

The Messenger
of Light

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

I.S.I.S. Symposium 2014

***How our
consciousness
changes our
brain***

**Do we have a brain?
Or are we our brain?**



How our consciousness changes our brain

Do we have a brain?

Or are we our brain?

May 17-18, 2014, The Hague

How our consciousness changes our brain

Do we have a brain?

Or are we our brain?

	Introduction	116
Day 1	Do we have consciousness, or are we consciousness? <i>Anja de Jong</i>	118
	Brain, thinking and consciousness <i>Corine Barth</i>	125
	States of consciousness <i>Which pair of glasses do we use when looking at life?</i> <i>Patricia van Lingen</i>	132
	Are we in control of our own brain? – Workshop results <i>Editors</i>	138
	Examples of changes of the brain <i>Editors</i>	145
Day 2	Expanding consciousness through resonance <i>Never too late to resonate</i> <i>Ruud Melieste</i>	148
	Consciousness before and after dying <i>Bouke van den Noort</i>	155
	Three levels of remembering: instinct, conscience and intuition <i>Barend Voorham</i>	162
	Expanding consciousness by practice – Workshop results <i>Man, know thyself</i> <i>Editors</i>	170
	Announcement I.S.I.S. Symposium 2015	176

Introduction I.S.I.S. Symposium 2014

How our consciousness changes our brain

Do we have a brain? Or are we our brain?

Are we a brain or do we have a brain? Many brain scientists suggest that it is proven that we are a brain. However, new developments in neurology show that the brain changes from cradle to grave. And you can direct those changes. Your thinking is able to change your brain. These latest scientific discoveries support the theosophical view that consciousness is the leading factor: the brain is the horse, consciousness is the horseman.

From brain-thinking to Universal thinking

During the I.S.I.S. Symposium “How our consciousness changes our brain”, of which this is the report, ample attention was given to subjects such as free will, (collective) memory, intuition and reincarnation. Our consciousness contains many potencies, which we hardly use yet. If we activate those potencies in ourselves, then our vehicles – the body and its brain – will be affected.

In the presentations practical hints were given on how to activate those powers, and how we can go from brain-thinking to Universal thinking.

Workshops

During both days of the symposium workshops were organized, in which participants tested the ideas given in the lectures. The theosophical view on consciousness gives a completely different perspective on life and its

challenges. The interaction between participants was an essential and inspiring part of the symposium. The results from the workshops were subsequently presented plenary, which resulted in a deepening discussion. Both these results and the discussion are presented in this report.

Thinking differently

The thoughts from this symposium may initiate a different, more spiritual life. For those who wish to learn more about the theosophical view, the I.S.I.S. Foundation organizes the course “Thinking differently”. In this course, based on consciousness as a starting-point, participants are enabled to get to know and ennoble their own thinking.

The Universal Wisdom or Theosophia

We can find the key thoughts of Theosophia in all world religions and philosophies: nothing is separate, everything is alive and together all forms one big organic unity. The fundamental principles of Theosophia are:

- The unity of life. All beings are essentially one and carry all endless possibilities of the universe within them. They only differ from one another in the extent to which they actively use those possibilities.
- All beings grow in cycles: they re-embody continuously.

- All beings have free will, and consequently the capacity of inner growth.

I.S.I.S. Foundation

I.S.I.S. Foundation is the international executive organization of The Theosophical Society Point Loma – Blavatskyhouse The Hague. The name I.S.I.S. means *International Study-centre for Independent Search for truth*. So, the emphasis is on independent, non-dogmatic search for truth. The Foundation wants to support people in their search for answers to the questions of life, and who want to acquire knowledge with an open mind and a critical view. With this aim the I.S.I.S. Foundation organizes lectures, courses and symposia.

During our symposia the Dutch lectures are supported in the English and German language. This allows foreign visitors to actively participate.

Video

The symposium has been recorded on video as well. You can watch it at our special website www.stichtingisis.org/symposium/video-opnames-2014/. There, you can also order the video recordings.

Reactions

Do you have questions or ideas as a result of this symposium? Please send them to the I.S.I.S. Foundation by email: info@stichtingisis.org. You can also write, the address is: De Ruyterstraat 72-74, 2518 AV Den Haag, The Netherlands.

Do we have consciousness, or are we consciousness?

Do you have consciousness or are you consciousness?

What are we really, in essence? What does all consist of?

Everyone has wondered about this one time or another, gazing at the starry sky or realizing the pluriformity of life and phenomena on our planet Earth.

In Antiquity, even before Plato wrote about Socrates in his *Dialogues*, there were some philosophers in Greece who were also searching for this root, or the first element of existence. That which is, and always lasts, behind all passing and transitory existence.

They answered this question in different ways: Parmenides called it the One, while Heraclitus saw that everything changes, and regarded this to be the very force behind existence. *Panta Rhei*: everything flows. For Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans numbers and the relations between numbers were the basis of all that exists.

Others claimed that everything consists of indivisible unities, which they called “atoms”.

Few original texts have been handed down from these philosophers, and today some people regard them as somewhat shallow or primitive thinkers. But they were connected to Egyptian and Oriental traditions, in which these subjects have been contemplated for many centuries. They all assumed that there is something that works through, or in, or behind the world that we can observe with our senses.

All is consciousness

To start this symposium, we will define this as follows: *all is consciousness*.

It means that all existence consists of conscious beings, who are, in their deepest core, ONE. They are all rooted in the Boundless.

A very fundamental proposition, we realize. We do not expect you to say: “Oh well, if you say so”. In this lecture we will try to explain what is meant by it, so, please regard it as a working hypothesis for now. It will be our starting point to gain more understanding about the relationship between consciousness and the brain, the subject of this symposium.

The Theosophia starts from three fundamental, far-reaching propositions, from which everything can be explained. I will give a short description.

The first is a *Boundless Principle*. It is that which precedes everything that exists and can only be referred to with negative concepts. Everything we say about it only dwarfs or restricts it; it supersedes our faculty of conception. You may know it as the TAO from the *Tao Te Ching* “that which can be called Tao is not the true Tao” or as “Parabrahman”, which means nothing more than: beyond Brahman.

This principle is no god, but an abstraction. The Boundless is absolutely ONE, there is nothing inside or outside, because then you already make a division that implies boundaries. It is impossible to ascribe any qualities to it, the only thing you can do is say

what it is *not*.

The second proposition is *Cyclicity*. Consciousness embodies itself on a certain plane, is active there, and then withdraws. Think about your day and night-rhythm. Where were you last night, when you were sleeping? Yet, you were present again this morning, and you used your mind and body to get here. We see cycles everywhere we look, like breathing in and out, low and high tides, the circulations of the planets around the sun and around their own axes. It is perpetual, rhythmic *motion*.

The third proposition can be described as: *as above, so below*. Each consciousness carries all in itself (because it is a spark of that Boundless), and develops itself eternally. *Conscious beings need each other* for development — a development from an unselfconscious Divine spark to a Self-conscious, full-blown God.

What is consciousness?

Going back to our thesis: if we say that everything is consciousness, the next, logical question is: *what is consciousness?*

To put it simply: it is being conscious. We should take it as a verb, which implies a certain kind of activity, an active way of being. It is *being that is conscious*, which means that there must be something active which manifests itself, which reflects in something else, its surroundings for instance. Just like light is only perceptible if there is something to reflect the light.

There is something that is conscious, and there is something, which that being *is* conscious *of*. So, consciousness is always active within a greater unity. So, consciousness can be defined as *the power of perception*. And this is more than the sensory perception, as we know it.

In this perception there is also an active, self-moving aspect. This was exactly the motor of our waking up this morning. We wake up, even if we did not set the alarm clock.

It may sound odd, but even waking up is a habit that we built up ourselves, actively, by our own impulse. We are focused on this waking state, we can actively learn our lessons here and that's why we perceive this exterior world. For the question "What does a being perceive or realize?" also means "What does this being take for real, what does it identify with, what is it

focused on?" So, perception is always limited, there is always a certain limited focus which emanates from the consciousness *itself*.

Plato defines consciousness as the power to act and react: *the power to act and to react on the actions of other beings*. Consciousness is "self-movement", as Plato defines it in one word. But this "self" you should not see as something separate from the totality. Consciousness can never be taken as separate from the encompassing totality. *So, a conscious being is a self-moving, perceiving being that interacts with other conscious beings, and, as a result of this process, grows.*

Each consciousness is in the core of its core of its core a spark or ray from the Boundless, as it were, and carries all the possibilities of the boundless in it. Conscious beings differ because they perceive, mirror and express the Boundless in different degrees and in different ways. To put it in other words: they differ because they are expressing *more or less* of those boundless possibilities. The boundless can never be perceived or expressed in its fullness. In that case it would be encompassed by something else, and, consequently, it would not be boundless.

What is consciousness?

- Consciousness is the power to act and to react, to perception.
- Each consciousness is in the core of its core a spark or ray from the Boundless, and has developed the boundlessness to a certain extent.

Infinite gradations of consciousness

Conscious beings need each other to grow, as we shall see. Consciousness always exists within other consciousness. And starting from the first proposition of boundlessness, the grades or levels of consciousness must be infinite in number as well.

So there are countless different conscious beings, sparks from the boundless fire, or rays from a sun, beings that have developed their inner core in a higher or lower degree. *This means that differences in consciousness are not absolute, but gradual.*

Those conscious beings which, from our point of view, do express very much of that infinity, we call "spiritual", or even "divine", and conscious beings that are

expressing little of it, we call “material”.

Thanks to all these gradations of consciousness, a close cooperation between all those different beings is possible. To put it more strongly, consciousness can only manifest itself within a hierarchical structure of cooperating conscious beings of different grades of evolution. The higher, or more evolved, needs the lower to express itself and to perceive and learn. And the lower, or less evolved, in its turn needs the higher to learn to express the higher in itself.

Spiritual and material are relative

“But what do we call higher and lower?” “What is *more* evolved, what is *less* evolved?” What we call spiritual or material, depends on our own grade of evolution. It depends on the realm of nature we belong to, and to what point we already did develop ourselves within that realm.

If we compare our human consciousness with that of an animal, we recognize similarities but also great differences. If we look for instance to a dog, we certainly see more than a few similarities, but to start a real discussion with a dog goes beyond its scope. Some aspects of consciousness are not yet active in animals. If we look at plants, it will become a little bit more difficult to recognize similarities with us human beings, but we know that plants are sensitive beings as well which interact with their surroundings. For instance sunflowers that bend their heads toward the sun. Or perhaps you may have seen a film at an accelerated pace, of a climbing plant searching for grip while it is growing. This self-movement and interaction we also find in minerals – for instance in the growth of crystals – and in molecules, atoms and the still less developed consciousnesses that form the building blocks of atoms. All these different kinds of beings are conscious beings, or “consciousnesses”.

Beings belonging to the same realm of nature may differ enormously too, just compare one human being to another human being. A wise man will realize much more clearly the interconnectedness of all things, and will act accordingly, while someone who thinks only of his own comfort and well-being will act from self-interest. They differ greatly in their scope of consciousness.

As human beings, with our physical senses, we are

mainly aware of beings *less* developed than we are, the animals, plants, minerals, atoms, protons, et cetera. But just like a cell in our body is hardly conscious of the whole body and of the leading consciousness behind that body, and yet functions and develops itself within that great body, in the same way we can imagine that we as human consciousnesses are hardly conscious of that in which we function and develop ourselves. There are also cosmic beings, the divine realms of nature, which have developed their limitless possibilities much more than we have, and in whose sphere of influence we momentarily gain our experiences. We may think for instance of the conscious being that expresses itself through our planet Earth as his instrument, or of the conscious being that functions behind the sun. What we can perceive of these cosmic beings are their habits, their regular behavior, that we call “laws of nature”.

For these great consciousnesses, we humans are a kind of cellular beings, serving as part of an instrument through which such a cosmic being expresses itself on a certain plane. An inspiring thought, isn't it?

To put it in other words: *spiritual and material is relative*. A being that is spiritual for us, will be a material building block for a much further developed consciousness. So, we are always parent and child at the same time, to put it that way; architect and builder; teacher and student. It simply depends on whether one looks up or down. Whether one looks at those who are further developed, or those who are less developed than we are.

“Spiritual” and “material” are relative

A being that is spiritual for us, will be a material building block, an instrument, for a much further developed consciousness.

Consciousness and self-consciousness

As human beings, as beings, who are developing thinking consciousness (of which we shall say more in the next lecture), we possess the faculty to perceive not only outward things but also inner things. For we have developed the capacity to think, the capacity to perceive thoughts.

For instance, we can perceive the concept of unity. We can think about ourselves, and experience ourselves as

an individuality, an indivisible unity. We have a notion of a permanent “I”, even though we have changed enormously since we were five years old. And we can contemplate on this permanent core.

In short: we human beings have developed – in contrast to the lower realms of nature – *self*-consciousness. Self-consciousness is a mode of consciousness; it is perception that is not only directed outwards, but also views inwards. So, we do not state that animals, plants, minerals, atoms (or its elements) have *self*-consciousness. Yet, they do perceive several things, they mirror themselves in these things, and they react to them. We, *men*, might call these beings “un-conscious”, but only because we take *our own mode of* consciousness as the norm.

Consciousness is composite

The fact that consciousness carries everything in itself, can also be conceived of as a stream of consciousness reaching from the divine to the physical. You may compare the aspects of consciousness to the seven colors that emerge if you send a ray of white light through a prism.

Each being has all the different aspects or qualities, but in man the thinking principle is the core principle. We already distinguished between the sensual perception of the outward world and the perception of which is directed to inner planes. One of these more inner perceptions is our feeling: we perceive our own emotions and those of other people, for instance when we sense the atmosphere when we enter a place. We are also conscious of our personal wishes, inclinations and impulses, et cetera.

But we recognize in ourselves many other kinds of thoughts too, like opinions and presumptions, convictions, reasonings and theories. We can see the *logic* in issues and develop *insight in connections*, we nourish our ideals, we see coherence, experience harmony and very seldom inspiration and unity.

Each human consciousness develops in its own way, accentuates other things, values the various aspects of life differently. That’s why there exist marked men and women of feeling, and very rational people, and also people who’s ideal or sense of connectedness serves as a the guideline for their actions. Someone like Gandhi, for instance, who was and is an example for a lot of

people, for the way he dealt with a very problematic situation in a peaceful and dignified way. In such people we recognize the expression of the higher aspects of consciousness, they think and act in a more universal way.

Cooperation between consciousnesses

But what we call matter or substance is also consciousness, although from our perspective primitive, undeveloped consciousness. More precisely stated: matter consists of cooperations of such primitive consciousnesses, lead by a higher, encompassing consciousness, that attracted these beings to form a body or instrument or vehicle, enabling him to gain experience on a certain plane. And within that body a great army of lower beings in their turn gets the chance to gain experiences, in order to evolve more of their boundless possibilities. As above, so below, from cosmos to atom: everywhere we see interaction, cooperation.

We human beings also attract lower beings that form our bodies. It is “bodies” because we have more than one body. Each one of our various aspects of consciousness, from spiritual to material, works through a certain instrument, and each instrument is such a cooperation consisting of lower beings of a certain quality.

Each of these instruments enables us to perceive certain things. We have our physical senses, by which we observe our physical world. But how shall we call the senses by which we observe inner things? For instance: by which instruments do we perceive our thoughts, varying from very down-to-earth thoughts to very lofty ideals? We could call these our inner instruments. Like our intellectual faculty, our faculty of understanding and our faculty by which we perceive or grasp a sense of unity.

During the embodiment of our consciousness (you remember: we are temporarily active on this outer plane) we attract these lower consciousnesses. The ray of consciousness clothes itself on the different planes in such instruments, until finally it builds up a physical body, in exactly the same way. In human beings we call the start of that “conception”. Beings seem to manifest themselves from nothing: the fertilized ovum starts dividing itself.

Compare it to water vapor that condensates on a cold

object: the water was already there, but now becomes visible as drops. We must realize that we are dealing with *cell consciousnesses* here, which embody themselves under the direction of a manifesting, overshadowing consciousness: that of a human being who is going to be born after nine months.

In the physical body, the various organs function as instruments for the different aspects of consciousness. Each organ reflects a certain quality of consciousness more than other qualities. The heart is the organ that represents the more spiritual aspects of consciousness on the physical plane, while the brain makes it possible for the more intellectual thinking aspect to express itself on this plane. An emotional disorder or stress may express itself through the skin, in the form of eczema, or through the stomach as an ulcer. In all these cases there is a force, in this case our feelings, that expresses itself through a suitable organ.

Each organ is also a consciousness in itself, with its own function and intelligence or organization which it can express through the composite of its cells. The fact that organ transplants are possible demonstrates this.

Fundamental cooperation between consciousnesses

On several planes, the relatively primitive beings form bodies or vehicles for the leading consciousness. Physical organs are instruments on the most material plane.

Hierarchical cooperation

So, there is a *hierarchic cooperation* between these different consciousnesses. The lower consciousness, the matter, gains experience within the sphere of influence of an overshadowing, leading consciousness. The higher consciousness uses those lower consciousnesses to gain experience in certain spheres.

In what way the leading consciousness makes use of these instruments has a great influence on the development of those organ and cell consciousnesses. We can use our body and our organs in a well-balanced way, but we can also overburden or neglect them.

The leading consciousness influences the body, just like a driver leaves traces of his driving behavior in his car, for instance a tired out gearbox, or worn through brakes. Now mark well: such traces *could* indicate an

unbalanced, nervous or aggressive driver, but it could also concern an ambulance driver, who acts well considered, led by his ideal to save people. So, we can't straight away read off the vehicle which aspect of consciousness predominated.

The various organs also function hierarchically in relation to each other; and when we talk about the brains, we can see that these have a prominent role in our functioning in this material sphere. Our brains are a many-sided instrument, that regulate several physical vital functions and coordinate the activities of the body, and in the case of man they offer the opportunity to translate all our various thoughts and ideals to the outward, physical sphere in the form of words or actions.

The spiritualistic principle

"Do we have consciousness, or are we consciousness?" is the title of this presentation. By now, you will understand that we do not start from the idea that you are a body that has a consciousness. Or that you *are* your brain, and that consciousness arises from it. When explaining phenomena we start from *the spiritualistic principle*.

The spiritualistic principle does not mean: that there is only spirit, or something like that. It does not mean that the material world does not exist, or isn't real. It means that there is always a leading force working through it, which cannot be explained from that matter, that composite of lower conscious beings, *itself*. It means that we look for the cause of those phenomena in the more developed consciousnesses in such a hierarchic collaboration. In those more developed consciousnesses we find truth, inspiration and a true solution for problems. And ultimately, this search will never end, because there will always be more development, more insight possible.

The cooperation of higher consciousnesses is also referred to as the Golden Chain of Hermes, or the Light Side of Nature.

The less developed consciousnesses are executing, following, forming a cooperation that supports a higher consciousness and offers it the opportunity to manifest. That outward side is very interesting to study, especially because one may recognize in it the traces or habits of the force behind it. But even if one would

cut that matter into increasingly smaller pieces, that leading, further developed consciousness shall not be found in it.

The material side of such a cooperation often causes illusory impressions; it seems to be the most firm and real, but it is not. It is, however, very real as far as one identifies with that material side.

Which leads us to the question: “Is consciousness located somewhere?”

Spiritualistic principle

The leading consciousness is the cause working behind the instrument.

Where is consciousness located?

We have stated that consciousness is unlimited *in principle*, but that it is in fact always limited in its perception and expression. In essence, it is everywhere, omnipresent, but it is limited or localized by the instrument or vehicle through which it works.

In our current phase of development, we people generally identify with the lower aspects; we often live from the perspective of our body, our feelings, our vitality, our personal desires, and we often use our intellect to meet these aspects. Our insight and our notion of unity have not yet been developed very much. As thinkers we can *focus* our consciousness, we can recognize, investigate, strengthen or ignore each of the aspects of consciousness. As mentioned before, there are typically emotional persons, scientifically oriented persons, and persons that are focused on an ideal, irrespective of the personal consequences. So, it is possible to focus our consciousness on the higher aspects of consciousness.

There are also people who identify themselves completely with their body; each change is noticed. Of course, one can always identify different phases in this respect; during a disease one is more aware of their body because there is something unusual with it.

Where is consciousness located?

In principle, consciousness is everywhere; but it is localized by the instruments through which it works.

Consciousness becomes what it focuses on.

Another important aspect of consciousness is the following: *consciousness becomes what it focuses on, what it identifies with.* This influences our perception. That what we are focused on – in general which we are interested in – *is our reality*. It is leading in our perception, in our actions and our reactions. We can focus our attention, that means, focus our consciousness on an ideal that we want to achieve, on the unity and connection of everything — *and see all our other perceptions in that light*. We can also have ourselves carried along by everything that occurs to our more outward senses, drift with the tide, let every TV commercial sink in, view every app message immediately, follow every impulse.

Do we concentrate our consciousness on the inner unity of everything, or do we diffuse it in the plurality of the outward world? Can we choose? How about our free will?

The free will

In principle each consciousness is free, because, as a stream of consciousness, it springs from the Boundless itself and contains all infinite possibilities. Even a minimally developed consciousness is, to a limited extent, free in its perception, in its action and reaction. The more a consciousness has developed that infinity; the more universal it is, the more freedom it has. A human being, for instance, has more freedom than an animal, because he has developed his thinking, which implies that he can base his choices on more than just instinct and survival impulse. Of course, a human being can also have the impression of being dominated by outward circumstances (without considering that one always reacts *in his own way* to those circumstances) or have himself wrapped up in his own habits in such a way that it seems as if there is no free will any more.

If we identify ourselves with the exterior, the body, the organs, and assume that they determine *what* we think and *how* we act, we do not activate the free will. In fact, we leave it up to those lower consciousnesses and our unconscious, instinctive reaction. But because a human being can think he can outline a plan, follow an ideal and thus give direction to his own life. Which means: he can change his own habits and character, and, as a consequence, his physical constitution will

change in the long run.

Only when the consciousness has developed itself that far that it can look inwards, that is, has developed its *mental* senses, it will be able to make self-conscious *choices*. Then it can *self*-consciously search for a connection with those more developed, more universal beings, and be inspired by them.

Because freedom is not only freedom of choice or being free from compulsion, it is also “the freedom to...”. It is also the freedom to function as well as we are able to, as a link in that hierarchy. Just like being able to play a piano offers us the freedom to express ourselves through music, in the same way our ability to activate our higher aspects like our sense of unity, insight and compassion, and to express them in the lower spheres – mirror them in our lower aspects – offers us the freedom to really mean something for our fellow men. However, just like learning to play the piano this requires some practice. In the workshops you can have a taste of that.

Each consciousness is by definition free

The more it has developed its infinite core, the more freedom it has. Active free will demands self-consciousness.

Finally: do we have consciousness of are we consciousness?

We *are* consciousness and – metaphorically speaking – we *have* consciousnesses; in the sense that the lower consciousnesses that constitute our instruments follow their own development within our overshadowing sphere of influence. And in the sense that we make use of these instruments to gain certain experiences and expand our consciousness. As long as our consciousness works through those lower consciousnesses, we offer them the opportunity to develop and we influence them in the course of their development. We, in our turn, are part of something bigger, a further developed consciousness in whose sphere of influence we develop and evolve.

Ultimately, all consciousnesses are ONE in their core, and they have all boundless possibilities in themselves.

Reference

1. Plato, *Laws* 894c-896d and *Phaedrus* 245c and e (universal Plato-paging)
-

Brain, thinking and consciousness

After the explanation in the previous lecture, whether we possess consciousness or in fact are consciousness, we will now focus on the mutual relationship between the human brain, thinking and consciousness. In this lecture we will present the following issues for assessment.

Firstly: man is a thinker. Secondly, we will talk about thinking and thoughts. Thirdly, we will present a view on the physical brain as an instrument of consciousness. We will then reflect upon the mutual communication between consciousnesses of a similar frequency. We will talk about the plasticity of our physical brain and finally about the reconstruction of our physical brain at rebirth.

We hope to show you that, when examining the capacities of our brain, we should not only focus on contemporary science but also on the metaphysical world of the psyche and the spirit of man, therefore beyond the boundaries of modern science.

Man is a thinker

Consciousness exists in many gradations and qualities. It depends on the extent to which a being has developed its boundless possibilities. As for man, his consciousness is developed up to the level where his thinking faculty has become active. Now man has to learn how to handle and control the forces and energies linked to the use of the thinking faculty. In short: *man is a thinker in training.*

About thinking and thoughts

Every consciousness is by definition perceiving. How else could it be conscious? That is why every perceiving consciousness shapes itself a body, a vehicle, a manifestation with senses, to be able to perceive its environment. The human consciousness has many senses, five of which for the external domain. They enable us to see, hear, smell, taste and feel. In other words to be able to perceive the different qualities of its environment, so it can evolve to a higher phase of consciousness.

Naturally a lot more can be said about the evolutionary process, but for this moment we will only share with you an old wisdom that pertains to the development of the thinking faculty, to wit that every action is preceded by a thought, that the repetition of an action leads to a habit and that a collection of habits constitutes a person's character. So the development of our character in fact starts with the thoughts we think. In the previous lecture we have learned of planes that can't be perceived by man's matter-oriented senses, but can be perceived by our consciousness. Take for example a thought: have you ever seen, heard, felt, tasted or touched a thought in a material form? Which is exactly what we do, actually, with our inner senses such as thinking.

To avoid misunderstandings we therefore distinguish between the notions "physical brain" and "brain". With "physical brain" we mean the physical organ in our

head, the “little grey cells” so to speak. With “brain” we mean the cooperating brain cells as consciousnesses, *as living beings*, evolving just like any other living being, with a scope of consciousness ranging from spiritual faculties to the physical body. And we humans are able to create images with our thinking faculties that can be “understood” as it were by these lower levels of consciousness. We will elaborate on this further on in this lecture.

Thinking as such is a mental process, the research of which falls under the domain of a vast variety of scientific disciplines. Despite the attention given to thinking by so many scientific disciplines, there is little scientific result to be found on what “thinking” really is. There is extensive talk and writing on what the thinking faculty causes, like memories, thoughts, imaging and ideas, but when it comes to the question what thinking is and where it comes from, we are mainly dependent on the old esoteric teachings that have been passed on to the world, with a new impulse, from 1875 onwards.

In the esoteric philosophy of ancient India the thinking faculty is presented as a property of universal consciousness. Moreover, these teachings tell us that the thinking of thoughts of a certain spiritual level takes place outside of the physical brain. In his *Poimandres* Hermes Trismegistus subtly refers to the highest thoughts that a sage should apply to approach the Truth with a capitol T.

In our contemporary use of words, “thinking” is sometimes synonymous for “believing”, for example: “I think I hear something”, means as much as “I believe I hear something”.

As our little joke, and in line with the poster of “Loesje” on this page, we would like to add: “I hear what I believe”.

Thinking is perceiving thoughts

However, thinking and thoughts are inextricably linked. With the thinking faculty our consciousness possesses the ability to receive and transfer thoughts. But what are these thoughts actually? Thoughts are, like everything else, conscious beings or “consciousnesses”. They are very primitive, very unselfconscious consciousnesses. The human consciousness cooperates

closely with these thought-consciousnesses. You can interpret man as a center attracting these elementary consciousnesses, these thoughts. Now, no single consciousness – no single being – can exist without a material shape. In fact, the human consciousness helps these thought-beings taking shape, and they in turn help man to think thoughts. In nature there is cooperation everywhere!

To summarize, we can say: a thought is a consciousness, either weak, either strong, that is received by our thinking faculty and sent to our brain. Our brain then “translates” this thought to the external sphere. For example, it finds the words to express these thoughts or it initiates a physical process, like the movement of an arm.

In the computer world one speaks of an interface when certain digital information is being converted into for example a textual or graphical form. The brain can also be seen as an interface between the human consciousness which is thinking thoughts, and the external world.

So, the thinking-consciousness perceives thoughts. The human ability to think comprises a range of mental states of consciousness, from high to low. For example, man is able to reflect upon himself and is therefore self-conscious, “I think, therefore I am”, said the French philosopher René Descartes.

You will understand that one can only perceive that which has one’s focus. Someone who never reflects on



Don't believe everything you think
— Loesje

philosophy will not perceive philosophical thoughts. It is just like television. Continuously, all around the world, programmes are being broadcasted, even at this moment, but since you are here you can't watch these programs. You will have to tune your consciousness to a certain mental sphere in order to perceive certain thoughts.

What is thinking, what are thoughts?

- Thoughts are very primitive consciousnesses.
- Our thinking faculty perceives thought-consciousnesses.
- Our brain is the interface between our thinking and the external world.

Translation errors

Returning to the perception of thoughts: I said our consciousness perceives thoughts, and these thoughts are sent to our brain if we want to put them into physical action. If we look closely, we notice that a lot of elements are involved in this process. I mention this because it will be clear that if one of these elements does not function properly, the rendering of the original image will be compromised. It is like looking through a microscope. The lens may be hazy, our eyes weary, or the light insufficient. These are all factors preventing us from seeing clearly, while the object itself doesn't change at all and remains itself.

Then there is the "other end" of communication. The one who listens has essentially the same challenge: to understand the message of the one who speaks in the way it is intended. The subjective orientation of the perceiver can cause them to perceive and interpret the thoughts you transferred in their own personal way. Perhaps you now understand why people can have such different opinions.

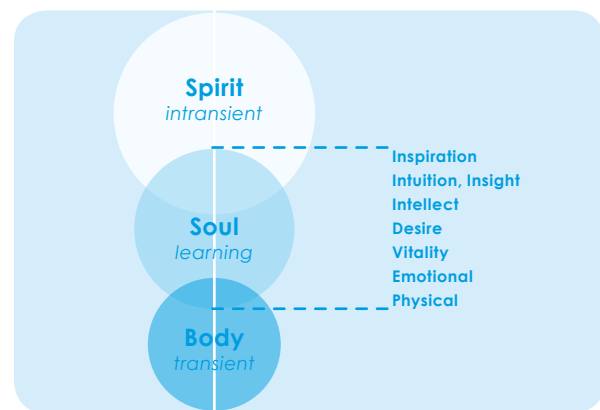
The various aspects of thinking

In our thinking we can distinguish various aspects: *Inspiration*: a thinking aspect of a very high spiritual caliber, which is therefore difficult to describe. It is the uppermost aspect of our thinking faculty and knowledge about its origins is therefore generally out of the reach of the average man. Activity of this aspect could lead for example to the experience of unity

(of all that is).

Intuition, insight and comprehension: this aspect offers the ability to understand the connection, the cohesion of all the things you perceive, beyond pure intellectual reasoning. Even if this conflicts with your observation. You see, or better still, your eyes perceive the sun sinking below the horizon at sunset, but you understand that the earth is spinning around its axis, which makes it look like the sun is sinking.

Intellectual thoughts: you know, like three times three is nine. Intellectual thinking is an important aspect of human nature. It is the turning point in our consciousness. Which is why we show you this diagram:



The white globe depicts our spiritual and therefore imperishable realm, the greyer globe represents the human soul, the learning consciousness, and the darkest globe depicts our physical, material realm. You can see that the higher part of the learning man overlaps with the spiritual realm and that the lower part of the learning man overlaps with the physical realm.

This diagram illustrates that man can deploy his intellectual thinking for either spiritual, imperishable matters or, as well, for material matters of transitory nature. Either for the totality of life, of which he regards himself as a part of, or for personal wealth and possessions. In short: general interest versus personal interest.

Thoughts of desire: you might think this term speaks for itself, but consider the fact that the wish to serve mankind is also a desire. As is the case with intellect, this aspect of thinking can be deployed either impersonally or personally.

Vitality: this aspect of our thoughts revolves around the urge to act. Someone who is driven by this aspect

will be inclined to act first and reason later.

Emotional thinking: in this state of mind our feelings and emotions get the better of us. Someone in this state of mind is opinionated irrationally and without foundation of knowledge or knowing.

Physical thinking: very simply focused on the body, for example “I am hungry”, or “these pants are not my style” and “I’ve got a splitting headache”.

The physical brain as instrument of the perceiving consciousness

The material, physical brain is an instrument of the human mind. The physical brain translates as it were the thoughts which our consciousness perceives, into the material world. They are also the nerve centers from where we govern our day-to-day physical activities. The physical brain therefore does not produce consciousness, as was an accepted idea in science not so long ago, but is the *outer* instrument of the perceiving consciousness.

The various parts of the physical brain constitute the composed organ of our thinking faculty. It is so to speak the image-former of all higher and lower thoughts to the physical plane. Scientists and philosophers of old occupied themselves with the mapping of the functions of the physical brain. About 2000 years BC a papyrus scroll already existed in which the brain mass is described as a steering device for the body by an Egyptian researcher. Later on, the ancient Greek wrote about the physical brain from a philosophical, medical and physical perspective. The Romans did some additional research, but until the Renaissance there was hardly any scientific interest for the functioning of the physical brain. Nowadays the physical brain has moved to the centre stage for psychologists, psychiatrists, neuroscientists, cell-biologists, electro-physiologists, anesthetists, brain-surgeons and philosophers.

Without wishing to elaborate, we present some remarkable figures for the statisticians among you. The physical brain of a baby weighs about 350 grams at birth, say approximately 25% of a mature physical brain. Each nerve cell (neuron) has then roughly 2500 synapses. Each synapse is the contact point between two neurons, a neuron or a muscle fiber, or a neuron and a gland cell. After three years the amount of syn-

apses has increased to about 15,000 per cell and also the amount of neurons has gradually increased until after six years the brain mass is 90% of the volume of an adult.

As an organ you could call the brain multi-tasking. It processes sensory perceptions and from these perceptions it controls physical functions, it monitors the body and detects deviations. It is the channel for information to and from the immaterial realms of our consciousness. The complexity of the structure of the physical brain can be deduced from the many billions of neurons, each of which in its turn is connected with thousands of other neurons.

Electro-physiology

Electro-physiology is a scientific discipline that explores the electric characteristics of cells and tissues. It measures changes in electric tension or electric current on a very broad scale. From a single ion-channel (molecular level) to complete organs such as the heart, which we call electro-cardiology, or of the physical brain, which is known as electro-encephalography. Much could be said about the different techniques to measure brain-activity such as EEG, MEG, CT, PET scan, MRI etc, but that goes beyond the scope of this lecture. The point is that electric currents in our physical brain can be measured and produced in an electro-encephalogram, an EEG.

We took this scientific excursion to prove on the material plane what is taught in esoteric philosophy: namely that consciousness vibrates, that every degree, quality or condition of consciousness generates its own specific frequency.

Both chemists and Theosophists will confirm that atomic vibrations, oscillations, frequencies, call it what you want, are measurable as electric impulses with our contemporary technology. The old sages who left us their esoteric teachings knew this even many thousands of years before Count Alessandro Volta and André-Marie Ampère lent their names to electric tension and current.

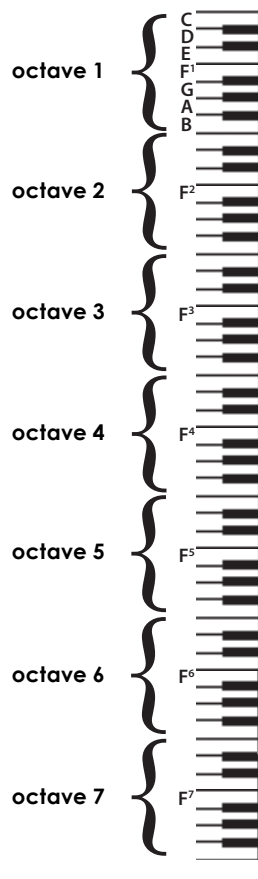
So far we have discussed several important issues.

1. In the previous lecture we told you that everything, and we do mean everything, is consciousness.

2. Earlier in this lecture we told you that thoughts can be considered as energies.
3. Just now we told you that every degree, quality or condition of consciousness generates a certain frequency.

The piano concept: the equal communicates with the equal

The illustration on this page describes the fact that, when any string of a certain frequency of an octave is played, for example the “F”, all the other “F”-strings from all the other octaves will also vibrate. The same applies to consciousness.



Similar consciousnesses communicate that way. They are tuned to the same wavelength so to speak. That is why you get along with some persons better than others. That is why some supporters lose themselves in the excitement over a football match while others, who are not on the same wavelength, distance themselves from the agitation. If you attend the St. Matthew Passion you experience a very different state of

mind compared to a visit to an amusement park. This is what could be called resonance.

By the way, my grandmother did not need a piano to explain all this. She just said: “the company you keep will rub off on you”. A Dutch proverb along the lines of: “tell me who your friends are and I’ll tell you who you are”.

What is alike will resonate together, so brain cells must have a consciousness side, an aspect that corresponds to our thinking. For example: Your brain cells are positioned on another octave than your thinking consciousness. The frequency, which is generated by your thinking consciousness, will make brain cells with the same frequency vibrate too, although some octaves higher. So, if you emanate a certain frequency on a regular basis, the corresponding brain cells will vibrate on the same basis and stay in shape. Furthermore, the possibility exists that other brain cells will be influenced more and more by this new frequency. On the other hand, if you never emanate a certain frequency, the corresponding brain cells will never be activated and will gradually die out. Here also, training is important.

You will comprehend that, if we wish to give our lives a more spiritual meaning because we realize that life must have more to offer than the gathering of money and goods, the best we do is to start with directing our thinking towards our higher nature. If you do that consistently and not just on a rainy Sunday afternoon because you have nothing better to do, but really from within your inner heart so to speak, then you will see that you will be confronted with like-minded people, situations, literature and organizations. Moreover, many brain cells, neurons and synapses that concur with your new frequency, will work with you as an equal amount of centers of consciousness, and the old frequencies will slowly fade away and perish. In other words: your consciousness determines your brain.

The significance (or not?) of brain mass

Scientific studies regarding the relationship between brain mass and thinking faculty produce interesting results. Napoleon Bonaparte for example had a brain mass of 1722 gram, where as Leon Gambetta, co-founder of the third French Republic, needed only 1100 grams. So the weight of the brain mass, which

by the way consists of water for 78%, is not important for intellectual skills. A provisional conclusion, here also, could be that consciousness plays a leading part in our thinking.

Consciousness changes the physical brain

Indeed, the power of our thinking indeed influences the composition of our brain mass. Just like training our muscles influences the muscle mass, evidently our thinking has an influence on our physical brain. Scientific research has shown that regular repetition of a certain thought will lead to physical development of the corresponding brain region by the development of more neurons and synapses. For example, researchers have taken measurements on meditating monks and established an increase of neurons and synapses in the parts of the brain concerned.

In another research one group of volunteers practiced a simple tune on the piano, every day for two hours, during a week. A second group practiced the same tune, but only in thought. For both groups considerable growth was established of the brain surface for finger skills, on the cerebral cortex.

Now that we are familiar with the communication between the alike, we can apply the piano concept to this situation. It is evident that the frequency of a powerful thought, for example meditation, brings about a growing network of like-minded brain cells. And by practicing the piano tune it turned out that the area of the cerebral cortex is not so much built through physical exercise of the fingers, but enlarged by the thinking consciousness. Theosophia puts forward that the spiritual consciousness is able to change the physical form of consciousness, the physical brain.

The plasticity of our brain

The individual consciousness adapts the brain to its own state of development

Consciousness reforms the physical brain as instrument

We have given you some examples from the scientific practice, and we would like to add some examples from the spiritualistic point of view, because the view that all mental processes are inevitably physical processes is a presumption, not a scientific fact.

Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor, a neuro-anatomist, had a stroke when she was 37 years old. A blood clot the size of a golf ball at her left temple squeezed upon her brain centre for speech. She heard and spoke indistinct woo-woo-woo sounds. At that moment her brain was not capable to put her thoughts into words, nor was her brain capable to convert words she heard into thought images. Nevertheless *she was reasonably clear and conscious*. So that was not the problem. It were brain cells, the instrument with which consciousness communicates with the outer world, that were – fortunately only temporary – defective. Through her willpower her consciousness was able to make her brain function normally again after a couple of years. This example shows that the physical process of bodily recovery was controlled by the individual consciousness. This evening we will show you some videos to elaborate on this and other examples.

The life journey of the atoms of our brain

Meanwhile it has been established that our physical brain is plastic. From the point of view of the Theosophia this is logical because everything is consciousness and this naturally also applies to the cells of our brain. At the start of this lecture we distinguished the physical brain and the brain. With “brain” we mean the cooperating brain cells as consciousnesses, as living beings, evolving just like every other living being. With “physical brain” we mean the physical organ in our head.

Just like man, the brain cell is a consciousness with higher and lower aspects of consciousness and a physical shape. “As above so below” is the brief translation of the Hermetic axiom. It is the consciousness of the thinker that communicates with the consciousness of the brain cell. As part of the human consciousness, the consciousness of the brain not only expresses the inner man, but is also evolving by the influence of thoughts. If I may take you back to the piano concept, then you will comprehend that if you change your way of thinking some brain cells will no longer be attracted to the new situation. Because you think differently you will stop feeding the old, redundant thoughts. The cells of your brain receive different “nutrition”. Some cells of your brain will drop out, but it is highly probable that you will raise most brain cells, neurons, synaps-

es, life atoms, you name it, the majority of them, to a higher level. You, like a piano-tuner, will tune them in a different tone as it were. Quite specifically, you thus help the atoms of your body – of course not only your brain – in their evolutionary process, a process that any kind of consciousness HAS to undergo. In their turn all those evolved life atoms of your brain will help you perceive new thoughts and new ideas. The only way to train our brain to understand our ideals, insights and life questions, is to direct our thinking to our higher human aspects. So in fact *we train our thinking and not our physical brain*. These aspects are no things exterior to us. No, we possess them already within ourselves. They are part of our total human being.

Will our thinking change automatically? Well, no. Science has established that the bulk of our thinking is habitual thinking. And smokers and diet-followers among us know how difficult it can be to break a habit.

The reconstruction of our physical brain

Man is not a once-only being. Every incarnation is a new chance to do better than the last time. In which case it is of course convenient to have access to a rucksack, already filled with some spiritual luggage.

During the development of the newborn man to adulthood we clearly see that the lower follows the higher, that the spiritual consciousness directs the development of the physical consciousness. To put it differently, the physical development is controlled by the consciousness.

From birth until approximately its 21st year, the consciousness again shapes an earthly body. The spirit involves into matter, while at the same time matter, the body, evolves.

From about its 14th to 21st year the human consciousness unfolds the higher abilities acquired in former lives and also the brain cells follow slavishly when constructing the connections between the various parts of the physical brain. On and in the cerebral cortex grows a fine-grained network of synapses in this period and all the functionalities of the frontal brain lobe can be used in full.

On the spiritual plane the consciousness develops its characteristics and karmic consequences, which are the result of all former lives, and at about 21 years old

man is what he has made of himself so far. Nothing can be “outted” that was not already “in”. If we do not pursue higher ideals in this life, we should not expect them to be handed to us on a silver platter next time. In fact, with our thinking *now* we can create a springboard for the next time. And maybe we did just that in our previous life: hence now we are all here to discuss what man really is and what he is capable of. It seems appropriate to conclude this lecture with the words of Gautama the Buddha:

All that we are is the result of what we have thought.

States of consciousness

Which pair of glasses do we use when looking at life?

Watching the news on television you possibly ask yourself if any of the many problems can ever be solved. Will there always be wars? In which way can we make immigration policy more humane? In view of the many changes in today's society, how can we hold firm? We are in search for answers. Perhaps we are asking ourselves what our own contribution to today's society could be. To answer these life questions, we need insight and wisdom. However, can we seek wisdom in our brain? Or is it consciousness that plays an important role?

Earlier we showed you that everything is consciousness. And that all these consciousnesses are interconnected — are ONE. It was mentioned that human beings can only exist thanks to the co-operation of consciousnesses. In this lecture we will further explore and discover where answers to these life questions can be found. Therefore we will set out on a journey through the various states of consciousness. In this way you can find out for yourself what is true and what the possibilities are to expand your vision in this matter.

Setting out on this inner journey, we have to be aware that *we have to let go of our present habitual way of thinking*. It is as though we are putting down our old glasses and replace them by new glasses to look at the world and our place in it anew. In doing so you will not only get a picture of the world and yourself as it is now, but you will also get a picture of how the world and your role in it could be and maybe even should be.

A quotation by Gandhi in *Ethic Religion* says: man has two windows to his mind: through one he can see his own self as it is; through the other, he can see what it should be.⁽¹⁾ We have the capacity within ourselves to take into mind an ideal of how we would like to be. We can do the same with the world: what would our ideal world look like?

Can you imagine that this new world, which you are perceiving with these new glasses now, will increasingly become a reality to you as you persistently focus and identify with it? Because, as we explained before, an important feature of consciousness is that it becomes what it focuses on, or what it identifies with. During this weekend we will try to examine together whether this is really the case.

Different states of consciousness

First we will take a look at the different states in which our consciousness can be. A state of consciousness is something different than consciousness *per se*. Consciousness can be in different states. Being awake, sleeping and dying are states in which our consciousness can remain at different planes.

We assume that there is, has been and always will be consciousness. Only the way in which consciousness is able to express itself is subject to change. Our consciousness is alternating between a waking state, a dream state and a dreamless sleep.

When we are awake our consciousness is able to re-

main in different states as well. For example when we are studying, or when we are fully engaged in watching a movie or listening to beautiful music. But also consider changing emotional moods, in which we feel angry, happy or sad.

It is important to realize that there are two possibilities: either we experience certain states passively, or we have developed the knowledge or insight within ourselves to rise above certain states, to control them. This means that, with full control, we can enter into a state through which we can manifest other qualities of our consciousness deliberately. For example, in the past we have been very impatient. By training we have learned to deal with it and now we can handle certain situations much more patiently.

So by studying and contemplating on the different states we train our discernment.⁽²⁾ By doing so we are more and more able to recognize the state we are in and to make a self-conscious choice regarding how we want to act in that state and consequently how we act in life.

Waking state, dreaming state, dreamless sleep

The first state or the first plane is the *waking state*. For us this is the external world in which we are awake and in which we, more or less consciously, have our experiences. We shall elaborate on this later.

The second state is the *dreaming state*. This is the state in which we remain when we are sleeping. Our consciousness has withdrawn from the physical plane and has left our body. Our consciousness is functioning on another plane of existence: a mental-emotional realm, another world of experience. Because we are not fully familiar yet with that realm, we cannot act fully conscious. Instead of being in charge, we undergo the experiences more passively.

The experiences there are a reflection of the emotional events that we experienced during daytime. In this sleeping state we work out these experiences. Remember a day when we had a quarrel with our neighbor, or when we had blissful experiences when we were in love. It is the realm of desires, fears and emotions like jealousy or blissful feelings. In this state we have experiences in accordance with these feelings. In this state we will never reap anything that is different from

what we have sown: it may be the previous day or longer periods back. It is a more inner state of our consciousness, but definitely not yet a spiritual state. In this state everything still revolves around one's own personal "I". In this state the great spiritual vision is still absent.

The third state is the *dreamless sleep*. It may sound strange, but the dreamless sleep is a very spiritual state of consciousness because it is a state of self-forgetfulness. In this state the personality does not play a role anymore. As the spiritual qualities are not predominant yet in the daily life of most of us, we are not yet able to have self-consciously experiences in this spiritual state. That is the reason why we experience this state as a dreamless sleep. If we were developed much further spiritually, we would be able to have self-conscious experiences in this state just like in the waking state. As this is not the case for most people, we experience very little or even nothing at all. Therefore we take very little to nothing back with us consciously when we wake up. This state is not an "extinguished consciousness", but an extremely active consciousness, at a spiritual level.

However, there are times that we are able to experience something of this state of consciousness. For example when we fall asleep with a problem of life on our mind, or when we want to help someone and the benefit of the other is paramount, then it is possible that we will wake up with an insight in the solution. Then we transfer an experience from our higher consciousness to our waking consciousness.

The fourth state of consciousness is the experiencing of unity. In the present stage of our evolution it is very difficult for us to get an idea of this. According to wisdom literature this state is "a thousand times" more spiritual than the third state. Although our deepest core is living in this state NOW already, the average man has not yet developed this state of consciousness. As you can see: our consciousness can remain in different states.

Three glasses, three visions

Now, we can look at the world in daily life – our waking state – from different perspectives. Perspectives, which correspond with the planes of consciousness we just mentioned. We can subdivide the waking state

in different *sub-states* or views, which for the purpose of this lecture we refer to as “pairs of glasses”. A materialistic pair of glasses corresponds with the waking state, mental-emotional glasses with the dreaming state and spiritual glasses correspond with the dreamless sleep. There is also a fourth pair of glasses, but this one is too abstract to us, so we will not use it today. The pair of glasses through which we look will determine our view on life. And our view on life determines what we see and what we perceive.

Looking through our materialistic pair of glasses we only perceive through our senses. We react according to the way the outside world appears to us. The majority of people consider the world of sensory perception, sensory thoughts and feelings and of physical things as the only reality. They assume that when their physical body ceases to function, their life will end. Their assumptions are based on the thought: you only live once. This is also called the “hall of ignorance”. With ignorance is meant that we are still not aware of the force behind the outer world.

Through your mental-emotional pair of glasses you perceive everything from your own personal perspective. You react from your own point of view on the basis of your feelings, your own desires and personal judgments towards the outer world. In this way we create a personal emotional reality. We make choices in life based on whether it “feels right”. Perhaps we are less focused on the outer life in this state, however, we certainly are not spiritual as we are still aware of our personality. Our “I” still plays a dominant role. We sense that there must be more, but we are not yet able to get it clear. We experience something of another state of our consciousness, but it is still vague. It can be compared to fantasizing and daydreaming. Everything is possible, but we cannot make it concrete. Or another example: we can be touched by someone’s sorrow but we lack the understanding and deeper insight to fully support that person in a meaningful way.

Looking through your spiritual pair of glasses you no longer perceive a distinction between yourself and the outside world. All things are related. In that spiritual state the observer and what he observes are one. We no longer make a distinction between ourselves and the world around us. We see the total cohesion and oneness of everything. We see the outer world as the

consequence of a greater Reality. Personal interests are of no concern anymore — the general interest is paramount. Because we perceive life from a wider perspective, we can see the causes and effects of events that take place around us. We realize that the solutions are to be found in man himself.

States of consciousness

- | | | |
|--------------------|---|--|
| 1. Waking State | { | Materialistic pair of glasses
Mental-emotional pair of glasses
Spiritual pair of glasses |
| 2. Dreaming State | | |
| 3. Dreamless Sleep | | |
| 4. Realizing Unity | | |

Your vision determines what you see and experience

Concluding

In conclusion we may say that through our materialistic pair of glasses we perceive only matter, the outside. We consider ourselves to be separated from others. With our mental-emotional glasses we react on basis of our own feelings and points of view. Through our spiritual pair of glasses we recognize the unity in everything.

The different states in our daily life

On the same day we can wear different pairs of glasses. Which type of glasses we wear, is determined by which of our capabilities we use, and which capabilities we keep dormant in the background.

If, for example, we feel hungry and respond to this by eating, then we are focused on our physical condition. However, if we are completely absorbed by our work it, is possible that we forget to eat. At that moment we move our physical condition to the background, because our work is more important to us. This also applies in case of an emotional condition. We can react emotional, which leads to nothing most of the times. Or we can react with understanding and insight, which enables us to find better solutions. In that case we move our higher powers more to the forefront.

This is no static situation, we switch from one state of consciousness to another continuously. One moment

we are happy, or we are hungry, another moment we are on an intellectual plane trying to solve a problem, and again later we can immerse ourselves in the current problems of the world. In the end we can direct this process as we like, depending on our will power and motivation.

The quality of our consciousness can therefore vary from physical activities such as sports or cooking to more spiritual qualities such as contemplation on the bigger questions of life.

When we look at the world around us we see that spiritual qualities are not dominant yet, in general. Personal interest is more prominent most of the time. We view the world through the two lower pairs of glasses, as a result of which compassion is more in the background. Our vision is still limited, but in ourselves we have all powers available to make it more spiritual. These spiritual qualities are still dormant, because our day-to-day consciousness is not focused on it. We do not yet realize what the effect of a spiritual state of consciousness could be for the totality. However, there are those tiny moments, when we receive a glimpse from our higher nature's influence. Remember these aha-moments you had. Without doubt you recognize these moments — we were beginning to “see the light”.

Three visions on three essential questions

During the day we constantly switch between these three different ways of looking at life. We will apply the three pairs of glasses – those three ways to look at life – on different cases now. We will analyze our brain, we will explore where we think truth can be found and we will enlarge our views on the issue of helping others. Because often enough we decide to help with good intentions, but it is not always the help which is needed most. Maybe true helping is helping people to help themselves? We will find out.

What is our brain?

Let us first analyze our brain with the help of our three different pairs of glasses. When we look at our brain through our *materialistic pair of glasses* then we see billions of brain cells, determining everything we think and do. They control our movements, our senses, emotions, memory and the words we speak. Using

this pair of glasses we believe that our brain function will improve and that we can function better, if we use our brain more.

We ascribe the changes that take place during the teenage years of a child to the brain of a child in puberty. Our child is difficult because its brain is changing. There are all kinds of stuff being broken down and created in its brain. When we share those ideas with our children, it can happen that your daughter tells you, after she has been naughty: yes, mum, I really cannot help it, my brains made me do it!⁽³⁾

If we think we are nothing more than a body, then we may also conclude that our brain, in an unexplainable way, produces our consciousness. How that works we cannot figure out with our materialistic pair of glasses. Because up to now no one has discovered where the “I”-notion can be found or where self-consciousness is located in the brain. There are scientists and philosophers who argue that the “I”-notion is a product of the communication between our billions of brain cells. Such however is only a vague theory; there is no proof at all.

When we look at our brain with our *mental-emotional* pair of glasses we are beginning to realize that we ourselves have an influence on our brain. We assume that our mental emotional condition determines how our brain works. This idea we recognize in several scientific results from which it is concluded that meditation has a prolonged effect on the functioning of the brain.⁽⁴⁾ When we look at our brain from this perspective, we assume that our way of thinking, how we feel, determines changes in our brain.

What is our brain?

1. *Materialistic pair of glasses: combination of brain cells that produce consciousness*
2. *Mental-emotional pair of glasses: our feeling determines our brain*
3. *Spiritual pair of glasses: our brain is an instrument of our consciousness*

Looking through our *spiritual pair of glasses* we understand that an essentially boundless consciousness is the active force behind our brain. We know man is a reincarnating being with unlimited possibilities and is in its CORE eternal. We understand that our physi-

cal body and its brain is just a temporary instrument, which is not essential for what we really are.

Where do we think we will find truth?

Now let us go on a quest for the place where we think truth can be found, with the help of our three pairs of glasses.

Looking through our *materialistic pair of glasses* we think we can find the truth in the material world. We focus on collecting material pieces of evidence and facts that concern the tangible world. We believe that man and the world he lives in is as we perceive them with our outer senses. Man did not make himself. And it is impossible for us to find solutions for the problems we see in the world. Our life depends on the circumstances, our DNA, our brain. We assume we can eventually find all answers in the material world. When using our *mental-emotional pair of glasses* we know truth can be found in ourselves. We learn that the way we look at the world determines what happens and that we can influence events. But we still have our own opinions and points of view. We still regard ourselves to be separate from the rest of the world. We do not understand yet that everything is connected with everything else.

Where do we expect to find truth?

1. *Materialistic pair of glasses: in the outer world*
2. *Mental-emotional pair of glasses: in our feeling*
3. *Spiritual pair of glasses: in the universal consciousness*

Now with our *spiritual pair of glasses* we discover truth in consciousness as cause of all things. We find truth in universality. And that means, that if something works for one thing, it must work for all things. When we look at the world we live in through this pair of glasses, then we gain a wider vision. We see the entire book and not just one page of it, you might say. We still recognize problems such as the growing gap between rich and poor or the environment, but using our spiritual pair of glasses we will find very different solutions. These are problems caused by the selfishness of man himself, who is chasing his *own* comfort and

possessions, which are very temporary things, considered from the eternity of consciousness. By way of developing insight we discover a greater truth about life. We recognize that all people are connected with each other as a result of which our functioning as human being gets a completely new meaning.

How do you help?

Now let us investigate which different ways there are to help and which results these different ways bring us. When using our *materialistic* pair of glasses, help will be focused on the physical plane. For instance when it concerns our health. We take an aspirin when we have a headache. It temporarily relieves us from a discomfort. We can extend this idea to helping countries where there is poverty. We donate money, which can be used to provide medicines, food and goods to these areas. In this way we support other people, which is absolutely necessary indeed. However, we should ask ourselves if this help also takes away the cause of the problem. Wearing our *mental-emotional* pair of glasses our help is based on emotional feelings. We would like to see others feel good, be happy. When touched by other people's problems and suffering it might happen that we become emotional ourselves. We have identified with the situation of other people so much that we suffer with them. The help we provide is based on what *we* think is good for the other. We project our ideas on them. But ... do we really know what is best for him if we do not know him well enough? We do not have full knowledge about ourselves yet, because we do not fully realize the divine consciousness we are essentially. Therefore we lack understanding of the causes of a situation and we do not have the knowledge, which can tell us what the other person essentially needs. Looking through our *spiritual* pair of glasses we help with understanding and discernment. We recognize justice in life and therefore we understand what is needed to help others. Sometimes life seems unfair. For instance, why is a child born in a refugee camp? But when you look at things from a wider perspective, you recognize cause and effect. Even when you do not understand which circumstances exactly were the causes of a horrible war, you still know that it must have resulted from behavior of mankind itself. Our helping others is not pointless. Knowing that stimulates us to

help and stimulates compassion. We can help others in such a way that they can learn to help themselves. In this way we offer them the opportunity to discover their own powers and to activate these.

When we offer this kind of help to the world a more humane mentality will emerge. For instance, we will provide shelter to refugees in our countries. And we will help them to initiate changes in their home countries, so they can go back without fear and contribute to a better situation there.

Helping others in such a way that they learn to take care of themselves is based on the Rāja-Yoga system. Katherine Tingley reintroduced this theosophical method of teaching. She assumed the divine is present in everything. She gave us keys to teach children *how* to think instead of *what* to think. By helping others they develop their own inner powers. Should you wish to learn more about this subject then we invite you to our symposium next year, when we will discuss it extensively.

How do you help?

1. *Materialistic pair of glasses: by physical means*
2. *Mental-emotional pair of glasses: by suffering with them*
3. *Spiritual pair of glasses: by removing the causes*

From brain-thinking to Universal-thinking

We can learn very much from idealists such as Nelson Mandela, Gandhi or Martin Luther King when we study their ideas. In his famous “I have a dream” speech Martin Luther King revealed his dream, his ideal to us.⁽⁵⁾ An ideal based on justice and equality. A good example, in which we can recognize universality. In those idealists’ lives we can also see that it all starts with the building of an ideal that expresses a true understanding of the notion of compassion. They shared their knowledge and understanding for the benefit of all without any self-interest. They inspired others by being a living example of the ideal they envisaged. Being ready to work together, confidence based on knowledge and insight, empathy and compassion, these are all qualities required to express those great ideals. These are all qualities already available to us and we

can use them right now. Everyone can imagine a way to help someone else. A child can be an example for another child, as parents we can do our job to the best of our abilities and as employers and employees we can work together to realize our ideals. Once we live in accordance with our highest ideals and have a general interest in mind we will definitely contribute to a better world. Because we understand unity and interconnectedness as a fact of life, we can see the effects of a compassionate life through our pair of spiritual glasses .

Be the change you want to see in the world⁽⁶⁾

This completes our inner journey. We discovered that we can look at the world from different states of our consciousness. Which pair of glasses we wear determines what we see and what we experience. We also discovered that truth and wisdom can be found in the higher spheres of our consciousness. Understanding the three pairs of glasses provides us with a wider vision on life. This enables us to decide ourselves which role we want to play in the world we live in. We only have to learn how to fulfill that role.

You have an opportunity to start with this in our workshops this afternoon. These workshops serve as a road to discovery — to experience the world seen through a pair of spiritual glasses.

References

1. M.K. Gandhi, *Ethical Religion*. Various publishers.
2. About the four states of consciousness: Nils A. Amnéus, *Life's Riddle*, Theosophical University Press, Pasadena 1998, chapter 5; Mandukya Upanishad, for example in the translation of S. Radhakrishnan; T. Subba Row, “Occultism of Southern India”. Article in: *Esoteric Writings of T. Subba Row*. The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar 1980, article 9; Barend Voorham, “Dromen in vele soorten en maten” (“Dreams of many kinds”). Article in: *Lucifer*, Volume 26, February 2004, no. 1, p. 10-16; Barend Voorham, “Esoterische Wijsheid uit India – deel 4” (“Esoteric Wisdom from India, part 4”). Article in: *Lucifer*, Volume 27, April 2005, no. 2, p. 36-45.
3. Hendrik Spiering, “Ik wil geen ruzie maken dat doen mijn hersenen” (“I do not make a row, my brain does”). Article in *NRC* d.d. 6 June 2006.
4. Various articles in *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*.
5. Martin Luther King, his speech “I have a dream”: www.youtube.com/watch?v=smEqnnklfYs.
6. Quote ascribed to M.K. Gandhi: http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Mahatma_Gandhi.

Are we in control of our own brain? – Workshop results

How our consciousness changes our brain

Based on the morning presentation, the following questions were discussed in the workshops:

- *Could you name something that does not act and react?*
- *Are we a brain or do we own a brain?*

There are people who suffered from serious cerebral hemorrhage and as a result are physically handicapped. They can hardly speak anymore, for example. However, some of them are able to perform at their former level again after intensive therapy. They learn how to speak again. Brain scans demonstrate that other parts of the brain have taken over the function of speech.

- *How can you explain this with the information given in the three lectures?*

The procedure is as follows: the questions from the workshops are displayed on the screen. The workshop leaders get the opportunity to present the views the group came up with. With their views we will proceed, and all of you will have the opportunity to ask questions. This way everyone benefits from the workshops and we share our experiences.

The first question was: *Could you name something that does not act or react?*

Workshop 1

Some workshop participants said: “Nothing, there is no such thing.” Acting or reacting is not always perceptible to the senses, it can be invisible, but it always takes place.

Other questions emerged as well. First of all: can Boundlessness – what has been mentioned in the presentations this morning – act and react? Another discussion was about meditation, is it a case of action and reaction when you find inner quietness and stillness? Some said yes, because you are entering and leaving the meditative state yourself. You are for sure “doing” something.

And the last discussion was about the period after death, in between two lives. You are digesting and processing your experiences, your consciousness interacts, so to speak, with your experiences. Can you describe this as action and reaction as well?

Workshop 2

Our conversation started with the question: if you choose not to react, can you say that you are actually reacting as well? The conclusion of the group was that this is reacting, because you are still choosing “not to react”. The next question was: can you perceive without reacting, is there something like pure perceiving? Somebody responded with the example of a photo. It seems to be an objective observation. One reaction

to this was: yes, but taking a picture is in fact subjective, because you choose a perspective and what you wish to highlight. And the person who looks at the picture perceives it from a certain perspective as well. Years later, the picture will have aged, with discolored edges — and this is also a kind of reaction. In short, we couldn't help but state that in the case of a photo there is some kind of action and reaction as well. What we discussed further was that everything manifested is actually action-reaction. And when *that* was concluded someone said: "Okay, so everything that followed from the Big Bang is action and reaction." And when *that* was concluded someone else said: "Okay, so there must be a power behind the Big Bang as well ..." — and there we ended the discussion.

Workshop 3

We will mention two or three very interesting reactions in response to the first question. It has been said explicitly: "Yes, action and reaction happens continuously, how this evolves depends on the level of attraction between the consciousnesses."

Sometimes there are effects you do not perceive at all, because they are outside your interest or scope. Sometimes you are not aware of the consequences of your actions for others. Like buying something in a shop, what does that entail for people in Africa or Japan? And if we think a thought, it may be that other people, for example in Australia, pick up these thoughts. There may be much more action and reaction than we suspect. Our view on this could expand enormously. And the following question was raised as well: how does this apply to the concept of Infinity?

Workshop 4

The group felt challenged to find examples of something that doesn't act or react. First of all the question was raised about Infinity or, as it was also called, the "Principle". So it might be interesting if you tell us more about that later.

Secondly, someone mentioned the "silent witness", the "perceiver". Probably something like the "Silent Watcher" we know in Theosophy. The question was whether the consciousness that is the summit of a smaller or larger hierarchy acts or reacts? On a physical level the question about frozen ova was brought

up: I was told there is *really* no life in them, so they can't move act or react, right?

Workshop 5

We have discussed several questions in our workshop and we tried to solve them ourselves. Like: is a table dead matter? And what happens to our physical body when our consciousness withdraws? Everyone found their own solutions and — this is nice to mention — they were based on the clear lectures of this morning.

Workshop 6

In our workshop we reached the conclusion that everything acts and reacts, after we talked about two examples. First of all: an unconscious body seems motionless. But it was defended that the body still reacts and that the human consciousness is somewhere else at that moment, and probably acting and reacting as well. Someone demonstratively put a pair of glasses on the table to indicate: this seems to be an object that is not reacting. But, the glasses consist of a lot of atoms and these atoms do react upon each other. The "absolute zero temperature" issue was also brought up in the discussion. But this problem was resolved easily as well.

Now Herman C. Vermeulen responded to the questions that were raised — which was followed directly by a lively debate with the public each time.

Does Infinity move?

We start with the question whether Infinity acts and reacts. This is a real brainteaser so to speak. Because Infinity, as described in *The Secret Doctrine*, is by definition beyond our human imagination. This is the difficulty, because if we want to say something about it, we can only state what it is *not*: it is not this and it is not that and you can go on endlessly with these denials, which is not worth your time. This is why in Buddhism they say that Emptiness is the best word to describe it, there is no way to imagine it and it is not possible to accredit any features to it.

If we want to consider whether Infinity acts and reacts we can only say this: acting and reacting is always connected to consciousness and being conscious always implies embodiment and therefore it has limitations — however subtle, spiritual, or on the other hand ma-

terial that manifestation may be. Maybe such a manifestation is entirely beyond our imagination. But still, it exists. In other words, Infinity is not consciousness. In some literature it is called “consciousness *per se*”, because it is the source from which all originates. But in itself it is not consciousness.

At the same time you must realize that consciousness automatically implies action and reaction. My colleague Barend Voorham and I have played more than one round of mental ping-pong about this question: what is more fundamental: action-reaction or consciousness? In the end we had a reasonable consensus. The two are so closely related that you cannot separate them. In short: Infinity does not act or react because motion is a limited activity. While Infinity – in its possibilities and *endless* movement – is unlimited. Philosophically it is not possible. You cannot attribute characteristics to it, you cannot say it is self-consciousness either, so you cannot say it acts and reacts.

Question

I wonder if the desire to manifest comes from the Infinite. If that is so, you may say a reaction does originate in this Root.

Answer

I know a beautiful Buddhist metaphor: we can image Infinity as an ocean that is. The ocean exists of an endless number of beings, “consciousnesses”, and there will be waves on the ocean constantly. One of those waves I call Herman Vermeulen. Actually I am a small ripple in that totality. We have a tendency to think in separateness: “here am I and over there is the totality”. Well, there is no such thing as separateness. There is only totality and within this totality there is a wave that has a sense of being separate, calls itself Herman Vermeulen and says: “That is me.” This is a very essential idea.

You cannot say about Infinity that it is stagnation *per se* either. Madame Blavatsky speaks of “eternal Motion”. With the Buddhist idea of “Emptiness” was not meant that it is “nothing”, but that we cannot imagine it, we cannot give it a form or shape. Surely, in Infinity everything is present, motion, even stagnation, et cetera. So everything is and somewhere within that Totality some kind of concentration arises to which

we accredit individuality. This is a very fundamental thought in Theosophy that you have to try to keep in mind and understand. If you don’t, then you will not be able to handle the depth Theosophy has to offer – with all its philosophical, religious and scientific angles – and you will get stuck eventually.

This fundamental idea of the Theosophia actually is the essence of religion in the true meaning of the word: “to be connected with the totality”, without limiting that in some way. In this sense religion has nothing to do with belief. It is very abstract and has nothing to do with various prescriptions and baroque ceremonies; it’s actually only THIS. I hope this answer will help. Yes, everyone has to think about this for themselves; because it is not something you suddenly master one morning while eating breakfast — it takes time.

Question

I am not yet convinced that the Infinite does not react, because this “Infinity” is sometimes described as the inhalation and exhalation of Brahman. Surely, of this you cannot say that it does not act or react?

Answer

Besides Brahman there’s the concept of Parabrahman; beyond Brahman. This is what we’re talking about right now: Infinity.

Question

But doesn’t Infinity exist because Finiteness exists?

Answer

No, that is not the case. In our thinking we know only finiteness. Because we cannot imagine Infinity, we tend to think in finite things. But all these limited things are in fact nothing but *aspects of Infinity* — and there are endless amounts of those aspects.

Reaction

I cannot imagine that it doesn’t react because everything is Life. So ...

Answer

Yes, you know, you have to ask yourself, and this is taking it a step further: what is reacting? A reaction is not infinite, it is limited. When I look at something,

eat, taste or hear something, then I have a limited reaction to that. If Infinity reacts, you're actually saying that Infinity has limited reactions and that is not right. It is all about realizing that within Infinity (makes a wide arm gesture, and readily admits his arms are not long enough) unlimited amounts of things happen, like actions and reactions, manifestations and withdrawals, you name it. It is all very dynamic.

Reaction

Well, I'm not sure — at least not yet.

Answer

It doesn't matter, I understand that. For this is an idea we should try to work with and from. After all it is the source for all religious, philosophical and scientific assumptions. You can understand, that if you have a philosophy in which Infinity is the starting point, you will have a totally different view on life compared to the view that life is just a onetime experience and you need to make this lifetime as comfortable as possible.

Reaction

Yes I understand, but I don't know how I will see things 100 years from now.

Answer

I don't know either, but your vision will probably be much broader in your next incarnation.

Continuous expansion: material or spiritual?

Remark

I would like to introduce the concept "expansion": new space arises. This is a point I haven't heard yet. In my mind there is an endless expansion of space and consciousness, which never stops.

Answer

If you speak in terms of expansion, you talk about the fact that you are limited and you overcome a limitation. But then you are still not infinite and so you are still limited.

Reaction

I thought that someone who is unlimited can expand himself unlimitedly.

Answer

No, someone cannot expand endlessly, because "someone" is a limited notion.

Reaction

The universe expands as well, so more and more space emerges. This process is endless and keeps on going. This also applies to one's consciousness, it will expand endlessly. There is no end or beginning.

Answer

If you say *consciousness* can grow endlessly, I would say: yes.

Reaction

Yes, that is what I meant.

Answer

That is what we learn in Theosophia as well, absolutely, excellent.

Can we perceive without influencing anything?

Remark

During the workshop the concept "silent witness" came to mind. I don't remember where I got the idea, but the way you describe the Infinite, for me has some connection to the idea of a "silent witness".

Answer

We don't know a silent witness in Theosophia, we do know a "Silent Watcher".

Reaction

A watcher is watching, that's active. A silent witness has a kind of consciousness that doesn't do anything except perceiving what is. I picture the totality as an ocean, as you described. I connect myself to that ocean, which is like a witness who can only see — it has no appearance, it just is.

Answer

Yes, but then it does not perceive as well. You cannot perceive without reacting.

When I look at you, I receive signals, optical initially; secondarily acoustic signals, and then I receive your

question. Those signals come towards me, and whether I want to or not, I translate them, because I make a conception of you. The fact that I see and hear you is already action and reaction. You cannot be outside of what you perceive.

Reaction

All right, then this must come from a source other than Theosophia.

Answer

I'm positive about that, with all due respect.

Becoming what we see

Question

You have said for four or five times that we can't imagine what Infinity is. I don't know exactly who you mean by "we"; this room or perhaps the entire humanity? Because how can you be sure there is no one who can imagine what Infinity is like?

Answer

Well, first of all there's an interesting philosophical logic behind that, which is commonly accepted — in mathematics for instance.

Secondly, you can look at the origin of the Theosophia. It leads back to Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and the Mystery Schools, and with that to the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion. They presented these principles to us.

Reaction

My point is; this morning you explained that consciousness becomes what it focuses on — so we become what we observe. Then you could say it's better not to become a Theosophist because according to Theosophia you can't know Infinity. If you don't focus on Infinity, you won't become it. And still I think every human being wants to be illuminated.

Answer

Absolutely, deep down inside every human wants to be illuminated. According to Theosophia that illumination, that inner growth, never stops in Infinity. So I would absolutely advise to become a Theosophist! Do you think you are able to know Infinity?

Reaction

Absolutely.

Answer

That's your point of view, that's fine. But I will try to explain our vision. In Theosophia we adopt three hypotheses. Let's start with "Infinity". You can read more comprehensively about this hypothesis in *The Secret Doctrine*, which says that Infinity is beyond all human imagination. The second hypothesis is "cyclic movement" and the third is "as above, so below" — or, what you observe in the smallest parts of life, you also see in the largest. If you are convinced you are able to know Infinity, fine, follow that path and you will find out for yourself. We simply state that if you define the word Infinity really as Infinity, then a consciousness, no matter how divine it may be, even super-super divine, will *not* be able to imagine it. Because if that was possible, that would immediately imply that that consciousness is equal to that Infinity, and that would imply there is no kind of individuality. No doubt that you may think differently — but this is Theosophia. More on this subject you can find in the Stanza's in Madame Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*.

Reaction

So you reason from books, not from your own experience?

Answer

I can assure you that in my experience — and I speak for myself — I have come to the conclusion that it is correct. Therefore I accept this hypothesis, but you don't have to.

Timelessness

Remark

One more thing about the Infinity. I once learned that it's timeless, so it has no beginning and no end. Something timeless can't change either. That, I think, is an answer to the question whether Infinity can act and react or not — there is no such thing.

Answer

That's a different way of looking at it, which I think is correct indeed. Thank you.

Is there still motion when temperature reaches the absolute zero?

A next question that came from the workshops was about “absolute zero temperature”. In physics a lot of research has been done – in Leiden amongst other places – to find the temperature where all physical motion stops. They came to the conclusion that at 273 degrees below zero that was the case. Afterwards they did some tests again and they concluded that it was at minus 273.2 degrees (defined as 0 degrees Kelvin) But then we’re talking about the physical side of *our* level of manifestation. When you assume that our matter is the only existing kind of matter (something Theosophia does not assume) you will get the idea of an absolute limit.

What does the absolute zero comprise? At that temperature all the physical motion stops, and matter loses its usual qualities. When you cool down conductors sufficiently, they become superconductors; the electrical currents can keep rotating without any resistance. But we only perceive the material side, which teaches us nothing about the quality of the consciousness. For example, when we die and our physical body starts to fall apart, we will have no contact with our body anymore. That’s a similar situation, in which the consciousness – which is still there – is in a dream state on the inner planes, has devachanic periods, but the body, as contracted matter, does not function anymore at that moment.

At absolute zero temperature the opposite happens, because the physical atoms don’t disseminate but their movements stop. From a theosophical point of view this happens: by cooling down matter so far, any consciousness that uses those material elements will not be able to express itself in *this* physical realm.

Question

I would like to ask what we actually do when we freeze embryos. At the moment of fertilization those cells were in motion. I would like to add the question; when does consciousness enter the foetus? If that already happened before the cells were cooled down, what happens to this consciousness? Does it withdraw for a while, and when the cells defrost, does the same consciousness manifest, or can it be the consciousness of another human being?

Answer

I think embryos are chilled quite a bit, but they are not cooled down to 273 degrees below zero. Because some materials will fall apart once they get too cold. But the question is clear, and our theosophical answer consists of multiple options. There are a few things that can occur.

You must realise that a fertilized egg or embryo is a manifestation of a consciousness from the moment of fertilization. When you freeze an embryo, it may have to wait for so long that the consciousness behind it has to start looking for another option to incarnate. Once the embryos are defrosted, a percentage of them will not be viable anymore.

When we look at the question from the notion of karma, the law of cause and effect, we can say that we have built many more relationships than just with this one set of parents. In many lives – even in this life – we have engaged in a large number of relationships; good relationships or also the opposite, which tie us to people in a negative way. Those ties can attract us to manifest ourselves *there*. We are drawn to things we connect to, and you can connect based on love but also based on hate. After freezing the embryo the consciousness behind it may look for an alternative. In another situation the consciousness behind it stays connected to the matter. That means we prevent that consciousness from manifesting itself during a certain period of time.

And *if* the consciousness retreats, one may wonder who will come forward – in an embryo which has been frozen for a decade – and makes use of that exceptional possibility to manifest.

Question

Freezing also happens to people who suffer from a terrible illness, hoping that their body can be brought back to life after fifty years or so, when the next of kin expect there’s going to be a cure. Can it be the case that another consciousness will manifest through that body by that time?

Answer

It’s a spooky scenario, but theoretically and technically speaking; yes, it is possible. But it is more likely that something else will happen. One must realize that ev-

everyone has a certain portion of life energy. And when that inner force is exhausted, you may wonder what happens when you defrost such a person after fifty years. That person will theoretically be 140 or 150 years old. Will that body be able to be activated at all?

Question

What if the body can be woken up?

Answer

Imagine that happens, then the question remains which consciousness will manifest in it. It must be someone with affinity with that physical structure of course.

Question

Do you think that there is a small chance that it will be the former inhabitant?

Answer

No, I'm not saying that. I think it will be more plausible – theosophically and technically speaking – that at that moment the body does not restart, because the life force behind it is already depleted. The idea to freeze sick people stems from a very materialistic point of view. Here is the ill body, at this moment we have no solution for it, so we freeze it and when we're able to do more we will defrost it. But then you do not take into account the consciousness behind it that will be at the end of its life period and will retreat on its vital date of death.

Of course it is good to realize that no one was ever defrosted and cured afterwards — in this regard it is only a huge speculation for the future.

Remark

The psychiatrist Oliver Sacks published about patients who were overtaken by the sleeping sickness, around 1920-1930. Those people were in a coma for thirty, forty years and were brought back to life through some kind of transmitter substance "L-DOPA". Those people said: "This is not my life, I don't recognise the structures surrounding me, I don't recognise the newspaper, I'm eating from a plastic plate and I'm in a hospital that I do not recognize." After ten days they passed away. Oliver Sacks concluded that life exists

through experiences and when I lose a large part of my experiences, I cannot manifest in this life anymore.

Answer

I think this idea surely matches in part with the theosophical view. It's a known fact that if you are not interested anymore in things happening around you, and when life starts to present itself in a much more restricted way, that at a certain moment in time it will be over for you. "Use it or lose it" is a well-known proverb for that reason.

Examples of changes of the brain

On Saturday evening, there was a special symposium program, during which the ideas of the first day were illustrated with practical examples. Based on the special stories of two persons who managed to overcome brain damage, a fascinating discussion with the audience arose. The evening began with a film about a famous German scientist, who dared to explain overtly why *boundless spirit* is the origin of all external forms, and how you may imagine this. This evening program was prepared by a team of German members; the program was presented by Ralph Kammer, Sieglinde Plocki and Claudia Bernard.

The films were introduced and reviewed in brief explanations, which made clear the connection with Theosophia and the theme of the symposium — how consciousness changes our brain. In case you wish to review the video of the complete evening, you can go to www.stichtingisis.org/symposium/.

Physical matter like a crest on a wave

In the first two films the German scientist Hans-Peter Dürr (1929 – 2014) gave his view on the relation between spirit and matter, and how we may look at our individual existence within Endless Unity.⁽¹⁾ In his professional life, Hans-Peter Dürr worked closely together with the famous quantum scientist Werner

Heisenberg, so he knows the quantum theory (which clearly suggests the existence of consciousness and free will) like the back of his hand. Moreover, he engaged in social and philosophical activities as well. For instance, he contributed to several Pugwash-conferences: conferences aiming at disarmament and a conscientious practice of science.

Now, we reproduce some fragments from the explanation of Hans-Peter Dürr, shortened and adjusted to some extent: “Ultimately, matter is just solidified spirit: it is, so to say, a *crust* of spirit. Therefore, matter is only a means, a vehicle of spirit; the latter is the driving force.” “The future is open, we are able to shape the future ourselves; this is not an illusion, but a fact of nature.” “As individual beings, we are all part of One Spirit, since Spirit is not divisible. I often imagine it like an ocean that always remains what it is. The wind drives the waves, the individual beings, and on top of the waves crests emerge. These white crests look at one another and then say to one another: ‘you are separate from me’. But, we have two kilometres of ocean beneath us and are not separated at all!” “Those crests are our physical bodies. Usually we value them tremendously. And yet, when we die, as spiritual beings we do not disappear at all, but we, as waves, are reunited in the whole again.”

A magnificent vision, which could have been taken from the texts of Mahāyāna-Buddhism. (Surely possible that this was indeed an important source of inspiration for this brave scientist.)

Reports “from inside”

After this, two appealing practical examples followed, in which brain damage was overcome after a period of time.

First, the story of Barbara Arrowsmith, who turned out to be able to overcome a congenital mental blockade.⁽²⁾ It concerned a heavy blockade: she was not able to arrange her thoughts and actions, and she was also not able to grasp abstract thoughts. Her brain turned out to have a certain abnormality. For young Barbara, it was an abnormality driving her to despair. However, when she learned as a young adult about research with rats, which demonstrated that brain cells could accrue, she started working on herself. By means of self-designed practice (her doctors didn't have any faith in it) she managed to activate all her blocked capacities again. Which shows she certainly had these capacities in her consciousness already, and that only her body, her instrument, was handicapped.

Thereby, Barbara Arrowsmith became a living example of *neuroplasticity*: that neurons are certainly able to adjust, and are able to repair or overcome damage. Later, she was able to stimulate many children with a mental problem to overcome their handicap to a certain extent, with her experiences in this field. She used her experience to help many others.

The second practical example was the story of Jill Bolte Taylor, a woman who at the age of 37 suffered from a heavy stroke, and as a consequence had a near-death-experience.⁽³⁾ She was a neuro-anatomist by profession, and she was therefore capable to describe her special experiences professionally. It concerns perceptions which are possible only because our human consciousness is able to perceive such drastic physical events as an observer. It is only possible because we stand above it.

Is the brain the seat of human consciousness?

Then, a fascinating discussion between the audience and the introducers took place, to which Herman C. Vermeulen contributed as well. We mention some serious “food for thought” from this exchange of ideas here.

It is not the case that the brain is the “seat of human consciousness”. To begin with, the human conscious-

ness is not situated “in” our body, but guides it. And we should not perceive our body as dead matter, but as a cooperating unity of beings: cell beings, atomic beings, and so on. These beings are much less developed than the human consciousness, yet, it is about beings, “consciousnesses”.

Once we entirely understand the intensive cooperation between human consciousness and neuron-beings, all brain symptoms and problems can be explained. The piano model, which is worked out in the lecture “Expanding consciousness by resonance, never too late to resonate”, provides a clear view on the way this interaction works.

There is another reason why the brain is not the special seat of human consciousness. In fact, *all* organs together comprise the instrument through which we work. Each organ plays its own part in the whole. In fact, the heart plays the most spiritual part in this respect.

Kinds of neuroplasticity

In the examples of Barbara Arrowsmith and Jill Bolte Taylor we see how heavy brain damage can be overcome. However, according to Theosophia, there is still another less eye-catching form of neuroplasticity, which is yet of great importance for our view on life. And that concerns our inner growth, the expansion and ennoblement of our consciousness. Each time we succeed in giving our thoughts and acts another, more inspiring and harmonious quality, this will have an effect on the beings that constitute our body. Thanks to our influence, they will be stimulated to “grow with us” from within. The effect is, that during the course of our incarnations, our brain (and of course all other organs) will be increasingly more fit to bring out our higher, more noble characteristics.

Specifically it means, that what researchers tell us now about “which part of the brain does what”, is at most applicable to the average man of this time. The physical brain simply mirrors our current thinking habits. In the future, our brain may be behaving in a completely different way.

Near-death-experience

In the hours after her stroke, Jill Bolte Taylor was shuttled, as it were, back and forth between two states of consciousness: her normal, organized and logical

mind (which rapidly decreased in strength) and an extraordinary sense of unity with everything around her. This latter state she called her “nirvâna-state”. In retrospect, she interpreted both her states as follows — and please realize that she of course perceived everything through neuro-anatomic spectacles: while she was still thinking logically, according to her, her left brain half was active, and while she had that harmonious notion of unity, her right brain half was active. Although this may be correct in a certain way, from a theosophical point of view we can still add an essential dimension to this, to wit: how strongly or weakly connected to our physical body we are at a certain moment. If that connection is strong, then our consciousness has the brain at its immediate disposal, and we are capable of reasonable action. However, if our consciousness is almost separated from the physical body, then a completely different type of consciousness may arise. Many people who, like Jill Bolte Taylor, had a near-death-experience, tell that they were overwhelmed by an inexpressible feeling of harmony. An experience that often gave a different orientation to the rest of their lives. However, this state has less to do with certain brain parts (it can also occur when the brain is completely switched off), but more with the fact that the human consciousness is temporarily liberated from the restrictions of its physical cover. And at such a moment, in the words of Hans-Peter Dürr, as a “wave” we become aware again of the Boundless Ocean of which we have always been an inseparable part.

References

1. Fragments from two films: *Geist kann zu Materie werden*, and *Materie kan nicht mehr zu Geist werden*. Münchner Max-Planck Institut, summer 1997. Accessible on YouTube.
 2. *The woman who changed her brain*. Video of lecture of Barbara Arrowsmith. Tedx-Toronto, 26 October 2012. Accessible on YouTube.
 3. *My stroke of insight*. Video of lecture of Jill Bolte Taylor. Tedx-Monterey, 27 February 2008. Accessible on www.ted.com/speakers/jill_bolte_taylor.
-

Expanding consciousness through resonance

Never too late to resonate

Yesterday you were able to learn here, amongst other things, to see through different pairs of glasses:

1. the materialistic glasses;
2. the mental-emotional glasses, and
3. the spiritual glasses.

With our *first pair of glasses* we look at the physical world; that is our reality with these glasses. We see ourselves as separated from that world, separated from others.

With our *second pair of glasses* we are focused on our own feelings and thoughts. We are imagining things, daydreaming, and create our personal emotional reality.

With our *third pair of glasses* we see the connections behind the manifestation, the bigger picture. We see ourselves as part of that whole. It is no longer about personal interests; we see the collective interest. We see with an expanded consciousness.

Today, we are going to dig deeper in the subject of looking at the world and ourselves in different ways. For this, we put on our spiritual glasses, and take off our materialistic glasses. That's of course easier said than done! Because spiritual glasses are not for sale! A spiritual vision we really have to develop ourselves. We possess the higher capacities in us to do so. How to activate those capacities, how to expand our consciousness, that's what this lecture is about.

What is resonance?

We expand our consciousness by resonance, and the challenging subtitle of this lecture is: *it's never too late to resonate*. We will gladly help you resonate. We will do that by first explaining to you what resonance in fact means.

“Resonate” is derived from the Latin word *resonare*, which means *resound*. Resonance is a physical phenomenon that occurs in vibrations: a vibrating object can cause a corresponding vibration in another object. When this other object is vibrating in the rhythm of the original vibration, this phenomenon is called resonance.

Resonance occurs in material objects, like music instruments: the vibration of equally tuned strings of a guitar, violin or piano. However, resonance also occurs in thoughts. We tune our thinking to a certain frequency, and get a response from other people who are on the same wavelength. That is for instance the basis for a fruitful cooperation between people. To express it more in general: consciousness is motion, is vibration. Consciousness can vibrate on certain pitches or characteristics. So, you vibrate, you resonate, with people with the same characteristic. And you can also receive impulses from more developed beings when you tune to the same characteristic on your own level.

We can resonate with anything

Because, as you were able to learn yesterday, every-

thing is consciousness. One Boundless Life. We are consciousness and we have a brain that helps to express it on the outer plane. An important thought to realize is that we, humans, as part of the whole, have everything, all possibilities existing in the Boundless, in us. In essence we *are* the Boundless, the All. We have the capacity to draw from that boundless reservoir. It is our challenge to do so: to develop properties, characteristics that are latent in us. We can learn to resonate with this consciously, with our free will. However, we often resonate one-sided: we overexpose one characteristic, and underexpose another characteristic in us. Wholly occupied by a certain situation, our thinking is caught in a certain characteristic. At your office a reorganization is taking place, and you keep on thinking: will I have a job after this? Or maybe you think: how will my company be able to perform better? Or maybe even: how will my company be able to make a better contribution to society? Do you see the difference? Personal interest, company interest or social interest. Here, different aspects of your consciousness are active and on the forefront. Often, we are not aware of this.

We can become aware of this by starting to recognize those different aspects of consciousness, those layers in us. That is the first step in expanding our consciousness. Which aspect of your consciousness is active? That changes all the time. As soon as we are able to recognize our different aspects of consciousness, we can learn to tune in to them, learn to resonate. That is the second step. By focusing our thinking clearly, we can become our higher aspects of consciousness. That is the third step. We become our universal and unselfish characteristics. We are expanding our consciousness. And finally, we have the capacity in us to *be* those higher characteristics at every moment of the day. Now, we are going to discuss these four steps in the process of expanding our consciousness further.

Process of expanding our consciousness

- *Recognizing our aspects of consciousness*
- *Learning to resonate in our higher aspects*
- *To become our higher aspects, our characteristics*
- *Being these higher characteristics*

Recognizing our aspects of consciousness

Let us begin with recognizing those aspects of consciousness. Yesterday, we have discussed that each consciousness is in essence both spiritual and material. We can call these two aspects the lower self and the Higher Self. The lower self is limited consciousness, while the Higher Self is universal consciousness. The lower self is separated, personal, focused on itself, the Higher Self is universally interconnected and impersonal, focused on the whole. The lower self is transient, illusory and transitory, the Higher Self is more enduring, more real, imperishable. Please realize that high and low are relative notions here, depending on how broad your view is. Let us explain this with an example.

What to do with Lima?

Lima, the capital of Peru, is being threatened by climate change very clearly. The city receives only four millimeters of rain each year, and for their water supply the eight million inhabitants are completely dependent on the glaciers in the Andean mountains that feed the rivers to Lima. However, due to global warming the glaciers are melting and disappearing. Expectations are that Lima will fall dry within twenty years. Lima will then have to produce drinking water from seawater. However, that is a terribly expensive technology. Peru does not have the money for that.

Are we, rich western countries, going to help them? Or are we only going to help ourselves? They will be without water before long, but on the other hand, when we do not elevate our dikes we may be under water before long! And many houses in the Netherlands are already “under water” — figuratively spoken: due to the crisis in the property market the value of many homes is less than the mortgage! Of course, it is very understandable that people are worried about their own situation or the situation of their own village or city, or country. Others may have a broader view and focus on our challenge as a world community to prevent climate change or at least compensate the consequences of it.

Directing your life

How broad is *your* view? Do you see the difference between the narrow and the more extended consciousness

in you? That is the first step. You may think, this is simple, I can see this too. However, are you aware of which part of you is at the forefront at each moment of the day? We do not ask you to be impractical, and to neglect your daily duties and responsibilities. However, we do ask you to think for yourself about what is essentially important, what is enduring, imperishable. Who or what in us is directing our consciousness? In order to give you more grips to that process we often use a threefold division of man: spirit, soul and body. The spirit is the aspect that is aware of the Boundless in you and me, the imperishable. The body is the instrument that we use, the transitory part. And the imperishable part communicates with this transitory part and *vice versa*, by means of the soul, the middle nature, the learning part. We learn and grow by directing ourselves to our spiritual part, and by expressing what we learned in daily life through the vehicle of our soul: the body with its brain.

If the soul identifies increasingly with the spirit, then you will become your Higher Self more and more. If the soul identifies with its physical vehicle, then you will be your lower self.

The various centers of consciousness in Man

Now, we are going to zoom in further on the composition of our consciousness. Our consciousness can be understood as a stream with several consciousness centers. A kind of condensation points in our stream of consciousness.

In sequence, from spiritual to material:

1. Divine consciousness.
2. Spiritual consciousness.
3. Higher human consciousness.
4. Personal human consciousness.
5. Animal-vital consciousness.
6. Physical consciousness.

This is a more subtle division of consciousness, which does more justice to the complex being that we humans are. In which center of consciousness are we active?

Are we active in our Divine consciousness?

Then we experience the unity of it all. For us human beings in our present phase of development this is still a rare experience. Here, unity experience is the defin-

ing aspect of consciousness. For example, a moment of realization of being one with nature approaches it.

Are we active in our Spiritual consciousness?

Then we comprehend matters in their core, we see the connectedness of everything. We have a vision on life and we are an inspiration to others. Here, comprehension, insight is the defining aspect of consciousness.

Are we active in our Higher human consciousness?

Then we have impersonal thoughts and insights. We look at situations without putting our own personality in the center. Here, the defining aspects are intellect, warmed by comprehension in a beginning stage. Since intellect sometimes can get stuck in cold reasoning, some understanding of the interconnectedness of things may bring along a mild, warm attitude of forgiveness and compassion.

Are we active in our personal human consciousness?

Then we have lower thoughts and desires. Here, the defining thinking aspects are intellect and desire. As such, desire is a neutral force, which is colored by our motive. For average man desire is often selfish, we wish something for our own group or ourselves. And we use our intellect to shape those selfish desires. However, when guided by the impersonal aspects, desire can also be noble. For example, the desire for a righteous society. Then, the force of desire resonates with the higher human consciousness.

Are we active in our animal-vital consciousness?

Then we are driven by impulses of desire, by tendencies and emotions. Here, the defining thinking aspects are vitality and feelings. Vitality is the drive to act. The impulse to do something without giving it a moment of good thought. When you resonate with people in whom the aspect of vitality dominates, you can become quite nervous and stressed from it. As an aspect of consciousness, feeling is closely connected to your senses. It is an instinctive reacting on sensory stimuli, without involving the intellect.

The animal-vital consciousness takes care of automatic processes, like your respiration and digestion. And what to think of driving a car? You are on your way and are preoccupied, and suddenly you realize: am I here already? Our animal-vital consciousness is the automatic pilot, which instinctively does its job.

Are we active in our physical consciousness?

Then our physical comforts and discomforts predom-

inate. How often do we not say “I” to our physical condition: I am thirsty, I am tired. However, when you are in a different state of consciousness you often do not feel that body at all for a while. For example, you are deeply absorbed in a book, and only after turning the last page, your physical consciousness manifests itself again: hungry, thirsty!

The equal communicates with the equal

Together, these centers of consciousness form a stream of consciousness, and we are able to tune our consciousness to those centers consciously, to tune to those points of condensation: by stimulating one aspect of consciousness and ignore another.

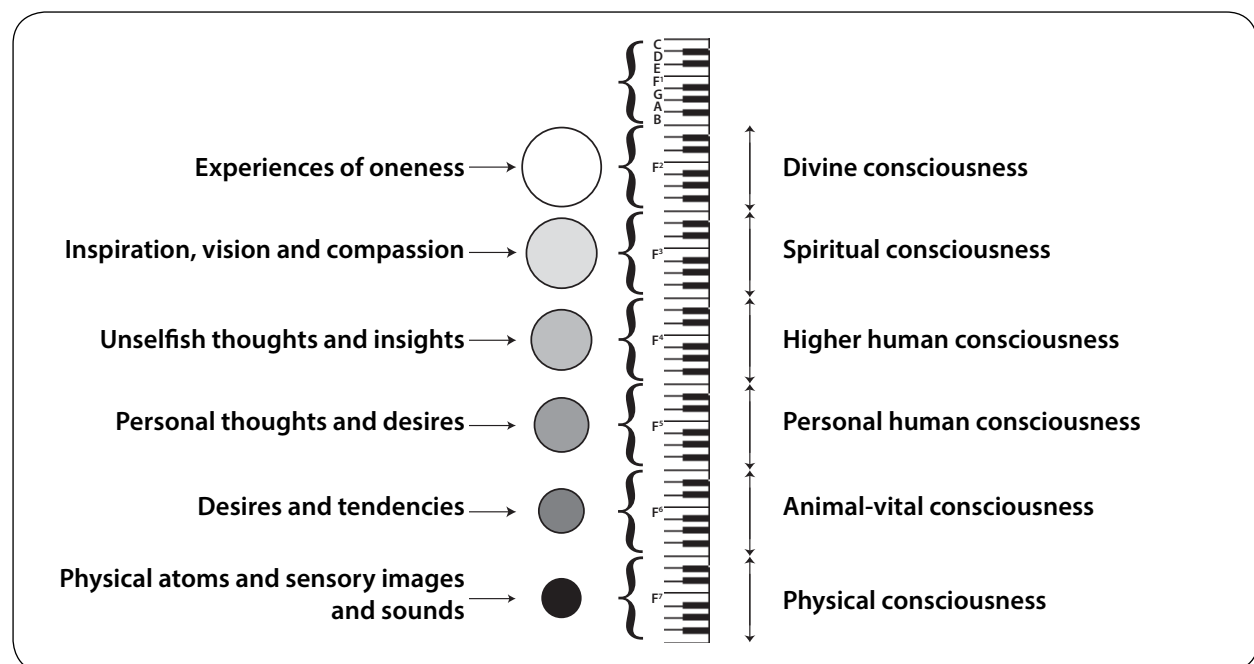
It is simply a question of resonance; to what are you tuned at a certain moment? All aspects are present in you, but to what are you paying attention at that moment? It works just like a radio or television. All channels are broadcasting, and you decide what to receive by tuning in to that channel. And then you will listen to classical music, or watch a soccer match, or you watch some reality show. Or you turn off your radio or television, or you do not even possess such a device. Instead you take a good book, or you have a good conversation, or you do good work for others. As long as you just realize that you are constantly in a transmitter-receiver relation with your environment,

there is continuous interaction. The equal communicates with the equal.

You will recognize that feeling of being on the same wavelength with someone, for instance when you share the same interests, or the same hobbies. You understand one another, you can finish each other’s sentences, and you develop something with one another without much difficulty. Or when you share the same sense of humor. Or when you hold the same sympathies and ideas, for instance for a club or association, to which you commit your heart and soul together with others. Or you share the same vision, which you develop together and share with others. There is also resonance when two people are attracted to each other. They share love and compassion, with each other and with others. However, aversion and hatred are also cases of resonance. To vibrate in anger with each other...

Resonance within the stream of consciousness

Moreover, there is also resonance of consciousness between the aspects, the characteristics, *within* your own stream of consciousness. Those aspects are not separated from each other, they are constantly communicating with each other, exchanging information and cooperating in order to give shape to man. Thereby, stimulating your higher aspects has a harmoniz-



ing influence on the lower aspects: desire, feelings and the body.

Suppose you feel hurt or you are jealous of a colleague who made a promotion instead of you. You may completely surrender to those lower feelings. However, when you succeed to direct your consciousness to higher aspects in yourself by for instance immersing yourself in a religious or philosophical subject, or by going for a stroll in nature, then those feelings of jealousy may change and perhaps you will even be happy for your colleague.

This resonance of consciousness between the different aspects or characteristics in us works like a piano (see illustration).

You can see each octave (consisting of eight notes: do re mi fa sol la ti do) as a layer, which can communicate with higher or lower octaves by striking keys of the same nature or color. When you strike a key on a piano, then those strings will vibrate, which are likewise tuned: they resonate. When you strike the F in an octave, then the F's in the other octaves will vibrate as well. The F's resonate. The striking of a key causes a string to vibrate, and the strings that are multiples (1:2, 1:3, et cetera) or dividers will vibrate with it. So, those strings are not in physical connection with each other, but they are in resonance, whereby the vibration is transmitted by air.

All layers of consciousness intercommunicate

In this way information is transmitted from one octave to the other, so from one aspect of consciousness to the other. There is constant communication between the different layers in the stream of consciousness. Consciousness is characterized by movement and change. So, there is always activity, vibration. And when there is vibration in one part, then this will have its effect on the other parts. In order to make this somewhat more clear we will give you some more examples of resonance between our different aspects of consciousness. Every man or woman has had an experience at some time, during which he or she identified with a bigger whole. For example, while looking at a dazzling starry sky during a stroll, or when watching the sunset at a seashore while hearing the waves break. At that moment our *personal human consciousness* realizes the silence and beauty of the starry night and, because

of that, resonates with the *divine consciousness* in us. And resonates in our *spiritual consciousness* of vision and inspiration, when during such an experience certain lines of a holy book occur to us. And resonates in our *higher human consciousness*, when we realize impersonally that already so many people have seen the same in the course of so many ages, and that so many people will see the same so many more ages to come. And resonates in our *animal-vital consciousness*: personal desire becomes desire for wisdom, personal feelings become feelings of bliss for all. In our *physical consciousness* it may even resonate in such a way that we, while starting our stroll tired, return home with new energy.

Another beautiful example is attending a lecture of an inspiring spiritual leader, like the *Dalai Lama* in Rotterdam last week, who speaks of compassion and the development of ethical awareness and ethical ways of acting in a secular world. He reminds us that all big world religions emphasize love, compassion, patience, tolerance and forgiveness. The essence of each religion is a good heart, however, too much attachment to one's own religious tradition can block the appreciation of views of others. Therefore, he calls for more spirituality and ethics – beyond mere religion – in education, from kindergarten to university. So that our children will build a more peaceful 21st century than we have experienced in the last century. The Dalai Lama touches our hearts, and our spiritual consciousness of vision and inspiration resonates, and brings our personal human consciousness in harmony with it, since it no longer resonates with religious preferences and prejudices.

The purpose of meditation

A well-trying method by which we can learn to resonate with the higher aspects in us is *meditation*. Literally meditation means contemplation, reflection and consideration. The purpose of meditation is to resonate with the insight providing aspect in us, the inspiring aspect and the unity experience. Concentrated and with an unforced, truth-seeking attitude, you are occupied with a question or a vision. Thereby, you are attentive to disturbing emotions and feelings of your personal consciousness that may come up, and you ignore them, let them pass. In that way you reach a

state of concentration, non-distraction.

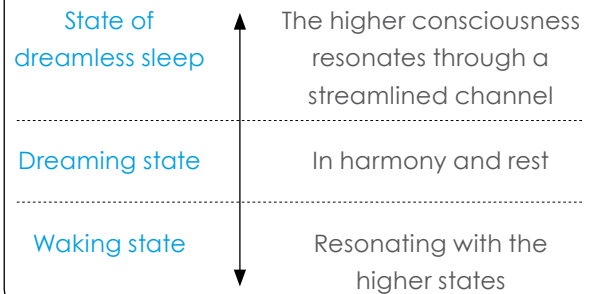
And then, the higher part in yourself is able to manifest itself. You are in resonance with your Higher Self. Maybe you will still need a specific time and place for this in the beginning. However, as you start to control your thinking processes ever better, you will be able to keep the question or vision on which you meditate in the background of your thinking permanently in daily life.

How do we become our higher characteristics?

Once we are constantly able to recognize our aspects of consciousness, the centers of consciousness from which we are active, and once we have learnt to resonate consciously on the higher aspects in us, how do we keep this developed faculty active in ourselves? How do we keep directing our thinking to our higher aspects of consciousness continuously? How can we become our universal and unselfish characteristics? For that, we have to develop a continuous interaction, a permanent resonance, with the higher aspects in ourselves. As we told you yesterday, as average human beings, we are active on the spiritual plane for a while each night, in our state of dreamless sleep — *sushupti*. This is a spiritual state, which transcends selfishness and personal prejudices, a state of comprehension and experiencing unity. The challenge now is to make available the spiritual knowledge and experience we acquired there in our waking state. This will go best when we resonate as pure as possible with our higher aspects in our waking state during the day; with all that is best and noblest in us. That means not resonating with the lower aspects, the personal and the transitory. Then our dream state, the state between waking and dreamless sleep, will be harmonic and quiet, and a streamlined channel for higher knowledge and experience from the spiritual planes will open up. The channel has been emptied from disturbing lower influences. There is no noise. And then, after awakening, we will have a broader and clearer idea of all that occurred in the state of *sushupti*. This may express itself in a new insight after a good night's sleep. Suddenly, we have the solution for a question, we have an idea we see the light. Suddenly we have a broader view on something.

That's the way it works for average man, but there are noble people who are self-consciously present in that spiritual state of consciousness – *sushupti* – while being wide awake. They have become their higher characteristics. We are also able to become that, to *be* that.

How do we become our higher characteristics?



How are we our higher characteristics?

We do this by recognizing our higher aspects of consciousness, and consequently directing ourselves to them consciously. And thereby we let our lower aspects vibrate in those higher characteristics. And you become what you resonate with; your higher characteristic becomes your character. So, it is possible to upgrade, to ennoble your character. Expansion of consciousness is ennoblement of character. You make yourself fit for assisting your fellow men with wisdom and compassion. It is a matter of resonating with the unselfish ideals and ideas which continuously flow from our deepest essence as inspiring streams; resonating with the noble characteristics and impulses from your environment; and resonating your lower aspects with the impulses of your higher. It is never too late to resonate!

Then, from the perspective of the hierarchy of Life, we resonate with beings with a consciousness much higher and much more advanced than average man: sages and Buddhas. In this way, beings with a consciousness lower than average man will resonate with us also. *We are responsible* for those lower beings, the animals, plants and minerals. *We are responsible* for the well being of the planet, our fellow men and the lower beings. *We are responsible* for our own billions of body cells, the beings which make up our body, which develop their consciousnesses within our constitution. For those beings our body, our constitution,

is their universe like the Milky Way is for us. When we direct ourselves to the best, the noblest in us, then our body cells will resonate with that.

Resonance of consciousness at each moment, on a level as high as possible within the possibilities you have developed, that is working with Nature. And like it is described so beautifully in the invaluable book *The Voice of the Silence*:

Help Nature and work on with her; and Nature will regard thee as one of her creators and make obeisance.⁽¹⁾

The effect of development of consciousness by resonance stretches over more than one lifetime. You will express no more and no less than what you have developed, from character to physical brain. How that works, that's what the next lecture is about.

Reference

1. H.P. Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*. Many editions. For instance, The Theosophy Company, Los Angeles 2006, p. 15.
-

Consciousness before and after dying

... I was on the other side (...) where there exists neither time nor space.⁽¹⁾

I felt I let go of my body and began rising up and got a feeling of peace that I never knew while on earth. I floated with tremendous speed through a spiral tunnel and the higher I rose, the more the darkness changed into light (...) An overwhelming feeling of love came over me, not the earthly feeling, that I knew well too, but something I cannot describe.⁽¹⁾

What happens to consciousness at death?

In this lecture we will go and have a look at what happens to our consciousness in the dying process, before, during and afterwards. What I just read to you are two quotations of persons who have had a Near-Death Experience. The exact occurrences during such a Near-Death Experience we will discuss later on, together with some other special cases in the natural dying process. However, to get a clear overview, we will first take a look at how the process takes its normal course, how this comes to pass for most people. Yesterday we told you consciousness is cyclically in a phase of activity and in a state of passivity; in the active phase consciousness manifests itself in the external sphere to acquire experiences, after which it withdraws to the inner realms again for a period of rest. A universal cyclical process, which for human beings is called: reincarnation, literally meaning: be-

coming flesh again. We will now follow this process while answering the following questions:

- What do we leave behind when we die?
- What do we take along, or in other words: who or what is it that reincarnates? What will we meet after death?
- Why do we not remember our experiences after death?

We now will go over the cycle of reincarnation according to the following outline

Shift of focus

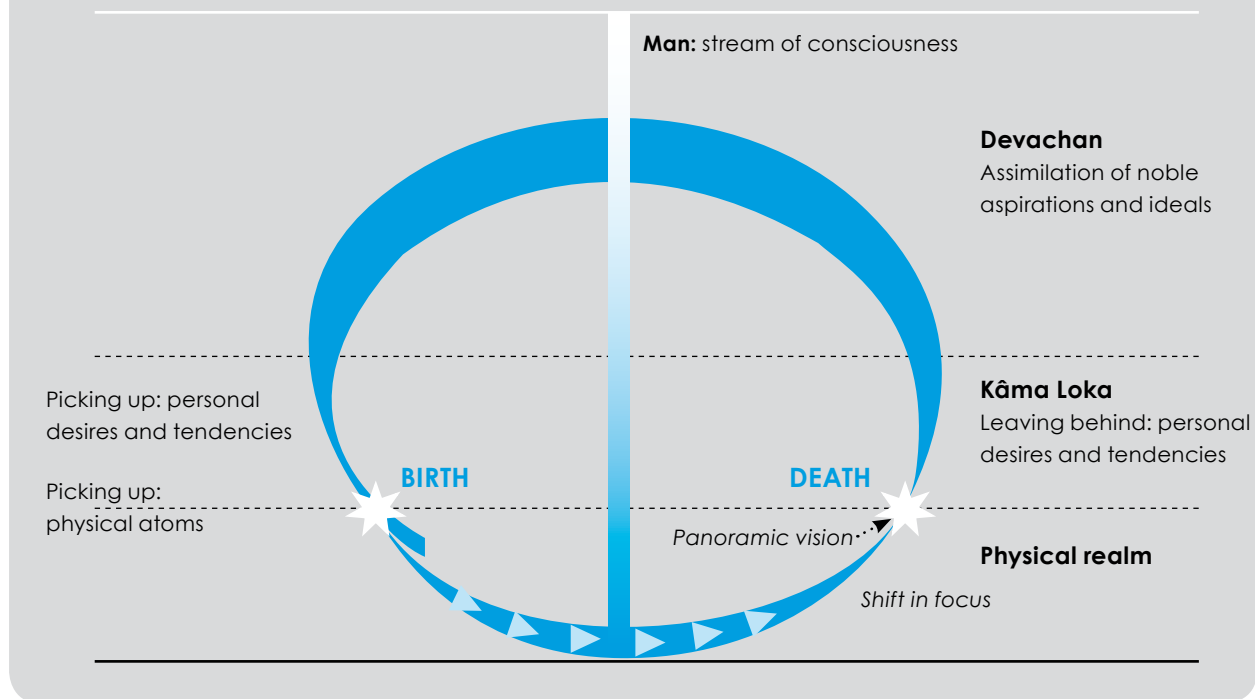
At the end of life we often see that matters of material character become less and less important. We do not bother that much about events in daily life anymore and perhaps we may appear a little absent-minded from time to time. These are signs consciousness is shifting its direction, its orientation, to the more inner realms. We may grow forgetful, but this is mostly as far as every day superficial matters are concerned, while at the same time important events from the past are becoming more and more prominent in our mind.

Panoramic vision

Now at the instant of death we immediately are in a state of complete and peaceful unconsciousness, after which moment a process takes place called the *pano-*

Reincarnation cycle

THE BOUNDLESS



ramic vision. During several hours from the last heart-beat, we see our whole life passing before our mind's eye in a very short time. The personal consciousness unites with the Higher Self temporarily and oversees his life just ended on earth — the role he has played. He sees what causes have led to a certain situation and he realizes the absolute justice of it.

This is a very important process in which all-valuable lessons and ethical consequences of choices made during the life just ended are harvested. For this reason it is recommended to leave someone undisturbed for several hours after passing away, so this important process can take place quietly. The stream of consciousness withdraws from the physical body definitively after this panoramic vision, which makes death complete. Again there is total unselfconsciousness. For just as we do not fall asleep self-consciously, we do not die self-consciously.

Kâma Loka

We recover to some vague form of consciousness in *Kâma Loka*, a sphere or state where all our personal

tendencies and desires are worked out. *Kâma Loka* literally means “world or plane of desire”. As discussed yesterday, we now find ourselves on the astral plane, which is slightly more ethereal than our outer world; it is a world where our personal emotions and desires are rooted. A spiritually oriented person will pass through this plane rather quickly and will not experience this plane consciously, because he has little attraction to it. But for people with strong personal desires and worldly attractions, dwelling on this plane will take longer. Simply because more time is needed to exhaust and cast off all this energy.

Answer to the first question: what do we leave behind at dying?

We now have answered the first question: what do we leave behind at dying? These are all the lower, personally oriented characteristics of man. It is that part of us that lives in the illusion of being separated from all other beings; an illusion we produce by identifying ourselves completely with the observations of our outward orientated senses.

Devachan

Now that we have left behind our lower, mortal part, we enter into a state where we actually rest. It is a spiritual state – also called *Devachan* – in which the higher part of personal man assimilates all spiritual lessons and experiences of the past life. As in Kâma Loka all lower tendencies and desires were exhausted and cast off, in Devachan all lofty longings and ideals are re-lived and woven into our character. Noble aspirations not completely fulfilled in the life just closed, we see realized in Devachan in all possible ways. So it certainly is a state of indescribable bliss and peace. Although it is illusionary up to a certain point, since it is a self-created spiritual dream world, it is described as being far more real than anything we can experience here on earth.

Finally, after all our ideals are relived and assimilated, we lose attraction to this state and we are drawn back to the earthly life we are so familiar with. Once we leave Devachan we recollect the building blocks of our lower nature. Not only our physical building blocks but also our inclinations, desires and other characteristics. Upon reaching adulthood, we have recollected all our building blocks again and we continue where we left off.

What reincarnates?

So the answer to the second question: who or what is it that reincarnates will be: the spiritual man, consisting of all the impersonal, noble characteristics, and focusing on the unity of all life. This is the immortal part of us, which life after life reincarnates and for this reason is called the Reincarnating Ego.

States of consciousness

Therefore death and birth are just *transitions of states of consciousness*, consciousness which is imperishable in essence. Dying can be seen as leaving behind your old, worn out coat. It is liberation for the inner man, who is no longer imprisoned by the physical body. During this process we pass through different states, as we have already described yesterday in the third lecture. When we die we make a transition from the waking state into the dreaming states in Kâma Loka and Devachan, the latter of which can have the character of a dreamless sleep. We are surrounded by our

own inclinations, thoughts and ideals at every moment, as we have seen.

What do we meet after death?

The answer to the third question, what do we encounter after death, will of course be: ourselves nothing more and nothing less. What we focus on during life and put energy in, is what will be worked out after death. Therefore there is no reason to be afraid of the so-called unknown, because it is *precisely* the well known that we are going through and indeed already have gone through countless times.

This also means that if we want to affect the situation we find ourselves in after death, we have to act NOW. We can now choose, with our free will, what we want to focus on in this life, or as the previous lecturer has expressed himself, what we resonate with.

Why don't we remember our experiences during death?

Finally, the last question, why then do we not remember death consciously? The reason for this is that we do not sufficiently live in our higher nature, our permanent part. We simply still do not have enough affinity with this level of consciousness to perceive and learn there self-consciously. We identify with our lower, transitory part more in our present stage of development, and it is this part that disintegrates at death. This includes the physical brain, which is linked to our personal memories and our impressions of the past life. However, this does not mean that we do not remember anything of our past lives, but you will hear more on that subject from the next speaker.

What do we encounter after death?

Ourselves: what we focus on during life. We determine this NOW.

Why don't we have a conscious memory of death?

We do not sufficiently live in our higher nature: in that realm, we are not yet able to perceive and learn self-consciously. Our transitory part disintegrates, together with our memories.

Special cases regarding life and death

Now that we have gone through the process of dying

as Theosophy teaches us, we want to look at some exceptional cases regarding this subject. Situations, which we think can be explained better from the perspective of consciousness than from a purely materialistic view. First: two situations related to people in a coma

1. Near-Death Experiences

2. Perception without brain activity

Subsequently we will talk about *dementia* and its relation to the process of dying. Finally, related to dementia: *terminal lucidity*, the phenomenon of a clear consciousness in the moments before death.

Two situations related coma

First of all two situations in relation to people in a coma. Coma usually is the result of severe brain damage. As a result of an accident, lack of oxygen or stroke for example, virtually all the activities of the physical brain stop, and from the outside we see someone who is in a deep sleep, which is also the original meaning of the classical Greek word “coma”.

In case the coma patient is kept alive artificially and brain activity cannot be measured any longer, we speak of “brain death”.

Near-Death Experience

It sometimes happens to people re-awakening from a coma that they experienced something that is now commonly known under the name *Near-Death Experience* (NDE). An experience so special that it has often resulted in profound, life-changing consequences for those who have experienced it. An experience of which the grandeur and intensity is impossible to express in words, as evidenced by the quotations at the start of this presentation. In almost all cases people who experienced an NDE mention a review of life, the experience of being outside their own body, the passing through a tunnel with a bright light at the end of it, and an experience of an overwhelming feeling of intense peace and unconditional love, or even an experience of unity.

Entering the dying process

Now what exactly happens to someone during such a Near-Death Experience? It is exactly as the term implies an experience on the threshold of death, it is the beginning, the first steps in the process which leads

to death, the human mind withdrawing to more inner spheres, but with the essential difference that the connection with the body is not completely disrupted yet. The perceiving consciousness still is that of the personal man, who – separated from the body and the filter of the brain – is going through this overwhelming experience on the astral plane. It is still colored by his personality, though. It is the everyday “I” who interprets the experience in this dreaming state. And this is precisely the reason why a religious person claims to have seen God, while, for example, an atheist will only see a white light; yet someone else sees a deceased loved one — the interpretation depends on each one’s faith or belief. Therefore, seeing one’s life passing by is not the actual panoramic vision that we experience when we really die, seen from our Higher Self. It is at most a foretaste of it, a slight lifting of the veil. Just think about it that even this slight lifting cannot even be expressed in words!

In a Near-Death Experience the lower part remains intact. The experience can be retold, although never to its full extent. The brain, as a vehicle of physical memory, is simply not equipped for the transmission of the intense experiences that took place without the use of that instrument. Literature describes thousands of cases all over the world, time and time again with the same recurring characteristics, just interpreted differently by the persons who experienced it, according to their different cultures.

An interesting example in the context of the theme of this symposium is the neurosurgeon Eben Alexander. He is a scientist who completely changed his life view because he has had a Near-Death Experience himself. He has written a book about this titled *Proof of Heaven: A Neurosurgeon’s Journey into the Afterlife* which has recently been released. Like many medical scientists, he defended the view that consciousness is the product of the brain, but by his own experience, he is now more than convinced that it is the other way around.⁽²⁾ He states that ever since he has but one mission: to reunite science with spirituality, not as two separate disciplines, but as one complementing each other.

No brain activity, yet perception

Another phenomenon that can occur to people awakening from a coma is the fact they have been observing

their own life-saving surgery operation, or the fact they can describe events that occurred around their beds. This can also happen to coma patients who show no brain activity, something quite impossible to understand for people who assume that we are our brains. The brain cannot have been the observer at that time, they would argue.

In his book *Consciousness beyond Life, The Science of the Near-Death Experience* cardiologist Pim van Lommel mentions the example of a woman who was brain dead, but after having been in coma for months she could reproduce literally what she had heard the doctors say at her bedside.⁽³⁾ This concerns people who find themselves in a condition where they *self-consciously* perceive the astral plane and manage to take the perception of it back with them after waking up from their coma. So during the coma one may be awake on the astral plane. Just as we have our physical senses on this level, we have them on the astral plane. Moreover, people who have had such an experience declare that their perception was of a clearness and accuracy they never knew possible for their physical senses.

Brain death is not death

An important conclusion we can draw from this is that brain death is not the same as death. At the very least, caution is required when no brain activity can be measured. It is by no means proof that the true man, the Reincarnating Ego, has truly departed. Because from the outside we cannot perceive the exact moment when the connection with the body is finally broken. At this moment brain death and actual death are still legally equated, with all the possible consequences that entails. About two years ago, for example, considerable commotion arose in Denmark after a young woman was injured in a serious accident; she got in a coma and was declared brain dead. Doctors were about to transplant her organs, but at the moment she was disconnected from the heart-lung machine she showed capable of breathing independently. Ten days later she was back home and a few months later she rode her horse as usual.

Dementia

Seemingly less directly related to the process of death is dementia, a common disease, which although it gets

more serious as death approaches, can make its entry many years before death. That is why I said “apparently”, because you might wonder how the loss of intellectual abilities years before dying relates to death. According to Theosophy this is totally related, as we will try to make clear in the following.

Dementia is an umbrella term for more than fifty different diseases, including Alzheimer’s disease as the most common.⁽⁴⁾

The current medical view on dementia is that it is a combination of multiple disorders in mental abilities (including memory), mood and behavior, as a result of various brain diseases.

Withdrawal of the thinking part of consciousness

Theosophy explains the loss of intellectual abilities differently. Taking consciousness as force behind all, she therefore puts the cause there; the withdrawal of the thinking consciousness causes the loss of ability to express ones intellectual abilities. The eventual effect is decay in the brain, because less use is made of the brain as a vehicle of the thinking consciousness. Just as muscle power decreases when muscles are not trained, brains deteriorate when not used. The faculty of thought and reflection is still there, but has retired to a certain extent already. Only the more vegetative consciousness remains connected to the body, which as a result remains alive.

The reason for the withdrawal of the thinking consciousness shows precisely why dementia has everything to do with death. In the natural process of dying the consciousness withdraws at the time that the body is “worn out”. Both events coincide at the time of death. In the case of dementia something else happens. The thinking consciousness of man withdraws prematurely to more inner planes, while the body is not worn out yet. The result is a separation from the vehicle, without the link being completely broken. The higher aspects that make us a human being can no longer express themselves through the brain; the person who suffers from dementia reacts instinctively only. “It is no longer my mother,” often can be heard. Nevertheless, the real man is still there, in the background but nonetheless still present. More on this in a moment, when we will discuss the phenomenon of terminal lucidity.

Cause of the premature withdrawal of the thinking part of consciousness

What now is the reason of the premature withdrawal of the higher man? Again, this can be traced to our consciousness, our own mind. Namely, it is a *disharmony* which has arisen in our thinking during this or any previous life. When we ignore certain aspects of our thinking, this creates a hitch or stagnation in the stream of consciousness. This can create a situation where the stream of consciousness cannot flow fully, with the consequence that the thinking consciousness eventually will withdraw and won't be able to express itself through its vehicle anymore. Please bear in mind, that we should not generalize, because we do not know what created the disharmony; moreover, it might have been a situation in this life but also in a previous life. The fact *that* the cause lies in our thinking also means that we can avoid it with our thinking. Dementia therefore is absolutely not a natural phase in life! It is an imbalance, which may be prevented by means of a harmonious orientation and control of the thinking mind. How this process works, we can recognize in our own environment. For instance, if you identify just with your body, without any other interests, then there is little left when the body decays. The same applies to an employee who sees work as his only drive in life, who has no other interests and knows no deeper meaning in life. After his retirement, there remains a void: "it doesn't matter to me anymore". Without any meaningful use of the valuable time, the training of the brain stops.

Keep the higher thinking active

Therefore, develop all the aspects of your human composition harmoniously, which means that the lower aspects are under the control of, and subservient to the higher, noble aspects. A healthy lifestyle contributes to this, but this is only a prerequisite for keeping healthy our vehicular side. More important for us is to focus on our higher thinking aspects, by means of which the brains are automatically trained and kept "in shape". An interesting fact to mention here is the following from the English Wikipedia: of the many symptoms of Alzheimer one is mentioned predominant there, this symptom continues throughout the course of the disease, and that symptom is apathy: loss

of interest in your environment and of the ability to empathize with others.⁽⁵⁾ To empathize with others, to *be* there for others is a typical quality of the Higher Self. Apathy, therefore, is an indication that the Higher Self has withdrawn, and is hidden in the background. Therefore, keep a keen interest in your fellow man, be involved, and keep on wondering. You are never too old to learn and you will discover you can practice this lifestyle literally to the last day of your life.

Terminal lucidity

Finally, we want to reflect on the phenomenon of terminal lucidity, which is closely associated with dementia. It is the phenomenon that people who for years were senile or suffering from mental illness, suddenly have a clear mind and often regain access to their memory in the last days or hours of their lives. According to modern science this should be impossible, because how can a clear mind arise from a damaged brain? Yet it is a phenomenon that has been described already by the ancient Greeks; and a fairly recently published research by Bruce Greyson and the German biologist Michael Nahm shows it occurs rather regularly in cases of dementia. One of the examples of this study describes a 92-year-old woman who had been diagnosed with Alzheimer for nine years and could not recognize her immediate family members, including her own son. However, 24 hours before she died she suddenly recognized them again and she also knew how old she was and where she was.⁽⁶⁾

Phase before the panoramic vision

This example is no exception, and maybe you have experienced something similar in your own environment. Returning to the process of dying, we can now understand why this phenomenon is no exception and with what phase in the process terminal lucidity corresponds. Indeed, it is a prelude to the clear consciousness that we experience during the panoramic vision. Before someone goes through their actual panoramic vision, they already can, one could say, "grow into it". The connection with one's higher thinking aspects is strengthened once more, and there is anew a temporary possibility for these aspects to manifest in the person who suffers from dementia. It is a preliminary phase of the panoramic vision and experienced

nurses know very well that such a revival and mental clarity announces death.

Literature also describes an example of a man who suddenly, just before his death, started to speak in a foreign language.⁽⁷⁾ It turned out to be the language of his home country that he had left in his early childhood, before he mastered the language. How it is possible that he suddenly was reminiscent of this language will become clear in the next lecture.

The consciousness principle as a hypothesis

None of these examples we have given you, which are describing a clear consciousness and perception in a period of brain failure or of serious brain damage in the case of dementia, are explained by the current materialistic view that consciousness is located in and originates from the brain. The vision we are presenting in this symposium, that consciousness is the causal force behind the manifestation, *does* offer a logical explanation, according to us. Our brain – which in its turn consists of consciousnesses of a lower nature – is nothing more than the instrument that enables us to express ourselves in the outer world and learn our lessons there.

Please consider our view to the matter from the perspective of consciousness as a hypothesis, and do examine its value yourself, in particular of the ethical aspects. In our experience this hypothesis will expand your understanding of the processes in nature, and we believe that an *a priori* denial of it closes the door to these deeper insights.

The researchers Greyson and Nahm concluded that more research into the specific phenomenon of terminal lucidity is needed. However, this requires an open mind and some courage to look with other than just the materialistic pair of glasses. Only with the third pair of glasses, when we use our higher thinking consciousness, unprejudiced research is possible and as we have demonstrated, this higher part of our mind never perishes. It is that part of us that is always there as a source we can draw from when we tune in to it, or resonate with it, as we have heard this morning. How we can do this, is what we are going to explore the rest of the afternoon!

References

1. Pim van Lommel, *Consciousness beyond Life, The Science of the Near-Death Experience*. Harper Collins, Glasgow 2010.
 2. Eben Alexander, *Proof of Heaven: A Neurosurgeon's Journey into the Afterlife*. Simon Schuster, New York 2012.
 3. See ref. 1.
 4. Source: Wikipedia.
 5. See ref. 4.
 6. Michael Nahm and Bruce Greyson, "Terminal Lucidity in Patients with Chronic Schizophrenia and Dementia: A Survey of the Literature". Article in *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, December 2009, p. 942-944.
 7. H.P. Blavatsky, "Memory in the dying". *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*. The Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton 1990, Vol. 11, p. 448.
-

Three levels of remembering: instinct, conscience and intuition

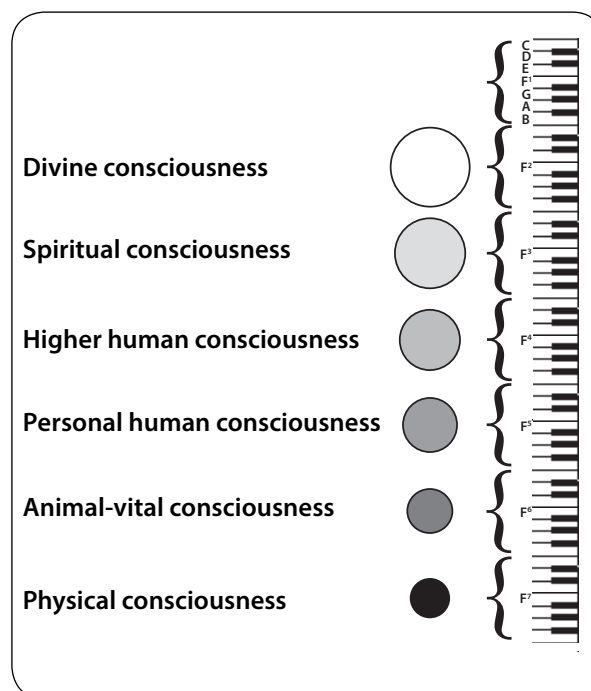
Once I heard a little girl ask her mother if she had ever seen a white car. “Yes, I have”, the mother replied. “Me too”, said the little girl, “but it was so long ago, I can’t remember it any more”. Maybe you’re thinking, “that’s funny, how can you know something you don’t remember?”

It is possible, though! There are cases where we certainly do know something, but we can’t remember it. Bouke van den Noort told us about the Fleming who spoke Flemish for the last time when he was two years old, and who remembered this language on his deathbed. This case was reported by a French medical doctor from the 19th century.

He describes an even more remarkable story: a dying woman used to sleepwalk when she was a little girl. She was the daughter of a notary. One time she stole an important document of her father while she was sleepwalking and hid it somewhere in his office. Her father had suffered major damage from this. On her deathbed the woman suddenly yelled: “I stole it!”, and she recalled where the document had been all this time. While she was sleeping she had removed the document and hid it, but in her day-to-day consciousness the woman knew nothing about it. On her deathbed she suddenly remembered.⁽¹⁾

Terminal lucidity is one of those mysteries of the memory as well, which cannot be explained from the general belief that memory is stored in the brain. No, you

can only clarify these remarkable cases if you regard human beings as composite consciousness. We will try to explain.



Transmitting and receiving signals that impress our consciousness

Our consciousness transmits signals from the different aspects or “levels” or “layers” of its composite nature. It receives signals too. It resonates with all kinds of

other conscious beings and causes other conscious beings to vibrate.

What we, for example, observe with our senses – like images and sounds – makes an impression on our physical body. These signals are being forwarded to the other levels in our consciousness, but first they affect the physical body. Even the food we eat has an effect. We can remember all these impressions. For instance, I always remember the smell of the metro when I think about Paris.

A desire or a tendency makes an impression on our animal nature. Sometimes the impression is so powerful that we can hardly get rid of it. In the case of an addiction, for example. The impression of a cigarette can be very strong; it might be hard to get rid of.

Similarly, personal thoughts make an impression on the personal human consciousness. Often we forget all these lower impressions.

Insights and impersonal thoughts, which make an impression on our higher human consciousness, are more difficult to experience because we do not live in the higher state of consciousness that often. For example, when you have understood a particular mathematic law, that insight is imprinted in your consciousness. Visions, true understandings and inspiration make impressions on our spiritual consciousness. For instance, if you understand that matter and consciousness are in essence exactly the same, then this concept is engraved in your spiritual consciousness. Actually it is already there – as we hope to explain later on – but the *personal* human consciousness now manages to tune in and observe it.

Finally, there is the divine consciousness that resonates on experiences of unity. Most people haven't got many of these experiences, but if you ever had one you will never forget it.

What is remembering?

Now, what is remembering?

It means: recalling an impression that has been made in your consciousness. You are bringing back an image, a sensation, a thought, or a vision to the perceiving consciousness.

Remembering is to bring something within reach of your perception again: the physical, emotional, mental or impersonal perceptions.

Memory: the ability to recall images in our consciousness

The ability to remember we call “memory”. A person with a good memory can remember things easily.

As we all know, there are certain things we can remember very well and other things we cannot. There are kids who can easily distinguish between dozens of car brands based on the headlights only, but they cannot memorize French irregular verbs.

This is all related to what we are interested in or attracted to. Wherever our focus is, that is where impressions are made deepest. Your consciousness is trained to be active on that plane, so it can recall certain impressions made on that same plane more easily. Someone who strongly lives in their emotions can probably remember an insult from years ago, while an intellectual person will forget about it within a week. So we can self-consciously get particular impressions from one of the layers of our consciousness back into our perception. We regain the mathematical insight, or we remember a name, an event, or we remember what a certain place looked like.

Memory: the location where impressions are made

In current usage of language we also consider “memory” to be the *location* where particular information is being saved; the memory as “the archive of the consciousness”. The materialist would immediately think of the brain here. The brain is being compared to a computer frequently, because in the digital world people also talk about memory, which is then expressed in kilo-, mega-, giga- and terabytes. Are our brains some kind of supercomputer?

Brains; the repository of information?

Well, as you've heard yesterday, the brain is composed of dozens of billiards of neurons or nerve cells. All these cells have connections to other cells. These connections become disconnected frequently as well. This all takes place in a very complex and dynamic process, much more dynamic and complicated than your pc. How and where this information would be saved in this dynamic and complex system, which is the brain, is fully unknown.

In general it is assumed that information is transferred

from one side of the brain to the other side. In this context one may speak of short-term and long-term memory. They say that all the things we experience or learn will be saved in the short-term memory first and then in the long-term-memory. But how can information be stored in brain cells that constantly change, that constantly make and break connections – synapses – with each other? How can these neurons contain our memories? We think this theory is not logical and therefore that memory is not located in the brain. The brain is the instrument of the lower thoughts so it is the *instrument* of our memory, especially in its lower aspects. We human beings, thinkers, remember our thoughts. And because we live in this material world we need a brain to shape our lower thoughts and to translate them to the outside realm. But to assume that the memory resides in the brain is to believe that music resides in the radio.

Memory is everywhere

But if memory does not reside in the brain, where else could it possibly be? Our answer is: where could it not? Memory is everywhere.

If remembering means to have the ability to bring back particular impressions to our perception, then the entire visible and invisible nature may enable us to remember impressions. You've probably experienced this yourself.

For example, after many years you return to a place you've visited on a holiday when you were young. When you get there you will remember precisely all the people you've seen there, what they did and what you did. Another example: you hear an old song on the radio and you remember certain idealistic ideas from your youth. The place of your holiday and the song are actually the places where your memories lie hidden. But you can never disconnect these circumstances from your own consciousness. There is something in your consciousness that resonates with that song and that particular place. Because of them you remember certain thoughts and feelings again.

Everything is connected

This can be clarified by the fact that there is an essential Unity that underlies the whole Nature. Everything is connected. We are not separated from

anything. Your experiences are therefore not your private property. They are not stored in a private archive of which only you have the key. Actually everyone has access to it.

This should make us realize the far reaching responsibility we have for life on our planet. Because simply by thinking a thought you leave a track in living Nature. And you can find back that track later on – you remember – but it is also possible for other people to draw it within their field of perception. And with Nature we don't mean merely visible nature, but we mean the totality of life. Let's try to explain that.

Âkâsa

The space where all those layers of our consciousness remain and live is not empty but it is filled with, what is called in Sanskrit Âkâsa: universal living substance. Âkâsa *is* that space.

So, Âkâsa extends from very divine, spiritual realms to physical realms. As Âkâsa approximates the coarser realms, it is also called the astral plane or the Astral Light. This Astral Light is a realm that is of a more etheric structure than our physical world, and that is why it is not perceivable to our senses.

The Astral Light infallibly registers what happens on earth. In this context the term "image gallery" is used sometimes. All thoughts, emotions and desires are being recorded here.

The Astral Realm is not separate from us. We are part of it. In our emotional, animal nature we are a part of the astral. We swim, as it were, through this realm, we are a part of it like a fish is part of the sea. We constantly make new impressions on it. Frequently, we perceive old impressions. When this happens we say we remember.

But these impressions don't have to be made by us. They can originally be made by other beings, or by us in previous lives. We certainly always have a connection to them, however vague, because otherwise we would not perceive them.

Higher and lower Âkâsa

In a similar way we are an integral part of Âkâsa in our higher aspects of consciousness. We don't notice this constantly, because we have not yet learned how to focus on this state of consciousness. As you've

already heard Ruud Melieste say, the higher state of consciousness is more like a dreamless sleep to us. We still have too little affinity with it.

As we can only perceive with our own consciousness, it is our character – who we are – that determines whether we perceive the lower regions of the astral realm or the higher of Âkâša. That is why a being can only perceive impressions that fit its own developed consciousness. An animal can't remember human thoughts, because it cannot think yet and therefore it hasn't had any experiences with them. Likewise, a human being cannot remember divine affairs, or I should say: *not yet*. First he has to learn how to do so.

Auric Egg

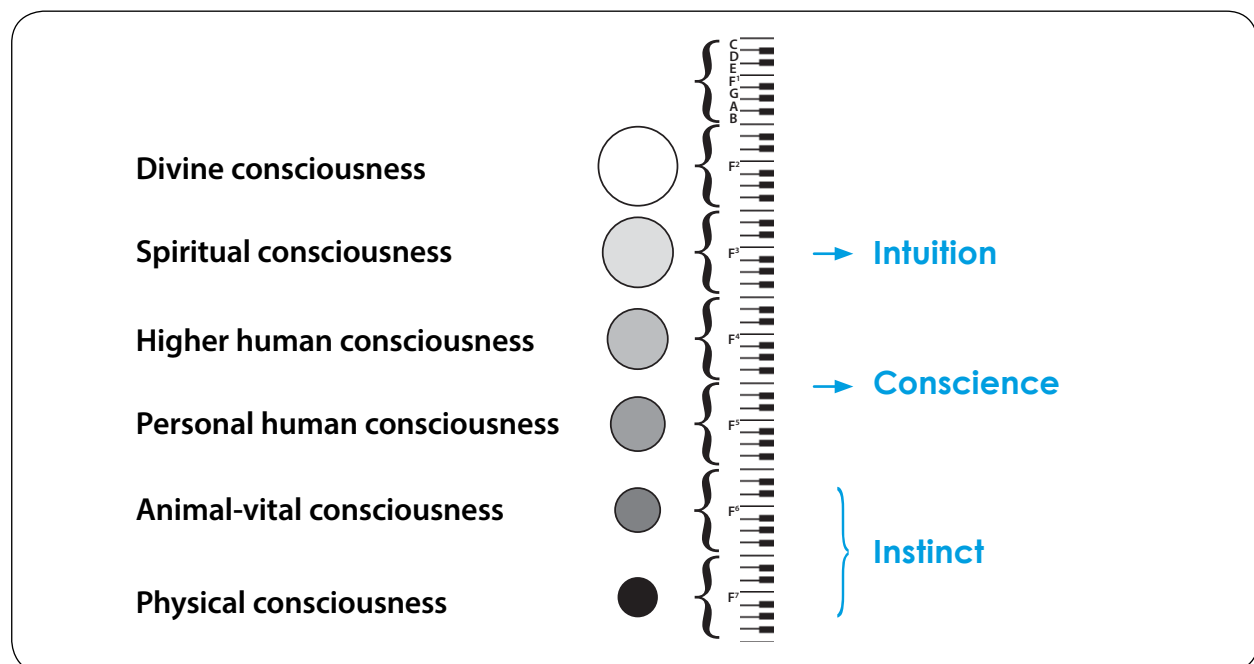
Every part of our consciousness wraps itself in a corresponding vehicle. The physical consciousness wraps itself in a body of physical matter, which is in fact the lowest form of the astral. The animal and personal consciousness folds itself in a corresponding astral vehicle, while the higher forms of our consciousness clothe themselves in the more ethereal layers of Âkâša. And all these different vehicles together form an aggregate, something we call the Auric Egg. This Auric Egg is the seat of all those different forms of consciousness. Why do we sometimes need a lot of effort to remember something, while some other time it seems ef-

fortless? If the impression is made closer in our own Auric Egg, we can reach it more easily and will recall the impression into our consciousness much faster. But some impressions are only vague signals we catch from other beings. These impressions are hardly made within ourselves. They are very hard to remember.

We should look at it this way: all experiences that we reflect on, fit into our own knowledge and experiences, and regularly think of, become part of our own Auric Egg, our own nature. And all other experiences do not. They will leave a track as well however, but it will take us much more effort to follow the track and trace the source.

Remembering on many levels

In fact, life is a continuous remembering: bringing back impressions to our field of perception. Learning is remembering. Growing is remembering. Our personal consciousness learns when it activates the views and knowledge that flow from higher forms of consciousness. We activate and *develop* them – un-fold them – which means: we *remember* them. Growth comes from within. Even physically: a plant or flower grows from within outward. A human body grows in the same way. This applies to consciousness as well. All abilities and faculties are inside, but they have to flow outward.



Instinct

As said, we experience impressions in all layers of our composite consciousness, whether they are made by ourselves or by other beings. Now, the memory of our vehicular nature, the physical and animal consciousness, we call *instinct*.

Biologists describe instinct as a recorded pattern of behavior, which occurs without this behavior ever being learned or experienced before. It is supposed to be genetically inherited. Instinct is found in human beings as well as in animals. For example, think of reflex movements.

We too say that instinct is inherited, however, not from your ancestors but from yourself. The experiences gained at this animal level in previous lives are not lost when you die. Although, we don't take these experiences with us to Devachan, because, like Bouke van den Noort has told you, in that state of consciousness we only relive and process our *spiritual* experiences. But when consciousness manifests itself again and starts to construct a physical body, all the gained aggregates of qualities of the past shall become active again.

This can explain all the miraculous capabilities of animals. A beautiful example is the Monarch butterfly. In the course of several generations those butterflies migrate from Mexico to Canada. The butterflies that emerge in Canada fly back straight away to the place in Mexico where their great grandparents were born. Where did they get their knowledge to travel this enormous journey? To that specific location? From their consciousness, wherein the experiences from previous incarnations are preserved.

The entire physical and instinctive consciousness of the human being is in fact a memory of experiences gained and processed earlier. These vary from specific physical activities, like the heartbeat and breathing, to the instinctive reactions to sensory stimuli. For us, thinkers, these are processes that happen automatically. But we are able to influence them with our thoughts. We can, when we think disharmonious, even disturb those processes. We can also put that animal consciousness in ourselves to use. We can train it. You could discipline your instinctive consciousness in such a way that you can, for example, type with ten fingers. You can concentrate totally on the thoughts and words you

want to use, while your fingers automatically find the right keys on the keyboard.

Personal thinking

The instinctive consciousness of the human being has become what it currently is during countless phases of development — what it should be at least: a vehicle fit for the truly human consciousness. But the thinking consciousness itself has gone through several experiences too, and these are also stored in it.

However, day-to-day experiences have no sustainable character. Those are the personal experiences, which are forgotten easily. That is why the memory of personal experiences is really unreliable. As the personal consciousness usually accredits reality to the deciduous, outside world, its impressions are most of the time of a transient nature. A personal human being simply has no ability to view its experiences from the correct perspective.

Compare it to a soccer team that has won a game. Every player shall remember the game from his own perspective. The keeper knows he failed to prevent a goal and the striker knows he did score. But the broader framework is missing. But the coach, who was standing at the side of the field, had an overview. His memory seems to be more accurate. In this example the coach is the higher human consciousness and each player represents the personal consciousness.

Characteristics of personal memories

Often people say that memory is unreliable. This is true when we talk about personal impressions. It is even the case that the personal consciousness often is blind to its own behavior. In the case of the sleepwalking girl: she did something that the personal consciousness never remembered. Only when she became an old woman short before her death, when the personal consciousness temporarily became one with the higher human consciousness, she suddenly remembered what she had done. You see, the higher consciousness is much more capable of perceiving those impressions and fathom their real importance.

When the personal man remembers something, he always colors these memories according to the consciousness he has developed up till that moment. Imagine you've had an amazing holiday with a friend, but

this friend mistreats you afterwards. Your memory of the holiday will be colored now by the unpleasant experiences later on.

The impressions of the personal man will not survive death. They will dissolve when the consciousness withdraws. With each new birth a new personality will be built. This will happen based on the qualities that were developed in previous lives. But these particularly personal impressions from previous lives cannot be found in the new personality. With every new birth a new brain is formed as well. This brain has to practice again, just like the entire physical body, before it can function optimally as an instrument for thinking. That is the reason why you can't find tracks of previous lives in the brain, nor in the personal consciousness.

An exception to this is when a person dies in childhood, because then they didn't have spiritual experiences that they had to process in Devachan. The personality of a child will not disintegrate and it will soon find a new opportunity, with new parents, to manifest. That is the reason why all over the world there are many people who died in childhood in their former life and can remember it.⁽²⁾

Conscience

Fortunately, the personal man has spiritual thoughts as well. He has impersonal interests and ideals. He thinks about how to live his life in a good way. These thoughts make impressions as well, which we retain from one life to the next, and thus are able to remember.

Do you know when we remember them? When we are about to do something we shouldn't. Our ethical sense will warn us at that moment.

These memories are called *conscience*. Our conscience comprises our spiritual and ethical experiences from this and previous lives, which we remember if we intend to act in a way which these experiences has taught us *not* to do. Therefore our conscience never advises us in an affirmative way. It never tells us what we should do. It warns us when we are about to do something ethically irresponsible.

The conscience is the noblest quality a human being has developed up to now. It has been formed by his most sublime impressions. Mind you, it's not the noblest he is, but the noblest he has experienced up to

now. You could picture the conscience as the bridge between the personal and the higher human consciousness.

Our conscience is not infallible, as our spiritual experience is limited. Sometimes we come across an ethical question that we have never encountered before, and never reflected upon. Then our conscience will remain silent. If we make the right choice, then we have added a spiritual experience, but if we make the wrong choice, and experience the following consequences, we will also learn an ethical lesson. It is through new spiritual experiences that our conscience will grow.

Listening to conscience

It is said that cruel people have no conscience. I think they do have a conscience; they just don't listen to it. Becoming deaf to the voice of your conscience is a gradual process. When you have to make an ethical choice and you do not listen to your conscience, you will hear it less loudly when you are in such a situation again. If you do this time after time, the voice of your conscience will fade out, and it will seem as if you have none.

Education plays an important part in this. Parents can stimulate or oppress their children's conscience. I once heard a little boy tell his mother: "Look what I've stolen", on which his mother gave no negative response whatsoever. Not quite an incentive to learn how to listen to your conscience. I also know a case of a mother who let her child return a toy that he had stolen. That is a way to stimulate your child's conscience. When someone acts against their conscience, they will regret it the first time. But when they ignore that remorse, conscience's voice becomes weaker, or rather, this voice will be heard less and less.

That is what you hear about murderers or criminals; after the first crime their conscience plays up. They don't sleep, they suffer. But after the second, third or fourth time, it becomes a habit. They don't hear their conscience speak to them anymore. A temporary situation, because they will be confronted with their actions at some time.

The lesson one may learn from this is to learn to listen to your conscience. You *are* your conscience. Your conscience is the gate to the higher aspects of yourself. If you don't listen to it, you close this gate.

Intuition

When these higher aspects of consciousness appear spontaneously, without intellectual reasoning, we call it *intuition*. Intuition is also a kind of remembering. The more spiritual kinds of consciousness have their own experiences and impressions at their level, too. Those imprints are registered in the Âkâśic Nature just as well. And we, living in the personal consciousness, have also access to it. We can behold them. Intuition is the immediate perception of truth. It is spiritual wisdom and manifests as impersonal, direct vision. You might think: “These cannot be my imprints. My reach of consciousness is confined to the personal. I may at best reach my conscience, and it’s already hard enough to listen to that continuously.” But remember that there is no separateness in nature. Everything is interconnected. You are these higher consciousnesses as well, if you identify yourself with them.

Learning, Plato says, is remembering. It means that we can activate the spiritual experiences from the stream of consciousness that we are. We become conscious of them.

In *Phaedo* Plato describes in a mythical story how human souls live in the world of the Gods before they are born. There they see the true Ideas. But when they are born, they have to drink from the river Lethe, the river of oblivion, and they forget what they have seen. Souls who drank a lot remember very little, and souls who drank a little remember a lot. But every soul is acquainted with that spiritual reality, and when we look closely inside ourselves and listen carefully, we know this.

We can self-consciously try to awaken this divine memory in ourselves. It is possible to train our intuition. We can learn to focus on the truly human, the spiritual, yes even the divine consciousness in ourselves. Searching for this kind of memory Blavatsky calls “reminiscence”; actively recalling these spiritual images.⁽³⁾

From brain thinking to Universal thinking

How do we do that? How do we connect to those spiritual influences? How do we tune “the octave of our piano”, our personal consciousness, in such a way that we resonate with the truth and compassion of the higher consciousnesses in us?

First we must empty ourselves. We should not give room to any personal thoughts. You may ask yourselves how many thoughts we spend every day on issues that, in the light of spirituality, are of no importance at all. Look for instance at what television has to offer and you will understand how our lower thinking aspect gets aroused by all kinds of unnecessary information and sensations. How much do we worry about our prosperity, about what can go wrong, possible diseases, or death itself! If we empty ourselves from these everyday worries, we tune our “octave” in to a different key and the spiritual thoughts will come to us naturally. Too often we accredit a level of reality to the illusionary, external world, which it does not deserve. We can realize however, that our happiness does not depend on illusions. Realizing you were worrying about nothing important gives a sense of liberation and room for new and greater insights.

It’s about recognizing these new insights, and then *feeding* them. This we can do by focusing our attention. Meditate on universal thoughts. Create an image of compassionate people, of a world where people work together and help out each other in practice. Think grand and impersonal. Live the loftiest ideal you can possibly imagine.

This spiritual keynote will change even our daily thoughts. Of course we will still take out the trash and go to the store for our daily needs, but even the thoughts necessary for these simple actions will be enlightened if we think them within a larger Ideal of compassion. Thus we ennoble the personal self, and even the animal and physical self. Eventually our brain will be enlightened by it as well.

We should not think with our brains only. We should think from the bigger, universal point of view.

We are a stream of consciousness. Our higher aspects live on spiritual planes. Let us remember that. Let us picture an equal and just world, where mutual help and cooperation is no exception but the norm. Let us picture it so sharp and clear, that we will remember this picture in our everyday life with every action we take and every thought we have. It is this memory that suffering humanity needs above all.

References

1. H.P. Blavatsky, “Memory in the dying”. *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*. The Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton 1990, Vol. 11, p. 446.
 2. I. Stevenson, *Reincarnation and Biology: A Contribution to the Etiology of Birthmarks and Birth Defects*. Vol I and II. Praeger Publishers, Highlands Ranch (US) 1997. And: H. van der Pol, “Wetenschappelijk onderzoek vindt bewijzen voor reïncarnatie” (“Scientific researchers find evidences for reincarnation”). Article in *Lucifer*, Vol. 27, October 2005, no. 5, p. 87.
 3. H.P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*. Theosophical University Press, Pasadena 1985, Chapter 8.
-

Expanding consciousness by practice – Workshop results

Man, know thyself

The workshops

After the three presentations, the participants of the symposium discussed the following questions in groups of approximately twenty persons: .

Can you give an example of going from one characteristic into another:

- driven by an outer impulse;
- from within.

Was this a lower or higher characteristic of consciousness?

How can we improve people's mentality?

- How do people develop their mentality, seen through a “materialistic pair of glasses”?
- How do people develop their mentality, seen through a “mental-emotional pair of glasses”?
- How do people develop their mentality, seen through a “spiritual pair of glasses”?

Now answer: how can we improve people's mentality?

How do we expand our consciousness?

After the workshops, the workshop leaders reported briefly what was discussed during these gatherings, on which Herman C. Vermeulen commented later. Below you will find an impression of the reports and discussions.

Workshop 1

As for the materialistic view, things were mentioned such as scientific dogma's – one could almost call it scientific beliefs – which imply good fortune or bad luck, as if we are participating in a lottery. They are presented as scientific dictates in society.

As for the mental-emotional view: competitiveness was mentioned, which is emphasized extremely in our current society.

When we look through the spiritual glasses we see very good examples of inspiring and compassionate people in our society.

An interesting discussion occurred concerning the last two questions about how to improve human mentality: “Who are we to want to change other people's mentality?” It is much more relevant to help people becoming aware of some matters, like the I.S.I.S. Foundation is trying to do here. For instance: showing that one's mind is composed of seven different aspects, which can be used as tools.

Furthermore, attention was paid to the higher aspects in one's self, which enables you to put your lower aspects aside in a sense, just to have it slowly disappear, some sort of “fading out” as a matter of fact.

A very nice example was given by someone based on the doctrine of hierarchies, showing how all things work together. There was someone who drew the conclusion that – because of our responsibility for all an-

imal life – it would be best to become a vegetarian. You could say this was a step forward in her mentality.

Workshop 2

A nice example was given of a change from one characteristic into another due to an outer impulse. Someone visited the Saint Peter's Square in Rome once and stood in the large crowd waiting for the Pope to appear in public. All of a sudden she started weeping with the crowd, emotionally influenced by the crowd, although she had no intention of doing so!

To the question "How do people develop their mentality seen from a materialistic point of view" the answer was given that it is formed by the brain and by your environment and accordingly by the way your brain reacts upon the environment.

A good statement concerning the change of mentality, as seen from the mental-emotional view is to say: "I am only human", which means that you don't consider yourself to be anything more than your limited faculties at that moment. Punishment and reward also belong to the mental-emotional view.

To the question "How does one develop one's mentality seen from the spiritual point of view" the following answers were given: by inspiring, by being an example, but yet more important is "living" the example, which is to inspire as well. Education is also of great importance. It is especially wise to listen well to the person you are "educating", so you can connect to them.

To the question "How do we improve people's mentality?", the simple answer is this: by looking through your spiritual glasses. Three aspects emerged strongly while discussing this subject, namely focusing on the unity of life, contemplating on it and meditating on it. Of course it is paramount to have an open mind, because then you will always be perceptive to a greater truth. Finally, self-forgetfulness was mentioned.

Workshop 3

Regarding the first question someone gave the example of a death that causes grief at first, which may be followed by a sense of relief because the departed one is freed from suffering, after which all the arrangements which need to be made give an impulse to take action. Here, one impulse appeals to several characteristics. How do you improve people's mentality? First we dis-

cussed whether someone, looking through his material pair of glasses only, would ever think about a subject like that at all. Wouldn't they just take the world like it is, without wondering whether this is due to the brain or not?

Many examples were given of looking through the mental-emotional glasses: actions done by the government, the media and educational system, in a positive as well as a negative way. From this second point of view you are able to have a slightly wider vision and you will search for causes.

Looking in a spiritual way you see harmony — and of course disharmony, if the mentality is not harmonious yet.

How can we improve people's mentality? Through leadership, was one of the answers. And: supporting the development of a vision among human beings. Spiritual leaders do inspire human beings to develop a vision themselves.

How do we expand our consciousness? One of the answers was "meditation", taken in the sense that you focus on an ideal.

Someone said that after attending the previous symposium he looked into his partner's eyes, and he saw a great mystery and what struck him most was a profound sense of wonderment at that moment. It was exactly this wonderment which allowed him to expand his consciousness. You need to be open minded in order to expand your consciousness.

Workshop 4

The three different "pairs of glasses" were not discussed explicitly, but the more was said about the composition of the human being. A part of this composition is often directed to the personal self — self-interest comes first. Within this complexity the psychic-mental part often does not cherish the much needed mentality that cares for the general interest.

The spiritual view raised many remarks, such as: Unity as a starting point. And when Unity is something real, then everything and everybody matters, without any exception. Then you'll try to add your own skills to that Unity as well.

The final question: "How can we change mentality?" was answered by one of the students of the "Thinking differently" course, especially by using some of the

basic ideas in that course: “We should stop thinking in an anthropomorphic way, and live in the higher aspects of our mind instead.”

Workshop 5

Before the participants addressed the questions, the following question – clearly an exercise in expanding one’s consciousness – was discussed: how do we affect each other according the piano-scheme? And: how can we prevent being affected by another piano? What causes interference when we try to listen to our conscience or intuition? We know that one percent of football hooligans are able to affect a whole city. But when we would like to do this in an opposite way, why don’t we succeed? All these questions led us to the same conclusion: everything resonates with everything. This made quite a nice starting point. Because it also means that we do not just resonate with people around us, but with certain places as well sometimes. The conclusion to this is: if you start looking through the spiritual pair of glasses you will have to enlarge your world, you have to learn to see causes and effects; you have to start looking for the whole chain of events — what is behind something when it happens? Self-reliance is a key factor. Think for yourself. Ask yourself questions. That way you will gain new insights. So you’ll be able to offer new insights and perspectives if you want to change people’s mentality — and above all connect those insights to the higher characteristics in one’s mind.

It stands to reason that our behavior should be an example. This means above all that we must be sincere concerning our motives. For example: if your child is doing not so well at school, then it is very important what you say, but the *motivation* behind your words is equally important, because what is it that actually resonates?

How do we come to expansion of consciousness? You have to wonder about things. You must gain knowledge. You must think independently; make sure that you meet different kinds of people and be a very good listener — show love, compassion and sympathy, cooperate, build bridges.

Another topic that was discussed is education. Is it possible to make this the theme of the next symposium? [This shall indeed be the case. – Ed.]

Workshop 6

First we discussed some questions about the basic concepts and especially the notion “conscience” was discussed. It was established that “conscience” is something quite different from the norms and values which are deemed important in a certain society. Our conscience is in fact our individual ethical experience, gained in former lives and in this life.

Then the different ways these conscious beings resonate with one another were considered. It was concluded that this resonance continues into the animal kingdom. Now, in short, the answers to the questions. “How is mentality formed, seen from the material point of view?” All is matter, so that is where you’ll have to find the answer.

If you look a little further, you will see that there is something else, something more behind matter — that is the second, the mental-emotional view. And when you look through the third pair of glasses, you’ll see that all is intrinsically connected.

“How do we improve people’s mentality?” It was stated before that we cannot improve human mentality, you can only improve your own mentality. This is extremely important to consider. By looking at the world through our spiritual glasses, we expand our consciousness. In a practical sense it means: start from a clear point of view. After that it is practice, perseverance and persistency in keeping the ideal in mind — and consider how to spread it among people as well. Start as early as you can, so right raising and education is of great importance.

Questions

Subsequently the questions were raised that had emerged during the workshops.

Herman C. Vermeulen provided answers.

Hierarchies and equality

When you mention the several ego’s in the piano-scheme, does that imply “higher” or “lower”? There are so many names: ego, the transcendent part, the personal, and the supra-personal. Isn’t there some sort of scale, in which the personal gradually becomes supra-personal? All is consciousness. There obviously is a hierarchical structure. Do we stand somewhere in the middle of that infinity? How do these higher

consciousnesses relate to our consciousness? And where do we stand in regard to the lower consciousnesses?

Answer

This is an elaborate and complex question. First we have to establish that Theosophia is based upon a hierarchic structure. This means: we are not the same, but we are of equal value, which is a very fundamental thought. We all have our own character and qualities. We are all different but we are all of equal value. Theosophical doctrine does not teach us that a certain level of consciousness has more authority than another. You must understand that there is a gigantic mutual cooperation, which is hierarchical in structure. This implies that each consciousness inspires a number of underlying consciousnesses to work together with it — just like the way we cooperate when we prepare a symposium or like the way a human being uses his body with all its cells. It is not as if he is in total control, but if right, he is inspiring to his body. The point is the free will. That means that the underlying consciousnesses of me may say: all right, fine, but we do not stay in your sphere but go elsewhere now. That freedom exists. So it is *not* “once here, always here”. It is a tremendously dynamic process.

However, there is always an ethical responsibility. Because you, as inspiring factor, work with those many cooperating consciousnesses, you set the tone for those other beings. You determine in what kind of sphere they work. It is like rolling out the ethics, the fundament for your cooperation.

When we talk about someone who is a leader and an inspiration according to our societal opinions, we tend to think of persons who are currently in charge within our society. But theosophically speaking, they usually are very wrong examples. True leadership means being an inspiration to other people. Or, as Lao Tzu puts it: a true leader walks behind the people, to avoid hampering anyone. In other words: you are a stimulator. And from a stimulator one may expect that they are a living example. Others may accept and follow this example based on their own free will.

Sometimes we receive the following question from people who wish to enter our organization: “What will I have to do?” You don’t have to do anything. If you don’t want to do something then you don’t, and

if you would like to cooperate with us then you are more than welcome. It doesn’t matter if you have no particular skills, for we will teach you and there is plenty to do all the time. This approach is quite different from saying: “When you join us you are obliged to do this or that.”

There is a hierarchical structure though, but in the infinite you cannot say that anything is top or bottom of infinity. There are only relative summits. There will always be an inspiring consciousness, which cooperates with other conscious beings. This can occur in all sorts of possible ways. This thought is apprehended with great difficulty in our society.

Perhaps I should explain this with a Buddhist example: life at the *Sangha*. Everybody is part of the Sangha: you all eat the same food, you are all dressed alike. But when it comes to studying, one knows more than the other. The challenge then will be to share your knowledge with others instead of keeping it to yourself. You have to inspire others.

Change and infinity

The past two days we have noticed that Nature is a very dynamic process, everything constantly changes, and that consciousnesses, or conscious beings, react to each other. Is infinity subject to change as well?

Answer

We lack the right phrase or words to express infinity correctly. Often we use a form of denial. Or we say something like: infinity is change or movement *per se*. Which implies it is the unseen force behind the exterior. Last night we used the metaphor of the ocean. Each wave thinks it is disconnected from the other, but yet they are all connected down below.

You must be aware that the notion of infinity is not conceivable in the form of change, because that would imply it is not endless. All imaginable forms and configurations, to which you can connect the notion of change, are already present in infinity. If infinity was able to change, it would not be infinity, for it would have certain characteristics. That’s why we say it is Change *per se*. It is Motion *per se*. All potencies are in it. The “local concentrations” express that Motion. So the waves in the ocean express the ocean. Would there be a day with no wind, one could assume there’s no

motion at all, but of course one can easily spot motion when you take a closer look. On the other hand one must realize motion always involves a certain limit. What now is the challenge? You should never limit Infinity and Motion. As soon as you start thinking in boundaries, you limit the infinite. You can read about this in the Prologue of *The Secret Doctrine*, in which H.P. Blavatsky says that the infinite is beyond every human imagination. Yet it is interesting to think about it. From this starting point, you can consider which ethics you would like to express in your own life. Philosophy presupposes a number of hypotheses and one important hypothesis is infinity. You can check whether your thinking starts from the totality. This implies there is always more; there is always lower and higher than us. There is always cooperation on a horizontal or a vertical level, but in fact in all directions as well, actually. It is three-dimensional, although you cannot really use this word speaking of infinity. Physicists have invented “string”-theories. I think they are counting 26 levels now. Theosophically speaking this is just a piece of cake, for in fact the amount of levels is endless.

Many religions have gotten into trouble because they, in one way or another, attributed restrictions to that infinity. The result is a form of religion where people start to ask all sorts of favors to the Supreme Being. However within Islamic Religion one is not allowed to portrait the Supreme Being. Within Jewish tradition you can only address it with an epithet or endearing name. Or as Lao Tzu simply puts it: “the Tao that can be spoken is not the real Tao”.

Learning

Can you tell us something about learning? How does this take place from a theosophical perspective? Can you please lift a little corner of the veil?

Answer

A corner of the veil! There are some important principles to take into account.

Firstly, a new-born baby is by no means a blank page. It carries its own history, as it formed its character through innumerable previous incarnations.

Secondly, the child’s development up to their 21st year takes place in a number of cyclic movements. Each

cycle gives a certain possibility for the educators to relate to that. That is something you can recognize in the views of Rudolf Steiner and Maria Montessori. They both had a theosophical background, no doubt about that. You can also find these ideas in the Râja-Yoga-school in Point Loma, in earlier days. In that school, people worked with this cyclical motion. Development takes place in phases. If you know how make use of these phases, then that is much more efficient than trying to teach skills or stimulate certain qualities at the wrong moment.

Learning is always a matter of leading out what is inside. It is the Socratic method of the midwife — asking the right questions, to enable the pupil to think about the answers. So not by saying *what* it is, but by asking why do you *think* it is this or that. And what made you reach that conclusion?

This is how we can inspire and lead out qualities and features. We acknowledge that all qualities are inherent in everyone; it only takes more time to develop these qualities in one person and less in another. For a certain individual one needs a mathematical approach, whereas someone else might need a different approach. This implies individual education. Thirty to thirty-five pupils in one and the same classroom is actually quite disastrous, seen from a theosophical point of view. One way or the other it is essential to guide all pupils individually to get rid of individual problems or obstacles.

During the next symposium, 30th and 31st of May 2015, we will elaborate on this subject. It will be called: “Râja-Yoga – Education of the Reincarnating Child”. The same method of Râja-Yoga is the basis for the 12 lessons of the course “Thinking differently”. The follow-up course of which is “Wisdom of life”, which enables you to develop a vision on life based on the Seven Jewels of Wisdom. During the first course we discuss how “thinking” works, and how to develop and retain thoughts of a higher quality. We present this course for a number of years now and it is still exciting and dynamic every time.

The best way to represent “Thinking differently” and Theosophia is to be a living example of the principle. You do not even have to talk about it. Which does not mean you are not allowed to talk about it: in my experience it is no use to overwhelm anyone with

words — it is the example that counts.

Looking back at these last two days, I think we've had some wonderful days. We gained a much better comprehension of the concepts of consciousness and matter. People often think that the theosophical spiritualistic principle contradicts science. We are however truly convinced that this is certainly not the case. All we do is place scientific facts in a larger perspective, by which entirely different conclusions are drawn.

Please realize that our lectures today are a very concise representation of the theosophical teachings. We own a very large library for anyone who is interested. In that respect we all have an infinite apprenticeship ahead of us. Please, don't let that weigh you down — each learning phase is a great experience!

International I.S.I.S. Symposium 2015

Râja-Yoga Education of the Reincarnating Child

Saturday 30th and Sunday 31st of May

The problems that many people struggle with can often be traced back to the fact that people have never been taught to get acquainted with their own nature and to master it.

World problems as well – violence, war and poverty – always carry back to people's unbalanced consciousness. Because of a lack of vision concerning life and death, people never seriously start looking for solutions. They think the world is the way it is and shall never get any better. In fact they have never learned to develop another view.

A right education enables people to develop a broader view. The importance of education is therefore essential. However, what is *right* education?

At the I.S.I.S. Symposium, organized by the I.S.I.S. Foundation (International Study-centre for Independent Search for truth), an answer to that question will be searched for during two days. Starting point for this search will be an ancient education system called Râja-Yoga. This system is based on the fact that all abilities and capacities are already inherent in humans. They have not or not yet completely been developed — or rather rolled out. So we should not “teach” children too much, but enable them to activate what is already there, although still dormant.

The reincarnation doctrine is a logical component of the Râja-Yoga system. Children are not born blank, but have shaped their character in former lives. Râja-Yoga teaches them to fully develop the noble parts of their character, which enables them to control the less noble parts and to ennoble them. They learn to familiarize themselves with all qualities of their composite consciousness, which allows them to create a view of their own, to acknowledge their responsibilities and accordingly take part in and work for a greater cause.

Since the beginning of the 20th century members of the Theosophical Society gained experience with Râja-Yoga, which specifically distinguishes itself from other systems because it does not teach children *what* to think, but *how* to think.

The Râja-Yoga system is not for children only. Not just (grand)parents and teachers can make use of it. Everybody meets other people. We are all each other's educator. But more important: we will only be good educators if we understand how to apply the principles of Râja-Yoga ourselves. We are our own educators!

During this Symposium the Râja-Yoga principles will be presented in short lectures. Following these lectures the participants can put those principles to the test themselves in the workshops. Later on you will find the announcement of the complete program and venue of the Symposium on our website www.stichtingisis.org. You can subscribe online for the Symposium there as well.

Lucifer®

Colophon

Editors: Barend Voorham, Henk Bezemer, Bianca Peeters, Astrid Kramer.

Chief editor: Herman C. Vermeulen

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

Reactions:
The Editorial Board reserves the right to make a selection and/or shorten incoming documents

Subscription:
This is the fifth free sample of *Lucifer, the Messenger of Light*. For subscription: mail the editorial office: luciferred@stichtingisis.org
The price of our "paper" issues will be about € 4,60 and € 9,20 for a double issue, excluding postage.
Payment by Internet – creditcard (see website).

Publisher:
I.S.I.S. Foundation, Blavatskyhouse,
De Ruyterstraat 72-74,
2518 AV Den Haag,
tel. +31 (0) 70 346 15 45,
fax +31 (0) 345 24 67,
e-mail: luciferred@isis-foundation.org
internet: www.blavatskyhouse.org

© I.S.I.S. Foundation
No part of this publication may be reproduced or made public in any form or by any means: electronic, mechanical, by photocopies, recordings, or any other way, without prior permission of the Publisher.

The I.S.I.S. foundation is not responsible for any statement or opinion that is published in this magazine, unless an explicit reference is made.

I.S.I.S. Foundation

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

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

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

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

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

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

I.S.I.S. Foundation ANBI number is 50872.



International
Study-centre for
Independent
Search for truth
Foundation

I.S.I.S. Foundation

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

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



Why this journal is called *Lucifer*

Lucifer literally means Bringer of Light.

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

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

For these people this journal is written.

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

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

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