

The Messenger  
of Light

# Lucifer<sup>®</sup>

For seekers of Truth

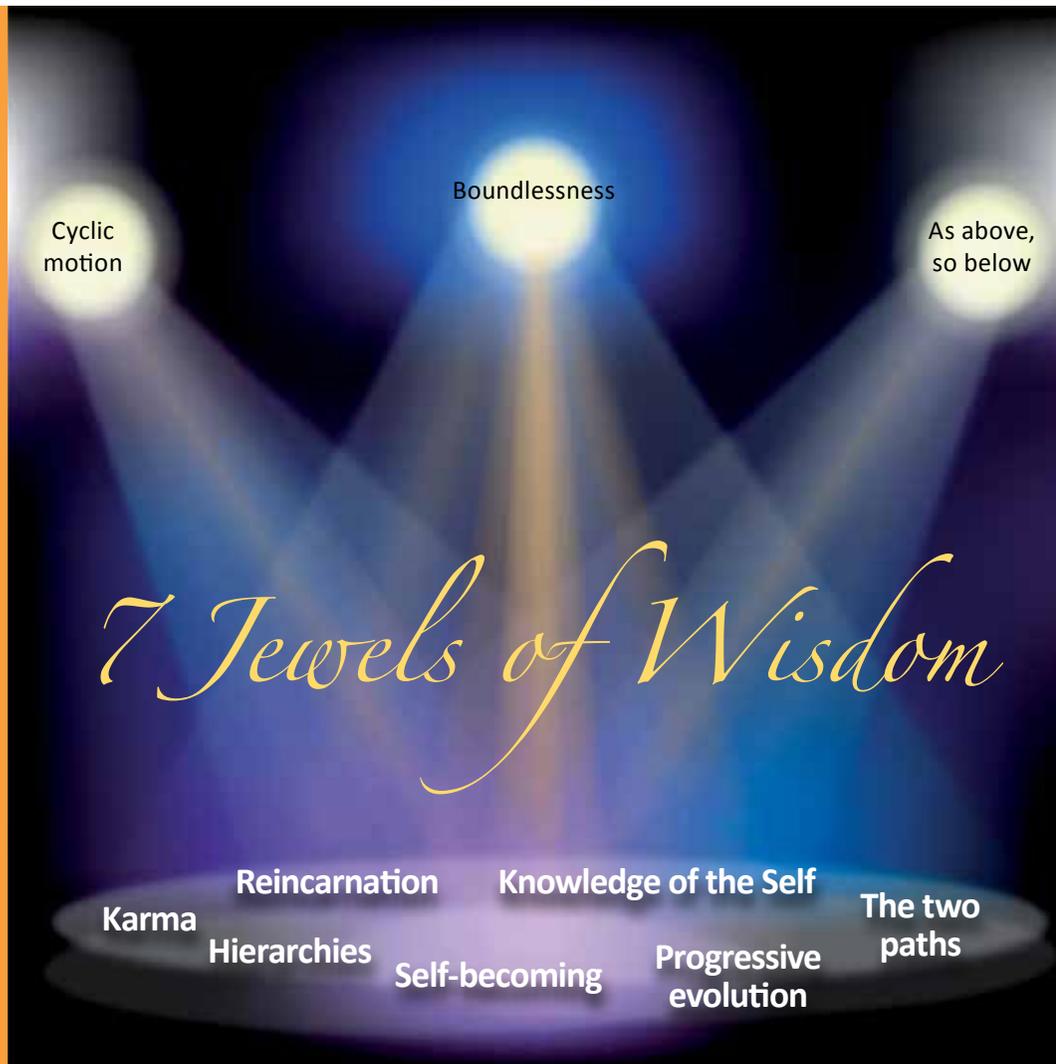
Current topics viewed in the light of the Ancient Wisdom or Theo-sophia — the common source of all great world religions, philosophies and sciences

## The three key thoughts of Theosophy

## The seven Jewels of Wisdom and their inspiring value:

1. Reincarnation
2. Karma
3. Hierarchies
4. Self-becoming
5. Progressive evolution
6. The two paths
7. Knowledge of the Self

## Recognizing the seven Jewels in world religions



# Lucifer®

## Colophon

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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.

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**The articles were written by the editorial team of *Lucifer*.**



# Editorial

## The seven Jewels of Wisdom – solutions to questions of life

### **Three and seven: one system**

In this second issue of *Lucifer – the Messenger of Light* we briefly present the seven Jewels of Wisdom. You can find traces of these teachings in the books of the world religions and great philosophical systems, as is shown in the last article of this issue. All theosophical teachings can be traced back to these seven Jewels.

Theosophy stretches over all fields of human thought. However, it is based on only three fundamental propositions, given by H.P. Blavatsky in *The Secret Doctrine*. (See the next article.) These propositions can be elaborated in seven principal ideas, called the seven Jewels of Wisdom.

Theosophy is a universal source of knowledge and wisdom. All great spiritual Teachers drew and still draw from it. Therefore you can find Theosophy in all the great religions and philosophies of the world. It is not dogmatic. It rises high above limited ideas. It is not a faith that one should believe. You should examine it yourself. The seven Jewels of Wisdom therefore are no dogmas but principal ideas you can recognize in nature and in your own life.

You can find these Jewels all through theosophical literature, in which they are explained at length. But you will rarely find them systematically ordered. Nevertheless, these seven Jewels do form one whole; one Jewel explains and complements the others. It is only by combining them that you can fully understand them. The profundity of a Jewel increases enormously if you take the other ones into consideration. For instance, reincarnation and karma cannot be understood separately. Furthermore, you understand them much better if you also study the other Jewels, which are far less publicly known. In this issue of *Lucifer*, we give principal explanations of all seven Jewels, and their mutual relations.

### **Practical tools to find answers to the questions of life**

The three propositions and the seven Jewels together are the foundation of the profound theosophical philosophy. We state that everybody can recognize these seven core ideas in his life. When structurally applying these Jewels you can solve every problem. Questions like for instance: ‘why am I who I am?’ and ‘what is the meaning of life?’ can be answered satisfactorily. In fact, when you ponder on the principle thoughts Theosophy offers you, you will find your own answers to all questions of life. Whether it is a social, ethical, pedagogic, scientific, religious or any problem whatsoever, you can find a solution in the seven Jewels offered in Theosophy. Surely, you have to work to find the answers. You have to test Theosophy in your life. But you can find the answers in yourself when you thoroughly think about these theosophical Jewels. Why is that? Because you possess

all the knowledge of these teachings in the core of your being.

We especially endeavor to show the practical value of the seven Jewels. Therefore we have illustrated the Jewels with some practical examples that students in Theosophy told us.

It is our intention to present these seven Jewels as practical tools, so that everybody is able to recognize and apply these teachings in his own life and his own environment.

We live in a world that needs this practical wisdom more than ever.

**Herman C. Vermeulen**

## The seven Jewels of Wisdom

A study of Theosophy will make you familiar with a number of core ideas like reincarnation, karma and evolution.

These core ideas can also be found in eastern scriptures, where they are called the Seven Jewels of Wisdom:

*Sapta Ratnâni*. They all follow from the three propositions of Theosophy.

Jewels of Wisdom	Explanation	A few conclusions
<b>1st Jewel: reincarnation, the cyclic process of life and death</b>	Every being passes through the phases of life (activity) and death (rest).	Our fellow-humans are <i>reincarnating egos</i> with whom we work and live life after life. So, a new born child is an old colleague whom we help to settle, and someone's death is a 'see you later'.
<b>2nd Jewel: karma, the doctrine of cause and consequence.</b>	Every action in the Cosmos leads to a reaction, a consequence. Thus, the consequences in your life are caused by your former thoughts and actions.	Karma is the doctrine of <i>free will</i> . You are the creator of your own destiny. Karma is a result of the <i>Unity</i> behind the Cosmos. Our destiny is interwoven with that of all beings.
<b>3rd Jewel: hierarchies</b>	Every being is part of something greater and is itself composed of smaller beings.	More developed and less developed beings are mutually dependent. Development is relative. We are both teacher and student. So, we should try to be an example for our fellow-men.
<b>4rth Jewel: self-becoming (swabhâva)</b>	Every being has a unique character. You always become what you yourself have built up in your consciousness.	You cannot blame your parents, your education, your circumstances or your DNA for what you are. You are responsible for your character.
<b>5th Jewel: progressive evolution</b>	Every being develops the latent capacities in its consciousness. This is not Darwinism. You don't change by chance but on your own strength.	There is never any need to think that you are "just what you are". You are much more than what you manifest now. Our unselfish ideals and aspirations are attainable.
<b>6th Jewel: the two Paths, the Path of "Everyone for Himself" and the Path of Compassion</b>	There are two motives to tread the Path: 1) for yourself, for individual deliverance; 2) for the benefit of all that lives. In this latter case your spiritual growth is incidental on helping others.	"Compassion is no attribute. It is the LAW of Laws." (H.P. Blavatsky) Practicing compassion is not just trying 'to do good deeds'; it is a continuous realizing of brotherhood as a fact in Nature.
<b>7th Jewel: knowledge of the SELF, the core of all beings (Âtma-vidyâ)</b>	You are able to know the One Life that flows through every being, because in the deepest core of your being you <i>are</i> THAT yourself.	Realizing the Unity of all that lives has bearing on all our habits: <i>on which bank do I put my money? How to deal with that annoying neighbor? How can I – or my country – contribute to peace in the world?</i>



# The three fundamental propositions of Theosophy

**Theosophy is based on three fundamental propositions. Those who become acquainted with Theosophy and investigate it beyond the surface, will be changed forever. One cannot ignore something that resonates so deeply in oneself.**

People who get in touch with Theosophy for the first time, quickly discover that this doctrine is something completely different from the belief systems to which they may be accustomed. Theosophy, when studied with an open mind, surprises, astonishes and makes a deep impression upon us. In Theosophy we can find answers to all of our questions; a fact that may even irritate some people. Others may experience a certain emotional resistance to this comprehensive system, as it challenges some of their beliefs that they had never before questioned, or when they discover that Theosophy is often contrary to many general, accepted opinions. However, many newcomers are struck by the consistency of this doctrine: a doctrine that seems somehow familiar to them, despite its apparent newness. It is familiar to them, because from deep within something starts resonating, as if they had already known these things but have never

been able to put them into words.

There are also people who, after their first encounter with Theosophy, prefer to wait and keep some mental distance at first. Perhaps they don't immediately recognize the scope of the doctrine. And even those who don't want to invest their time to study Theosophy, often admit that it is a clear and consistent thought system.

## **Combination of profound knowledge and philosophy of life**

Why does Theosophy often make such an overwhelming impression on people? What is this Theosophy actually?

To start with, Theosophy is a coherent system of profound knowledge that has been tried and tested since the existence of mankind. Therefore, it is not a revealed doctrine, which one can only choose to *believe* or not, but it is a system of thought which, just like a scientific hypothesis, can be

investigated and put to the test.

However, Theosophy is much more than a scientific theory; it penetrates every fiber of your consciousness, of your thoughts, your feelings, your actions. Once you have pondered over the vital questions of life in the light of Theosophy and experienced the truth of it, there is no going back to ignorance. In this fact lies the explanation for the overwhelming feelings that many people experience when they are introduced to Theosophy. For Theosophy is not merely a logical *scientific* system, not just a *philosophy*, and not another *religion*, but it is the synthesis of all three.

### The three fundamental propositions

H.P. Blavatsky defines the three principal thoughts in her book *The Secret Doctrine* as follows:

1. An Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless, and Immutable PRINCIPLE on which all speculation is impossible, since it transcends the power of human conception and could only be dwarfed by any human expression or similitude.  
One absolute Reality which antecedes all manifested, conditioned, being.
2. The Eternity of the Universe *in toto* as a boundless plane; periodically “the playground of numberless Universes incessantly manifesting and disappearing,” called “the manifesting stars,” and the “sparks of Eternity.”
3. The fundamental identity of all Souls with the Universal Over-Soul, the latter being itself an aspect of the Unknown Root; and the obligatory pilgrimage for every Soul – a spark of the former – through the Cycle of Incarnation (or “Necessity”) in accordance with Cyclic and Karmic law, during the whole term.

### Three principles

What distinguishes Theosophy from other thought systems is that it is consistently based on only three fundamental ideas, often called ‘the three principles’ or ‘the three propositions’. These three principles are no dogmas but working hypotheses that should be able to explain the world we live in: the world of phenomena. Studying these three principles requires a continuous alertness on our part. We must challenge every aspect of these principles by comparing them with the facts around us, before we can convince ourselves that the doctrine is correct. In other words, the study of Theosophy will never appeal to

blind faith, but on the contrary, to critical investigation and thorough contemplation.

In short we can describe these three principle ideas as follows (see also the box on this page).

1. Boundlessness. Life is eternal and boundless.
2. Periodicity: the cyclic nature of the Universe. Life manifests and withdraws itself periodically.
3. There is an obligatory Pilgrimage for each soul. Each and every being gradually evolves from ‘atom to god’ during the manifestations of life. This third proposition states that each being, at every level of development, has the same intrinsic value and the same divine destiny.

### Boundlessness

Especially the first principle – the Boundless Principle as H.P. Blavatsky calls it – is for many people a real eye-opener. It revolutionizes our view on almost everything. Sometimes, this first principle is experienced as difficult. The reason is that the human mind cannot grasp the notion of Boundlessness. Each manifested being is limited per se, cannot be boundless in its manifestation, and thus is unable to conceptualize the meaning of boundlessness. Nevertheless, the application of this principle is not so difficult, although it may be different from what most people are accustomed to. Of course, it does need thorough contemplation.

We are talking here about an *unknowable causeless cause* and not about an *entity*. Because this principle is boundless, it is omnipresent and it constitutes the very essence of everything. This also means that everything is alive; a galaxy is a living being just as much as an atom is. All the various life forms that we see around us are simply different levels of evolutionary development. Yet, every phenomenon is in its deepest essence this Boundlessness, which we sometimes call, for lack of the right words, our Divine essence. Everything that exists belongs to this Boundlessness — *is* in fact Boundlessness. That’s why all beings are inextricably related to each other. For when all beings are the Boundless Principle in the inmost of their inmost, then they are equal in essence.

### Conclusions from the three principles

It is almost unimaginable that the very comprehensive and profound system of theosophical teachings is based on only these three principles. The theosophical teachings can only be understood in the light of these three basic

thoughts. Therefore, we should try to understand these principles in such a way that we are able to apply them in practice.

The most important conclusion one can draw from these propositions, is the so-called spiritualistic principle. This principle or basic assumption implies that there is a force working 'behind', 'in', or 'through' every phenomenon. If life is boundless, then this life has in every aspect no beginning and no end, neither in duration nor in volume, scope, depth or in any other characteristic. Thus, viewed from the world of manifestation – the world of phenomena – there must be a force behind every manifested being. The different religious systems have given a variety of names to that force. They call this for instance soul or spirit. That soul, however, is in its turn the result of a force acting behind it. And that force emanates again from an inner force behind it, and so on. In fact, it is always the same fundamental force which, reasoned from our own point of view, becomes gradually more spiritual, gradually more ethereal, until it is barely perceivable to us — or not perceivable at all.

In Theosophy we call that force 'life' or 'consciousness'. Consciousness is therefore the inner cause of each phenomenon: a star, a human being, an animal, a mineral or anything. So consciousness or life does not arise from matter, which is what the materialistic thinking scientists state, nor is it the product of a creating deity. Instead, life is endless: sometimes it is manifested and sometimes it is not. If you fully understand this, then, in fact, you have solved the mystery of death.

Studying Theosophy may turn all your former ideas 'upside down' as it were, because from now on you consider the world from the spiritualistic point of view. We heard someone say: "Once you grasp the main thoughts of Theosophy, you can hardly understand how you could have had a different view in the past. Everything becomes hopeful. You have taken a step towards a greater truth." The spiritualistic principle also implies that every phenomenon comes and goes (see the second proposition). Each being appears in the world – in manifestation – and disappears from it again after some time. Life and death are therefore interrelated concepts, expressing nothing else than a temporary state in which the consciousness remains. Another important conclusion is that we are all continually developing ourselves. Inner growth is a universal habit. This is a crucial lesson: all beings are 'travelers'. This applies to a man, an animal, a god. Furthermore, we all need each other during this pilgrimage.

Therefore, equivalence of all life is an important practical conclusion of Theosophy. Theosophy not only teaches us to view our fellow human beings as companions on our journey, but to recognize plants, animals and all other living things as our companions as well. This idea is the fundament of all ethics. So, ethics is not created by human conventions; it is based on the Cosmic laws themselves. The three fundamental propositions are elaborated in the seven Jewels of Wisdom, which will be discussed in the following articles.

## **Background of religions**

Theosophy is not a new doctrine. Far from it. It is said to be as old as humanity itself. That fact seems to strike people as interesting, particularly those who come from a religious family. Older people in particular, who have sometimes struggled for years with Christian dogmas such as a cruel god who punishes people in an eternal hell. Theosophy liberates them from this fear. At the same time it gives them a true appreciation of what their religion *really* is. Theosophy sheds a completely different light on all mythical stories, like for example the Bible. Theosophy is therefore the essence of every religion. Every great religious or philosophical system originates from this Divine Wisdom, which in antiquity was known under many different names. This explains the joy of recognition that some people, who have grown up in a certain religious tradition, experience when they come in contact with Theosophy.

## **Synthesis of profound knowledge and philosophy of life**

As mentioned above, Theosophy is not only a source of knowledge, it is just as importantly a philosophy of life. You could call Theosophy a synthesis of this profound knowledge and this philosophy of life. In other words, knowledge alone is not Theosophy. That would be like having a road map without looking at it. What's the point of a navigation system if you don't turn it on?

But on the other hand, Theosophy is not *only* a way of living. Without knowledge you don't have a philosophy of life. It is the unique combination of the two that astonishes people when they first get in touch with Theosophy. In other words: you only really understand Theosophy when you apply its doctrines. To understand Theosophy is to apply Theosophy.

Hence we should *become* Theosophy: then we cannot act in any other way than living according to its principles.

The essence of the theosophical principles is best expressed by the concept of UNITY. All manifestations of life are aspects, components of the Boundless Life, and being part of the Boundless, they themselves are in the heart of their hearts the Boundless. So this means that every being is, in its essence, identical to other beings. Therefore, we are truly a part of one another. We are, speaking in human terms, each other's brothers. Brotherhood is a fact in Nature. There is unity behind the diversity of beings, and this is the central idea of the philosophy of life that Theosophy is. Getting acquainted with this Divine Wisdom is discovering this idea of unity, a discovering of the different types of arguments and evidence that support this idea of Brotherhood. These arguments are intellectual arguments that call upon our hearts and our idealism, but satisfy our feelings too: in short, arguments that convince our whole being.

Then we can *become* Theosophy. This means that we adopt the idea of unity as the starting point of all our thoughts and acts, thus permeating our consciousness with the fact that in the very essence of our being we are all the same. Finally, we *are* Theosophy when we not only use the doctrine as the basis of our thoughts, but when we have fully absorbed it, so that we are no longer able to do anything else but to think and act in accordance with it. There is no need to look at the 'road map' anymore. You have become the Way! Compare this with the law of gravity. You can study it and understand it as a theory. But only a fool would act without taking it into account: who would place his cup in the air and not on a table?

In the next seven articles, examples will be given on how you will live your life when you become or are Theosophy.



# Reincarnation, the first Jewel

**Reincarnation, the first Jewel of Wisdom, teaches us who we are, the origin of our eternal core and the origin of our temporary bodies. It teaches us to look behind the physical forms and recognize the fundamental Life that is working behind it, and to free ourselves from the 'you-only-live-once' way of life.**

When we elaborate on the three propositions that were presented in the preceding article, we arrive at the first of the seven Jewels of Wisdom: reincarnation or reimpodiment.

The term normally used is reincarnation or 're-becoming flesh'. A broader and therefore better term is reimpodiment. The movement of ceaseless manifestation and withdrawal, and the obligatory pilgrimage for every Soul through the Cycle of Incarnation calls forth a majestic picture of reimpodiment: life – consciousness – that always is, and which time and again manifests itself in the worlds of form in order to unfold its latent, unlimited possibilities for spiritual growth. Life that withdraws into the inner worlds after each period of experience, so that it can assimilate its experiences and embed the insights gained, that thus will become part of the active consciousness in the next impodiment.

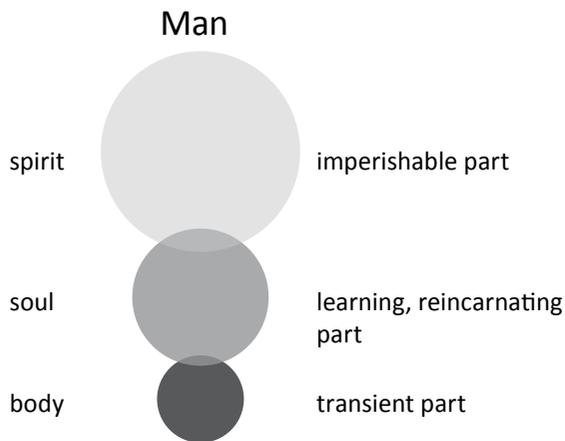
This process applies to man as it does to a universe, a planet or a material atom. For this 'mystery of life and death' we can find innumerable direct clues. All nature is cyclic. From the day and night rhythm and the changing of the seasons to the rise and fall of civilizations — life renews itself in countless ways. We perceive periods of outer growth and decline, which in the long term show certain developments.

But despite these clues, for many people still an important question remains. What in us exactly reincarnates? What consequences does this doctrine have for us? Which practical lessons and examples are available that reincarnation as a Jewel of Wisdom offers an enrichment of our lives?

## **What reincarnates?**

The Omnipresent PRINCIPLE, the first fundamental proposition, never incarnates — IT just *is*. The spiritual

essence of man is a spark of it and therefore will not incarnate. The spiritual essence of man always remains on its own spiritual plane, but it projects a ray from itself — a force. This force that flows forth from it, we call the soul. It is the soul that makes man a man. It is this element that reincarnates. This is the thinker. We differ from other natural kingdoms because of our ability to think. So, the total man is a composite being. This composite consciousness can be divided in spirit, soul and body.



The spirit stands for the immortal core, the god spark. This part in us is imperishable. Next there is the soul. The soul is the link between spirit and body, which is the carrier of the total consciousness.

The soul of man is his thinking capacity. As such, also the soul is composite. Its higher aspects have a proclivity to the 'above', so these are oriented on the spiritual. The lower aspects are focused on the body and are materially inclined. The soul is that part of man that recurrently reincarnates. It is the learning part of man and it enwraps itself in a material body again and again in order to learn its lessons.

Well now, we cannot consider the seven Jewels of Wisdom separately from each other — they are all elaborations of three basic propositions. Therefore the doctrine of reincarnation cannot be clearly understood if one does not involve the other Jewels, in particular the second Jewel, 'karma'. The re-embodiment of man is the reincarnation of an individual being, with a character that is formed by causes and effects — the law of karma — throughout a long series of lives.

In this article we focus specifically on reincarnation.

### No more fear of death

If there is one reason why the doctrine of reincarnation

has become of great value in one's life, then it is the realization that death is not the end but merely a phase of rest in the cycle of life and death. The fear of death — the paralyzing image that people often carry with them — vanishes; reincarnation gives peace of mind. Our body may die eventually, but our essential core is immortal. And our soul will resume its development with vim and vigor in the next incarnation.

This inner peace and calmness also applies to the loved ones of someone going through the process of dying. For many who have a loved one who is going through the process of dying, true knowledge about death makes things easier for them to deal with. Then the process can take place in peace and harmony. The struggle for life and the considerable emotions that usually accompany the 'you-only-live-once-philosophy', make place for a quiet transition from one condition to another.

The doctrine of reincarnation also puts the issue of sickness in an entirely different perspective. What happens when we are ill? In fact, it is a process in which a person is confronted with the results of an imbalance in his composite consciousness that he has caused in the past. The illness — how unpleasantly it may be running its course — is an expression of the process of restoration. Of course here karma — the doctrine of cause and effect — plays a role as well. But it is still a fact that our wildly expensive healthcare system often is focused on the preservation of outer life even in situations where someone's consciousness clearly is in the last phase of the process of dying. This is the direct result of a general view in society that does not consider reincarnation.

### Natural process

The process of dying is a natural phase in the cycle of appearing and disappearing that every being goes through countless times. The phase marks a transition to another state of consciousness. During the process of dying, the soul slowly withdraws from the body. The higher aspects of the soul, in particular the spirituality that the person has developed in the life now finished, will be embedded in the spiritual core. The lower aspects, just like the body, will disintegrate.

The withdrawal of the soul is a natural situation for an older person and therefore usually takes longer than just a few days. In fact, this process can take up several years. If this happens in a natural way, the soul, the learning part in us, can optimally assimilate the 'harvest' of the life just lived. And it can also prepare most effectively for the

next incarnation. Karmically seen, we plant the seeds of our future by the choices we make now: every day, every year until our last moments. We ourselves determine how our future, our next life will look like.

From the point of view of reincarnation the soul does not die. It is the body that dies, or better still, disintegrates. It disintegrates because life comes loose from it. A healthcare that keeps the body 'alive' unnaturally long by applying medical technology, does not fit this image. At the same time we see that – for the same reasons – also active euthanasia does not fit this image either. In this last case not all lessons that life offers have been learned yet and precisely those last moments just before death – also when these are painful – enable us to learn the greatest lessons.

### **Panoramic vision**

An extremely important process during the dying phase is 'taking stock': looking back and rendering account of our life. What kind of life did we live? What did we learn? What lessons can we draw from the life that is now coming to an end?

In fact, this 'taking stock' already starts several months or years before death sets in. People who are involved in care for the dying, either privately or professionally can help the elderly by talking with them about their life and asking them about it.

After the last heartbeat this process continues in a very illuminative way. The dying person then sees his whole life passing before his mind's eye. He looks upon everything he experienced and everything he thought, starting from early childhood and ending just before physical death, but now from a higher perspective. The soul oversees the past life with exceptional clarity, understands the relations of the 'how' and 'why', sees the justice of all that has happened — and in a flash sees the opportunities of his future incarnation. This vision is very important for the assimilation of the insights gained in the life just lived. It usually takes place in the first hours after the last heartbeat. But a second panoramic vision follows after the other lower principles of the personality have disintegrated. Then the focus is already more on a slumbering future: what awaits us in our next life, seen from the spiritual capacities of the Reincarnating Ego?

This second vision is usually followed by a long period of rest – long in terms of human time – after which the Reincarnating Ego, just before his next incarnation, again experiences a short panoramic vision. In this third vision he oversees the possibilities of what is to come.

### **Daily life**

For our daily life, knowledge about the processes of dying and incarnating again is of great importance. In a way the rhythm of waking and sleeping is dying a little everyday: sleep is an incomplete death and death is a complete sleep. But furthermore, these processes are identical. This is why we are advised to consciously evaluate every day: to look back and reflect on ourselves with honesty. What went well, what was not so good, what are our conclusions? In the morning we can recapitulate the mini-vision of last night so that we can have a focused start of the day. In the same way that we can draw our spiritual conclusions from the life that has passed, we can draw conclusions from the experiences we had in one day, if we develop this habit to review what happened during the day before we go to sleep.

Some people wonder how they can prepare best for the process of dying. Well, evaluate the day before you go to sleep. Look at it as an observer without any emotional judgment. Draw your conclusions. Ask yourself what you can do better, how you can live more spiritually. Meditate on your ideal of peace and compassion. After you wake up the next morning, make a preview of the day and imagine how you can contribute to peace and harmony in the world in a positive way.

A better preparation for death does not exist.

### **Disabled**

In the light of reincarnation, chronic diseases and congenital disabilities cannot be considered without karma. These diseases and disabilities are not punishment, nor are they some whim of fate; they are moments of learning evoked by ourselves. They offer us the opportunity to have experiences by which we can grow in consciousness and wisdom. We can learn to build up a harmonious balance between body, soul and spirit. Keep in mind: the real man – the spiritual part – is never handicapped. It is the learning part that created the causes. The circumstances in which we are, are always learning situations: they give us the chance to develop more compassion.

Many students find the strength to accept all kinds of inconveniences in the Theosophy: a child or grandchild with a disability, a partner with a serious illness. A life is never meaningless. The consciousness grows, that of the disabled maybe even more. Everybody will become a Buddha eventually. Patience! After reading the article about progressive evolution it may become clearer what is meant by 'patience'.

It is a very positive thought that a disability – and who doesn't have some or another relative 'handicap' – can be a lesson of life. But also here this does not fit in the 'you only live once' society. We can only look at it in a positive way from the perspective of reincarnation. Otherwise we cannot see the use of it. Or – and this happens a lot – the disability gets a negative connotation as a result of degenerated religious interpretations. 'It is the punishment of God, the punishment of Allah', or it is 'bad karma, you have done something wrong'. This is a horrible 'this is all your own fault' idea which is in total contradiction with the theosophical knowledge about reincarnation and karma. There is no 'good' or 'bad' karma: there is only cause and effect, and our difficulties often prove to be more valuable for our spiritual awakening, than things that go smoothly.

A child with a congenital disability has determined his specific vehicular capacities and limitations himself. He did not accidentally get his handicap. There is no such thing as coincidence. His body and soul are shaped in concurrence with his development and character. Justice does exist. In this life he has very specific possibilities to restore an unbalance in his constitution. He can practice his will, however scarcely visible this may be for the outer world.

### **Helping in an impersonal way**

How do you look upon the death of a small child from a theosophical perspective? Especially in this kind of situations Theosophy is of great value. Birth and the process of dying get a totally different meaning when seen in the light of reincarnation. Especially when children and young people pass away. Then obviously, in a material sense, the incarnation was not very successful: this vehicle was not suitable enough to give expression to the Reincarnating Ego. In fact young children are not really dying. You can better consider it as a failed birth. A child that dies has hardly made his thinking mind active, it has not yet learned any spiritual lessons that he needs to process. The consciousness of the deceased child therefore will soon – a long period of rest is not necessary – find new and fitting possibilities to re embody again.

By applying Theosophy in your life, your insights and vision increase and you can handle these problems better. If you look at your fellow men and everything that lives with compassion, your understanding expands. You see the unity of all that lives, you see that *brotherhood is a fact in Nature*.

If you take reincarnation as a starting point in life, this not

only helps you to develop a clear and powerful vision in difficult times, but it also enables you to really help others, while ignoring your own situation. To live Theosophy is setting an example that truly helps others. You don't let yourself be carried away by their personal suffering, but you show them the impersonal way in which a loss can be dealt with. How do we do that? This is an exercise in the Royal Way: to live for the benefit of the whole, to serve the ideal of brotherhood. The Path of Compassion that is described in numerous ways in the spiritual writings of the great religions and philosophies. Forget yourself, so that your Self can grow. Ignore the longings of your lower personality and focus on the growth of your spiritual capacities. Evaluate your days. Do well and don't look back, don't wish for results, *live* compassion. Impersonal helping is *sustainable* helping.

### **Old age in the light of reincarnation**

And then, when we have tried hard to live a meaningful life, 'suddenly' we are seniors, old, often less capable to be vitally active in a physical way. Often we are caught by surprise about the speed with which life seems to pass by. How do we experience the phase of old age? That depends a lot on how we have looked at it in the years before. Did we see man as a pilgrim of eternity, who in the last stage of this specific life can offer the abilities he developed for the benefit of society? Or did we see man as a once-only individual, whose batteries in the end get pretty empty and who, being an 'oldy' should not interfere with society anymore? If we can answer the first question with 'yes', then we will be quite a different senior than someone who has to answer the second question affirmative. Yes, we are the directors of our live — taking into account the karmic circumstances that originated in former lives can cross our path.

We can learn a lot from growing older in the light of reincarnation. As young adults we can already recognize the cycles in our life: specific periods of learning, implementing ideas, gaining experience and applying our developed skills. Furthermore, if we are inspired by a philosophy of life, by an understanding that grows along with the experiences we have, then we can live *consciously*, be the director of our life *consciously*, and thus prevent profound regrets for missed opportunities later. Then, especially when we did keep up with the pace of life, we shall be able to *inspire* others with our experiences. The recipe to keep us spiritually 'awake' and vital is to keep thinking actively about life, society and our ideal.

## **Dementia**

But yet, the time will come that the soul longs for rest, longs to withdraw from outer life. In this stage of life many people need help. Relief workers – often volunteers – should be aware of the outer, practical aspects, but also of the inner thoughts of the elderly person.

Many people fear dementia at an older age. But if you keep an open mind during your life, and think more of others than of yourself, dementia is not a necessary phase. However, there can be karmic causes from former lives that cause someone to lose his mental capacities.

It is a good advice to think about the final period of our incarnation, before that time comes. It is possible to prevent that ad hoc decisions have to be made as a result of unexpected circumstances. It is advisable to contemplate the whole process of dementia in the last stage of live and to form an idea of the wisest way to handle it. This way we can prepare our own decisions for this last phase of his life. But above all, growing older should stimulate us – at whatever age we may be – to actively improve and expand our vision of live. To live in the light of reincarnation is to live in the continuous realization that ‘young’ or ‘old’ are extremely relative conceptions, and unimportant in the perspective of the immortality of life itself, that is, the immortality of the core of our consciousness. It is a thought of endless beauty to be able to live and work for the spiritual development of all mankind, in the realization that each one of us is in essence life itself and that life never comes to an end.

In the next article we explore how we can view the karmic consequences of living Theosophia in the practice of daily life.



# Karma, the second Jewel

**Karma, the law of cause and effect, is usually associated with the doctrine of reincarnation. This makes sense because karma, the second Jewel of Wisdom, opens our eyes to the logic of ‘getting another chance’ to set things right. Coupled with the doctrine of reincarnation, the boundaries of having to do it all in one lifetime are removed. The effect always follows the cause: sometimes not even a second passes before we see the consequences of an action and sometimes an incredibly long period passes, sometimes as long as several lives.**

The law of karma is technically the law of recovering harmony. All actions influence Nature, and Nature responds in *kind*. The chain of cause and consequence in human life may be further explored as the concatenation of thoughts and actions leading to consequences which lead to effects with similar characteristics. Because we think and act life after life, we build on our character continuously. An ancient and very useful way to look at this is: sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character.

Karma is the practical explanation of the building of our character.

Karma teaches us to be disciplined, consistent and honest with ourselves. Karma is by definition fair to everyone, although this is not always immediately clear. A cause can

originate from former lives or from this life; a consequence can manifest itself now or in a subsequent life. So there remains karma that has not yet worked out, karma that we are producing by thinking and acting, and karma that has started to generate consequences. Thus we can say the circumstances of our life originate from the things we did ourselves, from our own character.

Karma brings precisely what we are and what we have built ourselves, not more and not less. Arbitrariness, blame and punishment have no part in karma. It is a neutral law of nature, impersonal and fair.

Someone can be born desperately poor in an underdeveloped country and someone else as the child of a rich man in a country overflowing with opportunity. Someone can be healthy for a long time and enjoy a

rich old age and someone else can die young. It is the nature of karma to encompass the entire series of our lives past, present and future to give us the opportunity to work out our thoughts and actions. This is the reason that often we think we are in a less than positive situation when it is exactly what we need.

The concept 'fate', whether or not used in relation to karma, does not exist from the theosophical perspective. When any event occurs, all circumstances are optimal for it, whether or not that is immediately obvious to the participants. When we are not able to grasp the how and why of it, we often call a concurrence of circumstances 'coincidence'. But coincidence simply does not exist.

### **Getting control over your own life**

The Western world operates on a Christian tradition which has instilled many with dogmatic and oppressive thoughts of guilt and fear of punishment from which they have difficulty breaking free. The idea that you are born in sin and that you must be saved by the mercy of a force outside yourself has enslaved generations in fear. The idea that you yourself and your fellow men should have to burn in hell forever, has tormented many their entire lives. Fundamentalist Christians whose particular denomination teaches predestination have had to deal with the frightening question whether they were in fact predestined for heaven or not.

Even when people turn their backs on the church, nagging thoughts of guilt and fear can play a role in neuroses for years afterwards.

When these people encounter Theosophy, one of the first things to disappear is the *fear*. You know that you can't get lost anymore. You experience that *you* are the one who observes, supervises and controls your life and that the idea of a judging god or other external powers interfering with you simply does not make sense any more. This way you learn to be more engaged in life and to face misfortunes with confidence. There are countless opportunities for you still in subsequent incarnations. You begin to understand that you will be able to realize all your ideals.

When most people first become aware of the simple truths of Theosophy something *resonates* deep within and they appear to know they are on the right track, finally!

One way karma helps us in our daily life is that we realize that although we have grown up with certain ideas, those ideas can easily be shed just like a child can grow out of its clothes. We discover that we have the ability to rise above our environment because our thinking can change,

can become nobler.

In other words, we are able to replace troubling thoughts with helpful, noble and inspirational ones. It is karma that compels us to reflect. We *are* our karma ourselves. We are our own causes and consequences. That's why we can consciously sow other causes, reap other consequences and thus change ourselves and our environment. Living in the awareness of karma results in an unshakably positive attitude towards life.

The ancient doctrines of karma and reincarnation show us we *are* able to actualize all of our ideals eventually! That is done by using opportunities optimally. Karma is a neutral law; it takes no favorites and therefore it is wise to appreciate the chances we create *for ourselves*.

### **Overcoming feelings of hatred**

Another positive effect of living in the awareness of the doctrine of cause and effect is that you become able to overcome feelings of hatred. People with traumatic experiences, such as men who have confronted hand to hand battle in a war or people who have been victims of other egregious forms of assault or have lost a loved one in a terrorist attack, can find peace within themselves by studying the doctrine of karma. They get answers to questions to which they could not have found a satisfactory answer without karma.

Some questions injured people frequently ask (before they become aware of karma) are: why did I have to be born exactly in that period in that country with those parents and in those circumstances? Why is this happening to me? Why was I exactly on that spot where the accident happened? Why have those criminals done this or that to me?

Thanks to the doctrine of karma people have the ability to ask other questions: is it only the *others* who are responsible for the things that happen to us? Didn't we sow the seeds ourselves for what has happened to us?

Remember that karma is a neutral law and it is in no way to be seen as 'punishment', but as an impersonal response of Nature to our thoughts and actions through all of our lifetimes. Every incident in our life that makes us uncomfortable is really the universe giving us the *opportunity* to regain balance and harmony. Karma is never punishment; it is always an *opportunity* to make things right.

When one finds answers to those questions because of karma, feelings of hatred begin to fade and traumatic experiences can be put into perspective.

## Breaking a negative chain

Karma as an essential part of our philosophy of life can help us to overcome personal traumas. Knowing that we are part of a *universal unity* and also participants in a field of causes and consequences will not make cruelties any less horrible, but will give us the tools to put those experiences behind us. We can look at the events in our lives as opportunities for growth instead of blocking our spiritual abilities with feelings of anger and revenge. The study of karma enables us to grow spiritually by learning to build on constructive thoughts and foster the comprehension necessary to work positively on a large scale.

An example of this possibility is the installation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, after the cessation of Apartheid. Although South Africa is still far from being a model of peace and harmony, this country was able to make a huge step forward in a short period of time, partly due to this commission.

Perseverance in rancor and insisting on retribution on the other hand can only bring about catastrophic consequences.

One example of this is the series of crippling 'compensations' which were imposed on Germany after the First World War. The frustration and anger among the German people about this and the following economic disaster were direct causes for the people to become vulnerable to the rhetoric of the rising Third Reich.

Try to imagine the world we would have if people could use the doctrine of karma as a working hypothesis in their lives. They would influence governments and entire cultures. If people were free to invest their energy and resources seriously in facing and dealing with war and suppression while aiming for peace first within themselves, the chain of violence could be broken. Polarization of peoples and hostility between countries simply would not make sense any more. The consequence would be peace and cooperation between countries and groups of people.

## Letting go of attachments

It is because of karma that people are attracted to each other. We need to realize well that the force of attraction has two poles: love and hatred. We are attracted to each other because of sympathy or love; but also antipathy or hatred.

The attractions caused by these two opposing forces ties people together through lifetimes. In spite of the fact that the relations created by love have different characteristics

from those which are established by hatred, these forces are equally powerful.

Because of this phenomenon, individuals who are attracted by feelings of sympathy (often mistaken for love) can evolve in different directions in the *same lifetime*. One may choose to stagnate for a while and another may be going through a growth spurt. Their common interests can change and the bond of 'love' can become weaker. When this occurs the reaction is often anger and hatred. When we understand karma, this type of growing apart does not have to include rancor and feelings of rejection. It is the logical consequence of the fact that individuals evolve at different rates.

When we realize that to cherish feelings of hatred assures us of having to deal with this perceived enemy again in a subsequent life (or indeed the same 'type' over and over in this life) we learn that the idea of *forgiveness* takes on a whole new perspective. Suddenly forgiveness does not mean an emotional reunion; on the contrary, a person can achieve feelings of complete *neutrality*. Forgiving someone does not always mean a person has to see the other.

In our hearts we are always connected with each other. But by our own thoughts, fed by sympathy and unfortunately sometimes also by antipathy, we choose the people that we deal with, our parents and family, our job, our environment. We are responsible for these choices ourselves although we may not remember having made them.

When people appear to abandon us because they take another direction in life, we are able to accept this more easily because of the doctrine of karma. We learn to look at our circumstances in an impersonal way even when things happen which hurt us personally. This gives us the freedom to 'let go' and to respect the wishes of the other.

## Brotherhood

A type of thinking which transcends the personal desires and needs of the individual is a skill which is essential to the study of the doctrines of karma and reincarnation. This discipline also prepares us for a future which extends over subsequent lives. To strengthen self-seeking thoughts would intensify our inner obstacles. Both self-aggrandizing and self-pitying thinking are prime examples of living in the illusion that we are separate from the rest of our fellow living things. The *Heresy of Separateness* to which most people still subscribe, albeit unconsciously, is the belief that one's own life is disconnected from the lives of others. Part of this illusion is that the concerns and needs of others are not one's own concerns and that our

lives are or ever could be separated from the whole. The principles of Theosophia, which are directly perceptible in the doctrine of karma, show us clearly that Brotherhood is a *fact* of Nature. We are inextricably linked together because we all are in essence the *life*, the PRINCIPLE.

### Acting ethically

Theosophia continues to prove her value again and again when it concerns insight into behaving well.

Even in very difficult circumstances, the insight that the understanding of karma brings gives us the wisdom to act ethically. It is as Krishna teaches Arjuna in *The Bhagavad-Gîtâ*:

The doer who performs necessary actions  
unattached to their consequences  
and without love or hatred  
is of the nature of the quality of truth — *sattva*.\*

Further in the same chapter:

The discerning power  
that knows how to begin and to renounce,  
what should and what should not be done,  
what is to be feared and what not,  
what holds fast and what sets the soul free, is of the *sattva*  
quality.<sup>(1)</sup>

We all know of situations in which people have had to make difficult decisions, such as what actions to take in the case of suspected child abuse. When someone adheres to the doctrine of karma he is able to act quietly and deliberately, always aiming at a long term solution and never acting on emotion or out of personal judgment. Allow yourself to imagine: if the doctrine of karma could have been practiced by bankers, the worldwide bank crisis would never have arisen. Bankers who were focused on their own short-term interests caused the worldwide crisis. If they could have understood a little of karma, then they may have had more vision of the whole and would have focused their view on the long term. The world would certainly have been spared the misery this self-seeking behavior caused.

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\* *Sattva* is one of the three *gunas* (or characteristics): *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. *Sattva* is understood to consist of truth, goodness, reality and purity. *Rajas* represents the urge to activity. *Tamas* is passivity and ignorance.

### Free will

The doctrine of karma and reincarnation shows us, as already stated earlier in this article, the undeniable fact that we *ourselves* are the architects and designers of this life and the next. We are not being passively fed into some mechanism over which we have no influence. On the contrary, we *are* that mechanism in every sense. Man has self-consciousness, although it is not yet completely developed. However, human self-consciousness is developed enough to live this life thoughtfully and to focus those thoughts on the general well-being of our family and our friends as well as acquaintances and all of our fellow men, of our neighborhood, of our environment and the world of which we are an essential and inseparable part. In that way we are able to concentrate on the lasting and continued development of our higher, spiritual faculties. In that way we make ourselves suitable to be an unwavering and valuable champion in the army of Helpers of humanity. Theosophia offers us the knowledge to build a philosophy of life for that purpose. We, with ourselves as self-governing sources of inspiration and power for good, can train in the wisdom to practice that knowledge each and every day of every life.

### Reference

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1. *The Bhagavad-Gîtâ*. Chapter 18: 'Devotion as regards renunciation and final liberation.' Verses 26 and 30. Translated by William Q. Judge. Online: [www.theosociety.org/pasadena/gita/bg18.htm](http://www.theosociety.org/pasadena/gita/bg18.htm).
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# Hierarchies, the third Jewel

**“Through Theosophy I have become aware that the inhabitants of all planes in nature are part of an eternal process of evolution – with all its subsequent, increasing responsibility – in this breathtaking play of billions of solar systems, which are part of one enormous living entity in the boundless and eternal Universal Space. The vast and intertwined cooperation throughout all this Universal Space made me realize that there is no room for feelings of separation. It has transformed me to a co-worker of Nature.”**

**These words were written by an 85-year-old man to the editors of *Lucifer*. It is a beautiful example of the doctrine of hierarchies, the third Jewel of Wisdom.**

The hierarchical structure of the Universe is the third Jewel of Wisdom. It is far less known than the preceding two: reincarnation and karma. The awareness of this natural law, however, is an important one, as appears from the quote in the introduction. When you understand the doctrine of hierarchies, you know that all forms of consciousness are ordered in a hierarchical structure. What is a hierarchy? The word itself comes from the Greek *hieros* ‘sacred’ and *archein* ‘to rule, to direct, to guide’. By using the word ‘sacred’ (*hieros*) the ancient Greeks showed us that in their days the word ‘hierarchy’ did not have the negative association as it has now sometimes. In our society people often associate

hierarchy with a command structure where orders ‘from the top’ have to be carried out.

## **A unitary being with a (relative) top**

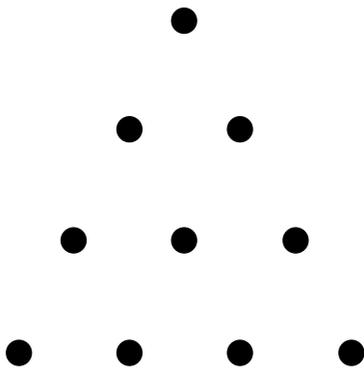
A hierarchy is an organization of beings working together under the supreme authority of one of them. It is through this supreme being Life flows in and disperses and transmits itself to the lesser-developed beings within this unity. Compare it to a bee colony. The supreme being of that colony is the queen. She lays the eggs; she transforms life to the lower planes. Nonetheless, the colony keeps functioning as a unity.

This supreme being of a hierarchy – one can call it the divine aspect –

has all the knowledge available in that hierarchy. It is the focal point of all the other beings. It is their destiny. But it is not the absolute top, because beyond – or ‘within’ – this hierarchy, again other, higher, more developed hierarchies exist, and this continues into infinity.

Therefore there are always beings that know more, and have a further developed consciousness than you, and likewise there are also always beings that know less, and have a less developed consciousness. In other words, whoever you are, wherever you are, no matter the stage of your development, you are always a link between something higher and something lower.

That is why interconnectedness is the main characteristic of the doctrine of hierarchies — the intertwined cooperation between beings on various planes of the Cosmos referred to in the introduction. After all, within a hierarchy, beings on a higher plane can only function by means of beings on a lower plane. And the lower beings in a hierarchy cannot function without the inspiration from all the planes above. The higher needs the lower and vice versa. This applies to a Universe as well as to a human being, a state and a company, to everything. All that exists in the Boundless has a hierarchic structure.



One can find a beautiful illustration of the doctrine of Hierarchies in the Holy Tetraktys, a symbol originating from the Esoteric School of the Greek sage Pythagoras. This triangle presents a hierarchy. Out of the first point on the top, two points appear, from those two again three points appear and those three in their turn, give rise to four points. I.e. the highest of a hierarchy – the divine – creates a ‘field’ or ‘atmosphere’ in which all the lower beings can manifest themselves. Each point in itself is again a triangle in which one could draw ten new points. And this triangle can be considered as a point in a bigger triangle. What is above, is the same as below. The boundless space is composed of an infinite number of hierarchies.

## An indispensable element

The writer of the letter mentioned in the introduction, points us into the direction of another very important aspect of the doctrine of hierarchies. Of course, our role on this earth is utterly modest, if we look at the billions of solar systems that surround us. But at the same time, we are an indispensable element in the hierarchic totality. It is literally like this: we *are* a part of the totality, there *is* no such thing as separation. And that is why all the things we do, have an effect on the totality. And mankind, with its state of self-consciousness in progress, does have a specific choice to live for its own personal interest or live for the benefit of all beings. In other words, a man either believes that he is separated from others or he understands that he is an indispensable link in the ladder of life. In that case, cooperation is the key.

This universal cooperation makes us realize the uselessness of domination, greed, selfishness and discrimination. In our present disharmonious world, we continuously work against Nature and we harm our planet. If we want a better world then we must work actively for the restoration of harmony. Theosophy explains why it is so hard to find world leaders who can restore the peace and harmony. What we are lacking is a universal life-philosophy, which we have developed ourselves in our mind — instead of blindly copying other people’s ideas.

## Characteristics of a hierarchy

So, what are the characteristics of a hierarchy? A hierarchy is a close cooperation of a number of beings that functions as a unity. From the top, the source of inspiration, the same life (the same energy) flows through all the – in a hierarchical structure – organized lower beings of that unity. Each hierarchy has its own characteristics (*swabhâva*, self-becoming, see also the fourth Jewel of Wisdom). The beings in a hierarchy are all in a different phase of evolution of their consciousness. Every one of these beings is indispensable for the functioning of the total entity (just like all the organs in a body being indispensable for the functioning of the complete body). Within the boundaries of the hierarchy all those beings have their own portion of free will, so they can give their own specific ‘tone’ to the main dominant characteristic (*swabhâva*) of the hierarchy. Each hierarchy is part of a larger hierarchy.

## There are beings that know more

The doctrine of hierarchies is a very inspiring one. It means that a higher wisdom is present in the Universe

and that every human being has a channel, or rather is a channel, which is connected to this wisdom. It is a matter of opening oneself for the influence of higher beings. Just as there are beings that are less developed compared to mankind – animals, plants and minerals for example – there are also beings that are further developed than we are. In the various religious traditions, this idea has degenerated. Divine beings are in those traditions depicted in an anthropomorphic way. They seem separated from man. Sometimes they seem to help mankind by removing obstacles or defeat enemies.

Theosophy teaches something different. There is unity. We *are* the hierarchy. That is, we are the life that flows through all its planes. Those planes are structured hierarchically. That means that the more developed beings transmit life to the less developed beings. They serve as inspirers that shine their consciousness upon ‘their children’ in order to awaken them, that they may become ‘one with the gods’. We can connect ourselves to this divine influence. How? By awakening the corresponding characteristics in our own consciousness and to start living in them. Then the work is not done by others. In that case there is no god or world teacher that is cleaning up our mess. No, we do it ourselves. And Theosophy, the Ancient Wisdom provides to us the keys.

### **How to connect to the source of wisdom?**

In many of the letters we received, readers mention that they have developed higher qualities in themselves, which made it easier for them to solve their problems. You connect yourself to the source of wisdom and translate the wisdom you receive to practical ideas for your everyday life. For connection to higher planes of consciousness you need to awaken compassion within yourself. When you practice impersonal Love and start to live according to the Laws of Nature, your strength to help other people will grow proportionally. You must make a conscious choice and ‘tune’ yourself in harmony with the impersonal, unselfish parts of your composite being.

Theosophy teaches us that we are all equal but also different, and that we develop Love for all that lives. Even a child will understand that. Even a child realizes that when it is treated unfair, and it will act the same in return, it will not solve the situation, but worsen it.

### **Wise leaders**

Once the doctrine of hierarchies would be accepted widely in society, we would definitely choose different leaders.

We will not vote then for the most shrewd politician, the one with the smoothest talk or the one with the most clever views on economy. No, the one who is closest to the spiritual worlds will then be the leader, since he lives in his divine nature more than anyone else. The wisest of all men is he who understands the seven Jewels of Wisdom best and has made them part of his thoughts and actions. Once we would seek guidance more often from our own divine nature, our Supreme Hierarchy, we would have a national, or perhaps even worldwide leadership, formed by the wisest men and women among us. Plato describes such a system as an aristocracy, where the leader is the wisest of all. And Lao tzu describes how a wise leader, in order to lead, stays *behind* the people. He stimulates, inspires and shows the way by being an example of compassion. He gives general guidelines and understands that suppression in any form does not work.

Through our thinking and actions we create our place in the hierarchy. And as a part of the entire hierarchy, we have an influence on the planes above as well as beneath us. We determine our own destiny, no one else. We develop ourselves. Self-becoming therefore, is the fourth Jewel of Wisdom.

With this knowledge we are able to train the leader in ourselves, and while doing so develop a more harmonious contribution toward society; moreover we will better be able to recognize the true intentions of those leading us.

### **Disadvantaged youth**

The president of a small foundation which is engaged in a training program for disadvantaged youth, told us that he felt encouraged in his work by focusing on an ideal. “Of course you have to build this ideal first and then continue to nourish it. But once it’s there, you can use it.” “The success of a project fully depends on the willingness of the young people to pass on what they have learned. That is why many of our activities are focused on raising solidarity. And developing a vision: how to use the skills you learned for the benefit of others?”

The latter of course, is a beautiful example of how to develop consciousness. Someone has a talent and he uses this talent to the benefit of the totality. In a world like this, the whole hierarchy gets the opportunity to grow, on the ‘base’ as well as on the ‘top’. This example also shows that we, no matter the stage of our spiritual or social development, are always a teacher and a student at the same time. A teacher for everyone we can give a positive example in one way or another – *and that is*

*potentially everyone* – and a student for those who are a positive example for us — *and that is potentially everyone*.

### **Our leading role toward animals and plants**

We humans not only have a responsibility to the higher planes in the hierarchy we are part of. Our responsibility reaches as well to the beings that are not as far developed as we are. In the same way as the gods are inspirers for us, we are the inspirers for the animals and plants. Now, everybody who has the slightest notice of how we treat the lower kingdoms of nature, knows that we are not always responding to that responsibility as we are supposed to. Once we recognize that the hierarchical structure of the Universe is truly a fact, we must be able to find a solution for this problem. Man's position on the cosmic ladder of life, as a self-conscious being, includes a special responsibility toward the other kingdoms of life above and below us, within our own constitution as well as in the outside world. To stop eating meat, or approaching nature with more respect — these are simple consequences when accepting the doctrine of hierarchies as a truth. We are the animals' teachers. We are the natural focal point for them. Some awareness of this is being raised in society. Currently, important debates take place about animal rights. A growing number of people want to implement these rights in our human laws.

### **Being a teacher**

The doctrine of hierarchies teaches us two essential things. We are at all times student *and* teacher. If we do not function properly in both roles, it will have its effect on others. If we do not open ourselves up to the wisdom of those who know more than us, then we cannot be a good help to the ones who know less than us. And there is always someone that knows less. H.P. Blavatsky says in *The Voice of the Silence*: “seek out him who knows still less than thou; (...) and — let him hear the Law.”<sup>(1)</sup> So we are a teacher as well. We become a teacher automatically if we sincerely try to live a theosophical life in accordance with the theosophical teachings. Especially in difficult situations – such as an economic crisis – someone who has made Theosophy a living power in his life, will be a beacon of tranquility. His fellow men will come and see him. Such a man gives confidence. Whether you want it or not, due to your knowledge of the Theosophia, you *have become* a teacher for many others. The question is whether you are also prepared to act accordingly. When your motives are predominantly

compassionate, you will cheerfully accept this role. Not with an attitude of ‘I know best’, but out of the desire to help others.

You will become much milder in judging others. After all, by interpreting the doctrine of hierarchies in a spiritual way, you realize that everyone – no matter their stage in evolution – has to play its role. Your own attitude will be one of service. You will help people to help themselves. You can show them the way to their own inner Teacher. When we realize that we can rely on our inner spiritual essence, our own inner leader, there is no space left for thoughts of separation. When we live in the light of our spiritual essence, we join the hierarchy of the helpers of mankind.

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# Self-becoming, the fourth Jewel

**In simple words, the theosophical vision on life could be described as 'Unity in Diversity'. The boundless Unity, outlined in the article about the three propositions, expresses itself in an equally boundless variety. The fourth Jewel of Wisdom, 'self-becoming', refers to the fact that each being is unique. And just like the previous three Jewels, we can draw inspiring lessons from it for our daily life.**

Each one of us is different. Everybody observes and experiences things differently. We look at things and situations with a different view, we have different experiences. We organize our life in our way, set our own goals and find our own ways to achieve these goals. No two people have the same character.

When we look around us with an open mind, then we discover that *every* being in the Cosmos has its own unique characteristics. These differences in characteristics are more easy to recognize among higher evolved beings, such as a star, planet or man. Each star has a unique spectrum of wavelengths. But the situation is not different in the lower Kingdoms of Nature. Each dog or cat has its own character, as we all know very well. You will not find two identical leaves in a wood. And chemical molecules of one type sometimes show a behavior quite

different from each other.<sup>(1)</sup> In fact, if two beings in the Cosmos would be completely identical in character, they would not be two beings but one.

## Fundamental fact

In the Ancient Wisdom, the Theosophy, you will find the fundamental fact that each being is unique in the doctrine of *swabhâva*. Swabhâva is a Sanskrit word which means: the essential characteristic of any entity. 'Swa' means 'self', 'bhâva' is derived from the verb 'bhû' which means 'to become'. Together 'self-becoming': what we are in essence – our essential characteristic – is what we express, what we will evolve.<sup>(2)</sup>

The idea is so simple that it is easy to pass by without noticing. Behind and in an apple seed there is a characteristic force or impulse, through which that seed develops into an apple tree and not into a pear or cherry tree. At the moment when

time was ready for us as a reincarnating human being to be born again on this earth, the essential characteristic of our consciousness made the fertilized ovum grow into a physical body that matched perfectly to our individual character.

The unraveling of the genetic material (DNA) in 1953 did not explain this fact to its full extent. Consider as an example identical twins: although they possess identical genetic material, they clearly are two different human beings. DNA cannot function without a guiding and selecting power. That power is the leading consciousness. The doctrine provides us with a clear insight as well on the hot issue of organ transplantation. Why do you think, does the physical body reject a donated organ? The answer can be found in the doctrine of swabhâva. Each organ originates from a unique being. It only fits in the constitution of that man. When it is transplanted into the unique physical body of another man, it will be rejected.

### **We are our own creator**

The meaning of self-becoming contains two aspects or 'layers'. The primary and most fundamental meaning refers to the fact that *each being is its own creator*. We are following our own unique path of evolution, all the time unfolding our inherent powers and characteristics, a process which never stops (see the fifth Jewel). The 'drive' for this process of unfolding lies in ourselves, in our swabhâva. This process will continue in the never ending future, we will always become ourselves.

Our character therefore is not unchangeable, it is not a permanent thing. As explained in the article about the Jewel karma, we can change our character by the cyclic process of thought – act – habit – character. This brings us to an important ethical conclusion: we can never pass on the responsibility for our character to a God who created us, or a blind fate, or even a kind of swabhâva *outside* ourselves. Unless we accept our responsibility and reform our minds, making room for more universal thoughts, our character will not change and we will keep running around in circles meeting the same problems every time again. As long as we are satisfied with that, we will not see the problem, but once we see to what a great extent we are connected with everyone else and share the same destiny, instantly the impulse to unselfish ideals awakens.

### **We express what we are in our inner nature**

The second meaning of swabhâva is as follows: *what we are spiritually, in our higher nature, that is what we*

*will be*. In other words: as long as in our consciousness the characteristic of MAN is prominent, we will express ourselves as humans (and will not be reborn as an animal, as some Hindus and Buddhists believe). The same applies of course for all beings. A rose entity becomes a rose, a dog entity becomes a dog, a divine entity becomes a god and an oxygen entity of course an oxygen atom.

The fourth Key of Wisdom explains perfectly what we refer to as 'heredity'. Our parents did not 'create' us, they functioned as a gate: they provided us with the opportunity to build up our own physical body. The reason why children in their appearance often resemble their parents (but never completely!) can be explained as follows: the reincarnating human being is psychically attracted to parents with characteristics most similar to its own. Though there is a resemblance between parents and their children, it is a fact that every human being is a unique combination of its own attributes. We inherit our physical body from ourselves.

### **Characters complement each other**

Characters complement each other. Every human being is a unique and indispensable link or thread in the enormous network of Life. Each being communicates with its fellow beings in accordance with its own character. Realizing that, men instantly understand their own uniqueness and that of all other people they live with, and that everyone deserves room and respect.

We should not confuse ourselves thinking that our uniqueness is a reason to do whatever we feel like, saying, "that is just the way I am". No, we also have free will and the possibility to improve ourselves. In this respect it is essential to keep the ideal of a Universal Brotherhood of men in our mind, based on the structure of Nature, where everything is interconnected and interwoven with everything else.

The more our understanding of Unity grows, the more universal our character will become. This does not imply we are losing our individual character – even the highest god we can imagine has its own individual character – but it means we have developed such a universal vision on Life that we are able to work with Nature in harmony, and to support all other beings (seventh Jewel).

### **Overcoming jealousy**

When each organ in our body functions in harmony with the other organs, the whole body functions at its best. When in our human society the postman and the sage

both do their duty and do not envy each other nor compete each other, a perfect society will exist. The practical value of this idea becomes very clear in the following story, which was told to us by a staff member from a day care center.

“I once watched some toddlers in a sandbox who were getting angry with each other and becoming violent. I asked the children to sit down in a circle. That worked well. The children told each other that hitting each other was not a good thing. To be friends was good.

I had read about swabhâva, about becoming who you are. In the circle we started to look at each other’s noses, which the children enjoyed very much. Together we arrived at the conclusion that a different nose was not a reason to hurt each other. We subsequently applied this new found wisdom on other differences between people.

On jealousy: each child mentioned its favorite tree, and we spoke about its leaves, flowers and fruits. And about the importance to *be* a good oak, beech or birch tree. During the process we imagined various combinations. The children however found it strange for instance, that if you are a birch tree and you fancy the nuts of a beech tree, that you also want to get beech nuts on your own birch tree, or would not tolerate the beech tree to carry its own fruits, etc. Eventually we used in our play examples from daily life and spoke about our own individual characteristics.

In this way I applied the theosophical teachings as guidance, in particular for the awakening of impersonal Love and of an awareness of the various qualities that make up man.”

### **The best society is a dynamic society**

As a consequence of the doctrine of self-becoming, our vision of an ideal society changes. Attempts to build a society on one way of thinking and one way of action always fail. By the ‘constructive collision’ of ideas, visions and ideals in our society we all learn the most eventually. We can all agree on the core ideas of Theosophy, for the simple reason they prove to be universally applicable. But every human being must find his own way to express the universal principle of Unity. Keeping up appearances does not work. As we can find in chapter 3, verse 35 of *The Bhagavad-Gîtâ*:

It is better to do one’s own duty, even though it be devoid of excellence, than to perform another’s duty well. It is better to perish in the performance of one’s own duty; the duty of another is full of danger.<sup>(3)</sup>

### **Everyone can develop the universal aspects of his character**

We learn from the doctrine of self-becoming that we are in fact our own children. We created and ‘colored’ our character, which is *ourselves*, through the choices we made in the past. And the thoughts we are thinking now determine our future character. There are always two paths we can choose between: do we want to develop the *universal aspects* of our character or the selfish aspects (see fifth Jewel)? And with what motive will we unfold our dormant powers: for certain selfish spiritual purposes, or to support and inspire to the best of our abilities the entire cosmic society we are an inseparable part of (see sixth Jewel)? The following two articles will further discuss this.

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# Progressive evolution, the fifth Jewel

**What is the meaning of life? How many people walk around wondering about this essential question, while they grasp in the dark, not knowing where to find the answer? The fifth Jewel of Wisdom, progressive evolution, shows us the meaning of life. It describes the grand process of developing our dormant powers; we do this from within and step by step. We carry boundless wisdom and knowledge within us, since we are children of the Boundless. In the core of the core of the heart of our heart we *are* indeed boundless.**

## Five Jewels of Wisdom

What did the previous four articles in this issue teach us? We are re embodying beings and therefore immortal in our essence, as the first Jewel of Wisdom indicated. By experiencing the consequences of our actions, we gain valuable knowledge and experience (second Jewel) and while applying this we will always have the inspiring examples of beings that are ahead of us (third Jewel). This is not a matter of 'letting ourselves drift with the processes of nature', because we are the creators of our own fate: we choose ourselves whether we will leave things the way they are or if we will take a step forward (fourth Jewel). Subsequently the fifth Jewel then outlines the purpose of life: the evolution of our consciousness, the increase of our knowledge and

wisdom, and of course the expression of our developed wisdom in our daily thoughts and actions. If we take this inner Path, we will progressively learn to distinguish all illusions of the manifested world and improve our ability to help all beings that are still struggling with these illusions. This then brings us to the sixth Jewel of Wisdom, which the following article is about.

## Development of the Self

Most people only know the word 'evolution' from the Darwinian theory of evolution. However, the theosophical approach to evolution is completely different than the vision of Darwin and his successors. What is 'evolution' according to the Ancient Wisdom or Theosophia? We find a direct clue when we study the origin of the word. 'E-volution' is

derived from Latin, and means rolling out, unwrapping or developing; developing the potential that is already within. Evolution is bringing out *everything that is already within us*. After all, we already carry all the possibilities of the Cosmos within us.

Evolution takes place from an inner urge: think for example of the inner urge that we see in every child, to bring back all the capabilities that have been developed in previous incarnations.

Without focusing too much on the Darwinian theory in its original and recent forms, we can indicate here, why from a theosophical point of view, this theory mistakes cause and effect, and is therefore still quite imperfect. While Darwinists search for the explanation of the miraculous development of organisms on Earth in physical causes, Theosophy sees this development as a result of growing, unfolding *consciousness*. This inner development or *e-volution* does lead to physical changes but these physical changes are the results, not the causes. In addition, we must note that the theosophical approach can be tested by anyone who is willing to study the theosophical propositions.

### **A promising teaching**

Every being is a pilgrim on the path of evolution. That path is, in the third proposition of Theosophy (see the first article), displayed as the inner growth through all stages of our Cosmic Hierarchy, from a very primitive unself-conscious being, through the realms of minerals, plants and animals to a self-conscious human, and then from a self-conscious human to ever grander and nobler planes of self-consciousness, through all kingdoms of gods, to the top of our Hierarchy. As already mentioned, this development has no boundaries because when we reach the top of our Cosmos, we will discover that we are still novices within a grander, more spiritual Cosmos 'inside' or 'above'. Words such as 'above' do not comply of course, because we are talking about states of consciousness and matter. This grand image has a direct impact on our daily life; we will no longer say 'impossible' to any ideal whatsoever, nor will we consider it as a final destination. It's all a matter of time and motivation.

This is stimulating for everyone. It is also the foundation to actually help people. After all, every being is infinite in its possibilities. This is a stimulant to provide an insight to the future for those who have 'gotten stuck' and to encourage them to examine whether this also works for them.

### **Self-guided evolution**

After the important transition from animal to human consciousness, evolution is *self-guided* evolution. As humans, we have developed self-consciousness; we make our own choices in life. For most of us this happens with trial and error. At this point, the fifth Jewel of Wisdom has a very inspirational value.

The fifth Jewel encourages us to self-motivation. We choose for ourselves how much light we will shine on the nobler aspects of our being. Theosophical help to our fellow human beings is in this light not only material help. We also touch something else, something much more real and imperishable.

If you see your fellow men as evolving beings that have the same core and possibilities as everyone else, then you naturally approach them from this perspective. You appeal to them according to the highest level in themselves and in doing so you invoke that level as well. The contact with their own higher nature is their only tool to help themselves sustainably. They feel that they are being approached in the essence of their being; they feel the confidence you have in them as well as in their development. However, this substantial contact from Human to Human is, in the beginning, only alive occasionally and often not more durable than at the times when you meet.

### **Free will**

Sometimes we also support our fellow men by reminding them that they should really make their own choices in life. Every being has a free will. This is often an eye-opener for those people who feel like a victim of circumstances. This offers space for everyone. You do not have to lie where you have fallen. Every being is continuously trying to develop itself. This is a true encouragement to try to get the best out of oneself.

### **Each cycle presents us with opportunities**

The fifth Jewel of Wisdom also teaches us that every day, even every hour, provides us with unique opportunities. Inner growth always takes place cyclically. This is an important thought from Theosophy. And then we can think of small and large cycles: the daily cycle, the cycle of our incarnations, and the much larger cycles that all of humanity has to go through. Each cycle has a specific characteristic, and gives us the opportunity to express certain aspects in ourselves. We can take the phases of our youth as an example. Until about our seventh year, we mainly develop our instinctive capabilities such as our

senses and our locomotion. Then, from our seventh to our fourteenth year, we will focus on our intellect. And from our fourteenth year we develop – as far as we are able in this incarnation – our idealism and the urge to choose our own path in life. As Gottfried de Purucker said:

There is one thing I learned when I was a boy, and I learned it well, and it has been one of my best friends ever since. It is that I can learn from everything, and that if I allow a single day to pass without increasing my store of wisdom, without enlarging and enriching my inner life, by however small an increment, that day is a lost day in my life.<sup>(1)</sup>

All the great Sages taught us: do not just dream about beautiful ideals, but use the possibilities of practical brotherhood in every hour of your life, the possibilities that are now available to you. And those opportunities always present themselves.

Every person creates an atmosphere by thinking. If you take the fifth Jewel as a starting point, you will create an atmosphere which not only you but also others experience as a stimulus to spiritual growth.

### **Compassion for all living things**

Thanks to the fifth Jewel, we recognize a fellow pilgrim in each being, no matter what his place on the Ladder of Life. Also in a blade of grass or in a worm hides an immortal spiritual core, which is trying to express itself. Every life form is, for the beings that belong to it, a temporary but necessary school. The consequences of this are tremendous for our own lives.

A theosophical student wrote to us: “Since I have been studying Theosophy a few years ago, I started to live more consciously. For example, before I always put my foot on every insect that I saw because I thought they were disgusting or because I was actually scared of them. Now that I realize everything is one and follows his own evolution, I let most insects go their own way. Only mosquitoes I still smash, but I am also trying now to catch them with a cup and release them outside.”

At this point we would like to have a small flashback to the past. When H.P. Blavatsky drew attention to Theosophia again in 1875, many people believed that animals would not have a soul. This idea lived both in religious as well as in scientific dogmatism. In those early days a number of Theosophists gave a huge boost to the protection of animals. And although countless animals are still kept in inhumane, but in fact in-animal, conditions, we can now,

138 years after the impulse of H.P. Blavatsky, conclude that almost every thinking human being realizes that animals are very sensitive, conscious beings. This gives us humans a great responsibility.

We are all on our way. Plants, animals, et cetera as well. We need to let animals take their own path as much as possible. So if they are only bred to be eaten and have not led their life as an animal, then we interfere deeply in their evolution.

### **Growth gives responsibility**

More knowledge gives more responsibility. Those who get in touch with Theosophy and personally taste the far-reaching consequences that come with it when applying it, might sometimes feel overwhelmed and think ‘what have I started?’ Some people experience Theosophy as if it imposes a certain pressure; a larger accountability. Everything you have now learned cannot be dismissed anymore; you can no longer say that you did not know. The things you supposedly do ‘wrong’ now, are being blamed on you more thoroughly.

We are not ‘blamed’ for these things by our fellow men, but by ourselves, by our own grown understanding. In some way this is a positive sign. Basically we are talking here about trials. These are not imposed on us by others, but by ourselves. We have raised the bar ourselves. At these moments of trial, it is good to see all sides of the situation. We then see for example, that our life and the purpose of our life has become much richer by Theosophy with more space for other people. We have woken up from a selfish kind of dream state.

By aiming our aspirations high, and acting unselfishly, we gradually awaken the abilities within us to put Theosophy to practice. Then we will come to the remarkable conclusion one day that we are capable of things that we hardly thought possible a few years back.

### **Equality**

The fifth Jewel, progressive evolution, is based on this inspiring principle: equality. All beings are rays or expressions of the One Boundless Life. There are infinite steps in development in the Cosmos, and each being can always achieve higher stages of evolution in the course of time. That is a matter of development time. In light of Theosophy we see how foolish it is to see ourselves as the measure of all things and to act accordingly. Less far developed does not mean ‘worth less’. As a Buddhist sūtra states: “The Bodhisattva must have equal respect for all

beings as he has for the Tathâgata [the Buddha].”<sup>(2)</sup> Or, in more common words, in the school of life, you do not have to look down on or look up to anybody. Because in daily life you cannot expect the same wisdom from a child in first grade as from a child in sixth grade, as this child began in first grade as well.

All Jewels of Wisdom are closely intertwined as aspects of the one boundless Truth. The recognition of all beings as fellow pilgrims on the – often difficult – Inner Path, leads us directly to the sixth Jewel of Wisdom, the two paths, presented in the following article.

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# The two paths, the sixth Jewel

**The five Jewels we have discussed already describe the inner path, the path of developing consciousness. The sixth Jewel presents us with this essential question: *why* do we follow the path of inner growth? What is our motive? The sixth Jewel of Wisdom teaches us that there is a choice that has great moral consequences.**

We can enlarge our consciousness from two fundamentally different motives.

If we strive for spiritual peace for ourselves, then we walk, as we call it, the *Everyone-for-himself Path*. If we continue on that path throughout our lives, we will eventually achieve spiritual enlightenment: Buddhahood. We enter the super spiritual condition of Nirvâna (which after all was the only goal) — and disappear from the stage of life.

But if it is our goal to help our fellow pilgrims on the arduous path of evolution, then we walk the *Path of Compassion*, or in other words, the *Path of self-forgetfulness*. We will also achieve inner growth, but this is not a goal in itself, but a means: the means by which we can help others with more insight. Then our growth is essentially a byproduct of our servitude to our fellowmen. Then we walk the path that all great Sages and Teachers of mankind have walked

before us. We will also eventually reach the high condition of spiritual enlightenment (Buddhahood), but we will refuse to enter Nirvâna, because we want to remain active within this Planet, for the benefit of all that lives. This is the noble sacrifice that the Buddha of Compassion makes. We see that both paths lead to inner growth. But the Buddha of Compassion was able to overcome all feelings of separateness and merged into Oneness; the Buddha for-himself-alone failed in that respect. The final results, therefore, are essentially different.

## **The sixth Jewel as part of a philosophy of life**

It may appear that the sixth Jewel of Wisdom, the doctrine of the two paths, is not yet of much concern for us, ordinary people. We already have so much trouble trying to control our daily selfish wants and our matter-directed inclinations, that such a

subtle choice between these two paths seems very far away. But that impression is not justified. This sixth Jewel is inspiring for every human being – because it shows us the Path of Compassion – as it is practical, because it is NOW that we are building our characteristic of thinking (see the article about self-becoming). It is not that somewhere in the far future we arrive at a crossroads; no, we are building a pattern of habits right now. We may not be able to recognize the most hidden subtleties of our own motives yet, but we can already choose to keep to a clear path. Think of the many situations where we could devote our time to our own inner growth, but nonetheless choose for doing duties for the benefit of others. Parents that accompany their children to the playground usually cannot do something for themselves at that moment. When an older employee is given the task to help a younger co-worker settle in, he cannot spend all his time making a speedy career for himself. And here's another example: someone who had lost jobs several times but kept his peace of mind, because he had the conviction that he would find a new position where he was most needed.

### **Compassion: the LAW of laws**

The keyword with the sixth Jewel is 'compassion'. What do we mean by that, in the light of Theosophy? The whole Cosmos is governed by divine harmony, which means: servitude of all for all. In the book *The Voice of the Silence* H.P. Blavatsky writes: "Compassion is no attribute. It is the LAW of LAWS."<sup>(1)</sup> To live compassionately is to live in the realization that there is unity (the seventh Jewel of Wisdom).

Most of the conflicts and disappointments, the indifference and the egotism in our world can be traced back to 'island thinking', to our lack of knowledge of the spiritual background of life. If you live from the realization of unity, then you submit yourself to the whole. Then no personal goal whatsoever is intended. Never again are you placed before the most fundamental choice: do I choose for myself or for the other? You no longer need to choose. You already made the choice! It is this mentality that we call compassion. Compassion is indeed not an attribute but a mentality, an attitude. You have no personal goals, but you always live in the perception of universal brotherhood. The quotation below of W.Q. Judge touches upon the essence:

Brotherhood is not sentiment. It is not emotion. Nor yet is it so-called love. It is putting one's self mentally in the very

place of another and realizing his difficulties, while showing him that true compassion for which we would hope in like place.<sup>(2)</sup>

### **The choice**

The one who follows the Path of Compassion and the one who follows the Everyone-for-himself Path both perform acts of compassion. But because their motives are essentially different, the consequences of their choice are very different as well. Whichever path we choose, we will harvest what we have sown (the Jewel of cause and effect).

When we walk the Path of Compassion we cooperate with Nature, which is in fact based on Unity. We will distribute our knowledge of Nature, as far as we understand it, to as many beings as possible. We will be concerned with the evolutionary successes and failures of an ever-extending circle of people.

Our circle of activity will extend itself continuously, and this is not the case for someone who merely wants to do 'the minimum' that is necessary to reach Nirvâna. Our compassionate motive is the binding force: because of it we slow down our evolutionary progress, although our consciousness becomes in a very profound sense ever broader and deeper. Therefore we will attain the condition of Buddhahood less quickly than one who follows the Everyone-for-himself Path.

It is like a student who continuously tries to help his fellow students to prepare for their tests. He will be working on material that he himself has mastered a long time ago. He will think of ways to explain the learning material. This allows him less time for his own studies, but many of his fellow students will be able to pass their tests.

This mentality will lead to refusal of Nirvâna – this condition of supreme bliss – when we 'stand at its threshold'. We don't want to go to the next 'class', because that means we can no longer help our classmates. Instead we choose to give up every evolutionary 'step upwards' during long, long cosmic eras and to take our place in the Protection Wall of the Planet. We choose to be an active transmitter of the highest divine wisdom, because this is the only way we can show pilgrims that are less advanced than us, the way to liberation and enlightenment. It is the noblest work that can be done in the Cosmos! And although this choice is an immense sacrifice in a way – because the Buddha of Compassion remains in an atmosphere that he experiences as a kind of underworld – this choice also gives unspeakable joy.

But in the long run the consequences are this: the Buddha Everyone-for-himself enters Nirvâna and he isolates himself from the rest of Life. He sleeps his blissful sleep during uncountable centuries, we are taught. But his development stands still. He had set for himself a limited goal, and once this was reached, every impulse to ‘cooperate with Nature’ disappeared. The Buddha of Compassion, on the other hand, had the goal to cooperate with Nature, and that is a goal without limits or end. He will always continue to learn. That is why, when in the far future the Buddha of Everyone-for-himself will wake up, he will discover that a) he has strongly isolated himself, and b) he is very much lagging behind the Buddhas of Compassion. Many who are first will be last.

### **What is compassion?**

Compassion means: servitude to all that lives. From the idea of unity you identify with the other, so that you consider his problems to be yours. This is the basic attitude. You don’t only help when you see someone is suffering, in your thoughts you always start from the notion of unity. In Theosophy, with compassion we mean something else than pity. Pity arises when the sorrow of someone else influences your state of mind. In other words, you take over the emotions that the other one is suffering from. You suffer with him. If the other one feels sorrow, you feel sorrow.

Compassion and pity are of a totally different character. Compassion is of an impersonal nature, so not colored by personal preferences. You are capable to act from insight in the causes behind what appears to be. Pity is colored by the personality; it is an instinctive sensing, but it does not offer insight in the causes that lay behind. For example, when someone gets wounded, he is not very much helped with pity, but he would be helped when someone can calmly determine what should be done. Still, pity is not at all wrong. Catching the feelings of someone else gives us the chance to see if something serious is going on. Every aspect or ability in man has its role or place. It is obvious that the average man has only just started to evolve his compassion, whilst his feelings are already fully active.

### **Living from Unity**

The theosophical doctrine of the two paths is in essence about pairs of opposites. When cosmic life embodies itself, it always appears in pairs of opposites: high-low, far advanced-not far advanced, spirit-matter, Yin and Yang. Both the Cosmos and every being in it, is built up

from two poles: a spiritual pole, our deepest core, and a material pole, our outer vehicle. The material has flowed forth from the spiritual, and will – if all is well – be guided by the spiritual.

Well, these opposites are always relative. We human beings are far advanced beings when compared to a plant or a mineral, but not far advanced when compared to a Solar divinity. This way you can check all opposites: they are all relative. And behind and in and above all those pairs of opposites is the One Life.

He who follows the Path of Compassion, does not choose for spirit or for matter. Spirit is not good per se and matter is not evil per se. He sees beyond the illusion. He does not attach absolute reality to matter, as materialistic thinkers tend to do. Neither does he attach absolute reality to what we see as ‘spirit’, the condition of Nirvâna, the summit of human consciousness. That bliss is only temporary and that summit is only relative: grander fields of experience are waiting beyond that Nirvâna.

He who sees the unity behind spirit and matter *lives and works where he is needed most*, in order to support all that lives in this way. This is why the Buddha of Compassion, after he has reached Nirvâna, chooses to keep following the call of compassion:

If thou would’st have that stream of hard-earn’d knowledge, of Wisdom heaven-born, remain sweet running waters, thou should’st not leave it to become a stagnant pond. (...)

Now bend thy head and listen well, O Bôdhisattva — Compassion speaks and saith: “Can there be bliss when all that lives must suffer? Shalt thou be saved and hear the whole world cry?” (...)

Thou shalt attain the seventh step and cross the gate of final knowledge but only to wed woe — if thou would’st be Tathâgata, follow upon thy predecessor’s steps, remain unselfish till the endless end.<sup>(3)</sup>

### **What does living a compassionate life mean?**

The first step on the Path of Compassion is building a vision, in which the seven Jewels of Wisdom can play a part. Let’s shape an image of selfless brotherhood and live accordingly. Day in, day out this image will give us the inspiration to tune our practical life to that vision. Gradually, because of spiritual will, all our personal characteristics will play a less dominant role in our lives. They melt away like snow before the sun.

Below we give some inspiring building blocks for such an ideal vision, handed to us by readers of *Lucifer*:

### *Examine and guard your motives*

Are we compassionate for compassion's sake or do we act compassionately for personal satisfaction, for instance because we so much want to do good ('the holy obligation', who is not familiar with it?) or because we think that things should happen our way? A striking quotation:

What can you think about and improve, as far as your inner development reaches? This question matters, because we all have influence and my world view is getting broader.

- My relationship with my partner, children and family. (Do I really try to support or guide them?)
- Work and voluntary work, leisure time. (Is something positive being accomplished?)
- Being born and getting new chances to learn lessons. (Helping others to grow, karma.)

Some people draw the conclusion from Theosophy that an unselfish life is a life without happiness. The opposite is true. Acting unselfishly is always accompanied by joy, inner peace, and often also with a generous portion of humor. In fact, we think that the only, genuinely sustainable bliss can only flow forth from compassionate acts. Happiness is a matter of vision. Compassion means having the right vision. You see unity and therefore, without saying, you work for the other one. This gives immense joy. We do not do it for this joy and peace — but they are the logical results of a life lived from the realization of unity.

### *Do the duties that are right in front of you*

The more we let the needs of others (which is, as we all know, something else than the wishes of others) be leading for the choices we make, the more we rise above all kinds of personal motivations. It is sometimes necessary, for example, to make a remark that may possibly be considered harsh — but the person concerned could get a wake-up call before even more harm will be done. An act like this can be compared to a painful intervention of a doctor: at the moment it is done it may be disagreeable, but in the end it is very healing.

Another beautiful example is this one:

When making decisions, now I first think of my fellow men instead of my own interests. For example, recently an acquaintance of mine (no family or friend) was admitted to

hospital far from where I live. Immediately I thought that if I would visit her, this would cost me half a day. I put that thought aside at once. The person I visited was very happy with me visiting. According to her sister who came with me, her reaction was surprisingly positive. She recognized me immediately, where just a few days before she did not even recognize her own sister. This right and immediate decision has brought me joy as well.

### *Helping our fellow men to help themselves*

An aid worker, who works a lot with people that have psychological problems, describes this very inspiring ideal:

The motive is that every man will get a grip on his own life again and to shape it and self-consciously give it meaning. Regardless what life looks like for a client, the main thing is to further self-directed development so that one will not be swept away by all the waves of life. You also help them to better understand life and their own life. And you try to make them see the connection between action and reaction (or cause and effect).

### *Passing on the wisdom as we have received it*

Only when we have understood some of the wisdom and have made it part of our own life, we can pass on a 'spark of insight'. One of our readers gave a nice example of this:

Thanks to the course 'Thinking Differently' I can deal with conflicts much better, in team meetings at work for example. In the course you learn that you can bring back every problem to the facts, and then you can look for solutions *together*. So: no emphasizing on 'who is guilty, has to come up with a solution'. Even more important is: now I can also explain this way of problem-solving much better, so that others can apply it too.

## **We make the choice NOW**

The sixth Jewel is a present-day, and directly applicable Jewel because we make the choice between the Path of Compassion or the Everyone-for-himself Path each moment of our life. Compassion is, as we have stated, not an attribute but the recognition of the fact of Oneness, and living accordingly (see the last article, about the seventh Jewel). In that sense, it is the most natural thing that exists. Think about it: only by true vision and true selflessness can we reduce the suffering in the world durably, and return hope to the hearts of men.

An unselfish man never stands alone. In fact, the whole

Cosmos is behind him because it is founded on harmony and compassion. There is the challenge for us human beings: to a meaningful, impersonal cooperation with each other, as the next quotation expresses so clearly:

I have become aware that there are many people that have the same ideal that I have, and that we can, by working together, better realize our common ideal to contribute to a better world.

## References ---

1. H.P. Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence. Fragment 3: The Seven Portals*. Various editions. See text between notes 30 and 31.
2. W.Q. Judge, *Echoes of the Orient*. Vol. 3, 'Suggestions and aids (New Series No. 3, Nov. 12, 1891)', p. 367.
3. See ref. 1, see text between notes 25 and 26, and text between notes 34 and 35.



# Knowledge of the Self, the seventh Jewel

**The seventh Jewel of Wisdom is the essence of all the ones preceding. In a way it summarizes and unifies them all and adds a new dimension to them.**

This Jewel you could describe as knowing the Core of Life. In Sanskrit it is called *Âtma-Vidyâ*, which means Self-knowledge. The capital S is absolutely not without meaning. We are talking about the SELF, Âtman, our link with the Boundless. When you focus on it, and yes, identify yourself with it, you perceive the Unity of Life, perceive that the life that flows in you is not essentially different from the life that flows in another man, in an ant, a plant, a star or whatsoever. You experience the Unity of Life.

There *is* Unity in Life. All beings are equal in their Core. Therefore: who understands the Core of his being, understands the Essence of Life. Such a man is liberated from the illusion of manifested life, from the illusion of death. He *is*.

Students often struggle with this image. Intuitively they experience the truth of this Jewel, but in our society, based on differences, it is difficult to accept it as real.

Theosophical Teachers through all

ages have given hints to men, in order to help them pull the Unity into their world of experience. The large variety of life is for example compared with the beams of a sun. Each beam is individual, yet all beams come forth from that sun and are therefore fundamentally one.

You can also compare that unity with the banyan tree. This special tree forms branches, from which tendrils hang down. When these tendrils reach the soil, they strike into the ground and become roots. The tendril which grew down and rooted itself into the ground, becomes another trunk, in its turn hanging down tendrils, which become new roots, which again become new trunks, and so on. Banyans may become immense. In countries like India and Thailand they are still considered as sacred.

So there is a tree from which other trees flow. Those 'offspring trees' however, remain a part of the mother tree, although they are in a certain way independent. In the same way,

every being is a part of an all-encompassing Tree of Life. It is a self-dependent being, provided with its own portion of free will, but nevertheless it is a part of a bigger whole of which the entire manifestation is a part.

So if you look to the core of every other being, you will discover the same divine source as your own. Self-knowledge furthers the understanding of connectedness, and relationships with others. You realize that you are the other, which makes compassion the most natural attribute in life.

### The Upanishads about Unity

In the Upanishads, sacred books from India, and especially in the *Chhândogya-Upanishad*, there are many hints on the Unity of Life. Here is an excerpt.<sup>(1)</sup>

As the bees, my son, make honey by collecting the juices of distant trees, and reduce the juice into one form,  
And as these juices have no discrimination, so that they might say, I am the juice of this tree or that, in the same manner, my son, all these creatures, when they have become merged in the True (either in deep sleep or in death), know not that they are merged in the True.

Whatever these creatures are here, whether a lion, or a wolf, or a boar, or a worm, or a midge, or a gnat, or a mosquito, that they become again and again.  
Now, that which is that subtle essence, in it all that exists has its self. It is the True. It is the Self, and thou, O Svetaketu, art it.

Please, Sir, inform me still more, said the son.  
Be it so, my child, the father replied.

These rivers, my son, run, the eastern (like the Ganga) toward the east, the western (like the Sindhu) toward the west. They go from sea to sea (i.e. the clouds lift up the water from the sea to the sky, and send it back as rain to the sea). They become indeed sea. And as those rivers, when they are in the sea, do not know, I am this or that river,

In the same manner, my son, all these creatures, when they have come back from the True, know not that they have come back from the True. Whatever these creatures are here, whether a lion, or a wolf, or a boar, or a worm, or a midge, or a gnat, or a mosquito, that they become again and again.

That which is that subtle essence, in it all that exists has its self. It is the True. It is the Self, and thou, O Svetaketu, art it.

### Exercises in the understanding of unity

Maybe the most important lesson Theosophy can teach us is to be fully aware of this Unity. Intellectual knowledge won't help much. We have to learn *to be* that unity.

As stated before, through the ages theosophical Teachers have tried to inspire men to be aware of this Unity. We have to practice. W.Q. Judge gave in his book *Letters that have helped me* a very effective meditation training.<sup>(2)</sup> One should imagine that one is not separate from anything. In the core of our being we are essentially equal. The bird, the star in the sky, every human, each being, has the same divine attributes. Rooted in a common source, we are indissolubly related to each other. The greater your range of consciousness and the closer you get to that common source, the greater is your awareness of that interconnectedness. Judge explains how you can develop this awareness.

Imagine you are *everything* — everything that exists. Things visible and invisible. What is outward and what is inward. Judge says it as follows: (...) *I am Brahma, and Brahma is everything. But being in an illusionary world, I am surrounded by certain appearances that seem to make me separate. So I will proceed to mentally state and accept that I am all these illusions.*

So you are your friends. Ponder on them. Ponder on everyone individually and collectively. Feel what moves them. What do they need to be happy? But you are also your enemies. Ponder on them as well, individually and as a group. Don't think of them emotionally, but realize that you are the other. You are the one who dislikes you. You are the ignorant one who knows his moments of sadness and doubt and who asks himself about the meaning of life. In this way, you should ponder on all the people of the town you live in; ponder on all the inhabitants of your country. You are they. But of course there are many countries. Ponder on the peoples of all countries. Be with them in your thoughts. Feel them. You are all those people with all the capacities and wisdom they encompass. But also with their fears, their anger and their ignorance.

Imagine you are the Boundless Life, from the infinitesimal atom up to the most powerful and mighty god. From plant or animal up to a galaxy. You are all of them.

A mystical exercise like this teaches us to think impersonally. You build a bridge to your spiritual divine nature, in which your awareness of Unity, ethics and compassion already lives. Those impersonal thoughts will color the daily thoughts you think.

By doing this, you will make these thoughts strong and

they will become a part of you. When you carry them with you in your daily life, you learn how to work with them. You will build up new capacities and habits. Applying these ideas will become natural, because when you find yourself in certain situations, you almost automatically go back to what you learned in this meditation exercise. You won't get angry or sad when somebody insults you. And when somebody is treated unjustly, you immediately defend him.

## Ideal

We can make our image of Unity very practical. Therefore we need to create an Ideal, and by this we mean of course not a personal ideal, but a sublime Ideal of Unity and Brotherhood. Form for yourself a mental image of the ideal world and the ideal man. Focus your thoughts on that image and apply it in your life. Live your Ideal.

Many scholars have experienced that Theosophy inspires to form such an impersonal Ideal. All theosophical teachings show the unity of all life and are therefore arguments to conform to the Unity of Life.

Theosophy also teaches that you don't have to strive for this Ideal. By doing this, you place it outside of yourself. You have to *live* it.

Living your Ideal relates to everything. It should penetrate all your daily habits. You will consider your old habits critically. Things you did before without thinking are not so obvious anymore. You are going to ask yourself questions. Should I put my money in that bank? Does this bank invest in shares of the armament industry? Are the clothes that I use to buy made by children in miserable circumstances? Should I continue to eat meat or fish? How can I handle that tiresome neighbor? How can I – and my country – contribute to peace in a distant country? When you live your Ideal, you have a naturally calm and friendly view on life. You always live in the perception of compassion. You are always there when people need you. Your mind is always focused on beautiful, spiritual thoughts, so that every duty is easy to fulfill.

There are people who have to conquer themselves every time their help is needed. And in our cold world this is of course better than when you are deaf to the cry for help from others. But a man who carries within his mind twenty four hours a day his impersonal Ideal of Universal Brotherhood, is always helping and inspiring others, even when he is alone in his room. After all, his thought life is always a paragon of unity and compassion, so that he incessantly spreads a kind-hearted sphere.

## Let your Ideal constantly grow

Everyone can create and live a practical Ideal. It doesn't matter where you live, what kind of work you do, if you are rich or poor, if you are respected or not. This Ideal doesn't necessarily need to concern just your own circumstances, because when it is based on clear, tested principles, then it has a universal validity and is therefore also universally applicable.

Those clear principles are the three fundamental propositions and the seven Jewels of Wisdom. They form the ingredients for the Universal Image of the genuine brotherhood of all that lives.

Beware: that image should not petrify, for if it turns into a dogma, then it will lead to separateness and enmity instead of to compassion and friendship. Then there is the danger that you will say that your ideal is better than that of another.

In the Boundlessness your Ideal can constantly grow, be sharpened, deepened and refined. Keep your Ideal flexible and try to make it more and more universal.

And – oh great paradox! – the more universal you make your image, the clearer it will become, so that it will be easier to apply it everywhere, because you became that image.

Again: there is Unity. We should learn to be aware of the Unity.

## References

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1. *Chhândogya-Upanishad*, book 6, verses 9 and 10. Online source: [www.hinduwebsite.com/sacredscripts/hinduism/upanishads/chandogya.asp#Pra6](http://www.hinduwebsite.com/sacredscripts/hinduism/upanishads/chandogya.asp#Pra6)
  2. W.Q. Judge, *Letters that have helped me*. Many editions. First Part, letter 4.
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# The seven Jewels of Wisdom in the world religions

**In the great world religions the same key teachings can be found.**

Many of the bloodiest conflicts and most obstinate forms of hatred can be traced back to the different religions. There are countries where only one religion is allowed, with all kinds of oppression and suppression of those who wish to profess another religion. In other countries more religions are allowed, it's true, but its followers live in discord with one another and not rarely threaten one another and often threaten the lives of one another. Does all this have a logical foundation?

No, the cause of this religious mania never lies in religion itself, but in the one-sided, anthropomorphic interpretation of the followers, mostly the priests, who impose their interpretation of the doctrine upon others.

Yet, the religions do not differ from one another in essence: not in ethics and not even in tenets. If followers of a religion would only obey the *golden rule*, which can be found in all religions. That rule is: "not to do to another what they would not like themselves." Then three quarters of evil in the world would immediately

disappear. If they would then also be prepared to regard their own religion – and that of others – without prejudice — then they would discover seven *Jewels of Wisdom*, which give each man a hold on a meaningful and happy life.

## **Theosophia**

Each religion is a more or less distorted appearance of the Divine Wisdom or Theosophia. Or, each religion results from the Universal Wisdom Religion, that flowed from the Heart of the Universe through all ages and all civilizations, and inspired the spiritually great to find the viewpoint for their specific age, which should help those whom they addressed to remember their inner divinity.

Theosophia is based on three principles: boundlessness, cyclicality, and growth or evolution. The idea of boundlessness is especially difficult for man to grasp, because the boundless per se can never be completely grasped. Therefore, in the course of ages the idea of boundlessness was explained

anthropomorphically in the various religions — that is: it was reduced to human proportions. Yet, we recognize the idea of boundlessness in the various religions without too much difficulty.<sup>(1)</sup>

First of all, we see it in Hinduism. Everywhere in the *Upanishads* we come up against the popular statement ‘TAT twam asi’. TAT means THAT, and only this word could express the Boundless. ‘TAT twam asi’ means: you are THAT, you are the Boundless.

Likewise, a term like Parabrahman indicates boundlessness. It means beyond Brahman. And Brahman is the highest divinity of the Universe. It is like the horizon of our consciousness. But is it an ultimate destination? No, since there is still more, there is Parabrahman, beyond Brahman. There have been attempts in the world religions to find a word, that should express what cannot be grasped in words. After all, the TAO that can be named, is not the true TAO. TAO is a Chinese notion, used by Lao tsu and mostly translated into the Path. However ... the true TAO cannot be named. Or: Boundlessness cannot be captured in a name.

Different concepts that are used are for instance: Zarvan Akarana (endless duration) from Persia; Endless Deepness in Egypt. Furthermore, the original meaning of GOD in monotheistic religions is the Boundless. Hebrew words like Elôhîm and Adonai are also translated rather arbitrarily with the singular God. However, if we are looking at the Divine Principle, or the Abstract Divinity, then that is a synonym for Boundlessness. Later generations explained this divine notion anthropomorphically and so God came into existence as a being.

## Seven Jewels

The Boundlessness of the Universe is, as it were, the eternally existing field of activity of (in essence) boundless beings, who more and more express their endless opportunities, in a cyclical process, in which they alternate periods of activity with those of rest. Symbolically the birth of a cosmic being was presented as an exhalation from the Boundless, and his death as an inhalation.

This grand idea of the continuously exhaling and inhaling universe can be specified and explained further on the basis of the seven fundamental propositions or tenets. These are far from dogmas, but hypotheses which, combined with one another, can explain all phenomena.

You will not find these seven Jewels as a composite unity in any religion or Holy Book. Yet, since immemorial times they were taught by far advanced Masters of Wisdom and

Compassion to their students. These teachings were passed on from generation to generation. Yet, the teachings were too esoteric to be taught as a composite unity. Only in modern theosophical literature you will find them again as a sevenfold unity.

Why they cannot be traced back as sevenfold in the old religions is hard to understand for us, living in the 21st century, in which it is common that information should be accessible to everyone. However, the seven Jewels can also be misused or misinterpreted. The seven notions with which they are defined are only key words, that hide a world of thoughts. Even the Sanskrit words, which already represent the ideas much clearer than the English translation, cannot prevent that the composite range of ideas – the seven colored pallet of wisdom – is incorrectly explained.

Nevertheless, you can trace back these seven Jewels in all religions. Not always in a direct form, sometimes like a hint or suggestion. We will try to demonstrate that in the four religions with currently the most followers, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, these seven Jewels can be traced back. Other religious and philosophical systems from the past and present contain these principal thoughts also. However, the article would get too long if we quoted from those.

## Reincarnation (Punarjanman)

Nowadays, the Jewel of reincarnation is so familiar, that we do not have to give it more than a moment’s thought. The Sanskrit term is *Punarjaman* (*punar* means ‘next time’ or ‘again’; and *janman* is ‘to live’). The idea is overwhelmingly well-known in Hindu tradition and is often found in the Holy Books. Even in the thousands of years old *Vedas* there are references to it. The *Upanishads* and *Bhagavad-Gîtâ* explain the tenet clearly.

As the lord of this mortal frame  
experiences therein infancy, youth and old age,  
so in future incarnations will it meet the same.  
(...)

As a man throws away old garments and puts on new,  
even so the dweller in the body,  
having quitted its old mortal frames,  
enters into others which are new.<sup>(2)</sup>

Buddhism, in fact an attempt of Gautama the Buddha to purify the system of tenets corrupted by the Brahmans, is also clear in disseminating the teaching of reincarnation.

From the mere fact that the prince Siddartha, achieving the state of enlightenment under the Bodhi-tree, perceived all his past lives passing his spiritual eye, it appears that reincarnation is an integral part of the teaching of the Buddha.

Much less known is the fact that originally Christianity taught the idea of reincarnation too. Only during the Council of Nicaea in 351 AD this teaching was banned from the official dogmas of the Church. Yet, many scriptural passages can be found in which is referred to reincarnation. Let us suffice here with just a few examples. In John 9:1 the disciples, pointing at a man *blind from birth*, ask Jesus if this man or his parents sinned. It is the modern issue of heredity or evolution. Jesus does not reprimand them by saying that this man could not have sinned because he was born blind, which Jesus would have said if reincarnation was not his teaching. On the contrary, he said that the man is blind, *so that the works of God might be displayed in him*.

In gnostic documents, like *The Secret Code of John*, it is explained what is meant by this. Souls that have gathered insufficient gnosis (inner knowledge) and did not live ascetic lives and so are not perfect yet, will be cast back to the Earth to continue to learn. In the *Pistis Sophia* it is mentioned as follows:

If a soul has sinned once or twice or thrice, then will he be cast back into the world again according to the type of the sins which he has committed.<sup>(3)</sup>

This is a clear example that reincarnation and karma were not unknown in early Christianity.

On many places in gospel history the fact that the Old Testament prophet Elijah is reincarnated as John the Baptist is pointed out (for instance in: Matthew 11:11-15 and 17:10-13). In Mark 9:13 Jesus says plainly: Elijah has come. And since Elijah had died, this can mean nothing else than that he is reincarnated again. Also in the Old Testament there are references to reincarnation. We give two quotes here:

Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever. (...) All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full; to the place the streams come from, there they return again. (...) What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.<sup>(4)</sup>

Furthermore, the Lord says:

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.<sup>(5)</sup>

So there is life before birth in any case.

Also in Islam indications can be found, that the teaching of reincarnation is not unfamiliar to this religion. Admittedly the general belief is that man enters Paradise after death. There is also talk of resurrection of the dead at the end of times. However, there have always been groups of Muslims as well, who adhered to the idea of reincarnation or *tanasoeh* as it is called in Arabic. The Druze, Ishmaelites and some Sufis still do this. They base themselves amongst others on this verse from the Koran:

How can you disbelieve in Allah when you were lifeless and He brought you to life; then He will cause you to die, then He will bring you to life, and then to Him you will be returned.<sup>(6)</sup>

That the idea of reincarnation has nearly disappeared from Islam, might have to do with the many wars that were made after the activities of the Prophet Mohammed. Because of that, the Muslims were no longer instructed and guided by philosophers and mystics but by more worldly people.

However, reincarnation was never inconsistent with Islam, but there was less and less emphasis put on it.<sup>(7)</sup>

## Karma

The teaching of karma is closely interwoven with that of reincarnation. In fact, the two cannot be apprehended without one another. Therefore, this twin teaching is often contained in one view.

In Hindu documents the teaching of karma is scarcely explained; it is assumed that the law of cause and effect is so generally well-known, that it does not need much discussion. For example, in the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ* Krishna teaches Arjuna how to transcend personal karma. The different forms of Yoga that can be found in this Holy Book are meant to transcend man beyond his personal karma. For example, we read:

Whatever thou doest, O son of Kuntî, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou sacrificest, whatever thou givest, whatever mortification thou performest, commit each unto me. Thus thou shalt be delivered from the good and evil experiences which are the bonds of action ...<sup>(8)</sup>

In order to apprehend these verses well, you have to realize that *karma* means ‘action’ literally. By attaching to the result of the action (karma) you tie yourself to the exterior and you will not reach liberation (*Moksha*). Continuously, man harvests the results of actions directed to this external world. It is this attachment, caused by blindness, that make people live in an illusionary world.

However, karma is not doom. It is not destiny, but also not happiness. It is the strict law, that each cause has a matching effect.

This appears strongly in Buddhism, a religion in which the law of cause and effect is interwoven in such a way, that it is always linked to ethical consequences. In the *Dhammapada*, highly valued by all Buddhists, we read for instance:

Not well done is that deed which one, having performed, has to repent; whose consequence one has to face with tears and lamentation.

Well done is that deed which one, having performed, does not repent, and whose consequence one experiences with delight and contentment.

So long as an evil deed does not mature (bring disastrous results), the fool thinks his deed to be sweet as honey. But, when his evil deed matures, he falls into untold misery.<sup>(9)</sup>

This last verse clearly shows that there can be a large space of time between action and consequence. We can also read this in the next verses:

Even the wrongdoer finds some happiness so long as (the fruit of) his misdeed does not mature; but when it does mature, then he sees its evil results.

Even the doer of good deeds knows evil (days) so long as his merit has not matured; but when his merit has fully matured, then he sees the happy results of his meritorious deeds.<sup>(10)</sup>

In Christianity the teaching of karma is clearly present as well. Paul the Apostle writes in his epistle to the Galatians (6:7):

For whatever a man shall sow, that also shall he reap.

And in Revelations (13:10) we read:

He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword.

And a quote from the Old Testament (Job 4:8):

As I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same.

Despite these convincing quotes you occasionally hear people object that in Christianity there is no room for the teaching of karma because of the fact that Jesus died at the cross for mankind. However, this so-called suffering for mankind has a quite different meaning, which also has everything to do with karma. It means that every Teacher of a Mystery School remains karmically responsible for his students. His education changed his student. Therefore, that student is capable of apprehending more of Nature and is therefore also able to influence more. If this student, despite the advice of his Teacher, misuses the knowledge for his own interest, then the Teacher – the Christos – will ‘suffer’ from this. After all, it are the consequences of his actions as a result of which the student could misuse the teaching. In Islam you also find traces of the teaching of cause and effect. In the Koran is mentioned:

For those who do good is good (reward) and more (than this) ...

And (as for) those who have earned evil, the punishment of an evil is the like of it ...<sup>(11)</sup>

Interesting is also that there are two ‘recorders’, who register all human actions.<sup>(12)</sup> This would be two angels, who sit at the right and left side of the man. You should not take all this literally. On the contrary, it points to the mystic teaching that all what man, yeh, in fact every being, thinks and does is recorded by ‘Holy Recorders’. This looks a lot like the Hindu Lipikas, who also record everything and who are seen in connection to karma. You might imagine that anything that is done, makes an impression on the consciousness of the actor and of others. It makes an impression in the so-called Astral Light. Sooner or later he who made this impression will be confronted with it again. Anything we do has its consequences.

## Hierarchies (Lokas and Talas)

The word ‘hierarchy’ has a rather negative connotation, because it is connected to a system in which managers, without listening to their subordinates, pass on certain instructions or orders, which their subordinates have to follow without protest. However, the third Jewel – which is called the hierarchical structure of the Universe – has

nothing to do with that, which appears very clearly from the Sanskrit words *Loka* and *Tala*.

Loka means place or world literally, while tala means something like inferior world. However, the teaching is that each Loka is indissolubly connected with a Tala. They cannot exist outside one another, just like the two poles of an electric current cannot exist separate. The Loka side stands for the spiritual side, while the Tala represents the more material side.

The third Jewel is designated as Lokas and Talas (plural form). In Hindu literature like the *Vishnu Purâna* seven Lokas-Talas are distinguished.<sup>(13)</sup> However, these seven worlds are not separate from one another. On the contrary, they arise from one another, penetrate one another, pass into one another and constitute a firm unity, whereby each Loka-Tala world is a reflection of the others. The more noble, spiritual Loka-Tala causes the origination from itself of a somewhat more material Loka-Tala, and at the same time remains connected with it as a kind of breeding atmosphere, from where the lower world gets its inspiration.

All those worlds are the habitats of the different classes of beings, yeh, in fact, those beings compose those worlds. Therefore, the Jewel of hierarchies implies that all composite elements, all beings, from very high developed to hardly developed, from super divinity to elemental, are interconnected and cooperate in a certain cosmos. Furthermore, the more developed beings constitute the inspiring, life giving force for the lower beings, which serve as instruments for the higher beings to acquire experiences. Those lower beings in their turn are the inspiring force for even less developed beings, which serve them as instruments. In the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ* this view is outlined on the basis of the tree of life *Aśwattha*, which is imperishable with its roots upward and branches downward.<sup>(14)</sup> Therefore, Krishna says:

All this Universe is pervaded by Me in My invisible form  
All things exist in Me, but I do not exist in them  
Nor are all things in Me.<sup>(15)</sup>

Here, Krishna stands for the highest form of life of a hierarchy, that evolves all other beings out of itself, but remains in its own sphere — the divine Loka-Tala. Elsewhere we read:

A portion of myself which, having assumed life in this world of conditioned existence, draws together the senses ...<sup>(16)</sup>

It is the idea of emanation. The Top of the hierarchy of life evolves a sphere out of itself, to which other beings are attracted. They are the branches, twigs and leaves of the tree, which, although being independent beings, remain part of the One Life.

Therefore, each individual being, each human being for instance, is also a hierarchy in itself. In his higher nature he is the root of the tree and in his external nature he is one of the leaves at one of the many branches at the same tree of life.

You find the same thought again in Mahâyâna Buddhism, where there is a hierarchy of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas: heavenly Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, human Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. However, it is also taught emphatically that man himself is a potential Buddha, but he does not realize himself this Buddhi condition yet.

In Buddhism emphasis is put strongly on the compassionate character of the hierarchy of life. The ideal is not to rise to a higher sphere, but to sacrifice oneself, so that less developed beings can make use of that sacrifice. This finds its strongest expression in the Bodhisattva ideal. A Bodhisattva refuses to rise to the Loka-Tala lying above him, because he would then be of less use for those he leaves behind. By staying behind he can continuously try to inspire man to develop himself spiritually.

Around the beginning of our age the teaching of hierarchies was widespread in the countries around the Mediterranean. Frequently, the worlds were designated by Greek names. In Gnostic scriptures, like for instance those of *Nag Hammadi*, there is talk of *Aeons*, which just like the Lokas-Talas are developed in couples, and which give life to one another. Out of the higher *Aeons* ever more material worlds are developed, until the lowest, our physical world is made by a blind god.<sup>(17)</sup>

That teaching of hierarchies lived so strongly in the minds of the races around the Mediterranean, that it also had a place in the 'official' Christianity. A certain Dionysius the Areopagite copied the neoplatonic hierarchy of life and replaced 'pagan' names with a strange mixture of Jewish and Christian terms: God, the Divine Spirit, the Seraphim, the Cherubim, the Thrones, the Principalities, the Powers, the Virtues, the Dominions, the Archangels and the Angels. Seraphim and Cherubim are Hebrew terms; the other words are also used by Paul in two of his epistles. The enumeration of Dionysius is still one of the official tenets of the Eastern and Roman Church.

The hierarchical structure in Islam gets shaped by a whole army of archangels and angels, which are further

developed in consciousness than man. However, the Koran acknowledges also, next to animals and plants, invisible beings who are less far developed: the *Djinnis*, which we nowadays call elementals.

Many esoteric Muslims worked out the idea of the hierarchical structure in a system (strongly influenced by neoplatonics) of seven spheres or beings, which give life to one another. For instance, you see that with the Ishmaelites: 1. God; 2. Universal Mind; 3. Universal Soul; 4. Original Matter; 5. Pleroma or Space; 6. Kenoma or Time; 7. Man.<sup>(18)</sup>

Also well-known is the Hierarchy of Compassion. These Masters (*Aulijaa*, or Friends of Allah) have a head: the Silent Watcher or *al-Chadir*. Al-Chadir is a mysterious being, half man, half god, who is the relatively highest point of the human hierarchy.

### **Self-becoming (Swabhâva)**

The fourth Jewel – the middle one – is the Jewel of swabhâva, which means self-becoming. This Jewel implies that each being occupies exactly that place in the hierarchy of life that fits him, because he becomes exactly that which he made himself in the Boundlessness. One always becomes himself. People make their own character, their own body. People produce themselves. People are always exactly that which they created themselves.

However, since each being has in essence all that exists, this process of self-becoming will always continue. We are now what we made ourselves in the past; and in the future we will become what we make ourselves now. Naturally, this process of self-becoming takes place according to the laws of reincarnation and karma.

Swabhâva also means that each being has a unique characteristic and that he has to play his role in society according to that unique characteristic.

Therefore, we read in the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ* that all beings, even the sages, follow their nature.<sup>(19)</sup>

Yet, this ‘nature’ is not fixed forever. Since each being is a hierarchy, he is also always busy to becoming his Higher Self. That Self is symbolized by Krishna in the *Gîtâ*. Therefore, Krishna says: “Aham Âtman. I am the Ego which is seated in the hearts of all beings; I am the Beginning, the Middle, and the End of all existing things.”<sup>(20)</sup>

The fourth Jewel, swabhâva, shows on the one hand how beings have become what they are now, but also offers a view in the future: it gives the perspective of how we may unfold further.

In Buddhism, which has evolved out of the Hindu tradition, the same teaching is known. There is even a school which made swabhâva the cornerstone of the teaching. This so-called svâbhâvika school from Nepal is one of the oldest and most mystical schools of Buddhism. It teaches emphatically that we originate from ourselves and that we become our own children. There is no power outside man which stipulates who we are or will become, it is through an inner urge that we always are what we made ourselves. The svâbhâvika school relates this teaching not just to humans, but to each living being.<sup>(21)</sup>

This teaching plays a crucial role in the frequently discussed issue in Buddhism, of there being a permanent part in man. The answer lies in the teaching of swabhâva. There is no permanent part in man in that sense that there would be something which always stays the same. We always grow, we always change. However, since change presumes there must be something that is subject to that change, it is that ‘something’ that moves continuously from one state to another, that becomes itself again and again. That ‘something’ is the consciousness, which becomes more and more universal and therefore wiser.

These thoughts are profound and difficult to comprehend for the thinking faculty which is not well-trained. Therefore, you will not come upon the teaching of self-becoming in Christian scriptures very explicitly. Nevertheless, you may come upon some clues in the Bible. For instance, in Genesis it is told that Adam gave all animals a name.<sup>(22)</sup> A name is often an expression for a characteristic. Each animal has its own specific feature, its own swabhâva.

Likewise, the Koran only hints at the teaching of self-becoming. In the Koran (71:14) is mentioned:

While he has created you in (diverse) stages.

Or, in each stage one becomes oneself, until one grows beyond this stage. When you have learned all in a certain stage, you will grow out of your coat, and you will leave your old form behind, like a snake his skin, and you become your new form. From this quote it appears that self-becoming is closely related to the fifth Jewel, progressive evolution.

### **Evolution (Pravritti and Nivritti)**

The fifth Jewel of Wisdom consists in Sanskrit of two words: pravritti and nivritti. Pravritti means ‘to turn around’, ‘to roll’ also ‘to unfurl’ or ‘to unfold’. Nivritti

means the opposite, i.e.: ‘to roll-back’, ‘wrapping’ or ‘to involute’. So, the concept of evolution is linked to involution. Hence, the unfolding and the wrapping take place simultaneously.

The idea is that life first descends into matter. It wraps itself in, in a manner of speaking. It involutes. At the deepest point of this ‘wrapping in’, which is the peak of the physical development, the process turns around and matter enwraps itself and life unfolds itself.

As a vision you can imagine: a being is located at the top of the hierarchy and descends, through various in-between phases, down into matter in order to gather experience and then it returns back to the spiritual level, enriched with the experience gained in the manifestation.

This grand process is the background of the huge Indian epic the *Mahâbhârata*, where the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ* takes a central place. In this epic the ups and downs of a royal family come to life. Initially one branch of the family rises to power. The blind King Dhritarâshtra sits on the throne, but hands over the scepter to his son. The more noble branch of the family, the Pândavas, is exiled.

For one who actually understands the symbolism, it is clear what is described here. It is the wrapping of the spirit, which goes hand in hand with the development of the material side. Dhritarâshtra is not depicted as being blind by coincidence. He represents matter or the physical body and his son, Duryodhana, and their family, the Kauravas, represent the materially oriented aspects of consciousness. Half way through the *Mahâbhârata*, however, the Pândavas decide to claim their rightful place in the Kingdom. At this place in the great epic the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ* is situated. Arjuna, one of the Pândavas, receives tuition from Krishna, his teacher and symbol of the inner god.

Then there is a great fight. Of course this is meant figuratively. The mental development goes hand in hand with the physical wrapping. The more matter oriented aspects in man will need to be governed by spirit.

At the end of a Kâlpa all things return unto my Prakriti [nature], and then again at the beginning of another Kâlpa I cause them to evolve again.<sup>(23)</sup>

The doctrine of progressive evolution can never be understood correctly, if you don't involve the teachings of the hierarchies. A being descends from the divine level – that of Krishna – through different links (Lokas and Talas) to the physical world and then climbs up again. In the Buddhist temple Borobudur on Java this whole

process is portrayed in stone. It is assumed that man has already descended into matter. Now he must once again return to the Top via the different stages. Buddhism is based on the learning that each person is his own inner Buddha and that he can realize perfection by his own commitment.

The goal of the whole process of involution and evolution is to get to a relative state of perfection. Man – let us conveniently restrict ourselves to mankind – has developed physical vehicles, with which he can build up experiences, in order that he may – enriched with those experiences – return to the state of unity, from which he once descended. Is this not the message of the whole Bible? Is the story of Genesis not the beginning of the physical development? Man develops self-awareness (he eats of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil), loses the paradisiacal state, but must return to that state of unity, but now as a self-conscious being. Man can only do so if he wakes the Christos in himself and lives therein. That message is very clearly reflected in the Gnostic scriptures. But also in the Bible we read this.

So be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.<sup>(24)</sup>

The Koran (71:14) also describes how humans have developed through various stages from a spiritual being into a material being:

While he has created you in (diverse) stages.

In each stage one becomes himself, until one grows out of his stage. Even more obvious is that in another verse:

Verily, We created man of the best stature (mould),  
Then We reduced him to the lowest of the low.

The man, spiritual in origin – but not self-conscious – descends into matter, the very lowest, from where one can ascend to the spirit, to Allah. For, as the following verse says:

Save those who believe and do righteous deeds, then they shall have a reward without end.<sup>(25)</sup>

Koran verses cannot be explained unambiguously, but as we conceive it, it seems that the reward of beneficial works is that you return to the spiritual state, albeit now self-conscious. To Him we return, is the popular saying

that you encounter everywhere in the Koran. The great human evolutionary path is symbolically exemplified in the pilgrimage to Mecca, the *Hajj*, one of the five pillars of Islam. During this pilgrimage the pilgrims have to walk seven times around the Kaaba. The first three times they should do that by running. During that seven circulations they should come ever closer to the black stone in the Kaaba and, if possible, ultimately touch it.

This whole trip symbolizes the seven evolutionary phases or Rounds, in which people develop more and more of themselves. Because we are now in the fourth Round and having already passed three Rounds, we can cover those first three more quickly. Touching the Kaaba symbolizes reaching the divinity, which, if we have succeeded, is the case after seven Rounds.

Also here the picture is displayed of a human being who constantly evolves, makes progress and eventually reaches the divine. That is the general Islamic thought. Hence devout Muslims never experienced the poem of the Sufi Jalal ad-Din Rumi as contrary to Islam:

I died as a mineral and became a plant,  
I died as plant and rose to animal,  
I died as animal and I was Man.  
(...)  
Yet once more I shall die as Man,  
To soar with angels blest ...<sup>(26)</sup>

## **Two paths (Amrita Yāna and Pratyeka Yāna)**

The first five Jewels answer the question about the meaning of life. You have to get the most out of it. You need to develop all the aspects that have been involuted, in order that you return as a self-conscious man to the purity of the spiritual-divine world.

Those first five Jewels are however inconclusive about the motive. Why would you do this?

Well, there are two possibilities. You're either doing it to experience the bliss of the retreat into the spirit, or you are doing it to encourage others to progress on this Path. In other words, you're performing it for yourself or for all that lives.

This is the background of the difficult verses from the final, the eighteenth, chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. There a distinction is made between *Sannyāsa* and *Tyāga*. It is very difficult to translate this Sanskrit-words. *Sannyāsa* you could translate as 'renunciation', in the sense that someone detaches himself from all worldly chains. Such a person

just focuses himself on his spiritual nature. *Tyāga* means self-denial or renunciation. That might seem at first sight the same as *Sannyāsa*, but there is a subtle distinction.

An example of *Sannyāsa* is the well-known hinduistic tradition, that an older man withdraws from his family and totally dedicates himself to the *Ātman*, the Self. He withdraws from the world completely.

*Tyāga* on the other hand, means the opposite. Also now one renounces something, but this time not the world but one's own reward. One offers himself for the benefit of the whole.

A wonderful example of the sacrifice of one's own bliss can be found in the *Mahābhārata*. The oldest brother of the Pāndavas, Yudhishtira, has reached after much sacrifice and suffering the Summit of Mount Meru, the symbol of Moksha, the liberating bliss. He is accompanied by his faithful dog. He receives word that he may enter Heaven, but his four-legged friend may not. That is why Yudhishtira refuses the bliss.<sup>(27)</sup> He sacrifices his own bliss for a being that is much less developed than he is. That is true compassion.

This is the great paradox: by renouncing Moksha you reach the true Moksha. After all, the ignorant acts for the sake of the fruit, for the sake of the results. However, the Sage acts without attachment and with the desire to maintain the order of the worlds.<sup>(28)</sup>

*Tyāga* and *Sannyāsa* correspond to two other Sanskrit words: *Amrita* and *Pratyeka*, which are used especially in the Mahāyāna Buddhism. *Pratyeka* means 'for one only'. *Amrita* means 'immortal'. How are we to conceive them? Well, if you apply the first five Jewels, this will undoubtedly lead to a result. You will find 'the way back' to the spirit, where you came from. But for whom do you do it? For yourself? Do you follow the *Pratyeka* path? That is a possibility. But you may also follow the *Amrita* path. Then it is not about yourself. It then concerns the well-being of all. That is the ultimate form of renunciation. Hence in the Buddhism of Tibet a Bodhisattva is even more honored than a Buddha. A Bodhisattva is only one step away from Nirvāna, but he refuses to make that step, because he wants to stay behind in this earthly sphere, in order to serve his fellow man.

To say it in the words of *The Voice of the Silence*, the in Tibetan Buddhist tradition written formal prescriptions for students:

Can there be bliss when all that lives must suffer? Shalt thou be saved and hear the whole world cry?<sup>(29)</sup>

The difference between the two Paths is so subtle that it hardly can be traced back in Christianity and Islam. Yet, in both religious systems people are constantly urged to behave unselfishly and to choose for the spirit. Numerous are the examples in the New and Old Testament showing that unselfishness is always to be preferred. But moving along the path to the spirit and subsequently giving up the reward, that is not easy to find.

The suffering of Jesus at the crucifixion – at least in the literal conception of the cross story – is an example of sacrifice of one's own welfare for others. Also, when Jesus says to his disciples:

but many who are first will be last, and the last will be first,<sup>(30)</sup>

this refers to the teachings of the two paths. This phrase is usually interpreted in social context. Those who are rich and powerful now, will later be less happy. But doesn't it mean more likely that those who follow the Pratyeka path and so be among the first to be liberated from the limitations and suffering of a material life, eventually will still be subject to a certain amount of illusion? Because they do not have the grandeur of the vision of the Buddhas of Compassion, who, after all, realize that there is no substantial difference between them and the others. Therefore they sacrifice themselves and wait for the others to get that far. In that sense, they are the rearguard, who eventually will be the first and the greatest, because of the great sacrifice that they bring: a sacrifice that actually is the keynote of all nature.

In the *shī'itic* Islam there is a curious story, which equally sketches such a big sacrifice. Salmaan al-Farisi overcomes the 'Antagonist', with the result that he is purified. He is positioned as someone who has the characteristics of the Archangel Michael and the Heavenly Man combined. But he refuses the divinity for himself, he gives it up. By this sacrifice he ends up in an in-between position: he is between the divine and humanity. He becomes an intermediary who transforms divine influences into the human. This doctrine should be, according to Henri Corbin, widespread in the second century of Islam, but many *shī'itic* books have been lost.<sup>(31)</sup> This story has a strong resemblance with the teachings of Bodhisattvas who refuse Nirvāna to stay behind for the benefit of mankind.

### Knowing the Self (Âtma-Vidyâ)

The last Jewel of Wisdom is not only the perfection

of the previous ones, but those previous ones become only now really accessible. Although this Jewel is the most mystical, you will come across it abundantly in the different religions, although its true meaning often has been lost. If in the monotheistic religions there is talk of return to God, then it seems like a human being unites itself with something outside of him. However, that is not the case. This Jewel means that the individual man unites with himself, or better expressed: the Self. It is this Self that is the same in all beings. It is the Source, the unity, which during the manifestation becomes the multitude. In Hinduism is it clear beyond a shadow of a doubt that we are dealing with an inner association. The word Âtman (Self) denotes this already. Âtma-Vidyâ means knowledge of Self. We need to discover the root of our existence. If we really know it, we know everything.

That is the central message of the Hinduistic *Upanishads*, the ancient esoteric writings belonging to the Vedic literature. These are mostly meditative writings, which should sharpen the learner's intuition and focus his attention on the underlying unity. Concisely that is reflected in the popular saying *Tat twam asi*, meaning: you are TAT, you are the boundless. We all are the boundless, we all are infinite life. We originate from the same top of the Hierarchy and are therefore one in our core.

That One-ness has turned into the many in a process of emanation and evolution. So the *Chhândogya Upanishad*<sup>(32)</sup> says that initially there was only Being (*Sat*). There were no two. Subsequently *Sat* brought forth fire, fire brought forth water and that in its turn food. Further there came into being gods, names and forms. The imagery is different, but here the same is described as the above-mentioned Aśwattha-tree, which grows with its roots in the air. The entire universe is that tree. We are all part of it. We all come from the same root.

In the *Bṛihadâraṇyaka Upanishad* is said that in the beginning there was nothing in particular.<sup>(33)</sup> There was not something. Everything was one and united. There was no differentiation yet. There was only Âtman, the Self. But by continuous division, as with a fertilized egg, there is generation, and finally there is that diverse multitude of life.

This process of emanation has everything to do with Âtma-Vidyâ. It does not only point out that everything originates from the same primordial point, but also that everything is rooted in the same.

The seventh Jewel teaches us that we can know that point. It is called Brahman (the deity of our hierarchy). And

Brahman, so teach the *Upanishads*, is the same as Âtman, the Self.

The *Chhândogya Upanishad* explains how a Guru teaches his apprentice about this unit. He lets him dissolve salt in water and then taste the water. The salt is everywhere. In the like manner life is everywhere. He explains that as the rivers have been resolved in the sea, it is not known any longer what seawater came from which river. So we do not know anymore where we come from. But the essence of life is everywhere and, so the teacher says, you are that essence.

To explain that process of unification, Buddhism uses a magnificent expression: the dew drop flows back into the ocean. Each sentient being is like a drop and through the process of emanation and evolution, by descend into matter and by ascribing reality to this Loka-Tala, we tend to forget that we are in fact nothing else than just a ripple in the ocean of life. That sense of unity is called Nirvâna. Nirvâna is that state of consciousness, where a being is impressed with the fact that he is the Unity, that he is the Ocean of Life. Nirvâna means 'extinction'. All the elements in our consciousness that prevented us from realizing that state of unity, are extinguished. And most importantly, that we may realize this state by evolution. In Christianity this state of Unity is expressed by the term 'the Kingdom of Heaven' or 'the Kingdom of God'. And, as in different places in the Gospels is stated: the Kingdom of Heaven is in you.<sup>(34)</sup> Does this saying not unambiguously deal with the thought that there is something outside of us which our salvation depends on? No, our salvation is in us. A statement like

I am the way, the truth and life. No one comes to the Father but by me.<sup>(35)</sup>

gets a completely different meaning in the light of Âtma-Vidyâ. The Father is the Self, the state of unity. That can only be achieved by developing the Christos-spirit, the buddhic ability in man. We need to work, life after life, sowing causes and harvesting effects, climbing up the ladder of life, realizing more and more of ourselves, always trying to express universal compassion, so we eventually realize that the Kingdom of Heaven is in all beings.

Whoever reads the Koran with an *open mind* will understand that the whole of Islam is nothing else but an attempt to get to know the Self. After all, the central idea in the Holy Book of the Muslims is *Taubâ*, often translated as 'conversion', but it can with as much right

be translated as 'repentance'.

Go inside yourself. Lose your self in your Self. To Him everything returns. To Allah – the all pervading divine essence – life will return, having been enriched by the experiences in this material existence.

The Sufi's above all have elaborated this idea. Mystical writings, such as *The Conference of the Birds* by the poet Farid ud-Din Attar describe the journey of the soul through different stages to be eventually ... destroyed. We are being destroyed ... and yet we continue to live. *Fanaa'bi-llah* and *bakaa'bi-llah*, destruction by God and to live on in God. The doctrine is clear.

Our life is destroyed with regard to the illusion that we are separate from others, and thereby we live on in Allah, in the realization of unity. We realize that the deity is Ourselves, and we ourselves are the deity. Ibn Mansur al-Hallaadj could therefore say: *Ana l-hakk*, I am the truth. I am God. Although that was conceived by orthodox Muslims as blasphemy, it is nothing but the deep awareness that every being is rooted in the divine, is brought forth by the divine and therefore in essence is that divine. He just needs to realize that this he is.

Nowhere this thought is more beautifully expressed than in a poem by Rumi:

There came one and knocked at the door of the Beloved.

And a voice answered and said, "Who is there?"

The lover replied, "It is I."

"Go hence," returned the voice;

"there is no room within for thee and me."

Then came the lover a second time and knocked and again the voice demanded,

"Who is there?"

He answered, "It is thou."

"Enter," said the voice, "for I am within."<sup>(36)</sup>

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24. Matthew, 5:48.
25. Koran, 95:4-6. Translation: Mohsin Khan.
26. E.g. English wikipedia, 'Rumi'.
27. See: [www.sacred-texts.com/hin/m17/m17003.htm](http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/m17/m17003.htm).
28. *Bhagavad-Gîtâ*, ch. 3, verse 25.
29. H.P. Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*. 'The Seven Portals'. [www.theosociety.org/pasadena/voice/voice3.htm](http://www.theosociety.org/pasadena/voice/voice3.htm) (after note 34).
30. Mark 10:31.
31. Henry Corbin, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*. Gallimard, 1964, p. 111-112.
32. *Chhândogya Upanishad*. Book 6, ch. 2. 'The thirteen principal Upanishads'. Oxford University Press, 1934. In this article we used the English translation of R.E. Hume, p. 241.
33. *Brihadâranyaka Upanishad*. Resp. book 1, ch. 2, verse 1; and book 1, ch. 4, verse 1 and verse 10. Furthermore: G. de Purucker, *Esoteric Instructions*, part 3 'Space and the doctrine of Mâyâ'. Point Loma Publications, San Diego 1987, p. 74, 81, 83.
34. E.g. Luke 17:21.
35. John 14:6.
36. See e.g.: [www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/sufi](http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/sufi).

# Seven Jewels in Plato and Taoism

One does not only find the seven Jewels of Wisdom in the four religions that were discussed here: Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, but in all great philosophical and religious systems. Here follow some indications in relation to Plato and Taoism for the student who wants to do further research.

## Plato

In the *Phaedo* Plato gives a logical foundation to reincarnation by posing that all pairs of contradiction generate from and turn into one another. A solid foundation based on logic in respect to karma can be found in many places in *Politeia* (known today as the *Republic*). For example, when it is concluded that injustice results in mutual friction and hate, while justice brings about unity and friendship.<sup>(1)</sup> Thus, Plato argues that poets who think that disaster comes from the gods, should not be read as part of the education, because man himself is the cause of this punishment which, incidentally, is good for him.<sup>(2)</sup> Karma takes care that man learns his lessons.

All through *Politeia* the aristocracy, or the spiritual hierarchy, is described as the best form of government. There is a natural spiritual hierarchy in Nature, and man should copy this in its form of government if he wants to build a just society. Of course we find such a hierarchical structure in man himself too, where the soul is the foundation of the body.<sup>(3)</sup> Therefore, people who live in their highest part, who live a virtuous life and thus, from a hierarchical point of view, stand above their fellow men, should conduct leadership in the state. This fact naturally leads to the doctrine of self-becoming. He, who has made of his inner self a philosopher, becomes a philosopher. Everyone becomes what he made himself and is naturally suitable for a certain task. One is better equipped for this task and another for that task.<sup>(4)</sup>

In *The Myth of Er* at the end of *Politeia* Plato incorporates the first four Jewels of Wisdom in a majestic way. He relates how soldier Er, who fell at the battlefield, is allowed to pass the portals of death without actually being dead. So he can acquire knowledge about the process of dying first hand. Of course Plato is using metaphors, but we can easily see how each new life is a continuation of the old one. Souls that died have a period of rest in which they harvest the characteristic of the

past life, after which they meet the three Moirae (goddesses of Fate) Lachesis (past), Clotho (present) and Atropos (future). The symbolism is crystal clear. Clotho, who is seated at a large loom, weaves the future fate in accordance with the acts committed in the past. In turn all souls may chose a fate. This fate turns out to be exactly that which is befitting to them. They occupy that place in the hierarchy, that is congruent with the characteristics they have developed in former lives.<sup>(5)</sup>

But no one is doomed to remain who he is. You can grow. In the famous allegory of the cave in *Politeia*, a chained man who is familiar only with the shadows on the wall of the cave (the physical world), is being freed of his chains and via different grades of knowledge finally goes to the source of all that is — the Sun. Self-development is also the aim of the process of education that Plato gives great deal of attention.

Also in Plato there is mention of compassion as a motive. Just as good doctors do not serve their self-interest, will a true leader have the interest of everyone in the state at heart and not his own.<sup>(6)</sup> And finally, according to Plato everyone can know the source from which everything flows forth. We already indicated the Sun in the allegory of the cave, the Source that brings forth all that is. It is the philosophers, those who love and desire wisdom, who are capable of knowing the source of it.<sup>(7)</sup>

## Taoism

Taoism is a religion that originated in China and goes back to the time that Lao tsu was active there. In ancient China Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism were three visions that not only peacefully coexisted, but many people were followers of all three simultaneously. Although Confucius never publicly spoke about reincarnation — he did not proclaim metaphysical teachings — silently he must have agreed with it. Also the holy book of Taoism, the *Tao te Ching*, contains paradoxes that are thought provoking, more than a fully elaborated system of teachings. It is a small book that Lao tsu allegedly had written when he left China in the western direction. It gives practical pointers combined with intuitive hints to deeper teachings.

Nevertheless, Taoism contains the doctrine of reincarnation. Tradition teaches that Lao tsu contemplated Tao in former lives. His student

Chuang tzu clearly taught reincarnation.<sup>(8)</sup> A quote like ‘returning is the motion of the Tao’<sup>(9)</sup> in the *Tao te Ching* can easily be interpreted as cyclicity — and therefore as reincarnation as well. Also: ‘the ten thousand things rise and fall while the Self watches their return’.<sup>(10)</sup>

That, because of karma, we should not selfishly appropriate power is shown very clearly here:

There is always an official executioner.

If you try to take his place, it is like trying to be a master carpenter and cutting wood.

If you try to cut wood like a master carpenter, you will only hurt your hand.<sup>(11)</sup>

Also a sentence like ‘a violent man will die a violent death’<sup>(12)</sup> can only be explained based on karma. The *Tao te Ching* gives a lot of attention to leadership. The hierarchy of life does not mean that the one who is the strongest physically should be leading. No, the one who knows Tao, who is aware of boundlessness and unity, who is the mildest, and doesn’t want anything for himself — he is the one suitable as a leader.

If the sage would guide the people, he must serve with humility. If he would lead them, he must follow behind. In this way when the sage rules, the people will not feel oppressed. When he stands before them, they will not be harmed.<sup>(13)</sup>

We find self-becoming in the following paradoxes:

When you are at one with the Tao, the Tao welcomes you. When you are at one with Virtue, the Virtue is always there. When you are at one with loss, the loss is experienced willingly.<sup>(14)</sup>

The duality – or the two Paths – that is the foundation of endless Nature, is being expressed in a very clear way by the well known symbol of Yin and Yang. Well now, the sage should rise above that duality. By choosing for Tao, and thus for the inextricable unity of all beings, he never needs to choose again and will never act for himself any more. This is called *wu-wei*, acting without purpose. It means that the sage never again pursues a personal goal, but only does what is necessary for the whole.

Finally, the *Tao te Ching* also knows the essential unity of life. This book teaches that we can know that Core of all things.

The beginning of the universe is the mother of all things. Knowing the mother, one also knows the sons. Knowing the sons, yet remaining in touch with the mother, brings freedom from the fear of death.<sup>(15)</sup>

So we can know the Source. The *Tao te Ching* teaches how to do that.

With an open mind, you will be openhearted.

Being openhearted, you will act royally.

Being royal, you will attain the divine.

Being divine, you will be at one with the Tao.

Being at one with the Tao is eternal. And though the body dies, the Tao will never pass away.<sup>(16)</sup>

## References

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1. Plato, *Republic*, the Politeia. Many editions, 351d-352c.
  2. See ref. 1, 380a-b.
  3. See ref. 1, 403d.
  4. See ref. 1, 370b-c.
  5. See ref. 1, 614b and further.
  6. See ref. 1, 342d-e.
  7. See for example: 484b-d.
  8. See: Sylvia Cranston, *Reincarnation, the Phoenix Fire Mystery*. Theosophical University Press, Pasadena 1998, p. 109-111.
  9. Lao tsu, *Tao te Ching*, a new translation by Gia-fu Feng and Jane English. Wildwood House Ltd., London 1973, verse 40.
  10. See ref. 9, verse 16.
  11. See ref. 9, verse 74.
  12. See ref. 9, verse 42.
  13. See ref. 9, verse 66.
  14. See ref. 9, verse 23.
  15. See ref. 9, verse 52.
  16. See ref. 9, verse 16.
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## I.S.I.S. Foundation

The activities of the I.S.I.S. Foundation 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.

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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.

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