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INSIGHTS INTO THE AGELESS WISDOM

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From the Editor's desk

Dear Friends,
Welcome to the September 2026 edition of *Esoterica*, the official journal of the Theosophical Society in England and Wales. Autumn is rapidly establishing its grip of decay and blazing colour as Summer, with its searing heatwaves and record temperatures gradually fades into memory. For all the relief of cooler days, I am not looking forward to winter.

Last month (August) Eric attended the society's Summer Convention at the Hillscourt Hotel & Conference Centre in Birmingham. He came home full of enthusiasm for the lectures, which he said were all inspirational and theosophical. We decided to include some of the talks in future editions, providing we can obtain notes. Members will be able to listen to the talks on the members area of the TSEW website. Eric especially recommends Andrew Swaffield's talk, *Life as an Inside Job: Navigating the Inner World*. Andrew is our newly elected President, and we thought his talk would serve as an introduction of his way of thinking and theosophical knowledge. I am pleased to feature the talk in this edition.

The first article in this edition, *Mahatma Gandhi and Theosophy: The Meeting of Universal Brotherhood and Practical Spirituality* was generated by ChatGPT in about 4 seconds. It is an interesting read with historic references and general interest. I would also recommend *The Wave Story* by Bob Wigginton, President of Torbay Lodge. Bob has



Clay Banks

put his mind to a useful theosophical analogy and written an excellent article around it. Come on folks, put your imagination in gear and have a go at following Bob's example.

A Divine Spirit's Journey Through a Cosmic Cycle lies at the other end of the theosophical spectrum and is a veritable feast for those of use who value the deeper aspects of our incredible teachings.

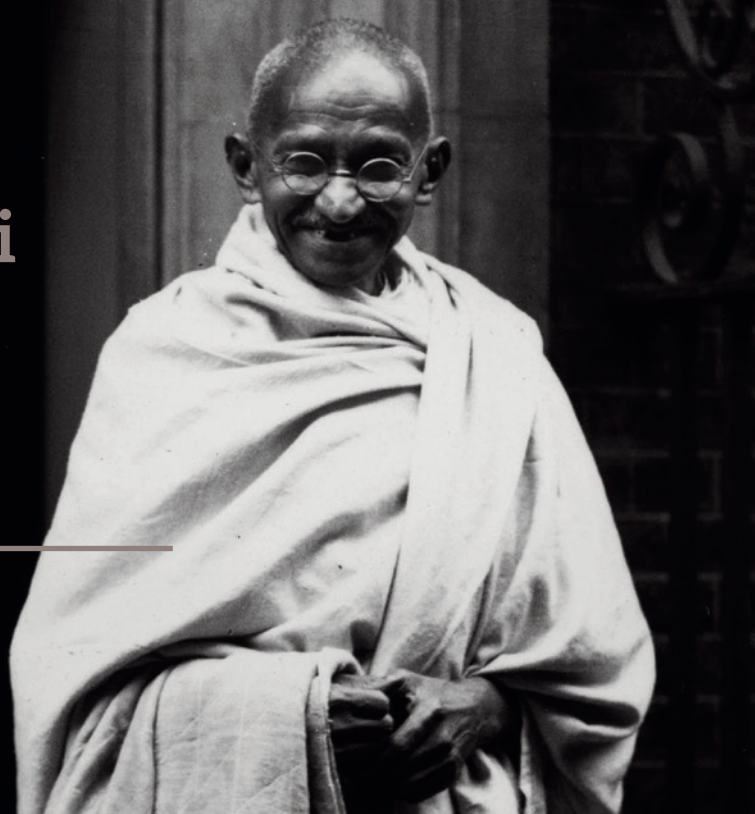
I hope that you enjoy all this edition's offerings. Perhaps some will inspire you, others challenge and some maybe lift your theosophical interest to new levels.

Best wishes for a pleasant Autumn. ✱

Julie Cunningham Editor

Mahatma Gandhi and Theosophy

The Meeting of Universal Brotherhood and Practical Spirituality



Among the many encounters between Indian spirituality and modern global movements, the relationship between Mahatma Gandhi and the Theosophical Society occupies a distinctive place. Gandhi was not a member of the Society, nor did he accept all aspects of Theosophical teaching, yet his life intersected with Theosophical ideas at an important stage in his spiritual development. Through contact with Theosophists in London, he was introduced more deeply to the Bhagavad Gita; through later encounters with figures such as Annie Besant, he participated in wider conversations concerning India's spiritual heritage, social

regeneration, and national awakening.

The connection between Gandhi and Theosophy is therefore not one of formal affiliation but of intellectual and spiritual sympathy. Both movements arose from a conviction that humanity possesses an inner unity, that spiritual truths are not confined to one tradition, and that ethical transformation must accompany any genuine progress of civilisation.

Theosophy and the Rediscovery of India's Spiritual Heritage

The Theosophical Society was founded in New York in 1875 by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, Henry Steel Olcott, and their associates. Its three declared objects included the formation of a nucleus of the universal

Above: Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948) was an Indian lawyer, anti-colonial nationalist and political ethicist who employed nonviolent resistance to lead the successful campaign for India's independence from British rule, and to later inspire movements for civil rights and freedom across the world. The honorific Mahatma (Sanskrit: "great-souled", "venerable"), was first applied to him in 1914 in South Africa.

brotherhood of humanity, the encouragement of comparative study of religion, philosophy, and science, and the investigation of the deeper laws of nature and the latent powers within humanity.

When the Society established its headquarters at Adyar, India, in 1882, it became closely associated with the revival of interest in India's philosophical and spiritual traditions. At a time when colonial interpretations often portrayed Indian civilisation as backward, Theosophists argued that the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and other classical texts represented profound contributions to world thought.

This intellectual climate formed part of the background to Gandhi's own rediscovery of Hindu philosophy. The Theosophical movement did not create Gandhi's spirituality, which was deeply rooted in his family upbringing, Vaishnava devotion, Jain influences, and personal search for truth. However, it helped provide an environment in which Indian spiritual traditions could be approached with renewed confidence.

Gandhi's Encounter with Theosophists in London

Gandhi's first significant contact with Theosophists occurred during his student years in London. Arriving in England in 1888 to study law, the young Gandhi was searching



Above: Theosophical Society International Headquarters, Adyar, India, in 1890.

for ways to understand his own religious inheritance. Although he had grown up in a Hindu household, he had not studied Hindu scriptures systematically.

Through two Theosophical acquaintances, the brothers Bertram and Archibald

Keightley, Gandhi was encouraged to read the Bhagavad Gita. They introduced him to Edwin Arnold's translation, *The Song Celestial*, and this became a turning point in his spiritual life.

Gandhi later recalled that the Gita became one of the greatest influences upon him. He interpreted it not as a justification for physical warfare but as an allegory of the inner struggle between higher and lower tendencies within human consciousness. The battlefield of Kurukshetra became, in his understanding, a symbol of the moral struggle faced by every individual.

This interpretation closely reflected one aspect of Theosophical thought: that spiritual evolution is fundamentally an inner transformation. The conquest required of the seeker is not domination over others but mastery of the lower self.

The Bhagavad Gita, Karma Yoga, and Service

The Gita's teaching of selfless action (*karma yoga*) became central to Gandhi's philosophy.



Top: Bertram Keightley (1860–1944) and above: Archibald Keightley (1859–1930).

He believed that the spiritual person must not withdraw from the world but serve within it, acting without attachment to personal gain.

This idea harmonised with the Theosophical emphasis on service and the evolution of consciousness. Although Theosophy often expressed evolution in a cosmological framework, Gandhi expressed it through ethical living: truthfulness, non-violence, compassion, simplicity, and service to the poorest members of society.

His concept of *satyagraha* – the force of truth – was a practical application of spiritual principles. For Gandhi, political action could not be separated from moral discipline. A

person seeking justice had first to transform themselves.

In this respect Gandhi's life became an example of a principle recognised by many Theosophical writers: that the advancement of humanity depends upon the awakening of higher qualities within individuals.

Annie Besant: Theosophy and Indian National Awakening

The strongest institutional connection between Gandhi and the Theosophical Society came through Annie Besant.

Besant joined the Society in 1889 and became one of its most influential figures. After moving to India, she devoted herself to education, social reform, and the revival of Indian cultural traditions.

She established the Central Hindu College at Benares, which later became connected with Banaras Hindu University.

Besant's work helped create a generation of Indians who combined modern education with appreciation for their spiritual inheritance. She also became active in the Indian independence movement and was elected president of the Indian National Congress in 1917.

Gandhi and Besant shared a deep concern for India's moral and political regeneration. Both believed that freedom required more than political change; it required the awakening of national character.

However, they differed in method. Besant initially favoured constitutional progress and dominion status within the British Empire, while Gandhi increasingly advocated non-cooperation and mass civil resistance. Their differences became especially visible during the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920.

Nevertheless, Gandhi respected Besant's dedication and her contribution to India. Her influence belonged to the larger movement that encouraged Indians to recognise the spiritual and cultural value of their own spiritual heritage.

Universal Brotherhood and the Removal of Social Barriers

The first object of the Theosophical Society – the formation of a nucleus of universal brotherhood – has a clear resonance with Gandhi's social ideals.

Gandhi's campaign against untouchability and caste discrimination reflected his belief that every human being possesses inherent



Above: Annie Besant (1847–1933) was an English socialist, theosophist, freemason, women's rights and activist, educationist, involved in women's rights, Home Rule, and Indian nationalism. She gave support to both Irish and Indian self-rule. She had been the first female president of the Indian National Congress in 1917.

dignity. He regarded the treatment of oppressed communities as a moral and spiritual failure.

Theosophical teachings similarly emphasised the essential unity of humanity. Although Theosophy and Gandhi approached social reform from different philosophical foundations, both challenged the idea that external differences represented true divisions between human beings.

Theosophists often spoke of the evolution of humanity toward greater wisdom and compassion. Gandhi expressed a similar aspiration through the practical language of love, service, and non-violence.

Blavatsky, Olcott, and Gandhi's Spiritual Environment

Although Gandhi had no personal relationship with Helena Blavatsky, the philosophical atmosphere created by Blavatsky's writings formed part of the intellectual world in which Gandhi's generation encountered Eastern spirituality.

Blavatsky's work sought to demonstrate the underlying unity of religious traditions and to restore appreciation for ancient wisdom. Henry Steel Olcott, meanwhile, worked closely with Buddhist and Hindu communities in Asia and supported educational and social initiatives.

Gandhi's own approach was different. He was less concerned with comparative metaphysics and more concerned with the practical consequences of spiritual truth. Yet the shared conviction that religions contain universal principles created a point of connection.

Krishnamurti and the Question of Spiritual Authority

A later figure associated with both Theosophy and the wider spiritual landscape of Gandhi's era was Jiddu Krishnamurti.

Krishnamurti was raised within the Theosophical Society and was once regarded by some Theosophists as a possible vehicle for a future spiritual teacher. However, he eventually rejected organised spiritual authority and emphasised direct personal insight.

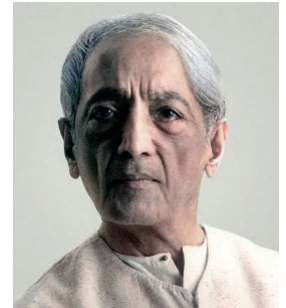
Gandhi and Krishnamurti did not share a close relationship, but their ideas occasionally touched upon similar themes: self-awareness, freedom from conditioning, and the importance of inner transformation.

Both men challenged the idea that spiritual life could be reduced to mere external conformity. For Gandhi, truth had to be lived through action; for Krishnamurti, truth required direct perception beyond inherited beliefs.

Points of Difference

While the connections between Gandhi and Theosophy are significant, it is important not to confuse sympathy with identity.

Gandhi did not accept Theosophical cosmology in its entirety. Concepts such as root races, planetary chains, and elaborate cycles of cosmic evolution were not central to his thought.



Above: Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986) was an Indian spiritual figure, speaker, and writer. Adopted by members of the Theosophical Society as a child, Krishnamurti was raised to fill the mantle of the prophesied World Teacher, a role tasked with aiding humankind's spiritual evolution. In 1929, he broke from the Theosophy movement and disbanded the Order of the Star in the East, a related movement which had been formed around him. He spent the rest of his life speaking to groups and individuals around the world, hoping to contribute a radical transformation of mankind.

His spirituality was grounded primarily in ethical practice. The questions that concerned him were immediate and practical:

- ~ How should one live?
- ~ How should one treat others?
- ~ How can injustice be opposed without hatred?
- ~ How can personal transformation contribute to social transformation?

In this sense, Gandhi transformed spiritual principles into a method of public action.

Conclusion: A Shared Vision of Human Possibility

The relationship between Gandhi and the Theosophical Society represents one strand in the wider dialogue between Eastern wisdom

and modern spiritual movements. The Society helped introduce Gandhi to the Bhagavad Gita and contributed to an intellectual environment in which Indian philosophy was newly appreciated. Figures such as Annie Besant demonstrated how spiritual ideals could become connected with education, social reform, and national renewal.

Gandhi, however, followed his own path. His greatness lay not in belonging to a particular movement but in bringing spiritual conviction into direct engagement with the problems of human society.

The deepest point of agreement between Gandhi and Theosophy

may be found in the ideal of the unity of life. Both recognised that humanity's future depends upon the awakening of compassion, wisdom, and responsibility. Whether expressed as universal brotherhood or as Gandhi's insistence on truth and non-violence, the underlying message remains that spiritual development and service to humanity are inseparable.

For this reason, the meeting between Gandhi and Theosophy remains a meaningful example of how ideas can travel across cultures, inspire new interpretations, and contribute to the continuing search for a more humane world. ✱

Created using ChatGPT.



Above: Many statues of Gandhi exist in cities around the world – this one stands in Parliament Square in London.

*"If we could
change ourselves,
the tendencies in the world
would also change.
As a man changes
his own nature,
so does the attitude
of the world
change towards him."*

Mahatma Gandhi

Light and Dark

Student: "I am worried about the evil that I see more of in the world. I have been meditating on the concepts of light and dark. I hear lots of talk about seeking the light but how can we do that when we are faced with the dark aspects of this world daily?"

Teacher: "Let's establish the default position before we go any further. We must always strive towards the light. However, in doing so we must realise that we can never vanquish darkness. Yet here we must see that this is not a simple matter. We must understand what darkness is and that light is the child of darkness. The 'mother deep' is the abstract nature of unconditioned space – that which is the ground of all being, within which the Absolute manifests each new creation. She is darkness absolute, the infinite night. The dawn of a new creation (when the Absolute stirs) causes light to emerge from her infinite womb. She gives birth to light, light itself cannot do this, only darkness can repolarise to produce its antithesis.

So, we see that light and dark are one thing, interdependent and yet complementary, the same force now occupying the same space, the same yet opposite. They are the divine twins of the Absolute's unerring purpose."

Student: "But darkness can manifest as evil. Surely, we cannot condone evil."

Teacher: "What we call evil is darkness not so well touched by light yet still divine in its yet, undeveloped nature. It is up to us, as spiritual seekers, not to reject the manifestations of darkness but to understand them, to learn from them, and to deal with them both in society and within ourselves. This is not to say encourage or condone but to see them for what they are: equal partners in the forces that make up the earthly life that we are here to learn and evolve from.

We do not seek to eliminate night-time from our world, but rather do we light our lamps to illuminate our own personal spaces. The night has not gone away yet the things it would hide are revealed to us."

Student: "How are we to attain perfection when evil exists in our lives?"

Teacher: "Perfection does not lie in the one-sided notion of good over evil but rather in the reconciliation of both good and bad. The wholeness of being is not a state where the opposites are at war but are in harmony. Creation cannot vanquish the Mother Deep, her darkness gives it a ground to be, an opposing force to push against so that it can grow strong and sure. Without this opposition none of us could even keep our human form.

Dear student, these things are very deep. They are not for the casual seeker. They must be meditated upon for an entire lifetime. They are there for us to measure ourselves against. We do not defeat evil we transmute it in the process of our evolving enlightenment.

Namaste." ✨

Taken from a question-and-answer session between a student of theosophy and her teacher.



Life as an Inside Job: Navigating the Inner World

Adapted from a talk given by *Andrew Swaffield*



If life really is an inside job – if the real work of a human life happens within – then how do we actually navigate it? Not in theory, but in practice: on an ordinary day, in an ordinary week, in the life we go home to each evening.

I choose the word navigate deliberately. A navigator needs three things: a map of the territory, a knowledge of its laws, and a reason for the voyage. That is the shape of this piece. The map is Theosophy's account of what a human being actually is. The laws are karma, reincarnation, and the great cycles. And the reason, I want to argue, is not private peace, and not escape, but something more demanding: ethical action, meaning and service, in the middle of ordinary life. Along the way we will call some unexpected witnesses – a handful of Nobel laureates among them.

The outside job

It is worth being honest about the opposition first, because the claim that life is an inside job runs against almost everything our culture teaches. From childhood we are trained to aspire outward: titles and status, money and power, position, celebrity, physical beauty, territory and possessions. These are the things

Rosie Steggles

our society worships — genuinely worships, with rituals and league tables and magazine covers. Success, we are told, is something that happens outside you, and can be seen from the street.

I want to be careful here, because it would be easy to sneer at all this, and I have no right to. I spent forty years in aviation and travel. I have held the titles; I have sat in the chief executive's chair. I chased a good deal of what is on that list and caught some of it. So, I am not speaking as someone who renounced the world from a cave. I am speaking as someone who got some of the prizes — and noticed, each time, that the person holding the prize was unchanged. The title changes what people call you. It does not change what you are.

None of this is wicked. Most of it is morally neutral, and some of it is useful. The problem is not that these things exist; the problem is the claim made on their behalf — that they are the job. And on its own evidence, the claim fails. Our society has run the experiment at scale. We are, materially, the richest generation of human beings who have ever lived — better housed, better fed, more entertained, more titled and more photographed than any of our ancestors. If the outside job worked, we would be the most contented people in history. Psychologists have a name for what actually happens: the hedonic treadmill. Each prize delivers its jolt of satisfaction, the jolt fades, the baseline resets, and the chase resumes a rung higher. The ladder has no top.

That is the claim the ancient wisdom

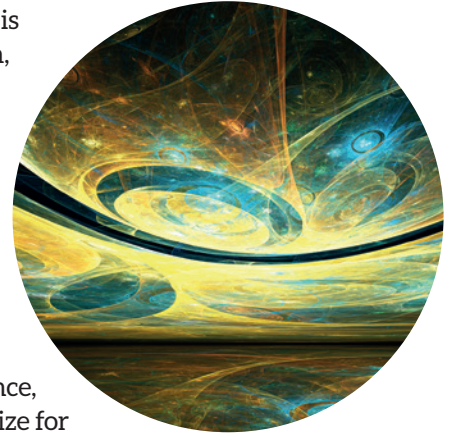
quietly, persistently denies — and it denied it long before the research caught up.

Maya, and an older instruction

The wisdom traditions have a word for the outer spectacle: maya. It is usually translated as illusion, and that translation causes trouble, because it can sound as though the world does not exist. That is not the teaching — the chair you sit on exists; keep sitting on it. Maya means the world is not what it appears to be: that we mistake appearance for essence, the mask for the face, the prize for the person. And the teaching says something more pointed still — that attachment to appearances binds us. It slows the pilgrim down. Every ounce of identity we invest in what can be taken away — the title, the body, the bank balance — is an ounce that will one day be torn, because everything on that first list is, by nature, temporary.

If outer achievement is not the job, what is? The oldest answer in the Western record was carved in stone at Delphi, over the entrance to the temple of Apollo, more than two thousand years ago: two words in Greek, *gnothi seauton* — know thyself.

Notice what that is not. It is not "*improve thyself*." It is not "*promote thyself*." Nor is it an invitation to introspect for its own sake. It is a statement about where the real





Above: *The Voice of the Silence* is a book by Helena Blavatsky. Written in Fontainebleau, it was first published in 1889. According to Blavatsky, it is a translation of fragments from a sacred book she encountered during her studies in the East, called *The Book of the Golden Precepts*.

work of a human life is located. The traditions differ in vocabulary and agree in direction. The Upanishads send the seeker inward to the Atman. The Sufis speak of polishing the mirror of the heart. The Kabbalists climb an inner tree. The Gospel of Luke places the kingdom of God within you. Blavatsky's *The Voice of the Silence* is a manual for an interior journey from its first page to its last. Different maps, different centuries, different languages – one compass bearing: inward.

The claim

So let me state the claim as plainly as possible. Life is an inside job. Consciousness is not a by-product of the world; the world, as we actually live it, is a product of consciousness. Everything we have ever experienced – every person loved, every landscape, every grief – we experienced in consciousness. It is the one place any of us has ever lived. And yet it is the one place our culture gives us no map for.

One might expect a Theosophist to say that. One might not expect the father of quantum theory to say it. Max Planck – Nobel Prize in Physics, 1918, the man who discovered the quantum itself – gave an interview to

The Observer in January 1931¹ and said this: "I regard consciousness as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness. We cannot get behind consciousness."

It is worth being honest about what that is and is not. It is not a laboratory result. It is

the considered philosophical conviction of the man who opened the door to modern physics – his view, stated late in life, after a lifetime staring at the foundations of matter. We will meet more of his colleagues shortly. But hold the thought: when the greatest students of the outer world reached the bottom of it, more than one of them found the inner world looking back.

The map: the sevenfold constitution

If the inner world is the territory, we need a map, and Theosophy's map of the human being is the sevenfold constitution.

The teaching is that we are not one thing, but a sevenfold being – an instrument of seven strings. At the summit, Atma: pure spirit, the ray of the One that never left home. Beside it, Buddhi: the spiritual soul, the faculty of intuition, of direct knowing. Then Manas: mind, the thinker, which in this life works in two registers – a higher mind that turns

toward Buddhi and a lower mind that turns toward the world. Those three together are the immortal triad. That is the pilgrim; that is what reincarnates; that is the "self" that has been at this far

"I regard consciousness as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness. We cannot get behind consciousness."

longer than one lifetime.

Below the triad sits the mortal quaternary – the equipment issued for one incarnation. Kama: desire and emotion, the whole roaring machinery of wanting and fearing. Prana: vitality, the life current. The linga-sharira: the

subtle model-body on which the physical form is built. And finally the sthula-sharira: the physical body, the only one of the seven that gets a seat on the bus. These four are the personality – the “me” of this time round. They are lent, and at death they are returned. That, in this teaching, is what death actually is: not the destruction of the person, but the pilgrim setting down the equipment of one journey. The triad withdraws, gathers the harvest of the life – everything in it that was true and noble enough to keep – and in due season takes up new instruments. Which is why the teaching insists, gently but firmly, that we grieve the parting, and rightly, but need not grieve the pilgrim.

One caution for the more scholarly reader: terminology varies between schools, and even between Blavatsky's own works – the arrangement above is the one given in *The Key to Theosophy*. But the point of the map is not the vocabulary; it is that once we know we are layered, an entirely new question becomes available, moment by moment, in the middle of ordinary life: where am I operating from, right now?

Using the map

That question stops being a diagram and becomes a navigation instrument the moment it is applied to ordinary experience. Consider three inner events any of us might have before breakfast.

The reaction: a flash of irritation, a craving, the sting when someone slights you. That is kama speaking – desire-emotion doing exactly what it was built to do. Nothing wrong with it; it is weather. But the navigator who

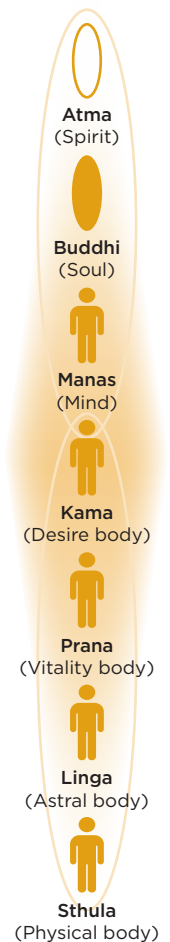
knows the map can name it as it rises – *that is kama, that is the fourth principle, that is not me* – and in the naming there is already a hair's breadth of freedom. One can have the emotion without the emotion having you.

The deliberation: the weighing, the planning, the rehearsing of conversations that will never happen. The restless lower mind – a superb servant and a tyrannical master, and most of modern life is spent entirely inside it.

And then, occasionally, the knowing: the quiet certainty that arrives whole, without argument, and does not raise its voice. Buddhi. Intuition. It speaks softly, and it speaks once. Most of us have learned to talk over it. The inner work, in large part, is learning not to.

What does the practice actually look like? Nothing exotic. Three disciplines, all ancient, all portable. First, the pause: the deliberate half-second between stimulus and response, in which one asks the navigator's question – *where is this coming from?* Managing it once a day changes a life. Second, some daily stillness – call it meditation, call it sitting quietly – ten minutes in which the loom is allowed to fall silent and something behind the weaving can be heard. And third, a practice the Pythagoreans taught and Theosophy inherited: the evening review. At the day's end, run the day backwards, without excuses and without flagellation, simply seeing it. What is truly seen begins to change; what is kept in the dark returns as fate. The review is karma-work done nightly, in ten minutes, in an armchair.

And lest this sound like ancient psychology with no modern standing: neuroscience tells us the instrument is plastic,



that attention, repeatedly placed, physically reshapes the brain. What we practise, we become. The mystics said it first; the laboratory has caught up. Charles Sherrington, who won the Nobel Prize for showing us how neurons work, described the waking brain as *"... an enchanted loom where millions of flashing shuttles weave a dissolving pattern."*²

An enchanted loom. And each of us is the weaver – which is the whole claim of this piece in a few words.

One life, or a long apprenticeship?

A map is not enough; a navigator also needs to know the rules of the territory. For Theosophy, two of those rules matter above all: reincarnation and karma.

Consider the story much of our culture inherited: one life, one chance, threescore years and ten, and at the end of it a final judgement whose result is eternal. This deserves to be said carefully and with respect, because many people have found real comfort in that tradition. But taken cold, as arithmetic,

it is a frightening idea – eternity decided in seventy years, one audition, no retakes. A great deal of the quiet despair in our society, and a great deal of its frantic outward striving, may trace back to that arithmetic, even in people who believe they stopped subscribing to it long ago.

Set beside it the story Theosophy tells. Reincarnation: the gentle progress of the pilgrim through many lives – many days at school. Between the days, rest: the

teaching describes a long assimilation between incarnations, in which the harvest of a life is woven into the soul, as sleep weaves the day's learning into the body. Nothing is lost; nothing is final. Every life resumes the lesson where it was left. Friendships resume too – the teaching on karmic affinity holds that we incarnate among our own, drawn back to those with whom our accounts are open, which is why some strangers are not strangers. The work resumes. Death is the end of the equipment, not the end of the pilgrim.

Notice what that frame does, psychologically, to a human life. It changes how we hold failure – a failed venture in an endless curriculum is a lesson, not a verdict. It changes how we hold grief – parting becomes an interval, not an ending, and that is not offered as a comforting platitude but as a proposition about the structure of reality. And it changes how we hold our own painfully slow progress. On the one-life clock, a habit still unconquered at seventy is a tragedy. On the pilgrim's clock, it is maybe Tuesday.

This is not a doctrine of escape. It is a doctrine of time enough.

Karma: sovereignty, not sentence

The second law is karma – the law of laws, the Masters called it. The word has been so cheapened that it now mostly means cosmic payback, something done to us, by the management, for our sins. That is precisely what the teaching does not say.

Karma is not punishment handed down by gods. It is a law – as impersonal, as reliable, and as little offended by us as gravity. Blavatsky defines it like this: *"We describe*

Jon Tyson



*Karma as that Law of re-adjustment which ever tends to restore disturbed equilibrium in the physical, and broken harmony in the moral world."*³

Re-adjustment. Restoration of harmony. Karma is not against us; it is the universe keeping its books honest – the echo of unresolved cause, returning until it is resolved. Karma is that which repeats until seen.

Karma is not punishment handed down by gods. It is a law – as impersonal, as reliable, and as little offended by us as gravity.

Here is the consequence, and it is the most empowering idea in the whole teaching. If karma is law and not sentence, then nothing is being done to us. We are the makers of our karma – every thought, every word, every act is a cause set in motion – and we are therefore the ones who can unravel it. Absolute agency. Sovereignty – not sovereignty over events, which will do as they please, but sovereignty over causes. The one thing in the universe that is entirely ours is the inner act. Which is, of course, why life is an inside job: the inside is the only place where causes are made.

One further point, because it bears on inherited and collective burden as much as personal fate. The teaching's answer to how individual sovereignty squares with what we inherit is that karma is woven, not solitary: family karma, national karma, the karma of humanity. Each of us is a thread in fabrics we did not weave alone. But the sovereignty

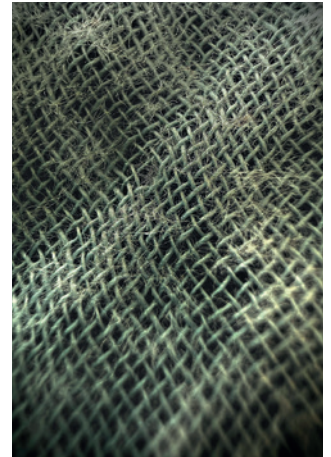
stands, because a thread that changes its own tension changes the cloth. Doing our own inner work quietly alters the weave for everyone entangled with us – ancestors, descendants, strangers. Nobody heals alone, in either direction.

Everything that lives, breathes

There is a third feature of the territory: rhythm. *The Secret Doctrine* describes a universe that breathes – manvantara and pralaya, activity and rest, outbreathing and inbreathing, on every scale from the atom to the cosmos. One does not need to take the cosmology on trust to feel the truth of it, because we live inside these rhythms already: the breath, day and night, the seasons, waking and sleep – which the old teaching calls a nightly rehearsal of death and rebirth. And, the tradition says, lives themselves: incarnation and rest, incarnation and rest, the great slow breathing of the pilgrim.

Why does this matter to a navigator? Because rhythm forbids two errors. It forbids despair, because no night, in a breathing universe, is final. And it forbids forcing, because no summer can be demanded in January. The inner life has seasons too – dry spells, fallow years, sudden springs. The navigator who knows the territory is cyclic stops panicking in winter.

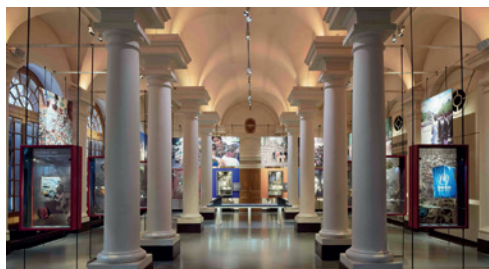
And the great cycle that contains all the others moves in one direction: the long evolutionary arc toward fuller consciousness, toward what we might become.



Francesco Ungaro

Stockholm: unexpected witnesses

A visit to the Nobel Museum in Stockholm makes an unlikely case in point. Standing amid the record of what human minds have achieved, two things strike a visitor. The first is simple awe at what remarkable beings humans are. The second is stranger: the



Above: The Nobel Prize Museum is located in the former Stock Exchange Building in Gamla Stan, the old town in central Stockholm, Sweden and showcases information about the Nobel Prize and Nobel laureates, as well as information about the founder of the prize, Alfred Nobel (1833-1896).

greatest students of the outer world kept arriving, unbidden, at the inner question.

We have already met Planck. Consider three of his colleagues. Erwin Schrödinger – Nobel Prize, 1933, an architect of quantum mechanics, the man whose equation runs the atomic world – engaged seriously

with Vedanta throughout his adult life, and argued in his philosophical writing that the apparent separateness of minds is exactly that: apparent. Appearance, not reality. The Upanishads' oldest claim, restated by the man who wrote the wave equation.

Wolfgang Pauli – Nobel Prize, 1945, and the most exacting critic in physics – spent twenty-five years in private dialogue with the psychologist Carl Jung about mind, matter and meaning. Their correspondence is published, under the title *Atom and Archetype*⁴. The man who policed the mathematics of the quantum spent a quarter of a century asking a psychologist about the soul.

And in our own time, Anton Zeilinger – Nobel Prize, 2022 – was honoured for

experiments demonstrating quantum entanglement: particles which, once joined, remain correlated across any distance. This is not offered as proof that entanglement demonstrates karmic affinity; it does not, and the tradition is done no favours by pretending otherwise. It remains, at most, a suggestive analogy. But it is a remarkable one: the deepest experiments we can perform show that connection, not separation, is the ground floor of nature.

These are the personal views of individual scientists, not a scientific consensus – that should be stated plainly. But they are no longer lonely views, either. In philosophy departments, the position called panpsychism – the idea that consciousness is not a late accident of complicated brains but a fundamental feature of nature, present in some degree all the way down – has moved in a generation from career-ending eccentricity to serious contention. The hard problem of consciousness – how mind could ever be squeezed out of mindless matter – has refused to die, and a growing number of philosophers now suspect it cannot be solved in that direction at all, that mind was there from the start. Blavatsky put the same claim in one line: *"the universe is worked and guided from within outwards"*⁵. The vocabulary is new; the direction of travel is very old.

One rule, every tradition

The inner world, then, has a map, laws, rhythm, and some unexpected friends in Stockholm. What does the inner work produce? The first answer, across every tradition humanity has kept, is the same answer: ethics.

Hillel, in the Talmud, a generation before Jesus: *"What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow."* Confucius, five centuries earlier, in the Analects: *"What you do not wish for yourself, do not do to others."* The Gospel of Luke: *"Do to others as you would have them do to you."*⁶ The Hadith, the Mahabharata, the Udanavarga say the same thing. Independent civilisations, separated by oceans and centuries, converge on one rule.

Why? A sceptic will say it is simply what large societies need in order to function, and the sceptic is not wrong – but that explains why the rule survives, not why it keeps being rediscovered by mystics in solitude, at the summit of the inner path, where no society is watching. The Theosophical answer is that this is not really a rule at all. It is a discovery, made again and again: that at the deepest level the other is not other. Go deep enough into the self and one strikes the common water table of being. That is why it is called brotherhood – not a duty imposed from a book, but a fact in nature, waiting to be recognised.

Altruism and the primacy of motive

Blavatsky sharpened this further, in what may be her most practical teaching. For her, altruism is not an ornament of the spiritual life; it is its test. And the test is applied in one place only: the motive.

*"It is the motive, and the motive alone, which makes any exercise of power become black, malignant, or white, beneficent Magic."*⁷

The same act, the same words, the same power – transmuted or corrupted entirely by the intention behind it. This is a working tool,

not a piety. Tried for a single day – before the email, before the remark, before the kindness, one honest glance at the motive, why am I actually doing this? – it is a bracing discipline. It catches generosity that turns out to be vanity in fancy dress, and candour that turns out to be cruelty with an alibi. But notice where the test relocates the whole moral life: inside. The inner work does not begin with visions or powers – Blavatsky was withering about people who wanted the powers. It begins with the slow, unglamorous purification of why we do what we do.

Not extra – everything

The inner work – self-knowledge, self-observation, meditation, the purification of motive – is not an extra. It is not a hobby for the spiritually inclined, bolted onto the real business of life. It is the engine. And its manifestation is not the temple. We did not incarnate to sit permanently on a cushion; if permanent retreat were the point, incarnation would be a mistake, and the teaching says it is not – we incarnated into this world, deliberately, to be in it and of it.

The sequence runs: self-knowledge becomes steadiness; steadiness becomes kindness; kindness becomes service – in the family, in the workplace, in the street, with every creature we meet, human and otherwise. Nobody sees the engine; they see the car move. People will never know about ten minutes of stillness or an evening review. They will know that we were steady when it mattered and



kind when it cost something. Ethical action, meaning and service are the outer face of an inner engine. The work is internal. The results are not.

Gods in potential

Where is it all going? The long cycles of evolution, the tradition teaches, are carrying us – slowly, surely, with time enough – toward our true spiritual nature, toward fuller consciousness, toward what Theosophy dares to call adeptship. A handful of human beings have achieved extraordinary things in the outer sciences within a single century, as any visit to the Nobel Museum makes plain. Theosophy makes the larger claim: that what a few achieve in science or art, all of us are becoming in the spirit. Gods in potential – every one of us, and everyone we will ever meet.

That, in the end, is the great task of the Theosophical Society: not to guard a doctrine, but to help our fellow human beings glimpse their own inner greatness – to teach the inside nature of the job at hand – while helping one another along the way with simple, practical kindness.

Close

Two hundred years ago William Blake compressed all of this into four lines:
*"To see a World in a Grain of Sand
 and a Heaven in a Wild Flower
 Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
 and Eternity in an hour".⁸*

The infinite, held on the inside of an ordinary life. That is the job. ✨

Adapted from a talk given by Andrew Swaffield at the Theosophical Society Summer Convention, Hillscourt, August 2026.



Andrew Swaffield has spent 37 years in the business world and the last 17 years as a chief executive of three significant companies. He is now an executive coach and leadership development consultant. Andrew is the

newly elected President of the Theosophical Society in England and Wales. He has served as a trustee for the past three years and leads the Worthing Lodge, of which he has been a member for fourteen years.

Notes and sources

1. Max Planck, interview, *The Observer*, 25 January 1931.
2. Charles Sherrington, *Man on His Nature* (Cambridge University Press, 1940) based on his 1937–38 Gifford Lectures. The "enchanted loom" phrase is verified as part of a longer passage beginning "*The great topmost sheet of the mass...*"
3. H. P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy* (1889), Section XI, *On the Mysteries of Reincarnation*, subsection *What is Karma?*, on karma.
4. Wolfgang Pauli and Carl Jung's correspondence is published as *Atom and Archetype: The Pauli/Jung Letters*.
5. The line describing the universe as "worked and guided from within outwards" is attributed to Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I.
6. The three Golden Rule citations follow standard renderings: Talmud, Shabbat 31a; Confucius, *Analects* 15:24; Luke 6:31.
7. H. P. Blavatsky, "Practical Occultism", *Lucifer*, April 1888, on motive.
8. William Blake, *Auguries of Innocence*, published 1863.

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Do you have any Theosophical or related books that may be taking up too much space, or perhaps you just no longer read them? Please consider donating your excess, or no longer needed books, to the Theosophical Society. We will arrange and pay for collection from within the UK mainland.

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THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY
in ENGLAND & WALES

John Green highlighted the collaborative effort behind quality, asserting:

***“What makes a book valuable is not the paper it's printed on,
but the thousands of hours of work... dedicated to creating
the best possible reading experience.”***

Plato credited books with giving:

“wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and life to everything.”

Patterns of Connection

An Interview with Fritjof Capra

By Richard Smoley

*We make up boundaries and objects,
but reality is fluid and
always changing.*

We have heard endless amounts about Taos and Zens of physics and everything else; they have become clichés today. This was not the case in 1970, when Fritjof Capra published his ground-breaking (and much imitated) work *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism*, paving the way for a new worldview. Since then, the book has sold over a million copies. Other works of his include *The Turning Point*; *The Web of Life: A New Scientific Understanding of Living Systems*; *Uncommon Wisdom: Conversations with Remarkable People*; and *The Science of Leonardo: Inside the Mind of the Great Genius of the Renaissance*.

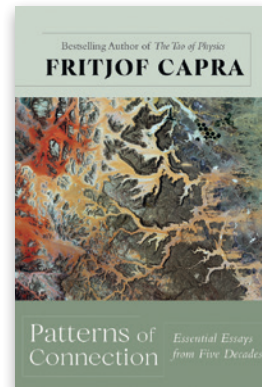
The essence of Capra's thought is what he calls the systems view of life, and he has pursued and promoted it in the past fifty years. This perspective is meant to replace the old (but still prevalent) mechanistic worldview, which views objects and living things as isolated elements interacting in a more or less automatic way. Capra's view holds that everything is interconnected and is best understood as a system of interrelated, constantly shifting, living processes.

In 2021, Capra published *Patterns of Connection: Essential Essays from Five Decades*, which traces his thought from the earliest days to the present. Essays include "Where Have All the Flowers Gone? Reflections on the Spirit and Legacy of the Sixties"; "The Dance of Shiva: The Hindu View of Matter in the Light of Modern Physics"; "The New Physics as a Model for a New Medicine, Psychology, and Economics?"; and "The COVID-19 Pandemic: A Systemic Analysis."

In October 2021, I conducted a Zoom interview with him to discuss his new book.

RS: Let me start with a question that my eleven-year-old son asked me last night: is reality there when no one is looking?

FC: That's pretty profound for an eleven-year-old. Actually, this is part of the new systemic



understanding of life that I have explored and synthesized for the last thirty or forty years, and which I call the systems view of life. I have published several books about that, and my grand synthesis is published in a book with that title: *The Systems View of Life*, co-authored with Pier Luigi Luisi. This book is related to *Patterns of Connection*, which represents the evolution of my thinking over five decades.

In response to your son's question: we have discovered that if nobody is looking, reality is still there, because it's independent of the observer. What happens with the human mind, or the process of knowing, is that we bring forth a world.

Wherever there is life, we find this cognitive dimension. For example, when we look at a tree, we know that a bird or an insect looking at the same tree will see something quite different. Even if we, say, were to have a couple of glasses of whiskey and look at the tree, we would see something different, because our mind would be influenced by the alcohol.

There is an existing world out there – I'm not saying that we made it up – but the way we divide the world into patterns and structures and parts depends on our process of observation, so we bring forth a world. If nobody were there, there wouldn't be objects, patterns, and things as we define them in the process of knowing. It's quite a complex issue.

RS: One fundamental theme that pervades your thought and your book is this: *"In order to maintain themselves effectively, living organisms must be able to discriminate between*

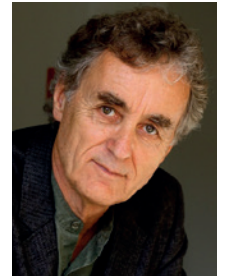
the system itself, as it were, and its environment. This is why all living organisms have a physical boundary."

That certainly makes sense in light of what you're saying, but could one also say that about the supposedly inanimate world, since all things have physical boundaries? Does the electron have some kind of capacity to distinguish between self and other, even though it would be in a form that is radically different from our own?

FC: I don't know whether "distinguish" is the right word, because as far as we know, there are no mental processes going on in electrons or atoms, whereas, linking the mental or cognitive process to the process of life, we can specify, say, how a bacterium distinguishes between a greater and a lesser concentration of sugar. Mind, or cognition, requires a certain complexity. That complexity arises with the living cell, which is the smallest unit of a cognitive system, of a living system.

RS: Very good; thank you. You discuss Hinduism and Buddhist thought in your book and relate them to current scientific discoveries. Yet one of the basic insights of Hinduism and Buddhism is the concept of delusion – *avidya*, *maya*, whatever you want to call it – the idea that this cognition of ours is somehow defective. How do you integrate that idea into your system?

FC: I will relate this exactly to what we were talking about before. There is a material world, which we don't make up. I would say from the scientific point of view that we introduce the



Above: Fritjof Capra is an Austrian-born American author, physicist, systems theorist and deep ecologist. In 1995, he became a founding director of the Center for Ecoliteracy in Berkeley, California. He was on the faculty of Schumacher College, which was disestablished in 2024.

division of reality into objects and events, and that would be the maya.

I should also say that in my collection of essays, spirituality forms sort of a set of bookends. I begin with my interest in Eastern spirituality in the 1960s, as well as the parallels I discovered between modern physics and the basic ideas of Eastern mysticism. At the end of the collection, I end with a reassessment of my view of science and spirituality, so this is a very important dimension of my work. Spirituality is always an underlying dimension to my whole work.

RS: What you say makes sense: we construct reality as we understand it through our cognition. But to pursue this line of thought, these Eastern systems say not only that our perceptions are delusory, but that we can go further to a true or accurate understanding of the world beyond these categories; this is called enlightenment. How does this fit into your system?

FC: The way I read mystical traditions, they are saying that we can experience a true understanding, but when we express it in words, we are always limited. In the Chinese Taoist tradition, for instance, the Tao Te Ching opens by saying, *"The Tao that can be expressed is not the real Tao"* – Tao meaning the ultimate reality.

This is the bedrock of my comparison between modern physics and Eastern spiritual

traditions: they are both empirical. These disciplines are based on observation and experience, and they both say that whenever that experience is expressed in words, we have limitations. The deeper we go into the nature of reality, the more severe these limitations become.

RS: Still, what these traditions seem to be saying is not that it's simply a matter of being ineffable or inexpressible in words, but that our minute to minute cognition – the way we experience the world on a day-to-day, moment to moment basis – is somehow flawed.

The classic Advaita metaphor tells us that we are like a man who sees a rope and thinks it's a snake. So this illusion is not merely a matter of expressing something in words, but of what we see moment by moment.

FC: From the point of view of cognitive science, which is a whole new interdisciplinary field, we perceive the world in a certain way: we make up the boundaries; we make up the objects and events. And of course we don't just do this individually, but culturally, because we're all bound together by linguistic and cultural tradition and tradition. We make up these boundaries and these objects, but reality is fluid and always changing. We tend to hang on to objects, fixed ideas, and fixed categories instead of realizing this fact. This is the most profound insight of the Buddha and of the whole Buddhist tradition.



RS: Let me turn to a different question, which has to do with particle physics. My background is in the humanities, I have no scientific training, but, as I understand it, at one point there were believed to be atoms that were supposedly indivisible. Then they were divided into protons, electrons, and so on. Later, these were divided into still simpler particles, known as hadrons, quarks – whatever the terms are. In your book, you mention one of the latest theories, which is string theory. It says that subatomic particles are composed of vibrating strings in a bizarre nine-dimensional space.

So what are these strings supposed to be made of? Is there something that makes them up in turn, and so on? Is this an infinite regress, or are you going to end up with some fundamental particle, like the indivisible atoms of Democritus?

FC: It seems to be an infinite regress, although the strings are very abstract. They are mathematical vibrating structures that are not material. The activity, the vibration, involves certain patterns of energy which, according to Einstein and relativity theory, are equivalent to certain masses. String theory is a very elegant theory that says at this level of abstract strings, everything is self-consistent: there is a fundamental vibration in the universe that creates the various patterns, which then manifest as subatomic particles.

The problem is that it's not a proper scientific theory, because it doesn't explain the

observed quantities in the subatomic world. Also there's not just one string theory; there is a whole range. You can vary the parameters and get different theories, and you can't decide which one is the most accurate. Still, its elegance is compelling, and that's why most particle physicists today are working in this world of string theory.

RS: I'd like to move on to something slightly different, which goes back to an essay in your book that I believe was written in 1982. In it, you say that these holistic perspectives need to be brought into other disciplines, such as medicine, psychology, and economics.

Again speaking as a layman, I see nothing like this in those disciplines. Medicine seems as fragmented, or more fragmented, than ever. Psychiatry has basically become a matter of prescribing drugs. So to what extent has this vision been realized? Am I missing something?

FC: No. I actually address this question in the epilogue of the book. I say that after five decades, it is fair to ask, has this paradigm shift, which I have written about and promoted during my whole professional life, actually happened?

The answer I come to is that it is not a smooth transition.

In various disciplines at different times, it has happened in various countries and regions of the world to different extents. Even in those

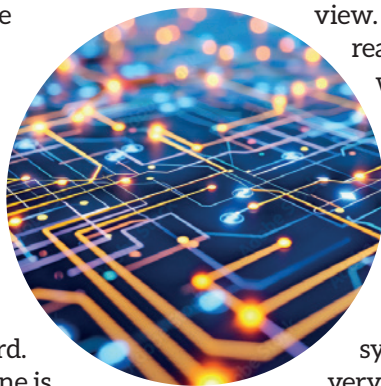


places, there have been backswings.

To describe this situation, I use the metaphor of a chaotic cultural pendulum. I go through the various phases of this pendulum from the counterculture of the 1960s to the New Age, ecology, and feminist movements of the 1970s, then to the rise of Green politics and the Gorbachev phenomenon. With the end of the Cold War, there was the so-called peace dividend. We were all very excited, saying, *"Now we can really change our economic system. We don't need all these military expenses."* Of course, today military expenses are vastly higher than they were then.

Finally, there was the information technology revolution, the new global economics, based on electronic networks, a new global capitalism, and a countermovement in the rise of a new global civil society, so the answer is not straightforward.

You can say that, yes, medicine is still very fragmented, but on the other hand, there is a lot of a more holistic or systemic approach to health and health care. For instance, I have a general practitioner to whom I go regularly; I have known him for twenty or thirty years. He prescribes herbal teas to me. He gives me a full standard medical checkup, but he is very preventive, and he actually has on his business card that he practices preventive medicine. So there are two parallel movements. There's a huge popular movement around healthy eating and healthy living.



In the academic world, most of our big universities are still committed to a fragmented view. They find it very hard to overcome it, because the university departments and scientific journals are structured that way. Academic degrees and tenure tracks remain fragmented, but on the other hand, there are smaller universities and colleges, and pockets in larger universities, where they teach a more systemic, holistic view.

Two trends that are quite obvious today have helped the breakthrough of the systemic view. One is that people in all fields realize that we live in a complex world. Secondly, people realize that networks are extremely important, especially young people, who live in social networks in their day-to-day world. They find it natural to talk about complexity, systemic networks, and systemic thinking. I find that very hopeful.

RS: One area that seems to have retrogressed in the last forty years is psychology, not only as an academic discipline, but in terms of the mental health of Americans, which is probably worse than it's ever been. Clinical psychology cannot be blamed for that, but it doesn't seem to be helping very much. Do you see any breakthroughs in psychology that will help deal with this epidemic of mental illness in America?

FC: I haven't followed the field in detail in

recent years, but I heard a lecture some time ago by Dan Siegel, who is a psychologist and neurologist in Los Angeles, and he says the same thing. He advocates an integrative vision.

RS: It seems that psychology has hit a wall in focusing on individuals. It seems there's been fairly little work done on mass psychology: how people think as a mass, both as a mob in the street and as a social network community. It has always seemed to me that this needs to be understood a lot better before even individual psychology can progress. This fits into your idea of a systems way of thinking, so I'm wondering if you have any observations along those lines.

FC: I agree with you that it's extremely important to get some clarity about cultural and social dynamics, especially in politics today. We have populist political leaders arising in several countries who notice the malaise of the population, which in many countries is suffering from the effects of economic globalization and the maldistribution of wealth – the systematic shift of wealth from the poor to the rich. A population suffering from such economic effects is very susceptible to those manipulations. To study those from a systemic point of view, I think, would be very important, but I am not aware of any such study.

RS: Another question that comes up in people's minds these days is a real or imagined revival of fascism. You grew up in postwar

Austria, so you saw the effects of that much more immediately than, say, someone like me. Do you see fascism arising again as any serious threat?

FC: Yes, this is exactly what I was talking about. The most extreme version of this populism is fascism, and there are a lot of fascist elements in populist politics. You could say that various radio shows of the far right are almost like the propaganda ministry of the Nazis.

Now the situation is by no means as extreme, and I think our democratic institutions today are much stronger than they were in Austria and Germany in the 1930s, so I'm not worried about it, but I think that the tendencies are definitely there.

There are two trends, focusing on two problems: the climate catastrophe and economic inequality. The two are also linked, so I see a very interesting connection.

This year marks the ten-year anniversary of the Occupy Wall Street movement, which had a creative idea of pinpointing social injustice and economic inequality by saying we are the 99 percent and the super-rich are the 1 percent. This has had any number of political repercussions since then. To me, this is very hopeful, because it shows that a grassroots movement with the right values, which is often pooh-poohed as not being effective, has in fact had a tremendous influence.



RS: In the economic sphere, you have mentioned thinkers like E.F. Schumacher, who have attempted to integrate a holistic systems approach into economics. How do you see this influence pervading economic thought these days, or do you observe it at all?

FC: I have written quite a lot about economics in these essays. I see something that is almost incomprehensible: the persistence of economists, and also of corporate and political leaders, in this illusion that unlimited economic growth is possible on a finite planet. This is irrational, yet it is pursued by almost all political and corporate leaders and economists.

Together with my colleague Hazel Henderson, I advocate a shift from purely quantitative and differentiated growth to qualitative growth, because that's what happens in nature. Growth is obviously an essential

part of life, but in nature, not everything grows all the time. While certain parts of an organism or ecosystem grow, others reach maturity and decline. This integrates and liberates their components, which become resources for new growth. I call it qualitative growth to distinguish it from GDP [gross domestic product] growth, which is promoted by our economists.

This shift is happening: there is a European organization called Beyond GDP and various other organizations

that promote different economic indicators, but it's still a minority view.

RS: I think of the announcement made in 2019 by the Business Roundtable in a double-page ad in *The Wall Street Journal*, according to which corporations were now going to consider the interests of "stakeholders" – everyone affected by their activities – instead of just the shareholders.

FC: Yes, I was very excited about that, but subsequently not much happened; it seems it fizzled out.

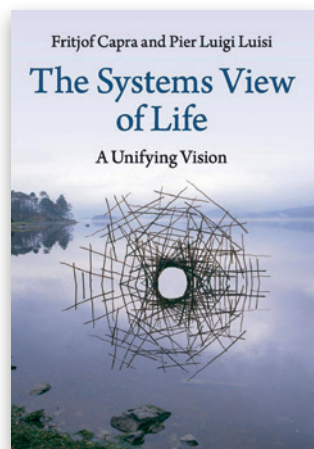
RS: Let's go on to something more personal. How does someone go about integrating some of these principles into their own daily life?

FC: The first step would be to educate yourself. When you speak of integrating those

principles into your lives, I would ask which principles? Educate yourself to really know what an ecological view and a systemic view means.

I have mentioned *The Systems View of Life*, my 500-page textbook. I also teach a course about the systems theory of life, which is known as the Capra Course. I've been teaching it now for six years, and I have an alumni network around the world of over 2,000 people. They discuss precisely how to integrate this view into your lives.

I would say the good news is encapsulated in the bad news, because our crisis is so



multifaceted that it doesn't really matter where you start. Whatever you do, you can change your way of life. If you are a teacher, you can teach differently; if you're an architect, you can do architectural design differently; if you are a greengrocer, you can sell different kinds of fruits and vegetables and connect with organic regenerative agriculture; if you are a doctor, you can practice medicine differently.

No matter what activity or profession you are in, you can involve yourself in this change of paradigms from the fragmented, mechanistic view to the holistic, systemic view. It's so broad and deep that you can start anywhere; you can just start recycling or invigorating your local community.

I would also say to people, you're not alone; there are already thousands and thousands of grassroots organizations that are involved in

this project. My colleague Paul Hawken has written a book called *Blessed Unrest*, in which he portrays numerous grassroots organizations. You can just go on the internet, type in the area you want to look at and the region you live in,

and you will find an organization pursuing precisely what you're seeking in your area: it's that widespread today.

RS: Apart from involving oneself in these groups, could you say how this works in terms of practical day-to-day ethics? How does, or should, this outlook affect people's day-to-day ethical behaviour?

FC: It does, absolutely. It affects the way you live, your daily life. When you go shopping or post a letter, do you drive, or do you walk or bicycle? Do you take a paper bag from your supermarket, or do you have a cloth shopping bag? How are you dealing with your own health and nutrition? How are you dealing with your community? Do you have a local community of neighbours that you can rely on for mutual support? It affects all aspects of daily life. ✨

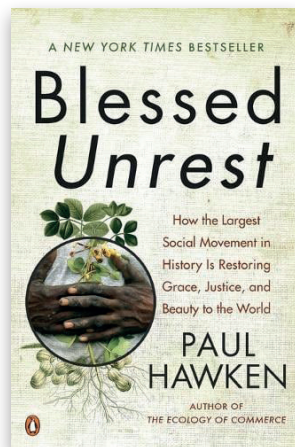


John Cameron

Article originally published in the Spring 2022 issue of Quest magazine 110:2, pg 14-19.



Richard Smoley is an author and philosopher focusing on the world's mystical and esoteric teachings, particularly those of Western civilization.



The Recognition of Law

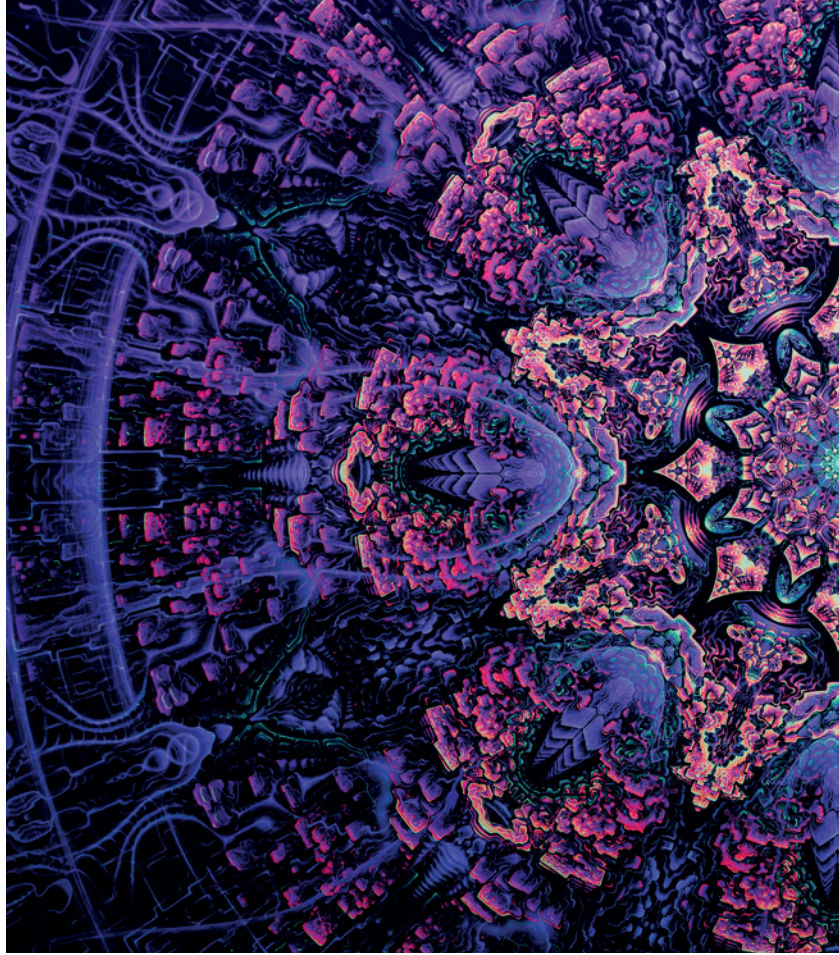
By *Robert Crosbie*

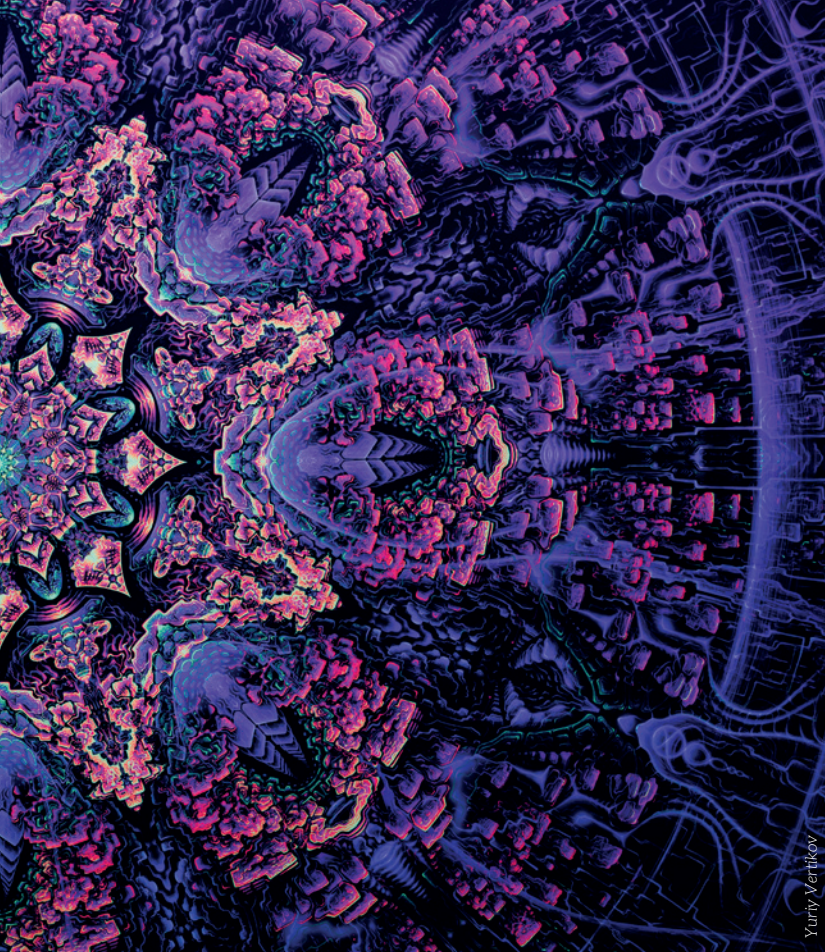
We have to assume either that this is a universe of law or a universe of chaos, chance, accident. In fact, we know perfectly well that it is not a universe of chance, because everything we use and understand we see to be under law; and where something befalls us, the cause of which we cannot discern, we none the less assume a cause and try to find it. We cannot even imagine an effect without a cause.

The first thing that the student has to learn to perceive in everything and in every circumstance is the reign of law. We recognize law in part, but not in full, as it should be recognized. Mistaking our own nature, by the very power of that nature, we set in motion causes that produce the results we now feel, and then call those results by such terms as “destiny”, “fate”, “chance”, or the “will of God.” The operation of law to most minds means a fate which befalls us wherein we are benefited or afflicted, but over which we have no

control, and in producing which we had no hand. Yet the operation of law can be easily understood. It has been enunciated by all the great Teachers of the past as meaning action and its consequent reaction. Let us remember that these are not two separate and unrelated things – Cause and Effect, Action and Reaction, are the two aspects of one and the same thing. In Sanskrit, both these aspects are included in the one word, Karma.

Karma has been recognized in the Christian scriptures, with which we are most familiar, in the expression, “*Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*” By consequence, we should easily see that whatever a man is





Yuriy Vertikov

We are all reaping what we have sown, individually and collectively; for we must know that we never act alone. We always act on and in connection with others, affecting them for good or evil, and we get the necessary reaction from the causes set in motion by ourselves. This presents to us the idea of absolute Justice, for under such a conception of Law each being receives exactly what he gives.

This points to another conception: there could not be action and its consequent reaction, unless there were a community of being amongst us. There must be that in our natures which is peculiar to none, but common to all. In other words, we have all sprung from the same

reaping, that he must have sown. Once we get the conception that actions do not produce themselves, that law does not operate of itself, we can see that we cause actions and experience their reactions; that it is we who set up causes and feel their effects.

Cause and effect, action and reaction – the operation of law – are seen to be in ourselves, not outside. There is no action unless there is a being to make it and to feel its effects. Everything that happens to any being has its antecedent cause, and that cause lies in some past action of the being himself. In other words, law rules on every plane of being, and every being of every grade is under that law.

Source; we are all traveling toward the same Goal. The path differs only with the pilgrims. The causes that each one sets in motion determine the path that one must follow. This might be called “*destiny*”, if we understand that it is a destiny of our own creation. Being created by us, it can be sustained by us or changed by us. If we do not like the “*destiny*” that befalls us, the effects that surround us, the conditions that encompass us, all we have to do is to set in motion such causes as will produce other and more desirable effects. But we have to do it; no one else can do it for us. No one holds us back. No one propels us forward.

There is no difference in our powers. Each

one of us has the same power to perceive, to experience, to learn. What we learn differs, our experiences differ, our perceptions differ, but that does not show a difference in our powers – it shows a difference only in the application of those powers. Each one of us contains within himself the same possibilities as exist anywhere and everywhere in the universe. The lines that we have hitherto taken have brought us to whatever pass, conditions or surroundings that may obtain at the present time. But we might have gone another way and produced an altogether different environment. We ought to see that even now, however hampered we may be as

the result of mistaken actions in the past, we have not lost and can never lose our power to set other and better causes in motion. The path toward all knowledge lies before us: *“All nature lies before you – take what you can.”*

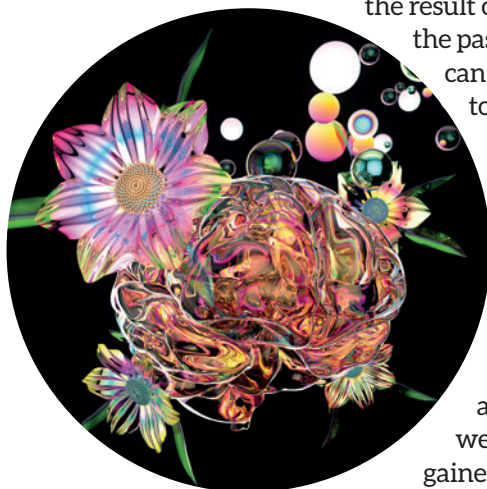
This means that all beings below man, and all beings above man, as well as man himself, have gained whatever individual positions they may now be in by their own exertions. It means that no being is standing still; all are acting, all progressing in one direction or another, according to the lines they have followed and are following. It also means that all the beings below man will some time reach our stage, and that every being above man has passed through stages similar

to our own – which is evolution carried to its highest point, spiritual and mental, as well as physical. We have applied the great Truths of nature only in a partial, a limited, a personal sense. These are universal truths and should be applied in a universal sense, if we desire to arrive at the fullest recognition of them.

The life in each of us is the Universal Life. Many imagine that Life means existence in a physical body, and that only; that out side of physical existence there is no life. But Life includes all things and forms from the highest spiritual down to life in its grossest form; it is the same Life all through, common to all. It is the One Life, the One Spirit in each and all, so that in each being of every grade there lies the potentiality of All-Being. There is that in each which is beginningless and endless, which is changeless; and that, though illimitable, invisible, inconceivable, can be realized by every human being.

Some illustrations will bring this fact forcibly to our minds. We speak of ourselves, of our identity. We say, *“I was a child; when I was a young man or woman; when I was middle-aged; as I am today; as I will be in the future.”* Now, what is That, itself unchanged, which is going through all those changes? The same “I”, the same identity. That does not change. The body changes, the ideas – the mind – change, the surroundings change. But the Man himself, the identity, remains unchanged through all these changes of body, scene and circumstance.

Again, take the power of seeing: we all have that power, and no matter how much we exercise it, it still remains the power to perceive. It is not changed by what we see.

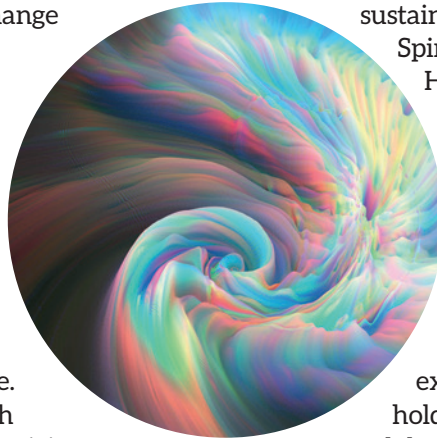


Julien Tromneur

And we may consider this: change cannot see change. Only that which is permanent can see change. So there is that in us which is permanent, which is Real, which is of the highest, which is a ray from and one with the Supreme, the universal Principle or Power, the creator, the sustainer, the regenerator of all that was, is, or ever shall be. We have to realize That – each one for himself – first by recognizing that IT IS, omnipresent, eternal, boundless and immutable; second, by divesting ourselves of those things we thought It to be: that It is this body, this mind, these circumstances. All these are changing things, things seen; but that which is the Real, the Supreme, our very Self and the Self of all things, is not subject to change; It is changeless; It cannot be seen, for It is the Perceiver.

The ideas we entertain of the Supreme, of Law, of Nature, and of our own Being govern the actions we perform. When we were children we had certain ideas, and we acted according to them, and so on, all through the years. Some of our ideas we have from time to time discarded, and others that we have collected have taken their place. We are now acting according to the ideas we now hold. Are they the best and highest possible to us?

If we change our ideas, we change our actions. If we see that Law rules, that this Law is inherent in our highest nature and not outside of us, we shall see that it is the Spirit in us – our very Self – that is the cause and



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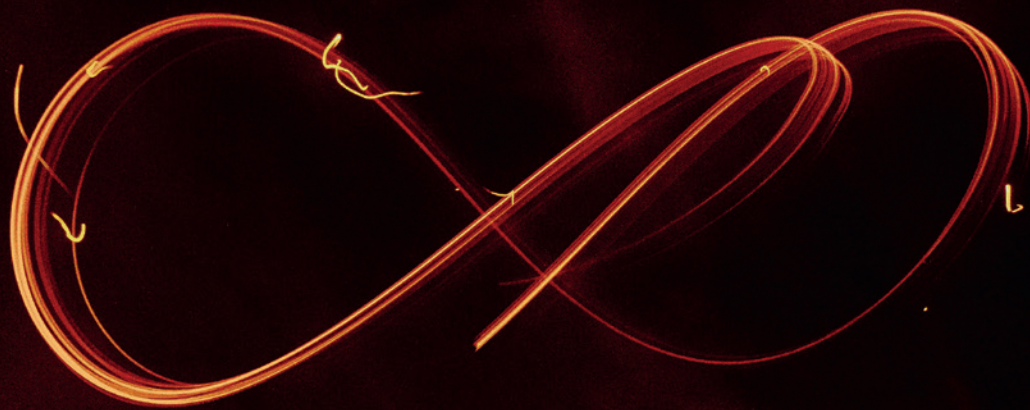
sustainer of all our actions; and this Spirit by its very power as the Highest, through false ideas creates for itself false positions and false destinies. We have often adopted and we often change our ideas without any real consideration as to their truth, as to their relation to Life, as to their bearing upon existence. We must adopt and hold fast to three great ideas: that each human being has what are called the attributes of the God power of creation, the power of preservation as long as that creation seems satisfactory, and the power to destroy that creation and regenerate better ones. All we have to do is to realize our own real nature, see what our defects are, strengthen our virtues, and move on. Just so surely as we do this, we shall find that our Virtues and strength increase, and our defects gradually fall away. ✨

Originally published (posthumously) in *Theosophy* magazine, October 1919.



Robert Crosbie (1849-1919) was a theosophist and founder, in 1909 of the United Lodge of Theosophists (ULT). In 1912, Crosbie first published the theosophical magazine 'Theosophy'. A book, 'The Friendly Philosopher', was

compiled from his letters, talks and articles, and published fifteen years after his death by appreciative students.



A Divine Spirit's Journey Through a Cosmic Cycle

Senya Mitin

In the beginning nothing existed. No-Thing existed. For nothing had been created. Even 'space' as we understand it did not exist. There was just an infinite ocean of pure consciousness. This Ocean was the totality, the Absolute. One could not describe it, adjectivise it, for to do so would diminish its state of the Absolute. It was neither good nor bad, merciful nor unmerciful, kind or unkind, **for all was potential**. But this Cosmic Ocean was self-existent, It knew itself.

The Cosmic Ocean passed through three phases of being;

1. Pralaya, the long sleep, when it was alive only to itself.
2. Creation of a new Universe;
3. Dissolution of that Universe when all the energies of such are brought back to the source of being.

So how long in Gaian, or Earth-Solar years, do these phases last? As at 2026 Western

Scientific Astronomy cannot even agree as to what the created Universe is doing. Continue expanding for ever; Expand then implode, disappearing in a Big Whimp? Some are now asking where did the energy originally come from for the Big Bang? Is the Universe cyclical in nature: Big Bang – expand – contract – rest – expand *ad infinitum*? All we can say from the point of view of Science is that the age of the created Universe to date is approximately 14 billion years. So are we in Phase Two or Phase Three?

There is a thought that the true knowledge about the Universe was lost when the island continent of Atlantis was destroyed by flood and fire. But the Hindu Vedas suggest otherwise. Many people of the uncorrupted Aryan Race, including its high priests and scholars migrated out of Atlantis before its demise. Travelling eastwards they first settled in Mongolia which in those days had a wetter climate, and extensive plant and tree growth. From Mongolia many travelled into Tibet. Some folk then migrated down into North India. This migration included several learned holy men, Rishis, who were steeped in ancient knowledge.

The Hindu Vedas were a series of writings emerging at different periods that contained much esoteric knowledge. So what did they teach about the Universe and Its time-scales? Firstly, closer to our time, there is a Buddhist system of teaching of ancient cycles of the Cosmos that seem to have borrowed from the ancient Vedas. This system counts up in a series of 'Yugs' and 'Manvantaras', to achieve a Grand Period or 'Total Kalpa' of 4.3 billion years, specifically 4,320,000,000 years. This figure is almost exactly the same as modern

archaeological calculations for the age of our planet. So it cannot refer to a complete Cosmic Cycle. Siddharta Gautami lived circa 650 BC in North East India. A prince of the Royal Court of a small Kingdom, as a young man he became appalled at the sight of the wretched state



of many of the inhabitants of his father's kingdom. Donning a simple tunic he travelled into a forest far away from home to be alone and meditate. After many trials and tribulations, mostly mental and emotional, he became enlightened with wisdom, and set forth to teach others as to the right path through Life. He then became known as the 'Buddha', the Enlightened-One'. But after the demise of his earthly body the Sect that he founded seems to have absorbed many of the teachings of the Ancient Vedas.

Which brings us back to those Vedas. It was a secret tradition passed down through the ages. Time, 'kala', in an absolute sense is eternal. But in the use of time in a more mundane sense it can be expressed in ages of immense duration when applied to the phases of the Cosmos. Various references to time can be found in the following Vedas: Manusmriti; Bhagavata Purana; Vishnu Purana; Mahabharata; Surya Siddhanta.

The Vedas divide the measurement of time

into two methods:

- (a) Sidereal Astrology: this is based upon the movement of stars and constellations over time.
- (b) Tropical Astrology: This is based upon the Equator's relative position to the sun, measured over eons of time. This could of course include the Buddhist example quoted above.

So for a long time-scale we have to look at Sidereal Astrology. In the Hindu texts the base unit of time is one second. From thence time is measured as a logarithmic progression up to a value for a 'Cycle of Brahman' of 10^{22} . This is a huge number, in the sextillions. And the base unit is also measured progressively into smaller units, backwards to 10^{-12} . Or one trillionth! How is it possible that the Hindu Vedas could possess such detailed knowledge? Because it was a system of calculation developed in Atlantis before its fall. But we have to bear in mind that these are calculations in seconds, not years! So what are these time-scans in years? One solar year in seconds: $60 \times 60 \times 24 \times 365.25 = 31,553,280$, that is 31½ million! So the Vedic time periods have to be divided by this figure. So, as adjusted:

(i) CYCLE OF BRAHMAN = One Sextillion,
or 317^{15} or 317,000,000,000,000,000.

(ii) DAY OF BRAHMAN = 317 billion, or 317^{12} ,
or 317,000,000,000,000.

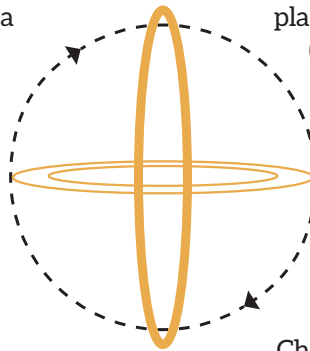
If by a 'Day-of Brahman' It represents one of the three phases above then three times one day of Brahman does not equal a Complete Cycle. Pralaya must represent such an

immense period of time that I think the cosmos forgot to switch its alarm clock on after it had wound up its last Universe. But such statements can only be seen from the perspective of human consciousness as time and space as we know such does not exist with the Cosmos; only the Eternal Now. So in human terms it is a paradox. The above also introduces the Cosmic law of three. A law which will heterodyne down all the planes of existence and is active in each one of us.

Phase One

The Divine Spirits, the motivating powers from all created things in the Material Universe, having been brought up the planes where their lower subtle bodies were disintegrated, including the soul which is no longer needed, pass through the veils that separate the Absolute from the created Universe. The Cosmos has brought them 'Home'. They download into the Cosmic Consciousness the sum total of all their experiences gained from thousands of (Gaian) years of incarnation on all the planes, particularly the material plane. The Cosmos absorbs such into its consciousness where the analysis of such forms the plan for a new Universe. What actually happens is actually much more profound but cannot be described in human language. A tension builds up in the Cosmic Ocean as it prepares to explode into a new creation. A movement takes place in the Cosmic Ocean like that of a current of water in a physical ocean. A linear movement that resolves into a gigantic circle that then spins on an axis, thus forming a sphere. This happens three times so that three spheres are

all spinning within each other like a Cosmic Gyroscope. In esoteric parlance they are known as the RING COSMOS, RING CHAOS, and RING PASS-NOT. The process as to how this comes about is rather complex and beyond the comprehension of ordinary mortals.



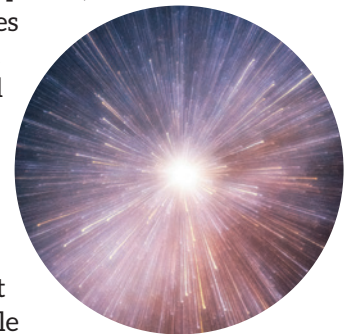
planes will, over immense periods of (Gaian) time pass through each of the rays, being influenced by the quality of each Ray. These Cosmic Rays are the origin of the Zodiac. Various powers are then created that will take an active part in the evolution of the Universe. We could think of them in Biblical terms as Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones etc. The whole

Phase Two

In a blinding flash the creative impulse of the Cosmos bursts through the three veils. The primary BIG BANG that precedes the material Big Bang that brought the Material Plane into existence. The first power to come through the veils was that of THE WILL TO LIFE, which was to drive the evolutionary program. From this came the next two powers, the ETERNAL MASCULINE and the ETERNAL FEMININE. These were the three powers that were to propel all creation. They would heterodyne all the planes and be present in everything, including Man's own nature. And then seven planes of matter were created in descending order of refinement and energy level, down to the 'Earth' plane with its atomic structure and energies ranging from 4 hertz to several million hertz. The unstable sub-atomic particles of the Material plane probably belong to the next plane above, helping to form its atomic structure, with energies in the range of billions of hertz. Then the whole system revolves around a centre esoterically known as the Central Sun. From this centre twelve rays shine forth shining through all the planes of creation. The rays are static which means that a particular location on the spinning

Universe is then seeded with untold myriads of Divine Sparks or 'Spirits' that are actually projections of the Cosmos, The Absolute, Itself. Depending on the level of evolution achieved in a previous Universe they will settle down on a plane appropriate to their development, build around themselves subtle bodies from the atomic matter of that plane. Bodies known as Soul, Mental, Astral (Emotional). Those Spirits not intended for humanoid or higher evolution will become the guiding force and intelligence of a whole species of being. A Group Soul. This means for example that if one subject in the group is wilfully hurt the whole Group will know of it. Capture, torture and kill (for fun say, not food), a roe deer and all roe deer will avoid you thereafter.

A Divine Spark intended for a human-type incarnation on the material plane, having built up its subtle bodies on the higher planes over immense ages, building up experiences as it travels down the planes, will descend to the level of the etheric envelope around a planet somewhere in the Universe that has the right conditions to support human-type life. Which



Casey Horner

could be Gaia, Planet Earth. So begins its journey through perhaps hundreds of incarnations lasting several thousand years until it has completely mastered all that material existence can teach it. It is now a 'Master' and its further evolution will be back up the planes until, shed of all its subtle bodies, including its Soul, it is now free to pass through the veils to be absorbed back into the Cosmic Ocean.

Phase Three

This is when the Cosmos starts to disintegrate each of the planes and heterodynes their matter and energies back upwards, plane by plane. For humanoid beings wherever they are, if all members of a race followed the Divine evolutionary plane decreed for it then all its members will have passed their

evolutionary nadir on the Material Plane and ascended as 'master' beings to higher planes. From there onwards they would form an hierarchy of masters ascending the higher planes, one by one. The leaders of that race would form the equivalent of the Gaian 'Great White

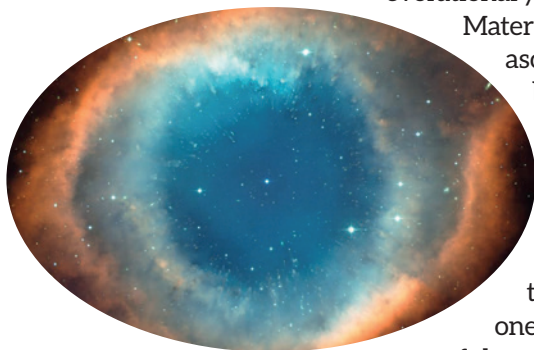
Lodge'. But with Gaian humans of our planet something went wrong in the distant past that caused the Soul of individuals to be cut off from the inner spirit, the Divine Spark. The Biblical 'Fall'.

There is a possibility that sometime in the

*Our Sun is a
God to us, as the
Cosmos as the Absolute
is so distant from us
we cannot reach it.
The consciousness of
the Sun is the
Christ Spirit.*

future when the Divine evolutionary Plan has decreed that the Material Plane in our Solar System be disintegrated and all its experiences brought upwards onto higher planes a certain proportion of humans will not be ready. It is open to speculation as to what will happen to them!

For those that have ascended the whole race will over further eons of time climb up, shedding their astral body, then the mental body, and lastly the Soul itself, which the inner spirit took so long to create and build up, a 'soul' that we (wrongly) identified as our 'Higher - Self'. It is only the Divine Spark that is our true 'higher self'. The Divine Spark is now free to pass through the three veils to be re-absorbed back into the Cosmic Ocean, uploading its wealth of experiences gained from its evolutionary cycle on the lower planes. With the whole created universe dissolved the Cosmos now goes into a new



Pralaya. There is a theory that it is when in the 'Night of God' the Cosmic Ocean is truly awake. When in its creation phase it projects a dream. As nothing exists outside of the Ocean the Cosmos has to create from its own substance, the first sacrifice!

So the cosmos, in Phase Two, has prepared the ground for the evolution of many life-forms. Cycles within cycles within cycles. Each one of shorter duration than that of the above. Possibly the Life-Cycle of the longest duration would be that of a Galactic Logos. Having the responsibility for overseeing the spiritual evolution of from 100 billion to 300 billion stellar logoi. These could have life cycles of about 10 billion years or so. And each Stellar Logos, if of a type that has a family of planets, one of which is within its 'habitable-zone' that supports intelligent humanoid life, is then responsible for overseeing the evolution of such.

Our Sun is a God to us, as the Cosmos as the Absolute is so distant from us we cannot reach it. The consciousness of the Sun is the Christ Spirit. The length of an evolutionary cycle of a human, wherever it has been created, is dependant upon several factors. It is likely to be tens of thousands of years up to, perhaps, a million years. What is important is that the nadir of its cycle takes place before the star reaches its nadir and the Cosmos reaches its! ✨

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An Introduction to Theosophical Astrology

By **Prof. Elton A. Hall**

In light of Theosophical understanding, astrology is a science requiring all the rigor, intense observation and complex principles that any science must possess. And like any science, its observations are

grounded in a philosophical worldview. In this exceptional collection of essays, that worldview is Theosophy as set forth by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky in her many writings. Fundamental to this worldview is the ancient Hermetic axiom, "As above, so below," teaching that analogy and correspondence are methods fundamental to understanding the relationships between microcosm and macrocosm, self and world.

Astrology comes in many forms. Traditional astrology maps the planets

as if the earth were the center of the universe. Solar astrology places the sun in the center. Western astrology traditionally fixes the twelve signs of the zodiac as if the sun enters Aries each spring equinox, but the slight, slow wobble of the earth in its orbit, rather like a spinning top rotates its upper part in a circle, precesses the equinoxes in a cycle of over 25,000 years. This means that over time the sun appears in different signs at the spring equinox. This is the idea behind the Age of Aquarius, emerging after approximately 2500 years of the Age of Pisces, Aries ending about 2500 years ago when the Piscean Age began. Indian astrology calculates this precession of the equinoxes and so places the sun now in or near Aquarius (depending on the method of calculation). So the zodiac fixed in the calendar

of Western astrology is one sign off by Indian standards. Since astrology has theoretical and symbolic content as well as empirical content, those born under a particular sign as measured in Western astrology would be considered to have been born under a sign one place earlier in the precessed zodiacal system of Indian astrology. This will show up in the fact that many people find characteristics of the previous sign as applying to themselves as well as the characteristics of their Western birth sign, since some features are established by empirical experience and other by theoretical considerations.

Traditionally, astrology has been used for three purposes: understanding the variable forces in the world, individual growth and transformation, and prediction regarding the future of the individual and conditions in the world. As the essays on each of the zodiacal signs and planets show, the purely personal purposes are not, on the whole, the most significant. And as they demonstrate, the symbolism and meanings involved are rich, complex and worthy of study and contemplation, activities which in themselves can serve the purposes of astrology.

As H. P. Blavatsky shows in the extract from *Isis Unveiled* included in this collection, this symbolism is profound indeed. For while map is not territory, astrological symbolism is connected to the deeper meanings and purposes of life. Put simply, astrology, when seriously studied, is knowledge. At a superficial level, it can throw light on personality traits and forces at play in daily life. When considered more seriously, it can illuminate aspects of one's spiritual life and

increase spiritual awareness as that life is increasingly seen as an irreducible part of a greater whole, that of humanity as a whole and the evolving cosmos.

The typical challenge to astrology is that it fails in its predictive power, and the common complaint is that it cannot tell me if I will get sick tomorrow or whether I should buy that new car, etc. After all, the laws of physics tell me that if I let go of an apple, it will fall to the ground. This view assumes that astrology is deterministic, that the planets make things happen.

Even physics has had to give up that view when it explores the micro-structure of things, since quantum theory can

only predict statistically. Astrology seeks to predict general conditions that affect thought and action both collectively and individually. As Shakespeare noted in *Julius Caesar*, "*The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings*"; astrology does not deny free will, but it acknowledges conditions which affect the exercise of choice and its results. A deep reflection on the symbolism and maps of astrology can aid in understanding the world, anticipate future conditions, and provide a resource for thought and action. These comprehensive articles



provide the material for such reflection.

The essays in the Theosophical Astrology section of Theosophy Trust's website do not contain instructions for casting a chart or even for interpreting one or another astrological map. The symbols discussed in detail can be applied at many levels, and, as with all good explanations, can be grasped and assimilated at multiple levels. These articles range across many ways of thinking, thereby freeing the reader from a fixed or dogmatic framework, allowing for new insights and broadened awareness to emerge. As in all Theosophical teaching, the student – here the reader – is encouraged to engage the ideas presented, examine them, reflect on them, and make them his or her own. Repeated engagement will nurture and grow individual

understanding. Thus these essays taken together constitute an introduction to Theosophical astrology, a treasure house of resources for the aspiring soul. ✨

With thanks to www.theosophytrust.org



Prof. Elton A. Hall is a retired professor who taught philosophy and religious studies at the university and college level for over 40 years. He has authored several books and countless articles on wisdom traditions and their

exemplars in both Eastern and Western lineages, and is a sought-after international speaker on Theosophical themes.

"We are born at a given moment, in a given place and, like vintage years of wine, we have the qualities of the year and of the season of which we are born."

Carl Jung

"Astrology is assured of recognition from psychology, without further restrictions, because astrology represents the summation of all the psychological knowledge of antiquity."

C.G. Jung

"I don't believe in astrology; I'm a Sagittarius and we're skeptical."

Arthur C. Clarke

The Mineral World is Capable of Self-healing

From *theoscience.org*

Tvegetable, animal and human kingdoms all have the capability of self-healing. Our human body is a wonderful, complex, magic machine capable of handling many bodily damages. It is the best medicine which we can use. The various biological systems ensure most of the required conditions to sustain life, and when any discrepancy occurs, an army of cells is dispatched to stop proliferation of infection and to repair any damage. A new study has discovered that this process of self-healing can occur in some metal, the nanoscale silver (Ag). This element, when subject to damages like nanocracks and nanopores, can repair itself without external intervention, the healed region restoring the crystal lattice with atomic precise ordering.

In *The Secret Doctrine* Vol. I, on page 178, it says that “Instead of saying a “Mineral Monad,” the more correct phraseology in physical Science, which differentiates every atom, would of course have been to call it “the Monad



Above: Transmission Electron Microscope image of silver nanoparticles;
below: mined silver mineral.

manifesting in that form of Prakriti called the Mineral Kingdom.”

And on page 626, it says that “Foremost of all, the postulate that there is no such thing in Nature as inorganic substances or bodies. Stones, minerals, rocks, and even chemical “atoms” are simply organic units in profound lethargy. Their coma has an end and their inertia becomes activity.” ❁

Published: September 2024.
Source: Phys.org



The Wave Story: A Fresh Perspective on the Purpose of Life

A personal reflection inspired
by Theosophy and the Gospel
of Thomas

By Bob Wigginton

Many traditions use the word 'God'. In Theosophy the term 'The Absolute' is generally preferred because it avoids limiting the Ultimate Reality to any particular religious conception. In this article, therefore, we will use The Absolute.

For many years I have wrestled with one simple question: "If The Absolute created a perfect universe, what is the real purpose of human life?"

Many answers have been suggested. Some say we are here to evolve spiritually over many lifetimes. Others say we are here to prepare for Heaven. Others believe our purpose is simply to gain knowledge. Each of these contains valuable insights. However, I would like to offer another perspective which, to me, appears to bring together both the cosmology of H. P. Blavatsky and the practical teaching of Jesus found in the Gospel of Thomas.

The Ocean and the Wave

Imagine standing beside the sea.

Every wave is unique.

Some are large.

Some are small.

Some are calm.

Some crash dramatically upon the shore.

Yet every single wave is made from the same ocean.

The wave appears separate.

The ocean never is.

Perhaps humanity is like that.

Each of us appears to be a separate individual, yet behind every human being lies the same Divine Reality.

Our individuality is real, but our deepest nature is shared.

Creation follows a single pattern

One of the ideas that has always fascinated me in *The Secret Doctrine* is Blavatsky's description of creation unfolding through a universal pattern. Although expressed in different ways throughout Theosophical literature, creation repeatedly appears to involve three inseparable aspects:

- **Will** - the originating purpose.
- **Wisdom** - the intelligent design and understanding that guides creation.
- **Activity** - the dynamic energy through which that purpose becomes manifest.

This triadic pattern seems to appear everywhere in nature. If it is the pattern through which the universe itself unfolds, might it not also be the pattern through which every human life unfolds?

Perhaps every person possesses these same three capacities:

- the freedom to choose (Will),
- the ability to understand (Wisdom),
- and the ability to express that understanding through action (Activity).

If so, then humanity is not separate from the creative process. Each life becomes a small reflection of the greater pattern through which the universe itself unfolds.

Measuring success differently

For many years I assumed that The Absolute's purpose must be to produce spiritually

awakened people. But this raised a difficult question. Throughout history there have been billions of human beings. Only a tiny number are recognised as great spiritual teachers. If producing enlightened individuals were The Absolute's only purpose, the apparent success rate seems remarkably low for a perfect Creator. Perhaps we have been measuring the wrong thing.

Suppose The Absolute's purpose is not to create millions of identical enlightened people. Suppose the purpose is to allow the Divine to express itself uniquely through every human life. Then every act of love... every act of kindness... every act of courage... every act of forgiveness... every act of creativity... becomes part of The Absolute's continuing activity in the world.

Under this understanding, The Absolute's purpose is already succeeding every day through ordinary people living ordinary lives.



Age Cymru

The contribution of Jesus

This brings us to what I believe is one of Jesus' greatest contributions. The Gospel of Thomas repeatedly directs our attention away from distant promises and towards the present moment.

"The Kingdom is inside you and outside you."

"The Father's Kingdom is spread out upon the earth, and people do not see it."

"If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you."

To me these sayings point towards something

profoundly practical. Jesus is not simply asking us to believe. He is inviting us to become consciously aware of the Divine already present. He encourages us to look for the Divine here and now – in every person, every circumstance and every moment of daily life. Recognition is not an escape from ordinary life. It transforms ordinary life. The present moment becomes the meeting place between the human and the Divine.

Conscious participation

Most people express goodness naturally from time to time. Parents care for children.

Neighbours help one another. Strangers perform acts of kindness. Many may never think of these actions as spiritual. Yet perhaps they are already allowing something of the Divine to shine through.

Jesus' invitation, as I understand it, is to become consciously aware of this process. Instead of occasionally expressing love, compassion or truth, we begin intentionally asking:

"How can the Divine express itself through me in this situation?"

Every conversation.

Every decision.

Every challenge.

Every opportunity.

Life itself becomes spiritual practice.

The Wave becomes transparent

The purpose of the wave is not to become the ocean. It already is the ocean in expression. Its purpose is to allow the nature of the ocean to

become visible. Likewise, perhaps our purpose is not to become something entirely different. Rather, it is to allow the Divine already within us to become increasingly visible through the way we think, speak and act.

Jesus demonstrated what such a life looks like. The Gospel of Thomas continually invites us to discover it for ourselves.

An invitation

This article is offered simply as a personal reflection. If it encourages readers to explore both the profound cosmology of H. P. Blavatsky and the practical wisdom of the Gospel of Thomas with fresh eyes, then it will have achieved its purpose. Perhaps the Kingdom has never been waiting to arrive. Perhaps it has always been waiting to be recognised – and consciously expressed – in the only place we can ever truly live: Here. Now.*

Bob Wigginton is President of the Torbay Lodge of the Theosophical Society of England and Wales.



John Tyson



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Last Words

The Miraculous Effect of Music

From **Theoscience.org**

Music brings people together. Materialistic Science explains it as a factor in human groups evolution, an advantage for survival. This theory is supported by a research paper published by the Cambridge University in 2020.

A doctoral thesis from the University of Oslo investigates further with live experiments showing that the musicians' heartbeats synchronized as they played. The audience is also synchronizing at certain moments.

How do we perceive music? *The Voice of the Silence* says: "Before the Soul can see, the harmony within must be attained", and *Light*

on the Path: "Before the ear can hear it must have lost its sensitiveness."

Music teaches that, instead of separateness, one can cultivate Unity, because every human can produce but a part in the great Symphony of human life. Never will the physical ear hear the beauty of that highest expression of soul-life, unless a human rises to the point where spiritual life opens its portals for him and touches the soul with the magic wand which awakens at once the spiritual senses, so that: "The seventh [sound] swallows all other sounds" (*The Voice of the Silence*). ✱

About The Theosophical Society

Three Objects of the Theosophical Society

1. *To form a nucleus of universal Brotherhood without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.*
2. *To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science.*
3. *To investigate the unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man.*

The Theosophical Society is a worldwide community whose primary Object is the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction, based on the realisation that life and all its diverse forms, human and non-human, is indivisibly One.

Founded in 1875, the Society draws together those of goodwill whatever their religious affiliation (if any), social status, gender or ethnicity. The Society promotes such understanding through the study and practical application of the Ageless Wisdom of Theosophy.

The International Mission Statement of the Society is: *'To serve humanity by cultivating an ever-deepening understanding and realization of the Ageless Wisdom, spiritual Self-transformation, and the Unity of all Life.'*

Unity lies at the very heart of the theosophical community and inspires the lives of its members towards unselfish service and inner transformation. Divine Wisdom is One – the paths towards it are many.

The word 'Theosophy' is from Greek origin meaning Wisdom of the Gods (*theo* – of Gods; *Sophia* – wisdom). It is a word which has been used for many centuries and is also known as the Ageless Wisdom.

The Society imposes no beliefs on its members, who are united by a common search for Truth and a desire to learn the meaning and purpose of existence through study, reflection, self-responsibility and self-less service.

It jealously guards and promotes freedom of thought and no member may impose their views on any other.

Esoterica is available both in printed form and online. Please let us know if you have friends or family members who would like to receive the printed version, free of charge, by filling out the form below and posting to **50 Gloucester Place, London W1U 8EA**, or by contacting **office@theosoc.org.uk**
A downloadable version, also free of charge, is available on our website homepage **www.theosoc.org.uk**

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ESOTERICA

INSIGHTS INTO THE AGELESS WISDOM

Esoterica, the journal of the Theosophical Society in England and Wales,
is a magazine for the inquiring and the curious.

It is for those seeking spiritual answers to those big questions of life:

Who are we?

Where did we come from?

What's our purpose and destiny in life?

Its mission is to explore those timeless truths, occult knowledge and universal laws
which pre-date but underpin all philosophy, science and religion.

We offer thought-provoking and original interpretations
of these fascinating ideas from the perennial philosophy
to unlock the secrets of ourselves and the cosmos.

Above all, it's our intention to offer not just dry theory but, wherever possible,
practical solutions to the difficult issues which face every one of us.

The next edition will appear on the winter solstice,
21st December 2026.

