

Sieglinde Plocki **Lecture**

T O K N O W Y O U R S E L F I S T H E F I R S T S T E P

**O hidden Life, vibrant in every atom,
O hidden Light, shining in every creature,
O hidden Love, embracing all in oneness,
May all who feel themselves as one with thee,
Know they are therefore one with every other.**

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends from all over the world,

This little invocation from the early days of the Theosophical Society expresses in a wonderful way the key thoughts for the subject which we will treat this morning.

Self-Knowledge is the first step for improvement – as a common saying goes, or, to put it in other words, life in theory and practice. Why this? Where is the linkage between those two sentences and the just heard invocation? Well, let us see:

First of all, Self-Knowledge implies to have a clear conception about what life is. So let us ask: What is life and where is it?

An answer is already given in the first line of the just cited universal invocation: “O hidden Life, vibrant in every atom”. Life is everywhere – our modern scientists do also agree to this. There is life even under circumstances which were some decades ago considered hostile to life. Microorganisms have been detected in boiling heat or unthinkable cold and in the vastness of the universe scientists lately have found the necessary prerequisites for physical life. Nobody can claim any more, that mankind is unique in the outer space. Everything is logically linked and bound with everything else: There is no empty space around us, neither in the interstices of the atoms, nowhere – this is what latest research says, and this is what our theosophical teachings tell us: even the infinitesimal point in the universe is life. So life is everywhere. It permeates us as human beings, each and every part of our sevenfold constitution, it permeates the animal kingdom, the plant kingdom, the mineral kingdom, the elemental kingdom way down to the evanescent and way back from mankind to the Dhyan-Chohanik kingdoms to the Gods and even further afield in the vast shoreless space. And everything is compound – thus atoms are forming molecules which are forming elements, plants, animals, building vehicles for all kinds of different states of consciousness – which is just another word for life. It is compound of matter in

different kinds of states from the densest one to etherical and spiritual ones. Just a few weeks ago the Berlin Newspaper *Der Tagesspiegel* published an article with the heading “Reprogrammed cells ‘remember’ their former life.” Is this is not a good example that biological cells are living entities, compound little hierarchies? How should they otherwise be able to remember?

“O hidden Light, shining in every creature” the invocation continues. All being is light – we just cannot see it shine, because we are wrapped up too much in matter. There is an uncountable, incalculable number of hierarchies, merged with each other, twisted with one another, permeating one another, and none of them could be omitted. Like for a well functioning clockwork you can state that only when all cogs in the machinery work together, the clockwork can function; each cog has to turn perfectly within the wheelwork of the hierarchies, as each one affects all the others. This is true for the whole universe, for the Kosmos itself, as it is a universal law. Only when we live in perfect harmony with our own highest hierarch, with our Divine Self, and therefore in harmony with all that lives, do we not disturb the harmony and order of the whole system. This is, what we try, or should try to do. And what else is karma – the great chance for us? It is not just the readjustment of deranged harmony, which we can harmonize again?

This, of course, also implies a tremendous responsibility towards all the other hierarchies composing our universe, especially towards those who are still below us. Each and every thought, emotion and action – mentioned on purpose in this order, because, though often unperceived, one follows the other in exactly this order – each and every thought, emotion and action affects the status of atoms and molecules, of even the smallest pinch of life – which we call life-atoms, composing our different bodies – and imprints them for good or bad, help or hindrance. We are responsible for them, for their luminance and radiation, or for the dirt which covers them.

So – Which kind of “atmosphere” surrounds us? Is it full of friendliness, love, understanding and harmony or are we the perpetually nagging, know-it-all, naysayer? It is **our** decision to be angry or to react unrestrained, or otherwise to mind our own business, our own imperfections, and act in a self-controlled and friendly manner, or is it not? It is up to us which kind of imprint we leave on those atoms, molecules, cells which form our different bodies.

What is the conclusion? What is the way to perfection?

Boris de Zirkoff once pointed out in *Thoughts on Theosophy*:

“The great search of the present generation is not for new dogmas and new theories; it is not for hypotheses on the metaphysical meanings of such or such a term. It is not for the complicated definitions of life. No! The search is for the Science of right living. The wine of Brotherly Love is craved. Man looks all over the world to find the solution of the great riddle of existence and suffering and sorrow. Theosophy, the ancient Wisdom of the earlier races, the mine of treasures and that beacon-light of truth, gives that solution and opens the way of knowledge and happiness.

This is the greatest stumbling-block of many a person today. Man thinks he is a fool and cannot understand a teaching which is A LITTLE above the everyday banal and useless life of pleasure and selfishness. BUT MAN IS NOT A FOOL; HE IS AS WISE AS THE SAGES OF OLD TIMES, only this wisdom is hidden in the depths of his soul and is so deep and so far from the consciousness of the individual himself that he is ready to deny it at every moment and laugh at those who would show him the way. ..

Theosophy shows to man the road of duty and love. It fashions the impulses of his heart and being into one great whole, imposing and strong. It means the regeneration of Humanity through selflessness and devotion. It leads Man to the victory of his Divinity amidst the struggle and battle of life.”

But to reach selflessness, you must know your self in order to put it aside, so that it cannot interfere with your affairs. There are some simple rules with great effects for this purpose.

We all know e.g. those beautiful *Golden Rules* of Pythagoras, which are

“Never suffer sleep to close thy eyelids, after thy going to bed,
Till thou hast examined by thy reason all thy actions of the day.
Wherein have I done amiss?
What have I done?
What have I omitted that I ought to have done?
If in this examination thou find that thou hast done amiss, reprimand thyself severely for it;
And if thou hast done any good, rejoice.
Practise thoroughly all these things; meditate on them well;
thou oughtest to love them with all thy heart.
'T is they that will put thee in the way of divine virtue.”

You see, they are helpers on this road of love and duty and they will lead us to self-knowledge and to knowledge of the Self.

But don't mistake Pythagoras to have meant pure brain-analyzing ones own character. Heart **and** mind is the key.

To achieve self-knowledge is quite a long way to go. It was probably Madame Blavatsky who said:

“The first necessity for obtaining self-knowledge is to become profoundly conscious of ignorance; to feel with every fibre of the heart that one is *ceaselessly* self-deceived.

The second requisite is the still deeper conviction that such knowledge—such intuitive and certain knowledge—can be obtained by effort.

The third and most important is an indomitable determination to obtain and face that knowledge.

Self-knowledge of this kind is unattainable by what men usually call “self-analysis.” It

is not reached by reasoning or any brain process; for it is the awakening to consciousness of the Divine nature of man.

To obtain this knowledge is a greater achievement than to command the elements or to know the future.”

Collected Writings 8:108 [Lucifer, 1.2 (October, 1887): 89]

Well, this is it! – We should try! Shouldn't we? And how should we try, what does the sentence “Live the Life” mean?

Real life happens in the higher parts of our constitution – i.e. in buddhi-manas. “Live the Life” therefore means to live in those higher parts of our constitution. This can only be done by putting into practice those parts of the Eternal Wisdom which we already understand and acknowledge as right and correct from the highest point of view or level possible. In other words, we must transfer knowledge from buddhi-manas downwards, passing unchanged through all lower principles of our constitution, because only then, when it reaches our physical brain unchanged, have we really attained some portion of knowledge. An earnest and profound study of the teachings of Theosophy, accordingly will give us important keys to study our own nature, our own character, our personality. The first steps for a conscious transformation must be taken by changing our mind, our thoughts, because they give the impulse for our emotions. When we start to transform the direction of our thoughts, when we strive for higher, better, eternal values, more and more our feelings, our emotions will change. This will indeed lead to a complete transformation of our emotional life: Our heart will be filled with compassion, and action will follow. If we study with our hearts involved and not the cold brain-mind, the-intellect only, we must inevitably reach the point where we cannot but work for others and try to help them to find their way, too. He or she who only once felt the sweetness and beauty of selfless work – may the task have been just a little one – will not mourn about an overload of work and duties, but be grateful for being allowed to do this kind of work. It is a privilege, a real privilege but a privilege which everybody is entitled to, which is not exclusively reserved for the few! Everything which carries us away from our little unimportant personality, everything which is helpful for life in general, for humanity as a whole, helps us to transcend our own shortcomings. If we tumble, we have at least tried. On the long run, no such effort will remain without effect. Just like the child who learns to walk we can get up again and again, until one day our efforts will be crowned by some success. No musician perfectly plays his instrument without having exercised and exercised and exercised again. Rome was not built in one day. Little by little we will develop our faculty of discrimination. Let us have a sharp look on our **own** shortcomings.

William Quan Judge pointed out:

“[S]elf-criticism prevents unkind criticism of others, and those who know their own weaknesses, and are striving to mend them, are always the most compassionate towards the weaknesses of others.”
(Echoes of the Orient 3:384)

and he continued:

“We may ‘fail’ in specific acts or endeavor, but so long as we continue to persevere such are not ‘failures’ but lessons necessary in themselves. Through resistance and effort we acquire fresh strength; we gather to ourselves -- and by occult laws -- all the strength we have gained by overcoming. Entire ‘success’ is not for us now, but continuous, persistent effort is, and that is success and not the mere carrying out of all our plans or attempts. Moreover no matter how high we go in Nature, there are always new rungs of the ladder to mount -- that ladder whose rungs are all mounted in labor and in pain, but also in the great joy of conscious strength and will. Even the Adept sees fresh trials before him. Remember also when we say ‘I have failed’ it shows that we have had and still have aspiration. And while this is so, while we have before us loftier heights of perfection to scale, Nature will never desert us. We are mounting, and aspiring and the sense of failure is the surest proof of this. But Nature has no use for anyone who has reached the limits of, or outlived, his aspirations. So that every ‘failure is a success.’ At the outset the greater your aspirations the greater the difficulties you will encounter. Forget not then that to continue to try even when one constantly fails is the only way to come to real success.”

(W.Q. Judge, op. cit. 410)

“Do not stop to mourn over your faults; recognize them and seek to learn from each its lesson. Do not become vain of your success. So shall you gradually attain self-knowledge, and self-knowledge shall develop self-mastery.”

(W.Q. Judge, op. cit. 289)

But, if we desire and practice selfless work, if it is our goal to become one more stone in the wall of the protectors of mankind, we must study the Ancient Wisdom deeply and earnestly and – as already shown – there is no other way but putting it into practice - first and foremost practicing Universal Brotherhood. We must make it a living factor in *our* lives and hereby likewise in the world – because we are intrinsically tied to this world – more than that: we are one with this world, one with everything.

Without that love which is born from the awareness of being one with all that lives, all knowledge turns to a “bell of clay”. Altruism and perseverance of duty are keys to life, keys to the Life. This means: to live with trustfulness in our leader, our Masters, our Higher Self; our Inner God - to begin and to end our day with this confidence. It means never to give up but to try and try again to live up to our highest principles in their ethical, moral and philosophical aspects. It means, to replace the good with the better and to replace the better with the even more perfect and to perform our duties with discrimination and discipline.

We have wonderful helpers to advise us: the Teachings of the Ancient Wisdom and our Inner Teacher who constantly talks to us – if we would only listen. Whenever we capture a genuine truth he makes the whole world sing and dance. And when we are down and fainthearted he does not leave us alone but sends thoughts for help, places a book, a proverb, at the right spot and we ask ourselves: What was the matter with me? Look at the grandeur and beauty of the eternal laws. There is no reason at all to be at odds with life.

How simple it turns out to be, if we only trust in our own forces and have confidence in our Divine Self.

And this confidence, this calmness, this endless feeling of security and everlasting love is also expressed in the Gâyatrî - it gives us inspiration and help on our journey to perfection – many of us recite it to welcome the morning but also at the end of the day. And with a translation in explanatory paraphrase by Dr. de Purucker, giving the essential esoteric meaning of the *Gayatrî* or Savitri, I will close know:

**“Oh thou golden sun of most excellent splendor,
illumine our hearts and fill our minds,
so that we, recognizing our oneness with the Divinity
which is the heart of the universe,
may see the pathway before our feet,
and tread it
to those distant goals of perfection,
stimulated by thine own radiant light.”**

Thank you

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