

The Emergence of the Eighth Sphere

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The Eighth Sphere and the Evolution of the Earth

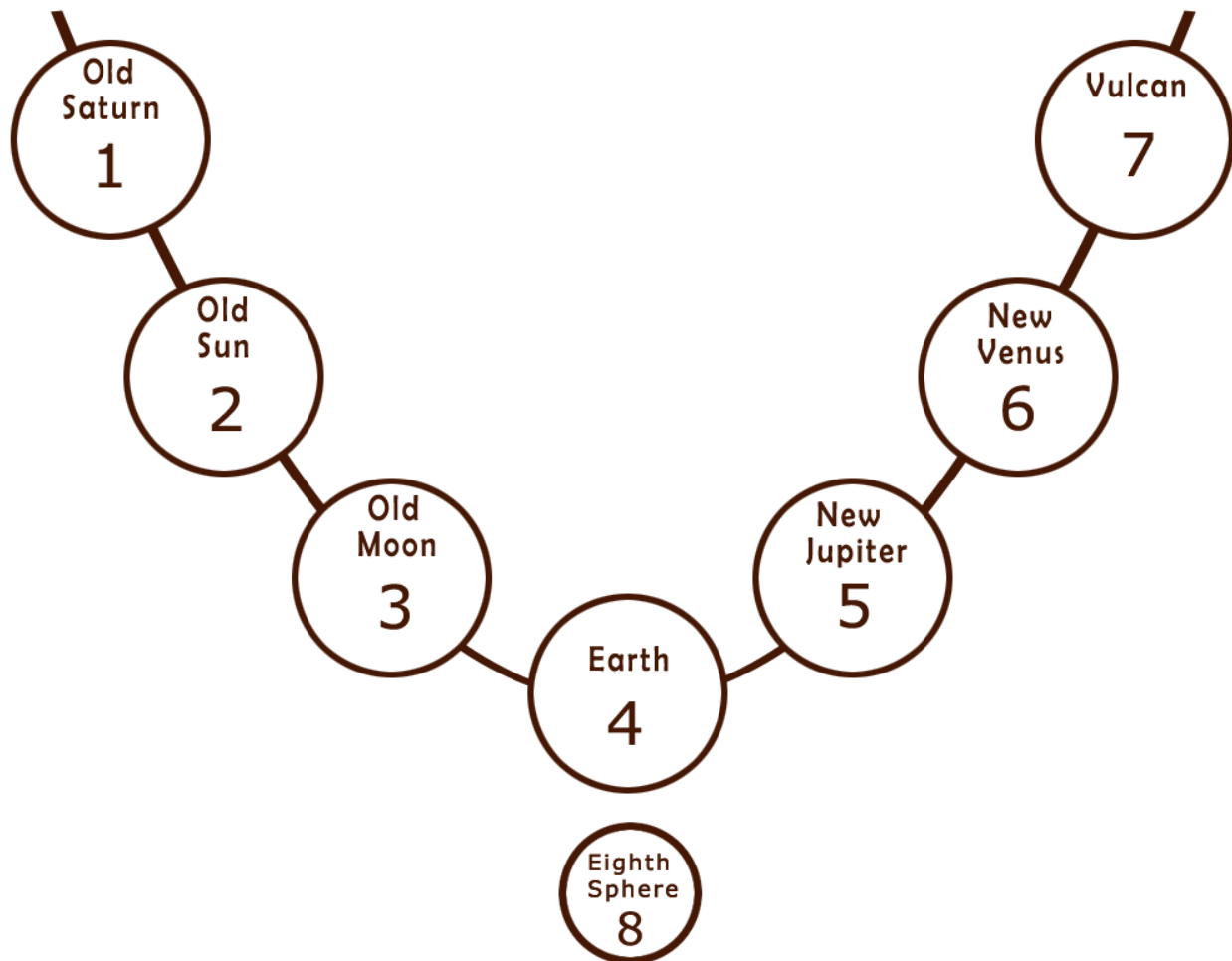


Figure One

The seven successive embodiments of the Earth and the Eighth Sphere

In a lecture given on 18th October 1915, Rudolf Steiner drew on the blackboard the picture shown in Figure One (my representation of that drawing, -Anthony). The seven apparently distinct planets in the picture represent different stages in the evolution of the single planet which we today call Earth, and should be regarded as different conditions that the planet undergoes over vast epochs of time. In the esoteric perspective that Steiner presents, our planet was initially in a state of existence that was extremely rarefied, as a body of warmth (Saturn). In subsequent embodiments it became increasingly densified. In its second embodiment (Sun) it attained a gaseous condition, and in its third embodiment (Moon) a fluid condition. Only in its fourth embodiment did it achieve the solidity and density that we experience today (see [chapter 4 of *Occult*](#)

Science). The evolution of the planet thus takes place through a series of stages from the least material to ever greater material substantiality. According to Steiner, future embodiments of the Earth (marked in the diagram as Jupiter, Venus and Vulcan) will be progressively rarefied, as the Earth is increasingly spiritualised in its next three incarnations.

While the names given to the past and future ("new" in my representation, -Anthony) incarnations of the Earth correspond to planets in our present solar system, they should not be confused with them. To avoid this confusion, Steiner more usually refers to the past incarnations as Old Saturn, Old Sun and Old Moon, and prefixes the word "future" ("new") to the forthcoming incarnations of Jupiter, Venus and Vulcan. Therefore, none of the planetary spheres shown in the diagram should be understood as having a separate and independent existence from one to another, as they all represent different stages that *the single planet Earth* goes through. This applies also to the Eighth Sphere, shown in the diagram beneath the Earth. It is not to be understood as a separate planet, literally located underneath the Earth. It is rather a potential future condition of the Earth, just as are the more spiritualised future planetary embodiments of Jupiter, Venus and Vulcan.

Although human beings aren't shown in the diagram, according to Steiner, the Earth's evolution and human evolution are completely interwoven with each other. Humanity has accompanied the Earth in its descent into increasingly dense conditions of physical materiality. Initially, on Old Saturn, the human body was barely materialised, and human consciousness was in a trance-like state of communion with the world of spirit. In subsequent incarnations of the planet, humanity incarnated ever more deeply into physical existence in order to experience during the present solidified incarnation of the Earth the wide-awake consciousness of individualised selfhood. **It is in this state of consciousness that the possibility of freedom in our life of thought and will is granted to us. It enables us to take moral responsibility for our actions and to freely undertake the work of our own spiritual transformation**, which also entails the spiritualisation of the Earth. According to Steiner, planetary and human evolution are interdependent: our future and the future destiny of the Earth belong together.

However, in his lecture of October 1915, Rudolf Steiner also points out that there are adversarial powers — specifically Lucifer and Ahriman — which would steer humanity away from realising the future spiritualisation of humanity and the Earth. These adversarial powers work towards bringing about a regressive incarnation of the Earth, in which it would revert to certain characteristics of its previous condition (Old Moon) that would also be injected with a degree of materiality that properly belongs only to the present incarnation of the Earth. In this way, a "bogus creation in the universe" would be formed, and it is this bogus creation that Steiner referred to as the Eighth Sphere. Despite being bogus, humanity would nevertheless be strongly attracted to it, with the danger that both human beings and the Earth would be diverted from their proper evolutionary trajectory. Gravely warning his listeners as to just how serious this prospect was, Steiner explained:

Lucifer and Ahriman strive unceasingly to draw from the Earth's substances whatever they can snatch, in order to form their Eighth Sphere which then, when it is sufficiently advanced, will be detached from the Earth and go its own way in the cosmos together with Lucifer and Ahriman.

The Occult Movement in the Nineteenth Century, GA 254, Lecture V, para. 16

With it will go that portion of humanity that has made itself at home in this bogus creation. Only in so far as the evolution of the Earth takes its rightful course will the future planetary incarnations of Jupiter, Venus and Vulcan be realised, but Steiner was aware that the formation of an alternative, anomalous Eighth Sphere was already underway. It is already in our environment – we are already living in it, but unconsciously, for it has yet to become fully manifest. Both an upward and a downward trajectory therefore exist as potentialities of the Earth's future evolution, and both are currently in the process of being realised. We are therefore faced with a choice regarding the future of Earth evolution, which has cosmic implications. All human beings are involved in this choice, because the future of the Earth belongs also to our human future.

A more extensive discussion of the Eighth Sphere can be found on the [FreeManCreator](#) website. -Anthony

The Purpose of the Current Planetary Embodiment

In order to grasp more clearly the implications of the retrograde step that the Luciferic and Ahrimanic powers are working towards, we should understand that, according to Steiner, during the previous Old Moon incarnation of the Earth, there was no mineral level of existence. The mineral kingdom only came into being during the present incarnation of the Earth, which entailed a greater densification and hardening of the previously fluid and soft environment which characterised the Old Moon incarnation. The picture that Steiner gives of the conditions that prevailed during the Old Moon is of "a dense vapour wherein the most diverse substances, being as it were dissolved in it, moved hither and thither in manifold currents."

During the Old Moon incarnation of the Earth, the state of consciousness of human beings had evolved from the deep trance-like state it had on Old Saturn to something akin to our present dream-consciousness. However, the dreamlike images experienced at that time were not the subjective pictures that we today experienced in our dreamlife, reflecting back to us the dynamics of our own psyche. Rather, they related human beings to their actual environment. They were imaginative perceptions through which human consciousness was brought into relationship with the inner nature of the processes and

events occurring in the outer environment. Human experience was thus innately clairvoyant and through it "the spiritual Beings holding sway behind the physical facts" were made present to human consciousness in these dreamlike images.

Although vestiges of it remained during the present incarnation of the Earth's earlier epochs of history, this dreamlike clairvoyance gradually died out. The contraction into solid materiality meant that human awareness of the spiritual Beings holding sway behind the surface physical phenomena was necessarily eclipsed, while at the same time the development of individual self-consciousness unfolded to a degree not hitherto attainable. And so, the "two-edged sword" of ego-consciousness became ever more dominant – two-edged because on the one hand it led to an inner hardening and self-centeredness, but on the other hand it gave to humanity independence from the world of spirit and granted to individuals freedom to make their own choices.

One important element in this gift of independence and inner freedom is that it provides the basis for us to work towards developing a wakeful and objective imaginative awareness of the world of spirit, in place of the old dreamlike clairvoyance. Such wakeful imaginative awareness is characterised by the conscious engagement of human beings in the production of the images through which the world of spirit is made manifest. Such a full conscious, image-based awareness will have become the norm in the next (Jupiter) incarnation of the Earth, but it is for us now to prepare the ground for this development.

Steiner regarded the inner freedom intrinsic to ego-consciousness as also being the precondition of love, understood as the ability to sympathetically enter into the suffering of others and to place their interests before our own. There can be no love that is not freely given: human beings cannot be forced to love. The development of ego-consciousness is therefore what enables the power of compassion and loving kindness to enter human evolution. The paradox of ego-consciousness is that it is also the element in our human make-up that can divide and separate us from each other – the opposite of love. For Steiner, the decisive factor determining which direction ego-consciousness takes is whether or not we are able to integrate the Christ impulse, for which St. Paul's words "Not I, but Christ in me" are the seal. The more the human soul is able to surrender its own self-centeredness to the Christ-imbued impulse of love, the more will it become able to spiritualise not only the soul but also the body and indeed, according to Steiner, matter and the substance of the Earth itself:

In this way our Earth will advance towards its future. Through the souls gradually refining matter from within, the substance of the Earth will become more and more refined until it receives the power to dissolve. Then will come the time when the insoluble part will be ejected as a separate globe.

This insoluble part that will be ejected is the Eighth Sphere.

The Formation of the Eighth Sphere

In one of the **early references** Rudolf Steiner makes to the Eighth Sphere in 1905, he refers to it as "a body of slag" that will be cast off from the Earth as the latter transitions to a higher spiritual state. Along with the Eighth Sphere will depart those human beings who have failed to develop beyond their own self-centered egotism. **Elsewhere**, he makes it clear that these human beings will be cast out of the stream of world evolution into the Eighth Sphere because they will have deliberately embraced evil. The self-embrace of egotism, insofar as it entails a renunciation of the voice of conscience, inevitably leads to the embrace of evil. One of the principle tasks of those on the Christ-imbued ascending path will be to make every possible effort to rescue these souls through the power of goodness and loving kindness.

In his October 1915 lecture, Steiner indicates that in the formation of the Eighth Sphere, the adversarial powers are active in three distinct areas of human life. In each of these areas, they seek to redirect what should be realised as our true spiritual potential towards the realisation of a corrupted image of the human being, to which people will increasingly conform as they adapt themselves to the counterfeit Eighth Sphere. First of all, the adversarial powers would draw humanity into a world of "densified imaginations," or overly materialised images, which stymie our capacity to develop true imaginative perception of spiritual realities. We would, instead, be immersed in a seemingly real world of illusions. Secondly, they would "drag the free will of man, and whatever stems from it, into the Eighth Sphere." Ahriman, in particular, would make our wills entirely self-centered, so we wish only for what is personal to ourselves and thereby lose any inclination to choose to act from spiritual ideals. As a result of this loss of moral anchorage, our intrinsic freedom of choice would be fatally impaired. Finally, the adversarial powers (again, especially Ahriman) would uproot the principle of love within human procreation, so as to render it and everything that belongs to the realm of genetic inheritance subject only to a cold and loveless rational-scientific thinking.

As for the Earth, Steiner foresaw that by the end of its present incarnation, the entire globe will have been transformed into "a kind of self-functioning electrical apparatus." He was aware that this process was already underway during his lifetime and shortly before his death he warned of the Earth sinking ever more deeply into the grip of forces that belong not to nature but to subnature, in which "the Divine-spiritual Being connected with the origin of human evolution, is completely absent. The purely Ahrimanic dominates this sphere [i.e. of subnature]." What Ahriman seeks to accomplish is a downward transformation of the Earth, so that it is held in the grip of subnatural forces, that squeeze living nature out to the very margins of existence. What would then remain of the Earth would be a lifeless husk, a "body of slag."

Manifestations of the Eighth Sphere in Technology

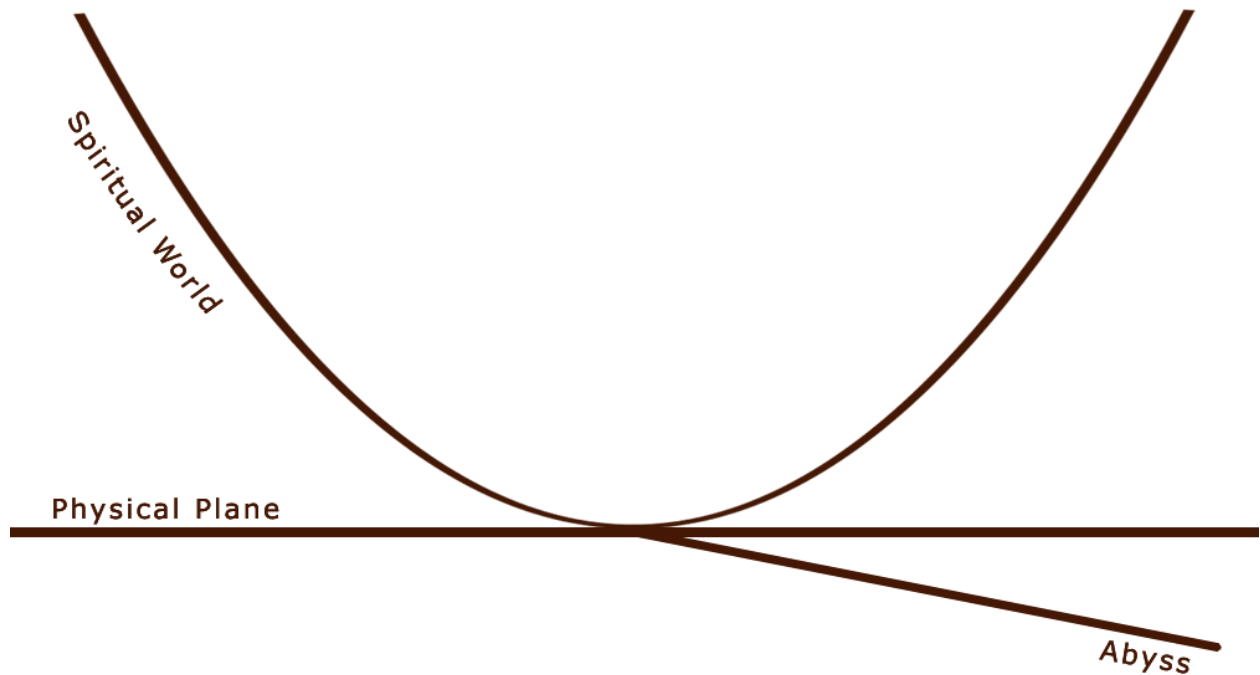


Figure Two
The spiritual world and the Abyss

In these statements we see how, in Steiner's thinking, the formation of the Eighth Sphere is closely tied to modern developments in technology. Through the utilisation of, for example, steam power and subsequently electricity, he saw "applied technical science" as having passed into Ahriman's domain. In Rudolf Steiner's lecture titled "**Technology and Art: Their Bearing on Modern Culture**" presented in Dornach on December 28th, 1914 he stated:

A real understanding of modern life makes it quite evident that through the milieu of applied technical science we pass into an Ahrimanic sphere and allow ourselves to be filled with Ahrimanic spirituality.

The downward trajectory of modern technology ultimately leads to an abyss in which humanity will dwell within the "corpse of nature", a lifeless environment in which not only the spirit in nature but also the spirit in human beings has become "hollowed out". We shall no longer know anything of ourselves anymore, and shall have become prey of Ahriman*.

In his lecture series on the *Apocalypse of St. John*, Rudolf Steiner illustrated the arc of humanity's evolutionary journey in relation to the Abyss (see above figure). He explains that the incarnation of Christ occurred when humanity's descent from the spiritual world reached the physical plane, but this was not the lowest point. The momentum downwards would have carried us yet further into the Abyss had not Christ's incarnation prevented it. As we shall see, for Steiner it is only through our uniting with the Christ-principle that it becomes possible for humanity to find the way upward, otherwise the gravitational pull towards the Abyss will overcome us.

It is not hard for us to find manifestations of this downward trajectory towards the Abyss in current technological developments. The creation of a global electronic ecosystem serving vast and intricate computer networks, reliant on a complex web of data centers, electronic sensors, and the constant irradiation of the planet through land-based transmitters and burgeoning satellite constellations, is effectively turning the Earth into a giant electrical apparatus. Within this electronic ecosystem, the technologies for creating virtual worlds of "densified imaginations" are rapidly becoming more sophisticated. The stated ambition of those promoting the "Metaverse" of interconnected virtual worlds is to make it "more meaningful to us than our physical lives". One of the technologies associated with this next technological step is the Brain Computer Interface, through which human beings will become biologically connected to computers. It is not hard to see how this must lead to a debasement of human thinking as a spiritual activity, thereby undermining the very source of our freedom and moral imagination^{**}. Finally, advances in biotechnology, which allow the application of extremely precise gene-editing techniques to human embryos, have opened up the realm of genetic inheritance to the kind of loveless rational-scientific interventions that Steiner warned against. For example, the world's first genetically edited babies, using the Crispr-Cas9 gene-editing technique, were born just a few years ago in China.

In his lecture series on *The Origins of Natural Science*, Rudolf Steiner describes the predicament of modern humanity in the midst of the technological age. We look out upon the technologized world of factories, railway lines, telephone cables and masts, and realise that "here at last is a sphere in which there is no spirit in the proper sense". At the same time, we look into ourselves and come to an experience of our own "nothingness". We may then have a feeling similar to that which we experience when we witness a person dying, as we see their living organism turn into a corpse. As we look upon this barren technological world without, and our own nothingness within, we may feel that we are standing "at the grave of all things spiritual". No longer do we feel any sense of wonder or joy in life. From deep within ourselves, we call out in anguish to the universe, into the cosmic expanses, for the recovery once more of the spirit. And, says Steiner, it is precisely this experience of loss and desperation that can bring us to the turning point, where "the call of infinite longing for the spirit, sent out in to the world, resounds in our inner being".

* It should be noted that what is meant here are those human beings that have fully and completely rejected the Truth of the Spirit, even their conscience on the matter within. These are the "prey of Ahriman". He has no power over those who look for the Divine in life. It should also be noted that technology is not intrinsically evil, only how it is used and how it is viewed — and used — makes it the cage which shall drag these unfortunates down into the Abyss. -Anthony

** What is meant with the word "imagination" as it is used by Steiner is as defined here on the FreeManCreator website: -Anthony

Imaginations are pictures in the mind that contain a multidimensional insight or realization about something, in a way that surpasses the limits of our intellectual thinking and rational understanding. A form of higher knowing or seeing.

Our thinking logic usually approaches any subject from a single dimension and then proceeds sequentially in a process of logic. Reality is much more complex. Therefore in spiritual science any subject is studied from various aspects and perspectives, in a way that does not seek for a simple definition but openly accepts all the perspectives offered as information about the true nature of that subject.

It is a faculty of our mind and consciousness, that we can have realizations at a higher level than our rational thinking. This relates to the clairvoyance at the astral level also called 'imagination', but this however has nothing to do with phantasy. Rather the term is used to describe the language of images, pictures with higher or deeper content than an intellectual thought.

The work of studying spiritual science 'as a soul process' is to do this inner work, fed by not only reading and studying, but also contemplation, meditation, pondering .. living with questions. As a result, one slowly develops the faculty that images flash up whereby one 'sees' in ones mind and thereby 'knows', without actually having thought or received an explanation in our normal language. It is up to the person than to assimilate and integrate the 'vision' and translate in words or picture to try and communicate this insight. Note the use of metaphors, analogies, and images in general can be helpful in doing so, because in those cases too one conveys about higher qualities beyond the specifics of the image used.

Counteracting the Formation of the Eighth Sphere

As we have seen, for Steiner it is only through our developing a living relationship to Christ that we can hope to avert the descent towards the apocalyptic Abyss of the Eighth Sphere and raise ourselves to pursue the ascending trajectory of evolution, which entails the spiritualisation of human nature and the healing of the Earth. How, then, do we develop a living relationship to Christ? Steiner addressed this question many times, most

relevantly in a **lecture** in which he highlighted the importance of suffering the feeling of our own helplessness – our powerlessness to lift ourselves to the Divine. In this experience in which we become aware of "the sickness, the powerlessness which has become allied with death in our soul" lies a potent gift. For when we experience it with sufficient intensity, it can lead to a sudden reversal, in which we come through to the realisation that if we "devote ourselves to what the spirit gives, we can overcome the inner death of the soul". We have, in other words, to face and fully suffer the limitations, weakness and destitution of ego-consciousness as a necessary inner death experience, which can then open the way to our saying: "Not I, but Christ in me."

In another lecture, he singled out three qualities, through the cultivation of which we may draw towards us the Christ-impulse and build a living relationship to Christ. The first is *wonder*, when we feel the unfathomable mysteriousness of the world, beyond the reach of rational-scientific analysis. Through wonder, we perceive more than its bare materiality and bear witness to the living presence of spirit in the world. The second quality is *compassion and loving kindness* toward others, of rit springs from the heart rather than from cold scientific reasoning. In compassion and loving kindness, the spirit of Christ comes to live between us and others. The third quality is *conscience*, whose voice sounds within us from a place of stillness and purity beyond the reach of the adversarial powers. In conscience, we encounter "the still small voice" of the divine within us which, as Steiner once put it, is "something that emanates to us as a droplet from the Godhead". All three qualities help delineate a sphere beyond the reach of Ahriman and the scientific-technological imperative, in which what is truly human can be nurtured. At the same time, Steiner tells us, each of the three qualities of wonder, compassion, and conscience draws the Christ impulse towards us.*



The Representative of Humanity

Significantly, it was these three qualities the Rudolf Steiner sought to embody in his sculpture of the figure of Christ as "The Representative of Humanity". He referred to them as "the three essential impulses" with which human beings need to imbue themselves in order to develop the powers of soul necessary to carry us forward into the future. Just as the concept of the Eighth Sphere is inseparable from that of the adversarial powers that seek to draw us into it, so the concept of our proper human future is inseparable from that of Christ, the exemplar of the divinised human being. In contemplating the concept of the Eighth Sphere, we are thus presented with the task of building our relationship to Christ, as the Being who can inwardly accompany us as we strive to embody all that is truly human.

** The book "Love & Its Meaning in the World" contains the lecture cycle entitled "Earthly and Cosmic Man." Chapter Six covers the above three "qualities" which, in this lecture he refers to as "powers". I have included that full lecture below. -Anthony*

Lecture: The Mission of the Earth

14 May 1912, Berlin

The question as to the meaning and purpose of existence frequently arises in life and in the sphere of philosophy. Study of Spiritual Science will certainly produce a kind of humility in regard to this question, for although we know that investigation of the spiritual worlds leads thought and perception beyond the material world of sense, we also realise that it is not possible to speak forthwith about the primal origins or the ultimate and highest meaning of life. The retort of superficial thinking here will certainly be: "What, then, *do* we know, if knowledge of the meaning and purpose of life is beyond our reach? "

An analogy that is entirely in line with the attitude of Spiritual Science and indicates what is permissible or not permissible in regard to this question, can be put in the following way: Suppose a man wants to journey somewhere — In his home town he can only get information as to how to reach a much less distant place, but he is sent off with the assurance that once there, further help will be available. Although he makes inquiries here and there as he goes along, he cannot know the exact path which will bring him to his final destination; nevertheless he is sure of arriving eventually because he is always able to find his way from place to place.

As students of Spiritual Science, we do not ask about the "ultimate goal" but about the one lying immediately ahead, in other words, about the goal of the Earth. We realise that it would be senseless to inquire about the "ultimate goal" for we have recognised that "evolution" is a reality in the life of man. It must therefore never be forgotten that at the present stage of our existence it is not possible to understand the goals of much later phases of evolution and that a higher vantage-point must be reached if we are to understand the meaning of a far distant goal. And so we ask about the goal lying immediately ahead, realising that by keeping it before us as an ideal and striving with the right means, we shall eventually attain it, thereby reaching a further stage in development. At that stage it will be legitimate to ask about the "next" goal, and so on. Thus if it were ever suggested that Spiritual Science might tend to make a man arrogant because his outlook extends beyond the ordinary world into a spiritual world, in reality his attitude will be one of humility towards these sublime matters about which superficial questions are so often asked.

We inquire, to begin with, about the goal of the Earth. In other words: What is it that man adds, essentially, to the fruits of the preceding periods of Saturn-, Sun-, and Moon-evolution, by developing on the Earth through repeated physical incarnations? We will here recall certain matters which will help us to associate concrete and definite ideas with what may be called the "meaning and purpose of Earth-evolution." Let me speak, to begin with of the following.

When intellectual thinking, based upon reason, came to birth during the Graeco-Latin epoch — it would actually be true to say, in the sixth century B.C. — a certain thought found frequent utterance, namely, that all philosophy, all deeper contemplation upon the secrets of existence, proceeds from Wonder, Amazement. In other words: As long as the human being can feel no wonder at the phenomena of life around him, so long is his life

vapid and thoughtless, and he asks without intelligence about the why and wherefore of existence. "All philosophy begins with wonder" was a much quoted saying during the ancient Graeco-Latin epoch. What, in reality, does it signify in man's life of soul?

It would be difficult today to find anyone in civilised Europe who has never set eyes on a locomotive in motion; not so very long ago, however, there were such persons — although nowadays they would, of course, only be found in very remote districts. If such a person sees a train moving along, he will feel wonder and amazement at the sight of an object going forward without any of the means with which he is acquainted. It is a known fact that many such people, in their astonishment at seeing a locomotive in movement, asked if the horses pulling it along were inside! Why were the people cast into amazement and wonder by what they saw here? It was because they were looking at something which in a certain sense was known, and at the same time unknown to them. They knew that things move forward, but whatever they had seen had always been provided with quite a different means of movement. Now they were looking at something on which they had never set eyes before. And this gave rise to wonder.

If during the Graeco-Latin epoch, men could only become philosophers when they were capable of wonder, they must have been persons who perceived, in everything taking place in the world, something at once known and unknown, in so far as the happenings and phenomena seemed to contain more than appeared on the surface — something unknown to them.

Why had the attitude of the philosophers to be that the primary causes and certain attributes of things in the world lay in a sphere unknown to them? As it will be admitted that philosophers are at least as clever as people who give no thought at all to what goes on around them, it cannot be supposed that philosophers are capable of accepting only what is to be perceived by means of the ordinary senses. Therefore they must find something lacking — or rather, they must surmise the presence of something which sets them wondering — something that is not present in the world of sense. And so, before the days of materialism, the philosophers always sought for the *Supersensible* in the phenomena presented to the senses. The wonder felt by the philosophers, therefore, is associated with the fact that certain things are not to be comprehended through what presents itself to the eyes of sense. They said to themselves: "What I there perceive does not tally with what I picture it to be; I must therefore conceive that super-sensible forces are present within it." But in the world of sense the philosophers perceived no super-sensible forces. That alone is enough to make a thinking man realise that a subconscious memory, not reaching into consciousness, has persisted in the human being since times when the soul perceived something more than the actual phenomena of the sense-world. In other words: Remembrance arises of experiences undergone before the descent into sense-existence. It is as though the soul were to say: "I discern things and their effects which can only call forth wonder in me, because they are different from what I have seen before; enlightenment on them can only be found by means of forces which must be drawn from the super-sensible world." And so all philosophising begins with wonder,

because in reality man approaches the phenomena of existence as a being who comes into the world of the senses from a super-sensible world and finds that the things of the sense-world do not tally with what he perceived in the super-sensible world. Wonder arises in him when the form in which the things of sense are made manifest, can only be explained by knowledge he once possessed in a super-sensible world. And so wonder points to the connection of man with the super-sensible world, to something belonging to a sphere he can only enter when he transcends the world in which his physical body encloses him. This is one indication of the fact that here, in this physical world, there is a continual urge within the human being to reach out beyond himself. A man who can only remain shut up in himself, who is not driven by wonder beyond the field of the "I," of the ordinary Ego, remains one who cannot reach beyond himself, who sees the sun rise and set without a thought and with complete unconcern. This is the kind of existence led by uncivilised peoples.

A second power which releases the human being from the ordinary world, leading him at once away from material perception into super-sensible insight, is Compassion, Fellow-feeling (Of this, too, I have spoken). Those who go heedlessly through the world do not regard compassion as having any great mystery about it; but to the thoughtful, compassion is a great and mysterious secret. When we look at a being only from outside, impressions come from him to our senses and intellect; with the awakening of compassion we pass beyond the sphere of these impressions. We share in what is taking place in his innermost nature, and transcending the sphere of our own "I", we pass over into *his* world. In other words: we are set free from ourselves, we break through the barriers of ordinary existence in the physical body and reach over into the other being. Here, already, is the Supersensible — for neither the operations of the senses nor of the reasoning mind can carry us into the sphere of another's soul. The fact that compassion exists in the world bears witness that even in the world of sense we can be set free from, can pass out beyond ourselves and enter into the world of another being. If a man is incapable of compassion, there is a moral defect, a moral lack in him. If at the moment when he should get free from himself and pass over into the other being, feeling, not his own pain or joy but the pain or joy of that other — if at that moment his feelings fade and die away, then something is lacking in his moral life. The human being on Earth, if he is to reach the stature of full and complete manhood, must be able to pass out beyond his own earthly life, he must be able to live in another, not only in himself.

Conscience is a third power whereby the human being transcends what he is in the physical body. In ordinary life he will desire this or that; according to his impulses or needs he will pursue what is pleasing and thrust aside what is displeasing to him. But in many such actions he will be his own critic, in that his conscience, the voice of his conscience sounds a note of correction. Final satisfaction or dissatisfaction with what he has done also depends upon how the voice of conscience has spoken. This in itself is a proof that "conscience" is a power whereby the human being is led out beyond the sphere of his impulses, his likes and dislikes.

Wonder and Amazement, Compassion or Fellow-feeling, Conscience — these are the three powers by means of which the human being, even while in the physical body, transcends his own limitations, for through these powers, influences which cannot find entrance into the human soul by way of the intellect and the senses, ray into physical life.

It is easy to understand that these three powers can only unfold through incarnations in a body of flesh. Man must, as it were, be kept separate by a body of flesh from what pours into his life of soul from another sphere. If a body of flesh did not separate him from the spiritual world and present the outer world to him as a sense-world, he would be incapable of wonder. It is the material body which enables wonder at the things of the world of sense to arise in man, compelling him to seek for the Spirit. Compassion could not unfold if the one human being were not separated from the other, if men were to live an undivided existence in which a single flow of spiritual life pervaded the consciousness of them all, if each soul were not separated from other souls by the impenetrable sheath provided by the physical body. And conscience could not be experienced as a spiritual force sending its voice into man's world of natural urges, passions and desires, if the material body did not hanker after things against which warning must be given by another power. And so the human being must be incarnated in a physical body in order that he may be able to experience wonder, compassion and conscience.

In our time, people concern themselves little with such secrets, although they are profoundly enlightening. But in a past by no means very remote, a great deal of attention was paid to these things: —

Think only of the world of the Greek Gods, the Gods of Homer; think of their actions and activities; try to understand the nature of the impulses working in Achilles, a being who stands there like a last survivor of an earlier generation on Earth. He, too, was born of a divine mother. Read through the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and ask yourselves whether this being, standing halfway between Gods and men, was ever stirred by anything like "conscience" or "compassion"? Homer builds the whole of the *Iliad* around the fury of the "wrath" of Achilles — and wrath is a passion. Everything in the Greek legend centres around this; the *Iliad* tells of what came about as the result of a passion — the wrath of Achilles. Consider all the deeds of Achilles described in the *Iliad* and see if you can say of a single one that Achilles is here moved by anything like compassion or conscience. Neither is there a single example of the stirring of wonder. The very greatness of Homer lies in his power to depict these things with such sublimity. When Achilles is told of some terrible happening, his behaviour is far from that of a man filled with wonder. And then turn to the Greek Gods themselves: they give vent to all kinds of impulses which are certainly of the nature of egotism when they manifest in a human being enclosed in a physical body. In the Gods they are spiritual impulses. But among the Greek Gods there is no compassion, no suggestion of conscience, nor anything like wonder. Why not? Because Homer and the Greeks knew that these Gods were Beings belonging to a period of

evolution preceding that of the Earth — a period when the Beings who were then passing through their "human stage" under the conditions prevailing in existence, had not yet received into the life of soul the powers of wonder, compassion and conscience. It must be constantly remembered that the earlier planetary conditions through which the Earth has passed and in which such Beings as the Greek Gods underwent their human stage, were not there for the purpose of implanting "Wonder," "Compassion," and "Conscience" in the life of soul. That is precisely the mission of Earth-evolution! **The purpose of Earth-evolution is that there may be implanted into the evolutionary process as a whole, powers which could otherwise never have come into existence: Wonder, Compassion and Conscience.**

I have told you how the birth of conscience can clearly be traced to a certain period of Greek culture. In the works of Aeschylus, what we call "conscience" played no part; there were only remembrances of the avenging Furies, and not until we come to the works of Euripedes is there any clear expression of "conscience" as we know it now. The concept of conscience arose only very gradually during the Graeco-Latin epoch. I have told you that the concept of wonder arises for the first time when men begin to philosophise in the world of Graeco-Latin culture. And a remarkable fact in the spiritual evolution of Earth-existence throws far-reaching light upon what we know as compassion, and also, in the true sense, love. **In the age of materialism it is exceedingly difficult to maintain in true and right perspective, this concept of compassion or love. Many of you will realise that in our materialistic times this concept is distorted, in that materialism associates the concept of "love" so closely with that of "sexuality" — with which, fundamentally, it has nothing whatever to do. That is a point where the culture of our day abandons both intelligence and sound, healthy reason. Through its materialism, evolution in our time is veering not only towards the unintelligent and illogical but even towards the scandalous, when "love" is dragged into such close association with what is covered by the term "sexuality."** The fact that under certain circumstances the element of sexuality may be associated with love between man and woman is no argument for bringing so closely together the all-embracing nature of love or compassion, and the entirely specific character of sexuality. So far as logic is concerned, to associate the concept of, say, a "railway engine" with that of a man being "run over," because engines do sometimes run over people, would be just about as intelligent as it is to connect the concept of love so closely with that of sexuality — simply because under certain circumstances there is an outward association. That this happens today is not the outcome of any scientific hypothesis but of the irrational and, to some extent, unhealthy mode of thinking prevailing in our time.

On the other hand, another telling fact points to the significance inherent in the concept of love and compassion. At a certain point in the evolution of humanity, and among all the peoples, something is made manifest which, while differing in many essentials, is identical in one respect all over the Earth, namely in the adoption of the concept of love, of compassion. It is very remarkable that six or seven centuries before the inpouring of the

Christ-Impulse into humanity, founders of religion and systems of thought appeared all over the Earth, among all the peoples. It is of the highest significance that, six centuries before our era, Lao-tse and Confucius should have been living in China, the Buddha in India, the last Zarathustra (*not* the original Zarathustra) in Persia, and Pythagoras in Greece. How great the difference is between these founders of religion! Only a mind abstracted from reality and incapable of discerning the differences can suggest, as is often mischievously done today, that the teachings of Lao-tse or Confucius do not differ from those of other founders of religions. Yet in one respect there is similarity among them all; they all teach that compassion and love must reign between soul and soul! The point of significance is this: six centuries before our era, consciousness begins to stir that love and compassion are to be received into the stream of human evolution. Thus whether we are thinking of the birth of wonder, of conscience or of love and compassion in the stream of evolution ... all the signs point to the fact that in the Fourth Post-Atlantean epoch of culture, something was imbued into mankind which we may recognise as the "meaning and purpose of Earth-evolution."

It is so superficial and foolish when people say: "Why was it necessary for man to come down from the worlds of Divine Spirit into the physical world, only to have to reattain them? Why could he not have remained in the higher worlds?" **Man could not remain in those worlds because only by coming down into the physical world of Earth-evolution could he receive into himself the forces of wonder, love or compassion, and conscience or moral obligation.**

We look at the Fourth Post-Atlantean epoch of culture and perceive, during its course, the dawn of impulses which — in reality only from that time onwards — spread more and more widely among mankind. It is very easy today to emphasise how seldom humanity is ruled by compassion and love, how seldom by conscience. But in pointing to these things, we must also be mindful of the fact that in the Graeco-Latin age, slavery was still an accepted custom, and that even a philosopher as great as Aristotle still regarded the existence of slaves as a necessary principle of human life; we must also remember that since those days, love has so far gained ground that even if today inequalities still persist among men, there is already present in their souls something like a feeling of shame that certain conditions exist. This in itself indicates that the forces which entered at that time into evolution are unfolding within the souls of men. Nobody would dare nowadays — if he is to avoid the tragic fate of Nietzsche — (the "followers" of Nietzsche can be ignored altogether, for in his right mind Nietzsche would have repudiated them) — to stand openly for the introduction of slavery as it was in Greece. Nobody will deny that **the greatest of all forces in the human soul is that of love and compassion, and that it must be man's task to make the voice that sounds out of another world into the soul, more and more articulate.**

Holding firmly in our minds that the unfolding of the three powers described constitutes the meaning and purpose of Earth-evolution, we turn to the greatest of all Impulses — the Christ-Impulse which poured into evolution during the Fourth Post-Atlantean epoch.

Even outer circumstances indicate that this Impulse is given at the very time when the Earth is ready for the development of the three powers of wonder, compassion or love, and conscience, or moral obligation, as intrinsically *human* qualities. Many studies have given us a picture of how the Christ-Impulse made its way into the evolution of humanity.

I want here to refer to one aspect of the Christ-Impulse. I have told you that certain spiritual, superhuman forces were held back in the spiritual worlds at the beginning of the evolutionary process on the Earth. This Impulse streamed into the Earth at the time of which an indication is given in the Bible, namely, at the time of the Baptism in the Jordan. It was an Impulse, therefore, untouched by the Luciferic forces as it had been kept back until the Fourth Post-Atlantean epoch; in that epoch it streamed into humanity. And now think of this in connection with certain things we have ourselves experienced. — If people are incapable of giving any concrete explanation of how the spiritual world plays into the physical world, it is really out of place for them to come out with crude and unreal ideas like that, for example, of the "Three Logoi." I have said many times that the word "Logoi" can convey to the ordinary intelligence nothing more than its five letters. When it is alleged in certain quarters outside that here we speak of Christ as the "second Logos," we do well to realise that misrepresentation and distortion are the order of the day. We ourselves are quoted as the source of statements which have actually originated somewhere else! Our constant endeavour is to deepen, to widen and to gather from every side, knowledge that can shed light on the Christ Idea. Yet outside our field of work, by talking round an abstract concept, people allege that we speak of the Christ as the "Second Logos." In the Theosophical Society, conscience ought to be too sharp to permit such allegations. So long as sheer misrepresentation of other people's views is possible, the Theosophical Movement cannot be said to have reached any particularly high level, and while this sort of thing goes on, it is futile to boast about freedom of opinion in the Society. This is an empty phrase as long as people allow themselves to spread false ideas of the views held by others. Certainly there must be freedom to spread every shade of opinion — but not freedom to misrepresent the views of others! Spiritual conscience must be sharpened in this respect; otherwise all feeling for truth would in the end be driven out of the Theosophical Movement and then it would not be possible to cultivate the true spiritual Movement within the framework of the "Theosophical Movement." These things must not be glossed over but taken really seriously. Certainly, there may be fewer publications, if the aim is to print only those things which are founded upon genuine, reliable knowledge. But after all, what harm will be done if there is less printing? What does it matter if less is said, so long as *what* is said is true and in accordance with reality? It was recently stated in periodicals abroad that the Christ is spoken of by us as the "Second Logos" and that we are said to be cultivating a "narrow" Theosophy, suitable for Germany, but not for any other country; we are said to be cultivating a "narrow" Theosophy, whereas a really "broad" Theosophical Movement is being conducted from a certain centre in Leipzig of which you have heard. When things of this kind are to be read, it can only be concluded that there does not exist in the Theosophical Movement the sharpness of conscience that is the pre-requisite of a spiritual movement. *And if we lack this sharpness of conscience, if we do not feel, the most intense responsibility to the*

holiest truth, we shall make no progress on any other path. These things have had to be said. And within the Theosophical Movement it will above all be necessary to have eyes for the quality of love and compassion.

If we conceive the Christ Impulse to be the down-pouring of that spiritual power which was kept back in the ancient Lemurian time in order to flow into evolution during the Fourth Post-Atlantean epoch at the point marked by the Baptism in the Jordan, reaching its culmination in the Mystery of Golgotha — then it is clear that He Who is known as the "Christ" was not, even at that time, incarnated in the ordinary sense, in a physical human being. We know what complicated processes were connected with the man "Jesus of Nazareth" in order that for three years of his life the Christ Impulse might live within him. We are therefore able to understand that for three years the Christ Impulse lived on the Earth in the three sheaths of a human being, but we realise, too, that even at that time, the Christ Impulse was not "incarnated" on the Earth in the ordinary sense but that He "pervaded" the body of the Being "Jesus of Nazareth." This must be understood when it is said that it is not possible to speak of a "return" of Christ, but only of an Impulse which was present once, during the time of the events in Palestine beginning with the Baptism in the Jordan, when there remained only the physical body, the ether-body and the astral body of Jesus of Nazareth; within these sheaths the Christ was then present on the very soil of the Earth. From that time Christ has been united with the spiritual atmosphere of the Earth and can there be found by souls who are willing to receive Him. From that time onwards — and only from that time onwards — He has been present in the spiritual atmosphere of the Earth. The great turn given to Earth-evolution lies in the fact that from that time forward there was a power in the Earth which it did not previously contain.

We know that what we actually see in the kingdoms of Nature around us is not reality, but "Maya," the "Great Illusion". In the kingdom of the animals we see the individual forms coming into being and passing away; the Group-Soul alone endures. In the plant kingdom, the individual plants appear and disappear, but behind them there is the Earth-Spirit which does not pass away. So it is, too, in the kingdom of the minerals. The Spiritual endures, but the Physical, whether in the animal, plant or mineral kingdom, is transient, impermanent. Even the outer senses discern that the planet Earth is involved in a process of pulverisation and will at some future time disintegrate into dust. We have spoken of how the Earth-body will be cast off by the Spirit of the Earth, as the human body is cast off by the individual human Spirit. What will remain as the highest substance of the Earth when its goal has been reached? The Christ Impulse was present on the Earth, so to say as "spiritual Substance." That Impulse endures and will be received into men during the course of Earth-evolution. But how does It live on? When the Christ Impulse was upon the Earth for three years, It had no physical body, no ether-body, no astral body of Its own, but was enveloped in the three sheaths of Jesus of Nazareth. When the goal has been reached, the Earth, like man, will be a fully developed being, a meet and fitting vehicle for the Christ Impulse.

But from whence are the three sheaths of the Christ Impulse derived? From forces that can be unfolded only on the Earth. Beginning with the Mystery of Golgotha, whatever has unfolded on the Earth since the Fourth Post-Atlantean period as the power of wonder, whatever comes to life in us as **wonder** — passes, finally, to the Christ, weaving the **Astral Body** of the Christ Impulse. **Love or Compassion** in the souls of men weaves the **Ether-Body** of the Christ Impulse; and the **power of conscience** which from the time of the Mystery of Golgotha until the goal of the Earth is attained, lives in and inspires the souls of men, weaves the **Physical Body** — or what corresponds with the physical body — for the Christ Impulse. (See also: *Christ and the Twentieth Century* (25.1.12). Published in the volume entitled: *Turning Points of Spiritual History*.)

The true meaning of words from the Gospel can only now be discerned: "Whatsoever ye have done to one of the least of these My Brethren, ye have done it unto Me." (Matt. 25. 40). The forces streaming from man to man are the units integrating the Ether-Body of Christ: love, or compassion, weaves the Ether-Body of Christ. Thus when the goal of Earth-evolution is attained, He will be enveloped in the threefold vesture woven from the powers that have lived in men — and which, when the limitations of the " I," have been transcended, become the sheaths of Christ.

And now think of how men live in communion with Christ. From the time of the Mystery of Golgotha to the attainment of the goal of Earth-evolution, man grows more perfect in that he develops to the stature that is within his reach as a being endowed with the power of the " I." But men are united with the Christ Who has come among them, in that they transcend their own " I " — and through wonder, build the Astral Body of Christ. Christ does not build His own Astral Body, but in the wonder that arises in their souls, men share in the forming of the Astral Body of Christ. His Ether-Body will be fashioned through the compassion and love flowing from man to man; and His "physical body" through the power of conscience unfolding in human beings. Whatever wrongs are committed in these three realms deprive the Christ of the possibility of full development on the Earth — that is to say, Earth-evolution is left imperfect. Those who go about the Earth with indifference and unconcern, who have no urge to understand what the Earth can reveal to them, deprive the Astral Body of Christ of the possibility of full development; those who live without unfolding compassion and love, hinder the Ether-Body of Christ from full development; and those who lack conscience hinder the development of what corresponds with the Physical Body of Christ ... but this means that the Earth cannot reach the goal of its evolution.

The principle of Egotism has to be overcome in Earth-evolution. The Christ Impulse penetrates more and more deeply into the life and culture of humanity and the conviction that this Impulse has lived its way into mankind, free from every trace of denominationalism — as, for example, in the paintings of Raphael, this conviction will bear its fruit. How Christ may truly be portrayed is a problem still to be solved. Men on Earth

will have to be greatly enriched in their life of feeling if, after the many attempts made through the centuries, another is to succeed to some slight extent in expressing what the Christ is as the super-sensible Impulse living on through Earth-evolution. The attempts made hitherto do not even suggest what form such a portrayal of Christ should take. For it would have to express how the enveloping sheaths woven of the forces of wonder, compassion and conscience are gradually made manifest. The countenance of Christ must be so vital and living that it is an expression of the victory won over the sensory, desire-nature in men of Earth — victory achieved through the very forces which have spiritualised the countenance. There must be sublime power in this countenance. The painter or sculptor will have to express in the unusual form of the chin and mouth, the power of conscience unfolded to its highest degree. The mouth must convey the impression that it is not there for the purpose of taking food but to give utterance to whatever moral strength and power of conscience has been cultivated by men through the ages; the very structure of the bones around the teeth in the lower jaw will seem to form themselves into a mouth. All this will have to be expressed in the countenance. The form of the lower part of the face will have to express a power whose outstreaming rays seem to shatter the rest of the way that certain other forces are vanquished. With a mouth like this, it will be impossible to give the Christ Figure a bodily form similar to that possessed by the physical human being today. On the other hand, all the power of compassion will flow out of His eyes — the power that eyes alone can contain — not in order to receive impressions but to bear the very soul into the joys and sufferings of others. His brow will give no suggestion of thought based upon earthly sense-impressions. It will be a brow conspicuously prominent above the eyes, arching over that part of the brain; it will not be a "thinker's" brow which merely works upon material already there. Wonder will be made manifest in this projecting brow which curves gently backwards over the head, expressing wonder and marvel at the mysteries of the world. It will be a head such as is nowhere to be found in physical humanity.

Every true representation of the Christ must be a portrayal of the Ideal embodied in Him. When man reaches out towards this highest Ideal and strives through Spiritual Science to represent it in Art, this feeling will arise in greater and greater strength: — If you would portray the Christ, you must not look at what is actually there in the world, but you must let your whole being be quickened and pervaded by all that flows from contemplation of the spiritual evolution of the world, inspired by the three great impulses of Wonder, Compassion and Conscience.

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