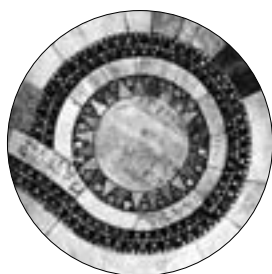


pentagram



'And I, behold, I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar; and bronze walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its princes, its priests, and the people of the land.'

This is what the prophet Jeremiah writes about his city. His city is Jerusalem, but it is also an ideal place, not made by hands; a city of God, a fortified place where all, who truly seek illumination, can come into free and unimpeded contact with the higher field of the spirit. In this issue, the pentagram examines the outer as well as the inner aspects of the ideal city.

The 'Secret words that Jesus spoke to Didymus Thomas' are well-liked by seeking readers because they are profound and free from dogma and from rules. On page 20, the reader will find a discourse about context and origin of the gospel, and a *logion* about the beginning and the end of man.

Even further back in time, but nevertheless very topical to us, are probably *The Golden Verses of Pythagoras*. The philosopher Pythagoras advises us, first of all, to strive for purity of the soul. By the way, this would develop automatically, if we would only take the universe as our guideline, because order and harmony rule in it and everything develops by a natural process with its own speed and rhythm.

This issue of the **pentagram** ends with a book review of *The Gnosis in Present-Day Manifestation*. In it, J. van Rijk-enborgh describes the genesis of the field of the Spiritual School, a spiritual field, in which a seeking person can find protection as well as development.

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Cover: Throughout time, the ideal form of the ideal city was the circle, which we may imagine in an abstract way as this floor mosaic of the renowned *marmorari* (marble artists) in 12th-century Rome



THE IDEAL CITY

a bird's eye view of the ideal city-state



During the past centuries, cities have often been reviled. They were dirty, unhealthy places, where people lived in poverty and misery. If you had money, you lived in the countryside. The first cities developed on crossroads of trade routes or on the passable banks of major rivers. In times of prosperity, these places attracted all kinds of strangers, who often contributed to the city's character. These same strangers were often dealt ugly blows in times of adversity, and were used as scapegoats.

The ancients had different examples of what an ideal city should look like. There was the legendary Atlantis, the model that may perhaps have existed on paper only, but also Athens and Alexandria have served as models for a long time. The Greek word 'polis' meant more than merely a collection of houses and public buildings; it also referred to the fields around the city, where the food for the city was grown. Many Greek cities established colonies around the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. These colonies referred to their 'mother city' as metropolis. The early Christians did not have a very concrete image of an ideal city, at least not on earth. They had a vision of the heavenly Jerusalem that you could already experience during your life by practising soul properties like faith, cheerfulness and love. Not until later did stories about ideal countries and cities crop up again.

THE THREE PERIODS During the Middle Ages, it was assumed, on the basis of a number of prophetic words, that Christ would return to the earth, preceding a millennium of peace. It would be a period of peace, prosperity and justice; and in the Apocalypse of John, he sees a 'heavenly city' descending. The teachings concerning the kingdom of peace are sometimes called chiliasm. Joachim di Fiore (1145-1202) gave a new direction to the idea of the millennium. After years of study, he had become convinced that the Bible contained a

hidden message. He used 'the book' not only as a source for moral or dogmatic discussions, but also as a way of understanding and predicting historical developments. He found as it were a code for deciphering the events and actions of people from the Bible. Thus he was able to recognise a pattern and a meaning in history. In his analysis of the Bible, he distinguished a succession of three periods:

1. the period of the Father or of life under the yoke;
2. the period of the Son or of the gospel, the life under the grace;
3. the period of the Holy Spirit, the life in freedom.

This third period still had to begin. It would relate to the two preceding ones as the light of the day to the light of the stars and the dawn, as high summer to winter and spring. It would be 'the Sabbath' for man; the world would be one great community, the 'kingdom of the holy ones' that would last for a thousand years.

Joachim di Fiore's influence has been considerable and the idea of the three successive periods has often been used. After him, many 'philosophers of history' have considered world history a development in three periods. We encounter it in the German philosophy of Lessing, Schelling and Fichte. The French philosopher Auguste Comte (1798-1857) saw history as an ascent from the theological via the metaphysical to the scientific (and positivistic) stage. Karl Marx described the development

Thomas More's intention was to show that a society in Christ should even surpass the freedom of Utopia

from primitive communism via class society to, ultimately, communism.

THOMAS MORE: UTOPIA The first 'more modern' vision of an ideal city was written by Thomas More, counsellor to the English king Henry VIII. In the year 1516, he wrote a 110-page book called *Utopia*. According to contemporary fashion, he modelled it as a report of a journey.

At the time, reports of journeys of discovery were quite popular and More wrote his story as a kind of parody. *Utopia* offered practical solutions to all kinds of problems that people in England and the rest of Europe encountered.

More was a devout man, but also very ecclesiastic. He resisted too radical reforms. It is, therefore, clear that he was against all kinds of habits that were common in *Utopia*: euthanasia, the marriage of priests, divorce by mutual consent, religious tolerance...

In More's *Utopia*, all of them appeared, while they were the very matters which he resisted all his life. It was his intention to show that a truly Christian society should try to surpass *Utopia*. *Utopia* was far from an ideal state. For instance, the social control in the city was so strict that modern readers would be reminded of Orwell's 1984.

Important sources for the description of an ideal city or state can be found in the Bible as well as in classical literature. Paradise and the Elysian fields were always ideal places. An

ideal city can be found in the description of the 'heavenly Jerusalem', which would appear when the millennium of peace would begin. This kingdom would begin with the second coming of Christ, which was believed to be imminent.

THE CITY OF HERMES In the twelfth and thirteenth century, when prosperity in Western Europe increased, people began to expand cities systematically for the first time since antiquity. New cities were built according to rigid schemes. They were often meant to protect strategic places and were designed as fortified army camps. It was also logical that people began to think about an ideal city.

By the end of the sixteenth century, visions of the future also appeared that had a more concrete purpose. There were groups that wanted to reconcile Protestants and Catholics. Should it not be possible for Christians to live in peace with each other? It became a utopia, to which people would often refer during the centuries to come.

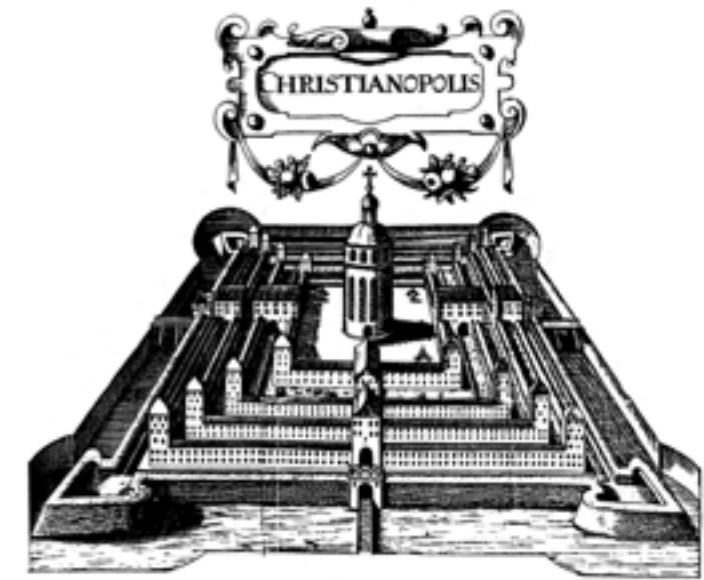
On the very crossroads of this thinking, we find the Hermetic writings. These manuscripts, written in Greek and discovered after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, were assumed to be stemming from Moses' time, approximately 1200 years BC. They purportedly were written by Hermes Trismegistus. The writings offered, among other things, an opportunity to trace the diversity of observed phenomena back to one source: God. One of the most important

authors and philosophers, who was influenced by the Hermetic writings, was Giordano Bruno (1548-1600). He broke through to the universal knowledge that there were both an infinite universe and countless worlds, and he was one of the first who said that Christianity was based on Egyptian sources, and had adopted symbols and interpretations from ancient Egypt.

This is why he was burnt at the stake on the Campo di Fiore in Rome in 1600.

Bruno and others also concluded from Chaldaean sources that Hermes had founded a special city in eastern Egypt. It was 12 miles long and within its centre was a palace with four gates. At the eastern gate, the striking image of an eagle watched, in the west a bull, in the south a lion and in the north a watchdog. No one was able to enter the city without their permission. He also planted an orchard and within its centre, a mighty tree that bore all fruits. A lighthouse crowned the palace, which every day of the week showed another colour, until the city was illuminated by the first colour again on the seventh day.

Around the waters that surrounded the city, statues were placed which, by their mere excellence, made the inhabitants virtuous and protected them from any baseness and disasters. The name of the city was Adocentyn. Adocentyn left its marks in all kinds of writings about ideal states and cities like, for instance, in the description of *The City of the Sun* by Tommaso Campanella.



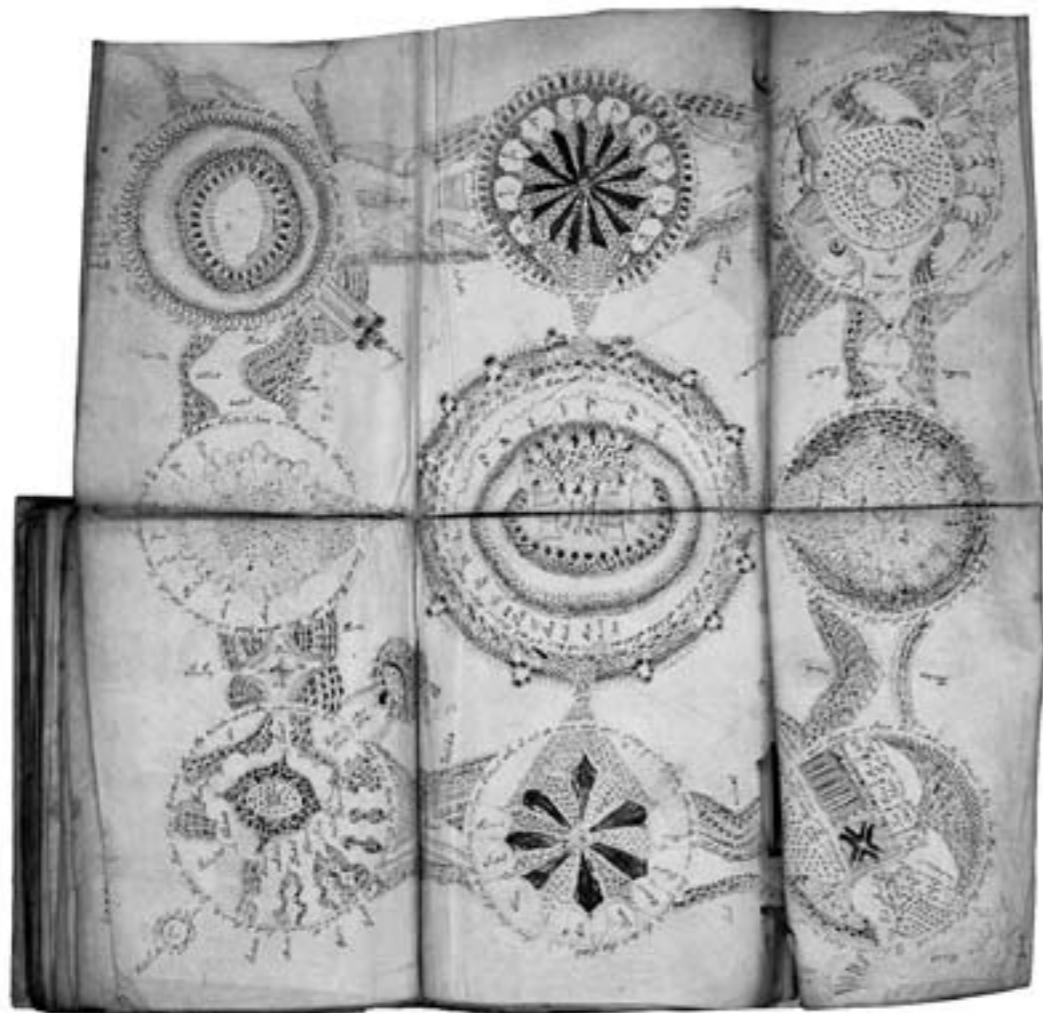
THE CITY OF THE SUN Tommaso Campanella, just as his friend Giordano Bruno, had entered the order of the Dominicans at a young age. In 1592, he was taken prisoner for the same kind of heresies as Bruno and for years, he was imprisoned in Rome. However, he escaped Bruno's fiery fate; in 1595, he was released.

Three years later, he was arrested again, because he had tried to organise a revolt against the Spaniards. The prediction that a new era would begin in 1600 played an important role in the cause of this revolt. According to tradition, Campanella, a large, sturdy man, must have had significant authority in his environment. Another element in his predictions was that the sun would come closer to the earth. The revolt failed and this time, Campanella was turned over to the inquisition, which cruelly tortured him for a long period of time.

In 1601, he was finally moved to a prison where he was allowed to read and write. There he wrote, among other things, *Città del Sole*. The original Italian version was not published during his life; in 1623, however, a Latin version appeared in Germany. It was not until 1626 that Campanella was released on parole; he died in France in 1639.

Similar to More and other authors who wrote about an ideal state or city, Campanella was confronted with an insurmountable problem. Everything would go well in a state as long as wise men ruled it, but how would they be able to recognise these wise men? Or, once they had discovered them, how could they make

The famous Voynich manuscript, written in an unknown alphabet and stemming from an unknown time, is attributed to Edward Keller, Cornelis Drebbel as well as to Francis Bacon. Others say that it stems from the environment of the Cathars. According to researchers, the picture shows a sketch of Bacon's *Nova Atlantis*.



them assume control of the government? The problem seemed insoluble. Authors sidestepped the answer to this question by describing their ideal state as if it already existed. The way in which it had once been created, remained veiled in mystery. Campanella, too, presented his description as a travel story. This time it was a seaman from Genoa, who sailed with Columbus and told his story to a knight hospitaller. 'The City of the Sun was situated on a hill, in the middle of a huge plain, and was divided into seven circular parts, named after the seven planets. Each part was separated from the rest by a wall. Four roads crossed the city, starting at the four outer gates and running to the four

quarters. They ran to the city centre. There, in the centre, on the top of the hill, stood a large temple. It was round and its large, domed roof was supported by huge pillars. Maps of heaven and earth were lying on the altar in the temple. Seven lamps were also hanging in the temple, named after the seven planets: Mercury, Venus, Moon, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. These lamps were burning continuously. All kinds of statues were standing on the walls of the city, both on the outside as well as on the inside. On the outermost wall stood statues of, amongst others, Moses, Osiris, Jupiter, Mercury and Mohammed. A lot of space was devoted to Christ and the twelve disciples.'

In *The New Atlantis*, Francis Bacon wanted 'to bring knowledge of the secret motions of things, and to enlarge bounds to the effecting of all things possible'

The influence of astrology on the course of events in the City of the Sun was remarkably large. Campanella used this knowledge to provide a solid foundation for the political and social development of his utopia. This also made it possible for his benevolent and right-minded rulers to use their wisdom for the benefit of the citizens. These rulers formed a hierarchy. At its top was 'the Sun', an example of the prince-philosopher, for which the utopists were looking. The former was expected to be omniscient. Under him worked three main magistrates: Power, Wisdom and Love, or Pon, Sin and Mor.

Pon (power) was responsible for military matters and the foreign policy of the city. Sin (wisdom) was responsible for the sciences, culture and education. His subordinates were, amongst others: the astrologer, the cosmographer, the politician, the physician and the moralist. Mor (love) was responsible for procreation, upbringing, medicine, botany, harvesting and meals. In Campanella's way of thinking, they formed the three main principles of being. Their opposites were three negative principles: tyranny, fallacy and hypocrisy. There was no room for them in the City of the Sun.

CHRISTIANOPOLIS In practice, ideals are usually unattainable. This was particularly true in the seventeenth century when, due to the many religious wars, tolerance proved to be scarce and ideal states in which people felt

very strongly about tolerance, had no chance. The book *Christianopolis* by Johann Valentin Andreae describes such a tolerant state. It was published in 1619, a year after the war broke out that was to last thirty years. French Catholic and Swedish Protestant armies travelled through Germany and fought each other in changing coalitions with various German states. It would prove to be the bloodiest religious war of that time. About a third (!) of the German population of that time was killed during this war.

In 1627, another example of such a utopia was published, *The New Atlantis*, by Francis Bacon (1561-1626). In it, seamen of a ship appeared wanting to cross from Peru to China and Japan. By misfortune, they were cast ashore on an unknown island. It proved to be the country of Bensalem. It was a Christian nation where social and religious tolerance ruled. Jews, too, were welcome. Different from Campanella, here the family was the cornerstone of society. It appeared that the inhabitants of Bensalem (as well as Bacon himself) compared the American continent with ancient Atlantis. The spiritual leadership of the country was in the hands of a council of wise men called 'Solomon's House'. Its aim was: 'the knowledge of causes and secret motions of things, and the enlarging of the bounds of human empire to the effecting of all things possible.' Bacon's aim was to expand human knowledge, not, as was done during the preceding centuries, as to what was 'good' or 'wrong', but as to nature.



THE IDEAL CITY

No utopia can be realised that does not put Universal Love in its centre

The sciences should liberate themselves from beliefs and superstition, and they should concentrate on improving human fate. During the remainder of the seventeenth and the eighteenth century, stories about utopia-like states still appeared, but they were rather meant as criticism of existing society. For instance, the satire, *Gulliver's Travels*, by Jonathan Swift (1726) was based on travel books. From the very first day, this work was immensely popular and was read 'from parliament to the playroom'.

WORKERS' PARADISES At the beginning of the nineteenth century, different idealists attempted to realise another utopia. Around 1820, Robert Owen (1771-1858) and the French Count de Saint-Simon (1760-1825) tried to improve the miserable living and working conditions of the labourers. They did so on the basis of a spiritual vision and stated that 'light and air' are indispensable for a healthy and happy life. In and around the revolutionary year 1848, Louis Blanc (1811-1882) tried out 'national workshops', where the state was to offer work to the unemployed.

In *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) strongly resisted the abovementioned attempts to establish 'workers' paradises'. They called it 'critical-utopian socialism' and because of this, for many, the concept of 'utopian' acquired a negative connotation. Marx and Engels wanted to give an accurate 'route description' of the way to their 'ideal society'. In this context, revolution was unavoidable and would only signify the beginning of a great change.

In different places in the world, the realisation of the ideal communist society has been attempted through violence, but time and again it has been shown that it was, ultimately, not possible to realise utopias. Many of these attempts degenerated into dictatorships, which disappeared one after another. It seems that we have to look for their realisation on quite another level ☺

This contribution is based on the article *De ideale stad in het ideale land* (The ideal city in the ideal country), Passage 7, May 2005.

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the way to safety, food, health and education

Since olden times, people have been longing to live together in peace and happiness. When we think about the societies and cities of the past, we see that people believed that monumental buildings, erected for the gods (and for the rulers) would bring guaranteed happiness for the people. Daily life developed in areas where cities had been founded around these monuments, and where they hoped that ideally, the divine, the gods, would manifest themselves.

We can imagine that throughout history, a great deal has been thought about the concept of 'the ideal city' and that many projections have been made. Sometimes this was done through abstract concepts, sometimes by active attempts, taking all aspects of life into account. Sometimes philosophers and thinkers worked only architectonically. Many people have diligently occupied themselves with 'the organisation of happiness', which we may, after all, call the principle of the ideal city. The mere words 'ideal city' demonstrate a longing for perfection, for wholeness, for which people have always been striving. We see around us how they have tried to consolidate this wholeness, sometimes real, sometimes imaginary, in a social organisation with justice, peace, freedom and love as its point of departure.

THE MODERN PROTOTYPES: COMMUNISM AND CAPITALISM From Akhenaten to Le Corbusier and from Plato to Wijdeveld (the architect of Renova), thinkers have suggested that the 'ideal city' could become reality on the basis of simple concepts. Our modern society is the final expression of a number of these projects. Lofty human values underlie them, which sometimes return in the motto of certain

countries like that of France: 'Freedom, Equality, Brotherhood'. Two main streams of the twentieth century, communism and capitalism, which largely determined the organisation of our modern society, were born from the idea of finding ultimate happiness. We have to draw the conclusion that neither has been successful.

The communist model says: 'The happiness of the group will be reflected by each individual, while each individual is wholly subservient to the goal', but we have seen that this philosophy of collectivity and sharing of all possessions resulted in the death of hundreds of millions of people. And the capitalist counterpart states: 'Acquiring power, possessions and means of production contributes to individual happiness. If the individual is happy, society will consequently also be so.'

We cannot yet wholly take stock, but there are enough signs (colonisation, the arms race, pollution of the environment, lack of respect for the laws of life on earth, excessive exploitation of natural resources, breaking up of the family, inner-city violence, credit crisis...) to be able to speak of a disastrous result.

Yet, both systems stem from the same longing: the striving for happiness and freedom although, ultimately, both resulted in the opposite of their primary goal, namely in the use



The ideal city-state is a social organisation with justice, peace, freedom, wisdom and love as its points of departure

of force. In one case by a state that imposed its laws in a dictatorial way, in the other by the economic market that imposed its laws by creating needs, resulting in the ‘dehumanisation’ of the human being. This is why a former president of the French Republic said: ‘I am convinced that liberalism is destined to experience the same failure as communism and that it will lead to the same excesses. Both are excesses of the human mind.’

We can imagine that the collective subconscious strongly resists this. There are people who withdraw in virtual ‘cities’: they create ‘ideal’ living conditions through drugs, information networks, ‘second life’ or through astral travel. In this way, they hope to satisfy

the longing for happiness that is continuously nagging as an eternal homesickness and that is interpreted as: living happily in a world without the use of force.

THE FOUR FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN PROBLEMS
In the meantime, we will have become aware that there is a difference between our longing for ‘the one true life’ and the world in which we live. This is why nowadays everyone agrees that a profound change is necessary. But what would be the characteristics of this change? Should we change institutions, laws, society? For a long time humanity has, in its striving for perfection, believed that ‘progress’ would be a logical movement to ‘ever better’, to ever

more, ultimately leading to the perfect human being in a happy and peaceful world. However, when we consider the attempts of culture, philosophy or religion of the last 6500 years, we can only admit that the long-expected stage of the perfect human being will still have to wait for quite some time. Does so-called ‘developed’ human civilisation not show an alarming number of egoistic, unconscious, strange, violent, complicated or irresponsible people? Almost systematically, humanity always seems to fall victim to new problems, which prevent it from realising its ideals. Below, we would like to present a broad outline of these seemingly inevitable pitfalls.

We begin by analysing the problems of the cities of antiquity and the Middle Ages. They were confronted with four great difficulties. The rulers of the cities and countries had to make treaties with other states, cities and rulers, while reinforcing their cities against raids. They had to take measures against famines, like filling the granaries and stimulating trade.

The ideal city, by Fra Carnevale, around 1480. The illustration served as a model of sculpting and architecture for a caring city government. A city, building in this way, showed that it took the well-being of its citizens to heart. ©Walters Art Museum, Baltimore

They knew small as well as large health problems and had to control plague, cholera and other epidemics as well as possible. They also had to occupy themselves with the education and training of new generations, so that they would in the future be able to safeguard the prosperity of the city-state and its citizens. Therefore, the points of departure were:

1. guaranteeing safety
2. proper management of resources
3. safeguarding the health situation
4. guaranteeing a functional system of education and training

Are the problems in developing countries in 2010 very different? Let us look at a number of problems, with which African states are



THE IDEAL CITY

the city as projection of human development

confronted. They have to find a way to end armed conflicts between tribes and nations, which cause thousands of casualties. They must be self-sufficient with regard to their primary vital needs and develop a better-equipped agriculture. There is a never-ending struggle against the HIV virus and AIDS. The quality of water and its accessibility as well as the infrastructure of these countries should be improved. Reading and writing are of great importance and the children are, generally speaking, very inquisitive, but there is a great lack of education; schools must be set up and teachers must be trained.

We therefore still encounter the four pillars: safety, management of resources, health, education. We might now easily be tempted to conclude that these countries are still 'developing' and that so-called 'developed' countries do not have these problems. If this were correct, modern countries would, therefore, not have to spend much financial and human energy on these aspects. However, the situation is rather grim.

Worldwide, the developed countries are responsible for seventy percent of all military expenses (the whole of Africa 2.5 percent). North America and Europe are the largest energy consumers. North America has the same energy consumption as the whole of Asia, with 8.6 times fewer inhabitants.

Public expenditure on health care per inhabitant (expressed in US dollars) was in 2003:

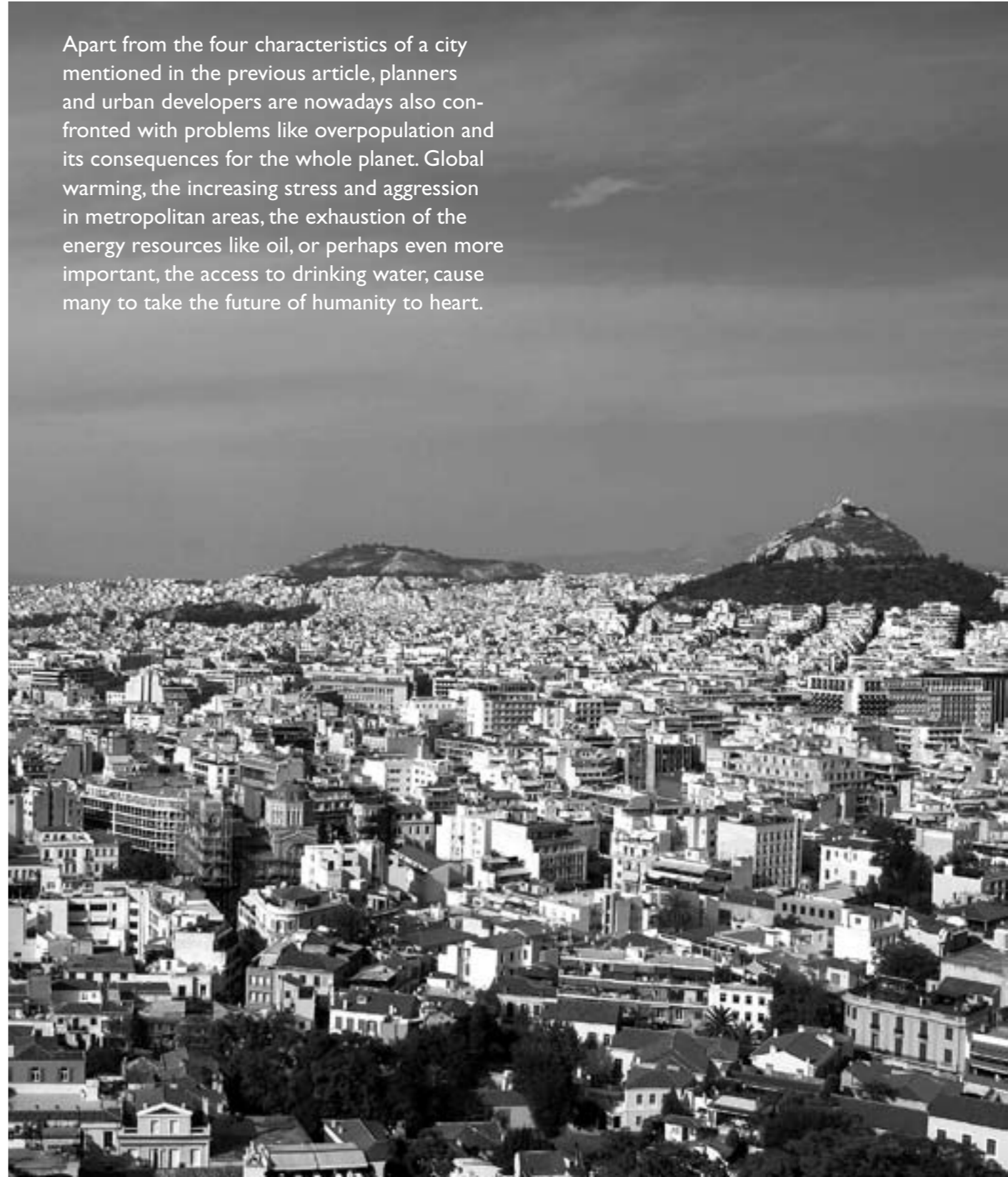
Germany:	2506
France:	2273
United States	2548
Norway:	4167
Afghanistan:	4
Bangladesh:	4
Burundi:	4
Democratic Republic Congo:	4

Education and training belong to the top expenditures of European countries (for instance, France: 60 billion euro in 2006, the equivalent of 15% of the total national budget).

Therefore, our conclusion is: the more developed a country is, the more it spends in the fields of military security, use of resources, health and education.

The four fundamental problems still prove to be the same, regardless of place, era or system of government. However, the developed countries often obscure these problems more or less successfully by investments of billions of unsecured dollars. Also in the 21st century, security, management of resources, health and education are still the four major aspects of worry in the world. An environment of perfect happiness proves to be an unattainable goal, yet people continue striving for it – because they cannot do otherwise ✪

Apart from the four characteristics of a city mentioned in the previous article, planners and urban developers are nowadays also confronted with problems like overpopulation and its consequences for the whole planet. Global warming, the increasing stress and aggression in metropolitan areas, the exhaustion of the energy resources like oil, or perhaps even more important, the access to drinking water, cause many to take the future of humanity to heart.



Salines Royales is a small part of an ideal industrial city, constructed near the saltworks at Arc-et-Senans in the east of France. From 1775, the buildings were constructed in four years time by Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, an architect-utopist, who wanted to build a commune for the labourers. There, the workers' families would be able to live in a closed circle and would be protected 'from the excesses and the desires that shorten the days of those, who had to live amidst the temptations.'



With all our energy, we chase after imagined, perfect happiness that, however, escapes us time and again

A part from the four characteristics of a city mentioned in the previous article, planners and urban developers are nowadays also confronted with problems like overpopulation and its consequences for the whole planet. Global warming, the increasing stress and aggression in metropolitan areas, the exhaustion of the energy resources like oil, or perhaps even more important, the access to drinking water, cause many to take the future of humanity to heart.

According to different polls taken during the first decade of the twenty-first century, eighty percent of people in the West think that global warming is one of the most serious dangers threatening the earth, closely followed by the problem of overpopulation. It took humanity millions of years to reach (in 1800) the number of one billion inhabitants of the earth; for the second billion only 130 years were needed; and then it took only 45 years to reach (in 1975) the number of 4 billion people. Now, in 2010, we have 6.5 billion people, and according to the Declaration of Human Rights, all of us have equal rights. According to the UN Millennium Development Goals, all of us have equal rights of access to the same natural resources.

Were all inhabitants of the planet to use the same energy as an inhabitant of a first-world country, the global energy consumption would be five times as large as it is today and in 2050, when we will perhaps have 9 billion inhabitants, this would be eight times as large.

Within the United Nations and international research institutions, researchers often wonder what the consequences would be for this population growth. There are scientists who think that humanity will suffocate itself with such numbers. Others plead that birth control is necessary. And it is not unthinkable that, in the near future, humanity is heading for an epidemic or another catastrophe for humanity that will curb this excessive growth which threatens to spread over the planet like a cancer. We will reach the point when the human being will be the problem for himself.

An appeal is made to us to combine all our energy, our natural resources and our intellectual powers to safeguard the survival of humanity. Can we imagine that the fundamental problem is the (coincidental?) appearance of humanity itself on earth?

THE 'PRESERVATION OF THE I': CAUSE OF ALL PROBLEMS? If we take the four points of departure mentioned before, constituting the human problems (safety, management of resources, health, education), we will see that they have one element in common: the fear of losing the structures that maintain the status quo. The fear of losing our life, our possessions, our civilisation or of no longer being able to develop it and of losing our own privileged position... all of them aspects that hint at our transience, at the disappearance from space and time of everything that has ever been formed. This puts our finger on the sore spot. Try

to imagine a world without space or time, a world in which rising, shining, fading and death do not exist, a world without end, without finite natural resources, energy or life... The fundamental problem of humanity is its existence in space and time. In our hearts, we have made room for a human building plan: the I and the earthly personality. It proves to be a fundamentally fatal work of construction. And the great mistake – perhaps even the greatest treason – is that we assume that continuous progress is possible in it. With all our energy, we chase after imagined, perfect happiness that, however, escapes us time and again, until we have the courage to face the fact that the psycho-biological human being, as we know him and however cultivated he may become, will never attain perfection – this 'is not part of the deal'. To become perfect, we

have to begin with a perfect plan to start with. From its inception, it has been taken into account in the building plan of the human being that this appearance would be finite.

STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS = THE STATE OF THE CITY Throughout history, the cities have projected as it were human needs into time, because the environment in which people develop, interacts with the consciousness that wants to express itself. What we have in us, we build, we allow to develop as houses, buildings, social organisations, laws, culture, science, the arts, religion and politics. A city is a representation and a projection of the human consciousness. Therefore: 'The city is an image of what we are!' In other words: in order to find the ideal city, we should first find the perfect human being ☺

the prototype of the ideal city

As long as we live in time, we contribute to the solution of the problems of safety, natural resources, health, education and pollution wherever we can. This is demanded by our culture and our inner civilisation. However, in the essence of life that is eternal, in the domain of original humanity, the processes of life do not end, and self-realisation is nothing other than working for others.

We have seen that a human being and his environment are strongly interdependent. A human being cannot live without others; he is a social being and not a solitary individual. Consequently, interaction with others is essential, so that forms of society, like settlements, villages and cities, are indispensable. In this context, people sharpen each other's awareness and ultimately gain insight and consciousness. Our environment actually reflects our consciousness. This is why, when we build a city, the following questions crop up:

- Does the perfect human being exist?
- What properties does he have?
- Where can we find him?

In myths, legends and holy writings which have accompanied humanity throughout time, we find descriptions of man as a perfect being, sometimes represented by a magnificent flying dragon, sometimes by a hero or as the equal of the gods. In hermetic thinking, he is sometimes described as one with God, as an 'infinite sphere, with its centre everywhere and its circumference nowhere'.

Lao Zi described the human being as one with Dao: 'Dao is empty, and in its radiations and activities, it is inexhaustible.

I know not whose child it is. Ere the highest God was, it was.'

In the teachings of the Rosycross, he is represented as man-microcosm!

This original human being has existed since

time immemorial. He developed as a divine being in the spirit field. His source of life was the universal Light, and outside this field, he was active, wholly in accordance with the vibration of this Light. This environment might be considered the ideal city, a field of life that

naturally attunes itself to the laws of what is absolute and has the same vibration as the original energy. In whatever way we describe this field, such as Nirvana, the holy Jerusalem, the city of God or the Holy Spirit, it refers to the same superdimensional reality: the original field of life, in which immortal humanity lives and develops.

THE IDEAL CITY CANNOT BE CREATED – IT IS
The revivification of the original nucleus of the microcosm, in which the I-human being currently lives, is actually the only method of definitively overcoming the problems of humanity. It may be clear that as long as we are living in time, we will strive to solve the problems of safety, natural resources, health, educa-

tion and pollution. Our culture and our inner civilisation demand this and all of us will have to contribute to it wholeheartedly. However, the essence that is eternal, is not subjected to these problems, because in a world without space and time, in the fields of life of original humanity, the vital processes have no end; they always continue.

He who has been taken up into this field, will no longer have to struggle or exert himself to stay alive: there, everything and everyone has its perfect place in an unending development of life. When we learn to understand the vital laws of our restored small world, and we obey them, we contribute to achieving the ideal city. How is this possible? The microcosm, as emanation of the divine idea, possesses all



THE IDEAL CITY



A modern representation of a utopian city – would we have to miss the open sky above our heads in future?



divine attributes. The energy of the spiritual sun, which makes its life's household and its resources inexhaustible, vibrates in its nucleus. As a fully developed, eternal being, nothing will affect its wholeness. It is not subjected to the effects of time, while, moreover, it is part of a field of inexhaustible wisdom and knowledge.

In our metaphor, this small world is the archetype of the ideal city, because the environment in which a human being develops, adapts itself to the consciousness that wants to express itself. And with original humanity, it forms a pure unity with the great whole. In it, we find the perfect model of integration, in which all serve all.

CHRIST: A UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLE OF LIFE This is what pure, universal Christianity has brought to people. The modern Rosycross does not speak of a historical Christ, but of the new

practice of life, of living in and with the universal Christ energy, a power in which ideals are turned into an inner reality. And what the Gnostics call 'Christ' is the prototype of the perfect microcosm. Each person carries the Christ principle in him, the spiritual seed of the renewal of the microcosm. Therefore, every human being is able to turn his life into a path of reconstruction and to approach perfection. The inner Christ principle can only guide the human being to perfection, to the ideal city. Christ is the microcosmic human being par excellence. We may consider him the ideal city. In the Gospel of Luke as well as in that of Thomas, we read: 'The kingdom is within you and it is around you.'

CHRISTIANOPOLIS From all of this, it will not be difficult to understand the background against which the seventeenth-century Rosicrucians, through Johann Valentin Andreae,

The possibilities of the new era help us link the consciousness with the inner reality of the eternal life, with the ideal city

described the ideal city as 'Christianopolis'. This absolutely does not refer to a brotherly community in an earthly sense, for which the inhabitants were chosen depending on their moral standard of life, but rather to an everlasting, divine city, to be found on a spiritual and inner level. It is a city, a community and a society, in which the world of eternal life resounds.

All different mystery schools that have succeeded each other throughout history have formed such an inner, tranquil and harmonious field. In this field, men and women joined, who inwardly accomplished the alchemical process of the restoration of microcosmic life. In this way, they liberated themselves of space and time and entered the original kingdom of humanity.

THE THREE TYPES OF CITIES It is clear that when a group of men and women practise this life of change of the consciousness on the basis of the inner Christ principle, this will immediately have consequences in society. During a certain period of time, situations and circumstances will appear that will offer great opportunities to those who are sensitive to it, to see and walk the path ahead.

However, it is important to understand that these possibilities are only offered for that certain period of time and are not intended to improve or embellish our world. Although they may certainly work like a balm, their aim is to link our consciousness with the inner reality of the eternal life, with the ideal city. We can distinguish three types of cities: firstly, the time-spatial city, in which the four pillars of safety, management of resources, health and education are constructed time and again. Time and again, this 'city' disappears and time and again, it is rebuilt. It refers to a social development that is unable to hold onto any true perspective in the sense of the original life.

Next, there is a 'city' that appears briefly, when a mystery school undertakes an alchemical work of transfiguration, a spiritual school that shows the way to the restoration of the microcosm with the energies of the original life and that, consequently, has a certain effect on the world and society.

Throughout the ages, there have been different liberating communities and mystery schools. Seen geographically, they were established from China, the indo-Iranian region and Asia Minor to Bulgaria, Great Britain and the South of France. These communities always imparted a new impulse. In its wake, the liberating impulse always caused social changes, too. The ancient Egyptian society, the gnosis of Mani or the brotherhood of the Albigenses are but a few examples of what the development of a gnostic brotherhood in a country or on a continent is able to accomplish. Although traditional religious and political rulers fought these communities by fire and sword, we should not underestimate their influence. The consciousness of the average person who came into contact with them, was always stimulated to think and act for himself, and the longing for a free and liberating life was always strengthened in him.

And ultimately, there is the perfect, omnipresent city, which is to be found in eternity and where microcosmic humanity has its eternal abode. This city does not know space or time, but rather everlasting development in the fields of the new soul life, a perfect and omnipresent field of life that expresses itself as absolute love ☸

inner and outer christianity

During the fourth century, a tragedy occurred with great consequences for original Christianity. Since Constantine (280-337 AD), a great political game was played to separate the true inner experiencing of Christianity, which every human being can experience, from the official Roman religion, which was mainly used as an instrument of power. An important chapter in this tragedy was the selection of the so-called true scriptures of the church, which were initially called 'the new Roman testimonies', but which soon became 'The New Testament'. However, now the Gospel of Thomas has been found.

The Gospel of Thomas begins as follows: 'Whoever discovers the interpretation of these sayings will not taste death.'

Instead of seriously seeking the meaning of these words, they were ultimately dealt with as heretical, that is, far from the truth. How could this happen? And has an explanation ever been found for these words?

During the early years of Christianity, differences in interpretation between the various groups was not a problem, that is, until, during the second century, church father Irenaeus became restless. He stated that there could be one church only. In his view, only the members of that church were orthodox Christians who stuck to the true faith. Those whom he considered not to think 'straight', were the Gnostics, particularly Valentinus, Basilides, Montanus and Marcion.

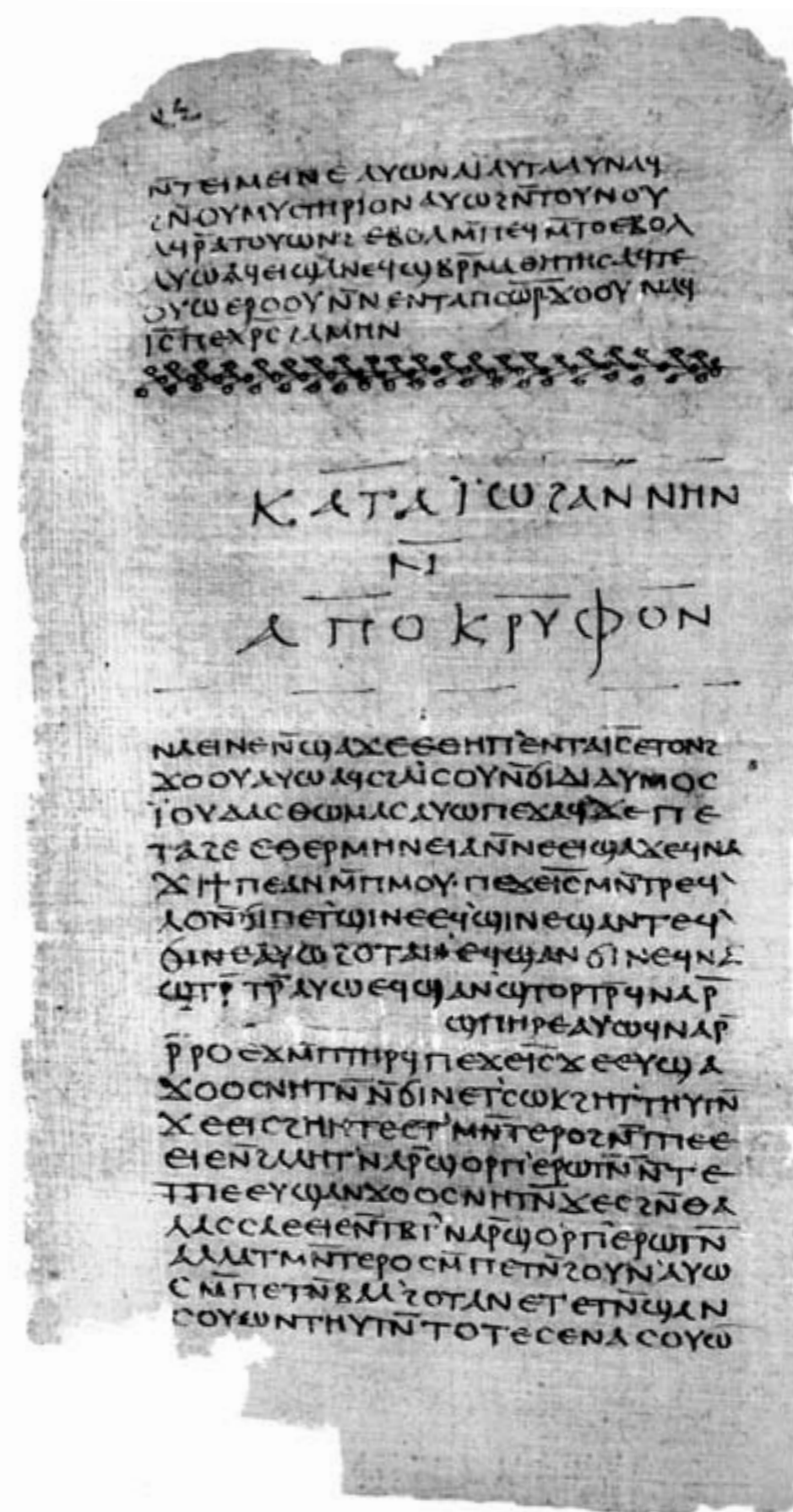
Irenaeus' ideas were gradually adopted widely, so that the church had become an institution by the end of the fourth century. Thus it had become possible to pursue a strict policy. Three radical measures were enforced:

- It was decided which books were holy and which were not. The church came with a canon, a collection of writings that determined once and for all which writings belonged to the Bible.
- A bishop was the head of the church.
- The teachings of the church determined

what people should believe. During successive councils or church assemblies, these were expanded and further specified.

The consequences are clear: even the discovery of about 35 gospels at Nag Hammadi in 1945 did not change an almost two-thousand-year-old canon overnight. In addition, it was discovered that the teachings of the church significantly deviated from the image of Jesus of Nazareth, which we find in these newly-found gospels. These documents describe teachings, according to which the original Christians of those days lived and worked, and which had already been known long before Irenaeus.

By the way, the image of Jesus of Nazareth that the church had at the time was certainly not unequivocal; it had not yet crystallised by a long shot. It was not until 451 AD, during the Council of Chalcedon, that the discussion was closed. For four and a half centuries, people had been discussing the question: How are the divine and the human nature combined in Jesus? Athanasius succinctly formulated it in his Confession: 'And although He is God and man, yet he is not two, but one Christ.' If we compare this with the part about Jesus from the 'apostolicum', which formulated the content of the faith, the image is almost complete: Jesus Christ is the only-begotten son. This confirmed the classical image: God has only one son, who was born as Godman on earth.



'WHOEVER DISCOVERS THE INTERPRETATION OF THESE SAYINGS WILL NOT TASTE DEATH'

Page from the Nag Hammadi codex. The capitals represent the end of the Apocryphon of John, which is included in this way. Below it 'The secret words of Didymus Thomas' begin.



'I am the Light that is over all things. I am all. Split a piece of wood; I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there'

from Psalm 2: 'Today I have begotten you.' This means that they, anyway, situated the divine birth during Jesus' life and not as having occurred at his birth.

This song of praise also speaks of the divine birth which a person may experience during his life. It would be a narrow interpretation to let this word refer to Jesus only. Something similar has happened to the words from the Gospel of John: the concept 'only-begotten' has been explained in the sense of a father-god, who has only one son, while the literal text means 'born from one', that is, born from the one, invisible, unknowable energy, as Light, as manifestation. 'Born of God.'

This verse was probably added later, because in two other verses, John describes the divine birth in the human being: 'But to all who received him, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.'

LUKE AND MATTHEW At first sight, the Gospels of Luke and Matthew emphasise the physical birth of Jesus. Particularly in the birth story of Luke, it has been so strongly externalised that it is usually only interpreted outwardly. Matthew opens with a genealogy of Jesus that immediately emphasises his human aspect: '... Jesus Christ, the son of David.' While Luke begins with: '... the son (as was supposed) of Joseph' and ends with '... the son of Adam, the son of God.' It may strike us that not only the

divine aspect of Jesus is mentioned, but above all the divine descent of man. Church history has had little eye for this aspect.

THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS Scientists still discuss dating of the Gospel of Thomas, but there are strong arguments in favour of an early dating of some parts at around the year 50 AD, while other parts stem from around 130 AD. Mark is the first official gospel (around 60 AD). Unlike the four gospels from the Bible, the Gospel of Thomas does not have a continuous story. It is a collection of sayings, in which the story of Jesus' life does not appear. It does not speak of the passion and the resurrection either. Consequently, the Gospel of Thomas is less restricted and less influenced by all kinds of interpretations.

JESUS IN THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS In the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus does not call himself a son of God. On the other hand, he guides his pupils, pointing out their divine descent: 'If they say to you: Where have you come from? say to them: We have come from the light, from the place where the light came into being by itself, established [itself], and appeared in their image. If they say to you: Is it you? say: We are its children, and we are the chosen of the living Father.' Here, the pupils are made conscious of the fact that they, too, are children of the living father. And in logion 108, Jesus even says: 'Whoever

drinks from my mouth will become like me...' When Jesus speaks about himself, he does so as follows in logion 77:

'I am the Light that is over all things. I am all. From me all came forth, and to me all attained. Split a piece of wood; I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there.'

These words particularly express the universal nature of the Gospel of Thomas, which is hardly present in the other gospels. Here we see a parallel with Daoism. When Chuang Zi told a pupil that Dao is omnipresent, the latter asked him: Can you be a bit clearer? Chuang Zi pointed to an ant, but the pupil did not understand. Next, he pointed at the weeds, and when he still did not understand, he pointed at a grain of sand. The Egyptian Gnosis knows the same idea, when Hermes says to Aesclepius: 'He who knows himself, knows the all.'

DISCOVERING THE BEGINNING What matters here is that the Gospel of Thomas offers an opportunity to see through all historical interpretations, so that a person will be able to recognise his divine descent again and will be able to live on the basis of what is eternal in him: 'Tell us, how will our end come? Jesus said: Have you found the beginning, then, that you are looking for the end? You see, the end will be where the beginning is. Congratulations to the one who stands at the beginning; that one will know the end and will not taste death.' ☸

THE GODMAN In the gnostic and the mystery religions from before our era, the concept of 'the divine human being' was a familiar phenomenon; it referred to the divine birth that occurs in a human being. This idea was recognised by original Christianity. When Jesus was baptised, the Gospel of Luke mentions that a voice from heaven resounded: 'You are my beloved Son; with You I am well pleased.' Some church fathers added the words

numbers, rules of life and competences

COMPETENCE-ORIENTED EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOL OF PYTHAGORAS AND PYTHAGOREAN INSIGHTS IN 2010

Among the sums, which future teachers currently have to be able to calculate, those of Pythagoras should certainly not be lacking. According to him, the ‘immortal gods’ from the world of the gods were actually numbers, forming the laws of the universe, indeed, even being the universe themselves.

With the Pythagorean expansion, the necessary arithmetic classes now mainly intended, it seems, to supply a tool to be able to go shopping, will then turn into a magical, sparkling, vibrating event whereby cosmic laws are recognized. Then each person himself is party to it and helps determine the result, if only by the quality of his or her radiation. Therefore, what will it become in the coming years: a plus or a minus?

Knowing everyone’s current crucial, breathtaking responsibility for the future fate of the whole earth, make the trials of ‘Harry Potter 7’ shrivel into entertaining children’s games in a sunny summer sandbox. Now it really is everything or nothing... it is impossible to escape it.

Nowadays, the educational sector reports that children are no longer able to do arithmetic or spell and by the way neither can their teachers! This is why they are required to meet higher standards.

As culprits for this lack of knowledge, the finger is pointed at the educational innovations of the last decades, with their emphasis on

learning competences. Instead of using the lessons for teaching basic knowledge of language, arithmetic and history, the time is used for learning to give presentations and practising discussion techniques. Unhindered by something banal like correct spelling, grammar, dates, long divisions and percentages, modern young people can cheerfully transmit information about anything, hurriedly collected from the Internet, to their classmates via the most modern, virtual technology. Nevertheless, the question as to whether the information is correct, remains unanswered.

Complaining about education is common to all times and cultures, because education itself is a concern of all times and cultures. From all over the world, we know stories and see images of children and older people being taught. What and how they learn exactly, and which ‘canons’ are compulsory, varies with time and region. People change, and so do education and the complaints about it. No problem, therefore, we might say.

SPIRITUAL SCHOOLS Yet, research shows that a type of education exists that actually never changes. It withdraws from any existing, government-imposed school curricula. It concerns the education of the mysteries of life. The teaching materials invariably contain the same themes, for instance, man as a microcosm, his relationship to the macrocosm, his origin, his immortal soul. This type of education is offered in spiritual schools, which have existed



Pythagoras teaching in his school. In the foreground Theano, his brilliant student, whom he later married

all over the world throughout the ages. Led by brotherhoods, ‘priests and priestesses’, associations, public or not, semi-public, secret, closed, for a few pupils or for more, but always appealing to the imagination of all seeking people. One such school was the School of Pythagoras.

PYTHAGORAS AND HIS SCHOOL Pythagoras (approx. 550–470 BC) was born around 550 BC on the Greek isle of Samos. His biographers say that at a young age, Pythagoras went to Egypt to study with the priests of Memphis and Thebes. In addition, he learned astronomy from the Chaldaeans, geometry from the Phoenicians and mystical rites from the Magi in Phoenicia. It is mentioned that he was initiated in different mystery schools. After his years of study, Pythagoras briefly returned to Samos, but due to all kinds of political problems on the island of his birth, he finally settled in Croton in southern Italy.

Here he founded his school, which would continue for 400 years.

This school consisted of two parts: a closed mystery school as well as a public school. There were also two types of pupils: the ‘auditors’ and the ‘followers’. The ‘auditors’ attended the public school for lessons in music theory and mathematics. The ‘followers’ were admitted to the mystery school. They lived in a closed community. Their education began with a number of years of silence. Their study contained, among other things, the teachings of reincarnation, numbers, gnosis, mathematics and music.

They were taught that man had a divine origin and should return to this divine origin. The ultimate goal of learning in the mystery school was achieved when the developing pupil was able to end the cycle of rebirth. The followers lived by the strict rules of life from *The Golden Verses of Pythagoras*. They followed, for example, a vegetarian diet. For the first

Numbers are essentially living energy formations, which as mathematical figures created and determined the living conditions in the macrocosm as well as the microcosm



FOTO © CALAINA GOODYEAR

time in history, women were also counted among the followers, amongst whom were Pythagoras' wife Theano and his three daughters.

PYTHAGORAS: NUMBERS FORM THE BASIS In the lessons, teaching numbers played a big role. Numbers formed the basis of Pythagorean

education. According to Pythagoras, the 'immortal gods', familiar from ancient stories and myths, were actually numbers. Numbers represented the laws of the universe and its creation. Among other things, the cabbala worked with these insights, too. Numbers were essentially living energy formations, the dif-

ferent possible orders of which, expressed as mathematical figures, created and determined the living conditions in the macrocosm as well as in the microcosm.

According to Pythagoras, the number 10 formed the basis of the whole of creation. The number 10 consists of the sum of the constituent parts of what Pythagoras called the 'Tetraktys' or the 'foursome'. $1+2+3+4 = 10$. The 'Tetraktys' was a holy symbol and contained the secret of continuous creation and renewal.

The ten points of the four levels of this holy symbol were explained by the Pythagoreans as follows:

1. The monad is the symbol of the unity, the state of being from before creation
2. The diad symbolises the first movement towards creation, the division of the monad into two polarities (in the Orient called yin-yang)
3. The triad symbolises the union of the two polarities by a mediating quality
4. The tetrad symbolises the true creation of the universe, represented in matter by the four elements fire, air, water and earth

The mentioned insights were taught under strict conditions to the 'followers' of Pythagoras' school only.

END OF THE SCHOOL OF PYTHAGORAS, BUT NOT OF ITS IDEAS The official authorities at the time of Pythagoras' school were, as was to be expected, not enthusiastic about his ideas. Teachings relative to people's inner divinity

Some quotes from The Golden Verses of Pythagoras, the most important writing from the School of Pythagoras, are still published.

Quote:

1. Rather choose to be stronger of soul than of body.
2. Be convinced that matters that cause much effort contribute more to virtue than pleasures.
3. Any passion of the soul is utterly hostile to its redemption.
4. It is difficult to walk many paths of life simultaneously.
5. It is necessary to choose a virtuous life. Habit will make this pleasant. Wealth is an unstable anchor; fame is even less stable; unstable are also the body, power and honour. For all of them are transient and powerless. What, then, are strong anchors? Caution, generosity, strength. They cannot be shaken by any storm. It is the Law of God that virtue is the only thing that is strong and that everything else has no value.

and the proper shaping of the whole of creation by eternal, living and vivifying, mathematical figures, were obviously on a collision course with the authorities, who wanted to keep humanity ignorant.

This is why the school in Croton was repeatedly attacked, and finally, 400 years after its foundation, it was burnt down. In addition, numerous followers of Pythagoras were murdered throughout the ages.

Yet, only people and buildings can be de-



The number one, as the origin, contains all other numbers within itself, without itself being contained by any of them. It brings forth all numbers, without itself being brought forth by any other number. All numbers are developed from the oneness, from the origin and root of all things. [...]

The number one signifies the unity of the soul with the spirit, with the Father, with the absolute, with the Logos, with the origin. [...]

When a human being returns to the unity, to what is one and indivisible, he will be placed before the number two. This number brings him who is linked with the unity into a new relationship with the primordial substance. This is why the number two is called 'the Mother' in the Hermetic Gnosis. The number three means the loving connection between the one, the absolute, and the primordial substance, between the Father and the Mother; that is, the conjunction of the two.

The number four manifests the fullness of conception. When an entity, which is linked with the Father, is brought into contact with the cosmic root substance, something is generated. Then the fullness of conception is manifested. The result is the number five, the new consciousness. [...]

Six is the number of justification. Through the power of the new consciousness, the candidate's whole state of being is justified and brought into harmony with the Logos.

This is why the number seven is the number of sanctification, and the perfect ascent into heaven follows in the number eight, the passage into the liberating life. [...]

In the number nine, the victory of the true Divine-human genesis is celebrated.

In this way, all the nine numbers are linked in a ninefold process of development.

Thus we are confronted again with the need of returning to the original unity, to the origin and root of all numbers. If we want to enter the whole process of the liberating life and return to the unity, we will have to start at the beginning, not abstractly, but concretely. We may find all these things, of which we are speaking, quite interesting; we may recognise their logic and we may find them very informative, but what is the use of understanding it, if we do not act accordingly? Therefore, not abstract talk, but concrete acts.

Jan van Rijckenborgh, *The Egyptian Arch-Gnosis and its Call in the Eternal Present*, part 2, chapter XXVI. Rozekruis Pers, Haarlem, 1987

Include Pythagoras' teachings in the curriculum of arithmetic; the children will do well by it

stroyed, not insights. For instance, for ages, Pythagoras' insights have influenced various neo-Platonic, Hermetic, cabbalistic and gnostic traditions. For example, Apollonius of Tyana, neo-Platonic philosopher from the first century AD, was reported to have said to the Persian king that he would like to become acquainted with 'the knowledge of your magi' to verify whether their knowledge was as far-reaching as he had been told. 'I myself am an adherent of the teachings of Pythagoras of Samos.' The most important work of this Pythagorean follower is *The Nuctemeron*.

In addition to this, our contemporary music would be unable to exist without Pythagoras' 'harmony of the spheres'. Pythagoras introduced, among other things, the theory of intervals: the octave, the fifth and the fourth. These insights were maintained in music up to and including Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750).

PYTHAGORAS AND COMPETENCE-ORIENTED EDUCATION What in the past was taught to noble people after they had sworn an oath to secrecy, can now be found openly on the Internet. For instance, the years of practising the proper mode of life by complying with the rules of life from Pythagoras' Golden Verses before being initiated into the laws of creation, is no longer relevant. These Internet revelations are called 'democratic and transparent', and with these concepts which everyone experiences as positive, the dangers of the increas-

ing number of ignorant sorcerer's apprentices were summarily brushed aside.

Perhaps we may intervene here in a positive sense, and advise all current ministries of education to embed the unstoppable publication of the secrets of the cosmos and its creatures in a regulated system of education. Therefore, if teaching arithmetic in educational institutions has to be changed, why not immediately include Pythagoras' teachings in the curriculum, too? And while we are at it, why should we not include Pythagoras' rules of life in study guides? In modern jargon, we then no longer call them 'rules of life', but 'competences' ♣

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ancient wisdom for a practical present

THE GOLDEN VERSES OF PYTHAGORAS



De oude wijsheid beeldt Pythagoras vaak zittend af, wijzend naar de hemel. De wijsgeer en wiskundige wordt in nauw verband gebracht met de muziek, die immers net als de hemellichamen in het universum door maat en getal wordt bepaald. Salzburger verzamelmanuscript M III 35/36

Pythagoras lived two and a half thousand years ago in Greece, in the colony currently known as Sicily. Often, Pythagoras is mentioned in the same breath with Hermes, Zarathustra and Plato, and he is counted among the greatest philosophers. From him stems the word philosophy: love of wisdom. In his view, a person should first of all strive for purity of the soul. This will automatically be the result, if he has respect for everything that lives and thinks about the universe, in which order and harmony rule. Myriads of developments take place there through natural growth and with their own rhythm and speed. In this majestic, macrocosmic whole, number, numeric values and relationships determine everything that appears.

There is a legend about Pythagoras that he could be in more than one place at the same time. Metaphorically, this certainly might still be said nowadays, because the influences of his philosophy are present everywhere: in philosophy, ethics, astronomy, music and mathematics. The combination of music and astronomy can be found in the expression ‘the music of the spheres’.

Shakespeare says about it in *The Merchant of Venice*:

‘Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold: There’s not the smallest orb which thou behold’st but in his motion like an angel sings, still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins. Such harmony is in immortal souls. But whilst this muddy vesture of decay doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.’

The Pythagoreans formed communities with certain rules of life, of which only a few external aspects have been passed down, albeit, taken out of context. According to Dicaearchus, Pythagoras taught that the soul is immortal; that everything that comes into being is reborn in the turning of the times and according to a certain cycle; that consequently,

nothing is wholly new and; that everything that is born alive is mutually related, because this is what they have in common: life.

Men and women joined the Pythagorean School on an equal footing. All possessions were communal and they lived in communities. Even discoveries in the field of music, mathematics or astrosophy were considered common property and were, in a mystical sense, attributed to Pythagoras, even after his death.

In the ethics of the Pythagoreans, the contemplative life was most important.

‘We are strangers in this world and the body is the tomb of the soul. Yet, we should not try to escape by suicide, because we are part and parcel of God. He is our keeper and if he does not command us to do so, we should not escape life. There are three types of people in this life, just as there are also three types of visitors of the Olympic Games. The lowest type is those who come to trade; the next type is those who participate in the competitions, but the highest are the spectators.

Therefore, the highest purification is unselfish wisdom and science, and the human being who devotes himself to it, that is, the true philosopher, will liberate himself most effectively from the wheel of birth.’

The Pythagoreans led a life of asceticism and abstinence. Respect for life was the central issue; they followed a vegetarian diet; they also abolished the sacrificing of animals to the gods. In this way, Pythagoras became the founder of the vegetarian way of life in Europe. Until the second half of the 19th century, someone, who abstained from meat and animal products, was called a Pythagorean; only later, the word vegetarian was introduced. www.stichting-pythagoras.nl

The word ‘theory’, the modern philosopher Bertrand Russell says, is originally an ‘orphic’ word, that is, a concept stemming from mystical-religious movements and teachings in antiquity that considered the soul a divine attribute, which is liberated from the body through a series of incarnations. This word may be interpreted as ‘passionate, sympathetic contemplation’. A ‘theory’ might lead to mathematical knowledge or deep insight. Thus the word ‘theory’ gradually acquired its current meaning via the Pythagoreans, but for all those, who were inspired by Pythagoras, it retained an element of ecstatic revelation. To all who grudgingly learned a little mathematics in school, this may seem strange. However, to those who have experienced anything of the ecstasy of ‘insight’, like for instance the sudden insight that mathematics sometimes grants, but certainly also insight into the path of liberation, will wholly recognise Pythagoras’ ideas.

Of Pythagoras’ rules of life, amongst other things, The Golden Verses of Pythagoras have been passed down, but the text is hard to find. This is why we would like to present a few fragments of this transmitted wisdom.

THE GOLDEN VERSES OF PYTHAGORAS

First worship the immortal gods, as they are established and ordained by the law. Reverence the oath, and next the heroes, full of goodness and light. [...] Honour likewise your parents, and those most nearly related to you. Of all the rest of mankind, make him your friend who distinguishes himself by his virtue. Always give ear to his mild exhortations, and take example from his virtuous and useful actions. Avoid as much as possible hating your friend for a slight fault. Power is a near neighbour to necessity. Know that all these things are as I have told you; and accustom yourself to overcome and vanquish these passions: First gluttony, sloth, sensuality, and anger. Do nothing evil, neither in the presence of others, nor privately; but above all things respect yourself. In the next place, observe justice in your actions and in your words. And accustom yourself not to behave yourself in any thing without rule, and without reason. But always make this reflection, that it is ordained by destiny that all men shall die, and that the goods of fortune are uncertain; and that as they may be acquired, so may they likewise be lost.

Concerning all the calamities that men suffer by divine fortune: support with patience your lot, be it what it may, and never repine at it, but endeavour what you can to remedy it.

And consider that fate does not send the greatest portion of these misfortunes to good men. There are among men many sorts of reasonings, good and bad; admire them not too easily, nor reject them. But if falsehoods be advanced, hear them with mildness, and arm yourself with patience. Observe well, on every occasion, what I am going to tell you: let no man either by his words, or by his deeds, ever seduce you, nor entice you to say or to do what is not profitable for yourself. Consult and deliberate before you act, that you may not commit foolish actions, for it is the part of a miserable man to speak and to act without reflection. But do that which will not afflict you afterwards, nor oblige you to repentance. Never do anything which you do not understand; but learn all you ought to know, and by that means you wilt lead a very pleasant life.

In no wise neglect the health of your body, but give it drink and meat in due measure, and also the exercise of which it has need.

Now by measure, I mean what will not incommode you.

Accustom yourself to a way of living that is neat and decent without luxury.

Avoid all things that will occasion envy. And be not prodigal out of season, like one who knows not what is decent and honourable.

Neither be covetous nor niggardly; a due meas-

ure is excellent in these things. Do only the things that cannot hurt you, and deliberate before you do them.

Never suffer sleep to close your eyelids, after your going to bed, till you have examined by your reason all your 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, you find that you have done amiss, reprimand yourself severely for it; and if you have done any good, rejoice. Practise thoroughly all these things; meditate on them well; you ought to love them with all your heart. It is they that will put you in the way of divine virtue.

I swear it by him who has transmitted into our souls the ‘Sacred Quaternion’, the source of nature, whose cause is eternal.

But never begin to set your hand to any work, till you have first prayed the gods to accomplish what you are going to begin.

When you have made this habit familiar to you, you will know the constitution of the immortal gods and of men. Even how far the different beings extend, and what contains and binds them together.

You shall likewise know that according to law, the nature of this universe is in all things alike, so that you shall not hope what you ought not to hope; and nothing in this world shall be hidden from you.

You will likewise know, that men draw upon themselves their own misfortunes voluntarily,

light with light, fire with fire

If we are to believe Goethe, man has been created from a dialogue: 'Man is the first creature whose existence is caused by a conversation between God and nature.' If we take what is said in countless places as being true, namely that nature is the manifestation of the divine, we may deduce from it that man, after all a being of this nature, was originally, very long ago, of divine descent.

and of their own free choice. Unhappy that they are! They neither see nor understand that their good is near them. Such is the fate that blinds mankind, and takes away his senses. Like huge cylinders they roll to and fro, and always oppressed with ills innumerable. For fatal strife, innate, pursues them everywhere, tossing them up and down; nor do they perceive it. Instead of provoking and stirring it up, they ought, by yielding, to avoid it.

Oh! Jupiter, our Father! If You would deliver men from all the evils that oppress them, show them of what demon they make use. But take courage; the race of man is divine. Sacred nature reveals to them the most hidden mysteries. If she impart to you her secrets, you will easily perform all the things which I have ordained you. And by the healing of your soul, you will deliver it from all evils, from all afflictions. But abstain from the meats, which we have forbidden in the purifications and in the deliverance of the soul. Make a just distinction of them, and examine all things well. Leaving yourself always to be guided and directed by the understanding that comes from above, and that ought to hold the reins. And when, after having divested yourself of your mortal body, you arrive at the most pure ether, you shall be a God, immortal, incorruptible, and death shall have no more dominion over you 🌟

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Sitting Pythagoras, painted in Raffael Urbino's *Scuola d'Atene (The School of Athens)* in the Stanza della Segnatura (Rome, around 1509)

However, his divine status becomes very topical and is brought very close to us in expressions like 'spark of the fire' or 'drop from the (divine) ocean' or even 'child of God'. So many honorary titles; for a moment, we taste the poetry – and pass on to the order of the day again, because it is too much honour, as this order of the day no longer shows much of the essence of this 'image and likeness'.

Any person who is not wholly blinded by conceit, experiences his limitations and his impotence to arm himself against the unexpected twists of fate. Instead, he creates a higher power, to which he can appeal, a god. Then he pours out his whole heart to this god who is subsequently worshipped with all honour and adoration which he is able to summon, in order finally, on this prepared ground, to be presented with his wish list. It is a somewhat simplified image of god; on the one hand, accepting a humble, subservient position; on the other, revolt and bitterness, if the desired help fails to come or works out altogether differently.

This context agrees with a prayer culture that has maintained a distorted image of god and man, similar to the way in which we consider a constellation: our consciousness sees the stars concerned in a plane, but their distance to our eyes differs by an order of magnitude that can sometimes hardly be grasped by numbers. In itself, nothing is wrong with this; we know that we are dealing with an optical distor-

tion and that we, for a more concrete image, can fall back on another frame of reference, like scientific instruments. With regard to the traditional ideas about the image of god, we cannot do so. However correct and profound concepts like the Lord may be, they mainly evoke images of awe, power, punishment and reward in our earthly consciousness. Even the redeeming 'God is love' is often reduced to conventional goodness. However, despite all of this, quite a lot of bona fide sources urge us to pray, and even to 'pray unceasingly' like, among others, Paracelsus or Master Eckhart. We find it abundantly recommended in many writings from the universal wisdom concerning the liberation of the soul.

'Unceasingly' is quite a remarkable qualification. This can never refer to the quoted ritual of lamentation-song of praise-supplication, or can it? If this were the case, we would easily satisfy this 'unceasingly', because almost every second of our life we have wishes, expectations and desires. What should our daily comings and goings then look like? Even if we permanently withdraw into the solitude, we are still confronted with a number of worldly needs, tasks and obligations, which will distract us from this praying. Therefore, this 'unceasingly' seems to be an impossible demand, unless such statements hide more than seems to be the case at first sight. A much deeper meaning is hidden behind the concept of 'praying'.

Note that, in the context of praying, the men-



tioned writings hardly ever speak of asking and giving, but rather of ‘moving’, of ‘elsewhere’ and ‘otherwise’, not so much physically, but rather concerning the consciousness, the soul or the spirit-soul: what matters is the inner human being. In *The Gospel of the Holy Twelve*, the apostles enter ‘the circle of palm trees’ – and Jesus comes to teach them. Hermes ‘meditates on the essential things’ – and encounters Pymander, his inner, eternal being. We are advised: Go into your room, and speak to the father-within-you. We are invited ‘to ascend the mountain’, ‘to lift up our heart’ and ‘to go into the upper room’, many favourite terms to describe the essence, the spirit of true prayer. If we then apply the ‘unceasingly’ to it, we leave our ordinary element and enter another dimension, a higher spiral, a state that is not to be found outside ourselves, but rather in our ‘room’. There we will find the personal point of contact with our true field of life, our ‘country of origin’, a divine world. The earthly personality with its I-consciousness does not partake of this field of life, but this personality is nevertheless the instrument for gaining a higher consciousness, implying the possibility of clearing the path to this other world. This higher consciousness, this new thinking, is still in an early stage of development in the majority of humanity. However, it is characterised by the fact that it surpasses the self-interest and the self-maintenance of the ordinary intellect, which is also called the animal soul because of these properties.

In eternity, the Father gives birth to the Son as his image. ‘The word was with God and the word was God’ (John 1:1). The word has the same nature as the Father. This giving birth gives the Father such bliss that his entire being goes up into it. Everything that is in him, drives him to bring forth; it is implied in his being. This is why the Father not only gives birth to the Son, but also to us in him. He wants us to become the same that his son is. [...] In the same way as the Father gives birth to his Son in eternity, he gives birth to him in the soul, and not in

another way. He does so unceasingly. He gives birth to me just as he gives birth to his Son, and as the same Son. I dare say: He not only gives birth to me as he gives birth to his Son, but he gives birth to me as himself, according to his own being, his own nature. From the deepest source, I well up in the Holy Spirit; this only concerns one life, one being, one work. Everything that God accomplishes is one: This is why he gives birth to me as he gives birth to his Son, without distinction.
(From: *Master Eckhart, Sermons, ‘Justus in perpetuum vivet’*)

And now Goethe’s statement tunes in wonderfully to this. What happens in the macrocosm, is reflected in the microcosm: As above, so below. The unmanifested, the spirit, engages in a dialogue with what is manifested, with the human being as to its widest, original meaning. Initially, this may be recognised by brief flashes, like falling stars in a dark sky, but gradually as a light cord that will increasingly determine and accompany our lives. Its colour is luminous joy; its language is freedom. We are totally free to seize the helping hand, or to restrict ourselves to meditation, literature and, when it suits us, a brief participation in a devout gathering, further remaining what we are. However, who is able to resist this beauty, this longing, once it has been manifested in the soul?

Catharose de Petri, Grandmaster of the School of the Rosycross, expressed it as follows: ‘Read the letter in your own heart, and act accordingly.’ Therefore: ‘Ora et labora’, pray and work. This twofold advice has far-reaching consequences. If we want to maintain the contrast between the familiar ‘order of the day’ and the other world, the received light impulse will degenerate into a burden, which we are unable to bear either mentally or physically. Hermetic wisdom says: ‘You have seen both worlds, and had experience of both. Now

make your choice between them.’ And this choice (or rather, this joyful acceptance) is exactly what is meant by ‘praying unceasingly’. It is not sprucing up a faded relationship; it is no longer identifying with our earthly figure. Due to the immense difference of vibration, the earth cannot make contact with the Light. Only the Light is able to do so, light with light, fire with fire. We can turn around to become the heavenly being that we fundamentally are. This is nothing more and nothing less than occupying the place for which we are destined: helping to manifest the divine idea. Reading and obeying the letter in our heart opens a wholly new, yet familiar world, although with an order of the day that puts the emphasis on something else. The same world that I expected to be able to experience in my room, now shows my true being as in a mirror: the divine element engages in a conversation with its inner image, in an absolutely new language that I can hear, but do not understand, and which surrounds my soul as with a mild glow. Breathlessly, I look at it ☺

the gnosis in present-day manifestation



BOOK REVIEW

Jan van Rijckenborgh

Throughout human history, there have been periods, during which the world of the spirit approached humanity very strongly. Our time is also such a period. In such times, there are always a few special people who, on the basis of their great longing to serve humanity, form a field of contact and encounter, in which the world of the spirit and the world of change 'go together' for some time. In and through this field, seeking people are enabled to go up into the world of the spirit consciously.

All original religions, including Christianity that was wholly 'gnosis', formed such a field of encounter. *The Gnosis in Present-day Manifestation* describes the formation, construction and development of this field of encounter in our modern age, on the basis of the history of the genesis of the Spiritual School of the Rosycross.

The field of encounter is a 'living body'. It is a consciously maintained system of thinking, attuned to the world of the spirit, of experiences and forces that sustain this living whole. It reflects an image of the properties and forces of the spiritual human being; the field of the living body is a structure of lines of force that corresponds to that of the true man. With its help, a human being who comes into contact with it, is enabled to approach the structures of the true, spiritual human being and realise them within himself.

In this field of encounter between the spirit

field and the natural world, the human being inwardly experiences each stage of development step by step and is able to realise each of them. There are seven stages, corresponding to the seven 'rays' of the spirit, while one state is always the condition for the next one. Yet, all the seven stages are present simultaneously and stimulate each other. In addition, the field of encounter has two poles that correspond to the two aspects of the perishable world. One pole is found here, in our world, and is kept alive by the group of striving people gathered in the school of the Rosycross. The other pole is free and can be found in the tenuous realms. The world of the spirit makes contact with people in one realm as well as with soul humanity in the other.

The living body constitutes a strong electromagnetic field, a bipolar sphere. As one pole has been formed by those who exist in the free spirit field, it is able to attract the forces from the spiritual world, which are put at the disposal of all who want to work on themselves.

The Gnosis in Present-day Manifestation extensively describes the historical as well as the inner development of this magnetic structure, because its intensity was not immediately present from the beginning, but had to be built up first. It began with a group of people who had heard the call of the spirit in their consciousness and reacted to it with their thinking and feeling. This reaction was ex-



In *The Gnosis in Present-day Manifestation*, J. van Rijckenborgh describes the development of the living body in seven stages. In the Rose Garden at Noverosa, where the work of the Spiritual School began in 1924, this is symbolised by a fountain, surrounded by seven rays – in which roses are blossoming

The properties of the spirit became known; the darkness disappeared and it became light in the striving human beings

pressed by a mode of life that may be summarised by: doing what you say, striving for simplicity and sincerity, pure feelings, and a benevolent, impartial attitude towards your fellow men. The author calls it a 'rational-moral' mode of life. Because the members persevered in this state long enough, the first ray of the spirit, the ray of power, was able to change and prepare the inner being of the group. During the second stage, the ray of Light gradually became active in addition to the ray of power. The properties of the spirit became known; the darkness disappeared and it became light in the striving human beings. In this way the power field became a Light field. The Living Body, the magnetic structure, was able to forge a direct link with the second aspect of the spirit. And because the second ray is also known as 'the son', J. van Rijckenborgh also called it 'the Light birth of Christ in the human being'.

In the life of one person, this Light birth is the decisive moment, just as it has also been decisive in the development of the Spiritual School. This is because, as heart and head gradually change, all radiations of the spirit can work on the building harmoniously in the

mortal body, so that a transfigured body will develop. And it is this 'glorious' or 'glorified' body that can ultimately, after the perishable body has fallen away, continue living imperishably.

The condition for this light birth consists, above all, of the surrender of the human will to 'the will of God', the energies of a new creative power. Because now that heart and head have already been harmoniously attuned to the mighty development of soul humanity, these energies will be admitted unobstructed. They will wholly be able to work for the benefit of the individual, for the group, and therefore, for the whole of humanity.

The book concludes with a probing chapter about the general reaction of humanity to the approach of the spiritual world. The author compares this reaction with the structural and systematic reaction to the assimilation of the new, high energies in a spiritual school, describing the first one as 'Pistis', knowledge, and the second one as 'Sophia', wisdom ✪