

13 WISDOM

13.1 What is Wisdom?

¹Philosophy is a quest for truth. Any attempt at limiting that definition must be emphatically rejected. The appropriation of ancient names for some certain branch of research must be deemed impermissible. Indeed, the philosophers of our times will not have the last word. To an esoterician, “modern philosophy” is on the wrong track and is as disoriented in reality and life as all the other products of speculation.

²The philosopher is not wise. He is just a friend of wisdom. Pythagoras, who said this, showed by this that he knew that wisdom is essentiality (46), a stage of consciousness that is attained only when the individual has passed to the fifth natural kingdom. How far from that esoteric realization are the philosophers of our times! They have not acquired even perspective consciousness (47:5).

³Wisdom consists in that latent fund of life experience which has become large enough to be turned into instinct of life, latent mental or causal ideas on the threshold of waking consciousness.

⁴All wisdom is knowledge gained through experience and realized through unity. You understand only what you realize, make real.

⁵To conceive the positive there is in all ideals is the main problem of the art of living; to survey them all in their connectedness is the final goal of human wisdom.

⁶Wisdom is by its very nature “esoteric”, inaccessible to those who have not attained the requisite levels.

⁷“The treasures of wisdom are hidden.” If all the axioms of wisdom were collected into a book, were read like a catechism by everybody, yet the effect of this would be almost nil.

⁸Wisdom is understanding and the ability to apply the law with regard to unity.

⁹Man becomes wise to the extent that he acquires a sense of proportion.

¹⁰Wisdom, the true knowledge, is never preached in the marketplace of opinions (in our times literature and other mass media). That would be pointless. For the knowledge is for the “initiates” (those who have the knowledge latently, and they are scarcely 15 per cent).

¹¹You never need to propagate and advertise the true knowledge. You need not repeat it incessantly, preaching it every Sunday and preferably also in between. It is sufficient that the individual has once clearly conceived the idea. Then it is ineradicable and a power in existence that need not be thrashed over and over again or be emotionalized.

13.2 The Beginning of Wisdom

¹Wisdom is acquired by striving to understand, by sympathizing with all living beings, by sincerity, humility, and the desire to serve. Thereby the finest human qualities are acquired. They are not acquired by learning by heart what is said in books, which is praised as education and a mark of culture. The capacity for judgement thus trained is a very simple ability of inference: it agrees or does not agree with what I have learned (what I believe I know).

²Book-learning may be valuable, if it increases our prospects of having experiences. It may enhance understanding, though only if it serves to awaken latent experience. You can learn from the experiences of another if you have these experiences latently yourself. You cannot learn from the experiences of another, if they are above your own level and outside your own past experience. Platon saw that the wise man may become the most skilful in everything he takes an interest in and has an opportunity to reacquire, just because he has these very abilities latently, having acquired them in previous incarnations.

³Wisdom begins by seeing the importance of “evil” for development as an impelling factor, by seeing the importance of the appearance of the latent faults, by understanding the

importance of mistakes and failures. Until then, the passivity and omissions of the negative attitude have been prevalent, laissez-faire has been the most comfortable, the fear of making mistakes has strengthened cowardice. Correctly Dante answered the question, “Who knows good?” by “He who knows evil.” The perversion of evil, which we experience daily, finally teaches us to see the necessity of good. Evil is lawlessness, and the basis of evil is life-ignorance. Because anyone who has true knowledge and insight (which includes the knowledge that existence is incorruptible) does not act against the Law. When that insight has become axiomatic in mankind at large, then man will have come of age, not before.

⁴All people make statements about everything. They are very clever. However, the beginning of wisdom is your realization that you are an idiot: a new formulation of the Sokranean wisdom saying. It is with wisdom as with self-knowledge. It begins when you have realized that you know “nothing”.

13.3 Wisdom is Consciousness of Unity

¹The law of unity (the love for all living creatures) is the foremost of the laws of life. This shows best in the fact that those who apply it instinctively and spontaneously in everyday life are able to accomplish amazing things with a discrimination that is in accord with true wisdom of life. Theological psychology has always led people astray in this respect as in all others. Not intellectual simplicity but the “simplicity of the heart” is wisdom. The law of unity is the summary of all laws of life, leads directly and the most quickly to the goal (the contact with the essential world, world 46).

²Life is a never-ending series of problems of reality through all the higher worlds and kingdoms in nature. It is characteristic that these problems cannot be solved theoretically but only practically. It is true that you must get to know the facts of existence. But in addition understanding is required and you gain that only by living the life. It is in life that you find the solution, see the solution, not through pondering and speculation. The solution is spontaneous, like a revelation, when you live in unity and for unity. That is the meaning of the ancient saying “love solves all problems”. That is why essential consciousness (46) is called “love and wisdom”, the two being inseparable. There can be no wisdom without love, only prudence.

³The essential life is unity and wisdom. The emotional saint lacks the knowledge of reality, even if he deceives himself that he has gained “cosmic consciousness”. It is not sufficient to have a knowledge of the physical and emotional worlds, and that is why the so-called love (eros) of emotional attraction is often unreasonable and unwise. Only when the individual has acquired the mental, causal, and essential knowledge, can he purposefully apply unity (agape).

⁴The original function of religion was to clarify to the individual (the self) the possibilities of acquiring causal and essential consciousness, acquiring both wisdom and love. This implied, to borrow an expression from Poul Bjerre, “restructuring” the self from “separate self to communal self and to universal self”. Bjerre aptly expresses the different attitudes taken by these three “selves” as follows: “It was your fault. It was our fault. It is my fault.”

13.4 Love Alone Does Not Suffice

¹It is up to ourselves when we shall be able to enter the world of common consciousness, when we shall be able to experience unity. It is the will to unity that develops attraction to all living creatures, and this attraction is a condition of the acquisition of the consciousness of unity. As long as we are in opposition to any living creature, we cannot be “one with all”. Perhaps you understand now what Christos–Maitreya meant by “god is love”, “we are all the children of god”, etc. He had to use such images when addressing the uninitiated who knew nothing of, and could not even grasp, the unity of life. He had to use the word “love”, which designates what is part of emotional consciousness, since this faculty is the highest one that

people can grasp. Emotionality does not suffice, however. Consciousness of unity presupposes and also implies wisdom. If we are to realize unity, we must have some knowledge of life. Feeling is not enough. Will is required, will that impels us to acquire the requisite qualities and abilities, so that we can realize unity.

²Emotionality (feeling and imagination) is no source of knowledge, even though imagination in its highest sphere can contact the essential world and experience the perception of ineffable bliss. It will not be more than a perception, however, since the self at the emotional stage is quite unable to grasp the consciousness of unity, the consciousness of community. It is that attraction, however, and not the desire of blind emotional will, which is supreme wisdom. Essentiality is a combination of unity (“love”, agape) and wisdom, and is far above the wisdom of the saint, far above the saint’s capability of understanding.

³Man’s so-called love of god and of his fellow man is emotional attraction. Such attraction is necessary, for it is the impelling power of all noble actions. It is not sufficient, however, for acting wisely, not even for acting prudently. Love without understanding, without the power of judgement, has caused innumerable and the most incredible follies, has brought about an infinite amount of unnecessary suffering for all parts concerned. Particularly in the matter of upbringing such love is often the ground of wasted lives. Love must be combined with wisdom. Else it can be disastrous.

13.5 Wisdom in Superhuman Kingdoms

¹The supreme representative of the will in our planet of course is the planetary ruler. Next below him are his three “lieutenants”, the three so-called buddhas of activity. These three are the supreme representatives of wisdom in our planet. They are the cosmic prototypes or models of man’s first triad mental molecule, causal centre, and second triad mental atom. These three representatives of wisdom also are responsible for mass causalization of monads from the animal to the human kingdom, the act of initiation, and the presentation to the initiate of a glimpse of the cosmic purpose.

²These the four highest divinities of our planet are spoken of in the catechism of the inner schools with the following words: “Out of the seven virgin-men (kumaras) four sacrificed themselves for the sins of the world and the instruction of the ignorant, to remain till the end of the present manvantara. Though unseen, they are ever present... These are the Head, the Heart, the Soul, and the Seed of undying Knowledge. O disciple, thou shalt never speak of these great ones before a multitude, mentioning them by name. The wise alone will understand.”

³World 46 has been called the world of unity, since it is in this world, the first world of self-conscious collective consciousness, that we experience unity, the condition of further evolution. But it is simultaneously the world of wisdom. Two ways lead to it: departments 6–4–2, which are called the way of unity, and departments 7–5–3–1, which in world 46 are discovered to be the way of wisdom. Such symbolic terms are very informative to those who strive to understand the meaning and do not interpret everything literally.

⁴In that which the planetary hierarchy calls love–wisdom, love is the force that unites the planetary hierarchy with mankind; wisdom is the force that unites the hierarchy with the planetary government.

⁵The expedient cooperation of the fifth ray with the second ray, causal-mental consciousness subordinate to 46-consciousness, is wisdom.

⁶To the types of the seven departments at the causal stage, the expression of life has a different character than at the stage of the normal individual. To be is will, is wisdom, is thought, is harmony, is knowledge, is attraction, is order of process. Starting from the last, the seventh, you can follow how consciousness expresses itself in evolution, even if imperfectly indicated.

⁷That the wisdom aspect is indispensable should be clear from the following fact. In our

solar system, those monads who become second selves on the 6–4–2 line, and so have their love aspect more developed than their wisdom aspect, are many more than those who become second selves on the 7–5–3–1 line and so have their wisdom aspect more developed than their love aspect. However, these “monads of love”, when later having become cosmic selves (42-selves), need to take an “intensive course in cosmic wisdom” in the Sirius system, which is our solar system’s next higher source of wisdom.

⁸Esoterically, the “spiritual” and the “divine” do not refer to the same kind of reality. Spirituality is unity, that is: the consciousness and will of the second self. Divinity is what is symbolically called “will”, that is: the consciousness and will of the third self. Wisdom is the principle uniting them and mediating between them. That is why the perfect 45-self is called the “master of wisdom”, because 45-consciousness and 45-will is what is highest in the second self and what is lowest in the third self.

13.6 Wisdom of Life

¹The spirit of revolt against destiny demonstrates the individual’s self-centredness. The same is true of all emotional suffering.

²You do not see faults in other people that you do not have latently yourself. What is disastrous about hateful criticism is that indulging in it you rouse what is latent.

³The worlds of man’s incarnation are the worlds of ignorance, the worlds of “appearance”, the effects of unknown causes. In the causal world, he will see the causes.

⁴Buddha indicated four grounds and causes of suffering: ignorance of the Law and inability to apply the Law; desire or fear of something; inability to live in mentality; inability to observe the following eight rules of wisdom: right knowledge; right thought; right speech; right action; right livelihood, that is not to cause suffering or loss to anybody; right striving; right remembrance; right control of attention.

⁵Buddha never said that “life is suffering”. He certainly knew that suffering exists only in the lower three regions of the physical and emotional worlds (49:5-7 and 48:5-7) and then only as bad reaping out of bad sowing.

⁶If man were the supreme product of life, life would not be worth living.

⁷According to theologians, wealth is a gift of god, a sign that god is pleased with the wealthy, has blessed them. Error. Wealth is good reaping out of good sowing and as a rule turns into bad reaping in the next life, because most people abuse the apparent benefits of wealth.

⁸“Everything” that we meet with is reaping and an opportunity for new sowing.

⁹It is part of the wisdom of life not to bereave yourself of the composure you have by fighting “disasters” beforehand, not to enlarge disasters by concentrating on them. As a rule, “nothing will be as good as you hope, nothing as bad as you fear”.

¹⁰It is part of the wisdom of life to see the truth of the old saw: “Others may, you may not.”

¹¹Half of all wisdom of life consists in saying nothing and believing nothing.

¹²Keep silent about what you know! Let everybody be the master of his wisdom! Never teach except when requested! Answer with questions only! Never controvert anyone!

¹³Anyone who does not forgive ties himself to the one he does not forgive.

¹⁴We are more or less idiots, all of us. But he is the greatest idiot who believes he is not.

¹⁵Common sense is supreme reason. Common sense sees its great ignorance, the relative uselessness of its learning, its lack of discernment.

¹⁶The esoterician distinguishes between emotional happiness, mental joy, and essential “bliss”. To the mentalist, “happiness” seems to belong to the infantile stage; and to the essentialist, both happiness and joy fade away.

¹⁷Nobody needs to feel alone who lives for his work. Nobody is alone who has become betrothed to wisdom. We “are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses”, of beings from many worlds! Nobody is alone!

¹⁸It is part of the wisdom of life to forgo power until you are able to use it right. Until then you should only strive for the knowledge that helps you to right understanding.

¹⁹You can never teach the moralists anything in their perverse attitude to all things human.

²⁰There is no such thing as a free gift. Everything received must be paid for, sooner or later, and in all respects. Parasites, too, must pay back some time.

²¹Suffering is a consequence of the self allowing the envelopes (the emotional in particular) to rule.

²²There is only one path to freedom: to serve.

13.7 From Knowledge to Wisdom

¹Probably it is only at the stage of reason that the demand for exact conception of reality is imperative for action. Then, in order to be able to act at all, you must understand why you should act in a certain manner.

²The mystic does not need such clarity, since the dynamic energy of attraction is a sufficient impelling force for him. But experience will teach him, by the consequences of unwise loving actions, that wisdom and knowledge are necessary as well. It constantly appears that human wisdom is not very wise. And so begins the pursuit of true wisdom, and that goes on during incarnations until the individual, through the higher mental development, reaches up to the “world of knowledge” and finds that the prerequisite of wisdom is the understanding that all life is one. Only he is wise who has entered unity, the world of unity. The causal knowledge of reality is not sufficient for man always to “live right”, to act wisely.

³The first self can acquire knowledge, but wisdom is a faculty of the second self. Wisdom requires essential consciousness (46, intuition in the original and proper sense), consciousness of unity, collective consciousness, consciousness of community. But you are well on the road to wisdom if you make efforts to apply in practice the esoteric knowledge we have received and are not content to use it for theoretical study only. Knowledge without application is the direct opposite of wisdom. Our failure to apply the knowledge is the ground of our faults and failings. Along with knowledge goes responsibility, something that most people would heed more if they could study their incarnations.

⁴Civilizational man may conceive of hylozoics as a working hypothesis at the most, albeit the most probable one. Anyone who cannot see that it agrees with reality, however, has never really understood it. For it gives the first self a sovereign view of thousands of otherwise inexplicable phenomena and facts, understanding of the mind and its problems and clarity about the right attitude to life and action. But if it remains only a theory without being realized and in its realization affording ever increasing understanding of its correctness, then it does not entail the development of consciousness intended. And that should be what most seekers desire: to reach beyond the level they are on, comprehend and understand ever more by themselves. Without work according to the law of self-realization there is no development. Theories that are never turned into something better, that are not applied in real life, only increase that responsibility in life which goes along with greater knowledge and with esoteric knowledge in particular. If we do not realize what we have understood we cause ourselves increasing difficulties in subsequent incarnations, we lessen our prospects even of understanding and remembrance anew; in any case we do not receive any new offers and opportunities of life to develop further. The planetary hierarchy has not given us the book of knowledge in order that we put it under the pillow to sleep better.

⁵It is important to learn to tell the difference between the knowledge of the first self and the wisdom of the second self. Thereby you also learn to distinguish between the energies of the first self and those of the second self. Anyone who has done this has solved the basic problem of life, a problem the individual must solve himself. Nobody else can do that for him, nobody else can teach him how to do it. That is no mysticism, but surely the secret of the true art of

living, which you discover by telling the essential from the unessential, by living with a purpose and an aim. In so doing you transform knowledge into wisdom; the problem of the first self.

⁶Esoteric knowledge is by no means necessary to find the way into the planetary hierarchy. It is sufficient if you acquire the necessary qualities through service and self-forgetfulness. The greatest importance of esoterics lies in the fact that it liberates from all the ideologies of ignorance and affords a theoretical world view and life view to those who must have such a basis to build on. However, anyone who mentally sees that all ideologies are untenable, that the hypothesis method of science is insufficient, is filled with compassion for all life and wants only to help whenever, wherever he can, he is already on the way. That was the deep symbolic meaning of the saying, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (served unity, baby talk to the uninitiated).

⁷A loving heart is an invaluable asset and is necessary to pass from the first self to the second self. Emotion is not always wise, however. We do not exist to always take up the burdens of other people. You have no right to free others from the problems that life has given them to solve for their own development, free them from having necessary experiences. Our fellow man is the man who is dependent on our very help, who has no other prospect. We cannot suffice for all who are in need. We do not help by hindering ourselves. Where we have not taken duties on us we are not obliged to yield to the demands of others. Wisdom is needed to always be able to help in the right way. Mankind has yet a long way to go before it can see the limitation of man. That is not possible without the Sokratean realization, the summit of the first self's wisdom.

⁸Knowledge is that quintessence of the first self's collected, worked-up experience which is stored in the causal envelope. This knowledge can be transformed into wisdom only under the influence of essential (46) energies. Before the monad has become a causal self, these 46-energies are mediated chiefly by Augoeides. Later, when the monad has become a causal self, it can itself receive and apprehend them, the lower three kinds to begin with: 46:5-7. According to the law of self-realization, the monad must effect this transformation of knowledge into wisdom by itself. The contribution of Augoeides is necessary at the beginning, but later must be superseded by the purposive work of man himself. Man's own growing understanding of the necessity of this work is an aspect of his incipient wisdom, too. By wisdom alone he must gain wisdom.

13.8 Learning or Erudition, Knowledge and Wisdom

¹There is no wisdom, if there is no common sense before. Without common sense, wisdom cannot find any expression.

²Learning or erudition (information), knowledge, and wisdom must be differentiated. Learning, erudition, is mere collected information, data on various subjects. Those data need not be true, be in agreement with reality. Even if true they may from a factual point of view be insignificant or misleading for an important context or purpose. By ending up in wrong contexts, facts that are correct in themselves may become meaningless or misleading. Also, one erroneous datum among otherwise correct facts may distort the entire presentation.

³Learning is not a bad thing in itself. It fulfils its purpose on its level, is important as a step in man's intellectual development. What is perceived as the esotericians' objection to, and criticism of, learning actually is not criticism of learning in itself, only of the tendency to regard learning as being what it is not.

⁴The learned often demonstrate that they do not understand that there is something beyond learning, something much higher. You must always strive after something that is higher than your present state if you want to progress also in your own field.

⁵Knowledge is nothing but facts, essential facts, put into their right reciprocal relations, so that they objectively form an essential context. Many contexts, correctly combined into a still

greater whole, form a system of knowledge. Knowledge is not the same as expanded learning. However much learning is expanded, it cannot supplant knowledge. Knowledge is superior to learning not in quantitative, but in qualitative respect. What is qualitatively different in knowledge is the growth of understanding, the heightening of consciousness.

⁶Esoterics can be studied at the stage of barbarism. Study is not ability, however; learning is not wisdom; and the teaching is not life. What is essential is our own experience. The importance of knowledge is that, when possessing it, we need not grope in the dark.

⁷Wisdom is knowledge applied expediently in action. No more than a mere quantitative growth of learning makes knowledge, no more just a quantitative increase of knowledge equals wisdom. Just as a qualitative extra element makes the difference of knowledge from learning, such a qualitative element distinguishes wisdom from knowledge. Where wisdom is concerned, this qualitative element is experience elaborated upon. It is by trying to apply his knowledge, by making mistakes and learning from them, that the individual grows in wisdom.

⁸In esoterics the thesis applies saying that knowledge does not precede experience but results from it. We learn by living, by making our own experiments in life. The knowledge we have received before experience has quite another significance through experience. Neither does knowledge impart the ability of realization. Man learns that by experience, by the endless number of unsuccessful experiences. That is why mistakes are necessary on the path to wisdom. That is also why it is said, *sapere aude*, dare to be wise, for it could as well be said: dare to make mistakes.

⁹Life-ignorant man lets himself be cast down by failures, blames himself, and loses his trust in self. The man experienced in life knows that mistakes are unavoidable and that he learns the most by making mistakes. He acquires trust in self through his failed attempts, for having made them he knows much more than before. Anyone who does not dare to act for fear of failing often misses valuable opportunities of learning. Many people also fear the criticism of others. Criticism (other people's lack of understanding) must be taken into account and be used to liberate oneself from the dependence on the opinions of others.

¹⁰Just as there is a process of development leading the individual from learning to knowledge, and from knowledge to wisdom, so there is also a process of degeneration that may implicate individuals and entire groups, if they do not take care: What became of the wisdom that decayed into knowledge? What became of the knowledge that decayed into information?

¹¹Seek wisdom while you have the strength, or you may lose the strength without gaining wisdom.

¹²“Anyone who loves wisdom loves life. And anyone who seeks her early will be filled with joy.”

¹³The three worlds of the first self make it possible for mental consciousness to function as common sense. Causal consciousness, consciously conquered by the disciple of the planetary hierarchy, gradually transforms into wisdom the experience the monad has gained in the lowest three worlds.

¹⁴Wisdom begins as man ceases to be the centre of his circle and instead puts an ideal there, not to become ideal but to forget himself.

¹⁵“To will, to know, to dare, and to be silent” is the sum of esoteric wisdom.

13.9 *The Golden Mean*

¹Aristoteles' view was that of all things being good within the limits set by the laws of life. Outside the law good becomes evil and virtues become vices. In his doctrine of the golden mean between the extremes (the “pairs of opposites” of esoterics) he tried to fix those norms which man must adopt if he is to be harmonious and happy. According to the Buddha, this is the path of wisdom.

²“In all relations there can be one measure that is too much, one that is too little, and one that is right which lies midway between the other two. This cannot be calculated mathematically, but reason learns the correct measure through experience. Virtue is the middle way between two vices, which are on either extreme side of virtue.” Virtue presupposes experience. Aristoteles thereby introduced the principle of relativity in so far as he showed that the middle way changes in every new situation, appears different from different points of view, and can be defined for the purpose of orientation only.

³“The virtue of courage lies midway between the vices of cowardice and foolhardiness. The coward calls courage recklessness and the foolhardy calls courage cowardice. Generosity is the virtue that lies between greed and extravagance. Temperance is the right middle way between love of enjoyment and asceticism, popularity between ingratiation and aloofness, meekness between slowness and wrath, etc. ad infinitum.”

⁴We become virtuous through the habit of acting right, which presupposes experience, common sense, and ability of judgement.

⁵According to esoterics everything is vice that conflicts with the laws of life. Among these vices is curiosity, since it violates our right to a private life protected from the encroachments of others.

⁶Virtue is the ability to choose right, to find the golden mean between the extremes.

⁷The opposition of right and wrong shows man a middle path to go, the “golden mean”. The more the individual conception of right is ennobled, the narrower the path is until it becomes the razor-edge path the planetary hierarchy speaks about. Only then you are on the sure path.

⁸The laws of the land indicate the outside limits. The norms, which in a cultural environment are ever more refined by the instinct of right, develop into tact, in which process the path becomes ever narrower.

⁹Those who talk about the justification for “white lies” are still pursuing a rather broad path. This is also the path of curiosity and gossip, interest in the personality.

¹⁰The level of development appears quite clearly in the conception of right.

¹¹Insight discovers the golden mean. But the art of using it depends on the emotional balance between attraction and repulsion.

13.10 The Wisdom Aspect in Disciples and Aspirants

¹A lower consciousness cannot perceive a higher one. But to the extent that the monad in its lower consciousness strives intentionally and expediently after higher consciousness (such as it perceives this), it activates the germs, the potential of higher that always exist in the lower. And it is through these germs that the monad is able, even though faintly and confusedly, to perceive something of the higher. That is why there are such germs of both causal and essential (46) consciousness also in disciples who are still first selves and are not even causal selves. The essential germs have, as has everything essential, a love aspect and a wisdom aspect. The love aspect appears in the compassion disciples show each others, in their solidarity, friendship, and brotherhood, their mutual help and support in difficulty and adversity.

²The wisdom aspect appears in their methodical work, under the guidance of their teacher, of sharing with each other their experience of their work with their consciousness development, a “down-scaling” of the common and shared experience that is at the disposal of 46-selves thanks to their having entered unity, possessing group consciousness.

³“Our way is that of group discussion. In solitude there is renown, and in renown there is peril. Welfare is to be found in a group. Those who follow this way find great benefit and blessing in group meetings.”

⁴Another expression of the first germs and potential of the wisdom aspect appears in disciples in all such things as can be summed up in the phrase “practical understanding of the

existence of higher consciousness than my own.” Only knowledge and intelligence are required to understand the existence of higher consciousness theoretically. The disciple is convinced through the facts and ideas of hylozoics that there must be a higher consciousness than his own, higher even than the highest possible human consciousness. To apply this understanding practically, however, requires something in addition, and this “something in addition” is the beginning of wisdom.

⁵The study group has members on a higher and a lower level of knowledge and being, in the school there are disciples on higher and lower levels. So it is because also in the esoteric teacher’s (the 45-self’s) group (ashram) there are disciples on higher and lower levels (in all things esoteric, the pattern, the example is set from above). It is thanks to their wisdom aspect, incipient or even somewhat developed, that those on a lower level perceive that those on higher levels are wiser and willingly receive their wisdom. Conversely, it is when this wisdom aspect does not make itself felt that disciples on lower levels challenge the wisdom of the higher ones, assert their own views against this, and do not consider the concerted experience, purpose, and well-being of the group.

13.11 Your Days are Numbered, Use Them with Care Then!

¹Some people deplore that they only late in life had the opportunity of studying the truth, the knowledge of reality. However, everything depends on what they do with it during the time that remains for them. Your last day in life can be made a perfect day. Since no man knows in the morning whether he will live in the evening, he has every reason to live as if each day were his last one. The ancients did so.

²“Wisdom may reach a man in the morning, and then he may die without grief in the evening the same day.”

³“Brethren, know that whoever works well in his days, his affairs are praised, but whoever does evil in them has lost his life. Whoever falls short will tomorrow regret his falling short. And whoever leaves the work for his future will regret it. And whoever abandons the guidance will weep when he has realized it. For the times are passing in haste, and days are seized and carried away from us. So hasten with your life before you depart, and seize your life before you die.”

⁴“Now then, monks, this I tell you. Transient are all things that have arisen. Work with care at your perfection.” The last words of Gautama the Buddha to his disciples.

13.12 Wisdom is Skill in Action

¹The Greek word *sophos* is usually translated “wise”, so that *sophia* is “wisdom”, *philosophos* means “lover of wisdom”, etc. However, in the ancient Greek society, a skilful shoemaker was considered *sophos* in his line of trade just as a teacher of wisdom in his one. Therefore, a more exact translation of *sophos* is “skilful in his work”, “skilful in action”. Thus wisdom is the same as the ability to apply the knowledge, skill in action. In the Gothic Bible, the oldest translation of the Bible into any Germanic tongue, the Greek word *sophos* was rendered by *handugs*, “handy”. That expresses the same idea of what wisdom is.

²Of course mere action is not sufficient. Wisdom is action with quality, the quality of consciousness. Wisdom is the power to realize.

³Correct statements are rare, and judgement is a rare capability. Many people are not clear about the great differences between intelligence, judgement, and ability of application. Judgement requires intelligence and expertise, knowledge of facts, and processing of those facts. The ability of application finally results in wisdom. People talk about theory and practice but often have superficial notions of both. Theory is about generals and universals, things considered on a large scale. Practice deals with particulars, things directed towards action. Practice is theory applied to things on a small scale, in man’s daily life.

⁴Action is conditioned by the totality of actual circumstances, which can almost never be foreseen. Even afterwards we often cannot decide whether we acted right. Acting right presupposes wisdom, and this is not obtained from rules which, at the best, cannot be more than orienting. The best actions are the spontaneous ones that come from the unconscious once we have acquired the right attitude to life. Anyone who needs to inquire and analyse, to argue with himself, or who needs to be influenced by rules or sentimentality, or be persuaded, does not have the spontaneity that comes from the understanding of life.

⁵Wisdom is won through self-realization. That is the one and only path. Without practice, everything will remain theory. No theory, however correct it may be, will help anyone to go forward. Realization requires experimental experience. Through such experience new, undreamt-of faculties are acquired.

13.13 Wisdom is Service

¹The whole of the wisdom of life is the simplest of all simple things. Forget yourself and live for something other than yourself. Doing this, however, you must use your common sense, so that you do not throw away yourself on activities that are below your own capacity, but live for those things by which you can best serve mankind, consciousness development, and unity. This is how the great ones live, those in higher kingdoms. Then your self-identity remains, but that is all that is left of your own self. You are given all for nothing: your envelopes and the experience of your worlds of consciousness, and moreover all you need to make your contribution. Anyone who gives his all to life receives all from life to ever higher degrees. This is the simple summary of the art of living taught by all religions.

²The attitude that life is service brings about incomparably more opportunities from life to sow good sowings, to weaken the effects of bad reaping, to develop the right instinct of life, to find the best way.

³Service is a difficult art. It is very difficult to serve in the right way. By serving others you can do more evil than good. You shall not serve evil, and you may do that by serving without discrimination. The important thing is not to satisfy egoism, not to allow yourself to be exploited, not to “bolster up vice”, not to yield to claims.

⁴There are many sayings in the Gospels attributed to Christos which he never uttered, at any event not with that formulation. He cannot have said, “Give to anyone who begs you”. Then you would be defenceless against unreasonable demands and soon be plundered. He has absolutely not said, “resist not evil”. We have a duty to resist evil. Else we abandon life to the power of evil.

13.14 Wisdom and Folly

¹A fool may live together with a wise man a whole life-time and yet fail to learn anything. A wise man may live together with a fool for only a day and yet learn much. The wise can learn from everything and everybody.

²There are many sayings attributed to Jeshu as very young though not recorded in the Gospels. This is one: “Jeshu, son of Mary, who taught you wisdom?” – “No one. I observed the folly of men and avoided it.”

³Where goodness is not combined with common sense, goodness turns into a vice and becomes the basis of the phenomenon that unreason and arbitrariness to a great extent may rule. The goodness that is weakness leaves the field open to insolence, cynicism, exploitation. The goodness that allows evil to rule is accessory to whatever evil brings about.

⁴Self-criticism is a good thing. But it must not be exaggerated, morbid. There are people who always take sides against themselves all the way to self-resignation. They do not realize that right is right regardless of you or me. I cannot possibly always be wrong. Such a view is injudiciousness made absolute. I may be right despite the fact that it is me.

⁵The slaves to beauty obviously have no idea of the tyranny of beauty and its idiotizing influence. The adoration of beauty can be defended, if beauty crowns goodness and wisdom.

13.15 The Sokratean Insight

¹What above all characterizes latent esotericians is the Sokratean insight that one is an idiot, thus genuine humility in respect of truth. That is the first step on the path of wisdom. Anyone who feels important (or feels ready) is far from reaching that insight. Another great mistake is any kind of comparison with those at lower levels. We are all brothers of the same kingdom in nature, and even though the path to the next higher kingdom is of different length, yet it is exceedingly short compared to that remaining for us all. When those of the fifth and sixth and still higher kingdoms call us their brothers, then we have every reason to try to assimilate that view of life: that all living beings make up a universal brotherhood. Anyone who has realized this understands, too, that hatred in all its thousand manifestations is the very perversion of life.

²Whatever may be a true “revelation” to one person, affording him an increased understanding of reality, may appear a paralysing limitation to another person who has experienced an even greater “expansion of consciousness”. And this is true of all individuals to be found on the seemingly endless gamut of developmental levels from the lowest physical to the highest cosmic. In this process it is typical that anyone who has acquired common sense and has got a vision of cosmic evolution always sees his own limitation and how “immensely much remains” for understanding. Therefore it was one of the characteristics of wisdom in Sokrates that he could say of himself that he “knew nothing” (implicitly: of what he desired to know in order to fully understand). That insight is the true humility, not what people call humility: bending one’s neck to wiseacres who believe they know, not suspecting their boundless ignorance.

13.16 The Seven Pillars of Wisdom

¹“Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars.” (The Bible, Proverbs 9:1.) This symbol indicates that the essential self (46-self) builds his own essential envelope (46-envelope), in which he is sovereign in all seven departments. This means that the 46-self controls his own type energies, thus with will and intention (which, of course, is one with the group will and the group intention) “is” that type which is the most suitable for the time being, for the particular work that the 46-self is doing right now. Selves of lower kinds (physical selves, emotional selves, mental selves, and causal selves) lack this sovereignty. Therefore they are ruled by their dominant types. Even if the causal self has begun liberating himself from this dominance, he still lacks the freedom of the 46-self who is able to “play the types” like the pianist the keys of his piano. This freedom is wisdom, skill in action. “Hewn out” indicates that this wisdom, freedom, skill in action is no gift but is the result of the individual’s own hard work through the long series of incarnations. Physical life is the quarry where the stones for the “temple of Solomon” are hewn. And the “temple” is the causal envelope, which is built with over 150 000 incarnations, alluded to in 2 Chronicles, 2:17,18 with the information about the number of workers in the quarry. Also the esoteric saying “the wise man rules his stars, the fool is ruled by them” has reference to the 46-self’s mastery of the seven type energies. The “stars” in question are the “seven sacred planets”, which are mediators of the seven energies on a solar systemic scale.

²The teaching of the esoteric schools was consistently symbolic, was made up exclusively of symbolic sayings such as the ones given above. These sayings were unintelligible to the uninitiated and also to initiates of lower degrees, so that the latter had to have them explained to them by the hierophant, and repeatedly, for deeper understanding, in each higher degree. To initiates of higher degrees they were axiomatic, because they corresponded to their own insight, the wisdom acquired by their own work.