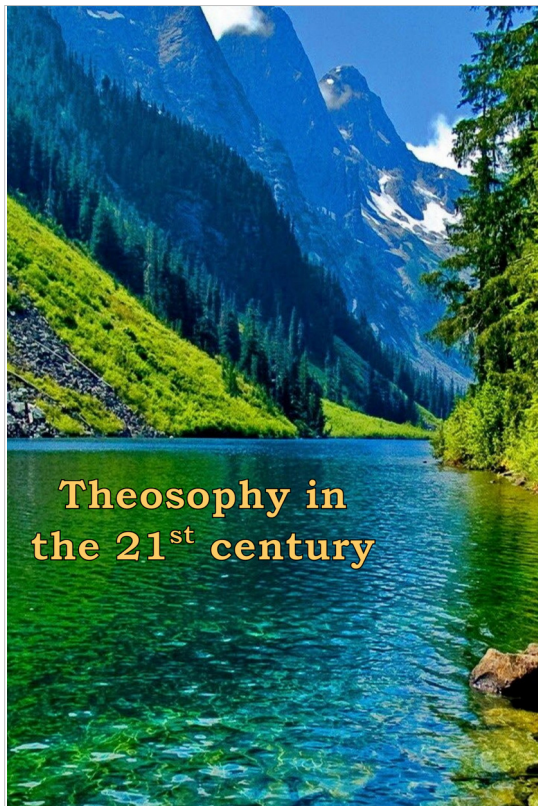




**Theosophy in
the 21st century**

11 The evolution

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What is the meaning of life?

- Close your eyes, quiet your mind and do an exercise of reflection:
- Think of our daily life, our family and friends, our work, our aspirations, our struggles, our achievements, our frustrations, the unfulfilled longings, the sufferings, the joys, our loves, ...
- What sense do we find to all this?

To address the issue of evolution, let's first do a reflection exercise.

To do this let's relax, breathe gently and quiet our mind. Close your eyes if you want and think about the following:

Think of our daily life, our family, our friends ...

Think of our work or study, our daily routine, its obligations and challenges ...

Think of our aspirations of all kinds, our struggles, our achievements and also our frustrations, the unrealized longings.

Think of the sufferings but also the joys that life has brought us.

Think of our loves, the relationships that allow us to love and feel full.

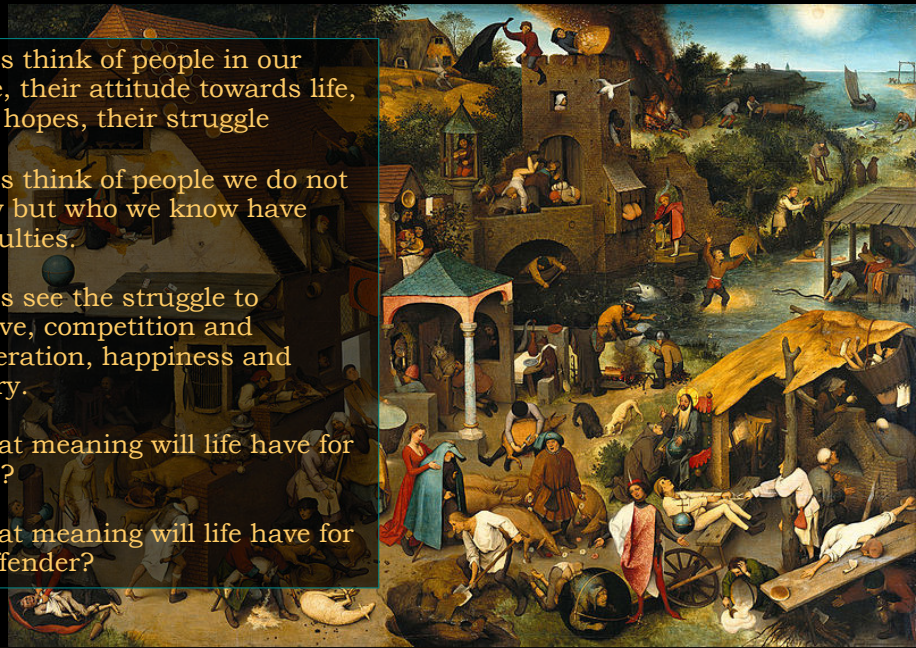
What sense do we find to all this?

What meaning does life have for us?

What do we expect from life?

What is the meaning of life for others?

- Let's think of people in our circle, their attitude towards life, their hopes, their struggle
- Let's think of people we do not know but who we know have difficulties.
- Let's see the struggle to survive, competition and cooperation, happiness and misery.
- What meaning will life have for them?
- What meaning will life have for an offender?



Let's think now of the people of our circle, family, friends, people with whom we relate daily.

Let's think about how they see life. Let's try to put ourselves in their place.

Let's think of their own desires, their attitude to life. Some work to achieve their aspirations, others are reactive, some are optimistic and others are pessimistic.

Think of their hopes, as we think we know them.

Let's think now of people that we do not know directly but of which we know they have difficulties. Victims of natural disasters, victims or relatives of accidents, victims of war and hatred, victims of hunger.

Let's see the struggle to survive. Fierce competition and also cooperation and help. Human happiness and misery.

What meaning will life have for them?

What meaning will life have for an offender?

What is the meaning of life in general?

- What does life mean for a plant? For an insect? For an animal?
- Let's think of the magnificence of the Universe we see in the countryside on a starry night ...
- Why do there exist planets, stars, galaxies?
- **What is the meaning of the whole Life, as a whole?**

Let's think now about what life can mean for a plant. Growing, giving its flowers, reproducing, changing according to the cycles of the seasons and finally dying.

What will life mean to an insect?

What will life mean to an animal?

Let's think now that we are in the countryside and on a clear and serene night we see in the sky the magnificence of the Universe. Its extraordinary magnitude, the enormous number of stars. The fantastic galaxies, including the one we belong to, the Milky Way.

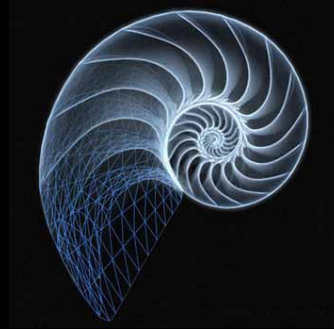
The Manifestation unfolds before our eyes or in our mind with a deep, unfathomable mystery. Why do planets and stars exist? Why do galaxies exist?

Finally we arrive at the deepest question we can ask ourselves:

What is the meaning of the whole Life, as a whole?

The Law of Evolution

- The **Law of Evolution** is a fundamental axiom of Theosophy since it reveals to us the progressive development of all existence.
- Everything, from the smallest to the greatest, is in a gradual and cyclical process of development activating the latent faculties.



No more than Science, does esoteric philosophy admit design or “special creation.” It rejects every claim to the “miraculous,” and accepts nothing outside the uniform and immutable laws of Nature. But it teaches a cyclic law, a double stream of force (or spirit) and of matter, which, starting from the *neutral centre* of Being, develops in its cyclic progress and incessant transformations.

Helena Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 2

We have seen in Chapter 4 how Biology explains the evolution of living organisms. It is related to the constant adaptation of the forms, of the bodies of organisms, to the environment through natural selection.

The Ancient Wisdom or Theosophy tells us that **Evolution** is a general law, a property of the entire Universe. All existence develops progressively through evolution. From the smallest to the largest, from the microcosm to the macrocosm, from the material to the consciousness, everything is evolving.

Evolution is then a gradual and cyclical process of unfolding that occurs in all aspects of Life as we will see.

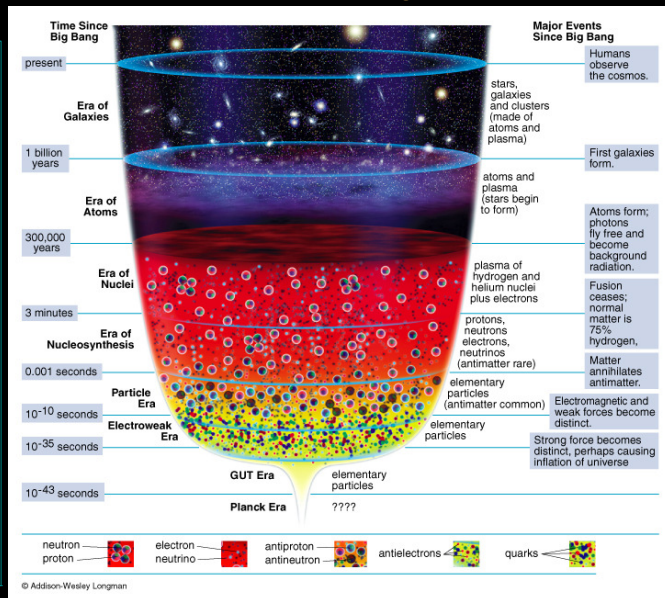
H.P. Blavatsky said that esoteric philosophy does not admit creationist ideas, special or miraculous designs, but the immutable laws of nature operating throughout existence.

Through evolution, life activates the characteristics that are latent, in a potential state. This happens cyclically as we have seen when we have talked about cycles in nature. But it is not a mechanical deployment, something that is totally determined and expressed. Life invents at every step in its constant effort.

And according to Theosophy this is the true meaning of life: **to evolve**.

The evolution of matter

- Matter has not always been as we know it.
- The Big Bang happened 13,700 million years ago.
- A millisecond later the elementary particles appeared.
- Just after 3 minutes the hydrogen nuclei were formed.
- The atoms took more than 300,000 years to appear.



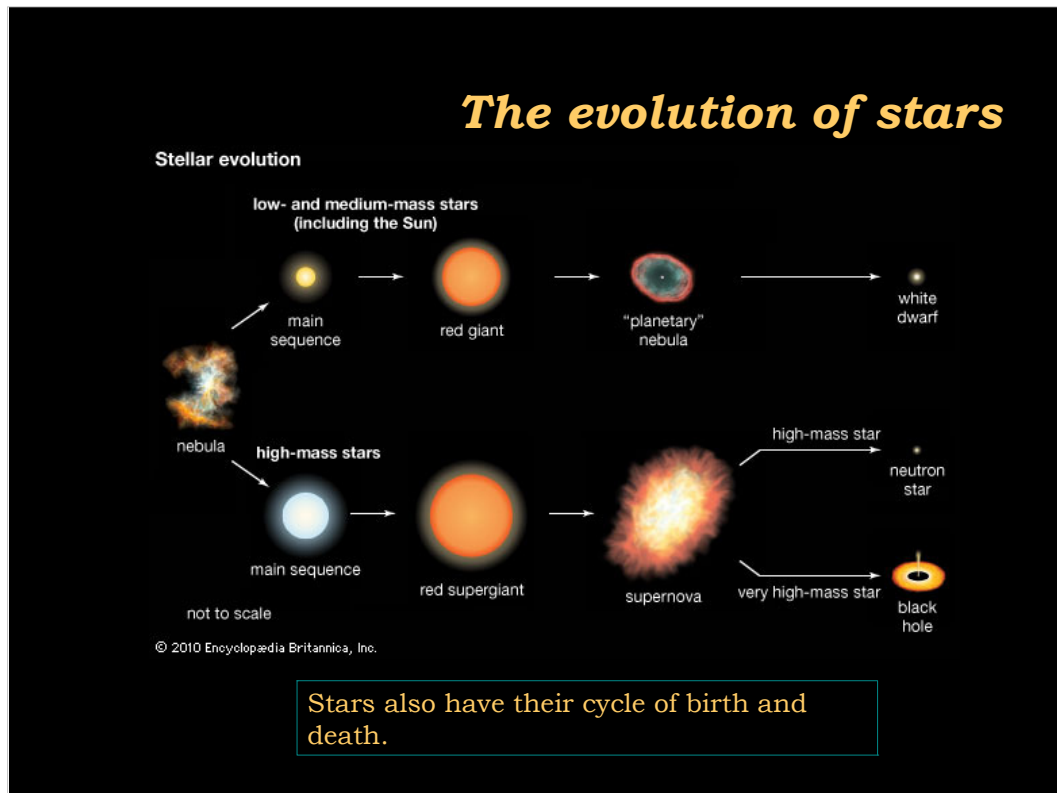
Many people will be surprised when we say that there is an evolution of matter. Astrophysicists show it to us because today we know that matter has not always been as we know it now.

According to the Big Bang theory, of which there are many indications and verifications, the material universe that we know began its existence 13,700 million years ago from a singularity usually called the big bang, although it was not an explosion as we know them but something much more mysterious. The universe was somehow concentrated at one point and began its manifestation with a great and sudden expansion, hence the simile with the explosion.

The state of matter and energy in those moments was very different from what it is now. It is estimated that the elementary particles we know: electrons, protons, neutrons, were formed after a millisecond after the big-bang.

But it is estimated that more than 300,000 years must have elapsed so that thanks to the expansion of the universe and its cooling begin to appear the complete atoms as they exist now. And from the existence of the hydrogen and helium atoms began to form stars producing then other heavier atoms. And it is estimated that the first galaxies were formed at just one billion years ago.

We see then that matter itself has had a series of transformations in the primitive history of the universe to reach its current state and serve as an elementary brick for the formation of life's scenarios. There is then an evolution of the matter although its times are so great that in our daily life we appreciate it as something static.



The stars populate the universe. A star is usually the center of a planetary system. Astronomers are discovering planets outside our solar system at a growing rate, according to what the techniques used allow, since this is a very difficult task.

But the stars are not static. They also have their evolution.

A star arises from the matter accumulated in a nebula which, due to its own gravity, is concentrated and compressed, reaching the point where the pressure and temperature are so great that they allow the fusion reactions in which the hydrogen atoms come together to form helium releasing a large amount of energy and giving birth to a new star.

The diagram illustrates the different phases through which a star will pass depending on whether it is a star of normal mass, such as our Sun, in the upper branch, or it is a star of great mass, highly bright, in the lower branch.

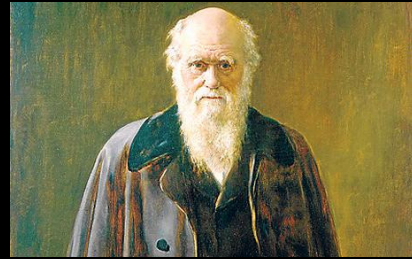
At the end of its main phase the star will have exhausted its fuel and expanded and cooled to become a red giant. Then the death of the star ensues. Normal stars produce a planetary nebula and eventually give rise to a white dwarf. The stars of great mass instead die with an explosion producing a supernova which can end up in a neutron star or in a black hole.

With the material product of the death of previous stars new stars are formed and everything starts again. The atoms of heavy metals like iron and gold have been formed in the explosion when a star dies and have formed our planet by the contribution of the material of countless meteorites.

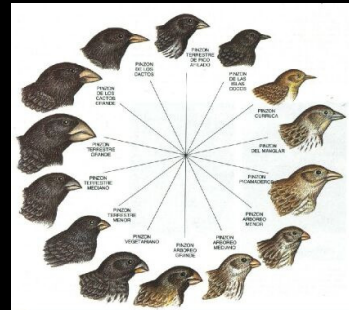
We see therefore that the stars also have their cycle of evolution and with their death they give rise to the regeneration of life.

The evolution of the species

- Lamarck began to sketch the ideas of evolution in 1800.
- Darwin traveled in the Beagle between 1831-1836 and published "The evolution of the species" in 1859.
- He formulated a scientific theory of evolution by means of:
 - Natural selection
 - Sexual selection
 It is the survival of the fittest.
- Mendel presented his work on genetic inheritance in 1866.



Charles Darwin (1809-1892)



Adaptation of the beak of the finches to the available food

Biology explains the process of the evolution of living organisms on the planet. Formerly it was believed that all living beings had been "created" as they are now. Lamarck began to sketch around 1800 the idea that there is an evolution. But the great discoverer of evolution was undoubtedly Charles Darwin (1809-1882).

After patiently observing many species of animals and plants on his journey through the world aboard the Beagle for five years, Darwin had the brilliant understanding of Evolution in Nature. Darwin published his ideas in his famous book *On the Origin of Species* (1859), which was an intellectual revolution in his time. In it he postulated that living organisms are not static but that they change over time, after many generations, to adapt to the environment.

Darwin said that these variations occur through **natural selection**. Small changes or alterations occur that improve or worsen the body's ability to survive and adapt to changing environmental conditions or to a new environment. The fittest survive and have more offspring, thus perpetuating the successful change. As these changes become more acute and multiply, new species are derived.

Darwin changed the current idea that living beings are something static to present a new concept for the incipient Biology, that every living being evolves and that all species are related to each other because they were derived from each other. This change of paradigm found great resistance, even in our days, because it is opposed to the creationist idea of some religions.

Biological evolution

- Organisms evolve from simple structures to more and more complex ones.
- In the DNA lies the biological information of the living being.
- The DNA determines the organic characteristics.
- Changes in DNA produce changes in the organism (mutations).
- Genetic characteristics are transmitted through inheritance.



Subsequent research and molecular biology have only confirmed and defined the process of evolution. Organisms evolve from simple structures to more and more complex ones.

The biological information of an organism is stored in a wonderful macro-molecule that is DNA. It is a memory that contains the instructions to build the organism. Each cell of the organism has a copy of the DNA. One of the wonders of DNA is its ability to replicate itself as Severo Ochoa and Arthur Kornberg discovered. Thanks to DNA and a complex chemical process, the cell can manufacture the proteins that the body needs.

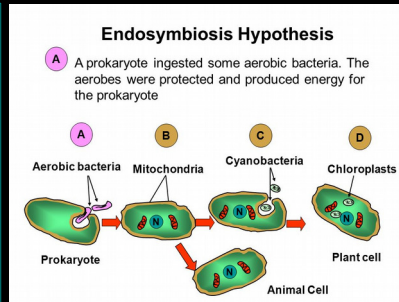
In the DNA are the genes, which are parts with information that determine the organic characteristics such as the form and functioning of the organism. *Genetics* is the study of genes and what they determine. But another part of the DNA that is outside the genes has revealed itself to be equally important, making a gene to be expressed, that is to say that the cell makes protein with its information, or not. They act as activation keys and are studied in *epigenetics*.

The changes are produced by mutations in the DNA that are transmitted thanks to the inheritance by those organisms that have managed to survive and reproduce better thanks to the change.

But in relation to evolution, how do these changes in DNA happen? Are they accidental or do they have any intentional direction (*teleological* evolution)?

The origin of eukaryotic cells

- Lynn Margulis postulated the theory, now accepted, of **endosymbiosis**, the association between simple organisms to form eukaryotic cells.
- The bacteria appeared 3,500 M years ago.
- Eukaryotic cells appeared 1,500 M years ago (perhaps much earlier).
- It was a transcendental step in biological evolution.



Lynn Margulis
(1938 - 2011)

Lynn Margulis argued that symbiosis and reuse have a more important role than mutations

For the vast majority of current biologists, changes in DNA happen randomly, without any direction. Neo-Darwinists argue that the increasing complexity of life is simply due to the triumph of some changes in competition, in the struggle for life. According to them, evolution proceeds *completely* by the method of trial and error.

However, a growing number of evolutionary biologists do not agree with this concept. Among them we must highlight Dr. Lynn Margulis (1938-2011) who postulated the theory, now accepted, of **endosymbiosis**. It is estimated that bacteria appeared on Earth about 3,500 million years ago. According to the endosymbiosis about 1,500 million years ago something special happened between the primitive bacteria. Instead of a cell phagocytosing a bacterium, they bound together, giving rise to a more complex cell, a transcendental step that gave rise to the appearance of eukaryotic cells that make up plants, fungi and animals. For Lynn Margulis cooperation and reuse have a more important role than mutations.

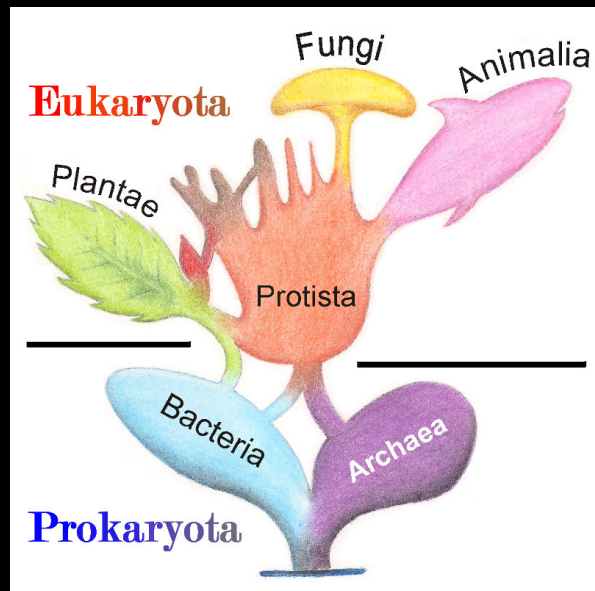
The neo-Darwinists say that variation originates from random mutation, defining mutation as any genetic change. By randomness they mean that characters appear randomly in offspring with respect to selection: if an animal needs a tail, it doesn't develop this tail because it needs it; rather, the animal randomly develops all sorts of changes and those with tails survive to produce more offspring. H.J. Muller, in the 1920s, discovered that not only do X rays increase the fruit-fly mutation rate, but even if fruit flies are isolated completely from X rays, solar radiation, and other environmental perturbation, a spontaneous mutation rate can be measured. Inherited variants do appear spontaneously; they have nothing to do with whether or not they're good for the organism in which they appear. Mutation was then touted as the source of variation- -that upon which natural selection acted — and the neo-Darwinian theory was declared complete. The science remaining required filling in the gaps in a "theory" with very few holes.

Lynn Margulis, *The Third Culture, Gaia is a tough bitch*

Evolution in Biology

- It is produced through changes through successive generations in the inheritable characteristics of a population.
- It only deals with biological organisms, not with consciousness.
- Evolution is proven, but its mechanisms still have many unknowns to discover.

Phylogenetic tree starting from primitive organisms



From many experiments, it is known that if mutagens like X rays or certain chemicals are presented to fruit flies, sick and dead flies result. No new species of fly appears — that is the real rub. Everyone agrees that such mutagens produce inherited variation. Everyone agrees that natural selection acts on this variation. The question is, From where comes the useful variation upon which selection acts? This problem has not yet been solved. But I claim that most significant inherited variation comes from mergers ...

Lynn Margulis, *The Third Culture, Gaia is a tough bitch*

All biological species can be sorted into a descendant tree, the so-called phylogenetic tree whose roots are the ancestral bacteria and archaea from which eukaryotic cells derive and from them all plant species, fungi and animals, including the human organism.

We must emphasize that biological evolution only deals with the evolution of the organism, but what about consciousness? Is not there also an evolution of consciousness?

So biological evolution is proven, but its mechanisms still have unknowns to discover. We have many questions left.

Is Evolution only about adapting to the changing environment by trial and error, or is it the expression of something else?

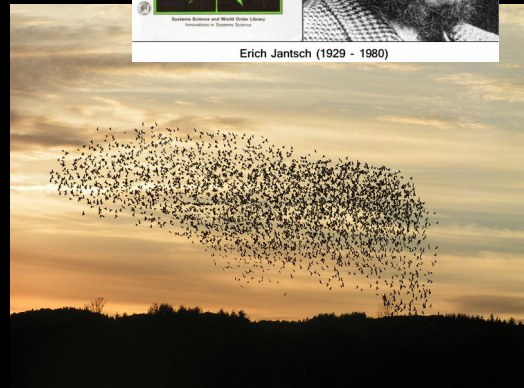
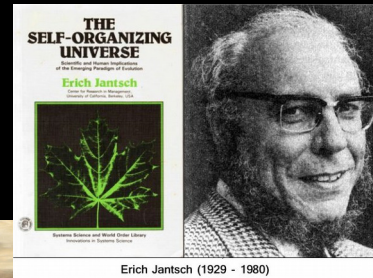
How did life originate?

Was it the fortuitous result of the aggregation of some molecules?

Why were they organized so complex?

Self-organizing systems

- New paradigm of evolution that rejects both creationism and reductionism (random mutations).
- Erich Jantsch exposed it in his work "*The Self-organizing Universe*".
- Applying systems theory to complex systems shows that they self-organize in an unstable equilibrium to evolve.
- General Evolution Theory (GET).



In recent years, a new paradigm of life and evolution is emerging in science. It is the concept of **self-organized systems** that provide a holistic view of life. It rejects both the characteristic creationism of theism and the reductionism that maintains that changes in organisms occur entirely at random and are the processes of selection and inheritance responsible for perpetuating successful changes. Self-organization is described generically as the process by which structural patterns of the interactions of the components of a system arise spontaneously.

Erich Jantsch (1929-1980) was an astrophysicist who turned away from reductionism and mechanism by researching and writing a remarkable book: "*The Self-Organizing Universe*" about Evolution as something holistic and self-organized by life. Jantsch applied systems theory to complex systems to show how they self-organize in an unstable equilibrium that allows them to evolve. Jantsch was inspired by the precursor work of the chemist Ilya Romanovich Prigogine (1917-2003, Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1977) about the theory of dissipative structures that are not in static equilibrium. Lynn Margulis among others read and helped to completely or partially correct the manuscript of the book. Proposing cutting edge ideas against the general current cost Erich Jantsch to be marginalized by most of his colleagues in the academic world.

But Jantsch was not the only one who explored the paradigm of self-organized systems. Fritjof Capra, the author of the famous book "*The Tao of Physics*" also left Physics and devoted himself to systems theory and ecology arguing that only from a holistic point of view can we understand life.

Erich Jantsch says in his book:

This new paradigm is the paradigm of self-organization. With it, an age-old vision is finding its scientific foundations.

In current theory, evolution is usually considered under the aspects of adaptation and survival.

The dire stereotypes of the "survival of the species" and of evolution as a "game in which the only reward is to stay in the game" exert their fateful influence even in the images we hold of ourselves and of human life in general. Such a "heroic pessimism" is further enhanced by theories which view the origin of life as a mere accident, so unlikely that it perhaps occurred only once in the whole universe.

But life is more than survival and the environment to which it adapts, itself evolves and adapts. To grasp this co-evolution in a non-dualistic perspective required the development of a paradigm capable of dealing with self-transcendence, the reaching out beyond the boundaries of one's own existence, the joy of creation. The emergent paradigm of self-organization permits the elaboration of a vision based on the interconnectedness of natural dynamics at all levels of evolving micro- and macrosystems. From such an interconnectedness of the human world with overall evolution springs a new sense of meaning.

Erich Jantsch, *The self-organizing Universe*

As we see this new scientific approach to evolution proposes that everything, beings and the environment, including physical elements, are integrated as a large system and that they seek to transform themselves and transcend their current state. That is, we are talking about an evolution that is not merely a process of adaptation to the changing environment.

The theory of Gaia formulated by James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis is in this line. Lovelock argues that the entire planet, including living beings, earth, water, air, minerals and gases, works as a large organism in homeostatic equilibrium (not static) that manages to perpetuate life in it.

Lovelock and others demonstrated how there are many systems and cycles on Earth that self-regulate making the conditions of life for their prosperity.

These holistic approaches based on the theories of self-organized systems lead to a much deeper understanding of the process of evolution of Life as a whole.

Then we see that little by little Science is questioning the reductionist, the neo-Darwinist concept, that evolution proceeds at random, entirely without direction and without meaning.

Is there an intention in Evolution?

- Does Evolution proceed at random or is there an intention?

- Are the changes random or is there *teleology* (intentionality)?

- Does Life have a fortuitous origin?

- The esoteric philosophy states that:

- Life evolves as a whole trying to unfold its potential.

- Intelligence is distributed in everything.

Intentionality in evolution is an old idea as Erich Jantsch points out and being a characteristic of the system itself, that is to say of Life itself, and not of an external god, it provides a transcendent sense of life, responding to our Initial question: What is the meaning of life?

Life as a whole evolves by unfolding its latent faculties, inventing at every step. The intelligence that carries this forward is distributed in Life itself, in every being, in every atom, in all natural laws.

In this sense, Helena Blavatsky has clearly indicated that the intention is behind the evolutionary process:

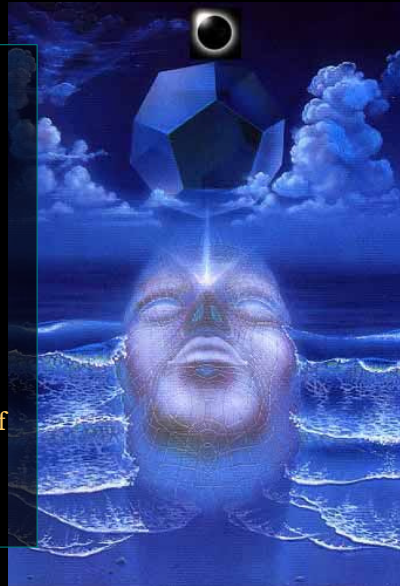
“Natural Selection” is no Entity; but a convenient phrase for describing the mode in which the survival of the fit and the elimination of the unfit among organisms is brought about in the struggle for existence. ... But Natural Selection, ... *as a Power*, is in reality a pure myth; especially when resorted to as an explanation of the origin of species. It is merely a representative term expressive of the manner in which “useful variations” are stereotyped when produced. Of itself, “it” can produce nothing, and only operates on the rough material presented to “it.”

The real question at issue is: what Cause — combined with other secondary causes — produces the “variations” in the organisms themselves. Many of these secondary causes are purely physical, climatic, dietary, etc., etc. Very well. But beyond the secondary aspects of organic evolution, a deeper principle has to be sought for. The materialist’s “spontaneous variations,” and “accidental divergencies” are ... powerless to account for the stupendous complexities and marvels of the human body for instance. ... The underlying physiological variation in species... is a sub-conscious intelligence pervading matter, ultimately traceable to a reflection of the Divine and Dhyan-Chohanian wisdom.

Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 2

Evolution of Consciousness

- The conscience evolves at the same time as the organism evolves by which it expresses itself.
- Evolution is essentially:
 - Learning
 - Development of latent capacities
- Psychological evolution.
- Evolution of the inner being, of the Monad.
- Everything is evolving.



The great ancient philosophers have postulated that consciousness has a process of evolution that goes hand in hand with the evolution of form, integrated into the great process of the Evolution of Life. The consciousness learns and models new forms, and these in turn allow a new learning and deployment of the faculties that are in potential state.

Evolution is a process of learning, of discovery, of unfolding the latent capacities of consciousness to transform them into active attributes. Our mind and our emotions, our entire psyche, evolve. The experiences we have, happiness and suffering, learning, the conquest of knowledge, the development of sensitivity, vision, all this is a process of soul maturation, different in each one, but which exists equally in everyone.

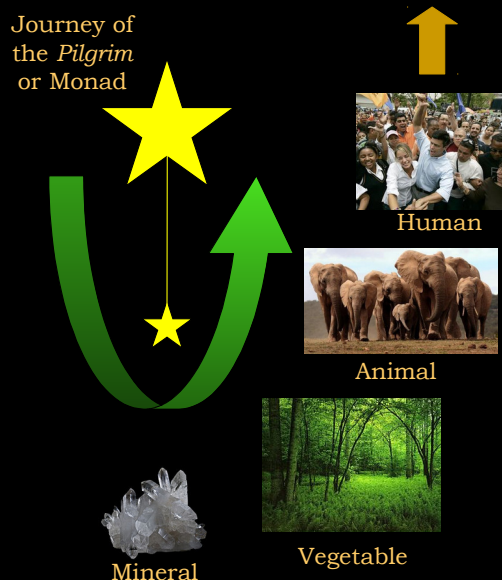
Therefore, the destiny of the human conscience or the spiritual soul is to **unfold its potential**, going from a savage, primitive state, to a state of lucidity, of effective power, of fullness, of self-awareness and of perception of its own greatness.

The soul of man is immortal, and its future is the future of a thing whose growth and splendour has no limit

Mabel Collins, *The Idyll Of The White Lotus*

Stages of consciousness

- The divine spark passes through various stages from its emanation until it blossoms awake and self-conscious.
- The Monad goes through stages for very long periods.
- The mineral, vegetable, animal and human kingdoms are stages of the journey of the Monad, the *pilgrim*.
- The Monads did not emanate at once, but in waves.
- The vegetables and animals are our younger brothers.



Each Monad or emanated but undetached spark of the One realizes a cycle of very great evolution happening through several stages. According to Blavatsky and other theosophical authors, the Mónada makes a pilgrimage through increasingly complex material vehicles that allow it to experiment, not directly, but through the structures or Principles that it creates. Firstly, it identifies with its vehicles and then gradually acquires what we know as consciousness.

The passage of the Monad for each of these stages includes, according to these authors, a very long period of time during which she gathers the essence of the experiences. We know these stages as the Realms of Nature: the mineral, the vegetable, the animal and the human are the manifestations of waves of Monads in different stages of their evolution.

The Monads did not emanate at the same time, and those in the vegetable kingdom are younger than those in the animal and human kingdoms.

Life sleeps on the stone,
dreams on the plant, is awake in the animal
and he knows that he is awake in man.

Chinese proverb

Darwin observed and explained the evolution of biological organisms producing increasingly complex and adapted forms. The esoteric tradition speaks of an evolution of Consciousness in which there is also an order. There are no beings that have been more or less favored in the Manifestation. Animals are no more disadvantaged than humans or inferior to them. His only misfortune is the cruelty with which the human race treats him when he should be more compassionate and condescending since he has a superior intelligence. Present humanity emanated before those that are now animals, in the same way that in a school we see children of different ages, but each one in its course according to age. And all, all beings, we are part of the fire of Life and we are in the process of evolution. The fire evolves with us. We are the fire.

The duality of the world



Despite this bright future, when we look around us it seems that the splendor of the human soul is very far away.

Many calamities provoked by the human being continuously plague our world. There are international wars, inter-tribal wars in a hungry country promoted by greedy people who struggle to take control of their riches, populations in which women are horribly discriminated against and have no access to education or independent living, exploitation of children making them work hard, conflicts in the family circle and in the workplace, to mention a few everyday misfortunes.

Human beings have caused so much damage to the planet by the excessive ambition that we are facing the certain danger of producing a disaster in life on it producing a global warming caused by human activity. And not to mention the most ominous: the cruel and inconsiderate treatment that humans have towards animals exploiting them without compassion, torturing and killing them for fun or for their own economic benefit without considering them as a part of Life that has its own rights and it deserves respect.

Paradoxically, the same human species that generates so much suffering is also capable of the most sublime. The human race is also capable of manifesting love, expressing beauty through art, cooperating to achieve an end, helping others selflessly, reaching the crests of the scientific knowledge of the universe, and embarking the mind on the adventure of philosophy.

Throughout history have appeared geniuses that have left us samples of the great achievements of which the human mind is capable, and also many anonymous people who are not popular, give their best in their daily lives and are a beacon for those around them.

Then what is the mystery behind this ambiguity, of this duality of human nature? Why is there in us a luminous side capable of the most sublime and a dark side capable of the most monstrous?

This question leads us to examine the old problem of good and evil.

Let's define good and evil

- When do we say that something is good or bad?
- Relationship with a subject.
 - ... It's good for me
 - ... it's bad for our people
- What happens when something is good or bad depending on how you look at it?
- Relativity of values:
 - If something is good for us, will it always be good, in all circumstances?



The glass
half full / half empty

What is good, what is evil? This is the classic question of ethics, to which religions and philosophies have tried to answer. If it is said that the human being must do good, it is essential to know what is good and what is wrong.

The problem is that the perception of the good and the bad vary with each individual. It is a problem that implies that we give a value judgment as subjects, and therefore it is subjective.

We say that something is good if it helps us in our purposes, if it causes us pleasure and joy, and on the contrary, something is bad if it makes us difficult or causes us pain.

Evil in many cultures is a broad term used to describe morally negative acts or thoughts that are cruel, unfair or selfish. Evil is usually contrasted with good, which describes acts that are kind, just or unselfish. In some religions, evil is an active force, usually personified as an entity such as Satan in Christianity or *Angra Mainyu* in Zoroastrianism, being. *Mainyu* = mind, *Angra* = destructive, malignant, or *Ahriman* in Manichaeism.

The evaluation of something as good or bad depends also on the extent to which we look, both in relation to all beings and in relation to time. Something that looks good in the immediate can be bad when it is examined over a longer period of time. For example, consider the case of parents who protect their young child by preventing them from going to places where there is a certain risk of falling and hurting him. In principle, it is a protection and it seems a good thing without a doubt. But if we look more broadly, we see that perhaps that attitude prevents the child from learning to withstand a fall, develop a certain ability to balance and can even cause the child to grow up with an important lack: to trust in himself. Taking controlled risks is something we must learn in life to progress. From this other point of view, it seems that parents unknowingly do more harm than good.

Good and evil are relative, and what we consider good may not be in other circumstances; but purity of intention produces two direct results. The first is that it frees us from the internal conflict that torments the lives of all the unscrupulous and produces a sick mental state. The other is that it purifies the mind by degrees and allows the light of Intuition to enlighten it more and more. One of the most undesirable consequences of making compromises with evil is that very soon it envelops us in a vicious circle from which it is very difficult to get out. The acts, thoughts and impure emotions cloud more and more the Intuition, which diminishes our ability to see if a certain act is good or bad, and entangles us more in the bad. This is what happens to normal people who gradually slip into a bad life and do not even realize that they are doing improper things: their intuitional function of discernment has been quenched and interrupted.

I.K. Taimni, *Self Culture in the Light of the Ancient Wisdom*

Are there then good and evil as principles? Are there two universal principles always in conflict?

The subjectivity of what we consider good and bad makes us think that this duality is only an illusion that disappears when we see things from an integral point of view, encompassing life as a whole and understanding the whole process.

What then causes this illusion?

Since we have a perception of good and evil that is subjective, it takes place in the subject, in our mind, and therefore it is she who creates the values of good and bad and assigns them to the facts, circumstances and people who they produced them.

The cause of evil

Evil has no existence *per se*
and is but the absence of good
and exists but for him
who is made its victim.

K.H.

There is only one good, knowledge,
and one evil, ignorance

Socrates

Ignorance is the root
and mother of all evil

Plato



What did the philosophers tell us about this problem, since ethics is one of the great branches of philosophy?

At least two thirds of our miseries come from human stupidity, human bad intention and those great motivators and justifiers of bad intention and stupidity: Dogmatic idealism and the proselytizing stamp in the name of political and religious ideas.

Aldous Huxley

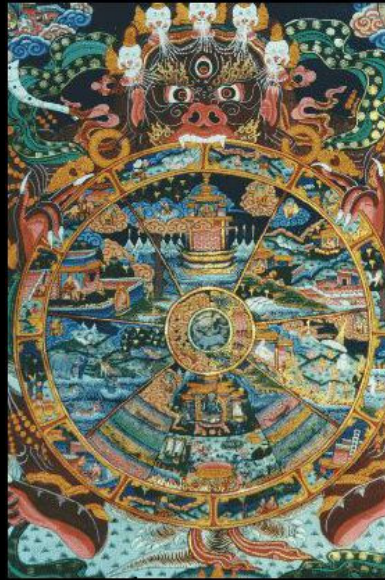
Most agree that evil is simply ignorance. Ignorance makes us make mistakes, make bad decisions and act in a way that harms others and harms us, according to the law of karma.

I wonder if there is such a thing as evil. Please pay attention, come with me, let's investigate together. We say that there is good and evil. There is envy and love, and we affirm that envy is bad and love is good. Why do we divide life by calling this "good" and "bad" that, thereby creating the conflict of opposites? It is not that there is no envy, hatred, brutality in the human mind and heart, absence of compassion, of love, but why do we divide life in the thing called "good" and the thing called "evil"? Is not there really only one thing, which is an inattentive mind?

Jiddu Krishnamurti, The conflict of opposites

Avidya, ignorance

- *Avidya* is the essential ignorance about Life.
- It means error, illusion.
- It is to take the ephemeral as permanent.
- Separativity: the great illusion of the self.
- Evolution is to change to the state of **Vidya**, is to become conscious, wise.



The philosophies of India have called this ignorance **Avidya** (in Sanskrit *a* = without, *vidya* = wisdom). It is not ignorance about historical facts or details about life, but fundamental ignorance about the laws of the Universe and of Life. Avidya is an illusory state of the mind, in which we take a fragmented perception as if it were reality. We believe that the ephemeral is permanent, as when we believe that death is something that will happen to others but not to us. Avidya is the state of ignorance about the One Life, the belief in separate entities without seeing the whole process. One of the most vibrant and clear expressions of the ideas of the Ancient Wisdom about evil can be found in one of the letters that the spiritual Master or Mahatma known as Koot Homi (also Kuthumi or K.H.) sent to Mr. Sinnet through Helena P. Blavatsky. K.H. says in letter number 10 (number 88 in chronological order):

Our ideas on Evil. Evil has no existence *per se* and is but the absence of good and exists but for him who is made its victim. It proceeds from two causes, and no more than good is it an independent cause in nature. Nature is destitute of goodness or malice; she follows only immutable laws when she either gives life and joy, or sends suffering [and] death, and destroys what she has created. Nature has an antidote for every poison and her laws a reward for every suffering. The butterfly devoured by a bird becomes that bird, and the little bird killed by an animal goes into a higher form. It is the blind law of necessity and the eternal fitness of things, and hence cannot be called Evil in Nature. The real evil proceeds from human intelligence and its origin rests entirely with reasoning man who dissociates himself from Nature. Humanity then alone is the true source of evil. Evil is the exaggeration of good, the progeny of human selfishness and greediness. Think profoundly and you will find that save death — which is no evil but a necessary law, and accidents which will always find their reward in a future life — the origin of every evil whether small or great is in human action, in man whose intelligence makes him the one free agent in Nature.

It is not nature that creates diseases, but man. The latter's mission and destiny in the economy of nature is to die his natural death brought by old age; save accident, neither a savage nor a wild (free) animal die of disease. Food, sexual relations, drink, are all natural necessities of life; yet excess in them brings on disease, misery, suffering, mental and physical, and the latter are transmitted as the greatest evils to future generations, the progeny of the culprits. Ambition, the desire of securing happiness and comfort for those we love, by obtaining honours and riches, are praiseworthy natural feelings but when they transform man into an ambitious cruel tyrant, a miser, a selfish egotist they bring untold misery on those around him; on nations as well as on individuals. All this then — food, wealth, ambition, and a thousand other things we have to leave unmentioned, becomes the source and cause of evil whether in its abundance or through its absence. Become a glutton, a debauchee, a tyrant, and you become the originator of diseases, of human suffering and misery. Lack all this and you starve, you are despised as a nobody and the majority of the herd, your fellow men, make of you a sufferer your whole life. Therefore it is neither nature nor an imaginary Deity that has to be blamed, but human nature made vile by selfishness. Think well over these few words; work out every cause of evil you can think of and trace it to its origin and you will have solved one-third of the problem of evil. And now, after making due allowance for evils that are natural and cannot be avoided, — and so few are they that I challenge the whole host of Western metaphysicians to call them evils or to trace them directly to an independent cause — I will point out the greatest, the chief cause of nearly two thirds of the evils that pursue humanity ever since that cause became a power. It is religion under whatever form and in whatsoever nation. It is the sacerdotal caste, the priesthood and the churches; it is in those illusions that man looks upon as sacred, that he has to search out the source of that multitude of evils which is the great curse of humanity and that almost overwhelms mankind. Ignorance created Gods and cunning took advantage of the opportunity. Look at India and look at Christendom and Islam, at Judaism and Fetichism. It is priestly imposture that rendered these Gods so terrible to man; it is religion that makes of him the selfish bigot, the fanatic that hates all mankind out of his own sect without rendering him any better or more moral for it. It is belief in God and Gods that makes two-thirds of humanity the slaves of a handful of those who deceive them under the false pretence of saving them. Is not man ever ready to commit any kind of evil if told that his God or Gods demand the crime? Voluntary victim of an illusionary God, the abject slave of his crafty ministers, the Irish, Italian and Slavonian peasant will starve himself and see his family starving and naked to feed and clothe his padre and pope. For two thousand years India groaned under the weight of caste, Brahmins alone feeding on the fat of the land, and to-day the followers of Christ and those of Mahomet are cutting each other's throats in the names of and for the greater glory of their respective myths. Remember the sum of human misery will never be diminished unto that day when the better portion of humanity destroys in the name of Truth, morality, and universal charity, the altars of their false gods.

Koot Hoomi, *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett, Letter No 10, Chronological No 88*

So what is the meaning of life?

- **Learning:** evolution is learning.
- **Love:** vivify the relationships that are part of Life.
- Everyone must discover what Life means to him.
- It is an evolutionary understanding, it changes and becomes deeper as we mature.



Returning to our initial question, what is the meaning of Life?

We have seen that the whole Universe is in evolution, that the very process of Evolution is inherent to everything, from matter to human being.

Evolution implies learning, not only on the part of the individuals that make up a system but learning of the system itself. There is a collective intelligence and there is a collective memory. The neural networks of our brain self-organize as they learn. Neurons connect with each other in different ways with our learning.

If relationships are enormously important in life, what makes these relationships fresh, lasting, satisfying and enabling learning and happiness for all? Without a doubt, love. When we truly love, selflessly, we vivify the relationship, we experience the essential identity between the loved one and us. Love is therefore an essential quality of life.

People who have been on the verge of death see their lives go through their minds quickly, making a recount. And there is a general coincidence that at that moment they saw their life go by contemplating two fundamental aspects: how much they had learned and how much they had loved. Neither the power, nor the acquired riches, nor the prestige, nor the accumulated knowledge are relevant at the moment of the final balance of our incarnation. What really matters for the inner being is how much we have learned and how much we have loved.

We can say that the purpose of Life is to learn and love to evolve, but what does this mean for each one of us? It is something that we have to discover for ourselves. Keeping in mind the essential meaning of life will make us avoid ignorance about it, Avidya. It does not matter so much what we do but how we do it. We can study, work as anyone but if we do it attentively, consciously, learning and loving the beings that are in contact with us, we will be taking advantage of the incarnation and this will open us to ever broader perspectives on life and evolution. It is a gradual process of maturation and awareness

To think



Watch, think, investigate, inquire ...
Make the following questions or thoughts suggestions
But don't stay here, ask yourself and find out.

- 1- Think of examples of actions that seem "good" a priori but that, viewed more broadly or over time, reveal to be "bad".
- 2- Do good and evil correspond with Spirit (Purusha) and Matter (Prakriti)?
- 3- What examples can we find of collective intelligence?
- 4- Are we forced by evolution? Does it limit our freedom to choose?
- 5- Is human development a solitary process? Reason the answer.