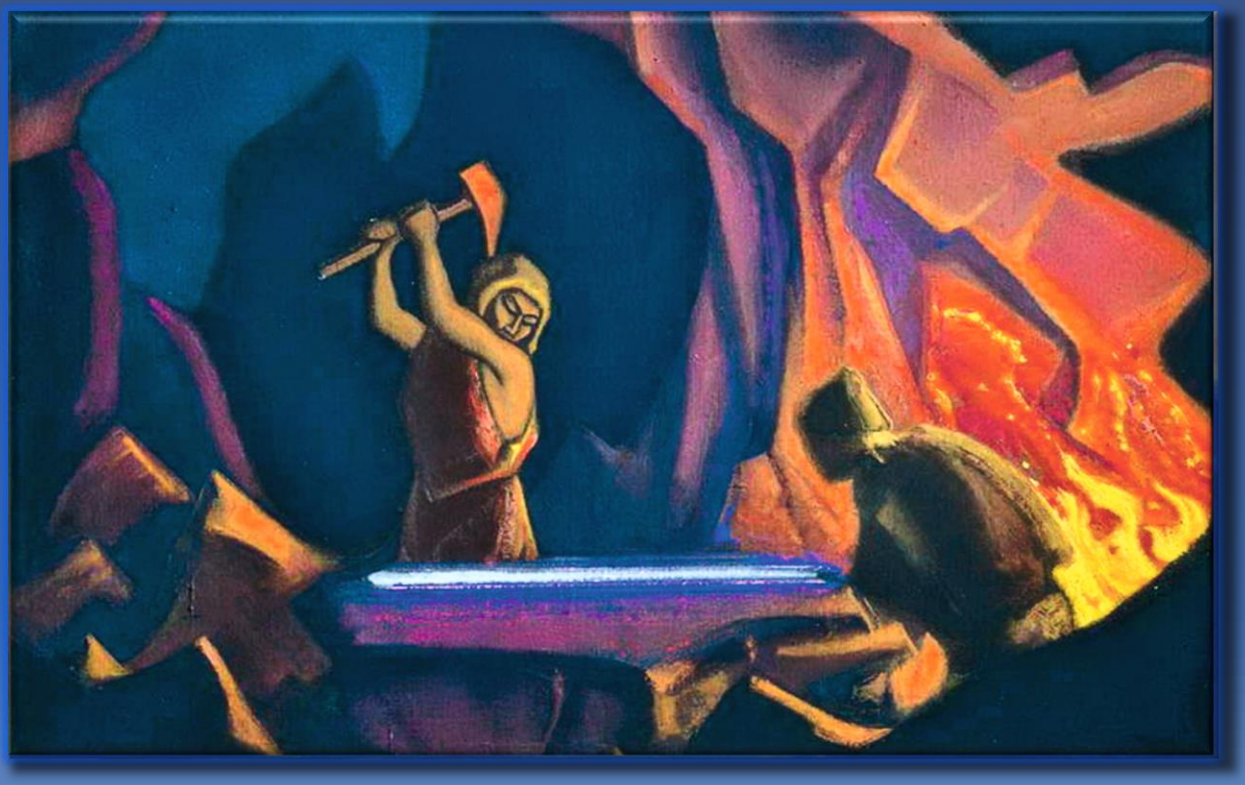
LEOBRAND

Letters on Living Ethics

Introduction to Agni Yoga



8. The meaning of suffering

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Cover picture: "Forging the sword" painting by Nicholas Roerich 1941

The meaning of suffering

1. What is suffering?

The question about suffering and afflictions has occupied the best thinkers of humanity at all times. The greatest efforts have been made to answer this question. Only the knowledge of the law of cause and effect (karma) as well as that of rebirth brought light into this difficult question. In the Christian Occident, where no attention is paid to the cosmic laws that guide and regulate our destiny, the question of the meaning of suffering has therefore not yet been able to receive a satisfactory answer. Rather, statements were made that can never satisfy a fair minded person.

Dostojewskij gives us an apt example of the spiritual dead end into which man reaches through the loss of knowledge about the laws of fate or through ignorance of them in his novel „The Brothers Karamazov". The hero of this novel cannot reconcile the suffering of the sorely afflicted child with the justice of God. He is deeply indignant and exclaims: "it's not God that I don't accept (...) only I most respectfully return him the ticket."

Dostojewskij smashed because of his ignorance of cosmic laws. His novel hero Karamazov contemplated the child's seemly blameless torment without the past of previous incarnations and without a future. He did not know any pre-existence and after-existence of the soul and therefore related suffering to a unique life on earth. In this case, of course, the child's "hellish" torment would be absolutely unjust and incomprehensible. If, however, he had known or admitted the hypothesis that this little child with its "unjust tears" had lived through not only one but several earthly existences in which this one had itself incurred heavy guilt through the same or similar torment of defenceless beings and the suffering experienced an suffered in this life was an old debt now paid off down to the last penny, he would not have used the harsh words against God. Such views come about through the constant confusion of God and karma in the Occident.

To one who doubted the eternal poetic justice, the Buddha spoke: „Once you committed the same wickedness that today your enemy is consciously or unconsciously inflicting on you. Therefore, endure in silence. You atone for nothing but your own guilt."

Suffering is mostly a self-inflicted consequence of a transgression of cosmic laws. Therefore, the study of karma as well as the law of rebirth is essential, for this opens up the true perspectives on the meaning of suffering.

The clearest and most exhaustive answer to the question of the meaning of suffering was given by the Great Master of Wisdom Gautama Buddha. As the son of an Indian king, he recognised the utter nothingness of earthly goods; as a hermit and monk, however, he also recognised the impossibility of attaining perfection through asceticism and complete renunciation of earthly goods. In essence, the original, pure teaching of Buddha, which over the millennia has been watered down by theologians just as Christianity has, is nothing other than the teaching about suffering and overcoming it.

Buddha proclaimed the four noble truths about suffering. The first sacred truth about suffering says: "Birth is suffering, death is suffering, union with what is displeasing is suffering, separation from what is pleasing is suffering, not to get what one wants is suffering, the whole life of the personality is suffering."

The second sacred truth about the source and origin of suffering says:" Tantha or suffering is a truth about the arising of suffering. Trishna or the aspiration to be, which leads from one birth to another, together with a thirst for lusts, thirst for wealth and power, is a source for the arising of suffering."

"The third sacred truth about the cessation of suffering is a liberation from desires, a renunciation of all selfish motives and the annihilation of the will to physical existence." Obviously, what is meant here is the overcoming of matter and the liberation from the wheel of rebirth through the attainment of a higher state of consciousness in the "Arhat" and not the annihilation of life itself. Life cannot be destroyed but continues in the subtle realms. Physical life forms the prerequisite for the evolution of the spirit that immersed itself in matter.

In the Occident, therefore, the Buddhist term "nirvana" was completely misunderstood. It does not mean dissolution into nothingness or a state of blissful tranquillity, but increased creativeness due to greater abilities and increased responsibility. Only at the level of the "Arhat" or "Master of Wisdom" is the human being able to create life in the elemental realm on his own responsibility. This presupposes the living out or overcoming of the lower personality - that is, the annihilation of the will to physical existence - but this is outweighed a thousandfold by entering into a divine or Higher Consciousness. This process, however, cannot yet be comprehended by the human being who is stuck in egoism. It is a state of happiness in which one overcomes earthly suffering and has only compassion towards the suffering creature. However, this is not an escape from suffering or a denial of life, but overcoming suffering through knowledge of its causes. He who primarily flees life could not overcome suffering at all, which is why LIVING ETHICS teaches: "Flee not from life." Only those who seek perfection through work in matter attain the state of Nirvana.

It can never be the purpose of human evolution to commit the same mistakes from life to life and to take on the same suffering without end. Evolution or development only becomes visible when we avoid the mistakes, thus freeing ourselves from suffering and transforming it into joy and compassion.

The Buddha's fourth truth about salvation, or the path to the cessation of suffering, is the noble eightfold path, namely: "Right understanding, right thinking, right speech, right action, right living, right labour, right vigilance and self-discipline, and right concentration."

a) Suffering as the antithesis of joy

LIVING ETHICS teaches that the nature of our “Higher Self", which is related to the nature of the higher cosmic beginning, is happiness. But we see from the Buddha's expositions and from the practice of life that, on the other hand, the nature of our "Lower Self" or "personality" is suffering. The twofold nature of the human being requires that both bliss and suffering, joy as well as sorrow, pleasure and pain are attributes of human matter and in this sense form the opposite poles of spirit and matter.

Bipolarity is a basic law of life. Without opposite poles there is no tension, without tension there is no movement, without movement there is no life. Therefore, life requires the two opposing poles of joy and suffering. Suffering is thus a cosmic necessity in the unfolding of human consciousness.

The human being is bipolar in two respects. Firstly, in relation to his constitutional make-up of spirit and matter and secondly, through the separation of the primordial beginnings, i.e. the male and female poles originally united in one entity. Man and woman since then resemble two separate magnetic poles seeking each other. The suffering caused by the loss of the original partner will be transformed into joy when they find each other again.

Thus, in the twofold nature of man and in his incompleteness on the other side lies the main cause of his sufferings. The aspirations and desires of our spirit and our "Higher Self" are opposed to the aspirations and desires of the material nature of man - the "Lower Self". The eternal struggle between the higher beginning, which stimulates us to refinement and rising perfection, and the lower beginning, which draws us downwards to materialisation and concentration, forms the cause or "root of all evils" of our sufferings. When in this conflict the higher beginning finally wins, man feels true joy on the other side, in spite of the extremely painful abandonment of his personality. But as long as the lower beginning remains victorious and strives to take possession of everything, to keep everything back for itself and to exploit everything for its own benefit, man will have to experience more and more suffering. Imperfection always and everywhere awakens in man the longing for perfection and improvement. This applies to the spiritual realm as well as to the earthly. This struggle can therefore never end as long as the earth is the scene of our struggle for the perfection of the states of existence. Only imperfect states give man the possibility of development and unfoldment. Even the saint can only develop in an imperfect world that needs improvement. In a perfect world he would

have no possibility of development. Thus evil as the antithesis of good has its cosmic justification, since man can only develop between the polar states of tension. Many do well in this life what they did badly in earlier ones.

It is the same with suffering. Only when we are submerged in suffering and unhappiness does the elementary longing for happiness and joy awaken. Whoever remains stuck in matter, for him it becomes suffering, because the real human being, namely the essential and lasting value in him, has its origin in the spirit. In order to be able to feel happiness, joy and painlessness as well as heavenly bliss, the soul must have come to know their opposite poles in the world of imperfection through suffering. Only one who has experienced the painful states in oneself can properly appreciate being free from them.

b) Two types of suffering

There is no human being on earth who has not already suffered mental suffering or physical pain in one form or another. The differences are in the extent and nature of the suffering. We see in suffering a painful sensation in spirit, soul and body. In accordance with the twofold nature of man, which consists of visible and invisible matter or of one physical and several subtle bodies, man also feels suffering of three kinds, namely physical, mental and spiritual. It is self-evident that a spiritually less developed person feels predominantly physical suffering, i.e. suffering of his body. As soon as a person feels spiritual and mental suffering, feels remorse or suffering of a similar kind within himself, this is already a sign of awakened consciousness or of the growth of the human spirit.

2. When did suffering enter the world?

a) The descent into matter

Suffering arose at the moment of the connection of the human spirit with matter, for suffering is this immersion or wrestling of that individualized divine spirit spark which transforms the lower animal man, who has evolved from the animal kingdom, into a spirit or god man. In order to induce the spirit soul to make this sacrifice, the state of union with matter must be associated with numerous comforts, otherwise the physical life of man would be unbearable from the beginning.

So we see that dwelling in matter has a power of attraction. It grants the illusion of the stability of value of earthly goods and a spell of power and amenities. If these advantages were not given, there would be no incentive for the human spirit to connect with matter. As a particle of the divine "Ego", man himself becomes a creative being and thereby very easily forgets his divine origin. The illusion of material splendour exerts such an attraction on the creative human being that - according to oriental legend - even gods (meaning higher masters and archangels) who voluntarily descended into matter also forgot their divinity finally, this also applies to Satan, who exchanged the glory of divine fellowship with the self-glory of his person and also tries to bind his followers to the glamour of the earthly world. However, liberation from matter is inevitable. The longer it is postponed, the more the animal nature (lower fourness) in man resists to follow the striving of the divine monad in order to approach the divine origin again, the more painful the separation from matter and the ascent into the higher realms of the spirit becomes. Matter is transient and subject to constant change. All desires and endeavours to keep the spirit in gross matter, instead of the other way round, to spiritualise matter, can only end in suffering and pain.

b) The beginning of negative karma

Due to the separation of the sexes in the middle of the third root race, negative karma and thus suffering began. At the same time, the total attachment to matter and the gradual

forgetting of the divine origin set in. According to biblical legend, this was the expulsion from paradise. From that moment on, man had to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, i.e. take up work in matter through suffering experiences. Human consciousness was now in the process of special development, good and evil could be distinguished, and the time had come when man had to take responsibility for his thinking, desiring, speaking and acting, which could not yet be expected of the underage. Also an ignorant child can never be held accountable as much as an adult. Thus, also the karma of the first root races remained without after-effects and could be lived out in the respective life without tragic feelings. Evil brings about evil, good has correspondingly pleasant effects. If this were not so, there would be no order in the world. Surely many people will ask: Why do I of all people have to suffer so much, why do I have such a difficult life, others have it much easier? In such cases, the Christian churches, ignorant of the law of karma, declare: "Whom God loves, He lets suffer." But this thesis is neither fair nor reasonable. How could an all-just and merciful God punish a man even in advance? Our sufferings must therefore have self-inflicted causes in the past, i.e. they must be reactions to actions that we ourselves performed centuries or millennia ago.

Of course, most of the time we can't remember. It is good for people not to know their past. We have all failed in the past; and it is better to be the payer, i.e. the sufferer, and to learn from the mistakes than to make new mistakes out of ignorance, as can be observed every day with ignorant people and people of weak character.

How many people are currently creating terrible karma for the future by their bad deeds? So the suffering can't end for a long time. All efforts of a social and political nature are in vain as long as they are not preceded by spiritual renewal. But people usually only become more decent and better when they feel the suffering they have created themselves.

No one knows the time nor the place where he must serve his negative actions. However, reparation is inevitable, because without it there is no harmony and no justice in the universe. But the question remains to be clarified, why did man have to immerse himself in matter at all and why did he have to cause negative karma? Man is a part of God or a part of the divine "Self" and thus a part of God has sunk into matter through man in order to sustain life in the universe. The other reason lies in bipolarity. He who has not known suffering cannot know joy, he who has not felt hatred and unkindness cannot appreciate love. Even goodness requires evil in order to unfold. Without bipolarity there is no life and no development, and thus suffering is the natural antipole of joy. After all, there are not only suffering incarnations. Sorrow and joy alternate, and the happy hours of life very often prevail. Those who overcame suffering with understanding will feel joy afterwards.

c) From the cradle to the grave

Buddha taught: "Birth is suffering, death is suffering." Suffering already begins with the birth of the child, not only through the physical act of birth of the mother, which is and should also be associated with pain; for only from pain can joy blossom. For the new earthling, too, a painful death in the Subtle World has preceded its birth. But no sooner has the entry into the new life been completed than new sufferings and sorrowful experiences arise. Beginning with the school years, the apprenticeship and the entry into professional life, up to marriage and family life, the stages of life are not entirely spared from suffering. Every development, every growth and earthly existence itself are accompanied by inevitable and unchangeable suffering. Our accumulated karma follows us like a shadow.

Finally, with suffering, life on earth ends. Numerous wishes and many hopes are buried in the ocean of disappointments. The dear body withers and is abandoned to decay. Even skilful cosmetic surgery cannot stop this. For people who do not believe in the immortality of the soul, the agonising death already begins with the gradual cessation of bodily functions, because they love the physical body above all else and identify it with their thinking and feeling being, without considering that consciousness grows and that above all the strength for eternal youth and beauty is to be drawn from this source. In this sense there is no dying, but only a change of the outer shell and from life to life its exchange into more beautiful and perfect forms.

3. How does suffering arise?

a) Ignorance of the cosmic laws

Any suffering or sorrow is evidence that the laws of life have been transgressed. According to the law of karma, suffering is the effect of unreasonable and negative actions from our past. In every life, new sufferings come about due to people's forgetfulness and ignorance. Above all it is to be observed that man forgets his divine origin and with it also that higher order of Christ: "But you shall become perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect"! This state of perfection can be striven for in all situations in life and in all professions, regardless of whether someone is a priest or a layman, whether a millionaire or an unskilled worker. He who develops his spirit and recognizes the meaning of his existence knows that he can gather life experiences in the course of hundreds of incarnations and that the conditions of the individual incarnations will be different. In this realisation, the spirit will bear its heavy lot with joy and equanimity. Suffering arises above all from disregard for the laws of nature. These are transgressed out of ignorance, weakness of character and lack of resistance to evil. Evil, which causes suffering, has its right to exist as the antithesis of good, but people are themselves far more deeply immersed in suffering than can be envisaged in the plan of development, since they watch almost inactively as evil increases its dominance on earth.

Human suffering will therefore not decrease as long as evil has power over people. All suffering is the effect of our negative thoughts, words, desires and deeds. Thus, the suffering we experience cannot be seen as punishment or an act of vengeance on the part of law of nature or even of God, but as reactions to causes we have triggered. Human beings punish themselves. That is why the Sublime Beings, namely the "Elder Brothers of Humanity" or "Masters of Wisdom", who guide our evolution, try as far as possible to ward off the negative forces brought into being by us, in order to alleviate human suffering. However, if a person refuses to follow these well-meant advices and instructions, then he must experience the effects of his self-initiated causes. Therefore, do not be surprised by evil effects, for transgressions of the law always entail unpleasant consequences.

When you touch a red-hot stove, it is not the stove that punishes you, but your own ignorance and unreason. We merely feel the consequences of transgressing a natural law. The pains we have to suffer are not always of physical origin, they are often related to the growth of the spirit. It is painful to give up a worldview that one has up to now held with zeal and firm faith, but which is later seen as outdated and often wrong in the light of higher knowledge. One cannot avoid these higher insights, indeed they are an evolutionary necessity if spiritual growth is to be promoted and ignorance eliminated. Even the development of the spiritual centres (chakras), which appears at the stage of higher unfoldment of consciousness, is associated with great physical pain. But not all unexplained ailments are pains of centres. The spiritual path is often a "way of the cross". The path to the goal is paved with suffering. But whoever approaches cosmic consciousness will feel the pain less and less, for great joy awaits the pilgrim at the end of the path in victory over matter.

b) Wishes and requests

Apart from ignorance, which leads to the transgression of the laws of nature, one can cite numerous other reasons that cause suffering. Man is filled with many desires and cravings, most of which are directed towards the attainment of various earthly goods. Although these are to be seen as unreal and illusory from the point of view of a higher wisdom of life, they are in the field of vision of a materialistic worldview. Most desires are also beyond the reach of their realisation and are, strictly speaking, dream castles and fantasy of the imagination. Many people are not satisfied with what they have and want even more.

Especially at the end of the Kali Yuga, or Dark Era, in which humanity finds itself today, the greed for earthly goods is insatiable. It grows progressively, like the appetite when eating. The satiety of passions eventually leads to addictions that reveal the horror of the

abyss. Passions create suffering. Even the satisfaction of the needs of our physical nature can lead to intemperance and be the cause of incurable diseases.

The few people who have pursued true self-perfection throughout history have not only realized but also painfully felt that physical nature is a brake on spiritual development. Therefore, educational measures must be taken and man's desires and cravings must be contained, because not only the soul but also the body suffers unspeakably from them and can suffer incurable damage.

c) Possessiveness as a leading factor

A very crucial factor that causes suffering is greed for possessions. Every wish, every thought and every action aimed at acquiring possessions usually creates negative karma in people and, as a result, suffering. The greed for property, the struggle for its preservation, the protection against theft of property, the robbery of other people's property, etc. led and lead to unspeakable crimes, murders and wars, under the consequences of which whole peoples have to suffer, in recent times almost the whole of mankind. Human society attaches excessive importance to possessions and completely forgets that only the builder of our solar system has a right to his possessions. He has entrusted the earthly goods to us only for the purpose of ennobling them. We should increase them, surround them with benevolent aura and then hand them over improved to the one whom HE has determined as successor. People who believe that they live only once on earth often act like robbers and senselessly snatch up whatever they can get their hands on, although at the hour of death they have to leave everything behind with a sore heart. Perhaps they are then left with the one consolation of having left their property to loved ones. How much travail and how much suffering do people endure in order to acquire property? How many crimes and frauds are committed in order to gain possession of goods that can only be enjoyed for a short time. One forgets that many goods, which man considers as his property, were given by the Creator or even borrowed from HIM, because only HE as such can be the true owner of the star created by HIM. As long as man has not learned to properly manage every asset, even someone else's, he cannot expect to get better life. It is right to preserve one's own property as if it were the property of the Creator Himself. HE has given us a part of his goods for the temporary administration, namely for the time of our stay on earth. Land and soil are therefore in the cosmic sense inalienable common property, which may not be abused as speculation object for the enrichment and exploitation. For the knower, the earthly existence is a short period of our entire life and only a short sojourn on earth compared to our sojourn in the Subtle World. People should therefore become aware that it is not material possessions that are of lasting value, but only spiritual riches. Christ Jesus also taught, "What profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world but suffers damage to his soul." We do not eke out an earthly existence for the purpose of accumulating material goods, but for the expansion and development of our consciousness. With expanded consciousness we learn to distinguish the real from the illusory and gradually become responsible co-workers and co-creators of the cosmos.

d) Bad character traits and passions

Besides the pursuit of possessions, there are other factors in human life that cause suffering of various gradations. There is a whole chain of negative qualities that make human life sorrowful. Here a particularly psychological plague that one tends to overlook: lying to other people and lying to oneself by false ideas about oneself, the environment and the processes in cosmos. Mental disappointment and bitterness are the inevitable consequences.

By discarding these ugly characteristics and the ethical postulate, many sufferings and diseases could be banished. Those who think in lies live in wrong ideas and build wrongness into their bodies. It becomes increasingly difficult for him to distinguish the true from the false. There are people whose thinking is so mendacious and confused that they can no longer recognize the truth. They fight it even when they have no valid arguments to present. Their only "evidence" is to dismiss or ridicule the truth as unscientific. This still works best today, because not believing or denying anything as long as you can is very easy and covers

up ignorance. The search for truth, even without tangible evidence, is a sign of courage for the truth.

A lie pretended to be the truth is an evil sign of darkness. Lies poison the coexistence of people in the family, in the circle of relatives and acquaintances and in the community in general. Another great danger of lies is that they bring a person into the cobweb with all other liars - according to the law of assimilation, according to which negative thoughts attract each other and form concentrated accumulations of chaotic forces, which sooner or later fall back on the author. Besides the general everyday lies, there are the more formidable ones, the so-called faith lies. These are false ideas about religion and worldview. Such lies of faith are very fatal, because they can inhibit the development of the person who has fallen under their spell for many millennia and prevent the expansion of consciousness. In this sense those harsh words are to be understood which Christ hurled in the face of the theologians, i.e. the scribes (see matth. 23/13, 23/25, mark 12/38) and which are also valid for today's theologians.

Speaking of the bad qualities and habits that lead to suffering, the most important are immoderateness in eating and drinking or gluttony and drunkenness. With these negative qualities, people create for themselves not only suffering of the present, but also for the distant future. Even illnesses cannot always be carried out in the same lifetime, nor can all the negative karma we have created, which must be stored up many times. In this way, diseases continue to have a karmic effect and appear in the next incarnations. In modern times there are many diseases, the causes of which were set in past centuries by wrong way of life, not least by intemperance, drunkenness and other passions. Thus, doctors are at a loss when faced with new diseases, and decades often pass before suitable medicines can be found. Other diseases, on the other hand, whose karmic end seems to have come, can be almost completely cured by medicine. All this will continue to exist in the near future, so that in today's world situation there is little prospect of foreseeing the end of the suffering. Rather, causes are being laid for new, incurable diseases that will have dire consequences, like the plague of past centuries. Just think of the increasing radioactivity.

Today there are not only very many physical illnesses, but also numerous mental illnesses. These are currently on the increase, on the one hand due to the dangers of psychism and mediumship, and on the other hand due to the excessive strain on the nerves.

But the "sin against the Holy Spirit" must also be discussed in this lesson. This is understood as blasphemy and turning away from the Higher Forces, i.e. from the "Hierarchy of Light" or the guidance of the universe. Such a sin is like the curse of a child against its loving mother. Certainly, many ignorant people will say: "We have often blasphemed God and His co-workers, and nothing has happened to us". But these fools may look into the fools' houses, deaf and dumb homes, prisons and poorhouses. They will find there their kind from previous incarnations. These, too, have mostly not sinned in this life and seem to suffer innocently, as it were. But the causes of their sad fate lie in the past. The consequences of the insults of the Highest Beginnings never show themselves immediately, mostly only in the next incarnations.

In the present day, many people, especially young people, create suffering for themselves through excessive and misunderstood sport. The purpose of sport is to exercise, keep healthy and strengthen the body. Excessive competitive sports, motor racing and the general addiction to setting records cause people to lose sight of their goal, so that deaths often occur or permanent invalidity and illness are caused.

One cannot close the chapter suffering without remembering that political intolerance and religious fanaticism have at all times led to blind hatred, terror and the destruction of opponents in bloody battles. Likewise most of all wars arose from religious differences, in which millions of people were bloodily exterminated in the name of the Saviour who taught charity and compassion. Sad as it may sound, the Christian churches have created more martyrs among their opponents, the truth seekers, than there are zealots of faith in their own ranks.

In the twentieth century, under the sign of religious indifference, perhaps greater religious tolerance came to the fore, but the religious wars were replaced by those bloody world wars whose roots are to be found in hatred of nations and races and in the bread envy of nations. Millions of dead, millions of invalids, widows, orphans, as well as millions of refugees and

expellees - everywhere unnecessary heavy suffering, which can be traced back to human ignorance and weakness of character.

4. The purpose of suffering

In LIVING ETHICS it is said that suffering and sorrow are the best purifiers and abbreviators of the Path. Suffering has a great educational significance for man and becomes a teacher who helps us to safely reach the earthly goal - namely, the subordination of the lower desire to the higher goal and the unfolding of the divinity within us. When man experiences suffering from life to life, he gradually focuses his attention on the cause of the pain and will eventually refrain from performing actions that are the causes of his anguishes. Thus, mental suffering and physical pain compels man to master the schoolwork of life and eventually attain a higher wisdom and better character. Whoever takes the trouble to follow his own development will notice that he has made the most significant resolutions of his life by enduring suffering. Consequently, suffering is a means that spurs man on to action. From suffering, hardship and struggle, the soul emerges enriched in experience and psychic energy by overcoming the obstacles Even if the soul is repeatedly defeated in the struggle with the lower nature, it is nevertheless gradually purified and taught through suffering. In the light of cognition, the earth becomes a school of life and a purifying place for development for man.

a) The meaning of the warning by pain

The occurrence of pain warns people of approaching diseases and threats to the body. Therefore, the bodily pains are highly necessary signs to prevent or avoid dangerous situations, because without these signs, many diseases would go unnoticed and the physical body could perish by negligence and recklessness. But the body creates the necessary tool for our soul to be able to work in matter. Therefore, it must be cared for and protected like a precious instrument. If there were no pain warning, even a seemingly harmless disease could lead to death. But the physical pain also has a spiritual meaning, it makes a person rich in cognitions and experiences.

b) The importance of the experience of suffering

In life, nothing happens without meaning. From these explanations of the meaning of suffering, it is clear that suffering primarily induces the good and deters from evil. It awakens virtues and good qualities in people that would otherwise not come to fruition: namely, compassion, mercy, helpfulness, thriftiness, and more. Those who have never suffered hardship themselves are hardly willing to help another. Of course, there are also people for whom a one-time call to suffer is not enough. Such people must be knocked on several times.

In general, suffering ennobles and elevates man. It is only through suffering that he strives to free himself from those things that cause suffering. Suffering grinds away the sharp features of character. Only those who have suffered much have understanding for the hardships of others.

Thus, we see that suffering contributes to the straining of all forces - the body and the mind - it prompts man to advance to the significant issues of life and rise to great achievements. „*Non est ad astra mollis e terris via*“ – it is not a comfortable way from the earth to the stars - , Seneca already said. Therefore, one should not avoid suffering.

All the great artists, heroes, saints, and pioneers of humankind have experienced the fiery forge of suffering. From painful experiences and disappointments in life, they have received impulses to the greatest achievements and reached their lonely but blissful height. There is no heroic deed without suffering, but everyone who is called to heroic deed must ignite in himself the fire of the heart. Only through the fire of their heart will the Master recognize those who aspire to Him.

5. The overcoming of suffering

a) The golden mean

Of two extremes, the truth always lies in the middle, hence the folk wisdom of the "Golden Mean". This is also in terms of overcoming suffering the path to gradual reduction and eventual liberation from suffering. Buddha also turned away in this way from both royal prosperity and monastic asceticism, because both paths lead to extremes and immoderation. Wealth and power are great seducers that easily lead man into ruin. They tempt to licentiousness, debauchery and tyranny. Moreover, they are not an absolute prerequisite for the happiness of the earthling, but rather contribute to his misfortune.

Man must learn to free himself from the slavery of his desires and passions. Only then does he arrive at that middle path on which human suffering can be reduced .This path leads only through waiver and gradual, reasonable overcoming of desires. Never should anything be given up by force, because the relapse could be worse than the passion before. Even nuns and monks who imprisoned themselves in monastic cells to mortify their bodies by starvation and sexual abstinence have not achieved victory over physical nature by these means. Nature cannot be vanquished. You cannot fight instinctive needs by means of asceticism, since they are an expression of the life energy, which should be gradually lived out and transformed into spiritual energy, which is achieved above all by the path of the golden mean. Bad qualities and tendencies must be lived out in consciousness gradually, without coercion and without hope of immediate results. The realization that the needs of the body are to subordinate to those of the mind must mature. Likewise, the realization that the physical body has necessary functions that must be used in moderation, otherwise the human race would die out, which would not be in the spirit of creation.

b) The end of negative karma

In order to free oneself from suffering, no new causes of suffering may be set. Just as a fire only goes out when it no longer finds nourishment, suffering also only ends when no more negative causes are triggered. In general, living out negative karma is associated with a great deal of suffering, great obstacles and difficulties. However, this necessity for development should not be discouraging, as it is a symptom of the fact that we are in the process of making up for the most serious mistakes and rising to greater achievements. The strong will pay his debts and gather strength. The knowing and discerning person will therefore be filled with joy at the possibility of settling old scores despite the suffering involved. He recognizes that the hour of spiritual rebirth is approaching, namely that time when he will gradually be freed from the necessity of physical rebirth.

With the termination of the separation respectively the reunion of the two primordial beginnings in the middle of the sixth root race, negative karma and with it the suffering of human beings comes to an end. When the two original partners have found each other again and are working together in harmony in one direction, they attain joy and bliss. Then the slightest thought of disharmony or lovelessness dwindles, and in harmonious cooperation human suffering ends.

c) The beginning of passion

On the path of evolution, man must develop within himself the feeling of love and compassion for his neighbour and his subordinates. However, in order to move a hard and compassionless person to charity and compassion, he must be educated to it through suffering. Only then will he have understanding for the distresses of other people. Compassion is a sign of a developed consciousness. It is that stage at which man also recognizes the cosmic law of sacrifice. The Masters of Wisdom act according to this law and have themselves incarnated repeatedly on earth after the overcoming of matter in order to initiate the spiritual progress of humanity. Last but not least, the Nazarene's death on the cross was also a sign of a heavy sacrifice in the service of ignorant humanity and a proof of the greatest compassion.

d) The transmutation of the lower qualities

The essence of overcoming suffering lies in the transmutation of the lower qualities into virtues. To overcome suffering, one must develop the strength within oneself to resist temptations and weaknesses. But small is the number of those people who have learned to control themselves, to bring their desires and passions under control, and to renounce all desires and passions. A single life on earth is not enough to achieve perfection or to get rid of all negative qualities. The LIVING ETHICS teaches: *"...Purify your thoughts, and after determining your three worst traits, sacrifice them to be burned away in fiery striving...."* (AY, § 185) It is well known, that standing on your head for ten minutes a day is easier than to fulfill this ethical requirement.

The following list, which by no means claims to be complete, may give reason to think about where the greatest character weaknesses of the individual lie and into which positive qualities these should be transformed:

Hate	into love and forgiveness
Heartlessness, sadism and ruthlessness	into compassion, goodness, consideration and helpfulness
vindictiveness	into noble-mindness
Envy, greediness, scrimpiness	into generosity and magnanimity
Egoism, selfishness	into altruism and love for one's neighbour
Despotism, tyranny	into friendship, fellowship
Impatience (intolerance)	into patience (tolerance)
Dogmatism	into open-mindness, understanding, liberal-
Quarrelsomeness	into good nature and peaceableness
Wrath, stubbornness	into gentleness and mastery
Nagging, criticism	into understanding, good opinion and good will
Gossip addiction, loquacity	into secrecy and reticence
Irritability, quarrelsomeness, irascibility and lack of inhibition	into restraint, gentleness and mutual understanding
Fanatism	into reasonable zeal and composure
Injustice	into justice
Vanity, immodesty, pride, thirst for glory, arrogance	into humility and modesty
Lust for power, overconfidence	into helpfulness and restraint
Brutality, violence	into mastery and love of neighbour
Irritability	into calmness and balance
Insolence, presumption	into courtesy and modesty
Rudeness	into courtesy
Boorishness, condescension	into nobility and affability
Pettiness, impatience	into generosity and patience

Infidelity	into fidelity
Dishonesty, deceitfulness	into honesty and sincerity
Lie, falsehood, shiftiness	into frankness and honesty
Unreliability	into reliability
Curiosity	into self-mastery
Slackness	into zest for action, joy of creation
Laziness	into diligence and perseverance
Lack of will	into willpower
Pessimism, bad mood	into optimism and encouragement
Dissatisfaction, joylessness	into contentment and joy
Despondency, cowardice	into courage and bravery
Indecision	into determination
Grumpiness	into humour
Disorderliness, absentmindedness	into order, concentration
Superficiality	into a sense of duty and conscientiousness
Carelessness, inaccuracy	into caution and accuracy
Waywardness	into community spirit and appeasementness
Passion	into dispassion
Epicurean addiction	into mastery, waiver
Eroticism, debauchery	into servant love and moderation
Jealousy	into sacrifice, true love, understanding
Ignorance, inexperience	into knowledge and wisdom.

Aspirants on the spiritual path must realize that haughtiness, irritability, sensitivity, and curiosity are the weaknesses that cause the greatest difficulty for a prospective master disciple, and that these gross vices must be discarded beforehand.

All the qualities mentioned here are a source of human suffering. Only their gradual, step-by-step transformation into virtues can transform suffering into bliss and joy.

All people must enter the path of purification. Not a single being ever attained the higher stages of evolution without having walked the fiery path of purification. . Blessed, therefore, be the sufferings as the glorious stages of ascent.

e) Liberation from bondage

One of the most important conditions for salvation from suffering is liberation from bondage to earthly goods. LIVING ETHICS teaches:

“At present a great understanding is arising, understanding of the manifestation of the celestial Teaching.

It is good to understand that one can possess things without a feeling of ownership. It is good to possess things in order to take care of them, and even to imbue them with a benevolent aura, with the intention of passing them on to others. The “hand of creativity” dwells in a home that is free of attachment to property, and whatever the hand improves will only serve to spread joy

further. The principle of the giving hand will be constantly put into practice; in this lies the justification for possession of objects.…" (LMG II, § 92.)

Everything depends on the consciousness and attitude towards things. Even a beggar can suffer greatly in his desire for money and goods. But he who has already attained the higher attitude of LIVING ETHICS can dispose of wealth without possessing it inwardly, and he will use it exclusively for the benefit of his fellow men. It is therefore not forbidden to acquire possession, because everyone should be able to live in orderly circumstances. LIVING ETHICS knows neither commandments nor prohibitions, but only recommendations and instructions.

6. Is there a substitutional deliverance from suffering?

Christian theologians teach that Christ Jesus redeemed mankind vicariously through His death on the cross and thus opened up access to heaven for them or bought it with His blood, and that up to this point, according to church dogma, all people remained in limbo. A thesis, which would be extremely unfair. Even millions of years before the birth of Christ, many decent and religious people lived on earth for millions of years, treading the path of perfection. Apart from that, even today only a quarter of the world's population professes Christianity. Why should heaven now be closed to all so-called "heathens" who heard nothing of Christ, but who in many respects are or were even more decent and "Christian" than many Christians?

According to the law of cause and effect, there is no substitutionary redemption, because everyone has to pay or make up for his sins and mistakes through suffering. Whoever follows Christ or a Master of Wisdom have to take up his cross, that is, endure his suffering and overcome it by his own efforts. The gates to the Higher Worlds have been open at all times to all people without distinction of faith. Only those who conquer "heaven" through their own efforts and do not enter it as stowaways can be considered decent.

7. Redemption from suffering by self-redemption

Avoid neither suffer nor joy!

Learn to suffer without complaining!

Despite suffering and hardship, don't be a pessimist, but an optimist and fight confidingly!

Whoever triggers positive causes by virtue of his uplifting thoughts and trusts God and himself at the same time, cannot perish!

Help is obtained by those who trust in God or in the hierarchy of light. However, help usually comes at the last minute, because people first have to exhaust all possibilities themselves.

Once man has conquered the lower nature within himself, he has overcome suffering.

8. Quotes from Living Ethics

„ Knowledge, knowledge, knowledge! If people would ponder upon the fact that knowledge is the only salvation, there would not be a particle of the present suffering. All human sorrow is the result of ignorance. Therefore, every expansion of consciousness is cooperation with evolution. Every manifestation that obstructs the expansion of consciousness is antagonistic to evolution. Hence, the actions of the enemies are criminal and their karma is dreadful. Knowledge, let us reiterate, will put an end to the suffering of mankind." (INF II, § 428,)

„Everywhere it is indicated that suffering is the best purifier and means of shortening the Path. This is undoubtedly true under the existing conditions on Earth. But could there have been Creation with an unalterable condition of suffering? No. Indeed, the Great Creativeness does not foresee a need for suffering. With terrific zeal people drive themselves into the circle of suffering. For millenniums people have tried to become mere bipeds. They try to weigh down the atmosphere of Earth with malice. Verily, every physician will bear witness that without evil there would be no suffering. Let us designate the ability to avoid suffering as a step toward Good. Truly, the passage of the Good through the furnace of Fire eliminates the sense of suffering. Thus, fiery transfiguration even on Earth lifts one beyond suffering. One should not evade

suffering, for without suffering earthly achievement does not exist. But let each one ready for achievement kindle the fires of his heart. They will be the indicators of the Path, and a shield not fashioned by human hands. Someone has asked, "How does the Lord discern those who approach him?" The answer is, "By the fires of their hearts." If we are astonished by the power of Fire that even here envelops us and saturates our garments, then we can understand how supernal is the glow of the fires of the heart along the Chain of Hierarchy!" (FW I, § 618.)

„ Agni is eternal! The fiery energy is imperishable! Folk sayings often speak of eternal joys and sorrows. The indestructibility of joy and sorrow sent into space has been observed very scientifically. Many bear the sorrow of another, and many grasp at joy that does not belong to them. Thus, one must always remember about eternal sowings. Thought, if not powerful, can be engulfed by the currents of space; but the substance of sorrow or joy is almost as indestructible as the fiery seed. It is useful to impregnate space with joy, and very dangerous to strew the heavens with sorrow. But where can one find the store of joy? Certainly not in the bazaar, but near the ray of Light, in the joy of Hierarchy. The increase of sorrow is one of the causes of fiery epidemics, but when physiology shall teach men about the debilitating consequences of sorrow, the quest for joy will begin. Gradually the rock of joy will be affirmed and an exalted solemnity will begin, recognized as the most healthful factor. Not without reason have We pointed out the benefits of the presence of healthy people. Joy is the health of the spirit. " (FW I, § 298.)

„The self-sacrificing heart of an Agni Yogi contains the pain of the world, but it is a rare manifestation. As is said in a most ancient psalm, "I shall encompass within my heart the sorrow of the world. I shall incandesce the heart as the womb of Earth. I shall saturate it with lightning. The new heart is the shield of the world. I shall inscribe upon it the sign of the Earth-Mother. The Cross of the Mother will be the sign of My fire." Thus knew the ancients.

And again a loyal heart is in the Service of the world. Therefore I say—health must be guarded. A vessel filled to the brim must be carried with caution.

One may rejoice at the kindling of the fire of the heart. Let us not forget how unexpectedly new fires are kindled." (HIE, § 102.)

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Build a “Star”

Many responsible-minded and worried people today demand a practical action that promises maximum success without attracting much attention, without affiliation to a club or without political risk. In this way they live up to positive expression to their sense of responsibility towards the world situation. Working on the "Star" helps to alleviate not only spiritual but also material distress. It is therefore important to be concerned, at least a few times a day, sending out good thoughts, not for oneself, but above all for the world and for peace. Then the general mental work will also become accustomed to selfless aspirations, and there will be the hope that through such concentrated powers of thoughts the power of evil can be successfully reduced and averted. If millions of people voluntarily made themselves available to such a work, those men and women who would be fit for their purified thinking and noble character, could be able to protrude without great difficulty in religion, politics and social life in order to establish a fair and peaceful world order for the benefit of all people.

„Aum – Tat – Sat – Aum“

Source of light in the universe,
pour out light into human thinking,
it become brighter on Earth!

Source of love in the universe,
pour out love into all human hearts,
May love blossom on Earth!

Source of wisdom in the universe,
pour out knowledge and wisdom,
let cognition prevail on Earth!

Source of peace in the universe,
strength peace and justice,
may felicity and joy be on Earth!

Source of power in the universe,
seal the door to evil,
that the plan of the good will be fulfilled!

„Aum – Tat – Sat – Aum“

(For further information see Lesson no. 6).

Source:

Works of the blessed Mahatma Maitreya Morya:

Blossoms of Morya`s Garden:

Abbreviations:

Leaves of Morya's Garden I,	LMG I	§§ 387
Leaves of Morya's Garden II,	LMG II	§§ 358

New era:

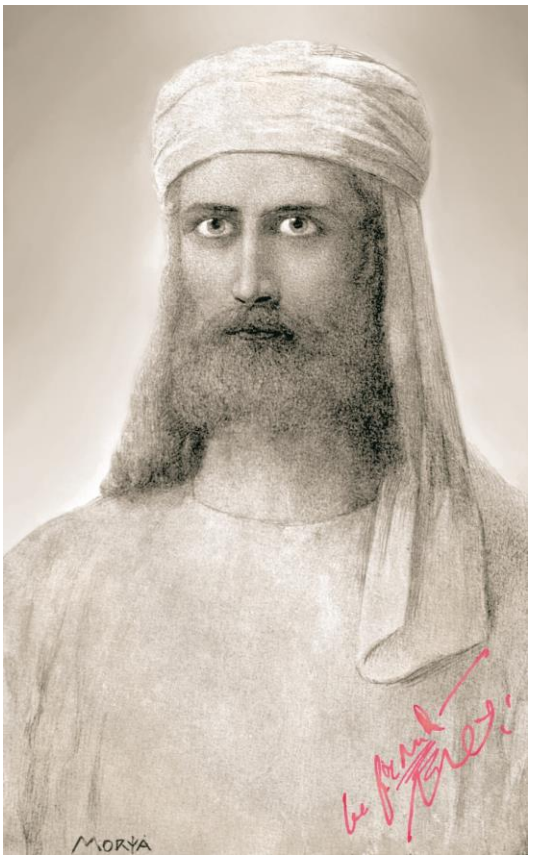
COMMUNITY	COM	§§ 275

Doctrine of Living Ethics in seven themes:

AGNI YOGA	AY	§§ 670
INFINITY I	INF I	§§ 400
INFINITY II	INF II	§§ 518
HIERARCHY	HIE	§§ 460
HEART	HEA	§§ 600
FIERY WORLD I	FW I	§§ 666
FIERY WORLD II	FW II	§§ 470
FIERY WORLD III	FW III	§§ 618
AUM	AUM	§§ 600
BROTHERHOOD	BH	§§ 610
SUPERMUNDANE	SMU	§§ 955

Letters of Helena Ivanova Roerich

2 Books: HIR I, HIR II



MORYA – Indian Rajput prince, whose spirit had been raptured to the great spirit of MAITREYA and was enlightened or overshadowed by him. This portrait drawing commissioned by the artist Hermann Schmiechen in 1884 was often repainted. However, the copies only achieved a resemblance to the "face of the teacher", which is why repainted copies can lead to failure in meditations!

LEOBRAND – Leopold Brandstätter (* 20th February 1915 Wallern, † 26th February 1968 Linz), was an Austrian nature philosopher and humanist.
His writings are concerned with ethics, humanities, psychology, philosophy, politics, ideology of the world and architecture.
In the 1950s he translated the Agni yoga doctrine from Russian together with a Baltic-German team, thus paving the way for this philosophy in German-speaking countries.
Leobrand founded a (non public) school for Living Ethics. Decades before the introduction of teaching ethics in public schools he had already written 36 lessons of Living Ethics, as the first interdenominational teaching aid for ethical training. He gave countless lectures and conducted seminars. Recordings of Leobrand‘s lectures are available. These historical audio documents offer the possibility to understand/think along the philosophical analysis of the great thinker Leobrand and open up new horizons for life´s spiritual dimension. Philosophical accuracy and clarity of expression are Leobrand‘s trademarks.
The new concept of God is particularly noteworthy. For this new and completely independent concept of God, a new term was created: "UNIVERALO“. Leobrand‘s concept is explained on a hierarchical basis, it detaches itself from the abstract and merges with the whole existence. It includes many philosophical and historical concepts as well as advanced knowledge of relatively immortal spiritual fields of force. Leobrand therewith expressed the first and only humanistic definition of God within a new worldview and pulls the rug from under atheism. The new concept of God is as dynamic as nature itself and thus indicative of the forthcoming independent humanities.
Other highlights are his work for a united Europe and for a forthcoming pannational world union. Many of those great-sounding ideas of Leobrand are already self-evident reality.

Works:

1955 - 1961: 36 lessions, **Briefe über Lebendige Ethik** (*letters on Living Ethics* **-** in translation)
1957: **Psychische Energie** (*Psychic energy* - humanities and psychologie)
1958: **Heilung durch psychische Energie** (*Healing by psychic energy* - humanities and health)
1966: **Freude** (*Joy* - philosophy)
1967: **Der Ausweg** (*The way out* - politics)
1968: **Neues Europa und Welt ABC** (*New europe and world ABC* - politics)
1968: **Das neue universelle Weltbild** (*The new universal world view* - world view)
1968: **Spiralik** (*Spiralik* - architecture of the future)
1953 - 1968: reprint, articles in magazines (partly unpublished manuscripts)
1976: **Der auferstandene Gott** (*The resurrected god* - humanities, compilation of articles)
1962 - 1967: **Lectures** and seminars on all his works (recordings MC in German language)

Activities:

1949: Establishment of a **peace league**
1953: Establishment of the (not public) „**School for Living Ethics**“ and magazine
1960: Publication of the magazine „ **Spirale und grüne Wacht**“ (nature protection and biotechnology)
1961: Publication of the magazine „ **Weltreichspirale**”
1962: Establishment of the association „ **Welt-Spirale**“ - ethical society of progress and renewal of the world, and magazine.

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Joy – Peace – Freedom

Serve peace and welfare of the world!

Overview of the „letters on living ethics, Introduction to Agni yoga“ from LEOBRAND:

Basic information ethics

1. The truth about yoga
2. Problems of spiritual renewal
3. The meaning of life
4. Karma and forming of fate
5. Might and meaning of thoughts
6. Self-help through proper thinking
7. Reincarnation – yes or no?
8. **The meaning of suffering**
9. Absolution or personal responsibility?
10. Dharma and life-task
11. Death and Rebirth
12. Devotions and sacrifice
13. The relationship of the sexes
14. Marital problems
15. Living Ethics and education
16. Living Ethics and everyday life
17. Living Ethics and nutrition
18. Living Ethics and art

Spiritual training

19. Living Ethics – doctrine of life
20. Chakras or centers of higher consciousness
21. The spiritual meaning of the heart
22. The widening of consciousness
23. The subtle constitution of man
24. Monad or spiritual grain
25. The construction of the universe and Cosmoses
26. Subtle world
27. Fiery world
28. Brotherhood
29. The universal understanding of God
30. The Mother of the world
31. Occultism – yes or no?
32. Danger and meanders of occultism
33. Good and evil
34. The coming new world
35. Infinity
36. The path to become a master

Any suffering or affliction is evidence that the laws of life have been transgressed. Suffering arises mainly from disregard for the laws of nature. According to the law of karma, suffering is the effect of unreasonable and negative actions from our past. Therefore, human suffering will not decrease as long as evil has power over people. Besides ignorance, which leads to the transgression of the laws of nature, one can cite numerous other reasons that cause suffering. Passions create suffering. The greed for property, the struggle for its preservation, the protection against robbery of property, the robbery of other people's property etc. led and lead to unspeakable crimes, murders and wars, under the consequences of which whole peoples have to suffer, lately almost the whole mankind. Nothing happens in life without meaning. One of the most important prerequisites of the redemption of sorrow is liberation from bondage to earthly goods. As soon as man has conquered the lower nature within himself, he has overcome suffering.

„Welt-Spirale“
www.welt-spirale.com
Ethical society for progress and world renewal