



# A Textbook of Theosophy: The Purpose of Life (The Evolution of Life)

*C W Leadbeater*

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Theosophy; literally "divine wisdom", refers to systems of esoteric philosophy concerning, or investigation seeking direct knowledge of, presumed mysteries of being and nature, particularly concerning the nature of divinity. Theosophy is considered a part of the broader field of esotericism, referring to hidden knowledge or wisdom that offers the individual enlightenment and salvation. The word esoteric dates back to the 2nd century CE. The theosophist seeks to understand the mysteries of the universe and the bonds that unite the universe, humanity, and the divine. The goal of theosophy is to explore the origin of divinity and humanity, and the world. From investigation of those topics, theosophists try to discover a coherent description of the purpose and origin of the universe. The term theosophy was used as a synonym for theology as early as the 3rd century CE. Hellenistic Alexandrian culture expressed religion through a syncretism that included influences from Egypt, Chaldea, Greece etc. It became a "philosophizing and systematizing" culture containing mythology, theosophy and gnosis of the East. The 12th-century philosopher Al-Shahrastani (died 548 AH / 1153 CE) explored theosophy in the context of Islamic thought. In the 13th century, a clear distinction was made between classical philosophers, modern (to the people then) philosophers, theosophers, and theologians in the work *Summa philosophiae* attributed to Robert Grosseteste. In *Summa*, theosophists were described as authors inspired by holy books, while theologians were described as persons whose task was to teach theosophy. During that time, the term theosopher was applied retroactively to include earlier people including Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and Origen.

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