

A Primer of Theosophy

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I

In studying any system of religious thought worthy of the name, we are at once confronted by the problems involved in the relations of the Creator to the created, of Man to God. But we soon find that it is man who is really the creator, and that it is in his image that his God is made. The god of the savage is an intensification of the traits that the savage most fears and admires and naturally worships; and as civilization carries its broadening light into darkest Africa, for instance, the deified savage takes on the semblance of something higher than himself in the scale of being, or if not higher, at least more powerful. In Browning's wonderful poem of "Caliban upon Setebos," the poet seems to have penetrated to the very core of primitive man's nature, and to have painted a perfect picture of what he calls "natural theology in the island," as embodied in the savage Caliban's description of his creator, "placable if His mind and ways were guessed, but rougher than His handiwork, be sure. . . . Also it pleaseth Setebos to work, use all His hands and exercise much craft, by no means for the love of what is worked. . . . Believeth with the life the pain shall stop. His dam held different; that after Death, He both plagued enemies and feasted friends. Meanwhile, the best way to escape His ire, is not to seem too happy."

And yet even through this dim and bewildered brain creeps a faint notion of "the something over Setebos, that made *Him*, . . . something quiet o'er His head, out of His reach, that feels nor joy nor grief . . . This Quiet, all it hath a mind to, doth."

So comes into imperfect understanding, a suggestion of something greater than Setebos. If Setebos made man, then who made Setebos? And so, step by step with the development of man, grows the development of the idea of a Divine Being, embodied in the majestic figures of the sculptured gods of India, of Egypt, of Greece and Rome, as the objects of men's adoration. Later on, the jealous God of Israel sweeps away the worship of beauty, and then with the Christian era, begins the worship of a God of Love.

But all these phases of the Divinity mostly concerned the people, for among the priests and philosophers of every age is handed down a "Wisdom-Religion," the portion of "those who know," the keys that open the doors of all knowledge, behind which lie hidden the answers to all the enigmas of the universe.

And the first and most important of these answers is the teaching that God is Spirit, not *a* Spirit, but SPIRIT, One and Indivisible, that from Him all things proceed, and to Him all things must return. But while we look upon Him as the source of all Being, we have a dim feeling that beyond the heavens that

declare the glory of God, there is what Browning's Caliban would call "the Quiet," an all-embracing something, a spiritual atmosphere, so to speak, but utterly beyond the power of primeval man to comprehend. It is impossible to formulate the basic ideas of Theosophy without a metaphysical background, it only remains to make that background as simple and easily comprehensible as possible.

If we attempt to pierce through the veils that represent to us the limits of thought, we find ourselves confronted with that vague something which our philosophers, in default of a better word, have called the ABSOLUTE, or the UNKNOWABLE. "The Absolute is not to be defined," (says the *Secret Doctrine, Abridgment*, p.322) "and no mortal nor immortal has ever seen or comprehended it during the periods of existence. The mutable cannot know the immutable, nor can that which lives perceive *Absolute Life*."

The first and fundamental axiom of theosophy then, is this metaphysical conception of the Absolute, "the Causeless Cause," from which is derived "the *First Cause*." Because when we speak of the *first*, we think of something that is dependent on time, and space, and rank, and none of these can have any relation to the Absolute, which is entirely outside of our conditioned existence. As an old Kabalistic poem says: "Thou art One, the root of all numbers, but not as an element of numeration, for Unity admits not of multiplication, change or form. Thou art One, and no thought of ours can fix for Thee a limit, or define Thee."

From "the Causeless Cause," the "Unknowable," is derived "the First Cause," the Creative God of all theologies. This is the Logos, in the theosophic philosophy the synthesis of the Seven Creative Powers, the "Word" of St. John's Gospel. "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was Life; and the Life was the Light of men."

And at the beginning of a new cycle of existence, when this Light springs forth from the bosom of Darkness, "the pairs of opposites" come into existence, and the work of creation, or rather evolution, begins. Spirit-Matter divides into Spirit *and* Matter, two aspects of the One Unity, and from them radiates the Divine Energy, *force* as science calls it, which corresponds to "the Son" of the Christian Trinity. Spirit, Matter, Force, these are the three in one that form the basis of every theological trinity.

That which theosophy calls *Universal Substance*, is underlying matter in all its different grades, and that which it called *Universal Thought* is the root of all individual consciousness. But apart from Universal Substance, Universal Thought could not manifest as *individual* consciousness, because it is only through a vehicle of matter that consciousness wells up as "I am I." And apart from Universal Thought, Universal Substance would remain an empty abstraction.

But just as the opposite poles of Spirit and Matter are but twin aspects of the one Unity, so there exists in the manifested Universe the guiding power of all manifestation, the Thought Divine, transmitted and made manifest through the intelligent Forces which are the architects of the visible world. Thus from Spirit, or Universal Thought, comes our consciousness; from Universal Substance the several vehicles in which that consciousness is individualized and attains to *self*-consciousness; while the Divine Energy, in its various manifestations, is the mysterious link between Mind and Matter, the animating principle electrifying every atom into life. Universal Thought includes Law, and the Forces of Nature are

comprised in Universal Energy, while *Life* and *Motion* are convertible terms.

We must begin, then, by recognizing the existence of an Immutable Principle, which is entirely beyond the range of human thought, and therefore is best spoken of (if spoken of at all) as the *Unknowable*. This is symbolized by theosophy under two aspects, absolute, abstract Space, and absolute, abstract Motion. This abstract Motion is the *One Life*, eternal, invisible, but omnipresent, without beginning or end, yet periodical in its regular manifestations. It is often spoken of as “the Great Breath.” Upon the boundless plane of the universe the worlds appear and disappear, in a regular tidal ebb of flux and reflux, confirming the absolute universality of that law of periodicity, or cyclic law, which obtains in every department of nature.

Moreover, we are taught, *first*, the fundamental identity of all souls with the universal Over-soul, the latter being itself an aspect of the Unknown Root; and *second*, the obligatory pilgrimage of every soul through “the Cycle of Necessity” or reincarnation, in accordance with the all-powerful law of cause and effect, and that of periodicity spoken of above. The Monad or unit of consciousness making this journey, is called “the Pilgrim,” and is the only immortal and eternal principle in us, being an indivisible part of the Universal Spirit, a Ray of the Divine. This obligatory pilgrimage springs from the law that no purely Divine Soul can have an independent, conscious existence until it has passed through all the lower grades of being, belonging to this cycle of life, and thus has acquired the individuality which makes it immortal, first through natural impulse, and then by self-devised efforts, modified by the experiences it has gathered on the way. Thus it ascends through all grades of intelligence, from that of the mineral to that of the holiest archangel, and works out its own salvation by its own efforts; for the pivotal doctrine of the esoteric philosophy admits no privileges or special gifts in any man except those won by his own Ego through personal effort during a long series of reincarnations.

This teaching of “the Cycle of Necessity” is very important because so many have asked, why should “the Pilgrim” leave its celestial abode and go through so much misery and such long and painful struggles, only to get back to where it started? But it gets back with the conscious, immortal entity it has made of itself, and this is the salvation it has won. It has built up its individuality and is now an immortal Soul, not merely part of a wave of life, one indistinguishable drop of the ocean of being.

“Just as at the close of the sidereal year the heavenly bodies return to the same relative positions which they occupied at its beginning, so at the close of the Cycle of Initiation, the inner man has regained the pristine state of divine purity and knowledge from which he set out on his cycle of terrestrial incarnations.” — (*Abridgment* 184)

“It is the spiritual evolution of the *inner* immortal man, that forms the fundamental tenet of theosophy, the reincarnating *Ego* that existed before its physical body, and survives all bodies that it may be clothed in.” (*Abridgment* 285, 476)

II EVOLUTION

The law of Evolution as defined by the scientist, means first of all, “a law of continuity or causal relation throughout nature,” or in other words, “a continuous progressive change according to certain laws and by means of resident forces.” (Le Conte on *Evolution*.) These “resident” forces of Le Conte, are the same thing that theosophy calls “the essential faculty possessed by all the cosmic and terrestrial elements of *generating within themselves* a regular and harmonious series of results, a concatenation of causes and effects, which proves that they are animated by intelligence coming either from within or from without.” In fact, to become complete and comprehensible, a theory of the universe has to start with a primordial Substance, diffused throughout boundless Space, of *an intellectual and divine nature*. That substance must be the Spirit and Soul, the synthesis and highest principle, of the manifested Kosmos. And to serve as a physical basis to this, there must be its vehicle — *primordial physical matter*, so to speak, though its nature must forever escape our limited normal senses, and we can know it only through its phenomena, the results, that is, of the action of the laws or forces of Nature, the life of the physical world. These forces may be roughly summed up as Light, Heat, Sound, Cohesion or Attraction, (which of course includes Repulsion) and Magnetism, or Nerve-Force, together synthesized as *Motion*. These are not the “blind forces” of science, but the manifestations of intelligent Powers, the Builders of the Universe. And while science recognizes innumerable degrees in the scale of physical being, theosophy maintains that there are at least as many in the scale of spiritual existence.

But while the degrees are infinite, none the less does this philosophy assert as its fundamental law, “*the radical unity* of all component parts in Nature, from star to mineral atom, from the highest spiritual being to the smallest infusoria, throughout *all* the worlds, whether spiritual, intellectual or physical.”

“The informing Intelligences, then, which animate the various centres of being, . . . are called by the truly ignorant, gods; by the learned-profane *the One God*; and the wise, the Initiates, honor in them only the periodic manifestations of *That* which neither our Creators nor their Creators can ever discuss or know anything about.”

The dawn of manifestation begins with *attraction*, the first flutter of awakening life being towards the centre, and after attraction comes expansion, or the action of the repulsive force, the two forming the rhythm of the Universe, or “the Great Breath.” A fundamental law of theosophy as well of science, is that known as “the conservation of energy,” which maintains that there is no such thing as rest or cessation of motion during these periods of activity, that which seems rest being only the change of one form into another. And another fundamental law is, that there is no such thing in Nature as *inorganic* (or lifeless) substances or bodies. Mineral and even chemical atoms are simply organic units in profound lethargy, which has an end, and their coma becomes activity, when the wave of the new cycle of Life sweeps over them.

There is no room here for the details of the splendid system of evolution as described in the *Secret Doctrine*, but it should be explained that in the earlier theosophical books, such as *Esoteric Buddhism*, an

error has crept in as to the teaching of the “planetary chains,” Mr. Sinnett having therein described the Earth as one of a chain of seven planets, including the chief planets of our solar system. But the *Secret Doctrine* teaches that the Earth has its own seven states of matter and consciousness like all the other planets. These seven “globes” as they are sometimes called, are of varying materiality, descending through three grades of increasing density to the fourth or most material, (represented by our own Earth in its present state) and ascending through three grades leading back to the spiritual. And as our physical eyes are only capable of perceiving objects on the physical plane, it follows that any stars and planets visible to us are on the same plane as ourselves, and neither higher nor lower in the scale of being. And these seven “globes” or conditions of matter, are capable of simultaneous existence, as the more ethereal interpenetrate the more substantial. Theosophy teaches that the matter of the heavenly spheres has its seven forms. First, we have *primordial* homogeneous matter, the One Element; then the second stage, called by science Cosmic dust, and Fire-mist; the third stage is the nebulous; the fourth is the atomic, when Divine Force thrills through this primordial matter, and the eternal vibration in the unmanifested world becomes vortical motion in the manifested. With motion, the differentiation of the elements begins, and we have the fiery, or *germinal stage*, so-called because these “elements” are but the germs of those we know. The sixth stage, the vaporous, the four-fold, shows us the beginning of our elements, the future earth, and the seventh stage is the cold and solidifying globe, dependent upon the sun for life and light.

Very briefly and roughly sketched, this is the *field* of man’s evolution. The *reason* of it is to be found in that often-quoted saying of Patanjali: “The universe exists for the sake of the soul’s experience and emancipation,” in other words, to give the soul its opportunity for development and salvation. And as man, to accept the popular division, is composed of body, soul, and spirit, the *process* of this evolution must necessarily be three-fold — physical, mental and spiritual.

The Ray of the Universal Mind, then, (the Monad, or the Pilgrim) passes through seven planes, three below and three above what the scientists call our threshold of consciousness. First, it passes through three elemental planes or nascent centres of force, which answer to the nebulous stages in the earth’s history; then through the mineral kingdom, the turning point in the evolution of consciousness, where it becomes wholly latent, then through the three stages of “organic” life, the vegetable, the animal, the human. In the higher animals the Monad almost becomes an individual entity, while in the vegetable kingdom there is hardly any tendency towards individual consciousness, which can only be seen in such attempts as the persistent struggle of a vine towards a support upon one side of it, or the unwearied seeking of a poplar’s roots after the water of a distant well.

The Sun gives Life to man, and therefore in the Eastern symbolism is rightly called his father, while the Moon represents his mother, for it is to the “Lunar Ancestors” that he owes the astral form around which is built up the physical body, given by his nurse the Earth. This astral prototype is formed of molecular matter far too ethereal to be perceptible to our normal senses, and interpenetrates the matter of our physical bodies, as a subtle odor interpenetrates the air.

And as the seed that perishes in the ground nourishes, by its decay, a new plant, so the Moon, having completed her cycle of existence, transferred her energies in dying (according to the law of the conservation of force) to a new cosmic centre which became our Earth. The process of evolution upon the

Earth, as well as all other worlds, is by seven successive waves of life-giving energy, which it has agreed to call *Rounds*, and during each of these stages of evolution, seven *Races*, with many subdivisions, inhabit the earth, each Race being specially adapted to the conditions which surround it.

But the human Monad which has begun its pilgrimage upon this globe does not merely touch upon each of these conditions and then pass on, but has to go through many incarnations in each Race, the development of the individual soul being a long process. Between each individual incarnation, and between each Round, or wave of evolution, the human Ego passes through a period of subjective, or unconscious life, thus completing the analogy with the shorter cycles of day and night, life and death, etc. Four times that great wave of evolutionary force has swept over the Earth, and four great Races have passed away. The present humanity is the fifth division of Fifth Race, so that we have passed the lowest point of materiality, and are beginning to ascend towards spirit. But the eighteen millions of years which embrace the duration of perfected *physical* man, have to be enormously increased if the whole process of spiritual, astral, and physical development, is taken into account. All analogy goes to show the truth of the theosophical teachings that man was not “created” the complete being he is now, however imperfect he still remains. Worlds and men were in turns formed and destroyed, *under the law of evolution and from pre-existing material*, until both the planets and their men became what they are in the present cycle.

In strict analogy, the cycle of seven Rounds that gradually leads man’s physical body through every kingdom of nature up to its perfect form, is repeated on a much smaller scale in the first seven months’ life of the human embryo. As the embryo although fully formed at that period, yet needs two months more in which to acquire a perfect development, so “man, having perfected his evolution during seven Rounds, remains two periods more in the womb of mother Nature before he is born (or reborn) a Dhyani, (or Divine Intelligence) still more perfect than he was before he launched forth as a Monad on the newly built chain of worlds” (*Secret Doctrine*, II, 259).

III THE NATURE OF MAN

“The development of ‘Man,’ from his first appearance on the Earth in this Round, forms the subject of the second volume of the *Secret Doctrine*. ”

The quotation marks above, around “Man”, point to a condition or conditions of being quite different from anything *we* should call man. If we can conceive of a ball of fire-mist gradually becoming a solid globe, settling into a man-bearing world, and if we see everything on it evolving from a speck of protoplasm to the gigantic forms of antediluvian monsters, is it impossible to imagine man himself going through the same transformation? The carbonic vapors and steaming soil of the early globe could have no effect on such human life and organisms as we are told existed at those remote periods, and the *Secret Doctrine* tells us that it is shown in every ancient scripture and cosmogony that “man evolved primarily as a *luminous incorporeal form*, over which, like the plastic clay around the iron framework of the sculptor, the *physical* frame of his body was built by, through, and from, the lower forms and types of animal terrestrial life.”

In studying the nature of man and his environment, we are struck by the omnipresence of the number *seven*. But after a long and careful comparison of these correspondences, it seemed that the principal reason for the omnipresence of this number lay in its relation to the phenomena of *life*, and in fact the *Secret Doctrine* says that in our world the rhythm of life is in *sevens*, because that is the rhythm of our Mother the Moon, who in dying imparted her life to her child the Earth, according to the great law regulating the cosmic forces. Other planets and stars and solar systems, have other rates of vibration; in them the rhythm of life throbs faster or slower as the case may be. The Sun is the heart of our solar system, and there is a regular circulation of the Life-Essence throughout that system, like that of the blood in the body, only instead of a few seconds it takes the solar blood ten or eleven years to complete its rounds, and the astronomers are beginning to recognize this rhythm as the cause of the recurrence of sun-spots.

To return to the evolution of man — we are told that the first human stock was a reproduction, by higher and semi-divine beings, of their shadowy selves. They “became” the First Race, just as the “eternal cell” of which Weismann speaks, became the endless number of cells into which it subdivided. When the Earth had become dry land, the Spirits of the Moon came to fashion the astral body of man, the shadowy prototype of future human beings.

These “Lunar Ancestors” as they are called, bear the same relation to the physical body of man that the Moon bears to the physical Earth. As the Moon formed the model, and still controls many of the phenomena of Earth-life, (the rhythm of diseases, of the tides, of generation, etc.), so the astral body still gives the model of the physical form, and controls the ebb and flow of its energies. But as these “Lunar Ancestors” corresponded to the elemental kingdoms preceding the mineral, and were devoid of the ray of Universal Mind, they could only give birth to astral man, a phantom with neither form nor mind.

“The Solar Ancestors” properly so-called, could and did, impart to this astral body a semblance of life (for from the Sun comes that great flood of vital force that vivifies all nature), but they could not give man that sacred spark which expands into the flower of human reason and self-consciousness, for they had it not to give.

It is the Solar Ancestors alone who could complete man, that is, make of him a self-consciousness, almost a divine being — a god on earth. But as they were devoid of the grosser *creative fire* they were unable to create *physical* man. The Lunar Ancestors, though possessed of creative fire, were devoid of the higher intellectual element, and could only give birth to the astral man, the model of the physical. The reason why the Solar Ancestors could not give to man the “sacred spark” just referred to, is because they were too divine and pure, too near to the Absolute Cause of all things. To complete the nature of *septenary man*, to unite his three lower principles with the spiritual Monad, two connecting principles are needed, *Mind* and *Desire*, or the emotional soul. It would be impossible for the Monad to dwell in a form without these, except in an *absolutely latent* state, as in the higher animals.

We find primeval man, then, described as ethereal, devoid of compactness, and *Mindless*. He had no middle principles to serve him as a medium between the *highest* and the *lowest*, the spiritual man and the physical brain, for he lacked *mind*. For the Monad, the Ray of Universal Mind, has no hold upon the mere

form. It cannot affect the form where there is no agent of transmission. But as no process of evolution is sudden or unprepared for, even the human mind developed by degrees, and although the First and Second Races were not what we call men, but merely rudiments of the future human beings, still even among these appeared here and there some faint foreshadowing of the intelligence to come.

The *Commentary* sums up the early Races in a few words: “*First* came the *Self-Existent* on this Earth. They are the ‘Spiritual Lives,’ projected by the absolute *Will* and *Law* at the dawn of every rebirth of the worlds.” (These, of course, are the Creative Powers, the fashioners of man.)

From these proceeds

I. The First Race, the “Self-Born,” the astral shadows of their progenitors. The body was devoid of all understanding (that is, mind, intelligence, and will). The inner being (the Monad), though within the earthly frame, was unconnected with it. The link was not there as yet.

From the First Race emanated the

II. Second, endowed by the preservers and the incarnating gods with the first weak spark of intelligence.

And from this proceeds

III. The Third Race, the Two-fold, or androgyne. As the process of evolution went on, and matter became more and more dense, the Third Race separated itself into three distinct divisions, according to its methods of reproduction. From being entirely without sex, it became androgynous, and having gone through the earliest stages of propagation by fission and by budding, in the Third (or egg-born) Race, the soft cell gradually turned into a man-bearing egg. These beings began to give birth, gradually and almost imperceptibly in their evolutionary development, first to beings in which one sex predominated, and then to distinct males and females. While the earlier Races were little higher than the sea-anemone in development, with the Third Race and its increase in materiality, came many changes of form, and towards its end, men came into the world under the same conditions and by the same processes as at present. This change required of course many millions of years, and followed the general lines of evolution very closely.

With the separation of the sexes, strife came into the world, and the conflict of natures bred passion and sin and death, for as some of our naturalists have said, reproduction has death as its inevitable consequence “it is the price paid for a body.” This is the real fall of man, “the descent of the soul into matter,” and involution, or the union of the spiritual with the physical having been effected, *evolution* or the return towards the spiritual began.

The Third Race shows three distinct divisions: physiologically and psychically; the earliest sinless; the second, awakening to intelligence; and the third and last decidedly *animal*, where the *mind* succumbs to the temptations of desire. The brain had continued to develop, until it had at last become a fitting vehicle for Mind, and the divine spark having kindled the fire of intelligence in man, he acquired the consciousness of his own powers, and ate of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. That is, having been given *mind*, *self-consciousness* had arisen from its union with matter, and man had become as a god, knowing good and evil. Good and evil, light and darkness, heat and cold, male and female, active and

passive, etc., etc., are the two scales of the ever-vibrating balance of creation. Therefore evil *must* be relative, and only through constant struggle can man work out his salvation, and win his way back to the Divine Source of all.

IV. With the Fourth Race developed language; and the men of its early subdivisions are described as being of gigantic stature, and endowed with extraordinary faculties. From the men of this Race we get our traditions of Titans and Cyclopes, the three-eyed, the third eye being, however, at the back of the head. The old *Commentary* says that when after the separation of the sexes men had fallen into matter, and their spiritual vision had become dim, it had to be awakened by artificial stimuli, and the third eye gradually disappeared. But it has left a trace of its existence in the *pineal gland*, which Descartes called the seat of the soul. It was an active organ in man at that stage of evolution when the spiritual element reigned supreme, and it did not become entirely atrophied till the close of the Fourth Race, when man's divine powers had been made the servants of his newly awakened physical and psychic passions instead of the reverse. The sin lay, not in using these powers, but in *mis-using* them.

The first civilization of our Round (the Fourth) began with the Third Race, of which a few remnants are now to be found among the flatheaded Australians. With the Atlanteans, physical beauty and strength reached their climax (in accordance with the law of evolution), towards their middle period. They represented an almost countless number of races and nations, and at their best, Greek, Roman, and even Egyptian civilizations, were as nothing compared to theirs. Their knowledge of the hidden powers of nature was far greater than ours, they built and navigated flying machines, and their houses were floored with gold. But little of their literature is now preserved, and their art and science have left scarcely any vestige except in China, although one of the principal astronomical works in Sanskrit is the production of an Atlantean astronomer.

It was their abuse of their knowledge of the subtler forces of nature which led to the downfall of the Atlantean Race. And as in any series of seven the fourth must be the central or point of equilibrium, so with the Fourth Race the spiritual element had become most deeply imbedded in matter.

V. With the Fifth the re-ascent towards the spiritual begins. Only by its *union* with matter can Universal Consciousness become individual Mind, only by the *purification* of matter can it regain the glorious liberty of the Sons of God. With each Race, we are told, a new sense and a new element come to perfection, and already the fifth element, Ether, is beginning to be recognized. Prof. Crookes has said that in its vibrations hardly understood as yet, "lie possibilities of a new organ in the human brain answering to these vibrations as the eye answers to the vibrations which we know as light." And so the way is being prepared for the development of that *sixth sense* which will be the distinguishing characteristic of the coming (Sixth) Race.

After the destruction of Atlantis, the Fifth Race "was ruled over by the first divine Kings . . . who re-descended, who made peace with the Fifth, who taught and instructed it." "When mortals shall have become sufficiently spiritualized, men will *know* that there never was a great world-reformer, whose name has come down to us, who was not a direct emanation of the *Logos*, and who had not appeared before, during the past cycle." Each of these, and many others, had first appeared on earth as one of the

seven Powers of the Logos, individualized as a God or angelic messenger, then, more material in form, they reappeared in turn as the great sages and teachers of the Fifth Race, and finally sacrificed themselves for the good of mankind, to be re-born under different circumstances at various critical periods.

IV THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF MAN

So far we have seen the evolution of man to be conducted on three lines, the physical, the mental, and the spiritual, but the closer we look into this marvellous system the more we realize that many problems present themselves that can only be solved by a more minute division, and the doctrine of “the seven principles” seems to be the Key that opens many locks. These seven principles, to begin with the lowest, or the most material, and therefore the best known to us, are (1) the physical body; (2) the astral body; (3) vitality, or the life-force; (4) the passionate or emotional nature, the lower mind; (5) the higher mind, or the intellectual nature; (6) the spiritual nature; and (7) that Ray of the Divine that overshadows man, rather than forms a part of him. Or instead of speaking of the emotional nature, etc., we may say the animal Soul, the intellectual Soul, and the Spiritual Soul, but the other classification is perhaps simpler.

I. To begin with the physical body, the most material of the component parts of man: This outermost “sheath” as the Oriental philosophers call it, is built up of countless cells, or “Lives,” under the constructive energy of the Life-Force, the third principle. These cells have a consciousness of their own, entirely apart from the brain-consciousness. This enables them to select from the nourishment provided them, that which suits their needs, and reject that which would be injurious. Another phase of this cell-consciousness is shown in the way the cells hasten to repair wounded tissue in any part of the body. The brain-consciousness feels the *pain* of the wound, but has nothing to do with the action of the cells in repairing the damage. The memory, which is a function of the brain, urges the cells to repeat the repairing process even when it is no longer needed, and this is the cause of scars and other things of like nature.

When the body dies, it is because the life-force is withdrawn from it, and the energy expended in building it up is changed into the energy which tears it to pieces. Wherever there is an atom of matter, even in the most gaseous condition, there is life, however latent and unconscious that life may be. The expression “inorganic substance” means simply that the latent life in the molecules of so-called inert matter cannot be detected by our senses. The *Commentary* says that the worlds to the profane are built up of the known elements. Fire alone is *One* on the plane of the One Reality; on that of manifested, hence illusive, being, its particles are “fiery lives,” which live and have their being at the expense of every other life that they consume. Therefore they are called the “Devourers.” The preservation and destruction of the physical body are due to the alternate functions of the “fiery lives” as builders and destroyers. They are “builders” by sacrificing themselves in the form of vitality to restrain the destructive influence of the microbes, and compelling them under that restraint, to build up the material body and its cells. They are “destroyers” when that restraint is removed, and the microbes, unsupplied with vital constructive energy, are left to run riot as destructive agents. During the first half of a man’s life the fiery lives are indirectly engaged in building up the material body; life is on the ascending scale, and its force is used in construction and increase. After thirty-five, the age of retrogression sets in, and the fiery lives having exhausted their

strength, the work of decrease and destruction begins.

But it must not be forgotten that there is in reality a principle more material than the physical body, or even the astral, and that is the fourth principle, the animal soul, the body of desires, as it has been called, the real animal centre through which the beast in us acts all its life, and of which the body is but the irresponsible shell and medium.

II. The second principle is the astral body, the framework upon which the physical body is built, and which is still molecular, though of a finer grade of matter than the physical body. The evolution of the *external* form round the *astral* is produced by the terrestrial forces, but the evolution of the *internal* or real *Man* is purely spiritual. The stories of perfected men, like Enoch and Elijah who are taken up to heaven alive, symbolize the death of any spiritual man who has reached the power and degree, as also the purification, which enable him to die only in the physical body, and *still live consciously in his astral body*. The Pauline expression that “Enoch should not see death,” has thus an esoteric meaning, but has nothing supernatural in it. The Biblical hints that Enoch will share with Christ and Elijah the glories of the last Advent, signify, *esoterically*, that some of these perfected men will return in the Seventh Race.

Theosophists will remember that during a period of cyclic rest, which answers to our nightly slumbers, everything visible and invisible remains in *statu quo*. All forms, as well as their astral types, remain as they were when the great clock of the Universe stopped. With the beginning of a new cycle the Monad has only to step into the astral body of the “Lunar Ancestors” in order that the work of physical consolidation should begin around the shadowy model. For there can be no *objective form* in all the universe, without its astral prototype being first formed in Space. From Phidias down to his humblest workman, a sculptor has to create a model in his mind before he can reproduce it in a figure, the most trivial thing that can be fashioned by the hand of man, must first exist in the mind of the artificer.

The astral body *inherits* in the physical body, and “to project the astral” means to disentangle every particle of the astral molecules that form it from the physical molecules, a most difficult and complicated performance, needing the knowledge and skill of an adept to complete successfully. Only in occasional cases, the astral and the physical bodies are both so loosely built, that the astral can slip out of its sheath, as can be seen sometimes in séances, when the astral body appears to ooze out of the *left* side of the medium, the spleen, which has been called the factory of astral matter, being on the left side. The astral body dies with the physical, or very soon afterwards, and one of the strongest arguments for cremation is, that by hastening the dispersion of the molecules, the higher principles are the sooner set free from the bonds of matters.

III. The third principle is “life,” or vitality, which pervades all the rest, as indeed do all the principles, nor can any one of them be thought of as a separate compartment, as it were, of man’s nature, while all of them are but a portion of the Universal Soul in whom we live and move and have our being. The principles of man correspond to the principles of the Universe, and so the Life of the universe is the “Spirit” of Electricity, we are told; “as an abstraction we call it the One Life; as an evident reality we speak of a septenary scale of manifestation, which begins at the top with the Unknowable, and ends as omnipresent Mind and Life, immanent in every atom of matter.” It is the action of the vital force upon a

compound or even a simple body that produces life. “When a body dies, it passes into the same polarity as its male energy, and repels therefore the active agent, which losing hold of the *whole* fastens on the parts or molecules, this action being called chemical.” (*Secret Doctrine*, I, 526, note.)

IV. The fourth principle is the emotional nature or Desire, which must be carefully distinguished from Thought. In its lowest aspect, it is the emotional and passionate nature, the part of consciousness which is common to man and the animal; in its highest, it is aspiration, the motive power of the soul. It is this distinction between the consciousness of the animal and the *self*-consciousness of man, that solves so many of the problems of the psychologist as to the reason or instinct of animals. Romanes has shown that they have all the passions of men, and that they possess the reasoning faculty to a large extent, cannot be denied by any careful observer. What then is the difference? Simply that the animals have not what is called “the I am I” consciousness, that *self*-consciousness which enables mankind to develop the inner man, and to become the Higher Ego, the immortal Spirit, or the Higher Mind.

Perhaps the nearest approach to self-consciousness in the beast is the sense of ownership which many of the higher animals possess, but even this strong sense of individual property is hardly to be called self-consciousness. In the *Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge* there are some very clear explanations of the true dividing line between man and beast, and even more in the second volume of the *Secret Doctrine*. “Man is a perfected animal,” says the former, “the vehicle of a fully developed *Monad*, *self-conscious* and deliberately following its own line of progress, whereas in the insect, and even the higher animals, the Higher Triad of principles (the overshadowing Divinity, the Intellectual Soul, and the Spiritual Soul), is absolutely dormant.” And the *Secret Doctrine* (II, 267) says: “No animal has the three higher principles awakened in him; they are simply potential, latent, and thus non-existent.” Therefore, “between man and the animal there is the impassable abyss of mentality and Self-consciousness.” And yet we must not forget that “in relation to *its own plane* of conception and perception, the ant has as good an intellect as ours, and over and above instinct, shows very high reasoning powers.” (*Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge*, I, 13)

But the three higher principles that go to make up man’s complex nature, the Intellectual Soul, and the Spiritual Soul, with the overshadowing Divinity, *can have no individuality on Earth*, cannot be *man*, that is, unless there is (1) the Mind, the Ego, to cognize itself, and (2) the terrestrial *false* personality, or the body of personal desires and will, to cement the whole to the physical form of man. It is the Mind and the body of desires and passions that contain the dual personality; the real immortal Ego (or the individuality) and the false and transitory *personality*, the two having to be closely blended to make up a *full* terrestrial existence. “The most perfect soul incarnated in the most perfect physical body, would be only a beautiful and unconscious being without Mind.” (*Abridgment*, 395)

V. It is then very evident that the most important principle of our nature is the fifth, the Mind, the pivot upon which all the other faculties turn, and which is the foundation of our immortality. It is the close and intimate union of the Mind or the Intellectual Soul, with the Spiritual Soul, which forms that immortal Ego that persists forever. Consciousness, that which beholds itself in the mirror of thought, is all that we can feel secure of in the beginning. “I think, therefore I am,” said Descartes. “I am, therefore I think,” is equally true, and it is the Thinker within us that spells out by slow degrees the complex characters of itself

and its surroundings, and learns at last to discern the important from the unimportant.

VI. VII. But higher than Mind, because nearer akin to Spirit, is the sixth principle, the Spiritual Soul, *Intuition* as opposed to *Understanding*, and the seventh principle, which is its vehicle and can hardly be treated of separately. “The Spiritual Soul (the sixth principle), is but a mirror that *reflects* absolute bliss, a reflection not yet free from ignorance; the Supreme Spirit (the seventh principle), alone, is the one real and eternal substratum of all — the essence and absolute knowledge.” (*Abridgment*, 269)

But it is better to leave the lofty speculations of philosophy for the present, and busy ourselves with matters more closely concerned with our everyday problems.

V

THE SOURCES OF THE SECRET DOCTRINE

In the introductory chapter to the first volume of the *Secret Doctrine* H.P.B. speaks of the “Wisdom Religion” as the inheritance of all nations all over the world, and states that Gautama’s *secret* teachings form but a very small part of the esoteric wisdom of the world since the beginning of our humanity, while he limited his *public* instructions to the purely moral and physiological aspects of the Wisdom Religion. Things “unseen and incorporeal” the great Teacher reserved for a select circle of his Arhats, who received their initiation at the famous Saptaparna cave near Mt. Baibhâs — (*Saptaparna* — *the seven-leafed plant*=man, with his seven principles).

The main body of the doctrines given is found scattered through hundreds and thousands of Sanskrit manuscripts, some already translated, more or less badly, others still in the vernacular. These are accessible to the scholar, while a few passages, taken from oral teaching or from the *Commentaries*, would be found difficult to trace. However, one thing is certain, says Mme. Blavatsky, that the members of several esoteric schools — the seat of which is beyond the Himalayas, and whose ramifications may be found in China, Japan, Thibet, India, and even in Syria and South America — claim to have in their possession *all* the sacred and philosophical works, whether in manuscript or in type, in whatever language or character, that have ever been written, — from the ideographic hieroglyphs down. And they claim also that these works have been carefully preserved in subterranean crypts and cave-libraries in the mountains of Western Thibet, and elsewhere.

The documents have been concealed, it is true, but the knowledge itself has always been made known to the chosen few through the medium of the great Adepts and teachers. More than one great scholar has stated that there never was a religious founder who had invented a new religion or revealed a new truth. They were all *transmitters*, not original teachers, and handed on fragments of the truths they had learned, couched in the symbolism of their own nation.

The teaching of the *Secret Doctrine* antedates the Vedas, and much of it has only been transmitted orally. The present book is based upon the Stanzas of the *Book of Dzyan*, a volume written in Senzar, the secret sacerdotal tongue once known to the Initiates of every nation. This language, besides having an alphabet

of its own, may be rendered in several modes of ideographic writing. The only original copy now in existence, says *Isis Unveiled*, is so old that modern antiquarians would not even agree upon the nature of the fabric upon which it was written. This archaic manuscript, says Vol. II of the *Secret Doctrine*, is a collection of palm leaves made impermeable to water, fire, and air, by some specific unknown process.

Tradition says that its contents were dictated to the first men of each race, by the Divine Beings whose duty it was to instruct them. The old book, having described cosmic evolution and explained the origin of everything on earth, including physical man, gives the true history of the races from the First, down to the Fifth, our present race, and stops short with the death of Krishna, about five thousand years ago.

It is the original work from which many of the most ancient volumes of occult learning in Chinese, Hebrew, Egyptian, Indian and Chaldean, have been compiled. Its influence can be traced in the Pentateuch itself, and an enormous number of commentaries, glosses, etc., have been written upon it. In the *Secret Doctrine* as we have it, certain portions of the Stanzas of the *Book of Dzyan* are printed, and extracts are also given from the Chinese, Thibetan, and Sanskrit translations of the original Senzar commentaries and glosses.

In addition we are told that it was from the Divine Teachers before mentioned that infant humanity got its first ideas of the arts and sciences, as well as of spiritual knowledge. The Cyclopean and Druidical remains found all over the world, are all, as well as many other ancient structures, the work of initiated Priest-Architects, the descendants of those primarily taught by the “Sons of God.”

The *Secret Doctrine* is the accumulated Wisdom of the Ages, but such is the power of occult symbolism that the facts which countless generations of initiated seers and prophets have occupied themselves in marshalling, setting down, and explaining, are all recorded in a few pages of geometrical signs and glyphs. It is needless to say that the system in question is no fancy of one or of several isolated individuals, but is the one uninterrupted record covering thousands of generations of seers, whose respective experiences were made to test and to verify the traditions passed orally from one race to another of the teachings of the Divine Instructors. For long ages the “Wise Men” of the Fifth, our own race, passed their lives in *learning, not teaching*, but in checking, testing, and verifying, in every department of nature, the traditions handed down to them by the independent visions of great Adepts; that is, *men* who have developed their physical, mental, psychic and spiritual powers, to the utmost possible degree. No vision of any one Adept was accepted till it was checked and confirmed by the visions — so obtained as to stand as independent evidence — of other Adepts, as well as by centuries of experience.

The mysteries of Life and Death *were* fathomed by the great master-minds of antiquity; and if they preserved them in secrecy and silence it is because these problems formed part of the sacred Mysteries, and because they must always have remained incomprehensible to the vast majority of men, as indeed, they do now.

VI THE ELDER BROTHERS

The student who has carefully followed these scanty outlines of a great scheme of philosophy, will have noticed that that scheme is based upon a few general laws which are repeated in many ways, and like the laws of physical science hold good throughout the universe. The law of the conservation of energy applies to spiritual phenomena as well as physical, and the action of the laws of evolution is as unerring upon the higher planes as upon the lower. Human nature develops along the same lines as animal nature, and from the progress that man has made in the past, we can safely forecast something, at least, of his future.

“The faith which is born of knowledge,” says Huxley, “finds its object in an eternal order, bringing forth ceaseless change, through endless time, in endless space, the manifestation of the cosmic energy alternating between phases of potentiality, and phases of explication.” And by these endless alternations, sometimes called “the Great Breath,” the universe develops, and the pebble beneath our feet changes from the mineral to the vegetable, and then to the animal, and finally to the human being. Beyond the man of today, what endless vistas of growth loom up, what ages of spiritual development! Huxley is often quoted as saying that it would be an impertinence to assert that there were not beings in the universe whose intelligence was as much beyond ours as ours is beyond that of the black beetle. Theosophy goes a step further, and asserts that such superior beings to ourselves do exist among us, of different grades of development, and called by many names, one that they have given themselves being “The Elder Brothers.”

When a planet has passed through its regular stages of development, it dies, and its inhabitants, by this time far advanced entities, pass on to another field of development, where they become the teachers, guides and friends of the new humanity. They keep the knowledge they have gained of the laws of nature in all her varied phases, and are always ready to use it for the benefit of mankind whenever cyclic laws permit, for only at the proper moment can this knowledge be given to the world by these Elder Brothers who have treasured it up for us all.

They have always existed as a body, known to each other, and in some periods of the world’s history, known to the people among whom they worked. At such times, certain of the Elder Brothers have been recognized as great rulers, some as teachers, a few as great philosophers, while others are only known to the most advanced of their own body. It will be easily seen that it would be very dangerous for such beings to mingle openly with men, by whom they would either be worshipped, as gods, or persecuted as devils. In our present age, one of change and transition, when so much is based upon money and money values, it would be impossible for the Elder Brothers to permit themselves to be seen of men. In a fine paper written for the *Path* (Sept. 1894) Mr. J.H. Connelly points out very clearly the conditions of their being. “If they temporarily assumed corporeal bodies, they would appear just like other men, and if embodied in more tenuous matter they would be invisible. . . . By those to whom the Mahatmas (*Maha-Atma* — *great soul*) are personally known — and there are such — it is recognized that theirs is not an equality of development, the greater wisdom and spirituality of some elevating them to higher planes and endowing them with greater powers, than those attained by others, and such progression extends far beyond the range of normal human comprehension.”

And Mr. Sinnett quotes from the letter of one of these Elder Brothers, who writes to explain why they

were supposed to have failed in making any perceptible mark upon the history of the world. “What they have done, *they* know; all that those outside their circle could perceive was the results, the causes of which were masked from view. . . . There never was a time, within or before the so-called historical period, when our predecessors were not moulding events and ‘making history.’ We never pretended to be able to draw nations in the mass to this or that crisis in spite of the general drift of the world’s cosmic relations. The cycles must run their rounds. . . . And we, borne along the mighty tide, can only modify and direct some of its minor currents.”

The laws of evolution mould alike the world and its inhabitants, and when those inhabitants have learned all that their sojourn in their present environment can teach them, they are ready to instruct the dwellers in the next planetary system, to whom we shall be “the terrene ancestors.” The Guardian Spirits furnished many of our earliest nations with divine Kings and Leaders who taught humanity their arts and sciences. They had finished their own cycles on earth and other worlds in preceding Rounds, and in future life-cycles they will have risen to higher systems than ours. (*Abridgment* 145-452)

It is an interesting fact that the tradition of divine rulers and teachers runs through all the early nations of the world, and they are called by many names; Adepts, Initiates, Magi, Wise Men, Masters, and Mahatmas, among others. And when one of these has reached the final point of his development, if he refuse to enter Nirvana, he may exist on earth as an Adept, and when at last he dies, “he remains in that glorious body he has woven for himself, *invisible* to uninitiated mankind, to watch over and protect it.” (*Voice of the Silence*. Note to the “Seven Portals.”)

“There will be Initiates and profane till the end of this present life-cycle,” and *the* Initiator, or the Watcher, the Divine prototype, called the GREAT SACRIFICE, will sit at the threshold of LIGHT, looking into it from the circle of Darkness which he will not cross; nor will he quit his post till the last ray of this life-cycle. Why does the solitary Watcher remain by his self-chosen post? Because the lonely pilgrims on their way back to their *home*, are never sure, up to the last moment, of not losing their way in this limitless desert of illusion called earth-life. . . . It is under the direct guidance of this Great Teacher that all the other less divine teachers of mankind became, from the first awakening of human consciousness, the guides of early humanity, and it is they who laid the first foundation-stones of those ancient civilizations that puzzle so sorely our modern archaeologists. . . . In future life-cycles they will have risen to higher systems than ours, and it is the elect of our humanity who will take their places. The next Great Cycle of being will see the men of this, becoming the instructors and guides of a mankind whose Monads may be still imprisoned — semi-conscious — in the most intelligent of the animal kingdom, while their lower principles will perhaps be animating the highest specimens of the vegetable world.” (*Abridgment* 119-146)

“The most intelligent being in the universe, man, — has never been without a friend,” says Mr. Judge in *The Ocean of Theosophy*, “but has a line of Elder Brothers who continually watch over the less progressed, preserve the knowledge gained through aeons of trial and experience, and continually seek to draw the developing intelligence of the race to consider the great truths concerning the destiny of the soul.”

KATHARINE HILLARD