

# *Eliphas Levi on Death and Satan*



## Stray thoughts on Death and Satan

**With editorial notes by H.P. Blavatsky  
and annotations by a Master of Wisdom.**

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[As appears from a letter of Master K.H. to A.P. Sinnett, received February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1883,<sup>1</sup> at one time or another after the publication of this article the Master precipitated some remarks and comments on a couple of pages of *The Theosophist* which contain Éliphas Lévi's articles on "Death" and "Satan." He also underlined certain passages in Lévi's text. In his Letter to Sinnett, the Master suggests that he reflect upon certain words used, such, for instance, as *drones*, *etc.* These pages from *The Theosophist* are among the so-called "Mahatma Papers" in the holdings of the British Museum, and we have incorporated the Master's comments in the present reproduction of this article. — *Boris de Zirkoff.*]

TO THE EDITOR OF *The Theosophist*

Madam,

Since you have published a posthumous letter of my Master and beloved friend, the late Éliphas Lévi, I think it would be agreeable to you to publish, if judged suitable, a few extracts of the many manuscripts in my possession, written expressly for, and given to, me by my ever-regretted MASTER.

To begin, I send you — "Stray Thoughts on Death and Satan" from his pen.

I cannot close this letter without expressing the deep indignation aroused in me by the base diatribes published in the London *Spiritualist* against your Society and its members. Every honest heart is irritated at such unfair treatment, especially when proceeding from a man of honour as Mr. Harrison (Editor of *The Spiritualist*) who admits in his journal anonymous contributions that are tantamount to libels.

With the utmost respect,

I remain, Madam,

Yours devotedly,

BARON J. SPEDALIERI

Marseilles, July 29<sup>th</sup> 1881

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<sup>1</sup> *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, p. 196



## Editorial Note by H.P. Blavatsky

It is with feelings of sincere gratitude that we thank Baron Spedalieri for his most valuable contribution. The late Éliphas Lévi was the most learned Kabbalist and Occultist of our age in Europe, and everything from his pen is precious to us, in so far as it helps us to compare notes with the Eastern Occult doctrines and, by the light thrown upon both, to prove to the world of Spiritualists and Mystics, that the two systems, the Eastern-Aryan, and the Western or the Chaldeo-Jewish Kabala — are one in their principal metaphysical tenets. Only, while the Eastern Occultists have never lost the key to their esoterism, and are daily verifying and elaborating their doctrines by personal experiments, and by the additional light of modern science, the Western or Jewish Kabbalists, besides having been misled for centuries by the introduction of foreign elements in it, such as Christian dogmas, dead letter interpretations of the Bible, *etc.*, have most undeniably lost the true key to the esoteric meaning of Shimon Ben Yochai's Kabala, and are trying to make up for the loss, by interpretations emanating from the depths of their imagination and inner consciousness. Such is evidently the case with J.K., the self-styled London "Adept," whose anonymous and powerless vilifications of the Theosophical Society and its members are pertinently regarded by Baron Spedalieri as "tantamount to libels." But we have to be charitable. That poor descendant of the Biblical *Levites* — as we know him to be — in his pigmy efforts to upset the Theosophists, has most evidently fractured his brain against one of his own "occult" sentences. There is one especially in *The Spiritualist* (July 22<sup>nd</sup>), to which the attention of the mystically inclined is drawn further down, as this paragraph is most probably the cause of the sad accident which befell so handsome a head. Be it as it may, but it now disables the illustrious J.K. from communicating "scientifically his knowledge" and forces him at the same time to remain, as he expresses it "in an incommunicable ecstatic state." For it is in no other "state" that our great modern adept, the literary man of such a "calibre"<sup>1</sup> that to suspect him of "ignorance" becomes equal, in audacity, to throwing suspicion upon the virtue of Caesar's wife — could possibly have written the following lines, intended by him, we believe, as a *lucid* and clear exposition of his own psycho-Kabbalistic lore as juxtaposed to the "hard words," "outlandish verbiage," "moral and philosophical platitudes," and "jawbreakers" of "the learned Theosophists."

These are the "gems of occult wisdom" of the illustrious Jewish Kabbalist who, like a bashful violet, hides his occult learning under two modest initials.

In every human creature there lies latent in the involitional part of the being a sufficient quantity of the omniscient, the absolute. To induce the latent absolute, which is the involitional part of our volitional conscious being, to become

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<sup>1</sup> "To accuse a *literary man of my calibre* of ignorance, is as amusing a mistake as it would have been to charge Porson of ignorance of Greek," he writes in *The Spiritualist* of July 8<sup>th</sup>. . . "The occult is my special subject, and . . . *there is but little . . . that I do not know,*" he adds. Now, the above sentence sets the question at rest with us. Not only an "adept" but no layman or profane of the most widely recognized intellect and ability, would have ever *dared*, under the penalty of being henceforth and forever regarded as the most ridiculously conceited of Aesop's heroes — to use such a sentence when speaking of himself! So stupidly arrogant, and cowardly impertinent has he shown himself behind the shield of his initials to far better and more worthy men than himself, in his transparent attacks upon them in the above-named *Spiritualist* — that it is the first and certainly the last time that we do him the honour of noticing him in these columns. Our journal has a nobler task, we trust, than to be polemizing with those, whom in vulgar parlance the world generally terms — *bullies*.

manifest, it is essential that the volitional part of our being should become latent. After the preparatory purification from acquired depravities, a kind of introversion has to take place; the involitional has to become volitional, by the volitional becoming involitional. When the conscious becomes semi-unconscious, the, to us, formerly unconscious becomes fully conscious. The particle of the omniscient that is within us, the vital and growing, sleepless, involitional, occult or female principle being allowed to express itself in the volitional, mental, manifest, or masculine part of the human being, while the latter remains in a state of perfect passivity, the two formerly dissevered parts become re-united as one holy (wholly) perfect being, and then the divine manifestation is inevitable.

Very luckily, J.K. gives us himself the key to this grandiloquent gush:

. . . necessarily [he adds] this is only safely practicable while living in uncompromisingly firm purity, for otherwise there is danger of *unbalancement* — *insanity*, or a questionable form of *mediumship*.

The italics are ours. Evidently with our *immaculate* “adept” the “involitional, occult or *female* principle” was *not* allowed to “express itself in the volitional, mental, manifest, or masculine part” of his being, and — behold the results!!

For the edification of our Hindu readers, who are unprogressive enough to refuse reading the lucubrations of “J.K.” or follow the mental “grand trapeze” performed by this remarkable “Adept” in the columns of *The Spiritualist*, we may add that in the same article he informs his English readers that it is “Hindu mystification acting on Western credulity” which “brought out the Theosophical Society.” “Hindu philosophy,” according to that great light of the nineteenth century is no “philosophy” but “rather mysticism.”

Following the track of the mystifying and mystified Hindus they (the Theosophists) consider the four above faculties (Siddhis of Krishna) Anima, Mahima, Laghima and Garima to be the power they (we) have to strive for. . . . Indeed, what a ludicrous confusion of effect with cause!

The fracture of the brain must have been serious indeed. Let us hope that timely and repeated lotions of “witch hazel” or “the Universal Magic Balm” will have its good effects. Meanwhile, we turn the attention of our Hindu readers and students of Occultism to the identity of the doctrines taught by Éliphas Lévi (who, too, is contemptuously sneered at, and sent by the “Adept” to keep company with “Brothers,” Yogis, and “Fakirs”) in every essential and vital point with those of our Eastern initiates.

[In the two Essays of Éliphas Lévi which follow, the Comments of Master K.H. are printed in bold type, parallel with the text itself. They are numbered to correspond with similar numbers inserted in square brackets within the body of the essays. Words and sentences which are underlined have been underscored by K.H. himself. The footnotes signed ED. THEOSOPHIST, as well as the long Editorial Note, are by H.P. Blavatsky herself. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

# Eliphas Levi on Death

## Annotated by a Master of Wisdom

Death is the necessary dissolution of imperfect combinations. [1] It is the re-absorption of the rough outline of individual [2] life into the great work of universal life; only the perfect [3] is immortal.

It is a bath in oblivion. [4] It is the fountain of youth where on one side plunges old age, and whence on the other issues infancy.<sup>1</sup>

Death is the transfiguration of the living; corpses are but the dead leaves of the Tree of Life which will still have all its leaves in the spring. [5] The *resurrection* [6] of men resembles eternally these leaves.

Perishable forms are conditioned by immortal types.

All who have lived upon earth, live there still in new exemplars of their types, but the souls which have surpassed their type receive elsewhere a new form based upon a more perfect type, as they mount ever on the ladder of worlds;<sup>2</sup> the bad exemplars are broken, and their matter returned into the general mass.<sup>3</sup>

Our souls are as it were a music, of which our bodies are the instruments. The music exists without the instruments, but it cannot make itself heard without a material intermediary; [8] the immaterial can neither be conceived nor grasped.

[1] **Of the 1, 2, 3d, 4, 5<sup>th</sup>.**

[2] **The personality of the personal Ego.**

[3] **The 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Principles.**

[4] **Until the hour of remembrance.**

[5] **In the language of the Kabbalist “Spring” means the beginning of that state when the Ego reaches its omniscience.**

[6] **The Chaldean “resurrection in life eternal” borrowed by the Xtians means resurrection in Nirvana.**

[8] **Hence Spirit cannot communicate.**

<sup>1</sup> Rebirth of the *Ego* after death. The Eastern, and especially Buddhistic doctrine of the evolution of the new, out of the old *Ego*. — ED. THEOSOPHIST.

<sup>2</sup> From one *loka* to the other; from a positive world of causes and activity, to a negative world of effects and passivity. — ED. THEOSOPHIST.

<sup>3</sup> Into Cosmic matter, when they necessarily lose their self-consciousness or individuality, [7] or are annihilated, as the Eastern Kabbalists say. — ED. THEOSOPHIST. [7] **Their Monad 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Principles.**

Man in his present existence only retains certain predispositions from his past existences. [9]

[9] **Karma.**

Evocations of the dead are but condensations of memory, the imaginary coloration of the shades. To evoke those who are no longer there, is but to cause their types to re-issue from the imagination of nature.<sup>1</sup>

To be in direct communication with the imagination of nature, one must be either asleep, intoxicated, in an ecstasy, cataleptic, or mad. [10]

[10] **And to be in direct communication with the intelligence of Nature one must become an Adept.**

The eternal memory preserves only the imperishable; all that passes in Time belongs of right to oblivion.

The preservation of corpses is a violation of the laws of nature; it is an outrage on the modesty of death, which hides the works of destruction, as we should hide those of reproduction. Preserving corpses is to create phantoms in the imagination of the earth;<sup>2</sup> [11] the spectres of the nightmare, of hallucination, and fear, are but the wandering photographs of preserved corpses. [12] It is these preserved or imperfectly destroyed corpses, which spread, amid the living, plague, cholera, contagious diseases, sadness, scepticism and disgust of life.<sup>3</sup> Death is exhaled by death. The cemeteries poison the atmosphere of towns, and the miasma of corpses blight the children even in the bosoms of their mothers.

[11] **We never bury our dead. They are burnt or left above the earth.**

[12] **Their reflections in the astral light.**

Near Jerusalem in the Valley of Gehenna a perpetual fire was maintained for the combustion of filth and the carcasses of animals, and it is to this eternal fire that Jesus alluded when he says that the wicked shall be cast into *Gehenna*; signifying that dead souls will be treated as corpses.

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<sup>1</sup> To ardently desire to see a dead person is to *evoke* the image of that person, to call it forth from the astral light or ether wherein rest photographed the images of the *Past*. That is what is being partially done in the *séance rooms*. The Spiritualists are unconscious NECROMANCERS. — ED. THEOSOPHIST.

<sup>2</sup> To intensify these images in the astral or sidereal light. — ED. THEOSOPHIST.

<sup>3</sup> People begin intuitively to realize the great truth, and societies for burning bodies and *crematories* are now started in many places in Europe. — ED. THEOSOPHIST.

The *Talmud* says that the souls of those who have not believed in immortality will not become immortal. It is faith only which gives personal immortality;<sup>1</sup> [13] science and reason can only affirm the general immortality.

The mortal sin is the suicide of the soul. This suicide would occur if the man devoted himself to evil with the full strength of his mind, with a perfect knowledge of good and evil, and an entire liberty of action which seems impossible in practice, but which is possible in theory, because the essence of an independent personality is an unconditioned liberty. The divinity imposes nothing upon man, not even existence. Man has a right to withdraw himself even from the divine goodness, and the dogma of eternal Hell is only the assertion of eternal free will.

God precipitates no one into Hell. It is men who can go there freely, definitely and by their own choice.

Those who are in Hell, that is to say, amid the gloom of evil<sup>2</sup> and the sufferings of the necessary punishment, without having absolutely so willed it, are called to emerge from it. This Hell is for them only a purgatory. The damned completely, absolutely and without respite, is Satan who is not a rational existence, but a necessary hypothesis.

**N.I.**<sup>3</sup> Satan is the last word of the creation. He is the end infinitely emancipated. He willed to be like God of which he is the opposite. God is the hypothesis necessary to **II.**<sup>4</sup> reason, Satan the hypothesis necessary to unreason asserting itself as free will. [14]

[13] **In the Deva-Chan the Ego sees and feels but that which he longed for. He who cares not for a continuation of sentient personal life after physical death will not have it. He will be reborn remaining unconscious of the transition.**

[14] **That which I have marked with red pencil are all seeming contradictions but they are not.**

<sup>1</sup> Faith and *will* power. Immortality is conditional, as we have ever stated. It is the reward of the pure and good. The wicked man, the material sensualist, only survives. He who appreciates but physical pleasures will not and *cannot* live in the hereafter as a self-conscious Entity. — ED. THEOSOPHIST.

<sup>2</sup> That is to say, they are reborn in a “lower world” which is neither “hell” nor any theological purgatory, but a world of nearly absolute *matter* and one preceding the last one in the “circle of necessity” from which “there is no redemption for there reigns *absolute* spiritual darkness” (*Book of Kiu-te*). — ED. THEOSOPHIST.

<sup>3</sup> [See corresponding marks in the second Essay, on “Satan,” which follows.]

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

To be immortal [15] in good, one must identify oneself with God; to be immortal in evil, with Satan. These are the two poles of the world of souls; between these two poles vegetate and die without remembrance the useless portion of mankind.

*Editor's Note.* — This may seem into the average reader, for it is one of the most abstruse of the tenets of Occult [16] doctrine. Nature is dual; there is a physical and material side, as there is a spiritual and moral side to it; and, there both good and evil in it, the latter the necessary shadow to its light. To force oneself upon the current of immortality, or rather to secure for oneself an endless series of rebirths conscious individualities — says the *Book of Kiu-te*, Volume XXXI, [17] one must become a co-worker with nature, either for *good* or for *bad*, in her work of creation and reproduction, or in that of destruction.

[18] It is but the useless drones, which she gets rid of, violently ejecting and making them perish by the millions [19] as self-conscious entities. [20] Thus, while the good and the pure strive to reach *Nipang* (*Nirvana* or that state of *absolute* existence and *absolute* consciousness — which, in the world of finite perceptions, is *non*-existence and *non*-consciousness) — the wicked will seek, on the contrary, a series of lives as conscious, definite existences or beings, preferring to be ever suffering under the law of retributive justice [21] rather than give up their lives as portions of the integral, universal whole. Being well aware that they can never hope to reach the final rest in

[15] **As a rule the Hermetists, when using the word “immortality,” limit its duration from the beginning to the end of the minor cycle. The deficiencies of their respective languages cannot be visited upon them. One could not well say a semi-immortality. The ancients called it “panaeonic eternity” from the words, πάν — all or nature, and αἰών, a period of time which had no definite limit, except for the initiates. See Dictionaries — an aeon is the period of time during which a person lives, the period during which the universe endures, and also — eternity. It was a “mystery word” and was purposely veiled.**

[16] **Western.**

[17] **Chap. III.**

[18] **This sentence refers to the two kinds of the initiates — the adepts and the sorcerers.**

[19] **One of her usual exaggerations.**

[20] **Two useless words.**

[21] **Karma.**



pure spirit, or *nirvana*, they cling to life in any form, [22] rather than give up that “desire for life,” or *Tanhā* which causes a new aggregation of *Skandhas* or individuality to be reborn.\* Nature is as good a mother to the cruel bird of prey as she is to the harmless dove. Mother nature will punish her child, but since he has become her co-worker for destruction she cannot eject him. [23] There are thoroughly wicked and depraved men, yet as highly intellectual and acutely *spiritual* for evil, as those who are spiritual for good.

[24]

The *Egos* of these may escape the law of final destruction or annihilation for ages to come. [25] That is what Éliphas Lévi means by becoming “immortal in evil,” through identification with Satan. “I would thou wert *cold* or *hot*,” says the vision of the Revelation to St. John (iii, 15-16). “So then because thou art *lukewarm*, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.” The *Revelation* is an absolutely *Kabbalistic* book. Heat and cold are the two “poles,” *i.e.*, good and evil, *spirit* and *matter*. Nature *spues* the “lukewarm” or “the useless portion of mankind” out of her mouth, *i.e.*, annihilates them. This conception that a considerable portion of mankind may after all not have immortal souls, will not be new even to European readers. Coleridge himself likened the case to that of an oak tree bearing, indeed, millions of acorns, but acorns of which under nominal [26] conditions not one in a thousand ever developed into a tree, and suggested that as the majority of the acorns failed to develop into a new living tree, so possibly the majority of men fail to develop into a new living entity after this earthly death.

[22] **Thro’ mediums who have existed everywhere in every age. \*Read note on pages attached.**

[23] **Not during the aeon, if they but know how to force her. But it is a life of torture and eternal hatred. If you believe in us how can you disbelieve in them?**

[24] **The Brothers o the shadow.**

[25] **The majority have to go out of this planet into the 8<sup>th</sup> as she calls it. But the highest will live till the very threshold of the final nirvana.**

[26] **Normal.**

# Eliphas Levi on Satan

## Annotated by a Master of Wisdom

Satan is merely a type, not a real personage.

**II.** It is the type opposed to the Divine type, the necessary foil to this in our imagination. It is the factitious shadow which renders visible to us the infinite light of the Divine.

If Satan was a real personage then would there be two Gods, and the creed of the Manicheans would be a truth.

Satan is the imaginary conception of the absolute in evil; a conception necessary to the complete affirmation of the liberty of the human will, which, by the help of this imaginary absolute seems able to equilibrate the entire power even of God. It is the boldest, and perhaps, the sublimest of the dreams of human pride.

“You shall be as Gods knowing good and evil,” saith the allegorical serpent in the Bible. Truly to make evil a science is to create a God of evil, and if any spirit can eternally resist God, there is no longer one God but two Gods.

To resist the Infinite, infinite force is necessary, and two infinite forces opposed to each other must neutralize each other.<sup>1</sup> If resistance on the part of Satan is possible the power of God no longer exists, God and the Devil destroy each other, and man remains alone; he remains alone with the phantom of his Gods, the hybrid sphinx, the winged bull, which poises in its human hand a sword of which the wavering lightnings drive the human imagination from one error to the other, and from the despotism of the light, to the despotism of the darkness.

The history of mundane misery is but the romance of the war of the Gods, a war still unfinished, while the Christian world still adores God in the Devil, and a Devil in God.

The antagonism of powers is anarchy in Dogma. **N.I.** Thus to the Church which affirms that the Devil exists the world replies with terrifying logic: then God does not exist; and it is vain to seek escape from this argument to invent the supremacy of a God who would permit a Devil to bring about the damnation of men; such a permission would be a monstrosity, and would amount to complicity, and the god that could be an accomplice of the devil, cannot be God.

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<sup>1</sup> And evil being infinite and eternal, for it is co-eval with matter, the logical deduction would be that there is neither God nor Devil — as personal Entities, only One Uncreated, Immutable and Absolute Principle or Law: EVIL or DEVIL — the deeper it falls into matter, GOOD or GOD as soon as it is purified from the latter and becomes again pure unalloyed Spirit or the Absolute in its everlasting, immutable Subjectivity. [27] — ED. THE-OSOPHIST. [27] **True.**

The Devil of Dogmas is a personification of Atheism. The Devil of Philosophy is the exaggerated ideal of human free will. The real or physical Devil is the magnetism of evil.

Raising the Devil is but realizing for an instant this imaginary personality. This involves the exaggeration in one's self beyond bounds of the perversity of madness by the most criminal and senseless acts.

The result of this operation is the death of the soul through madness, and often the death of the body even, lightning-struck, as it were, by a cerebral congestion.

The Devil ever importunes, but gives nothing in return.

St. John calls it "the Beast" (*la Bête*) because its essence is human folly (*la Bêtise humaine*).

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Éliphas Lévi's (*Bonae Memoriae*) creed, and that of his disciples.

We believe in a God-Principle, the essence of all existence, of all good and of all justice, inseparable from nature which is its law and which reveals itself through intelligence and love.

We believe in Humanity, daughter of God, of which all the members are indissolubly connected one with the other so that all must co-operate in the salvation of each, and each in the salvation of all.

We believe that to serve the Divine essence it is necessary to serve Humanity.

We believe in the reparation of evil, and in the triumph of good in the life eternal.

FIAT

