

*When inner and outer man  
are off-kilter*



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What is the Theosophical view of “Obsession?” Are the New Testament accounts of “casting out devils” to be regarded as literally true? If so, is it a retribution coming under the law of Karma, as with persons under seven years of age? There are cases where the so-called obsessing power seems so far superior in force of will as to be wholly irresistible by the victim: where is the remedy?

The T.S.<sup>2</sup> has no “view” about obsession. All on such subjects must be the expression of individual opinion. The Editor appears to intimate that there are really no cases of obsession, and if that is the intention of the answer, it must result from the fact that he has never met a case. It is true that as superstition abates instances of obsession do also, but that does not prove the phenomena to be the product wholly of belief in their possibility. Nor do the writings of men like Lecky<sup>3</sup> prove much to my mind on these topics, since he thinks from a standpoint entirely at variance with mine. Since I have, in common with many other members of the Society, known of clear cases of obsession, no amount of argument by one who had never encountered such would be of any avail; and it is quite likely that those who do not believe in the possibility of these abnormal occurrences will never meet one, because the mind is not directed in that direction. There are obsessions, then, as we think from observation, but the classes of obsession given in the first answer, two in number only, are not adequate. We have to include in obsession that most mysterious thing — insanity. Physicians do not understand this affliction. They cannot explain how a man suddenly loses his identity and becomes a raving maniac. Or in milder cases, where a man periodically becomes for months at a time some other person with no memory of the former state, and so relapses from one to the other. I know of such a case in which a boy first showed this form of insanity, and has gone on for years with the alternation of personality until now he is of age. His trouble would long ago have brought him to the insane asylum if it were not that he was born in a rich and fortunate family. What is to be said of such cases? Are they voluntary or not? They do not

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<sup>1</sup> [This magazine was distributed free of charge to members-at-large of the Theosophical Society in America, who were invited to “send questions, answers to questions, opinions and notes upon Theosophical subjects.” Usually they were handled by the editor, Alexander Fullerton, with the assistance of Mr. Judge. Though some of the editor’s answers (signed Ans.) may have been by Judge, we include only those contributed under his own name, initials, or pen-names. — DARA EKLUND, Compiler.]

<sup>2</sup> [Theosophical Society]

<sup>3</sup> [William Edward Hartpole Lecky, 1838–1903, Irish historian and political theorist.]

come under either of the heads in the answer by the Editor. As they are wholly involuntary, is free-will invaded or justice dethroned? I think not. Karma rules in this as in all else, and it is only when one limits his view of karma to this one life that he can be confused. Acts in a former life set up such tendencies in the ocean of life that when the Ego came back again it was sure to one day become insane, which only means that a disarrangement of astral and physical forces was brought about resulting in a total inability to correlate the soul and body, and this is called insanity. It was free will that laid down the causes, and free will has no power to alter the effects. But, as in the case I cited, there may be ameliorations brought about by karma in the same way. For in that one we see — as is often not the case with others — that the poor insane person is protected by reason of the effect of another kind of karma, and is in this long insane or obsessed life cared for and made as happy as is possible. Remember, the mind of each is connected with the body in a certain definite manner and not merely in an imaginary way. This definite method is by certain channels and filaments or nerves; among the most difficult to explain are the magnetic and electric ties for the mind. Now our hold upon the body we have been born into may be so weak that we are not able to keep possession of these channels, and stronger forces may even unconsciously go in where we have tried to stay. This is not caprice any more than it is caprice that water will leak from a tank if there be any cracks. So there may come a time that the building called the body, which we hoped to occupy for a long time, becomes so imperfect that our mental tenancy is no longer possible and we drift off altogether, leaving it to the use of other forces or intelligences good or bad; or, as is often the case, we are now driven out for a time and then again get complete possession for a short term, until in that process the cords of magnetism and the electric channels are clogged up or destroyed so far as we are concerned, when we leave altogether. All this of course may happen by what is called the man's own will or act, as where one suffers from paresis brought about by gross dissipation, but all the cases are not of this kind, nor are they all due to spiritualistic *séances*. As to remedies, those suggested by the Editor are good, but there are others possible by the use of strong magnetism used by one who knows all these laws in every detail and can intelligently apply the remedy.

