


*Madame Blavatsky on the
difference between six-pointed
and five-pointed stars*



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["Our Answer" was written by way of reply to an article by K. Lalshankar, entitled "The Six-Pointed and Five-Pointed Stars." It is quite complete and self-explanatory.]

 **OUR AUTHORITIES FOR REPRESENTING THE PENTAGRAM** or the five-pointed star as the *microcosm*, and the six-pointed double triangle as the *macrocosm*, are all the best known Western Kabbalists — mediaeval and modern. Éliphas Lévi (Abbé Constant) and, we believe, Khunrath, one of the greatest occultists of the past ages, give their reasons for it. In Hargrave Jennings' *Rosicrucians* the correct cut of the microcosm with *man* in the centre of the Pentagram is given. There is no objection whatever to publish their speculations save one — the lack of space in our journal, as it would necessitate an enormous amount of explanations to make their esoteric meaning clear. But room will always be found to correct a few natural misconceptions which may arise in the minds of some of our readers, owing to the necessary brevity of our editorial notes. So long as the question raised provokes no discussion to show the interest taken in the subject, these notes touch but superficially upon every question. The excellence of the above-published paper, and the many valuable remarks contained in it, afford us now an opportunity for correcting such errors in the author's mind.

As understood in the West, *Spirit* and *Matter* have for the real Kabbalists their chief symbolical meaning, *in the respective colours* of the two interlaced triangles and relate in no way to any of the lines which bind the figures themselves. To the Kabbalist and Hermetic philosopher, everything in nature appears under a triune aspect; everything is a multiplicity and trinity in unity, and is represented by him so symbolical-ly in various geometrical figures. "God geometrizes," says Plato. The "Three Kabbalistic Faces" are the "Three Lights" and the "Three Lives" of EN-SOPH (the Parabrahman of the Westerns) also called the "Central Invisible Sun." The "Universe is his Spirit, Soul and Body," his "Three Emanations." This triune nature, the purely *Spiritual*, the purely *Material* and the Middle nature (or imponderable matter, of which is composed man's astral soul) are represented by the equilateral triangle whose three sides are equal, because these three principles are diffused throughout the universe in equal proportions; and the ONE LAW in nature being perfect EQUILIBRIUM — they are eternal and co-existent. The Western symbology then, with a trifling variation, is identically the same as that of the Aryans. Names may vary, and trifling details added, but the fundamental ideas are the same. The double triangle representing symbolically the MACROCOSM, or great universe, contains in itself besides the idea of the

¹ Frontispiece by James White.

duality (as shown in the *two* colours, and *two* triangles — the universe of SPIRIT and that of MATTER) — those of the Unity, of the Trinity, of the Pythagorean TETRACTYS, the perfect Square, and up to the Dodecagon and the Dodecahedron. The ancient Chaldean Kabbalists, the masters and inspirers of the Jewish Kabala, were not the Anthropomorphites of the Old Testament or those of the present day. Their EN-SOPH, the Endless and the Boundless,

. . . has a form and then he has no form,

says the Book of the *Zohar*¹ and forthwith explains the riddle by adding:

The Invisible *assumed a form when he called the universe into existence,*

i.e., the Deity can only be seen and conceived of in objective nature — pure pantheism. The three sides of the triangles represent to the Occultists as to the Aryans — *spirit, matter, and middle nature* (the latter identical in its meaning with *space*); hence also the *creative, preservative, and destructive* energies, typified in the “Three Lights.” The *first* light infuses intelligent, *conscious* life throughout the universe, thus answering to the *creative* energy; the *second* light produces incessantly forms out of cosmic preexistent matter and within the cosmic circle, hence is the *preservative* energy; the *third* light produces the whole universe of gross physical matter; and, as the latter keeps gradually receding from the central spiritual light, its brightness wanes, and it becomes *Darkness* or *EVIL* leading to Death. Hence it becomes the *destructive* energy, which we find ever at work on forms and shapes — the temporary and the changing. The *Three Kabbalistic Faces* of the “ANCIENT of the Ancient” — who “has no face” are the Aryan deities — respectively called *Brahmā, Vishnu, and Rudra* or *Śiva*. The double triangle of the Kabbalists is enclosed within a circle represented by a serpent swallowing its own tail (Egyptian emblem of the eternity) and sometimes by a simple circle (see the Theosophical Seal). The only difference we can see between the Aryan and the Western symbology of the double triangle, judging by the author’s explanation, lies in his omission to notice the profound and special meaning in that which he terms “the *zenith* and the *zero*” if we understand him rightly. With the Western Kabbalists, the apex of the white triangle loses itself (the meaning being the same in the Egyptian pyramid)² in the *zenith*, the world of pure immateriality or unalloyed spirit, while the lower angle of the black triangle³ pointing downward towards the *nadir* shows — to use a very prosaic phrase of the mediaeval Hermetists — pure or rather “impure matter” as the “gross purgations of the celestial fire” — Spirit — drawn into the vortex of annihilation, that lower world, where forms and shapes and conscious life disappear to be dispersed and return to the mother fount — cosmic matter. So with the central point, and the central cavity, which according to the Pu-

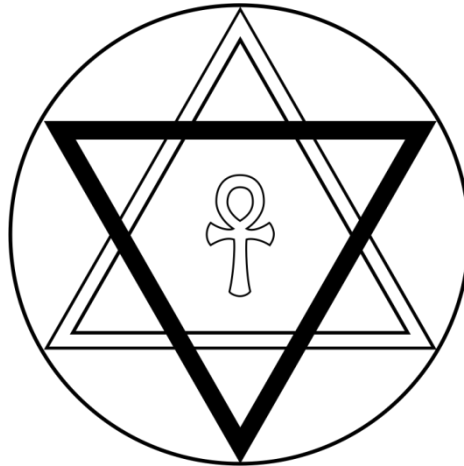
¹ *Zohar* — Book of Splendour, written by Shimon ben Yochai, in the first century B.C.; according to others in the year A.D. 80.

[Ref. is to *Zohar*, III, p. 288, Amsterdam ed., 1714. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

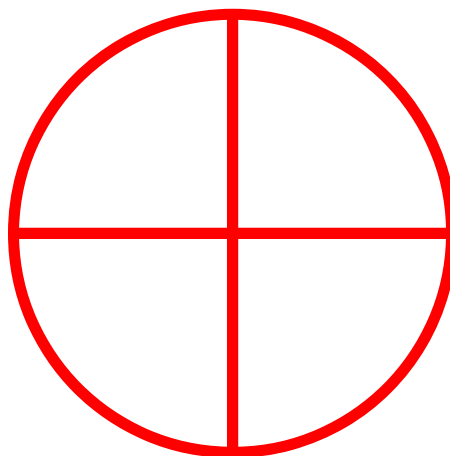
² A French archaeologist of some renown, Dr. E. Rebold, shows the great culture of the Egyptians 5000 B.C., by stating upon various authorities that there were at that time no less than “thirty or forty colleges of the initiated priests who studied occult sciences and practical magic.” [*Histoire générale de la Franc-Maçonnerie*, Paris 1851]

³ In the August Number (1881) of *The Theosophist* a mistake has crept in which has now to be corrected. On page 240 (second column, line 16th of the *Editor’s Note*) it is said — “the *two* points of its *black* triangle inclining earthward,” whereas it ought to read — the “*lower* point of its *black* triangle,” since the black triangle has its two angles forming its base reversed.

ranic teaching “is considered to be the seat of the Avyaktabrahmā, or the unmanifested Deity.” The Occultists who generally draw the figure thus,



instead of a simple central, geometrical point (which, having neither length, breadth, nor thickness, represents the invisible “Central Sun,” the light of the “unmanifested deity”), often place the *crux ansata* (the handled cross or the Egyptian TAU), at the *zenith* of which instead of a mere upright line they substitute a circle, symbol of limitless, uncreated Space, which cross thus modified has nearly the same significance as the “mundane cross” of the ancient Egyptian Hermetists, a cross within a circle.



Therefore, it is erroneous to say the *Editorial note* stated that the double triangle represented “Spirit and matter *only*” for it represents so many emblems that a volume would not suffice to explain them.

Says our critic:

If, as you say, the “double triangle” is made to represent the universal spirit and matter only, the objection that two sides, or any two things, cannot form a triangle, or that *a triangle cannot be made to represent one thing* — a *spirit* alone or *matter* alone — as you appear to have done by the distinction of *white* and *black*, remains unexplained.

Believing that we have now sufficiently explained some of the difficulties, and shown that the Western Kabbalists always regarded the “trinity in unity” and *vice versa*, we may add that the Pythagoreans have explained away the “objection” especially insisted upon by the writer of the above words, about 2500 years ago. The sacred numbers of that school — whose cardinal idea was that there existed a permanent principle of unity beneath all the forces and phenomenal changes of the universe — did not include the number *two* or the *duad* among the others. The Pythagoreans refused to recognize that number, even as an abstract idea, precisely on that ground that in geometry it was impossible to construct a figure with only two straight lines. It is obvious that for symbolical purposes the number cannot be identified with any circumscribed figure, whether a plane or a solid geometric figure; and thus as it could not be made to represent a unity in a multiplicity as any other polygonal figure can, it could not be regarded as a sacred number. The number *two* represented in geometry by a double horizontal line = and in the Roman numerals by a double perpendicular line || and a line having length, but not breadth or thickness, it had to have another numeral added to it before it could be accepted. It is but in conjunction with number *one* that, becoming the equilateral triangle, it can be called a figure. It becomes, therefore, evident why, having to symbolize *spirit* and *matter* — the Alpha and the Omega in the Cosmos — the Hermetists had to use two triangles interlaced, both a “trinity in unity,” making the former to typify “spirit” — *white*, with chalk — and the later typifying “matter” — *black*, with charcoal.

To the question, what do the two other *white* points signify, if the one “white point ascending heavenward symbolizes spirit,” we answer that, according to the Kabbalists, the two lower points signify “spirit falling into generation,” *i.e.*, the pure divine spark already mixed with the matter of the phenomenal world. The same explanation holds good for the two black angles of the horizontal line; both of the third points, showing one the progressive purification of spirit, and the other the progressive grossness of matter. Again, to say that “any thought of upward or downward” in “the sublime idea of the Cosmos” seems “not only revolting but unreal,” is to object to anything abstract being symbolized in a concrete image. Then why not make away with all the signs altogether, including that of Vishnu and with all the learned Puranic explanation thereof given by the writer? And why should the *Kabbalistic* idea be more revolting than that of “Death – Devourer – Time,” the latter word being a synonym of Endless Eternity, represented by a circle surrounding the double triangle? Strange inconsistency and one, moreover, which clashes entirely with the rest of the article! If the writer has not met “anywhere with the idea of one triangle being *white* and the other *black*” it is simply because he has never studied, nor probably even seen the writings of the Western Kabbalists and their illustrations.

The above explanations given by us contain the key to the Pythagorean general formula of unity in multiplicity, the ONE evolving the many, and pervading the many and the whole. Their mystic DECAD $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10$ expresses the entire idea; it is not only far from being “revolting” but it is positively sublime. The ONE is the Deity, the Two *matter* (the figure so despised by them as matter *per se* can never be a conscious unity),¹ the THREE (or Triangle) combining *Monad* and *Duad*, partaking of the nature of both, becomes the triad or the phenomenal world. The Tetrad or sacred TETRACTYS, the form of perfection with the Pythagoreans, expresses at the same time the emptiness of all, MAYA; while the DECAD, or sum of all, involves the entire cosmos. We say in *Isis Unveiled*.²

The universe is the combination of a thousand elements, and yet the expression of a single element — absolute harmony or spirit — a chaos to the sense, a perfect cosmos to reason.

Pythagoras learned his philosophy in India. Hence, the similarity in the fundamental ideas of the ancient Brāhmanical Initiates and the Pythagorists. And when defining the *Shatkon*, the writer says,

. . . it represents the great universe (Brahmānda), the whole endless (Mahākāśa), with all the planetary and stellar worlds contained in it,

he only repeats in other words the explanation given by Pythagoras and the Hermetic philosophers of the hexagonal star or the “Double Triangle” as shown above.

Nor do we find it very difficult to fill up the gap left in our brief note in the August number as to the “remaining three points of the two triangles” and the three sides of each of the “double triangles” or of the circle surrounding the figure. As the Hermetists symbolized everything visible and invisible they could not but do so for the *macrocosm* in its completeness. The Pythagorists who included in their DECAD the entire cosmos, held the number 12 in still higher reverence as it represented the sacred *Tetractys* multiplied by three, which gave a trinity of perfect squares called *Tetrads*. The Hermetic philosophers or Occultists following in their steps represented this number 12 in the “Double Triangle” — the great universe or the *Macrocosm* as shown in this figure, and included in it the pentagram, or the *microcosm* — called by them the little universe.

Dividing the twelve letters of the outer angles into four groups of *triads*, or three groups of *Tetractys*, they obtained the *dodecagon*, the regular geometric polygon, bounded by *twelve* equal sides and containing *twelve* equal angles which symbolized with the ancient Chaldeans the twelve “great gods,”³ and with the Hebrew Kabbalists

¹ See in Kapila’s Sankhya — Purusha and Prakriti: only the two combined when forming a performing unity can manifest themselves in the world of senses.

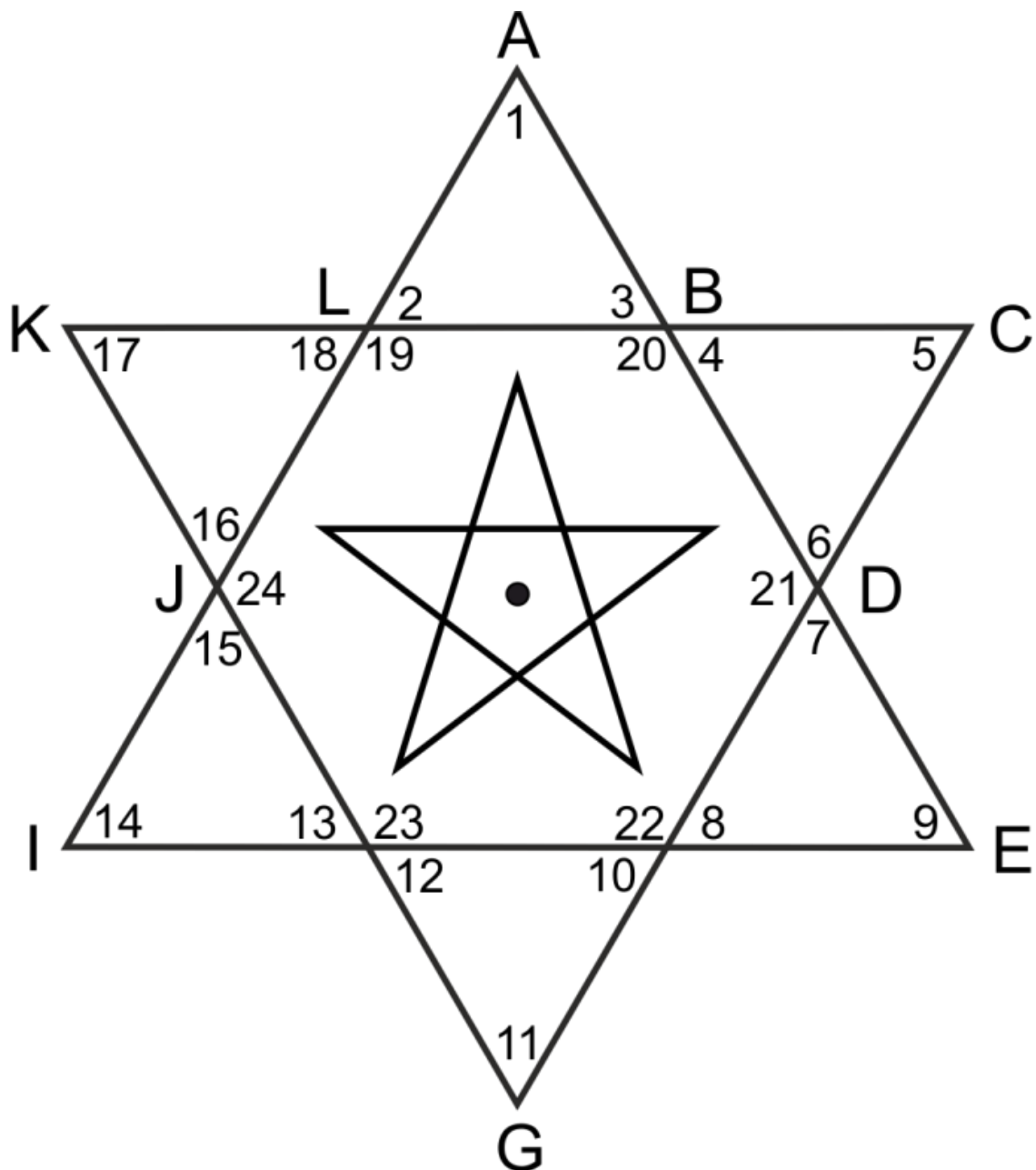
² [In *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. I, p. xvi, this sentence runs: “The universe is the combination of a thousand elements, and yet the expression of a single spirit — a chaos to the sense, a cosmos to the reason.” — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

³ According to Haug’s *Āitareya Brāhmanam*, the Hindu *manas* (mind) or Bhagavant creates no more than the Pythagorean *monas*. He enters the egg of the world and emanates from it as Brahm, as itself (Bhagavant) has no first cause (apūrva). Brahm as Prajāpati manifests himself as the androgyne Sephīrāh first of all as the ten Sephīrōth do — as twelve bodies or attributes which are represented by the twelve gods symbolizing:

(1) Fire, (2) The Sun, (3) Soma, (4) All living Beings, (5) Vayu, (6) Death, Siva, (7) Earth, (8) Heaven, (9) Agni, (10) Aditya, (11) Mind, (12) The great Infinite Cycle which is not to be stopped.

This, with a few variations is purely the Kabbalistic idea of the Sephīrōth.

the ten Sefhīrōths, or creative powers of Nature, emanated from Sefhīrāh (Divine Light), herself the chief Sefhīrōth and emanation from *Hokhmāh*, the Supreme Wisdom (the *unmanifested* wisdom), and EN-SOPH, the endless; *viz.*, three groups of Triads of the Sefhīrōth and a fourth Triad, composed of Sefhīrāh, En-Soph, and “Hokhmāh,” the Supreme Wisdom “that cannot be understood by reflection,” and which “lies concealed *within* and *without* the cranium of Long Face”;¹ the uppermost head of the upper triangle formed the “Three Kabbalistic Faces,” making up the *twelve*. Moreover, the twelve figures give two squares or the double *tetractys* representing in the Pythagorean symbology the two worlds, the spiritual and the physical, the 18 inner and 6 central angles yield, besides 24, twice the sacred macrocosmic number, or the 24 “divine unmanifested powers.”



¹ *Idrah Rabbah* (Greater Holy Assembly), vi § 58

These it would be impossible to enumerate in so short a space. Besides it is far more reasonable in our days of scepticism to follow the hint of Iamblichus, who says, that

. . . the divine powers always felt indignant with those who rendered manifest the composition of the *icosagonus*,

viz., who delivered the method of inscribing in a sphere the *dodecahedron*, one of the *five* solid figures in Geometry, contained under *twelve* equal and regular pentagons, the secret Kabbalistic meaning of which our opponents would do well to study.¹

In addition to all that, as shown in the “Double Triangle” above, the pentagram in its centre gives the key to the meaning of the Hermetic philosophers and Kabbalists. So well-known and spread is that double sign that it may be found over the entrance door of the *Lha-Khang* (temple containing Buddhist images and statues) in every *Gompa* (lamasery) and often over the relic-cupboard, called in Tibet *Doong-ting*. The mediaeval Kabbalists give us in their writings the key to its meaning. “Man is a little world inside the great universe,” teaches Paracelsus. “A microcosm, within the macrocosm, like a foetus, he is suspended by his three principal spirits in the matrix of the universe.” These three spirits are described as double:

- 1 The spirit of the Elements (terrestrial body and vital principle);
- 2 The spirit of the stars (sidereal or *astral* body and will governing it);
- 3 The spirit of the spiritual world (the animal and the spiritual souls), the *seventh* principle being an almost *immaterial* spirit or the divine Augoeides, *Ātma*, represented by the central point, which corresponds to the human navel.

This *seventh* principle is the *Personal* God of every man, say the old Western and Eastern Occultists.

Therefore, the explanations given by our critic of the *Shatkon* and *Pañchkon*, rather corroborate than destroy our theory. Speaking of the five triangles composed of “five times *five*” or 25 points, he remarks of the pentagram that it is

. . . a number otherwise corresponding with the twenty-five *elements* making a living human creature.

Now we suppose that by “elements” the writer means just what the Kabbalists say when they teach that the emanations of the 24 divine “unmanifested powers,” the “unexisting” or “Central Point” being the 25th — make a perfect human being? But in what other respect does the above sentence — without disputing upon the relative value of the words “element” and “emanation” — strengthened moreover as we find it by the author’s additional remark that

. . . the entire figure of the microcosm . . . the inner world of individual living being . . . a figure which is the sign of Brahmā, the deified *creative* energy

— in what respect, we ask, does it clash so much with our stating that some proficients (in Hermetic philosophy) and Kabbalists regard the five points of the penta-

¹ [This difficult subject is greatly clarified and amplified in L. Gordon Plummer’s work entitled *The Mathematics of the Cosmic Mind*, privately published in 1966, wherein all geometrical solids are explained in terms of the Esoteric Philosophy. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

gram as representing the five cardinal limbs of the human body? We are no ardent disciple or follower of the *Western* Kabbalists; yet, we maintain that in this they are right. If the twenty-five elements represented by the five-pointed star, make up “a living human creature” then these elements are all vital, whether mental or physical, and the figure symbolizing “creative energy” gives the more force to the Kabbalistic idea. Every one of the five gross elements — earth, water, fire, air (or “wind”) and ether — enters into the composition of man; and whether we say, “five organs of action” or the “five limbs” or yet “the five senses,” it will always amount to splitting hairs, for it means all one and the same thing. Most undoubtedly the “proficients” could explain at least as satisfactorily *their claim*, as the writer controverts and denies it, by explaining his. In the *Codex Nazaraeus*, the most Kabbalistic of books, the Supreme King of Light and the chief Aeon, MANO, emanates the five Aeons — he himself with the Lord Ferho (the “unknown formless life” of which he is an emanation) making up the *seven* which typify again the *seven* principles in Man — the five being purely material and semi-material, and the higher two almost *immaterial* and *spiritual* (see “Fragments of Occult Truth”).¹ Five refulgent rays of light proceed from each of the *seven* Aeons, five of these shooting through the head, the two extended hands, and the two feet of *Man* represented in the five-pointed star, *one* enveloping him as with a mist and the *seventh* settling like a bright star over his head. The illustration may be seen in several old books upon the *Codex Nazaraeus* and the *Kabala*. What wonder, that electricity or animal magnetism passing most powerfully from the five cardinal limbs of man, and the phenomena of what is now called “mesmeric” force having been studied in the temples of ancient Egypt and Greece and mastered as it may never hope to be mastered in our age of idiotic and *a priori* denial, the old Kabbalists and philosophers who symbolized every power in nature, should for reasons perfectly evident for those who know anything of the arcane sciences and the mysterious relations which exist between numbers, figures, and ideas, have chosen to represent “the *five* cardinal limbs of man” — the head, the two arms and the two legs — in the five points of the pentagram? Éliphas Lévi, the modern Kabbalist, goes as far, if not further than his ancient and mediaeval brethren; for, he says in his *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie*:²

The Kabbalistic use of the pentagram can determine the countenance of unborn infants, and an initiated woman might give to her son the features of Nēreus or Achilles, as those of Louis XIV, or Napoleon.³

The *astral light* of the Western occultists is the *ākāśa* of the Hindus. Many of the latter will not study its mysterious correlations, neither under the guidance of initiated Kabbalists nor that of their own initiated Brahmans, preferring to *Prajñā-Pāramitā* their own conceit. And yet both exist and are identical, the idiotic and ignorant denials of J.K., the London “Adept,” notwithstanding.



¹ [The first three instalments of this Series were published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. III, October 1881, March and September 1882. They were written by A.O. Hume. Later instalments of the Series were from the pen of A.P. Sinnett. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

² p. 175

³ [Vol. I, p. 187, in 6th edition. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]