

*Eastern Occultism is the parent
stream of Inner Wisdom*



Divine Wisdom irrigates the fields of charity immortal.

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[The following Note is H.P. Blavatsky's Editorial comment on an article contributed to *Light* by Gerald Massey and reprinted in *The Theosophist*, in which he raised various points about the elementals, and invited explanations from *The Theosophist*.]

Summed up in a few words, this article asks for further information about "elementals";¹ suggests that they may be what Spiritualists would call "the spirits" of deceased animals; offers this as a new idea for the consideration of Eastern philosophers; and points out that if the adepts of occult science had been privileged to read Darwin they might, with their peculiar powers of clairvoyance, have been able to detect in the elementals, shapes which would identify these as *reliquiæ*² of Man's imperfectly developed ancestors.

The comprehension of what occult science really is, has spread in Europe so very imperfectly as yet, that we must not be impatient even with this curiously entangled view of the subject. European mystics, when further advanced in the tedious study of unintelligible books, will often be hardest to persuade that they must go back some distance on the paths they have travelled, before they can strike into those which lead to the fully illuminated regions of Eastern knowledge. They are naturally loth to confess that much time has been wasted; they try to make the fragments of esoteric Eastern philosophy they may pick up here and there, fit into the vacant places in the scheme of things they have painfully constructed for themselves, and when the fragments will not fit, they are apt to think the [382] corners want paring down here and there, and the hollows filling up. The situation which the European mystic does not realize is this: The Eastern occult philosophy is the great block of solid truth from which the quaint, exoteric mysticism of the outer world has been casually thrown off from time to time, in veiled and symbolical shapes. These hints and suggestions of mystic philosophy may be likened to the grains of gold in rivers, which early explorers used to think betokened somewhere in the mountains from which the rivers sprang, vast beds of the precious metal. The occult philosophy with which some people in India are privileged to be in contact, may be likened to the parent deposits. Students will be altogether on a wrong track as long as they check the statements of Eastern philosophy by reference to the teachings and conceptions of any other systems. In saying this we are not imitating the various religionists who claim

¹ [Consult "Blavatsky on Elementals and Elementaries," in our Blavatsky Speaks Series. — ED. PHIL.]

² [remains, especially after cremation]

that salvation can only be had within the pale of their own small church. We are not saying that Eastern philosophy is right and everybody else is wrong, but that Eastern philosophy is the main stream of knowledge concerning things spiritual and eternal, which has come down in an unbroken flood through all the life of the world. That is the demonstrable position which we, occultists of the Theosophical Society, have firmly taken up, and all archæological and literary research in matters connected with the earliest religions and philosophies of historical ages helps to fortify it. The casual growths of mystic knowledge in this or that country and period, may or may not be *faithful* reflections of the actual, central doctrines; but, whenever they seem to bear some resemblance to these, it may be safely conjectured that at least they are reflections, which owe what merit they possess to the original light from which they derive their own.

Now the tone of such articles as that we have reprinted above is quite out of harmony with this general estimate of the position. Mr. Massey's mental attitude is that of a power in treaty with a collateral power:

Give us this and this bit of information which you perhaps possess; we offer [383] you in return some valuable hints derived from Western science. Weld them into your own inquiries, and you will, perhaps, bring out some fresh conclusions.

Such an attitude as this is absolutely ludicrous to anyone who has had the means of realizing, even in a small degree, what the range and depth of Eastern occult philosophy really are. To say that offering knowledge or discoveries of any sort to the Masters of Occult Philosophy is carrying coals to Newcastle,¹ is to say nothing. There may be some small details of modern science which occult philosophy has not anticipated (centuries ago), but if so, that can only be because the genius of occult philosophy leads it to deal with the main lines of principle and to care as a rule very little for details — as little as for the material advantage or comfort they may be designed to subserve. Such broad conceptions as the theory of evolution, for example, have not only been long ago known to Eastern occultists, but as developed in Europe, are now recognized by them as the first faltering step of modern science in the direction of certain grand principles with which they have been familiar — we will not venture to say since when . . .

If the Theosophist were also an evolutionist, perhaps he would be able to fix the “fleeting forms” of his vision, and perceive some of the Spirits of man's predecessors on the earth . . . ²

says Mr. Massey. If the European scientists whose fancy has for the first time been caught, within these last few years, by the crude outlines of an evolutionary theory, were less blankly ignorant of all that appertains to the mysteries of life, they would not be misled by some bits of knowledge concerning the evolution of the body, into entirely absurd conclusions concerning the other principles which enter into the constitution of Man.

¹ [doing something which is pointless and superfluous]

² [See, in this connection, Letter CXCVIII, p. 364, in *The Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*. — Boris de Zirkoff.]

But we are on the threshold of a far mightier subject than any reader in Europe who has not made considerable progress in real occult study, is likely to estimate in all its appalling magnitude. Will any one who has perused with only some of the attention it really deserves the [384] article we published but two months ago under the title *Fragments of Occult Truth*,¹ make an effort to account, in his own mind, even in the most shadowy and indistinct way, for the history of the six higher principles in any human creature, during the time when his body was being gradually perfected, so to speak, in the matrix of evolution. Where, and what were his higher spiritual principles when the body had worked into no more dignified shape than that of a baboon? Of course, the question is put with a full recognition of the collateral errors implied in the treatment of a single human being as the apex of a series of forms, but, even supposing that physical evolution were as simple a matter as that, how to account for the final presence in the perfected human body of a spiritual soul? Or, to go a step back in the process, how to account for the presence of the animal soul in the first creature with independent volition that emerges from the half vegetable condition of the earlier forms? Is it not obvious, if the blind materialist is not to be accepted as a sufficient guide to the mysteries of the universe — if there really are these higher principles in Man of which we speak, that there must be some vast process of spiritual evolution going on in the universe *pari passu*² with the physical evolution?

For the present we merely throw out hints and endeavour to provoke thought and enquiry; to attempt in this casual manner a complete exposition of the conclusions of Eastern philosophy in this direction would be like starting on a journey to the South Pole *à propos* to a passing enquiry whether one thought there was land there or not.

What has become of the particles of matter which composed the physical bodies of man's predecessors on earth?

But we have, perhaps, said enough to meet the somewhat imperfect suggestion in Mr. Gerald Massey's article to the [385] effect that elementals may perhaps be the spirits of animals or of "missing links" belonging to a former epoch of the world's history. The notion that in some immaterial shape — one may use an absurd expression to set forth an absurd conjecture — the spirits of any living creature can lead a perpetual existence as the stereotyped duplicates of the transitory material forms they inhabited while passing through the earthly stage of their pilgrimage, is to reckon entirely without the very doctrine which Mr. Massey so kindly offers for the consideration of Eastern philosophers. No more than any given material form is destined to infinite perpetuation, can the finer organisms which constitute the higher principles of living creatures be doomed to unchangeability. What has become of the particles of matter which composed the physical bodies of "man's predecessors on the earth"? They have long ago been ground over in the laboratory of Nature, and have entered

¹ [A series of articles published in *The Theosophist*, initially by A.O. Hume, and later on by A.P. Sinnett. Cf. Note by Boris de Zirkoff from *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, III p. 384 *fn.*]

This series of articles was started in the October 1881 issue of *The Theosophist*, the second instalment appearing in March 1882, and the third in September of the same year. From various statements in *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett* and several of H.P. Blavatsky's own letters, it can be conclusively demonstrated that these three instalments were written by A.O. Hume, even though they exhibit here and there a few characteristics of Blavatsky's style. Subsequent articles under the same title were written by A.P. Sinnett.]

² [with an equal step, "hand-in-hand"]

into the composition of other forms. And the idea or design of the earlier forms has risen into superior idea or design which has impressed itself on later forms. So also, though the analogy may give us no more than a cloudy conception of the course of events, it is manifest that the higher principles, once united with the earlier forms must have developed in their turn also. Along what infinite spirals of gradual ascent the spiritual evolution has been accomplished, we will not stop now to consider. Enough to point out the direction in which thought should proceed, and some few considerations which may operate to check European thinkers from too readily regarding the realms of spirit as a mere phantasmagorical cemetery, where the shades of the Earth's buried inhabitants doze for ever in an aimless trance.

