

*How to force oneself upon  
the current of immortality*



## One must become a co-worker with nature, either for good or for bad.

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The following letter states an embarrassment which may very likely have occurred to other readers of the passages quoted, besides our correspondent.

To the Editor of *The Theosophist*.

In the article on “Death” by the late Éliphas Lévi, printed in the October number of *The Theosophist*, Vol. III,<sup>1</sup> the writer says that “to be immortal 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.*” In your explanatory note on this passage you quote the book of *Kiu-te*, which says that

. . . to force oneself upon the current of immortality, or rather to secure for oneself an *endless series of rebirths as conscious individualities*, 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. It is but the *useless drones*, which she gets rid of, violently ejecting and making them perish by the millions as self-conscious entities. Thus, while the good and the pure strive to reach Nirvana . . . the wicked will seek, on the contrary, series of lives as conscious, definite existences or beings, preferring to be ever suffering under the law of retributive justice 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 pure spirit, or *Nirvana*, they cling to life in any form, rather than give up that “desire for life,” or *Tanhā* which causes a new aggregation of *Skandhas* or individuality to be re-born. . . . There are thoroughly wicked or depraved men, yet as highly intellectual and acutely *spiritual* for evil, as those who are spiritual for good. The *Egos* of these may escape the law of final destruction or annihilation for ages to come. . . . Heat and cold are the two “poles,” *i.e.*, good and evil, *spirit* and *matter*. Nature *spews* the “lukewarm” or “useless portion of mankind” out of her mouth, *i.e.*, annihilates them.

In the very same number in which these lines occur we have the “Fragments of Occult Truth,” and we learn thence that there are seven entities or principles

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<sup>1</sup> [October, 1881, pp. 13-14 See Vol. III, pp. 292 ff. in the present Series.]

constituting a human being. When death occurs, the first three principles (*i.e.*, the body, the vital energy, and astral body) are dissipated; and with regard to the remaining four principles “one of *two* things occurs.” If the Spiritual Ego (sixth principle) has been in life material in its tendencies, then at death it continues to cling blindly to the lower elements of its late combination, and the true spirit severs itself from these and passes away elsewhere, when the Spiritual Ego is also dissipated and ceases to exist. Under such circumstances only two entities (the fourth and fifth, *i.e.*, Kāma Rūpa and Physical Ego) are left, and the *shells* take long periods to disintegrate.

On the other hand, if the tendencies of the ego have been towards things spiritual, it will cling to the spirit, and with this pass into the adjoining *World of Effects*, and there evolve out of itself by the spirit’s aid a new ego, to be reborn (after a brief period of freedom and enjoyment) in the next higher objective world of causes.

The “Fragments” teach that, apart from the cases of the higher adepts, there are two conditions:

*First*, that in which the Spirit is obliged to sever its connection; and,

*Secondly*, that in which the Spirit is able to continue its connection with the fourth, fifth and sixth principles.

In either case the fourth and fifth principles are dissipated after a longer or a shorter period, and, in the case of the spiritual-minded, the Spiritual Ego undergoes a series of ascending births, while in the case of the depraved no Spiritual Ego remains and there is simply disintegration of the fourth and fifth principles after immense periods of time. The “Fragments” do not seem to admit of a third or intermediary case which could explain the condition of Éliphas Lévi’s “useless portion” of mankind after death. It appears to me also that there could be only two cases:

Either the spirit continues its connection,

Or it severs its connection.

What, then, is meant by the “useless portion of mankind” who, you suggest, are annihilated by the millions? Are they a combination of less than seven principles? That cannot be, for even the very wicked and depraved have them all. What, then, becomes of the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh principles in the case of the so-called “*useless portion of mankind*”?

The “Fragments” again tell us that, in the case of the wicked, the fourth and fifth principles are simply disintegrated after long ages, while in your above quoted note you say that the

. . . wicked will seek a series of lives as conscious, definite existences or beings, →

and again in the note to the word “Hell” you write that it is

. . . 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.”

These two notes seem to suggest that, in the case of the depraved, the fourth and fifth principles are born again in inferior worlds and have a series of conscious existences.

The “Fragments” are admittedly the production of the “Brothers,” and what I could gather from them after a careful perusal seems apparently not to accord with your notes quoted above. Evidently there is a gap somewhere, and, as the “useless portion of mankind” have been so far noticed, a more exhaustive explanation of them after the method of the seven principles is needed to make your otherwise learned note accord with the “Fragments.” I might mention again that at every step the words “matter” and “spirit” confound the majority of your readers, and it is highly important and necessary that these two words be satisfactorily explained so that the average reader might understand wherein lies the difference between the two; what is meant by matter emanating from spirit, and whether spirit does not become limited to that extent by the emanation of matter therefrom.

Yours faithfully and fraternally,

N.D. K \* \* \* , F.T.S.<sup>1</sup>



. . . The apparent discrepancy between the two statements, that our correspondent quotes, does not involve any real contradiction at all, nor is there a “gap” in the explanation. The confusion arises from the unfamiliarity of ordinary thinkers, unused to Occult ideas, with the distinction between the personal and individual entities in Man. Reference has been made to this distinction in modern Occult writing very frequently, and in *Isis* itself where the explanations of a hundred mysteries lie but half-buried — they were altogether buried in earlier works on Occult philosophy — only waiting for the application of intelligence guided by a little Occult knowledge to come out into the light of day. When *Isis* was written, it was conceived by those from whom the impulse, which directed its preparation, came, that the time was not ripe for the explicit declaration of a great many truths which they are now willing to impart in plain language. So the readers of that book were supplied rather with hints, sketches, and adumbrations of the philosophy to which it related, than with methodical expositions. Thus in reference to the present idea, the difference between personal and individual identity is suggested, if not fully set forth at page 315, Vol. I. There it is stated as the view of certain philosophers, with whom, it is easy to see, the writer concurs: →

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<sup>1</sup> [These initials stand for Navroji Dorabji Khandalavala, President of the Poona Theosophical Society. It would appear from *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, pp. 189-90, that Master K.H. contributed some of the material which is contained in the reply to Khandalavala’s letter. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

Man and Soul had to conquer their immortality by ascending towards the Unity with which, if successful, they were finally linked. . . . The individualisation of man after death depended on the spirit, not on his soul and body. Although the word “personality,” in the sense in which it is usually understood, is an absurdity, if applied literally to our immortal essence, still the latter is a distinct entity, immortal and eternal *per se*.

And a little later on:

A person may have won his immortal life, and remain the same *inner-self* he was on earth, throughout eternity; but this does not imply necessarily that he must either remain the Mr. Smith or Mr. Brown he was on earth. . . . <sup>1</sup>

A full consideration of these ideas will solve the embarrassment in which our correspondent is placed. Éliphas Lévi is talking about personalities — the “Fragments” about individualities. Now, as regards the personalities, the “useless portion of mankind” to which Éliphas Lévi refers, is the great bulk thereof. The *permanent* preservation of a personal identity beyond death is a very rare achievement, accomplished only by those who wrest her secrets from Nature, and control their own super-material development. In his favourite symbolical way Éliphas Lévi indicates the people who contrive to do this as those who are immortal in good by identification with God, or immortal in evil by identification with Satan. That is to say, the preservation of personal identity beyond death (or rather, let us say, far beyond death, reserving for the moment an explanation of the distinction) is accomplished only by adepts and sorcerers — the one class having acquired the supreme secret knowledge by holy methods, and with benevolent motives; the other having acquired it by unholy methods, and for base motives. But that which constitutes the inner self, the purer portions of the earthly personal soul united with the spiritual principles and constituting the essential individuality, is ensured a perpetuation of life in new births, whether the person, whose earthly surroundings are its present habitat, becomes endowed with the higher knowledge, or remains a plain ordinary man all his life.

This doctrine cannot be treated as one which falls in at once with the view of things entertained by people whose conceptions of immortality have been corrupted by the ignoble teaching of modern churches. Few exoteric religions ask their devotees to lift their imaginations above the conception that life beyond the grave is a sort of prolongation of life on this side of it. They are encouraged to believe that through “eternity,” if they are good in this life, they will live on in some luxurious Heaven just as they would be living if transported to some distant country, miraculously protected there from disease and decay, and continuing for ever the “Mr. Smith” or “Mr. Brown” they may have been previous to emigration. The conception is just as absurd, when closely thought out, as the conception that for the merits or the sins of this brief life — but a moment in the course of eternity — they will be able to secure infinite bliss, or incur the utmost horrors of perpetual punishment. Ends and means, causes and effects, must be kept in due proportion to one another in the worlds of spirit as in the worlds of flesh. It is nonsense for a man who has not first rendered his personality something altogether abnormal to conceive that it can be rationally thought of as

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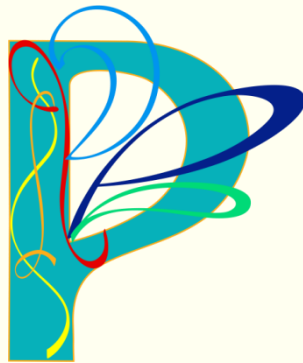
<sup>1</sup> [p. 316]

surviving *forever*. It would be folly to wish even that it could be so perpetuated, for, how could human beings of ignoble, miserable life, whose personality is merely a congeries of wretched and sordid memories, be happy in finding their misery stereotyped for all coming time, and in perpetual contrast with the superior personalities of other such stereotypes. The memory of every personal life, indeed, is imperishably preserved in the mysterious records of each existence, and the immortal individual spiritual entity will one day — but in a future so remote that it is hardly worth thinking about much at present — be able to look back upon it, as upon one of the pages in the vast book of lives which he will by that time have compiled. But let us come back from these very transcendental reflections to the destinies more immediately impending over the great majority of us whom Éliphas Lévi so uncivilly speaks of as “the useless portion of mankind” — useless only, be it remembered, as regards our special present congeries of earthly circumstance — not as regards the *inner self* which is destined to active enjoyment of life and experience very often in the future among better circumstances, both on this earth and in superior planets.

Now, most people will be but too apt to feel that unsatisfactory as the circumstances may be, which constitute their present personalities, these are after all *themselves* — “a poor thing, Sir, but mine own” — and that the inner spiritual monads, of which they are but very dimly conscious, by the time they are united with entirely different sets of circumstances in new births, will be other people altogether in whose fate they cannot take any interest. In truth when the time comes they will find the fate of those people profoundly interesting, as much so as they find their own fates now. But passing over this branch of the subject, there is still some consolation for weak brethren who find the notion of quitting their present personality at the end of their present lives too gloomy to be borne. Éliphas Lévi’s exposition of the doctrines is a very brief one — as regards the passage quoted — and it passes over a great deal which, from the point of view we are now engaged with, is of very great importance. In talking about immortality the great Occultist is thinking of the vast stretches of time over which the personality of the adept and the sorcerer may be made to extend. When he speaks of annihilation after this life, he ignores a certain interval, which may perhaps be not worth considering in reference to the enormous whole of existence, but which none the less is very well worth the attention of people who cling to the little fragment of their life experience which embodies the personality of which we have been talking.

It has been explained, in more than one paper published in this magazine during the last few months, that the passage of the spiritual monad into a rebirth does not immediately follow its release from the fleshly body last inhabited here. In the *Kāmaloka*, or atmosphere of this earth, the separation of the two groups of ethereal principles takes place, and in the vast majority of cases in which the late personality — the fifth principle — yields up something which is susceptible of perpetuation and of union with the sixth, the spiritual monad, thus retaining consciousness of its late personality for the time being, passes into the state described as *Devachan*, where it leads, for very long periods indeed as compared with those of life on this earth, an existence of the most unalloyed satisfaction and conscious enjoyment. Of course this state is not one of activity nor of exciting contrasts between pain and pleasure, pursuit and achievement, like the state of physical life, but it is one in which the per-

sonality of which we are speaking is perpetuated, as far as that is compatible with the nonperpetuation of that which has been painful in its experience. It is from this state that the spiritual monad is reborn into the next active life, and from the date of that rebirth the old personality is done with. But for any imagination, which finds the conception of rebirth and new personality uncomfortable, the doctrine of *Devachan* — and these “doctrines,” be it remembered, are statements of scientific fact which Adepts have ascertained to be as real as the stars though as far out of reach for most of us — the doctrine of *Devachan*, we say, will furnish people who cannot give up their earth-life memories all at once — with a soft place to fall upon.



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