

*Hermetic Fire,
Spirit of the Flame*



Hermetic Fire is the invisible Spirit of the visible flame.

From *Isis Unveiled*, I pp. 422-24.

The invisible part of the flame stands for the inextinguishable Divine Spirit (Atman), the omnipotent and omniscient God.

Professor Balfour Stewart¹ pays a very high tribute to the philosophical intuition of Heraclitos, the Ephesian, who lived five centuries before our era; the “crying” philosopher who declared that “fire was the great cause, and that all things were in a perpetual flux.” Says the professor,

It seems clear that Heraclitos must have had a vivid conception of the innate restlessness and energy of the universe, a conception allied in character to, and *only less precise* than that of modern philosophers, who regard matter as essentially dynamical.²

He considers the expression *fire* as very vague: and quite naturally, for the evidence is wanting to show that either Prof. Balfour Stewart (who seems less inclined to materialism than some of his colleagues) or any of his contemporaries understand in what sense the word fire was used.

Heraclitos’ opinions about the origin of things were the same as those of Hippocrates. Both entertained the same views of a supreme power,³ and, therefore, if their notions of primordial fire, regarded as a material force, in short, as one akin to Leibnitz’s *dynamism*, were “less precise” than those of modern philosophers, a question which remains to be settled yet, on the other hand, their metaphysical views of it were far more philosophical and rational than the one-sided theories of our present-day scholars. Their ideas of fire were precisely those of the later “fire-philosophers,” the Rosicrucians, and the earlier Zoroastrians. They affirmed that the world was created of fire, the *divine spirit*, of which was an omnipotent and omniscient GOD. Science has condescended to corroborate their claims as to the physical question.

¹ [Balfour Stewart (1828–1887) was a Scottish physicist. His studies in the field of radiant heat led to him receiving the Rumford Medal of the Royal Society in 1868. In 1859 he was appointed director of Kew Observatory. He was elected professor of physics at Owens College, Manchester, and retained that chair until his death. He was the author of several successful science textbooks, including *The Conservation of Energy*, quoted in *Isis Unveiled*, and also of the article on “Terrestrial Magnetism” in the ninth edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica.]

² [*The Conservation of Energy*, (1875) p. 133]

³ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, “Heraclitos,” vi

The Hermetic philosopher follows the extinguished flame through the world of the knowable, across and out on the other side into the unknowable, as he traces the spark of heavenly flame to its divine source.

Fire, in the ancient philosophy of all times and countries, including our own, has been regarded as a triple principle. As water comprises a visible fluid with invisible gases lurking within, and behind all the spiritual principles of nature, which gives them their dynamic energy, so, in fire, they recognized:

- 1 Visible flame;
- 2 Invisible, or astral fire — invisible when inert — but when active producing heat, light, chemical force, and electricity, the molecular powers;
- 3 Spirit.

They applied the same rule to each of the elements; and everything evolved from their combinations and correlations, man included, was held by them to be triune. Fire, in the opinion of the Rosicrucians, who were but the successors of the theurgists, was the source, not only of the material atoms, but also of the forces which energize them. When a visible flame is extinguished it has disappeared, not only from the sight but also from the conception of the materialist, forever. But the Hermetic philosopher follows it through the “partition-world of the knowable, across and out on the other side into the unknowable,” as he traces the disembodied human spirit, a “vital spark of heavenly flame,” into the Æthereum, beyond the grave.¹

This point is too important to be passed by without a few words of comment. The attitude of physical science toward the spiritual half of the cosmos is perfectly exemplified in her gross conception of fire. In this, as in every other branch of science, their philosophy does not contain one sound plank: everyone is honeycombed and weak. The works of their own authorities teeming with humiliating confessions, give us the right to say that the floor upon which they stand is so unstable, that at any moment some new discovery, by one of their own number, may knock away the props and let them all fall in a heap together. They are so anxious to drive spirit out of their conceptions that, as Balfour Stewart says:

There is a tendency to rush into the opposite extreme, and to work physical conceptions to an excess.

He utters a timely warning in adding:

Let us be cautious that, in avoiding Scylla, we do not rush into Charybdis. For the universe has more than one point of view, and there are possibly regions which will not yield their treasures to the most determined physicists, armed only with kilogrammes and meters and standard clocks.²

In another place he confesses:

We know nothing, or next to nothing, of the ultimate structure and properties of matter, whether organic or inorganic.³

¹ See the works of Robertus de Fluctibus; and *The Rosicrucians*, by Hargrave Jennings.

² *The Conservation of Energy*, p. 136

³ [*ibid.*, p. 2]

Fire is quintessence of Life.

From *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (FRAGMENT) XIII pp. 354-55.
Fragment in H.P. Blavatsky's handwriting from the Adyar Archives. — Boris de Zirkoff.

Sun and Fire are the fittest emblems of Life.¹

Paracelsus and others certainly did teach that “Fire was the last and only to be known God”; but, the subtle sense of their meaning generally escaped their critics. We need hardly say then that by “fire” they did *not* mean the material, visible fire, but that subtle invisible *Spirit* of the flame, the quintessence of all the attributes of fire which has, and ever will escape analysis and detection by “chemical processes”; though it may be sometimes experienced by the *superphysical* light of the spiritually trained mind. To the modern student of experimental sciences, in whose eyes even Reichenbach's *aura* of “Odyle Force” is a pure hallucination, and hence remains absent from the scientific nomenclature, the above words must appear void of all sense. But for the student of psychology who knows anything of the properties of animal magnetism and Mesmerism, the meaning will be clear. For such a student is acquainted with the theory of the “Soul of Things”; and for him, this Hermetic, *Divine* “Fire” is the quintessence of life, that Spiritual and intangible Spirit which starts from, and is immediately reabsorbed into matter; the ultimate essence of every atom whether pertaining to animate or inanimate, organic or inorganic substance; the Spirit invisible to all but the eyes of another immortal Spirit . . . And here, perhaps, an illustration from the physical sciences will not be amiss.

Fire bears the same relation to Water, as Spirit to Matter.²

Fire and Water are the elements in which the active and passive productive powers of the universe are respectively centred.³

It is a well-known fact that as long as the real bearing of the mechanical theory of heat upon the phenomena of the “Voltaic” battery was imperfectly understood, the necessity for a two-celled battery for the developing of heat in the decomposition of water had not struck the physicists, and they could not produce with one cell that which they can now easily produce with two. May not the same perchance be required in biology? As the scientific man, according to their own confession stood perplexed, and unable for a long time to solve the enigma why a single cell should not decompose water, so the biologists and the psychologists (of exact science) stand helpless before certain phenomena of mind. They are unable to perceive the true bearing of that Hermetic Divine “Fire” already adverted to, upon the phenomena of the human Voltaic battery known as the brain; a “fire” which may sometimes be generated and developed on the same principle as one of its correlations — heat (as in the case of artificial mesmeric development of clairvoyance). And if increased to its utmost powers it can liberate the spirit from its fetters, and lifting high the *bodiless* over the earthy, allow man to see with his spiritual eyes that which he would never be able to perceive with the physical senses. Hence, the phraseology of the Hermetic

¹ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (ZOROASTRIANISM AND OCCULT PHILOSOPHY) IV p. 530

² *ibid.*, (TRANSACTIONS OF THE BLAVATSKY LODGE) X p. 377

³ *ibid.*, (ZOROASTRIANISM AND OCCULT PHILOSOPHY) IV p. 530

philosophers and Alexandrian theurgists seems naturally obscure and meaningless to the uninitiated.

The Sun is the Father of Man; The Moon, his Mother; The Wind, his Nurse.

From *The Secret Doctrine*, II p. 105; [Stanza IV.17].

But Spiritual Fire alone can make animal man divine.

THE BREATH (*human Monad*) NEEDED A FORM; THE FATHERS GAVE IT. THE BREATH NEEDED A GROSS BODY; THE EARTH MOULDED IT. THE BREATH NEEDED THE SPIRIT OF LIFE; THE SOLAR LHAS BREATHED IT INTO ITS FORM. THE BREATH NEEDED A MIRROR OF ITS BODY (*astral shadow*); “WE GAVE IT OUR OWN,” SAID THE DHYĀNIS. THE BREATH NEEDED A VEHICLE OF DESIRES (*Kāma-Rūpa*); “IT HAS IT,” SAID THE DRAINER OF WATERS (*Śuchi, the fire of passion and animal instinct*). BUT BREATH NEEDS A MIND TO EMBRACE THE UNIVERSE; “WE CANNOT GIVE THAT,” SAID THE FATHERS. “I NEVER HAD IT, SAID THE SPIRIT OF THE EARTH. “THE FORM WOULD BE CONSUMED WERE I TO GIVE IT MINE, SAID THE GREAT (*solar*) FIRE . . . (*nascent*) MAN REMAINED AN EMPTY, SENSELESS BHŪTA . . . THUS HAVE THE BONELESS GIVEN LIFE TO THOSE WHO BECAME (*later*) MEN WITH BONES IN THE THIRD (*race*).¹



¹ *Secret Doctrine*, II p. 105; [Stanza IV.17]

The Zohar on the tripartite principle of fire.

From Isaac Myer, LL. B., Member of the Numismatic and Antiquarian Society of Philadelphia, and La Société Royale de Numismatique de Belgique.

Qabbalah. The Philosophical Writings of Solomon Ben Yehudah Ibn Gebirol or Avicbron, and their connection with the Hebrew Qabbalah and Sepher ha-Zohar, with remarks upon the antiquity and content of the latter, and translations of selected passages from the same. Also, "An ancient Lodge of Initiates," translated from the Zohar, and an abstract of an essay upon the Chinese Qabbalah contained in the book called the Yih King, a translation of part of the mystic theology of Dionysios the Areopagite, and an account of the construction of the ancient Akkadian and Chaldean Universe, etc. Accompanied by diagrams and illustrations.

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This passage is from Ch. XIX, "Excerpts from the Zohar," pp. 376-77; text typographically edited by the Series Editor.

Began R. Shim-on and said:

Two verses are written;

That YHVH thy Elohim is a devouring fire, a zealous Ail (El);¹

Again it is written;

But you that cleave unto YHVH your Elohim, are alive, every one of you, this day.²

On this verse "That YHVH thy Elohim is a consuming fire," this we said to the Companions:

That it is a fire which devours fire, and it is a fire which devours itself and consumes itself, because it is a fire which is more mighty than a fire, and it has been so confirmed.

But, Come, See! Whoever desires to know the wisdom of the Holy Unity should look in that flame arising from a burning coal or a lighted lamp. This flame comes out only when united with another thing.

Come, See! In the flame which goes up are two lights: one light is a bright white and one light is united with a dark or blue; the white light is that which is above and ascends in a straight path, and that below is that dark or blue light, and this light below, is the throne to the white light and that white light rests upon it; and they unite one to the other so that they are one. And this dark light or blue colour, which is below, is the precious throne to the white. And this is the mystery of the blue.³ And this blue dark throne unites itself with another thing to light that from below, and this awakes it to unite with the upper white light, and this blue or dark, sometimes changes its colour but that white above never changes its colour, it is always white; but that blue changes to these different colours, sometimes to blue or black and

¹ Deuteronomy iv, 24. See Herder's *Geist der Hebräischen Poesie*, Vol. II.

² *ibid.*, iv, 4

³ The blue colour of Heaven and the *th'keileth*, i.e., blue, of the Tallith.

sometimes to a red colour, and this unites itself to two sides. It unites to the above, to that upper white light, and unites itself below to the thing which is under it, which is the burning matter, and this burns and consumes always from the matter below. And this devours that matter below, which connects with it and upon which the blue light rests, therefore this eats up all which connects with it from below, because it is the nature of it that it devour and consume everything which depends on it and is dead matter, and therefore it eats up everything which connects with it below, and this white light which rests upon it never consumes itself and never changes its light, and therefore said Moses:

That YHVH thy Elohim is a consuming fire.¹

Surely He consumes. It devours and consumes everything which rests under it; and on this he said: "YHVH is thy Elohim" not "our Elohim," because Moses has been in that white light, Above, which neither devours nor consumes.

Come, See! it is not His Will to light that blue light that should unite with that white light, only for Israël; because they cleave or connect under Him.

And, Come, See! Although the nature of that dark or blue light is that it shall consume everything which joins with it below, still Israël cleaves on Him, Below, * * * and although you cleave in Him nevertheless you exist, because it is written:

You are all alive this day.

And on this white light rests above a Hidden Light which is stronger. Here is the above mystery of that flame which comes out from it, and in it is the Wisdom of the Above.²



¹ Deuteronomy iv, 24. Cf. Zohar ii, 226g; Hebrews xii, 29.

² Zohar i, 50b, Amsterdam and Brody Editions; Cremona Ed., i, 36a, col. 141. See Exodus iii, 2-3 ; Acts vii, 30. Dr. Christian D. Ginsburg in: *The Kabbalah, etc.*, London, 1865, pp. 25-26, applies the above to the Triadic idea of the Deity. His translation of it and most of the other quotations from the Zohar, have been copied from Prof. Adolphe Franck, and cannot be depended upon. Franck has been severely criticised for his translations, by Dr. D.H. Joel in his *Religions-philosophie des Sohar*, etc. See, *Philo.*, Bohn's Ed., iv, p. 44.