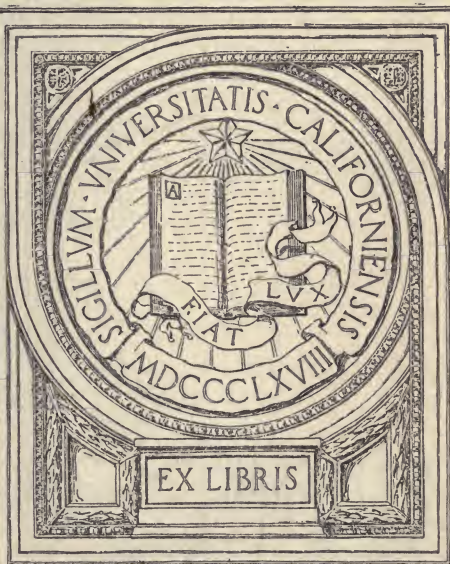


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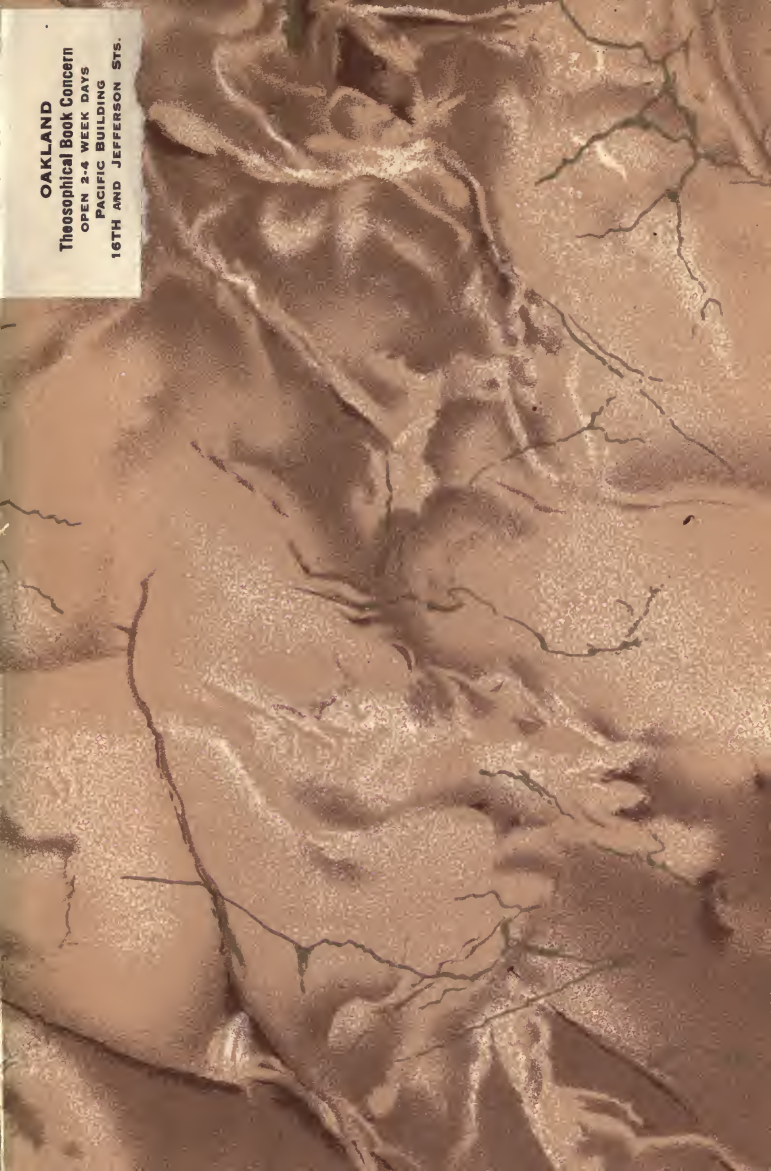
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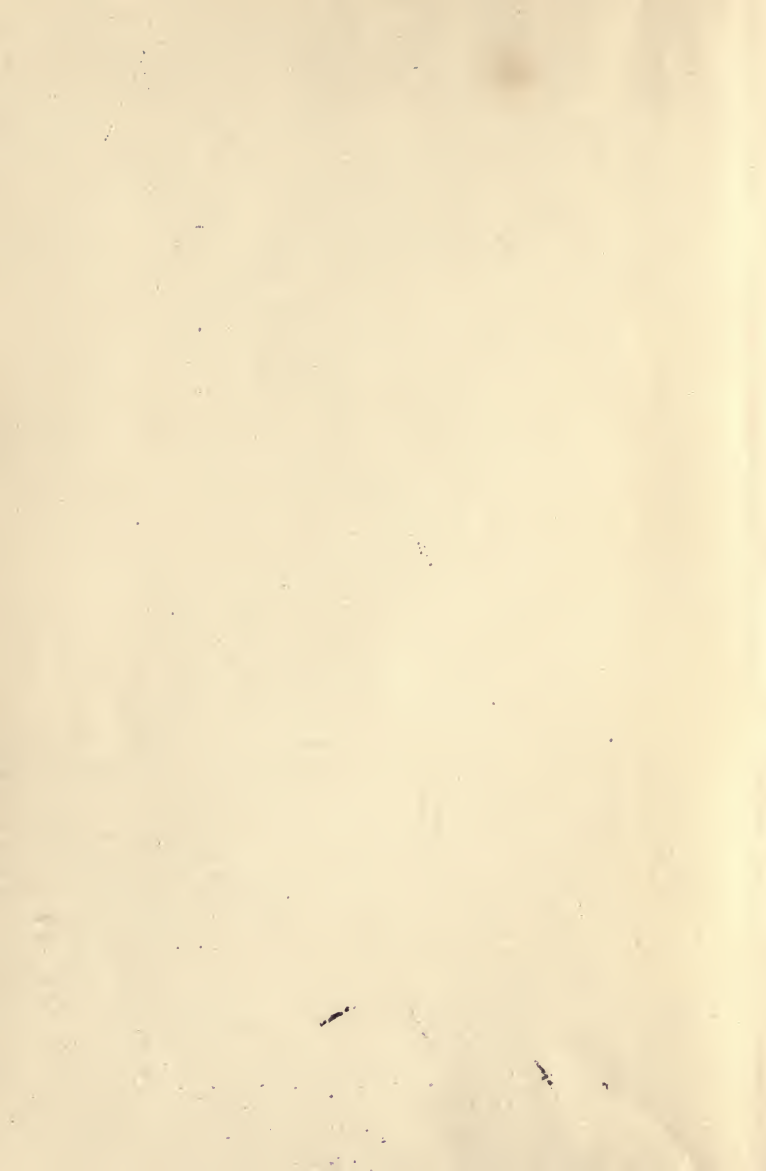
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A Word on Man His Nature and His Powers

*A Lecture delivered on board the "Kaisar-i-Hind,"
in the Red Sea, Oct. 30th, 1893.*

(Reported.)

The last time I spoke to you I took a very large subject, which I was obliged to treat very roughly. To-night I have selected a smaller subject, although still a large one, and shall be able therefore to treat it a little more fully. I propose to put before you what the Esoteric Philosophy teaches concerning man: man's nature and man's powers, his possibilities in the future, as well as his state in the present. May I say in opening what I have to put to you, that I am simply laying before you that which I have been taught, and which I have to a considerable extent verified by my own personal experiment, so that it has become to me a matter of knowledge? I, however, only put it to you as a matter of reasonable hypothesis. I do not pretend to dictate to you your opinions; I do not pretend to formulate for you what you shall think, or what you shall reject. On each of you the

responsibility of forming his own thought; on each of you the responsibility of accepting or rejecting, as your own reason, your conscience and your judgment may decide. All that the speaker can do, or has the right to do, is to put the truth as he sees it, leaving it to each individual to accept or to reject, the right and the duty being on each, and not on the one who speaks.

With regard to man, there is a fundamental difference in the conception of man as he is looked at in the East and in the West. According to the Esoteric Philosophy man is regarded essentially as a soul. What he may have of instruments which that soul employs, what bodies he may clothe himself in, what special forms he may adopt—all that is matter which changes in time and space. As you may read in the *Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad*: “As a goldsmith, taking a piece of gold, forms another shape . . . so throwing off this body . . . the soul forms a shape.” And so the man is the soul, the soul that lives to gather experience, that lives to subjugate external nature, that lives to unite itself with the Divine Spirit from whence it sprang; and as regards the soul’s bodies, those differ as evolution proceeds, and the soul moulds them century after century into the fuller and more perfect expression of itself. But in the West, man is far more identified with his outer form; he identifies himself with his body and with

his mind. To us the soul stands above body and mind, using both as instruments, whereas in the West, people think of themselves as consisting of body and of mind; and the things that interest them are the things that affect the body, while the mind, they think, is practically their master, and they never dream of mastering their own thoughts and being ruler of their own intellectual as well as of their own physical domain.

In order that these distinctions may be understood, let us sketch the different "principles," as they are sometimes called—"states of consciousness," as they are called at other times—which make up man when you take him completely, as man physical, man psychical and man spiritual. Those are the three great divisions accepted, let me say in passing, by Christianity as much as by other religions. For you find St. Paul speaking of a man "as body, soul and spirit." I know that in popular Christianity the distinction between soul and spirit has very largely been lost. But that is not so in Christian philosophy. If you take the writings of the great thinkers of Christendom, those who have dealt with religion scientifically and philosophically, you will find they follow the lines laid down by the great Christian Apostle, and regard man as a triple and not only as a dual entity. Now the body which belongs to the man, which is a physical garment as we say, is a very changing and a

very illusory thing, as I said to you the other night—changing continually from moment to moment, and from year to year; so that if you turn to any modern book on physiology you will find that every minute particle of your body changes absolutely and completely in the space of seven years, that not a fragment of it you had seven years ago is yours to-day. Not only so. In the later investigations of physiology you will find it recognised in the West, that a great part, at least, of the body, is made up of minute lives, microbes as they are called; and whenever men of science are searching after the cause of disease, they are on the track of some particular microbe, and it has become one of their favourite recreations to cultivate the microbe and improve him, so that he may become less dangerous when he falls upon any particular body. In this, Western science is on the track of a great truth, and as far as it goes, it speaks rightly in the fact that these microbes enter into the composition of the human body. It might go further: it might say that the whole body is made up of nothing else but microbes and more minute creatures still, so that the whole body of man is composed of tiny lives, lives each with its own independent existence, coming into the body and going out of it, taking while in the body the stamp of the individual man, of which, for a time, it forms a part. So that our bodies are like hosts of these tiny visitors, and each of us stamps on those

particles of the body his own physical, and to a great extent, his mental, moral and emotional characteristics. Out of the great reservoir of nature, there pour through us these streams of tiny lives; and each, while it remains in our keeping, receives our stamp and then passes on to form part of some other body—vegetable, mineral, animal, human, as the case may be. So that even physically we become the creators of the world in which we live. Even physically, the world as it surrounds us, is made up of that which we contribute, and is modified and changed according to the character of these constant contributions that we make. Into our body flow the tiny lives. There we feed them, poison them or purify them, pollute them or cleanse them, as the case may be. By our food and by our living, we modify these tiny particles which are a passing part of ourselves; and then we send them out to affect others—to make part of the bodies of other people, to make part of the physical nature around us, modifying them according to the fashion in which we are living ourselves. This is the physical basis of the brotherhood of all that lives. And there is nothing that lives not. So that this constant interaction throws on each a responsibility, gives to each the responsibility of this creative power, of this transmuting and modifying influence. One by one we change each other's lives physically, day by day we affect each other's health mentally as well as morally.

Sometimes it is said that the man who is evil in his living, as the drunkard, is only his own enemy. It is not so. He is the enemy of everything that surrounds him, of every life that comes in contact with his own. The terrible curse of the drunkard is that all these tiny lives are sent out from him, poisoned with alcohol, to fall on the bodies of other men, women and children, carrying with them the poison that he has infused into them, and making him a focus of evil to all among whom he lives. Thus, learning what the physical body is, the Esoteric Philosophy makes us careful in our physical life. It carries on this sense of responsibility into the common actions, common thoughts of everyday and ordinary life, so that self-restraint in the body as well as in the mind, should be the note of the life of every true Theosophist.

Let me pass from the body to the next stage in man, that astral body to which I alluded the other night. Really the astral body should come first in our thought, for it is the stable matrix or mould, into which all of these tiny physical lives pass, and out of which they pass again, the stable part of man which preserves the form, only slowly and gradually modified, which is more directly acted upon by the mind than the physical molecules, which affects the physical molecules in their arrangement, in that as you alter the matrix, these physical molecules must take on the form of the mould into which they run. This

astral body of astral matter envelopes every physical molecule, but spreads out around the body, making a kind of atmosphere around each of us, extending some few feet away on every side, so that a clairvoyant looking at the body, sees the physical body surrounded by what is called an aura, that is, a vibrating mass of delicate matter, visible to anyone who is sensitive under special conditions, but visible normally to the clairvoyant, and differing in appearance according to the state of health, physical, psychical or mental, of the person whom it concerns. Now, that aura or atmosphere surrounding the body, which is in a sense an expression of astral matter, is very closely connected with the mind; it is very easily affected by the mind of the person to whom it belongs, and also by the minds of others. These magnetic atmospheres that surround us (for in astral matter all magnetic forces play) bring us into contact one with the other, so that we affect each other unconsciously, as we sometimes say. Have you never felt on meeting a person for the first time an attraction or a repulsion which had nothing in it of intellectual judgment, nothing in it of previous knowledge or experience? You like a person—you cannot tell why; you dislike another—you have no reason for your dislike. Esoteric Philosophy explains to you the very simple reason that causes these strange antipathies and attractions. It is that every human being has his own rate of vibration, the vibration of this astral matter,

so that it is always quivering backwards and forwards. It is one of the characteristics of this ethereal matter to be thrown easily into waves; and just as light is nothing more than waves of ether set in very rapid motion by a rapidly vibrating body, which we call luminous, because of the effect it has upon the eye, so this ethereal matter, which is part of our own bodies, is thrown into waves of definite length and definite frequency; and these vibrate always in and around us, and are part of ourselves, modified by our own characteristics. Just as striking two strings on a piano, you may have either harmony or discord, according to the length of the sound-waves set up by these vibrating strings, so you may have either harmony or discord, according to the length of the sound-waves set up by these vibrating strings, so you may have either harmony or discord between the vibrating auras of two different people; and if the vibrations fall into harmony—that is, if they bear a certain definite relation of wave length to each other—there is an attraction between the two: whereas, if they bear a different relation, you get discord—that is, friction and jangle, and you are repelled without understanding the reason.

It is this astral body and astral atmosphere which are the medium for all magnetic phenomena. All the effects we produce upon each other are modified by this astral atmosphere. All the effects that deal with

emotions and passions, with all those sides of the human character which are of the nature of emotion, come to us by means of these astral vibrations.

Have you ever tried to think what oratory is? It does not lie in the words that are spoken; it does not lie in the thought that is behind the words. You might take in cold blood the most eloquent passage of some great oration, and read it calmly without any movement of the emotions, without any sense of passion or of vibrating enthusiasm in you. If you hear it spoken, it is different. Why? It is because the thought of the speaker, working on his own astral atmosphere, throws that into vehement vibrations—vibrations of love or of hatred, passion or pity—vibrations of great enthusiasm; and then these vibrations of his throwing the whole ether around him into wave motion, these waves strike person after person, making their own atmosphere vibrate, and then from one to another there flies the contagion until the whole crowd is moved as by a single impulse and a single will.

These are all results of this second part of man's nature, this astral atmosphere that penetrates and surrounds him, by means of which the mind works on physical matter. And not only in this fashion, but in many forms of nervous disease, in those strange crises of panic, in those often puzzling attacks of hysterical affection that rush through a

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