

THE BLAVATSKY LECTURE No. 1

1918

BY

E. L. GARDNER



LONDON

THEOSOPHICAL PUBLISHING HOUSE

1, UPPER WOBURN PLACE, W.C. 1

1918

T.
G17A
m

PROPERTY OF THE

NATIONAL
LIBRARY

of the

THEOSOPHICAL
SOCIETY

in America

WHEATON

•

ILLINOIS

THE
BLAVATSKY LECTURE

No. 1

DELIVERED AT THE ANNUAL CONVEN-
TION OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY
IN ENGLAND AND WALES, MAY, 1918

BY
E. L. GARDNER

MATTER IS THE SHADOW OF SPIRIT"

(THE SECRET DOCTRINE, VOL. I.)

NATIONAL LIBRARY
THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY
IN AMERICA
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

LONDON
THEOSOPHICAL PUBLISHING HOUSE
1, UPPER WOBURN PLACE, W.C. 1

1918

T

25426

C 112

M

WHEATON, ILLINOIS
IN AMERICA
THE THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
NATIONAL LIBRARY

FOREWORD

THE idea of an annual Blavatsky Lecture emanated from Mr. D. N. Dunlop, whose devotion to Madame Blavatsky and her writings is well known throughout the Theosophical Society, and the idea was so obviously an excellent one that prompt measures were taken by the Executive Committee to give it a concrete form.

It is doubly important that the lore and teaching contained in the writings of Mme. Blavatsky should be continually studied, discussed and interpreted; in the first place because of the vast treasures which they hold for the student of occultism, and in the second place because of the scientific theories they contain. These theories were derided when Mme. Blavatsky first enunciated them; but every advance that science makes is an advance towards admission of their truth; and it is of first importance that they should be as widely promulgated and as competently expounded as possible, so that as fresh discoveries substantiate them the profound knowledge by which they were inspired and the value of the methods by which they were obtained may be recognised.

The first Lecture, delivered by Mr. Gardner, is a worthy beginning of a great enterprise.

H. BAILLIE-WEAVER.

MATTER IS THE SHADOW OF SPIRIT

OUR debt to Madame Blavatsky is one of immense gratitude that in an age of hard-set materialism she brought a large measure of truth to the Western world. Of the many books left to us, that usually held in the highest esteem and regarded as the greatest treasure-house is the "Secret Doctrine." To many readers, perhaps, the three volumes composing that work have appeared more formidable than enlightening. Major cycles, minor cycles, wheels within wheels, chains, rounds, globes, races!—many a brain has reeled at the onslaught. But if the student be resolute and prepared to adapt himself to the method demanded, a priceless course of study awaits him. H. P. B.'s way was not to present the finished canvas, so to speak, but to provide the artist with brush and palette, the craftsman with tools, that each might, with the vast assistance given, work out his own understanding.

Not to cover too wide a field, I am confining myself to a fragment of the first volume, that

MATTER IS THE SHADOW OF SPIRIT

a circle into two parts and unites two half-circles in one, a dual function always held to be specially typical of the Second Logos. His separative work is expressed in the organisation of forms—their ensoulment of His own Being is the guarantee of their ultimate union.

A correspondence on a minute scale is furnished by a single-celled animalcule. The cell divides in two (*a* and *b*), and these, though usually called daughter-cells, are, it would seem, not exactly alike, for though similar division continues for a while, ultimately, to restore vitality, two cells must unite. Division and reunion are conditions of their growth.

In the next stage of form-development the multicellular, complete division is arrested (*c*), a bridge remaining which connects the cells. The nucleus and its centre of intense vitality, the nucleolus, have divided, but not the plasmic body. The correspondence to the division of the mental principle in the macrocosm, arrested till the middle of the fifth round of a Chain approximately, is significant and should be noted, for it is well worth exploration.

THE MENTAL PRINCIPLE.

In the evolution of our humanity the separative tendency is associated with the lower mind, which provides the subtlest constituent of the personality: the urge towards union is characteristic of the higher mind, the vehicle of the

MATTER IS THE SHADOW OF SPIRIT.

ego. The development of this instrument of self-consciousness, the mental principle, is due, we are told, to the mighty influence exercised by the Lords of the Flame. During the Third Root Race the mind was expanded, higher and lower became distinctive, and humanity entered on the new and particular work of the Chain.

The first three Races on our globe, in common with the first three cycles of any series of seven, were recapitulatory—running through the forms established in the first three Rounds. Similarly the younger kingdoms—the animal, plant, and mineral—are engaged with forms not built anew by themselves, but which are the “cast-off clothes” of a pioneer humanity.

Up to the period of the expansion of the mental principle the cosmic creative energy is, as it were, reciting a poem composed in a previous cycle. Fascinating and entrancing as the work of “Nature” is, we are really witnessing the mechanical methods of a copyist, repeating on a new stage that which has been thoroughly rehearsed and performed before. Not till the human mind becomes a working instrument does art (and error) enter.

Human consciousness works clumsily, with difficulty, making many a blunder—as an apprentice with unfamiliar tools—but it is adorned with the grace of creative artistry! The stumblings and mistakes are those of the immature genius of a Creative Hierarchy.

MATTER IS THE SHADOW OF SPIRIT.

THE SEVEN PLANES: FIVE AND TWO.

Of the Seven Great Planes, five furnish the field of personal and individual evolution. This division into five and two is perhaps a little perplexing. The position seems to be that the "five" are particular and individual and the "two," relatively, are cosmic and synthetic. An example of this division is furnished, on the larger scale, by the Sun and his immediate family of five Schemes, represented by the planets Venus, Earth, the Asteroids, Jupiter, and Saturn. The life of the planets is dependent on the Sun. His rays sustain, indeed in a very real sense are, that life, though particularised in form. The Sun and his Rays are the "two" general and cosmic, and the Five Schemes the particular and individual.

Through the current phase of human consciousness the latter appear to correspond to the higher mind (Venus), the lower mind (Earth), the astral nature (Asteroids), the etheric physical (Jupiter), and the dense physical (Saturn). H. P. B.'s statement: "There are enormous mysteries connected with the lower manas," has a deep significance when we connect this correspondence with the coming of the Lords of the Flame from Venus to our Earth.

On the smaller scale the Monad and his Ray represent the "two," and the five planes—âtmâ, buddhi, manas, astral, physical—furnish the five instruments or vehicles that the Monad uses,

MATTER IS THE SHADOW OF SPIRIT

which we divide again into ego and personality. The ray of the Monad is the life of both throughout their long course. Retiring into "silence and darkness" because immersed in matter, as the sunbeam is "lost" in the growth of a plant, it is he nevertheless that sustains the driving urge. The Monad is, so to speak, chairman of a committee of three: for the first half of the

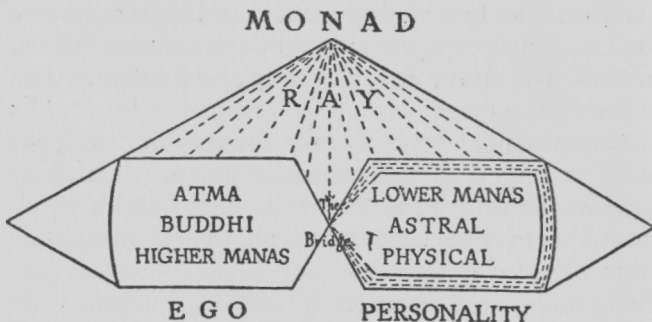


DIAGRAM 2.

vast evolutionary cycle he consistently supports the desires of the personality; at the mid-period the voice of the ego begins to be articulate; the Monad then emerges to some apprehension of his destiny and power and attempts to exercise some discrimination in his decisions. This last stage, broadly, is the position of humanity at the present time.

In the diagram the "five" are shown as constituting the familiar dual field of the ego and personality, the principles and aspects of

MATTER IS THE SHADOW OF SPIRIT.

the S.D. The principle of Power is expressed in muscular strength (Atma physical); Activity in the eager restlessness of the lower mind (Higher and Lower Manas); Wisdom is somewhat deeply disguised in emotion (Buddhi Astral).

With the expansion of the mental body, due to the stimulus given to the lower mind, the important fourth stage is reached on which so much stress is always laid, self-consciousness is attained—and a new heaven and earth dawn on the awakened mental understanding. The keenest attention, rightly enough, is first directed to the latter.

A helpful correspondence is the way of development of a seed in the ground. The seed strikes downwards and upwards, but in the culture of plants it is the roots that should be assisted first. Top growth must not be encouraged till these have well struck, for the sustenance of earth and water is needed before any attempt is made to negotiate the fire of the sun and the air of the atmosphere. And in the development of human consciousness the stability of the physical must be established before the faculties of the higher mind can be exercised.

As roots and branches correspond, pursue their fortunes together, are interdependent, so personality and ego have similar characteristics, grow together, are interdependent, and are of equal value to the Monad.

“Personality is a necessity of Egoism.”

MATTER IS THE SHADOW OF SPIRIT.

Without its shadow of matter Spirit would never become aware.

Immersed in the personality the ray of the Monad is deprived of its natural freedom in order that it may estimate its loss. The value of privation was a favourite theme of Madame Blavatsky's. As we tend only to appreciate the value and glory of health when suffering from sickness, so a realisation of selfhood is attained only when deprived of a measure of that freedom which is the very breath of Spirit—and the mask of Matter is the depriving agent. On this is based the abundant symbolism associated with the "immersion" of spirit in matter, the "bonds" of form, the "limitations" of the vehicle. Throughout this privation, however, the Mind affords a connecting link, a bridge, a means of communication, between the immanent Ray and the transcendent Monad—who ever remains the Spectator of the unfolding drama.

THE FUNCTION OF MIND.

We must come to grips with the function of mind, and, if we adopt once more H. P. B.'s advice concerning "correspondence," may obtain some light. Consider a five-fold series on the familiar level of the physical—the Five Senses. We may note in passing that here, again, "two" senses, the sixth and seventh, are on a different footing and are of a wider order than the "five."

We are told that Hearing corresponds to Atma,

MATTER IS THE SHADOW OF SPIRIT.

Touch to Buddhi, Sight to Manas, Taste to the Astral, and Smell to the Physical. The Mind on the purely physical level is thus represented by the Eye.

Consciousness, being determined to see its environment, the obedient builders, under the pressure of Will, construct the eye—and the Mind is the model on which it is built. That crystal clarity of positive understanding, which is the characteristic quality of the higher mind, is precipitated as a lens in the organ of vision. That receptive picture-building faculty of the lower mind is interpreted in the eye as a retina, a screen, on which shadows may be thrown. In the lens and retina we have correspondences to the characteristic functions of the higher and lower minds respectively.

Consider now for a moment the work done by the lens: gazing from a hilltop on some landscape the main details of a wide expanse of country are received through the narrow aperture of the pupil of the eye and by means of the lens, through which the light must pass, the whole is concentrated practically in a point. The vast and diffused becomes minutely clear and defined, is indeed reduced to a comprehensible form. Without this lens that concentrates and focuses the light we should not be able to see the world around us.

A conceivable alternative, a plane mirror would call for an eye the same size as the object! A macrocosm could be reflected in another

MATTER IS THE SHADOW OF SPIRIT.

macrocosm, but in nothing less. Possessed, however, of a lens, each one of a multitude of microcosms may reflect, that is reproduce in miniature, within itself a replica of the greater.

The lens reduces the object seen to a shadow-picture and the mind behind the eye interprets the picture in terms of form according to its experience and growth. A sunset will mean far more to an artist than to one untrained in colour. The sunset is the same, but the forms built in the receptive minds of both vary greatly. The one builds far truer than the other. And these mental interpretations are the only "forms." Thoughts are the only "things." A flower is not born till we see it. A bundle of abstract qualities becomes a thing of beauty and a song of colour only when perceived by an eye linked to a human mind. A thousand flowers may be visited by a bee in the course of a day, but the bee, in this sense, sees not one. The meadows are decked with myriads of wild flowers, but the ox that grazes them heeds not the fairest. The eye on the physical level is a true illustration and correspondence of Mind in the realm of Consciousness, for in exactly similar fashion, on the larger scale of the mental principle, the human mind is the screen on which may be imprinted the shadows thrown by Spirit.

Shadow-forms only? Yes, for who knows the object at which we gaze, the "thing" that we touch? We know only its qualities. The "thing in itself" can never be sensed because

MATTER IS THE SHADOW OF SPIRIT.

it does not exist. Only that exists (lit. stands forth) that we make with the mind. The mind is the die-stamp with obverse and reverse, that changes a plain sheet into character forms. The higher mind is the one, the lower mind the other, and the "form" is stamped between them.

Mind is the gateway through which abstract ideas may emerge as concrete realities. As the eye gathers the threads of light together, reducing a large field of vision to a tiny shadow, so the mind may collect the archetypal and mould it as shapely form. Thought-forms may be stimulated into being by the external objective world and such a form will be a copy. They may be built by applying the stimulus of the internal subjective will and such a form will be a creation. Yet the objective world of matter and the subjective realm of spirit are one, as light and shade are one. We divide them by interposing mind, perceiving the objective with the lower, conceiving the subjective with the higher. Though we cannot know more than qualities by means of the vehicle of mind, we can "become" the thing in-itself, and when that consummation is reached our experience with the mental principle will enable us to know that we are that. This is the pearl of great price our excursion into manifestation will have secured.

From the point of view of the Ego in the field of the inner planes, Mind is where ideas are clothed, where they become actual: it is the welcome birthplace of the concrete. From the

MATTER IS THE SHADOW OF SPIRIT.

point of view of the Personality in the field of the outer planes, Mind is the one and only avenue whereby intuition may achieve birth. "Brahmâ meditates and a Universe is born." Thoughts are things and are the only forms, and Matter provides their substance.

"Everything has been, is, or will be, Man." Manas—a thinking Mind—to perceive and respond to the glory of Truth.

INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR.

Concentration is a precept of every Scripture and is taught by example throughout Nature. Only by concentration can the outer be perceived and the inner conceived by the mind. In enquiring what is meant by these terms, inner and outer, let us not delude ourselves into thinking that we explain anything by postulating a fourth dimension. The shield and protection of the Mysteries is their simplicity, not their complexity. Mind can unravel a fearsome tangle for the ample reason that mind alone makes such, but only the simple purity of a Parsifal wins to the throne of God. Simplicity, then, shall be our guide.

The "inner and outer" are the transcendent and immanent, and though we think the latter alone to be near and familiar, they are equally distant from, or rather close to, us. To grasp clearly these relations let us borrow the illustration of a cinema projecting lantern. Three principal factors are needed—a powerful light,

MATTER IS THE SHADOW OF SPIRIT.

the film, and the lantern mechanism, including lens and screen. On the scale of the Macrocosm the light would stand for the First Aspect, Power ; the lantern framework and appliances for the Third ; and the roll of film for the Second—containing the whole purpose, yet needing the other factors for expression. On the human level the part played by the lantern mechanism will serve to illustrate the function of mind. The photographs on the film are at first rolled up, hidden from sight ; they await unfoldment, and for this time-sequence and space are required. The rolled-up film may stand for the unexpressed Intuition. Now let us follow the projection.

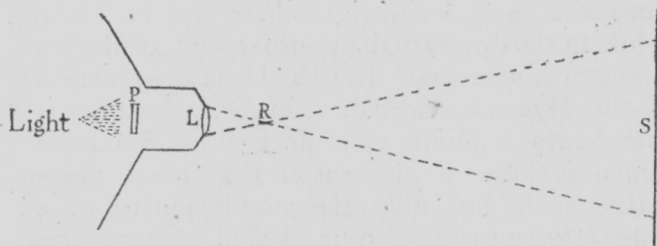


DIAGRAM 3.

The light passes through the picture (P) and is modified by it. It is then collected and focussed by the lens (L), is reversed (R), and, impinging on the screen (S), presents there an enlarged shadowgraph of the actual film. The point of view of the audience looking at the screen illustrates that of human consciousness when using the lower mind. The objective

MATTER IS THE SHADOW OF SPIRIT.

world around us owes its being to the shadows thrown by spirit on the screen of matter: shadows that are interpreted by us as forms. Consciousness at present is normally playing, as it were, between R and S, and finds it difficult to realise that within its vehicle of mind is the focal point of reversal, R. The field of the higher mind is illustrated by that region between R and L, and the view obtained in this direction must be coupled with the earlier if a true understanding of that which is projected as shadow is to be reached. Just as we build up the illusory shadows on the cinema screen into life and action, so do we construct "form" out of the qualities projected by the ever-hidden "thing-in-itself."

In the cell, referred to earlier, the focal point between inner and outer, or transcendent and immanent, is connected with the nucleolus, that centre of intense activity which seems apparently to mark the very source of life. Pulses of motion well and throb from this centre outwards, and the insistent question is, Whence comes this stream? Energy is passing from a "within" to a "without," or, in other words, transcendent is becoming immanent before one's eyes! Applying the analogy of the eye and the mind, and seeking a solution along simple lines instead of invoking extra dimensional assistance, we may understand. That which is happening may be merely the concentration of diffused forces and their expression anew under certain limitations.

MATTER IS THE SHADOW OF SPIRIT.

Consider the experiment of converting a suitable gaseous mixture (say oxygen and hydrogen) to a liquid: a spark passes, an explosion follows, and a quantity of water represents the gas. Supposing now we imagine this practically instantaneous conversion slowed down to a day in time, then for twenty-four hours one might witness energy streaming from a centre outwards as the body of water grew.

Conversely the chemist by his art can build an unstable solid compound, the popular explosive, leading to a contrary conversion. Fire is the gateway always, and, significantly enough, the S.D. corresponds fire to the mental plane.

Without pursuing this further here, I would merely submit that the vital processes to be observed in the cell, as also, of course, in every corresponding case, are the expression of a principle of manifestation. The gaseous mixture and the water illustrate the relation of group soul to physical body—the latter being built and maintained by the concentrated activity of the life-energy of the soul “exploding” through that focal point which marks the middle of each plane and the middle plane of any septenary series. The same applies in a general way to the relation of ego to personality—though better to that of Monad to both. From our point of view, therefore, we may regard the “inner” as simply the diffused and abstract, and the “outer” as the limited and concrete, the linking medium being due to that effort of focal con-

MATTER IS THE SHADOW OF SPIRIT.

centration, or voluntary limitation of the Logos, which generates Consciousness itself.

THE REFLECTED SHADOW.

Finally, let us glance at this question of reversal, so often met with in the S.D. in terms of the mirror and reflection.

The eye records its image upside down, yet we see correctly without any conscious effort. The reason for this has often been sought, and it affords an interesting proof of the statement that "the dense physical body is not a principle of man." Having crossed the physical "bridge," we operate the body from the higher or inner level and reversed impressions are automatically rectified. But in the mental sphere we are engaged in this very task of "bridging" efficiently the lower and higher minds and our progress in so doing may be marked by the constant reversal of early errors of judgment.

The earth once thought to be flat is now a sphere: the sun no longer revolves around us, we have reversed the relation: the "void" of space is now "densest solid" and matter is motion within and of it. The "atom" of the material world is no longer indivisible and solid, it is a "centre of force." Gravitation, it is suspected, is a thrust from without, not a pull from within. The biologist is searching for the origin of life in the lowliest of the kingdoms; his gaze must be reversed, for the secret is in

MATTER IS THE SHADOW OF SPIRIT.

the heights. We are witnessing methods of education being completely revolutionised : our penal system will follow suit. The worship of an exterior Deity is giving place to a realisation of the divine spark within. To these many reversals of our purely lower-mental judgments a most instructive and interesting addition has lately been made. It would seem that consciousness controls the physical body entirely by processes of inhibition. The observation and treatment of a large number of injuries to the spinal cord and brain, caused in the war, have resulted in a mass of information concerning the control of muscles from the brain centres. It is asserted now that we control by inhibiting action and not by positive direction. To raise the arm, for instance, we really relax the extensor muscles by inhibiting their tension : automatically the flexor muscles raise the arm ! We wish to touch something with a finger : we do it by preventing the finger touching anything else ! And so on— all our actions being accomplished by the negative process of inhibition.

We might, perhaps, have deduced all this from the fact that the control of the dense physical is from an inner level, and hence the impulse must cross the focal point of reversal, but it is extremely interesting to find that, as the result of direct observation, this procedure is stated to be the fact.

To abandon "inhibition" and sink through to the dense physical again would mean a rever-

MATTER IS THE SHADOW OF SPIRIT.

sion to the lower animal status and the "loss of the soul."

Applying all this to the Mind and remembering the work of the Fifth Race is to link up with the higher, we find an added significance imparted to the instructions concerning self-control and meditation :—"Still the activity of the mind"—"Inhibit the modifications of the mind."

We are enmeshed in matter, we have to learn how to control it and release ourselves, to "let go" yet master it, and in its mastery know it as shadow and win home.

Have I emphasised the form side too strongly, or exalted the mind unduly? In the cycle of manifestation the building and mastery of form is the task. We *are* the life, and life is uncreate. Life is, and its energy, though constrained in form, is unimpaired. Coiled up? Yes. Its release awaits the exercise of the human will on mind.

Padmapani, according to the allegory quoted by H. P. B., splits into numberless fragments; and in their reassembly each gradually becomes conscious and self-conscious as spirit weaves its shadows of matter about it. That weaving is done, and later undone, with the instrument of mind.

The sublime heights of complete human self-consciousness can only be attained when the lens of the higher mind focuses truly on the screen of the lower, allowing the knowledge that

MATTER IS THE SHADOW OF SPIRIT.

is Wisdom freely to play through without distortion.

* * * *

The teachings given to the modern world associated with the name of Madame Blavatsky have never been of more profound importance than at the present time.

Theosophy is the science of the fundamental functions of life. It defines our present limitations and their reason: it explains the worlds around us and the value of our vehicles: it teaches the intimate relations of Spirit and Matter and interprets both in terms of one consciousness.

One Consciousness! On that is established the brotherhood of humanity. A humanity of differing temperaments, with various duties to perform, hence with many points of view; a humanity to be wrought to a harmonious and united Hierarchy. That is the aim embodied in the first object of the Society founded by Madame Blavatsky, and we honour her by extending its inspiration, a knowledge of the Divine Wisdom.