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# PERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND THE SUB-CONSCIOUS MIND

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## MADAME BLAVATSKY AND THE SUB-CONSCIOUS

READERS of Colonel Olcott's "Old Diary Leaves" will remember the circumstances under which he met Madame Blavatsky in Chittenden County, Vermont, amid scenes of spiritualistic splendour that excited great attention in their young day, and every one of us is grateful for the simple truth and freedom from policy which mark the colonel's words, and have given a quality most convincing to his record of the unusual phenomena surrounding H. P. B.

As the reader proceeds with the work and learns how "Isis Unveiled" was written, he becomes aware that Madame Blavatsky and those who inspired her were interested in showing the power of mind over matter, and in making it clear that many of the phenomena deemed to be due to spirit communication are produced unconsciously by the persons present at the *séance*.

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On a number of occasions the forms were made consciously by Madame Blavatsky, and one medium, who was a pretender, was nearly frightened out of her life because, when H. P. B. was present, things really did happen.

To be brief, Madame Blavatsky, with her thought-power, moulded many of the apparently personal manifestations, and stated that the same power, unconsciously exercised by other minds, was generally responsible for such phenomena. I should like to mention one example, related to me from personal experience by my father about twenty-five years ago, which illustrates this sort of occurrence. He had gone with a friend to pay a private call on a non-professional Manchester medium, whom they both knew well, and during the interview, in which a variety of interesting things occurred, this gentleman said :

“I can see standing beside you a man who seems to want to communicate. He must have been some relative of yours. He is dressed in convict garb and is looking between bars as of a cage”—and he gave a description of the man, and finally asked, “Do you recognise him ?”

“No,” said my father’s friend, “I cannot say that I do.”

But afterwards, when they had left the house, he told my father what, he said, he had not liked to explain to the medium. A short time earlier the Manchester Ship Canal had been opened with much celebration and many exhibitions, and among these was a side-show of one of the old

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Botany Bay ships, which had been fitted up with wax-work figures in cages—a very realistic exhibition. My father's friend had seen this, and had been much impressed by one of the figures, which had now been described accurately to him by the medium, although it was not in his consciousness at the time. And the medium, acting on the usual assumption, thought that he was seeing the spirit of a dead man.

### TWO DIVISIONS OF THE SUB-CONSCIOUS

In speaking of such things, Madame Blavatsky did not use the term "sub-conscious mind." That was coined later by somebody else. But she did most emphatically assert that the conscious mind was not the whole mind, or that there were in men mind operations beyond the scope of their actual consciousness, and that the results of these outcropping occasionally into the light of consciousness, fell into two classes, as indicating the presence within us of a *personal sub-conscious mind*, filled with impulses, interests and powers of our personal being, and a *super-personal sub-conscious spirit*, the source of mind, the reality behind our personality, the Divine Self in man. The voice of this latter was the Voice of the Silence—heard during the silence of the personality, out of the silence of the bodiless Self.

I may perhaps be permitted to give an example of super-personal impressions which occurred frequently during the Great War. I happen to know a gentleman who had the rather unusual

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fortune to be in the fighting line on the French front during the greater part of the War, and lived through those years without a scratch, although he saw his regiment almost destroyed again and again. He spoke of frequent cases of premonitions among his men. One day, perhaps on the occasion of an attempted advance, a man would say, "This is my last. I am going West this time." Invariably the premonition proved true, and the most interesting thing about it was the way in which that which could tell the man that death was near seemed to know also that it was not to be feared—for while it gave the information it took away the fear of death. Here was an impression from the super-personal sub-conscious mind or spirit. And I think that any real willing, loving and thinking comes within the same class, and from that super-personal part of us which is the source of all positive progress in human life, and is interested more in the expansion and expression of real life than in the preservation of the personality.

It is worth while to remember, when we read H. P. B.'s emphatic denunciations of the belief in spirit return, that she was very vividly conscious of this higher self; and when she admitted the communications, she insisted that they were from the personal mind of the departed—not from the spirit—and that personal mind by no means as rational in the astral plane as it had been in the physical, and, indeed, often but a faded remnant of it, or even a sloughed collection of its old

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thought-forms. The personal mind, after death, was no longer in contact with kârmic events, no longer able to initiate new lines of feeling and thought in response to external stimuli, but in a subjective condition.

### THE SUBJECTIVE STATE AFTER DEATH

I think I may briefly say that Madame Blavatsky's doctrine with regard to the after-death state of the average man was that it was the time when he did most of his feeling and thinking about the experiences of his life just past—in fact, the utmost thinking and feeling about them that was possible for his so-far-developed personality.

During physical life, especially in the earlier part of it, men collect experiences which form starting points for many trains of thought and feeling, and these are all preserved as latent impulses in the personal sub-conscious mind, and the extent of the subjective life after death depends upon the quantity stored and the quality of personality developed. I must remark incidentally that the man who does much thinking here sees more than other men, however unobservant he may seem to be, stores more material and improves the possibilities of his personality, and so provides for himself a longer period between death and birth—not a shorter time, as might at first glance appear.

Madame Blavatsky's use of the term "subjective" with reference to the normal after-death state of human and animal minds must be under-

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stood to refer to the cause and content of their experiences in worlds where matter responds instantly to their imagination. It is in perfect agreement with most of the descriptions of investigators like Dr. Besant and Bishop Leadbeater, who, even if they have not used the term "subjective," have described the condition of the departed as entirely and immediately due to his present feeling and thought, except when he is in some degree earth-bound by the etheric double or in those lowest conditions of the astral plane in which the undeveloped imagination is not strong enough to shape the matter according to the mind.

I find the idea very plainly expressed in "The Mahābhārata," where it says, "This world is the world of causes, and that is the world only of their effects." The personal mind, released from the limitations of the body, can start no new lines of activity, can pay attention to no new facts, can have no strictly kārmic dealings, for the very simple reason that it is too free. It can do what it wants. Most of us in the body cannot do what we want because kārma, in the shape of a physical world, is all the time busy buffeting and obstructing us, and compelling our attention to other things, and if we do succeed in doing or making something of our choice it is only after long labour in which the world has taught us much. Here, too, we have the heavy ballast of the physical body, delaying the mind impulses and permitting second thoughts.

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The progress men make during the astromental state is therefore *evolutionary*, not *kārmic*. What man does generates *kārma*, and indeed the word comes from a root *kri*, to do or to work. Strictly, *kārma* is the law of work, the law of his relation to things, providing that a living being shall have what he works for, neither more nor less, directly or through retribution. I think I have observed in the Sanskrit books that they say of a man *karoti*, he does, and of other things *chalayanti*, they move. An animal acts, but a man works. Work is action with a purpose, and the awakened will is behind it. No doubt some rare people can work and generate *kārma* on the astral and higher planes, but it is not normal, and perhaps does not usually last very long after the ballasting effect of the physical body has been entirely removed.

### THE PRE-PERSONAL CHARACTER OF A CHILD

A study of these conditions helps us to realise that the personality in man grows from the physical plane upward, though the essential character of the man manifests from within. Study the case of a tiny child—a baby. As sure as that a bean tendril will turn to the right and a honeysuckle to the left, or that the familiar crinkled oak-leaf will characterise the tree that springs from an acorn, it is that the child has character of its own with which to take hold of the matter and forces of Nature. Because of itself it will happen that some things make little

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impression upon it, and others much. Also the character in the child is inseparable from its consciousness—and I would say that in the proper sense of the term the child is self-conscious before it is conscious of anything it would call itself. This is only another way of expressing the old Vedāntic idea that there is no consciousness without self, no feeling without a feeler, no knowing without a knower, no willing without a willer. The child feels, knows and wills, and gradually grasps the world.

I have heard that it is often a matter for wonder for a mother when she first witnesses the awakening of intelligence and other qualities in her little child ; they seem to appear from nowhere, and sometimes spring up like mushrooms in a single night. Out of the depth of its consciousness is appearing the latent life-character developed in some past time—an appearance no more difficult to realise than the recovery of five or six foot-pounds of active energy in the water-bottle, should I knock it off the table.

So also a seed might lie upon a florist's shelf until a customer takes it and plants it in the ground. Then there will be an exhibition of the power that was latent within the seed, but would never have been expressed under other conditions. And that power is no trifle. Let it be the seed of an oak tree that is provided with what it needs of water and soil and air. It will sprout and grow into a mighty oak. No outward device can cause it to become a pine tree or a gooseberry bush.



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No one would say that the matter and the force of Nature of which the tree is formed come out of the seed (matter which amounts to many tons ; forces that can raise a great quantity of sap every day, or push a wall aside) ; but something did come out of it—the power (I can think of no other word for it) to take hold of the matter and forces of Nature and build them up into this splendid form predetermined in type.

### THE GROWTH OF PERSONALITY

Though the character thus comes as a power from within the child, the personality soon appears, and forms an overgrowth upon it, increasing year by year. The child learns that it has a body. It comes to think “ I am a body.” It observes in the world what it can and what it cannot do. It learns to understand the speech of others, and it hears their opinions of itself—that it is strong or weak, beautiful or ugly, clever or stupid, good or bad. Thus viewing itself in the mirror of physical life the personality develops—often too quickly when the elders make the foolish mistake of directing the child’s attention to its own body and feelings, or what is commonly called “ itself.”

The frequent awkwardness of the boy of sixteen or seventeen in society is due very largely to the unsettled character of his personality. He does not know what he can do. Even more he is

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conscious that others do not know what he can do. This makes him uneasy, unable to express his powers, and blundering in his attempts to satisfy others. But in course of time he finishes his "education," enters a profession, assumes the habit, airs and manners of a doctor, lawyer, minister, golfer or man of the world—and now there is no more awkwardness, for he does something and stands for something in his own eyes and those of his neighbours, and he knows it. He is now entrenched in a more or less established personality, composed not only of a collection of physical conditions and habits, but of emotional and mental ones as well.

We must observe at this stage that this overgrowth of personality has been taking place upward through the three planes—the physical, astral and lower mental. On the return to birth, when the mental and astral permanent atoms send out their magnetic call, they gather a quantity of appropriate matter of those planes into the periphery of the human auric egg, which is evidently the form of man determined from above or within. And that matter is not very dense, and may perhaps not be a particularly noticeable thing to the average careless entity or observer on the plane—which is probably the chief reason why so many denizens of the so-called spirit-world do not see men descending to birth, but only men ascending to finer realms into which they all in turn pass from sight.

The personal man is built up in the middle of

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that auric egg on the astral and mental planes, as he develops physically, emotionally and mentally in the physical world of experience. His personal progress is from below, with a corresponding condensation of most of the matter of the egg into the periphery of the physical form, so that quite commonly only that form, without the aura, is seen by the inexperienced astral observer.

### PERSONAL SUB-CONSCIOUS PHENOMENA

I suppose that the major part of the sub-conscious phenomena that appear in most people's lives is the result of the work of this part of the personality on the astro-mental levels during sleep and at other times. We find here two classes of sub-conscious activity, in addition to the familiar storage function which some writers think to be all there is of the sub-conscious mind. Myers' term, "the supra-liminal self" represents the state well, as it permits the conception of a being who has the two activities of observing with the senses of his own plane, including various telepathic responses, and using his reason as a subjective or indirect sense for the discovery of truth or facts.

Let me take the case of the dream of Professor Agassiz, related in Abercrombie's "Physiology." It happened that a portion of a fossil fish, protruding from a stone in one of the public gardens in Paris, was so unusual as to excite the Pro-

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fessor's special interest. He became anxious to classify the specimen, but could not do so because his utmost efforts of thought and imagination yielded him no picture of the full form of the fish, and the authorities would not permit him to break open the stone. At last he put the problem out of mind as insoluble, until one night he suddenly awoke out of a dream in which he had clearly seen the missing portion of the fish. He jumped out of bed, got pencil and paper, and sketched the form before it had time to fade, and afterwards satisfied himself that his dream had given him what his waking logic and imagination had failed to do.

Dr. Abercrombie also tells of a well-known lawyer that one night his wife saw him get out of bed, go to his desk, write there for some time, and then return to bed. The next morning the lawyer told his wife that he had had a vivid dream in which he had delivered a valuable opinion on a case which was troubling him, and said he wished he could remember it, for he was sure it was good. His wife then directed him to his desk where, to his astonishment, he found his dream written out—his sub-conscious mind having directed the entire process. I believe that many flashes of inspiration that have given us new inventions and scientific discoveries have been the work of the personal sub-conscious mind, often continuing the work on a problem dropped by the conscious mind as insoluble when it had reached the limit of its powers.

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## THE SUB-PERSONAL SUB-CONSCIOUS

We must remember that the sub-conscious part of the personality is physical as well as astro-mental. Many impulses have been wrought into the very texture and pattern of the body in the ages that lie behind us, and physical impulses not now willed or thought in consciousness are possible because of that. Let me give you a recent example. In the course of the Great War many men not fighters by disposition were trained in bayonet practice. It was not merely a physical training, in which the men learned to handle their weapons with ease. It was partly a psychological one. Bags stuffed with straw were hung upon a frame or placed in trenches, and while the men were thrusting their bayonets into these, the instructor would say, again and again, "Now, think it's a man; imagine it's a man." Why? Because, if one did not practise that thought and action together, when the real enemy was there and the hands were about to thrust, they would hesitate and perhaps draw back, and the other man might get his blow in first. Here was the seed of much recent crime. To injure a man without second thought became an instinctive thing in those who had not sufficient repugnance for the whole proceeding to throw off its effects in a short time.

Many of the less desirable human emotions are now linked up with bodily mechanisms that are

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no longer under the control of active consciousness. They are machines built by mind in the dim past, and working under its touch, but not necessarily in harmony with the present purpose. Let me take as an example the influence of fear on the adrenal glands—two little organs not far from the kidneys. These glands have several functions, among which is one by which they pour reserves of sugar into the blood under the influence of fear, and thus make possible greatly increased muscular exertion. Thus an old gentleman might be taking his constitutional in the country. Looking over his shoulder, he sees a bull rapidly approaching him with an eye full of meaning. He begins to run, and, under the influence of fear, runs as never before, and when he comes to a fence—well, high o'er the fence leaps Sunny Jim! And all because of the adrenal glands. Here we see the real value of fear. But suppose that the same old gentleman is sitting in his office, and he opens his morning paper with great anxiety to look at the market reports of his favourite stock, which has been falling dreadfully of late. The faithful glands will pour their sugar into the blood, and it is only a question of time before the old gentleman will be troubled with diabetes or something of the kind. In this we see the function and value of fear in the animal kingdom, but realise that it is rarely useful in human life. Here is an example of what may be classified as the sub-personal sub-conscious mind.

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### CONSTITUTION OF THE SUPER-PERSONAL SELF

I want to turn again to the question of the super-personal self—to be a little more precise about the higher self, in order to show the relation to it of the lower self or personality. It has been described as *ātmā-buddhi-manas*, which I would define simply as consciousness of self, of others, and of things. *Ātmā* means “self,” *buddhi* means “wisdom,” and *manas* “mentality.” Now, the wise man differs fundamentally from the man of knowledge. The one collects pieces of information, arranges them, and acts accordingly, as a business magnate collects money and property; but the other is interested in what concerns the lives full of feeling and activity that surround him. If he is a politician, for example, he will not be one of those dangerous men who try to make others conform to a system and then blame the people for its disastrous failure, saying, “They did not do what I said.” He will be sensitive, first of all, to the life in the people, and able to realise what can be done with that. In brief, *buddhi* is realisation of life, while *manas* is realisation of things, and *ātmā* is realisation of self.

These three definitions relate to the receptive powers of the triple self, but we see them occasionally also in their active forms, operating on the world through our lives. We then have what I would call will-power, love-power and thought-power. Dr. Besant has made a great deal of use

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of the Sanskrit terms *ichchhā*, *jñāna* and *kriyā* and has spoken of them as the qualities of the monad which are reflected as *ātmā*, *buddhi* and *manas* in the spiritual self, and are for all practical purposes indistinguishable from them. I should like to discuss these words for a moment.

*Ichchhā* simply means "will" or self-determination, inseparable from a being belonging to the divine, not the material, side of reality. A self that knows itself is interested in its own freedom.

*Jñāna* means "wisdom," and that this is not knowledge, but sensitiveness to life is well shown in the "Bhagavad Gītā," where Shri Krishna says that all work in the world culminates in wisdom in the soul, and tells Arjuna, his pupil, that to realise wisdom he must practise devotion, enquiry and service—all three.

*Kriyā* means "activity"—but we must remember that we are dealing with consciousness, not with matter, and it means not motion in space, which belongs to things, but the working activity of consciousness, which is known to us as "thought." Some evidence of this will be found in the stories of creation, particularly in the "Devi" and "Shiva Puranas," where it is related that the third member of the Divine Trinity had given to him the work of creating the world, and he did it by meditation, and as he meditated the matter of space obeyed his thought and the world came into being. Only afterwards the second member of the Trinity entered into the world and gave it life, and was hence called Vishnū, the pervader.



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## WILL *versus* THOUGHT ?

In recent studies of the sub-conscious mind we have some light thrown on the relations between these different elements of the spiritual man, especially in Monsieur Coué's famous statement that thought is stronger than will, which by its very error (which is in terminology, not in fact) draws attention to the truth about the will, which seems to have been well-known to the ancient Hindu psychologists.

You will remember that Monsieur Coué says that when there is a conflict between will and imagination, the imagination always wins, because what is held in the imagination, conscious or sub-conscious, is sure to influence the body. I came across a striking example of this in Los Angeles. I had been speaking at an automobile club dinner on the subject of mental progress, and the president afterwards told me that he was being troubled with a curious case of a man who simply could not learn to drive a motor car. The firm that sold the cars undertook to teach the purchaser to drive, and they had many times taken this gentleman out in the early morning on the best and broadest road when there was nobody about ; but the difficulty was that he had a perfect mania for telegraph poles—they fascinated him. He would be coming along in an uncertain way when suddenly a pole would catch his eye, and he would begin saying to himself anxiously, " Now, I must not run into that pole :

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I do hope I shall not run into it!" And then he steered for the pole with as much accuracy as the most expert taxi-driver could have shown.

In the conflict the imagination won. But strictly it was not a conflict between thought and will. It was between thought and wish—a very different thing. A wish is an acknowledgment of inability, an accepted dependence upon external events. For example, with regard to this watch lying on the table, I can say, "I will pick it up," or "I will not pick it up." But if I knew or thought that it weighed about a ton I might say, "Oh, I do wish I could pick up that watch." By hoping or wishing to miss the telegraph pole the man put the event out of his power by abrogating the use of his will. He was not willing. He would have been willing if he had said to *himself*, "Now, stop thinking about that pole, you fool, and fix your eye on the road."

The will is the power of self-change (though you cannot imagine it in material terms), the power with which we change ourselves, our thoughts and feelings. And thought-power is the means by which we deal with the outer world. I might say to you, "See, I lift the book by thought-power," and you might reply, "No, we saw you use your hand." It would then be my turn to say, "Yes, but I lifted the hand by thought-power." Thought is influential among things, love among living beings, and will in oneself.

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### THE SPIRIT EVOLVES ; THE PERSONALITY ASSISTS

We may thus describe a man, when really himself, as a thinker, lover and willer—I say lover, not feeler, because love is the feeling of one who feels the consciousness in others, and this is the truly human feeling. Increase in consciousness of these three powers marks our evolution, which is an unfoldment of the higher self, not of the personality. The higher self grows from within through the exercise of its powers in the personality, and this goes on without ceasing, but the personality is made and broken a thousand times, like all material things. Indeed, it is naught in itself, for there are not two selves, a higher and a lower. The lower self is only the higher self making a mistake, confused by personality and in consequence enslaved and bonded to things, and with every mistake becoming more implicated in them, or, in brief, making kārma.

It must not, however, be assumed that the personality is not the friend of the real self. Two expressions have been used to describe its services—it is an enabling instrument on these lower planes, and is also a limiting instrument ; and the latter is its true function, for when the self is through its task it should see without eyes and hear without ears. Until that time, or rather that state, arrives, the physical body has two main uses for the thinker, shown in its organs of sense, whereby the man contacts the outside

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world, and those of action, by which he affects the world. These organs are the instruments of the man in the physical world, and the remainder of the body is only a device to sustain them and carry them about.

Still, it cannot be said that this body really puts the man into touch with the world. The senses are only a little mitigation of its function of shutting him away from it. When a little child begins to use its senses for observation it sees first the whole world before its vision in one indefinite blur, and only gradually distinguishes one thing from another. It is engaged in making the indefinite definite, not in gradually building up a world of knowledge of objects each one of which is first seen as something definite in itself. There are no particulars. The same is true of our mental process, for we gain knowledge as the result of distinguishing something definite, of discriminating something as different from the general mass to which it had belonged before. It is truly "out of the everywhere into the here."

### THE CAMERA SIMILE

The body is thus literally a camera—a dark box. It shuts us away from the world. It does not present the world to us. But, admitting a little light, it makes a clear picture in consciousness, at the cost of wider but less definite vision. The vision, however, always belongs to the self, never to the box.

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Everyone knows that in the photographic camera the lens plays no essential part. Take a square cardboard box, remove the lid and replace it with a piece of slightly transparent paper, such as heavy tissue paper, and make a pin-hole in the middle of the bottom of the box. Now hold this box in your hands, like a hand camera, and point the pin-hole at various bright objects, and you will find that images of those objects present themselves on the paper screen. That is because there is always the same picture at both ends of a pencil of rays of light, whether you can see it or not.

Now push a penholder or your finger through the pin-hole and thus make it much larger. There will be no clear picture now on the screen—not because there are no pictures there, but because there are too many. One falls on top of another, so in the mass they become confused and obliterated. A camera is just a dark box which gives you a picture of what enters it when all or most of the other possible pictures are excluded.

Thus does the body act as a camera for us. The eyes and ears and other organs of sense are the openings, pin-holes pierced outwards into the big world. What they give us is clear and definite, and capable of making a decided impression on our consciousness. With their aid each little thing observed acquires the self-existent reality belonging only to the whole of things, as it in turn occupies our attention, and the mystery of omnipresent reality is thus

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wrapped up in every simple act of perception, the unquestionable basis of all our knowledge.

The paradox of this appears in a variety of ways. I can see, for example, because I cannot see. I can move because I am not free to move. If I were able with these eyes to see through these walls, it might be considered a very convenient thing. But if I could see perfectly through the wall, I could not see the wall. And if I could see the atmosphere, I could not see through it. If I were able to see perfectly, I should see nothing at all. So also I can move along because the earth resists my motion, obstructing my feet, and I am held in the grip of gravitation. The world is definable as that which obstructs consciousness, and the body is the instrument for realising it. The same truth applies to the rest of the personality—our affections often shut us out from greater affections, and our thoughts from greater thoughts.

Now there is a very encouraging side to this matter. The pin-hole is being constantly enlarged, without loss of the power that has been gained through its use. The mineral is more confined than the vegetable, the vegetable than the animal, the animal than the man, and the elementary man than the developed man. We are progressing in our power. It is as though the sensitive screen at the back of the camera of our life were growing in sensitiveness and retentiveness and capacity as it experiences the contacts of the world, and thus the pin-hole can be en-

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larged, the sense organs improved, and yet there will be no loss of definition as the more complex pictures fall upon the screen. With this there must be gain in the power to experience, and thus to evolve the powers of our essential being.

### “SELF-PERSONALITY”

The defect of the personality becomes apparent when attachment to it leads a man to cease searching for freedom through work, for unity through love, and for understanding through thought, all of which mark the true purpose of his bodily existence, since they represent the expansion of his life within. This illusion of the personality, the error of self-personality, often makes it a prison house instead of a palace of joy. The man, thinking it to be himself, becomes interested in it as an end, not as a means, like the man who bought a fine car and enjoyed immensely sitting in it in his garage, but would not drive it out lest it should be worn and spoiled, and sometimes, indeed, like the man who saved up so sedulously for his old age that he starved himself to death before he reached that state. This is the way in which, as the poet said, “The shades of the prison house close in upon the growing boy.” Often the bodily emotional and mental habits, which ought to serve him as a valuable labour-saving device in the world, increasingly shut a man off from new experiences; and eventually the death of the body may be

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necessary as the only means to further progress of life.

Possessions and responsibilities so great that they cannot be held without anxiety, without repression of love, thought and the spirit of adventure, produce a reduction of life for the time being, although they may seem to augment the personality. Similarly, a great part of the over-education of our day has the same effect, resulting in the production of many persons who have ideas and opinions but no thoughts. They have used their mental power to the utmost to grasp some ideas originally thought by others, and there is none left over with which to handle those ideas as data for further thinking of their own. The ideas remain as inflexible opinions in the mind, and often form actual obstacles to the little real thinking that their proud possessor is capable of doing. Be they true or false to fact, they are prejudices—nothing better than that. Such people are often happy and at rest in their club opinions as in their club armchairs, and never pause to consider that what makes the mind comfortable is sometimes anything but true.

Of all opinions the most dangerous is the one that a man forms about himself, or about some near personality to which as a limit his love extends. In different degrees almost all people are thinking "I am this," and they come to value that idea of themselves so that they constantly sacrifice the real things of life for it. It would be called insanity were it not the common



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thing, and every one is thus mad in some degree.

A story is told of a party of visitors to an insane asylum. They had been shown round the place by an obviously well-educated gentleman who had explained everything to their satisfaction. To their astonishment, as they were about to depart, their guide suddenly assumed a strange attitude, with one hand on his hip and the other in the air, and cried out, "Pour me out, please. I'm a tea-pot!" He believed that he was a tea-pot, though he was sane in other respects.

I am tempted to tell another story which describes a more common error. It relates to the old slave days in North America, when one man's body could be at the complete and life-long disposal of another man's will. The hero of this anecdote had obtained a beautiful new hat, and he was taking it out for a walk one day, when the sky became cloudy and rain began to fall. Sambo removed the precious possession from his head, and carried it under his coat. And presently he met a friend. "Why do you carry your hat like that?" inquired his friend. "Because it will get wet, and the rain might spoil it," was the reply. "But your head will get wet, and you will catch cold," said the friend. "What does that matter?" said Sambo conclusively. "The head belongs to master, but the hat belongs to me."

These are mistakes that everybody is making, thinking himself doctor, lawyer, artist or what

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not, except the occultist, who knows himself to be the thinker, willer and lover, the real man.

### THE PRACTICAL ISSUE

There is an eminently practical issue to this study of human personality. By study of the self and control of mind it is possible to preserve the positive character of will, love and thought that mark the presence of the real man, and yet have a strong personality and use it as an instrument for work in the world. It is possible for us in the midst of things to escape their bondage, by the realisation of what it means to be men, to be ourselves. Thoughtlessly we think, "I am this"—be it possessions or body or name. But "this" is subject to circumstances, which dominate our actions, excite our feelings, and give colour to our thoughts, quite against our best judgment, desire and will. Thoughtfully we shall at last think, "I am the willer, the lover, the thinker," and shall recognise that we only really live in those moments when the great ideals that are the laws of the spirit are with us, when we are ready to go forward loving our enemies, free from prejudice, devoted to truth, and not anxious that things should ever be arranged to satisfy the desires and feelings or even the needs of a personality—our own or another's.

On this subject Madame Blavatsky was adamant. Readers of her article on "Occultism and the Occult Arts" will perhaps remember some

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of her expressions. To be an occultist, to live the life of the hidden self seeking the divine mind in Nature, a man must "step out of the ranks of the living," he must "become a cipher." It is not an easy thing to look oneself straight in the eye, as it were, and ask whether one is willing to become a cipher. Those who can do so will perhaps be a little surprised to find that the cipher is there. Yet it only means that the personality is no longer the centre of consciousness. In the midst of all its defeats the higher self is evolving to power and perfection, like a great surgeon using his knowledge and skill in desperate cases, and as the personality is gradually won to human perfection the hidden worker reaches his spiritual triumph at the same time.

This solves also the old problem of desirelessness or indifference. "How is it possible," asks the reader of the "Gītā," "to be free from attachment, to act without desire?" Easily, when we understand that desire is mistaken love, the love of things, the astral reflection of that *buddhi* which is love of lives. Read the first chapter of the "Gītā," and see how Shrī Krishna tested Arjuna, and taught the full doctrine of love in all its beauty and strength only after the disciple had proved his capacity to love even the enemies with whom he was about to engage in righteous war.

In view of this knowledge, which H. P. B. emphasised as the only practical theosophy, what mistake could men make greater than that of

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asking the higher self to serve the personality, or even trying to enlist the personal sub-conscious powers of the astro-mental planes in the interests of bodily life and work. Such a process is the opposite of the evolution that means life and happiness for them. The thinker who wishes to have inspiration from the astro-mental sub-conscious mind can be most sure of receiving it if he first uses his conscious powers to the utmost, for the use of the powers we have develops the conscious and sub-conscious parts of the mind at the same time. Maybe the other policy that some people follow, perilously approaching beggary and theft, which calls for money and motor-cars and not for knowledge alone, will take the working power of the personal sub-conscious off the task that it has taken up for us with more knowledge than our own. But when it gives the man what he asks for, he is deprived of far more precious things needed for healthy and normal growth.

And when we consider the super-personal spiritual self, what can be our attitude, even in the personality, but to serve it devotedly with all our powers? Did not the Buddha declare that there is no permanent self such as men commonly think the self to be, and did not another great Teacher say, "Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven, and all these things shall be added unto you"?

1723-7

Printed in Great Britain by The Whitefriars Press, Ltd., London and Tonbridge.

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