

Transmigration of the Life-Atoms

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In your learned note on Mr. Oxley's article, "Hierosophy and Theosophy" [*The Theosophist*, Vol. IV, page 2 (July No.)] you say that "for 3,000 years at least the 'mummy' notwithstanding all the chemical preparations goes on throwing off to the last invisible atoms, which from the hour of death re-entering the various vortices of being go indeed 'through every variety of organized life forms.' But it is not the soul, the 5th, least of all the 6th, principle, but the *life atoms* of the *jiva*, the 2nd principle. At the end of the 3,000 years, sometimes more, and sometimes less, after endless transmigrations all these atoms are once more drawn together, and are made to form the new outer clothing or the body of the same monad (the real soul) which had already been clothed with [them] two or three thousands of years before. Even in the worst case that of the annihilation of the conscious *personal* principle the monad or individual soul is ever the same as are the atoms of the lower principles which regenerated and renewed in this ever-flowing river of being are magnetically drawn together owing to their affinity, and are once more reincarnated together."

This little passage is a new instalment of occult teaching given to the public, and opens up a vast field for thought. It suggests in the first instance that the exoteric doctrine of the transmigration of the soul through lower forms of existence,—so generally believed in by the Hindus—though incorrect as regards the soul (5th principle), has some basis of truth when referred to the lower principles.

You say in one place that the mummy goes on throwing off invisible atoms which go through every variety of organized life forms, and further on you state that it is the *life-atoms* of the *Jiva*, the 2nd principle, that go through these transmigrations.

According to the 1st "Occult Fragment," the *Jiva* is "a form of force, indestructible and when disconnected with one set of atoms, becoming attracted immediately by others."

What then is meant by the *life-atoms*, and their going through endless transmigrations.

The invisible atoms of the mummy would mean the imperceptibly decaying atoms of the physical body, and the *life-atoms* of the *Jiva* would be quite distinct from the atoms of the mummy. Do your words import that both the invisible atoms of the physical body as well as the atoms of the *Jiva* after going through various life-forms return again to re-form the physical body, and the *Jiva* of the entity that has reached the end of its Devachanic state and is ready to be reincarnated again?

You teach again that even in the worst case (the annihilation of the Personal Ego) the atoms of the *lower principles* are the same as in the previous birth. Here does the term "lower principles" include the "*Kama rupa*" also, or only the lower triad of body, *Jiva*, and *Lingasarira*? It seems the *Kama rupa* in that particular case cannot be included, for in the instance of the annihilation of the personal soul, the *Kama rupa* would be in the 8th sphere. Another question also suggests itself.

The 4th principle (*Kama rupa*) and the *lower* portion of the 5th, which cannot be assimilated by the 6th, wander about as shells and in time disperse into the elements of which they are made. Do the

atoms of these principles also re-form—after going through various transmigrations, to constitute over again the 4th and the lower 5th of the next incarnation?

I have no doubt that a few words more from you will clear away all these doubts and give us valuable information on a hitherto dark and unfathomable point.

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EDITOR'S NOTE.— We would, to begin with, draw our correspondent's attention to the closing sentence of the footnote under his review. "Such was the true occult theory of the Egyptians"—the word "true" being used there in the sense of its being the doctrine they really believed in, as distinct from both the tenets fathered upon them by some Orientalists and quoted by Mr. Oxley, and that which the modern occultists may be now teaching. It does not stand to reason that, outside those occult truths that were known to, and revealed by, the great Hierophants during the final initiation, we should accept *all* that either the Egyptians or any other people may have regarded as true. The Priests of Isis were the only true initiates, and their occult teachings were still more veiled than those of the Chaldeans. There was the true doctrine of the Hierophants of the *inner* Temple; then the half-veiled Hieratic tenets of the Priest of the *outer* Temple; and finally, the vulgar popular religion of the great body of the ignorant who were allowed to reverence animals as divine. As shown correctly by Sir Gardner Wilkinson, the initiated priests taught that—"dissolution is only the cause of reproduction . . . nothing perishes which has once existed, but things which appear to be destroyed only change their natures and pass into another form." In the present case, however, the Egyptian doctrine of atoms coincides with our own occult teachings. The just criticism of our observing brother, who takes naturally enough the sentence—"The life-atoms of the Jiva" in its literal sense, reminds us at the same time, more than ever, of that most important fact that one can never take too much care to express clearly new ideas while writing on metaphysical subjects. In penning the words under review, no thought was given in fact, that the idea was "a new instalment," and, therefore, its incompleteness gave rise to a fresh misunderstanding. Without any doubt *Jiva* or *Prana* is quite distinct from the atoms it animates. The latter belong to the lowest or grossest state of matter—the *objectively* conditioned; the former—to its highest state: that state which the uninitiated, ignorant of its nature, would call the 'objectively finite,' but which, to avoid any future misunderstanding, we may, perhaps, be permitted to call the *Subjectively Eternal*, though at the same time, and in one sense the subsistent existence—however paradoxical and unscientific the term may appear.* Life, the occultist says, is the eternal uncreated energy, and it alone represents in the infinite universe, that which the physicists have agreed to name, the principle, or the law of continuity, though they apply it only to the endless development of the conditioned. But since modern science admits through her most learned professors that "energy has as much claim to be regarded as an objective reality as matter itself"† and that life, according to the occult doctrine,—is the *one* energy acting Proteus-like under the most varied forms, the occultists have a certain right to use such a phraseology. Life is ever present in the atom of matter, whether organic or inorganic, conditioned or unconditioned—a difference that

* Though there is a distinct term for it in the language of the adepts, how can one translate it into a European language? What name can be given to that which is objective yet immaterial in its finite manifestations, *subjective*

yet *substantive* (though not in our sense of *substance*) in its eternal existence? Having explained it the best we can, we leave the task of finding a more appropriate term for it to our learned English occultists.—Ed.

† *The Unseen Universe.*

the occultists do not accept. Their doctrine is that life is as much present in the inorganic as in the organic matter: when life-energy is active in the atom, that atom is organic; when dormant or latent, then the atom is inorganic. Therefore, the expression “life-atom” though apt in one sense to mislead the reader, is not incorrect after all, since occultists do not recognise that anything in nature can be inorganic and know of no “dead atoms,” whatever meaning science may give to the adjective. The alleged *law* of Biogenesis is the result of the ignorance of the man of science of *occult* physics. It is accepted because the man of science was hitherto unable to find the necessary means to awaken into activity dormant life in what he terms an inorganic atom: hence the fallacy that a living thing can only be produced from a living thing, as though there ever was such a thing as *dead* matter in Nature! At this rate and to be consistent, a mule ought to be also classed with inorganic matter, since it is unable to reproduce itself, and generate life. We lay so much stress upon the above to answer at once any future objection to the idea that a mummy several thousand years old, can be throwing off atoms. Nevertheless the sentence may perhaps have been more clearly expressed by saying instead of the “life-atoms of Jiva,” the atoms “animated by dormant Jiva or life energy.” Again, the sentence quoted by our correspondent from *Fragment No. I*, though quite correct on the whole, might be more fully, if not more clearly, expressed. The “Jiva,” or life principle which animates man, beast, plant or even a mineral, certainly is “a form of force indestructible,” since this force is the one life, or *anima mundi*, the universal living soul, and that the various modes in which the various objective things appear to us in nature in their atomic aggregations, such as minerals, plants, animals, &c., are all the different forms or states in which this force manifests itself. Were it to become, we will not say absent, for this is impossible, since it is omnipresent, but for one single instant inactive, say in a stone, the particles of the latter would lose instantly their cohesive property and disintegrate as suddenly— though the force would still remain in each of its particles, but in a dormant state. Thus the continuation of the sentence which states that, when this indestructible force is “disconnected with one set of atoms, it becomes attracted immediately by others” does not imply that it abandons entirely the first set, but only that it transfers its *vis viva* or living power, the energy of motion, to another set. But because it manifests itself in the next set as what is called Kinetic energy, it does not follow that the first set is deprived of it altogether; for it is still in it, as potential energy, or life latent.* This is a cardinal and basic truth of occultism, on the perfect knowledge of which depends the production of every phenomenon. Unless we admit this point, we should have to give up all the other truths of occultism. Thus what is “meant by the life-atom going through endless transmigrations” is simply this: we regard and call in our occult phraseology those atoms that are moved by Kinetic energy as “life-atoms,” while those that are for the time being passive, containing but *invisible* potential energy, we call “sleeping atoms,” regarding at the same time these two forms of energy as produced by the one and same force, or life. We have to beg our

* We feel constrained to make use of terms that have become technical in modern science—though they do not always fully express the idea to be conveyed—for want of better words. It is useless to hope that the occult doctrine may be ever thoroughly understood—even the few tenets that can be safely given to the world at large—unless a

glossary of such words is edited; and, what is of a still more primary importance—until the full and correct meaning of the terms therein taught is thoroughly mastered.—Ed.

readers' indulgence: we are neither a man of science, nor an English scholar. Forced by circumstances to give out the little we know, we do the best we can and explain matters to the best of our ability. Ignorant of Newton's laws, we claim to know something only of the *Occult* Laws of motion. And now to the Hindu doctrine of Metempsychosis.

It has a basis of truth; and, in fact, it is an axiomatic truth—but only in reference to human atoms and emanations, and that not only after a man's death, but during the whole period of his life. The esoteric meaning of the *Laws of Manu* (Chap. XII, 3 and 55), of the verses that state that “every act, either mental, verbal or corporeal, bears good or evil fruit [Karma], the various transmigrations of men [not souls] through the highest, middle, and lowest stages, are produced by his actions”; and again that “A Brahman-killer enters the body of a dog, bear, ass, camel, goat, sheep, bird, &c.,” bears no reference to the human Ego, but only to the atoms of his body, of his lower triad and his fluidic emanations.* It is all very well for the Brahmins to distort in their own interest, the real meaning contained in these laws, but the words as quoted never meant what they were made to yield from the above verses later on. The Brahmins applied them selfishly to themselves, whereas by “Brahman,” man's seventh principle, his immortal monad and the essence of the personal Ego were allegorically meant. He who kills or extinguishes in himself the light of Parabrahm, i.e., severs his personal Ego from the Atman and thus kills the future Devachanee, becomes a “Brahman-killer.” Instead of facilitating through a virtuous life and spiritual aspirations the mutual union of the *Buddhi* and the *Manas*, he condemns by his own evil acts every atom of his lower principles to become attracted and drawn in virtue of the magnetic affinity, thus created by his passions, into the forming bodies of lower animals or brutes. This is the real meaning of the doctrine of Metempsychosis. It is not that such amalgamation of human particles with animal or even vegetable atoms can carry in it any idea of personal punishment *per se*, for of course it does not. But it is a cause created, the effects of which may manifest themselves throughout the next rebirths—unless the personality is annihilated. Otherwise from cause to effect, every effect becoming in its turn a cause, they will run along the cycle of re-births, the once given impulse expending itself only at the threshold of Pralaya. But of this anon. Notwithstanding their esoteric meaning, even the words of the grandest and noblest of all the adepts, Gautama Buddha, are misunderstood, distorted and ridiculed in the same way. The *Hina-yâna*, the lowest form of transmigration of the Buddhist, is as little comprehended as the *Maha-yana*, its highest form, and, because Sakya Muni is shown to have once remarked to his Bhikkhus, while pointing out to them a broom, that “it had formerly been a novice who neglected to sweep out” the Council room, hence was reborn as a broom (!), therefore, the wisest of all of the world's sages stands accused of idiotic

* [In *The Sacred Books of the East*, translated by various Oriental scholars and edited by F. Max Müller (Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1879, etc.), Vol. XXV (1886), containing the *Laws of Manu*, gives the following rendition of these verses, translated by G. Bühler:

(Chap. xii, 3) “Action, which springs from the mind, from speech, and from the body, produces either good or evil results; by action are caused the (various) conditions of man, the highest, the middling, and the lowest.”

(Chap. xii, 55) “The slayer of a Brâhmana enters the womb of a dog, a pig, an ass, a camel, a cow, a goat, a sheep, a deer, a bird, a Chasâla, and a Pukkasa.” —Compiler.]

superstition. Why not try and find out, before accusing, the true meaning of the figurative statement? Why should we scoff before we understand? Is or is not that which is called magnetic effluvia a something, a stuff, or a substance, invisible, and imponderable though it be? If the learned authors of *The Unseen Universe* object to light, heat and electricity, being regarded merely as imponderables, and show that each of these phenomena has as much claim to be recognised as an objective reality as matter itself—our right [so] to regard the mesmeric or magnetic fluid which emanates from man to man or even from man to what is termed an *inanimate* object, is far greater. It is not enough to say that this fluid is a species of molecular energy like heat for instance, for it is vastly more. Heat is produced whenever visible energy is transformed into molecular energy we are told, and it may be thrown out by any material composed of sleeping atoms or inorganic matter as it is called: whereas the magnetic fluid projected by a living human body *is life itself*. “Indeed it is life atoms” that a man in a blind passion throws off, unconsciously, and though he does it quite as effectively as a mesmeriser who transfers them from himself to any object consciously and under the guidance of his will. Let any man give way to any intense feeling, such as anger, grief, etc., under or near a tree, or in direct contact with a stone; and many thousands of years after that any tolerable Psychometer will see the man and sense his feelings from one single fragment of that tree or stone that he had touched. Hold any object in your hand, and it will become impregnated with your life atoms, indrawn and outdrawn, changed and transferred in us at every instant of our lives. Animal heat is but so many life atoms in molecular motion. It requires no adept knowledge, but simply the natural gift of a good clairvoyant subject to see them passing to and fro, from man to objects and *vice versa* like a bluish lambent flame. Why then should not a broom, made of a shrub, which grew most likely in the vicinity of the building where the lazy novice lived, a shrub, perhaps, repeatedly touched by him while in a state of anger, provoked by his laziness and distaste to his duty, why should not a quantity of his life atoms have passed into the materials of the future besom and therein have been recognised by Buddha, owing to his superhuman (not *supernatural*) powers? The processes of nature are acts of incessant borrowing and giving back. The materialistic sceptic, however, will not take anything in any, save in a literal, dead-letter sense. We would invite those Christian Orientalists who chuckle at this record of Buddha’s teachings to compare it with a certain passage in the Gospels—a teaching of Christ. To his disciples’ query “who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?”—the answer they received was—“neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.” (*John ix. 2-3.*)

Now Gautama’s statement has a scientific and a philosophic meaning for every occultist at least, if it lacks a clear meaning for the profane; while the answer put (probably centuries later)* into the mouth of the founder of Christianity by his over-zealous and ignorant biographers has not even that esoteric meaning, which so many of the sayings of Jesus are pregnant with. This alleged teaching is an uncalled-for and blasphemous insult to their own God, implying, as it clearly does, that for the pleasure of manifesting his power, the Deity had foredoomed an innocent man to the torture of a life-long blindness. As well accuse Christ of being the author of the 39 Articles!

* And probably by, or under, the inspiration of Irenaeus—since the sentence is found in the 4th Gospel, that of John, that did not exist yet at the time of his quarrels with the Gnostics.—Ed.

To conclude our too long answer, the “lower principles” mentioned in the footnote are the 1st, 2nd and the 3rd. They cannot include the *Kamarupa*, for this “rupa” belongs to the middle, not the lower principles. And, to our correspondent’s further query, “do the atoms of these (the 4th and the 5th) also re-form after going through various transmigrations to constitute over again the 4th and the lower 5th of the next incarnation”—we answer—“they do.” The reason why we have tried to explain the doctrine of the “life atoms” at such length, is precisely in connection with this last question, and with the object of throwing out one more valuable hint. We do not feel at liberty at present, however, to give any further details.