

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE MICROCOSM

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The few remarks which I made in my first lecture on the Bhagavad Gita published in the February issue of this Journal, on the septenary classification of the various principles in man hitherto adopted in theosophical publications have elicited a reply from Madame H. P. Blavatsky which appeared in the last issue of this Journal under the heading of "Classification of Principles." This reply was apparently intended to explain away the remarks which fell from my lips and justify the classification hitherto advocated. I feel extremely thankful to the writer for the friendly tone of criticism which she has adopted. I cannot however fail to see that the line of argument which she has followed is likely to create a wrong impression in the minds of her readers regarding my real attitude in this matter without a few words of explanation on my part. And moreover the important questions raised by the controversy which is set on foot by the article under consideration deserve a thorough investigation. I think it necessary therefore to define clearly the position taken up by me, and examine how far the arguments now advanced in defence of the septenary classification are calculated to remove the objections raised against the said classification and weaken the force of my criticism. Looking at the tenor of the reply it becomes necessary to decide at the outset whether my remarks were intentional or whether they were due to a *lapsus linguae* as my critic is pleased to assert, and formulate the real question at issue in case there should be found a serious difference of opinion between us. I cannot but confess that my remarks were deliberate and intentional. I thought it fit to condemn the seven-fold classification after serious and anxious consideration, and I duly weighed my words in using them. It will be easily conceded that my evidence is the best and the most direct evidence available as regards my own states of consciousness which accompanied the expressions used. The term unscientific is characterized as a thoughtless expression. Whether the epithet was rightly or wrongly applied is the very issue to be settled between us; but it was certainly not due to any negligence or carelessness on my part. It is further alleged in the article under examination that when I said that the seven-fold classification was conspicuous by its absence in many Hindu books, I must have meant "some special orthodox books." This allegation has no foundation whatsoever. I was not speaking from the stand-point of any special orthodox system and could not have referred therefore to any special orthodox books. The word many is taken advantage of by my critic for the purpose of attributing to me an intention which I never had. I could not very well have said that the classification was absent in the whole range of Sanskrit mystic literature unless I had examined every book on the subject. I did not come across this classification in any book that I have read, though I have perused many of these books. If my learned critic means to assert that it would be found in some book which I have not read, she ought to name the book and the author. A classification like this should not be allowed to rest merely on the basis of a theoretically possible inference without some clear and definite proof of its existence. And, again, I really cannot see what authority my critic has for asserting that, in making the remarks commented upon, I desired to remain strictly "within theoretical and metaphysical and also orthodox computations" of the microcosmic principles. For the purposes of this controversy a distinction is drawn between occult theories which are theoretically and metaphysically good, and those

which are good for “practical demonstration” whatever the expression may mean. This is simply absurd. Occultism is both a science and an art. Its scientific principles, if they are correct, must be consistent with the rules of their practical application which are as it were but matters of inference from the said principles. Any system of occultism which has got one set of principles for its theory, and another set of principles inconsistent with the former for its practice, would be but an empirical system which could hardly be called scientific.

Fortunately for the occult science of the ancients such a distinction does not exist. I am obliged therefore to repudiate the specific motives and intentions attributed to me and frankly confess that the difference of opinion between us is not merely apparent but real. Such being the case I am fully prepared to justify my assertions.

Any further discussion of the subject will of course be out of the question if it is asserted that I am not at liberty to question the correctness of the so-called “original teachings.” Some have argued, it would appear, that a slur was thrown on “the original teachings” by my remarks, thereby implying that I had no business to make them and contradict these teachings. The author of the article probably endorses this view, as she virtually informs her readers, in the footnote on page 450, that they must either adopt the seven-fold classification or give up their adherence “to the old School of Aryan and Arhat adepts”. I am indeed very sorry that she has thought it proper to assume this uncompromising attitude. It is now necessary to examine what these “original teachings” are and how far they must be considered as conclusive on the subject. The “original teachings” on the subject in question first made their appearance in an editorial headed “Fragments of Occult Truth” published in the issue of *The Theosophist* for October 1881. They were subsequently referred to in various articles written by the Editor, and additional explanations have been given from time to time. These teachings were also embodied in Mr. Sinnett's “Esoteric Buddhism,” which has been put forth as an authoritative book. They were further alluded to in “Man,” which has been considered equally authoritative, but whose teachings are materially inconsistent with those of “Esoteric Buddhism.”

As far as I am in a position to see, these are the authorities on which these so called “original teachings” have their foundation. In my humble opinion it would be highly dangerous for the future well-being and prosperity of the Theosophical Society, if it were to evolve, so early in its career, an orthodox creed from the materials supplied by the above mentioned sources and raise the publications above named to the dignity of an original revelation. Most of the members of the Theosophical Society know full well the circumstances under which these teachings were given. Their fragmentary character has been repeatedly acknowledged. Their defective exposition is apparent on their very face; and their imperfection can be easily detected by a careful examination. It was also pointed out, I believe, that these teachings were derived from teachers who could not and would not reveal their real secrets, and *fully* explain their doctrines except to real initiates. The writers of these various publications had to work according to their own lights on a few hints thrown out to them. It was often pointed out that the real teachings of the ancient Arcane Science had to be approached very gradually and that the line of exposition followed was of a tentative character. It will be found on examination that the teachings connected with the seven-fold classification have gone through various changes since the appearance of the first article on the subject; and it is in my humble opinion premature to say that we have arrived at the end of our labours in this direction and ascertained the true constitution of the Microcosm. Under these circumstances it will be inconsistent with the policy which has been hitherto adopted to declare now that these “original teachings,” which have

already gone through so many transformations, should be accepted as an infallible revelation. Such a declaration will effectually prevent all further progress in the work of investigation which the Society has undertaken and perpetuate the blunders already committed. The introduction of anything like an orthodox dogmatic creed at this stage of our progress will simply be ruinous to the cause of our Society. It is submitted that under such circumstances it will be no crime on my part to maintain the correctness of my remarks regarding the unsatisfactory nature of this seven-fold classification, and I am not in the least afraid that by doing so I shall forfeit my right to follow the teachings of “the old school of Aryan and Arhat adepts.” I am yet to be convinced that the seven-fold classification we have adopted was the real seven-fold classification of this ancient school of occultism.

I have characterized this seven-fold classification as misleading and unscientific. It is admitted in the reply that the classification is really misleading but the blame is thrown on Western materialism. This is putting the blame on the wrong party. If the classification has misled no less a person than its original exponent herself, and made her change her conceptions about the nature of the various principles from time to time, it is pretty nearly certain that the classification itself must be held responsible for all the confusion it has created.

I must now invite the attention of my readers to the “Fragments of Occult Truth” (p. 17, *The Theosophist*, Oct. 1881) which contains the “original teaching” on the subject and the other articles and publications herein referred to. I shall take up principle after principle in the order of enunciation, and point out what new ideas have subsequently been introduced into the conception of these various principles.

The first principle is here described as the physical *body*. It is made to correspond to *Rupa* or *form* in “Esoteric Buddhism” (p. 21). It will perhaps be said that both mean the same thing. But a distinction is drawn in the original article between the astral *body* and the astral *shape*. They are counted as two *distinct* principles.

The second principle is herein called the vital principle or Jiv-Atma. It is differentiated from the *astral elements* in the human constitution and is described as a “*form of force*.” It is however identified in an article headed “Transmigrations of Life Atoms” (p. 535, “Five Years of Theosophy”) written by the same author, with *anima mundi* which is equivalent to *astral light* (See p. 301, vol. I, *Isis Unveiled*). And again the same author has identified this very principle with *karana sarira* in an article on “The Septenary Principle in Esotericism” (p. 193, “Five Years of Theosophy”). Here then we have a mysterious principle which was at first described as an indestructible force different from astral light, which was afterwards identified with the astral light itself, and which was ultimately transformed into *karana sarira*. And yet we are bound to accept the classification, it would appear, as thoroughly scientific and correct.

The third principle of the original classification is stated to be the astral body otherwise called therein *Linga Sarira*. It is considered as *sukshma sarira* in “The Septenary Principle in Esotericism” above referred to; in another place (p. 197) however, in the same article, it is considered as a part of the *manomaya kosa*. The “original teaching” places this principle in the second group which represents the Perispirit of man. It is apparently transferred to the first group representing the physical man in the “Transmigrations of Life Atoms” (p. 538). It is brought back into the second group subsequently (see p. 235, “*The Path*,” November 1886, and p. 70, *The Theosophist*, Nov. 1886). In the present article it is again retransferred to the first group (p. 451, 1. 23). It will be interesting to notice further in this connection that this principle

is described as something different from the astral body in “*Esoteric Buddhism*.” More than five years have elapsed since the appearance of the “original teachings,” and yet we are not quite certain whether this third principle is a part of the physical man or of the astral man. Moreover the “original teaching” says that this principle dies with the body. “*Esoteric Buddhism*” repeats the same lesson. But this principle is made to survive the dissolution of the physical body in “*The Theories about Reincarnation and Spirits*” (Paras. 3 and 4, p. 235, “*The Path*,” Nov. 1886). My critic however reverts to the original view in her present article (p. 451, lines 3, 4, 5). In spite of all these contradictions we are assured that this seven-fold classification is the right one for explaining the phenomena “especially of *post-mortem* life.”

The fourth principle is described as the astral *shape* in the “*Fragments [of Occult Truth]*” and as something different from the astral body. The reason for this distinction is not yet clear. It has subsequently usurped the place of the astral *body*. The original teaching seems to imply that it is *astral* in its constitution. Curiously enough, however, the present article divides the seven principles into two groups; the three principles of the first group are described as “objective and astral,” and the four principles of the second group as “Superterrestrial and Superhuman” Is this fourth principle then to be removed from the plane of astral light? If not what is the reason for drawing a line of demarcation between the third principle and the fourth principle which are so intimately connected with each other according to the “*Fragments [of Occult Truth]*?” In this connection a strange blunder has been committed by my critic. The following statement occurs in an article by me published in “*Five Years of Theosophy*” (p. 185):—“It will also be seen that the fourth principle *is included* in the third Kosa (sheath), as the said principle is but the vehicle of will power, which is but an energy of the mind.” Now see what my critic says in her present article: “As to the remark in the same article (the one above referred to) *objecting* to the fourth principle being included in the third Kosa, as the said principle is but a vehicle of will power which is but an energy of the mind, I answer! Just so.” In saying so she is misquoting my statement and contradicting the assertion which she made in her article on “*The Septenary Principle in Esotericism*” (p. 19, “*Five Years of Theosophy*”) to the effect that this fourth principle was a part of the third Kosa. This is sufficient to show how ready she is to change her opinions about these “original teachings” which are declared to be almost infallible.

The fifth principle of the classification originally occupied but a very humble position. It was nothing more than the animal or physical intelligence of man not far removed from “the reason, instinct, memory, imagination, etc.,” of the brute creation. No part of it was then allowed to go to Devachan. It was simply a part of the animal soul which was ultimately dissolved in Kamaloka (See “*Fragments [of Occult Truth]*”, pp. 18, 19 and 20). The real ego of man—the permanent element in him which runs through the various incarnations,—had not its basis in this principle originally or any part of it. The “*Elixir of Life*” assigns to it more or less the same position as the following passage shows: —Each of these (seven principles) has in turn to survive the preceding and more dense one and then die. The exception is the sixth when absorbed into and blended with the seventh.” It is partly mixed up with Ananda-Maya Kosa and partly with Vignanamaya Kosa according to the “*Septenary Principle*” (p. 197, “*Five Years of Theosophy*”). These two Kosas being described as the “*illusion of supreme bliss*” and the “*envelope of self-delusion*” respectively. It is also to be inferred from the “*Replies to an English F.T.S.*” (p. 274, “*Five Years of Theosophy*”) that it is not the ego or the human monad. It is further declared in the “*Transmigration of Life-Atoms*” (p. 539, “*Five Years of Theosophy*”)

that the particles composing this principle disperse after death and “reform after going through various transmigrations to constitute over again” the fifth principle of the next incarnation. The nature of this principle has gradually changed. Though originally it was but the animal consciousness of man it has subsequently been represented as the fully developed human mind. The whole of it used to perish originally, but subsequently a part of it has been allowed to remain in existence. The whole of it was originally destined for Kama-loka, but a portion has been subsequently lifted up to Devachan. In this connection it must be noticed that it has not up to this time been explained whether after death this principle is physically split up into two parts, or whether the principle merely leaves impressions of its mental activity on the fourth principle taking its physical constitution to Devachan, or whether the sixth principle in conjunction with the seventh takes with it to Devachan the mere *vasana* (aroma) of this fifth principle leaving its material constitution behind with the fourth principle in Kama-loka. If the first view is accepted it must be admitted that the material constitution of this principle is something peculiar and unintelligible. No other similar phenomenon is presented to us by Nature. In case we accept the second view, we shall be placing the Devachanee in a very uncomfortable position as, according to “The Transmigrations of Life-atoms,” the particles composing his fifth principle will have to undergo the process of disintegration before the next incarnation. The third view will require us to have the sixth principle for the real seat of the Ego. But it has been declared in an article published in “The Path” (p. 235, November 1886) that Manas or the fifth principle should be considered as the seat of the Ego. The first view is inconsistent with the original teaching, the second view with the philosophy of “Esoteric Buddhism,” and the third view with the later developments of the occult theory. And to make our difficulties worse there is no other view possible. The latest change in the doctrine is yet to be noticed. According to the present article, this principle is a mere “*correlating state*”—a condition of existence—and not a physical upadhi. It will be very interesting to enquire whether “*correlating states*” are composed of particle which disperse and reform as originally taught. It is further declared in this article that this principle is in its nature “super-terrestrial and superhuman.” The change from animal consciousness to something that is superhuman is indeed very vast; but it has quietly been effected within the last five years.

Now taking the whole of this teaching into account this principle may be described as follows:

The fifth principle of man is his “animal or physical consciousness” composed of particles subject to *post-mortem* disintegration which is under certain conditions “the illusion of supreme bliss” and under other conditions the “envelope of self-delusion,” but which must be conceived as the seat of the Ego, and “a superterrestrial and superhuman” “*correlating state*” corresponding to the dreamy condition. Let us now turn our attention to the sixth principle. It was originally described as the higher or spiritual intelligence or consciousness in man, and the main seat of consciousness in the “perfect man” (“Fragments [of Occult Truth]” p. 19, *The Theosophist* Oct. 1881). It must be noticed that the expression “perfect man” used in this connection does not mean the perfected man or an adept, but a human being who has fully reached the level of humanity in the course of evolutionary progress from the animal kingdom,

According to the original teaching of the “Fragments [of Occult Truth]” the *post-mortem* career of this principle is something very peculiar. It is stated that if this principle—“the spiritual ego”—“has been in life material in its tendencies,” it clings blindly to the lower principles and severs its connection with the seventh (p. 19, para. 3). It is further stated that its

severance from the seventh principle brings about its dissolution. The author of the "Fragments [of Occult Truth]" writes thus on the subject, "Withdraw the oxygen and the flame ceases. Withdraw the spirit and the spiritual Ego disappears." It is further declared that in such cases the seventh principle passes away "taking with it no fragment of the individual consciousness of the man with which it was temporarily associated." It is also pointed out on the next page that under certain peculiar conditions this principle may remain in combination with the fifth as an elementary. Is Madame H.P. Blavatsky prepared to adhere to this original view at present? If so a considerable portion of the subsequent theosophical literature will have to be thrown to the winds. If the spiritual Ego, the main seat of consciousness in the so-called "perfect man," is liable to be destroyed whenever the man's tendencies in life happen to be material; if the fifth principle is likewise to be dissolved in Kamaloka, and if the seventh principle carries nothing connected with the individual with it, how is the chain of incarnations kept up and sustained?

What becomes of the doctrine of karma then? Now see what changes have been introduced into the conception of this principle by subsequent articles and other publications. According to "The Elixir of Life" the sixth principle does not perish in the manner stated. "The Replies to an English F.T.S." speak of it in conjunction with the seventh principle as the permanent monad which runs through the whole series of incarnations. The teachings of "Esoteric Buddhism" are utterly inconsistent with the original view as may be easily perceived. In the present article my critic identifies it with Karanopadhi and calls it at the same time a "correlating state." This very Karanopadhi she has some time ago identified with the second principle, as above shown. She has thus contradicted the original teaching any number of times in her sub-sequent writings. It must also be remembered that in writing these "Fragments [of Occult Truth]" she has made the following distinct declaration: "These are no speculations—we speak what we do know." And yet she herself has treated them as if they were something worse than mere speculations. Nevertheless with all these contradictions and all this confusion people must accept, it would appear, these teachings as gospel truths, and not utter a single word to criticize them. There is not much difficulty perhaps about the seventh principle as nothing very definite has ever been said about it. One fact about it is pretty nearly certain. It must be considered as the Logos, there being no other entity in the Cosmos which possesses the attributes assigned to it. It has been often declared, as far as my recollection goes, that the ancient occultists regarded this principle as something existing out of the body and not in the body. It was once loosely stated that this principle should be considered as a principle running through the other principles (p. 197, "Five Years of Theosophy.") This might be true as regards its light or aura; it the Logos itself is never present in the microcosm except when it finally enters into a man before his final emancipation from the trammels of incarnate existence. It is erroneous in my humble opinion to name the Logos as a principle in man. It will be quite as proper to name Parabrahmam itself as a principle in man.

In tracing the course of evolution it is stated in "Esoteric Buddhism" and some other writings, that each succeeding planetary round is calculated to bring about the development of one of the seven principles. But to avoid certain difficulties which are obvious, it is further asserted that the germs of the higher principles in man are present in him at every stage of his evolutionary progress. These various statements when put together are apt to give rise to the belief that the seventh principle is subject to a course of evolutionary development. This difficulty has long ago been pointed out by one or two writers, but received no consideration from the propounders of the original doctrine. My critic calls even this principle "a correlating

state.” There is no use quarrelling about the nature of this principle when so little has been or can be said about it.

From the foregoing remarks it will be seen that this unfortunate seven-fold classification is misleading, not on account of western materialism as my critic asserts, but on account of its own inherent defects. Its unscientific nature is equally clear from all that has been said about it. A classification which has brought about such a state of things, and required so many alterations in the conceptions associated with it to keep it in existence, must be supported, if it can be supported at all, by clear definitions and powerful arguments. On the other hand my critic virtually evades the real question at issue and undertakes to establish a proposition which I have never denied.

As this article has already become very lengthy its continuation will appear in the next number of *The Theosophist*.

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NOTE.

In Mr. Subba Row's third lecture the following corrections should be made.

Page 432, line 48, for Chapter XII, read Chapter XIII.

Page 442, line 47, for *Mityasamsarikas*, read *Nityasamarikas*.

Page 442, line 48, for *Intyamuktas*, read *Nityamuktas*.

Page 446, line 46, for *Vachas*, read *Vach as*.

Page 447, line 14, for *Prana*, read *Pranava*.

Page 447, line 3, for *Achidrupam*, read a *Chidrupam*.