

# THEOSOPHY

*An Introduction to the  
Supersensible Knowledge  
of the World and the  
Destination of Man*

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## Contents

From the Prefaces to the First, Second, and Third Editions

Preface to the Revised English Edition

Introduction

Chapter I. The Essential Nature of Man

- 1 The Corporeal Nature of Man
- 2 The Soul Nature of Man
- 3 The Spiritual Nature of Man
- 4 Body, Soul and Spirit

Chapter II. Re-embodiment of the Spirit and Destiny

Chapter III. The Three Worlds

- 1 The Soul World
- 2 The Soul in the Soul World After Death
- 3 The Spiritland
- 4 The Spirit in Spiritland After Death
- 5 The Physical World and its Connection with the Soul and Spiritland
- 6 Thought Forms and the Human Aura

Chapter IV. The Path of Knowledge

Addenda

## **From the Prefaces to the First, Second, and Third Editions**

The purpose of this book is to give a description of some of the regions of the supersensible world. The reader who is only willing to admit the existence of the sensible world will look upon this description as merely an unreal production of the imagination. Whoever looks for paths that lead beyond this world of the senses, however, will soon learn to understand that human life only gains in worth and significance through insight into another world. He will not, as many fear, be estranged from the “real” world through this new power of vision because only through it does he learn to stand securely and firmly in this life and learns to know the causes of life. Without this power of vision he gropes like a blind man through their effects. Only through the understanding of the supersensible does the sensible “real” acquire meaning. A man therefore becomes more and not less fit for life through this understanding. Only he who understands life can become a truly practical man.

The author of this book describes nothing to which he cannot bear witness from experience — the kind of experience that belongs to these regions. Nothing will be described here that has not been personally experienced in this sense.

This book cannot be read in the customary manner of the present day. In certain respects every page, and even many sentences, will have to be worked out by the reader. This has been aimed at intentionally because only in this way can the book become to the reader what it ought to be. The one who merely reads it through will not have read it at all. Its truths must be experienced, lived. Only in this sense has spiritual science any value.

The book cannot be judged from the standpoint of science if the point of view adopted in forming such a judgment is not gained from the book itself. If the critic will adopt this point of view, he will certainly see that the presentation of the facts given in this book will in no way conflict with truly scientific methods. The author is satisfied that he has taken care not to come into conflict with his own scientific scrupulousness even by a single word.

Those who feel more drawn to another method of searching after the truths here set forth will find such a method in my Philosophy of Freedom. The lines of thought taken in these two books, though different, lead to the same goal. For the understanding of the one, the other is by no means necessary, although undoubtedly helpful to some persons.

Those who look for “ultimate” truths in this book will perhaps lay it aside unsatisfied. The primary intention of the author has been to present the fundamental truths underlying the whole domain of spiritual science. It lies in the very nature of man to ask at once about the beginning and the end of the world, the purpose of existence, and the nature and being of God. Anyone, however, who looks not for mere phrases and concepts of the intellect, but for a real understanding of life, knows that in a work that deals with the elements of spiritual knowledge, things may not be said that belong to the higher stages of wisdom. It is indeed only through an understanding of these elements that it becomes clear how higher questions should be asked. In another work forming a continuation of this one, namely in the author's Occult Science, an Outline, further particulars will be found on the subject here dealt with.

In the preface to a second edition of this book the following supplementary remarks were inserted: Anyone who at the present time gives a description of supersensible facts ought to be quite clear

on two points. The first is that the cultivation of supersensible knowledge is a necessity for our age; the other is that the intellectual and spiritual life of the day is full of ideas and feelings that make a description like this appear to many as an absolute chaos of fantastic notions and dreams. Knowledge of the supersensible is a necessity today because all that a man can learn through current methods about the world and life arouses in him numerous questions. Those can be answered only by means of supersensible truths. We ought not to deceive ourselves with regard to the fact that the teaching concerning the fundamental truths of existence given within the intellectual and spiritual currents of today is for the deeply feeling soul a source, not of answer, but of questions about the great problems of the universe and of life. Some people may for a time hold firmly to the opinion that they can find a solution of the problems of existence within conclusions from strictly scientific facts, and within the deductions of this or that thinker of the day. But when the soul descends into those depths into which it must descend if it is to understand itself, what at first seemed to be an answer appears only as the incentive to the real question. An answer to this question does not merely have to satisfy human curiosity. On it depend the inner calm and completeness of the soul life. The attainment of such an answer does not satisfy merely the thirst for knowledge. It makes a man capable of practical work and fits him for the duties of life, while the lack of an answer to these questions lames his soul and finally his body also. In fact, the knowledge of the supersensible is not merely something that meets a theoretical requirement. It supplies a method for leading a truly practical life. It is just because of the nature of our present day intellectual life that study in the domain of spiritual knowledge is indispensable.

On the other hand it is an evident fact that many today reject most strongly what they most sorely need. Some people are so greatly influenced by theories built up on the basis of exact scientific experience that they cannot do otherwise than regard the contents of a book like this as a boundless absurdity. The exponent of supersensible truths is able to view such a fact entirely free from any illusions. People will certainly be prone to demand that he give irrefutable proofs for what he states, but they do not realize that in so doing they are the victims of a misconception. They demand, although unconsciously, not the proofs lying within the things themselves, but those that they personally are willing to recognize or are in a condition to recognize. The author of this book is sure that any person, taking his stand on the basis of the science of the present day, will find that it contains nothing that he will be unable to accept. He knows that all the requirements of modern science can be complied with, and for this very reason the method adopted here of presenting the facts of the supersensible world supplies its own justification. In fact, the way in which true modern science approaches and deals with a subject is precisely the one that is in full harmony with this presentation. Anyone who thinks thus will feel moved by many a discussion in a way described by [Goethe's](#) deeply true saying, "A false teaching does not offer any opening to refutation because it rests upon the conviction that the false is true." Argument is fruitless with those who allow only such proofs to weigh with them as fit in with their own way of thinking. Those who know the true nature of what is called "proving" a matter see clearly that the human soul finds truth through other means than by argument. It is with these thoughts in mind that the author offers this book for publication.

# Theosophy

## Chapter I

### The Essential Nature of Man

The following words of **Goethe** point beautifully to the beginning of one way by which the essential nature of man can be known. "As soon as a person becomes aware of the objects around him, he considers them in relation to himself, and rightly so, because his whole fate depends on whether they please or displease him, attract or repel, help or harm him. This quite natural way of looking at or judging things appears to be as easy as it is necessary. A person is, nevertheless, exposed through it to a thousand errors that often make him ashamed and embitter his life.

"A far more difficult task is undertaken by those whose keen desire for knowledge urges them to strive to observe the objects of nature as such and in their relationship to each other. These individuals soon feel the lack of the test that helped them when they, as men, regarded the objects in reference to themselves personally. They lack the test of pleasure and displeasure, attraction and repulsion, usefulness and harmfulness. Yet this test must be renounced entirely. They ought as dispassionate and, so to speak, divine beings, to seek and examine what is, not what gratifies. Thus the true botanist should not be moved either by the beauty or by the usefulness of the plants. He must study their formation and their relation to the rest of the plant kingdom. They are one and all enticed forth and shone upon by the sun without distinction, and so he should, equably and quietly, look at and survey them all and obtain the test for this knowledge, the data for his deductions, not out of himself, but from within the circle of the things he observes."

This thought thus expressed by Goethe directs man's attention to three divisions of things. First, the objects concerning which information continually flows to him through the doors of his senses — the objects he touches, smells, tastes, hears and sees. Second, the impressions that these make on him, characterizing themselves through the fact that he finds the one sympathetic, the other abhorrent, the one useful, another harmful. Third, the knowledge that he, as a "so to speak divine being," acquires concerning the objects, that is, the secrets of their activities and their being as they unveil themselves to him.

These three divisions are distinctly separate in human life, and man thereby becomes aware that he is interwoven with the world in a threefold way. The first division is one that he finds present, that he accepts as a given fact. Through the second he makes the world into his own affair, into something that has a meaning for him. The third he regards as a goal towards which he ought unceasingly to strive.

Why does the world appear to man in this threefold way? A simple consideration will explain it. I cross a meadow covered with flowers. The flowers make their colors known to me through my eyes. That is the fact I accept as given. Having accepted the fact, I rejoice in the splendor of the colors. Through this I turn the fact into an affair of my own. Through my feelings I connect the flowers with my own existence. Then, a year later I go again over the same meadow. Other flowers are there. Through them new joys arise in me. My joy of the former year will appear as a memory.

This is in me. The object that aroused it in me is gone, but the flowers I now see are of the same kind as those I saw the year before. They have grown in accordance with the same laws as have the others. If I have informed myself regarding this species and these laws, I then find them again in the flowers of this year, just as I found them in those of last year. So I shall perhaps muse, "The flowers of last year are gone and my joy in them remains only in my memory. It is bound up with my existence alone. What I recognized in the flowers of last year and recognize again this year, however, will remain as long as such flowers grow. That is something that revealed itself to me, but it is not dependent on my existence in the same way as my joy is. My feelings of joy remain in me. The laws, the being of the flowers, remain outside of me in the world."

By these means man continually links himself in this threefold way with the things of the world. One should not, for the present, read anything into this fact, but merely take it as it stands. From this it can be seen that man has three sides to his nature. This and nothing else will, for the present, be indicated here by the three words, *body*, *soul* and *spirit*. Whoever connects any preconceived opinions or even hypotheses with these three words will necessarily misunderstand the following explanations. By *body* is here meant that through which the things in the environment of a man reveal themselves to him, as in the above example, the flowers in the meadow. By the word *soul* is signified that by which he links the things to his own being, through which he experiences pleasure and displeasure, desire and aversion, joy and sorrow in connection with them. By *spirit* is meant what becomes manifest in him when as Goethe expressed it, he looks at things as a "so to speak divine being." In this sense man consists of *body*, *soul* and *spirit*.

Through his *body* man is able to place himself for the time being in connection with things; through his *soul* he retains in himself the impressions they make on him; through his *spirit* there reveals itself to him what the things retain for themselves. Only when we observe man in these three aspects can we hope to throw light on his whole being, because they show him to be related in a threefold way to the rest of the world.

Through his *body* man is related to the objects that present themselves to his senses from without. The materials from the outer world compose his *body*, and the forces of the outer world work also in it. He observes the things of the outer world with his senses, and he also is able to observe his own bodily existence. It is impossible, however, for him to observe his *soul* existence in the same way. Everything in him that is bodily process can be perceived with his bodily senses. His likes and dislikes, his joy and pain, neither he nor anyone else can perceive with bodily senses. The region of the *soul* is inaccessible to bodily perception. The bodily existence of a man is manifest to all eyes; the *soul* existence he carries within himself as his world. Through the *spirit*, however, the outer world is revealed to him in a higher way. The mysteries of the outer world, indeed, unveil themselves in his inner being. He steps in *spirit* out of himself and lets the things speak about themselves, about what has significance not for him but for them. For example, man looks up at the starry heavens. The delight his *soul* experiences belongs to him. The eternal laws of the stars that he comprehends in thought, in *spirit*, belong not to him but to the stars themselves.

In this way, man is a citizen of three worlds. Through his *body* he belongs to the world that he also perceives through his *body*; through his *soul* he constructs for himself his own world; through his *spirit* a world reveals itself to him that is exalted above both the others.

It seems obvious that because of the essential difference of these three worlds, a clear understanding of them and of man's share in them can only be obtained by means of three different modes of observation.

## Chapter I

### The Essential Nature of Man

#### 1. The Corporeal Nature of Man

We learn to know man's body through bodily senses, and the manner of observing it cannot differ from the way in which we learn to know other objects perceived by the senses. As we observe minerals, plants and animals, so can we also observe man. He is related to these three forms of existence. Like the minerals, he builds his body out of natural substances; like the plants, he grows and propagates his species; like the animals, he perceives the objects around him and builds up his inner experiences on the basis of the impressions they make on him. Thus, a mineral, a plant and an animal existence may be ascribed to man.

The differences in structure of minerals, plants and animals correspond with the three forms of their existence. It is this structure — the shape — that is perceived through the senses, and that alone can be called body. Now the human body is different from that of the animal. This difference must be recognized, whatever may otherwise be thought of the relationship of man to animals. Even the most extreme materialist who denies all soul cannot but admit the truth of this passage uttered by Carus in his *Oragnon der Natur und des Geistes*. "The finer, inner construction of the nervous system and especially of the brain remains still an unsolved problem for the physiologist and the anatomist. That this concentration of structures ever increases in the animal kingdom and reaches in man a stage unequalled in any other being is a fully established fact — a fact that is of the deepest significance in regard to the mental evolution of man. Indeed, we may go so far as to say it is really a sufficient explanation of that evolution. Where, therefore, the structure of the brain has not developed properly, where its smallness and poverty are in evidence as in the case of microcephali and idiots, it goes without saying that we can no more expect the appearance of original ideas and of knowledge than we can expect the propagation of the species from persons with completely stunted reproductive organs. On the other hand, a strong and beautifully developed build of the whole man, and especially of the brain, will certainly not in itself take the place of genius but it will at any rate supply the first and indispensable condition for higher knowledge."

Just as one ascribes to the human body the three forms of existence, mineral, plant and animal, so one must ascribe to it a fourth — the distinctively human form. Through his mineral existence man is related to everything visible; through his plantlike existence to all beings that grow and propagate their species; through his animal existence to all those that perceive their surroundings and by means of external impressions have inner experiences; through his human form of existence he constitutes, even in regard to his body alone, a kingdom by himself.

## Chapter I

### The Essential Nature of Man

#### 2. The Soul Nature of Man

Man's soul nature as his own inner world is different from his bodily nature. When attention is turned to even the simplest sensation, what is personally his own comes at once to the fore. Thus no one can know whether one person perceives even a simple sensation in exactly the same way as another. It is known that there are people who are color-blind. They see things only in various shades of grey. Others are only partially color-blind. Because of this they are unable to distinguish between certain shades of color. The picture of the world that their eyes gives them is different

from that of so-called normal persons. The same holds good more or less in regard to the other senses. Thus it will seem without further elaboration that even simple sensations belong to the inner world. I can perceive with my bodily senses the red table that another person perceives but I cannot perceive his sensation of red. We must, therefore, describe sensation as belonging to the soul. If this single fact is grasped quite clearly, we shall soon cease to regard inner experiences as mere brain processes or something similar. Feeling must link itself with sensation. One sensation causes us pleasure, another displeasure. These are stirrings of our inner life, our soul life. In our feelings we create a second world in addition to the one working on us from without. A third is added to this — the world of the will. Through the will we react on the outer world thereby stamping the impress of our inner being upon it. The soul of man, as it were, flows outwards in the activities of his will.

The actions of man differ from the occurrences of outer nature in that they bear the impress of his inner life. Thus the soul as man's own possession stands confronting the outer world. He receives from the outer world the incitements, but he creates in response to these incitements a world of his own. The body becomes the foundation of the soul being of man.

The Essential Nature of Man

### 3. The Spiritual Nature of Man

The soul nature of man is not determined by the body alone. Man does not wander aimlessly and without purpose from one sensation to another, nor does he act under the influence of every casual incitement that plays upon him either from without or through the processes of his body. He thinks about his perceptions and his acts. By thinking about his perceptions he gains knowledge of things. By thinking about his acts he introduces a reasonable coherence into his life. He knows that he will worthily fulfill his duty as a man only when he lets himself be guided by correct thoughts in knowing as well as in acting. The soul of man, therefore, is confronted by a twofold necessity. By the laws of the body it is governed by natural necessity. It allows itself also to be governed by the laws that guide it to exact thinking because it voluntarily acknowledges their necessity. Nature subjects man to the laws of changing matter, but he subjects himself to the laws of thought. By this means he makes himself a member of a higher order than the one to which he belongs through his body. This order is the spiritual. The spiritual is as different from the soul as the soul is from the body. As long as only the particles of carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen and oxygen that are in motion in the body are spoken of, we do not have the soul in view. Soul life begins only when within the motion of these particles the feeling arises, "I taste sweetness," or, "I feel pleasure." Likewise, we do not have the spirit in view as long as merely those soul experiences are considered that course through anyone who gives himself over entirely to the outer world and his bodily life. This soul life is rather the basis of the spiritual just as the body is the basis of the soul life. The biologist is concerned with the body, the investigator of the soul — the psychologist — with the soul, and the investigator of the spirit with the spirit. It is incumbent on those who would understand the nature of man by means of thinking, first to make clear to themselves through self-reflection the difference between body, soul and spirit.

Chapter I

The Essential Nature of Man

### 4. Body, Soul and Spirit \*

\* (See Addendum 3)



Man can only come to a true understanding of himself when he grasps clearly the significance of thinking within his being. The brain is the bodily instrument of thinking. A properly constructed eye serves us for seeing colors, and the suitably constructed brain serves us for thinking. The whole body of man is so formed that it receives its crown in the physical organ of the spirit, the brain. The construction of the human brain can only be understood by considering it in relation to its task — that of being the bodily basis for the thinking spirit. This is borne out by a comparative survey of the animal world. Among the amphibians the brain is small in comparison with the spinal cord; in mammals it is proportionately larger; in man it is largest in comparison with the rest of the body.

There are many prejudices prevalent regarding such statements about thinking as are presented here. Many people are inclined to under-value thinking and to place higher value on the warm life of feeling or emotion. Some even say it is not by sober thinking but by warmth of feeling and the immediate power of the emotions that we raise ourselves to higher knowledge. People who talk in this way are afraid they will blunt the feelings by clear thinking. This certainly does result from ordinary thinking that refers only to matters of utility. In the case of thoughts that lead to higher regions of existence, what happens is just the opposite. There is no feeling and no enthusiasm to be compared with the sentiments of warmth, beauty and exaltation that are enkindled through the pure, crystal-clear thoughts that refer to the higher worlds. The highest feelings are, as a matter of fact, not those that come of themselves, but those that are achieved by energetic and persevering thinking.

The human body is so constructed that it is adapted to thinking. The same materials and forces that are present in the mineral kingdom are so combined in the human body that thought can manifest itself by means of this combination. This mineral structure built up in accordance with its function will be called in the following pages the *physical body* of man.

Organized with reference to the brain as its central point, this mineral structure comes into existence by propagation and reaches its fully developed form through growth. Man shares propagation and growth in common with plants and animals. Through propagation and growth what is living differentiates itself from the lifeless mineral. Life gives rise to life by means of the germ. Descendant follows forefather from one living generation to another. The forces through which a mineral originates are directed upon the substances of which it is composed. A quartz crystal is formed through the forces inherent in the silicon and oxygen that are combined in the crystal. The forces that shape an oak tree must be sought for indirectly in the germ-cells of the mother and father plants. The form of the oak is preserved through propagation from forefather to descendent. Thus, there are inner determining conditions innate in living things, and it was a crude view of nature that held lower animals, even fishes, to have evolved out of mud. The form of the living passes itself on by means of heredity. How a living being develops depends on what father and mother it has sprung from — in other words, on the species to which it belongs. The materials it is composed of are continually changing but the species remains constant during life and is transmitted to the descendants. Therefore, it is the species that determines the combination of the materials. This force that determines species will here be called life-force. Mineral forces express themselves in crystals, and the formative life-force expresses itself in the species or forms of plant and animal life.

The mineral forces are perceived by man by means of his bodily senses, and he can only perceive things for which he has such senses. Without the eye there is no perception of light; without the ear no perception of sound. The lowest organisms have only one of the senses belonging to man — a kind of sense of touch. \* (See [Addendum 2](#)) These organisms have no awareness of the world

perceptible to man with the exception of those mineral forces that they perceive by the sense of touch. In proportion to the development of the other senses in the higher animals does their surrounding world, which man also perceives, become richer and more varied. It depends, therefore, on the organs of a being whether what exists in the outer world exists also for the being itself as something perceptible. What is present in the air as a certain motion becomes in man the sensation of hearing. Man, however, does not perceive the manifestations of the life-force through the ordinary senses. He sees the colors of the plants; he smells their perfume. The life-force, however, remains hidden from this form of observation. Even so, those with ordinary senses have just as little right to deny that there is a life-force as the man born blind has to deny that colors exist. Colors are there for the person born blind as soon as he has undergone an operation. In the same way, the various species of plants and animals created by the life-force — not merely the individual plants and animals — are present for man as objects of perception as soon as the necessary organ unfolds within him. An entirely new world opens out to him through the unfolding of this organ. He now perceives not merely the colors, the odors and other characteristics of living beings, but the life itself of these beings. In each plant and animal he perceives, besides the physical form, the life-filled spirit-form. In order to have a name for this spirit-form, let it be called the *ether body* or *life body*.\*

\* The author wishes to note that long after this book was written, he gave the name “formative-force body” to what is here called etheric or life body, (also cp. *Das Reich*, fourth book of the first year's issue, January, 1917). He felt himself moved to give it this name because he believes that one cannot do enough to prevent the misunderstanding due to confusing what is here called etheric body with the “vital force” of older natural science. In what concerns the rejection of this older concept of a vital force in the sense of modern natural science, the author shares, in a certain sense, the standpoint of those who are opposed to assuming the existence of such a vital force. The purpose of assuming such a vital force was to explain how the inorganic forces work in a special way in the organism. But there is no difference between the activity of the inorganic in the organism and its activity outside in the inorganic world. The laws of inorganic nature are in the organism no different from what they are in the crystal. But in the organism there is present something that is not inorganic — the formative life. The etheric body, or formative force body, lies at the base of this formative life. By assuming its existence, the rightful task of natural science is not interfered with, namely, to observe the workings of forces in inorganic nature and to follow these workings into the organic world, and further, to refuse to think of these operations within the organism as being modified by a special vital force. To a true spiritual science this seems justified. The spiritual researcher speaks of the etheric body insofar as there manifests in the organism something different from what shows itself in the lifeless. In spite of all this, the author does not feel himself impelled to replace the term “etheric body” by the other “formative force body,” since within the whole connected range of what is said here, any misunderstanding is excluded for anyone who really wants to comprehend. Such a misunderstanding can only arise when the term is used in a development that cannot exhibit this connection. (Compare this also with what is said under [Addendum 1](#).)

To the investigator of spiritual life this ether body is for him not merely a product of the materials and forces of the physical body, but a real independent entity that first calls forth into life these physical materials and forces. We speak in accordance with spiritual science when we say that a purely physical body derives its form — a crystal, for example — through the action of the physical formative forces innate in the lifeless. A living body does not receive its form through the action of these forces because in the moment life has departed from it and it is given over to the physical forces only, it falls to pieces. The ether body is an organism that preserves the physical body from dissolution every moment during life. In order to see this body, to perceive it in another being, the

awakened *spiritual eye* is required. Without this ability its existence as a fact can still be accepted on logical grounds, but it can be seen with the spiritual eye just as color can be seen with the physical eye.

We should not take offense at the expression "ether body." "Ether" here designates something different from the hypothetical ether of the physicist. We should regard it simply as a name for what is described here. The structure of the physical body of the human being is a kind of reflection of its purpose, and this is also the case with the human etheric body. It can be understood only when it is considered in relation to the thinking spirit. The human etheric body differs from that of plants and animals through being organized to serve the purposes of the thinking spirit. Man belongs to the mineral world through his physical body, and he belongs through this etheric body to the life-world. After death the physical body dissolves into the mineral world, the ether body into the life-world. By the word "body" is meant whatever gives a being shape or form. The term body must not be confused with a bodily form perceptible to the physical senses. Used in the sense implied in this book, the term body can also be applied to such forms as soul and spirit may assume.

The life-body is still something external to man. With the first stirrings of sensation the inner self responds to the stimuli of the outer world. You may search forever in what is called the outer world but you will be unable to find sensation in it. Rays of light stream into the eye, penetrating it until they reach the retina. There they cause chemical processes in the so-called visual-purple. The effect of these stimuli is passed on through the optic nerve to the brain. There further physical processes arise. Could these be observed, we would simply see more physical processes just as elsewhere in the physical world. If I am able also to observe the ether body, I shall see how the physical brain process is at the same time a life-process. The sensation of blue color that the recipient of the rays of light experiences, however, I can find nowhere in this manner. It arises only within the soul of the recipient. If, therefore, the being of this recipient consisted only of the physical and ether bodies, sensation could not exist. The activity by which sensation becomes a fact differs essentially from the operations of the formative life-force. By that activity an inner experience is called forth from these operations. Without this activity there would be a mere life-process such as we observe in plants. Imagine a man receiving impressions from all sides. Think of him as the source of the activity mentioned above, flowing out in all directions from which he is receiving these impressions. In all directions sensations arise in response to the stimuli. This fountain of activity is to be called the *sentient soul*. This sentient soul is just as real as the physical body. If a man stands before me and I disregard his sentient soul by thinking of him as merely a physical body, it is exactly as if, instead of a painting, I were to call up in memory merely the canvas.

A statement similar to the one previously made in reference to the ether body must be made here about perceiving the sentient soul. The bodily organs are blind to it. The organ by which life can be perceived as life is also blind to it. The ether body is seen by means of this organ, and so through a still higher organ the inner world of sensation can become a special kind of supersensible perception. Then a man not only senses the impressions of the physical and life world, but he beholds the sensations themselves. The sensation world of another being is spread out before a man with such an organ like an external reality. One must distinguish between experiencing one's own sensation world, and looking at the sensation world of another person. Every man, of course, can see into his own sensation world. Only the seer with the opened spiritual eye can see the sensation world of another. Unless a man is a seer, he knows the world of sensation only as an inner one, only as the peculiar hidden experiences of his own soul. With the opened spiritual eye

there shines out before the outward-turned spiritual gaze what otherwise lives only in the inner nature of another being.

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In order to prevent misunderstanding, it may be expressly stated here that the seer does not experience in himself what the other being experiences as the content of his world of sensation. The other being experiences the sensations in question from the point of view of his own inner nature. The seer, however, becomes aware of a manifestation or expression of the sentient world.

The sentient soul's activity depends entirely on the ether body. The sentient soul draws from the ether body what it in turn causes to gleam forth as sensation. Since the ether body is the life within the physical body, the sentient soul is also directly dependent on the physical body. Only with correctly functioning and well-constructed eyes are correct color sensations possible. It is in this way that the nature of the body affects the sentient soul, and it is thus determined and limited in its activity by the body. It lives within the limitations fixed for it by the nature of the body. The body accordingly is built up of mineral substances, is vitalized by the ether body, and itself limits the sentient soul. A man, therefore, who has the organ mentioned above for seeing the sentient soul sees it limited by the body, but its limits do not coincide with those of the physical body. This soul extends somewhat beyond the physical body and proves itself to be greater than the physical body. The force through which its limits are set, however, proceeds from the physical body. Thus, between the physical body and the ether body on the one hand, and the sentient soul on the other, another distinct member of the human constitution inserts itself. This is the *soul body* or sentient body. It may also be said that one part of the ether body is finer than the rest and this finer part forms a unity with the sentient soul, whereas the coarser part forms a kind of unity with the physical body. The sentient soul, nevertheless, extends, as has been said, beyond the soul body.

What is here called sensation is only a part of the soul nature. (The expression sentient soul is chosen for the sake of simplicity.) Connected with sensations are the feelings of desire and aversion, impulses, instincts, passions. All these bear the same character of individual life as do the sensations, and are, like them, dependent on the bodily nature.

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The sentient soul enters into mutual action and reaction with the body, and also with thinking, with the spirit. In the first place, thinking serves the sentient soul. Man forms thoughts about his sensations and thus enlightens himself regarding the outside world. The child that has burnt itself thinks it over and reaches the thought, "Fire burns." Man does not follow his impulses, instincts, and passions blindly but his reflection upon them brings about the opportunity for him to gratify them. What one calls material civilization is motivated entirely in this direction. It consists in the services that thinking renders to the sentient soul. Immeasurable quantities of thought-power are directed to this end. It is thought-power that has built ships, railways, telegraphs and telephones, and by far the greatest proportion of these conveniences serves only to satisfy the needs of sentient souls. Thought-force permeates the sentient soul similarly to the way the formative life-force permeates the physical body. The formative life-force connects the physical body with forefathers and descendants and thus brings it under a system of laws with which the purely mineral body is in no way concerned. In the same way thought-force brings the soul under a system of laws to which it does not belong as mere sentient soul. Through the sentient soul man is related to the animals. In animals also we observe the presence of sensations, impulses, instincts and passions.

The animal, however, obeys these immediately and they do not become interwoven with independent thoughts thereby transcending the immediate experiences. \* (See *Addendum 4.*) This is also the case to a certain extent with undeveloped human beings. The mere sentient soul, therefore, differs from the evolved higher member of the soul that brings thinking into its service. This soul that is served by thought will be termed the *intellectual soul*. It could also be called the mind soul.

The intellectual soul permeates the sentient soul. The one who possesses the organ for seeing the soul sees the intellectual soul as a separate entity in contrast to the mere sentient soul.

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By thinking, the human being is led above and beyond his own personal life. He acquires something that extends beyond his soul. He comes to take for granted his conviction that the laws of thought are in conformity with the laws of the universe, and he feels at home in the universe because this conformity exists. This conformity is one of the weighty facts through which he learns to know his own nature. He searches in his soul for truth and through this truth it is not only the soul that speaks but also the things of the world. What is recognized as truth by means of thought has an independent significance that refers to the things of the world, and not merely to one's own soul. In my delight at the starry heavens I live in my own inner being. The thoughts I form for myself about the paths of heavenly bodies have the same significance for the thinking of every other person as they have for mine. It would be absurd to speak of my delight were I not in existence. It is not in the same way absurd, however, to speak of my thoughts, even without reference to myself, because the truth that I think today was true also yesterday and will be true tomorrow, although I concern myself with it only today. If a fragment of knowledge gives me joy, the joy has significance just as long as it lives in me, whereas the truth of the knowledge has its significance quite independently of this joy.

By grasping the truth, the soul connects itself with something that carries its value in itself. This value does not vanish with the feeling in the soul any more than it arose with it. What is really truth neither arises nor passes away. It has a significance that cannot be destroyed. This is not contradicted by the fact that certain human truths have a value that is transitory inasmuch as they are recognized after a certain period as partial or complete errors. Man must say to himself that truth after all exists in itself, although his conceptions are only transient forms of manifestation of the eternal truths. Even someone who says, like Lessing, that he contents himself with the eternal striving for truth because the full pure truth can only exist for a god, does not deny the eternity of truth but establishes it by such an utterance. Only what has an eternal significance in itself can call forth an eternal striving for it. Were truth not in itself independent, if it acquired its value and significance through the feelings of the human soul, it could not be the one unique goal for all mankind. By the very fact of our striving for truth, we concede its independent being.

As it is with the true, so is it with the truly good. Moral goodness is independent of inclinations and passions inasmuch as it does not allow itself to be commanded by them but commands them. Likes and dislikes, desire and loathing belong to the personal soul of a man. Duty stands higher than likes and dislikes. Duty may stand so high in the eyes of a man that he will sacrifice his life for its sake. A man stands the higher the more he has ennobled his inclinations, his likes and dislikes, so that without compulsion or subjection they themselves obey what is recognized as duty. The morally good has, like truth, its eternal value in itself and does not receive it from the sentient soul.

By causing the self-existent true and good to come to life in his inner being, man raises himself above the mere sentient soul. An imperishable light is kindled in it. In so far as the soul lives in this light, it is a participant in the eternal and unites its existence with it. What the soul carries within itself of the true and the good is immortal in it. Let us call what shines forth in the soul as eternal, the *consciousness soul*. We can speak of consciousness even in connection with the lower soul stirrings. The most ordinary everyday sensation is a matter of consciousness. To this extent animals also have consciousness. The kernel of human consciousness, that is, *the soul within the soul*, is what is here meant by consciousness soul. The consciousness soul is thus distinguished as a member of the soul distinct from the intellectual soul, which is still entangled in the sensations, impulses and passions. Everyone knows how a man at first counts as true what he prefers in his feelings and desires. Only that truth is permanent, however, that has freed itself from all flavor of such sympathy and antipathy of feeling. The truth is true even if all personal feelings revolt against it. That part of the soul in which this truth lives will be called consciousness soul.

Thus three members must be distinguished in the soul as in the body, namely, *sentient soul*, *intellectual soul* and *consciousness soul*. As the body works from below upwards with a limiting effect on the soul, so the spiritual works from above downwards into it, expanding it. The more the soul fills itself with the true and the good, the wider and the more comprehensive becomes the eternal in it. To him who is able to see the soul, the splendor radiating forth from a man in whom the eternal is expanding is just as much a reality as the light that streams out from a flame is real to the physical eye.

For the seer, the corporeal man counts as only part of the whole man. The physical body as the coarsest structure lies within others that mutually interpenetrate it and each other. The ether body fills the physical body as a life-form. The soul body (astral shape) can be perceived extending beyond this on all sides. Beyond this, again, extends the sentient soul, and then the intellectual soul, which grows the larger the more of the true and the good it receives into itself. This true and good causes the expansion of the intellectual soul. On the other hand, a man living only and entirely according to his inclinations, likes and dislikes, would have an intellectual soul whose limits coincide with those of his sentient soul. These organizations, in the midst of which the physical body appears as if in a cloud, may be called the human aura. The perception of this aura, when seen as this book endeavors to present it, indicates an enrichment of man's soul nature.

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In the course of his development as a child, there comes a moment in the life of a man when for the first time he feels himself to be an independent being distinct from all the rest of the world. For sensitive natures, it is a significant experience. The poet, Jean Paul, says in his autobiography, "I shall never forget the event that took place within me, hitherto narrated to no one and of which I can give place and time, when I stood present at the birth of my self-consciousness. As a small child I stood one morning at the door of the house looking towards the wood-pile on my left, when suddenly the inner vision, I am an I, came upon me like a flash of lightning from heaven and has remained shining ever since. In that moment my ego had seen itself for the first time and forever. Any deception of memory is hardly to be conceived as possible here, for no narrations by outsiders could have introduced additions to an occurrence that took place in the holy of holies of a human being, and of which the novelty alone gave permanence to such everyday surroundings." It is known that little children say of themselves, "Charles is good." "Mary wants to have this." One feels it is to be right that they speak of themselves as if of others because they have not yet become

conscious of their independent existence, and the consciousness of the self is not yet born in them.  
\* (See *Addendum 5*.)

Through self-consciousness man describes himself as an independent being separate from all others, as "I." In his "I" he brings together all that he experiences as a being with body and soul. Body and soul are the carriers of the ego or "I," and in them it acts. Just as the physical body has its center in the brain, so has the soul its center in the ego. Man is aroused to sensations by impacts from without; feelings manifest themselves as effects of the outer world; the will relates itself to the outside world, realizing itself in external actions. The "I" as the particular and essential being of man remains quite invisible. With excellent judgment, therefore, does Jean Paul call a man's recognition of his ego an "occurrence taking place only in the veiled holy of holies of a human being," for with his "I" man is quite alone. This "I" is the very man himself. That justifies him in regarding his ego as his true being. He may, therefore, describe his body and his soul as the sheaths or veils within which he lives, and he may describe them as bodily conditions through which he acts. In the course of his evolution he learns to regard these tools ever more as instruments of service to his ego. The little word "I" is a name which differs from all others. Anyone who reflects in an appropriate manner on the nature of this name will find that in so doing an avenue opens itself to the understanding of the human being in the deeper sense. Any other name can be applied to its corresponding object by all men in the same way. Anybody can call a table, table, or a chair, chair. This is not so with the name "I." No one can use it in referring to another person. Each one can call only himself "I." Never can the name "I" reach my ears from outside when it refers to me. Only from within, only through itself, can the soul refer to itself as "I." When man therefore says "I" to himself, something begins to speak in him that has to do with none of the worlds from which the sheaths so far mentioned are taken. The "I" becomes increasingly the ruler of body and soul.

This also expresses itself in the aura. The more the "I" is lord over body and soul, the more definitely organized, the more varied and the more richly colored is the aura. The effect of the "I" on the aura can be seen by the seer. The "I" itself is invisible even to him. This remains truly within the "veiled holy of holies of a human being." The "I" absorbs into itself the rays of the light that flame forth in him as eternal light. As he gathers together the experiences of body and soul in the "I," so too he causes the thoughts of truth and goodness to stream into the "I." The phenomena of the senses reveal themselves to the "I" from the one side, the spirit reveals itself from the other. Body and soul yield themselves up to the "I" in order to serve it, but the "I" yields itself up to the spirit in order that the spirit may fill it to overflowing. The "I" lives in body and soul, but the spirit lives in the "I". What there is of spirit in it is eternal, for the "I" receives its nature and significance from that with which it is bound up. In so far as it lives in the physical body, it is subject to the laws of the mineral world; through its ether body to the laws of propagation and growth; by virtue of the sentient and intellectual souls, to the laws of the soul world; in so far as it receives the spiritual into itself it is subject to the laws of the spirit. What the laws of mineral and of life construct, come into being and vanishes. The spirit has nothing to do with becoming and perishing.

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The "I" lives in the soul. Although the highest manifestation of the "I" belongs to the consciousness soul, one must, nevertheless, say that this "I" raying out from it fills the whole soul, and through it exerts its action upon the body. In the "I" the spirit is alive. The spirit sends its rays into the "I" and lives in it as in a sheath or veil, just as the "I" lives in its sheaths, the body and soul. The spirit

develops the "I" from within, outwards; the mineral world develops it from without, inwards. The spirit forming and living as "I" will be called *spirit self* because it manifests as the "I," or ego, or self of man. The difference between the spirit self and the consciousness soul can be made clear in the following way. The consciousness soul is in touch with the self-existent truth that is independent of all antipathy and sympathy. The spirit self bears within it the same truth, but taken up into and enclosed by the "I," individualized by it, and absorbed into the independent being of the individual. It is through the eternal truth becoming thus individualized and bound up into one being with the "I" that the "I" itself attains to the eternal.

The spirit self is a revelation of the spiritual world within the "I," just as from the other side sensations are a revelation of the physical world within the "I." In what is red, green, light, dark, hard, soft, warm, cold one recognizes the revelations of the corporeal world. In what is true and good are to be found the revelations of the spiritual world. In the same sense in which the revelation of the corporeal world is called sensation, let the revelation of the spiritual be called intuition. \* (See [Addendum 6](#).) Even the most simple thought contains intuition because one cannot touch thought with the hands or see it with the eyes. Its revelation must be received from the spirit through the "I." If an undeveloped and a developed man look at a plant, there lives in the ego of the one something quite different from what exists in the ego of the other. Yet the sensation of both are called forth by the same object. The difference lies in this, that the one can form far more perfect thoughts about the object than the other. If objects revealed themselves through sensation only, there could be no progress in spiritual development. Even the savage is affected by nature, but the laws of nature reveal themselves only to the thoughts fructified by intuition of the more highly developed man. The stimuli from the outer world are felt also by the child as incentives to the will, but the commandments of the morally good disclose themselves to him in the course of his development in proportion as he learns to live in the spirit and understand its revelations.

There could be no color sensations without physical eyes, and there could be no intuitions without the higher thinking of the spirit self. As little as sensation creates the plant in which color appears does intuition create the spiritual realities about which it is merely giving knowledge.

The ego of a man that comes to life in the soul draws into itself messages from above, from the spirit world, through intuitions, and through sensations it draws in messages from the spiritual [physical –e.Ed] world. In so doing it makes the spirit world into the individualized life of its own soul, even as it does the physical world by means of the senses. The soul, or rather the "I" flaming forth in it, opens its portals on two sides — towards the corporeal and towards the spiritual.

Now the physical world can only give information about itself to the ego by building out of physical materials and forces a body in which the conscious soul can live and possess within its organs for perceiving the corporeal world outside itself. The spiritual world, on the other hand, with its spiritual substances, and spiritual forces, builds a spirit body in which the "I" can live and, through intuitions, perceive the spiritual. (It is evident that the expressions spirit substance, spirit body, contain contradictions according to the literal meaning of the words. They are only used to direct attention to what, in the spiritual region, corresponds to the physical substance, the physical body of man.)

Within the physical world each human body is built up as a separate being, and within the spirit world the spirit body is also built up separately. For man there is an inner and an outer in the spirit world just as in the physical world there is an inner and an outer. Man takes in the materials of the



physical world around him and assimilates them in his physical body, and he also takes up the spiritual from the spiritual environment and makes it into his own. The spiritual is the eternal nourishment of man. Man is born of the physical world, and he is also born of the spirit through the eternal laws of the true and the good. He is separated as an independent being from the spirit world outside him, and he is separated in the same manner from the whole physical world. This independent spiritual being will be called the *spirit man*.

If we investigate the human physical body, it is found to contain the same materials and forces as are to be found outside in the rest of the physical world. It is the same with the spirit man. In it pulsate the elements of the external spirit world. In it the forces of the rest of the spirit world are active. Within the physical skin a being is enclosed and limited that is alive and feels. It is the same in the spirit world. The spiritual skin that separates the spirit man from the unitary spirit world makes him an independent being within it, living a life within himself and perceiving intuitively the spiritual content of the world. Let us call this "spiritual skin" (auric sheath) the *spirit sheath*. Only it must be kept clearly in mind that the spiritual skin expands continually with advancing human evolution so that the spiritual individuality of man (his auric sheath) is capable of enlargement to an unlimited extent.

The spirit man lives within this spirit sheath. It is built up by the spiritual life force in the same way as the physical body is by the physical life force. In a similar way to that in which one speaks of an ether body, one must speak of an ether spirit in reference to the spirit man. Let his ether spirit be called *life spirit*. The spiritual nature of man is thus composed of three parts, *spirit man*, *life spirit* and *spirit self*.

For one who is a seer in the spiritual regions, this spiritual nature of man is, as the higher, truly spiritual part of the aura, a perceptible reality. He sees the spirit man as life spirit within the spirit sheath, and he sees how this life spirit grows continually larger by taking in spiritual nourishment from the spiritual external world. Further, he sees how the spirit sheath continually increases, widens out through what is brought into it, and how the spirit man becomes ever larger and larger. In so far as this becoming larger is seen spatially, it is of course only a picture of the reality. This fact notwithstanding, the human soul is directed towards the corresponding spiritual reality in conceiving this picture because the difference between the spiritual and the physical nature of man is that the physical nature has a limited size while the spiritual nature can grow to an unlimited extent.

Whatever of spiritual nourishment is absorbed has an eternal value. The human aura is accordingly composed of two interpenetrating parts. Color and form are given to the one by the physical existence of a man, and to the other by his spiritual existence. The ego marks the separation between them in such wise that the physical element after its own manner surrenders itself and builds up a body that allows a soul to live within it. The "I" surrenders itself and allows the spirit to develop in it, which now for its part permeates the soul and gives the soul its goal in the spirit world. Through the body the soul is enclosed in the physical. Through the spirit man there grow wings for movement in the spiritual world.

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In order to comprehend the whole man one must think of him as put together out of the components mentioned above. The body builds itself up out of the world of physical matter in such a way that this structure is adapted to the requirements of the thinking ego. It is permeated with life

force and becomes thereby the etheric or life body. As such it opens itself through the sense organs towards the outer world and becomes the soul body. The sentient soul permeates this and becomes a unity with it. The sentient soul does not merely receive the impacts of the outer world as sensations. It has its own inner life, fertilized through thinking on the one hand and through sensations on the other. The sentient soul thus becomes the intellectual soul. It is able to do this by opening itself to the intuitions from above as it does to sensations from below. Thus it becomes the consciousness soul. This is possible because the spirit world builds into it the organ of intuition, just as the physical body builds for it the sense organs. The senses transmit sensations by means of the soul body, and the spirit transmits to it intuitions through the organ of intuition. The spiritual human being is thereby linked into a unity with the consciousness soul, just as the physical body is linked with the sentient soul in the soul body. Consciousness soul and spirit self form a unity. In this unity the spirit man lives as life spirit in the same way that the ether body forms the bodily life basis for the soul body. Thus, as the physical body is enclosed in the physical skin, so is the spirit man in the spirit sheath. The members of the whole man are therefore as follows:

- A Physical Body
- B Ether or life body
- C Soul body
- D Sentient soul
- E Intellectual soul
- F Consciousness soul
- G Spirit self
- H Life spirit
- I Spirit man

Soul body (C) and sentient soul (D) are a unity in the earthly human being. In the same way consciousness soul (F) and spirit self (G) are a unity. Thus there come to be seven members in earthly man.

- 1 Physical body
- 2 Etheric or life body
- 3 Sentient soul body
- 4 Intellectual soul
- 5 Spirit-filled consciousness soul
- 6 Life spirit
- 7 Spirit man

In the soul the "I" flashes forth, receives the impulse from the spirit, and thereby becomes the bearer of the spiritual human being. Thus man participates in the three worlds, the physical, the soul and the spiritual. He is rooted in the physical world through his physical body, ether body and soul body, and through the spirit self, life spirit and spirit man he comes to flower in the spiritual world. The stalk, however, that takes root in the one and flowers in the other is the soul itself.

This arrangement of the members of man can be expressed in a simplified way, but one entirely consistent with the above. Although the human "I" flashes forth in the consciousness soul, it nevertheless penetrates the whole soul being. The parts of this soul being are not at all as distinctly

separate as are the members of the bodily nature. They interpenetrate each other in a higher sense. If then one regards the intellectual soul and the consciousness soul as the two sheaths of the "I" that belong together, with the "I" itself as their kernel, then one can divide man into physical body, life body, astral body and "I." The expression astral body designates what is formed by considering the soul body and sentient soul as a unity. This expression is found in the older literature, and may be applied here in a somewhat broad sense to what lies beyond the sensibly perceptible in the constitution of man. Although the sentient soul is in certain respects energized by the "I," it is still so intimately connected with the soul body that a single expression is justified when united. When now the "I" saturates itself with the spirit self, this spirit self makes its appearance in such a way that the astral body is transmuted from within the soul. In the astral body the impulses, desires and passions of man are primarily active in so far as they are felt by him. Sense perceptions also are active therein. Sense perceptions arise through the soul body as a member in man that comes to him from the external world. Impulses, desires and passions arise in the sentient soul in so far as it is energized from within, before this inner part has yielded itself to the spirit self. This expresses itself in the illumination of the impulses, desires and passions by what the "I" has received from the spirit. The "I" has then, through its participation in the spiritual world, become ruler in the world of impulses and desires. To the extent to which it has become this, the spirit self manifests in the astral body, and the astral body is transmuted thereby. The astral body itself then appears as a two-fold body — partly untransmuted and partly transmuted. We can, therefore, designate the spirit self manifesting itself in man as the transmuted astral body.

A similar process takes place in the human individual when he receives the life spirit into his "I." The life body then becomes transmuted, penetrated with life spirit. The life spirit manifests itself in such a way that the life body becomes quite different from what it was. For this reason it can also be said that the life spirit is the transmuted life body. If the "I" receives the spirit man, it thereby receives the necessary force to penetrate the physical body. Naturally, that part of the physical body thus transmuted is not perceptible to the physical senses, because it is just this spiritualized part of the physical body that has become the spirit man. It is then present to the physical senses as physical, and insofar as this physical is spiritualized, it has to be beheld by spiritual perceptive faculties, because to the external senses the physical, even when penetrated by the spiritual, appears to be merely sensible.

Taking all this as basis, the following arrangement may also be given of the members of man:

- 1 Physical body
- 2 Life body
- 3 Astral body
- 4 I, as soul kernel
- 5 Spirit self as transmuted astral body
- 6 Life spirit as transmuted life body
- 7 Spirit man as transmuted physical body