

## LIFE-ATOMS AND THE CAUSE AND CURE OF DISEASE

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Science teaches us that the living as well as the dead organism of both man and animal are swarming with bacteria of a hundred various kinds; that from without we are threatened with the invasion of microbes with every breath we draw, and from within by leucomaines, ærobes, anærobes, and what not. But Science never yet went so far as to assert with the occult doctrine that our bodies, as well as those of animals, plants, and stones, are themselves altogether built up of such beings; which, except larger species, no microscope can detect... Each particle – whether you call it organic or inorganic – is *a life*. Every atom and molecule in the Universe is both *life-giving* and *death-giving* to that form, inasmuch as it builds by aggregation universes and the ephemeral vehicles ready to receive the transmigrating soul, and as eternally destroys and changes the *forms* and expells those souls from their temporary abodes. It creates and kills; it is self-generating and self -destroying; it brings into being, and annihilates, that mystery of mysteries – the *living body* of man, animal, or plant, every, second in time and space; and it generates equally life and death, beauty and ugliness, good and bad, and even the agreeable and disagreeable, the beneficent and maleficent sensations. It is that mysterious LIFE, represented collectively by countless myriads of lives, that follows in its own sporadic way, the hitherto incomprehensible law of Atavism; that copies family resemblances as well as those it finds impressed in the aura of the generators of every future human being, a mystery, in short, that will receive fuller attention elsewhere... We are taught that every physiological change, in addition to pathological phenomena; diseases – nay, life itself – or rather the objective phenomena of life, produced by certain conditions and changes in the tissues of the body which allow and force life to act in that body: that all this is due to those unseen CREATORS and DESTROYERS that are called in such a loose and general way, microbes. Such experimenters as Pasteur are the best friends and helpers of the Destroyers and the worst enemies of the Creators – if the latter were not at the same time destroyers too

— *The Secret Doctrine, I, 260-3*

The doctrine of the life-atoms is intimately related to and connected with the causes and manifestation of disease, Both health and disease are karmically the results or consequences of the characters and tendencies which we ourselves have impressed upon the lifeatoms which compose and make up the various bodies or sheaths in which we, the human Egos, are clothed during incarnation in earthlife: impressed upon them by our thoughts, our feelings, our desires and our habits. This does not mean, however, that a man has now a photographic duplication, as it were, of his last physical body with the same disease or diseases that he may have been suffering from. Disease, shape of body, and physiognomy Or shape of face, are all matters of change, of karmic change, of evolution.

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A man in one life may have a disease and exhaust the karmic causes which brought it about, and in the next life be perfectly free from the disease, or he may not be free. It all depends upon his karman. Usually a karmic disease is worked out in one life, fortunately, but it is not always so. This is all a matter of natural law. We have the same life-atoms, we have the same astral monad as before, both of course modified or changed according to the karman previously engendered. The karman of these life-atoms and of this astral monad is simply brought over from the last life, and begins anew from the very point at which the last life was closed, just like a watch which stops and begins to run again from the exact point at which it stopped, when it is re-wound. Life is continuous; but as all things change, as of course likewise do the very life-atoms of our body; and as our soul – to use the popular expression – has changed for the better in its Devachan by absorbing its experiences, so the new man is indeed the old man, but nevertheless is in a sense new. You have now practically the same body that you had in your last life. Nevertheless, as a general rule, and save in certain cases due to karman, as for instance in certain cases of those who die in childhood or in early youth, the Reincarnating Ego is born into a different race when it returns to

earth, into a different time, into different surroundings, and other environments. The life-atoms are identical, but they change necessarily, just as last Monday is not the same Monday as the Monday to come, although you are the same person.

How about the growth and change even in one life of a human being? Has a full-grown man the same contour that he had as the new-born babe? And yet it is the same individual, the same life-atoms. I repeat: how about any one life? Is the child the same as the adult man? Yes. No. The same body, but how different! So it is with the different lives. just as the child grows into the adult man by slow changes of progress, so does a man pass from incarnation to incarnation on earth, continuously the same in essential being, and yet in each new life undergoing a change, and yet in each new life having the same life-atoms, and further in each new life having the same astral monad as in the last and in preceding lives; but, let us hope, all the time changing for the better.

There is also this to say: that in each succeeding reincarnation on earth the new man, when grown to maturity, closely resembles the man of the past life when that man of the past life had reached maturity, with the present changes of course that karma has brought about; just as you, ten years from now, will be the same man and yet changed. How simple this is! You are making yourself now

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very largely what you will be ten years from now. You may have conquered a disease that you are now suffering from. You may have a disease then that now you have not. In either case you yourself are responsible. And I will tell You that the greatest preventive of disease is a selfless soul working through a selfless mind, Do you understand me? I mean a self-forgetful heart. Nothing brings disease upon a human being so quickly as selfishness with its concomitant temptations, and the succumbing to those temptations.

Be utterly unselfish, and the world's wealth is yours: wealth of health, wealth of vision, wealth of physical riches, wealth of power, wealth of love, wealth of faculty, wealth of everything.

Disease is the working out of karma; everything that comes to a man is the karmic result, the consequence, the coming to flower, of seeds sown in the past. As W. Q. Judge has written:

... diseases are gross manifestations showing themselves on their way out of the nature so that one may be purified. To arrest them through thought ignorantly directed is to throw them back into their cause *and replant them in their mental plane.*

This is the true ground of our objection to metaphysical healing practices, which we distinguish from the assumptions and so-called philosophy on which those methods are claimed to stand. For we distinctly urge that the effects are not brought about by any philosophical system whatever, but by the practical though ignorant use of psycho-physiological processes.(21)

Diseases are the karmic result, the consequences, of past errors of living, of previous wrong thoughts and wrong deeds, of working inharmoniously with Nature. The way of health and of restoration to health, the way of purification, to use the word employed by Brother judge, is to work with Nature, to help Nature; and this is possible because you are a part of Nature, an integral part of the Universe in which you move and live and have your being,

How can you help Nature? Every great Sage and Seer has taught the way. The method is in every great religious book, in every great book of philosophy. It is voiced again and again and again in the teachings of my own great predecessors. "Live the life and ye shall know the doctrine." Live the life, and unless you deliberately renounce health and strength in order to help others, you shall have health and strength; unless, indeed, mark well, karma prevents. Therefore bring not disease and misery, misfortune and poverty, upon yourselves and upon others by deliberately choosing a wrong way of living.(22)

21. *The Path*, VII, 190, September, 1892. [*Echoes I*, 264].

22. Our physical life-atoms are our children and hence they partake of our characteristics, our swabhâva, and respond to our thoughts and feelings, to our example; but it does not necessarily follow that a man whose present life has been marked by high endeavor and by fine and noble characteristics should in the next earth-life. in his next incarnation, have a healthy physical body. The contrary of this in our present stage of evolution is too well known: noble-minded

men and women who have weak and sickly bodies, and, on the other hand, vicious characters in outwardly beautiful and healthy bodies. How is this to be explained?

In the case of noble characters who have a weak and frail physical encasement, it is simply because, so far as the inner man is concerned, they have won their freedom, but so far as the life-atoms are concerned in which they still have to live – because those life-atoms are a part of them – they have not yet cleansed those life-atoms of the preceding dye and stain which that same spirit-soul brought upon them. But the time will come when the cycle of a frail physical body will have passed, and then the man will be able to shine in splendor.

It is likewise true that some corrupt and evil human beings have bodies of physical beauty, but that is not often. It is rare. Unadvanced human souls are usually the ones possessing bodies of physical perfection. And do you want to know why? Because the fire within is not yet aroused, and neither consumes nor enflames the body. Genius usually appears in a weak and often decrepit physical body because the inner fire is too strong for the vehicle, and often tears it to pieces when it does not distort! Yet, if one were given the choice, who would not lieber be a genius, particularly a spiritual genius, even with a weak and frail body, than one whose soul is spiritually dead – or as yet wholly unawake!

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To say, however, that selfishness is the cause of all disease is too broad and general a statement of a fact. To be more specific, it is the form of selfishness called passion, whether conscious or unconscious, quasi-conscious or not, which is the fruitful cause of disease – unconquered violent passion, such as hatred, anger, lust, etc. Any such passion, mental or physical, shakes the lower constitution of man; it escapes from the control of the guiding hand of the higher part of the constitution; it changes the direction of flow of the prânic life-currents, condensing them here, rarefying them there. It thus interferes with the natural, easy workings of Nature, which is another word for health in this connexion.

Selfishness is at the root not merely of all disease, but of all evil-doing; and most evil-doing, and most disease more specifically, are originally caused by not unconquerable but unconquered passions. Passions are the root of them; passions are their seed. Their immediate fruits produce the bodily afflictions which human beings call disease.

But there is another side to this question. Medical questions may be interesting, but they are questions which one is loath to deal with too definitely, for reasons which should appeal to you. These questions are doubtless important and very interesting to the average

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individual; nevertheless it is questions of philosophy, of religion, of theoretical science—that is, of pure science—which are really the elevating and instructive ones.

However, I will say this much about disease: What are called the symptoms of disease, which only too often are treated as being the disease itself, are not infrequently and perhaps are usually the efforts of what one may call the forces of health, to throw the poison out of the body. All diseases actually are poisons injected into the system, and the symptoms occur when the system is striving to throw them outwards, to rid itself of the poison. Alas! sometimes the struggle is futile.

Remember that every time when you indulge in a selfish passion, you lay by a seed for disease or of evil-doing. YOU store it up for future appearance, and as sure as truth, some day you will suffer from it. Be not deceived: Nature is not mocked; Nature is not *mocked!* What you have called for, you will receive. What you have brought into being, will come back to you.

Diseases are purifying processes, processes of purification, and doubtless we should welcome diseases as we should welcome in the right spirit all things that happen to us. As judge said in substance: “I strive to attain that state of heart and mind in which everything that may happen unto me is considered by me to be exactly what I myself would have desired.” But while this is so, it does not mean that anyone should go out and deliberately contract a disease. That idea, as a deduction from what has been said, is preposterous. Nor should the statement be taken as a palliation of moral defects of character.

A disease should be understood as a purifying process and therefore welcomed because the end will be a cleansing. It should be welcomed in the sense of quiet understanding of the situation, and without either fear or an attempt to complicate or hinder the purifying process, as some fanatics might attempt to do from misunderstanding the remarks that have just been made.

When you consciously seek to help Nature and to become one with her, you ally yourselves with the forces of Nature, and the Masters themselves who ever watch for the Buddhic Splendor shining however feebly in the heart, shining as a result of your own efforts, your aspirations, and attitude of mind and heart – the Masters themselves will help you, for they are the servants of Nature.

Seeing that the Masters have given a good deal of help to science in general, the question has arisen: Why has medicine apparently

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been ignored by them? One might also ask: How is it that sculpture has been entirely ignored, or painting, or oratory, or statesmanship, or other fields of science, or some other branch of human activity? The Teachers at various times answered the questions that were then asked of them. Doubtless if questions concerning the field or ground of medicine had been asked, they would then have been answered. And I may point out also that, as all good, practical, sensible physicians know, medicine is largely guess-work, and a doctor experiments. Every reputable physician knows this perfectly well, and the honest ones among them admit the fact and thus in a sense gain the confidence of their patients, who trust them because they are honest.

Well now, in a science or pseudo-science of that type, what would happen, for instance, if the Teachers had then taught that some of the so-called savage and barbarian tribes know more of medicine than the faculties of medicine of European and American universities do – how welcome the information would have been, and how rapidly would it not have been taken up!

I have heard it asked: “Why is it that the Teachers do not tell me how to make a fortune quickly?” My answer has always been: “Ask them; you will get your answer.” The Teachers are spiritual guides, intellectual and spiritual guides and governors and helpers; and it is the main and important things in life that they concentrate their efforts and life and work upon: teaching men how nobly to live, how nobly to die, how to live so that the next life will be a better one, how to live so that men do good to their fellows and not evil. These and others like them are the great, the important things in human existence, not “Whom shall I marry?” “How shall I cure myself of a disease I deliberately brought upon my body?”

They have already told you: “Physicians, help; your work is a noble one. Bring comfort; bring the help that you can; study; reflect.” Probably the Teachers were as well aware as others were that a new cycle in medicine had entered into the world in the latter half of the nineteenth century. No longer were human beings dosed until they died with mighty draughts of this and mighty potions of that. Doctors were beginning to see that it is Nature that cures, and that the wise physician is a guide and an eliminator rather than a doser.

Today, because of the imperfect knowledge which physicians have, diseases in their acute stages often kill. The course of the disease is so rapid that the human system cannot withstand the strain. This need not be if physicians had more knowledge – knowledge of Nature and how to work with her. The scientific medical practitioners

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of the far distant future will understand so well what diseases are, and the methods of curing them – indeed, the method of preventing them, the foundation of which method is, of course, a clean life and high thinking – that they will cure diseases by ‘leading them out,’ but so gently, so smoothly as it were, that the disease will appear to vanish while actually it is manifesting itself. That statement may sound paradoxical to the ears of men of today, but the fact will come to pass; and indeed, the physicians of that far distant period of time in the future of which I speak, who would allow a patient to die, would be considered to have failed in the very elements of the medical profession.

But many people have an idea that the curing of disease consists in damming it back, which merely means shutting the doors against its egress out of the system, and the results consequently are that the disease invariably, at some later karmic time, will reappear and will doubtless injure the body more than if led out quietly, easily, when it makes its first appearance. Physicians today do not know how to do this, or at least if they have some inklings of how to do it, they do not know enough about it to do it well. That is our present misfortune.

Such damming back of disease is not merely a postponement of its manifestation and its egress out of the system, but, leaving the roots of the disease still alive, hidden away underground, as it were, such methods allow these roots to take firmer hold and spread and accumulate energy, so that when the disease reappears, as it inevitably will, for its roots have not been extirpated, its reaction upon the body is more violent than it would have been if the disease had been allowed to take its course in the first instance. Such delayed reaction may be so violent that death may be the result because the body now cannot adjust itself as might have been the case originally had the patient received proper medical treatment: first, by understanding what disease is in itself; and next, by using every remedy that research, that careful thought, and that experience, apart from one's personal opinions, provide us with. There is no other way of helping medically at the present time; and indeed there is an ethical side to this entire matter which has not yet been touched upon.

If diseases are processes of purification, as actually they are, to men of our present imperfect stage of evolution, in many, many, instances diseases are a heaven-sent blessing. They cure egoisms, for instance. They teach patience. They bring about in their train a dwelling of the mind on the beauty of life, on the need for living rightly. They make one kindly and sympathetic. Consider the average man in his present imperfect stage of evolution: passionate,

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with ungoverned emotions, with fierce desires for sensation, and for ever more sensation, and for still more sensation. Consider a moment: if men of today, such as they are, had bodies which could not be diseased, but could be weakened and killed by excesses; do you not see that things as they are have a very kindly side to them? Diseases actually are our warnings to reform our evil thoughts and to live in accordance with Nature's laws.

Remember further that it is not an outside and tyrannical Nature which brings disease upon us, but disease is in every instance the result or consequence of our own wrong doing: mental wrong doing, and physical wrong doing: either in this or in some past life. Diseases, with their concomitant suffering and pain, are our best monitory friends.

This does not mean again that the physician should not attempt to heal. It is his bounden duty to try to heal. For the necessary lessons can be learned – the lessons that disease can teach the unfortunates who have them, can be learned without killing the body.

As I have already said, there is no certain knowledge in modern medicine as to the meaning and cause of disease, with the result that new systems of medical practice are constantly being introduced. For instance, in some systems the use of stimulants and narcotics is advocated; in others, eliminative and suppressive measures, with respect merely to the symptoms of disease. There is also the practice of affirmations and denials as in 'Christian Science,' and other schools of so-called 'Mental' or 'Faith' healing. There is, however, more justification for the former methods of treating disease, imperfect though these are, which are in vogue in certain so-called regular schools of medicine, than for the latter which, speaking generally, are opposed to all medical practice. Yes, there is more justification for the one than for the other. It is a very dangerous thing indeed by the practice of affirmations and denials to dam back elemental forces working through the human being's constitution on their way outwards; because all diseases are actually purgations, cleansings. You thus have the picture immediately. Consequently, however imperfect medical science may be today, it nevertheless treats the body with material means, which are the least harmful of all the means by which diseases may be treated.

There are spiritual ways of treating disease and psychical ways, and the Christian Science ways are a mixture of the two. The best way is to attempt by wise medical care to alleviate pain, and to help the sick and the suffering in body and in mind; and this is a sublime and beautiful duty and it is that of the true physician. He should do so with sympathy in his heart, using all the medical resources

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known to him. There is real justification for treatment by medicine of the physical woes from which human beings suffer.

I hesitate to turn more fully to the other aspect of the question; and perhaps the mere allusion, the hint, in the statement that there is more justification for the methods of medicine than there is for those of so-called Mental or Christian Science healing, will perhaps tell you the whole story.

It is not to be thought, however, that Christian Science and other more or less similar movements are wrong in every particular. No; and it is precisely here that the danger of such movements lies, for there are points of agreement between them and Theosophy, as well as points of disagreement. The Ancient Wisdom, which is simply the formulation in human language of the natural verities of the fundamental structure and operations of the Universe, of which we are inseparable units, must have points of agreement with every branch of human thought whatsoever. There is good in Christian Science; there is good in mental healing; but how far does the good go? Must we accept every claim that is made? Must we reject everything? Or shall we accept the things which are good, and reject the things which are not good? Obviously this last. These 'sects of deniers,' as H. P. Blavatsky neatly and truthfully called them, for such they are, have good things in their beliefs, and also some things which it is impossible for a Theosophist honestly and sincerely to accept, because he knows that they are not true.

For instance: the teaching of these sects of so-called 'healers' that a bright and cheerful spirit is a good thing to have, is a good teaching. But it is not new. We teach exactly the same; and here then is a point of agreement. Their teaching, again, that life should be faced with an attitude of courage, and with an appeal to the spiritual energy inherent in the Universe, is a good thing, and therefore this teaching is good. But it is not new. We teach exactly the same thing. Here, then, is a second point of agreement. And so one might continue, finding different points of agreement.

But what are mere isolated points of agreement, unless united into a synthesis or system? It is the system of these healers that a Theosophist must object to. First because it is unscientific as a system, although containing certain things with which we can agree, and which things we also teach. There are other things, however, which we find it impossible to accept. The philosophy – if one might dignify it by that name – which these otherwise most earnest, splendid people profess, is not really a philosophy at all. It is a formal belief. It is not logical, because its component parts do not hang together, and therefore it is not fundamentally rational. For in-

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stance: the teaching that matter does not exist, or that all is good, which teaching is more or less at the basis of all the rest of their belief, however their idea may be phrased, has points of *rapprochement* with the teachings of the Ancient Wisdom. But nevertheless most emphatically we do not say that matter does not exist. We say that it is *mâyâvi* – illusory. But we do not deny its existence. If we did, we should be obliged to deny the existence of spirit also, because spirit and matter are but the polar antitheses of each other.

Then, above everything else, there is the question of the concentration of personal interests around each individual, and the strenuous attempt at getting help for oneself, which is so contrary to the spiritual ideal which the Theosophist has always before his eyes. Our teaching – the first teaching put before the mind of every chela, of every pupil – is that to live to benefit mankind is the first step. This is the first step in vision, the first step of spiritual growth, the first step of upward progress – not to live in order to benefit yourself, but to benefit the Universe; which, indeed, and from another standpoint, is yourself, for It is you and you are It.

Now the concentration of attention on the ills of the material body, and on the ills of the mind, is not wholesome because it is profoundly unethical and unscientific. This is not good. This distracts attention away from the great basic spiritual laws of existence, from the fundamentals of universal being, from the great truths of the Universe, and concentrates that attention on the personal, on the individual, and mainly on the body. Here is where the irrationality comes in. They deny the disease and yet concentrate so much attention upon it, which is rather absurd.

A sick man should seek relief from his ailing, whether that ailing be a mental one or a physical one; but if he uses the spiritual powers, or forces, or energies, of his being, and tries to drag them down into the material world, and prostitute them to the uses of gross physical existence, he is proceeding in a direction entirely contrary to all Mother Nature's great fundamental current of being, which is

upwards. The rule is to raise, not to debase. Such action is a swimming in *adversum flumen*, against the current of Nature's evolutionary flow; and therefore fundamentally the system of these healers or deniers is wrong. Their meaning is good, their motives are doubtless excellent. Many of them doubtless desire to do good in the world, but the system is wrong.

Therefore we Theosophists say: Be kindly, be gentle, try to show them a greater light, a larger truth, and thus help them. They are right in one respect: if men's lives were distinctly clean and pure, holy – to use the old expression – then disease would vanish away

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from the world. Consequently, where should we concentrate our point of attack? On the symptom or on the cause? These healers, these deniers, deny the cause and yet concentrate on the symptoms, the effects of that cause. The Theosophist goes to the root of the evil, shows men the fundamental causes of disease and mental ills; shows men what love is, and what desire is; how to gain the one, which brings health both mental and physical, and to leave behind the other, which is the original root of all disease and all ills.

A clean life, an open mind, a pure heart, an eager intellect, an unveiled spiritual vision, living for mankind and not for self: these, as you see immediately, cut the roots of selfishness, which therefore means the doing away with disease finally. Here you go to the root of it all.

It is not enough to tell people, as these otherwise most excellent people do: be good, because being good is good. Obviously it is true; but you must tell men something more than the mere platitude. You must awaken their imaginations, show them the vision of greater things. You must teach men, you must change men's hearts. Give a new direction to their minds, and then you change their lives, and they will grow, gaining health and overcoming disease automatically and by Nature's own processes. Meanwhile, seek relief on the physical plane for physical ailments.

There is a third aspect of this matter which has often been touched upon, and this aspect is the danger of throwing back the diseasepoison into the constitution by methods of intense psychologic thinking. It is a most dangerous thing to do. All disease is a purging, is a purgation, is an attempt of the whole constitution to throw out seeds of disease and the fruits of seeds of disease planted in that constitution; and these purgations express themselves through the physical body, thus coming out along the easiest pathway, as illness, sickness, disease.

As I have told you on many other occasions, the doctors of the far distant future will be magicians, illuminated men. They will know how to lead disease out of the system, and without injury to the body. As a matter of fact, in those happy days of the far distant future, there will be very little disease, but such disease will be of a more subtil character than even those diseases which exist today; and the then magician-doctors will know how to lead it out of the system without injuring the body at all. They will dissipate its energy, and the system then will simply throw it off, unseen, unfelt; as even the body's system today does very often – it throws off a sickness by its own unaided powers. There you have the secret.

The advice therefore is, to treat these good people who deny that

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sickness exists, that matter exists, that evil exists, who say that all is good in the world, that there is nothing but good – an obvious falsity: treat them with kindness, and try to show them always a greater light. Help them; they mean well. Don't oppose them unkindly, or vindictively, or argue foolishly with them. Don't you see that the argumentative manner of handling these things simply arouses antagonisms in those you argue with? By argument, the other man is confirmed in his belief that he is right, because he has the instinctive feeling: So-and-so would not make so much of my belief and argue with me if he did not instinctively feel that I am right, and that he is wrong after all; he is trying to convince himself by arguing with me.

Of all the diseases which afflict mankind one of the most puzzling and baffling, as to its cause and effective cure, is epilepsy; another is cancer. We must constantly remember that everything that

happens to a man is the working of karman, of course. All diseases are karmic resultants of inharmonious thoughts and emotions of this or of a past life, now working themselves outwards from the constitution and through the physical body. More particularly, all diseases – and of course, epilepsy among them, whether in its greater or in its smaller form called petit mal or the small disease – are brought about through the instrumentality of elementals. This is the ancient teaching and was the ancient belief of the entire world, until the Occident in its supreme wisdom began to look upon the consensus of opinion of the entire human race as superstition, as founded upon superstitious fear, and without a natural fact to support that so-called superstition.

In the Christian New Testament, due to its faulty translation a faulty translation arising out of an entire misapprehension of what these early Christian writers intended to say when they wrote these tracts – diseases are ascribed to the operation of what the English translation calls ‘devils,’ or ‘demons,’ a mistranslation which is so grotesque and superstitious because brought out of the minds of grotesquely superstitious western men.

These ‘daimonia,’ as the Greek word runs – mistranslated as ‘devils’ or ‘demons’ with all the flavor of the Occidental superstition of the time – are simply the lowest order of animate and sensate creatures, commonly called in the Theosophical teaching ‘elementals,’ these ‘elementals’ forming the lowest step of the hierarchical ladder of which the highest step or rung is the realm of being, or state or condition of spiritual existence, as well as an actual world, inhabited by the gods. Between elemental and god there is a wide range of differ-

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ence in degree of evolutionary progress, but no difference in essence or in origin. Man occupies an intermediate stage on this ladder of life between the elementals at one end and the gods at the other. All diseases, from cancer to a common cold, from tuberculosis to a tooth-ache, from rheumatism to any other physical ailment, are brought about through the instrumentality of elementals working as the instruments of the karmic law. And the same remark applies exactly to what are called mental diseases: an outburst of anger, a raging temper, persistent melancholia, and the manias of various kinds, are all elemental in origin.

Mania is an especial example in point, and very neatly shows the truth I have just spoken of. Homicidal mania, or mania of any other kind, is essentially quite unhuman as well as being inhuman. It is elemental. An elemental in such case has temporary control of the human temple, and has for the time being dispossessed, evicted, cast forth, the rightful human dweller therein. Such a state is due to human weakness and human self-indulgence – above everything else to human selfishness. It need not happen.

You may ask how it is that in some great and good man or woman some terrible disease may appear. No perceptible cause is known in the present life, and yet so noble and virtuous a human being is stricken and suffers grievously under the affliction. The answer is that it is a working out of old karman previously dammed back; and it is better that it work out as soon as possible. There are cases, even with our own chelas – and in rare cases chelas who stand high in our own order – who have been so stricken and who have preferred to go through with the trial and have it out, bring the poison out, and thus end it, than to dam it back again for it to come forth in the future at some period when its occurrence will be still more disastrous.

Epilepsy, therefore, like every other disease is due to an elemental, or to a host of elementals of quite kindred type; and remember that an elemental is a nature-spirit, an energy-center, an energy-consciousness-center, of an unevolved kind which has usurped, or usurps for the time being, the position normally and properly occupied by the human soul in the body.

You have heard, I suppose, of one of the ancient Mesopotamian gods who is spoken of in the early Christian and Jewish scriptures as Ba’alzevuv, commonly mispronounced as ‘Beel-Zebub’ and usually translated as meaning ‘Lord of the Flies’ – a translation absurdly evincing the utter lack of knowledge of natural facts that the supreme scientific and religious and philosophical wisdom of the Occident has. ‘Zevuv’ of course means ‘flies,’ or ‘a fly’; but the fly is mystically

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symbolic of an astral animate entity, and hence the fly was taken as representative of the character and actions and antics of the elementals. Therefore, 'Lord of Flies' simply means 'Lord of the Elementals' – of the elemental forces and powers; and do you know who that lord is? It is the moon. Epilepsy was known in antiquity and during the Middle Ages under the name of the 'Sacred Illness,' and by other similar names. This was on account of the strong psychological element that pertains to epilepsy with a few other diseases, and which contrasts these so strongly, which differentiates them so largely, from other more purely physical afflictions. It was thought that elementals of a nobler and loftier type – so far as the mere evolutionary procedure is concerned – were active as instruments in epileptic seizures; but not noble or lofty in the spiritual sense. It was thought that elementals of a higher grade, possessing a larger psychological sphere of activity, were concerned in epilepsy – in the 'falling sickness.'

This thought also prevails throughout all the Orient, as in the South Sea Islands, for instance, where things which are either religiously sacred or politically sacred, or sacred in any sense, are called 'tabu,' 'forbidden,' and considered to be under the special protection of the elemental spirits of Nature; therefore called 'tabu,' 'forbidden' or 'sacred.'

Epilepsy, epileptic seizures, have always been looked upon with horror by men, but actually they are no worse in the physiological sense than any other outbreak of disease: cancer, tuberculosis, the common cold, indigestion, rheumatism, neuritis, gangrene, in fact almost everything. Indeed, everything in the way of disease can be reduced to the same causes: an originating series of selfish thoughts, and particularly selfish emotions, continued through a length of time, eventuating in a distortion and an inharmonious interaction of the prânic currents in the body, thus producing disease; and according to the character of the emotions and thoughts, so was the disease which eventuated.

Epileptics are 'moon-struck' at the time when they suffer. But they need not be so. There is a sure preventive of such a disease as epilepsy which partakes of both a physiological and a psychological character, and that preventive is the practising Of the six glorious virtues, or *Pâramitâs*.(23) For this practice builds an âkâsîc wall around the individual so strong, once it is established, that nothing can pass it, nothing can penetrate it – only love.

Love can pass in and out, for nothing in the Universe can stay or

23. See *Instruction No. I* of this series.

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bar its coming or going. These six glorious virtues you can read of in H. P. B.'s *The Voice of the Silence*, and they may be reduced to a few simple ethical teachings: Love your neighbor as well as you love yourself, and act upon it. Be kindly; be truthful; be unselfish above all things, for selfishness is the root of all human pains ultimately. Forgive; and if you think it is so easy to forgive, try it and be honest with yourself. Forgive when and where the need for forgiveness lies, and not in your day-dreams nor in your sleep.

Nor does what has just been said, Companions, mean that every epileptic has been selfish and an evil-doer in the present life. Remember the old teaching: the consequences may come upon you today or after many lives.

In regard to cancer, and the malignant growths which are almost invariably fatal to the sufferer, there is one fundamental cause, branching into two: malignant, deep-seated, self-seeking, or selfishness, first; and next, acting on this general background, unregulated emotionalisms. The combined power of these two vital-astral currents, weakens, destroys, resistance, and so directs the currents of life that they leave certain portions of the body where they are naturally in check, and center on others where they run riot. This does not mean that every case of cancer is the resultant of such a state of things in the present life. The causes may have been sown ages back in other lives, and prevented from appearing, from coming into manifestation, before the life in which they do finally appear.

It is however possible to modify the course and development of the disease, and even sometimes to effect a cure, by thoughts of an opposite nature to those I have just enumerated: thoughts of

unselfishness and sympathy, control of the emotions, deeds of charity and kindness; in a word by self -forgetfulness. Many more people would suffer from cancerous growths on the body, if Nature, kindly Nature, did not automatically gather together its forces of resistance: intellectual, emotional, moral, physiological, and what not: and thus cause the body to react so strongly that the resistance throws back the attack. Many things regarding the human body are great mysteries, simply because men are blinded to the obvious. Besides, it should be borne in mind that all growths, malignant or benign, on the body are physiological memories, as it were, of the method of propagation which the early Third Root-Race used unconsciously to itself. Then the thing was normal and natural; now it is abnormal at best and malignant at the worst, because occurring out of evolutionary time. Then it was caused by the natural currents of life running true and strong. Now it is caused by the same currents of

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life running strong in a wrong minor direction – wrong because out of time .<sup>24</sup>

24. In regard to the suffering of animals. whether due to human cruelty or to neglect, or to other causes such as in the case of animals being preyed upon by other animals, there is this to be said – and it will answer the question. which has puzzled many. as to whether we may speak of karmic consequences in such a case. Can an animal be made responsible for its actions if it has no real selfconsciousness ?

In the first place. everything that is or that occurs is karmic, which means consequences flowing from preceding causes, and therefore in this sense the sufferings even of the dumb beasts are karman. But their karmic sufferings are not largely derivative from, nor do they have their root in, the inner nature of the beast, as is the case with man. The beasts are not morally responsible, as men are, for what they do; consequently they do not suffer moral retribution, but they are involved in the general karman of the races of beings on earth, in what you might call the earth-karman, the karman of the civilization which is the child of the race of the time. The beasts are in their origin the offsprings of men; and even today the beasts which now live among us are deeply rooted in the astral life of mankind, because the *inner constitutions* of the beasts are largely built up of the life-atoms that men are constantly throwing out, day by day, hour by hour, *instant by instant*, and through the ages. The beasts are in very truth our younger brothers. in a sense even so physically; and in a great and true sense their karman is to a large degree apparently unjust. The beasts have not earned, morally speaking, the sufferings that they endure. They are in a sense victims, but they are so because they are composite even physically of the life-atoms originating in men, and men have made themselves thereby responsible, spiritually and morally, and in a large degree. for the sufferings of the beasts. This is a karman which men will have to work out, not the beasts. There is the key to the explanation of the problem.

But let me add this, although it would take me too far afield to develop the thought fully: the beasts are nevertheless not wholly free from karmic responsibility, for every astral Monad, or more accurately, psycho-astral Monad – which is the center around which the beast-body is builded – is the reflexion of a spiritual Monad, coming out of past eternities of manvantaras in which that spiritual Monad made for itself karman not exhausted when those past manvantaras ended. And consequently these Monads have come into the present manvantara with these distant karmic stains, to use a strange figure of speech, imprinted into the very fabric of their being, and these Monads show these karmic stains even in the condition in which the beasts now are. The same observation will apply to the plants also, and to the mineral kingdom likewise.

Nature is balanced with exceeding delicacy, with exceeding nicety, and nothing is accidental or fortuitous. But having said this much, I now again will call your attention to the fact that the beasts, the plants, and the minerals, are in a sense our younger brothers, and we as men, as self-conscious, moral – or immoral alas–influences on this earth, will be held strictly accountable for all that we do: even the sufferings of the beasts arising in their own warfare upon each other. and the more direct sufferings that man inflicts upon them, all originate ultimately, with the exception hereinbefore made, in man's own evil thoughts and acts .

The beasts cannot be said to be morally responsible for the sufferings that they undergo. In each beast, as in each man, there shines the visible but feeble radiance of a divinity at the heart of it. In man that splendid glory manifests its power in some fulness, and thus gives to us reason and conscience, aspiration, love, forgiveness, compassion, kindness, and the moral sense; above everything else, that splendid glory shows itself in our instinctive recognition of the fact of our oneness with the Universe. In the gods, still greater glory is poured out from the divine-spiritual suns existent in the heart of each of the divinities, but in the beasts this glory shows only, the feeblest glimmering of its power. But the beasts are on the way towards manhood, even as men are on the pathway to becoming gods, and the gods super-gods, on the rising ladder of evolution.

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The modern practice of medicine, or, let me say, of one school of medicine, is largely based on animal experimentation, vivisection, and it is claimed that the knowledge so gained, with its supposed resulting benefits, justifies the means employed to that end. This is the same argument that has been used by evil-doers throughout all time of the past: "In order to do good, I shall do evil." A strangely erroneous doctrine!

No, it is not possible that knowledge gained through vivisection or animal or human experimentation can ever be of permanent benefit to mankind, or even of temporary benefit. Inhuman, cruel, and selfish acts do but blind the doers thereof, and shut the doors of both mind and heart to the acquirement of truth. You never can learn through cruelty or by taking advantage of less evolved entities who trust you. Selfishness breeds its own retributive karma, just as wilful spiritual blindness does; and no good can come to the doer out of evil-doing. Although, on the other hand, as a philosophical proposition it is also quite true to say that even out of the evil-doings of men, the universe being so balanced in harmony and love, good ultimately will result. But the evil-doer must pay his debt to the uttermost farthing, simply because Nature is so perfectly balanced. The heart of Nature is perfect equilibrium, harmony, peace, love.

Many of the present-day methods of treating disease would be abandoned if physicians realized the nature and causes of disease. Among such methods, I now refer more particularly to the use of vaccines, serums, so-called glandular therapy and 'blood-transfusion.'

It is with a great deal of reluctance that I touch upon any medical question, for the reasons that I have tried so often to set forth.

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All the different phases of medical practice are more or less faddist, fads. They come and they go, because they change; and anything said about them may carry with it elements of danger unless those who listen are most extremely careful: elements of danger, because anything that I could say is so easily misunderstood even with the best of intentions on my part and on yours.

In regard to vaccines and serums it is claimed that by their use many diseases have been virtually wiped out, or at least brought under control. I strongly question the statement that vaccines and serums have cured or done away with so many diseases. Many and great are the claims that are made along this line. I still await corroboration of the claims. I notice by the statistics that new and strange diseases have come among men, and that these diseases act virulently. It is hard to convince some people who have passed a lifetime in one narrow rut of human experiences backed by others who have had the same career. Their minds are set like crystal and break like crystal. Therefore treat them kindly. Do not mentally vaccinate them or give them a mental serum- treatment.

Let me add this: the injection of an alien poison into the human blood-stream is a crime against human health. It will work; drugs will work: these two will apparently cure things and nevertheless so weaken the body's resistance that when the next attack comes: when the victim is in the environment or in the circumstances where the next attack comes upon him: he is a much easier victim to the same or to some other disease.

I turn instinctively against any method of medical treatment which has to do with injecting into the blood-stream, the secretions coming from some other diseased body. The whole atmosphere of the practice is unpleasant to me: it seems to be unclean, unwholesome: probably more productive, in the long run — producing a larger number — of mysterious diseases than the cases of disease which the practice might possibly benefit.

There are two methods employed in so-called glandular therapy, that is in the use of the products of the glands of internal secretion, namely the injection method, and the eating of such products: the method of administering these so-called remedies by mouth certainly is the cleaner way. I cannot help feeling that it is a more wholesome way than by injecting these gland-extracts into the blood. I perfectly well understand that in some cases subcutaneous injection of certain so-called remedies will produce a stronger reaction, produce greater results, than if taken by means of the stomach. But something in me revolts against the former practice. I do not like a medical practice of that kind. It seems unclean to me.

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The physicians of the future will have long abandoned all such methods of treatment. I do not desire to condemn present-day physicians as a body. That, I think, is unfair. There are many, many, splendid men passing lives of impersonal devotion in medical research: unselfishly working to better the condition of mankind physically. That fact is unquestionable, and of course it is understandable that they turn in any direction where they see the possibility of some new opening of discovery; where they see some great discovery on the horizon, some newer and better means of attacking a disease in its own center, The motives are usually most excellent; but the practice deals with putrid products, or products in some cases which have poisoned the body from which they are taken; and injecting these products into other bodies, I cannot help feeling, is, as a procedure, unclean, and therefore revolting. I cannot feel that the outcome, the final results, of this kind of medical practice, are good. Something in me tells me that the practice is fundamentally wrong; and I say this leaving entirely to one side the most excellent motives that in so many splendid men drive them to study along those lines.

The physicians of the distant future will heal human bodies in a very different way. They will understand the virtues of simples, of minerals and of plants. They will understand how certain juices of plants and certain mineral extracts can be used; and these are much less harmful, or would be, or will be, when injected subcutaneously in preparations properly treated and properly understood, than are these animal extracts taken from other bodies, and usually from bodies of unfortunate beasts. We hear a great deal about the successes of this latter method of practice: about the apparent cures; but the failures we hear very little of: I repeat that we hear very little about the failures.

There is one way of treating a human being's disease by using extracts taken from the body of the diseased person himself, when these extracts are properly treated and properly prepared and properly used. This method of practice would not be so repulsive to me – at least not repulsive in the same degree; and to such a procedure I would not personally, in all probability, raise any strenuous objection. My feeling in such case would be more or less neutral; but to inject into the blood-stream of one man, extracts taken from the diseased body of some other man, or even from the apparently healthy body of some other man, or from the body of some diseased beast, is something against which I cannot do otherwise than instinctively revolt. This revolt is instinctual.

There is another side to this matter too, which to many people who do not think very much would sound heartless. And yet I feel

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it my duty briefly to allude to this. Diseases are often terrible. It is the duty of physicians to help, if they can, to alleviate pain: in short to heal, if they can. But nevertheless the actual truth about disease is that it is a purgation through the suffering body; and the physician of the future, as I have so often told you, will know how to aid Nature in this purgation, so that the disease will work itself off or out easily, quickly, and without injuring the body. Now this is a beautiful and a wonderful thing for medical science to look forward to. Most attempts to heal actually are like the practices of the Christian Scientists along their own line: an attempt to dam back the disease, to throw it back into the system, in other words to check its course. How can you blame our physicians? If they let the disease run its course, it may mean death, and it may also mean horrible pain. So you see that the physicians try to do right. You cannot blame them, because they do not know.

Thus you see the difficulty that is involved here – the various difficulties that are involved in this problem. I sometimes feel almost inclined to say: Stick to the few well-tried remedies that the experience of the ages has shown to be helpful. Try to do all you can by diet, by exercise, by bathing, by hygiene, by sanitation. Try to help your patients mentally and spiritually. Few physicians realize how the suffering patient turns in almost pathetic trust to the doctor who comes to his bed-side; and true healing is helping the body to heal itself.

As to the medical practice of so-called 'transfusion of blood,' this is just one of the many things that in the Occident have grown up largely around the practice of vivisection – not entirely perhaps, but largely. Such ideas are all Atlantean in type and in character. They are essentially filthy because they lack cleanliness. There is also in this practice the possibility of injecting the latent seeds of

disease from man to man, and the mere wish to give of one's blood to the dying friend, or the sick friend, in the belief that this medical practice is useful, is not enough to take away from it the foul stigma of moral and physical uncleanness. I wonder how many diseases have been implanted into the veins of the recipient, how many times has disease been transferred with the transfusion of blood? I do not care to allude to the psychic aspect this, but I can assure you that if you could see on the other plane—see and understand what goes on when livingblood passes from the veins of one man to the veins of another man—you would be horrified.

I have heard of human beings drinking human blood. It has

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happened, and happened frequently, in times when men have lost their reason temporarily, but that is a small thing as compared with the direct transference of blood from the veins of one to the veins of someone else. The Mosaic teaching is right: "In the blood is the life." For what is blood? It is actually condensed or concreted vitality, and therefore is the original carrier of disease, just as well as the original carrier of health. The idea of blood-transfusion has always shocked me. I classify it in my mind with other unclean practices that doubtless you all have heard of. It can easily sow in the new blood-stream the latent seeds of disease in the rare cases where it is otherwise successful.

Rather large claims have been made for this practice; these claims are reiterated and advertised until some new fad or some new discovery directs the attention away to some new thing, and then the old claims are forgotten or fall into abeyance. The annals of medicine are filled with the proofs of what I have just said. A time was, and it was not so long ago, when it was considered not merely a professional crime, but a moral crime, to give a cup of cold water to a fever-stricken patient – the very thing that the sufferer needed most.

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Before leaving this phase of the subject, brief mention should be made of the 'germ-theory of disease' which is so widely accepted in modern medicine as explaining the causes of most, if not all, diseases; which theory is at the basis of the use of vaccines and serums in the treatment of such diseases as smallpox, typhoid, diphtheria, scarlet fever, etc. So widespread is the acceptance of this theory that, at least in one school of so-called regular medicine, 'official' medicine it might be called, inoculation is made compulsory as a preventive of one or another or of all such diseases. Instead of teaching right living, clean living, unselfish living, fear is engendered, followed either by voluntary or, as is often the case, compulsory submission to inoculation.

Nevertheless, there is partial truth in the 'germ-theory,' but not in the sense that germs or bacteria are the primary causes of disease. This is not so; the teaching of the Esoteric Science is that germs are secondary invaders, scavengers. It is true, however, that the so-called companions of disease are what modern science calls germs, microbes, bacteria. what not. These likewise, although the resultants or companions of a diseased condition of the body, can cause disease in another being into whom they may be transplanted, whether by coming through the air, or in the food, or by contacting dirt,

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or what not. But no such microbe or bacterium or germ can live in a system which is immune, in other words can multiply in a system which is without the psychic originating seed of the same disease. When the seed is already in the body then the germ or bacterium will multiply and the disease begins. It is impossible for any human being to contract any disease unless the seed of that disease be already lying latent in him.

However, as very few human beings are sufficiently enlightened to know whether they have the seeds of this or some other disease within, ordinary prudence should of course be exercised. This means, of course, that care should be taken not to do foolish things in exposing oneself unnecessarily to infection. Some diseases work out of the system gently as time passes, without causing death; but disease may become virulent and possibly kill. Therefore common prudence

demands care. On the other hand, needless fear is one of the worst possible things to carry around with you. It opens the doors to psychic infection, which weakens the system in its turn.

I think that enough has been said about these medical questions. There is much that concerns them that I cannot touch upon in this Degree because it deals with matters concerning physiological mysteries. For instance, the mere question of anatomy. I was once asked to answer a question as to why such mystery should have been made among the ancients about teaching so simple a thing as human anatomy: was it a crime to do it? Yes, it was a crime for the ancients, because the teaching that they would have given about it was the truth, and the true teachings concerning human anatomy would open up mysteries to which no one has a right who is not irrevocably pledged. There is the simple fact. The mere anatomical description of the bones is relatively nothing, amounts to nothing at all, relatively speaking, and the mere chemical composition of the bones would have been considered to be nothing at all from the ancient standpoint. They did not cure diseases by experimental chemical methods so much as they did by an intuitive understanding of what the disease was, how it originated, and how to apply, at the exactly proper point and at the appropriate time and in the right circumstances, the healing remedy.

Consider a moment: suppose that one of you, a physician, knew the origin of every disease and also knew how to cure it quickly, and in consequence went through the world doing works of medical beneficence and compassion, healing all and sundry whom he might meet: would he be doing his Masters' work? I tell you that I am doubtful, and that I am obliged to say, Nay. In your present state as physicians and learners, it is your duty to heal your fellow-men

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as best you can, using every good scientific remedy, every approved scientific resource that you have at hand and that you have proved to be at least not harmful and not a mere medical fad.

But how would you dare, knowing the causes, knowing that the human being is paying his debt and that until that debt is paid and also that if it be not paid the human being will remain in torment: how would you dare to interfere with another's karma after the manner that I have outlined? Pray think the matter over and this will not seem so harsh and unkindly as at first blush it may appear. It is based upon great wisdom and true compassion. Knowing, according to the hypothetical case that I have outlined, so much, being of so illuminated a mind, knowing what disease is, how it originated and what the resultants would be, would you dare to interfere with another person's soul-progress?

This explanation should be in a way a test for you. Watch yourselves; watch your reactions; and remember this: any human being, and in especial any member of our Holy Order, who omits to do a work of pity, who omits, who fails, to extend a helping hand to relieve suffering and pain, is a monster.

Remember that physical and mental diseases of men are purges of the evil of their souls. Reflect upon this! No Sage, no true Seer, no Master of Wisdom, ever interferes with the karmic law; for these are the Servants of that law and manifest it in their works among men. In some senses also are they the bringers about of the karmic law; for thus is natural equilibrium achieved and evolution advanced. Yet it is the duty of men to try to heal each other by every means in their power, by research, by compassionate thought, and especially by receiving the keys that the Ancient Wisdom gives, if they are awakened enough to understand these keys.

Whence arise diseases ultimately? In man's evil thoughts, in his selfish impulses, in his egoistic propensities; and so the natural way, the easy way, the simplest way, the least harmful way, of ridding oneself of these diseases is letting them pass out through the body, though they may and usually do thereby bring about physical disturbances. Cut the roots of diseases and you shall have peace.

Yea, the Sages and the Seers of the past were healers, but healers of the souls of men of the spirit of egoism, of the spirit of self-love, of the spirit of evil aiding the hordes of passions lurking in the human breast, which are the offspring of human thinking and desires. Heal these and you heal the body.