



THE OCCULT SIGNIFICANCE OF BLOOD

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AN ESOTERIC STUDY by RUDOLF STEINER, Ph.D. (Vienna), 1912

“Blood is a very Special Fluid”

Each one of you will doubtless be aware that the title of this lecture is taken from Goethe’s *Faust*. You all know that in this poem we are shown how Faust, the representative of the highest human effort, enters into a pact with the evil powers, who on their side are represented in the poem by Mephistopheles, the emissary of hell. You will know, too, that Faust is to strike a bargain with Mephistopheles, the deed of which must be signed with his own blood. Faust, in the first instance, looks upon it as a jest. Mephistopheles, however, at this juncture utters the sentence which Goethe without a doubt intended should be taken seriously: “Blood is a very special fluid.”

Now, with reference to this line in Goethe’s *Faust*, we come to a curious trait in the so-called Goethe commentators. You are of course aware how vast is the literature dealing with Goethe’s version of the Faust Legend. It is a literature of such stupendous dimensions that whole libraries might be stocked with it, and naturally I cannot make it my business to expatiate on the various comments made by these interpreters of Goethe concerning this particular passage. None of the interpretations throw much more light on the sentence than that given by one of the latest commentators, Professor Minor. He, like others, treats it in the light of an ironical remark made by Mephistopheles, and in this connection he makes the following really very curious observation, and one to which I would ask you to give your best attention; for there is little doubt that you will be surprised to hear what strange conclusions commentators on Goethe are capable of drawing.

Professor Minor remarks that “the devil is a foe to the blood”; and he points out that as the blood is that which sustains and preserves life, the devil, who is the enemy of the human race, must therefore also be the enemy of the blood. He then – and quite rightly – draws attention to the fact that even in the oldest versions of the Faust Legend – and, indeed, in legends generally – blood always plays the same part.

In an old book on Faust it is circumstantially described to us how Faust makes a slight incision in his left hand with a small penknife, and how then, as he takes the pen to sign his name to the agreement, the blood flowing from the cut forms the words: “O man, escape!” All this is authentic enough; but now comes the remark that the devil is a foe to the blood, and that this is the reason for his demanding that the signature be written in blood. I should like to ask you whether you can imagine any person being desirous of possessing the very thing for which he has an antipathy? The only reasonable explanation that can be given – not only as to Goethe’s meaning in this passage, but also as to that attaching to the main legend as well as to all the older Faust poems – is that to the devil blood was something special, and that it was not at all a matter of indifference to him whether the deed was signed in ordinary neutral ink, or in blood.

We can here suppose nothing else than that the representative of the powers of evil believes – nay, is convinced – that he will have Faust more especially in his power if he can only gain possession of at least one drop of his blood. This is self-evident, and no one can really understand the line otherwise. Faust is to inscribe his name in his own blood, not because the devil is inimical to it, but rather because he desires to gain power over it.

Now, there is a remarkable perception underlying this passage, namely, that he who gains power over a man's blood gains power over the man, and that blood is a "very special fluid" because it is that about which, so to speak, the real fight must be waged, when it comes to a struggle concerning the man between good and evil.

All those things which have come down to us in the legends and myths of various nations, and which touch upon human life, will in our day undergo a peculiar transformation with regard to the whole conception and interpretation of human nature. The age is past in which legends, fairy-tales, and myths were looked upon merely as expressions of the childlike fancy of a people. Indeed, the time has even gone by when, in a half-learned, half-childlike way, it was the fashion to allude to legends as the poetical expression of a nation's soul.

Now, this so-called "poetic soul" of a nation is nothing but the product of learned red-tape; for this kind of red-tape exists just as much of the official variety. Anyone who has ever looked into the soul of a people is quite well aware that he is not dealing with the imaginative fiction or anything of the kind, but with something very much more profound, and that as a matter of fact the legends and fairy-tales of the various peoples are expressive of wonderful powers and wonderful events.

If from the new standpoint of spiritual investigation we meditate upon the old legends and myths, allowing those grand and powerful pictures which have come down from primeval times to work upon our minds, we shall find, if we have been equipped for our task by the methods of occult science, that these legends and myths are the expressions of a most profound and ancient wisdom.

It is true we may at first be inclined to ask how it comes about that, in a primitive state of development and with primitive ideas, unsophisticated man was able to present the riddles of the universe to himself pictorially in these legends and fairy-tales; and how it is that, when we meditate on them now, we behold in them in pictorial form what the occult investigation of to-day is revealing to us with greater clearness.

This is a matter which at first is bound to excite surprise. And yet he who probes deeper and deeper into the ways and means by which these fairy-tales and myths have come into being, will find every trace of surprise vanish, every doubt pass away; indeed, he will find in these legends not only what is termed a naïve and unsophisticated view of things, but the wondrously deep and wise expression of a primordial and true conception of the world.

Very much more may be learned by thoroughly examining the foundations of these myths and legends, than by absorbing intellectual and experimental science of the present day. But for work of this kind the student must of course be familiar with those methods of investigation which belong to spiritual science. Now, all that is contained in these legends and ancient world-conceptions about blood is wont to be of importance, since in those remote times there was a wisdom by means of which man understood the true and wide significance of blood, this "very special fluid" which is itself the flowing life of human beings.

We cannot to-day enter into the question as to whence came this wisdom of ancient times, although some indication of this will be given at the close of the lecture; the actual study of this subject must, however, stand over to be dealt with in future lectures. The blood itself, its import for man and the part it places in the progress of human civilisation, will to-day occupy our attention.

We shall consider it neither from the physiological nor from the purely scientific point of view, but shall rather take it from the standpoint of a spiritual conception of the universe. We shall best approach our subject if, to begin with, we understand the meaning of an ancient maxim, one of which is intimately connected with the civilisation of ancient Egypt, where the

priestly wisdom of Hermes flourished. It is an axiom which forms the fundamental principle of all spiritual science, and which has become known as the Hermetic Axiom; it runs, "As above, so below."

You will find that there are many dilettante interpretations of this sentence; the explanation, however, which is to occupy us to-day is the following:— It is plain to spiritual science that the world to which man has primary access by means of his five senses does not represent the entire world, that it is in fact only the expression of a deeper world hidden behind it, namely, the spiritual world. Now, this spiritual world is called – according to the Hermetic Axiom – the higher world, the world of "above"; and the world of the senses which is displayed around us, the existence of which we know through the medium of our senses, and which we are able to study by means of our intellect, is the lower one, the world "below," the expression of that higher and spiritual world. Thus the occultist, looking upon this world of the senses, sees in it nothing final, but rather a kind of physiognomy which he recognises as the expression of a world of soul and spirit; just as, when you gaze upon a human countenance, you must not stop at the form of the face and the gestures, paying attention only to them, but must pass, as a matter of course, from the physiognomy and the gestures to the spiritual element which is expressed in them.

What every person does instinctively when confronted by any being possessed of a soul, is what the occultist, or spiritual scientist, does in respect of the entire world; and "as above, so below" would, when referring to man, be thus explained: "Every impulse animating his soul is expressed in his face." A hard and coarse countenance expresses coarseness of soul, a smile tells of inward joy, a tear betrays a suffering soul.

I will here apply the Hermetic Axiom to the question: What actually constitutes wisdom? Spiritual science has always maintained that human wisdom has something to do with experience, and that painful experience. He who is actually in the throes of suffering manifests in this suffering something that is an inward lack of harmony. He, however, who has overcome the pain and suffering and bears their fruits within him, will always tell you that through suffering he has gained some measure of wisdom. "The joys and pleasures of life, all that life can offer me in the way of satisfaction, all these things do I receive gratefully; yet were I far more loth to part with my past pain and suffering than with those pleasant gifts of life, for 'it is to my pain and suffering that I owe my wisdom.'"

And so it is that in wisdom occult science has ever recognised what may be called crystallised pain – pain that has been conquered and thus changed into its opposite.

It is interesting to note that the more materialistic modern research has of late arrived at exactly the same conclusion. Quite recently a book that has been published on "The Mimicry of Thought," a book well worth reading. It is not the work of a theosophist, but of a student of nature and of the human soul. The author endeavours to show how the inner life of man, his way of thinking, as it were, impresses itself upon his physiognomy. The student of human nature draws attention to the fact that there is always something in the expression on the face of a thinker which is suggestive of what one might describe as "absorbed pain."

Thus you see that this principle comes to light again in the more materialistic view of our own day, a brilliant confirmation of that immemorial axiom of spiritual science. You will become more and more deeply sensible of this, and you will find that gradually, point for point, the ancient wisdom will reappear in the science of modern times.

Occult investigation shows decisively that all the things which surround us in this world – the mineral foundation, the vegetable covering, and the animal world – should be regarded as the physiognomical expression, or the "below," of an "above" or spirit life lying behind them.

From the point of view taken by occultism, the things presented to us in the sense-world can only be rightly understood if our knowledge includes cognition of the “above,” the spiritual archetype, the original Spiritual Beings, whence all things manifest have proceeded. And for this reason we will to-day apply our minds to a study of that which lies concealed behind the phenomenon of the blood, that which shaped for itself in the blood its physiognomical expression in the world of sense. When once you understand this “spiritual background” of blood, you will be able to realise how the knowledge of such matters is bound to react upon our whole mental outlook on life.

Questions of great importance are pressing upon us in these days; questions dealing with the education, not alone of the young, but of entire nations. And, furthermore, we are confronted by the momentous educational question which humanity will have to face in the future, and which cannot fail to be recognised by all who note the great social upheavals of our time, and the claims which are everywhere being advanced, be they incorporated in the Woman Question, the Labour Question, or the Question of Peace. All these things are preoccupying our anxious minds.

But all such questions are illuminated as soon as we recognise the nature of the spiritual essence which lies at the back of our blood. Who can deny that this question is closely linked to that of race, which at the present time is once more coming markedly to the front? Yet this question of race is one that we can never understand until we understand the mysteries of the blood and of the results accruing from the mingling of the blood of different races. And finally, there is yet one other question, the importance of which is becoming more and more acute as we endeavour to extricate ourselves from the hitherto aimless methods of dealing with it, and seek to approach it in its more comprehensive bearings. This problem is that of colonisation, which crops up wherever civilised races come into contact with the uncivilised: namely – To what extent are uncivilised peoples capable of becoming civilised? How can a negro or an utterly barbaric savage become civilised? And in what way ought we to deal with them? And here we have to consider not only the feelings due to a vague morality, but we are also confronted by the great, serious, and vital problems of the very fact of existence itself.

Those who are not aware of the conditions governing a people – whether it be on the up- or down-grade of its evolution, and whether the one or the other is a matter conditioned by its blood – such people as these will, indeed, be unlikely to hit on the right mode of introducing civilisation to an alien race. These are all matters which arise as soon as the Blood Question is touched upon.

What blood in itself is, you presumably all know from the current teachings of natural science, and you will be aware that, with regard to man and the higher animals, this blood is practically fluid life.

You are aware that it is by way of the blood that the “inner man” comes into contact with that which is exterior, and that in the course of this process man’s blood absorbs oxygen, which constitutes the very breath of life. Through the absorption of this oxygen the blood undergoes a renewal. The blood which is presented to the instreaming oxygen is a kind of poison to the organism – a kind of destroyer and demolisher, – but through the absorption of the oxygen the blue-red blood becomes transmuted by a process of combustion into red, life-giving fluid. This blood that finds its way to all parts of the body, depositing everywhere its particles of nourishment, has the task of directly assimilating the materials of the outer world, and of applying them, by the shortest method possible, to the nourishment of the body. It is necessary for man and the higher animals first to absorb such foodstuffs into their blood, to absorb the oxygen from the air into it, and to build up and maintain the body by means of it.

One gifted with a knowledge of souls has not without truth remarked: “The blood with its circulation is like a second being, and in relation to the man of bone, muscle, and nerve, acts like a kind of exterior world.” For, as a matter of fact, the entire human being is continually drawing his sustenance from the blood, and at the same time he discharges into it that for which he has no use. A man’s blood is therefore a true double ever bearing him company, from which he draws new strength, and to which he gives all that he can no longer use. “Man’s liquid life” is therefore a good name to have given to the blood; for this constantly changing “special fluid” is assuredly as important to man as is cellulose to the lower organisms.

The distinguished scientist, Ernst Haeckel, who has probed deeply into the workings of nature, in several of his popular works has rightly drawn attention to the fact that blood is in reality the latest factor to originate in an organism. If we follow the development of the human embryo we find that the rudiments of bone and muscle are evolved long before the first tendency towards blood formation becomes apparent. The groundwork for the formation of blood, with all its attendant systems of blood-vessels, appears very late in the development of the embryo, and from this natural science has rightly concluded that the formation of blood occurred late in the evolution of the universe; that other powers which were there had to be raised to the height of blood, so to speak, in order to bring about at that height what was to be accomplished inwardly in the human being. Not until the human embryo has repeated in itself all the earlier stages of human growth, thus attaining to the condition in which the world was before the formation of blood, is it ready to perform this crowning act of evolution – the transmuting and uplifting of all that had gone before into the “very special fluid” which we call Blood.

If we would study those mysterious laws of the spiritual universe which exist behind the blood, we must occupy ourselves a little with some of the most elementary concepts of Theosophy. These have often been set forth, and you will see that these elementary ideas of Theosophy are the “above,” and that this “above” is expressed in the important laws governing the blood – as well as the rest of life – as though in a physiognomy.

Those present who are already well acquainted with the primary laws of Theosophy will, I trust, here permit a short repetition of them for the benefit of others who are here for the first time. Indeed, such repetition may serve to render these laws more and more clear to the former, by hearing them thus applied to new and special cases. To those, of course, who know nothing about Theosophy, who have not yet familiarised themselves with these conceptions of life and of the universe, that which I am about to say may seem little else than so many words strung together, of which they can make nothing. But the fault does not always consist in the lack of an idea behind the words, when the latter convey nothing to a person. Indeed, we may here adopt, with a slight alteration, a remark of the witty Lichtenberg, who said: “If a head and a book come into collision and the resulting sound is a hollow one, the fault need not necessarily be that of the book!”

And so it is with our contemporaries when they pass judgement on theosophical truths. If these truths should in the ears of many sound like mere words, words to which they cannot attach any meaning, the fault need not necessarily rest with Theosophy; those, however, who have found their way into these matters will know that behind all allusions to higher Beings, such Beings do actually exist, although they are not to be found in the world of the senses.

Our theosophical conception of the universe shows us that man, as far as he is revealed to our senses in the external world, as far as his shape and form are concerned, is but a part of the complete human being, and that, in fact, there are many other parts behind the physical body. Man possesses this physical body in common with all the so-called “lifeless” mineral objects

that surround him. Over and above this, however, man possesses the etheric, or vital body. (The term “etheric” is not here used in the same sense as when applied by physical science.) This etheric or vital body, as it is sometimes called, far from being any figment of the imagination, is as distinctly visible to the developed spiritual senses of the occultist as are externally perceptible colours to the physical eye. This etheric body can actually be seen by the clairvoyant. It is the principle which calls the inorganic materials into life, which, summoning them from their lifeless condition, weaves them into the thread of life’s garment. Do not imagine that this body is to the occultist merely something which he adds in thought to what is lifeless. That is what the natural scientists try to do! They try to complete what they see with the microscope by inventing something which they call the life-principle.

Now, such a standpoint is not taken by theosophical research. This has a fixed principle. It does not say: “Here I stand as a seeker, just as I am. All that there is in the world must conform to my present point of view. What I am unable to perceive has no existence!” This sort of argument is about as sensible as if a blind man were to say that colours are simply matters of fancy. The man who knows nothing about a matter is not in the position to judge of it, but rather he into whose range of experiences such matters may have entered.

Now man is in a state of evolution, and for this reason Theosophy says: “If you remain as you are you will not see the etheric body, and may therefore indeed speak of the ‘boundaries of knowledge’ and of ‘Ignorabimus’; but if you develop, and acquire, the necessary faculties for the cognition of spiritual things, you will no longer speak of the ‘boundaries of knowledge,’ for these only exist as long as man has not developed his inner senses.” It is for this reason that agnosticism constitutes so heavy a drag upon our civilisation; for it says: “Man is thus and thus, and being thus and thus he can know only this and that.” To such a doctrine we reply: “Though he be thus and thus to-day, he has to become different, and when different he will then know something else.”

So the second part of man is the etheric body, which he possesses in common with the vegetable kingdom.

The third part is the so-called astral body – a significant and beautiful name, the reason for which shall be explained later. Theosophists who are desirous of changing this name can have no idea of what is implied therein. To the astral body is assigned the task, in man and in animal, of lifting up the life-substance to the plane of feeling, so that in the life-substance may move not only fluids, but also that in it may be expressed all that is known as pain and pleasure, joy and grief. And here you have at once the essential difference between the plant and the animal; although there are certain states of transition between these two.

A recent school of naturalists is of opinion that feeling, in its literal sense, should also be ascribed to plants; this, however, is but playing with words; for, though it is obvious that certain plants are of so sensitive an organisation that they “respond” to particular things that may be brought near to them, yet such a condition cannot be described as “feeling.” In order that “feeling” may exist, an image must be formed within the being as the reflex of that which produces the sensation. If, therefore, certain plants respond to external stimulus, this is no proof that the plant answers to the stimulus by a feeling, that is, that it experiences it inwardly. That which has inward experience has its seat in the astral body. And so we come to see that which has attained to animal conditions consists of the physical body, the etheric or vital body, and the astral body.

Man, however, towers above the animal through the possession of something quite distinct, and thoughtful people have at all times been aware wherein this superiority consists. It is indicated in what Jean Paul says of himself in his autobiography. He relates that he could

quite well remember the day when he stood as a child in the courtyard of his parents' house, and the thought suddenly flashed across his mind that he was an ego, a being, capable of inwardly saying "I" to itself; and he tells us that this made a profound impression upon him.

All the so-called external science of the soul overlooks the most important point which is here involved. I will ask you, therefore, to follow me for a few moments in making a survey of what is a very subtle argument, yet one which will show you how the matter stands. In the whole of human speech, there is one small word which differs *in toto* from all the rest. Each one of you can name the things around you; each one of you can call a table a table, and a chair a chair. But there is one word, one name, which you cannot apply to anything save to that which owns it, and this is the little word "I." None can address another as "I." This "I" has to sound forth from the innermost soul itself; it is the name which only the soul itself can apply to itself. Every other person is a "you" to me, and I am a "you" to him. All religions have recognised this "I" as the expression of that principle in the soul through which its innermost being, its divine nature, is enabled to speak. Here, then, begins that which can never penetrate through the exterior senses, which can never, in its real significance, be named from without, but which must sound forth from the innermost being. Here begins that monologue, that soliloquy of the soul, whereby the divine self makes known its presence when the path lies clear for the coming of the Spirit into the human soul.

In the religions of earlier civilisations, among the ancient Hebrews, for instance, this name was known as "the unutterable name of God," and whatever interpretation modern philology may choose to place upon it, the ancient Jewish name of God has no other meaning than that which is expressed in our word "I." A thrill passed through those assembled when the "Name of the Unknown God" was pronounced by the Initiates, when they dimly perceived what was meant by those words reverberating through the temple "I am that I am."

In this word is expressed a fourth principle of human nature, the one that man alone possesses while on earth; and this "I" in its turn encloses and develops within itself the germs of higher stages of humanity.

We can only take a passing glance at what in the future will be evolved through this fourth principle. We must point out that man consists of a physical body, an etheric body, an astral body and the ego, or actual inner self; and that within this inner self are the rudiments of three further stages of development which will originate in blood. These are Manas, Buddhi, and Âtmâ:

Manas, the Spirit-Self, as distinguished from the bodily self;

Buddhi, the Life-Spirit;

Âtmâ, the actual and true Spirit-Man, a far-off ideal to the man of to-day; the rudimentary germ now latent within, but destined in future ages to reach perfection.

We have seven colours in the rainbow, seven tones in the scale, seven series of atomic weights, and seven grades in the scale of the human being; and these again are divided into four lower and three higher grades.

We will now attempt to get a clear insight into the way in which this upper spiritual triad secures a physiognomical expression in the lower quaternary, and how it appears to us in the world of the senses. Take, in the first place, that which has crystallised into form as man's physical body; this he possesses in common with the whole of what is called "lifeless" nature. When we talk theosophically of the physical body, we do not even mean that which the eye beholds, but rather that combination of forces has constructed the physical body, that living Force which exists behind the visible form.

Let us now observe a plant. This is a being possessed of an etheric body, which raises physical substance to life; that is, it converts that substance into living sap. What is it that transforms the so-called lifeless forces into the living sap? We call it the etheric body, and the etheric body does precisely the same work in animals and in men; it causes that which has a merely material existence to become a living configuration, a living form.

This etheric body is, in its turn, permeated by an astral body. And what does the astral body do? It causes the substance which has been set in motion to experience inwardly the circulation of those outwardly moving fluids, so that the external movement is reflected in inward experience.

We have now arrived at the point where we are able to comprehend man so far as concerns his place in the animal kingdom. All the substances of which man is composed, such as oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen, sulphur, phosphorus, etc., are to be found outside in inanimate nature also. If that which enters the etheric body has transformed into living substance is to have inner experiences, if it is to create inner reflections of that which takes place externally, then the etheric body must be permeated by what we have come to know as the astral body, for it is the astral body that gives rise to sensation. But at this stage the astral body calls forth sensation only in one particular way. The etheric body changes the inorganic substances into vital fluids, and the astral body in its turn transforms this vital substance into sentient substance; but – and this I ask you specially to notice – what is it that a being with no more than these three bodies is capable of feeling? It feels only itself, its own life-processes; it leads a life that is confined within itself.

Now, this is a most extraordinary fact, and one of extraordinary importance for us to bear in mind. If you look at one of the lower animals, what do you find it has accomplished? It has transformed inanimate substance into living substance, and living substance into sensitive substance: and sensitive substance can only be found where there exists, at all events, the rudiments of what at a later stage appears as a developed nervous system.

Thus we have inanimate substance, living substance, and substance permeated by nerves capable of sensation. If you look at a crystal you have to recognise it primarily as the expression of certain natural laws which prevail in the external world in the so-called lifeless kingdom. No crystal could be formed without the assistance of all surrounding nature. No single link can be severed from the chain of the cosmos and set apart by life itself. And just as little can you separate from his environment man, who, if he were lifted to an altitude of even a few miles above the earth, must inevitably die. Just as man is only conceivable here in the place where he is, where the necessary forces are combined in him, so is it too with regard to the crystal; and therefore, whoever views a crystal rightly will see in it a picture of the whole of nature, indeed of the whole cosmos. What Cuvier said is actually the case, viz., that a competent anatomist will be able to tell to what sort of animal any given bone has belonged, every animal having its own particular kind of bone-formation.

Thus the whole cosmos lives in the form of a crystal. In the same way the whole cosmos is expressed in the living substance of a single being. The fluids coursing through a being are, at the same time, a little world, and a counterpart of the great world. And when substance has become capable of sensation, what then dwells in the sensations of the most elementary creatures? Such sensations mirror the cosmic laws, so that each separate living creature perceives within itself microcosmically the entire macrocosm. The sentient life of an elementary creature is this an image of the life of the universe, just as the crystal is an image of its form. The consciousness of such living creatures is, of course, but dim. Yet this very vagueness of consciousness is counterbalanced by its far greater range, for the whole cosmos

is felt in the dim consciousness of an elementary being. Now, in man there is only a more complicated structure of the same three bodies found in the simplest sensitive living creature.

Take man – without considering his blood – take him as a being made up of the substance of the surrounding physical world, and containing, like the plant, certain juices which transform it into living substance, and in which a nervous system gradually becomes organised. This first nervous system is the so-called sympathetic system, and in the case of man it extends along the entire length of the spine, to which it is attached by small threads on either side. It has also at each end a series of nodes, from which threads branch off to different parts, such as the lungs, the digestive organs, and so on. This sympathetic nervous system gives rise, in the first place, to the life of sensation just described. But man's consciousness does not extend deep enough to enable him to follow the cosmic processes mirrored by these nerves. They are a medium of expression, and just as human life is formed from the surrounding cosmic world, so is this cosmic world reflected again in the sympathetic nervous system. These nerves live a dim inward life, and if man were but able to dip down into his "sympathetic" system, and to lull his higher nervous system to sleep, he would behold, as in a state of luminous life, the silent workings of the mighty cosmic laws.

In past times people were possessed of a clairvoyant faculty which is now superseded, but which may be experienced when, by special processes, the activity of the higher system of nerves is suspended, thus setting free the lower or subliminal consciousness. At such times man lives in that system of nerves which, in its own particular way, is a reflection of the surrounding world.

Certain lower animals indeed still retain this state of consciousness, and, dim and indistinct though it is, yet it is essentially more far-reaching than the consciousness of the man of the present day. A widely extending world is reflected as a dim inward life, not merely a small section such as is perceived by contemporary man. But in the case of man something else has taken place in addition. When evolution has proceeded so far that the sympathetic nervous system has been developed, so that the cosmos has been reflected in it, the evolving being again at this point opens itself outwards; to the sympathetic system is added the spinal cord. The system of brain and spinal cord then leads to those organs through which connection is set up with the outer world.

Man, having progressed thus far, is no longer called upon to act merely as a mirror for reflecting the primordial laws of cosmic evolution, but a relation is set up between the reflection itself and the external world. The junction of the sympathetic system and the higher nervous system is expressive of the change which has taken place beforehand in the astral body. The latter no longer merely lives in the cosmic life in a state of dull consciousness, but it adds thereto its own special inward existence. The sympathetic system enables a being to sense what is taking place outside it; the higher system of nerves enables it to perceive that which happens within, and the highest form of the nervous system, such as is possessed by mankind in general the present stage of evolution, takes from the more highly developed astral body material for the creation of pictures, or re-presentations, of the outer world. Man has lost the power of perceiving the former dim primitive pictures of the external world, but, on the other hand, he is now conscious of his inner life, and out of this inner life he forms, at a higher stage, a new world of images in which, it is true, only a small portion of the outer world is reflected, but in a clearer and more perfect manner than before.

Hand in hand with this transformation another change takes place in higher stages of development. The transformation thus begun extends from the astral body to the etheric body. As the etheric body in the process of its transformation evolves the astral body, as to the sympathetic nervous system is added the system of the brain and spine, so, too, does that

which – after receiving the lower circulation of fluids – has grown out of and become free from the etheric body now transmute these lower fluids into what we know as blood.

Blood is, therefore, an expression of the individualised etheric body, just as the brain and spinal cord are the expression of the individualised astral body. And it is this individualising which brings about that which lives as the ego or “I.”

Having followed man thus far in his evolution, we find that we have to do with a chain of consisting of five links, affecting –

1. The Physical Body;
2. The Etheric Body and
3. The Astral Body. These links are:–
4. The inorganic, neutral, physical forces;
5. The vital fluids, which are also found in plants;
6. The lower or sympathetic nervous system;
7. The higher astral body, which has been evolved from the lower one, and which finds its expression in the spinal cord and the brain;
8. The Principle that individualises the etheric body.

Just as these two latter principles have been individualised, so will the first principle through which lifeless matter enters the human body, serving to build it up, also become individualised; but in our present-day humanity we find only the first rudiments of this transformation

We have seen how the external formless substances enter the human body, and how the etheric body turns these materials into living forms; how, further, the astral body fashions pictures of the external world, and how this reflection of the external world resolves itself into inner experiences, and how this inner life then reproduces from within itself pictures of the outer world.

Now, when this metamorphosis extends to the etheric body, blood is formed. The blood-vessels, together with the heart, are the expression of the transformed etheric body, in the same way in which the spinal cord and the brain express the transformed astral body. Just as by means of the brain the external world is experienced inwardly, so also by means of the blood this inner world is transformed into an outer expression in the body of man. I shall have to speak in similes in order to describe to you the complicated processes which have now to be taken into account.

The blood absorbs those pictures of the outside world which the brain has formed within, transforms them into living constructive forces, and with them builds up the present human body. Blood is therefore the material that builds up the human body. We have before us a process in which the blood extracts from its cosmic environment the highest substance it can possibly obtain, viz., oxygen, which renews the blood and supplies it with fresh life. In this manner our blood is caused to open itself to the outer world.

We have thus followed the path from the exterior world to the interior one, and also back again from that inner world to the outer one. Two things are now possible. We see that blood originates when man confronts the external world as an independent being, when out of the perceptions to which the external world has given rise, he in his turn produces different shapes and pictures on his own account, thus himself becoming creative, and making it possible for the Ego, the individual Will, to come into life. A being whom in this process had

not yet taken place would not be able to say "I." In the blood lies the principle for the development of the ego. The "I" can only be expressed when a being is able to form within itself the pictures which it has obtained from the outer world. An "I-being" must be capable of taking the external world into itself, and of inwardly reproducing it.

Were man merely endowed with a brain, he would only be able to reproduce pictures of the outer world within himself, and to experience them within himself; he would then only be able to say: "The outer world is reflected in me as in a mirror." If, however, he is able to build up a new form for this reflection of the external world, this form is no longer merely the external world reflected, it is "I." A creature possessed of a sympathetic nervous system only reflects the world which surrounds it; it does not perceive that outer world as itself, as its inner life. A being possessed of a spinal cord and a brain perceives the reflection as its inner life. But when a creature possesses blood, it experiences its inner life as its own form. By means of the blood, assisted by the oxygen of the external world, the individual body is formed according to the pictures of the inner life. This formation is expressed as the perception of the "I."

The ego turns in two directions, and the blood expresses this fact externally. The vision of the ego is directed inwards; they build up the inner man, and again they are turned outwards to the oxygen of the external world. This is why, on going to sleep, man sinks into unconsciousness; he sinks into that which his consciousness can experience in the blood. When, however, he again opens his eyes to the outer world, his blood adds to its constructive forces the pictures produced by the brain and the senses. Thus the blood stands midway, as it were, between the inner world of pictures and the exterior living world of form. This role becomes clear to us when we study two phenomena, viz., ancestry – the relationship between conscious beings – and experience in the world of external events. Ancestry, or descent, places us where we stand in accordance with the law of blood-relationship. A person is born of a connection, a race, a tribe, a line of ancestors, and what these ancestors have bequeathed to him is expressed in his blood. In the blood is gathered together, as it were, all that the material past has constructed in man; and in the blood is also being formed all that is being prepared for the future.

When, therefore, man temporarily suppresses his higher consciousness, when he is in a hypnotic state, or one of somnambulism, or when he is atavistically clairvoyant, he descends to a far deeper consciousness, one wherein he becomes dreamily cognisant of the great cosmic laws, but nevertheless perceives them much more clearly than the most vivid dreams of ordinary sleep. At such times the activity of his brain is in abeyance, and during states of the deepest somnambulism this applies also to the spinal cord. The man experiences the activities of his sympathetic nervous system; that is to say, in a dim and hazy fashion he senses the life of the entire cosmos. At such times the blood no longer expresses pictures of the inner life which are produced by means of the brain, but it presents those which the outer world has formed in it. Now, however, we must bear in mind that the forces of his ancestors have helped to make him what he is. Just as he inherits the shape of his nose from an ancestor, so does he inherit the form of his whole body. At such times of suppressed consciousness he senses his ancestors within him, even as during his waking consciousness he senses the pictures of the outer world; that is to say, his forebears are active in his blood, and at such a time he dimly takes part in their remote life.

Everything in the world is in a state of evolution, human consciousness included. Man has not always had the consciousness he now possesses; when we go back to the time of our earliest ancestors, we find a consciousness of a different kind. At the present time man in his waking-life perceives external things through the agency of his senses and forms ideas about

them. These ideas about the external world work on his blood. Everything, therefore, of which he has been the recipient as the result of sense-experience, lives and is active in his blood; his memory is stored with these experiences of his senses. Yet, on the other hand, the man of to-day is no longer conscious of what he possesses in his inward bodily life by inheritance from his ancestors. He knows naught concerning the forms of his inner organs; but in earlier times this was otherwise. There then lived within the blood not only what the senses had received from the external world, but also that which is contained within the bodily form; and as that bodily form was inherited from his ancestors, man sensed their life within himself.

If we think of a heightened form of this consciousness, we shall have some idea of how this was also expressed in a corresponding form of memory. A person experiencing no more than what he perceives by his senses, remembers no more than the events connected with those outward sense-experiences. He can only be aware of such things as he may have experienced in this way since his childhood. But with prehistoric man the case was different. Such a man sensed what was within him, and as this inner experience was the result of heredity, he passed through the experiences of his ancestors by means of his inner faculty. He remembered not only his own childhood, but also the experiences of his ancestors. This life of his ancestors was, in fact, ever present in the pictures which his blood received, for, incredible as it may seem to the materialistic ideas of the present day, there was at one time a form of consciousness by means of which men considered not only their own sense-perceptions as their own experiences, but also the experiences of their forefathers. In those times, when they said, "I have experienced such and such a thing," they alluded not only to what had happened to themselves personally, but also to the experiences of their ancestors, for they could remember these.

This earlier consciousness was, it is true, of a very dim kind, very hazy as compared to man's waking consciousness at the present day. It partook more of the nature of a vivid dream, but, on the other hand, it embraced far more than does our present consciousness. The son felt himself connected with his father and his grandfather as one "I," because he felt their experiences as if they were his own. And because man was possessed of this consciousness, because he lived not only in his own personal world, but because within him there dwelt also the consciousness of preceding generations, in naming himself he included in that name all belonging to his ancestral line. Father, son, grandson, etc., designated by one name that which was common to them all, that which passed through them all; in short, a person felt himself to be merely a member of an entire line of descendants. This sensation was a true and actual one.

We must now enquire how it was that this form of consciousness was changed. It came about through a cause well known to occult history. If you go back into the past, you will find that there is one particular moment which stands out in the history of each nation. It is the moment at which a people enters on a new phase of civilisation, the moment when it ceases to have old traditions, when it ceases to possess its ancient wisdom, the wisdom which was handed down through generations by means of the blood. The nation possesses, nevertheless, a consciousness of it, and this is expressed in its legends.

In earlier times tribes held aloof from each other, and the individual members of families intermarried. You will find this to have been the case with all races and with all peoples; and it was an important moment for humanity when this principle was broken through, when foreign blood was introduced, and when marriage between relations was replaced by marriage with strangers, when endogamy gave place to exogamy. Endogamy preserves the blood of the generation; it permits of the same blood flowing in the separate members as

flows for generations through the entire tribe or the entire nation. Exogamy inoculates man with new blood, and this breaking-down of the tribal principle, this mixing of blood, which sooner or later takes place among all peoples, signifies the birth of the external understanding, the birth of the intellect.

The important thing to bear in mind here is, that in olden times there was a hazy clairvoyance, from which the myths and legends originated. This clairvoyance could exist in the nearly-related blood, just as our present-day consciousness comes about owing to the mingling of blood. The birth of logical thought, the birth of the intellect, was simultaneous with the advent of exogamy. Surprising as this may seem, it is nevertheless true. It is a fact which will be substantiated more and more by external investigation; indeed, the initial steps along this line have already been taken.

But this mingling of blood which comes about through exogamy is also that which at the same time obliterates the clairvoyance of earlier days, in order that humanity may evolve to a higher stage of development; and just as the person who has passed through the stages of occult development regains this clairvoyance, and transmutes it into a new form, so has our waking consciousness of the present day been evolved out of that dim and hazy clairvoyance which obtained in times of old.

At the present time everything in a man's environment is impressed upon his blood; hence the environment fashions the inner man in accordance with the outer world. In the case of primitive man it was that which was contained within the body that was more fully expressed in the blood. In those early times the recollection of ancestral experiences was inherited, and, along with this, good or evil tendencies. In the blood of the descendants were to be traced the effects of the ancestors' tendencies. Now, when the blood was mixed through exogamy, this close connection with ancestors was severed, and man began to live his own personal life. He began to regulate his moral tendencies according to what he experienced in his own personal life and in a mixed blood the power of personal experience.

The myths and legends tell of these things. They say: "That which has power over thy blood, has power over thee." This traditional power ceased when it could no longer work upon the blood, because the latter's capacity for responding to such power was extinguished by the admixture of foreign blood. This statement holds good to the widest extent. Whatever power it is that wishes to obtain the mastery over a man, that power must work upon him in such a way that the working is expressed in his blood. If, therefore, an evil power would influence a man, it must be able to influence his blood. This is the deep and spiritual meaning of the quotation from *Faust*. His is why the representative of the evil principle says: "Sign thy name to the pact with thy blood. If once I have thy name written in thy blood, then I can hold thee by that which above all sways a man; then shall I have drawn thee over to myself." For whoever has mastery over the blood is master of the man himself, or of the man's ego.

When two groups of people come into contact, as is the case in colonisation, then those who are acquainted with the conditions of evolution are able to foretell whether or no an alien form of civilisation can be assimilated by the others. Take, for example, a people that is the product of its environment, into whose blood this environment has built itself, and try to graft upon such a people a new form of civilisation. The thing is impossible. This is the reason why certain aboriginal peoples had to go under, as soon as colonists came to their particular parts of the world.

It is from this point of view that the question will have to be considered, and the idea that changes are capable of being forced upon all and sundry will in time cease to be upheld, for it is useless to demand from blood more than it can endure.

Modern science has discovered that if the blood of one animal is mixed with that of another not akin to it, the blood of the one is fatal to that of the other. This has been known to occultism for ages. If you mingle the blood of human beings with that of the lower apes, the result is destructive to the species, since the one is too far removed from the other. If, again, you mingle the blood of man with that of the higher apes, death does not ensure. Just as this mingling of the blood of different species of animals brings about actual death when the types are too remote, so, too, the ancient clairvoyance of undeveloped man was killed when his blood was mixed with the blood of others who did not belong to the same stock. The entire intellectual life of to-day is the outcome of the mingling of blood, and the time is not far distant when people will study the influence this had upon human life, and they will be able to trace it back in the history of humanity when investigations are once more conducted from this standpoint.

We have seen that blood united to blood in the case of remotely connected species of animals, kills; blood united to blood in the case of more closely allied species of animals, does not kill. The physical organism of man survives when strange blood comes in contact with strange blood, but clairvoyant power perishes under the influence of this mixing of blood, or exogamy.

Man is so constituted that when blood mingles with blood which is not too far removed in evolution, the intellect is born. By this means the original clairvoyance which belonged to the lower animal-man was destroyed, and a new form of consciousness took its place.

Thus in the higher stages of human development we find something similar to what happens at a lower stage in the animal kingdom. In the latter, strange blood kills strange blood. In the human kingdom strange blood kills that which is intimately bound up with kindred blood, viz., the dim, dreamy clairvoyance. Our every-day objective consciousness is therefore the outcome of a destructive process. In the course of evolution the kind of mental life due to endogamy has been destroyed, but in its stead exogamy has given birth to the intellect, to the wide-awake consciousness of the present day.

That which is able to live in man's blood is that which lives in his ego. Just as the physical body is the expression of the physical principle, as the etheric body is the expression of the vital fluids and their systems, and the astral body of the nervous system, so is the blood the expression of the "I," or ego. Physical principle, etheric body, and astral body are the "above"; physical body, vital system, and nervous system are the "below." Similarly, the ego is the "above," and the blood is the "below." Whoever, therefore, would master a man, must first master that man's blood. This must be borne in mind if any advance is to be made in practical life. For example, the individuality of a people may be destroyed if, when colonising, you demand from its blood more than it can bear, for in the blood the ego is expressed. Beauty and truth possess a man only when they possess his blood.

Mephistopheles obtains possession of Faust's blood because he desires to rule his ego. Hence we may say that the sentence which has formed the theme of the present lecture was drawn from profound depths of knowledge; for truly –

“Blood is a very Special Fluid.”

THE END

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