

Personality and Individuality

THE SYMBOLS used in astrology are perfect ideographs to the astrologer when engaged in his delineation of nativities, for his success to a considerable extent depends upon his skill in interpreting its very wonderful symbology; and it is mainly owing to this fact that the inner truths of the science have been so very carefully preserved, so that now they are once again being slowly revealed to us after many centuries of concealment.

We have come to look upon the Moon as the symbol or representative of the Personality, its waxing and waning being similarly expressed in the changes that take place almost daily in the personal life. The Sun on the other hand stands as a representative of the Individuality, or the real man, the immortal part that dieth not.

To those who are interested in the inner or esoteric side of our science, it is important that a correct knowledge of all that is involved in the terms that are the subject of this article be fully understood.

The relation of the Individuality to the Personality may be roughly symbolized by a tree, whose leaves, when the sap or vital principle is withdrawn from them, fade and fall and are trodden under foot. They are gone into the grave of things. Will they return? We know that cannot be, but the tree will reclathe itself anew with other leaves, will again feed and inform them with the sap flowing within, the vital principle that proceeds from the "One Life"—the Spirit animating all Nature. Without carrying our analogy too far, we may liken the personality to the leaves of a tree.



Hans Holbein II, from Sebastian Münster's *Canones*, printed in Basel, 1534

The moon's phases illustrate the mutability of the personality and justify its lunar symbol, while the sun, a perpetual source of light, represents the enduring individuality or Ego.

This personality is the garb assumed by the individuality for each life period as the most fitting expression of its actual condition, status, and needs. Certain physical traits, partly due to heredity, as indicated by the rising sign, are recognized; but these become modified, or even disappear, as the character develops and manifests.

Now the ordinary person and the materialist (especially the latter) mistake the personality with its desires, passions and appetites for the real man, whereas it is only his outer expression, just as the clothes of the actor, though appropriate to the part he plays, do not constitute the actor himself. Shakespeare says: "Each man in his time plays many parts"—*each man* standing for the real being, and the *many parts* for the personalities—successive earthly lives.

The personality can be seen and known, but the individuality (symbolized by the tree in the first analogy) can only be perceived by the eye of the soul. Thus it naturally follows that most of us are deluded by appearances, and consequently we often make the personality the sole object of the life, working only for physical and personal interests, worldly success, comfort, and enjoyment; and therefore naturally feeling that when the body dies all is over. This is the materialistic view, and even some of our religious men, who piously declare that the spirit “returns to God who gave it,” do not realize this in consciousness, though they may intellectually assent to it.

Few really grasp the true relation between the higher and lower self, which seem as it were separated for each life period, the lower or physical self being the instrument which the higher uses for gathering experience on earth.

“The soul is immortal, and its future is the future of a thing whose growth and splendor has no limit.” It is a growing entity, feeding on the earthly experience gathered by its physical vehicle.

On retiring from this earth’s sphere of action the personality hands on to the individuality the experience gained by its contact with matter—the net results, so to speak, of the past life. In this way faculty after faculty is evolved, virtue after virtue unfolded, power after power is gained by the soul. For many lives its progress must necessarily be slow, because it is young and does not realize the purpose of manifestation and evolution. It is not ready or willing to obey and cooperate with the law, so that little experience worth handing up is secured, the personality living for itself alone, lost in the delights and gratification of the senses, forgetful of its lord and of the purpose for which it incarnated.

It must be remembered that the immortal soul, the real man, the individuality, is dependent on its instrument, the personality, to gather its experience, much as our physical body depends on its hands to feed and work for it, or its feet to carry it.

Astrologers will understand the saying, “The

Moon must fall ere the Sun can rise,” for it is only as the lunar form holds itself as a vehicle for the solar influence to permeate, order, and inspire—the personality realizing that it is but a channel for the divine life to use, and allowing that life to influence and direct it, trying ever to shape itself to the divine will—that real wisdom can be secured, and the true purpose of evolution can be fulfilled.

Skeptics and materialists argue that when the form perishes man’s life is blotted out and leaves no trace, even his nobler nature perishing with the physical brain. But the materialist is not an astrologer nor an occultist, and he ignores altogether the immortal and individualized spirit, because he cannot prove its existence by physical means.

How, some may ask, can pure spirit, formless, undifferentiated, become an individual spirit?

It can only become individualized by a descent into matter, by conjunction with human

consciousness which, without its presence, would be scarcely raised a degree above the more highly evolved animals.

The question is often mooted, by earth’s toilers and workers, as well as by the jaded and satiated pleasure-seeker, Is life worth living?

The pessimist who believes in only one life is forced to answer, No! The social reformer and political economist holds that the end and aim of life is personal (?) happiness—the greatest happiness to the greatest number; but in the face of the want, pain, and misery rampant in the world, they can scarcely claim to have hit on either a solution to the problem or a panacea for the evil.

What answer can astrology—one of the seven keys to wisdom—give to this query? If the question be studied from the occult standpoint, as it was in past ages when the science of the stars was a world’s religion, it proclaims each earth-life as only one phase in the evolution of the individual by means of a long struggle with matter and by specific experiences gained through a material personality. But it never teaches that life or happiness is an end in itself; although right living in any life

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produces that harmony and peace which alone can be truly called happiness.

When the higher stages of consciousness are reached, the highest joy is felt in living and serving the higher Self, and in maintaining a constant struggle against the temptations of the lower nature, until finally the complete conquest of selfishness is attained. Of course this means a life of conscious work, effort, and struggle, the rescue of the mind from the senses; for if the horses of the senses run away with the driver, or the mind, they are likely to drag him down and destroy him.

So many persons seem to suffer under the lash of the senses that sometimes we feel sad on account of those who cannot be convinced of any necessity for a nobler life. Yet there is no occasion for regret when we realize the fact that if one life is wasted it must be re-lived, and that man can only delay, but cannot prevent his evolution; for man's eventual perfection is the will of the Logos, the God of our solar system.

Still, the Christ, or divine principle, in each must ever be, while crucified on the cross of matter, the "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," for the cross is the burden of the flesh and the carnal appetites.

What is the meaning of that strange and hard saying, "man must lose his life ere he can find it"? It has two interpretations. The life of the animal must first be yielded to the life of the intellect, and finally the life of the mind must be surrendered to that of the soul. There are thus three types of man, animal, human, divine. Such are some of the stages we each pass through during the soul's pilgrimage. We must endeavor to become unselfish and non-personal and then we shall not be bound nor limited, neither by Mars nor Saturn, neither by sensation nor by concrete mental conceptions.

A true realization of personality and individuality would be the understanding that the lower is the servant, not the master; the agent, not the actor. This does not mean that the physical instrument is to be neglected. Nor does it mean that fasting or asceticism is to be practiced, or any part of the nature killed out—but harmonized and brought under the control of the higher nature. For every force we have is ours by divine right, and it is for



Lithograph by Lehman & Bolton

Lithograph, 19th century, Library of Congress, Washington D. C.

The Scourging of Christ

Each Christian individualizes the life of Christ Jesus. The personality experiences verbal lashings and interior emotional flayings, the buffetings of contrary events and conflicting impulses while it is bound to the pillar of the physical body.

us to use it legitimately, controlling and transmuting, not destroying. Asceticism as well as profligacy, say the sages and Rishis of old, is to be avoided. The middle path is the path of safety.

The physical body is the instrument for work on the physical plane. How does a good workman treat his tools? He keeps them clean and well-protected, otherwise they would be useless for service. Just so must the body be kept in good condition, pure, clean and healthy, if useful work is to be accomplished.

Now the personality is more than the physical form; it embodies passions, affections, desires, intellect and social proclivities; it is concerned with the sphere of human duties around us. Every one of us, each in his own place, has to work out his own salvation by means of this personality, for the human has eventually to become the divine—"God manifest in the flesh"—and just in proportion as we seize and utilize our present opportunities will further opportunities present themselves; for we are the makers of our own destiny, the

awarders of our own joys or woes. "As we sow, we must and shall inevitably reap," is God's law, the law of the universe.

Our position today is simply the result of causes set in motion by ourselves, and while reaping the harvest of past sowing, we are sowing fresh seed for future reaping; some of this seed may spring up in this life, some may be postponed to a future life.

If we tried to realize these facts of life and destiny, we would be less discontented with our position and condition in the world; for even supposing we could override the law and remove ourselves and others from the position and circumstances we so deplore, we would be robbing the soul of its experience.

One of our poets sings truly, being inspired, as all true poets are,

*Thou camest not to thy place by accident,
It is the very place alone for thee.*

We can all help forward the work of evolution if we will, no matter whether our position be lofty or lowly, great or humble. True, those who hold a position of great influence in the world can work for others on a larger scale than those who hold a lesser post, but we are inclined to measure things from an outside standpoint that is often erroneous. We think of work as being only or chiefly external, seen and recognized, but in very truth the reverse is more often the case.

If we are poor in this world's goods we may be rich in thought, pure in mind, and by sending into the world's thought-stream good, pure and lofty thoughts, we are actively working to raise humanity.

Helping by pen or speech, though useful, is still not so far-reaching in its power as devotion, aspiration, and unseen aid rendered to our fellows; for the unseen is mightier than the recognized, the unmanifest than the manifest.

The widow's mite, the cup of cold water, given with true devotion or unselfish love, afford examples of the truth that it is motive which is after all of the greatest consequence; and if that motive be desire for the spiritual welfare of humanity, then we liberate a spiritual force that can be used in man's service.

Most people attach too much importance to rank and prestige, luxury and fame. These things take on a totally different aspect when judged by the soul's measure. That measure is moral character.

One important lesson that life teaches is to do our own duty, the duty that lies nearest. It is for that experience we are incarnated, and if we shirk the task today we shall only have to pick it up tomorrow. In doing our own work we need not neglect helping our brothers and sisters by our love and sympathy, trying, as far as we can, to fulfill the law of the Master, "Bear ye one another's burdens."

A life of usefulness and service yields a large return to the individuality, for all unselfish deeds, all acts of kindness and self-denial, become the permanent stock of the immortal soul. But a wasted life, i.e., a selfish one, causes the personality sorrow and suffering, as it will have to work out its redemption in future lives. The higher self, however, suffers only in having an unprofitable servant that yields its master no experience (for nothing of evil can be carried to the soul, virtue alone can be wrought into the individuality); it is merely one earth-life wasted.

What are we each doing with our personality? Is it master or servant? Are we living selfishly, or otherwise? personally, or individually?

It is by making the personality a vehicle for the soul's use, by realizing self through non-self, that man eventually transcends limitation and finally completes his emancipation from matter.

We must each make our own at-one-ment, unity, and harmony. As we seek to do so life becomes worth living and the peace that passes all understanding becomes ours; for as we slowly climb, step by step, the golden ladder of perfection, so do we draw nearer to the true perfection—the Divinity from Whom we come.

The way is hard, the struggle severe. But the end is bliss and joy unspeakable, for shall we not hear at last: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord"? Then shall we realize, realize in utter bliss—no dull pigments of earth may paint nor any fallen language voice the supreme ecstasy of that final at-one-ment—"I and my Father are one." □

—Bessie Leo