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THE ORIGIN OF INSANITY.*

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Read at the meeting of Medical Superintendents of Institutions for Insane in North America, at Washington, D.C., May 6th, 1892.

Putting aside such comparatively rare causes as traumatism, sunstroke, and syphilis, and, speaking broadly and generally, the etiology of insanity, as generally given, may be reduced to two heads:

- (1) Heredity.
- (2) Mental, emotional, or bodily strain, one kind or another.

But it is an obvious criticism that we must have insanity before it can be inherited, and that strain of every conceivable kind and degree is undergone by thousands of persons every day, and even carried to the point of causing death, without resulting in insanity.

This being the case, it seems clear that we must revise our theory of the causation of the group of maladies in question, and I am anxious to add my mite toward a truer and more comprehensive explanation.

Some here present may perhaps pay me the compliment of remembering that ten years ago, at Cincinnati, I read a paper on the "Growth of the Intellect." In it I tried to show that human intelligence, starting far back in our remote ancestry from an aboriginal germ concept

or precept, and, as it were, sprouting therefrom, as a tree from its seed, became by a process of division and branching extending through many milleniums the manifold and highly organized function that we know by that name at present. However well or ill I may have succeeded in my self-imposed task, nothing is more certain to-day than that the intellect did come into existence in the manner indicated—that is, by a long process of gradual evolution. In the same address I pointed out that ancient literature, philology, and the science of optics all concurred to prove that our color sense is comparatively modern—that it probably did not exist when the Aryans, before their dispersion, still lived, a pastoral horde, in their original home, whether in Bactria, the Caucasus, or northern Europe; and I concluded my discourse by citing evidence that the sense of fragrance is still more modern than is the sense of color.

To-day I want to broaden what I said ten years ago into a general proposition to the following effect: The human mind, including in that term the intellect, moral nature, and senses, is made up of a large number of faculties done up, as it were, in bundles. Thus the intellect is one bundle, and in it we have consciousness, self-consciousness, perception, conception, comparison, judgment, imagination, sense of humor, memory, and so on. The moral nature is another bundle, and in it we have love, reverence, faith, fear, hope, hate—each one of which, and many more left unnamed, could be, as you know,

*I desire to state that the following pages are from a work in course of preparation, to be named "Cosmic Consciousness."