

**PERSONALITY:  
HUMAN  
AND DIVINE**

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Personality: Human and Divine by William W. Olssen

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**WILLIAM W. OLSEN**

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PERSONALITY.



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## PERSONALITY: HUMAN AND DIVINE.

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THE multiplicity and complexity of all things, animate and inanimate, forbid the thought that the world and what it contains have existed forever in their present condition. It is, however, impossible to imagine a state in which nothing exists, much less to conceive of anything causelessly springing from nothing. The question then presents itself: Whence arose the existing universe?

All the various theories may be reduced substantially to two. In both theories, the existence of simple matter, unorganized and unarranged, and therefore in a state of chaos, and the existence of a principle of life, which, when united to a simple homogeneous germ, constitutes a living cell, are accepted as fundamental and necessary truths. Philosophy cannot take us beyond these facts and show the origin of

matter, or the cause of life. The unity of nature is also accepted as a necessary truth. The question then arises: How are life and matter joined so as to constitute a true unity? Is life subordinate to and dependent upon matter, or is the principle of life superior, or is there some external power by which living beings and inert matter are associated in that state of harmony and mutual adaptation which we observe? It is in the answers given to such questions as these that the two theories begin to diverge.

The one theory would make matter, ruled and guided by abstract law, the source of all organized existences. These beings could thus be really and substantially nothing but material. What are called mental, moral, or spiritual faculties are, according to this theory, simply modes of material existence manifested through certain physical organs.

The other theory would make spirit and matter distinct, and the power by which they are guided and ruled a personal agency. Matter it would make subordinate to spirit, and therefore that personal agency is conceived as a supreme spirit.

All other theories, and they are numerous, are virtually embraced under these two. It will be observed that either theory requires the existence of something beyond matter, something which rules and guides it, and therefore beyond and above it. The one theory calls this power *Abstract Law*; the other theory calls it a *Personal Supreme Spirit*. The controversy then is narrowed to the simple question: Is the power by which the universe has been formed, and is upheld, Abstract Law, or a Personal Agency?

Much confusion arises from the indistinct or erroneous apprehensions of the force of terms, or from using the same term in various senses. This is notably the case in reference to the word *personality*. It will be necessary, therefore, to explain its true significance. The derivation of the word *personality* from *persona*, a "mask," will suggest a general definition of the term. It is that which represents something, which gives the distinguishing characteristics, and by which we know one being from all others. Before proceeding to the question of the personality of that agency by which the universe is ruled, it will be well to