

STUDIES IN OCCULTISM

A Series of Reprints from the Writings

of

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NO. VI

ASTRAL BODIES

CONSTITUTION OF THE INNER MAN

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ASTRAL BODIES,
OR DOPPELGÄNGERS

M. C. Great confusion exists in the minds of people about the various kinds of apparitions, wraiths, ghosts, or spirits. Ought we not to explain once for all the meaning of these terms? You say there are various kinds of "doubles" — what are they?

H. P. B. Our occult philosophy teaches us that there are three kinds of "doubles," to use the word in its widest sense. First, man has his "double" or *shadow*, properly so called, around which the physical body of the *fetus* — the future man — is built. The imagination of the mother, or an accident which affects the child, will affect also the astral

body. The astral and the physical both exist before the mind is developed into action, and before the *Ātmâ* awakes. This occurs when the child is seven years old, and with it comes the responsibility attaching to a conscious sentient being. This "double" is born with man, dies with him, and can never separate itself far from the body during life, and though surviving him, it disintegrates, *pari passu*, with the corpse. It is this which is sometimes seen over the graves like a luminous figure of the man that was, during certain atmospheric conditions. From its physical aspect it is, during life, *man's vital* double, and after death, only the gases given off from the decaying body. But, as regards its origin and essence, it is something more. This double is what we have agreed to call *Linga-sarîra*, but which I would propose to call, for greater convenience, "Protean" or "Plastic Body."

M. C. Why Protean or Plastic?

H. P. B. Protean, because it can assume all forms; e. g., the "shepherd magicians" whom popular rumor accuses, perhaps not

without some reason, of being "were-wolves," and "mediums in cabinets," whose own "Plastic Bodies" play the part of materialized grandmothers and "John Kings." Otherwise, why the invariable custom of the "dear departed angels" to come out but little further than arm's length from the medium, whether entranced or not? Mind, I do not at all deny foreign influences in this kind of phenomena. But I do affirm that foreign interference is rare, and that the materialized form is always that of the medium's *Astral*, or Protean body.

M. C. How is this astral body created?

H. P. B. It is not created; it grows, as I told you, with the man and exists in the rudimentary condition even before the child is born.

M. C. And what about the second?

H. P. B. The second is the "Thought" body, or Dream body, rather; known among Occultists as the *Mâyâvi-rûpa*, or "Illusion-body." During life this image is the vehicle both of thought and of the animal passions and desires, drawing at one and the same time from

the lowest terrestrial *manas* (mind) and *Kâma*, the element of desire. It is *dual* in its potentiality, and after death forms what is called in the East *Bhût*, or *Kâma-rûpa*, but which is better known to Theosophists as the "Spook."

M. C. And the third?

H. P. B. The third is the true *Ego*, called in the East by a name meaning "causal-body," but which in the *trans*-Himâlayan schools is always called the "Karmic body," which is the same. For *Karma*, or action, is the cause which produces incessant rebirths or "reincarnations." It is *not* the *Monad*, nor is it *Manas* proper; but is, in a way, indissolubly connected with and a compound of the *Monad* and *Manas* in *Devachan*.

M. C. Then there are three doubles?

H. P. B. If you call the Christian and other Trinities "three Gods," then there are three doubles. But in truth there is only one under three aspects or phases: the most material portion disappearing with the body; the middle one surviving both as an independent but

temporary entity in the land of shadows; the third, immortal throughout the Manvantara, unless Nirvâna puts an end to it before.

M. C. But shall not we be asked what difference there is between the *Mâyâvi* and *Kâma-rûpa*, or as you propose to call them the "Dream body" and the "Spook"?

H. P. B. Most likely, and we shall answer, in addition to what has been said, that the "thought-power" or aspect of the *Mâyâvi* or "Illusion-body," merges after death entirely into the causal body or the conscious, *thinking* Ego. The animal elements, or power of desire of the "Dream body," absorbing after death that which it has collected (through its insatiable desire *to live*) during life; i. e., all the astral vitality as well as all the impressions of its *material* acts and thoughts while it lived in possession of the body, forms the "Spook" or *Kâma-rûpa*. Our Theosophists know well enough that after death the *higher* Manas unites with the *Monad* and passes into Devachan, while the dregs of the *lower* Manas or animal mind go to form this Spook. This has

life in it, but hardly any consciousness, except, as it were, by proxy; when it is drawn into the current of a medium.

M. C. Is it all that can be said upon the subject?

H. P. B. For the present this is enough metaphysics, I guess. Let us hold to the "Double" in its earthly phase. What would you know?

M. C. Every country in the world believes more or less in the "double" or doppelgänger. The simplest form of this is the appearance of a man's phantom the moment after his death, or at the instant of death, to his dearest friend. Is this appearance the *mâyâvi-rûpa*?

H. P. B. It is; because produced by the thought of the dying man.

M. C. Is it unconscious?

H. P. B. It is unconscious to the extent that the dying man does not generally do it knowingly; nor is he aware that he so appears. What happens is this. If he thinks very intently at the moment of death of the person he either is very anxious to see, or loves best,

he may appear to that person. The thought becomes objective; the double, or shadow of a man, being nothing but the faithful reproduction of him, like a reflection in a mirror: that which the man does, even in thought, that the double repeats. This is why the phantoms are often seen in such cases in the clothes they wear at the particular moment, and the *image* reproduces even the expression on the dying man's face. If the double of a man bathing were seen it would seem to be immersed in water; so when a man who has been drowned appears to his friend, the image will be seen to be dripping with water. The cause for the apparition may also be reversed; i. e., the dying man may or may not be thinking at all of the particular person his image appears to, but it is that person who is sensitive. Or perhaps his sympathy or his hatred for the individual whose wraith is thus evoked is very intense physically or psychically; and in this case the apparition is created by, and depends upon the intensity of the thought. What then happens is this. Let us call the dying man A, and him

who sees the double B. The latter, owing to love, hate, or fear, has the image of A so deeply impressed on his psychic memory, that actual magnetic attraction and repulsion are established between the two, whether one knows of it and feels it, or not. When A dies, the sixth sense or psychic spiritual intelligence of the *inner man* in B becomes cognizant of the change in A, and forthwith apprizes the physical senses of the man by projecting before his eye the form of A as it is at the instant of the great change. The same when the dying man longs to see some one; *his* thought telegraphs to his friend, consciously or unconsciously along the wire of sympathy, and becomes objective. This is what the "Spookical" Research Society would pompously, but none the less muddily call *telepathetic impact*.

M. C. This applies to the simplest form of the appearance of the double. What about cases in which the double does that which is contrary to the feeling and wish of the man?

H. P. B. This is impossible. The "Double" cannot act unless the key-note of this action

was struck in the brain of the man to whom the "Double" belongs, be that man just dead, or alive, in good or in bad health. If he paused on the thought a second, long enough to give it form, before he passed on to other mental pictures, this one second is as sufficient for the *objectivization* of his personality on the astral waves, as for your face to impress itself on the sensitized plate of a photographic apparatus. Nothing prevents your form then being seized upon by the surrounding Forces — as a dry leaf fallen from a tree is taken up and carried away by the wind — being made to caricature or distort your thought.

M. C. Supposing the double expresses in actual words a thought uncongenial to the man, and expresses it — let us say to a friend far away, perhaps on another continent? I have known instances of this occurring.

H. P. B. Because it then so happens that the created image is taken up and used by a "Shell." Just as in séance-rooms when "images" of the dead—which may perhaps be lingering unconsciously in the memory or even

the auras of those present — are seized upon by the Elementals or Elementary Shadows and made objective to the audience, and even caused to act at the bidding of the strongest of the many different wills in the room. In your case, moreover, there must exist a connecting link — a telegraph wire — between the two persons, a point of psychic sympathy, and on this the thought travels instantly. Of course there must be, in every case, some strong reason why that particular thought takes that direction; it must be connected in some way with the other person. Otherwise such apparitions would be of common and daily occurrence.

M. C. This seems very simple; why then does it only occur with exceptional persons?

H. P. B. Because the plastic power of the imagination is much stronger in some persons than in others. The mind is dual in its potentiality: it is physical and metaphysical. The higher part of the mind is connected with the spiritual soul or Buddhi, the lower with the animal soul, the Kâma principle. There

are persons who never think with the higher faculties of their minds at all; those who do so are the minority and are thus, in a way, *beyond*, if not above, the average of human kind. These will think even upon ordinary matters on that *higher* plane. The idiosyncrasy of the person determines in which "principle" of the mind the thinking is done, as also the faculties of a preceding life, and sometimes the heredity of the physical. This is why it is so very difficult for a materialist — the metaphysical portion of whose brain is almost atrophied — to raise himself, or for one who is naturally spiritually-minded to descend to the level of the matter-of-fact vulgar thought. Optimism and pessimism depend on it also in a great measure.

M. C. But the habit of thinking in the higher mind can be developed — else there would be no hope for persons who wish to alter their lives and raise themselves? And that this is possible must be true, or there would be no hope for the world.

H. P. B. Certainly it can be developed, but

only with great difficulty, a firm determination, and through much self-sacrifice. But it is comparatively easy for those who are born with the gift. Why is it that one person sees poetry in a cabbage or a pig with her little ones, while another will perceive in the loftiest things only their lowest and most material aspect, will laugh at the "music of the spheres," and ridicule the most sublime conceptions and philosophies? This difference depends simply on the innate power of the mind to think on the higher or on the lower plane, with the *astral* (in the sense given to the word by St. Martin), or with the physical brain. Great intellectual powers are often no proof of, but are impediments to spiritual and right conceptions; witness most of the great men of science. We must rather pity than blame them.

M. C. But how is it that the person who thinks on the higher plane produces more perfect and more potential images and objective forms by his thought?

H. P. B. Not necessarily that "person"

alone, but all those who are generally sensitive. The person who is endowed with this faculty of thinking about even the most trifling things from the higher plane of thought has, by virtue of that gift which he possesses, a plastic power of formation, so to say, in his very imagination. Whatever such a person may think about, his thought will be so far more intense than the thought of an ordinary person, that by this very intensity it obtains the power of creation. Science has established the fact that thought is an energy. This energy in its action disturbs the atoms of the astral atmosphere around us. I already told you; the rays of thought have the same potentiality for producing forms in the astral atmosphere as the sunrays have with regard to a lens. Every thought so evolved with energy from the brain, creates, *nolens volens* a shape.

M. C. Is that shape absolutely unconscious?

H. P. B. Perfectly unconscious unless it is the creation of an adept, who has a preconceived object in giving it consciousness, or rather in sending along with it enough of his

will and intelligence to cause it to appear conscious. This ought to make us more cautious about our thoughts.

But the wide distinction that obtains between the adept in this matter and the ordinary man must be borne in mind. The adept may at his will use his *Mâyâvi-rûpa*, but the ordinary man does not, except in very rare cases. It is called *Mâyâvi-rûpa* because it is a form of illusion created for use in the particular instance, and it has quite enough of the adept's mind in it to accomplish its purpose. The ordinary man merely creates a thought-image, whose properties and powers are at the time wholly unknown to him.

M. C. Then one may say that the form of an adept appearing at a distance from his body, as for instance Ram Lal in *Mr. Isaacs*, is simply an image?

H. P. B. Exactly. It is a walking thought.

M. C. In which case an adept can appear in several places almost simultaneously.

H. P. B. He can. Just as Apollonios of Tyana, who was seen in two places at once,

while his body was at Rome. But it must be understood that not *all* of even the *astral* adept is present in each appearance.

M. C. Then it is very necessary for a person of any amount of imagination and psychic powers to attend to their thoughts?

H. P. B. Certainly, for each thought has a shape which borrows the appearance of the man engaged in the action of which he thought. Otherwise how can clairvoyants see in your *aura* your past and present? What they see is a passing panorama of yourself represented in successive actions by your thoughts. You asked me if we are punished for our thoughts. Not for all, for some are still-born; but for the others, those which we call "silent" but potential thoughts — yes. Take an extreme case, such as that of a person who is so wicked as to wish the death of another. Unless the evil-wisher is a *Dugpa*, a high adept in black magic, in which case Karma is delayed, such a wish only comes back to roost.

M. C. But supposing the evil-wisher to have a very strong will, without being a *dugpa*,

could the death of the other be accomplished?

H. P. B. Only if the malicious person has the evil eye, which simply means possessing enormous plastic power of imagination working involuntarily, and thus turned unconsciously to bad uses. For what is the power of the "evil eye"? Simply a great plastic power of thought, so great as to produce a current impregnated with the potentiality of every kind of misfortune and accident, which inoculates, or attaches itself to any person who comes within it. A *jettatore* (one with the evil eye) need not be even imaginative, or have evil intentions or wishes. He may be simply a person who is naturally fond of witnessing or reading about sensational scenes, such as murder, executions, accidents, etc., etc. He may be not even thinking of any of these at the moment his eye meets his future victim. But the currents have been produced and exist in his visual ray ready to spring into activity the instant they find suitable soil, like a seed fallen by the way and ready to sprout at the first opportunity.

M. C. But how about the thoughts you call "silent"? Do such wishes or thoughts come home to roost?

H. P. B. They do; just as a ball which fails to penetrate an object rebounds upon the thrower. This happens even to some *dugpas* or sorcerers who are not strong enough, or do not comply with the rules — for even they have *rules* they have to abide by — but not with those who are regular, fully developed "black magicians"; for such have the power to accomplish what they wish.

M. C. When you speak of rules it makes me want to wind up this talk by asking you what everybody wants to know who takes any interest in occultism. What is a principal or important suggestion for those who have these powers and wish to control them rightly — in fact to enter occultism?

H. P. B. The first and most important step in occultism is to learn how to adapt your thoughts and ideas to your plastic potency.

M. C. Why is this so important?

H. P. B. Because otherwise you are creat-

ing things by which you may be making bad Karma. No one should go into occultism or even touch it before he is perfectly acquainted with his own powers, and that he knows how to commensurate it with his actions. And this he can do only by deeply studying the philosophy of Occultism before entering upon the *practical* training. Otherwise, as sure as fate — HE WILL FALL INTO BLACK MAGIC.

CONSTITUTION OF THE INNER MAN

M. OF course it is most difficult, and, as you say, "puzzling" to understand correctly and distinguish between the various *aspects*, called by us the "principles" of the real *Égo*. It is the more so as there exists a notable difference in the numbering of those principles by various Eastern schools, though at the bottom there is the same identical substratum of teaching in all of them.

X. Are you thinking of the Vedântins? They divide our seven "principles" into five only, I believe?

M. They do; but though I would not presume to dispute the point with a learned Vedântin, I may yet state as my private opinion that they have an obvious reason for it. With them it is only that compound spiritual aggregate which consists of various mental aspects that is called *Man* at all, the physical body be-

ing in their view something beneath contempt, and merely an *illusion*. Nor is the Vedânta the only philosophy to reckon in this manner. Lao-Tze in his *Tao-te-King*, mentions only five principles, because he, like the Vedântins, omits to include two principles; namely, the spirit (Âtmâ) and the physical body, the latter of which, moreover, he calls "the cadaver." Then there is the *Târaka Râja Yoga* School. Its teaching recognizes only three "principles" in fact; but then, in reality, their *Sthûlo-pâdhi*, or the physical body in its *jâgrata* or waking conscious state, their *Sûkshmo-pâdhi*, the same body in *svapna* or the dreaming state, and their *Kâranopâdhi* or "causal body," or that which passes from one incarnation to another, are all dual in their aspects, and thus make six. Add to this Âtmâ, the impersonal divine principle or the immortal element in Man, undistinguished from the Universal Spirit, and you have the same seven, again, as in the esoteric division.*

* See *The Secret Doctrine* for a clearer explanation.

X. Then it seems almost the same as the division made by mystic Christians: body, soul, and spirit?

M. Just the same. We could easily make of the body the vehicle of the "vital Double"; of the latter the vehicle of Life or *Prâna*; of *Kâma-rûpa* or (animal) soul, the vehicle of the *higher* and the *lower* mind, and make of this six principles, crowning the whole with the one immortal spirit. In Occultism, every qualificative change in the state of our consciousness gives to man a new aspect, and if it prevails and becomes part of the living and acting Ego, it must be (and is) given a special name, to distinguish the man in that particular state from the man he is when he places himself in another state.

X. It is just that which is so difficult to understand.

M. It seems to me very easy, on the contrary, once that you have seized the main idea, i. e., that man acts on this, or another plane of consciousness, in strict accordance with his mental and spiritual condition. But such is

the materialism of the age that the more we explain, the less people seem capable of understanding what we say. Divide the terrestrial being called man into three chief aspects, if you like; but, unless you make of him a pure animal, you cannot do less. Take his objective *body*; the feeling principle in him—which is only a little higher than the *instinctual* element in the animal—or the vital elementary soul; and that which places him so immeasurably beyond and higher than the animal—i. e., his *reasoning* soul or “spirit.” Well, if we take these three groups or representative entities, and subdivide them, according to the occult teaching, what do we get?

First of all Spirit (in the sense of the Absolute, and therefore invisible ALL) or Âtmâ. As this can neither be located nor conditioned in philosophy, being simply that which IS, in Eternity, and as the ALL cannot be absent from even the tiniest geometrical or mathematical point of the universe of matter or substance, it ought not to be called, in truth, a “human” principle at all. Rather, and at best, it is that

point in metaphysical Space which the human Monad and its vehicle man, occupy for the period of every life. Now that point is as imaginary as man himself, and in reality is an illusion, a *mâyâ*; but then for ourselves as for other personal Egos, we are a reality during that fit of illusion called life, and we have to take ourselves into account—in our own fancy at any rate, if no one else does. To make it more conceivable to the human intellect, when first attempting the study of Occultism, and to solve the A B C of the mystery of man, Occultism calls it the *seventh* principle, the synthesis of the six, and gives it for vehicle the *Spiritual Soul, Buddhi*. Now the latter conceals a mystery, which is never given to any one with the exception of irrevocably pledged *chelas*, those at any rate, who can be safely trusted. Of course there would be less confusion, could it only be told; but, as this is directly concerned with the power of projecting one's double consciously and at will, and as this gift like the "ring of Gyges" might prove very fatal to men at large and to

the possessor of that faculty in particular, it is carefully guarded. Alone the adepts, who have been tried and can never be found wanting, have the key of the mystery fully divulged to them. . . . Let us avoid side issues, however, and hold to the "principles." This divine soul or Buddhi, then, is the Vehicle of the Spirit. In conjunction, these two are one, impersonal, and without any attributes (on this plane, of course), and make two spiritual "principles." If we pass on to the *Human Soul* (*manas*, the *mens*) every one will agree that the intelligence of man is *dual* to say the least: e. g. the high-minded man can hardly become low-minded; the very intellectual and spiritual-minded man is separated by an abyss from the obtuse, dull and material, if not animal-minded man. Why then should not these men be represented by two "principles" or two aspects rather? Every man has these two principles in him, one more active than the other, and in rare cases, one of these is entirely stunted in its growth: so to say paralysed by the strength and predominance

of the other *aspect*, during the life of man. These, then, are what we call the two principles or aspects of *Manas*, the higher and the lower; the former, the higher *Manas*, or the thinking, conscious EGO gravitating toward the Spiritual Soul (Buddhi); and the latter, or its instinctual principle attracted to *Kâma*, the seat of animal desires and passions in man. Thus, we have *four* "principles" justified; the last three being (1) the "Double" which we have agreed to call Protean, or Plastic Soul; the vehicle of (2) the life *principle*; and (3) the physical body. Of course no Physiologist or Biologist will accept these principles, nor can he make head or tail of them. And this is why, perhaps, none of them understand to this day either the functions of the spleen, the physical vehicle of the Protean Double, or those of a certain organ on the right side of man, the seat of the above mentioned desires, nor yet does he know anything of the pineal gland, which he describes as a horny gland with a little sand in it, and which is the very key to the highest and divinest consciousness

in man — his omniscient, spiritual and all embracing mind. This seemingly useless appendage is the pendulum which, once the clock-work of the *inner* man is wound up, carries the spiritual vision of the EGO to the highest planes of perception, where the horizon open before it becomes almost infinite. . . .

X. But the scientific materialists assert that after the death of man nothing remains; that the human body simply disintegrates into its component elements, and that what we call soul is merely a temporary self-consciousness produced as a by-product of organic action, which will evaporate like steam. Is not theirs a strange state of mind?

M. Not strange at all, that I see. If they say that self-consciousness ceases with the body, then in *their* case they simply utter an unconscious prophecy. For once that they are firmly convinced of what they assert, no conscious after-life is possible for them.

X. But if human self-consciousness survives death as a rule, why should there be exceptions?

M. In the fundamental laws of the spiritual world which are immutable, no exception is possible. But there are rules for those who see, and rules for those who prefer to remain blind.

X. Quite so, I understand. It is an aberration of a blind man, who denies the existence of the sun because he does not see it. But after death his spiritual eyes will certainly compel him to see.

M. They will not compel him, nor will he see anything. Having persistently denied an after-life during this life, he will be unable to sense it. His spiritual senses having been stunted, they cannot develop after death, and he will remain blind. By insisting that he *must* see it, you evidently mean one thing and I another. You speak of the spirit from the Spirit, or the flame from the Flame—of *Âtmâ* in short—and you confuse it with the human soul—*Manas*. . . . You do not understand me, let me try to make it clear. The whole gist of your question is to know whether, in the case of a downright materialist, the com-

plete loss of self-consciousness and self-perception after death is possible? Isn't it so? I say: It is possible. Because, believing firmly in our Esoteric Doctrine, which refers to the *post-mortem* period, or the interval between two lives or births as merely a transitory state, I say:— Whether that interval between two acts of the illusionary drama of life lasts one year or a million, that *post-mortem* state may, without any breach of the fundamental law, prove to be just the same state as that of a man who is in a dead swoon.

X. But since you have just said that the fundamental laws of the after-death state admit of no exceptions, how can this be?

M. Nor do I say now that they admit of exceptions. But the spiritual law of continuity applies only to things which are truly real. To one who has read and understood *Mândukya Upanishad* and *Vedânta-Sâra*, all this becomes very clear. I will say more: it is sufficient to understand what we mean by Buddhi and the duality of Manas to have a

very clear perception why the materialist may not have a self-conscious survival after death: because Manas, in its lower aspect, is the seat of the terrestrial mind, and, therefore, can give only that perception of the Universe which is based on the evidence of that mind, and not on our spiritual vision. It is said in our Esoteric school that between Buddhi and Manas, or Ísvara and Prajñâ,* there is in reality no more difference than *between a forest and its trees, a lake and its waters*, just as *Mândukya* teaches. One or hundreds of trees dead from loss of vitality, or uprooted, are yet incapable of preventing the forest from being still a forest. The destruction or *post-mortem* death of one personality dropped out of the long series, will not cause the smallest change in the Spiritual *Ego*, and it will ever remain the same *Ego*. Only, instead of experiencing *Devachan* it will have to immediately reincarnate.

* *Ísvara* is the collective consciousness of the manifested deity, *Brahmâ*, i. e., the collective consciousness of the Host of *Dhyâni Chohans*; and *Prajñâ* is their individual wisdom.

X. But as I understand it, Ego-Buddhi represents in this simile the forest and the personal minds the trees. And if Buddhi is immortal, how can that which is similar to it, i. e., Manas-taijasi,* lose entirely its consciousness till the day of its new incarnation? I cannot understand it.

M. You cannot, because you will mix up an abstract representation of the whole with its casual changes of form; and because you confuse *Manas-taijasi*, the *Buddhi*-lit human soul, with the latter, animalized. Remember that if it can be said of Buddhi that it is unconditionally immortal, the same cannot be said of *Manas*, still less of *taijasi*, which is an attribute. No *post-mortem* consciousness or *Manas-taijasi*, can exist apart from Buddhi, the divine soul, because the first (*Manas*) is, in its lower aspect, a qualificative attribute of

* *Taijasi* means the radiant in consequence of the union with Buddhi of Manas, the human, illuminated by the radiance of the divine soul. Therefore *Manas-taijasi* may be described as radiant mind; the *human* reason lit by the light of the spirit; and *Buddhi-Manas* is the representation of the divine *plus* the human intellect and self-consciousness.

the terrestrial personality, and the second (*taijasi*) is identical with the first, and that it is the same Manas only with the light of Buddhi reflected on it. In its turn, Buddhi would remain only an impersonal spirit without this element which it borrows from the human soul, which conditions and makes of it, in this illusive Universe, *as it were something separate* from the universal soul for the whole period of the cycle of incarnation. Say rather that *Buddhi-Manas* can neither die nor lose its compound self-consciousness in Eternity, nor the recollection of its previous incarnations in which the two — i. e., the spiritual and the human soul, had been closely linked together. But it is not so in the case of a materialist, whose human soul not only receives nothing from the divine soul, but even refuses to recognize its existence. You can hardly apply this axiom to the attributes and qualifications of the human soul; for it would be like saying that because your divine soul is immortal, therefore the bloom on your cheek must also be immortal; whereas this bloom, like *taijasi*,

or spiritual radiance, is simply a transitory phenomenon.

X. Do I understand you to say that we must not mix in our minds the noumenon with the phenomenon, the cause with its effect?

M. I do say so, and repeat that, limited to Manas or the human soul alone, the radiance of Taijasi itself becomes a mere question of time; because both immortality and consciousness after death become for the terrestrial personality of man simply conditioned attributes, as they depend entirely on conditions and beliefs created by the human soul itself during the life of its body. Karma acts incessantly: we reap *in our after-life* only the fruit of that which we have ourselves sown, or rather created in our terrestrial existence.

X. But if my Ego can, after the destruction of my body, become plunged in a state of entire unconsciousness, then where can be the punishment for the sins of my past life?

M. Our philosophy teaches that Karmic punishment reaches the Ego only in its next

incarnation. After death it receives only the reward for the unmerited sufferings endured during its just past existence.* The whole punishment after death, even for the materialist, consists therefore in the absence of any reward and the utter loss of the consciousness of one's bliss and rest. Karma — is the child of the terrestrial Ego, the fruit of the actions of the tree which is the objective personality visible to all, as much as the fruit of all the thoughts and even motives of the spiritual "I"; but

* Some Theosophists have taken exception to this phrase, but the words are those of the Masters, and the meaning attached to the word "unmerited" is that given above. In the T. P. S. pamphlet No. 6 a phrase, criticised subsequently in *Lucifer*, was used, which was intended to convey the same idea. In form, however it was awkward and open to the criticism directed against it; but the essential idea was that men often suffer from the effects of the actions done by others, effects which thus do not strictly belong to their own Karma, but to that of other people — and for these sufferings they of course deserve compensation. If it is true to say that nothing that happens to us can be anything else than Karma — or the direct or indirect effect of a cause — it would be a great error to think that every evil or good which befalls us is due *only* to our own personal Karma. (*Vide* further on.)

Karma is also the tender mother, who heals the wounds inflicted by her during the preceding life, before she will begin to torture this Ego by inflicting upon him new ones. If it may be said that there is not a mental or physical suffering in the life of a mortal, which is not the fruit and consequence of some sin in this, or a preceding existence, on the other hand, since he does not preserve the slightest recollection of it in his actual life, and feels himself not deserving of such punishment, but believes sincerely he suffers for no guilt of his own, this alone is quite sufficient to entitle the human soul to the fullest consolation, rest and bliss in his *post-mortem* existence. Death comes to our spiritual selves ever as a deliverer and friend. For the materialist, who, notwithstanding his materialism, was not a bad man, the interval between the two lives will be like the unbroken and placid sleep of a child; either entirely dreamless, or with pictures of which he will have no definite perception. For the believer it will be a dream as vivid as life and full of realistic bliss and visions. As for

the bad and cruel man, whether materialist or otherwise, he will be immediately reborn and suffer his hell on earth. To enter *Avitchi* is an exceptional and rare occurrence.

X. As far as I remember, the periodical incarnations of *Sûtrâtmâ* * are likened in some Upanishad to the life of a mortal which oscillates periodically between sleep and waking. This does not seem to me very clear, and I will tell you why. For the man who awakes, another day commences, but that man is the same in soul and body as he was the day before; whereas at every new incarnation a full change takes place not only in his external envelop, sex and personality, but even in his

* Our immortal and reincarnating principle in conjunction with the Manasic recollections of the preceding lives is called *Sûtrâtmâ*, which means literally the Thread-Soul; because like the pearls on a thread so is the long series of human lives strung together on that one thread. *Manas* must become *taijasi*, the radiant, before it can hang on the *Sûtrâtmâ* as a pearl on its thread, and so have full and absolute perception of itself in the Eternity. As said before, too close association with the terrestrial mind of the human soul alone causes this radiance to be entirely lost.

mental and psychic capacities. Thus the simile does not seem to me quite correct. The man who arises from sleep remembers quite clearly what he has done yesterday, the day before, and even months and years ago. But none of us has the slightest recollection of a preceding life or any fact or event concerning it. . . . I may forget in the morning what I have dreamed during the night, still I know that I have slept and have the certainty that I lived during sleep; but what recollection have I of my past incarnation? How do you reconcile this?

M. Yet some people do recollect their past incarnations. This is what the Arhats call Samma-Sambuddha — or the knowledge of the whole series of one's past incarnations.

X. But we ordinary mortals who have not reached Samma-Sambuddha, how can we be expected to realize this simile?

M. By studying it and trying to understand more correctly the characteristics of the three states of sleep. Sleep is a general and immutable law for man as for beast, but there

are different kinds of sleep and still more different dreams and visions.

X. Just so. But this takes us from our subject. Let us return to the materialist, who, while not denying dreams, which he could hardly do, yet denies immortality in general and the survival of his own individuality especially.

M. And the materialist is right for once, at least; since for one who has no inner perception and faith, there is no immortality possible. In order to live in the world to come a conscious life, one has to believe first of all in that life during one's terrestrial existence. On these two aphorisms of the Secret Science all the philosophy about the *post-mortem* consciousness and the immortality of the soul is built. The Ego receives always according to its deserts. After the dissolution of the body, there commences for it either a period of full clear consciousness, a state of chaotic dreams, or an utterly dreamless sleep indistinguishable from annihilation; and these are the three states of consciousness. Our physiologists

find the cause of dreams and visions in an unconscious preparation for them during the waking hours; why cannot the same be admitted for the *post-mortem* dreams? I repeat it, *death is sleep*. After death begins, before the spiritual eyes of the soul, a performance according to a program learned and very often composed unconsciously by ourselves; the practical carrying out of *correct* beliefs or of illusions which have been created by ourselves. A Methodist will be a Methodist, a Mussulman a Mussulman, of course, just for a time — in a perfect fool's paradise of each man's creation and making. These are the *post-mortem* fruits of the tree of life. Naturally, our belief or unbelief in the fact of conscious immortality is unable to influence the unconditioned reality of the fact itself, once that it exists; but the belief or unbelief in that immortality, as the continuation or annihilation of separate entities, cannot fail to give color to that fact in its application to each of these entities. Now do you begin to understand it?

X. I think I do. The materialist, dis-

believing in everything that cannot be proven to him by his five senses or by scientific reasoning, and rejecting every spiritual manifestation, accepts life as the only conscious existence. Therefore, according to their beliefs so will it be unto them. They will lose their personal Ego, and will plunge into a dreamless sleep until a new awakening. Is it so?

M. Almost so. Remember the universal esoteric teaching of the two kinds of conscious existence: the terrestrial and the spiritual. The latter must be considered real from the very fact that it is the region of the eternal, changeless, immortal cause of all; whereas the incarnating Ego dresses itself up in new garments entirely different from those of its previous incarnations, and in which all except its spiritual prototype is doomed to a change so radical as to leave no trace behind.

X. Stop! . . . Can the consciousness of my terrestrial *Egos* perish not only for a time, like the consciousness of the materialist, but in any case so entirely as to leave no trace behind?

M. According to the teaching, it must so perish and in its fulness, all except that principle which, having united itself with the Monad, has thereby become a purely spiritual and indestructible essence, one with it in the Eternity. But in the case of an out and out materialist, in whose personal "I" no Buddhi has ever reflected itself, how can the latter carry away into the infinitudes one particle of that terrestrial personality? Your spiritual "I" is immortal; but from your present Self it can carry away into after-life but that which has become worthy of immortality, namely, the aroma alone of the flower that has been mown by death.

X. Well, and the flower, the terrestrial "I"?

M. The flower, as all past and future flowers which blossomed and died, and will blossom again on the mother bough, the *Sûtrâtmâ*, all children of one root or Buddhi, will return to dust. Your present "I," as you yourself know, is not the body now sitting before me, nor yet is it what I would call Manas-Sûtrâtmâ — but Sûtrâtmâ-Buddhi.

X. But this does not explain to me at all, why you call life after death immortal, infinite, and real, and the terrestrial life a simple phantom or illusion; since even that *post-mortem* life has limits, however much wider they may be than those of terrestrial life.

M. No doubt. The spiritual Ego of man moves in Eternity like a pendulum between the hours of life and death. But if these hours marking the periods of terrestrial and spiritual life are limited in their duration, and if the very number of such stages in Eternity between sleep and awakening, illusion and reality, has its beginning and its end, on the other hand the spiritual "Pilgrim" is eternal. Therefore are the hours of his *post-mortem* life — when, disembodied he stands face to face with truth and not the mirages of his transitory earthly existences during the period of that pilgrimage which we call "the cycle of rebirths" — the only reality in our conception. Such intervals, their limitation notwithstanding, do not prevent the Ego, while ever perfecting itself, to be following undeviatingly, though gradual-

ly and slowly, the path to its last transformation, when that Ego having reached its goal becomes the divine ALL. These intervals and stages help towards this final result instead of hindering it; and without such limited intervals the divine Ego could never reach its ultimate goal. This Ego is the actor, and its numerous and various incarnations the parts it plays. Shall you call these parts with their costumes the individuality of the actor himself? Like that actor, the Ego is forced to play during the Cycle of Necessity up to the very threshold of *Para-nirvâna* many parts such as may be unpleasant to it. But as the bee collects its honey from every flower, leaving the rest as food for the earthly worms, so does our spiritual individuality, whether we call it Sûtrâtmâ or Ego. It collects from every terrestrial personality into which Karma forces it to incarnate, the nectar alone of the spiritual qualities and self-consciousness, and uniting all these into one whole it emerges from its chrysalis as the glorified Dhyâni Chohan. So much the worse for those terrestrial personalities

from which it could collect nothing. Such personalities cannot assuredly outlive consciously their terrestrial existence.

X. Thus then it seems, that for the terrestrial personality, immortality is still conditional. Is then immortality itself *not* unconditional?

M. Not at all. But it cannot touch the *non-existent*. For all that which exists as SAT, ever aspiring to SAT, immortality and Eternity are absolute. Matter is the opposite pole of spirit and yet the two are one. The essence of all this, i. e., Spirit, Force and Matter, or the three in one, is as endless as it is beginningless; but the form acquired by the triple unity during incarnations, the externality, is certainly only the illusion of our personal conceptions. Therefore do we call the after-life alone a reality, while relegating the terrestrial life, its terrestrial personality included, to the phantom realm of illusion.

X. But why in such a case not call sleep the reality, and waking the illusion, instead of the reverse?

M. Because we use an expression made to facilitate the grasping of the subject, and from the standpoint of terrestrial conceptions, it is a very correct one.

X. Nevertheless, I cannot understand. If the life to come is based on justice and the merited retribution for all our terrestrial suffering, how, in the case of materialists many of whom are ideally honest and charitable men, should there remain of their personality nothing but the refuse of a faded flower!

M. No one ever said such a thing. No materialist, if a good man, however unbelieving, can die forever in the fulness of his spiritual individuality. What was said is, that the consciousness of one life can disappear either fully or partially; in the case of a thorough materialist, no vestige of that personality which disbelieved remains in the series of lives.

X. But is this not annihilation to the Ego?

M. Certainly not. One can sleep a dead sleep during a long railway journey, miss one or several stations without the slightest recol-

lection or consciousness of it, awake at another station and continue the journey recollecting other halting places, till the end of that journey, when the goal is reached. Three kinds of sleep were mentioned to you: the dreamless, the chaotic, and the one so real, that to the sleeping man his dreams become full realities. If you believe in the latter why can't you believe in the former? According to what one has believed in and expected after death, such is the state one will have. He who expected no life to come will have an absolute blank amounting to annihilation in the interval between the two rebirths. This is just the carrying out of the program we spoke of, and which is created by the materialist himself. But there are various kinds of materialists, as you say. A selfish wicked Egoist, one who never shed a tear for anyone but himself, thus adding entire indifference to the whole world to his unbelief, must drop at the threshold of death his personality for ever. This personality having no tendrils of sympathy for the world around, and hence nothing to hook on

to the string of the Sûtrâtmâ, every connexion between the two is broken with the last breath. There being no Devachan for such a materialist, the Sûtrâtmâ will re-incarnate almost immediately. But those materialists who erred in nothing but their disbelief, will oversleep but one station. Moreover, the time will come when the ex-materialist will perceive himself in the Eternity and perhaps repent that he lost even one day, or station, from the life eternal.

X. Still, would it not be more correct to say that death is birth into a new life, or a return once more to the threshold of eternity?

M. You may if you like. Only remember that births differ, and that there are births of "still-born" beings, which are *failures*. Moreover, with your fixed Western ideas about material life, the words "living" and "being" are quite inapplicable to the pure subjective state of *post-mortem* existence. It is just because of such ideas — save in a few philosophers who are not read by the many and who themselves are too confused to present a distinct picture of it — that all your conceptions

of life and death have finally become so narrow. On the one hand, they have led to crass materialism, and on the other, to the still more material conception of the other life which the Spiritualists have formulated in their Summerland. There the souls of men eat, drink, and marry, and live in a Paradise quite as sensual as that of Mohammed, but even less philosophical. Nor are the average conceptions of the uneducated Christians any better, but are still more material, if possible. What between truncated Angels, brass trumpets, golden harps, streets in paradisiacal cities paved with jewels, and hell-fires, it seems like a scene at a Christmas pantomime. It is because of these narrow conceptions that you find such difficulty in understanding. And, it is also just because the life of the disembodied soul, while possessing all the vividness of reality, as in certain dreams, is devoid of every grossly objective form of terrestrial life, that the Eastern philosophers have compared it with visions during sleep.