

The Soul's Journey through Life and Death – Part 4

Excerpts from: Key to Theosophy

On The Kama-Loka and Devachan

On The Fate of the Lower "Principles"

ENQUIRER. You spoke of *Kama-loka*, what is it?

THEOSOPHIST. When the man dies, his lower three principles leave him forever; *i.e.*, body, life, and the vehicle of the latter, the astral body or the double of the *living* man.

And then, his four principles — the central or middle principle, the animal soul or *Kama-rūpa*, with what it has assimilated from the lower Manas, and the higher triad find themselves in *Kama-loka*.

The latter is an astral locality¹, the *limbus*² of scholastic theology, the *Hades*³ of the ancients, and, strictly speaking, a *locality* only in a relative sense. It has neither a definite area nor boundary, but exists *within* subjective space; *i.e.*, is beyond our sensuous perceptions. Still it exists, and it is there that the astral *eidolons*⁴ of all the beings that have lived, animals included, await their *second death*.

For the animals it comes with the disintegration and the entire fading out of their *astral* particles to the last. For the human *eidolon* it begins when the Ātma-Buddhi-Manasic triad is said to "separate" itself from its lower principles, or the reflection of the *ex-personality*, by falling into the Devachanic state.

¹ **Locality** - The fact or quality of having position in space.

² **Limbus** - (Latin. for "edge," "fringe," e.g. of a garment), a theological term denoting the border of hell, where dwell those who, while not condemned to torture, yet are deprived of the joy of heaven. The more common form in English is "limbo," which is used both in the technical theological sense and derivatively in the sense of "prison," or for the condition of being lost, deserted, obsolete.
<http://www.theodora.com/encyclopedia/l2/limbus.html>

³ **Hades** (Greek.), or *Aïdes*, the "invisible," the land of shadows; one of whose regions was Tartarus, a place of complete darkness, [*lowest region*] as was also the region of profound dreamless sleep in Amenti. Judging by the allegorical description of the punishments inflicted therein, the place was purely Karmic. Neither Hades nor Amenti were the Hell still preached by some retrograde priests and clergymen; and whether represented by the Elysian Fields or by Tartarus, they could only be reached by crossing the river to the "other shore." As well expressed in the "Egyptian Belief," the story of Charon, the ferryman (of the Styx) is to be found not only in Homer, but in the poetry of many lands. The *River* must be crossed before gaining the Isles of the Blest. The Ritual of Egypt described a Charon and his boat long ages before Homer. He is Khu-en-na, "the hawk-headed steersman." (KT)

⁴ **Eidolon** (Greek). The same as that which we term the human phantom, the astral form. (TG)

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ENQUIRER. And what happens after this?

THEOSOPHIST. Then the *Kama-rūpic* phantom, remaining bereft of its informing thinking principle, the higher Manas, and the lower aspect of the latter, the animal intelligence, no longer receiving light from the higher mind, and no longer having a physical brain to work through, collapses.

ENQUIRER. In what way?

THEOSOPHIST. Well, it falls into the state of the frog when certain portions of its brain are taken out by the vivisector. It can think no more, even on the lowest animal plane. Henceforth it is no longer even the lower Manas, since this "lower" is nothing without the "higher."

ENQUIRER. And is it *this* nonentity which we find materializing in Séance rooms with Mediums?

THEOSOPHIST. It is this nonentity. A true nonentity, however, only as to reasoning or cogitating⁵ powers, still an *Entity*, however astral and fluidic, as shown in certain cases when, having been magnetically and unconsciously drawn toward a medium, it is revived for a time and lives in him by *proxy*, so to speak. This "spook," or the *Kama-rūpa*, may be compared with the *jelly-fish*, which has an ethereal gelatinous appearance so long as it is in its own element, or water (the *medium's specific AURA*), but which, no sooner is it thrown out of it, than it dissolves in the hand or on the sand, especially in sunlight. In the medium's Aura, it lives a kind of vicarious life and reasons and speaks either through the medium's brain or those of other persons present. But this would lead us too far, and upon other people's grounds, whereon I have no desire to trespass. Let us keep to the subject of reincarnation.

ENQUIRER. What of the latter? How long does the incarnating *Ego* remain in the Devachanic state?

THEOSOPHIST. This, we are taught, depends on the degree of spirituality and the merit or demerit of the last incarnation. The average time is from ten to fifteen centuries, as I already told you.

ENQUIRER. But why could not this *Ego* manifest and communicate with mortals as Spiritualists will have it? What is there to prevent a mother from communicating with the children she left on earth, a husband with his wife, and so on? It is a most consoling belief, I must confess; nor do I wonder that those who believe in it are so averse to give it up.

⁵ **Cogitate** - consider carefully and deeply; reflect upon; turn over in one's mind

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THEOSOPHIST. Nor are they forced to, unless they happen to prefer truth to fiction, however "consoling." Uncongenial our doctrines may be to Spiritualists; yet, nothing of what we believe in and teach is half as selfish and cruel as what they preach.

ENQUIRER. I do not understand you. What is selfish?

THEOSOPHIST. Their doctrine of the return of Spirits, the real "personalities" as they say; and I will tell you why. If *Devachan* — call it "paradise" if you like, a "place of bliss and of supreme felicity," if it is anything — is such a place (or say *state*), logic tells us that no sorrow or even a shade of pain can be experienced therein. "God shall wipe away all the tears from the eyes" of those in paradise, we read in the book of many promises. And if the "Spirits of the dead" are enabled to return and see all that is going on on earth, and especially *in their homes*, what kind of bliss can be in store for them?

WHY THEOSOPHISTS DO NOT BELIEVE IN THE RETURN OF PURE "SPIRITS"

ENQUIRER. What do you mean? Why should this interfere with their bliss?

THEOSOPHIST. Simply this; and here is an instance. A mother dies, leaving behind her little helpless children — orphans whom she adores — perhaps a beloved husband also. We say that her "Spirit" or *Ego* — that individuality which is now all impregnated, for the entire Devachanic period, with the noblest feelings held by its late *personality*, i.e., love for her children, pity for those who suffer, and so on — we say that it is now entirely separated from the "vale⁶ of tears," that its future bliss consists in that blessed ignorance of all the woes it left behind.

Spiritualists say, on the contrary, that it is as vividly aware of them, *and more so than before*, for "Spirits see more than mortals in the flesh do." We say that the bliss of the *Devachanee* consists in its complete conviction that it has never left the earth, and that there is no such thing as death at all; that the *post-mortem* spiritual *consciousness* of the mother will represent to her that she lives surrounded by her children and all those whom she loved; that no gap, no link, will be missing to make her disembodied state the most perfect and absolute happiness.

The Spiritualists deny this point blank. According to their doctrine, unfortunate man is not liberated even by death from the sorrows of this life. Not a drop from the life-cup of pain and suffering will miss his lips; and *nolens volens*⁷, since he sees everything now, shall he drink it to the bitter dregs.

⁶ **Vale** - the world, or earthly life.

⁷ **nolens volens** - Whether willing or unwilling.

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Thus, the loving wife, who during her lifetime was ready to save her husband sorrow at the price of her heart's blood, is now doomed to see, in utter helplessness, his despair, and to register every hot tear he sheds for her loss. Worse than that, she may see the tears dry too soon, and another beloved face shine on him, the father of her children; find another woman replacing her in his affections; doomed to hear her orphans giving the holy name of "mother" to one indifferent to them, and to see those little children neglected, if not ill-treated.

According to this doctrine the "gentle wafting to immortal life" becomes without any transition the way into a new path of mental suffering! And yet, the columns of the "Banner of Light," the veteran journal of the American Spiritualists, are filled with messages from the dead, the "dear departed ones," who all write to say how very *happy* they are! Is such a state of knowledge consistent with bliss? Then "bliss" stands in such a case for the greatest curse, and orthodox damnation must be a relief in comparison to it!

ENQUIRER. But how does your theory avoid this? How can you reconcile the theory of Soul's omniscience with its blindness to that which is taking place on earth?

THEOSOPHIST. Because such is the law of love and mercy. During every Devachanic period the Ego, omniscient as it is *per se*, clothes itself, so to say, with the *reflection* of the "personality" that was. I have just told you that the *ideal* efflorescence⁸ of all the abstract, therefore undying and eternal qualities or attributes, such as love and mercy, the love of the good, the true and the beautiful, that ever spoke in the heart of the living "personality," clung after death to the Ego, and therefore followed it to Devachan. For the time being, then, the Ego becomes the ideal reflection of the human being it was when last on earth, and *that* is not omniscient. Were it that, it would never be in the state we call Devachan at all.

ENQUIRER. What are your reasons for it?

THEOSOPHIST. If you want an answer on the strict lines of our philosophy, then I will say that it is because everything is *illusion (Maya)* outside of eternal truth, which has neither form, colour, nor limitation. He who has placed himself beyond the veil of maya — and such are the highest Adepts and Initiates — can have no Devachan. As to the ordinary mortal, his bliss in it is complete. It is an *absolute* oblivion of all that gave it pain or sorrow in the past incarnation, and even oblivion of the fact that such things as pain or sorrow exist at all. The *Devachanee* lives its intermediate cycle between two incarnations surrounded by everything it had aspired to in vain, and in the companionship of everyone it loved on

⁸ **Efflorescence** - a bursting forth or flowering; a process of unfolding or developing. The point or time of greatest vigor; the culmination.

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earth. It has reached the fulfilment of all its soul-yearnings. And thus it lives throughout long centuries an existence of *unalloyed* happiness, which is the reward for its sufferings in earth-life. In short, it bathes in a sea of uninterrupted felicity spanned only by events of still greater felicity in degree.

ENQUIRER. But this is more than simple delusion, it is an existence of insane hallucinations!

THEOSOPHIST. From your standpoint it may be, not so from that of philosophy. Besides which, is not our whole terrestrial life filled with such delusions? Have you never met men and women living for years in a fool's paradise?⁹ And because you should happen to learn that the husband of a wife, whom she adores and believes herself as beloved by him, is untrue to her, would you go and break her heart and beautiful dream by rudely awakening her to the reality? I think not. I say it again, such oblivion and *hallucination* — if you call it so — are only a merciful law of nature and strict justice.

At any rate, it is a far more fascinating prospect than the orthodox golden harp with a pair of wings. The assurance that "the soul that lives ascends frequently and runs familiarly through the streets of the heavenly Jerusalem, visiting the patriarchs and prophets, saluting the apostles, and admiring the army of martyrs" may seem of a more pious¹⁰ character to some. Nevertheless, it is a hallucination of a far more delusive character, since mothers love their children with an immortal love, we all know, while the personages mentioned in the "heavenly Jerusalem" are still of a rather doubtful nature.

But I would, still, rather accept the "new Jerusalem," with its streets paved like the show windows of a jeweler's shop, than find consolation in the heartless doctrine of the Spiritualists. The idea alone that the *intellectual conscious souls* of one's father, mother, daughter or brother find their bliss in a "Summer land"¹¹ — only a little more natural, but just as ridiculous as the "New Jerusalem" in its description — would be enough to make one lose every respect for one's "departed ones." To believe that a pure spirit can feel happy while doomed to witness the sins, mistakes, treachery, and, above all, the sufferings of those from whom it is severed by death and whom it loves best, without being able to help them, would be a maddening thought.

⁹ **Fool's Paradise** - a state of happiness based on a person's not knowing about or denying the existence of potential trouble. "they were living in a fool's paradise, refusing to accept that they were in debt"

¹⁰ **Pious** - Earnestly compliant in the observance of religion; reverent or devout.

¹¹ **Summerland** - The fancy name given by the Spiritualists to the abode of their disembodied "Spirits," which they locate somewhere in the Milky Way. It is described on the authority of returning "Spirits" as a lovely land, having beautiful cities and buildings, a Congress Hall, Museums, etc., etc. (See the works of Andrew Jackson Davis.) (KT-Glossary)

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ENQUIRER. There is something in your argument. I confess to having never seen it in this light.

THEOSOPHIST. Just so, and one must be selfish to the core and utterly devoid of the sense of retributive justice, to have ever imagined such a thing. We are with those whom we have lost in material form, and far, far nearer to them now, than when they were alive. And it is not only in the fancy of the *Devachanee*, as some may imagine, but in reality.

For pure divine love is not merely the blossom of a human heart, but has its roots in eternity. Spiritual holy love is immortal, and Karma brings sooner or later all those who loved each other with such a spiritual affection to incarnate once more in the same family group.

Again we say that love beyond the grave, illusion though you may call it, has a magic and divine potency which reacts on the living. A mother's *Ego* filled with love for the imaginary children it sees near itself, living a life of happiness, as real to it as when on earth — that love will always be felt by the children in flesh.

It will manifest in their dreams, and often in various events — in *providential*¹² protections and escapes, for love is a strong shield, and is not limited by space or time. As with this Devachanic "mother," so with the rest of human relationships and attachments, save the purely selfish or material. Analogy will suggest to you the rest.

ENQUIRER. In no case, then, do you admit the possibility of the communication of the living with the *disembodied* spirit?

THEOSOPHIST. Yes, there is a case, and even two exceptions to the rule. The first exception is during the few days that follow immediately the death of a person and before the *Ego* passes into the Devachanic state.

Whether any living mortal, save a few exceptional cases — (when the intensity of the desire in the dying person to return for some purpose forced the higher consciousness to *remain awake*, and therefore it was really the individuality, the "Spirit" that communicated) — has derived much benefit from the return of the spirit into the *objective plane* is another question. The spirit is dazed after death and falls very soon into what we call "pre-devachanic unconsciousness." The second exception is found in the *Nirmanakayas*.

¹² **Providential** - occurring at a favorable time; opportune; Involving divine foresight or intervention.

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Nirmanakayas¹³

ENQUIRER. What about them? And what does the name mean for you?

THEOSOPHIST. It is the name given to those who, though they have won the right to Nirvana and cyclic rest — (*not* "Devachan," as the latter is an illusion of our consciousness, a happy dream, and as those who are fit for Nirvana must have lost entirely every desire or possibility of the world's illusions) — have out of pity for mankind and those they left on earth renounced the Nirvānic state. Such an adept, or Saint, or whatever you may call him, believing it a selfish act to rest in bliss while mankind groans under the burden of misery produced by ignorance, renounces Nirvana, and determines to remain invisible *in spirit* on this earth. They have no material body, as they have left it behind; but otherwise they remain with all their principles even in astral life in our sphere. And such can and do communicate with a few elect ones, only surely not with *ordinary* mediums.

ENQUIRER. I have put you the question about *Nirmanakayas* because I read in some German and other works that it was the name given to the terrestrial appearances or bodies assumed by Buddhas in the Northern Buddhistic teachings.

THEOSOPHIST. So they are, only the Orientalists have confused this terrestrial body by understanding it to be *objective* and *physical* instead of purely astral and subjective.

ENQUIRER. And what good can they do on earth?

THEOSOPHIST. Not much, as regards individuals, as they have no right to interfere with Karma, and can only advise and inspire mortals for the general good. Yet they do more beneficent actions than you imagine.

ENQUIRER. To this Science would never subscribe, not even modern psychology. For them, no portion of intelligence can survive the physical brain. What would you answer them?

THEOSOPHIST. I would not even go to the trouble of answering, but would simply say, in the words given to "M. A. Oxon,"¹⁴ "Intelligence is perpetuated after the body is dead. Though it is not a question of the brain only. . . . It is reasonable to propound the indestructibility of the human spirit from what we know" (*Spirit Identity*, p. 69).

¹³ **Nirmanakaya** is the name given to the astral forms (in their completeness) of adepts, who have progressed too high on the path of knowledge and absolute truth, to go into the state of Devachan; and have on the other hand, deliberately refused the bliss of nirvana, in order to help Humanity by invisibly guiding and helping on the same path of progress elect men. But these astrals are not empty shells, but complete monads made up of the 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th principles. There is another order of Nirmanakaya, however, of which much will be said in *The Secret Doctrine*.—H.P.B. (CW7, 188-189fn)

¹⁴ **M. A. Oxon** Refers to Rev. Wm. Stainton Moses, who wrote under the pseudonym of "M. A. Oxon."

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ENQUIRER. But "M. A. Oxon" is a Spiritualist?

THEOSOPHIST. Quite so, and the only *true* Spiritualist I know of, though we may still disagree with him on many a minor question. Apart from this, no Spiritualist comes nearer to the occult truths than he does. Like any one of us he speaks incessantly "of the surface dangers that beset the ill-equipped, feather-headed muddler with the occult, who crosses the threshold without counting the cost."¹⁵ Our only disagreement rests in the question of "Spirit Identity." Otherwise, I, for one, coincide almost entirely with him, and accept the three propositions he embodied in his address of July, 1884. It is this eminent Spiritualist, rather, who disagrees with us, not we with him.

ENQUIRER. What are these propositions?

THEOSOPHIST.

"1. That there is a life coincident with, and independent of the physical life of the body."

"2. That, as a necessary corollary, this life extends beyond the life of the body" (we say it extends throughout Devachan).

"3. That there is communication between the denizens of that state of existence and those of the world in which we now live."

All depend, you see, on the minor and secondary aspects of these fundamental propositions. Everything depends on the views we take of Spirit and Soul, or *Individuality* and *Personality*. Spiritualists confuse the two "into one"; we separate them, and say that, with the exceptions above enumerated, no *Spirit* will revisit the earth, though the animal Soul may. But let us return once more to our direct subject, the Skandhas.¹⁶

¹⁵ **HPB:** "Some things that I *do* know of Spiritualism and some that I *do not*."

¹⁶ **Skandhas.** The *attributes* of every personality, which after death form the basis, so to say, for a new Karmic reincarnation. They are five in the popular or exoteric system of the Buddhists: *i.e.*, *Rupa*, form or body, which leaves behind it its magnetic atoms and occult affinities; *Vedana*, sensations, which do likewise; *Sanna*, or abstract ideas, which are the creative powers at work from one incarnation to another; *Samkhara*, tendencies of mind; and *Vinnana*, mental powers. (KT Glossary)

Skandha or *Skhanda* (*Sk.*). Lit., "bundles", or groups of attributes; everything finite, inapplicable to the eternal and the absolute. There are five—esoterically, *seven*—attributes in every human living being, which are known as the *Pancha Shandhas*. These are (1) form, *rûpa*; (2) perception, *vidâna*; (3) consciousness, *sanjnâ*; (4) action, *sanskâra*; (5) knowledge, *vidyâna*. These unite at the birth of man and constitute his personality. After the maturity of these Skandhas, they begin to separate and weaken, and this is followed by *jarâmarana*, or decrepitude and death. (TG)

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ENQUIRER. I begin to understand better now. It is the Spirit, so to say, of those Skandhas *which are the most ennobling*, which, attaching themselves to the incarnating Ego, survive, and are added to the stock of its angelic experiences. And it is the attributes connected with the material Skandhas, with selfish and personal motives, which, disappearing from the field of action between two incarnations, reappear at the subsequent incarnation as Karmic results to be atoned for; and therefore the Spirit will not leave Devachan. Is it so?

THEOSOPHIST. Very nearly so. If you add to this that the law of retribution, or Karma, rewarding the highest and most spiritual in Devachan, never fails to reward them again on earth by giving them a further development, and furnishing the Ego with a body fitted for it, then you will be quite correct.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE SKANDHAS

ENQUIRER. What becomes of the other, the lower Skandhas of the personality, after the death of the body? Are they quite destroyed?

THEOSOPHIST. They are and yet they are not — a fresh metaphysical and occult mystery for you. They are destroyed as the working stock in hand of the personality; they remain as *Karmic effects*, as germs, hanging in the atmosphere of the terrestrial plane, ready to come to life, as so many avenging fiends, to attach themselves to the new personality of the Ego when it reincarnates.

ENQUIRER. This really passes my comprehension, and is very difficult to understand.

THEOSOPHIST. Not once that you have assimilated all the details. For then you will see that for logic, consistency, profound philosophy, divine mercy and equity, this doctrine of Reincarnation has not its equal on earth. It is a belief in a perpetual progress for each incarnating Ego, or divine soul, in an evolution from the outward into the inward, from the material to the Spiritual, arriving at the end of each stage at absolute unity with the divine Principle. From strength to strength, from the beauty and perfection of one plane to the greater beauty and perfection of another, with accessions¹⁷ of new glory, of fresh knowledge and power in each cycle, such is the destiny of every Ego, which thus becomes its own Saviour in each world and incarnation.

ENQUIRER. But Christianity teaches the same. It also preaches progression.

¹⁷ **Accession** - The attainment of a dignity or rank: An increase by means of something added.

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THEOSOPHIST. Yes, only with the addition of something else. It tells us of the *impossibility* of attaining Salvation without the aid of a miraculous Saviour, and therefore dooms to perdition¹⁸ all those who will not accept the dogma. This is just the difference between Christian theology and Theosophy. The former enforces belief in the Descent of the Spiritual Ego into the *Lower Self*; the latter inculcates¹⁹ the necessity of endeavouring to elevate oneself to the Christos, or Buddhi state.

ENQUIRER. By teaching the annihilation of consciousness in case of failure, however, don't you think that it amounts to the annihilation of *Self*, in the opinion of the non-metaphysical?

THEOSOPHIST. From the standpoint of those who believe in the resurrection of the body *literally*, and insist that every bone, every artery and atom of flesh will be raised bodily on the Judgment Day — of course it does. If you still insist that it is the perishable form and finite qualities that make up *immortal* man, then we shall hardly understand each other.

And if you do not understand that, by limiting the existence of every Ego to *one* life on earth, you make of Deity an ever-drunken Indra of the Puranic dead letter, a cruel Moloch²⁰, a god who makes an inextricable mess on Earth, and yet claims thanks for it, then the sooner we drop the conversation the better.

ENQUIRER. But let us return, now that the subject of the Skandhas is disposed of, to the question of the consciousness which survives death. This is the point which interests most people. Do we possess more knowledge in Devachan than we do in Earth life?

THEOSOPHIST. In one sense, we can acquire more knowledge; that is, we can develop further any faculty which we loved and strove after during life, provided it is concerned with abstract and ideal things, such as music, painting, poetry, etc., since Devachan is merely an idealized and subjective continuation of earth-life.

ENQUIRER. But if in Devachan the Spirit is free from matter, why should it not possess all knowledge?

THEOSOPHIST. Because, as I told you, the Ego is, so to say, wedded to the memory of its last incarnation. Thus, if you think over what I have said, and string all the facts together, you will realize that the Devachanic state is not one of omniscience, but a transcendental continuation of the personal life just terminated. It is the rest of the soul from the toils of life.

¹⁸ **Perdition** - Loss of the soul; eternal damnation.

¹⁹ **Inculcate** - To impress (something) upon the mind of another by frequent instruction or repetition.

²⁰ **Moloch** - In the Bible, the god of the Canaanites and Phoenicians to whom children were sacrificed.

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ENQUIRER. 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 bye-product of organic action, which will evaporate like steam. Is not theirs a strange state of mind?

THEOSOPHIST. 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 they are firmly convinced of what they assert, no conscious after-life is possible for them. For there *are* exceptions to every rule.

ON POST-MORTEM AND POST-NATAL CONSCIOUSNESS

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

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

ENQUIRER. Quite so, I understand. This is but an aberration of the 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. Is this what you mean?

THEOSOPHIST. He will not be compelled, nor will he see anything. Having persistently denied during life the continuance of existence after death, he will be unable to see it, because his spiritual capacity having been stunted in life, it 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 Ātma, 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 materialist²¹, the complete loss of self-consciousness and self-perception after death is possible? Isn't it so? I answer, 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

²¹ **Materialist.** Not necessarily only one who believes in neither God nor soul, nor the survival of the latter, but also any person who materializes the purely spiritual; such as believe in an anthropomorphic deity, in a soul capable of burning in hell fire, and a hell and paradise as localities instead of states of consciousness. American "Substantialists," a Christian sect, are materialists, as also the so-called Spiritualists. (KT Glossary)

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any breach of the fundamental law, prove to be just the same state as that of a man who is in a dead faint.

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

THEOSOPHIST. Nor do I say that it does admit of an exception. But the spiritual law of continuity applies only to things which are truly real. To one who has read and understood Mundakya Upanishad²² and Vedanta-Sara 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 gain a clear perception why the materialist may fail to have a self-conscious survival after death.

Since Manas, in its lower aspect, is the seat of the terrestrial mind, it can, therefore, give only that perception of the Universe which is based on the evidence of that mind; it cannot give spiritual vision. It is said in the Eastern school, that between Buddhi and Manas (the *Ego*), or Iswara and Pragna²³ there is in reality no more difference than *between a forest and its trees, a lake and its waters*, as the Mundakya 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.

Buddhi and Manas-Taijasi

ENQUIRER. But, as I understand it, Buddhi represents in this simile the forest, and Manas-taijasi²⁴ the trees. And if *Buddhi* is immortal, how can that which is similar to it, *i.e.*, Manas-taijasi, entirely lose its consciousness till the day of its new incarnation? I cannot understand it.

THEOSOPHIST. You cannot, because you will mix up an abstract representation of the whole with its casual changes of form. Remember that if it can be said of Buddhi-Manas

²² **Mundakya Upanishad** (Sk.). Lit., the “Mundaka esoteric doctrine”, a work of high antiquity. It has been translated by Raja Rammohun Roy. The Mandukya Upanishad is one of several Upanishads that discuss the meaning and significance of the syllable Om (Aum).

²³ **Iswara** is the collective consciousness of the manifested deity, Brahma, *i.e.*, the collective consciousness of the Host of Dhyan Chohans (*vide* SECRET DOCTRINE); and Pragna is their individual wisdom.

²⁴ **Taijasi** means the radiant in consequence of its union with Buddhi; *i. e.*, Manas, the human soul, 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 revelation of the divine plus human intellect and self-consciousness.

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that it is unconditionally immortal, the same cannot be said of the lower Manas, still less of Taijasi, which is merely an attribute.

Neither of these, neither Manas nor Taijasi, can exist apart from Buddhi, the divine soul, because the first (*Manas*) is, in its lower aspect, a qualificative²⁵ attribute of the terrestrial personality, and the second (*Taijasi*) is identical with the first, because 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 recognise its existence. You can hardly apply this axiom²⁶ to the attributes and qualifications of the human soul, for it would be like saying that because your divine soul is immortal, therefore the bloom²⁷ on your cheek must also be immortal; whereas this bloom, like Taijasi, is simply a transitory phenomenon.

ENQUIRER. Do I understand you to say that we must not mix in our minds the noumenon²⁸ with the phenomenon, the cause with its effect?

THEOSOPHIST. 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

²⁵ **Qualificative** - That which qualifies, modifies, or restricts; a qualifying term or statement.

²⁶ **Axiom** - A self-evident or universally recognized truth;

²⁷ **Bloom** - youthful or healthy rosinness in the cheeks or face.

²⁸ **Noumena** (Gr.) The true essential nature of Being as distinguished from the illusive objects of sense. (KT Glossary)

Noumenon - (Greek) The inner essence of things that is unknowable by reason or ordinary perception. This word was introduced by the philosopher Immanuel Kant who contrasted it to phenomenon and denotes a purely intellectual intuition. It is encountered in theosophical writings where it is mostly used in reference to the true essential nature of being as distinguished from the illusive objects of sense. (Theosophedia)

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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 in this.

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Karma and Devachan

ENQUIRER. 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?

THEOSOPHIST. 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 past incarnation.²⁹ 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 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 direct fruit and consequence of some sin in 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, and therefore thinks he suffers for no guilt of his own, this alone is 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 filled with pictures of which he will have no definite perception; while for the average mortal it will be a dream as vivid as life, and full of realistic bliss and visions.

Life Passing Before the Eyes of the Dying

ENQUIRER. Then the personal man must always go on suffering blindly the Karmic penalties which the Ego has incurred?

²⁹ Some Theosophists have taken exception to this phrase, but the words are those of Master, 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 — and for these sufferings they of course deserve compensation.

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THEOSOPHIST. Not quite so. At the solemn moment of death every man, even when death is sudden, sees the whole of his past life marshalled before him, in its minutest details. For one short instant the *personal* becomes one with the *individual* and all-knowing *Ego*. But this instant is enough to show to him the whole chain of causes which have been at work during his life. He sees and now understands himself as he is, unadorned by flattery or self-deception. He reads his life, remaining as a spectator looking down into the arena he is quitting; he feels and knows the justice of all the suffering that has overtaken him.

ENQUIRER. Does this happen to everyone?

THEOSOPHIST. Without any exception. Very good and holy men see, we are taught, not only the life they are leaving, but even several preceding lives in which were produced the causes that made them what they were in the life just closing. They recognise the law of Karma in all its majesty and justice.

ENQUIRER. Is there anything corresponding to this before re-birth?

THEOSOPHIST. There is. As the man at the moment of death has a retrospective insight into the life he has led, so, at the moment he is reborn on to earth, the *Ego*, awaking from the state of Devachan, has a prospective vision of the life which awaits him, and realizes all the causes that have led to it. He realizes them and sees futurity, because it is between Devachan and re-birth that the *Ego* regains his full *manasic* consciousness, and rebecomes for a short time the god he was, before, in compliance with Karmic law, he first descended into matter and incarnated in the first man of flesh. The "golden thread" sees all its "pearls" and misses not one of them.

WHAT IS REALLY MEANT BY ANNIHILATION – SUTRATMA

ENQUIRER. I have heard some Theosophists speak of a golden thread on which their lives were strung. What do they mean by this?

THEOSOPHIST. In the Hindu Sacred books it is said that that which undergoes periodical incarnation is the *Sutratma*, which means literally the "Thread Soul." It is a synonym of the reincarnating *Ego* — *Manas* conjoined with *Buddhi* — which absorbs the *Manasic* recollections of all our preceding lives. It is so called, because, like the pearls on a thread, so is the long series of human lives strung together on that one thread. In some Upanishad these recurrent re-births are likened to the life of a mortal which oscillates periodically between sleep and waking.

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ENQUIRER. This, I must say, does not seem 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 incarnation a full change takes place not only of the external envelope, sex, and personality, but even of the mental and psychic capacities. 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 of any fact or event concerning it. . . . I may forget in the morning what I have dreamt during the night, still I know that I have slept and have the certainty that I lived during sleep; but what recollection can I have of my past incarnation until the moment of death? How do you reconcile this?

THEOSOPHIST. Some people do recollect their past incarnations during life; but these are Buddhas and Initiates. This is what the Yogis call Samma-Sambuddha, or the knowledge of the whole series of one's past incarnations.

Three Kinds of Sleep

ENQUIRER. But we ordinary mortals who have not reached Samma-Sambuddha, how are we to understand this simile?

THEOSOPHIST. By studying it and trying to understand more correctly the characteristics and the three kinds 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.

ENQUIRER. But this takes us to another 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.

THEOSOPHIST. And the materialist, without knowing it, is right. One who has no inner perception of, and faith in, the immortality of his soul, in that man the soul can never become Buddhi-tajjasi, but will remain simply Manas, and for Manas alone 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 the 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 a period of full awakened consciousness, or a state of chaotic dreams, or an utterly dreamless sleep undistinguishable from annihilation, and these are the three kinds of sleep.

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If 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, before the spiritual eyes of the soul, begins a performance according to a programme learnt and very often unconsciously composed by ourselves: the practical carrying out of *correct* beliefs or of illusions which have been created by ourselves. The Methodist will be Methodist, the Mussulman³⁰ a Mussulman, at least for some 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 property of independent or separate entities, cannot fail to give colour to that fact in its application to each of these entities. Now do you begin to understand it?

ENQUIRER. I think I do. The materialist, disbelieving in everything that cannot be proven to him by his five senses, or by scientific reasoning, based exclusively on the data furnished by these senses in spite of their inadequacy, 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?

THEOSOPHIST. Almost so. Remember the practically universal 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 inhabited by the eternal, changeless and immortal Monad³¹; 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.

ENQUIRER. How so? Can my conscious terrestrial "I" perish not only for a time, like the consciousness of the materialist, but so entirely as to leave no trace behind?

³⁰ **Mussulman** - archaic term for Muslim.

³¹ **Monad** - It is the Unity, the ONE; but in occultism it often means the unified duad, Ātma-Buddhi, — or that immortal part of man which incarnating in the lower kingdoms and gradually progressing through them to Man, finds thence way to the final goal — Nirvana.

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THEOSOPHIST. According to the teaching, it must so perish and in its fullness, all except the 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 no Buddhi has ever reflected itself, how can the latter carry away into the Eternity one particle of that terrestrial personality? Your spiritual "I" is immortal; but from your present self it can carry away into Eternity that only which has become worthy of immortality, namely, the aroma alone of the flower that has been mown by death.

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

THEOSOPHIST. The flower, as all past and future flowers which have blossomed and will have to blossom on the mother bough³², the *Sutratma*, 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-Sutratma³³, but Sutratma-Buddhi.

ENQUIRER. 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.

THEOSOPHIST. No doubt. The spiritual Ego of man moves in eternity like a pendulum between the hours of birth and death. But if these hours, marking the periods of life terrestrial and life spiritual, 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 re-births" — the only reality in our conception.

Such intervals, their limitation notwithstanding, do not prevent the Ego, while ever perfecting itself, from following undeviatingly, though gradually and slowly, the path to its last transformation, when that Ego, having reached its goal, becomes a divine being.

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. I have given you once already a familiar illustration by comparing the *Ego*, or the *individuality*, to an actor, and its numerous and various incarnations to the parts it plays.

³² **Bough** - A tree branch, especially a large or main branch.

³³ **Manas Sutratma** (Sans.) Two words meaning "mind" (Manas) and "Thread Soul" (Sutratma). It is, as said, the synonym of our Ego, or that which reincarnates. It is a technical term of Vedantic philosophy.

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Will you call these parts or 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 *Paranirvana*³⁴, 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 Sutratma or Ego. Collecting from every terrestrial personality, into which Karma forces it to incarnate, the nectar alone of the spiritual qualities and self-consciousness, it unites all these into one whole and emerges from its chrysalis as the glorified Dhyan Chohan³⁵. So much the worse for those terrestrial personalities from which it could collect nothing. Such personalities cannot assuredly outlive consciously their terrestrial existence.

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

THEOSOPHIST. Not at all. But immortality cannot touch the non-existent: for all that which exists as SAT³⁶, or emanates from 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 this triple unity during its incarnations, its externality, is certainly only the illusion of our personal conceptions. Therefore do we call Nirvana and the Universal life alone a reality, while relegating the terrestrial life, its terrestrial personality included, and even its Devachanic existence, to the phantom realm of illusion.

ENQUIRER. But why in such a case call sleep the reality, and waking the illusion?

THEOSOPHIST. It is simply a comparison made to facilitate the grasping of the subject, and from the standpoint of terrestrial conceptions it is a very correct one.

ENQUIRER. And still 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 really honest and charitable men, there should remain of their personality nothing but the refuse of a faded flower.

³⁴ **Paranirvana**. In the Vedantic philosophy the highest form of nirvana — beyond the latter.

³⁵ **Dhyan Chohans** (Sans.) Lit., "The Lords of Light." The highest gods, answering to the Roman Catholic Archangels. The divine Intelligences charged with the supervision of Kosmos.

³⁶ **Sat** (Sk.). The one ever-present Reality in the infinite world; the divine essence which is, but cannot be said to exist, as it is Absoluteness, Be-ness itself.

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THEOSOPHIST. No one ever said such a thing. No materialist, however unbelieving, can die for ever in the fullness of his spiritual individuality. What was said is that consciousness can disappear either fully or partially in the case of a materialist, so that no conscious remains of his personality survive.

ENQUIRER. But surely this is annihilation?

THEOSOPHIST. Certainly not. One can sleep a dead sleep and miss several stations during a long railway journey, without the slightest recollection or consciousness, and awake at another station and continue the journey past innumerable other halting-places till the end of the journey or the goal is reached.

Three kinds of sleep were mentioned to you: the dreamless, the chaotic, and the one which is 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 the after life a man has believed in and expected, such is the life he will have.

He who expected no life to come will have an absolute blank, amounting to annihilation, in the interval between the two re-births. This is just the carrying out of the programme we spoke of, a programme created by the materialists themselves. 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, at the threshold of death, drop his personality for ever. This personality having no tendrils³⁷ of sympathy for the world around and hence nothing to hook on to Sutratma, it follows that with the last breath every connection between the two is broken. There being no Devachan for such a materialist, the Sutratma will re-incarnate almost immediately. But those materialists who erred in nothing but their disbelief will oversleep but one station. And the time will come when that ex-materialist will perceive himself in the Eternity and perhaps repent that he lost even one day, one station, from the life eternal.

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

THEOSOPHIST. You may if you like. Only remember that births differ, and that there are births of "still-born" beings, which are *failures* of nature. Moreover, with your Western fixed ideas about material life, the words "living" and "being" are quite inapplicable to the pure subjective state of *post-mortem* existence.

³⁷ **Tendrils** - a threadlike, leafless organ of climbing plants, often growing in spiral form, which attaches itself to or twines round some other body, so as to support the plant.

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It is just because, 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, it is just because your Western ideas of life and death have finally become so narrow, that 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 Summer-land. There the souls of men eat, drink, 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, being if possible still more material. What between truncated angels, brass trumpets, golden harps, and material hell-fires, the Christian heaven seems like a fairy scene at a Christmas pantomime.

It is because of these narrow conceptions that you find such difficulty in understanding. It is 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.

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DEFINITE WORDS FOR DEFINITE THINGS.

ENQUIRER. Don't you think it is because there are no definite and fixed terms to indicate each "Principle" in man, that such a confusion of ideas arises in our minds with respect to the respective functions of these "Principles"?

THEOSOPHIST. I have thought of it myself. The whole trouble has arisen from this: we have started our expositions of, and discussion about, the "Principles," using their Sanskrit names instead of coining immediately, for the use of Theosophists, their equivalents in English. We must try and remedy this now.

ENQUIRER. You will do well, as it may avoid further confusion; no two theosophical writers, it seems to me, have hitherto agreed to call the same "Principle" by the same name.

THEOSOPHIST. The confusion is more apparent than real, however. I have heard some of our Theosophists express surprise at, and criticize several essays speaking of these "principles"; but, when examined, there was no worse mistake in them than that of using the word "Soul" to cover the three principles without specifying the distinctions.

The first, as positively the clearest of our Theosophical writers, Mr. A. P. Sinnett, has some comprehensive and admirably-written passages on the "Higher Self."³⁸ His real idea has also been misconceived by some, owing to his using the word "Soul" in a general sense. Yet here are a few passages which will show to you how clear and comprehensive is all that he writes on the subject: —

. . . "The human soul, once launched on the streams of evolution as a human individuality, ³⁹ passes through alternate periods of physical and relatively spiritual existence. It passes from the one plane, or stratum, or condition of nature to the other under the guidance of its Karmic affinities; living in incarnations the life which its Karma has pre-ordained; modifying its progress within the limitations of circumstances, and, — developing fresh Karma by its use or abuse of opportunities, — it returns to spiritual existence (Devachan) after each physical life, — through the intervening region of Kamaloka — for rest and refreshment and for the gradual absorption into its essence, as so much cosmic progress, of the life's experience gained "on earth" or during physical existence. This view of the matter will, moreover, have suggested many collateral inferences to anyone thinking over the subject; for instance, that the transfer of consciousness from the Kamaloka to the Devachanic stage of this progression would necessarily be gradual⁴⁰; *that in truth, no hard-and-fast line separates the varieties of spiritual conditions,*

³⁸ *Vide* Transactions of the "LONDON LODGE of the Theos. Soc.," No. 7, Oct., 1885.

³⁹ **HPB:** The "re-incarnating Ego," or "Human Soul," as he called it, the *Causal Body* with the Hindus

⁴⁰ **HPB:** The length of this "transfer" depends, however, on the degree of spirituality in the ex-personality of the disembodied Ego. For those whose lives were very spiritual this transfer, though gradual, is very rapid. The time becomes longer with the materialistically inclined.

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that even the spiritual and physical planes, as psychic faculties in living people show, are not so hopelessly walled off from one another as materialistic theories would suggest; that all states of nature are all around us simultaneously, and appeal to different perceptive faculties; and so on. . . It is clear that during physical existence people who possess psychic faculties remain in connection with the planes of superphysical consciousness; and although most people may not be endowed with such faculties, we all, as the phenomena of sleep, even, and especially . . . those of somnambulism or mesmerism, show, are capable of entering into conditions of consciousness that the five physical senses have nothing to do with. We — the souls within us — are not as it were altogether adrift in the ocean of matter. We clearly retain some surviving interest or rights in the shore from which, for a time, we have floated off. The process of incarnation, therefore, is not fully described when we speak of an *alternate* existence on the physical and spiritual planes, and thus picture the soul as a complete entity slipping entirely from the one state of existence to the other. The more correct definitions of the process would probably represent incarnation as taking place on this physical plane of nature by reason of an efflux emanating from the soul. The Spiritual realm would all the while be the proper habitat of the Soul, which would never entirely quit it; *and that non-materializable portion of the Soul which abides permanently on the spiritual plane may fitly, perhaps, be spoken of as the HIGHER SELF.*"

This "Higher Self" is ATMA, and of course it is "non-materializable," as Mr. Sinnett says. Even more, it can never be "objective" under any circumstances, even to the highest spiritual perception. For *Atman* or the "Higher Self" is really Brahma, the ABSOLUTE, and indistinguishable from it. In hours of *Samadhi*, the higher spiritual consciousness of the Initiate is entirely absorbed in the ONE essence, which is Atman, and therefore, being one with the whole, there can be nothing objective for it.

Now some of our Theosophists have got into the habit of using the words "Self" and "Ego" as synonymous, of associating the term "Self" with only man's higher individual or even personal "Self" or *Ego*, whereas this term ought never to be applied except *to the One universal Self*. Hence the confusion. Speaking of Manas, the "causal body," we may call it — when connecting it with the Buddhic radiance — the "HIGHER EGO," never the "Higher Self." For even Buddhi, the "Spiritual Soul," is not the SELF, but the vehicle only of SELF. All the other "*Selves*" — such as the "Individual" self and "personal" self — ought never to be spoken or written of without their qualifying and characteristic adjectives.

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Thus in this most excellent essay on the "Higher Self," this term is applied to the *sixth principle* or *Buddhi* (of course in conjunction with *Manas*, as without such union there would be no *thinking* principle or element in the spiritual soul); and has in consequence given rise to just such misunderstandings. The statement that "a child does not acquire its *sixth* principle — or become a morally responsible being capable of generating Karma — until seven years old," proves what is meant therein by the HIGHER SELF. Therefore, the able author is quite justified in explaining that after the "Higher Self" has passed into the human being and saturated the personality — in some of the finer organizations only — with its consciousness "people with psychic faculties may indeed perceive this Higher Self through their finer senses from time to time."

But so are those, who limit the term "Higher Self" to the Universal Divine Principle, "justified" in misunderstanding him. For, when we read, without being prepared for this shifting of metaphysical terms,⁴¹ that while "fully manifesting on the physical plane . . . the Higher Self still remains a conscious spiritual Ego on the corresponding plane of Nature" — we are apt to see in the "Higher Self" of this sentence, "Atma," and in the spiritual Ego, "Manas," or rather *Buddhi-Manas*, and forthwith to criticise the whole thing as incorrect.

To avoid henceforth such misapprehensions, I propose to translate literally from the Occult Eastern terms their equivalents in English, and offer these for future use.

THE HIGHER SELF is: Atma the inseparable ray of the Universal and ONE SELF. It is the God above, more than within, us. Happy the man who succeeds in saturating his inner Ego with it!

THE SPIRITUAL *divine* EGO is: the Spiritual soul or *Buddhi*, in close union with *Manas*, the mind-principle, without which it is no EGO at all, but only the Atmic *Vehicle*.

THE INNER, or HIGHER "EGO" is: *Manas*, the "Fifth" Principle, so called, independently of *Buddhi*. The Mind-Principle is only the Spiritual Ego when merged *into one* with *Buddhi*, — no materialist being supposed to have in him *such* an Ego, however great his intellectual capacities. It is the permanent *Individuality* or the "Re-incarnating Ego."

THE LOWER, or PERSONAL "EGO" is: the physical man in conjunction with his lower Self, *i.e.*, animal instincts, passions, desires, etc. It is called the "false personality," and consists of the *lower Manas* combined with *Kama-rupa*, and operating through the Physical body and its phantom or "double."

⁴¹ **HPB:** "Shifting of *Metaphysical terms*" applies here only to the shifting of their translated equivalents from the Eastern expressions; for to this day there never existed any such terms in English, every Theosophist having to coin his own terms to render his thought. It is nigh time, then, to settle on some definite nomenclature.

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The remaining "Principle" "*Prana*," or "Life," is, strictly speaking, the radiating force or Energy of Atma — as the Universal Life and the ONE SELF, — ITS lower or rather (in its effects) more physical, because manifesting, aspect. Prana or Life permeates the whole being of the objective Universe; and is called a "principle" only because it is an indispensable factor and the *deus ex machina*⁴² of the living man.

ENQUIRER. This division being so much simplified in its combinations will answer better, I believe. The other is much too metaphysical.

THEOSOPHIST. If outsiders as well as Theosophists would agree to it, it would certainly make matters much more comprehensible.

⁴² *deus ex machina* - an unexpected power or event saving a seemingly hopeless situation, especially as a contrived plot device in a play or novel.

For example, a character or thing that suddenly enters the story in a novel, play, movie, etc., and solves a problem that had previously seemed impossible to solve; an unexpected power or event saving a seemingly hopeless situation, esp. as a contrived plot device; a stage device in Greek and Roman drama in which a god appeared in the sky by means of a crane (Greek, *mechane*) to resolve the plot of a play.

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Excerpts from: Key to Theosophy

On Re-Incarnation or Re-Birth

WHAT IS MEMORY ACCORDING TO THEOSOPHICAL TEACHING?

ENQUIRER. The most difficult thing for you to do, will be to explain and give reasonable grounds for such a belief [*Re-incarnation*]. No Theosophist has ever yet succeeded in bringing forward a single valid proof to shake my scepticism. First of all, you have against this theory of re-incarnation, the fact that no single man has yet been found to remember that he has lived, least of all who he was, during his previous life.

THEOSOPHIST. Your argument, I see, tends to the same old objection; the loss of memory in each of us of our previous incarnation. You think it invalidates our doctrine? My answer is that it does not, and that at any rate such an objection cannot be final.

ENQUIRER. I would like to hear your arguments.

THEOSOPHIST. They are short and few. Yet when you take into consideration (a) the utter inability of the best modern psychologists to explain to the world the nature of *mind*; and (b) their complete ignorance of its potentialities, and higher states, you have to admit that this objection is based on an *a priori*⁴³ conclusion drawn from *prima facie*⁴⁴ and circumstantial evidence more than anything else. Now what is "memory" in your conception, pray?

ENQUIRER. That which is generally accepted: the faculty in our mind of remembering and of retaining the knowledge of previous thoughts, deeds and events.

THEOSOPHIST. Please add to it that there is a great difference between the three accepted forms of memory. Besides memory in general you have *Remembrance*, *Recollection* and *Reminiscence*, have you not? Have you ever thought over the difference? Memory, remember, is a generic name.

ENQUIRER. Yet, all these are only synonyms.

THEOSOPHIST. Indeed, they are not — not in philosophy, at all events. Memory is simply an innate power in thinking beings, and even in animals, of reproducing past impressions by an association of ideas principally suggested by objective things or by some action on our external sensory organs.

⁴³ *a priori* - relating to or denoting reasoning or knowledge that proceeds from theoretical deduction rather than from observation or experience.

⁴⁴ *prima facie* - based on the first impression; accepted as correct until proved otherwise.

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Memory is a faculty depending entirely on the more or less healthy and normal functioning of our *physical* brain; and *remembrance* and *recollection* are the attributes and handmaidens of that memory. But *reminiscence* is an entirely different thing. "Reminiscence" is defined by the modern psychologist as something intermediate between *remembrance* and *recollection*, or "a conscious process of recalling past occurrences, but *without that full and varied reference* to particular things which characterises *recollection*."

Locke, speaking of recollection and remembrance, says: "When an *idea again* recurs without the operation of the like object on the external sensory, it is *remembrance*; if it be sought after by the mind, and with pain and endeavour found and brought again into view, it is *recollection*." But even Locke leaves *reminiscence* without any clear definition, because it is no faculty or attribute of our *physical* memory, but an intuitional perception apart from and outside our physical brain; a perception which, covering as it does (being called into action by the ever-present knowledge of our spiritual Ego) all those visions in man which are regarded as *abnormal* — from the pictures suggested by genius to the *ravings* of fever and even madness — are classed by science as having no existence outside of our fancy.

Occultism and Theosophy, however, regard *reminiscence* in an entirely different light. For us, while *memory* is physical and evanescent and depends on the physiological conditions of the brain — a fundamental proposition with all teachers of mnemonics, who have the researches of modern scientific psychologists to back them — we call *reminiscence* the *memory of the soul*. And it is *this memory* which gives the assurance to almost every human being, whether he understands it or not, of his having lived before and having to live again. Indeed, as Wordsworth has it:

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting,
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath elsewhere had its setting,
And cometh from afar."

ENQUIRER. If it is on this kind of memory — poetry and abnormal fancies, on your own confession — that you base your doctrine, then you will convince very few, I am afraid.

THEOSOPHIST. I did not "confess" it was a fancy. I simply said that physiologists and scientists in general regard such reminiscences as hallucinations and fancy, to which *learned* conclusion they are welcome. We do not deny that such visions of the past and glimpses far back into the corridors of time, are not abnormal, as contrasted with our normal daily life experience and physical memory. But we do maintain with Professor W. Knight, that "the absence of memory of any action done in a previous state cannot be a conclusive argument against our having lived through it."

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And every fair-minded opponent must agree with what is said in Butler's *Lectures on Platonic Philosophy* — "that the feeling of extravagance with which it (pre-existence) affects us has its secret source in materialistic or semi-materialistic prejudices." Besides which we maintain that memory, as Olympiodorus called it, is simply phantasy, and the most unreliable thing in us. ⁴⁵ Ammonius Saccas⁴⁶ asserted that the only faculty in man directly opposed to prognostication, or looking into futurity, is *memory*. Furthermore, remember that memory is one thing and mind or *thought* is another; one is a recording machine, a register which very easily gets out of order; the other (thoughts) are eternal and imperishable. Would you refuse to believe in the existence of certain things or men only because your physical eyes have not seen them? Would not the collective testimony of past generations who have seen him be a sufficient guarantee that Julius Caesar once lived? Why should not the same testimony of the psychic senses of the masses be taken into consideration?

ENQUIRER. But don't you think that these are too fine distinctions to be accepted by the majority of mortals?

THEOSOPHIST. Say rather by the majority of materialists. And to them we say, behold: even in the short span of ordinary existence, memory is too weak to register all the events of a lifetime. How frequently do even most important events lie dormant in our memory until awakened by some association of ideas, or aroused to function and activity by some other link. This is especially the case with people of advanced age, who are always found suffering from feebleness of recollection. When, therefore, we remember that which we know about the physical and the spiritual principles in man, it is not the fact that our memory has failed to record our precedent life and lives that ought to surprise us, but the contrary, were it to happen.

⁴⁵ **HPB:** "The phantasy," says Olympiodorus (in *Platonis Phaed.*), "is an impediment to our intellectual conceptions; and hence, when we are agitated by the inspiring influence of the Divinity, if the phantasy intervenes, the enthusiastic energy ceases: for enthusiasm and the ecstasy are contrary to each other. Should it be asked whether the soul is able to energise without the phantasy, we reply, that its perception of universals proves that it is able. It has perceptions, therefore, independent of the phantasy; at the same time, however, the phantasy attends in its energies, just as a storm pursues him who sails on the sea."

⁴⁶ **Ammonius Saccas.** A great and good philosopher who lived in Alexandria between the 2nd and 3rd centuries of our Era, the founder of the Neo-Platonic School of the Philalethians or "lovers of truth." He was of poor birth and born of Christian parents, but endowed with such prominent, almost divine goodness as to be called *Theodidaktos*, the "*God-taught*." He honoured that which was good in Christianity, but broke with it and the Churches at an early age, being unable to find in Christianity any superiority over the old religions. (KT Glossary)

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WHY DO WE NOT REMEMBER OUR PAST LIVES?

ENQUIRER. You have given me a bird's eye view of the seven principles; now how do they account for our complete loss of any recollection of having lived before?

THEOSOPHIST. Very easily. Since those "principles" which we call physical, and none of which is denied by science, though it calls them by other names,⁴⁷ are disintegrated after death with their constituent elements, *memory* along with its brain, this vanished memory of a vanished personality, can neither remember nor record anything in the subsequent reincarnation of the EGO.

Reincarnation means that this Ego will be furnished with a *new* body, a *new* brain, and a *new* memory. Therefore it would be as absurd to expect this *memory* to remember that which it has never recorded as it would be idle to examine under a microscope a shirt never worn by a murderer, and seek on it for the stains of blood which are to be found only on the clothes he wore. It is not the clean shirt that we have to question, but the clothes worn during the perpetration of the crime; and if these are burnt and destroyed, how can you get at them?

ENQUIRER. Aye! how can you get at the certainty that the crime was ever committed at all, or that the "man in the clean shirt" ever lived before?

THEOSOPHIST. Not by physical processes, most assuredly; nor by relying on the testimony of that which exists no longer. But there is such a thing as circumstantial evidence, since our wise laws accept it, more, perhaps, even than they should. To get convinced of the fact of re-incarnation and past lives, one must put oneself in *rapport* with one's real permanent Ego, not one's evanescent memory.

ENQUIRER. But how can people believe in that which they *do not know*, nor have ever seen, far less put themselves in *rapport* with it?

THEOSOPHIST. If people, and the most learned, will believe in the Gravity, Ether, Force, and what not of Science, abstractions "and working hypotheses," which they have neither seen, touched, smelt, heard, nor tasted — why should not other people believe, on the same principle, in one's permanent Ego, a far more logical and important "working hypothesis" than any other?

⁴⁷ **HPB:** Namely, the body, life, passionate and animal instincts, and the astral eidolon of every man (whether perceived in thought or our mind's eye, or objectively and separate from the physical body), which principles we call *Sthula śarira*, *Prana*, *Kama rūpa*, and *Linga śarira* (vide supra).

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ENQUIRER. What is, finally, this mysterious eternal principle? Can you explain its nature so as to make it comprehensible to all?

THEOSOPHIST. The EGO which re-incarnates, the *individual* and immortal — not personal — "I"; the vehicle, in short, of the Atma-Buddhic MONAD, that which is rewarded in Devachan and punished on earth, and that, finally, to which the reflection only of the *Skandhas*, or attributes, of every incarnation attaches itself.⁴⁸

ENQUIRER. What do you mean by *Skandhas*?

THEOSOPHIST. Just what I said: "attributes," among which is *memory*, all of which perish like a flower, leaving behind them only a feeble perfume. Here is another paragraph from H. S. Olcott's "Buddhist Catechism" ⁴⁹ which bears directly upon the subject. It deals with the question as follows: —

"The aged man remembers the incidents of his youth, despite his being physically and mentally changed. Why, then, is not the recollection of past lives brought over by us from our last birth into the present birth? Because memory is included within the *Skandhas*, and the *Skandhas* having changed with the new existence, a memory, the record of that particular existence, develops.

Yet the record or reflection of all the past lives must survive, for when Prince Siddhartha became Buddha, the full sequence of His previous births were seen by Him. . . . and any one who attains to the state of *Jhana* ⁵⁰ can thus retrospectively trace the line of his lives." This proves to you that while the undying qualities of the personality — such as love, goodness, charity, etc. — attach themselves to the immortal Ego, photographing on it, so to speak, a permanent image of the divine aspect of the man who was, his material *Skandhas* (those which generate the most marked Karmic effects) are as evanescent as a flash of lightning, and cannot impress the new brain of the new personality; yet their failing to do so impairs in no way the identity of the re-incarnating Ego.

⁴⁸ **HPB:** There are five *Skandhas* or attributes in the Buddhist teachings: "*Rupa* (form or body), material qualities; *Vedana*, sensation; *Sanna*, abstract ideas; *Samkhara*, tendencies of mind; *Vinnana*, mental powers. Of these we are formed; by them we are conscious of existence; and through them communicate with the world about us."

⁴⁹ **HPB:** By H. S. Olcott, President and Founder of the Theosophical Society. The accuracy of the teaching is sanctioned by the Rev. H. Sumangala, High Priest of the Sripada and Galle, and Principal of the *Widyodaya Parivena* (College) at Colombo, as being in agreement with the Canon of the Southern Buddhist Church.

⁵⁰ **HPB** Glossary: *Jhana* (Sans.) or *Jnana*, Knowledge: Occult Wisdom

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ENQUIRER. Do you mean to infer that that which survives is only the Soul-memory, as you call it, that Soul or Ego being one and the same, while nothing of the personality remains?

THEOSOPHIST. Not quite; something of each personality, unless the latter was an *absolute* materialist with not even a chink in his nature for a spiritual ray to pass through, must survive, as it leaves its eternal impress on the incarnating permanent Self or Spiritual Ego.⁵¹ (See *On post mortem and post natal Consciousness*.) The personality with its Skandhas is ever changing with every new birth. It is, as said before, only the part played by the actor (the true Ego) for one night. This is why we preserve no memory on the physical plane of our past lives, though the real "Ego" has lived them over and knows them all.

ENQUIRER. Then how does it happen that the real or Spiritual man does not impress his new personal "I" with this knowledge?

THEOSOPHIST. How is it that the servant-girls in a poor farm-house could speak Hebrew and play the violin in their trance or somnambulant state, and knew neither when in their normal condition?

Because, as every genuine psychologist of the old, not your modern, school, will tell you, the Spiritual Ego can act only when the personal Ego is paralysed. The Spiritual "I" in man is omniscient and has every knowledge innate in it; while the personal self is the creature of its environment and the slave of the physical memory. Could the former manifest itself uninterruptedly, and without impediment, there would be no longer men on earth, but we should all be gods.

ENQUIRER. Still there ought to be exceptions, and some ought to remember.

THEOSOPHIST. And so there are. But who believes in their report? Such sensitives are generally regarded as hallucinated hysterics, as crack-brained enthusiasts, or humbugs, by modern materialism. Let them read, however, works on this subject, pre-eminently "Reincarnation, a Study of Forgotten Truth" by E. D. Walker, F. T. S., and see in it the mass of proofs which the able author brings to bear on this vexed question.

⁵¹ **HPB:** Or the *Spiritual*, in contradistinction to the personal *Self*. The student must not confuse this Spiritual Ego with the "HIGHER SELF" which is *Atma*, the God within us, and inseparable from the Universal Spirit.

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One speaks to people of soul, and some ask "What is Soul?" "Have you ever proved its existence?" Of course it is useless to argue with those who are materialists. But even to them I would put the question: "Can you remember what you were or did when a baby? Have you preserved the smallest recollection of your life, thoughts, or deeds, or that you lived at all during the first eighteen months or two years of your existence? Then why not deny that you have ever lived as a babe, on the same principle?"

When to all this we add that the reincarnating Ego, or individuality, retains during the Devachanic period merely the essence of the experience of its past earth-life or personality, the whole physical experience *involving* into a state of *in potentia*,⁵² or being, so to speak, translated into spiritual formulae; when we remember further that the term between two rebirths is said to extend from ten to fifteen centuries, during which time the physical consciousness is totally and absolutely inactive, having no organs to act through, and therefore no existence, the reason for the absence of all remembrance in the purely physical memory is apparent.

ENQUIRER. You just said that the SPIRITUAL EGO was omniscient. Where, then, is that vaunted omniscience during his Devachanic life, as you call it?

THEOSOPHIST. During that time it is latent and potential, because, first of all, the Spiritual Ego (the compound of Buddhi-Manas) is *not* the HIGHER SELF [*Atma*], which being one with the Universal Soul or Mind is alone omniscient; and, secondly, because Devachan is the idealized continuation of the terrestrial life just left behind, a period of retributive adjustment, and a reward for unmerited wrongs and sufferings undergone in that special life. It is omniscient only *potentially* in Devachan, and *de facto*⁵³ exclusively in Nirvana, when the Ego is merged in the Universal Mind-Soul. Yet it rebecomes *quasi* omniscient during those hours on earth when certain abnormal conditions and physiological changes in the body make the *Ego* free from the trammels of matter.

Thus the examples cited above of somnambulists, a poor servant speaking Hebrew, and another playing the violin, give you an illustration of the case in point. This does not mean that the explanations of these two facts offered us by medical science have no truth in them, for one girl had, years before, heard her master, a clergyman, read Hebrew works aloud, and the other had heard an artist playing a violin at their farm. But neither could have done so as perfectly as they did had they not been ensouled by THAT which, owing to the sameness of its nature with the Universal Mind, is omniscient. Here the higher principle acted on the Skandhas and moved them; in the other, the personality being paralysed, the individuality manifested itself. Pray do not confuse the two.

⁵² **in potentia** - as a possibility; potentially.

⁵³ **de facto** - denoting someone or something that is such in fact.

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ON INDIVIDUALITY AND PERSONALITY. ⁵⁴

ENQUIRER. But what is the difference between the two? I confess that I am still in the dark. Indeed it is just that difference, then, that you cannot impress too much on our minds.

THEOSOPHIST. I try to; but alas, it is harder with some than to make them feel a reverence for childish impossibilities, only because they are *orthodox*, and because orthodoxy is respectable. To understand the idea well, you have to first study the dual sets of "principles": the *spiritual*, or those which belong to the imperishable Ego; and the *material*, or those principles which make up the ever-changing bodies or the series of personalities of that Ego. Let us fix permanent names to these, and say that: —

⁵⁴ **HPB:** Even in his *Buddhist Catechism*, Col. Olcott, forced to it by the logic of Esoteric philosophy, found himself obliged to correct the mistakes of previous Orientalists who made no such distinction, and gives the reader his reasons for it. Thus he says:

"The successive appearances upon the earth, or 'descents into generation,' of the *tanhaically* coherent parts (Skandhas) of a certain being, are a succession of personalities. In each birth the PERSONALITY differs from that of a previous or next succeeding birth. Karma, the DEUS EX MACHINA, masks (or shall we say reflects?) itself now in the personality of a sage, again as an artisan, and so on throughout the string of births. But though personalities ever shift, the one line of life along which they are strung, like beads, runs unbroken; it is ever that *particular line*, never any other. It is therefore individual, an individual vital undulation, which began in Nirvana, or the subjective side of nature, as the light or heat undulation through aether began at its dynamic source; is careering through the objective side of nature under the impulse of Karma and the creative direction of *Tanha* (the unsatisfied desire for existence); and leads through many cyclic changes back to Nirvana. Mr. Rhys-Davids calls that which passes from personality to personality along the individual chain 'character,' or 'doing.' Since 'character' is not a mere metaphysical abstraction, but the sum of one's mental qualities and moral propensities, would it not help to dispel what Mr. Rhys-Davids calls 'the desperate expedient of a mystery' (*Buddhism*, p. 101) if we regarded the life-undulation as individuality, and each of its series of natal manifestations as a separate personality? The perfect individual, Buddhistically speaking, is a Buddha, I should say; for Buddha is but the rare flower of humanity, without the least supernatural admixture. And as countless generations ('four *asankheyyas* and a hundred thousand cycles,' Fausböll and Rhys-Davids' BUDDHIST BIRTH STORIES, p. 13) are required to develop a *man* into a Buddha, and *the iron will to become one* runs throughout all the successive births, what shall we call that which thus wills and perseveres? Character? One's individuality: an individuality but partly manifested in any one birth, but built up of fragments from all the births?" (*Bud. Cat., Appendix A. 137.*)

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1. *Atma*, the "*Higher Self*," is neither your Spirit nor mine, but like sunlight shines on all. It is the universally diffused "*divine principle*," and is inseparable from its one and absolute *Meta-Spirit*, as the sunbeam is inseparable from sunlight.

2. *Buddhi* (the spiritual soul) is only its vehicle. Neither each separately, nor the two collectively, are of any more use to the body of man, than sunlight and its beams are for a mass of granite buried in the earth, *unless the divine Duad is assimilated by, and reflected in, some consciousness*. Neither *Atma* nor *Buddhi* are ever reached by Karma, because the former is the highest aspect of Karma, *its working agent* of ITSELF in one aspect, and the other is unconscious *on this plane*. This consciousness or mind is,

3. *Manas*,⁵⁵ the derivation or product in a reflected form of *Ahamkara*, "the conception of I," or EGO-SHIP. It is, therefore, when inseparably united to the first two, called the SPIRITUAL EGO, and *Taijasi* (the radiant). This is the real Individuality, or the divine man. It is this Ego which — having originally incarnated in the *senseless* human form animated by, but unconscious (since it had no consciousness) of, the presence in itself of the dual monad — made of that human-like form *a real man*. It is that Ego, that "Causal Body," which overshadows every personality Karma forces it to incarnate into; and this Ego which is held responsible for all the sins committed through, and in, every new body or personality — the evanescent masks which hide the true Individual through the long series of rebirths.

ENQUIRER. But is this just? Why should this Ego receive punishment as the result of deeds which it has forgotten?

THEOSOPHIST. It has not forgotten them; it knows and remembers its misdeeds as well as you remember what you have done yesterday. Is it because the memory of that bundle of physical compounds called "body" does not recollect what its predecessor (the personality *that was*) did, that you imagine that the real Ego has forgotten them? As well say it is unjust that the new boots on the feet of a boy, who is flogged for stealing apples, should be punished for that which they know nothing of.

⁵⁵ **HPB:** MAHAT or the "Universal Mind" is the source of *Manas*. The latter is Mahat, *i.e.*, mind, in man. *Manas* is also called *Kshetrajna*, "embodied Spirit," because it is, according to our philosophy, the *Manasa-putras*, or "Sons of the Universal Mind," who *created*, or rather produced, the *thinking* man, "*manu*," by incarnating in the *third Race* mankind in our Round. It is *Manas*, therefore, which is the real incarnating and permanent *Spiritual Ego*, the INDIVIDUALITY, and our various and numberless personalities only its external masks.

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ENQUIRER. But are there no modes of communication between the Spiritual and human consciousness or memory?

THEOSOPHIST. Of course there are; but they have never been recognised by your scientific modern psychologists. To what do you attribute intuition, the "voice of the conscience," premonitions, vague undefined reminiscences, etc., etc., if not to such communications?

Would that the majority of educated men, at least, had the fine spiritual perceptions of Coleridge⁵⁶, who shows how intuitional he is in some of his comments. Hear what he says with respect to the probability that "all thoughts are in themselves imperishable." "If the intelligent faculty (sudden 'revivals' of memory) should be rendered more comprehensive, it would require only a different and appropriate organization, the *body celestial* instead of the *body terrestrial*, to bring before every human soul *the collective experience of its whole past existence (existences, rather).*" And this body celestial is our Manasic EGO.

⁵⁶ **Samuel Taylor Coleridge** (21 October 1772 – 25 July 1834) was an English poet, literary critic and philosopher who, with his friend William Wordsworth, was a founder of the Romantic Movement in England and a member of the *Lake Poets*. He wrote the poems *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan*, as well as the major prose work *Biographia Literaria*.

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Excerpts from: Key to Theosophy

ON THE REWARD AND PUNISHMENT OF THE EGO.

ENQUIRER. I have heard you say that the *Ego*, whatever the life of the person he incarnated in may have been on Earth, is never visited with *post-mortem* punishment.

THEOSOPHIST. Never, save in very exceptional and rare cases of which we will not speak here, as the nature of the "punishment" in no way approaches any of your theological conceptions of damnation.

ENQUIRER. But if it is punished in this life for the misdeeds committed in a previous one, then it is this Ego that ought to be rewarded also, whether here, or when disincarnated.

THEOSOPHIST. And so it is. If we do not admit of any punishment outside of this earth, it is because the only state the Spiritual Self knows of, hereafter, is that of unalloyed bliss.

ENQUIRER. What do you mean?

THEOSOPHIST. Simply this: *crimes and sins committed on a plane of objectivity and in a world of matter, cannot receive punishment in a world of pure subjectivity*. We believe in no hell or paradise as localities; in no objective hell-fires and worms that never die, nor in any Jerusalems with streets paved with sapphires and diamonds.

What we believe in is a *post-mortem state* or mental condition, such as we are in during a vivid dream. We believe in an immutable law of absolute Love, Justice, and Mercy. And believing in it, we say: "Whatever the sin and dire results of the original Karmic transgression of the now incarnated Egos ⁵⁷ no man (or the outer material and periodical form of the Spiritual Entity) can be held, with any degree of justice, responsible for the consequences of his birth.

⁵⁷ **HPB:** It is on this transgression that the cruel and illogical dogma of the Fallen Angels has been built. It is explained in Vol. II. of the *Secret Doctrine*. All our "Egos" are thinking and rational entities (*Manasa-putras*) who had lived, whether under human or other forms, in the precedent *life-cycle* (*Manvantara*), and whose Karma it was to incarnate in the *man* of this one. It was taught in the MYSTERIES that, having delayed to comply with this law (or having "refused to create" as Hinduism says of the *Kumaras* and Christian legend of the Archangel Michael), *i.e.*, having failed to incarnate in due time, the bodies predestined for them got defiled (Vide Stanzas VIII. and IX. in the "Slokas of Dzyan," Vol. II. *Secret Doctrine*, pp. 19 and 20), hence the original sin of the senseless forms and the punishment of the *Egos*. That which is meant by the rebellious angels being hurled down into Hell is simply explained by these pure Spirits or Egos being imprisoned in bodies of unclean matter, flesh.

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He does not ask to be born, nor can he choose the parents that will give him life. In every respect he is a victim to his environment, the child of circumstances over which he has no control; and if each of his transgressions were impartially investigated, there would be found nine out of every ten cases when he was the one sinned against, rather than the sinner. Life is at best a heartless play, a stormy sea to cross, and a heavy burden often too difficult to bear. The greatest philosophers have tried in vain to fathom and find out its *raison d'etre*,⁵⁸ and have all failed except those who had the key to it, namely, the Eastern sages. Life is, as Shakespeare describes it: —

"... but a walking shadow — a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing...."

Nothing in its separate parts, yet of the greatest importance in its collectivity or series of lives. At any rate, almost every individual life is, in its full development, a sorrow. And are we to believe that poor, helpless man, after being tossed about like a piece of rotten timber on the angry billows of life, is, if he proves too weak to resist them, to be punished by a *sempiternity*⁵⁹ of damnation, or even a temporary punishment?

Never! Whether a great or an average sinner, good or bad, guilty or innocent, once delivered of the burden of physical life, the tired and worn-out *Manu* ("thinking Ego") has won the right to a period of absolute rest and bliss.

The same unerringly wise and just rather than merciful Law, which inflicts upon the incarnated Ego the Karmic punishment for every sin committed during the preceding life on Earth, provided for the now disembodied Entity a long lease of mental rest, *i.e.*, the entire oblivion of every sad event, aye, to the smallest painful thought, that took place in its last life as a personality, leaving in the soul-memory but the reminiscence of that which was bliss, or led to happiness.

⁵⁸ **raison d'etre** - the most important reason or purpose for someone or something's existence.

⁵⁹ **sempiternity** - the state or quality of being eternal, without beginning or end.

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Plotinus⁶⁰, who said that our body was the true river of Lethe⁶¹, for "souls plunged into it forget all," meant more than he said. For, as our terrestrial body is like Lethe, so is our *celestial body* in Devachan, and much more.

ENQUIRER. Then am I to understand that the murderer, the transgressor of law divine and human in every shape, is allowed to go unpunished?

THEOSOPHIST. Who ever said that? Our philosophy has a doctrine of punishment as stern as that of the most rigid Calvinist,⁶² only far more philosophical and consistent with absolute justice. No deed, not even a sinful thought, will go unpunished; the latter more severely even than the former, as a thought is far more potential in creating evil results than even a deed. ⁶³ We believe in an unerring law of Retribution, called KARMA, which asserts itself in a natural concatenation of causes and their unavoidable results.

ENQUIRER. And how, or where, does it act?

THEOSOPHIST. Every labourer is worthy of his hire, saith Wisdom in the Gospel; every action, good or bad, is a prolific parent, saith the Wisdom of the Ages. Put the two together, and you will find the "why."

After allowing the Soul, escaped from the pangs of personal life, a sufficient, aye, a hundredfold compensation, Karma, with its army of Skandhas, waits at the threshold of Devachan, whence the *Ego* re-emerges to assume a new incarnation.

It is at this moment that the future destiny of the now-rested Ego trembles in the scales of just Retribution, as *it* now falls once again under the sway of active Karmic law.

⁶⁰ **Plotinus** (c. 204/5 – 270) was a major philosopher of the ancient world. In his philosophy there are three principles: the One, the Intellect, and the Soul. His teacher was Ammonius Saccas and he is of the Platonic tradition. His metaphysical writings have inspired centuries of Pagan, Christian, Jewish, Islamic and Gnostic metaphysicians and mystics.

⁶¹ **Lethe** - In Greek mythology, Lethe was one of the five rivers of the underworld of Hades. Also known as the *Ameles potamos* (river of unmindfulness), the Lethe flowed around the cave of Hypnos and through the Underworld, where all those who drank from it experienced complete forgetfulness. Lethe was also the name of the Greek spirit of forgetfulness and oblivion, with whom the river was often identified. (Wikipedia)

⁶² **Calvinism** (also called the Reformed tradition, Reformed Christianity or the Reformed faith) is a major branch of Protestantism that follows the theological tradition and forms of Christian practice of John Calvin and other Reformation-era theologians. Calvinists broke with the Roman Catholic Church but differed with Lutherans on the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, theories of worship, and the use of God's law for believers, among other things. (Wikipedia)

⁶³ **HPB**: "Verily, I say unto you, that whosoever looketh at a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." (Matt. v., 28.)

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It is in this rebirth which is ready for it, a rebirth selected and prepared by this mysterious, inexorable, but in the equity and wisdom of its decrees infallible LAW, that the sins of the previous life of the Ego are punished.

Only it is into no imaginary Hell, with theatrical flames and ridiculous tailed and horned devils, that the Ego is cast, but verily on to this earth, the plane and region of his sins, where he will have to atone for every bad thought and deed. As he has sown, so will he reap.

Reincarnation will gather around him all those other Egos who have suffered, whether directly or indirectly, at the hands, or even through the unconscious instrumentality, of the past *personality*. They will be thrown by Nemesis⁶⁴ in the way of the *new* man, concealing the *old*, the eternal EGO, and

ENQUIRER. But where is the equity you speak of, since these new "personalities" are not aware of having sinned or been sinned against?

THEOSOPHIST. Has the coat torn to shreds from the back of the man who stole it, by another man who was robbed of it and recognises his property, to be regarded as fairly dealt with?

The new "personality" is no better than a fresh suit of clothes with its specific characteristics, colour, form and qualities; but the real man who wears it is the same culprit as of old.

It is the *individuality* who suffers through his "personality." And it is this, and this alone, that can account for the terrible, still only *apparent*, injustice in the distribution of lots in life to man.

When your modern philosophers will have succeeded in showing to us a good reason, why so many apparently innocent and good men are born only to suffer during a whole life-time; why so many are born poor unto starvation in the slums of great cities, abandoned by fate and men; why, while these are born in the gutter, others open their eyes to light in palaces; while a noble birth and fortune seem often given to the worst of men and only rarely to the worthy; while there are beggars whose inner selves are peers to the highest and noblest of men; when this, and much more, is satisfactorily explained by either your philosophers or theologians, then only, but not till then, you will have the right to reject the theory of reincarnation.

⁶⁴ **Karma** (Sk.). Physically, action: metaphysically, the LAW OF RETRIBUTION, the Law of cause and effect or Ethical Causation. **Nemesis**, only in one sense, that of bad Karma. (TG)

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The highest and grandest of poets have dimly perceived this truth of truths. Shelley believed in it, Shakespeare must have thought of it when writing on the worthlessness of Birth. Remember his words:

"Why should my birth keep down my mounting spirit?
Are not all creatures subject unto time?
There's legions now of beggars on the earth,
That their original did spring from Kings,
And many monarchs now, whose fathers were
The riff-raff of their age"

Alter the word "fathers" into "Egos" — and you will have the truth.

The Soul's Journey through Life and Death – Part 4

Excerpts from: Key to Theosophy

On The Various Post Mortem States

The Physical and the Spiritual Man

ENQUIRER. I am glad to hear you believe in the immortality of the Soul.

THEOSOPHIST. Not of "the Soul," but of the divine Spirit; or rather in the immortality of the re-incarnating Ego.

ENQUIRER. What is the difference?

THEOSOPHIST. A very great one in our philosophy, but this is too abstruse and difficult a question to touch lightly upon. We shall have to analyze them separately, and then in conjunction. We may begin with Spirit.

We say that the Spirit (the "Father in secret" of Jesus), or *Atman*⁶⁵, is no individual property of any man, but is the Divine essence which has no body, no form, which is imponderable, invisible and indivisible, that which does not *exist* and yet *is*, as the Buddhists say of Nirvana.

It only overshadows the mortal; that which enters into him and pervades the whole body being only its omnipresent rays, or light, radiated through *Buddhi*, its vehicle and direct emanation. This is the secret meaning of the assertions of almost all the ancient philosophers, when they said that "the *rational* part of man's soul"⁶⁶ never entered wholly into the man, but only overshadowed him more or less through the *irrational* spiritual Soul or *Buddhi*.⁶⁷

ENQUIRER. I laboured under the impression that the "Animal Soul" alone was irrational, not the Divine.

THEOSOPHIST. You have to learn the difference between that which is negatively, or *passively* "irrational," because undifferentiated, and that which is irrational because too *active* and positive. Man is a correlation of spiritual powers, as well as a correlation of chemical and physical forces, brought into function by what we call "principles."

⁶⁵ In section 10 of KT called *The Mystery Of The Ego*. HPB writes: Our God within us, or "our Father in Secret" is what we call the "HIGHER SELF," Atma.

⁶⁶ **HPB:** In its generic sense, the word "rational" meaning something emanating from the Eternal Wisdom.

⁶⁷ **HPB:** *Irrational* in the sense that as a *pure* emanation of the Universal mind it can have no individual reason of its own on this plane of matter, but like the Moon, who borrows her light from the Sun and her life from the Earth, so *Buddhi*, receiving its light of Wisdom from *Ātma*, gets its rational qualities from *Manas*. Per se, as something homogeneous, it is devoid of attributes.

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ENQUIRER. I have read a good deal upon the subject, and it seems to me that the notions of the older philosophers differed a great deal from those of the mediaeval Kabalists, though they do agree in some particulars.

THEOSOPHIST. The most substantial difference between them and us is this. While we believe with the Neo-Platonists and the Eastern teachings that the spirit (Ātma) never descends hypostatically⁶⁸ into the living man, but only showers more or less its radiance on the *inner* man (the psychic and spiritual compound of the *astral*) principles, the Kabalists maintain that the human Spirit, detaching itself from the ocean of light and Universal Spirit, enters man's Soul, where it remains throughout life imprisoned in the astral capsule. All Christian Kabalists still maintain the same, as they are unable to break quite loose from their anthropomorphic and Biblical doctrines.

ENQUIRER. And what do you say?

THEOSOPHIST. We say that we only allow the presence of the radiation of Spirit (or Ātma) in the astral capsule, and so far only as that spiritual radiancy is concerned. We say that man and Soul have to conquer their immortality by ascending towards the unity with which, if successful, they will be finally linked and into which they are finally, so to speak, absorbed.

The individualization of man after death depends on the spirit, not on his soul and body. Although the word "personality," in the sense in which it is usually understood, is an absurdity if applied literally to our immortal essence, still the latter is, as our individual Ego, a distinct entity, immortal and eternal, *per se*.

Separation of the Personality from the Individuality in the case of a Criminal

It is only in the case of black magicians or of criminals beyond redemption, criminals who have been such during a long series of lives — that the shining thread, which links the spirit to the personal soul⁶⁹ from the moment of the birth of the child, is violently snapped, and the disembodied entity becomes divorced from the personal soul, the latter being annihilated without leaving the smallest impression of itself on the former.

If that union between the lower, or personal Manas, and the individual reincarnating Ego, has not been effected during life, then the former is left to share the fate of the lower animals, to gradually dissolve into ether, and have its personality annihilated. But even then the Ego remains a distinct being. It (the spiritual Ego) only loses one Devachanic state — after that special, and in that case indeed useless, life — as that idealized *Personality*, and is reincarnated, after enjoying for a short time its freedom as a planetary spirit almost immediately.

⁶⁸ **Hypostasis** (Greek) means underlying state or underlying substance, and is the fundamental reality that supports all else. Neo-Platonists argue that beneath the surface phenomena that present themselves to our senses are three higher spiritual principles or hypostases, each one more sublime than the preceding. For Plotinus, these are the soul, being/intellect (Nous), and the One.

⁶⁹ **The Lower Manas** – Antahkarana is the path or bridge between the Higher and the Lower Manas, the divine Ego, and the *personal Soul* of man. (TG)

The Soul's Journey through Life and Death – Part 4

Excerpts from: Key to Theosophy

Planetary Spirits

ENQUIRER. It is stated in *Isis Unveiled* that *such* planetary Spirits or Angels, "the gods of the Pagans or the Archangels of the Christians," will never be men on our planet.

THEOSOPHIST. Quite right. Not "*such*," but *some* classes of higher Planetary Spirits. They will never be men on this planet, because they are liberated Spirits from a previous, earlier world, and as such they cannot re-become men on this one. Yet all these will live again in the next and far higher Mahamanvantara, after this "great Age," and "Brahma *pralaya*," (a little period of 16 figures or so) is over.

For you must have heard, of course, that Eastern philosophy teaches us that mankind consists of such "Spirits" imprisoned in human bodies? The difference between animals and men is this: the former are ensouled by the "principles" *potentially*, the latter *actually*.⁷⁰ Do you understand now the difference?

ENQUIRER⁷¹. Yes; but this specialization has been in all ages the stumbling-block of metaphysicians.

THEOSOPHIST. It was. The whole esotericism of the Buddhistic philosophy is based on this mysterious teaching, understood by so few persons, and so totally misrepresented by many of the most learned modern scholars. Even metaphysicians are too inclined to confound the effect with the cause.

An Ego who has won his immortal life as spirit will remain the same inner self [*Manas*] throughout all his rebirths on earth; but this does not imply necessarily that he must either remain the Mr. Smith or Mr. Brown he was on earth, or lose his individuality. Therefore, the astral soul and the terrestrial body of man may, in the dark hereafter, be absorbed into the cosmical ocean of sublimated elements, and cease to feel his last *personal* Ego (if it did not deserve to soar higher), and the *divine* Ego still remain the same unchanged entity, though this terrestrial experience of his emanation may be totally obliterated at the instant of separation from the unworthy vehicle.

⁷⁰ **HPB:** Vide "*Secret Doctrine*," Vol. II., stanzas. (Vol. 2, Page 255) It is only at the mid-point of the 3rd Root Race that man was endowed with Manas. Once united, the two and then the three made one; for though the lower animals, from the amoeba to man, received their monads, in which all the higher qualities are potential, all have to remain dormant till each reaches its human form, before which stage manas (mind) has no development in them.* In the animals every principle is paralysed, and in a foetus-like state, save the second (vital) and the third (the astral), and the rudiments of the fourth (Kama, which is desire, instinct) whose intensity and development varies and changes with the species.

⁷¹ This next section is from *Isis Unveiled* (See Vol. 1, Page 316)

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ENQUIRER. If the "Spirit," or the divine portion of the soul, is pre-existent as a distinct being from all eternity, as Origen, Synesius, and other semi-Christians and semi-Platonic philosophers taught, and if it is the same, and nothing more than the metaphysically-objective soul, how can it be otherwise than eternal? And what matters it in such a case, whether man leads a pure life or an animal, if, do what he may, he can never lose his individuality?

THEOSOPHIST. This doctrine, as you have stated it, is just as pernicious in its consequences as that of vicarious atonement.⁷² Had the latter dogma, in company with the false idea that we are all immortal, been demonstrated to the world in its true light, humanity would have been bettered by its propagation.⁷³

⁷² We have often wondered at the extraordinary ideas of God and His justice that seem to be honestly held by those Christians who blindly rely upon the clergy for their religion, and never upon their own reason. How strangely illogical is this doctrine of the Atonement. We propose to discuss it with the Christians from the Buddhistic stand-point, and show at once by what a series of sophistries, directed toward the one object of tightening the ecclesiastical yoke upon the popular neck, its acceptance as a divine command has been finally effected; also, that it has proved one of the most pernicious and demoralizing of doctrines. The clergy say: no matter how enormous our crimes against the laws of God and of man, we have but to believe in the self-sacrifice of Jesus for the salvation of mankind, and His blood will wash out every stain. God's mercy is boundless and unfathomable. It is impossible to conceive of a human sin so damnable that the price paid in advance for the redemption of the sinner would not wipe it out if a thousandfold worse. And, furthermore, it is never too late to repent. Though the offender wait until the last minute of the last hour of the last day of his mortal life, before his blanched lips utter the confession of faith, he may go to Paradise; the dying thief did it, and so may all others as vile. These are the assumptions of the Church. But if we step outside the little circle of creed and consider the universe as a whole balanced by the exquisite adjustment of parts, how all sound logic, how the faintest glimmering sense of Justice revolts against this Vicarious Atonement! If the criminal sinned only against himself, and wronged no one but himself; if by sincere repentance he could cause the obliteration of past events, not only from the memory of man, but also from that imperishable record, which no deity — not even the Supremest of the Supreme — can cause to disappear, then this dogma might not be incomprehensible. But to maintain that one may wrong his fellow-man, kill, disturb the equilibrium of society, and the natural order of things, and then — through cowardice, hope, or compulsion, matters not — be forgiven by believing that the spilling of one blood washes out the other blood spirt — this is preposterous! Can the results of a crime be obliterated even though the crime itself should be pardoned? The effects of a cause are never limited to the boundaries of the cause, nor can the results of crime be confined to the offender and his victim. Every good as well as evil action has its effects, as palpably as the stone flung into a calm water.

(*Isis Unveiled* Vol. 2, Page 542)

⁷³ In *Isis Unveiled*, HPB continues: Crime and sin would be avoided, not for fear of earthly punishment, or of a ridiculous hell, but for the sake of that which lies the most deeply rooted in our inner nature — the desire of an individual and distinct life in the hereafter, the positive assurance that we cannot win it unless we "take the kingdom of heaven by violence," and the conviction that neither human prayers nor the blood of another man will save us from individual destruction after death, unless we firmly link ourselves during our terrestrial life with our own immortal spirit — our GOD. (See *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. 1, Page 316)

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Let me repeat to you again. Pythagoras⁷⁴, Plato, Timaeus of Locris, and the old Alexandrian School, derived the *Soul* of man (or his higher "principles" and attributes) from the Universal World Soul, the latter being, according to their teachings, Aether (Pater-Zeus).

Therefore, neither of these "principles" can be *unalloyed* essence of the Pythagorean *Monas*, or our *Atma-Buddhi*, because the *Anima Mundi*⁷⁵ is but the effect, the subjective emanation or rather radiation of the former.

Both the *human* Spirit (or the individuality), the re-incarnating Spiritual Ego, and Buddhi, the Spiritual soul, are pre-existent. But, while the former exists as a distinct entity, an individualization, the soul exists as pre-existing breath, an unscient⁷⁶ portion of an intelligent whole. Both were originally formed from the Eternal Ocean of light; but as the Fire-Philosophers⁷⁷, the mediaeval Theosophists, expressed it, there is a visible as well as invisible spirit in fire. They made a difference between the *anima bruta* and the *anima divina*. Empedocles firmly believed all men and animals to possess two souls; and in Aristotle we find that he calls one the reasoning soul, *nous*, and the other, the animal soul, *psuche*. According to these philosophers, the reasoning soul comes from *within* the universal soul, and the other from *without*.

⁷⁴ **Pythagoras.** The most famous mystic philosopher, born at Samos about 586 B. C., who taught the heliocentric system and reincarnation, the highest mathematics and the highest metaphysics, and who had a school famous throughout the world. (KT Glossary)

⁷⁵ **Anima Mundi** (Lat.) The "Soul of the World," the same as *Alaya* of the Northern Buddhists; the divine Essence which pervades, permeates, animates, and informs all things, from the smallest atom of matter to man and god. It is in a sense "the seven-skinned Mother" of the stanzas in the *Secret Doctrine*; the essence of seven planes of sentiency, consciousness, and differentiation, both moral and physical. In its highest aspect it is *Nirvana*; in its lowest, the Astral Light. It was feminine with the Gnostics, the early Christians, and the Nazarenes; bisexual with other sects, who considered it only in its four lower planes, of igneous and ethereal nature in the objective world of forms, and divine and spiritual in its three higher planes. When it is said that every human soul was born by detaching itself from the *Anima Mundi*, it is meant, esoterically, that our higher Egos are of an essence identical with *It*, and *Mahat* is a radiation of the ever unknown Universal ABSOLUTE. (KT Glossary)

⁷⁶ **Scient** - knowing; skillful.

⁷⁷ **Fire-Philosophers.** The name given to the Hermetists and Alchemists of the Middle Ages, and also to the Rosicrucians. The latter, the successors of Theurgists, regarded fire as the symbol of Deity. It was the source, not only of material atoms, but the container of the Spiritual and Psychic Forces energising them. Broadly analysed, Fire is a triple principle; esoterically, a septenary, as are all the rest of the elements. As man is composed of Spirit, Soul, and Body, *plus* a four-fold aspect; so is Fire. As in the works of Robert Flood (de Fluctibus), one of the famous Rosicrucians, fire contains — Firstly, a visible flame (body); secondly, an invisible, astral fire (soul); and thirdly, spirit. The four aspects are (*a*) heat (life), (*b*) light (mind), (*c*) electricity (Kamic or molecular powers, and (*d*) the synthetic essences, *beyond spirit*, or the radical cause of its existence and manifestation. For the Hermetist or Rosicrucian, when a flame is extinct on the objective plane, it has only passed from the seen world into the unseen; from the knowable into the unknowable.

The Soul's Journey through Life and Death – Part 4

Excerpts from: Key to Theosophy

Is the Soul Matter?

ENQUIRER. Would you call the Soul, i.e., the human thinking Soul, or what you call the Ego — matter?

THEOSOPHIST. Not matter, but *substance* assuredly; nor would the word "matter," if prefixed with the adjective, *primordial*, be a word to avoid. That matter, we say, is co-eternal with Spirit, and is not our visible, tangible, and divisible matter, but its extreme sublimation. Pure Spirit is but one remove from the *no*-Spirit, or the absolute *all*. Unless you admit that man was evolved out of this primordial Spirit-matter, and represents a regular progressive scale of "principles" from *meta*-Spirit down to the grossest matter, how can we ever come to regard the *inner* man as immortal, and at the same time as a spiritual Entity and a mortal man?

ENQUIRER. Then why should you not believe in God as such an Entity?

THEOSOPHIST. Because that which is infinite and unconditioned can have no form, and cannot be a being, not in any Eastern philosophy worthy of the name, at any rate. An "entity" is immortal, but is so only in its ultimate essence, not in its individual form. When at the last point of its cycle, it is absorbed into its primordial nature; and it becomes spirit, when it loses its name of Entity.

Its immortality as a form is limited only to its life-cycle or the *Mahamanvantara*; after which it is one and identical with the Universal Spirit, and no longer a separate Entity. As to the *personal* Soul — by which we mean the spark of consciousness that preserves in the Spiritual Ego the idea of the personal "I" of the last incarnation — this lasts, as a separate distinct recollection, only throughout the Devachanic period; after which time it is added to the series of other innumerable incarnations of the Ego, like the remembrance in our memory of one of a series of days, at the end of a year. Will you bind the infinitude you claim for your God to finite conditions? That alone which is indissolubly cemented by *Ātma* (i.e., Buddhi-Manas) is immortal. The soul of man (i.e., of the personality) per se is neither immortal, eternal nor divine.

Says the *Zohar* (vol. iii., p.616), "the soul, when sent to this earth, puts on an earthly garment, to preserve herself here, so she receives above a shining garment, in order to be able to look without injury into the mirror, whose light proceeds from the Lord of Light." Moreover, the *Zohar* teaches that the soul cannot reach the abode of bliss, unless she has received the "holy kiss," or the reunion of the soul with the substance from which she emanated — spirit.

All souls are dual, and, while the latter is a feminine principle, the spirit is masculine. While imprisoned in body, man is a trinity, unless his pollution is such as to have caused his divorce from the spirit. "Woe to the soul which prefers to her divine husband (spirit) the earthly wedlock with her terrestrial body," records a text of the *Book of the Keys*, a Hermetic work. Woe indeed, for nothing will remain of that personality to be recorded on the imperishable tablets of the Ego's memory.

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ENQUIRER. How can that which, if not breathed by God into man, yet is on your own confession of an identical substance with the divine, fail to be immortal?

THEOSOPHIST. Every atom and speck of matter, not of substance only, is *imperishable* in its essence, but not in its *individual consciousness*. Immortality is but one's unbroken consciousness; and the *personal* consciousness can hardly last longer than the personality itself, can it? And such consciousness, as I already told you, survives only throughout Devachan, after which it is reabsorbed, first, in the *individual*, and then in the *universal* consciousness.

Better enquire of your theologians how it is that they have so sorely jumbled up the Jewish Scriptures. Read the Bible, if you would have a good proof that the writers of the *Pentateuch*⁷⁸, and *Genesis* especially, never regarded *nephesh*⁷⁹, that which God breathes into Adam (Gen. ch. ii.), as the *immortal soul*.

Here are some instances: — "And God created . . . every *nephesh* (life) that moveth" (Gen. i. 21), meaning animals;

and (Gen. ii. 7) it is said: "And man became a *nephesh*" (living soul), which shows that the word *nephesh* was indifferently applied to *immortal* man and to *mortal* beast.

"And surely your blood of your *nepheshim* (lives) will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man" (Gen. ix. 5), "Escape for *nephesh*" (escape for thy *life*, it is translated), (Gen. xix. 17). "Let us not kill him," reads the English version (Gen. xxxvii. 21.) "Let us not kill his *nephesh*," is the Hebrew text. "*Nephesh* for *nephesh*," says Leviticus (xvii. 8). "He that killeth any man shall surely be put to death," literally "He that smiteth the *nephesh* of a man" (Lev. xxiv. 17); and from verse 18 and following it reads: "And he that killeth a beast (*nephesh*) shall make it good. . . . Beast for beast," whereas the original text has it "*nephesh* for *nephesh*." How could man kill that which is immortal? And this explains also why the Sadducees denied the immortality of the soul, as it also affords another proof that very probably the Mosaic Jews — the uninitiated at any rate — never believed in the soul's survival at all.

⁷⁸ **Pentateuch** - the first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

⁷⁹ **Nephesh**: a soul, living being, life, self, person, desire, passion, appetite, emotion
<http://biblehub.com/hebrew/5315.htm>

The Soul's Journey through Life and Death – Part 4

Excerpts from: Key to Theosophy

ON ETERNAL REWARD AND PUNISHMENT; AND ON NIRVANA.

ENQUIRER. It is hardly necessary, I suppose, to ask you whether you believe in the Christian dogmas of Paradise and Hell, or in future rewards and punishments as taught by the Orthodox churches?

THEOSOPHIST. As described in your catechisms, we reject them absolutely; least of all would we accept their eternity. But we believe firmly in what we call the *Law of Retribution*, and in the absolute justice and wisdom guiding this Law, or Karma. Hence we positively refuse to accept the cruel and unphilosophical belief in eternal reward or eternal punishment. We say with Horace: —

"Let rules be fixed that may our rage contain,
And punish faults with a proportion'd pain;
But do not flay him who deserves alone
A whipping for the fault that he has done."

This is a rule for all men, and a just one. Have we to believe that God, of whom you make the embodiment of wisdom, love and mercy, is less entitled to these attributes than mortal man?

ENQUIRER. Have you any other reasons for rejecting this dogma?

THEOSOPHIST. Our chief reason for it lies in the fact of re-incarnation. As already stated, we reject the idea of a new soul created for every newly-born babe. We believe that every human being is the bearer, or *Vehicle*, of an *Ego* coeval⁸⁰ with every other *Ego*; because all *Egos* are *of the same essence* and belong to the primeval emanation from one universal infinite *Ego*. Plato calls the latter the *logos* (or the second manifested God); and we, the manifested divine principle, which is one with the universal mind or soul, not the anthropomorphic, extra-cosmic and *personal* God in which so many Theists believe. Pray do not confuse.

ENQUIRER. But where is the difficulty, once you accept a manifested principle, in believing that the soul of every new mortal is created by that Principle, as all the Souls before it have been so created?

⁸⁰ **coeval** - Originating or existing during the same period; lasting through the same era.

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THEOSOPHIST. Because that which is *impersonal* can hardly create, plan and think, at its own sweet will and pleasure. Being a universal *Law*, immutable in its periodical manifestations, those of radiating and manifesting its own essence at the beginning of every new cycle of life, IT is not supposed to create men, only to repent a few years later of having created them. If we have to believe in a divine principle at all, it must be in one which is as absolute harmony, logic, and justice, as it is absolute love, wisdom, and impartiality; and a God who would *create* every soul for the space of *one brief span of life*, regardless of the fact whether it has to animate the body of a wealthy, happy man, or that of a poor suffering wretch, hapless from birth to death though he has done nothing to deserve his cruel fate — would be rather a senseless *fiend* than a God. (*Vide infra*, "On the Punishment of the Ego.") Why, even the Jewish philosophers, believers in the Mosaic Bible (esoterically, of course), have never entertained such an idea; and, moreover, they believed in re-incarnation, as we do.

ENQUIRER. Can you give me some instances as a proof of this?

THEOSOPHIST. Most decidedly I can. Philo Judaeus says (in "De Somniis," p. 455):

"The air is full of them (of souls); those which are nearest the earth, descending to be tied to mortal bodies, ... return to other bodies, being desirous to live in them."

In the Zohar, the soul is made to plead her freedom before God:

"Lord of the Universe! I am happy in this world, and do not wish to go into another world, where I shall be a handmaid, and be exposed to all kinds of pollutions." ("Zohar," Vol. 11., p. 96.)

The doctrine of fatal necessity, the everlasting immutable law, is asserted in the answer of the Deity:

"Against thy will thou becomest an embryo, and against thy will thou art born." ("Mishna," "Aboth," Vol. IV., p. 29.)

Light would be incomprehensible without darkness to make it manifest by contrast; good would be no longer good without evil to show the priceless nature of the boon; and so personal virtue could claim no merit, unless it had passed through the furnace of temptation. Nothing is eternal and unchangeable, save the concealed Deity. Nothing that is finite — whether because it had a beginning, or must have an end — can remain stationary. It must either progress or recede; and a soul which thirsts after a reunion with its spirit, which alone confers upon it immortality, must purify itself through cyclic transmigrations onward toward the only land of bliss and eternal rest, called in the Zohar, "The Palace of Love," in the Hindu religion, "Moksha"; among the Gnostics, "The Pleroma of Eternal Light"; and by the Buddhists, "Nirvana." And all these states are temporary, not eternal.

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ENQUIRER. Yet there is no re-incarnation spoken of in all this.

THEOSOPHIST. A soul which pleads to be allowed to remain where she is, *must be pre-existent*, and not have been created for the occasion. In the *Zohar* (vol. iii., p. 61), however, there is a still better proof. Speaking of the re-incarnating *Egos* (the *rational* souls), those whose last personality has to fade out *entirely*, it is said: "All souls which have alienated themselves in heaven from the Holy One — blessed be His Name — have thrown themselves into an abyss at their very existence, and have anticipated the time when they are to descend once more on earth." "The Holy One" means here, esoterically, the Atman, or *Atma-Buddhi*.

ENQUIRER. Moreover, it is very strange to find *Nirvana* spoken of as something synonymous with the Kingdom of Heaven, or the Paradise, since according to every Orientalist of note *Nirvana* is a synonym of annihilation!

THEOSOPHIST. Taken literally, with regard to the personality and differentiated matter, not otherwise. These ideas on re-incarnation and the trinity of man were held by many of the early Christian Fathers. It is the jumble made by the translators of the New Testament and ancient philosophical treatises between soul and spirit, that has occasioned the many misunderstandings.

It is also one of the many reasons why Buddha, Plotinus, and so many other Initiates are now accused of having longed for the total extinction of their souls — "absorption unto the Deity," or "reunion with the universal soul," meaning, according to modern ideas, annihilation.

The personal soul must, of course, be disintegrated into its particles, before it is able to link its purer essence for ever with the immortal spirit.

But the translators of both the *Acts* and the *Epistles*, who laid the foundation of the *Kingdom of Heaven*, and the modern commentators on the Buddhist *Sutra of the Foundation of the Kingdom of Righteousness*, have muddled the sense of the great apostle of Christianity as of the great reformer of India.

The former have smothered the word (*ψυχικος, psychikos*) so that no reader imagines it to have any relation with *soul*; and with this confusion of *soul* and *spirit* together, *Bible* readers get only a perverted sense of anything on the subject.

On the other hand, the interpreters of Buddha have failed to understand the meaning and object of the Buddhist four degrees of *Dhyāna*.

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Ask the Pythagoreans, "Can that spirit, which gives life and motion and partakes of the nature of light, be reduced to nonentity?" "Can even that sensitive spirit in brutes which exercises memory, one of the rational faculties, die and become nothing?" observe the Occultists.

In Buddhistic philosophy *annihilation* means only a dispersion of matter, in whatever form or *semblance* of form it may be, for everything that has form is temporary, and is, therefore, really an illusion.

For in eternity the longest periods of time are as a wink of the eye. So with form. Before we have time to realize that we have seen it, it is gone like an instantaneous flash of lightning, and passed for ever.

When the Spiritual *entity* breaks loose for ever from every particle of matter, substance, or form, and re-becomes a Spiritual breath: then only does it enter upon the eternal and unchangeable *Nirvana*, lasting as long as the cycle of life has lasted — an eternity, truly.

And then that Breath, existing *in Spirit*, is nothing because it is *all*; as a form, a semblance, a shape, it is completely annihilated; as absolute Spirit it still *is*, for it has become *Be-ness*⁸¹ itself.

The very word used, "absorbed in the universal essence," when spoken of the "Soul" as Spirit, means "*union with*." It can never mean annihilation, as that would mean eternal separation.

⁸¹ **Be-ness.** A term coined by Theosophists to render more accurately the essential meaning of the untranslatable word *Sat*. The latter word does not mean "Being," for the term "Being" presupposes a sentient consciousness of existence. But as the term *Sat* is applied solely to the absolute principle, that universal, unknown, and ever unknowable principle which philosophical Pantheism postulates, calling it the basic root of Kosmos and Kosmos itself, it could not be translated by the simple term "Being." *Sat*, indeed, is not even, as translated by some Orientalists, "the incomprehensible Entity"; for it is no more an "Entity" than a non-entity, but both. It is as said absolute BE-NESS, not "Being"; the one, secondless, undivided and indivisible ALL — the root of nature both visible and invisible, objective and subjective, comprehensible and — never to be fully comprehended.

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ENQUIRER. Do you not lay yourself open to the accusation of preaching annihilation by the language you yourself use? You have just spoken of the Soul of man returning to its primordial elements.

THEOSOPHIST. But you forget that I have given you the differences between the various meanings of the word "Soul," and shown the loose way in which the term "Spirit" has been hitherto translated.

We speak of an *animal*, a *human*, and a *spiritual*, Soul, and distinguish between them.

Plato, for instance, calls "rational SOUL" that which we call *Buddhi*, adding to it the adjective of "spiritual," however; but that which we call the reincarnating Ego, *Manas*, he calls Spirit, *Nous*,⁸² etc., whereas we apply the term *Spirit*, when standing alone and without any qualification, to Atma alone.

Pythagoras repeats our archaic doctrine when stating that the *Ego (Nous)* is eternal with Deity; that the soul only passed through various stages to arrive at divine excellence; while *thumos*⁸³ returned to the earth, and even the *phren*,⁸⁴ the lower *Manas*, was eliminated.

Again, Plato defines *Soul (Buddhi)* as "the motion that is able to move itself." "Soul," he adds (Laws X.), "is the most ancient of all things, and the commencement of motion," thus calling Atma-Buddhi "Soul," and *Manas* "Spirit," which we do not.

"Soul was generated prior to body, and body is posterior and secondary, as being according to nature, ruled over by the ruling soul." "The soul which administers all things that are moved in every way, administers likewise the heavens."

"Soul then leads everything in heaven, and on earth, and in the sea, by its movements — the names of which are, to will, to consider, to take care of, to consult, to form opinions true and false, to be in a state of joy, sorrow, confidence, fear, hate, love, together with all such primary movements as are allied to these. . . . Being a goddess herself, she ever takes as an ally *Nous*, a god, and disciplines all things correctly and happily; but when with *Annoia* — not *nous* — it works out everything the contrary."

⁸² **Nous** (*Gr.*) A Platonic term for the Higher Mind or Soul. It means Spirit as distinct from animal-Soul, *Psyche*; divine consciousness or mind in man. The name was adopted by the Gnostics for their first conscious Æon, which, with the Occultists, is the third *logos*, cosmically, and the third "principle" (from above) or *Manas*, in man.

⁸³ **Thumos** (*Gr.*) A Pythagorean and Platonic term; applied to an aspect of the human soul, to denote its passionate *Kamarupic* condition: — almost equivalent to the Sanskrit word *tamas*: "the quality of darkness," and probably derived from the latter.

⁸⁴ **Phren**. A Pythagorean term denoting what we call the Kama-manas, still overshadowed by Buddhi-Manas.

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In this language, as in the Buddhist texts, the negative is treated as essential existence. *Annihilation* comes under a similar exegesis. The positive state is essential being, but no manifestation as such. When the spirit, in Buddhistic parlance, enters *Nirvana*, it loses objective existence, but retains subjective being. To objective minds this is becoming absolute "nothing"; to subjective, NO-THING, nothing to be displayed to sense. Thus, their Nirvana means the certitude of individual immortality *in Spirit*, not in Soul, which, though "the most ancient of all things," is still — along with all the other Gods — a finite emanation, in *forms* and individuality, if not in substance.

ENQUIRER. I do not quite seize the idea yet, and would be thankful to have you explain this to me by some illustrations.

THEOSOPHIST. No doubt it is very difficult to understand, especially to one brought up in the regular orthodox ideas of the Christian Church. Moreover, I must tell you one thing; and this is that unless you have studied thoroughly well the separate functions assigned to all the human "principles" and the state of all these after death, you will hardly realize our Eastern philosophy.

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ON THE VARIOUS "PRINCIPLES" IN MAN.

ENQUIRER. I have heard a good deal about this constitution of the "inner man" as you call it, but could never make "head or tail on't" as Gabalis expresses it.

THEOSOPHIST. 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 EGO. 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.

ENQUIRER. Do you mean the Vedantins, as an instance? Don't they divide your seven "principles" into five only?

THEOSOPHIST. They do; but though I would not presume to dispute the point with a learned Vedantin, 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 being in their view something beneath contempt, and merely an *illusion*.

Nor is the Vedanta the only philosophy to reckon in this manner. Lao-Tze, in his *Tao-te-King*, mentions only five principles, because he, like the Vedantins, omits to include two principles, namely, the spirit (Atma) and the physical body, the latter of which, moreover, he calls "the cadaver."

Then there is the *Taraka Rajà Yogà* School. Its teaching recognises only three "principles" in fact; but then, in reality, their *Sthulopadi*, or the physical body, in its waking conscious state, their *Sukshmopadhi*, the same body in *Svapna*, or the dreaming state, and their *Karanopadhi* 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 Atma, the impersonal divine principle or the immortal element in Man, undistinguished from the Universal Spirit, and you have the same seven again. (See "Secret Doctrine" for a clearer explanation. Vol. I., p. 157.) They are welcome to hold to their division; we hold to ours.

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

THEOSOPHIST. Just the same. We could easily make of the body the vehicle of the "vital Double"; of the latter the vehicle of Life or *Pranā*; of *Kamarupa*, 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.

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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.

ENQUIRER. It is just that which it is so difficult to understand.

THEOSOPHIST. 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, and unless you make of him a pure animal you cannot do less.

Take his objective *body*; the thinking principle in him — which is only a little higher than the *instinctual* element in the animal — or the vital conscious 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, indivisible ALL), or Atma. As this can neither be located nor limited in philosophy, being simply that which is in Eternity, and which 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 in Metaphysics, that point in 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 *maya*; 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.

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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 this seventh principle the synthesis of the sixth, 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*,⁸⁵ or 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,"⁸⁶ would prove very fatal to man at large and to the possessor of that faculty in particular, it is carefully guarded.

But let us proceed with 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* or *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.

ENQUIRER. But why should not man be represented by two "principles" or two aspects, rather?

THEOSOPHIST. 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, or paralysed by the strength and predominance of the other *aspect*, in whatever direction. 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 *Kama*, the seat of animal desires and passions in man.

⁸⁵ **Chela** (*Sans.*) A disciple. The pupil of a Guru or Sage, the follower of some Adept, or a school of philosophy.

⁸⁶ The Ring of Gyges is a mythical magical artifact mentioned by the philosopher Plato in book 2 of his *Republic*. It granted its owner the power to become invisible at will. Through the story of the ring, *Republic* considers whether an intelligent person would be moral if he did not have to fear being caught and punished. In *Republic*, the tale of the ring of Gyges is described by the character of Glaucon who is the brother of Plato. Glaucon asks whether any man can be so virtuous that he could resist the temptation of being able to perform any act without being known or discovered.

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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, which gland is in truth the very seat of the highest and divinest consciousness in man, his omniscient, spiritual and all-embracing mind. And this shows to you still more plainly that we have neither invented these seven principles, nor are they new in the world of philosophy, as we can easily prove.

ENQUIRER. But what is it that reincarnates, in your belief?

THEOSOPHIST. The Spiritual thinking Ego, the permanent principle in man, or that which is the seat of *Manas*. It is not Atma, or even Atma-Buddhi, regarded as the dual *Monad*, which is the *individual*, or *divine* man, but *Manas*; for Atman is the Universal ALL, and becomes the HIGHER-SELF of man only in conjunction with *Buddhi*, its vehicle, which links IT to the individuality (or divine man).

For it is the *Buddhi-Manas* which is called the *Causal body*, (the United 5th and 6th Principles) and which is *Consciousness*, that connects it with every personality it inhabits on earth. Therefore, Soul being a generic term, there are in men three *aspects* of Soul — the terrestrial, or animal; the Human Soul; and the Spiritual Soul; these, strictly speaking, are one Soul in its three aspects. Now of the first aspect, nothing remains after death; of the second (*nous* or *Manas*) only its divine essence *if left unsoiled* survives, while the third in addition to being immortal becomes *consciously* divine, by the assimilation of the higher *Manas*. But to make it clear, we have to say a few words first of all about Re-incarnation.

ENQUIRER. You will do well, as it is against this doctrine that your enemies fight the most ferociously.

THEOSOPHIST. You mean the Spiritualists? I know; and many are the absurd objections laboriously spun by them over the pages of *Light*. So obtuse and malicious are some of them, that they will stop at nothing. One of them found recently a contradiction, which he gravely discusses in a letter to that journal, in two statements picked out of Mr. Sinnett's lectures. He discovers that grave contradiction in these two sentences: "Premature returns to earth-life in the cases when they occur may be due to Karmic complication . . ."; and "there is no *accident* in the supreme act of divine justice guiding evolution." So profound a thinker would surely see a contradiction of the law of gravitation if a man stretched out his hand to stop a falling stone from crushing the head of a child!

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