

After Death — What?

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Theosophical Manuals Series

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Chapter 1

Introductory

Death is the opener, the one giving vision; death is the greatest and loveliest change that the heart of nature has in store for us. — G. de Purucker, *Golden Precepts of Esotericism*

"O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?" We are all familiar with these beautiful words of Paul, but alas, how little real consolation have they given to bereaved hearts! For there has been no teaching or experience to bear out their promise of divine assurance. And yet the truth has been close beside us all the time, whispering to our hearts in the very voice of our own love for our departed: *Spiritual man is eternal: there are no dead.*

Love itself is the evidence of our spiritual survival — true love, which is unselfish and undemanding, pure, forgiving, and indestructible. Can we ever cease to love, though we may at least cease continually to mourn, those who have preceded us into the Land of Light? Our love, just because it is indestructible, must spring from something in us which is also undying, for how can a quality be greater than the source from which it springs?

It is here, in love itself, that we must look for proofs that the human spirit lives for all time. But we must not forget that it is real love only, and not selfish emotional clinging, that can open for us the door of true spiritual communion with our departed.

Theosophy tells us that the seeming separation from our loved ones at death is not a reality, and that we live in illusions. Does not even physical science tell us that matter is "mostly holes"? Yet matter and external life seem to have become for us all that we care to understand. We live almost entirely in the material aims and interests of our personalities — our brain-minds or our emotional mentality. And these personalities, being of the earth earthy and bound up with the bodily things that perish with the

body, themselves die and pass away from human ken. The great lesson we have to learn, if we would keep in spiritual touch not only with the dead but with all those who are absent from us in the flesh, is the fleeting nature of the personality. We must learn to understand our personal selves for the transitory things they are. Then, discovering and living in the spiritual reality behind them and within them, we shall find our inner immortal selves and begin to live in and for that permanent root of our being. When we can do that, we shall *see*; we shall *know* ourselves as being immortal today — now — in this moment! And we shall then also recognize the true selves of those we love, and experience in every moment of our lives the fact that we are together always, always in real touch with one another even when the bodily eyes do not see the beloved face and the bodily ears hear not the voice of the absent. It is knowledge alone of our spiritual selves and of the inner spiritual selves of those we love that will give us the victory over death.

There is indeed truth to be had. It is within the power of each one of us to solve all our problems and find healing for every sorrow. Death is not a mystery in the sense of something that cannot be understood. The truths about death are within the reach of all of us.

It is only our ignorance of the spiritual facts behind material life that surrounds death with such grief and dread and fearfulness. If we will but have courage and determination we may lift the veil and find, by means of our own awakened spiritual faculties, that death is but an entrance to a higher form of being on a plane where we and our loved ones are inseparable; and that, together always, "we advance from age to age and from heights to greater heights forever."

Ignorance is our greatest enemy, and above all else ignorance of

our own nature. *Man, know thyself!* for in thee lie all the possibilities and realities of the universe. It is because most of us know practically nothing of ourselves beyond that narrow groove of living in which our thoughts and feelings daily repeat themselves, that we are ignorant about why we are here and whither we are bound.

The illusory and deceptive nature of material things is being gradually brought home to the thoughtful by the work of modern science. Physicists, for example, tell us that our bodies in the last analysis are made up of small electric particles which science classifies as electrons, protons, neutrons, etc., but which theosophy calls lives or life-atoms. If all the particles in a human body could be packed together, we are told they would be no larger than a speck of dust. And yet it is this speck — spread out as it were by the magic of the life forces — which makes this relatively enormous, seemingly solid physical body. Similarly, a table, a block of marble, or any "solid" body is really a mass of these particles vibrating with such inconceivable rapidity that our eyes cannot see between them, and so we sense the illusion of solidity, as when we whirl a lighted stick, it appears to our vision like a complete circle of fire. Thus we understand how it is that what we have always thought of as "solid reality" is actually an illusion, though real enough when looked at from the viewpoint of experience.

We have also recently discovered that there are forms of matter which we cannot see because their rates of vibration are not perceptible to our senses — like infrared and the ultraviolet light rays, one too slow and the other too swift in its oscillations for us to see them, though their existence is proved by photography and other experimental tests.

If then we are to understand the mysteries of life and death — to

see and to know those things of the spiritual realms which are beyond our present perceptions — we must realize the deceptive nature of merely material things. And we have to recognize the meaning to us of the existence of forms of matter which are beyond our present ken. We must understand what science is just beginning to demonstrate, but which theosophy, the ancient wisdom-science, has taught for ages: that the real universe is built, not of matter, but of consciousness. Man is not a body, for that is illusory. He is a center, a unit of consciousness, imbodyed in a garment of impermanent flesh.

The body and the personality or brain-mind — that is, our everyday selves — are not of course to be undervalued, for they are our tools, our apparatus for experience in the world around us where our present evolution is taking place. Indeed, a true understanding of our personalities would enable us to develop them into a beauty and usefulness now undreamed of. But we cannot do this, nor can they be trained to serve us properly, until we can step aside in our thoughts and view them in their relation to the deeper, undying self in which lies the key to all our "mysteries."

We are bewildered often by our own moods and mental conditions. We do not understand why we are so changeable from day to day. But we know that there is within us something permanent which can recognize these changes and observe them, something by which we have carried forward our sense of identity from childhood to old age, and through all the experiences which so greatly alter character. This permanence within is the true self, which persists beneath our moods much as the sea remains unaltered for all the waxing and waning tides and storms that undulate its surface. And this abiding reality within is our spiritual self.

In thinking this over we see that the real person can be best understood if we regard him not so much as a body or a mind, but as a consciousness. The word "consciousness" is one with which we should familiarize ourselves, for consciousness is the stuff with which evolution works. It is the basis of all life and growth and being. And a human being is really a complex of different kinds of consciousness in which the spiritual self is the binding element — the invisible core, so to speak. Even the leading exponents of science no longer look upon consciousness as something which is a byproduct of the brain, but as the fundamental stuff of existence (see *The Esoteric Tradition*, 3rd & rev. ed., pp. 203-7).

Now what do we mean by consciousness? Radically, it is the sense of I AM: I exist: I am alive, feeling, and experiencing. But this I AM is only the root of ourselves, the impersonal, universal basis. During life this sense of root-consciousness develops into many forms: bodily consciousness, emotional and mental consciousness, and greatest of all, self-consciousness: the sense of *I AM I* — I am myself and no one else. Each of these various kinds of consciousness itself grows into a complex, or bundle, of energies, which exist in us as centers of activity.

That this is true we recognize in the fact that different individuals are pretty sure to think or feel in certain characteristic ways. We do not expect a miser to act upon a sudden impulse of generosity. He has built up through thought and habit certain strong centers of feeling that dominate him, even when generosity might serve his own interests. But most of us have not developed in so definite a way and so are hardly aware of the growth of this inner psychological organism of loosely knitted centers of feeling, any more than we are aware of the growth of our bodies.

Nevertheless, these centers are there. We identify ourselves daily,

first with one then with another, as our moods testify. We have built these centers ourselves throughout the years. They are the basis of our characters and actions. All the tyrannies of temperament, the difficulty of breaking habits or getting rid of prejudices are due to the existence of these centers of energy which we have all unaware been building within us all our lives. So it is to the study of consciousness that theosophy first of all directs us. The mystery of death is one of the mysteries of consciousness.

Chapter 2

Sleep and Death

The similarity between sleep and death has impressed all thinkers. The ancient Greeks had a saying: "Sleep and death are brothers." For death is the same phenomenon as sleep on a larger and deeper scale. We all recognize sleep as a temporary state because we understand it, or imagine that we do. But we think of death as the end of life when, as a matter of fact, death should not be coupled with life in that way. We ought not to say "life and death" but *birth and death*. We do not think of birth as a final thing because we know it is followed by death. But theosophy shows us that neither is death final. Death is not only a birth of the spiritual man into a higher sphere of existence, but death in its turn is followed eventually by man's rebirth upon earth. So that it is life or consciousness which is the great enduring fact; and birth and death are but rhythmic events in the endless circle of the conscious evolution of all things.

Thus in our daily experiences we find that sleeping and waking are also the rhythmic events through which this life rounds out our personal development. If we would but observe ourselves more closely in the light of theosophical teachings, and would link

up death with the experiences of our ordinary consciousness, it would cease to be such a dark and hopeless riddle. Once recognized as an understandable part of our evolution and as being rich in interest and new discoveries for the mind and heart, the study of death adds a new and wonderful chapter to the romance of our spiritual history.

. . . I tell you, my Brothers, that each one of you, given the right key, can solve all the mysteries of Sleep and therefore of Death, because Sleep and Death are psycho-physical brothers. . . . Exactly the same succession of events takes place in death that ensues when we lay ourselves in bed at night and drop off into that wonderland of consciousness we call Sleep; . . . Death and Sleep are brothers. What happens in sleep takes place in death — but perfectly so. What happens in death and after death, takes place when we sleep — but imperfectly so. — G. de Purucker, *Questions We All Ask*, Series II, No. 19

Now if we consider a little more observantly our various states of consciousness, we find another valuable clue. But what do we mean by states of consciousness? Most of us, you see, rarely think of ourselves as anything but bodies animated by a physical brain. We do not go deeply enough into our own inner life to realize that the real part of us consists of our consciousness centering itself at different times in different parts of our constitution. This is very simple to understand if we will reflect upon the fact that even our commonplace daily life is made up of states of consciousness as different as possible from one another.

Some of these "states" or functions of our consciousness are emotional, such as anger, grief, happiness, or excitement; occasionally they are purely intellectual, as in the work of a scientist or a writer; again we may center ourselves, when we are

hungry or tired or have suffered a painful accident, entirely in the body. At night our consciousness passes into still other and less familiar functions or aspects of ourselves.

Nearly everyone has had the experience, when walking along the street, or in reading or conversing, of noticing something that instantly recalled a vivid dream of the preceding night. Or, upon waking in the morning, one's mind is full of some dream experience that, though sharp and significant at the moment, fades hopelessly as waking consciousness returns. In the first instance the dream might never have been remembered but for the external event which recalled it. Both instances show, however, that we have experiences in consciousness of which we may remain ordinarily unaware, but which on their own level are as vivid as those of the brain when awake. How many such experiences has the inner self not had that are never recollected by the waking self! Yet they have existed, have at the moment been as real as waking life, as real as those infrared and ultraviolet rays which we never see. Moreover they have had their share in shaping us to what we are. And herein lies the clue above referred to.

So if we would understand death we must study our own consciousness, we must *know ourselves*. For, as already emphasized, consciousness is the fundamental fact of the universe. Modern science, so long convinced that consciousness was a mere byproduct of matter, is now gradually, through some of our foremost scientists, coming to the theosophical point of view, and are beginning to talk about consciousness as the reality behind all phenomena. Two passages are here quoted from men of different temperaments and outlook, the first being from Max Planck, regarded as one of the soundest and most original researchers:

. . . I regard consciousness as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness. We cannot get behind consciousness. Everything that we talk about, everything that we regard as existing, postulates consciousness. — *The Observer*, London, January 25, 1931

Sir James H. Jeans, another original scientific researcher, expresses the same idea in almost identical words:

I incline to the idealistic theory that consciousness is fundamental, and that the material universe is derivative from consciousness, not consciousness from the material universe. . . . It may well be, it seems to me, that each individual consciousness ought to be compared to a brain-cell in a universal mind. — *The Observer*, London, January 4, 1931

With the basic thoughts expressed in the above quotations theosophy, the ancient wisdom, is in complete agreement. It has been teaching them as long as mankind has existed. But we now begin to see where this idea leads us: If consciousness is the fundamental reality in the universe and each person is an individual center of that consciousness, this shows him to be as real and therefore as indestructible as the universe itself. He is a droplet of the universal life.

Indeed, the universe itself is made up of consciousnesses, stretching in innumerable degrees of development downward from mankind to the lower kingdoms, to the electron, and even below; then upward, from mankind to divinity — an endless scale of hierarchical beings of which we are an integral part. We are parts of a living whole, so that until the universe itself passes away, we and all creatures composing it cannot cease to exist. We are sharers in its continuity.

This idea is emphasized again and again in theosophical literature, but particularly by G. de Purucker, who tells us:

You don't live outside of the Universe, you are a part of it, as a part is an integral portion of the whole. . . . What the Universe is, that you are; what you are, the Universe is. — *Questions We All Ask*, Series II, No. 20

Know thyself, O son of man! For in thee lie all the mysteries of the Universe. Thou art its child; inseparable from it shalt thou ever be; for It is thou and thou art It. This is the pathway to all wisdom, to all knowledge, to all achievement. It is also therefore the pathway of evolution — of evolving, of unfolding, what is folded up or latent within you. — *Op. cit.*, Series II, No. 30

In connection with the similarity between sleep and death the following interesting suggestion has been made:

If one desire to know how he will feel when he dies, let him when he lies down to sleep, grip his consciousness with his will and study the actual processes of his falling asleep — if he can! It is easy enough to do this once the idea is grasped and practice in the exercise has become more or less familiar. — G. de Purucker, *The Esoteric Tradition*, 3rd & rev. ed., p. 447

We must *re-educate* ourselves if we would be able to solve life's deeper problems. It is our present habit to identify ourselves with our personal consciousness; that is, those mental and emotional concerns which center in self-interest or personal desire. If we would understand and conquer the mysteries of either life or death we must study ourself as a center of *spiritual* consciousness, a divine pilgrim progressing ever upward upon the glorious pathway of self-directed evolution.

Chapter 3

Why Do We Die?

We die because we are, in our innermost, a spiritual being. Life on this earth is only part of our evolution. Our spirit-soul is native to the invisible spiritual worlds and only sojourns here for a while in order to round out its experience and to afford an opportunity for growth to the innumerable less evolved entities, such as life-atoms, which make up its earthly vehicle.

The spiritual self reincarnates here during life after life after life; but between these lives it returns to its home in the inner worlds and pursues there the higher ranges of its evolution.

The real reason why we die is because, deep within us, the spiritual self feels the call of its "homeland." The time comes when it grows weary of the burden of flesh and longs for the freedom and light of the spiritual realms. So, little by little in the case of the average human being, the spirit loosens its hold upon its earthly tenement and prepares to depart upon its sublime homeward way.

What we call death means far more than almost anyone realizes. Laying down its physical body or encasement is not all that the spiritual tenant has to do in order to be free for its journey to the inner spheres. For man is a composite being. He has not only a physical body but his spirit-soul also uses a psychological vehicle — his personality. This is made up of mental and emotional states of consciousness. It is a complex tissue which in its selfishness and materiality weighs down the spirit even more heavily than does the physical body. This garment of personality must also be sloughed off and must in its turn suffer dissolution. And this later process is called in the esoteric philosophy, the second death.

Death therefore is really the breaking up of these two lower

aspects of consciousness, the physical and the psychological, into their respective elements. The body is dissolved and disappears. All the ephemeral energy centers of the psychological nature — those of the passions, the earthly desires and appetites, and the purely personal mental activities — dissolve away into the life-atoms of which they were built by the thoughts and actions of the individual who has been using them. The real person, the spiritual self, having thus sloughed off — like the butterfly its chrysalis — these enshrouding earth vehicles, can then wing its way into the freedom and joy of its native spiritual realms.

The whole wonderful, mystical process of death is assisted by the law of periodicity which governs the life of all things. For death and birth are themselves twin manifestations of this universal law of periodicity. All life has two poles, the positive and the negative. Everything swings pendulum-like between night and day, heat and cold, ebb and flow, storm and sunshine, systole and diastole, sleeping and waking — also between birth and death. But as the second of each of these pairs — the ebb, the cold, the systole, and sleep — are really only periods in themselves and not endings, so theosophy maintains that death is not an ending but is the beginning of a period of life of another kind. And being but a period, it must be followed again by birth.

So it is this law of periodicity underlying the manifestation of all active, composite beings which assists the spiritual self to achieve freedom from its earthly tabernacle. But this event, this so-called death — which we can see — is only the turn of the tide, beyond which the undying, physically invisible self is carried outward by its spiritual ebb upon the boundless ocean of unending existence.

Let us remember, however, that

. . . Death is never sudden; . . . nothing goes in nature by violent transitions. Everything is gradual, and as it

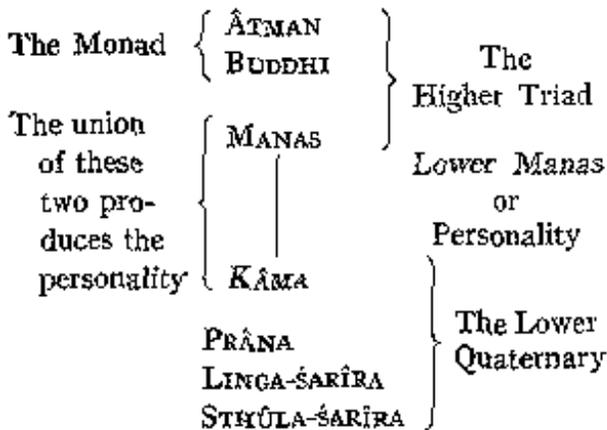
required a long and gradual development to produce the living human being, so time is required to completely withdraw vitality from the carcass. — H. P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled* 1:480

Old age is nothing to fear. It is a blessing. It is a splendor seen as through a veil, of the life beyond, the higher life, the life in which the higher incarnating ego lives, literally. Shadows — coming events casting their shadows before, the shadows of the splendor to be — such is a fine old age! — G. de Purucker, *Golden Precepts of Esotericism*, chapter 2

MAN'S SEVEN PRINCIPLES

In order to understand more clearly what happens after death and how the inner spiritual self abandons one by one the garments or vehicles through which it gains experience here, let us briefly examine the seven principles of our composite nature.

The following diagram, beginning with the spiritual as the first and highest principle, will give a brief idea of them:



Atma-buddhi is the monad, the spirit-soul. The word *monad* means a "unit" of life or consciousness — an individual. A monad exists at the heart of every being — star, planet, animal, plant, atom, electron — no matter what. In ourselves we can regard it

more graphically as his spiritual self, the sense of *I am*. Atman is a ray of pure universal spirit, linking us with the ALL. Buddhi is pure intelligence, wisdom, and love. It acts as a vehicle or channel to step down the light of the universal into the human constitution. From buddhi spring all our highest qualities: compassion, discrimination, sympathy, and conscience, as well as the visions of genuine spiritual seership or exalted genius. Atma-buddhi is pure consciousness, which is common to all beings, though without manas (as in the animals) it cannot function intellectually.

Manas is the "thinker" in man. It is our ego, the seat of self-consciousness, by which we feel, "I am I and no one else." Through it we relate consciously to others and to our environment and thus are able to carry on our own self-directed evolution. It is manas which gathers in and remembers the experiences of individual life in all the worlds; and these, when finally absorbed by the universal spirit, constantly enrich the unfoldment of cosmic consciousness. These three higher principles are divine in their origin.

The lower quaternary is that composite vehicle, made up of the animal-vital qualities in nature, which evolution on this earth in past ages prepared for the use of manas, the self-conscious thinker. In this diagram we observe that manas is dual, for this self-conscious thinker or ego, once it takes up its work on this earth by means of a physical body, must associate itself on its lower side with the animal quaternary. This association it is which makes the personality or human ego, which we call the lower manas.

But the higher side of manas is associated with the wisdom and light of buddhi; and it is this higher side which is the reincarnating ego, the higher manas. The reincarnating ego does

not experience death; but lower manas, being the product only of the association of manas with the mortal part of human nature, exists but during earth-life and meets its dissolution at the second death.

THE LOWER QUATERNARY

We come now to the *kama-rupa*, the highest aspect of the lower quaternary and one of the most powerful and important elements in human nature. *Kama-rupa* means literally "desire-body" and is that center of animal appetites, passions, and emotions which is the basic inciting energy in the lives of the majority. For are we not most of us more easily swayed by our passions and appetites, or by self-interest and prejudice, than by unselfishness and impersonal wisdom?

The *kama-rupa*, as just stated, has been developed by past evolution through many ages. During human life it is that bundle or complex of energies needed by the higher triad to come into touch with the material kingdoms of nature on this earth. To conquer and transform this desire-complex into a center of spiritual desire instead of animal and selfish propensities is one of the evolutionary tasks of manas, the reincarnating ego.

As the thinker within us chooses to be swayed by the lower quaternary or the spiritual self, it makes bad or good karma which shapes its present and future lives. And the object of reincarnation is that through experience and self-directed effort over a long series of earth-lives, the thinker may learn through pleasure and pain the fleeting and unsatisfactory nature of all things connected with the lower quaternary. Then, finally discovering how to ally himself with the spiritual self, it will raise its mortal parts into immortality.

Another important principle for us to understand is the so-called

astral body or *linga-sarira*. *Linga* means "model" or "pattern," and *sarira*, an impermanent form. It is described by Dr. de Purucker in his *Occult Glossary* as the sixth substance-principle of the human constitution,

the model or framework around which the physical body is built, and from which, in a sense, the physical body flows or from which the physical body develops as growth proceeds.

Prana we may think of as the "field" of vital energies circumscribed by our astral-physical organism. It is an aggregation of vital life-atoms drawn from nature's reservoirs and determined as to kind and activity by the karmic affinities and characteristics of the person concerned. In a study of afterdeath states these principles are not as important to understand as the higher ones, for both are dissipated almost immediately after death. The same is true of the physical body.

AFTER-DEATH STATES

Let us see now what happens to these principles at death. First, the higher triad departs from the lower quaternary, and the latter immediately begins to fall apart. Dissolution of the physical body at once sets in and this releases its astral model-body or *linga-sarira*, which also disintegrates. Prana or vitality passes back into the reservoirs of nature.

Upon the withdrawal of the higher triad and the break-up of the three lower principles, the *kama-rupa* is, so to say, separated out as a bundle or *rupa* (form) of desire energies. It is soulless of course, for the higher triad, the real self, has gone; but it will persist for a longer or shorter time according as the passional selfish nature of the individual was encouraged, or was controlled and refined, during the life just ended.

But where does this kama-rupa exist? And is it still alive and active? This shell of the person that was exists now in what is called in theosophy the *kama-loka*, i. e., the "place" or "world" of desire.

This kama-lokic afterdeath state is important for us to understand, for it has a very real bearing upon human progress and happiness. The whole psychological realm extending in consciousness between earth-life and devachan, the spiritual heaven-world, is known in theosophy as the *kama-loka*. Another quotation from the *Occult Glossary* will explain this kama-lokic sphere:

Kama-Loka (Sanskrit) A compound which can be translated as "desire world," . . . It is a semi-material plane or rather world or realm, subjective and invisible to human beings as a rule, which surrounds and also encloses our physical globe. It is the habitat or dwelling-place of the astral forms of dead men and other dead beings — the realm of the kama-rupas or desire-bodies of defunct humans. "It is the Hades," as H. P. Blavatsky says, "of the ancient Greeks, and the Amenti of the Egyptians, the land of Silent Shadows."

It is in the kama-loka that the second death takes place, . . . The highest regions of the kama-loka blend insensibly into the lowest regions or realms of the devachan; . . .

When the physical body breaks up at death, the astral elements of the excarnate entity remain in the kama-loka or "shadow world," with the same vital centers as in physical life clinging within them, still vitalizing them; and here certain processes take place. The lower human soul that is befouled with earth-thought and the lower instincts cannot easily rise out of the kama-loka, because it is foul, it

is heavy; and its tendency is consequently downwards. It is in the kama-loka that the processes of separation of the monad from the kama-rupic spook or phantom take place; and when this separation is complete, which is the second death above spoken of, then the monad receives the reincarnating ego within its bosom, wherein it enjoys its long rest of bliss and recuperation.

The second death is a gradual process and for the average human being is entirely unconscious. It is a perfectly normal process. Remember that by death we mean simply the dissolution of the elements of a body. We are no more aware of this second death than we are conscious of the daily and quite normal and healthy breakdown of the tissues of the body, or of the gradual and more subtle changes always taking place in our characters, for the bundle of energies called the kama-rupa or desire-body is instinctual only. But though it is ordinarily unconscious, it yet preserves for a time the stamp, the characteristic personal impress, of the person to whom its energies belonged — the human individual, in short, who brought the kama-rupa into being. And it is this fact which it is so important for us to understand.

A very large number of spiritistic manifestations are due to the fact that the medium and the sitters attract, by the magnetism of intense desire, grief, or curiosity, these shells or masks or kama-rupas of the departed, left as their remnants in the kama-lokic sphere. Such shells can be magnetically drawn into the thought-atmosphere of the seance room and, vitalized and given concrete direction by the vitality of the medium and "circle," are galvanized into a fictitious life. Then these automata can, like phonographic records, give off phrases, recollections, and ideas closely associated with the life and personality of the departed. Or they can reflect, like a photographic plate, the thoughts of those in

the circle. Theosophy maintains that an enormous percentage of so-called "communications from the dead" are of this class.

That these communications are rarely anything but such automatic repetitions is evident when we remember that no creative philosophy of this world or the next, no hints for new paths of scientific research, or for archaeological and historical discovery, have come from the seance room. A "Summerland" which is but a rainbow-hued repetition of earth-life is about all that almost two centuries of modern spiritistic experiments have given us. What tentative new lines of research have resulted from Spiritism have been the result of living rather than departed intelligences.

This, however, is but the negative side of the matter, as a later chapter will set forth.

The following listing sums up briefly the various processes and conditions which are brought about by the separation of our seven principles after death:

Atman, Buddhi: Dwelling in the spiritual worlds Manas:
Gradually absorbing the spiritual essence of the lower manas
or human ego and then passing into devachan Kama-rupa,
lower manas: Dissolving away slowly at the second death in
kama-loka Prana, linga-sarira, sthula-sarira: Already
disintegrated when the second death takes place

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Chapter 4

Devachan, the Heaven World

The "roseate beauty" of the heaven world are the words of a teacher which will give us an opening glimpse into what theosophy tells us of devachan. By devachan is meant that state of being into which the reincarnating ego — what is popularly called the soul — is gradually withdrawn at the completion of the sifting process of the second death. The following passage defines devachan more closely:

[Tibetan, *bde-ba-can*, pronounced *de-wa-chen*] A translation of the Sanskrit *sukhavati*, the "happy place" or god-land. It is the state between earth-lives into which the human entity, the human monad, enters and there rests in bliss and repose. . . .

Devachan is the fulfilling of all the unfulfilled spiritual hopes of the past incarnation, and an efflorescence of all

the spiritual and intellectual yearnings of the past incarnation which . . . have not had an opportunity for fulfillment. It is a period of unspeakable bliss and peace for the human soul, until it has finished its rest time and stage of recuperation of its own energies. — G. de Purucker, *Occult Glossary*

Who has not, in looking back over his life, seen most if not all of his best dreams unrealized? Beginning with those ideals of youth which fade so quickly in "the light of common day," there follow our dreams of dear companionship never found, of musical, literary, scientific, or humanitarian achievement towards which we have aspired, but which we have either failed to reach or have had no opportunity even of trying for. And there are the things we have longed to do for those we loved, but have been too poor or too busy to undertake.

These desires are the best part of us. More than this, they are energies, all the more cumulative and powerful for being denied expression while silently cherished. Being energies they must have somewhere their fruition, and that fruition will naturally take place in the nature which originated them. It is these energies which create for us the conditions of the god-world, the heaven-world — devachan. We have seen that man's baser mental desires have helped by his own unconscious activity to build the conditions of his state of consciousness while in kama-loka, which surrounds this planet with a mental-emotional atmosphere. Likewise have his higher thoughts, yearnings, and aspirations towards spiritual self-expression built up his devachan, which is the state of consciousness where these higher energies surround him and bring to him his spiritual fruition in joy and beauty and peace.

Having come this far we may be led to imagine that devachan

resembles the heaven of the Christian religion. But there are in reality radical differences. First, theosophy teaches that human *creative* evolution can be accomplished only through rebirth upon earth. The period of devachan does not initiate any new lines of development; it merely brings to fruition the spiritual aspects of the experiences originated in past lives. Therefore devachan is but a temporary state of being. Moreover, it is itself merely an extension — a subjective expansion — of the karma of the past life of the ego. For the character of the devachan, the beauty, happiness, and length of its episodes, will be the unfoldment of only those spiritual thoughts and desires which were felt by the ego during its earth-life.

We have pointed out elsewhere the similarity between sleep and death. Sleep, theosophy tells us — and we repeat it for emphasis — sleep is an imperfect death; death is a complete and perfect sleep. So death, like sleep, must be followed by an awakening to a fresh period of activity in earth-life. And herein lies of course the greatest difference between devachan and the Christian heaven.

But there is another striking resemblance which death bears to sleep. In sleep we dream, and our dreams are peopled by those we know; they are filled with experiences of many kinds, all quite as vivid and absorbing while they last as those of waking life. In dreams we often exercise faculties and graces that we lack in this workaday world. We perhaps paint pictures, or play some loved instrument with skill. There are people who can play a musical instrument in their dreams who have no knowledge of it in their waking life. Or we may meet interesting new friends or travel into undiscovered country. These dreams, good or bad as the case may be, result from our daily thoughts and desires working themselves out in this way when the mind has relaxed its check-rein.

Death, being but a longer, more complete sleep, is also a time of dreams. But whereas our dreams at night are often troubled, after death they are all consoling and beautiful. For we have sloughed off the lower parts of us where nightmare miasmas and suffering arise. Those lower elements have been dissipated at the second death. There is nothing left within us to suffer, for we are living then in the light and purity of the harmonious realms of spirit. And over us is the divine aegis of the spiritual self.

Here however we must note again that

in the heaven-world, in Devachan, you will get precisely what you have built into your own character, which is equivalent to saying what you longed for in the way of spiritual recuperation and peace and bliss.

In these few sentences lies the secret meaning of the heaven-world and the nature of its functioning and of what happens to the resting ego. It is, therefore, perfectly obvious that a man, on the one hand, whose whole nature is of materialistic bent or bias, whose thoughts are of the earth earthy, and whose instincts impel him to things of matter, will remain but a short time in the heaven-world for he has built little into his character which will keep him in the heaven-world for a long period of time: whereas a man, on the other hand, whose whole nature is of a spiritual type, who has received but little spiritual joy and peace and rest in the busy turmoil of physical existence and whose nature therefore is entirely unsatisfied along these lines, will pass a long time in the heaven-world; for the entire impulses of the heart-hunger of his being cling to what the resting ego there undergoes and receives. — G. de Purucker, *Questions We All Ask*, Series 1, No. 12

The period passed in devachan lasts, as an average, for fifteen

hundred years. But the rule for the individual is one hundred years in the devachan for every year of life on earth. A man dying at fifty will thus pass 5,000 years in devachan; at eighty, 8,000 years of heaven-life, and so on. The *low average* of 1,500 years is due to the very large percentage who, because of their materialistic natures, build within themselves no foundation for the spiritual joys of devachan and therefore are not able to remain long apart from reincarnation on earth.

Here it may be well to remind ourselves that there is a marked difference between the bad and the merely materialistic person. It is only the truly evil, those who through selfishness or sensuality have willfully harmed others, who must suffer in kama-loka. There are many well-meaning and honest people who live only for their personal interests and pleasures. Such do not suffer in the kama-loka, having wrought no conscious harm; but neither can they experience the blissful conditions of self-expression and self-realization of the heaven-world. How can they, when they have laid no foundation for it in themselves? And further, we are glad to remember that even those who undergo the mental sufferings of kama-loka reach the end of that condition when the energies they have stored up run low, and then they fall into the state of unconsciousness which leads to a rebirth upon earth. And in reincarnation, through meeting in their own surroundings the misery they have inflicted upon others, they will come to understand what selfishness means, and so have the chance to grow out of evil into sympathy and compassion.

Coming back to an earlier viewpoint of this subject, we may again remind ourselves that life after death is not a state of existence cut off by an abyss from ourselves as we are today. Afterdeath states are merely: first, the dissolution of our physical-astral, and then our lower mental and emotional, consciousness-centers;

second, when that is completed, life itself is continued on a higher level than we know it now and in the unimpeded activity of our spiritual natures in conditions where they can for the first time truly unfold and fulfill themselves.

Fear of death is due to wrong education, which has given us no vision of a life beyond death which stands in logical or normal relation to what we know or experience here on earth. But theosophy shows us the thread of continuity which runs through the experiences of the individual in all worlds, while demonstrating the interrelation of the invisible worlds with the world in which we are living today.

. . . Remember that when you lie down to sleep on your bed you die a little death. This will cast out fear from your hearts when you realize its truth. Death will thus become familiar to you. The thought of death will become friendly; and when your time comes to die you will die gladly and you will die with a will. I repeat that death and sleep are one. Sleep is an imperfect, incomplete death; and death is an absolute, perfect, complete sleep; but sleep and death are essentially one process of change. — G. de Purucker, *Questions We All Ask*, Series II, No. 19

Chapter 5

Can We Communicate with Our "Dead"?

Our old childish conceptions of heaven and hell sprang from ignorance of our true nature, and of the nature of the universe to which we belong. "Heaven," it is well to repeat for emphasis, is not a place but a state of being, of consciousness. And our heaven is not a reward, as already shown, but a natural outcome of what we have made of ourselves. And the same for "hell" or kama-loka, which similarly is not a punishment but a consequence of our

actions while on earth.

Perhaps someone, to whom the theosophical idea of the heaven-world is still unfamiliar, may ask: "But what about those I love? Am I not going to have them actually with me after death?" How little we understand ourselves, or know where lie our deeper needs! Think of a husband, an old man who has lost an aged wife, his companion through long years of joy and sorrow. How will he wish to find her in the heaven-world if she is to be actually her very self, present there with him? Shall it be as the young and beautiful helpmate of his youth, or as the feeble but beloved partner of his declining years? Will that not be a difficulty for him if heaven is to be the place of literal actuality that he demands? And the mother: will the son she has lost in childhood be a child still, or shall he perchance have grown out of her recognition? These are logical questions springing out of the conception of heaven as merely a place, and of our loved ones merely as the physical personalities we remember so fondly. But a human being is not a personality. He is a spiritual being using the personality as an instrument for acquiring experience.

. . . Man is an embryo god locked in sheaths of emotion and thought and feeling, swathed in crippling inner veils in their turn garmented in a body of flesh; and it is to recall men to a realization of the divine light within, the divine spirit within: it is to teach men to transcend and outrange these encircling veils and crippling shackles, that we Theosophists teach and preach and write, and do our best to pass on to others what we ourselves have found to be so fine.

Man, know thyself, said the Delphic Oracle, for in knowing thyself, thou shalt know the Universe. — G. de Purucker, *Lucifer*, May, 1933, pp. 488-9

The idea that in heaven we shall find our friends actually as they were with us in this life is a materialistic conception springing directly from those personal ideas which help to make the veils and crippling shackles above referred to. If we will study the spiritual nature within us, which is the only permanent part of ourselves, we shall realize that a true heaven-world can have little in common with the personalities of ourselves and our friends; for it is from the faults and limitations of our own and others' personalities that spring our heaviest trials.

Devachan is above all a place of rest. It is the "sleep" of the ego in which — paralleling the sleep of the body — it assimilates what it has taken in of knowledge and experience during the earth-life just passed through.

Now if we look back over our lives we discover that those things which have tried and disappointed us most have sprung from our human relationships. The troubles originating merely from environment, such as early handicaps, lack of money, or opportunity of various kinds, have in many cases proved stimulating and have often brought forth the best that was in us. It is people who wear us down. A mother, for example, who has passed long, heart-breaking years of struggle to reform a wayward son, and who fails at last — how can she rest after death if she is to be reunited to his turbulent nature? And he, if he has been leading a half-criminal existence, with strong animal desires and indulgences, how can he exist with her in the devachan? He has built up no heaven-world for himself. Instead, he will pass through a period of unrest in kama-loka, falling asleep finally to be reborn on earth. And as his mother has earned a long and blissful rest in the devachan, while he has not, he will perhaps be reincarnated long before she is, and, learning and developing through suffering the consequences of misdeeds in his past life, will perhaps meet her again in a later incarnation as a better and

more loving child. Thus the true-hearted mother will receive her reward; for in devachan all her dreams for that boy will be realized and she will experience the joy of seeing her loving sacrifices reach their fruition in his character. And because love is the most penetrating and creative energy in the universe, and because we do have a deep inner communion with our dead, her joy in seeing his reformation accomplished will reach him wherever he is and be perhaps a more powerful influence for good — because it will work unconsciously upon him — than her living presence with its possibly irritating restraints. For there are some dreams which are more potent than so-called realities.

No, nature is wise and wholly compassionate. She protects us, while we are at rest in the heaven-world, from all outside and disturbing influences. She releases us from our emotional demands and cravings while healing our bruised and weary hearts. And when the interval of recuperation is over we are reborn on earth, uniting with those who belong to us in fresh relationships, for higher opportunities and further growth.

These thoughts lead us naturally to a consideration of the subject of "communication" with the dead. But here we are not referring to the various types of such so-called communications obtained in the seance room. Theosophy denies that these are true messages from the spiritual selves of our departed. It has already been explained that the kama-loka, which intermingles in its various phases, higher and lower, with the thought-atmosphere of our world, is thickly populated with the kama-rupas or shells of those who have just died. These shells are also called elementaries, and again spooks.

To recapitulate: the shell is the double or replica, in appearance and apparent character, of the personality that was. It retains, as will a glove that is thrown aside, the impress of the one who has

so long used it. And these shells, being made of *life-atoms*, may reproduce not only the lineaments but the very habits and mental characteristics of the departed. This is possible because they are instinct with automatic memories of the past lives of those who have discarded them at death. For that is exactly what they are, *automata*; and like automata they are unconscious of themselves unless galvanized so often by mediums that they are awakened to a false and dangerous vitality. But as a rule the messages they give off at the vitalizing urge of mediums and "sitters" are but the phantom-echo of a voice whose owner has departed. The ego which has sloughed off these astral-psychological garments is awaiting the second death and the hour when it can enter the bliss of devachan. This blessed hour of release for the ego is delayed if its kama-rupic shell is kept intact when it should be mercifully disintegrating.

There may be a yet worse effect from these psychic practices. A false and dangerous liaison between the decaying shell and the unfortunate relatives of the departed can be brought about by the medium and the activities during seance, resulting in unhappy karmic consequences for all concerned. Theosophy warns that all necromantic practices open the door into a psychic charnel-house, the exhalations of which are far more unwholesome and dangerous to mankind than those from the abodes of the physically dead. For the first time in centuries theosophy restores to the Western world that philosophy and science of spiritual sanitation by which this noxious psychology may be purged from our life.

Theosophy repudiates so-called "communication with the dead." H. P. Blavatsky in *The Key to Theosophy*, when discussing the difference between theosophy and spiritualism, wrote:

. . . They [the Spiritualists] maintain that these

manifestations are all produced by the "spirits" of departed mortals, generally their relatives, who return to earth, they say, to communicate with those they have loved or to whom they are attached. We deny this point blank. We assert that the spirits of the dead cannot return to earth — save in rare and exceptional cases, of which I may speak later; nor do they communicate with men except by *entirely subjective means*. That which does appear objectively is only the phantom of the ex-physical man. — pp. 27-8

(For further information upon the subject of so-called "spirit-return" see also *Isis Unveiled* by H. P. Blavatsky, Vol. I of her *Complete Writings*, G. de Purucker in his *Occult Glossary*, W. Q. Judge in *The Ocean of Theosophy*, and other manuals of this series.)

In the few cases of true intercommunion between the dead and the living to which she refers briefly in the same section, she says:

it is not the *spirits* of the dead who *descend* on earth, but spirits of the living that *ascend* to the pure Spiritual Souls. In truth there is neither *ascending nor descending*, but a change of *state or condition*. . . . — *Op. cit.*, p. 30

And in speaking of genuine *communion* — not "communication" — with the departed she tells us very significantly in the same passage:

there is hardly a human being whose Ego does not hold free intercourse, during the sleep of his body, with those whom it loved and lost, yet, on *account of the positiveness and non-receptivity of its physical envelope and brain*, no recollection, or a very dim, dream-like remembrance, lingers in the memory of the person once awake. b Ibid.

(italics ours)

In the foregoing passages are several suggestions which are illuminating when we think them over. The expressions "objective" and "subjective" and "a change of state or condition," for example, contain the key to true communion with our dead. They emphasize the fact that *spiritual* clairvoyance — not astral or psychic — belongs to our inner or subjective nature, and has naught to do with the senses, either physical or astral. This applies to mediums and sensitives as well as to ordinary humanity. The difference between the two kinds of manifestations are easily discernible, the *objective*, or psychic, being misleading and demoralizing, while the subjective is so often fraught with the deepest spiritual benefit.

An incident can be given which illustrates this; it happened to a friend and is one of many which could be cited. A mother died leaving to her young daughter the care of five children. The grief of the young girl and her sense of responsibility were intense, and she brooded over them to the point of illness. One night as she was falling asleep she suddenly saw before her two great portals which, as she gazed, opened slowly, to reveal a glorious vision of beauty and peace. In the opening stood the form of her mother, but transfigured with light. And to the daughter came her mother's beloved voice bidding her grieve no longer, for her grief troubled her mother's rest. Well did the wise mother-heart realize the strength of such an appeal! It aroused at a touch the unselfish courage and willpower of her child. When the young girl awoke, her grief had vanished and she felt within her heart the power to carry forward joyfully the task which her mother's death had placed in her hands.

This is but one of many such occurrences, experienced by people of all ages, creeds, and nationalities. But they are in the great

majority of cases a phenomenon of the dream state which, remember, has its analogy to the devachan. They are purely *subjective*, and frequently have as their result some moral effect upon the recipient.

There are, in contrast, those occasional times when almost immediately after death the form of the departed appears visually to some relative who is wide awake at the time. This is an instance of an "objective" manifestation. Such an occurrence seems generally to indicate that the departed was tormented with some worry before death, at a time when the body was beyond speech. Such an apparition, as in a case known to the writer, led to the discovery of a sum of money which had been concealed by the departed and never mentioned to his relatives. In this case his double returned automatically to the spot where the money was hidden and the daughter who saw it divined what the difficulty was and discovered the money. But in many cases the shell is so vague in its movements, or those who see it are so frightened or confused, that nothing comes of it. For in this type of appearance it is not the ego which returns but a phantom of the deceased, strongly energized into *postmortem* activity by the agonized regrets of the deceased. Its discarded kama-rupa is so instinct with the mental disturbance of its departed tenant that it is irresistibly projected into the scene of the ego's last thoughts.

This latter type of apparition is, relatively speaking, accidental, and is far removed in every way from the spiritual condition and influence of the ego itself, as depicted in the first instance given. One might say, without much exaggeration, that those who are never conscious of after-death communion — not communication, note — with their departed are either ignorantly or willfully shutting themselves outside the high sphere in which their loved ones now are existing. Grief is often very self-centered and careless of its influence on those who are gone, and such

grieving will inevitably raise a barrier between us and our happy dead. They are in the care of the spiritual self, at rest and sheltered under the shield of its protecting light. Only the pure vibrations of our selfless attunement to them, and to the ideal conditions of life in which they are isolated from material things, will penetrate the veils which are between us, and give a sure and abiding sense of their serene existence in devachan, the heaven-world. And only so may we prove for ourselves that we can never be really separated from our departed loved ones, nor forgotten by them in their happy rest.

Chapter 6

A Glance Backward

In order to round out the teachings of theosophy as to afterdeath states, let us, before passing on, consider such exceptions as accidental death, capital punishment, and suicide. These bring new conditions for our study. It has already been suggested that the same states of consciousness exist as well before death as afterward. But we are not definitely aware of them as such because they are all interblended and working within us as more or less one state of psychological activity — composite in reality of course, but not seeming so to the person who unites them into one tissue of existence.

After death, when the spiritual self has departed, this tissue separates into its components — just as the chemical elements combine to make a physical body, with a unified and definite awareness of itself and its functions but after death splitting up, and the definite physical consciousness vanishing. That which makes our psychological states one tissue is the selfhood; what breaks them up is the departure of this selfhood, the spiritual self.

But what if the Self does not depart, even though the physical body

dies and is dissolved away?

When a person is born his constitution may be compared to a clock wound up to run for a certain length of time. If an injury be wrought to the clockwork it will stop running before that time, but not otherwise. Science recognizes that every organism has its time limit or vitality period, so to say. We understand that each human being has within him a reservoir of vitality upon which he draws when passing through some abnormal strain, such as a dangerous fever or a stretch of agonizing anxiety. We say that such experiences are a drain upon the vitality.

This reservoir of vitality is the vital-psychological part of us. Vitality and instinctual willpower keep us alive. But these, theosophy declares, do not originate with the physical body. They depend of course upon the body for expression in earth-life, but they do not originate there. They are therefore not destroyed at the death of the body, for they do not pass away until their own energy, which determines their term of duration, is exhausted.

In the case, therefore, of accidental or premature death the only thing that suffers dissolution is the body. For the time has not yet come when in the natural course of things the spiritual self has felt its periodic evolutionary pull to the invisible worlds. The human attractions which tied it to life on earth are by no means exhausted. The pendulum of earth experience has not yet passed through its appointed arc of movement.

What then has happened? A complete human entity, minus only the physical body, is left in the kama-loka to pass through its appointed arc of existence in that sphere, instead of normally in earth-life.

The words "accidental death" have been used. But there is in reality no such thing as accident. It may so appear to us because

we see nothing of the inner causes which led up to it. But theosophy teaches that moral justice rules the universe. A man is not here now on earth for the first time. He has lived many other lives on this globe, and it was his thoughts or actions in those past human lives which made him what he is today. If he is run down by a speeding automobile, or falls over a cliff, it is because he himself, in this or a former life, laid the train of causes which resulted in that accident. He himself has done things which led him to the precise spot or circumstances where that "accident" could overtake him. So that accidental death is in reality a part of his karma, a consequence flowing from past actions done by himself. Nevertheless, his karma has cut him off prematurely from earth-life, and this very cutting-off by so-called "accident" is a part of the unfavorable karma he has built up for himself by past failures.

What happens then in the case of so-called accidental death? This will depend, naturally, upon the man himself. If his life has been saturated with the base desire elements, of which the lower planes of kama-loka consist, to those lower elements will he gravitate. And the very identity of his consciousness with them will keep him alive there. Just to the extent that he has been selfish or has cultivated his animal appetites will he be keenly alive in this lower mental sphere which is so close to physical existence. But he will be able to feel only the cravings of the appetites themselves — he will have no body with which to gratify them. From what all good men would rightly regard as his hell of selfishness on earth he will pass to a genuine hell of mental torment in kama-loka.

When we remember the criminally-minded in every land put suddenly out of life through capital punishment, we can realize how potent a force for evil we are letting loose in the thought-atmosphere of humanity. These disembodied, but still living,

human beings keep alive in humanity's mental sphere thoughts of hatred and revenge as well as base desires and appetites. Such conditions in the world's thought-atmosphere must hold back the spiritual progress of all those who are in sympathy with them. Is it any wonder that most types of social reforms find progress such an uphill discouragement? And it is significant that a diminution of crime is often observed to follow where capital punishment has been abandoned.

But of course there is also the brighter side of the picture. Fortunately, even the average among us are very different from the case above pictured. When accidental death comes to a person whose life is marked by integrity and helpfulness, he will have little in his psychological nature in common with this lower kama-loka. There will be nothing, therefore, to keep him awake, so to say, in those lower spheres. He will fall into a prolonged slumber — the same state which he would pass through in a shorter form at normal death. All his life through he has lived in a measure of harmony — even if unconsciously — with his spiritual self; and that self as a natural consequence can shed over him its protection, drawing him into its own divine and waiting peace. So he slumbers until that moment comes when his spiritual self feels the call, the urge, to depart into its own inner realms.

Then the psychological sifting process, the "second death," sets in. That part of the psychological nature at rest in the higher regions of the kama-loka is absorbed by the reincarnating ego and the lower breaks up and dissolves into its component elements.

The two instances above are given as typical cases. Different aspects of the general condition have been thus described by Dr. de Purucker:

Kama-loka is for every man or woman on Earth. But there are as many different kinds of kama-lokic existences as

there are existences on earth; and the average man or woman passes through the Kama-loka scarcely realizing it. A very bad, a very evil, man or woman, on the contrary, has a keen realization of where he is in the Kama-loka; and there are cases where the suffering is simply awful. But it is a mental suffering. . . . In the case of very good men or women, they pass through the Kama-loka and they don't know that they have done it. There is no break of the unconsciousness that merciful Nature brings to us at the moment of death: there is no break in that unconsciousness until the Devachan [the Heaven-world] with its roseate beauty is entered. . . .

The excarnate entity, the person who dies, remains in the Kama-loka just as long as his karmic deserts call for his being there, and not one instant longer. — *The Theosophical Forum*, February 1933, p. 176

And in the case of accidental death:

. . . when the time is reached which would have been the normal life of the physical body, then there is an awakening in the Kama-loka and a following out of the simple processes of kama-lokic freeing that occur to all men. . . . Kama-loka is not so terrible, except for those who are genuinely wicked; and there are places on our physical earth which are terrible for men who are wicked and who are caught. — *Op. cit.*, p. 174

Suicide is the most unfortunate of all forms of violent death. This is because it means

the deliberate taking of one's own life in order to escape the consequences of what one has earned; and if any man thinks that he can cheat Nature in that way, he greatly errs.

He but adds to the heavy burden he has to carry in the future. . . . He has deliberately forced Nature's hand, so to say; he has deliberately exercised his own will-power and consciousness for an unholy deed in an unnatural way, and done an act which Nature, through its unerring laws, has not itself brought about; and when you break a law of Nature, what happens? — G. de Purucker, *Questions We All Ask*, Series I, No. 6

The answer is briefly given:

The fate of the suicide is a sad one, indeed a terrible one, and it is good and right that the truth concerning suicide be told. The suicide wilfully cuts short the life that Nature, as we Theosophists say, intended to be longer, and he has thus placed himself in a *postmortem* condition in which he must live and suffer greatly until the term of his lifetime, had he lived on earth, is closed. The fate of the suicide is an awful one. b *Op. cit.*, Series II, No. 19

The whole point is indicated here in the statement that the suicide *wilfully* cuts short the life that karma *intended* to be longer. In other forms of violent death, the accident or crime or execution, as the case may be, was karmic. In suffering such a misfortune the human being is paying his "karmic price." Suffering the consequences of his own actions in the past, he thus wipes the karmic slate clean of that particular debt.

But the suicide, by his act of selfishly shirking the consequences of his failures in this life and — as frequently happens — leaving the burden to be borne by others, has set in motion for himself a fresh cause of misery. In his next life he will have to meet again the same conditions which led to his suicide in this, only in a form intensified by the very energy of his refusal to meet them now. Every act of ours is made up of energy and with every

intensification of energy the consequences deepen. So the last state of that person will indeed be worse than the first.

The postmortem state of the person who takes his own life is the terrible one of living over and over again the horror of his act and the mental torture which led up to it. Suicides, like executed criminals, must in most cases become powerful vortices of diseased thought-energy adding their force to the existing handicaps to the spiritual progress of the world.

It is good to remember, however, that these cases of misfortune which we have been discussing are but an infinitesimal proportion of the great mass of human beings. By far the greatest number of accidental deaths are of people who have been living kindly and normal lives, and their postmortem conditions cannot for that reason be anything but peaceful. And reincarnation, by giving everyone "another chance" in life after life, leads each person to achieve at last his own redemption.

We may appropriately close this chapter with these further words from Dr. de Purucker:

Every time when you are in intense suffering, mental suffering I mean, if it is something especially which involves the elements of remorse, of intense contrition, that is kama-loka; and you are then in kama-loka even while alive in the physical body. See the lesson to be drawn from this. You see why H. P. Blavatsky was so anxious that the teaching regarding the kama-loka and the Devachan should be broadcast among men as a warning, if only as a warning. Live a decent life, a cleanly, manly, or womanly life, and you need not bother your head about Kama-loka; you need not think twice about it; you won't know anything about it; you will just pass through it like a meteor, but so to speak upwards. — G. de Purucker, *The*

Chapter 7

Death and the Monad

The death of those we love and the prospect of our own passing is so intimate to each one of us that we easily overlook the wider and really more important experiences which death brings to spiritual man. But theosophy, being an explanation of the facts of existence, directs our attention to this wider view; for what we call death, and the states of living which follow it, are of the utmost importance to the evolution of the individual and of humanity.

Theosophy maintains that the problems of life can never be solved until our researchers realize that the secret of all life lies in the invisible rather than in the physical universe. Scientists themselves are beginning to suspect this, one of them, Professor J. Y. Simpson, the Edinburgh Professor of Natural Sciences, having made this significant statement:

With physico-chemical instruments and methods it is difficult to see how you can get anything but physico-chemical results, and when applied to the investigation of life, such practice constitutes no proof accordingly that there is nothing in the characteristics of life beyond what admits of physico-chemical expression. Further, the assumption that mind, which devises all the experimentation, can itself be the product of analogous physico-chemical happenings, seems altogether too heavy for the premises to bear. — *The Listener*, March 8, 1933

Let us supplement this negatively important point of view by the positive side as expressed by Dr. de Purucker:

To know the exterior Universe, you must have brought into functional activity within yourself the knower. . . . To understand the Universe you must have the understanding heart, the faculty of understanding. Do you get the idea? Consequently, while the scientists, for instance, are doing marvelous work, . . . nevertheless where they fail is just on the point that they themselves are not seers, not genuine understanders of what they themselves discover. You must cultivate your inner self. b *The Theosophical Forum*, April, 1933, p. 230

The secret of evolution is to be sought therefore in the inner nature of man and in the invisible worlds of which our visible universe is but the physical evidence as the human body is the visible evidence of its invisible but causal self, its monad.

Let us remember here what we mean by the monad, as already explained in Chapter 3: a monad is a unit of consciousness, an indestructible unit of individuality. There is a monad at the heart of every being from an atom to a sun. In an atom the monad is far less evolved than is the monad of a human being, which has begun to be fully self-conscious. The monad at the heart of a sun has evolved to the state of godhood. In ourselves we can regard the monad as our spiritual self.

All evolution is produced by monads. The monads which now comprise the human kingdom began their evolution in past ages by each one shaping for itself a vehicle in each of the lower planes and kingdoms — first the mineral and the vegetable; then it evolves a beast nature with a physical body; and at last unfolds the potencies from within itself which we call the egoic consciousness or the self-conscious ego. The kingdoms of nature beneath the human are made up of monads which have not yet evolved self-consciousness. So that, speaking roughly, we are at

present a monad or spiritual self (atma-buddhi) expressing itself through a self-conscious, reincarnating ego (manas, dual — higher and lower); and these again act through a lower triad (kama, a model-body, and a physical body, with prana their breath of life).

The entire purpose of this evolutionary journey through all the kingdoms is twofold: first, to enable the monad to gain the fruits of self-consciousness on lower planes than its own spiritual one; then to aid the evolution of the life-atoms — each with its own ensouling monad — which form its various vehicles on the different planes of evolution, physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual. And we must understand something of this process of evolution, its purpose and objectives, if we would understand the sublimest of all the mysteries of death.

Man has at the core of him the god within, which is not himself but is his root and spiritual parent, the monad from which he draws unconsciously his spiritual vitality. This divine being within is our inspirer, protector, and guiding star, the voice of compassion and of conscience within our human hearts. Its holy light awakens within us all our ideals and true aspirations. Without its surrounding, all-penetrating presence we poor human egos would soon perish like fragile moths scorched in the hot flame of material delusion.

The monad, then, is a part of ourselves or, rather, we are a part of it, and yet it is not ourselves. We cannot exist apart from it because it is our link or channel of communion with the universal cosmic life.

Now the monad is itself an individual on its own (to us) invisible plane of existence. At times, when we have perhaps gone momentarily beyond the limitations of our daily selves — through some action of unselfish love, an effort of intense self-discipline,

or a strong aspiration toward the divine within ourselves — in such a moment a vibration of freedom, insight, pure happiness or peace may take possession of us. For a time we breathe the ether of a purer world, and all things seem possible to us. This is the light of the god within, the monad. Upon the closed door of its realm of spiritual illumination that thought or action acted as a pressure and the door swung briefly open to release a ray of glory into the uplifted heart.

Thus the god within us has its own spiritual world. There it too lives, and experiences, and grows, the while it over-illuminates the reincarnating ego in its journey through the shadows of earth-life. Its own realm lies in that causal divine world of which this physical sphere is the outer garment or vehicle.

Little use in one's asking, "*Where* is this inner, invisible world?" One might as well say to the invisible self of a friend, "Where are *you*?" — meaning the mental-spiritual person who is the real friend of one's heart. For the spiritual inner world exists on a different plane, in a different state of matter, vibrates to another scale of existence than this one that we see around us.

We must remember our composite nature: body, ego, spirit-self. Each of these three, as we have seen, must be again divided for accurate study, making seven principles or elements in all. So also the planetary world through which we evolve is sevenfold, there being seven globes to a planetary chain of evolution, of which our earth is the physical and the lowest globe, being the only one we can see, and corresponding by analogy with man's physical body. (For a fuller explanation of our Earth-chain of globes the inquirer should read *The Secret Doctrine* by H. P. Blavatsky, 1:136 *et seq.*, and *The Ocean of Theosophy* by W. Q. Judge.)

Every planet in space is likewise sevenfold — is accompanied by six other, but to us invisible planets. So that, if we had the proper

organ of inner sight, we could look at night deep within the starry universe above us to envision a countless host of more ethereal worlds, within and ever within the outer spaces. It is these inner, more ethereal worlds which are the causal ones, the roots of the physical universe, in the same way that our spiritual self is the root of our visible being.

H. P. Blavatsky tells us about these worlds:

the occultist does not locate *these spheres* either *outside* or *inside* our Earth, as the theologians and the poets do; for their location is nowhere in the space *known* to, and conceived by, the profane. They are, as it were, blended with our world — interpenetrating it and interpenetrated by it. There are millions and millions of worlds and firmaments visible to us; there are still greater numbers beyond those visible to the telescopes, and many of the latter kind do not belong to our *objective* sphere of existence. Although as invisible as if they were millions of miles beyond our solar system, they are yet with us, near us, *within* our own world, as objective and material to their respective inhabitants as ours is to us . . . each is entirely under its own special laws and conditions, having no direct relation to our sphere. . . .

Nevertheless, such invisible worlds do exist. Inhabited as thickly as our own is, they are scattered throughout apparent Space in immense number; some far more material than our own world, others gradually etherealizing until they become formless and are as "*Breaths*." That our physical eye does not see them, is no reason to disbelieve in them; physicists can see neither their ether, atoms, nor "modes of motion," or Forces. Yet they accept and teach them. . . .

But, if we can conceive of a world composed (for *our* senses) of matter still more attenuated than the tail of a comet, hence of inhabitants in it who are as ethereal, in proportion to *their* globe, as we are in comparison with *our* rocky, hard-crustrated earth, no wonder if we do not perceive them, nor sense their presence or even existence. b *The Secret Doctrine* 1:605-7

In the higher and innermost reaches of these invisible worlds dwells the monad, the human spiritual self. Yet that fact, as can be seen from the above quotation, does not make it absent from us. No more are the real egos of our friends absent from us although we can see only their physical bodies. We must learn, as already said, to think of living beings more in terms of consciousness than we now do. The human spiritual self is a being of pure consciousness imbodyed in its buddhic vehicle or garment; the ego is an intellectual center of consciousness imbodyed in a personal-animal vehicle; the lower triad is likewise compounded of elementary consciousness imbodyed in astral-physical shape. And all these are blended into one by their common origin in the monad at the heart of them all.

So we see that these different centers form, during earth-life, one being. If it seems a strange thought that the god within us is evolving on its own plane continuously, we can better understand by recalling that the mind and the body are also developing simultaneously on two different planes, one of which is invisible to our outer senses. Each principle or element in us over-illuminates and helps the one immediately beneath it. As the lower advances in evolution it gives a greater liberty of action to the consciousness-centers above it, as a man who has subdued his bodily appetites is free of them; one who has not is in some degree their slave. And this is true in a far greater degree of the vices of the mind and emotions. Free ourselves of them and the

whole nature advances to a larger and deeper kind of activity. And conversely, no one can think a thought or commit an action that does not influence for good or ill the countless lower lives of his own organism that his consciousness interpenetrates. The effect of our vices upon our physical health is one instance of this. And to complete the thought, our daily thoughts and actions help or retard the spiritual evolution of our higher principles, whose wider ranges of consciousness interpenetrate and inspire our ordinary human selves. Thus there is an evolutionary interaction throughout all planes of being.

Death is the great friend which releases our spiritual self from its encasement in the heavy gross matter of physical earth, while it opens for the weary human soul the beautiful portal into spiritual self-fulfillment and peace.

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Section 1

Chapter 8

Peregrinations of the Monad

The teachings of the esoteric wisdom about to be briefly sketched are a beautiful answer to what has been an intuitive dream of poets and thinkers of every age. How often, when looking up into the deep infinitudes of the midnight sky, has the spirit of man not longed to pierce the secrets of those shining worlds that circle in their far-distant majesty above us! And many have had the true vision that it actually is the destiny of the human spirit to visit after death other worlds and planets which beckon in serene beauty from the pathways of space. The poet-astronomer Camille Flammarion, at one time a student of theosophy, was one among the modern thinkers to express this belief, which is so logical and romantic an answer to the heart-questings of humanity.

The journeys of the human spiritual self to the worlds of outer and inner space are called in theosophy the peregrinations of the monad. In the foregoing pages we have set the stage for the great adventure which follows death upon this earthly sphere. We have seen how the four lower principles or elements of the individual dissolve away at the first and second deaths; how the higher nature of the personality is absorbed by manas, the self-conscious, reincarnating ego; and then how manas itself is

withdrawn into the bosom of the monad, its "Father in Heaven," for a long period of blissful rest.

The monad (atman with its spiritual vehicle or garment, buddhi) is now free to pursue its peregrinations or pilgrimage through the inner worlds. For we must not imagine that the monad, which is a divine being of cosmic consciousness and potencies, rests during the periods between our earth-lives and while it is holding the sleeping ego within it. The monad has no need of what we call rest. It is ever active, ever occupied during the periods of solar manifestation in its work as evolutionary emanator and inspirer of those hosts of less evolved entities with which its vast range of karmic affinities brings it into contact. And this aid and inspiration it accomplishes by clothing itself with, building for itself, vehicles made up of these lower entities on all the planes, inner and outer and "higher" and "lower," which it must pass through in its peregrinations. Among these lower entities which act directly and indirectly as vehicles for the urges and activities of the monad are the six other and less evolved principles of the human being, as well as all the forms throughout the lower kingdoms which the monad has animated, as explained in the last chapter.

It may make the following teachings clearer if we briefly repeat that everything in the universe is sevenfold in its manifested evolutionary nature or constitution; that is, in the universe of form, life manifests through seven different degrees of consciousness and substance, of which our seven principles are illustrations. The other six principles or elements through which the cosmic and also the individual monad manifest are invisible because their substance is too ethereal for perception by our physical senses, which are not attuned to the finer rates of vibration of those ethereal matters. And this earth of ours is therefore but one of a system of seven globes or planets of which

ours is the outermost and most material and the only one apparent to our physical senses. These six sister globes of our earth are on inner and higher levels of being.

We must pause here just a moment to remind the reader not to regard these sister-globes of ours as being the other six principles of the earth, for they are not. Each one is itself, like the earth, a complete septenary entity. But together with the earth they form a series of seven evolutionary stages or planes of development through which we all must eventually pass to round out our own complete septenary evolution and become thus complete aspects of the whole. (For a fuller description of these seven globes of our planetary chain, see *The Secret Doctrine*, 1:170 *et seq*; for a study of the seven principles of the earth, *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy* by G. de Purucker.)

To these invisible globes of our earth-chain the monad or spiritual self, now that physical death and the second death are completed, wings its way. There on each globe, pursuing the same process as already described, it evolves forth bodies or vehicles or forms appropriate to evolution on those higher planes of consciousness. These peregrinations through the invisible globes of our planetary chain are a phase of the "inner rounds." Then, the cycle of the monadic peregrinations on these higher globes of our planetary chain being at last completed, the monad enters on its cycle of journeyings through the "outer rounds" — that is, it makes the circuit of what the ancients called the seven sacred planets of our solar system.

But what and which are these sacred planets, and why are they called sacred? Obviously, being rooted as it is in an organized universe governed in its every part and aspect by changeless law, the monad does not wander aimlessly about on its peregrinations through the spheres. It follows instead those definite paths which

are called in the esoteric philosophy the circulations of the cosmos. The peregrinations of the monad are also strictly defined by its own innate karmic affinities or attractions, and these affinities limit its cosmic journeyings to the seven sacred planets.

These planets are Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Mercury, the Sun, and the Moon — the latter bodies being used as symbols or substitutes for two planets, very little information about which has been given in the literature of the ancient wisdom.

Now why are these particular seven planets called sacred and what is their karmic relation with mankind? The explanation is given in *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy* by Dr. de Purucker as follows:

these seven planets are sacred for us, inhabitants of this globe, because they are the transmitters to us from the sun of the seven primal forces of the kosmos. Our seven principles and our seven elements spring originally from this sevenfold life-flow.

Moreover, these seven sacred planets, or rather their rectors — indwelling spiritual beings of which these planets are the physical vehicles — each one oversees the building or formation of one of the seven globes of the earth's planetary chain plus the swabhava or innate karmic characteristics of that globe itself. For further information on this and other aspects of this teaching the reader is referred to G. de Purucker's *The Esoteric Tradition*, "Circulations of the Cosmos." In *The Secret Doctrine*, H. P. Blavatsky refers to these tenets, one such passage being here quoted:

The planetary origin of the Monad (Soul) and of its faculties was taught by the Gnostics. On its way to the Earth, as on its way back [to its native divine home] from the Earth,

each soul born in, and from, the "Boundless Light," had to pass through the seven planetary regions both ways. —
1:577

Thus it is through these seven sacred planets and their respective planetary chains that the monad continues its afterdeath peregrinations once its imbodiments on the invisible globes of our earth's planetary chain are completed. A description here follows, in passages taken from *The Esoteric Tradition*, which will answer many questions and describe much that has been merely outlined so far:

during its [the Monad's] activity after the postmortem existence for the man is commenced, it passes from sphere to sphere, going the rounds anew on its ceaseless peregrinations during the manvantara. It passes through the spheres not merely because it is native to all of them and is therefore drawn to them by its own magnetic attractions and impulses, but likewise because it itself wills to do so; for free will is a godlike thing and is an inherent and inseparable attribute of itself. — p. 462, 3rd & rev. ed.

The reader's attention is called to the words "going the rounds anew," which refers of course to the fact that these inner and outer rounds are followed by the monad after *each* of the incarnations on earth of the human being. And also note the free will exercised by the monad as showing that it, a divine being, takes upon itself voluntarily the immense task of embodying itself in all classes of the lower lives of its own cosmos in order to lift them up, to urge and inspire *their* self-evolution into godhood like its own. To continue:

Now, during the peregrinations of the Monad through the 'Seven Sacred Planets' of the ancients, the said Monad must of necessity follow those pathways or channels or lines of

least resistance which the Esoteric Philosophy has called the 'Circulations of the Cosmos,' or by some similar phrase. These Circulations of the Cosmos are very real and actual lines of communication between point and point, or locality and locality, or celestial body and celestial body, as all these exist in the structural framework, both visible and invisible, of the universe. These Circulations are not merely poetic metaphors, or figures of speech; they are as real in the inner economic working of the visible and invisible Worlds of the Universe, as are the nerves and the arterial and venous blood-vessels in the human physical body, and just as these latter provide the channels or canals or pathways of the transmission of intellectual and psychical and nervous impulses and directions, as well as of the vital fluid called the blood, so in identical analogous fashion, the Circulations of the Cosmos provide the channels or canals or pathways followed by the ascending and descending Rivers of Lives, which Rivers are composite of the never-ending stream of migrating and peregrinating entities of all classes back and forth, hither and yon, 'up' and 'down' throughout the Universal Structure. — p. 464, 3rd ed.

The Monad on reaching the next planet in order after it has left this sevenfold Earth-chain, thereupon produces or forms a Ray or Radiance from itself during its passage in and through such planetary chain, a psycho-mental apparatus or 'soul' of temporary existence, which takes in consequence temporary imbodiment in a correspondingly fit vehicle or body there, the such body being of a spiritual, an ethereal, an astral, or a physical type. — p. 469, 3rd ed.

Thus the Monad, our Spiritual Self, our Essential Self, . . . gathers at each one of the seven sacred planets a new harvest of soul-experiences only to be gained in each such

planet, each such 'harvest' being the aggregated experiences in imbodiment acquired by the Spiritual Monad which belong in essential characteristics of substance and energy to each such respective planet. — p. 471, 3rd ed.

Is not this a magnificent picture — sweeping us from our moorings in the stagnant backwaters of lingering medieval theology or of modern materialism, out upon the ocean of spiritual adventure! It well illustrates the meaning of a phrase often used in theosophy, the expansion of consciousness. No: we are neither worms of the dust nor merely developed simians. We are destined neither to a static heaven or hell nor to merciless extinction. Instead, there are for us illimitable fields of cosmic activity and adventure sublime beyond our present imagining.

It is true that the purer side of our present consciousness will be dreaming blissfully in devachan while the god within, the spiritual self or monad — carrying us "in its bosom" — is pursuing its divine adventure through the pathways of the solar system. It is rather as a goal of inspired effort that this picture of our grand destiny is painted for us by the adepts and sages of the archaic wisdom. They have drawn aside the dark curtain of our ignorance to reveal the unfathomable vistas of life that fill the inner reaches of space. They assure us of our happy place, our fruitful and unending share in the immensely varied and fascinating drama of the universe.

We now see something of the meaning of the evolutionary process touched upon in the last chapter. In this process, the re embodying ego at the close of its great cycle of evolution becomes at last itself a monad. It will have evolved from the core of its own being the monadship now latent, or only just beginning to unfold there. Then in a future manvantara it too as a monad

will follow, between its imbodiments, the circulations of the cosmos; while what is now our animal nature shall have evolved and advanced to humanhood.

Chapter 9

Value of These Teachings

One of the best things about theosophy is that its idealism is constructive and practical. It might seem at first thought that it is difficult to relate this sublime scheme to our hurried, overcommercialized present. Yet there is not one of the teachings of theosophy, not even the most seemingly abstruse, which has not an intimate, almost a utilitarian value to the daily thought and conduct of men and women like ourselves. For merely one example, could there be anything more practical in its effects than the certainty that we survive after death? Its ethical influence would obviously be tremendous, especially when taken in connection with reincarnation and karma.

Why, in the main, do we dread death for ourselves? Is it not that we fear to "let go," to give up our familiar daily consciousness? We do not dread sleep, for we remember yesterday and we know that after an interval of loss of consciousness tomorrow will certainly restore it again. But in regard to death we are like little children who struggle every night to hold themselves awake dreading the moment when they must sink into the unconsciousness of sleep. It is only when we are older and more experienced that we learn what a friend and consoler is life's daily interval of blessed Lethe.

The same difference in development between child and adult in regard to sleep marks the difference in growth between incompletely developed men like ourselves and the spiritual adept or mahatma in regard to death. For to overcome death, that

is to carry the consciousness without break from life to life, is one of the great results of true occult training. And by true occult training is meant the scientific application of theosophical teachings to self-development, under the guidance of a spiritual teacher.

We die, in the sense of losing grasp upon ourselves, because we live now almost wholly in that part of our natures which is bound to die, the personal and physical consciousness. Even the highest god of the inner spiritual worlds must, could he take upon himself human flesh, sooner or later witness its dissolution. The physical nature of Jesus, who was a high avatara — or the manifestation of a god — had to pass through the gates of physical dissolution. "But," you say, "he rose again from the dead." Indeed yes — as every one of us must learn to "rise" — "greater things than these shall ye do," he promised us.

The "resurrection" is an initiation-teaching from the ancient Mystery schools. These schools existed in antiquity as a vital part of all those old civilizations. Their purpose was to teach mankind the origin, constitution, laws, and destiny of the universe and of our relations and experiences within it. In the days of Jesus these Mystery schools had deteriorated, as all things must with time. The truths, however, which that mystery-knowledge had been teaching for ages, were so interwoven into the mental and moral fabric of the Mediterranean civilizations that the Christian Church was obliged to adopt a great deal of the mystery-language and ceremony to attract the people and make its new dogmas intelligible. But in partially adopting these, it misunderstood them and debased them to material levels; and the glorious "resurrection" of the spiritual man triumphant over his own selfish and animal nature was debased into the present illogical doctrine. The true resurrection has a deep place in the teachings of occultism, or applied theosophy:

Its meaning is this, that within each one of you is a divine being, a living god, prevented from manifesting its transcendent powers only by the cramping bonds of our personal selfhood — our prejudices, our whims, our small petty hates and loves; and that when a man can conquer these lower things — conquer them in the sense of making them servants of the god within, fit instruments and tools for self-expression — then you will see man walking the earth as a human god, because manifesting the transcendent powers of the god within him, of the immanent Christ, of the inner Buddha, as the Buddhists put it. — G. de Purucker, *Questions We All Ask*, Series I, No. 44

True resurrection means initiation — that final glorious consummation of the long course of self-directed evolution under the guidance of a spiritual teacher which theosophy offers to all who will live the life and embody its teachings. The subject of initiation is copiously dealt with in theosophical literature, so we shall quote but one passage in regard to it:

there is a pathway steep and thorny though it be for the average man, yet it leads to the very Heart of the Universe. The man traveling this path passes through the portals of growth quickly, relatively speaking; and I can show you how to put your feet upon this pathway, so that instead of spending ages and ages and ages and ages in slowly evolving, in slowly expanding, in slowly bringing forth the powers and faculties within you, you can grip yourself, guide your own evolution, and thus much more quickly grow.

This is 'self-directed evolution,' . . . This is initiation. — *Op. cit.*, Series II, No. 4

There is actually of course a kind of resurrection of the body in the meaning herewith described:

when you realize that the very atoms of your body do not come to you by chance, that they are the same atoms which you used in your last incarnation on earth, then you quickly see that there is a resurrection of the physical man in that sense of the word: *i. e.*, that when you return to earth in the next reincarnation, the atoms in which you live in this present body, will automatically fly to that new body, will be psycho-magnetically drawn to you, for they are your physical, astral, and ethereal children. — *Op. cit.*, Series I, No. 44

Both these teachings however, belonged to the Mystery schools and were, as seen, badly distorted by early Christian pietists who adapted them to the uses of the new religion, Christianity.

Theosophy but re-states the ancient mystery-teachings, which Krishna, Lao-Tse, Gautama, and Jesus all taught in their varied ways — varied because each was given to a different age and people. Theosophy now voices again the immemorial, mystic call from the heart of the universe to the heart of man, bidding him to arise and go to the Father, within whose temple of the spirit he may find that strength and wisdom that will lift him above the illusions of the selfish personality and give him victory over death. For said the great avatara: "In my Father's house are many mansions," and "I go to prepare a place for you."

These great ideas and promises relate themselves to our daily experience because they express the goal of all humanity. We suffer and toil and die because we do not understand ourselves or the elements of which we are made. We do not know why we are here. We understand so little about life that our own selfish interests seem the most important part of it. We have wrong ideas

about almost everything. Those things which are the call of the spiritual nature within, such as pain, self-sacrifice, sorrow, and discipline, we avoid when we can, too often accepting in their stead the narcotics of self-indulgence or indifference. And this leads only to more pain, more sorrow and disease, and to all the deeper aspects of personal mortality.

We recall again Katherine Tingley's declaration that the object of life is the "raising of the mortal into immortality." But immortality is not bestowed upon us any more than character or environment. It must be earned and built up by effort before it can be ours. The human self must achieve immortality and its own right to the divine adventure by transforming its lower composite nature into the unity and homogeneity of spirit. Things made up of varied elements, whether material or psychological, must fall apart when the energy that brought them together is exhausted. But the god within is a pure ray of universal oneness and cannot decay or cease to be. When we can transmute through selfless and universal thought and action our own human nature into the homogeneity of the divine then we will know ourself immortal because we will have become so through self-directed efforts. We will be Masters of Life.

The great promise of theosophy for the individual may fitly bring this chapter to a close:

the old initiations have not died off from the face of the earth. They take place even today, and in the archaic way, under the supervision and the guidance of men, great Sages and Seers, . . .

The personal man, my Brothers, must be 'crucified,' *i. e.*, 'slain' — metaphorically speaking — in order that the Christ within you may resurrect or arise. . . .

The Pathway of Beauty, the Pathway of Peace and Strength, the Pathway of the Great Quiet, is within you — not within the material body, but within the inmost focus of your consciousness. This is the Pathway that the great Sages and Seers of all the ages have taught. Follow that Pathway; it will lead you to the heart of the Sun, the Master and Guide of our Solar System; and later if you follow it, it will conduct you to a destiny still more sublime. Yet that sublime destiny is only the beginning, only the beginning of something grander; for evolution, growth, expansion of consciousness, go on forever. — *Op. cit.*, Series II, No. 32

Chapter 10

Death and Rebirth

It is hardly possible to think of survival after death without also thinking of preexistence and rebirth, for anything supposed to be without an end must also be regarded as having no beginning. In a logical system of thought we have to account for and describe not only what happens after death but also what happens *before birth*.

And just here it will be interesting to note the immediate causes of the reincarnation of the human ego. Reimbodiment is of course a "law," that is, a universal habit of nature. Everything in the universe reimbodies — an electron, an atom, a mineral, a plant — that is, the monads evolving through these forms must re embody; likewise for an animal, a man, a planet, a sun, a solar system, a universe — nothing can escape its essential destiny of the evolution or unfolding of its inner nature and powers through reimbodiment and progressively advancing organization and environments. And the human ego naturally shares in this universal habit of self-evolution.

But it is the *immediate* reasons which bring about reincarnation on earth, with the methods and procedures which are followed in the process, that concern us particularly now. We left the monad, the spiritual self, peregrinating through the seven sacred planets carrying the reincarnating ego "asleep in its bosom." But as always in nature, that which rests or is asleep must awaken and enter afresh upon self-conscious activity for the purpose of carrying forward its own evolution.

So at last the reincarnating ego begins slowly to reach the end of its period of devachanic spiritual assimilation. Memories of its former earth-lives, vague but compelling, stir it from its blissful sleep. And so harmonious and flexible and self-adjusting are all the processes of nature that the monad has completed its peregrinations through the inner and outer rounds by the time the reincarnating ego is reaching the end of its dream-rest in the monadic essence.

Consequently, whether an ego have a short or a long devachan, it has no difficulty in either case, because the spiritual monad is more or less strongly influenced by the spiritual quality of the re embodying ego which it holds in its bosom, and thus it is that the pilgrimage of the spiritual monad is often to a large extent controlled as regards the time passed in the interplanetary pilgrimage. — *The Esoteric Tradition*, 3rd & rev. ed. p. 480

The reincarnating ego is therefore gradually carried "downward" or "outward" through the invisible interplanetary spheres until it begins again to approach the threshold of earth-life. Here it sends out from itself a manasic radiance or ray, and the presence of this ray acts dynamically upon all those centers of energy which were cast off when it last passed through the portal of death here on earth. The life-atoms composing these energy-centers or

principles or elements begin to crystallize around the manasic ray as a nucleus. These principles or elements are four in number, as already enumerated, and constitute the lower quaternary or lower self which the ego used as its vehicle on earth in the last life. They are: kama, passionate desire; prana, the life-principle or vitality; the astral or model body, the *linga-sarira*; and the physical sheath or *sthula-sarira*. And when once these begin to reform around the manasic ray, the personality, *kama-manas*, comes again into earth existence.

The final process is thus described for us:

The Ray or Radiation from the Reimbodying Ego finally reaches the critical point or stage in its 'descent' where it is drawn to or attracted by the specific and definite human germ-cell whose growth, if not interrupted, will eventuate in a physical body. The psycho-magnetic attractions and inner impulses of the Reimbodying Ego . . . have karmically led it to that one cell which is most appropriate out of the number of other possible cells, the father and the mother in due course joining to give what we may perhaps figuratively call the magic link of united 'life,' . . .

From this instant the living protoplasm begins to grow from within outwards, and little by little to manifest forth what is stored within itself. — *Op. cit.*, pp. 481-2

The ego is usually drawn to that family and that type of social environment in which it laid down its burdens, problems, and relationships at the last death of its physical body.

The study of death and afterdeath states of consciousness and experience is of the deepest importance to every one and for the following reasons, among others:

(1) Because it will teach us how to bridge the gap, which is

apparent only, between ourselves and those we love closely who have passed onward into the invisible worlds; and this removes the sting of death.

(2) Because it dissolves away the fear of death from our hearts and inspires us with a great hope and purpose in so shaping today that death's tomorrow may be a glorious one.

(3) Because we cannot understand death without learning the secrets of our own natures, a study and a mastery of which will reconstruct all living for us both here and hereafter.

There is about theosophy a completeness, a rounding out of many processes of nature, which science at present beholds only as half-truths. Such are gravitation and evolution, as H. P. Blavatsky explains in *The Secret Doctrine*. Science regards human life, for example, as a straight line, a fragment, whereas it is an infinitesimal section of a mighty circle turning upward upon itself through alternating degrees of light and shade — a tremendous spiral ascent. Upward, ever slowly upward it trends, carrying the individual from the murky shadows of one life here into the gleaming curve of the between-lives period; then, into another shadowy patch of earth-existence and so on, still gradually climbing until the goal is reached.

As for the goal or "ending" of this evolutionary process of which life on this earth is one segment with "death" and beyond as another — this goal too is but a partial ending. It is a mere stopping place, a period for rest and spiritual assimilation of a higher sort, as is clearly indicated in the following passages:

It was precisely the ancient religions and philosophies which in their inner meaning taught that the Universe is based on law and order, builded around imperishable centers which vary never, and which, each one, pursues an

evolutionary course towards the Divine Polar-Star of the Universe; and which further taught that the imperfect things that we see in Nature around us, like us human beings ourselves, are imperfect because they are as yet not fully evolved.

And hearken, they taught more. They taught that there never is an ultimate, a final stopping-place, beyond which the evolutionary stream of life cannot go. But they said, no matter how great and how highly evolved such and another stream of life may be with all its component entities, there is veil upon veil behind and beyond the frontiers of the Universe, stretching into other Universes. Endings of evolution, as I have said, exist not at all. — *Questions We All Ask*, Series I, No. 31

The spirit or monad is constantly growing; it is evolving, on its way to become the super-spiritual, finally to become the Divine, then the Super-divine. Is that the end of its evolutionary possibilities? No, it advances ever, constantly and endlessly evolving, growing. But words fail us here to describe this sublime conception. We cannot describe it in faltering human language. Our imagination falls palsied in any such attempt, and we can merely point to the evolutionary path vanishing in both directions into infinity and into eternity, as beginningless as it is unending. *b Op. cit.*, Series I, No. 13

We have now taken a somewhat detailed view of what death really implies and of the place which it holds in human evolution. As to the process itself, it may be useful very briefly to review the stages through which the human consciousness passes when death brings release to the spiritual self. These are:

1. Death itself, or the sloughing off and disintegration of the

physical body, caused by the severance of the link between the spiritual self and its lower principles. The astral model-body or linga-sarira also now disintegrates — a process which is greatly hastened by cremation of the physical body.

2. The review by the reincarnating ego of the events of the just ended life. This is a most important and solemn part of the act of dissolution, when the ego views every thought and act of its life, seeing clearly the justice and meaning of the life's events. At such a time, immediately following death, there should be perfect, reverent quiet around the departed so that no breath of disturbance from the outer plane may interrupt this necessary and sacred event.

3. The falling asleep of the human personality or consciousness while the next two processes take place.

4. The dissolution of the kama-rupa, unless it should be kept alive by mediumistic interference.

5. The second death, during which the spiritual essence of the personality is absorbed by the ego.

The two latter processes are unconscious ones for normal humanity.

6. The passing of the reincarnating ego into its devachanic rest in the bosom of the spiritual self or monad.

7. Peregrinations or cosmic journeyings of the monad or spiritual self upon its "divine adventure," carrying the reincarnating ego "in its bosom."

8. Re-awakening of the reincarnating ego to the pull of earth-life and its descent towards reincarnation in a new personality.

Some Questions Answered

In connection with our study of this profound and wonderful subject many questions are likely to arise. It is often asked, for example, if, since theosophy teaches that there is a heaven-world, does it not also teach something about a hell? And how about purgatory, which many people believe in: what has theosophy to say about that?

If by "hell" is meant a place of eternal punishment, then theosophy emphatically denies both the ideas implied in this expression. In the ancient wisdom there is no place for the illogical and childish idea of punishment. We meet only the *consequences* of our own past thoughts and actions in this or former lives — that is, our karma. No one imposes or forces these resulting conditions upon us: they follow our own actions as naturally as heat follows combustion, or as the furrow follows the plow. Also, to repeat, no state or condition of existence can be everlasting.

Our theological ideas of heaven and hell are more of those man-made misconstructions already mentioned — those distorted remnants of the ancient mystery-teachings which still prevailed in the popular mind at the beginning of the Christian era. All these misconceptions were fastened upon human thought at a time when humanity was passing into an age of spiritual inertia, culminating in the so-called Dark Ages. And the theological doctrines of hell as found in all religions in some form have, to condense the words of Dr. de Purucker (see *The Esoteric Tradition*, 3rd & rev. ed., pp. 279-283), become almost without exception highly embroidered misconceptions of the original doctrine taught by the founders of such religions. All these misconceptions came to be accepted literally instead of symbolically and figuratively, and have brought about almost

untold suffering and misery to human hearts. Thus the words "heaven" and "hell," in their true mystical sense as a part of the ancient mystery-teachings, are seen to refer — the heavens to

those spiritual realms of experience through which all monads must at some time in their ages-long peregrinations pass, and in which they dwell for periods proportionate with the karmic merit attained. The hells are those spheres or realms of purgation, to which all monads whatsoever during certain periods of their peregrinations must pass, therein washing the matter-laden souls, so that once cleansed they may rise again along the ascending arc of cosmic experience. — *The Esoteric Tradition*, 3rd & rev ed. p. 283-4

Indeed this earth itself is regarded by those beings who have long ago transcended its matter-weighted vehicles and temptations as a hell of a particularly trying variety. Thus theosophy, while explaining the origin of these theological misconceptions, frees the human mind once and for all of their degrading and cruel influence.

There is of course in nature's vast realms a condition or state of being which is the opposite or nether pole to those stages of spiritual attainment and rest which extend all the way from devachan to the different degrees of nirvana at the close of the greater periods of evolution. This other state of being is called "avichi" and is also of many degrees according to the material propensities of the entities who are drawn into it by their own evil actions. Those who are given over to hatred, revenge, lusts, or vices of any kind, gravitate inevitably to some form of avichi, to which state the lower stages of the kama-loka belong. Here dwell the psychic remains of such men and women, for human life gives as incomplete a scope on the one hand for the deepest

degrees of evil as for the attainment of the purest spiritual happiness on the other. Yet if people accumulate within themselves desires and energies of either the basest or finest, these must find their outlet and expression somewhere. The "hells" or lower reaches of the kama-loka are the direct karmic consequences of the indulgence by men and women in degrading human attributes. But even so the results are merciful, for these "hells" confront the entities attracted to them with the terrible consequences of unbridled self-indulgence in evil, and so impress them that the road to avichi may later be avoided. And happily they are but temporary and the number of such unfortunate men and women is relatively small.

Theological doctrines about purgatory are another example of the distortion by ignorant men of the mystery-teachings of the ancient wisdom to serve the ends of exoteric religion. How they arose can easily be seen from the foregoing, though the ancient wisdom tells us that in the actual state of kama-loka — excepting in the rare instances already cited of suicides and the very evil — while there is purgatory of a sort in the sense of the dissolving away of the material and selfish elements of the deceased, this purification is an unconscious process and involves little or no suffering whatever for normal human beings. All these bugbears of theology and superstition theosophy explains, and in explaining casts aside.

Another point that inquirers often bring up is in regard to the possibility of shortening the period between earth-lives. There is a perhaps surprisingly large class of men and women who cannot endure the idea of thousands of years of bliss while the human world is toiling painfully along without their efforts to help and alleviate. In this light the state of devachan seems essentially selfish. To such inquirers the following will be of interest:

Question: In The Mahatma Letters [to A. P. Sinnett] I read that Devachan is a state of intense selfishness. . . . I believe that real love will shorten the time we are in Devachan; and I hope I am right; . . .

Answer by Dr. de Purucker: Dear Brother: . . . I absolutely agree with you. Now, when we analyse the devachanic state closely, we must come to recognise that, however beautiful it may be, however much of a rest and recuperation it is — for it certainly is all that — it nevertheless is a selfish state. Say what we will, it is necessary at the present time, on account of its being rest and recuperation and peace and a rebuilding and an assimilation of the experiences of the life just closed; but granting all that, it is a selfish existence; because, for the hundreds of years that we are in the Devachan, we are sunken in roseate dreams, and the world may be going to hell, and we don't care. Now, that is not the spirit of the Buddhas of Compassion. Love, impersonal love, which loves all things both great and small, will free us even from the Devachan; and it is just this spirit of impersonal love, love for all things, a yearning to help all, and to aid — it is this spirit which is the very core of the Buddhas of Compassion and of our own Order. It is this spirit which will shorten our Devachan and advance us rapidly on the pathway of chelaship. It is the spirit which infills our Elder Brothers, the Masters of Wisdom and Compassion and Peace. They have no Devachan. They have advanced beyond it — at least the higher ones among them have. —
The Theosophical Forum, February 1933, p. 178

An intense impersonal desire to live for humanity, if persisted in during life — particularly if it is not mere sentimentality but takes the shape of daily self-sacrifice in thought and conduct — is an

energy of the most powerful kind. It is powerful above all other energies because it partakes of the moving harmony and love which flow forth from the heart of the universe to pervade and animate all that is. It will find its appropriate expression by drawing the incarnate entity back to that field where alone this spiritual desire-energy may work itself out — reincarnation upon earth in any environment where such humanitarian activity is possible.

The foregoing leads to a question often brought up as to the relative importance of the two states, earth-life and devachan. To suggest the answer in a homely form we might ask: Which is more important, eating or digestion? For earth-life gives the accumulation of experience and devachan brings about its assimilation. To average humanity both are necessary and each complements the other.

Yet, even so, as the astute reader will have deduced from answers to questions already given, the mahatma, the adept, the Master of Life, has "advanced beyond" devachan. He passes from life to life and body to body without break of consciousness. But we must not overlook the fact that in doing this he has also passed beyond the need, for himself, of any further experience of earth-life. He reincarnates as a man of flesh that he may devote himself to the spiritual welfare of all things. To overcome the power of death and its conditions, one must first overcome the thirst for life. For these two, life on earth and life in the inner worlds beyond death are at present the human method of evolution. And only by transcending the need of both can we become mahatmas — self-consciously immortal.

But death, even for the average person, will change its conditions eventually, for of course we are constantly evolving. Under the influence not only of our own inner urge, but with the help of an

environment which we, in common with our family, nation, and race, is daily creating, we will develop, unwrap, unroll from the core of our own being new powers and capacities. And as we evolves these new faculties, so will we at the same time be bringing about the conditions whereby to express them. This is a part of the grand outlook which theosophy offers for the future of humanity.

As Dr. de Purucker tells us:

When the human race shall have advanced somewhat farther, old age will be considered to be the most beautiful period of life because the fullest in intellectual, psychical, and spiritual power, and it will remain so until within a few short hours before actual physical death occurs. — *The Esoteric Tradition*, 3rd & rev. ed., pp. 434-5

Another matter which should be touched upon before closing this study is the new light which theosophy throws upon our present unscientific conceptions of immortality. This point of view was recently expressed in the following way:

men do not know what real immortality means; they think it means unchanging continuance of the human soul as it now is — and what a hell that would be! Fancy being for ever, and for ever, and for ever what one is now!

The teaching of Occultism is just the contrary of this. Its teaching tells of an endless growth, endless improvement, endless development, endless evolution, therefore an endless changing of consciousness, going ever higher and higher out of the human sphere into the semi-divine, and out of the semidivine worlds into the divine, and thereafter into the super-divine, and so on *ad infinitum*. There is no such thing as immortality as commonly understood. The

only immortal thing is the Universe itself; but even this is by no means immortal as it now is, because it itself is constantly changing, and its essence is its life, which is of the very essence of change which means growth, which means evolution. — G. de Purucker, *Occultism and Psychic Phenomena*

The point to be marked in the above passage lies in the words, "as it now is." Nothing continues to exist forever *as it now is*. It is this fact, so illogically and unscientifically ignored by theologians and so completely supported by nature, that lies at the root of modern scientific prejudice against the idea of immortality. The individual persists, but his very persistence is by means of change. We are our karma — we grow into what we make ourselves to become. And it is what we make of ourselves that persists, and in this progress or retrogression lies our future. Could there be imagined a greater or more compelling challenge to common sense as well as to the best and the strongest and the purest in human nature? Even the beautiful phrase "to raise the mortal into immortality" has only a relative validity. For the monad itself into which we ourselves aspire to transmute our consciousness, and which is immortal as compared with the human ego, that monad is growing and evolving on its own plane to greater and greater heights forever.

To return to the idea with which this brief inquiry was opened:

You will never fully understand death nor its mysteries as long as you concentrate your attention on the bodies in which this flame of consciousness enwraps itself. Follow the consciousness within you, become acquainted with yourself, know yourself better, follow this flame of consciousness inwards, ever more inwards, which also means upwards; and then you will no longer fear death,

but will recognise it as the sweetest, holiest friend that man has; for it means laying aside imperfection for perfection, restricted consciousness for an enlarged sphere of consciousness. Follow that stream of consciousness continually; and finally you will reach inwards to the core of your being, the divinity at the heart of yourself. There is the secret for understanding the real mystery of death as it is taught in the ancient esoteric schools of all races of men.
— G. de Purucker, *Lucifer*, April 1934, pp. 441-2

A fitting conclusion to this very brief exposition of the theosophical teachings about death and after may be found in these final words:

Remember that you are a child of infinitude, each one of you, inseparable from the boundless Universe in which we all live and move and have our being; remember that you are well taken care of by almighty Nature's laws, which brought you here, which will take you out from this life, and which will infallibly guide you on your way. Trust yourself then to death in happy confidence; die with a strong and happy will; die with gladness when your time comes; be not afraid. Mock at the phantom of 'death' b mock at the old hideous specter which the fearful imagination of ignorance wove in the hearts and minds of men. Mock at that specter, that evil thing of the imagination! Cast it out! Remember that you are well taken care of. b *Questions We All Ask*, Series II, No. 19