

Death and post-mortem states

A little collection of stray thoughts



Hideaway by Inga Nielsen

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Stray thoughts

. . . death is the veil which those who live call life:
they sleep, and it is lifted.

— Percy Bysshe Shelley¹

Thus all things are but altered, nothing dies.

— Publius Ovidius Naso²

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like wither'd leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,
Scatter, as from an unextinguish'd hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawaken'd earth
The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

— Percy Bysshe Shelley³

Egyptians thought more of the dead than of the living.

Look upon this great cave. Sawest thou ever the like? Yet was it, and many more like it, hollowed by the hands of the dead race that once lived here in the city on the plain. A great and wonderful people must they have been, those men of Kōr, but, like the Egyptians, they thought more of the dead than of the living. How many men, thinkest thou, working for how many years, did it need to the hollowing out this cave and all the galleries thereof?⁴

Try to live like Stoics did, greeting both life and death with great dignity and indifference to either pain or pleasure, for, it is passion that distorts truth, troubles the soul, and brings about real pain.

These are the thoughts that those who pursue philosophy should ponder: . . . It was in this spirit that Agrippinus⁵ used to say — do you know what? “I will not stand in my own way!” News was brought him, “Your trial is on in the Senate!” “Good luck to it, but the fifth hour is come” — this was the hour when he used to take his exercise and have a cold bath — “let us go and take exercise.” When he had taken his exercise they came and told him, “You are condemned.” “Exile or death?” he asked. “Exile.” “And my property?” “It is not confiscated.” “Well then, let us go to Aricia⁶ and dine.”⁷ [Continued overleaf.]

¹ Shelley: *Prometheus Unbound*, III, iii, 113

² Ovid, *Metamorphoses* xv, 165 (Omnia mutantur, nihil interit.) Tr. Dryden — *King's Quotations*

³ Shelley: *Ode to the West Wind*

⁴ Rider Haggard H. *She* (1st ed. 1887); ch. 16, p. 201

⁵ A famous Stoic, for two years proconsul of Crete under Claudius.

⁶ A country town on the Appian road, about 20 miles south of Rome, on the skirts of the Alban hills.

⁷ Matheson P.E. (Tr.). *Epictetus: Discourses*, Books 1 and 2. (1st ed. rpr. 1916 by Clarendon Press, Oxford); New York: Dover Publications, 2004; i, 1, pp. 5-6



Here you see the result of training as training should be, of the will to get and will to avoid, so disciplined that nothing can hinder or frustrate them. I must die, must I? If at once, then I am dying: if soon, I dine now, as it is time for dinner, and afterwards when the time comes I will die. And die how? As befits one who gives back what is not his own.⁸

“Look through the ruined lamp to the eternal light which burns within.”

What of the vile vessel, rotted in the grave of time? What of the flesh that perishes? . . . Look through the ruined lamp to the eternal light which burns within. Look through its covering carrion to the inextinguishable soul.⁹

It is the dream that never dies.

Complete or true immortality, — which means an unlimited *sentient* existence, can have no breaks and stoppages, no arrest of *Self*-consciousness. And even the *shells* of those good men whose page will not be found missing in the great Book of Lives at the threshold of the Great Nirvana, even they will regain their remembrance and an appearance of *Self*-consciousness, only after the sixth and seventh principles with the essence of the 5th . . . have gone to their gestation period, *not before*.¹⁰

Skandhas keep disassembling at death before reassembling once more for the new birth.

On the death of the body, the Kama principle collects the Skandhas in space, or at the rebirth of the ego the Skandhas rush together and assemble about it to go with it in the new life.¹¹

At the last moment, “The dying brain dislodges memory with a strong supreme impulse,”

At the last moment, the whole life is reflected in our memory and emerges from all the forgotten nooks and corners picture after picture, one event after the other. The dying brain dislodges memory with a strong supreme impulse, and memory restores faithfully every impression entrusted to it during the period of the brain’s activity. That impression and thought which was the strongest naturally becomes the most vivid and survives so to say all the rest which now vanish and disappear for ever, to reappear but in Devachan. Good gracious! Had I forgotten in my hurry to add the last five words, would not I have caught it as a charge of *flat* contradiction!¹²

⁸ *Epictetus: Discourses*, Books 1 and 2, I.1, p. 6

⁹ Rider Haggard H. *Ayesha: The Return of She* (1st ed. 1905); ch. 15; [Oros on Ayesha’s sudden physical decay.]

¹⁰ Mahātma Letter 20c (70c), p. 125; 3rd Combined ed.; [comparing after-death states of adepts and sorcerers.]

¹¹ *Judge Letters*, III (AN OCCULT NOVEL - A CHAPTER) p. 250; [*The Assembling of the Skandhas*.]

¹² Mahātma Letter 23b (93b), p. 167; 3rd Combined ed.



In a “phantasmagoric marshaling of past dreams.”

That particular one *moment* which will be most intense and uppermost in the thoughts of his dying brain at the time of dissolution will of course regulate all the other “moments”; still the latter — minor and less vivid though they be — will be there also, having their appointed place in this phantasmagoric marshaling of past dreams, and must give variety to the whole. No man on earth but has some decided predilection if not a domineering passion; no person, however humble and poor — and often because of all that — but indulges in dreams and desires unsatisfied though these be. Is this monotony?¹³

But no one dies insane or unconscious.

No man dies insane or unconscious — as some physiologists assert. Even a *madman*, or one in a fit of *delirium tremens* will have his instant of perfect lucidity at the moment of death, though unable to say so to those present. The man may often appear dead. Yet from the last pulsation, from and between the last throbbing of his heart and the moment when the last spark of animal heat leaves the body — the *brain thinks* and the *Ego lives* over in those few brief seconds — his whole life again. Speak in whispers, ye, who assist at a deathbed and find yourselves in the solemn presence of Death. Especially have you to keep quiet just after Death has laid her clammy hand upon the body. Speak in whispers, I say, lest you disturb the quiet ripple of thought, and hinder the busy work of the Past casting on its reflection upon the veil of the Future . . .¹⁴

“Speak in whispers, ye, who assist at a deathbed and find yourselves in the solemn presence of Death.”

“The greatest insult you can offer to the Power than made you, to cast back its gift of life”

. . . as a thing outworn, contemptible and despised. A crime, I say, which will bring with it worse punishment than any you can dream; perhaps even the punishment of everlasting separation.¹⁵

Death is a temporary release from the house of hell.

Know ye not that this world is indeed the wide house of hell, in whose chambers from time to time the spirit tarries a little while, then, weary and aghast, speeds wailing to the peace that it has won.¹⁶

¹³ Mahātma Letter 25 (104), p. 189; 3rd Combined ed.

¹⁴ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (MEMORY IN THE DYING) XI p. 447; [quoting from “a very old letter from a MASTER,” republished as Mahātma Letter 23b (93b), p. 167; 3rd Combined ed.]

¹⁵ Rider Haggard H. *Ayesha: The Return of She* (1st ed. 1905); ch. 1; [Holly to Leo on suicide.]

¹⁶ *Ibid.* ch. 18; [Ayesha to Leo.]



But there are more hells awaiting the unwary.

Prepare for death by living within the “one eternal Truth, and one infinite changeless Spirit of Love, Truth and Wisdom in the Universe” and by loving, helping, and defending each other against any Spirit of untruth or deception.¹⁷

The variety of *states* after death is greater, if possible, than the variety of human lives upon this earth. As remarked further on, not all, by any means, become *pisachas*, nor are they all Earth-walkers. The victims of accident are generally exempt from this curse, only those falling into the current of attraction who die full of some engrossing earthly passion; the SELFISH who have never given a thought to anyone but their own selves. Overtaken by death in the consummation — whether real or imaginary — of some master-passion of their life, the desire remaining unsatisfied even after a full realization, and they still craving after more, such can never pass beyond the earth’s attraction to wait for the hour of deliverance in happy ignorance and full oblivion. Among the “suicides” those to whom the statement of the writer applies in full are that class who commit the act in consequence of a crime, to escape the penalty of human law, or of their own remorse. Natural law cannot be broken with impunity; the inexorable causal relation between action and result has its full sway, but in the world of effects — the *Kama-loka*; and every case is met there by an adequate punishment, and in a thousand ways which would require volumes to describe them even superficially. In one of the future numbers of this magazine will be given quotations from the Buddhist Scriptures, and the Hindu Shastras concerning this subject with volume, page, and verse for easier verification.¹⁸



¹⁷ Cf. *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (ONE ETERNAL TRUTH) XIII p. 269; [Paul quoting Aratus’ *Phainomena*.] Cf. “For ‘In him we live, and move, and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we too are his offspring.’” *Acts* xvii, 28

¹⁸ *Ibid.* (FOOTNOTE TO “LETTERS ON ESOTERIC THEOSOPHY”) IV pp. 188-89



Premonitions of death

The animal lives an existence of bliss, neither seeing nor knowing death, and dies without cognizing it. Why then should man have received the gift of seeing and knowing it, and why should death be so terrible to him that it actually tortures his soul, often forcing him to kill himself out of sheer fear of death? Why should it be so? Because the man who sees death is a sick man, one who has broken the law of his life, and lives no longer a conscious existence. He has become an animal himself, an animal which also has broken the law of life.

— Count Lyev Nikolayevich Tolstoy¹⁹

“The body being only the covering of the soul, at its dissolution, we shall discover all the secrets of nature and darkness shall be dispelled.” Such is the “ideation” of the sage Seneca.

MAN is composed of two bodies, the *internal* and the *external*; the inner one being moreover, double, *i.e.*, having, in its turn, a semi-physical outer shell which serves as the *astral* being only during the life-time of man; while the latter is still in seeming health, the dissolution of the former, or rather of its outer shell, may have already begun. For during its captivity in the living body the “double” — or that covering of the astral form that alone survives — is too closely bound by its jailor (man), too much encumbered with the physical particles derived from the prison of flesh within which it is confined, not to imperiously require, before the astral form proper is set entirely free, to be thrown off from the latter. Thus, this preliminary process of purification may be justly called “the dissolution of the *inner* man,” and it begins much earlier than the agony or even the final disease of the physical man. Let us admit so much and then ask: why should we require, in such a case, in order to account for the insight some persons have of the hour of their death, — to explain the phenomenon by “revelation” from *without*, supernaturalism, or the still more unsatisfactory hypothesis of a purely physiological character as given by Hunter and Wakley, and that explain to us moreover nothing at all? During and after [348] the dissolution of the “double,”²⁰ the darkness of our human ignorance beginning to be dispelled, there are many things we can see. Among these, things hidden in futurity, the nearest events of which, overshadowing the purified “soul,” have become to her as the present. The “former-self” is making room for the *actual*-self, the latter to be transformed in its turn, after the final dissolution of both the “double” and the physical body into the “Eternal Ego.” Thus the “*actual*-self” may pass its knowledge to the physical brain of man; and thus also we may see and hear the precise hour of our death striking on the clock of eternity. It is made visible to us through the decaying nature of our dying “double,” the latter surviving us during a very short period, if at all,²¹ and

¹⁹ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (THE SCIENCE OF LIFE) VIII p. 247; [quoting from a lecture by Tolstoy delivered before the Moscow Psychological Society.]

²⁰ That such dissolution *has* to precede that of the physical body, is proved to us by several things. One of these is the well ascertained *fact* (to those, of course, who believe in such facts) that the astral doubles of living men — of *sorcerers* for instance—fear steel, and may be wounded by sword or fire; their wounds, moreover, reacting upon and leaving marks and scars upon the physical shells — whereas the astral bodies of even the “Elementary apparitions” — *cannot be hurt*. — *Ed.*

²¹ When the “double” of the living man has been disintegrated before the death of man, it is annihilated for ever. When, however, death comes suddenly, it may survive the body that held it captive, but then, the process of dissolution going on outside of the dead body, the “soul” suffers, and *in its impatience tries often to throw off the particles that encumber its freedom and chain it to the earth, upon the living* — says the MSS. of the Copt



through the newly acquired powers of the purified “soul” (the higher *tetraktis* or quaternary) as yet in its integral whole, and which is already possessing itself of those faculties that are in store for it, on a higher plane. Through our “soul” it is then that we see, clearer and still clearer, as we approach the end; and it is through the throbs of dissolution that horizons of vaster, profounder knowledge are drawn on, bursting upon our mental [349] vision, and becoming with every hour plainer to our inner eye. Otherwise, how account for those bright flashes of memory, for the prophetic insight that comes as often to the enfeebled grandsire, as to the youth who is passing away? The nearer some approach death, the brighter becomes their long lost memory and the more correct the previsions. The unfoldment of the inner faculties increases as life-blood becomes more stagnant.

Truly is life on earth like a day passed in a deep valley surrounded on all sides by high mountains and with a cloudy, stormy sky above our heads. The tall hills conceal from us every horizon, and the dark clouds hide the sun. It is only at the close of the stormy day, that the sunshine, breaking through the clefts of the rocks affords us its glorious light to enable us to catch occasional glimpses of things around, behind and before us.²²

The Step Beyond



Terentius. The cases of accidental *deaths and suicides* are fairly described in Mr. A.P. Sinnett's *Fragments of Occult Truth* by a Lay Chela (See *The Theosophist*). Suicides fare the worst. — *Ed.*

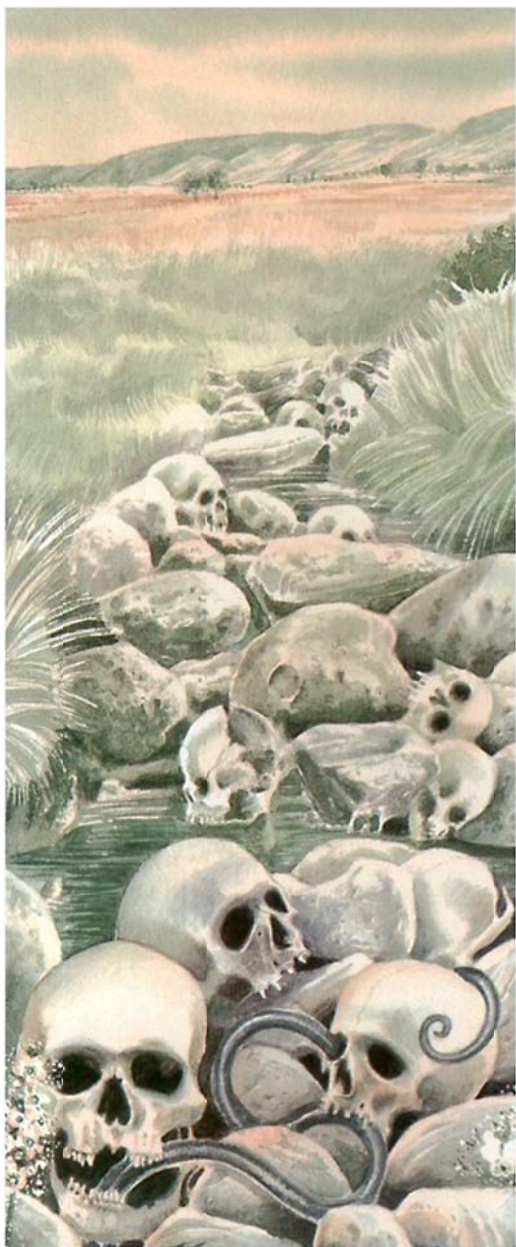
[This text can also be found in Chapter vi of *Esoteric Buddhism*, by A.P. Sinnett. — *Comp.*]

²² *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (FACTS AND IDEATIONS) VI pp. 347-49



Corpse disposal

A corpse you may place in a vase of aqua-fortis, or consign it to the fire, or to the earth.



COMMENTARY. — The usage of the Fersendajians regarding the dead was this:

After the Soul has left the body, they washed it in pure water, and dressed in clean and perfumed vestments: they then put in into a vase of aqua-fortis, and when the body was dissolved, carried the liquid to a place far from the city and poured it out: or else they burned it in fire, after attiring it as has been said; or they made a dome, and formed a deep pit within it, which they built and whitened with stone, brick and mortar; and, on its edges, niches were constructed and platforms erected, on which the dead were deposited: or they buried a vase in the earth, and enclosed the corpse in it; or buried it in a coffin in the ground; and in the estimation of the Fersendajians, the most eligible of all these was the vase of aqua-fortis.²³

Twelve hours at least had to elapse between the death of the person and the burning or the destruction by any other means of the corpse of the dead. This old law was equally forgotten by the Brahmins as by the Zoroastrians. It was not the act of *burning* that was forbidden, but the burning before the corpse was empty, *viz.* before the inner principles had had time to get entirely liberated. As the *aqua fortis* was thought possessed of an occult property to that effect, hence the preliminary burning of the flesh by this means — with the Fersendajians.²⁴

Further reading

- *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (TIBETAN TEACHINGS: A LONG-DELAYED PROMISE FILLED) VI, pp. 94-113

²³ *The Desatir or the Sacred Writings of the Ancient Prophets*, tr. by Mulla Firuz Bin Kaus, Bombay, 1818, 2 Vols.; with additional notes by Dhunjeebhoy Jamsetjee Medhora, Bombay, 1888; “Book of the Prophet, the Great Abad,” vs. 154, p. 22

²⁴ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (THE EFFICACY OF FUNERAL CEREMONIES) IV p. 508 *fn.*



Cicero on lamentations over the dead

From *Tusculan Disputations* (tr. Yonge). Full text in our Down to Earth Series.

Anytis and Melitus may indeed put me to death,
but they cannot injure me.

— Socrates²⁵

Therefore we must suppose that the much talked-of-good
fortunes are an invention of the lords of the underworld
for the ambush of souls.

— Synesius²⁶

**Because the bodies return
to earth it is thought that
the afterlife continues
underground.**

. . . as our bodies fall to the ground, and are covered
with earth (*humus*), from whence we derive the ex-
pression to be interred (*humari*), that has occasioned
men to imagine that the dead continue, during the
remainder of their existence, under ground;²⁷

**And those who lament
the dead imagine that they
have been stricken by an
affliction sent by the Gods,
and acknowledge themselves
afflicted and humbled in order
to appease them.**

Besides, many people are persuaded that they are
doing something very acceptable to the dead when
they lament bitterly over them. To these may be
added a kind of womanish superstition, in imagining
that when they have been stricken by the afflictions
sent by the Gods, to acknowledge themselves afflict-
ed and humbled by them is the readiest way of ap-
peasing them. But most men appear to be unaware
what contradictions these things are full of. They
commend those who die calmly, but they blame
those who can bear the loss of another with the
same calmness, as if it were possible that it should
be true, as is occasionally said in love speeches, that
any one can love another more than himself. There
is, indeed, something excellent in this, and, if you
examine it, something no less just than true, that we
love those who ought to be most dear to us as well
as we love ourselves; but to love them more than
ourselves is absolutely impossible; nor is it desirable
in friendship that I should love my friend more than
myself, or that he should love me so; for this would
occasion much confusion in life, and break in upon
all the duties of it.²⁸

²⁵ Plotinus quoting Socrates (εμε δε Ανυτος και Μελιτος αποκτειναι μεν δυνανται, βλαψαι δε ου δυνανται) in: *Ennead* I, ii; (tr. Taylor)

²⁶ Synesius: *De Insomniis* v, 5; (tr. Fitzgerald; full text in our Constitution of Man Series.)

²⁷ *Tusc. Disp.* I xvi. Cf. “On account of the Essence of Æther, or the Unseen Space, being held divine as the supposed veil of Deity, it was regarded as the medium between this life and the next one. The ancients considered that when the directing active “Intelligences” (the gods) retired from any portion of Ether *in our Space* — the four realms which they superintend — then that particular place was left in the possession of evil, so called by reason of the absence of the *Good* from it.” *Secret Doctrine*, I p. 343

²⁸ *Tusc. Disp.* III xxix



But since no one is miserable after death, what is the purpose of making life more miserable by lamenting over it?

What makes us uneasy, or rather gives us pain, is the leaving all the good things of life. But just consider if I might not more properly say, leaving the evils of life; only there is no reason for my now occupying myself in bewailing the life of man, and yet I might, with very good reason. But what occasion is there, when what I am labouring to prove is that no one is miserable after death, to make life more miserable by lamenting over it? I have done that in the book which I wrote, in order to comfort myself as well as I could. If, then, our inquiry is after truth, death withdraws us from evil, not from good.²⁹

For, neither death is evil nor we have a duty to lament over it.

Now the duty of a comforter is, to remove grief entirely, to quiet it, or draw it off as much as you can, or else to keep it under, and prevent its spreading any further, and to divert one's attention to other matters. There are some who think, with Cleanthes, that the only duty of a comforter is to prove that what one is lamenting is by no means an evil. Others, as the Peripatetics, prefer urging that the evil is not great. Others, with Epicurus, seek to divert your attention from the evil to good: some think it sufficient to show that nothing has happened but what you had reason to expect; and this is the practice of the Cyrenaics. But Chrysippus thinks that the main thing in comforting is, to remove the opinion from the person who is grieving, that to grieve is his bounden duty. There are others who bring together all these various kinds of consolations, for people are differently affected; . . . But the proper season is as much to be attended to in the cure of the mind as of the body; as Prometheus in Æschylus, on its being said to him,



I think, Prometheus, you this tenet hold,
That all men's reason should their rage control?

answers,

Yes, when one reason properly applies;
Ill-timed advice will make the storm but rise.³⁰

²⁹ *Tusc. Disp.* I xxxiv

³⁰ Ωκ. Οὐκοῦν Προμηθεῦ τοῦτο γινώσκεις ὅτι ὀργῆς νοσοῦσης εἰσὶν ἰατροὶ λόγοι.

Πρ. ἐάν τις ἐν καιρῷ γε μαλθάσῃ κεῶρ
καὶ μὴ σφριγῶντα θυμὸν ἰσχναίνῃ βίῃ.

Æsch., Prom. v. 378 — *Tusc. Disp.* III xxxi



**Nature has only lent you life,
as she might lend you money,
without fixing any certain time
for its repayment.**

Away, then, with those follies, which are little better than the old women's dreams, such as that it is miserable to die before our time. What time do you mean? That of nature? But she has only lent you life, as she might lend you money, without fixing any certain time for its repayment. Have you any grounds of complaint, then, that she recalls it at her pleasure? for you received it on these terms. They that complain thus allow that if a young child dies, the survivors ought to bear his loss with equanimity; that if an infant in the cradle dies, they ought not even to utter a complaint; and yet nature has been more severe with them in demanding back what she gave. They answer by saying that such have not tasted the sweets of life; while the other had begun to conceive hopes of great happiness, and, indeed, had begun to realize them. Men judge better in other things, and allow a part to be preferable to none. Why do they not admit the same estimate in life?³¹



Lamentations over the death of the first born (1877) Charles Sprague Pearce

³¹ *Tusc. Disp.* I xxxix



Our spiritual aspirations or Antahkarana are the only link with the Higher Self

What is Antahkarana?

The Antahkarana is . . . that portion of the Lower Manas which is one with the Higher, the essence, that which retains its purity; on it are impressed all good and noble aspirations, and in it are the upward energies of the Lower Manas, the energies and tendencies which become its Devachanic experiences. The whole fate of an incarnation depends on whether this pure essence, Antahkarana,³² can restrain the Kāma-Manas or not. It is the only salvation. Break this and you become an animal.³³

Ante-mortem

. . . Antahkarana . . . is represented in Plate I³⁴ as a narrow strip connecting the Higher and the lower Manas. If you look at the Glossary of *The Voice of the Silence*, pp. 88 and 89, you will find that it is a projection of the lower Manas, or, rather, the link between the latter and the Higher Ego, or between the human and the divine or spiritual Soul.³⁵

Post-mortem

“At death it is destroyed as a path, or medium of communication, and its remains survive as Kāma-Rūpa” — the “shell.” It is this which the Spiritualists see sometimes appearing in the séance rooms as materialized “forms,” which they foolishly mistake for the “Spirits of the Departed.”³⁶ So far is this from being the case, that in dreams, though Antahkarana is there, the personality is only half awake; therefore Antahkarana is said to be *drunk or insane* during our normal sleeping state. If such is the case during the periodical death (sleep), of the living body, one may judge of what the consciousness of Antahkarana becomes when it has been transformed after the “eternal sleep” into Kāma-Rūpa.

[Let the student] view the lower Manas or Mind, as the personal Ego during the waking state, and as Antahkarana only during those moments when it aspires towards its higher half, and thus becomes the medium of communication between the two. It is for this reason that it is called “Path.”³⁷

³² [It corresponds to the Pituitary Body or “fourth cavity” of brain. Cf. *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (E.S. INSTRUCTION No. V) XII p. 697 — ED. PHIL.]

³³ *Ibid.* (E.S. INSTRUCTION No. V) XII p. 710

³⁴ [*Ibid.* (E.S. INSTRUCTION No. III) XII, opposite p. 580. Cf. our Drawing in the same series. — ED. PHIL.]

³⁵ As the author of *Esoteric Buddhism* and *The Occult World* called Manas the Human Soul, and Buddhi the Spiritual Soul, I have left these terms unchanged in the *Voice*, seeing that it was a book intended for the public.

³⁶ In the exoteric teachings of Rāja-Yoga, Antahkarana is called the inner organ of perception, and is divided into four parts: the (lower) Manas, Buddhi (reason), Ahankāra (personality), and Chitta (selfishness). It also, together with several other organs, forms a part of Jīva, Soul, called also Lingadeha. Esotericists, however, must not be misled by this popular version.

³⁷ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (E.S. INSTRUCTION No. III) XII p. 633



Vedānta teaches that Rāja-Yoga can be attained if the Higher Mind is by-passed. Theosophy asserts that no communication with Ātman is possible, except through Buddhi-Manas.

If we destroy Antahkarana before the personal is absolutely under the control of the impersonal Ego, it is like destroying a bridge over an impassable chasm.

Seeing that the faculty and function of Antahkarana is as necessary as the medium of the ear for hearing, or that of the eye for seeing, so long as the feeling of Ahamkāra (of the personal “I” or selfishness) is not entirely crushed out in a man, and the lower mind not entirely merged into and become one with the Higher (Buddhi Manas), it stands to reason that to destroy Antahkarana is like destroying a bridge over an impassable chasm: *the traveller can never reach the goal on the other shore*. And here lies the difference between the exoteric and the esoteric teaching. The former makes Vedānta state that so long as Mind (the lower) clings through Antahkarana to Spirit (Buddhi-Manas), it is impossible for it to acquire true spiritual Wisdom, Jnāna, and that this can only be attained by seeking to come *en rapport* with the Universal Soul (Ātman); that, in fact, it is by ignoring the Higher Mind altogether that one reaches Rāja-Yoga. We say that it is not so. No single rung of the ladder leading to knowledge can be skipped. No personality can ever reach or bring itself into communication with Ātman, except through Buddhi-Manas; to try and become a Jivanmukta or a “Mahātma,” before one has become an Adept or even a Naljor (a sinless man) is like trying to reach Ceylon from India without crossing the sea. Therefore we are told that if we destroy Antahkarana before the personal is absolutely under the control of the impersonal Ego, we risk to lose the latter and be severed forever from it, unless indeed we hasten to re-establish the communication by a supreme and final effort.

It is only when we are indissolubly linked with the essence of the divine Mind, that we have to destroy Antahkarana. “Like as a solitary warrior pursued by an army, seeks refuge in a stronghold; to cut himself off from the enemy, he first destroys the drawbridge, and then only commences to destroy the pursuer; so must the Srotāpanna act before he slays Antahkarana.” Or, as an occult axiom has it: “The unit becomes three, and three generate four. It is for the latter (the quaternary) to rebecome three, and for the divine three to expand into the Absolute One.” Monads (which become duads on the differentiated plane, to develop into triads during the cycle of incarnations), even when incarnated, know neither Space nor Time, but are diffused through the lower principles of the quaternary, being omnipresent and omniscient in their nature. But this omniscience is innate, and can manifest its reflected light only through that which is at least semi-terrestrial or material; even as the physical brain which, in its turn, [635] is the vehicle of the lower Manas enthroned in Kāma-Rūpa. And it is this which is gradually annihilated in cases of “second death.”³⁸



³⁸ Blavatsky *Collected Writings*, (E.S. INSTRUCTION No. III) XII pp. 634-35



Three deaths and a fourth

[When consciousness withdraws from Its earthly prison it undergoes three deaths before it regains Subjectivity; and a fourth when it re-enters Objectivity:]

- (1) the death of the body;
- (2) the death of the Animal Soul in Kāma-Loka;
- (3) the death of the Astral (Linga-Sharīra), following that of the Body;
- (4) the metaphysical death of the Higher Ego, the *immortal*, every time it “falls into matter,” or incarnates in a new personality.

The Animal Soul, or Lower Manas, that shadow of the Divine Ego which separates from it to inform the personality (the details of which process will now be given), cannot by any possible means *escape death* at Kāma-Loka, at any rate that portion of this reflection which remains as a terrestrial residue and cannot be impressed on the Ego. Thus the chief and most important secret with regard to that “second death,” in the esoteric teaching, was and is to this day the terrible possibility of the *death* of the Soul, that is, its severance from the Ego on earth during a person’s lifetime. This is a *real* death (though with chances of resurrection), which shows no traces in a person and yet leaves him morally a living corpse. [Prior to 1890 the latter teaching has been kept secret.]³⁹



Death of Seneca (1773) Jacques-Louis David

³⁹ Blavatsky *Collected Writings*, (E.S. INSTRUCTION No. III) XII p. 628



Bardo or period between death and rebirth

“Bardo” is the period between death and rebirth — and may last from a few years to a kalpa. It is divided into three sub-periods:

(1) when the *Ego* delivered of its mortal coil enters into *Kāma-Loka*⁴⁰ (the abode of Elementaries);

Sub-period (1) may last from a few minutes to a *number* of years — the phrase “a few years” becoming puzzling and utterly worthless⁴¹ without a more complete explanation;

(2) when it enters into its “Gestation State”;

Sub-period (2) is “very long,” as you say, longer sometimes than you may even imagine, yet proportionate to the *Ego*’s spiritual stamina;

(3) when it is reborn in the *Rūpa-Loka* of Devachan.

Sub-period (3) lasts in proportion to the good KARMA, after which the *monad* is again reincarnated.

The *Agama Sutra* saying: — “In all these *Rūpa-Lokas*, the Devas (Spirits) are equally subjected to birth, decay, old age, and death,” means only that an *Ego* is borne thither, then begins fading out and finally “dies,” *i.e.*, falls into that unconscious condition which precedes rebirth; and ends the Shloka with these words: “As the devas emerge from these heavens, they enter the lower world again”; *i.e.*, they leave a world of bliss to be reborn in a world of causes.⁴²

1. Kama Loka

Lasting from hours to years, 150 years on average.

During life the Lower Manas acts through this *Kāma-Rūpa*, and so comes into contact with the *Sthūla-Sharīra*; this is why the Lower Manas is said to be “enthroned in *Kāma-Rūpa*” (p. 635). After death it ensouls the *Kāma-Rūpa* for a time, until the Higher Triad, having reabsorbed the Lower Manas, or such portion of it as it can reabsorb, passes into Devachan. The normal period during which any part of the consciousness remains in *Kāma-Loka*, *i.e.*, is connected with the *Kāma-Rūpa*, is one hundred and fifty years. The *Kāma-Rūpa* eventually breaks up, and leaving in *Kāma-Loka* the *Tānhic Elementals* (p. 609), its remaining portions go into animals, of which the red-blooded come from man. Cold-blooded animals are from the matter of the past.⁴³

The rule is, that a person who dies a natural death will remain from “a few hours to several short years” within the earth’s attraction, *i.e.*, in the *Kāma-Loka*. But excep-

⁴⁰ [Tibetan: Yuh-Kai.]

⁴¹ [Hinting at an inaccuracy by H.P. Blavatsky. Cf. *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (SEEMING DISCREPANCIES) IV pp. 120-21 — ED. PHIL.]

⁴² Cf. Mahātma Letter 16 (68), Question 7, p. 103; 3rd Combined ed.

⁴³ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (E.S. INSTRUCTION No. V) XII p. 708



tions are, in the case of suicides and those who die a violent death in general. Hence, one of such Egos, for instance, who was destined to live, say, 80 or 90 years, but who either killed himself or was killed by some accident, let us suppose at the age of 20 — would have to pass in the *Kāma Loka* not “a few years,” but in his case 60 or 70 years, as an Elementary, or rather an “earth-walker”; since he is not, unfortunately for him, even a “shell.” Happy, thrice happy, in comparison, are those disembodied entities who sleep their long slumber and live in dream in the bosom of Space! And woe to those whose *Trishna* will attract them to mediums, and woe to the latter, who tempt them with such an easy *Upadana*. For in grasping them, and satisfying their thirst for life, the medium helps to develop in them — is in fact the cause of — a new set of *Skandhas*, a new body, with far worse tendencies and passions than was the one they lost. All the future of this new body will be determined thus, not only by the *Karma* of demerit of the previous set or group but also by that of the new set of the future being. Were the mediums and Spiritualists but to know, as I said, that with every new “angel guide” they welcome with rapture, they entice the latter into an *Upadana* which will be productive of a series of untold evils for the new Ego that will be born under its nefarious shadow, and that with every séance — especially for materialization — they multiply the causes for misery, causes that will make the unfortunate Ego fail in his spiritual birth, or be reborn into a worse existence than ever — they would, perhaps, be less lavish in their hospitality.⁴⁴

The disembodied souls of the depraved can remain there for centuries.

For it is after the death of the utterly depraved, the unspiritual and the wicked beyond redemption, that arrives the critical and supreme moment. If during life the ultimate and desperate effort of the INNER SELF (*Manas*), to unite something of the personality with itself and the high glimmering ray of the divine *Buddhi*, is thwarted; if this ray is allowed to be more and more shut out from the ever-thickening crust of physical brain, the Spiritual EGO or *Manas*, once freed from the body, remains severed entirely from the ethereal relic of the personality; and the latter, or *Kama rupa*, following its earthly attractions, is drawn into and remains in *Hades*, which we call the *Kamaloka*. These are “the withered branches” mentioned by Jesus as being cut off from the *Vine*. Annihilation, however, is never instantaneous, and may require centuries sometimes for its accomplishment. But there the personality remains along with the *remnants* of other more fortunate personal Egos, and becomes with them a *shell* and an *Elementary*. As said in *Isis*, it is these two classes of “Spirits,” the *shells* and the *Elementaries*, which are the leading “Stars” on the great spiritual stage of “materialisations.” And you may be sure of it, it is not they who incarnate; and, therefore, so few of these “dear departed ones” know anything of re-incarnation, misleading thereby the Spiritualists.⁴⁵

These are the “shells” which remain the longest period in the *Kāma Loka*; all saturated with terrestrial effluvia, their *Kāma Rūpa* (body of desire) thick with sensuality and made impenetrable to the spiritualizing influence of their higher principles, en-

⁴⁴ Mahātma Letter 16 (68), Question 9, pp. 109-10; 3rd Combined ed.

⁴⁵ *Key to Theosophy*, § X (THE DOCTRINE IS TAUGHT IN ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL) pp. 190-91



dures longer and fades out with difficulty. We are taught that these remain for centuries sometimes, before the final disintegration into their respective elements.⁴⁶

2. Gestation state

The 7th and 6th of exceptionally good men, plus the higher parts of the 6th extracted from the lower mind of the average men, can enter the rūpa-loka of Devachan. The irredeemably wicked are barred from Devachan, for, their Antahkarana is permanently severed.

“*The very good ones*: these are prepared to pass with their four constituent elements to a reincarnation on a planet in a superior world.” — Here are two capital errors in four lines; four principles or constituent elements can never be found together *in the gestation state* which precedes the *Devachan* (the paradise of the Buddhist Occultists). They are separated at the entrance into *gestation*. The seventh and the sixth, that is to say the immortal *spirit* and its vehicle, the immortal or spiritual soul, enter therein *alone* (an exceptional case) or, which nearly always takes place, the soul carries in the case of very good people (and even the indifferent and sometimes the very wicked), the essence, so to speak, of the fifth principle which has [43] been withdrawn from the *personal* EGO (the material soul). It is the latter *only*, in the case of the *irredeemably wicked* and when the spiritual and impersonal soul has nothing to withdraw from its individuality (terrestrial personality), because the latter had nothing to offer but the purely material and sensual — that becomes *annihilated*. Only the individuality, which possesses the most spiritual feelings, can *survive* by uniting with the immortal principle. The “Kāma-rūpa,” the vehicle, and the *manas*, the soul in which the personal *and animal* intelligence inheres, after having been denuded of their essence, as described, remain alone in *Kāma-loka*, the intermediate sphere between our earth and the *Devachan* (the *Kāma-loka* being the *hades* of the Greeks, the region of the shades) to be extinguished and to disappear from it after a while. This unfortunate duad forms the cast-off “tatters” of the “spiritual ego” and of the personal EGO, superior principles which, purified of all terrestrial uncleanness, united henceforth with the divine monad in eternity, pass into regions where the mire of the purely terrestrial *ego* cannot follow, to glean therein their reward — the effects of the causes generated — and from which they do not emerge until the next incarnation.⁴⁷

[Éliphas Lévi’s] . . . “central and eternal fire” is that disintegrating Force, that gradually consumes and burns out the *Kāma-rūpa*, or “personality,” in the *Kāma-loka*, whither it goes after death. And verily, the Mediums are attracted by the astral light, it is the direct cause of their personal “souls” being absorbed “by the force which has produced” their terrestrial elements. And, therefore, as the same Occultist tells us:

All the magical operations consist in *freeing* one’s self from the coils of the Ancient Serpent; then to place the foot on its head, and lead it according to the operator’s will. “I will give unto thee,” says the Serpent, in the Gospel myth, “all the kingdoms of the earth, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.” The initiated should reply to him, “I will not fall down, but thou shalt crouch at my

⁴⁶ Blavatsky *Collected Writings*, (ELEMENTALS) VI p. 196

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* (THEOSOPHY AND SPIRITISM – THE REPLY OF THE THEOSOPHISTS) V pp. 42-43; [identifying errors in the conclusions of Brother D.A.C.]



feet; thou wilt give me nothing, but I will make use of thee and take whatever I wish. For *I am thy Lord and Master!*"⁴⁸

3. Devachan

Its ratio to earth life is 21:1, on average.

W.Q.J. — The general proportion as I have always known of it between earth life and Devachan is that between 70 years of life and 1500 years in Devachan. Further it is known that many persons emerge from the Devachanic state very soon after entering it. A reflection on the fact that the years of our life are full of thoughts attached in vast numbers to every single act will show why Devachan is so much longer than earth-life. The disproportion between the act done and the thoughts intimately belonging to it is enormous, and, compared with Devachan as related to earth-life, it is vast. In Devachan these thoughts, which could never find but the very smallest fraction of expression in this life, must exhaust and can be exhausted nowhere else. This is what is required, not by evolution, but by thought itself. And those who have but little aspiration here, who indulge in act more than thought, lay but little basis for Devachan, and hence emerge from it sooner than others.⁴⁹



[River Island Dreams] by Jacek Yerka

⁴⁸ Blavatsky *Collected Writings*, (PSYCHIC AND NOETIC ACTION) XII p. 374

⁴⁹ First published in: *The Theosophical Forum*, April 1889 through April 1895, Question 211, in: Numbers One to Seventy, First Series]. Republished in: Eklund D (Comp.). *Echoes of the Orient: The Writings of William Quan Judge*. San Diego: Point Loma Publications, Inc., 1975-1987. Vol. 2: publ. 1980, p. 296; [Question 211: *Since the time spent in physical life is the time of actual progress and the time spent in Devachan is merely a time of rest, or, at most, digestion, why should the law of evolution require such a vast disproportion of time to be wasted in Devachan — a disproportion of something like eight thousand years of rest to less than one hundred years of work?*]

