

*After-death states of
man's three astral bodies*



Train of thoughts

There are three kinds of “doubles” or astral bodies

1. The most material double

The Protean or plastic body (linga-sharira) of the gross physical body (shtula-sharira). 3

It is born with man, dies with him, and can never separate itself far from the body during life. It decomposes together with the physical body. 3

2. The middle, psycho-physical double

The “thought” or “dream” body (kama-manas), vehicle of animal desires (kama) and worldly thoughts (manas). Occultists call it the illusion-body (mayavi-rupa). 4

Post-mortem, kama-manas becomes a distinct body of ante-mortem desires (kamarupa) and survives as an independent but temporary entity in the shadowy “desire world” (kama-Loka), until its final dissipation. 4

3. The truly spiritual double

The true Ego (monas+manas) is the causal body (karana-sharira) and chief cause of reincarnation, known in the trans-Himalayan schools as the karmic body. 5

Following the death of the physical body and its subtle counterpart, the body of purified thoughts and aspirations withdraws in the bliss of Devachan where it retains its immortality and kinetic energy in-between incarnations throughout the manvantara, unless Nirvana puts an end to it before. 5

Projection of an illusionary “double” or doppelganger to any location

Adepts can project consciously, and dying persons unconsciously, an illusory appearance of their person to any distant location — while their physical body is left “entranced.” This phantom is termed mayavi-rupa. 7

The ability to project a mayavic rupa depends upon the plastic power of the imagination and the higher faculties of the mind. 8

Imagination is far more intense in those who are spiritually minded, than in those whose metaphysical part of the brain has atrophied, for it is by this very intense imagination that the former obtain the power of creation. 9

Armed with a powerful imagination, a malicious person can turn unconsciously bad thoughts to a lethal weapon

Unless the evil-wisher is a high adept in Black Magic, in which case his karma is delayed, such a wish only comes back to roost. 10

Warning to students of occultism

Learn how to adapt your ideas and thoughts to your plastic potency. Otherwise, you are creating things by which you may be making bad karma. 11



There are three kinds of “doubles” or astral bodies

First published in *Lucifer*, Vol. III (No. 16), December 1888, pp. 328-33. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE TWO EDITORS ON ASTRAL BODIES OR DOPPELGÄNGERS) X pp. 217-26.

[In two consecutive months, namely, December 1888, and January 1889, there were published in the pages of *Lucifer* two instalments of a Dialogue between the two Editors.¹ The first one is published here-with, as its text does not appear to be identical with any other piece of writing from H.P. Blavatsky’s pen, even though the same trend of ideas has been expressed by her in other places.

The situation with regard to the second instalment is quite different, however. It deals with the constitution of the inner man and its division, and its text is in every way identical with pp. 117-21, and 156-71, of *The Key to Theosophy*, with the exception of a few brief sentences connecting various paragraphs. As is well known to students, *The Key to Theosophy* was published in 1889, most likely in the latter part of the year.

It should also be borne in mind that most of the material used by Blavatsky in this second instalment of her “Dialogue” originally appeared in Russian as an integral part of her serial story, *Iz peshcher i debrey Indostana* (FROM THE CAVES AND JUNGLES OF HINDOSTAN) published in the *Russkiy Vestnik* (Russian Messenger), namely, in Vol. CLXXXI, February 1886, pp. 802-13. At the time, it was cast in the form of a conversation between Thākur, a Teacher, and several other persons. When writing her *Key*, Blavatsky apparently drew to a considerable extent upon this early story of hers, or used this second instalment of her “Dialogue” which, in all probability, is her own English translation of her Russian original text in the *Russkiy Vestnik*.

For some strange reason, another translation of the same Russian text was published in *Lucifer*, Vol. XI, October 1892, i.e., a considerable time after H.P. Blavatsky’s passing.

To avoid any duplication with the text of the *Key*, we publish here only the first instalment of the “Dialogue.” — *Boris de Zirkoff.*]

1. The most material double

The Protean or plastic body (linga-sharira) of the gross physical body (shtula-sharira).

It is born with man, dies with him, and can never separate itself far from the body during life. It decomposes together with the physical body.

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

H.P.B. Our occult philosophy teaches us that there are three kinds of “doubles,” to use the word in its widest sense. Man has his “double” or *shadow*, properly so called, around which the physical body of the *foetus* — the future man — is built. The imagination of the mother, or an accident which affects the child, will affect also the astral body. The astral and the physical both exist before the mind is developed into action, and before the Ātma awakes. This occurs when the child is seven years old, and with

¹ Mabel Collins (M.C.), nom de plume of Kenningale R. Cook, and Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (H.P.B.).

it comes the responsibility attaching to a conscious sentient being. This “double” is born with man, dies with him and can never separate itself far from the body during life, and though surviving him, it disintegrates, *pari passu*, with the corpse. It is this, which is sometimes seen over the graves like a luminous figure of the man that was, during certain atmospheric conditions. From its physical aspect it is, during life, *man’s vital* double and after death, only the gases given off from the decaying body. But, as regards its origin and essence, it is something more. This “double” is what we have agreed to call *linga-śarīra*, but which I would propose to call, for greater convenience, “Protean” or “Plastic Body.”¹

M.C. Why Protean or Plastic?

H.P.B. Protean, because it can assume all forms; *e.g.*, the “shepherd magicians” whom popular rumour accuses, perhaps not without some reason, of being “werewolves,” and “mediums in cabinets,” whose own “Plastic Bodies” play the part of materialized grandmothers and “John Kings.” Otherwise, why the invariable custom of the “dear departed angels” to come out but little further than arm’s length from the medium whether entranced or not? Mind, I do not at all deny foreign influences in this kind of phenomena. But I do affirm that foreign interference is rare, and that the materialized form is always that of the medium’s “Astral” or Protean body.

M.C. But how is this astral body created?

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

M.C. And what about the second?

2. The middle, psycho-physical double

The “thought” or “dream” body (kama-manas), vehicle of animal desires (kama) and worldly thoughts (manas). Occultists call it the illusion-body (mayavi-rupa).

Post-mortem, kama-manas becomes a distinct body of ante-mortem desires (kama-rupa) and survives as an independent but temporary entity in the shadowy “desire world” (kama-Loka), until its final dissipation.²

H.P.B. The second is the “Thought” body, or Dream body, rather; known among Occultists as the *Māyāvi-rūpa*, or “Illusion-body.” During life this image is the vehicle both of thought and of the animal passions and desires, drawing at one and the same time from the lowest terrestrial *manas* (*mind*) and *Kāma*, the element of desire. It is *dual* in its potentiality, and after death forms, what is called in the East *Bhoot*, or *Kāma-rūpa*, but which is better known to theosophists as the “Spook.”

M.C. And the third?

¹ [See Table in “Constitution of Man – Overview,” Constitution of Man Series. — ED. PHIL.]

² Attempts to delay death, *e.g.*, by necromancy, is Black Magic.

3. The truly spiritual double

The true Ego (monas+manas) is the causal body (karana-sharira)¹ and chief cause of reincarnation, known in the trans-Himalayan schools as the karmic body.

Following the death of the physical body and its subtle counterpart, the body of purified thoughts and aspirations withdraws in the bliss of Devachan where it retains its immortality and kinetic energy in-between incarnations throughout the manvantara, unless Nirvana puts an end to it before.

H.P.B. The third is the true *Ego*,² called in the East, by a name meaning “causal body”³ but which in the trans-Himalayan schools is always called the “Karmic body,” which is the same. For *Karma* or action is the cause which produces incessant re-births or “reincarnations.” It is *not* the *Monad*, nor is it *Manas* proper; but is, in a way, indissolubly connected with, and a compound of the *Monad* and *Manas* in *Devachan*.

M.C. Then there are three doubles?

H.P.B. If you can call the Christian and other Trinities “three Gods,” then there are three doubles. But in truth there is only one under three aspects or phases: the most material portion disappearing with the body; the middle one, surviving both as an independent, but temporary entity in the land of shadows; the third, immortal, throughout the manvantara unless Nirvana puts an end to it before.

M.C. But shall not we be asked what difference there is between the *Mâyāvi* and *Kāma rūpa*, or as you propose to call them the “Dream body” and the “Spook”?

¹ [Study notes selected by the Series Editor:

What is Kārana-śarīra?

It is the higher Ego is the higher Manas illuminated by Buddhi; the principle of self-consciousness, the “I-am-I,” in short. It is the Kārana-śarīra, the immortal man, which passes from one incarnation to another. Cf. *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (DREAMS) X p. 249.

Kārana-śarīra means simply the *human Monad* collectively or the reincarnating ego, the “causal body.” *ibid.*, (WHAT SHALL WE DO FOR OUR FELLOW-MEN?) XI p. 476.

Blavatsky’s comment on *John* iii, 3, “. . . unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (RSV): “Born” from above, *viz.*, from his *Monad* or divine EGO, the seventh Principle, which remains till the end of the *Kalpa*, the nucleus of, and at the same time the overshadowing Principle, as the *Kāranātman* (Causal Soul) of the personality in every rebirth. In this sense, the sentence “born anew” means “descends from above,” the last two words having no reference to heaven or space, neither of which can be limited or located, since one is a state and the other infinite, hence having no cardinal points. *ibid.*, (SOME REASONS FOR SECRECY) XIV p. 57 *fn.*

Erroneous use of the term

Kārana-śarīra is often mistaken by the uninitiated for *Linga-śarīra*, and since it is described as the inner rudimentary or latent embryo of the body — confounded with it. But the Occultists regard it as the *life* (body) or *Jīva*, which disappears at death — is withdrawn — leaving the 1st and 3rd principles to *disintegrate* and return to their elements. *ibid.*, (THE SEPTENARY PRINCIPLE IN ESOTERICISM) IV p. 579 *fn.*

The esotericisms of the Buddhists and Vedāntists, though one and identical, sometimes differ in their expressions. Thus what we call *Linga-śarīra*, the interior subtle body of the gross, or the *Sūkshma* of the *Sthūla-śarīra*, is called by the Vedāntists the *Kārana-śarīra* or causal body, the rudimentary or ethereal embryo of the body. *ibid.*, (A LEVY OF ARMS AGAINST THEOSOPHY) IV p. 548 *fn.*]

² [Or Higher Ego. See “Higher Self and Higher Ego” in our Confusing Words Series. — ED. PHIL.]

³ [Buddhi-manas or karana-sharira]

CONSTITUTION OF MAN SERIES
THREE KINDS OF “DOUBLES” OR ASTRAL BODIES

H.P.B. Most likely, and we shall answer, in addition to what has been said, that the “thought power” or aspect of the *Māyāvi* or “Illusion body,” merges after death entirely into the causal body or the conscious *thinking* EGO. The animal elements, or power of desire of the “Dream body,” absorbing after death that which it has collected (through its insatiable desire *to live*) during life; *i.e.*, all the astral vitality as well as all the impressions of its *material* acts and thoughts while it lived in possession of the body, forms the “Spook” or *Kāma rūpa*. Our Theosophists know well enough that after death the *higher* Manas unites with the *Monad* and passes into Devachan, while the dregs of the *lower manas* or animal mind go to form this Spook. This has life in it, but hardly any consciousness, except, as it were by proxy; when it is drawn into the current of a medium.

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

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



Projection of an illusory “double” or doppelganger to any location

Adepts can project consciously, and dying persons unconsciously, an illusory appearance of their person to any distant location — while their physical body is left “entranced.” This phantom is termed mayavi-rupa.

M.C. Every country in the world believes more or less in the “double” or doppelganger. The simplest form of this is the appearance of a man’s phantom, the moment after his death, or at the instant of death, to his dearest friend. Is this appearance the *Māyāvi rūpa*?

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

M.C. Is it unconscious?

H.P.B. It is unconscious to the extent that the dying man does not generally do it knowingly; nor is he aware that he so appears. What happens is this. If he thinks very intently at the moment of death of the person he either is very anxious to see, or loves best, he may appear to that person. The thought becomes objective; the double, or shadow of a man, being nothing but the faithful reproduction of him, like a reflection in a mirror, that which the man does, even in thought, that the double repeats. This is why the phantoms are often seen in such cases in the clothes they wear at the particular moment, and the *image* reproduces even the expression on the dying man’s face. If the double of a man bathing were seen it would seem to be immersed in water; so when a man who has been drowned appears to his friend, the image will be seen to be dripping with water. The cause for the apparition may be also reversed; *i.e.*, the dying man may or may not be thinking at all of the particular person his image appears to, but it is that person who is sensitive. Or perhaps his sympathy or his hatred for the individual whose wraith is thus evoked is very intense physically or psychically; and in this case the apparition is created by, and depends upon, the intensity of the thought. What then happens is this. Let us call the dying man A, and him who sees the double B. The latter, owing to love, hate, or fear, has the image of A so deeply impressed on his psychic memory, that actual magnetic attraction and repulsion are established between the two, whether one knows of it and feels it, or not. When A dies, the sixth sense or psychic spiritual intelligence of the *inner man* in B becomes cognisant of the change in A, and forthwith apprizes the physical senses of the man, by projecting before his eye the form of A, as it is at the instant of the great change. The same when the dying man longs to see someone; *his* thought telegraphs to his friend, consciously or unconsciously along the wire of sympathy, and becomes objective. This is what the “Spookical” Research Society would pompously, but none the less muddily, call *telepathic impact*.

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

The ability to project a mayavic rupa depends upon the plastic power of the imagination and the higher faculties of the mind.

H.P.B. This is impossible. The “Double” cannot act, unless the keynote of this action was struck in the brain of the man to whom the “Double” belongs, be that man just dead, or alive, in good or in bad health. If he paused on the thought a second, long enough to give it form, before he passed on to other mental pictures, this one second is as sufficient for the *objectivisations* of his personality on the astral waves, as for your face to impress itself on the sensitized plate of a photographic apparatus. Nothing prevents your form then, being seized upon by the surrounding Forces — as a dry leaf fallen from a tree is taken up and carried away by the wind — [to] be made to caricature or distort your thought.

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

H.P.B. Because it then so happens that the created image is taken up and used by a “Shell.” Just as in séance-rooms when “images” of the dead — which may perhaps be lingering unconsciously in the memory or even the auras of those present — are seized upon by the Elementals or Elementary Shadows and made objective to the audience, and even caused to act at the bidding of the strongest of the many different wills in the room. In your case, moreover, there must exist a connecting link — a telegraph wire — between the two persons, a point of psychic sympathy, and on this the thought travels instantly. Of course there must be, in every case, some strong reason why that particular thought takes that direction; it must be connected in some way with the other person. Otherwise such apparitions would be of common and daily occurrence.

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

H.P.B. Because the plastic power of the imagination is much stronger in some persons than in others. The mind is dual in its potentiality: it is physical and metaphysical. The higher part of the mind is connected with the spiritual soul or Buddhi, the lower with the animal soul, the Kāma principle. There are persons who never think with the higher faculties of their mind at all; those who do so are the minority and are thus, in a way, *beyond*, if not above, the average of human kind. These will think even upon ordinary matters on that *higher* plane. The idiosyncrasy of the person determines in which “principle” of the mind the thinking is done, as also the faculties of a preceding life, and sometimes the heredity of the physical. This is why it is so very difficult for a materialist — the metaphysical portion of whose brain is almost atrophied — to raise himself, or for one who is naturally spiritually minded, to descend to the level of the matter-of-fact vulgar thought. Optimism and pessimism depend on it also in a large measure.

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

H.P.B. Certainly it can be developed, but only with great difficulty, a firm determination, and through much self-sacrifice. But it is comparatively easy for those who are born with the gift. Why is it that one person sees poetry in a cabbage or a pig with her little ones, while another will perceive in the loftiest things only their lowest and most material aspect, will laugh at the “music of the spheres,” and ridicule the most sublime conceptions and philosophies? This difference depends simply on the innate power of the mind to think on the higher or on the lower plane, with the *astral* (in the sense given to the word by de Saint-Martin),¹ or with the physical brain. Great intellectual powers are often no proof of, but are impediments to spiritual and right conceptions; witness most of the great men of science. We must rather pity than blame them.

Imagination is far more intense in those who are spiritually minded, than in those whose metaphysical part of the brain has atrophied, for it is by this very intense imagination that the former obtain the power of creation.

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

H.P.B. Not necessarily that “person” alone, but all those who are generally sensitives. The person who is endowed with this faculty of thinking about even the most trifling things from the higher plane of thought has, by virtue of that gift which he possesses, a plastic power of formation, so to say, in his very imagination. Whatever such a person may think about, his thought will be so far more intense than the thought of an ordinary person, that by this very intensity it obtains the power of creation. Science has established the fact that thought is an energy. This energy in its action disturbs the atoms of the astral atmosphere around us. I already told you; the rays of thought have the same potentiality for producing forms in the astral atmosphere as the sunrays have with regard to a lens. Every thought so evolved with energy from the brain, creates *nolens volens* a shape.

M.C. Is that shape absolutely unconscious?

H.P.B. Perfectly unconscious unless it is the creation of an adept, who has a pre-conceived object in giving it consciousness, or rather in sending along with it enough of his will and intelligence to cause it to appear conscious. This ought to make us more cautious about our thoughts.

But the wide distinction that obtains between the adept in this matter and the ordinary man must be borne in mind. The adept may at his will use his *Māyāvi-rūpa*, but the ordinary man does not, except in very rare cases. It is called *Māyāvi-rūpa* because it is a form of illusion created for use in the particular instance, and it has

¹ [Louis Claude de Saint-Martin (1743–1803) was a French philosopher, known as “le philosophe inconnu,” the name under which his works were published. See short biography in the *Theosophical Glossary*.]

quite enough of the adept's mind in it to accomplish its purpose. The ordinary man merely creates a thought-image, whose properties and powers are at the time wholly unknown to him.

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

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

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

H.P.B. He can. Just as Apollonius of Tyana, who was seen in two places at once, while his body was at Rome. But it must be understood that not *all* of even the *astral* adept is present in each appearance.

Armed with a powerful imagination, a malicious person can turn unconsciously bad thoughts to a lethal weapon

Unless the evil-wisher is a high adept in Black Magic, in which case his karma is delayed, such a wish only comes back to roost.

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

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

M.C. But supposing the evil-wisher to have a very strong will, without being a *dugpa*, could the death of the other be accomplished?

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

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

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

Warning to students of occultism

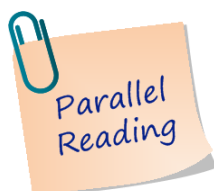
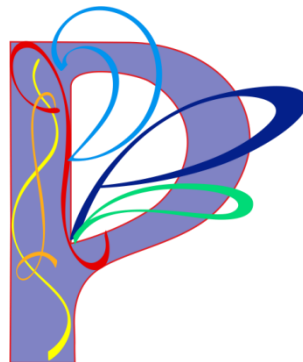
Learn how to adapt your ideas and thoughts to your plastic potency. Otherwise, you are creating things by which you may be making bad karma.

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

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

M.C. Why is this so important?

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



“Apparitions of the Blessed Ones,” in our Masque of Love Series.