

The CYCLE of LIFE

Blavatsky Lecture 2009
by COLIN F. PRICE

The *CYCLE* of LIFE

by Colin F. Price

** The Blavatsky Lecture **

delivered at the Summer School of
The Foundation for Theosophical Studies
Ancaster Hall, The University of Nottingham
Sunday 2 August 2009

£5.00

The Theosophical Publishing House
50 Gloucester Place, London W1U 8EA

THE THEOSOPHICAL PUBLISHING HOUSE
50 Gloucester Place, London W1U 8EA
Tel: 020 7563 9816 e-mail: books@theosoc.org.uk
www.theosoc.org.uk

Printed by Doppler Press, Brentwood, Essex. 2009
Design by Colyn Boyce

Front cover:

Ebb and flow: The wild ocean off Tenerife, Canary Isles, Spain
Photo by Colyn Boyce

The CYCLE of LIFE

INTRODUCTION

In his book *Cyclic Evolution*, Adam Warcup writes

It is easy to get carried away by the ‘cyclic’ aspect and overlook the ‘evolution.’

At all times it is vital to bear in mind the words of a Mahatma:

Realise but once the process of the Maha (great) cycle and you have realised them all! *Cyclic Evolution*, p.10

In other words there is but one cyclic process with its component stages, and every great or small cycle reflects exactly the same stages within its own context. Our personal development is a component part of the development of all mankind and we accomplish it with our own series of cycles. Each cycle commences with our birth into a physical body so that we become subjected to the many cycles of earth life, days and nights, seasons, years and so on. The component parts of our earth life become increasingly spiritually significant as we grow in understanding and awareness of the meaning of life. If we fail to advance through the cycle of knowledge and wisdom we will have little to contribute to the bigger cycle of which our life is a part.

In the *Mahatma Letters* we read

they forget, or never knew that he who holds the keys to the secrets of death is possessed of the keys of life.

ML Chron Ed No.136, p.451

Thus a knowledge of the whole cycle is essential to an understanding of its components.

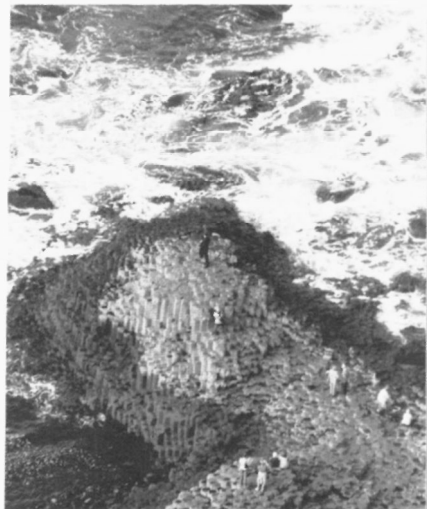
Cyclicity is fundamental to existence itself and is at the heart of the second of the Three Fundamental Propositions which H. P. Blavatsky describes in the *Proem* to the *Secret Doctrine*.

The Eternity of the Universe in toto as a boundless plane, periodically the playground of numberless Universes incessantly manifesting and disappearing . . . The appearance and disappearance of the Worlds is like a regular tidal ebb of flux and reflux.

In the *Foundations of Esoteric Philosophy*, Ianthe Hoskins further quotes as follows:

This second assertion of the Secret Doctrine is the absolute universality of that law of periodicity, of flux and reflux, ebb and flow, which physical science has observed and recorded in all parts of nature. An alternation such as that of Day and Night, Life and Death, Sleeping and Waking, is a fact so perfectly universal and without exception, that it is easy to comprehend that in it we see one of the absolutely fundamental laws of the universe.

SD I, p.17



The pounding surf off the Giant's Causeway, Northern Ireland
photo by Colyn Boyce

As Autumn sees the fading of Nature's Summer bloom and she prepares through Winter for another Spring; so man's physical strength weakens while his spirit grows in wisdom and lays the foundation for

another earth life. However, the concept that we live an earth life for spiritual development and the acquisition of qualities of unselfishness, altruism and loving concern for others does not seem to be widely held. More often it would seem that man is motivated primarily by selfish desires with little concern that their fulfilment has on the lives of others.

This is why the consideration of the whole cycle of life is so essential. Where the earth life is a life of causes, the Bardo state between lives is that part of the cycle where the effects are experienced. Each individual reaps the harvest they have sown. Without fear or favour the inexorable and immutable law of karma pays the wages of good and ill. The process is not enacted under anaesthetic like a hospital operation. The persistence of some consciousness after physical death ensures that justice is not only done, but seen by the individual to be done.

PART 1: RELEVANT CONCEPTS

It is therefore necessary to understand how the cycle of life proceeds in the bardo state between earth lives and theosophical literature has produced a number of important concepts or intellectual tools to establish the reality and credibility of this unseen world of effects:

1. The doctrine of reincarnation.
2. The concept of occult or dimensionless space.
3. The 7 principles of man arranged in a hierarchical order.
4. A view of time measured by the frequency of events which determines its duration.
5. The teaching of the various states of consciousness within this hierarchy.
6. The notion of ‘ever-becoming’ as nature in all her cycles progresses towards a limitless horizon of perfection and evolution.

The development of spiritual qualities during life is a major theme for many of the world’s religions, but the significance of events after death is not widely addressed. There is also a lack of authoritative, credible detail

about such events and until recent times little information that would be classified as reliable evidence. By contrast, H. P. Blavatsky and even more so the Mahatmas in the *Mahatma Letters*, give us a great deal of information derived mainly from that huge accumulation of occult knowledge called the Ancient Wisdom. It has been extracted and collated by Geoffrey Farthing and is included in an Appendix so that students may assess it for themselves and draw their own conclusions.

1. The Doctrine of Reincarnation

The acceptance of the concept of life as a cyclic process where physical earth life alternates with the bardo state virtually demands the idea of reincarnation as an integral part of the overall process. Naturally the enquiring mind will need answers to many fundamental questions before accepting that life is a cyclic process on the scale suggested, and if consciousness really does persist between lives.

For example: WHERE do we go between lives? How long do we have to wait to reincarnate and are there other factors involved? Can I choose when I come back to earth and who my parents are? Am I always the same sex? If I am, do I have an identical body, if not why not and so on.

It is to produce a conviction that reincarnation is not only credible to those who choose to believe, but also to those who want to believe and would like to be persuaded that many other pieces of theosophical doctrine can be used and can be shown to be relevant.

It should be noted that the church fathers rejected the idea of reincarnation because of its incompatibility with the theology which was



According to legend, the Phoenix appears regularly from his ashes, symbolizing the process of rebirth
painting by Ron Wildego

agreed at the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. under the direction of the Emperor Constantine. In particular, the theology of the physical resurrection of the body. The references in the New Testament to the Jews belief that John-the-Baptist was Elijah returned after many hundreds of years shows the prevailing mood before then, and particularly at the time of Christ. The threat of hellfire and judgement is greatly enhanced by the idea that you only have one chance to get things right! This clearly gave the church great authority and power in controlling peoples lives which it has used whenever it can to this day.



St John (Titian 1542)
credit: Wikipedia.

2. The Concept of Occult or Dimensionless Space

The branch of modern science known as theoretical physics has for many years postulated the existence of space with many more dimensions than the 3 with which we are familiar. It is not therefore unreasonable to suggest that such a thing as dimensionless space might exist.

In the Foreword to George Adam's book *Physical and Ethereal Spaces* is quoted a translation of a poem by Rudolf Steiner:



Rudolf Steiner

**Think on it: how the point becomes a sphere
and yet remains itself. Hast thou understood
how the infinite sphere may be only a point,
then come again, for then the Infinite will
shine forth for thee in the Finite.**

George wrote:

The whole field is one of those places where the exoteric science of our time comes hard upon the threshold of the eternal occult truths and asks to be complemented, to be directed and

confirmed by the science of spiritual initiation. The formal mathematics used in the idea of ethereal or negative space, sometimes called polar-euclidean space, has long been known to pure mathematicians, but apart from their interest in its beautiful form, they have attached no further importance to it. Its significance lies however, not in its mere form, but in the fact that its discipline, created by the mathematicians of the nineteenth century, gives insight into a quite new conception of space which exactly corresponds to what has always been described by occultists as the secret spatial aspect of the etheric – of life.

Physical and Ethereal Spaces, p.9

Geoffrey Farthing in his book *Deity, Cosmos & Man* draws our attention to the obvious fact that thoughts and imaginings do not occupy 3-dimensional space, and this property of the mind may help us to grasp, at least, vaguely at this very difficult concept.

The importance of this for that part of the cycle of life where we have no physical body is obvious. Kamaloka, Devachan, Avitchi and for that matter Purgatory, Heaven and Hell, do not have to be ‘anywhere’ in order to have a reality for the disembodied consciousness which is effectively what we are between lives. More precisely we are dealing with a part of our consciousness which has survived death and this refinement is considered later.

Geoffrey Farthing suggests that one should imagine an orange, observe its colour and texture, smell and taste it by using your memory. Then ask what space this imaginary orange occupied. Thoughts do not occupy space, but never the less have an unquestionable reality. So are all abstract and subjective properties of the Spirit independent of 3 dimensional space.



credit: Wikipedia.

3. The 7 Principles of Man in an Hierarchical Order

Theosophy expands the general view of man as body, soul and spirit or body, mind and spirit to 7 parts: Atma, Buddhi, Manas, Kama (Desire), Prana (Life Force), Linga Sharira (Astral) and Sthula Sharira (Physical body). The combination of Atma and Buddhi is called the Monad, Manas or Mind is divided into 2 parts, upper and lower.

The upper or higher manas is combined with the Monad to form the Individuality which then becomes a vehicle for the Egoic Consciousness.

The lower manas is often combined with Kama and called the kama manasic principle because they function so closely together. (Sometimes called the middle duad). This combines with the 3 lower principles or lower triad to form the personality and is the vehicle for our normal waking consciousness. It is this consciousness which fades as these lower principles finally disintegrate during the after death processes, so that only the Egoic consciousness remains to enter Devachan.

It ultimately emerges from Devachan to receive the Skandhas which contain the karmic record prior to re-birth. It is suggested that ultimately this egoic individuality can escape the cycle of birth, death and rebirth when it has lost all desire and has become sufficiently spiritually evolved.

There are many details about the 7-fold nature of man which are not directly relevant to this study. They are explained in *The Key to Theosophy* by Madame Blavatsky.

There is an obvious need to establish a reasonable explanation for how consciousness can exist 'outside' 3-dimensional space. A majority of people find the idea of travelling to some other part of the physical universe to find the location for existence after death unacceptable. Conversely, the idea that we remain around the earth to await our next incarnation occasionally manifesting as poltergeists or ghosts does not appeal as an adequate explanation. Particularly as we do not feel we are being watched by thousands of people we used to know and who have died.

Man's 7 fold nature correlates directly with the 7 planes of the cosmos. The physical correlation is obvious. The astral correlation is not so



H. P. Blavatsky

Table I - THE CONSTITUTION OF MAN

	English Names	The Principles as Elements of Man's Being				Sanskrit Names		
7	THE ONE SELF (Spirit)	↑	↑	↑	↑	Atma		
6	Vehicle of Spirit	The whole man in Life	THE INDIVIDUALITY, The Divine Man	UPPER TRIAD, 'Human' Soul Devachanee The Ego	UPPER DUAD, Monad ↓	Buddhi		
5	Mind				Higher	-----	Causal Body	Higher Manas
					Lower	-----		
4	Emotion (Desire, etc)					↑	MIDDLE DUAD, 'Animal' Soul The Psyche, Kama-Rupa (after death only), An Elementary	Lower Manas
3	Life Force (Vitality)					↓		Kama
2	Astral Body					↑		Prana
1	Physical Body					↓	LOWER TRIAD, Physical & Life Principles	Linga Sharira
						Sthula-Sharira		

obvious, but it is highly relevant to an understanding of the relationship between 3-dimensional space and abstract or occult space.

There is abundant evidence that our consciousness can transfer from our physical to our astral bodies – not only from those who can ‘travel’ when asleep at night, but from the many cases of Near Death Experiences. There is a constant flow of evidence from our hospitals where people who undergo dangerous surgery sometimes experience a transference of their consciousness to their astral bodies.

It seems that the astral plane is a transitional plane which enables a variety of effects to occur according to circumstances. This may account for some confusion which occurs with reference to an etheric body. The transition can be slow, gradual or virtually instantaneous according to the individual, and in the case of NDEs reversible due to resuscitation. Once in the astral body, it would seem that the awareness of 3-dimensional space can slowly fade as the individual moves more deeply into occult space. As this proceeds it becomes more and more difficult to return, in spite of the most intense efforts of the paramedics. Those who embrace death willingly at the end of a long life, or after much illness and pain would not be expected to dawdle! While others conversely unwilling to die in the prime of life may cling to earth life and help the resuscitators as much as they can.

We are given considerable information about the part of the cycle of life that immediately follows the death of the physical body. We arrive in Kamaloka. The location of man’s kama, (desire) fourth principle. Initially man is very conscious of his past life and is able to review it in intimate detail from the indelible records in the Astral Light. Only after this first review is the cycle of life continued. Geoffrey Farthing writes:



Geoffrey Farthing

Death has occurred at a distinct moment, when the silver cord, as it is sometimes called, between the physical body and the astral double is severed. This link between the earthly man and his soul principles is of ethereal matter. At this time, these principles include not only the fourth and lower fifth (the middle duad), but the upper fifth, sixth and seventh

(the upper triad), the Egoic individuality. After the severance of the cord there is no possibility of a return. *When We Die*, p.33

The deceased loses the consciousness of his personality or lower self and the astral double as well as the physical body begins to disintegrate. However, the complex nature of man's dual consciousness means that his egoic consciousness persists and is able to take a full part in the processes in Kamaloka, which includes the death struggle and gestation and ends with a second review of the past life before entry into Devachan.

The Clear Light of the Void

At the moment of death, the empiric consciousness, or consciousness of objects is lost. There is what is popularly called a 'swoon' which is however, the corollary of super-consciousness itself, or the clear light of the Void; for the swoon is in, and of the Consciousness as a knower of objects. This empirical consciousness disappears, unveiling Pure Consciousness which is ever ready to be 'discovered' by those who have the will to seek and power to find it.

TBD Foreword, p.lxxi

It is here that the full significance of man's dual consciousness becomes apparent. Only the egoic consciousness associated with his higher self survives. The deceased's former gender and particular personality characteristics are no longer relevant to the rest of the life cycle. However, the degree to which the deceased has during his life developed his egoic consciousness, and corresponding spiritual maturity and sensitivity, will determine the depth of his experience in Devachan.

The speed at which all this occurs seems to be varied according to a number of factors. These include: the inability of the deceased to let go of earth life, as in the case of someone murdered in the prime of life, when they may haunt the murder spot until the time they would have died a natural death. Or the deceased may have a strong emotional attachment to his physical body and be reluctant to move on. It has been said that a generally unrecognised advantage of cremation is that the physical body

then can no longer be a point of attachment. We are told in the *Mahatma Letters* that the process is halted in the case of suicides who must remain attached to the cause of their action and wait in Kamaloka until the time they would have died.

4. A View of Time Measured by the Frequency of Events

The entry into Devachan does not only complete the withdrawal from 3-dimensional space, but it also marks the end of earth time for the deceased. Time is much more complex than it appears to be. The variability of time in relation to earth time across the vast distances of the universe which can only be measured with reference to the speed of light has been shown by Einstein's Theory of Relativity ($E = mc^2$). It is hardly surprising that withdrawal from 3-D space into abstract or occult space would have a significant effect upon time as we know it. In fact, even now we experience the same subjective variability in time. When we are enjoying ourselves time seems to go quickly. When we are unhappy and particularly when we are in pain, time seems to go more slowly. If we look more deeply into this subjective experience of time, we see that we really measure time by the frequency of events. The more things that happen to us and around us in an hour, the faster that hour seems to go for us. When we are busy time flies! The converse is also true.



5. The Teaching of Various States of Consciousness

There are different states of consciousness associated with man's seven principles. The highest spiritual consciousness is said to be achieved by the egoic individuality, *i.e.* with the Monad combined with upper manas. This can only be achieved by the practice of meditation and contemplation of spiritual things. The higher consciousness is able to watch and direct the lower mind's thinking consciousness. Something we do every day when

we decide what we wish to think about. The Kamic consciousness is that of the emotions and we are all aware when we are emotionally aroused and our focus is in our emotions. Likewise, our focus of consciousness can be entirely in our physical bodies and this is particularly true when we are very hungry or thirsty or in great pain.

6. The Notion of Ever-Becoming

It is the cultivation of our higher consciousness which is necessary to prepare us for our journey through the bardo state between lives and ultimately to enter the Nirvana (state) to begin a different, higher more advanced cycle beyond earth life to continue our spiritual evolution.

The Cycles of Matter will be succeeded by Cycles of Spirituality and a fully developed mind. On the law of parallel history and races, the majority of the future mankind will be composed of glorious Adepts. Humanity is the child of cyclic Destiny, and not one of its Units can escape its unconscious mission, or get rid of the burden of its co-operative work with nature. Thus will mankind, race after race, perform its appointed cycle-pilgrimage.

SD 2, p.446, p.456; SD 3, p.444

The study of the past and of the principles underlying evolutionary advance points to the inescapable fact that we all, individually and collectively, *are* the humanity whose evolution is the central theme of Esoteric Science.

PART 2: THE CYCLE

So a study of the cycle of life begins with a consideration of birth. The newly born child might well ask the questions: Why am I here and where was I before? Indeed various studies have been published of children of around 3-6 years old who have very convincingly identified the location of their previous life which had usually been shortened by an accidental death.

Such evidence for the survival of self-consciousness is of course hugely exciting and makes the teachings about the after-death processes of major interest to all who care about what happens to them when they die. Not that such interest is anything new. In a Foreword to the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, (entitled *The Science of Death*), Sir John Woodroffe writes

The thought of death suggests two questions. The first is: How may one avoid death, except when death is desired as in “Death-at-will” (Ichchhamrity). The avoidance of death is the aim when Hatha yoga is used to prolong present life in the flesh. The second question is: How to accept Death and die? Here the technique of dying makes death the entrance to good future lives, at first out of, and then again in, the flesh unless and until liberation (Nirvana) from the wandering (Sangsara) is attained.
TBD, p.i

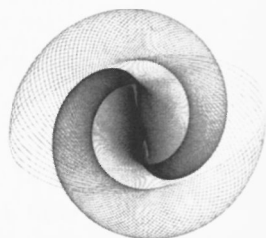
The fact that the ego has been reborn suggests that it is still in bondage to rebirth. In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* we read:

As a man’s desire is, so is his destiny. For as his desire is, so is his will; and as his will is, so is his deed; and as his deed is, so is his reward, whether good or bad. A man acteth according to the desire to which he clingeth. After death he goeth to the next world bearing in his mind the subtle impressions of his deeds; and after reaping there the harvest of his deeds, he returneth again to the world of action. Thus he who hath desire continueth to be subject to rebirth.
TBD Preface to 3rd Ed, p.xii

Conversely in the *Katha Upanishad* we read of Freedom from Rebirth as follows:

He who lacketh discrimination, whose mind is unsteady and whose heart is impure, never reacheth the goal, but is born again and again. But he who hath discrimination, whose mind is steady and whose heart is pure, reacheth the goal, and having reached it is born no more. *TBD Preface to 3rd Ed, p.xii*

Perhaps the Cycle of Life should be considered as a Spiral of Life as each successive life moves the ego forward towards the goal of Nirvana. (*ML Chron Ed No.44* p.122 refers). Furthermore, the consideration of the events in the bardo state, between lives takes on added significance and importance when it is seen as part of an on-going process.



The spiralling motion of a harmonograph

From *Tour of all Toures* and *Teacheth a Man for to Die*.

Against his will he dieth that hath not learned to die. Learn to die and thou shalt learn to live, for there shall none learn to live that hath not learned to die.

From the *Katha Upanishad* we get echoes of the Hermetic Axiom (*As above, so below*).

Whatever is here, that is there; what is there, the same is here. He who seeth here as “different”, meeteth death after death. [beware all who contemplate suicide].

By mind alone this is to be realised, and [then], there is no difference here. From death to death he goeth, who seeth as if there is difference here. *TBD title page et al*

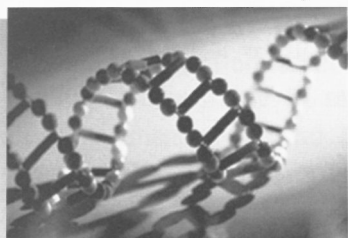
As a final answer to the question, “Where was I before I was born?”, remember the words of Krishna in the *Bhagavad-Gita* (Chapter 4 verse 5).

Many lives, Arjuna, you and I have lived. I remember them all, but thou dost not.



Krishna and Arjuna

The reincarnated ego has many influences to determine the potentialities for its future life. Not only has it inherited some of the characteristics of its parents both physically and in personality, but it has entered with the skandhas which it carried forward when it exited from Devachan, built up of accumulated karma from tens of thousands of events – just as DNA is constructed using tens of thousands of atoms. These constitute a sort of spiritual DNA giving the characteristics of the ego and also its karmic balance carried over from previous lives.



Strands of DNA

credit: www.all-about-forensic-science.com

What task will this reincarnated ego face as it grows into an adult responsible human being? To live its life in such a way as to prepare for death, or rather the life in the bardo state following death. Man has two components to his consciousness. One associated with his Individuality, Higher Self, and the other with his Personality or Lower Self.

The technical theosophical definition of Individuality is that it consists of the highest 3 of man's 7 principles but only that part of mind associated with Higher Consciousness. The definition of Personality is that it is the lower 4 principles, plus the lower mind which depends upon the physical brain consciousness; this is so fragile, so easily set aside for sleep, for anaesthetics and so on and lost finally in the death of the physical body. Clara Codd in her delightful book *The Technique of the Spiritual Life* writes of the Individuality and Personality:

The Individuality. The Ego or Soul (our divine side).

The Spiritual Will – the purpose of Life

The Eternal Love – shining like the Sun on all

The Eternal Intelligence – leading to Wisdom and
Spiritual Knowledge.

The Personality. (our human side)

Body – for experience and service

Heart – for response to Beauty and Love, and for radiating Beauty
and Love.

The Mind – to observe and understand.

This threefold personality is the crystal vase which must be
cleansed and purified, for within it burns the Divine Flame, the
Source of loveliness and good.

The Antahkarana (the bridge between) The Mind and Heart
purified of egotism, and aspiring steadily towards its divine
counterpart.

The challenge facing the new grown adult, having survived the
uncertain environmental influences of childhood and adolescence, is all to
do with the balance of power and control between the Higher Self and the
Lower Self. *The Voice of the Silence*, H. P. Blavatsky's final book, spells
out the magnitude of the challenge and the difficulty of rising adequately
to it. No one who reads it could be surprised that it takes many cycles of
lives to succeed.

Clara Codd sees the power of the will, associated with the Higher self
as a factor of supreme importance:

**. . . The magical power of Kriyashakti is the power of
concentrated thought and will.**

Willpower, she writes, not only means the ability to choose, but also to
keep to the chosen path, to persevere.

This power is often one of the weakest spots in the constitution of modern man. The whole trend of our soft, comfortable life is liable to sap the will and the power of endurance. The intelligence to see the best path, and the sustained will to continue treading it, are an absolute necessity for success in any venture, material or spiritual.



Clara Codd

Now the possession of will-power is not an arbitrary gift from on high. If one is in possession of it, it has been developed in past lives by ourselves. The vast majority of men are more or less deficient in it. But it may be developed. There is only one way to do this, by acquiring the faculty of being able to say 'no' to ourselves; of being able to face disappointment, loss and failure, without wavering in our ultimate intention. Begin early, if some of you who read the words are young. Will is a high form of desire. It is a high impersonal desire, seen to be right, necessary, altruistic; opposed to personal self-satisfaction, momentary pleasure and lower self-indulgence. The self-indulgent man can never become the holy, the illuminated, God-radiant man.

Will power is developed by 'going without', denying the little self on every possible occasion, till it ceases to beg, ask, or tussle, and obeys the intelligent ruling of the Higher Self without question. In an article entitled *Unless You Deny Yourself*, Dr. Cronin speaks of the famous physicist and electrical engineer Nikola Tesla, who began as a boy to learn and to practise this.



Nikola Tesla
credit: Wikipedia

If I had something I particularly liked, a sweet, a cake or chocolate, I gave it away although I suffered in doing so. Was there some task or exercise I disliked, I did it, no matter how inclination pulled. As the years passed, the conflict ceased. My wish and my will became one.

Here is the true asceticism so much despised these days, which gives a man sovereign power. The Saints knew this well, and so we find St. Therese of Lisieux closing the book she was reading, even at the most interesting part, the moment the Convent bell rang; and restraining her natural curiosity until the next day. The early Christian saints despised the body to such an extent that they often rendered it useless. The middle way of the Lord Buddha was neither to ill treat, nor to indulge the body and the passions and desires which move it.



St Therese of Lisieux
credit: Wikipedia

The little self of our ordinary mind, emotions and body must learn obedience to the will of the divine Self within, and they will suffer bitterly until they become habituated and at peace. This battle is the first step . . . and as the French proverb says “It is the first step that counts”.

Clara Codd: *The Technique of the Spiritual Life*, pp.19-21

We have already seen there is a consciousness of the Personality and there is a consciousness of the Individuality. In fact there is a duality in everyone’s consciousness. With our higher consciousness we can not only observe our thoughts, but modify them as we wish using our will. It is the exercise of our will to control our actions which is a key factor in the Cycle of Life.

Man’s 49 Sub-Principles

In *Collected Writings* (Vol.12 pp.693-694), H. P. B. explains that each of man’s 7 principles has 7 sub-principles or aspects. This means that the Individuality has 17 sub-principles and the Personality has 32 sub-principles. An interesting comparison is provided by the teaching in the Tibetan Book of the Dead (p.192) where we are told that the aggregate of a living human body, according to some Tibetan systems of yoga, is composed of 27 parts:

1. The 5 elements; earth, air, fire, water, ether.
2. The 5 skandhas; body aggregate, sensation aggregate, feelings aggregate, volition aggregate, consciousness aggregate.
3. The 5 airs; downward-air, warmth equalizing-air, the pervader, upward moving-air, life holding air.
4. The 5 sense organs; nose, ears, eyes, tongue, skin.
5. The 6 faculties, sight, smell, hearing, tasting, perception, reasoning.
6. The mentality.

These 27 parts constitute the impermanent personality. Behind them all stands the sub-conscious, the Knower, which unlike the personality, is the principle capable of ultimately realising Nirvana.

Once again it is made clear that the consciousness of the Personality is transient and the consciousness of the Knower (Individuality) has the potentiality to reach Nirvana. It is a recurring theme. It is important to differentiate clearly between these 2 consciousnesses when studying the literature relating to the 'after death' processes or the wrong conclusions may easily be drawn.

There are 4 separate events which happen in the Kamaloka: 1. The first review of the past life, 2. The death struggle, 3. The gestation. 4. The second review

It seems unlikely that these can all take place while the deceased is in a state of total unconsciousness. If so, what purpose would be achieved? However, it seems unlikely that the consciousness of the personality can be maintained beyond the first review even though it has shifted into the Astral body, following the death of the physical one, because this also will generally start to disintegrate and the physical consciousness will have only the middle duad (lower mind and desire body) or kama manas as a upadhi (vehicle).

This is precisely what does happen when consciousness returns to the 'shell'. A reading of the principal relevant texts (see *Appendix*) shows that it is impossible to generalise as each ego's experience of the bardo state will depend upon its individual spiritual development and karma.

This is further corroborated by the section entitled *The Bardo or After Death State* in the *Tibetan book of the Dead*. The various states of consciousness in the 3 bardo states are described. The first is described as *Chikhai Bardo*, Transitional State at the moment of death, after which the deceased finally realises that he is separated from his physical body. The second Bardo state is the *Chosnyid Bardo* or Transitional State of Reality which merges into the third Bardo, *Sidpa* or Transitional State of Rebirth. In the second Bardo there dawns upon him in symbolic visions, one by one, the hallucinations created by the karmic reflexes of actions done by him in the earth-plane body. What he has thought and what he has done become objective: thought forms having been consciously visualised and allowed to take root and grow and blossom and produce, now pass in a solemn and mighty panorama, as the consciousness-content of his personality.

When he finally realises he no longer has a body of flesh and blood, he begins to develop an overmastering desire for Rebirth. Significantly the text goes on to say that, although this is the normal process for people, however, for those very exceptional minds, possessed of great yogic knowledge and enlightenment, only the more spiritual stages in the first few days will be experienced. In fact, the most enlightened of the yogis may escape all of Bardo passing into a paradise (Devachan) realm or else reincarnating in this world as soon as the human body has been discarded, maintaining all the while unbroken continuity of consciousness. (See pp 28-30 *TBD*).

Compare *ML Cron Ed No.70C* (p.211) as follows:

**regarding panaeonic immortality, (i.e. beginning with the manvantara and ending with the pralaya of our solar universe)
 . . . I remain as Koothoomi in my Ego throughout the whole series of births and lives across the seven worlds and Arupalokas until finally I land again on this earth among the fifth race men . . .**

Evolution or Degeneration?

The late Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdup, the translator, has left on record his own complementary opinion as follows:

The 49 days of the Bardo symbolize ages either of evolution or of degeneration. Intellects able to grasp Truth do not fall into the lower conditions of existence.

The doctrine of the transmigration of the human to the sub-human may apply solely to the lower or purely brutish constituents of the human principle of consciousness; for the Knower itself neither incarnates nor re-incarnates - it is the Spectator.

In the *Bardo Thodol*, the deceased is represented as retrograding, step by step, into lower and lower states of consciousness. Each step downwards is preceded by a swooning into unconsciousness; and possibly that which constitutes his mentality on the lower levels of the Bardo' in some mental element or compound of mental elements formerly a part of his earth-plane consciousness, separated, during the swooning, from higher or more spiritually enlightened elements of that consciousness. Such a mentality ought not to be regarded as on a par with a human mentality; for it seems to be a mere faded and incoherent reflex of the human mentality of the deceased. And perhaps it is some such thing as this which incarnates into sub-human animal bodies - if anything does in a literal sense

TBD, p.44

Nature of Time

Perhaps the confusion and uncertainty over bardo consciousness, or the lack of it, arises from a mistaken idea of time in the world of effects. Even in this realm of existence our perception of the passage of time is often dictated by the frequency of events and how much we are enjoying ourselves. Here it appears to be more like the dormouse at the Mad Hatters tea party in Alice in Wonderland. He only participates in the conversation when prodded and woken up and then goes back to sleep again. In fact it may be a bit more serious than that for us. We may only be aware of events when they are relevant to us, or when things happen with which we resonate. A radio or television set that cannot be tuned into any of the frequencies on which programmes are transmitted will produce nothing. If we have not developed the spiritual qualities or sensitivities to 'tune-in' to Devachan we shall not be aware of it.



The Mad Hatter with the Dormouse asleep on the left.
illustration by John Tenniel credit: Wikipedia

Meanwhile we shall be acutely aware of the two reviews of our past life and the death struggle and gestation. Unlike earth life, you cannot be bored in bardo, because like the dormouse, you will be asleep when nothing is happening for you!

First Review

There is an immediacy about the first review of the past life. So much so that it apparently occurs while the dying is not quite complete and resuscitation is possible. It is unavoidable. There is no option to miss it out! Like it or not, the whole life must be reviewed for assessment. The law of Karma takes effect, which is why Mahatma K. H. calls it "that terrible law". It is exact in that it fits every punishment precisely to the crime

without fear or favour. The record of evidence is indisputable as it has been perfectly recorded in the Astral light. There can be no grounds for complaint!

The law of karma itself is totally immutable like all of Nature's laws and can not be altered, adjusted or modified in any way. No divine judgement could surpass it for fairness and lack of favouritism. "Beware!" says the Prophet "your sins will find you out." This is undoubtedly the experience of every dying person as they enter Kamaloka.

Death Struggle

After the first review comes the death struggle. It sounds somewhat sinister and mysterious. In the literature it is explained as the attempt by the High Self (egoic consciousness) to acquire all the spiritual qualities developed during the earth life.

There is a struggle between the Higher Self and the Lower Self throughout most peoples lives. A person often has a struggle with their conscience when they are attempting to do something which they know is wrong. Now the outcome of this final contest will depend upon the results of countless battles throughout the life just lived. The conscience may have been totally silenced, in which case, the result is almost predictable. If the Higher Self loses, there will be little to show as far as the ego's evolutionary progress is concerned. The Personality now confined to the 'shell', Kama-manas, will struggle to retain anything of spiritual value.

Gestation

The seeds of the spiritual content of the late life which have been gathered and quickened in the struggle, gestate to form suitable material to enter into the spiritual world of the ego. This is an order of being we can hardly imagine because no terms descriptive of spacelessness, timelessness, complete wholeness, unity, purity, omniscience, omnipotence, and where

consciousness suffers none of the limitations of personal existence . . .

When We Die pp.34-35

It requires little effort to imagine how the ego ‘feels’ now bereft of the personality and facing all the uncertainties of a new incarnation into earth life. Possibly in a different culture, religion and even the opposite sex. What sort of childhood, parents, siblings? He has got as long as he needs. Maybe he comes in and out of consciousness many times, as many sessions may be needed for him to prepare himself.

It is hardly surprising that the length of the bardo varies so much between individuals, or that the perception of time in these circumstances is so different from earth time. As the Psalmist wrote:

1000 years are but as yesterday when it is passed or as a watch in the night.

Psalm 90 v.4

and St. Peter writes,

with the Lord one day is as a 1000 years and a 1000 years as one day.

2 Peter 3 v.8

Second Review

There is a fourth event in Kamaloka before the ego can enjoy the unalloyed pleasures of Devachan and that is the second review of the past life. It might well be asked why another review? A lot may have changed for the ego since the first review. Most importantly, it has separated from its personality. Further things for which until now he excused himself for having done he now may see very differently. Maybe he is prepared to make a fresh assessment. It often takes a change of heart for the full horror of wrongdoing to dawn on the perpetrator. Genuine remorse and regret for past failures are highly karmic and can mitigate to some extent the karmic consequences of them. No doubt there have been many ‘sin and guilt-laden’ egos who have appreciated the opportunity for this re-assessment

and a second chance to repent. In fact it is highly compassionate and undeserved, much like the Christian concept of grace. (unmerited favour).

It is interesting to note how the whole process completely obviates the need for a dreadful day of judgement which the church for centuries has taught men and women to fear. In fact it is doubtful whether Jesus either taught, or believed in it. He is reported as saying

If anyone hears my sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him . . . the Word [Law of Karma] that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day. *St John 12 vv.47a, 48b*

In many respects this second review is the “last day” before the entry into Devachan which may be regarded as the end of one life cycle and the beginning of the next, or possibly the entry finally into the state of Nirvana.

Devachan

.After all the agony of karma in the second review the ego enters Devachan released from all knowledge and remembrance of it. Like the Christian concept of heaven, it is described as a place of unalloyed bliss and happiness where everything is exactly to the egos liking! Needless to say it is a phantasy land quite at odds with the Hermetic Axiom already quoted. However, for the ego it is said to have a reality which surpasses that which he experienced during his earth life.

Theologically Devachan could hardly be more different from the Christian Heaven, a place prepared for the elect of God at the end of the Age and not entered until then. Conversely, Paradise (*Greek: Hades*) is much closer to the concept of Kamaloka. The place where Jesus promised to be with the dying thief after they had both died.

Finally after an undefined period of enjoyment in Devachan the ego emerges to be reborn on earth. At this moment he has a prospective vision of the life that awaits him, and a glimpse of the many previous lives he has lived while regaining his full manasic consciousness. *Appendix p.37*

HPB writes:

Karma, Tanha and Skandhas are the almighty trinity in one and the cause of our rebirth. *CW 10. p176. (Appendix p36)*

Devachan is a state, not a locality, Rupa-loka, Arupa-loka and Kama-Loka are the three spheres of ascending spirituality in which the several groups of subjective entities find their attractions. In the Kama-Loka (semi-physical sphere) dwell the shells and the victims and suicides; and this sphere is divided into innumerable regions and sub-regions corresponding to the mental state of the comers at their hour of death. This is the glorious “Summerland” of the Spiritualists, to whose horizons is limited the vision of their best seers . . .

ML Chron Ed No.104, p.361

So the Ego after the passing of possibly many centuries of earth time, has arrived back on earth and the cycle of life has taken a complete turn. A new sequence of events commences with fresh opportunities to grow and develop to greater heights of consciousness and personal altruism. In fact, a continuation of the cyclic evolution which is the “Ever-becoming” of Theosophy.

oooOOOooo

BOOK LIST

<i>Deity, Cosmos and Man</i>	Geoffrey Farthing
<i>When We Die</i>	— Geoffrey Farthing
<i>Cyclic Evolution</i> —	Adam Warcup
<i>Mahatma Letters</i> (Chronological Edition)	
<i>The Technique of the Spiritual Life</i>	Clara M. Codd
<i>The Tibetan Book of the Dead</i>	W. Y. Evans-Wentz
<i>Foundations of Esoteric Philosophy</i>	Ianthe Hoskins
<i>Physical and Ethereal Spaces</i>	George Adams
<i>Collected Writings of H. P. Blavatsky</i>	
<i>The Secret Doctrine</i>	Helena Petrovna Blavatsky
<i>The Key to Theosophy</i>	Helena Petrovna Blavatsky
<i>The Voice of the Silence</i>	Helena Petrovna Blavatsky

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ML Chron Ed</i>	<i>Mahatma Letters</i> (Chronological Edition)
<i>TBD</i>	<i>Tibetan Book of the Dead</i>
<i>CW</i>	<i>Collected Writings of H. P. Blavatsky</i>
<i>SD</i>	<i>The Secret Doctrine</i>
<i>Key</i>	<i>The Key to Theosophy</i>

APPENDIX

The principal (and quite unique) source of information on this subject is the *Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, but there is much supplementary information in H. P. B.'s *Collected Writings*. There are many and different versions of the after-death processes now extant, some from spiritualistic sources, some from later theosophical writers, but the description given us by the Masters is consistent not only throughout all their writings and those of H. P. B., but with all their voluminous other teachings on the total nature and processes of Cosmos, viz. the planes of being, the constitution of man and Cosmos, their origins, and the Law. This does not apply in the case of the other accounts; in fact, many of them are mutually contradictory in matters both of principle and detail. These differences have repercussions into the nature and explanations of psychic and spiritualistic phenomena, 'astral' travel, E. S. P., paranormal happenings and so on.

To understand the after-death processes from an objective point of view, we must first have a working knowledge of the esoteric constitution of man and the planes of being as now put forward, some knowledge of the nature of the Astral Light, and the place of Elementals in the cosmic economy.

We have shown man as comprising three parts, an upper Triad, a middle Duad and a lower Triad. These are the main divisions of his sevenfold nature. For purposes of examining the after-death processes, this constitution, with the numbering of the principles is the one the Masters used in their classification. This information from the Letters is supplemented not only in the *Collected Writings*, but in the *S. D.*, extracts from both of which are quoted later. References to quotations from the *Mahatma Letters* are from the Chronological Edition.

According to the Masters, the after-death processes are as follows:

When man dies, his second and third principles die with him; the lower triad disappears, and the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh principles form the surviving *Quaternary*.

ML Chron Ed No.68, pp.192-193

At the moment of death the man becomes unconscious:

Every just disembodied *four-fold* entity . . . loses at the instant of death all recollection, it is mentally – *annihilated*; it sleeps its akashic sleep in the Kama-loka. This state lasts from a few hours, (rarely less), days, weeks, months – sometimes to several years. All this according to the entity, to its mental status at the moment of death, to the character of its death, etc.

ML Chron Ed No.85B, p.263

There is a corroborative statement by H. P. B. about this period of unconsciousness:

But the process of stripping off the lower, the fourth and part of the fifth principles is an unconscious one in all normal human beings . . . otherwise in very exceptional cases.

CW 9, p.164

In certain circumstances the disintegration of the fourth and part of the fifth principles is prolonged and they survive as the Elementary ‘shell’. This is one of the exceptional cases mentioned above.

As to what happens during this period of unconsciousness, we have: a "death" struggle between the Upper and Lower dualities . . . the most Spiritualized portions of its mind – follows its divine elder (the 7th) into the “Gestation” State; and the fifth and fourth remain in association as an empty *shell* – (the expression is quite correct) – to roam in this

earth's atmosphere, with half the personal memory gone, and the more brutal instinct fully alive for a certain period – an “Elementary” in short. This is the “angel guide” of the average medium.

ML Chron Ed No.68B, p.193

Later herein and often elsewhere the Elementary is referred to as a ‘shell’ or ‘spook’.

Regarding the upper triad, on its quitting the lower principles: . . . man's sixth principle, as something purely spiritual could not exist, or have *conscious* being in the Deva-Chan, unless it assimilated some of the more abstract and pure of the mental attributes of the fifth principle or animal Soul: its *manas* and memory.

ML Chron Ed No.68, p.193

After the ‘gestation’ period there is the second review of the past life: That remembrance will return slowly and gradually towards the end of the gestation (to the entity or Ego), still more slowly but far more imperfectly and *incompletely* to the *shell*, and *fully* to the Ego at the moment of its entrance into the Devachan. And now, the latter being a state determined and brought by its past life, the Ego does not fall headlong, but sinks into it gradually and by easy stages. With the first dawn of that state appears that life (or rather *is once more lived over* by the Ego) from its first day of consciousness to its last. From the most important down to the most trifling event, all are marshalled before the spiritual eye of the Ego; only, unlike the events of real life, those of them remain only that are chosen by the new *liver* (pardon the word) clinging to certain scenes and actors, these remain *permanently* – while the others fade away to disappear for ever, or to return to their creator – *the shell*. Now try to understand this highly important, because so highly just and retributive law, in its effects. Out of the

resurrected Past *nothing* remains but what the Ego has felt *spiritually* – that was evolved by and through, and lived over by his spiritual faculties – be they *love* or *hatred*.

ML Chron Ed No.85B, p.263

“Who goes to Devachan?” The personal Ego of course, but beatified, purified, holy. Every Ego – the combination of the sixth and seventh principles – which, after the period of unconscious gestation is reborn into the Devachan, is of necessity as innocent and pure as a new-born babe. The fact of his being reborn at all, shows the preponderance of good over evil in his old personality. And while the Karma (of evil) steps aside for the time being to follow him in his future earth-reincarnations, he brings along with him but the Karma of his good deeds, words, and thoughts, into this Devachan. ‘Bad’ is a relative term for us – as you were told more than once before, – and the Law of Retribution is the only law that never errs. Hence all those who have not slipped down into the mire of unredeemable sin and bestiality – go to the Devachan. They will have to pay for their sins, voluntary and involuntary, later on. Meanwhile they are rewarded; receive the *effects* of the *causes* produced by them.

Of course, it is a *state*, one, so to say, of *intense selfishness*, during which an Ego reaps the reward of his *unselfishness* on earth. He is completely engrossed in the bliss of all his personal earthly affections, preferences and thoughts, and gathers in the fruit of his meritorious actions. No pain, no grief nor even the shadow of a sorrow comes to darken the bright horizon of his unalloyed happiness: for, it is a state of *perpetual “Maya”*.

ML Chron Ed No.68, p.190

This is an extract from a longer passage which goes on to describe more fully the Devachanic state, and to reiterate that entities there cannot communicate with earth. The description also says that the

Devachanic state varies greatly in quality and extent according to that of the previous life, and the evolutionary development of the entity.

Concerning the duration of the after-death states:

... the period between death and rebirth ... lasts from a few years to a kalpa [Note: Maybe millions of years]. It is divided into three sub-periods (1) when the Ego, delivered of its mortal coil, enters into Kama-Loka (the abode of Elementaries); (2) when it enters into its "Gestation State"; (3) when it is reborn in the Rupa-Loka of Devachan. Sub-period (1) may last from a few minutes to a number of years - the phrase "a few years" becoming puzzling and utterly worthless without a more complete explanation; Sub-period (2) is "very long"; ... longer sometimes than you may even imagine, yet proportionate to the Ego's spiritual stamina; Sub-period (3) lasts in proportion to the good KARMA, after which the monad is again reincarnated ... "in all these Rupa-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 ...

ML Chron Ed No.68, p.194

It was asked how long this phase lasts:

For years, decades, centuries and millenniums, oftentimes multiplied by something more . . . Every effect must be proportionate to the cause. And, as man's terms of incarnate existence bear but a small proportion to his periods of inter-natal existence in the manvantaric cycle, so the good thoughts, words, and deeds of any one of these "lives" on a globe are causative of effects, the working out of which requires far more time than the evolution of the causes occupied.

ML Chron Ed No.68, pp.192-193

Relating some of the foregoing information to references to it in other original literature, where we get an expansion of the basic ideas, we have the following concerning the consciousness residing in the kama-manasic vehicles after the gestation process:

At death it [the Antahkarana] is destroyed as a path, or medium of communication, and its remains survive as Kama Rupa – the “shell”. It is this which the Spiritualists see sometimes appearing in the séance rooms as materialised “forms” which they foolishly mistake for the “Spirits of the Departed”. 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 is like when it has been transformed after the “eternal sleep” into Kama Rupa. *CW 12, p.633*

The Masters corroborate this information when talking about the consciousness of the ‘shell:

When the sixth and seventh principles are gone, carrying off with them the finer, spiritual portions of that, which once was the *personal* consciousness of the fifth, then only does the shell gradually develop a kind of hazy consciousness of its own from what remains in the shadow of personality. *ML Chron Ed No.93B, p.308*

But what is then “the nature of the remembrance and self-consciousness of the shell?” . . . As I said . . . no better than a reflected or borrowed light. “Memory” is one thing, and “perceptive faculties” quite another.

ML Chron Ed No.93B, p.308

These statements are important in view of the part played by 'shells' in spiritualistic phenomena. In a few cases the question of there being any punishment after death is raised:

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

A. Our philosophy teaches that Karmic punishment reaches the Ego only in its next incarnation. After death it receives only the reward for the unmerited sufferings endured during its past incarnation.

Key, Chap.9, pp.160

In this passage there is more about the question of reward and punishment, justified by the overall principles involved.

Death comes to our spiritual selves ever as a deliverer and friend. For the materialist who, notwithstanding his materialism, was not a bad man, the interval between the two lives will be like the unbroken and placid sleep of a child, either entirely dreamless, or filled with pictures of which he will have no definite perception; while for the average mortal it will be a dream as vivid as life, and full of realistic bliss and visions.

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

A. Not quite so. At the moment of death every man, even when death is sudden, sees the whole of his past life marshalled before him, in its minutest details. For one short instant the *personal* becomes one with the *individual* and all-knowing Ego. But this instant is enough to show him the whole chain of causes which have been at work during his life. He sees and now understands himself as he is,

unadorned by flattery or self-deception. He reads his life, remaining as a spectator looking down into the arena he is quitting; he feels and knows the justice of all the suffering that has overtaken him.

Q. Does this happen to everyone?

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

Q. Is there anything corresponding to this before rebirth?

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

Key, Chap.9, pp.161-162

This extract introduces us to the processes of coming back into earth life again. It is the dying process in reverse. The soul principles, the fifth and fourth, and the vital principles, the second and third, then finally the first, the physical body, are re-formed. In the case of the soul principles even the life atoms which previously composed them are re-assembled. Under what impulses is this process started and conducted? It is explained in the *Collected Writings* that:

KARMA, TANHA and SKANDHAS, are the almighty trinity in one, and the cause of our re-birth. The illustration of painting our own present likeness at death, and that likeness becoming the future personality is very poetical and graphic, but we claim it as an occult teaching . . . At the solemn moment of death, no man can fail to see himself under his true colours, and no self-deception is of any use to him any longer. Thence the following thing happens. As at the instant of drowning man sees marshalled past his mind's eye the whole of his life, with all its events, effects and causes, to the minutest details, so at the moment of death, he sees himself in all his moral nakedness, unadorned by either human flattery or self-adulation, and, as he is; hence, *as he*, or rather, as his astral double combined with his *Kama* principle – shall be. For the vices, defects and especially the passions of the preceding life become, through certain laws of affinity and transference, the germs of the future potentialities in the *animal* soul (*Kama-rupa*), hence of its dependent, the astral double (*linga-sharira*) – at a subsequent birth. It is the *personality* alone which changes; the real reincarnating principle, the EGO, remains always the same; and it is its KARMA that guides the idiosyncrasies and prominent moral traits of the *old* “personality” that was (and that the EGO knew not how to control), to re-appear in the *new* man that will be. These traits and passions pursue and fasten on the yet plastic third and fourth principles of the child, and – unless the EGO struggles and conquers – they will develop with tenfold intensity and lead the adult man to his destruction. For it is they who are the tools and weapons of the Karmic LAW OF RETRIBUTION. Thus . . . our good and bad actions “are the only tools with which we paint our likenesses at death”, for the *new* man invariably the son and progeny of the old man that was.

CW 10, p.176

Our characteristics and tendencies, our Skandhas, are transferred from one personality to the next. In this we must remember that life atoms are, in fact, ‘primitive’ Elementals, conditioned by their experience as components of the various vehicles used by men during their earth lives.

There are other explanatory passages which help us get a more complete picture of the after-death processes. Here is one:

. . . the Devachanic Entity, the Ego, in order to be able to go into a state of bliss, as the “I” of its immediately preceding incarnation, has to be clothed (metaphorically speaking) with the spiritual elements of the ideas, aspirations and thoughts of the now disembodied Personality; otherwise what is it *that enjoys bliss and reward*? Surely not the *impersonal* Ego, the Divine Individuality. Therefore it must be the good Karmic records of the deceased, impressed upon the Auric *Substance*, which furnish the Human Soul with just enough of the Spiritual elements of the ex-personality, to enable it to still believe itself that body from which it has just been severed, and to receive its fruition, during a more or less prolonged period of “spiritual gestation”. For Devachan is a “spiritual gestation” within an ideal matrix state, that ends in the new birth of the Ego into the world of effects, which ideal, subjective birth precedes its next terrestrial birth – the latter being determined by its bad Karma – into the world of causes. § In the second case, that of furnishing the Kama Rupa for the ghost or spook of the Entity, it is from the animal dregs of the Auric Envelope, with its daily Karmic record of animal life, so full of animal desires and selfish aspirations, that it is furnished.

CW 12, p.609

§ Here the world of effects is the Devachanic state, and the world of Causes, earth life-

The story goes on to tell us what happens when an Ego, its Devachanic period completed, starts the process of re-birth.

. . . the Linga-Sarira remains with the Physical Body, and fades out along with it. An astral entity then has to be created (a new Linga Sarira provided) to become the bearer of all the past Tanhas and future Karma. How is this accomplished? The mediumistic “spook”, the “departed *angel*”, fades out and vanishes also in its turn as an entity or full image of the Personality that was, and leaves in the Kamalokic world of effects only the records of its misdeeds and sinful thoughts and acts, known in the phraseology of the Occultists as Tanhic or human “Elementals”.

It is these Elementals which – upon entering into the composition of the “astral form” of the new body, into which the Ego, on its quitting the Devachanic state, is to enter according to Karmic degree – form that new astral entity which is born within the Auric Envelope, and of which it is often said “Karma, with its army of Skandhas, waits at the threshold of Devachan”. For no sooner is the Devachanic state of reward ended, than the Ego is indissolubly united with (or rather follows in the track of) the new Astral Form. Both are Karmically propelled towards the family or woman from which is to be born the *animal child* chosen by Karma to become the vehicle of the Ego which has just awakened from the Devachanic state. Then the *new* Astral Form, composed partly of the pure Akashic Essence of the Auric “Egg”, and partly of the terrestrial elements of the punishable sins and misdeeds of the last Personality, is drawn into the woman. Once there, Nature models the foetus of flesh around the Astral, out of the growing materials of the male seed in the female soil. Thus grows out of the essence of a decayed seed the fruit or *eidolon* of the dead seed, the physical fruit producing in its

turn within itself another and other seeds for future plants.

CW 12, p.609

An interesting passage tells us that death has not always been the lot of human kind, and presumably, as evolution goes full circle, there will come a time again when we shall not be subject to it. Here is the passage:

It is of this “earth” or new continent that Zarathustra became the law-giver and ruler. This was the fourth Race in its beginning, after the men of the Third began to die out. Till then . . . there had been no regular death, but only a transformation, for *men had no personality* as yet. They had monads – breaths of the ONE Breath, and as impersonal as the source from which they proceeded. They had bodies, or rather shadows of bodies, which were sinless, hence *Karmaless*. Therefore, as there was no Kamaloka – least of all Nirvana or even Devachan – for the “souls” of men who had no personal *Egos*, there could be no intermediate periods between the incarnation. Like the Phoenix, primordial man resurrected out of his old into a new body. Each time, and with each new generation, he became more solid, more physically perfect, agreeably with the evolutionary law, which is the *Law of Nature*. Death came with the complete physical organism, and with it – moral decay.

SD Vol.2, p.610

The story of the after-death states is the one for the normal case, there are exceptions, for example of premature deaths, suicides, victims of accidents and child deaths. About these the Masters give us some specific information, as follows:

But there is another kind of “Spirits”, we have lost sight of: the *suicides* and those *killed by accident*. Both kinds can communicate, and both have to pay dearly for such visits

. . . They are an exception to the rule, as they have to remain within the earth's attraction, and in its atmosphere – the *Kama-Loka* – till the very last moment of what would have been the natural duration of their lives . . . Unless they were so good and pure, as to be drawn immediately within the Akashic *Samadhi*, i.e. to fall into a state of quiet slumber full of rosy dreams, during which they have no recollection of the accident, but move and live among their familiar friends and scenes, until their natural life-term is finished, when they find themselves born in the Devachan – a gloomy fate is theirs. Unhappy shades, if sinful and sensual they wander about – (not *shells*, for the connection with their two higher principles is not quite broken) – until their death-hour comes.

ML Chron Ed No.68, p195

This information is supplemented by a full account of what can happen if these 'exceptions' are attracted to a medium, and it is mostly unpleasant and harmful karmically.

We should note particularly the account given of the after-death states and note especially that it does accord with all we have been told about the constitution of man and Cosmos, the Astral Light, the Law and so on. We should also note, because of the many other differing accounts, how they differ from it in important ways. Such differences can be in the states of consciousness at various stages of the after-death process. Some accounts refer to astral consciousness on an astral planes, or a state of consciousness in a mental body. We should also note that, except for the abnormal cases of premature death, and maybe a very few others, there is no possibility of communication, direct or indirect, with the true being, the Egoic individuality, of the deceased. There can be no 'astral' plane communication between the deceased and someone still alive either in his physical or his astral body; here we are using the word 'astral' as some of the later theosophical writers use it, to mean the Kama-Rupa in Kama-Loka.

The Masters' account of the death processes shows us that it fits the grand universal process of ever-becoming, according to cyclic and evolutionary law. The only real tragedy of death is for those left behind; it is in their personal bereavement. Their sadness is because they can only see death as a single isolated incident instead of one of a long series. Perhaps one day we shall all be able to see it in its vast panorama, to see causes and effects and the events of our many lives, and to see that these have led to those enduring, inseverable bonds of love and duty, the seeds which we are ever forming as we pass through the various stopping places of many earth lives. Then we shall see our vast journey of Egoic LIFE, passing through its many, many personal lives, until its final perfection and liberation, when the otherwise endless cycle of births and deaths will cease, for ever.

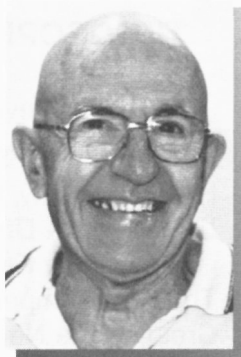
Deity, Cosmos & Man p.168

Table II—The After-Death States and Processes.

<i>Stage</i>	<i>State and Process</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Dying	Memory dislodges from physical brain. Review of past life.	No possibility of an Ego, other than a pre-mature death, communicating with the living, even through a medium, during this period.
Just After Death	Person unconscious; the three lower principles abandoned. Loss of perceptive faculties forever; loss of spiritual powers of cognition and volition for the time being. (The Mayavi-Rupa may appear to loved ones.)	
Death "Struggle"	Person, normally unconscious, in Kama-Loka, in earth's atmosphere. Struggle develops between fourth and fifth principles and sixth and seventh principles for spiritual content of past-life experience.	
Gestation	Assimilation of spiritual content by Ego (upper fifth, sixth, and seventh principles) — Ego and person unconscious.	
Entry into Devachan	Second review of previous life. Fourth and Fifth principles sloughed off to become "shell." Consciousness slowly returns to Ego. A dim consciousness and personal memory returns to "shell."	
Devachan	Ego now conscious again. Subjective dream-like state. All scenes, population and activities are as the ex-person would have most liked them. Ego knows nothing of what is happening on earth. Person "en rapport" with Devachanee can, by raising his consciousness, feel himself to be communicating with him.	
Rebirth	Ego relapses into unconsciousness but glimpses, before rebirth, the main tenor of the life to come. New astral body and middle principles formed, conditioned by Skandhas. New personality and environment determined by Karma. Skandhas cannot be altered after death (the world of effects) except pre-mature deaths via mediums.	

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Colin Price is a retired professional scientist & chartered electrical engineer, having spent 34 years doing scientific research, and serving on international scientific committees. In 1984 The Institution of Electrical Engineers awarded him the Compton Premium for work of outstanding merit and originality. Before joining the Theosophical Society in 1989 he served on church standing & finance committees, and was chair of various committees. Additionally he was parochial church councillor 40 years and was a member of deanery and diocesan synods, and a study group leader.



For nine years (1999 - 2008) Colin served as National President of the T.S in England. He has been Treasurer and Registrar for summer schools since 1992. For 12 years he was leader of the introductory course *A Way of Self Discovery* held on Sunday afternoons at the London H.Q. of the TS in England. A national & international lecturer, Colin sits on the National Council, the Executive Committee, the Finance Sub-Committee, the Summer School Committee. He is also director of several companies: the English Theosophical Trust, Foundation for Theosophical Studies, Tekels Park Estate and Guest House. Colin has held a number of international post: Director European School of Theosophy, Member of European Congress and General Council.

Colin is a Director of The Blavatsky Trust, an organisation set up by Geoffrey Farthing to promote the core teachings of H. P. Blavatsky and *The Mahatma Letters*.

THEOSOPHICAL PUBLISHING HOUSE LONDON

Previous Blavatsky Lectures Still Available

The Science of Spirituality – Ianthe Hoskins 1950 (reprint)
H. P. Blavatsky, the Light Bringer – Geoffrey Barborka 1970
Life, Death & Dreams (reprinted with additional material) –
Geoffrey Farthing 1974
The Soul's Imperative – Harold Tarn 1999
Creating the New Age – Michael Gomes 2000
Theosophy: Its Beneficent Potentialities –
Geoffrey Farthing 2001
The Harvest of Life – Alan Hughes 2002
Joyful Gnosis – Stephan Hoeller 2003
Living Truth – Radha Burnier 2005
The Virtuous Key – Betty Bland 2006
Col. Olcott & the Healing Arts – Michael Gomes 2007
Esoteric Psychology: the Theosophical Janus –
John Gordon 2008

Recent Publications

The Right Angle: H. P. Blavatsky on Masonry –
compiled by Geoffrey Farthing
Man: A Universe in Miniature – Joy Piper
Theosophy: The Truth Revealed –
compiled by Merseyside Lodge of the TS
Aspects of Divine Law – Geoffrey Farthing

Classic Literature

The Key to Theosophy – H. P. Blavatsky
The Occult World – A. P. Sinnett
The Search Within – Christmas Humphreys

Theosophical Society Book Department
50 Gloucester Place, London, W1U 8EA.
Tel.: 020 7563 9816 E-Mail: books@theosoc.org.uk

