

THEOSOPHY ON THE ASTRAL BODY

From the writings of H. P. Blavatsky and William Q. Judge

DEFINITIONS & EXPLANATION OF TERMS

“**Astral Body**, or Astral “Double.” The ethereal counterpart or shadow of man or animal. The *Linga Sharira*, the “Doppelganger.” The reader must not confuse it with the ASTRAL SOUL, another name for the lower Manas, or Kama-Manas so-called, the reflection of the HIGHER EGO.” (HPB, “Theosophical Glossary” p. 37)

“**Linga Sharira** (*Sanskrit.*). The “body,” *i.e.*, the aerial symbol of the body. This term designates the *doppelganger* or the “astral body” of man or animal. It is the *eidolon* of the Greeks, the vital and *prototypal* body; the reflection of the men of flesh. It is born *before* and dies or fades out, with the disappearance of the last atom of the body.” (HPB, “Theosophical Glossary” p. 190)

“The second constituent of man is the Astral Body (called in Sanscrit *Linga Sarira*) . . . in looking for words to describe the inner body the only ones found in English were the “astral body.” This term comes near to the real fact, since the substance of this form is derived from cosmic matter or star matter, roughly speaking. But the old Sanscrit word describes it exactly – *Linga Sarira*, the design body – because it is the design or model for the physical body. This is better than “ethereal body,” as the latter might be said to be subsequent to the physical, whereas in fact the astral body precedes the material one.” (WQJ, “The Ocean of Theosophy” p. 37, 39)

“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 SEVEN PRINCIPLES

7TH - **ATMA** - SPIRIT - THE HIGHER SELF, ABSOLUTE UNIVERSAL DIVINE PRINCIPLE

6TH - **BUDDHI** - SPIRITUAL SOUL - THE VEHICLE OF PURE UNIVERSAL SPIRIT

} THE
MONAD

5TH - **MANAS**

HIGHER - HUMAN SOUL - PERMANENT REINCARNATING INDIVIDUALITY, THE HIGHER EGO



Antaskarana, link between higher and lower manas

LOWER - PERSONAL MIND - PRESENT PERSONALITY, THE LOWER EGO

4TH - **KAMA** - ANIMAL SOUL - DESIRES AND PASSIONS

3RD - **PRANA** - LIFE ENERGY, VITALITY

2ND - **LINGA SHARIRA** - ASTRAL BODY - SUBTLE UNSEEN "DOUBLE" OF THE PHYSICAL BODY

1ST - **STHULA SHARIRA** - PHYSICAL BODY - VEHICLE OF ALL THE OTHER PRINCIPLES DURING LIFE

THE UPPER TRIAD IS IMMORTAL AND ENDURING; THE LOWER QUATERNARY IS NEW WITH EACH SUCCESSIVE INCARNATION.

REFERENCES & SOURCES: "THE KEY TO THEOSOPHY" BY H.P. BLAVATSKY, P. 91-92, 135-136, 174-176.

...the child, will affect also the astral body. . . . 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 *lingasarira*, but which I would propose to call, for greater convenience, “Protean” or “Plastic Body.”” (HPB, “Dialogues Between The Two Editors: On Astral Bodies, or Doppelgangers)

“In the ordinary man who has not been trained in practical occultism or who has not the faculty by birth, the astral body cannot go more than a few feet from the physical one. It is a part of that physical, it sustains it and is incorporated in it just as the fibers of the mango are all through that fruit. But there are those who, by reason of practices pursued in former lives on the earth, have a power born with them of unconsciously sending out the astral body. These are mediums, some seers, and many hysterical, cataleptic, and scrofulous people. Those who have trained themselves by a long course of excessively hard discipline which reaches to the moral and mental nature and quite beyond the power of the average man of the day, can use the astral form at will, for they have gotten completely over the delusion that the physical body is a permanent part of them, and, besides, they have learned the chemical and electrical laws governing in this matter. In their case they act with knowledge and consciously; in the other cases the act is done without power to prevent it, or to bring it about at will, or to avoid the risks attendant on such use of potencies in nature of a high character.” (WQJ, “The Ocean of Theosophy” p. 41-42)

“**Astral Light** . . . The invisible region that surrounds our globe, as it does every other, and corresponding as the second Principle of Kosmos (the third being Life, of which it is the vehicle) to the *Linga Sharira* or the Astral Double in man. A subtle Essence visible only to a clairvoyant eye, and the lowest but one (*viz.*, the earth), of the Seven Akasic or Kosmic Principles.” (HPB, “Theosophical Glossary” p. 38)

STRUCTURE OF THE ASTRAL BODY

“The astral body is made of matter of very fine texture as compared with the visible body, and has a great tensile strength, so that it changes but little during a lifetime, while the physical alters every moment. And not only has it this immense strength, but at the same time possesses an elasticity permitting its extension to a considerable distance. It is flexible, plastic, extensible, and strong. The matter of which it is composed is electrical and magnetic in its essence, and is just what the whole world was composed of in the dim past when the processes of evolution had not yet arrived at the point of producing the material body for man. But it is not raw or crude matter.” (WQJ, “The Ocean of Theosophy” p. 39)

“This astral body, or double, permeates the physical one as color does the bowl of water. And although to the materialistic conceptions of the present day such a misty shadow is not admitted to have *parts, powers, and organs*, it nevertheless has *all* of these with a surprising power and grasp. Although perhaps a mist, it can exert under proper conditions a force equal to the viewless wind when it levels to earth the proud constructions of puny man. . . . the astral one . . . is the mediator between mind and matter. Hearing the commands of mind, he causes the physical nerves to act and thus the whole body. All the senses have their seat in this person, and every one of them is a thousand-fold more extensive in range than their outer representatives,

for those outer eyes and ears, and sense of touch, taste, and smell, are only gross organs which the inner ones use, but which of themselves can do nothing. . . .

“The structure of the inner astral man is definite and coherent. . . . Just as the outer body has a spine which is the column whereon the being sustains itself with the brain at the top, so the astral body has its spine and brain. It is material, for it is made of matter, however finely divided, and is not of the nature of the spirit. . . . at birth it is potentially of a certain size, and when that limit is reached it stops the further extension of the body, making possible what are known today as average weights and average sizes. At the same time the outer body is kept in shape by the inner one until the period of decay. And this decay, followed by death, is not due to bodily disintegration *per se*, but to the fact that the term of the astral body is reached, when it is no longer able to hold the outer frame intact.” (WQJ, “Mesmerism” article)

“There are cases – perhaps rare – in which five years before the death of the physical, a clairvoyant has seen the disintegration of the astral beginning. The idea intended to be conveyed is that, regardless of periods of time, if the man is going to die naturally (and that includes by disease), the corruption, disintegrating or breaking up of the astral body may be perceived by those who can see in that way.” (WQJ, “Letters That Have Helped Me” p. 115-116)

“The astral body is the guiding model for the physical one, and all the other kingdoms have the same astral model. Vegetables, minerals, and animals have the ethereal double and this theory is the only one which will answer the question how it is that the seed produces its own kind and all sentient beings bring forth their like. . . . at the present time the model for the growing child in the womb is the astral body . . . It is on this the molecules arrange themselves until the child is complete, and the presence of the ethereal design-body will explain how the form grows into shape, how the eyes push themselves out from within to the surface of the face, and many other mysterious matters in embryology which are passed over by medical men with a description but with no explanation.

“This will also explain, as nothing else can, the cases of marking of the child in the womb sometimes denied by physicians but well known by those who care to watch, to be a fact of frequent occurrence. The growing physical form is subject to the astral model; it is connected with the imagination of the mother by physical and psychical organs; the mother makes a strong picture from horror, fear, or otherwise, and the astral model is then similarly affected. In the case of marking by being born legless, the ideas and strong imagination of the mother act so as to cut off or shrivel up the astral leg, and the result is that the molecules, having no model of leg to work on, make no physical leg whatever; and similarly in all such cases. But where we find a man who still feels the leg which the surgeon has cut off, or perceives the fingers that were amputated, then the astral member has not been interfered with, and hence the man feels as if it were still on his person. For knife or acid will not injure the astral model, but in the first stages of its growth ideas and imagination have the power of acid and sharpened steel.” (WQJ, “The Ocean of Theosophy” p. 39-41)

ASTRAL PROJECTION AND TRAVEL

“Among all the phenomena, that of re-percussion, closely allied with those of bi-location and aerial “travelling,” is the most astounding. In the middle ages it was included under the head of sorcery. . . . “The prodigy of re-percussion,” says des Mousseaux, “occurs when a blow aimed at the spirit, visible or otherwise, of an absent living person, or at the phantom which represents him, strikes this person himself, at the same time, and in the very place at which the spectre or

his double is touched! We must suppose, therefore, that the blow is re-percussed, and that it reaches, as if rebounding, from the image of the living person – his phantasmal duplicate – the original, wherever he may be, in flesh and blood.” (HPB, “Isis Unveiled” Vol. 1, p. 360)

“As whatever hits or affects the astral reacts by repercussion on the physical body, it becomes logical and stands to reason that, by stabbing the likeness in its vital parts – the heart, for instance – the original may be sympathetically killed, without any one being able to detect the cause of it.” (HPB, “Animated Statues” article)

“. . . the *projection* of the *astral entity* . . . This phenomenon is no more a miracle than one’s reflection in a looking-glass. No one can detect in such an image a particle of matter, and still there stands our double, faithfully representing, even to each single hair on our heads. If, by this simple law of reflection, our double can be seen in a mirror, how much more striking a proof of its existence is afforded in the art of photography! . . . Therefore, as every man – in common with every other living, and even inert object – has an *aura* of his own emanations surrounding him; and, moreover, is enabled, by a trifling effort, to transport himself in *imagination* wherever he likes, why is it scientifically impossible that his thought, regulated, intensified, and guided by that powerful magician, the educated WILL, may become corporealized for the time being, and appear to whom it likes, a faithful double of the original? Is the proposition, in the present state of science, any more unthinkable than the photograph or telegraph were less than forty years ago, or the telephone less than fourteen months ago? . . . there is no reason why the adepts, the alchemists, the savants of the secret art, should not have already found out that which scientists deny to-day, but may discover true tomorrow, *i.e.*, how to project electrically their astral bodies, in an instant, through thousands of miles of space, leaving their material shells with a certain amount of animal vital principle to keep the physical life going, and acting within their spiritual, ethereal bodies as safely and intelligently as when clothed with the covering of flesh? There is a higher form of electricity than the physical one known to experimenters; a thousand correlations of the latter are as yet veiled to the eye of the modern physicist, and none can tell where end its possibilities.” (HPB, “Isis Unveiled” Vol. 2, p. 619-620)

“At the time when Abbé Huc [i.e. a French Catholic priest, missionary, and traveller, 1813-1860] was living in Paris, after his return from Thibet, he related, among other unpublished wonders, to a Mr Arsenieff, a Russian gentleman, the following curious fact that he had witnessed during his long sojourn at the lamasery of Kounboum. One day while conversing with one of the lamas, the latter suddenly stopped speaking, and assumed the attentive attitude of one who is listening to a message being delivered to him, although he (Huc) heard never a word. “Then, I must go”; suddenly broke forth the lama, as if in response to the message.

“Go where?” inquired the astonished “lama of Jehovah” (Huc). “And with whom are you talking?”

“To the lamasery of * * *,” was the quiet answer. “The Shaberon wants me; it was he who summoned me.”

“Now this lamasery was many days’ journey from that of Kounboum, in which the conversation was taking place. But what seemed to astonish Huc the most was, that, instead of setting off on his journey, the lama simply walked to a sort of cupola-room on the roof of the house in which they lived, and another lama, after exchanging a few words, followed them to the terrace by means of the ladder, and passing between them, locked and barred his companion in. Then turning to Huc after a few seconds of meditation, he smiled and informed the guest that “he had gone.”

“But how could he? Why you have locked him in, and the room has no issue?” insisted the missionary.

“And what good would a door be to him?” answered the custodian. “*It is he himself who went away; his body is not needed, and so he left it in my charge.*”

“Notwithstanding the wonders which Huc had witnessed during his perilous journey, his opinion was that both of the lamas had mystified him. But three days later, not having seen his habitual friend and entertainer, he inquired after him, and was informed that he would be back in the evening. At sunset, and just as the “other lamas” were preparing to retire, Huc heard his absent friend’s voice calling as if from the clouds, to his companion to open the door for him. Looking upward, he perceived the “traveller’s” outline behind the lattice of the room where he had been locked in. When he descended he went straight to the Grand Lama of Kounboum, and delivered to him certain messages and “orders,” from the place which he “pretended” he had just left. Huc could get no more information from him as to his *aerial* voyage. But he always thought, he said, that this “farce” had something to do with the immediate and extraordinary preparations for the polite expulsion of both the missionaries, himself and Father Gabet, to Chogor-tan, a place belonging to the Kounboum. The suspicion of the daring missionary may have been correct, in view of his impudent inquisitiveness and indiscretion.

“If the Abbé had been versed in Eastern philosophy, he would have found no great difficulty in comprehending both the flight of the lama’s astral body to the distant lamasery while his physical frame remained behind, or the carrying on of a conversation with the Shaberon that was inaudible to himself.” (HPB, “Isis Unveiled” Vol. 2, p. 604-605)

REINCARNATION AND THE RIGHT KIND OF PROGRESS

“As the *individual* Soul is ever the same, so are the atoms of the lower principles (body, its astral, or *life double*, etc.), drawn as they are by affinity and Karmic law always to the same individuality in a series of various bodies, etc., etc.” (HPB, “The Secret Doctrine” Vol. 2, p. 672)

“When the Soul is reincarnating it attracts to itself those physical and astral atoms which are like unto its old experience as far as possible. It often gets back again some of the identical matter it used in its last life. And if the astral senses have received in the prior existence on earth great attention and development, then there will be born a medium or a real seer or sage. Which it will be depends upon the great balancing of forces from the prior life. For instance, one who in another incarnation attended wholly to psychic development without philosophy, or made other errors, will be born, maybe, as an irresponsible medium; another, again, of the same class, emerges as a wholly untrustworthy partial clairvoyant, and so on *ad infinitum*.

“A birth in a family of wise devotees and real sages is declared from old time to be very difficult of attainment. This difficulty may be gradually overcome by philosophical study and unselfish effort for others, together with devotion to the Higher Self pursued through many lives. Any other sort of practice leads only to additional bewilderment.” (WQJ, “The Sheaths of the Soul” article)

“BY ASTRAL HAND”

After William Judge’s passing in 1896, Theosophical magazines reported his writing of a message “by astral hand” when he had been literally right on the verge of death two years previously and which was then, in 1896, read out at his cremation. This unusual happening, apparently from 1894, was described by Claude Falls Wright, saying that, “It was a solemn scene, and one I shall never forget. The soul was about to leave its earthly tenement and the president’s [i.e. Judge’s] hand was utterly powerless. But, as the serenity of what is called death was settling on his features, we all observed a slight fluttering among the papers that lay on the table beside his bed. Turning our eyes in that direction, what was our astonishment to see the hand of a man, a white delicate hand, write several lines on the blank page of a book, the title of which is *The Ocean of Theosophy*. Those best acquainted with Mr. Judge say the hand was his. As for the lines, I cannot remember them exactly, but I know they related to one of the principal tenets of our belief. When the hand had completed the writing, Mr. Judge sighed lightly, and closed his eyes.”

Newspapers in New York were so intrigued by such accounts that they contacted Wright, who was reported as saying to “The Morning Advertiser” that “We are not accustomed to seek publicity or notoriety, but as we have nothing to conceal, and since you are persistent, here is the paper you refer to.” The 26th March 1896 edition of that newspaper contained a photographic reproduction of the message that had been written by William Judge’s astral hand. The first sentence was a line from the Isha Upanishad. It read:

BY ASTRAL HAND

[*The Morning Advertiser*, March 26, 1896.]

WILLIAM Q. JUDGE'S DEATH BED MESSAGE.

*The is no room for sorrow in the heart of
him who knows and realizes the Unity
of all spiritual beings. While people,
monuments and governments disappear
the self remains & returns again. The
wise are not disturbed, they remain
silent; they depend on the Self and
seek their refuge in it* ¶

This script which I hand you was written by the late William Q. Judge when death was upon him. When I say it was written by Mr. Judge I do not mean by his earthly hand. It was written by his ego, what you may call his astral hand.

CLAUDE FALLS WRIGHT

[“There is no room for sorrow in the heart of him who knows and realizes the Unity of all spiritual beings. While people, monuments and governments disappear — the self remains and returns again. The wise are not disturbed; they remain silent; they depend on the Self and seek their refuge in it.”]