



# **THE ETHERIC DOUBLE ?**

THE FAR-REACHING EFFECTS  
OF A FALSE ASSUMPTION

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DIFFERENCES IN THEOSOPHICAL TEACHINGS

AN EXAMINATION OF SOME OF THE DIFFERENCES IN DATA AND  
TERMINOLOGY BETWEEN THE ORIGINAL LITERATURE AND LATER VERSIONS

Introduction

There are many of the more thoughtful students of Theosophy and many teachers who are genuinely confused at the discrepancies they find between what has become known as second generation Theosophy (the Annie Besant/ C.W. Leadbeater or A.B./C.W.L. system) and the teachings of the two Masters instrumental in setting up the Theosophical Society and introducing Theosophy as given out through H.P. Blavatsky (the H.P.B./ Masters system).

These discrepancies do not come to light as long as only one system is studied. In the minds of such students there are no difficulties or inconsistencies to worry about. The attitude can then well be that really there cannot be any serious divergences because surely the source of data, the main outlines of the Esoteric Science, are common to both systems, therefore discrepancies are likely to be trivial and really inconsiderable. This attitude is not really tenable but it is one generally held by those who have studied nothing but second generation literature. Moreover, it is this second generation literature which has become the commonly accepted one throughout the Adyar Society and generally in the world at large. Its classifications of the principles of man and the planes of Cosmos are now the commonly accepted ones. They do not accord, however, with those originally given out in the vast Blavatsky literature. Some of the areas of difference are presented and examined in this article. It will be seen that nearly all hinge on the introduction into the A.B./C.W.L. literature of the Etheric Body into the constitution of man. Many alterations not only to that

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constitution but also to the planes of Nature had to be made to accommodate this introduction, chiefly to preserve a sevenfold classification.

The purpose of this paper is not only to point out the discrepancies but to demonstrate that they are unjustified because there is not and cannot be such a thing as an Etheric Body constituted as described by Leadbeater.

The ramifications of the impossibility of there being such a body are discussed.

### Some Areas of Difference

The main areas of difference are in the classification of the human principles and the 'planes' of being. These differences stemmed from the division in the A.B./C.W.L. system of the physical plane into seven sub-planes, with three of them regarded as dense physical and four as 'etheric', a term first used by Leadbeater to describe four states of matter he had observed during a clairvoyant examination of the common physical elements.

In the book *Occult Chemistry* which records some prolonged and painstaking investigation work done by Leadbeater and Besant over about three decades in their discoveries of the graded formation and the nature of the sub-atomic aggregations that make up physical atoms, there is a passage towards the end describing four pre-normal states of the common elements of Carbon, Hydrogen, Nitrogen and Oxygen which Leadbeater named 'etheric'. He added that this was done 'perhaps unadvisedly' (see *Occult Chemistry* revised edition 1919, table opposite p.7, and Appendix after p.109). He said this because of the sense in which the word 'ether' was then being commonly used. Ether was then regarded as the postulated universal all-pervading 'substance' which conveyed electro-magnetic vibrations such as heat, light, electric charge, etc., throughout space and through a vacuum. Nevertheless, the term 'etheric' as above defined was adopted and became generally used thereafter in the A.B./C.W.L. literature, making three gross states, viz. solid, liquid and gaseous, and four etheric states.

It is important to note that these investigations were done clairvoyantly, or, in the author's parlance, using astral sight (presumably in Blavatsky's nomenclature). This is

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important because, according to the Blavatsky teachings, there is a laya centre, or neutral condition between each plane of Cosmos and it is explained that senses of a different order are needed for each plane. In other words, physical senses will not respond to 'astral' stimuli and vice versa. This means that anyone using 'etheric' (astral) sight could not be seeing physical matter. What would be seen would be the etheric (astral) counterpart of the physical, not the physical itself. In order to examine these 'etheric' sub-atomic structures Leadbeater had to use a special power of the will (siddhi) to break down the atoms from their normal state (of gaseous) to the abnormal disintegrated sub-states which he saw. It must be stressed, however, that these sub-states of matter were created by Leadbeater using his siddhi, and that they do not exist in the normal way, either in the 'etheric' (astral) plane or at physical level. They have never been observed as existing in the 'free' state at physical level, although specimen states corresponding to them may exist under abnormal conditions, for example during sophisticated and powerful experiments. If they exist at physical level they would be observable by normal physical senses or suitable sense-extending instruments. Similarly the astral (Blavatsky) world being that from which all that is in the physical is projected, would contain the counterparts of 'etheric' atomic states normally (i.e. without Leadbeater having to break down atoms into their constituent parts). However, they do not, or he would have seen them without having to use his siddhi.

If these 'etheric' states do not exist at physical level, there is no matter of which the 'etheric' double could be composed. That there was, was an assumption made by Leadbeater. This assumption could have been checked by his clairvoyantly examining an Etheric Body direct. There is no record of such an examination and presumably none was made, i.e. the assumption of the composition of an Etheric Body was not checked by direct observation, neither was the real existence of such a body (as described) ever established by him or any other person.

The 'etheric' states of physical matter, or its astral Blavatsky counterpart, were 'created' by Leadbeater, and the idea of an 'etheric' body or semi-physical plane, was an unsound deduction.

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### Leadbeater's 'Etheric' States of Matter

The conception of an 'Etheric Body' and its location on an 'etheric' semi-physical plane arose from the naming as described of what might be regarded as the formative stages of the atoms of common chemical elements, by a series of aggregations of what Besant and Leadbeater called the ultimate physical atom (Anu). It is important to note that, whereas in such a developmental stage, i.e. moving from one 'etheric' state to the next, there is a change in atomic structure, but in the three normal states of matter, i.e. solid, liquid and gaseous, there is no such change. This is an inconsistency from the normal process of change of state.

Besant refers (on p 72 of *The Ancient Wisdom*) to these etheric stages as 'higher' than the physical atoms of science. There is a serious objection to this contention in that the 'etheric' states are clearly formative, i.e. more primitive states than those of the elements as they now exist. If there were such a thing as an Etheric Body it would be lower on the evolutionary scale than the physical body.

Furthermore, as pointed out above, apart from the chemical elements (listed in the periodic table) composed according to Leadbeater of the sub-atomic particles of his investigations, which comprise the 'matter' of our objective world, Leadbeater's sub-particles have normally no independent existence. Therefore no bodies, and no plane, could be composed of them.

Besant later, consistently with the original (Blavatsky) literature, added 'fire' to the gross physical states, corresponding the classical four elemental states of Earth, Water, Air and Fire and the invisible beings, the elementals, supposed in mediaeval times to have been associated with them, viz. the gnomes, the sylphs, the undines and the salamanders. These four Elements correspond in the original literature to the tattvic states of matter which include Fire but the A.B./C.W.L. classification in *Occult Chemistry* omits Fire as a state of matter, having however its four etheric states. If Fire is included as an element there is room only for three etheric states. In Blavatsky's classical scheme there are seven tattvic states.

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Tattvas and corresponding States of Matter

In several places Blavatsky identified the four states of matter, viz. earth, water, air, fire, and associated them with elementals of corresponding classes and with the Tattvas under the Hindu names of Prithivi, Apas, Tejas, Vayu. Continuing up the tattvic scale she put the 5th as Alaya or Akasa, and then mentioned two more above that, viz. a 6th, Anupadaka and a 7th, Adi. These are the expressions used in the Table opposite p 500 in S.D.III (C.W.XII, 614; E.W., 399) and compared with the A.B./C.W.L. nomenclature in the table below:

TABLE I  
 Comparative Table of the STATES OF MATTER in the two Systems

H.P.B./MASTERS SYSTEM			A.B./C.W.L. SYSTEM	
TATTVAS	No.	ELEMENTS & STATES OF MATTER	No.	STATES OF MATTER (Unrelated to Tattvas)
ADI	7	AETHER (Akasa)	1	ETHER 4 (Ultimate Physical Atom. Anu)
ANUPADAKA	6	DIVINE FLAME	2	ETHER 3 <u>Etheric</u>
ALAYA (or AKASA)	5	ETHER	3	ETHER 2 <u>Physical</u>
TEJAS	4	FIRE	4	ETHER 1
VAYU	3	AIR	5	----- AIR. GASEOUS <u>Gross</u>
APAS	2	WATER	6	WATER. LIQUID <u>Physical</u>
PRITHVI	1	EARTH	7	EARTH. SOLID  (Fire omitted)

Note the inverted numbering.

Notes

- 1) Adi simply means first or supreme - not used to apply to a plane in the S.D.
- 2) Anupadaka (lit. parentless) - apart from being the name of a tattva, it was applied to the seven Dhyani Buddhas (see S.D.I, 571, 3rd Ed., 624, 4th Ed., 295)
- 3) The inversion of the numbering should be noted. It is a further cause of confusion to students.

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In the S.D.III Table the 5th Tattva (Alaya) is referred to as Akasa, but is the equivalent of the 2nd differentiation from Adi: commonly in the text of the S.D. Akasa is synonymous with Aether, i.e. the One Element. Alaya is referred to elsewhere as (and corresponds to) Ether. Further it must be noted that the Table in *The Secret Doctrine* shows the correspondences of the Tattvas with, among other things, the human Principles, which include the Linga Sarira (as such). Ether is significantly mentioned on p 12 of S.D.I (3rd Ed., 40, 4th Ed., 78) wherein it says,

For clearer understanding on the part of the general reader, it must be stated that Occult Science recognizes *seven* cosmical elements, four entirely physical and the 5th (Ether) semi-material, as it will become visible in the air towards the end of our Fourth Round, to reign supreme over the others during the whole of the Fifth. The remaining two are as yet absolutely beyond the range of human perception. These latter will, however, appear as presentments during the sixth and seventh Races of this round, and will become known in the sixth and seventh Rounds respectively.

Obviously the first four entirely physical elements are those enumerated above and the fifth, Ether, is in the process of manifesting now, but the other elements, whether regarded as Ethers or not, are not yet manifest on our globe. There is therefore nothing in the H.P.B./Masters system that could correspond to the A.B./C.W.L. system's four 'ethers or etheric states of matter.

### Sub-atomic States of Matter

It can be asked, if the above is true, what is the matter that is manifest at spiritualistic seances as ectoplasm and of what are the 'auras' of Kirlian photography composed?

To answer the second question first, Kirlian photographs are relatively high voltage discharges affected by the emanations from living bodies, or where a part of a body has been detached (cut off or severed by accident) the astral (not etheric) model still remaining intact affects the discharge. An understanding of this involves a knowledge of how forms or models in the astral are projected into objectivity at physical level.

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The first question concerning the exuding of the matter called ectoplasm from mediums (spiritualistic) during seances involves a process of the disintegration of the physical substance of the medium's body, i.e. the creation of a special state of physical matter for the time being. The phantom's weight increases as that of the medium correspondingly decreases. Ectoplasm is exuded as an amorphous mass from an orifice, e.g. mouth or nostril, and then it, or some of it, assumes a form, or a number of forms, of recognizable likenesses. These are impressed on the substance by psychic (astral) force by elementals from patterns in the minds of those present or in the Astral Light.

Blavatsky describes (see S.D.I, 257, 3rd Ed., 267, 4th Ed., 259) what characteristic of matter will correspond to the 'etheric' state when it does manifest, and she says it will be that of 'permeability'. Along with it a sixth sense will develop in man which will enable him to see 'through' solid matter. Not only that, in the then proper 'etheric' state a solid object will be able to pass through another solid one, say a wall, or knots will be able to be tied in an endless cord, etc. This is something that elementals are now able to do and sometimes do at seances. If the etheric states as described by Leadbeater were of this nature this state of permeability and the sixth sense would also be here now, but they are not. It should be noted that, just as Leadbeater 'created' his 'etheric states of matter, so there must be other states of matter than those we normally know - as implied a number of times by Blavatsky - which do not ordinarily exist in a free state. An example of the temporary creation of one of these abnormal states would be that of the endless cord knots just cited, wherein abnormal states of matter would have been created by the Elementals.

### Established Terminology

When Blavatsky wanted to describe something non-physical and tenuous in nature she used the word 'ethereal' (not etheric), which again she specifically related to the astral plane (see S.D.II, 299, 3rd Ed., 313, 4th Ed., 300). Further, towards the end of an article that she entitled 'A Danger Signal' written for La Revue Théosophique, April 1889, (see C.W.XI, 185 et seq.) Blavatsky makes the following statement: 'The terminology established some



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fifteen years ago in the Theosophical Society is the correct one, because in every case these terms are a faithful translation of their Sanskrit equivalents, almost as old as the latest human race', and then significantly she adds, 'This terminology could not be modified at present without running the risk of introducing into the theosophical teachings a chaos which would be deplorable and dangerous to their clarity'. This statement is particularly relevant and significant in the light of what in fact happened to the theosophical terminology in the books written later on.

It was in 1889 that Blavatsky wrote *The Key to Theosophy* and therein she very carefully defined her terms and their meanings. Towards the end of Chapter IX (p 171 Original Ed.) she wrote a section, 'Definite words for definite things'. In this she was concerned that the terminology should be settled. She used a large part of that section for definitions of the elements of the human 'soul'. In a footnote (p 175) she puts, 'Shifting of *Metaphysical terms*', which she says 'applies here only to the shifting of their translated equivalents from the Eastern expressions: for to this day there never existed such terms in English, every Theosophist having to coin his own terms to render his thought. It is high time then to settle on some definite nomenclature', and this she did in *The Key* where she defined precisely all the more commonly used words and gave their Sanskrit equivalents. She set out the constitution of man, giving the English equivalents of the Eastern names, in Table II on the following page.

Besant's *The Ancient Wisdom* was written in 1897, eight years after this terminology had been established. In it (p 194) she equates the Linga Sarira to her Etheric Double which in her system, as explained above, she places on the physical plane. This introduces a difficulty because the Linga Sarira in the Hindu and original theosophical sense is on the plane above the physical.

It must also be remembered that, according to Blavatsky, there is a Laya Centre between the physical plane proper and the one of the Linga Sarira (the astral) above it, and therefore distinctly different sets of senses operate on the planes on either side of the Laya Centres. The physical is cognizable by physical senses but the plane of the Linga Sarira (the

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Astral in the Blavatsky system) is not; the latter requires astral senses, i.e. those of clairvoyance and clairaudience. In the A.B./C.W.L. system, however, the Etheric Body or Double being 'etheric' physical, but on the physical plane, would not be separated from the dense physical by a Laya Centre: physical senses would therefore apply to both the gross physical and the etheric physical.

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TABLE II  
 THEOSOPHICAL DIVISION

SANSKRIT TERMS	ESOTERIC MEANING	EXPLANATORY
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The Lower (personal) Quaternary:-

(a) Rupa, or Sthula Sharira	(a) Physical Body	(a) Is the vehicle of all the other 'principles' during life.
(b) Prana	(b) Life, or vital principle	(b) Necessary only to a, c, d, and the functions of the lower Manas, which embrace all those limited to the <i>physical</i> brain.
(c) Linga Sharira	(c) Astral body	(c) The double, the phantom body.
(d) Kama Rupa	(d) The seat of animal desires and passions	(d) This is the centre of the animal man, where lies the line of demarcation which separates the moral man from the immoral entity.

The Upper Imperishable Triad:-

(e) Manas - a dual principle in its functions	(e) Mind, intelligence; the higher human mind, whose light or radiation links the Monad, for the life-time, to the mortal man.	(e) The future state and the karmic destiny of man depend on whether Manas more gravitates downward to Kama Rupa, the seat of the animal passions, or upwards to Buddhi, the spiritual Ego. In the latter case, the higher consciousness of the individual spiritual aspirations of mind (Manas), assimilating Buddhi, are absorbed by it and form the Ego, which goes into devachanic bliss.
(f) Buddhi	(f) The spiritual soul	(f) The vehicle of pure universal spirit
(g) Atma	(g) Spirit	(g) One with the Absolute, as its radiation

[Key VI, 91/2, Original Ed.]

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She gave some further significant definitions which are of relevance in the light of some later usage of the terms:

I. Atma, the Higher Self, is neither your spirit nor mine, but like sunlight shines on all. It is the universally diffused divine principle, and is inseparable from its one and absolute super-spirit, as the sunbeam is inseparable from sunlight.

II. Buddhi, the spiritual soul is only its vehicle. Neither Atma nor Buddhi separately, nor the two collectively, are of any more use to the body of man, than sunlight and its beams are for a mass of granite buried in the earth, unless the divine duad is assimilated by, and reflected in, *some consciousness*. Neither Atma nor Buddhi are ever reached by Karma, because the former is the highest aspect of Karma, *the working agent of Itself* in one aspect, and the latter is unconscious *on this Plane*. This consciousness or mind is

III. Manas, the derivation or product in a reflected form, of *ahamkara*, 'the conception of I,' or 'Ego-ship'. It is, therefore, when inseparably united to the first two, called the spiritual Ego, and *taijasa*, the radiant. This is the real individuality, or the divine man. It is this Ego which - having originally incarnated in the senseless human form animated by, but unconscious of, the presence in itself of the dual monad, since it had no consciousness - made of that human-like form a real *man*. It is this Ego, this 'causal body', which overshadows every personality into which Karma forces it to incarnate. It is this Ego which is held responsible for all the sins committed through and in, every new body or personality - the evanescent masks which hide the true individual through the long series of rebirths. [Key VIII, 135]

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*The Higher Self*  
is

Atma, the inseparable ray of the Universal and One SELF. It is the God above, more than within us. Happy the man who succeeds in saturating his *Inner Ego* with it!

*The Spiritual  
Divine Ego* is

the spiritual soul or Buddhi, in close union with Manas, the mind-principle, without which the former is no Ego at all, but only the Atmic Vehicle.

*The Inner, or  
Higher Ego,* is

Manas, the 'fifth' principle, so called, independently of Buddhi. The mind-principle is only the *Spiritual Ego* when merged into one with Buddhi; no materialist being supposed to have in him *such* an Ego, however great his intellectual capacities. It is the permanent *individuality* or the reincarnating Ego. *The Lower, or Personal ego,* is the physical man in conjunction with his *lower* self, i.e. animal

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instincts, passions, desires, etc. It is called the false *personality*, and consists of the lower Manas combined with Kama Rupa, and operating through the physical body and its phantom or double. [Key IX, 176]

It is also important to note that, whereas there are tattvic correspondences to the solid, liquid, gaseous and fiery states of matter, there are none to the four physical 'etheric' states.

### Besant's Terminology

In her book *The Ancient Wisdom*, in a footnote, Besant says, 'Linga Sarira was the name *originally* given to the Etheric Body and must not be confused with the Linga Sarira of Hindu philosophy. Sthula Sarira is the Sanskrit name for the dense body'. But the 'Etheric Body' is her modern term and Linga Sarira is an ancient one. She does not explain the origins of the term 'Etheric Body' nor what she meant by 'originally', but in the original (Blavatsky) theosophical literature there is no 'etheric' body or state of matter. Besant does not say why the Etheric Body should not be confused with the Linga Sarira. She implies that the term Etheric Body was somehow of more ancient usage than Linga Sarira but does not justify her statement. It was certainly used as a word by mediaeval and even 19th century occultists but not in the sense in which Besant used it. To this double, however, she ascribed most of the characteristics and qualities of the astral body (2nd principle) of the Blavatsky system, often referred to by its Indian name Linga Sarira.

In the H.P.B./Masters literature the word 'etheric' does appear in a few places, e.g. concerning the force used in the Keeley motor (see S.D.I, 562, 3rd Ed., 613, 4th Ed., 285)) but there Blavatsky expressly relates 'etheric' to Astral (i.e. her 2nd plane). It could be that in contrasting it with the meaning given to the word by the Hindus Besant was thinking of Linga Sarira being translated as 'sex-body' (see C.W.IV, 53), Linga being the Sanskrit word for phallus or maleness. Blavatsky does mention this but persists with her use of the word. The meaning she gave to Linga Sarira in her Theosophical Glossary is as follows:

*'Linga Sarira.* The 'body', i.e., the aerial symbol of the body. This term designates the *doppelgänger* or the 'astral body' of man or animal. It is the *eidolon* of the Greeks, the vital and *prototypal* body; the reflection of the man of flesh. It is born *before* and dies or fades out, with the disappearance of the last atom of the body.'

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It is used in this sense consistently throughout the Blavatsky writings. Linga Sarira is the direct equivalent of Blavatsky's astral body. Later she explains the Linga Sarira's relationship to the Kama and Mayavi Rupas in *Collected Writings Vol.IV*, p 53.

In all the voluminous literature that came during and after the Besant era, the astral plane became identified with the Kama Loca (4th Blavatsky plane), but to add to the confusion many of the qualities ascribed to the astral plane in the later literature were in fact those of the astral plane (2nd) as originally described by Blavatsky, and sometimes of the Astral Light (Blavatsky).

Little or no mention of the Astral Light, as such, is made in the later literature in spite of its importance, particularly in explaining psychic phenomena. Another important difference between the A.B./C.W.L. view on 'etheric' states and the H.P.B./Masters description of Ether is that the former might be regarded, as 'developmental' states of matter, and would then be associated with the processes of involution, whereas the tattvic Ether and higher states are evolutionary, i.e. they will appear only in the Rounds after our present fourth.

Besant said she was making these changes to eradicate confusions but it is difficult to see that any confusions existed, especially as Blavatsky had been at such pains to define her terms which she used consistently throughout both her own and the Masters' writings.

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### Principles and Planes

Many confusions were introduced by the changes made by Besant in both the terminology and classifications of the principles and planes. A fundamental one was the use of the word 'Monadic' to describe a plane (2nd) (see Table IV below). Monad is defined in the Blavatsky literature as a duad, the combination of Atma and Buddhi. It is also used in the universal sense to include Mahat i.e. Monad is then regarded as a triad (see S.D.I, 570, 3rd Ed., 623, 4th Ed., 293). There is a reference in the S.D. Vol.III to the Monad as both a duality and a triad, but by the latter the Ego (the upper Triad in man) is obviously meant. Although Monad as defined by Blavatsky is one and indivisible, the triad Atma-Buddhi-Manas is sometimes referred to in her literature as the human Ego (see terminology and definitions given at the end of Chapter IX of *The Key*, p 176 in the Original Ed.).

The division of the physical plane by Besant into two (a dense lower and an upper etheric) not only meant a radical rearrangement of the principles of man, but also affected the naming of the planes in Nature on which the 'subjective' globes of a Chain are placed. The H.P.B./Masters scale of principles is clearly set out in *The Key* (see Table II). Besant's variations on this are given on p 194 of her *The Ancient Wisdom* (Table III herein). They are also set out on p 48 and there are further variations in the footnote, where the numbering of the principles is inverted. Here Atma is allocated to the 5th plane, counting from the bottom, instead of the 7th (see Table IV). It is explained in the text that two higher principles above the 5th (3rd in Table IV) are beyond the consciousness of man at this time. No reference to any such higher principles or planes is given in the Blavatsky literature. Corresponding planes of Nature are given on p 3 of Besant's *A Study in Consciousness*. Here Adi and Anupadaka are names given to the two planes above Atma, whereas in the H.P.B./Masters classification Atma is supreme, i.e. no planes above it, and the names Adi and Anupadaka are those of the Tattvas *corresponding* to Atma and Buddhi (see Table I).

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TABLE III

COMPARATIVE TABLE OF CLASSIFICATION OF PLANES

MASTERS/H.P.B. System		A.B./C.W.L. System (OLD)	
		1	ADI
		2	ANUPADAKA
7	ATMA	3	ATMA
6	BUDDHI	4	BUDDHI
5	Higher MANAS ----- Lower	5	Higher MENTAL ----- Lower
4	KAMA	6	ASTRAL
3	PRANA		
2	LINGA SARIRA (Astral)		
1	STHULA SARIRA (Physical Body)	7	Etheric PHYSICAL ----- Dense

The inversion of the numbering should be noted.  
 It is a further cause of confusion to students.

Note Table IV (p 14) for new names of planes in A.B./C.W.L. system (see Besant's *Study in Consciousness*, p 3)



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Besant applied the word 'Monadic' (see Table IV) to her No.2 plane (counting downwards) making it superior to the Spiritual (Atmic). Apart from the fact that in the classical system there is no 'plane' above Atma, Besant's nomenclature is illogical in that whether Monad is regarded as a duad or triad, Atma is its highest component. Any combination of Atma with Buddhi and Manas, both derivatives of 'Atma', could not possibly be superior to Atma.

On p 194 of *The Ancient Wisdom* Besant gives a table of principles and 'forms'. Under the forms she lists a series of bodies which she says corresponds to the Koshas in the Vedantic classification, but here she relates Atma to the bliss, Buddhi to the causal and Manas to the mental body respectively. These terms are not so used in the Blavatsky system where the causal body corresponds to the higher Manas and bliss to Buddhi (see S.D.I, 157, 3rd Ed., 181, 4th Ed., 211). In Besant's Table the astral body is equated to Kama, or the animal soul, and the Etheric Double to Linga Sarira and the dense body to Sthula Sarira. Underneath the Table Besant says: 'It will be seen that the difference is merely a question of names and that the 6th, 5th, 4th and 3rd 'principles' (not however numbered in the Table) are merely Atma working in the buddhic, causal, mental and astral bodies while the 2nd and 1st principles are the two lowest bodies themselves'. To this statement was added, 'This sudden change in the method of naming is apt to cause confusion in the mind of the student, and as Blavatsky, our revered teacher, expressed much dissatisfaction with the then current nomenclature as confused and misleading and desired others and myself to try and improve it, the above names as descriptive, simple and representing the facts are here adopted'. The changes, together with others, made by Besant did not in fact represent the same 'facts', e.g. the invention and insertion of the 'etheric' body, but they were adopted both within and outside the Theosophical Society. In the meanwhile they have virtually become standard 'Theosophy'. It is difficult to understand how Blavatsky's 'then current nomenclature' was 'confused and misleading', in that so near to her death as 1889 when she wrote *The Key to Theosophy* she set out so clearly and simply the terminology which had been devised over

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many years with the Masters' cooperation. Up to that time there were no English expressions for the then devised terms, and there was certainly no confusion in them.

As an example of how Besant's new nomenclature was imposed on the membership of the T.S. (and the interested public), we have the following from Leadbeater's *Textbook of Theosophy*, p 61:

'The President has now decided upon a set of names for the planes, so for the future these will be used instead of those previously employed. A table of them is given below for reference.

TABLE IV

NEW NAMES		OLD NAMES
1	Divine World	Adi Plane
2	Monadic World	Anupadaka Plane
3	Spiritual World	Atmic or Nirvanic Plane
4	Intuitional World	Buddhic Plane
5	Mental World	Mental Plane
6	Emotional or Astral World	Astral Plane
7	Physical World	Physical Plane

'These will supersede the names given in Vol.II of *The Inner Life*.'

It will be noted that neither the 'New' nor the 'Old' names referred back to those given by Blavatsky.

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### Further Differences between the Systems

Confusions have certainly arisen because of the altered nomenclature and numbering of both planes and principles. In the H.P.B./Masters literature specific expressions are used quite consistently; for example, the Linga Sarira is always the astral body or the astral double. In the A.B./C.W.L. system this term, Linga Sarira, was dropped, together with its corresponding plane, as was also the principle of Prana and its plane. Both the Blavatsky astral and prana principles, however, have their corresponding states of consciousness, but both of these were omitted in the A.B./C.W.L. system.

It is true that Blavatsky made some variations in the ordinary septenary classification of planes and principles in the Papers for her Esoteric School, particularly in dividing Manas into upper and lower, and sometimes omitting the physical body as a principle, but she never altered the main theme of her sevenfold system, with Atma as the supreme principle and plane. It will be seen from the foregoing that the alterations made by Besant, which were generally adopted by later writers in the Society, e.g. Leadbeater, C. Jinarajadasa, A.E. Powell, etc., were more than mere terminological changes and certainly did nothing to improve clarity.

It is important to note what is said in S.D.III (495 fn, C.W.XII, 608 fn; E.W., 394 fn). 'It is erroneous to call the fourth [2nd in A.B./C.W.L.] human principle 'Kama Rupa'. It is no Rupa at all until after death, but stands for the Kamic elements in man, his animal desires and passions, such as anger, lust, envy, revenge, etc., the progeny of selfishness and matter'. This states categorically that there is no Astral Body (4th principle vehicle as such) until after death. In what body then it can be asked does 'astral' travel occur, if there is no body during life in which to travel? Blavatsky tells us,

'When a man visits another in his Astral Body, it is the Linga-sarira that goes, but this cannot happen at any great distance.

If a man thinks intensely of another at a distance, his Mayavi-Rupa (see later) may appear to that person, without the projector knowing anything about it. This Mayavi-rupa is formed by the unconscious use of Kriyashakti. (C.W.XII, 706/7).

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### Doubles

In the matter of the 'doubles' in man's constitution Blavatsky wrote an article, in question and answer form between herself and M.C., for *Lucifer* (December 1888, see C.W.X, 217 et seq.) 'On Astral Bodies, or Doppelgängers' wherein she clearly states:

*H.P.B.* Our occult philosophy teaches us there are three kinds of 'doubles', to use the word in its widest sense. (1) Man has his 'double' or *shadow*, properly so called, around which the physical body of the *foetus* - the future man - is built. The imagination of the mother, or an accident which affects the child, will affect also the astral body. The astral and the physical both exist before the mind is developed into action, and before the Atma awakes. This occurs when the child is seven years old, and with it comes the responsibility attaching to a conscious sentient being. This 'double' is born with man, dies with him and can never separate itself far from the body during life, and though surviving him, it disintegrates, *pari passu*, with the corpse. It is this, which is sometimes seen over the graves like a luminous figure of the man that was, during certain atmospheric conditions. From its physical aspect it is, during life, *man's vital double* and after death, only the gases given off from the decaying body. But, as regards its origin and essence, it is something more. This 'double' is what we have agreed to call *linga-sarira*, but which I would propose to call, for greater convenience, 'Protean' or 'Plastic Body'.

M.C. Why Protean or Plastic?

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

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

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

M.C. And what about the second?

*H.P.B.* The second is the 'Thought' body, or Dream body, rather; known among Occultists as the *Mayavi-rupa*, or 'illusion-body'. During life this image is the vehicle both of thought and of the animal passions and desires, drawing at one and the same time

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from the lowest terrestrial *manas*(mind) and *Kama*, the element of desire. It is *dual* in its potentiality, and after death forms, what is called in the East *Bhoot*, or *Kama-rupa*, but which is better known to theosophists as the 'Spook'.

M.C. And the third?

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

M.C. Then there are three doubles?

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

After this Blavatsky went on to explain the difference between the *Mayavi* and *Kama Rupa*, very relevant to 'astral' travel and the after-death states. All this explanation was to eradicate confusion.

### Man's Constitution as Principles and Aspects

There is important explanatory passage in SD.III, 493, or C.W.XII, 607, which gives another view of the elements of man's make-up, and which significantly supplements what was in *The Key* tabulated above. These extracts indicate how precisely Blavatsky defined the terms which had then been decided upon. The established classification and numbering of the principles of man were those used consistently throughout the massive Blavatsky literature.

Some variations on the main theme were made in her E.S. Papers but these were explained. It is hard to see how any confusion could have arisen prior to the changes made by Besant herself.

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### ABOUT 'PRINCIPLES' AND 'ASPECTS'

Speaking metaphorically and philosophically, on strict esoteric lines, man as a complete unit is composed of Four basic Principles and Three Aspects produced by them on this earth. In the semi-esoteric teachings, these Four and Three have been called Seven Principles, to facilitate the comprehension of the masses.

THE ETERNAL BASIC PRINCIPLES	TRANSITORY ASPECTS PRODUCED BY THE PRINCIPLES
1. Atman, or Jiva, 'the One Life', which permeates the Monadic Trio. (One in three and three in One.)	1. Prana, the Breath of Life, the same as Nephesh. At the death of a living being, Prana re-becomes Jiva. (Remember that our reincarnating Egos are called the Manasaputras, 'Sons of Manas' (or Mahat), Intelligence, Wisdom.)
2. Auric Envelope; because the substratum of the Aura around man is the universally diffused primordial and pure Akasa, the first film on the boundless and shoreless expanse of Jiva, the immutable Root of all.	2. Linga-Sarira, the Astral Form, the transitory emanation of the Auric Egg. This form preceded the formation of the living Body, and after death clings to it, dissipating only with the disappearance of its last atom (the skeleton excepted).
3. Buddhi; because Buddhi is a ray of the Universal Spiritual Soul (ALAYA).	3. Lower Manas, the Animal Soul, the reflection or shadow of the Buddhi-Manas, having the potentialities of both, but conquered generally by its association with the Kama elements.
4. Manas (the Higher Ego); for it proceeds from Mahat, the first product or emanation of Pradhana, which contains potentially all the Gunas (attributes). Mahat is Cosmic Intelligence, called the 'Great Principle'.	As man is the combined product of two aspects: physically, of his Astral Form, and psycho-physiologically of Kama-Manas, he is not looked upon even as an aspect, but as an illusion.

The Auric Egg, on account of its nature and manifold functions, has to be well studied. As Hiranyagarbha, the Golden Womb or Egg, contains Brahma, the collective symbol of the Seven Universal Forces, so the Auric Egg contains, and is directly related to, both the divine

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and the physical man. In its essence, as said, it is eternal; in its constant correlations, it is a kind of perpetual motion machine during the reincarnating progress of the Ego on this earth.

The aim of this booklet is to draw attention to the fact that the Ethers of which the Etheric Double was said to be composed (see *The Ancient Wisdom* p 50 *et seq.*) do not exist. Students may also be interested in the alterations to the original classification of the human principles which were made to accommodate the Etheric Body. These, as given by Besant, are set out in tabular form below (see A.W. p 193):

TABLE V  
 PLANES AND PRINCIPLES (BESANT)

PLANES		PRINCIPLES	
7	Hidden *		
6	Hidden *		
5	Nirvanic (Atmic)	7	Atma
4	Buddhic	6	Buddhi
3	Mental	5	Higher Manas ----- Lower
2	Astral	4	Kama
1	Physical	3 2 1	( Prana Physical { Etheric Double ( Body (Dense)

\* The 7th and 6th planes are described in *The Ancient Wisdom* pp 46/7. See also footnote to p 48. Principles 1, 2 and 3 are regarded as physical.

It will be seen from this Table that neither the planes nor the principles nor their numerous correspondences accord with those given in the original literature, particularly in

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the Inner Group Notes (C.W.XII or S.D.(1897) Vol III), where the planes and principles correspond exactly to each other according to the Law of Analogy. Similarly the characteristics of the planes as described by A.B./C.W.L. do not agree in important particulars with those given in the H.P.B./Masters system. Besant gives the colour of the Etheric Double (A.W. p 54) as violet-grey or blue-grey. In the Notes (H.P.B./Masters system) violet is the colour of the Astral Double, which is on the plane above the physical.

### After Death

Another serious difficulty that arises is that the whole of the Masters' account of what occurs at and after death cannot be understood in terms of the classification of principles later used by Besant. This is apart from essential differences between the Masters' account of what actually happens after death and that enunciated later by Leadbeater. Besant's account in her early book *Death and After* is, however, generally in accord with that of the Masters.

### Summary

The foregoing analysis and comparison deals with only some of the salient points of difference between the Theosophy as given us by the Masters and the system propounded by Besant and her followers. There are many other areas of difference not touched on in this paper, viz. group souls, permanent atoms, the dispensing of Karma and the attitude to religion.

From what has been given it is quite clear that in the respects mentioned the two systems are irreconcilable. This is particularly so in connection with the latest information Blavatsky gave out in the Papers to her Inner Group. The A.B./C.W.L. system is incompatible with the correspondences given there and with, for example, the hierarchical colours and their relationship to the principles of man. It is important that serious students of Theosophy should know about these discrepancies.



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### NOTE I

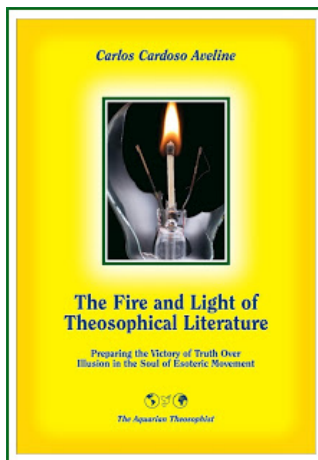
The clairvoyant investigations into the atomic structure of some elements was started in 1895. An early reference to the term 'Etheric' is on p 20 of Leadbeater's book *The Astral Plane* (1895, reprint 1987). On p 21 he refers to Blavatsky's 'seven principles of man', but Blavatsky never made reference to the Etheric Double (see Table II and refs. to Blavatsky's Doubles on p 16 et seq.)

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The end of “The Etheric Double?”.

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On the role of the esoteric movement in the ethical awakening of mankind during the 21st century, see the book “**The Fire and Light of Theosophical Literature**”, by Carlos Cardoso Aveline.



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