

LESSON 8

NOTES

THE ETHERIC DOUBLE

Among the five vehicles utilized by the human Ego or Soul for his evolution, the Etheric Double, also known as the Vital Body, is an essential component.

The Etheric Double is not a body in the same sense that the astral or the physical bodies are, because it has no separate existence. It serves two main purposes: a) to act as a link between the physical body and the subtle astral and mental bodies, and b) to provide vitality to the dense physical body. As such, it originates and sustains certain functions in the latter as we shall presently see.

Let us first examine the true composition of what is known as the Physical World. Once this has been ascertained, we will be in a position to understand how the physical body of a man is structured in terms of its matter. Basic chemistry has identified three primordial elements: Solids, Liquids and Gases. Occult Science adds four more, indicating that, although still physical, they are finer than the gaseous state of physical matter. These finer, more subtle, gases constitute the Etheric Region of the Physical World. Despite being considered physical, etheric matter cannot be seen or perceived by the senses because the human eye perception range does not reach its vibratory rate, hence the existence of this very important part of the Physical World is at present unsuspected by science. But the testimony of trained clairvoyants, plus that of many people who have a natural disposition to perceive beyond the normal range of the eyes, clearly confirm the existence of these ethers.

As stated before, Occult Science posits a universe structured by seven basic types of matter arranged in spheres which interpenetrate and interact with each other. It also posits that the matter of each sphere is in turn divided into seven sub-types. In accordance with these hypotheses the Physical World shows the following structure:

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| 1. Reflection Ether | |
| 2. Luminous Ether | |
| 3. Life Ether | Etheric Region |
| 4. Chemical Ether | |
| | |
| 5. Gases | |
| 6. Liquids | Chemical Region |
| 7. Solids | (Dense) |

The common understanding is that the human body is made of solid, liquid and gaseous matter, and contemporary science stops there. However, in Occult Science we are told that if it were not for that part of our physical body which we cannot see (the etheric part) these chemical elements would be rendered inert and useless. The etheric part of our Physical Body is called the Etheric Double, owing its name to the fact that it constitutes an exact replica of the dense flesh body, atom by atom, molecule by molecule.

Moreover, we are told that this Etheric Double is the mold upon which the dense part is shaped and constructed

have generated in our previous incarnations. If our actions have been dictated by cruelty or selfishness, for example, the Angels in charge of building in the womb of the mother-to-be may not be furnished with all the required elements to build a strong and healthy body, and the result may be a baby born with physical or mental handicaps. By contrast, if our deeds have been positive and dictated by love and generosity, all elements required by the builders may now be available, and the result of their effort will be a healthy baby. Nature's methods may appear stern to some, and they undoubtedly are. But they are also effective and kind in that they teach us right action and its inherent benefits. Handicapped by having to use a chronically sick and sometimes even deformed body, the Soul learns about the need to respect the dictates of Natural Law, gaining thereby a measure of wisdom and advancement.

The Etheric Double in an adult extends a few inches beyond the dense Physical Body. Its aspect is seen by clairvoyants as a peach-blossom colored light which appears to completely surround the latter. During pregnancy, when fetal development is taking place, only part of the etheric matter is utilized, the rest being left as a store of etheric atoms from which vitality is drawn upon to help the growing dense body after birth and until it reaches adulthood. Thus, upon clairvoyant observation, the Etheric Double of a child will be seen protruding far beyond his dense body.

It is not an exaggeration to state that the survival of our Physical Body depends exclusively on the vitality imparted to it by the Etheric Double. The etheric atoms, shaped like prisms, penetrate the physical atoms and cause them to vibrate. This life-giving energy is absorbed by the Etheric Double from the Sun, the life source of our planetary system, through the etheric counterpart of the spleen where it is absorbed by a wheel-like vortex of energy called the Spleen Chakra, which specializes it and then distributes it to the other vortices existing in the body

Occult Science tells us that there are many centers which circulate this vital energy throughout the human body, but that the main ones are seven: The Sacral, or base-of-the-spine Chakra, The Navel Chakra, the Spleen Chakra, the Heart Chakra, The Throat Chakra, The Brow Chakra and the Crown Chakra. Their function, we are told is to transmit this solar energy (known as Prana) to the dense physical body, thus ensuring the continued replenishment of its energy and vitality. For more detailed information about Chakras, the student is referred to the book "TheChakras" by C.W. Leadbeater.

The Etheric Double is also responsible for controlling important functions of the dense physical body. Its etheric matter is therefore divided into four types, each being instrumental to those functions as follows:

1. Reflecting Ether. - This Ether owes its name to what has been termed the "Memory of Nature". This universal memory This universal memory is part of the Mental World (Concrete Region) and records all that has taken place during the active life period of the Universe (Manvantara). It is also known as the Akashic Records. By means of using the reflecting Ether, clairvoyants may have access to this reflected information when required. We are told that all actions and even the thoughts of man are indelibly recorded there, making it thus an invaluable source of accurate historical data. However, there could be some difficulties posed for the researcher in that what

is being observed is - we must not forget - a reflection and not always a clear one. It is pretty much like trying to see through dirty glasses. Hence, the best method to read the Akashic Records with precision and accuracy is by means of direct contact with the Mental World, where only very high Initiates can have direct access while incarnated. This Ether is also the medium through which thought is transmitted to the human brain by the mind (or Mental Body) because it is closely connected with the fourth or highest sub-level of the Concrete Region of the Mental World, which is considered as the home of the human mind.

2. The Light Ether- Like the other Ethers, this one has negative and positive polarities. The forces acting through its positive pole generate warm blood in man and animals of the higher species. The forces working through its negative pole are concerned with the development and functions of the five senses, especially building and nourishing of the eye. The positive pole of this Ether is also concerned with the circulation of blood in cold-blooded animals. As it has been often observed, when one sense is lost due to illness or accident, this ether works through its negative pole to strengthen the other senses compensating thus for the handicap. For example, if someone becomes blind, his sense of hearing will become keener. Nature offers a good example of this in the way it deals with the different animal species. Dogs have poor sight, but their keen sense of smell and hearing, stronger than in man, do compensate for their shorter range in sight.

Forces working through the positive pole of this ether cause the circulation of juices in plants. When winter arrives, the forces of this pole tend to weaken, this being the reason why plants tend to wither away when there is an absence of sun. The return of Spring and Summer will energize the force again, and vitality will return to the plant. The color of plants is due to the action of the negative forces of this ether.

3. Life Ether - This Ether is concerned with the perpetuation of the species through the forces of propagation. Its positive polarity acts upon the gestation process of the female, while the negative enables the production of semen in the male.

4. Chemical Ether - This Ether is concerned with the assimilation of the nutritional elements of the food we eat as well as the excretory functions. Both processes are carried out through forces with which students of occultism will become acquainted at a later stage, forces which do not act mechanically but selectively and whose effects are well known by regular science. The positive pole acts on the assimilation of food, the negative on the excretory functions. Thus the role of this Ether is centered on the growth and sustenance of the physical body. When proper control is not exercised, our astral body may sometimes have a detrimental effect over our physical body in its relentless pursuit of the fulfillment of its desires. Our Etheric Double, on the other hand, works constantly to restore the energy on the flesh vehicle.

Being made of matter of the Desire or Astral World, our astral body may sometimes have a destructive effect over our physical body in its relentless pursuit of the fulfillment of inappropriate desires. Our Etheric Double, on the other hand, works constantly to restore the energy and proper functions of the physical body especially during the night when the body sleeps and the Ego withdraws from it taking with it both the mental and astral bodies plus two ethers: the Reflecting and the Luminous.

The Ego remains connected to the body by an etheric matter cord known as the “Silver Cord”, that connects the aforementioned ethers with the two lower ones: the Vital and the Chemical, that remain with the body during sleep.

In the immature Soul, the battle of these two vehicles (Astral and Etheric) rages constantly, and it is only through rational thinking and solid determination that we must give our Etheric Double a chance to win it. Directing the astral energies to encompass only lofty and unselfish desires will have not only a positive and healthy effect in our physical body, but it will also confer upon our Soul a measure of expanded consciousness, enriching our daily living. This can be achieved by firmly refusing to yield to the demands of our astral body for the satisfaction of its base desires and emotions, remembering that these do not come from the Self that we are, but from the astral vehicle itself, which is where all desires originate. To ignore this is tantamount to accepting being exploited by a vehicle given to us for **our** utilization (not the other way around) and we may as a result find ourselves submerged in a mire of vices and addictions entirely detrimental to our progress and quite difficult to eradicate.

From the above it is easy to conclude that our Etheric Double is a friend indeed, a marvelous instrument through which the Solar Logos gives us His Life and His Light. We are told that a great part of the restorative effort of the Double over our Dense vehicle takes place by night during sleep, when the Astral and Mental Bodies leave the Physical by means of the Reflecting and Light Ethers, the subtle bodies remaining still attached to the Physical by means of a cord of etheric matter known as the Silver Cord. This cord keeps the contact of the two aforementioned ethers with the lower ones, the Life Ether and the Chemical Ether, which remain with the Physical frame to do their restorative work. As much as both these ethers are concerned with the growth and sustenance of the dense Physical Body, the two higher ethers, Light and Reflecting, are concerned with the accumulation of material derived from the higher experiences in the life of the individual. Such material, gathered as a result of a life devoted to service and sacrifice, can be seen clairvoyantly as an aura of gold and blue.

Although the Etheric Double is with us since before we are born, it becomes truly active only at age 7. Before that, the child is under the influence of the Etheric Double of the planet.

The Etheric Double of the Male is feminine or negative, whereas that of the Female is masculine or positive.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. What is the Etheric Double?
2. Describe its functions.
3. What is the relationship between the Etheric Double and the Astral Body?
5. Describe the seven sub-divisions of the Physical World.
6. How does the Etheric Double impart energy to the dense Physical Body, and from where does it gather this energy?
7. Explain the effects that the polarity of the four ethers have over the functions of the dense physical body.
8. Explain the effects that a lofty type of life devoted to disinterested service has over an individual's Etheric Double, as opposed to the effects which will follow after a life of vice and waste.
9. Describe the aspect of the Etheric Double both during childhood and adulthood.

SUPPLEMENTARY READING:

The Etheric Double, by A.E. Powell

The Rosicrucian Cosmo Conception, by Max Heindel

Man, Visible and Invisible, C.W. Leadbeater.