

WHAT BECOMES OF THE DEAD

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Papus, the co-founder of the Traditional Martinist Order, joined the French Army Medical Corp in 1914 at the outbreak of World War I. He served as a medical officer in the trenches on the Western Front. Reflecting on his experience there he wrote What Becomes of the Dead. Following are two excerpts from that text. Papus died while in service to his country in 1916, at the age of fifty-one.



Chapter 1 Section of the Eagle Feminine Intuition: The Ideal

The reasoning and skeptical brain of man appreciates concise and precise arguments corroborated by facts. But for you, mothers, spouses, sisters who mourn a beloved one who passed through transition, no arguments are necessary. Your intuition alone is sufficient.

Guardians of the most subtle forces of Nature, there is something dwelling within you that speaks louder and more clearly than all the complicated reasoning of men! You feel and know that the dear ones who passed away are near you. They appear in an occasional dream to embrace a mother or beloved spouse. The child that has not

yet been submerged by terrestrial forces is also a dweller on two planes. That child is able to perceive a dead soldier-father who is the object of the secret tears of his or her mother.

Hallucinations, nervousness, mental illness, says the scientist! Nevertheless, women feel definitely that those are realities that transcend terrestrial ones.

The sick dog that is released by her master among the plants of the fields soon discovers the herb that will generate her recovery. Yet she has never received instructions from any school. However, there is a force circulating in that animal that is less fallible than the science of many human beings. This force is the intelligence of Nature that the profane call instinct.

Now, you women from every class of society are the sacred guardians of that formative intelligence of Nature. Listen to the whisper of that mysterious voice which vibrates in the depth of your heart and which is perceptible only to you. It was that same voice that enchanted your heart formerly when, as a young woman, your fiancé conversed with you during those long and unforgettable promenades. Then, when the infant was born, even before he had learned to speak, the soft and mysterious voice became audible anew.

Today, you are at the lowest point of your sorrow. The voice cries out again: No, mother, your son has not departed without recourse. The Creator is the Divine Parent and a Parent is never an executioner.

Your son has died for his country and thus has become one of the lights of the invisible planes. A curtain separates him from you, but your love will suffice to lift it.

Be courageous though you are overwhelmed by sorrow. Hope, pray, and do not reveal to anyone the words spoken by the voice. May your heart remain sealed so that the profane and the defilers may have no access to it. Send the scholars and the skeptics back to their studies; call upon the departed one; pray for enlightenment from those that live in the higher world. Then, the Virgin of Light will shed upon you her golden celestial veil and behind this veil will appear your beloved ones, blessing you and smiling at you.

Women of Earth, glorious or crucified, may the Divine bless you, for you are worthy!

It is to you that I am appealing, women who have lost a cherished one; either a son, husband, or close relative. I am speaking to you because your intuition has not been distorted by the incomplete science of the century. Is it not a fact that you know the beloved one has not disappeared forever? Is it not a fact that you feel the truth concerning the affirmation of all the religions of Earth and especially of your own, when they declare that death is but a momentary transformation?

In the depth of your heart, you have the certainty that you will see again the dear one who passed away, especially since he or she has sacrificed themselves voluntarily for their country. This mysterious intuition enhances truth itself. The state of consciousness of the dead one has changed. Their sacrifice has propelled them to a level higher than the one they had occupied previously. They are united at all times with those left on Earth through love, which is imperishable. A mere curtain separates that being from those left behind, but that curtain may be lifted sometimes.

Be calm, overcome your anguish, be confident and strong. Nature has selected you to conserve its most precious forms and its most sacred seeds. Dry your tears, for the one whom you mourn is not far from you. They are like travelers who, exploring a new country, are unable to communicate easily with those left at home.

Strive to perceive the radiance of the love that exists within the serene mind of the departed one. Feel how this being surrounds by their presence their little children and all those that remained here after their transition. Ask the Higher Beings for help. Pray according to the ritual of your religion and then you will perhaps be given permission to see the departed one once again, for Death has terror no longer for one who is acquainted with the Mysteries. To this soul, it is a mere change where Earth takes back the body which it lent to the soul for one existence and where that soul, liberated and clothed with a more subtle body, evolves on a new plane.

Pray and the veil will be lifted for you.

At this time, we shall try to explain the terms: spirit, subtle body, and plane.

Later, we shall resume that explanation for the narrow minds of the skeptics and lovers of reason. Consider these pages to be a sweet musing; they are not written for them.

Chapter II

Section of Man

Constitution of the Human Being

In order to comprehend our assertions regarding the transformations undergone by the human being after death, it is necessary that we explain at this time the human constitution while still in incarnation. Since a great number of books have been written already on this subject by diverse schools of thought, we shall not be too explicit while we demonstrate those assertions.



For the sake of clarity, which is our objective, we wish to remind you that the human being was considered by the ancient initiates to possess three principles or elements while incarnated:

1. The Physical Body, lent by Earth for one lifetime, is linked to this planet by the food it provides for growth and substance.
2. Life, which is like a spark that emanates between the two poles that constitute humanity—the body below, the soul above. Life is linked to the terrestrial atmosphere by the breath, and that atmosphere is, in turn, joined to the light of the Sun that energizes it. Thus, the breath connects humanity to the forces emanated from the stars whose directing center is the Sun. Life has been given many names which rather confuses the poor neophyte. Paul names it soul (*Corpus, Anima et Spiritus*); the schools of spiritism call it perispirit; the occultists term it the astral body. We shall not enumerate the Hebrew, Egyptian, Chinese, and Sanskrit appellations given to this principle called Life that has always excited the interest of all researchers.
3. The Immortal Soul is linked to the forces of the invisible plane by intuition, feeling, and will.

During terrestrial life those three principles are united intimately with one another. The soul liberates itself during sleep and permits Life to clean the body and operate the organs which depend directly upon organic life.

Let us summarize: Incarnated humans are constituted by three principles:

The Physical Body— Life— The Soul.

- The Physical Body is linked to Earth.
- Life is connected to the Stars, to Universal Life.
- The Soul is tied to the Higher Forces and to the Divine Plane.

Let us disregard the different analyses of those principles that are said to comprise seven, nine, or twenty-one elements. Nothing is lost in the discussion by ignoring them. Rather, to consider them would complicate simple matters unnecessarily.

What happens to the three principles at the hour of death? The vital spark is extinguished and Life, the Vital Force, is separated into two poles:

1. The more luminous part remains around the soul and becomes the astral vehicle, the vehicle of the soul, or according to Pythagoras, the subtle body which surrounds the soul on the astral plane.
2. The second part, the denser one, remains in the physical body that has become a cadaver.

The cadaver returns to Earth as a used garment returns to the used clothes dealer. Since Earth can take back at will anything that belongs to it, worms may destroy the garment which is joined to the soul by only a very tenuous link. It is not to the disintegrating body that devotion should be rendered, but rather to the love and the ideas that the departed one left.

The soul retains its complete personality. The impact of passing from one plane to the other dims the faculties momentarily, but the soul finds itself surrounded by friends and relatives who had earlier departed. If the person died for the collective, he or she is, moreover, helped by spiritual beings who alleviate any suffering that he or she may be enduring. Thus, if one wishes to mourn, the tears should be shed undoubtedly on behalf of the poor blind human beings of Earth and not the liberated soul who, by the sacrifice of their terrestrial life, endeavored to save the collective of their country.

Such has been the teaching of the Sanctuaries for more than 7,000 years. All initiates have always been convinced about

this personal existence that succeeds terrestrial life, for they have lived it experimentally. The initiation into the Isis Mysteries had no other aim in its elementary aspect and the initiations into all Mysteries in all countries have always had the same objective. In the Sanskrit language, the individual who knows these truths in a practical way is called *Dwidia* which means “dweller on two planes.”

Because scientific studies have either reached a plateau or undergone a deforma-

tion, certain minds have come to believe in good faith that after death a person becomes either cabbage, carrots, or wild flowers.

Nature is the most meticulous of all misers. She would never spend centuries to evolve a human brain for the purpose of annihilating in one minute the slow and progressive effort of so many years. The human soul survives after physical death, and our knowledge concerning this fact compels us to verify this affirmation.

At Chaumont-sur-Argonne, near Pierrefitte, in a trench a young German was dead, holding near his head and at eye level his prayer book. . . .

Poor victim of the madness of the great, I salute you. . . . Knowing death was coming, you bravely prepared your soul for its physical departure, and, obscure hero, you called on the One who awaits all. May your gesture be blessed. It is of no consequence that you were an enemy of my country and an envoy of the blind who sacrificed the flower of their men to the base satisfaction of their ambition. . . .

Tomorrow you will return to the earth, but you will have drunk from the waters of forgetfulness . . . I salute you and I pray with you.

PAPUS

