

The Astral Plane in the Physical Plane The Missing Link Between Religion and Science

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MOLECULES are the elements which make a body; these, are in their turn made up of similar elements called atoms, and there is no experimental objection to these in their turn being composite. For the limits which are imposed by a subdivision to infinity are in reality simply limits set by human incapacity for further comprehension. In this way by passing from material elements, through degrees of subtlety, we arrive at the Ether which is the basis of light, warmth, magnetism, sound, and electricity. It is a substance infinitely more tenuous than physical matter which already ceases to appeal to our sense of perception in its molecular state. We have two senses which are especially affected by the appearance of ether and its phenomena: the ear and the eye.

Few of us but are possessed by the idea that the eye is especially made for the perception of material things. If this were so, then half of its life is so arranged as to cut it out of practical existence. It is true that the eye is made in such a way as to see material objects, but we have no proof that this is its only use. It is generally limited to this, and has been so for so long that most of us believe that it is made solely for this use. Nevertheless, material objects exist in the darkness as well as in the light, and yet we do not see them; from this it would appear that the eye is made for the perception of light, one of the modifications of Ether.

Of these modes two only are we able to perceive clearly; light and sound, heat, magnetism and electricity we only partially feel. Now, since we are able to distinguish a difference between them, even though feebly, they must be distinct one from the other, a fact which allows us to suppose that if feeling were subdivided into three special senses appropriate to sensing these three modes of Ether the world would produce upon us effects of which we have now not the slightest conception.

That which perceives the modifications of ether is not actually the sense itself or the material apparatus which receives the ethereal impressions; it is not the eye which sees. The eye simply makes known the presence of that which is visible to that which sees and is within us. That which hears and feels by touch is the same as that which looks through the eyes. If it were possible to place this being more directly in contact with the modes of existence of ether, these modes would be still more readily seen than as they are through the intermediary of the physical senses. In the normal condition it is difficult to obtain this direct contact; but there is something which may happen to us, and that without being aware of it, [Page 13] and that is an augmentation of an impression on our senses made by the modes of ether by which we are able to see an object more distinctly than we generally do.

There are numerous and constant examples of this increased power of perception of the modes of ether. That which in us sees the ether is imprisoned in the body, and the impression which the ether makes must depend necessarily upon the body; if the condition of the body changes then there follows a modification in the etherial impression, for the relations existing between our element of perception and the medium of such is changed. This change may show itself in two ways; either as an augmentation of etheric impression, or as a diminution.

Both these two kinds of modification are looked upon as being the necessary result of disease.

Drunkenness is a state of body modifying the relation of the perceiver within it to the ambient medium; when alcoholic drunkenness has reached a certain pitch, when the head reels, then the eye looks straight into the ether and sees it not as a material thing but simply as Movement. Experience teaches the drunkard that motion exists quite independent of the thing moved; for he perceives it by the direct sense of sight and of touch.

Lean over the parapet of a bridge and watch the current of a swiftly flowing river; soon you will lose the impression of moving water, and instead, the bridge will seem to be flying from your feet and carrying you up the river. Look out of the window of a carriage; you seem to yourself to be stationary, while the earth, trees, and houses, on each side of the road rush rapidly back in the direction from which you have come. Turn round rapidly on yourself as children and waltzers do, and when in a few moments you stop, your head swims and all things seem to be turning round you. Everybody has noticed these things; but generally, instead of reflecting, we are satisfied with calling them simply illusions. They are no illusions in the general meaning of the word; they are facts, and as such they are as important as any other facts.

Things which seem to move round the drunkard in his drunkenness, the movement communicated by running water in our previous example, the turning of objects round those who are seized with giddiness, are no real movements in things themselves. Where then must we look for an explanation of this motion? We shall find it in the ambient ether. Alcohol, the movement of the brain and of the dance have modified the condition of the body in such a manner as to increase the power of perception of that which it holds within, and which is ordinarily called the mind; and this modification has allowed the mind to come into more direct relations with the surrounding ether which, no matter what its particular [Page 14] mode may be, either heat, light, sound, magnetism, electricity, is always in motion. Circular motion is the method by which the dancing dervishes place themselves in relations with the djins, the inhabitants of the astral world amongst whom many of them fancy that they recognise the blessed ones of Mahomet's Paradise.

Giddiness, no matter how caused, whether by alcoholism, by fixing the eye on a moving object or on a fixed and shining point (hypnotism), or by circular movement, is not due to a lowering of the bodily strength, as is generally thought, but to a heightening of the aptitudes of perception. It is not disease that has weakened the bodily capacities, but some of these latter which have become greater. But this increase in their power being sudden and too great, the body finds itself carried too far from its normal condition and loses touch with its ordinary faculties. What is necessary is that, by graduated use of these increases of energy the body may learn to maintain its normal consciousness, so that it does not lose its old faculties whilst acquiring the use of new ones. Ether being one substance existing in several different modes of manifestation (as is proved by the conversion of these modes one into the other) if the eye should see that particular mode called light it ought to be capable of being trained to perceive the other

modes of ether, and amongst them heat, which is the nearest manifestation of ether to light. There are people who are endowed with a rudimentary appropriation by the eye of the power to perceive that mode of ether called heat; they are epileptics. But their bodies are not always in the condition which is necessary to bring them into relation with that mode of ether which they are able at other times to see with greater distinctness than the generality of mankind; access is the name given to that condition of body which is necessary for these perceptions. Under this condition they generally lose all consciousness of the physical state in which they are in, their senses cease to be appropriated by the physical body, and are only able to place them in communication with the ethereal medium. In contradiction to the accepted opinion there are in epileptics the rudiments of a superior organisation to that possessed by what are generally termed healthy people; their senses begin to be directed to the cognition of modes of ether unperceived by these others.

Nevertheless there are those whose senses are already awakened to ethereal perception; these are the seers, while those who suffer from nervous disorders are imperfect seers, who may be said to be in a state of formation. Their rudimentary power of seeing a modification of ether which is imperceptible to the masses deprives them, when exercising it, of the capacity for recognising their physical surrounding; whereas the true seer sees both the ethereal and physical manifestation at the same time, so that he is enabled to appreciate the real relation existing between the astral vision and its [Page 15] physical medium. One of the peculiar characteristics of a certain class of epileptics is the fear which they show before these astral apparitions. Many there are who would have neither convulsions nor loss of consciousness, if they only knew the real nature of these beings who frighten them, they would then look on them and their relations with them as natural events, being no more of the supernatural than their relations with physical beings. These inhabitants of the ethereal medium though intangible and extremely mobile and changeable are none the less real; indeed they are just as much actualities in their own ethereal sphere as physical bodies are on the material plane. They often take on appearances so similar to physical objects that even the true seer may be mistaken; how much more so the unformed and highly nervous clairvoyant.

These beings re-act on the physical plane, to the organisation of which they contribute, and those people who are called superstitious, that is to say, those whose nervous system is more delicate than the average mass of humanity, are faintly conscious of the action which they have on physical objects and beings. This consciousness being only partial, it follows that the materials which it furnishes to the intellect are not easily understood; and that in its interpretation it often makes mistakes, more often in fact than not, which gives the incredulous, that is to say, those who are in complete ignorance of the astral plane, good reasons for mocking at what they call superstitions. But all the reasoning in the world will be unable to crush out superstition as long as the nervous system keeps its delicacy of perception, for the impressions which it gives to the consciousness are facts and Reason is powerless before them, except in the minds of those who are self-styled savants. And thus, notwithstanding the affirmations, denials and arguments of these savants, we still see superstition rampant in the world. In order to banish it we should first have to suppress the woman whose nervous system is more sensitive than that of man, and with her all those men who share with woman the privileges of a highly sensitive nervous system, such as artists, poets, and great philosophers.

But those people who boast of their common sense, and who are always incredulous, should remember and reflect on one thing, namely, that all the great thinkers of the world: Socrates, Plato, Pythagoras, the Neoplatonists, many fathers of the church, Luther, Pascal, Locke, Leibnitz, Newton, Kant, Ampere,

Hegel, Fichte, Schelling, Schopenhauer, Hartmann, and many others, have admitted, under various names, the existence of that world which we generally call invisible, and thus all agree that there is no reasonable cause to deny its existence.

Surely we may be allowed to believe that the opinion of these men is of more value than that of M. Prudhomme and M. Homais. Prudhomme confines himself to shaking his head and sententiously saying: These are [Page 16] mysterious and insoluble questions, whose solution will always remain obscure and difficult. While Homais squarely and from the height of his ignorance denies their existence.

Doctors believe that the modifications of ether are vibrations in the substance which composes it. To this we may add, with the materialists, that the vibratory state of ether in nervous matter produces a special phenomena, *thought*, which we can rank amongst astral forces, though called a physical force generally. The world floats in ether, which in occultism is called the astral light, just as a fish floats in the ocean; all things which go to make the world are for ever bathed in this astral light; indeed they are more than merely bathed in it, they are permeated by it; for gross matter offers no obstacle to its passage. The mind, which is simply a part of this astral light, feels every vibration which traverses this sea of life, but since it is surrounded by a physical body, which modifies the vibrations from the astral medium before they are allowed to reach it, it does not always vibrate exactly in unison with the astral disturbance; in fact, we may say that there is generally discord between them. If the mind were in direct contact with the ethereal waves, then it would be directly influenced by them. The body is the real cause why such is not the case.

A crowd of men throws off a mass of astral light in the shape of a human mind. The ideas, sensations, sentiments and desires of this mass are simply its vibratory states. Each one, according to the special aptitudes of his organism and the circumstances which determine his condition of the moment, will have in himself more of a certain kind of particular vibrations than of other kinds.

That thought exists as substance which escapes from the brain and floats in the air, is an idea which has often been enumerated by persons whose nervous systems were exceptionally delicate; if they have not been able to perceive this with much clearness, as is shown by the doubtful way in which they express themselves, they have, at all events, experienced it with sufficient force for it to have formulated itself in their minds.

We are unconsciously drawn together because crowds disengage the ethereal substance of thought, which is directly assimilated by the mind and by which it is nourished in the same way as the body is fed by physical matter; for ideas do not proceed from material substance alone, as certain physiologists maintain. Now, it is a fact, that most people of keen and active intellect prefer to live in a large house to living in a small one, and, as a rule, they do not know why, for the reasons they themselves give of obtaining greater opportunities for gain or amusement, are not always the real ones. In a city like Paris the brain is more active than in a provincial town. With every breath of air they breathe in the ethereal substance which nourishes and fertilises the mind, furnishes them with thoughts [Page 17] which they would not otherwise have been able to compass; or if the brain should not happen to be complex, if the nervous currents are slightly twisted, the windings few, so that they are badly arranged for meditation, then the ethereal substance which they inhale gives them a special aptitude for talking. As a fact, we know that no one can chatter faster or more ceaselessly than the Parisian of the lower and middle

classes.

Go, for instance, to a distant provincial capital and try when there to think on those subjects which were the subject of your meditations in Paris, and you will instantly perceive the difference in the quantity of etherial matter which floats in the atmosphere in the two places. Without knowing why, you will find that you are less intelligent, that your ideas are less abundant in the provincial capital than they were in Paris. This is a well-known fact, but people generally are contented with recognising its existence without trying to discover its cause, analytical studies being generally those for which people have the greatest aversion.

Let a strong conviction *force* itself on a person; why does it *force* itself ? The reason is that this conviction is synonymous with a vibratory condition of the astral matter composing the mind, and that this disturbance is transmitted by undulations to the surrounding ether and to the minds of the hearers or spectators. Why do we go to the theatre ? The reason is well expressed in ordinary language. We go in order to vibrate to the sentiments and passions which are expressed by the characters of the *pièce*. "Show me your friends and I will tell you your character". The moral world consists in an assemblage of etherial vibrations; as long as the conditions are the same the same vibrations continue to vibrate; the mind becomes accustomed to feel them, and answers to them the more readily the more it is accustomed to them. In other words this same idea is expressed by saying that an action leaves a tendency to repetition, and that thought tends to action.

We must think of these vibrations as being a series of vibratory states following one another, and losing themselves one in the other, just like we know the colours of the solar spectrum to do. Every vibration may develop in two ways: either by increasing or diminishing the intensity of each successive condition. The positive and the negative are found everywhere in nature, and Hegel was not mistaken when he based his philosophy on the dialectics of opposites.

Every vibration has a tendency to evolve the series of conditions which forms it, and every state of consciousness may be said to be a vibration. A fresh vibration arriving in order to reach into the mind may be of two sorts: either it is of the same kind as those already evolving in the mind, or it is opposite to them. In the first case the state of the mind is sympathetic to its admission; in the second it is the reverse.
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If, for example, we wish to convince someone against their will? " I do not wish to hear or listen to you" he will answer. What does he express by these words ? That he wishes that the vibration should produce the same conviction which he already has and which should not be disturbed by that which you wish to introduce. What is a fixed idea? It is the constant repetition of a certain kind of vibration in the mind. The surroundings in which we live cause ceaseless repetition of the same vibration.

Thus, why are we ordered change of air for certain moral diseases? Simply because these illnesses are the result of certain sorts of vibration set up in the mind by the surroundings amongst which we happen to be living at the time. A change in these will cause other sets of vibrations which, differing from the first, will cure the patient. This is well expressed by the Spanish proverb: "A males de amor tiempo y tierra por medeo" (of the illness of Love time and space are the cure).

We might continue to apply the theory of the Astral Light to the solution of many other questions, and we could show that this theory has lived for ages in the popular mind by referring to many proverbs, epitomes of natural wisdom, which in agreement with the law of rhythm, of positive and negative, have all of them another proverb which is an exact counterpart.