The first Seven Articles on Occult Chemistry 1895-1899

Occult Chemistry by Annie Besant - 1895

This article was first published in the London theosophical journal *Lucifer* in November of 1895, pages 211-219. Between pages 216 and 217 there was an extra oversize folded leaf containing 15 diagrams of clairvoyant observations of five physical substates (gas, E4, E3, E2, E1) of atoms of Hydrogen, Oxygen and Nitrogen. A reprint in pamphlet form appeared in 1905.

Occult Chemistry

by

Annie Besant

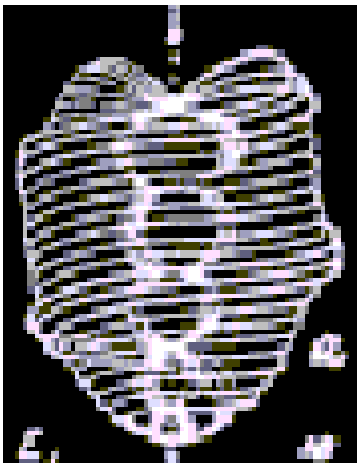
Of late years there has been much discussion among scientific men as to the genesis of the chemical elements, and as to the existence and constitution of the ether. The apparatus which forms the only instrument of research of the scientists cannot even reach the confines of the ether, and they apparently never dream of the possibility of examining their chemical atom. There is in regard to both atom and ether a wealth of speculation but a poverty of observation - for lack, of course, of any means which would render observation possible.

Now man possesses senses, capable of evolution into activity, that are able to observe objects beyond the limits of the sensitiveness of the five senses. These latter organs receive vibrations from the physical world, but their capacity of reception is comparatively narrow, and vast numbers of vibrations, still physical in their character, leave them entirely unaffected. The keener and more delicate senses of the astral body are latent for the most part in men of our race, and are therefore not available for general use. Yet they afford instruments for observation on the higher levels of the physical plane, and bring under direct ken objects which from their minuteness or subtlety escape ordinary vision. It seems worth while to lay before the public a few observations made through these senses, partly because it is possible that they may suggest hypotheses useful as elucidating some scientific problems; and partly because science is advancing rapidly and will ere long be investigating some of these matters for itself, and it will then perhaps be well for the Theosophical Society if the first statements of facts that will then be accepted should have come from members of its body.

The physical world is regarded as being composed of between sixty and seventy chemical elements, aggregated into an infinite variety of combinations. These combinations fall under the three main

heads of solids, liquids and gases, the recognised substates of physical matter, with the theoretical ether, scarcely admitted as material. Ether, to the scientist, is not a substate, or even a state, of matter, but is a something apart by itself. It would not be allowed that gold could be raised to the etheric condition, as it might be to the liquid and gaseous; whereas the Occultist knows that the gaseous is succeeded by the etheric, as the solid is succeeded by the liquid, and he knows also that the word *ether* covers four substates as distinct from each other as are the solids, liquids, and gases, and that all chemical elements have their four etheric substates, the highest being common to all, and consisting of the ultimate physical atoms to which all elements are finally reducible. The chemical atom is regarded as the ultimate particle of any element, and is supposed to be indivisible and unable to exist in a free state. Mr. Crookes' researches have led the more advanced chemists to regard the atom as compound, as a more or less complex aggregation of protyle.

To astral vision ether is a visible thing, and is seen permeating all substances and encircling every particle. A *solid* body is a body composed of a vast number of particles suspended in ether, each vibrating backwards and forwards in a particular field at a high rate of velocity; the particles are attracted towards each other more strongly than they are attracted by external influences, and they *cohere*, or maintain towards each other a definite relation in space. Closer examination shows that the ether is not homogeneous, but consists of particles of numerous kinds, differing in the aggregations of the minute bodies composing them; and a careful and more detailed method of analysis reveals that it has four distinct degrees, giving us, with the solid, liquid and gaseous, seven instead of four substates of matter in the physical world.



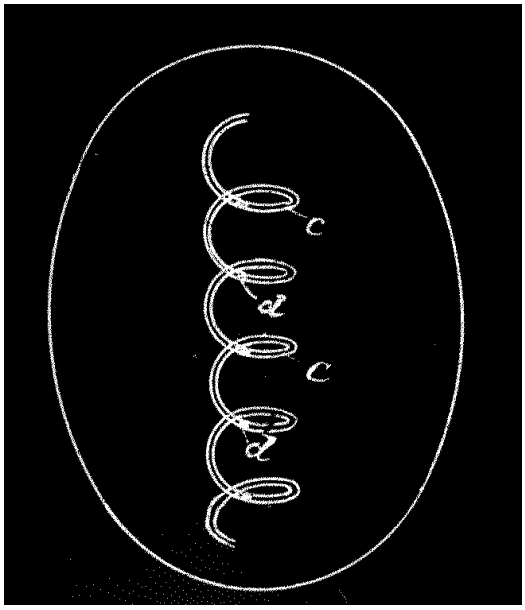
Ultimate
Physical Atom

These four etheric substates will be best understood if the method be explained by which they were studied. This method consisted of taking what is called an atom of a gas, and breaking it up time after time, until what proved to be the ultimate physical atom was reached, the breaking up of this last resulting in the production of astral, and no longer of physical, matter.

It is, of course, impossible to convey by words the clear conceptions that are gained by direct vision of the objects of study, and the accompanying diagram - cleverly drawn from the description given

by the investigators - is offered as a substitute, however poor, for the lacking vision of the readers. The horizontal lines separate from each other the seven substates of matter; solid, liquid, gas, ether 4, ether 3, either 2, ether 1. On the gas level are represented three chemical atoms, one of hydrogen (H), one of oxygen (O), one of nitrogen (N). The successive changes undergone by each chemical atom are shown in the compartments vertically above it, the left hand column showing the breaking up of the hydrogen atom, the middle column that of the oxygen atom, the right hand column that of the nitrogen atom. The ultimate physical atom is marked a, and is drawn only once, although it is the same throughout. The numbers 18, 290 and 261, are the numbers of the ultimate physical atoms found to exist in a chemical atom.

The dots indicate the lines along which force is observed to be playing, and the arrowheads shew the direction of the force. No attempt has been made to shew this below E2 except in the case of the hydrogen. The letters given are intended to help the reader to trace upward any special body; thus d in the oxygen chemical atom on the gas level may be found again on E4, E3, and E2. It must be remembered that the bodies shewn diagrammatically in no way indicate relative size; as a body is raised from one substate to the other immediately above it, it is enormously magnified for the purpose of investigation, and the ultimate atom on E1 is represented by the dot a on the gaseous level.



"the oxygen chemical atom on the gas level"

The first chemical atom selected for this examination was an atom of hydrogen (H). On looking carefully at it, it was seen to consist of six small bodies, contained in an egg-like form. It rotated with great rapidity on its own axis, vibrating at the same time, and the internal bodies performed similar gyrations. The whole atom spins and quivers, and has to be steadied before exact observation is possible. The six little bodies are arranged in two sets of three, forming two triangles that are not interchangeable, but are related to each other as object and image. (The lines in the diagram of it on the gaseous sub-plane are not lines of force, but shew the two triangles; on a plane

surface the interpenetration of the triangles cannot be clearly indicated). Further, the six bodies are not all alike; they each contain three smaller bodies - each of these being an ultimate physical atom - but in two of them the three atoms are arranged in a line, while in the remaining four they are arranged in a triangle.

The wall of the limiting spheroid in which the bodies are enclosed being composed of the matter of the third, or gaseous, kind, drops away when the gaseous atom is raised to the next level, and the six bodies are set free. They at once re-arrange themselves in two triangles, each enclosed by a limiting sphere; the two marked b in the diagram unite with one of those marked b1 to form a body which shews a positive character, the remaining three forming a second body negative in type. These form the hydrogen particles of the lowest plane of ether, marked E4 - ether 4 - on the diagram. On raising these further, they undergo another disintegration, losing their limiting walls; the positive body of E4, on losing its wall, becomes two bodies, one consisting of the two particles marked b, distinguishable by the linear arrangement of the contained ultimate atoms, enclosed in a wall, and the other being the third body enclosed in E4 and now set free. The negative body of E4 similarly, on losing its wall, becomes two bodies, one consisting of the two particles marked b1 and the second, the remaining body, being set free. These free bodies do not remain on E3 but pass immediately to E2, leaving the positive and negative bodies, each containing two particles, as the representatives of hydrogen on E3. On taking these bodies a step higher their wall disappears, and the internal bodies are set free, those containing the atoms arranged lineally being positive, and those with the triangular arrangement being negative. These two forms represent hydrogen on E2, but similar bodies of this stage of matter are found entering into other combinations, as may be seen by referring to f on E2 of Nitrogen (N). On raising these bodies yet one step further, the falling away of the walls sets the contained atoms free, and we reach the ultimate physical atom, the matter of E1. The disintegration of this sets free particles of astral matter, so that we have reached in this the limit of physical matter. The Theosophical reader will notice with interest that we can thus observe seven distinct substates of physical matter, and no more.

The ultimate atom, which is the same in all the observed cases, is an exceedingly complex body, and only its main characteristics are given in the diagram. It is composed entirely of spirals, the spiral being in its turn composed of spirillae, and these again of minuter spirillae. A fairly accurate drawing is given in Babbitt's *Principles of Light and Colour*, P.102. The illustrations there given of atomic combinations are entirely wrong and misleading, but if the stove-pipe run through the centre of the single atom be removed, the picture may be taken as correct, and will give some idea of the complexity of this fundamental unit of the physical universe.

Turning to the force-side of the atom and its combinations, we observe that force pours into the heart-shaped depression at the top of the atom, and issues from the point, and is changed in character by its passage; further, force rushes through every spiral and every spirilla, and the changing shades of colour that flash out from the rapidly revolving and vibrating atom depend on the several activities of the spirals; sometimes one, sometimes another, is thrown into more energetic action, and with the change of activity from one spiral to another the colour changes.

The building of a gaseous atom of hydrogen may be traced downwards from E1, and, as said above, the lines given in the diagram are intended to indicate the play of the forces which bring about the several combinations. Speaking generally, positive bodies are marked by their contained atoms setting their points towards each other and the centre of their combination, and repelling each other outwards; negative bodies are marked by the heart-shaped depressions being turned inwards, and by a tendency to move towards each other instead of away. Every combination begins by a welling up of force at a centre, which is to form the centre of the combination; in the first positive hydrogen combination, E2, an atom revolving at right angles to the plane of the paper - turning head over heels if the expression may be allowed - and also revolving on its own axis, forms the centre, and force rushing out at its lower point, rushes in at the depressions of two other atoms, which then set themselves with their points to the centre; the lines are shown in +b, right hand figure. (The left hand figure indicates the revolution of the atoms each by itself). As this atomic triad whirls round, it clears itself a space, pressing back the undifferentiated matter of the plane, and making to itself a whirling wall of this matter, thus taking the first step towards building the chemical hydrogen atom. A negative atomic triad is similarly formed, the three atoms being symmetrically arranged round the centre of out-welling force. These atomic triads then combine, two of the linear arrangement being attracted to each other, and two of the triangular, force again welling up and forming a centre and acting on the triads as on a single atom, and a limiting wall being again formed as the combination revolved round its centre. The next stage is produced by each of these combinations on E3 attracting to itself a third atomic triad of the triangular type from E2, by the setting up of a new centre of upwelling force, following the lines traced in the combinations of E4. Two of these uniting, and their triangles interpenetrating, the chemical atom is formed, and we find it to contain in all eighteen ultimate physical atoms.

The next substance investigated was oxygen, a far more complicated and puzzling body; the difficulties of observation were very much increased by the extraordinary activity shown by this element, and the dazzling brilliancy of some of its constituents. The gaseous atom is an ovoid body, within which a spirally coiled snake-like body revolves at a high velocity, five brilliant points of light shining on the coils. The snake appears to be a solid rounded body, but on raising the atom to E4, the snake splits lengthwise into two waved bodies, and it is seen that the appearance of solidity is due to the fact that these spin round a common axis in opposite directions, and so present a continuous surface, as a ring of fire can be made by whirling a lighted stick. The brilliant bodies seen in the atom are on the crests of the waves in the positive snake, and in the hollows in the negative one; the snake itself consists of small bead-like bodies, eleven of which interpose between the larger brilliant spots. On raising these bodies to E3 the snakes break up, each bright spot carrying with it six of the beads on one side and five on the other; these twist and writhe about still with the same extraordinary activity, reminding one of fire-flies stimulated to wild gyrations. It can be seen that the larger brilliant bodies each enclose seven ultimate atoms, while the beads each enclose two. (Each bright spot with its eleven beads is enclosed in a wall, accidentally omitted.) On the next stage, E2, the fragments of the snakes break up into their constituent parts; the positive and negative bodies, marked d and d1, showing a difference of arrangement of the atoms contained in them. These again finally disintegrate, setting free the ultimate physical atoms, identical with those obtained from hydrogen. The number of ultimate atoms contained in the gaseous atom of oxygen is 290, made up as follows:

- 2 in each bead, of which there are 110;
- 7 in each bright spot, of which there are 10;
- 2 x 110 + 70 = 290.

When the observers had worked out this, they compared it with the number of ultimate atoms in hydrogen:

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290 / 18 = 16.11+
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The respective numbers of ultimate atoms contained in a chemical atom of these two bodies are thus seen to closely correspond with their accepted weight-numbers.

It may be said in passing that a chemical atom of ozone appears as an oblate spheroid, with the contained spiral much compressed and widened in the centre; the spiral consists of three snakes, one positive and two negative, formed into a single revolving body. On raising the chemical atom to the next plane, the snake divides into three, each being enclosed in its own egg.

The chemical atom of nitrogen was the third selected by the students for examination, as it seemed comparatively quiet in contrast with the ever-excited oxygen. It proved, however, to be the most complicated of all in its internal arrangements, and its quiet was therefore a little deceptive. Most prominent was the balloon-shaped body in the middle, with six smaller bodies in two horizontal rows and one large egg-shaped one in the midst, contained in it. Some chemical atoms were seen in which the internal arrangement of these contained bodies was changed, and the two horizontal rows became vertical: this change seemed to be connected with a greater activity of the whole body, but the observations on this head are too incomplete to be reliable. The balloon-shaped body is positive, and is apparently drawn downwards towards the negative egg-shaped body below it, containing seven smaller particles. In addition to these large bodies, four small ones are seen, two positive and two negative, the positive containing five and negative four minuter spots. On raising the gaseous atom to E4, the falling away of the wall sets free the six contained bodies, and both the balloon and egg found themselves, apparently with the removal of their propinquity, as though they had exercised over each other some attractive influence. The smaller bodies within the egg - marked q on E4 are not on one plane, and those with n and a form respectively square-based and triangular-based pyramids. On raising all these bodies to E3 we find the walls fall away as usual, and the contents of each *cell* are set free: p of E4 contains six small bodies marked k. and these are shewn in k of E3, as containing each seven little bodies - marked e - each of which has within it two ultimate atoms; the long form of p E4 - marked l - appears as the long form l on E3, and this has three pairs of smaller bodies with in, f1, g and h, containing respectively three, four and six ultimate atoms; q of E4, with its seven contained particles, m, has these particles m on E3, each showing three ultimate atoms within them; e from n of E4 becomes i of E3, with contained bodies, e, shewing two ultimate atoms in each; while c1 from o of E4 becomes j of E3, each having three smaller bodies within it, c1 with two ultimate atoms in each. On E2 the arrangement of these ultimate atoms is shown, and the pairs f1, g and h are seen with the lines of force indicated; the triads in f - from m of E3 - are similarly shown, and the duads in e and e1 - from i and j of E3 are given in the same way. When all these bodies are raised to E1, the ultimate physical atoms are set free, identical, of course,

with that previously described. Reckoning up the number of ultimate physical atoms in a chemical atom of nitrogen we find they amount to 261, thus divided:

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62 + bodies with 2 ultimate atoms, 62 x 2 = 124
24 - bodies with 2 ultimate atoms, 24 x 2 =  48
21 - bodies with 3 ultimate atoms, 21 x 3 =  63
 2 + bodies with 3 ultimate atoms,  2 x 3 =   6
 2 + bodies with 4 ultimate atoms,  2 x 4 =   8
 2 + bodies with 6 ultimate atoms,  2 x 6 =  12
                                        261
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This again approaches closely the weight-number assigned to nitrogen;

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261 / 18 = 14.44 +
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[note added Aug 2000: 14.5, not 14.44]

This is interesting as checking the observations, for weight-numbers are arrived at in so very different a fashion, and especially in the case of nitrogen the approximation is noteworthy, from the complexity of the bodies which yield the number on analysis.

Some other observations were made which went to shew that as weight-numbers increased, there was a corresponding increase in the number of bodies discerned within the chemical atom; thus, gold shewed 47 contained bodies; but these observations need repetition and checking. Investigation of a molecule of water revealed the presence of twelve bodies from hydrogen and the characteristic snake of oxygen, the encircling walls of the chemical atoms being broken away. But here again, further observations are necessary to substantiate details. The present paper is only offered as a suggestion of an inviting line of research, promising interesting results of a scientific character; the observations recorded have been repeated several times and are not the work of a single investigator, and they are believed to be correct as far as they go.

Annie Besant

Between the first Occult Chemistry article in 1895 and its reprint in 1905 there appeared some other articles on the subject. Here are the next six.

Five extracts from Sarah Corbett's book

EXTRACTS FROM THE VAHAN - 1891-1904

The Vahan was a theosophical London journal issued in 30 volumes between 1890 and 1920.

First published in *The Vahan* in 1897 reprinted in Corbett's book in 1905 as

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Question 258 p539-540

On looking keenly at any exposed portion of the human body (say the face or hand) I frequently see multitudes of tiny forms, such as dice, stars, double pyramids, etc. pouring rapidly out from it; surely these can hardly be thought-forms, yet if not, where am I to place them, as they do not seem to correspond with anything on the astral plane of which I have read? (1897)

query: anonymous

reply: C.W.L.

- Such forms certainly belong neither to the thought plane nor to the astral, but are purely physical, though of exceeding minuteness. What the questioner sees is simply the physical emanation from the body which is always taking place - the waste matter, consisting largely of finely divided salts, which is constantly being thrown out in this manner. The cubic, octahedral, and star like shapes mentioned are readily recognisable by any one who possesses what has sometimes, though perhaps inaccurately, been called *etheric sight* - that is to say, sight capable of observing physical matter in a state of exceedingly fine subdivision, though not yet capable of discerning the still subtler matter of the astral plane.

These emanations constitute what has been referred to as the health-aura, for in the case of a healthy man as they leave the body they are combed out into straight lines by the outrush of the spare prana or vitality which he is constantly radiating from himself in all directions, in the same kind of way as river weeds are held rigid in parallel lines by the strength of the current. In illness, extreme fatigue, or weakness, the man's stock of vitality falls lower, and, consequently, such emanations hang about the man in a chaotic cloud, since the outpouring of prana is insufficient to reduce them to order and sweep them away with it as usual.

The character of these tiny particles varies however from many other causes than loss of health; any wave of emotion will affect them to a greater or less extent, and they even respond to the influence of any definite train of thought. In a recent publication by Dr. Marques, Professor Gates is reported as saying:

- That the material emanations of the living body differ according to the states of the mind, as well as the conditions of the physical health.
- That these emanations can be tested by the chemical reactions of same salts of selenium.
- That these reactions are characterised by various tints or colours, according to the nature of the mental impressions.
- That forty different *emotion products,* as he calls them have already been thus obtained.

If the questioner will endeavour to systematise her observations, she will no doubt find herself able to confirm some of these discoveries, which have been made by a method of investigation so entirely different from that which she is using, and results of very considerable interest might be obtained by work along that line.

A fuller and more detailed work upon the aura, including some study of thought-forms and cognate subjects, will presently be issued, and no doubt the questioner will find in that very much that will be of deep interest to her in connection with her own observations.

First published in *The Vahan* in 1897 reprinted in Corbett's book in 1905 as

Question 259 p541-541

I also frequently see animated particles of some kind quivering with intense rapidity, and dashing about in the air before me, and these seem to be of several different kinds, some of the most active being tiny serpentine forms; is this a dawning perception of the elemental essence of the astral plane? (1897)

query: anonymous

reply: C.W.L.

This question, like the one preceding it, shows the possession of much increased physical power, not of astral. The description given is by no means a bad one, and quite sufficiently proves that what the questioner has seen are realities, and not figments of the imagination, but it applies to physical molecules of gas, and not to astral elemental essence. The active serpentine forms, for example, are obviously molecules (though a chemist would call them atoms) of oxygen, and if the questioner will refer to *Lucifer* for November, 1895, she will no doubt recognise in the drawings there given an attempt to represent what she has seen. Very probably the other molecules there shown would prove recognisable also, while she can hardly have failed to notice the curious corded-bale-like molecule of carbon, or some of the very complicated and ingenious combinations which represent the heavier metals.

It is eminently desirable that those who are still in the earlier stages of the development of the higher sight should be exceedingly careful in their observations, and should compare and test them in every possible way, in order to avoid serious mistake. It is, unfortunately, only too common for a person who gains for the first time a glimpse of astral or even of etheric matter to jump at once to the conclusion that he is at least upon the devachanic level, and holds in his hand the key to all the mysteries of the entire solar system. All that will come in good time, and those grander vistas will assuredly open before him one day; but he will hasten the coming of that desirable consummation if he makes sure of each step as he takes it, and tries fully to understand and make the best of what he has before desiring more. Those who begin their experiences with devachanic vision are few and far

between; for most of us progress must be slow and steady, and the safest motto for us is festina lente.

First published in *The Vahan* in 1897 reprinted in Corbett's book in 1905 as

Question 341 p695-701

Can anything be said as to the respective functions of the Three Logoi in the evolution of humanity and their correspondence to the Christian Trinity? (1897)

query: anonymous

reply: C.W.L.

- This is a subject of which none of us can hope to attain perfect comprehension for many an aeon to come, for he who grasps it thoroughly must be consciously one with the Highest. But some indications may be given which may perhaps help the enquirer in his thinking, though it is most emphatically necessary to bear in mind all the way through that since we are looking at the problem from below instead of from above, from the standpoint of our extreme ignorance instead of from that of omniscience, any conception that we may form must be imperfect and therefore inaccurate.

We are told that what happens at the beginning of a solar system (such as our own), is, allowing for certain obvious differences in the surrounding conditions, identical with what happens at the re-awaking after one of the great pralayas; and it will probably be more possible for us not entirely to misunderstand if we endeavour to direct our attention to the former rather than to the latter. It should be realised to begin with that in the evolution of a solar system, three of the highest principles of the Logos of that system correspond to and respectively fulfil the functions of the three Great Logoi in cosmic evolution; in point of fact, those three principles are identical with the three Great Logoi in a manner which to us down here is wholly incomprehensible, even though we may see that it must be so.

Yet we should be careful, while recognising this identity in essence, on no account to confuse the respective functions of beings differing so widely in their sphere of action. It should be remembered that from the First Logos, which stands next to the Absolute, emanates the Second or Dual Logos, from which in turn comes the Third. From that Third Logos come forth the Seven Great Logoi, called sometimes the Seven Spirits before the throne of God; and as the divine outbreathing pours itself ever further outward and downward, from each of these we have upon the next plane seven Logoi also, together making up on that plane forty-nine. It will be observed that we have already passed through many stages on the great downward sweep towards matter; yet, omitting the detail of intermediate hierarchies, it is said that to each of these forty-nine belong millions of solar systems, each energised and controlled by its own solar Logos. Though at levels so exalted as these, differences in glory and power can mean but little to us, we may yet to some extent realise how vast

is the distance between the three Great Logoi and Logos of a single system, and so avoid a mistake into which careless students are constantly falling.

It has often been stated that each of the planes of our system is divided into seven sub-planes, and that the matter of the highest sub-plane in each may be regarded as atomic qua its particular plane - that is to say, that its atoms cannot be further subdivided without passing from that plane to the one next above it. Now these seven atomic sub-planes, taken by themselves and entirely without reference to any of the other sub-planes which are afterwards called into existence by the various combinations of their atoms, compose the lowest of the great cosmic planes, and are themselves its seven sub-divisions. So that before a solar system comes into existence, we have on its future site, so to speak, nothing but the ordinary conditions of interstellar space - that is to say, we have matter of the seven subdivisions of the lowest cosmic plane (sometimes called the cosmic prakritic), and from our point of view this is simply the atomic matter of each of our sub-planes without the various combinations of which we are accustomed to think as linking them together and leading us gradually from one to the other.

Now in the evolution of a system the action of the three higher principles of its Logos (generally called the three Logoi of the system) upon this antecedent condition of affairs takes place in what we may call a reversed order. In the course of the great work, each of them pours out his influence, but the outpouring which comes first in time is that from that principle of our Logos which corresponds to the Manas in man, though of course on an infinitely higher plane. This is usually spoken of as the Third Logos, or Mahat, corresponding to the Holy Ghost in the Christian system - the *Spirit of God which broods over the face of the waters* of space, and so brings the world into existence.

The result of this first great outpouring is the quickening of that wonderful and glorious vitality which pervades all matter (inert though it may seem to our dim physical eyes), so that the atoms of the various planes develop, when electrified by it, all sorts of previously latent attractions and repulsions, and enter into combinations of all kinds, thus by degrees bringing into existence all the lower subdivisions of each level, until we have before us in full action the marvellous complexity of the forty-nine sub-planes as we see them today. For this reason is it that in the Nicaean symbol the Holy Ghost is so beautifully described as *the Lord and Giver of Life*; and some clue as to the method of His working may be obtained by anyone who will study carefully Professor Crookes' paper on *The Genesis of the Elements,* read before the Royal Institution of Great Britain on February 18th, 1887.

When matter of all the sub-planes of the system is already in existence, and the field has thus been prepared for its activity, the second great outpouring begins - the outflow of what we have sometimes called the monadic essence; and it comes this time from that higher principle corresponding in our system to the Second Logos, of whom the old theologians spoke truly enough in intention, however unfortunate they were in their choice of an expression, when they called Him *the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, by whom all things were made,* since He is indeed the only direct emanation of the First, the Unmanifested, and undoubtedly *without Him was not anything made which was made,* for this monadic essence is the ensouling and energising principle at the back of all life of which we know anything.

Slowly and steadily, but with resistless force, this great influence pours itself forth, each successive wave of it spending a whole manvantara in each of the kingdoms of nature -- the three elemental, the mineral, the vegetable, the animal and the human. On the downward arc of its mighty curve it simply aggregates round itself the different kinds of matter on the various planes, so that all may be accustomed and adapted to act as its vehicles; but when it has reached the lowest point of its destined immeshing in matter, and turns to begin the grand upward sweep of evolution towards divinity, its object is to develop consciousness in each of these grades of matter in turn, beginning, of course, with the lowest.

Thus it is that man, although possessing in a more or less latent condition so many higher principles, is yet for a long time at first fully conscious in his physical body only, and afterwards very gradually becomes so in his astral vehicle, and later still in his mind body. Thus also while we see in the mineral kingdom scarcely anything that we should call consciousness - nothing but the first faint beginnings of desire as shown in chemical affinity - in the vegetable kingdom we find likes and dislikes (desire, in fact) becoming very much more prominent; indeed we have only to read any of the later works on botany to see that many plants exercise a great deal of ingenuity and sagacity in attaining their ends, limited though these ends may be. In the animal kingdom desire occupies a very prominent place, and there can be no doubt that the astral body is definitely beginning to function, though the animal has as yet nothing that can be called consciousness in it apart from the physical vehicle. In the higher domestic animals, however, the astral body has sufficient development to be made after death into a kamarupa which persists for some days at least, or sometimes even for weeks, while a certain amount of manasic activity is distinctly beginning to show itself.

When we come to the human kingdom we find that while with the lower types of men, desire is still emphatically the most prominent feature, the manasic development has proceeded much further; during life the man has a dim consciousness in his astral vehicle while he is asleep, and after death his kamarupa is very fairly conscious and active, and endures for many years, though as yet he has practically nothing of the devachanic life. Coming to the ordinary cultured man of our own race, we find him showing high mental activity during life, and possessing qualities which give him the possibility of a very long devachanic existence after death. He is fully conscious in his astral body during sleep, though not usually able to carry through any memory from the one condition of existence to the other. The cases of the comparatively few men who have as yet undertaken the task of self-development along occult lines show us that the future course of evolution simply means the unfolding of consciousness on higher and higher planes, as humanity passes onward and becomes fit for such development.

But long before this period the third great outpouring of divine life has taken place - that from the highest principle of the Logos of the system, corresponding to the Atman in man, and holding the place filled in cosmic evolution by the First Logos, which has been called by Christianity *God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible,* because from Him all come, even the Second and Third Logoi themselves, and into Him one day all that came forth must return. An attempt has been made to indicate how the monadic essence in its upward course gradually unfolds consciousness first in the physical plane, then in the astral, and then in the lower manasic. But it is only when in the highest of the domestic animals it reaches this latter stage

that the possibility of the third outpouring comes within measurable distance. For this third wave of divine life can descend of itself no lower than our buddhic plane, and there it seems as it were to hover, waiting for the development of fit vehicles to enable it to come down one step further and be the individual souls of men. the phrase sounds strange, but it is difficult to express accurately in human words the mysteries of the higher life.

Imagine (to use an Eastern simile) the sea of monadic essence steadily pressed upward into the manasic plane by the force of evolution inherent in it, and this third outpouring hovering above that plane like a cloud, constantly attracting and attracted by the waves below. Anyone who has ever seen the formation of a waterspout in tropical seas will grasp the idea of this Oriental illustration - will understand how the downward-pointing cone of cloud from above and the upward-pointing cone of water from below draw nearer and nearer by mutual attraction, until a moment comes when they suddenly leap together and the great column of mingled water and vapour is formed.

Similarly the blocks of animal monadic essence are constantly throwing parts of themselves into incarnation like temporary waves on the surface of a sea, and the process of differentiation goes on, until at last a time comes when one of these waves rises high enough to enable the hovering cloud to effect a junction with it, and it is then drawn up into a new existence neither in the cloud nor in the sea, but between the two, and partaking of the nature of both; and so it is separated from the block of which it has hitherto formed a part, and falls back into the sea no more. That is to say, an animal belonging to one of the more advanced blocks of essence may by his love for and devotion to his master, and by the mental effort involved in the earnest endeavour to understand him and please him, so raise himself above his original level, that he becomes a fit vehicle for this third outpouring, the reception of which breaks him away from his block and starts him on his career of immortality as an individual.

If we remember that the consciousness of the monadic essence has been developed up to the lower manasic level, and that the hovering influence of the divine life has descended to the buddhic plane, we shall be prepared to look on the higher manasic levels, the arupa division of the devachanic plane, for the resultant combination; and that is truly the habitat of the causal body of man, the vehicle of the reincarnating Ego.

But here we note that a curious change has taken place in the position of the monadic essence. All the way through its long line of evolution in all the previous kingdoms it has invariably been the ensouling and energising principle, the force behind whatever forms it may have temporarily occupied. But now that which has hitherto been the ensouler becomes itself in turn the ensouled; from that monadic essence is formed the causal body - that resplendent sphere of living light, into which the still more glorious light from above descends, and by means of which it is enabled to express itself as a human individuality.

Nor should any think that it is an unworthy goal to reach as the result of so long and weary an evolution, thus to become the vehicle of this last and grandest outpouring of the divine spirit; for it must be remembered that without the preparation of this vehicle to act as a connecting link, the immortal individuality of man could never come into being, and that this upper triad thus formed becomes a transcendent unity - *not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the*

manhood into God. So that no fragment of the work that has been done through all these ages is lost, and nothing has been useless; for without that work this final consummation could never have been reached, that man should become the equal of the Logos from whom he came forth, and that so that very Logos Himself should be perfected, in that He has of His own offspring those equal to Himself upon whom that love which is the essence of His divine nature can for the first time be fully lavished.

Be it remembered also that it is only in the presence within him of this third outpouring of the divine life that man possesses an absolute guarantee of his immortality; for this is *the spirit of man that goeth upward* in contradistinction to *the spirit of the beast that goeth downward* - that is to say, which flows back again at the death of the animal into the block of monadic essence from which it came. A time will come - the time of the mahapralaya - when *all things visible and invisible* will be reabsorbed into That from which they came; when the the Second and Third Logoi themselves, and all that is of their essence, must disappear. But even in that period of universal rest, there is one Entity who remains unaffected; The First the Unmanifested Logos rests still, as ever, in the bosom of the Infinite. And since the direct essence of this, the divine Father of all, enters into the composition of the spirit of man, by that almighty power his immortality is absolutely assured.

First published in *The Vahan* in 1898 reprinted in Corbett's book in 1905 as

Question 234 p511-512

Is sight developed in the etheric double apart from the dense body, and if so, is it by such sight that the various kinds of ether are perceived? (1898)

query: anonymous

reply: C.W.L.

The etheric double is really part of the physical body, and as a general rule we are less likely to fall into error about either of them if we think of them together. They separate completely only at death, and even partial separation occurs only under anaesthetics, except in the case of a medium. There is etheric matter as well as solid and liquid matter present in the retina of the eye and in the brain, and it is probable that ordinary sight is connected quite as much with the vibrations of the former matter as with those of the latter. The capability of examining the molecules or atoms of either would seem to be rather a different faculty, and apparently implies the use of a much higher power; but large masses of matter in the etheric state, or the bodies of the inhabitants of the etheric sub-planes, may often be seen under favourable conditions by what seems to be a more intensification or exaltation of ordinary sight.

This question is probably closely connected with the evolution which is slowly, but steadily taking place in the physical atom itself. Those who have read the article in *Lucifer* on *Occult Chemistry*

will remember that four sets of spirillae are there mentioned as existing in the atom, lying as it were one behind the other, each set forming the spiral running round the walls of the tube of the larger or grosser set below it. There are in reality seven sets of such spirillae, thus lying one behind or within the other, and one of them comes into activity in each round of our evolution. Thus since we are now in the fourth round, only four sets of these spirillae may be observed in working order in the atom as we see it today; but by the end of the seventh round the entire system of seven orders of spirillae will be fully vitalised, and therefore the physical atom will no doubt be a far more sensitive object, able to answer to many finer vibrations which at present evoke from it no response.

Now one of the lighter tasks of the aspirant to adeptship is the development of the very atoms of which his physical body is composed, so that they may be capable of response to these finer forces of nature, and as he does this he gradually becomes sensitive to all kinds of etheric vibrations which had not previously affected him, and is therefore conscious of much to which the undeveloped man is totally blind.

Naturally his efforts along these lines have to be continually kept up, since the atoms of his body are constantly changing, and every new atom which is absorbed into his frame needs to be subjected to this process of development. Thus he is assisting in his small way in the evolution of the physical universe, for the atoms which have passed through his body are distinctly the better for his use of them. Though after they leave him their finer spirillae sink back into inactivity, they are yet much more ready to be again aroused into response to the play of the higher forces than would be the case with other atoms which had had no such experience. These more advanced atoms come in process of time to form part of other organisms, and the presence of a number of them in the brain, even of a quite ordinary person, would be very likely to give him occasional opportunities of a certain amount of what is commonly called etheric vision.

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Question 355 p723-725

Does a highly-developed Ego, that of a Master, for instance, put on the limitations of the physical brain when it descends to work on the physical plane? (1898)

query: anonymous

reply: C.W.L.

Undoubtedly when working on the physical plane such an Ego must be limited by his physical brain; but if we in any way compare such limitation with that which we experience in connection with our own brains we shall be grievously mistaken. It should be remembered that the Master stands at least at the Asekha level - the position which humanity is intended to attain at the end of

the seventh round - and that, therefore, even his physical body is far more highly evolved and far more sensitive than ours.

In addition to the evolution of the physical atom, to which reference has already been made, there is also visible in the adept a very striking development of the means of communication between the cells of the brain and the higher principles. It is very difficult to describe this clearly without the help of a diagram, but it may be possible to give some idea of it by calling in the aid of the reader's imagination.

Let us suppose the grey matter of the brain to be laid out upon a flat surface, so that the layer is only one particle thick - that is to say, let us suppose ourselves looking down upon it from the *fourth dimension* since that is exactly the appearance that it would present if regarded from that point of view. Let us suppose also that the corresponding particles of the astral body and of the mind body are similarly arranged in layers on their respective planes, and that the lines of communication between them are represented by threads joining each physical particle in turn to its counterpart in the mind body.

Now, if we imagine an ordinary man's brain and its counterparts to be thus arranged, we should see that surprisingly few of the lines of communication were perfect - probably not more than a score or two out of many thousands. In the case of the vast majority of the particles there would simply be no threads at all, and great areas of the brain matter could therefore never receive any direct communication from the higher bodies. In the case of other particles the thread might exist between the mind-body and the astral, but not be carried through to the physical, while yet others might have the thread complete between astral and physical, but no continuation of the line higher up.

Now since the various faculties of man express themselves down here only through their appropriate areas in the brain, it is obvious that the state of affairs which has been described entails some rather curious consequences. We are for the moment leaving entirely out of account the enormous differences which exist between the various Egos, and also the differences in the impressibility of their respective mind bodies; yet we see what infinite possibilities of variety we have, even in the arrangement of the threads of communication between the lower vehicles alone.

Take for example the power of metaphysical thought. We shall find many an Ego in whom such a faculty does not yet exist at all, but even when it is beginning to develop, it will be with the greatest difficulty that any connection can be established with the appropriate area of brain matter. Until the Ego can evolve the proper threads of communication, he will be able to operate that part of his physical brain only by the clumsy and roundabout expedient of sending his message down some other and quite inappropriate thread, and letting it spread out laterally, as it were by transference from one cell to another in the physical brain. We can see at once how different would be the position of the man who had developed even one of the threads especially belonging to that type of thought, and how infinitely better yet would be the condition in which all the threads which feed that section of the brain were in full working order. This last-mentioned state, of course, exemplifies the ideal condition of that part of the brain in a seventh-round body, so it is needless to say that not even the highest philosophical thinkers among us are within anything like measurable distance of such a consummation as yet.

But that is the condition to which the Asekha has brought his physical brain, not as regards one part only, but the whole; so that although it is undoubtedly true that he is limited by his physical brain, since he has vast stores of knowledge which are altogether beyond even its power of expression, we shall be making a mistake of the most colossal character if we suppose that that limitation is in any way comparable with those under which we constantly find ourselves labouring. We should remember that this fourth round is not the one specially intended for the development of Manas, and that we can at present have no conception of the glorious heights to which it will attain in its own fifth round, any more than we can realise how poor a thing the intellect of which we are so proud today will appear to us, when we look back upon it from the standpoint which we shall then have attained.

This letter was first published in the *Theosophical Review*, London, in February of 1899, pages 554-557.

CORRESPONDENCE

Atomic Sub-Planes

We are told that the highest sub-planes of each of the seven planes of our evolutionary system form together a great cosmic plane. These sub-planes are formed of ultimate atoms, which are vortices for the coarse aggregations of matter, and these ultimate atoms are themselves formed from the aggregation of the coarsest material of the plane above. Are they different all in substance, or only in degree of density? If only the latter, why should they belong to a cosmic plane?

Is it only on the fact that they are vortices that their value as matter of a cosmic plane depends? In other words, why should the ultimate atoms of each plane belong to a cosmic plane, and in what lies their difference from the other matter?

query: H.M.S.

reply: C.W.L.

Let me begin by reminding our questioners generally, as I have done more than once before, that our investigators do not necessarily know the reason of everything that they see. They can observe a few of the more obvious facts of nature, and they can collate and classify them, and after many patiently-repeated observations they can come to feel themselves on tolerably safe ground so far; but when it comes to discussing the reason of it all we at once enter a region of deductions and inferences where we tread far less surely. Sometimes we catch as it were passing glimpses of great ruling principles, but as regards most of them we know as yet far too little to be able to formulate them with any degree of precision. But it seems to me preferable to build slowly and surely, fixing

each stone firmly in its place as we lay it, rather than to run up rapidly huge edifices of rash speculation, which are liable to sudden overthrow a little later by the discovery of new and irreconcilable facts.

I think therefore that I will respectfully decline to offer any opinion as to why these atomic sub-planes should belong to a cosmic plane and, after premising that the information was originally given by an older student whose acquaintance with occult science seemed extensive and thorough, I will confine myself to mentioning some of the observations which show that the statement is a correct one.

1. The direct relation between these atomic sub-planes

This is manifested in many ways, but perhaps in none more strikingly than in the manner of descent of the monadic essence through the various kingdoms. For example, after entering the third elemental kingdom (which it does by veiling itself in the atomic astral matter) it gradually presses downward into all the other sub-planes, until it ensouls forms of the very lowest astral matter, and is on the very verge of physicality. Yet it does not step from that lowest subdivision of the astral into the highest of the physical, which seems to lie so near; instead of that, it slowly draws back into the astral atomic condition, bearing with it all experience gained or quality developed, and then from the highest astral it shoots straight down into the highest physical, along another line of connection - as it were in another dimension.

Another way in which this direct connection shows itself is in the transmission of vibrations. Usually a vibration in any sub-plane can readily affect only the one next below or above it; for example, a movement on the second etheric sub-plane would instantly set in motion matter of the third, and through that would influence the fourth, but it would be only with considerable difficulty that it would directly affect matter of that fourth sub-plane if there happened to be none of the third order of ether present to act as an intermediary. Yet certain motions in atomic astral matter immediately affect the matter of the second astral sub-plane. They simply overleap those intervening sub-planes, or rather they seem to travel by another route altogether - by what we might call a cosmic route.

2. The condition of interplanetary space

Interplanetary space properly contains only matter in the atomic condition - atomic physical ether, atomic astral, atomic devachanic, and so on. So much of the space is loaded with meteoric dust, and filled with worlds that are not physical, that the purely atomic condition of which we are speaking is not so enormously predominant as would naturally be supposed. Still where we do find it, its constitution is as I have described - a sort of honeycomb of widely separated equidistant atoms, each vibrating in its own field of action; and this is so upon all the planes within reach of the investigator. Now this interplanetary space is undoubtedly part of the lowest cosmic plane; so that this consideration again confirms the theory that these are its sub-planes.

3. The constitution of the atom

Here there is very striking evidence to be found, though the description of it is perhaps rather difficult to follow for those who are not yet able to see the atom for themselves. It is true, as implied in the question, that if a physical atom be forcibly broken up for the time by occult means, its fragments will be transferred by that action to the lowest astral sub-plane. They will have to be held there equally by force, as long as it is desired that they should remain; the moment they are released they will return to their previous condition, and the physical atom will re-appear.

But there is another method of dealing with it. Anyone who will carefully examine the drawing of an atom published by Mrs. Besant in *The Ancient Wisdom* will see that it is in reality composed of ten lines or wires lying side by side, each complete in itself and returning into itself, but never interfering with the others. They are like ten exactly similar circles of wire, somehow twisted through themselves fourth-dimensionally into complicated parallel spirals - exactly alike, except that three of them are thicker and slighter larger than their fellows.

Now each of these ten, when carefully examined, is found to be not a simple wire but a coil, for it is composed of spirillae wound closely at right angles to the line of the wire. Obviously such a coil might be straightened out and it would then represent a very much larger circle of much thinner wire. But this again proves to be a coil composed of a finer order of spirillae, and so it can be unwound and attenuated in its turn; and this process may be repeated again and again until we get a comparatively enormous circle of a thinness quite beyond imagination.

When the whole has thus been carefully unwound even down to the seventh order of its spirillae it will be found that the circle really consists of an immense number of astral atoms lying end to end in one long line - how long it would be difficult to say, but certainly of prodigious length as compared to the size of the physical atom. Thus we see another evidence of direct connection between the different orders of atoms, in that each is simply composed, in its ultimate analysis, of ten great circles of the atoms of the order next above - not even combined, but simply arranged end to end by one stream of force which flows ever round and round through them.

4. The vortex aspect of the atom

Hitherto we have been dealing with the atom of each plane simply as a kind of brick out of which all the other forms belonging to that plane must be built up; and even from that point of view the fact that it is the ultimate brick of a plane, and that any further subdivision of it at once puts it on the plane next above, seems to give it a character all its own, entitling it to stand as the representative of its plane in cosmic relations.

But the atom has another aspect. We have only to watch its intense activity, to note the exceeding rapidity and variety of its motions, in order to recognize that it is the vehicle of some wonderful force which incessantly wells up within it, apparently from nowhere, and sets currents into vigorous and constant circulation all round it. Really of course this force is pouring steadily into it from a higher plane - from another dimension, as it were.

Closer examination leads us to the conclusion that the atom is not only the vehicle of this higher force for its own plane, but that it has itself been called into existence by the action of that force. The fact that there is in a certain spot a vortex produced by that force, is the only reason why in that spot the particular aggregation of astral matter which constitutes a physical atom is also to be found, for that matter has been drawn together and is held together by that vortex.

Now though this force is essentially and always one - the great force of evolution which is the will of God in action - yet it obviously needs different vehicles in which to work on the different planes, and for this reason it sets up on each plane the innumerable vortices which provide it with the requisite atoms. Here, evidently in the common production of all atoms by the direct action of the one great cosmic force, and in their common use for its more direct manifestations, we have another close bond between the atomic sub-planes, another proof of their cosmic importance.

The question as to the difference of substance has been practically answered in the above remarks. It will be evident from what has been said that there is in reality but one substance in the universe, so far as we know it, and that all the bewildering complexity around us is produced from it simply by aggregation and arrangement in obedience to cosmic law.

END
