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*Professor Agassiz*  
*with Lady Baltimore's Compts*  
SPECULATIONS

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# PHILOSOPHY OF EXISTENCE.

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RELIGION MODERNA."



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# SPECULATIONS

## ON THE

### PHILOSOPHY OF EXISTENCE.

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“I deny nothing, and I assert nothing; I only speculate and seek for truth.”

WE believe the universe to be composed of various forces, which, by the different effects they produce on the world we inhabit, we have divided into material and spiritual atoms.

Every fragment of matter in the universe represents a corresponding atom of spiritual existence; this realm of spiritual being is the essence, force, and real substance of the material; but both inevitably are dissolved together, both being resolved back into their component parts, in the chemical change we call death.

The same as there are material atoms in the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms, there are also spiritual atoms in every one and in

each of those ; thus, as man's body is composed of earthly substances,—vegetable tissues, mineral, atmospheric, vegetable and watery elements,—so all those have realms of spiritual existences perfectly in harmony with their peculiar quality and functions. Hence there are spirits, or rather masses of undeveloped spiritual essences, in the earth, water, fire, air, stones, minerals, plants, flowers, animals, in the atmosphere, in the other planets, without limit or number.

The same as man's body is entirely formed of the elements which have composed minerals, vegetables, and animals, his soul or individualized spirit is composed of the spirits that have inhabited or rather given life to all those ; so, as a whole, is far superior to the spirits of earth, water, plants, etc. But there are also spirits in the universe superior even to the spirit in man.

The spiritual and material atoms are immortal. For everything changes, but nothing dies. Death is but a word, the same as birth ; they are words made by men to express ideas which they cannot understand. Man has never seen a being born or die : he has seen a spirit appear under the form of a germ, in an embryotic existence ; some time after he has seen this spirit disappear and his

body dissolved into its component material substances ; but as for the principle that gave life to this form, it has always escaped his comprehension. Yet it exists.

It is impossible to deny that there is a spiritual essence in man, besides his material organization, because it is not the organs that produce the faculty of thought ; on the contrary, those organs proceed from this faculty. The senses, therefore, are not the intelligence : they are only the instruments.

Man has a spirit that gives him life, and this spirit is immortal. Because, if the decomposition of the body was the annihilation of life, it would be necessary to admit a Creator who undid with one hand what he did with the other, or two rival powers, a creative and a destructive. But reason refuses such beliefs. Let us beware of believing anything that stands against reason : God did not give us this great blessing in order that we might believe nonsensical doctrines. The order of nature is *one*, because God is *one*.

Man's spirit may grow old, it may grow weak, but is destined to become active again ; his action may stop with his death, but his faculty of acting cannot cease. At the hour of his death as at the moment of his birth it is there ; quite as perceptible

to those who surround him, and yet where it comes from and where it goes to are mysteries to them.

The spiritual atoms as the material are immortal, —that is to say, they last forever; being, as they are, indestructible, and, like the material atoms, can form parts of several beings successively.

For instance: a cabbage is formed of various atoms of matter, united for the time being in one form. A cow eats this cabbage, and the particles of matter of which it was composed become parts of this animal's body; the man who partakes of the flesh or of the milk of this cow partakes also of the material atoms that made the body of the animal, and those pass naturally to form parts of his organism, such as flesh and blood. At the death of the man those same particles are dissolved into their component parts, and thus it goes on forever.

So we see that an atom of matter can form part of a cabbage, a cow, a man, etc., successively, and, in the same way, of an innumerable series of organisms.

Matter is therefore immortal; when it no longer forms part of a human body, it will in time help to make up another form in the natural order of things.

The spiritual atoms follow the same law, they

are likewise immortal; only that, having life in themselves, being as they are the *life-giving essence* of the organisms they inhabit, they themselves form it, attracting around them material atoms, with the aid of their *peri-sprit* or magnetic force, that binds matter and spirit together by means of the individualized power of life.

As those atoms progress—for, being the essence of the life which animates the universe, they must progress—they form bodies or moulds of form more and more advanced, more and more developed, always in conformity with their progress and actual development. For the development of the organs follows that of the spirit, the progress of which would be stopped if its physical conformation were not adapted to its moral organization. What could the genius of Newton do, imprisoned in the form of an elephant? And, on the other hand, what would be the use of the organs of a Newton to the spirit of that animal?

The spirits form, therefore, their bodies in accordance with the functions they expect from them. As they progress they require less of the material element wherewith to form their bodies,—that is to say, they require material envelopes of less density. Thus, the proportion of the spiritual and

material atoms is ever varying, and is always augmenting in favor of the former. In this way they form minerals, vegetables, and animals, and after an intermediate state, of which at present we do not speak, help to make up the individualized spirit that gives life to the animal called man.

Man is thus formed of an agglomeration of spiritual and material atoms, which are united by means of a magnetico-spiritual force to which we have given the *absurd* names of *peri-esprit* or *meta-espiritu*; but such as they are, those are the names by which it is known. (By the former in France, and by the latter in Spain.)

Man, according to philosophy, is a rational animal, and his animal nature is of an entirely different source from his rational being or inner soul, although these two are united in one individuality during the short life of each being in the planet.

The material body known as his animal nature must have had an origin entirely different from that of the spiritual soul which gives it life. For they are of an entirely distinct nature.

Scripture seems to point out to us this truth when it tells us that "*God made man of the dust of the earth, and breathed*" [or inspired] "*into his nostrils the breath of lives, and man was made a living soul.*"

This is a direct and simple exposition that man's body was not *created*, as the first and absolute sense of this word seems to imply, but that it was formed of pre-existing matter, namely, *the dust of the earth*, which means with the mineral, vegetable, and animal substances of which this dust was composed.

His soul was also created in the same way,—that is to say, it was derived from the spiritual mass that had given life to former organizations; only that it does not become an individualized spirit until it is capable of forming for itself a human body, and then for the first time it acquires an absolute power over the matter which forms its body, or mould, by means of the magnetico-spirit-force called *peri-esprit* or *meta-espiritu*.

Thus, the individualized spirit of man builds up his own body, and this is what is meant by the words *a living soul*.

The spark of life is the *peri-esprit* which is *breathed* or *inspired* on the human being in the moment of his first appearance on earth.

It is curious to remark that this form of *inspiring* is the same which was used by Christ when he conferred upon his disciples the supernatural power and the graces of the Christian dispensation, which

was, as it were, a new life to them, and is even now a form often used in the rites and ceremonies of the Church of Rome.

After the man's death, the spiritual atoms which formed his soul, like the material molecules that made up his body, and that in a short time became again *dust of the earth*, go to form a superior being, perhaps another man; but more advanced and developed than the first, because it has acquired his experience and knowledge, which once acquired by a spirit can never be lost. In this way, if the spiritual molecules lose their temporary individuality in the change of material atoms that make up their body, they do not change their essence, and remain therefore the same spirit, although in another and higher condition of being.

As before said: Besides the spiritual and material atoms, there are magnetico-spiritual atoms that unite the spirit with its body in the being called man. Some think those are the spirit itself, but in reality they are only the *peri-esprit* which gives life to the material organs forming the magnetic force which unites and holds matter and spirit together, serving as a motor-power of action to the spirit over the temporal material envelope that binds it to the material world.

Those spiritual atoms are the mere magnetic envelope which binds spirit and body together. In the first or inner recesses of nature is the realm of force, comprising aura, essence, light, heat, magnetism, life, nerve, electricity, and all the imponderables that make up motion, for motion is force, composed of many subdivisible parts, but this is not, however, individualized spirit. They are the *spiritual parts* of matter, and supply to matter the qualities of force; but they are all embryotic, all transitory, and only partially intelligent existences; they are organs, but not organisms, and only can act as a magnetic force between the soul and its body.

Saint Paul said to the Corinthians, "*There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body.*" The first is that which is formed by the material atoms; the second, the one formed by the spiritual. This is the one that gives life to the material body, establishing a magnetic current between the spirit and its body, and it is by its means only that we can command the material part of our nature. It is, in a word, the life of man without being his soul.

Man's soul, that is to say, his individuality, is formed, as I have before stated, of the different spiritual atoms, after they have developed them-

selves through the three lower kingdoms of nature, mineral, vegetable, and animal, and perhaps through others yet unknown to us.

Every spirit must ascend by those slow steps before he can attain an individualized existence. It would have been unjust of God, if he could create a man at once, not to have made him an angel. But everything must follow its course, and this slow progression is necessary to the spirit, for it could not give life all at once to a human form ; it must learn first the rudiments of organized existence, and this can only be done through a series of progressive lives, beginning at the very first step of the ladder and ascending to its very top. In this progressive series of existences the spiritual atoms must develop themselves through the atmospheric, mineral, vegetable, animal, and individualized states.

And yet in reality there are neither kingdoms nor species. Under the shape of those millions of forms, and of different physiognomies, we only can see phases and grades of intelligence, more or less developed it is true, but yet always of the same nature. Those families that appear to us so varied are in reality but one continued and ascending scale of being. It would be impossible to tell

where one species, one family, or even where one kingdom ends and the other begins. They are only *ages, epochs, phases*, of organized life; in a word, different stages of organized existence, which becomes more and more developed, and more and more advanced, but which always retains the same qualities.

But nothing imperfect is permanent, and nothing is perfect excepting God, who is perfection itself; so every spirit *must* change, it *must* progress, and therefore it must also lose the individuality which it would be impossible for it to keep through so many changes, and under such different conditions. As Saint Paul stated, "*we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.*"

And this is true; according to the observations of the most learned and reliable physicians, we can state as a proved fact, that every seven years, or perhaps in even less time, our material bodies change entirely. So that as far as our material nature is concerned we are entirely new persons at the end of every seven years during our earth-life.

Our spirit changes in the same way, only that its changes are always a further development; we always progress, because the divine essence that is in us makes us progress,—that is to say, we gain more

and more power, as we go on, over the material atoms that make up our terrestrial habitation.

Thus we see that the power of the spirit over matter is far greater in the animal kingdom than it is in the mineral or vegetable; in the first (mineral) the relative power of the spiritual atoms is exceedingly limited, almost entirely imperceivable; this is because as yet they are only in embryo, and as such they are learning their first lesson in the material world.

In man, the mind, that is, the spiritual atoms which make up his soul and his life, are in proportion to the material atoms of his body as fifty to fifty, more or less, for in some cases the mind, and in others the body, predominates.

In a future state the human spirit will form for itself organizations in which the mind, already more advanced and developed, will work more freely a less material body; and in this new being the spirit will be in proportion to matter as seventy-five to twenty-five.

Man, as he now inhabits this planet, is a sad intermediate state between the animal and the angel; he aspires to a supreme knowledge and he cannot attain it; he wants to explore the first cause of all that exists and he is obliged to stop half-way, his

mind will carry him no further; if he had less intellectual qualities he would not have the pretension to inquire into the origin of things; while, on the other hand, these would be known to him if his mind was more developed, and if his body was less material. As it is, he only knows sufficient to feel that the things he knows are but an infinitesimal part of the glorious truths which he yearns to know.

Victor Hugo said very truly that a one-eyed man is much more incomplete than a blind man, for he knows what it is that's wanting.

Man, therefore, cannot be the final state of the spirit, the atoms that compose his mind have been educated for a far more perfect state of being, and our soul is growing a great deal too spiritual to remain much longer in this material body, which is already too incomplete and imperfect for the functions to which the spirit aspires.

I shall finish by repeating Louis Figuier's true statement, that "Man is but a step in the progressive and ascending ladder of animated beings. The divine power that filled the earth with life, sensation, and thought; that gave life and organization to the plant; movement, sensation, and intelligence to the animal; and to man, besides

those numerous functions, the faculty of reason and the power of speculating on the ideal, intends one day creating by man's side, or rather after him, a being yet superior to him.

"This new creature, which modern religion and the minds of poets seem to have guessed at in the ever radiant and beautiful type of the Christian angel, will be provided with moral faculties, the nature and the purpose of which surpass our present comprehension.

"We must satisfy ourselves," he continues, "with expressing this formidable problem without resolving it. For this great mystery, to use the magnificent expression of Pliny, is hidden in the majesty of nature; *Labet in majestate naturæ*:" or, to express it better still, in the thoughts and omnipotence of the Creator of the material and spiritual atoms in the universe.



