



modern theosophy

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unveiled*

*The writings of H.P. Blavatsky
in modern English. Volume I.*

Extract

Recently some scholars have turned their attention to a field usually regarded as little more than ‘superstition.’ They have begun speculating on the possibility of invisible worlds. The authors of *The Unseen Universe*, Balfour Stewart and Peter Guthrie Tait, were the first to lead the way. They already have a follower in the form of Professor John Fiske who outlined his own ideas in his book *The Unseen World*. It seems that scientists are starting to question the value of materialism and exploring alternative fields in case materialism is ultimately discredited. Both the English logician William Stanley Jevons and the English polymath Charles Babbage agree that there doesn’t have to be a conflict between science and religion. Both believe that every thought creates a wave in the particles of the brain and this wave travels throughout the universe. According to *Principles of Science* by Jevons, ‘each particle of extant matter must contain a record of everything that has happened.’ In *A Course of Lectures on Natural Philosophy and the Mechanical Arts Volume I* the English physician Thomas Young asks the reader to ‘speculate freely on the possibility of parallel worlds. Some of these may exist in different parts of the universe. Others may exist in the same space and interpenetrate even though they are unknown and invisible to one another. There may be others that do not need space at all in order to exist.’

When scientists speculate on the existence of parallel worlds, they consider scientific theories like the transfer of energy into other universes and the continuity principle. This principle, developed by the physicist William Thomson, suggests that everything is connected, cohesive and unending. If scientists are free to speculate in this way, why shouldn’t occultists and spiritualists do the same? In *History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science* William Draper describes how a surface of polished metal will register the impression of an object and preserve it for

an indefinite amount of time. It is as if the metal has captured a nerve-like impression. Draper continues in a poetic vein: ‘Whenever a shadow is cast against a wall it leaves a permanent trace. This trace can be made visible again with the right methods. Pictures of friends or landscapes are hidden from view on the light-sensitive surface of a photographic plate. But as soon as the plate is developed, the images will appear. It is as if a specter is hidden on the plate’s surface until the photographer brings it to light and makes it visible again. When someone is in the privacy of their own home, they assume no one is watching and their privacy is complete. But the walls themselves hold impressions of everything that has taken place inside.’

Objects and events leave a permanent impression on inorganic matter. Equally nothing in the universe is ever lost or ceases to exist completely. Why then is there so much hostility from the scientific community toward Balfour Stewart and Peter Guthrie Tait? Why does science reject the hypothesis that: ‘Thought in this universe also affects the fabric of a parallel invisible universe. This may explain how consciousness can pass from this universe but continue to exist in an immaterial future state.’

Psychometry offers powerful proof that matter is indestructible, retaining impressions of people and events eternally. The ability to perceive those eternal impressions is even more powerful proof that man’s individual spirit is immortal. Man’s inner sight is capable of discerning events that took place hundreds of thousands of years ago. Why can’t his inner sight use the same ability to perceive the future? When inner sight is directed at eternity it sees the future contained in a boundless present where past and future co-exist.

Scientists are the first to admit that there are significant gaps in scientific knowledge. But they still refuse to accept the existence

of an esoteric spiritual force beyond the laws of physics. They want to take the laws that govern the inanimate world and apply them to living beings. They're lucky to have discovered that light, heat, electricity and motion are the main constituents of ether (described by the Kabbalists as its 'gross purgations'). They have found that different wavelengths produce the colors of the spectrum. Satisfied with their achievements, they avoid looking any further. Several scientists have investigated the nature of ether. As they have not been able to measure it with photometry, they have described it as 'a hypothetical medium.' They define it as 'rarified, extremely flexible and thought to suffuse everything, including solid objects.' According to the dictionary definition it is 'the medium of transmission of light and heat.' Others who could be described as pseudo-scientists have also investigated ether, claiming to have examined it 'through powerful lenses.' Even so, they failed to find anything supernatural or to discover anything of scientific value about its elusive nature. Consequently, they went on to dismiss everyone who believes in immortality in general and spiritualism in particular. Out of spite, they called them all 'insane fools' and 'visionary lunatics' in the words of the US physician Frederic Marvin in his lecture, 'Mediomania.'

In *The Unseen Universe* Stewart and Tait write:

'Scientists like Thomas Huxley have chosen to regard the mystery of life or will as something separate from the objective, scientifically observable universe. Their mistake is to think that consequently the mystery disappears from the universe altogether. It does no such thing. It only disappears from that small circle of light - the universe as studied by science. There are three great mysteries (a trinity of mysteries): the mystery of matter, the mystery of life, and the mystery of God - and these three are one.'

Notes

(3) Blavatsky gives the name of Hénin de Cuvillers' journal as the *Annales de Magnétisme Animal* but this appears to be incorrect. A bi-monthly journal the *Annales du Magnétisme Animal* was launched in 1814 and, after a short interruption, reappeared as the *Bibliothèque du Magnétisme Animal*. This title became defunct in 1819 and was then replaced by the *Archives du Magnétisme Animal* under the editorship of Hénin de Cuvillers.

(4) Smyrna was an ancient Greek city located on the west coast of modern-day Turkey. The modern city occupying the original site of Smyrna is called Izmir.

(5) Nineveh was an ancient Assyrian city on the outskirts of what is now the city of Mosul in northern Iraq. Located on the eastern bank of the Tigris River, Nineveh was the capital of the Neo-Assyrian Empire.

(6) *L'Ami des Sciences* was a Sunday paper founded by the French science writer Victor Meunier in Paris in 1855. It promoted general interest in scientific topics and was part of the popular science movement.

(7) Caesar's *Commentaries* may refer to one of two works written by the Roman emperor Julius Caesar. The first is *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* and concerns Caesar's campaigns in Gaul and Britain fought between 58 BC and 50 BC. The second is *Commentarii de Bello Civili* describing

his participation in the Roman Civil War 49 BC - 48 BC.

(8) A Leyden jar, or Leiden jar, was the original form of the capacitor. It stores a high-voltage electric charge from an external source between electrical conductors on the inside and outside of a glass jar. Metal foil is cemented to the inside and the outside surfaces, and a metal terminal projecting vertically through the jar lid makes contact with the inner foil.

(9) Perispirit, in spiritism, is the subtle body used by the spirit to connect with the perceptions created by the brain. The term is found in the extensive nomenclature originally devised by Allan Kardec in his books about spiritism.

(10) Planchette, from the French 'little plank,' is a device used in automatic writing. It is a small, flat piece of wood, usually heart shaped, with two castors and a pencil holder.

Chapter Seven

(1) The first spheres of astral existence: Neo-Platonic philosophy, and later, theosophy, suggested that there are several spheres of non-physical existence on the astral plane. These spheres must be traversed by the soul as it incarnates or following the death of the physical body.

(2) Mr. Vincent is described in the original Blavatsky text as a government engineer. It appears from the de la Loubère text (quoted below) that this is incorrect and Vincent was in fact a physician from Provence (see *Vincent, Mr.* page 453) The Blavatsky text goes on to claim that de la Loubère could verify the truth of the fish story but the source text indicates that it was Vincent who vouched for the truth of the phenomenon: *Amongst the Fresh-water Fish, they have some little ones of two sorts, which do here deserve to be mention'd. They call them Pla out, and Pla cadi, that is to say the Fish out, and the Fish cadi. To free me from all doubts, some have assur'd me, that after they have salted them together, as the Siameses us'd to do, if they leave them in an earthen Pot in their Pickle, where they soon corrupt, by reason they salt ill at Siam, then, that is to say when they are corrupted, and as it were in a very liquid Paste, they do exactly follow the flux and reflux of the Sea, growing higher and lower in the Pitcher as the Sea ebbs or flows. Mr. Vincent gave me a Pot thereof at his arrival in France, and assur'd me that this Experiment was true, and that he had seen it; but I cannot add my Testimony thereunto, by reason I was too late advertised thereof at Siam, to have an occasion of ascertaining it by my own Eyes; and that the Pot which Mr. Vincent gave me, and which I brought to Paris, perform'd this Effect no more: perhaps because the Fish were too much corrupted, or that their virtue of imitating the flux and reflux of the Sea continues only a certain time... The External does so exceedingly weaken the Natural Heat, that*

here are not seen almost any of those Distempers, which our Physicians do call Agues: and this is so throughout India, and also in Persia, where, of an hundred sick persons, Mr. Vincent the Provençal Physician, whom I have already mention'd, declar'd that he scarce found one which had the Fever...

(3) The Chukchi Peninsula is the easternmost peninsula of Asia and is located on the edge of Siberia. The indigenous Chukchi people were fishermen, hunters and reindeer herders. In the Chukchi religion, every object, whether animate or inanimate, is assigned a spirit which can be either harmful or benevolent.

(4) 'Talapoin' is a 16th-century French word for a Buddhist monk from the Portuguese 'talapão,' which is derived from 'mon tala pōi' meaning 'our lord.'

(5) Cevennes and Morzine: outbreaks of religious fervor occurred in both towns beginning with convulsions among the towns' children. The first outbreak occurred at Cevennes in 1707, the second in the Alpine town of Morzine in 1857.

(6) The Convulsionnaires of Saint-Médard were a religious sub-group of the Catholic theological movement known as Jansenism. Their spiritual practice was characterized by fits of religious convulsions which began at the tomb of François de Pâris, a

Jansenist deacon, buried at the cemetery of the parish of Saint-Médard in Paris.

(7) Andrew Jackson Davis believed that no sudden or radical change takes place in the character and disposition of an individual at death. Those who were mischievous, unprincipled, or promiscuous during their lives remained so, for a time at least, after they died. He referred to these residual presences as ‘Diakka.’

(8) ‘Temple of Jupiter Amun at Libya’ refers to the temple built at the Oasis of Siwa to the Egyptian deity Amun. Worship of Amun had spread beyond Egypt to include Nubia, Sudan, Greece and ancient Libya. The temple was so renowned for its oracle that even Alexander the Great is said to have crossed the desert to consult it.

(9) ‘A Temple of Venus’ may refer to the Temple of Venus and Roma, the largest temple in ancient Rome, or the Temple of Venus in Djémila, Algeria. In *Mysteries of Ancient South America*, Harold T. Wilkins writes, ‘If we are to believe St. Augustine and Cedrenus, the old Byzantine chronicler, ‘perpetual lamps’, or lights, were by no means unknown to the ancient Egyptians, Romans and Greeks. St. Augustine says that such a lamp was in a fane of Venus in Africa.’

(10) Carystus was a city-state on the Greek island of Euboea, situated on

the south coast, close to the site of modern Karystos. Asbestos is still mined in the northeastern part of the city in the Okhi mountain.

(11) Cabeirian Mysteries, HPB: Kabeirian, is a mystery cult devoted to deities in Greek mythology called the Cabeiri. The mysteries were centered on the north Aegean islands of Lemnos and possibly Samothrace. Like all mystery schools the details of initiation, rituals and deities have been kept secret. Presumably, the image referred to by Blavatsky depicts an aspect of ritual associated with this particular mystery tradition.

(12) Luxor Temple is a large ancient Egyptian temple complex located on the east bank of the river Nile. Constructed c. 1400 BC, it was the major religious center of the ancient city of Thebes (present-day Luxor).

(13) Damascus steel is named after Damascus, the capital of Syria. It was made using a secret process of carburization in which wrought iron was heated with carbon-containing materials in sealed vessels. The metal can be recognized by a distinctive light and dark pattern on its surface. Damascus steel was favored in the production of blades because it was strong but remained flexible.

(14) Karnak Temple Complex covers more than 100 hectares on the east bank of the Nile. The great hall is the highlight of the Karnak

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on the design of the Julian calendar. He modified the 365-day Egyptian solar calendar, introducing the leap year.

Spencer, Herbert (27 April 1820 - 8 December 1903) was an English sociologist and philosopher. He advocated the primacy of the individual over society and of science over religion. He was an early supporter of the theory of evolution and is remembered for his development of social Darwinism in which he applied Darwin's theory of evolution to society and social classes. He coined the term 'survival of the fittest.'

Spinoza, Benedict de (24 November 1632 - 21 February 1677), was a Dutch Jewish philosopher. His work *Ethica* (Ethics) published in 1677 describes an ethical vision in which God is identified with nature. Rather than the transcendent creator of the universe, God is presented as nature itself, of which mankind is an integral part.

Sprengel, Kurt Polycarp Joachim (3 August 1766 - 15 March 1833) was a German botanist and physician. Between 1792 and 1799 he published the five volumes of *Versuch einer Pragmatischen Geschichte der Arzneikunde* (Toward a Pragmatic History of Medicine). It was the standard work for nearly a century.

Stallbaum, Johann Gottfried HPB: *Stalbaum* (25 September 1793 - 24 January 1861) was a German classical scholar. He is noted for his studies of Plato: *Platonis Meno* (Plato's Meno) published in 1827 and *Platonis Opera*

Omnia (The Works of Plato) published between 1827 and 1860.

Stewart, Balfour (1 November 1828 - 19 December 1887) was a Scottish meteorologist, geophysicist and member of the Society for Psychical Research. He became director of Kew Observatory in 1859 and professor of natural philosophy at Owens College, Manchester in 1870. He specialized in the study of the earth's magnetic field. He was co-author of *The Unseen Universe* (1875) with Peter Guthrie Tait. The book proposes the idea that 'the visible universe has been developed out of the invisible.' Blavatsky refers to Stewart and Tait obliquely using the phrase 'the authors of *The Unseen Universe*.'

Stowe, Harriet Elisabeth Beecher HPB: *Stow* (14 June 1811 - 1 July 1896) was an author and American abolitionist. Her best known work is her anti-slavery novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* published in 1852. The line cited by Blavatsky is frequently attributed to Stowe but appears as an uncited aphorism in *The Unjust Judge or the Evils of Intemperance on Judges, Lawyers and Politicians* by 'a member of the Ohio bar,' published in 1854.

Strabo (c. 64 BC - after 21 AD) was a Greek geographer and historian. His major work is *Geographica* (Geography), a 17-volume encyclopedia of geographical knowledge. It is the only surviving work from antiquity detailing the peoples and countries known to Greeks and Romans in the reign of Augustus (27 BC - 14 BC).

Swedenborg, Emanuel (29 January 1688 - 29 March 1772) was a Swedish philosopher, scientist and mystic. His theology reflected a long struggle to understand the world of spirit through investigation of the physical world.

Sydenham, Floyer (1710 - 1 April 1787) was an English scholar of ancient Greek. He produced many translations including *The Works of Plato: His Fifty-five Dialogues and Twelve Epistles* published in 1804.

Synesius (c. 373 - c. 414) was a bishop and philosopher from the ancient city of Cyrene (now Shahhat, Libya). Before he converted to Christianity, he wrote pagan hymns that closely follow the fire theology of the Chaldean Oracles. His later Christian writings reveal great similarities between these belief systems.

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Tachenius, Otto real name: Heinz-Herbert Take (1610 - 1680) was a German pharmacist, physician and alchemist. He is thought to have been the son of a miller and to have been apprenticed to an apothecary. He qualified as a doctor at Padua in 1652, settling in Venice where he sold a 'viperine salt' (sal viperinum) as a cure-all. He wrote a commentary on van Helmont's *alkahest* published as *Epistola de Famoso Liquore Alkahest* (Letter on the Famous Alkahest) in 1655.

Tait, Peter Guthrie (28 April 1831 - 4 July 1901) was Scottish

mathematician and physicist. He became professor of natural philosophy at Edinburgh in 1860 and held the chair until shortly before his death. He was co-author of *The Unseen Universe* (1875) with Balfour Stewart. The book proposes the idea that 'the visible universe has been developed out of the invisible.' Blavatsky refers to Tait and Stewart obliquely with the phrase 'the authors of *The Unseen Universe*.'

Tasso, Torquato (11 March 1544 - 25 April 1595) was an Italian poet, regarded as the greatest of the late Renaissance. His most famous work is *Gerusalemme Liberata* (Jerusalem Liberated) published in 1581. This epic poem portrays the Crusaders' capture of Jerusalem.

Tatian (c. 120 - c. 180 AD) was a Syrian Christian writer and theologian. He compiled the *Diatessaron* which presented the four Gospels as a single narrative. This text was of central importance to the Syrian church for centuries. In *Oratio ad Graecos* (Address to the Greeks), published c. 177 AD, he argued that 'whatever immortality a man may obtain is thus by participation in the immortality and incorruptibility of God.'

Taylor, Bayard full name: James Bayard Taylor (11 January 1825 - 19 December 1878) was an American travel writer. He wrote accounts of his visits to Europe, India, China, Mexico, Russia, Egypt, Palestine, Iceland, Africa, Scandinavia, and Japan. Blavatsky appears to be paraphrasing his book

Isis Unveiled, published in 1877, was H.P. Blavatsky's original occult masterpiece and covered a wide range of topics from ancient Egyptian Mystery schools to the conflict between science and spiritualism. But Blavatsky's elaborate Victorian prose presents a major stumbling block for the 21st-century reader.

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Moon Laramie is an author and theosophist. His books include *Spirit of Garbo* and *Theosophy and the Search for Happiness* (with Annie Besant). *Blavatsky Unveiled Vol. I* is the beginning of an ambitious publishing project to present all of Madame Blavatsky's writing in modern English.



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