

STUDIES IN THE
PHILOSOPHY
of LORENZ OKEN

:: by D.N. Dunlop ::

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“The present time with its accumulating mass of knowledge presses upon us ever more and more the necessity of work, wherein abstract science and experience, theory and facts shall advance together, the Ideal in part receiving and reflecting back with increased lustre the light which it has derived from the Real or outward semblance of things”

From the Translator's Note to the
“Elements of Physiophilosophy.”

Oken in his Preface to the English Translation of his Physiophilosophy states that the first Edition was written in 1810 "in a kind of inspiration". Later scientific investigations, he said, would necessarily modify details in his classification but the fundamentals would remain essentially the same.

The Physiophilosophy was preceded by various pamphlets dealing with different aspects of his scientific research in which he developed his Mineral, Vegetable and Animal systems and his philosophical Physiology and Anatomy.

Later he sought to bring these into mutual connexion, building up a philosophy of nature based upon the principle that a special organ or anatomical system forms the basis of each animal and vegetable class. In the determination, moreover, of these cardinal organs, it becomes clear that organs and classes are of but one kind, and that the development by stages or degrees of the embryo is the antetype of the classes, and that each class taking its standpoint from below falls into a series of mutually parallel ranks.

As in chemistry where the combinations follow a definite numerical law, so also in Anatomy the organs, in Physiology the functions, and in Natural History the classes, families and even genera of Minerals, Plants and Animals present a similar mathematical ratio.

"The inorganic matters and activities pass, how-

ever, parallel also to the anatomical functions, and that this is the case too with the spiritual or psychical functions the philosophy of the future will probably be in the condition to point out."

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A study of occult philosophy leads to the conclusion that all worlds originate in Consciousness. Associated with Consciousness we find Motion and Substance. Ideas move in Consciousness and Nature is their manifestation. The visible implies the invisible. We find ourselves immediately concerned with the laws by which the unmanifest becomes manifest: how *some-thing* is derived from *no-thing*. We vaguely realize that the "elements" attain self-consciousness in Man and the process of creation fascinates self-conscious man. "I am here," he says, in effect; "how did I arrive?" Man is the Moses who writes Genesis. To write wisely he must comprehend what has preceded his present form. If self-conscious man is the flower of creation, self-consciousness must have been implied in the seed or root-consciousness. On this assumption the elements in all the kingdoms of nature have been the field of Man's activities and upon them in varying combinations he has "conferred" consciousness. This involves a deeper understanding of man than is suggested by his bodily limita-

The fountain of knowledge is the pure, bright, self-enlightening mind.

TWAN-TSI-SIN-YAO
(Tang Dynasty)

tions. Reflection will show that in all individual things the operation of consciousness is continuous; that all things resemble each other and finally one being—Man.

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We must not arrive at conclusions too hastily. Every step should be taken by a method as scientifically exact as mathematics. "The whole science of mathematics depends upon zero." All things are derived from this source. In the "becoming" the *reality* manifests in multiplicity. All details exist potentially in zero. Differences exist in form only. Manifestation is an extension of the idea. What we regard as *reality* is but a limitation, a definition of the *ideal*. Forms are the limitations of the ideal form. In *essence* all individual forms are united with the highest principle—unity. Limitations impart diversity. One identity runs through all forms infinite in number and variety. This pure identity, homogeneous, bright, translucent, eternal, indivisible "has no definitions in time and space, is neither finite nor infinite." Here, then, is the eternal principle which all nature possesses and from which all forms emerge and have their being. Multiplicity, obscurity, diversity, hide from us unity, brightness, homogeneity. We may, however, regard every form as a condensation of light acting in air, water and earth. "Matter is the foam

Thou settest a barrier in thine own being
and then callest thy severed self a myriad
notes. This thy self-separation has taken
body in me.

Rabindranath Tagore

on the crest of the waves of light." When forms respond adequately to the creative energy there is sympathetic relationship between all the elements composing them; the light of consciousness functions through all the centres of life and they become animated by Intelligence *per se*. According to their function, we invoke these centres of Intelligence by all the dear familiar names to be found in the true legends of the world: they enshrine the "Lords of Being." The mystery and the fascination for man lie in the diversified forms which enable the genius of the human hierarchy to be fully expressed. Man's fertile periods depend upon sympathetic relationship being established between the "inferior" and "superior" natures; when they are in synchronism the "fire" acts, and the whole organism is in sympathy with the "sphere" which is the true habitation of consciousness. But this is for *practical* rather than *theoretical* students of occultism.

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Continuing our study, we find the Eternal expressed for us in positive and negative terms, but this duality implies no change in the *essence* of the Eternal; it exhibits the truth of the statement that the *form* alone changes; however numerous the forms may be, the essence is one.

In the Eternal resides the power of self-defin-

All the Gods are venerable and beautiful . . . What else however is it but intellect through which they are such?

Plotinus

ition. Affirmation and a suppression of affirmation are the ceaseless acts of the Eternal—the outbreathing and inbreathing of Brahma. The science of numbers originates in this repeated affirmation of God. No doubt of the Eternal can be entertained; being devoid of properties it is cognisable by the fact that it has none. “The original of our knowledge is the O.” The invention of O is in itself a spiritual act, and all numbers that follow like steps in progression are likewise spiritual acts. The *zero* of the mathematician is the *Eternal* of the philosopher. Pythagoras maintained that the whole Universe had arisen from numbers, implying that all things are acts of the Eternal; everything exists by virtue of its being a number, and “the essence in numbers is naught less than the Eternal”; the act of affirming is one in kind with being. In final analysis nothing *is* but the Eternal and all individual things are definitions of It, posited unceasingly, and incessantly suppressed. I AM is nothing else than the Eternal self-positing. The act of affirmation and what is affirmed are of one kind. Being is the self-manifestation of the Eternal; realisation involves complete antagonism. Every act in manifestation is two-fold. The disappearance of the *finite* is a retrogression into the *eternal*. Consciousness having the power of self-manifestation, the Eternal self-consciousness is named God. The ceaseless motion

I know I have the best of time
and space, and was never measured,
and never will be measured.

Walt Whitman.

or action of the Eternal is the presentation of consciousness. Consciousness is expressed through repeated acts of self-consciousness. "In the beginning was the Word"; the *idea* has become actualised in the *language* of Creation; the whole of creation is a realised system of *thought*. "Day unto day uttereth speech." The world is thought become apparent. Man as a thinker carries the world within him. Speech is the outcome of thought; it is an act of creation. God is the Eternal Thinker; in all around us we perceive His thought, His words, His language. In speech, Consciousness is self-conscious; being implies self-consciousness, and there is no being without it. "That which does not think is not for itself but only for some other consciousness. The self-consciousness of God is independent of our speech." If creation is the language of God it implies a logical system of thought; the creation is governed by eternal and immutable laws. The true philosophy of life is a divine logic, the science of the genesis of the world.

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What holds good of mathematical principles must hold good also of the principles of nature. Consciousness manifests under three forms, and the three are one. Mathematics makes this comprehensible. The mathematical trinity O, + and - represent the three fundamental ideas of the

To perceive intellectually, and to be, are the same thing.

Parmenides.

Eternal Consciousness: the life of God consists in eternally manifesting itself, eternally contemplating itself in unity and duality, eternally dividing itself and still remaining one. The personification of these three Ideas furnishes us with the religious trinity. Being implies action and function. Rest, Motion, Expansion, are conditions of action. A philosopher tells us that it is around the oscillating resting point in the Universe which everything collects and from which everything emerges: the zero appears in all numbers: that which in its essence is unchangeable reveals itself in everything. Time is the portal of Eternity through which Consciousness operates. We only hear Time ticking in ourselves. "Time is the act of numbering; numbering is thinking; thinking is time." Causality and polarity are the same law. In the beginning of a planetary system polarity is immediately in operation. "Sex is rooted in the first movement of the world."

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The succession of individual things is motion. "Primary motion is the result of primary polarity," and polar tension is behind all motion. Motion is unity, the result of duality.

The sages have declared that only in the Eternal may rest be found; all rest otherwise is relative, is but the result of a combined motion. We associate

Quiescence underlies motion. . .
TAO remains quiescent and yet
leaves nothing undone.

Lao-tze

motion with life: they are to us inseparable. While Consciousness acts, life, we may say, is created. The *breath* of Consciousness polarises all things. When polarity is dissolved motion ceases, death ensues, and individual things "retreat into the Absolute." The processes of preservation and destruction are present everywhere. Through destruction of limitation the finite seeks to become universal. Vitality and variety are the same word. The true individual is an expression of the whole in miniature, comprehending in itself "the whole of arithmetic." Man resembles the Eternal in that he represents in himself the manifold universe—a secondary totality, "the likeness of the primary." In realizing the Eternal he has become self-conscious. He is the finite God. In him God becomes corporeal. "Man is God represented by God in the Infinity of Time. God is Man representing God in *one* act of self-consciousness, without time." All elements find their home in him. Man and the creatures below him are ideas of God, the former in the *self-consciousness* of God, the latter in the *consciousness* of God. When all numbers, all elements, meet together in Consciousness there man is. "Animals are fragments of man"; they do not possess self-consciousness, and never attain to consciousness concerning themselves. "Man is the whole of mathematics." Man in his true

To become self-conscious, Spirit must pass through every cycle of being; culminating in its highest point on earth in Man.

H.P. Blavatsky.

principle is free: he can select, but having selected he must work within the laws governing the proposition selected. He is therefore "compounded of freedom and and necessity."

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Life is a mathematical problem. "Theology is arithmetic personified." All problems are a sum in proportion, the solution of which gives the key to the numbers of motion, of life itself. All movements in nature "are only movements of numbers by numbers." The operations of consciousness extend through the whole of space. God is time and space; space is co-existent with Him. There is no empty space. "Time and space are virtually the manifesting primary act." The sphere is an extended point, the point a contracted sphere. The sphere is the form of God; His globe is the entire Universe. The line is a series of numbers, a repetition of the point. All lines are polar — one end rooted in the eternal, the other in finitude. Line originates by tension, is, in fact, tension. This tension manifests in lines of light, and in the planet as magnetic lines. Polarity appears as electricity — the strides of Fohat. Electricity and magnetism are "in eternal antagonism." Motion implies heat, the planetary chemistry. All perfect motion is circular, and "without rotation there is no being and no life." "God geometrises." Geometry is the

God is a Number endowed with motion, which is felt but not demonstrated.

Balzac.

doctrine of the sphere; it is arithmetic solidified. Time is represented by the line; space the surface; life the globe. The Divine becomes perfect in finiteness the more it approximates to the individual.

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"It is the central urge in every atom,
To return to its divine source and origin, however distant,
Latent the same in subject and in object, without one exception."

This is Walt Whitman's statement of the law of Gravity—"the invisible need of every seed." The urge and spur of every life is by virtue of the direction to the centre which never ceases to operate in every finite thing. The distance from the centre determines the value, and that which has no place in the centre is always uneasy. All our effort therefore is towards the centre—towards *Rest*. Gravity is the force ceaselessly striving unto rest. "Thou! thou! the vital, universal, giant force, resistless, sleepless, calm, How ill to e'er forget thee." Little wonder, perhaps, that struggling under the "weight of matter" we fail to recognise the "silent over-*swaying* power, in which and upon which we float, and every one of us is buoy'd."

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Our good friend Oken shows us that "matter is itself space, time, form, and motion." Immediately nothing is posited, it is something. Matter is impossible apart from motion. "Matter is limited

I am the ground of thy soul;
And I am that which draws thee
unbeknown--veiled Eros. . .

Edward Carpenter.

activity." There is no dead matter; its life is derived from the Eternal. Matter has no existence apart from consciousness. At the first manifestation of being matter is mysteriously present; it is co-existent with the Eternal in manifestation. It is necessary to account for the Material by inventing the Immaterial. In our theological symbolism God only is immaterial—"Formless, Polarless, Timeless." The Will of the Eternal evokes the world. Matter is only another word for Gravity. The primary Matter is the Cosmic Æther—the infinite matter; out of it everything originated; the Æther unindividualised is Chaos. All the principles of life reside in this primary substance, the essence of life, the universal substratum in nature. The primary matter is "soul-stuff," not the ether of science; it is the essential light, which being fixed becomes the metaphysical stone of the alchemical philosophers. We speak of dense matter, forgetting that clarity is likewise a quality of matter.

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Everywhere around us filling space is the "moved tensed æther." "Light is tension of æther." The æther of rest is darkness: with motion comes Light and the World "arises" out of the darkness of Chaos. The stars stand in a state of tension to each other and to the central sun. The "operation" of Light maintains the air, as the light of intelligence

Day full-blown and splendid—day of the immense
sun, action, ambition, laughter,
The Night follows close with millions of suns,
and sleep and restoring darkness.

Walt Whitman

sustains thought. To understand the nature and function of the Light Eternal, we invent the darkness of Chaos. Motion and light are one. The Eternal becoming self-conscious is light. God said: "Let there be light, and there was light." Light is not a separate substance, but the "æther is illuminant through its binary division." The Sun gives light because of its position in the centre; its relationship to the planets *is light*. Matter is born of light, and is the child of the illuminating æther. The universe is transparent. The laws of creation are the laws of light. The æther fills all space and adopts all forms, being self-moving. The friction between light and the indifferent æther produces heat, which co-exists with light. Light oscillates between two poles; heat permeates; light is the action in æther, heat the completion of the action. There is no separate body of heat. Where the *æther* is, heat is; it extends on all sides. Heat and light are *fire*. Fire, therefore, is the perfect symbol of divinity. Out of fire everything originates, and it brings about all changes. "God is a consuming fire." Fire is the manifested trinity of Gravity, Light, Heat.

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Solar systems are infinite in number; they come into being dynamically, by polarisation "according to eternal laws, according to the laws of light." The

O Light eternal who only in thyself abidest,
only thyself dost understand, and to thyself,
self-understood self-understanding, turnest
love and smiling!

Dante

Sun is positive, the planet negative; "both are a single globe of *æther*, the centre of which is called sun, the periphery planet." In light resides the cause of pole fixation; light is the *spirit* in matter which renders it impenetrable, not the mass itself. The substance, the *æther*, is indestructible, unchanging; "it is only the poles that change; there is no diversity without poles."

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The *æther* is the home of the spirit; the activity of the spirit in this substance is a process of combustion—a process of fixation. Vulcan precedes Neptune. The gaseous and fluidic precede the solid. Planetary combustion is a reflection of the combustion in the primary elements. The motion of the heavenly bodies exhibits the functions of gravity. By the polarisation of light the *æther* condenses into matter; in matter the activity of light is obscured. Oxygen is corporeal light. When the tension of oxygen reaches its maximum, light appears. The body of oxygen in the planetary system is the sun; the Earth is the basic body; between the two is the air of heaven—the *æther*. The sun is four times less dense than the Earth, and is thus practically the density of water. It is the Central Water; it gives out light because it is a body of oxygen, and as such, it is in eternal motion. The ebb and flow of the solar water is caused by

Beauty in colour, too, is simple, deriving from shape, from the conquest of the darkness in Matter by the appearance of light, the unembodied, which is Reason and Forming-Idea.

Plotinus on the Beautiful

planetary motion. "Every motion in water shines". Light descends from heaven to earth and becomes more closely characterised; it has a chemical relationship; it deoxydises the bodies; out of water it develops oxygen and separates the constituent parts of the air. Light obeys the law of polarity; between the sun and the centre of the earth the tension oscillates; "the line of tension is between the two centres." Bodies of an "earthly nature" attract the light, and are permeated by it. This permeation is dynamic. Matter being condensed æther is susceptible of the same polarisation as the æther, but it takes place more slowly.

Translucency is a process of light in matter; it is a co-illumination like "the concord of equally attuned instruments." Bodies denser than the æther refract light. In passing from a rarer into a denser medium light is refracted towards the centre, and in the reverse case turned from it. Bodies that cannot be deoxydised are non-transparent. Dense material suppresses in itself the tension of light. The tensed æther is *light*; the non-tensed dark. Between the two are the mediate conditions of *twilight*. Light mingled with darkness is called *colour*. Colour is the actual transmission of light into matter; no matter can be uncoloured. The pure light materially posited is *White*; the untensed æther substantially posited is *Black*. "Darkness is

Time assumes to himself various hues of black, white and red (at night, day and midday) which serve for his vestures.

Yoga-Vasishta-Maharamayana

the cause of colour, it is the cause of all visibility. Colours are illuminated darkness; colours reside in the shadows. Red is the fire-colour, "The first-born of many brethren." The first terrestrial colour is the air-colour—blue; the second green, the third yellow. Green is the terrestrial synthesis. The genesis of colours is the genesis of matter. The elements are only gradations of light, colours, self-manifestations of the sun in dark matter. Students of occultism will, no doubt, see much significance in this philosophy of nature.

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