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# Either/Or: Spiritualism and the roots of paranormal science

By James E. Beichler

## PART I

Spiritualism is that "system of beliefs, partly religious and partly allegedly scientific, which is based upon a number of obscure phenomena of which the interpretation is to be sought in the supposed agency not only in incarnate men and women but also in those who have died and are still suppose to be active in another sphere of existence."

E.J. Dingwall in the introduction to F. Podmore's *Mediums of the 19th Century*

### The Traditional View of History

Many historians to have dated from about 1848 accept the rise of "modern" spiritualism. During that year, mysterious rappings occurred in a cabin occupied by the Fox family in Hydesville, New York. These rappings were attributed to the spirit of a murdered salesman and news of this discovery traveled far and wide. From this humble beginning, the phenomena were popularized and elaborated upon during their rapid spread from America to England and Europe. Alan Gauld has remarked on the "rapidity with which spiritualism spread from America to England," a case which therefore "merits detailed investigation by a competent social historian." (Gauld, p.13) Such a rapid spread of spiritualism could not have occurred in an intellectual vacuum, but could have only occurred if the way for spiritualism had already been prepared. A.A. Walsh has found a somewhat different origin for modern spiritualism in the lectures of J.S. Grimes on physiology of the nervous system and phrenology in Poughkeepsie, New York, in 1843 (Walsh, p.168). Yet both of these views belittle if not ignore the vast movements in the occult, earlier forms of spiritualism, other related disciplines and the scientifically respectable speculations of natural philosophy that were part and parcel to the European intellectual heritage well before the 1840's.

Others have found the origins of modern spiritualism within earlier intellectual movements rather than specific events. Frank Podmore, in his classic history of spiritualism of 1902, *Modern Spiritualism*, has offered a much more complex and comprehensive view of the rise of modern spiritualism. He concluded that modern spiritualism was the outcome of two preexistent strains of belief, which came together for the first time in America. These two strains were to be found in the cult followings of "Animal Magnetism which prevailed more or less in every civilized country from the

days of Mesmer" and "in witchcraft and its associated phenomena." (Podmore, Vol.II, p.34) Furthermore, "It was in America, where, as in England, the cult of Animal Magnetism had won but tardy recognition, that the spiritualistic interpretation found its most congenial soil, and attained its fullest development." (Podmore, Vol.II, p.350) Podmore's view takes fully into account the social, religious and other aspects of spiritualism.

The new gospel appealed to the sympathies of men in diverse ways. To the idly curious, the mere brute appetite for the marvelous, it offered signs and wonders; to those whose curiosity was of a more instructed kind it held out hopes of new developments in science, a science which, starting from the physical, should mount up towards the spiritual; those who looked only for an earthly Utopia were dazzled with the promise of the speedy fulfillment of their dream; it offered consolation to the mourner; and to all some hope of light on the mystery of the universe. The movement was thus inspired, in its beginnings, with a genuine enthusiasm which may not unfitly, perhaps, be called religious. (Podmore, Vol.II, pp.351-2)

However,

The epithet 'religious' indeed, seems to require some justification. If the prostration of the heart before the vision of Ideal Righteousness, of the intellect before Supreme Intelligence, is essential to religion, the movement was so far not religious. (Podmore, Vol.II, p.352)

Thus it would seem that spiritualism was not religious in the same manner as established religions, but still had the philosophical trappings of a religion. But Podmore's opinions may need some qualifications. Podmore was a major contributor to the scientifically based psychic research of the era as a member of the Society of Psychical Research. He would have sought, possibly at a subconscious level, to dissociate the religious aspects of spiritualism from the psychical phenomena upon which modern spiritualism had evolved in order to demonstrate the scientific validity of studying psychic phenomena. It is exactly in the last point made by Podmore that modern spiritualism can be seen as differing from the numerous forms of the occult practices and beliefs that have always haunted mankind.

Modern Spiritualism became associated with or rather evolved into a pseudo-religion and thus differed from earlier forms of popular occultism. It was also associated with science to a greater or lesser degree. The level or quality of science included in modern spiritualism depended upon each person's individual definition of science and personal worldview. So spiritualism differed from its predecessors not only by its religious connotations but also by its character as a "scientific" movement.

In modern historical research it is customary to study the factors that influence the development of events rather than looking only at singular isolated events as the causes of larger sequences of events. Recently, Janet Oppenheim has published a more analytical

study of Spiritualism within this newer historiographic context. In her study, Oppenheim places the spiritual movement of the late nineteenth century more strictly within its religious context than had Podmore.

With their fellow spiritualists and psychical researchers, they shared goals that were central to the period in which they lived - a period that perceived the need to bring religion more into line with the teachings of modern science and thereby to reduce the threat that science posed to the fundamental tenets of Christianity. (Oppenheim, p.391)

The "they" to whom Oppenheim referred were the few scientists who adopted spiritualistic views and were also actively engaged in psychical research, but the statement applies more broadly to all practitioners of modern spiritualism. Oppenheim placed the religious beliefs of all spiritualists squarely in the camp of individuals who were attempting to find a compromise between Christianity and science. However, it must be pointed out that involvement in spiritualistic belief and psychical research were not mutually inclusive. A few scientists were actively involved in psychical research without ever having themselves become spiritualists and in fact were highly critical of the spiritualism movement. Podmore was among this group. These scientists saw in spiritual phenomena physical and mental feats that they thought could be explained by science without hypothesizing the spirits of once-living humans. These scientists speculated upon the physics and psychology of what we presently call paranormal phenomena and can be seen as the true forerunners of modern parapsychologists and paraphysicists.

Gauld also studied the role of standard religions in the development of spiritualism more fully. He traced the genesis of a religious revival in England during the early nineteenth century, which he attributed to increased interests in Evangelism and Methodism. He further related this revival to the adoption by many British commoners of spiritualism. But he noted that there was a tendency to "reluctant doubt" in Christian faith and more general religious beliefs which affected spiritualism as exemplified by the cases of Frederick Myers and Henry Sidgwick, two of the founders of the Society for Psychical Research. An increasing religiosity does go a long way toward explaining the evolution of spiritualism as a religion, but it does not address completely the questions of how and why spiritualism was scientific. Nor does it address the philosophical attitudes that fostered the change from older occult forms of spiritualism to a more scientific modern spiritualism as well as the philosophical justification for some scientists' personal belief in either spiritualism or the reality of psychic phenomena. To account for these difficulties, Gauld briefly referred to the success of science as well as the new faith that the common people now placed in the empirical method.

But in the second quarter of the nineteenth century various scientific and technical achievements gained wide publicity and fired people's imaginations with the power and possibilities of science. ... These developments could not fail to arouse, at least in young people, very considerable optimism as to what scientists might in the future achieve through their methods of empirical investigation. (Gauld, pp. 45-46)

While this trend helps to explain the rise of modern spiritualism as a scientific endeavor in the eyes of the common people, it does not fully explain the fact that some scholars and scientists adopted spiritualism as a personal belief. Nor does it completely account for some scientists' belief in the reality of spiritualistic or psychic phenomena and their use as valid grist for the mill of scientific investigation. What seems to be missing from the story is a complete list of all the major factors that gave rise to modern spiritualism as well as an explanation of how those factors were related.

Oppenheim also introduced the earlier study of phrenology as another important precursor to modern spiritualism. Mesmerism developed primarily in pre-Revolutionary France where it became something of a "cause celebre" and bulwark against Enlightenment thought as well as being associated with various sociopolitical movements of the era. After the French Revolution, mesmerism abandoned its dependence on "animal magnetism" and "vitalistic fluids," and in so doing moved away from its extreme rationalism and even materialism to spiritualism. (Darnton, p.156)

By the time of mesmerism's apogee in the 1850's, new techniques had evolved for summoning ghosts and triggering convulsions. The mesmerized wands and chains remained but the tubs were generally abandoned; mirrors had been perfected so that they showed spirits instead of merely reinforcing the movement of the fluid; spirits communicated their messages by means of rapping tables and charcoal drawings; and the old-fashioned mesmerist massagers had surrendered the command of the movement to somnambulists. (Darnton, pp.140-141)

So mesmerism slowly evolved into something resembling spiritualism. This fact has been confirmed by Gauld who specified that the "principal teachings of early Spiritualism can be found in the mesmeric literature of the decades prior to 1848." (Gauld, p.23)

On the other hand, phrenology developed after the 1820's. Phrenology's major contribution to the science of mind lay in the "firm assertion that the brain alone is the organ of the mind." (Oppenheim p.208) Also, as a science of the mind, focusing on the human brain as the seat of the human mind, phrenology became a precursor to psychology, the same science to which psychical research was intimately tied in its infancy. Many of the same people, be they laymen, medical practitioners, scholars or scientists, who worked with the newer form of mesmerism also became interested in phrenology and these two practices came to share a similar if not common set of beliefs. In the very least, phrenology and mesmerism influenced each other, and together they influenced the development of modern spiritualism and psychology. Phrenology and mesmerism both claimed a scientific basis, even if that basis did not represent science, as we now understand science, just as spiritualists later claimed a scientific basis for their beliefs. But the main difference between mesmerism and phrenology on the one hand and spiritualism on the other was the development of spiritualism into a pseudo-religious movement.

Although some aspects of modern spiritualism were religious at the level of the common man, just as some adherents to the spiritualist doctrine saw the movement as sociopolitical and a substitute for traditional religions, the movement in modern spiritualism also came to be adopted and accepted as legitimate science by some well known and respected scientists. It is within this scientific context that spiritualism must be interpreted. Most of the scientists who showed the greatest interest in modern spiritualism were either British or German, while spiritualism remained more of a common practice in America (Wundt, pp.577-8). This fact should not be taken as denigrating the contributions to psychical research by the French, Italians and other nationalities. The very fact that noted scientists became interested in modern spiritualism at all is of historical importance. Why, during a time when the Newtonian mechanistic worldview had supposedly reached the zenith of its success would some scientists begin to show interest in spiritualism and/or psychical research? After all, spiritualism would seem antithetical to the prevailing scientific view of a mechanistic universe. Oppenheim has already answered this question by stating that these scientists sought to find a common ground between Christianity and science while other scholars have not sought to answer these questions at all.

However, answering these questions is not that simple. Many factors must be taken into consideration. To distinguish any portion of modern spiritualism as a scientific endeavor, the opinions of what constituted science during the period in question becomes crucial. While this task would seem quite difficult because science as a whole was in a state of flux during the latter half of the nineteenth century, Oppenheim has concluded that

One needs to know precisely what science meant to the British public after 1850 and what were perceived as the limits of its jurisdiction. But there are no clear answers to those questions during the period under consideration, for people thought about science from widely diverse perspectives. For some, science was restricted to laboratory research. For others, it included every realm of knowledge concerning man and nature, and every form of technical expertise. There was, furthermore, an infinite number of intermediate positions between the two extremes. Although spiritualism and psychical research, both of which eluded repeatable laboratory tests, were evidently outside the former interpretation of the scientific enterprise, the latter, obviously, was broad enough to embrace them. (Oppenheim, p.391)

Oppenheim's stated conclusion only begs the questions of the relationship between science and spiritualism and justifies still more questions which demand answers. How broadly or narrowly could science be defined to allow for the incorporation of spiritualistic and/or psychic phenomena? To what extent did science include metaphysical speculation on the nature of reality? Was reality considered to be merely physical, merely mental, or some combination of both? To what extent are science and religion mutually inclusive or exclusive? These questions are directly related to the historical roots of the modern spiritualism movement as well as the development of a true

science of the paranormal. Their answers can only be found within historical analyses of the evolution of science itself.

While some scholars and scientists may have wished a lessening of the conflict between science and religion, and even worked toward that goal after their own manners, it is important to note that these scientists did not try to explain science in terms of religion, but instead sought to find in science a place for religion. This fact does not necessitate spiritualism as a solution to the conflict as implied by Oppenheim. Scientists who wished a compromise to the conflict between science and religion could more easily try to resolve that conflict without resorting to spiritualism. On the other hand, in order to either accept or reject the phenomena upon which spiritualism was based, all scientists, as well as all laymen, must have had some fundamental notion of reality, whether their notions were explicitly expressed by them or were acted upon as inward mental filters to discriminate which phenomena were acceptable as valid or real. This proposition indicates that the fundamental concepts, which underlie spiritualism and religion as well as science, could not be found in any single individual's concept of reality. In turn, the scientific concept of reality is based on the predominant worldview at any given moment in history. Thus, the commonality of spiritualism, science and religion would be found at the point in history where the most fundamental concepts upon which they are based were unified, before the supernatural and natural world were split apart. At that point in history, the fundamental question was one of the relation between mind and matter.

### Modern spiritualism within the evolutionary context of science

In the late nineteenth century, the predominant scientific worldview upon which scientists based their concept of reality was Newtonian and mechanistic as well as materialistic in most cases, but laymen did not as universally hold this exact same worldview. Those people who were not actively engaged in science at some level were not as completely committed to the Newtonian worldview, as were the academics. During the previous century and a half, the successes of Newton's physics and related technologies had been so great that a basic knowledge of science had filtered down to the common educated layperson. However, in the translation from scientists, scholars and philosophers to the commoners, changes as to the nature, domain and practice of science had occurred. So the layperson's concepts of science were not always the same as those held by professional academics that worked in science. Even then, within the bounds of individual variation and opinion, common factors can be found in the intellectual makeup of the science of the late nineteenth century that bear upon the questions raised concerning the scientific study of spiritualism. As stated above, the most common factor was the search for a synthesis of mind and matter. At the very outset, all attempts to bridge the gap between mind and matter in either a scientific or pseudoscientific manner were paradoxical. Ideas such as animal magnetism, vitalistic fluids, life forces and bumps on the head, to mention only a few, were developed in the search for a conjunction of mind and matter. Humans and other living beings seemed to be more than just automatons or mechanisms, and animate matter had special qualities that went beyond the characters imposed by its inanimate parts.

This search represented an attempt to solve a paradox that had been common to philosophical thought for as long as records had been kept. The paradox itself seemed a constant factor that influenced both the history and development of science and philosophy and as such represented a constant factor in overall human intellectual development. Both Arthur Lovejoy and Gerald Holton have studied such constants and the affects that they have had within history. In *The Great Chain of Being*, Arthur Lovejoy recognized that

There are, first, implicit or completely explicit *assumptions* of more or less *unconscious mental habits*, operating in the thoughts of an individual or a generation. (Lovejoy, p.7)

He then introduced the notion of a "unit-idea" which "consists in a single specific proposition or 'principle' expressly enunciated by the most influential or early European philosophers, together with some further propositions which are, or have been supposed to be, its corollaries." (Lovejoy, p.14) Lovejoy introduced the concept of a "unit idea" within the context of cultural history or the history of ideas. In a similar manner, Gerald Holton developed the notion of "themata" in *The Thematic Origins of Scientific Thought* that fulfill nearly the same function in the history of science that Lovejoy's unit-ideas hold in the history of ideas. In Holton's evolutionary view of the history of science (also held by the philosophers of science Stephen Toulmin and Lewis Feuer) there are no radical historical changes such as scientific revolutions, but rather a continuous evolution of the concepts of science with renewed hypotheses becoming popular at any given time in history. These hypotheses are the themata that continually recur in science. These themata change within limited bounds and progress according to the stage of advancement of science since they were last in vogue. In other words, there are basic and fundamental concepts that retain some constancy throughout the history of culture and science. These concepts evolve or progress through various stages of advancement according to the state of science and culture within any given period of history.

When studying histories of spiritualism such as Podmore's *Modern Spiritualism* or Oppenheim's *The Other World*, it is not difficult to recognize recurring concepts which seem to fit the characteristics of Lovejoy's unit-ideas and Holton's themata. These same recurring concepts are well known in other branches of history. For example, the philosophical debates on reality and the mind-matter dichotomy form very broad unit-ideas in cultural history. Occultism, spiritualism (before 1848), witchcraft, mysticism and other superstitious beliefs (viewed by some as pseudo-scientific) form a special type of themata, which interfaced with the cultural and scientific attitudes during the nineteenth century to become modern spiritualism. When seen within this context, neither modern spiritualism nor psychical research need be regarded as a scientific aberration of the late nineteenth century, but can be viewed as a legitimate questioning and coming to grips with the duality of the concepts of mind and matter within a scientific context. Since spiritualists considered their beliefs scientific and some scientists accepted the existence of spirits to varying degrees, it would certainly seem that spiritualism should be a legitimate area of scientific enquiry. At the very least, spiritualism was based upon physical phenomena, whether real or imaginary, which by their reported existence

demanded either scientific verification or investigation. Spiritualism and the mind/matter dichotomy had always existed just below the surface of practical science, but were relegated to metaphysics rather than physics. But the recent successes and advances in science were rapidly bringing this part of metaphysics back into the realm of physics and natural science.

Perhaps modern spiritualism existed on the very periphery, the outermost edge of science, but that would make it no less a part of science during the late nineteenth century. Common laymen clearly viewed spiritualism as a scientific endeavor whether the scientific community accepted spiritualism as scientific or not. In the eyes of the spiritualists "spiritualism simply extended the range of the natural sciences into areas labeled supernatural, thereby 'converting supernatural into the natural'." (Barrow, p.54) As the scientific movement came to encroach upon the supernatural, the older spiritualism evolved and accordingly developed specific characteristics which distinguished it from its immediate predecessors in several ways; The modern version of spiritualism was more permanent than other similar movements (Podmore, Vol.I, p.283); The "spiritual beings, ..., which by popular belief of the 17th and 18th centuries intervened in mortal affairs, were not human spirits (Podmore, Vol.I, p.14, also mentioned in Barrow, p.5) while modern spiritualism dealt with the spirits of human deceased; Modern spiritualism had a "propensity to generate sweeping statements about the nature of reality;" (Barrow, p.55) And finally, the spiritual world was no longer separate from the living material world, but together they formed a continuous world. Each of these characteristics of modern spiritualism were the products of an evolutionary process of human thought which included scientific concepts.

Such changes emphasized the encroachment of science on the supernatural, but that encroachment is not enough to completely explain the changes from the occult or primitive spiritualism to modern spiritualism. Wilhelm Wundt, a philosopher at the University of Leipzig, wrote that,

I see in spiritualism, ..., a sign of the materialism and Barbarism of our time, from early times, as you well know, materialism has had two forms; the one denies the spiritual, the other transforms it into matter. The latter form is the older. From the animism of the popular mythologies, it passes into philosophy, in order to be by the latter gradually overcome. As civilized Barbarism can experience relapses into all forms of primitive conditions, so it is not spared from this also. (Wundt, p.593)

The two forms of materialism expressed by Wundt represent the two methods by which science traditionally rationalized spiritualism in those cases where scientists thought it necessary to do so. On the other hand, a strict duality of mind and matter could be adhered to by a denial of spiritualism whereby the realms of science and the spiritual were kept separate. This view was Cartesian and mechanistic.

However, the second form of materialism transforms spiritualism into matter and has as its basis the monads of the seventeenth century German philosopher Gottfried von



Leibniz as modified by Leibniz' followers. Leibniz' development of the concept of "monads" represented his own attempt to synthesize matter and mind. If matter and mind could be synthesized by reduction to a common factor, a flexible boundary could exist between the natural and the supernatural. Such a boundary could be extended whenever necessary by any new developments in science. In his *Monadology*, Leibniz stated that,

14. The passing condition which involves and represents multiplicity in the unity, or in the simple substance, is nothing else that what is called *Perception*. This should be carefully distinguished from *Aperception* or *Consciousness*, as will appear in what follows. In this matter the Cartesians have fallen into serious error, in that they treat as non-existent those perceptions of which we are not conscious. It is this also which has led them to believe that spirits alone are monads and that there are no souls of animals or other Entelechies, and it has led them to make the common confusion between a protracted period of actual unconsciousness and actual death. They have thus adopted the Scholastic error that souls can exist entirely separated from bodies, and have even confirmed ill-balanced minds in the belief that souls are immortal. (Leibniz, p.253)

Actually, there was no interaction between spirit and body in Leibniz' philosophy, instead there was a "preestablished harmony." The "substance" to which Leibniz referred was the substance of the scholastics. However, Leibniz' development of monads was an attack on several philosophical problems; the Cartesian duality which allowed an absolute separation of mind and matter, the fact that matter was separate from spirit, and finally the fact that souls can exist separate from material bodies. Leibniz introduced a continuity between the world of spirit and that of matter which was lacking in the Cartesian view. Soul and body in the monad were inseparable but absolutely autonomous from each other according to Leibniz. This continuity between the world of mind and matter, reached by the reduction of matter to the atom-like monads, is an early precursor to the spiritualist views of a single world consisting of a material segment continuous with the spiritual as well as a precursor to that propensity of the spiritualists to make sweeping statements about the nature of reality. The success of science also allowed science to make ever sweeping statements about the nature of reality, and in this respect there is a confluence of physics, the mind\matter dichotomy and spiritualism.

Yet other factors were important in the gradual change of the intellectual attitudes which underlie modern spiritualism. Barrow has noted that spiritualism evolved as a confluence of factors.

Most generally, one may surmise that spiritualism was influenced by a partial confluence, during a very long period of Enlightenment rationalism ... with local healing practices, 'natural' magic and so-called 'white-witchcraft.' (Barrow, p.54)

This view is naive and simplistic. The rationalism of the Enlightenment had as its philosophical basis the Cartesian doctrine of the separation of mind and matter. A more

important factor in such a confluence, which led over a long period of time to modern spiritualism, was the rise of Romanticism. As a philosophical movement, Romanticism has been commonly viewed as a reaction to the rational strictures of the Enlightenment in roughly the same manner that mesmerism was a reaction to the extreme mechanistic rationalism of Enlightenment science.

Both Lovejoy and the philosopher Ernst Cassirer have found the seeds of the Romantic movement within the Enlightenment itself, even though a more commonly held view of the relationship of the Enlightenment to the Romantic is that the latter was a reaction to the former. After noting that the German philosopher Herder marked the break from the Enlightenment, Cassirer went on to state that,

His progress and ascent were possible only by following the trails blazed by the Enlightenment. This age forged the weapons with which it was finally defeated; with its own clarity and consistency it established the premises on which Herder based his inference. (Cassirer, p.253).

The rationalism usually associated with the Enlightenment is strictly objective, an attempt to explain the world as mechanistic, the reduction of the world to a combination of matter and forces. In the extremes of Enlightenment philosophy, the separation of mind and matter was complete, Cartesian. If, then, Romanticism was a complete rejection of that rationalism, it would be completely subjective, and not bother with the reduction of the world to matter and forces.

But Romanticism as such is misunderstood. The Romantic to some extent was a rejection of the mechanistic reductionism, but at the same time it was a continuation of that rationale. There seemed to have been a realization that the reduction of the world to a mechanism, an automaton, was not enough and more was needed than the simple mechanical reduction to explain natural phenomena. Leibniz had discovered this problem with science a century earlier and sought a solution in his association of mind and soul with the monad, a physical entity. The monad itself was a reduction of our physical world, but it was also a unification of the physical with the mental, mind with matter, objective with subjective. The importance of Herder was that he discarded the autonomy of the soul and body in the Leibnizian monad and made them interactive. The monad had a unified substance that strove to realize itself, a "spirit," a "kraft" or force. It was Herder who influenced Romanticism, rather than Leibniz, through his extension and amplification of Leibniz' ideas.

Though more than a century before what historians have termed the Romantic, Leibniz' concepts represented the organic view of Romanticism, as well as an attitude of the unity of forces and nature which was the cornerstone of the German 'Naturphilosophie.' Many other traits of Romanticism can also be said to characterize mesmerism. In fact, "French romantic writing is full of electric shocks, occult forces, and ghosts' (Darnton, p.150) which may have been adopted from mesmerism and "Mesmerism provided [Alexander] Dumas and other romantic writers with the material they wanted, ... 'the fantastic, the mysterious, the occult, the inexplicable'." (Darnton,

pp.150-151) Given this information, it should be evident that there was a confluence leading to modern spiritualism as Barrow said, but his conception of that confluence was much too narrow.

The concept of the unity of forces, the fundamental tenet of 'Naturphilosophie,' finds its roots in the more fundamental principle of continuity. In some early views of mechanism, forces and matter were not distinctly separate in nature, but were at some point continuous. For example, in the early eighteenth century Roger Boscovich developed a theory whereby atoms of matter were reduced to combinations of attractive and repulsive forces. If force and matter were thus continuous, there would be a unity to nature underlying any attempt at the scientific reduction of phenomena. So it was possible that mechanical reduction might not represent the endpoint in finding the basis of nature. In such a scheme, all forces could be converted at their point of continuity. This concept later gave science a philosophic basis for the laws of the Conservation of Matter and Conservation of Energy. But the Principle of Continuity is itself a unifying fundamental thought process in science and thus considered one of the basic unit-ideas by Lovejoy. In fact, Lovejoy used Leibniz' philosophy to illustrate his own ideas.

The essential characteristics of the universe are for him (Leibniz) plenitude, continuity and linear gradation. The chain consists of the totality of monads, ranging in hierarchical sequence from God to the lowest grade of sentient life, no two alike, but each differing from those just below and just above it in the scale by the least possible difference.

And,

He habitually employs without hesitation the ordinary language of physical realism, and discusses the problems of physical science as genuine, not as fictitious problems. And in the material world too the same three laws hold good; and they should be used by the investigator in nature as guiding principles in his empirical researches. (Lovejoy, p.144)

It is important to note that for Leibniz there was no absolute void in the universe. This idea hearkened back to the Aristotelian concept of the plenum, a continuous material substance which filled the whole universe. The Principle of Continuity and the notions of unity, convertibility and conservation, seen explicitly in the Romantic scientific movement of 'Naturphilosophie,' are philosophical and intellectual preconditions for the rise of modern spiritualism as well as other scientific attitudes of the latter nineteenth century.

The influence of the Principle of Continuity can be found chiefly in the literature of spiritualism itself. Just as continuity was the link for the Leibnizian soul and matter in the monad, it became the justification for a link between the living and the dead. If one didn't believe completely in the mechanistic worldview, and assumed something beyond the reduction of the matter and forces in living beings, then something must continue when the body dies. According to A.R. Wallace,

As nothing in nature actually 'dies,' but renews its life in another and higher form, so Man, the highest product of natural laws here, must by the power of mind and intellect continue to develop hereafter. (Wallace, Vol.I, p.58)

In this sense, the Principle of Continuity became a linking mechanism in the evolutionary development of man. Wallace, as co-founder of 'Darwinism,' held a great deal of prestige in the scientific world. Neither he nor Darwin could cope with the problems presented by the special evolutionary character of the human mind. Mind separated humankind from the rest of the rest of the animal kingdom, and even though man was believed to have evolved from lower forms of animals, the development of the human mind could not be made to fit the evolutionary picture. With the development of the theory of evolution, the paradox of mind and matter became even more important. This problem became a main bone of contention between Darwin and Wallace.

The definite statement of his (Wallace's) belief in this 'something' other than material in the evolution of Man, appeared in his essay "The Development of Human Races under the Natural Law of Selection" (1864). In this he suggested that, man having reached a state of physical perfection through the progressive Law of Natural Selection, thenceforth Mind became the dominating factor, endowing man with an ever-increasing power of intelligence which, whilst the physical had remained stationary, had continued to develop according to his needs. This 'inbreathing' of a Divine Spirit, or the controlling force of a supreme directive Mind and Purpose, ... was one of the points of divergence between his theory and that held by Darwin ... (George, p.415)

The theory of evolution formed another of the important factors or preconditions for the rise of modern spiritualism in just the same manner that it affected all of later science. When added to other factors such as continuity, the unity of nature, conservation of energy and matter, and general metaphysical questions concerning the relations between mind and matter, the affects of evolution theory help to explain the basic characteristics, which separate modern spiritualism from older forms of spiritualism and make it unique.

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## [PART II](#)

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