

AN OPEN LETTER TO ALFRED RUSSEL WALLACE.

BY BARON DU PREL.

DEAR SIR,—I have just finished the book, Alfred Russel Wallace's "Les Miracles et le Moderne Spiritualisme. Traduit de l'Anglais. Paris, Librairie des Sciences Psychologiques," in which you have the kindness of mentioning my "Philosophy of Mysticism," translated into English by Mr. C. C. Massey. In your work you call me the representative of the theory of the Unconscious, who makes use of this "unconscious" for the explanation of those facts which you explain through the theory of Spiritualism.

Now, I am sure that you will not take it amiss if I take the liberty of explaining to you in a few words that I am not only no adversary to Spiritualism, but that on the contrary I stand in Germany in the bad reputation of being its most zealous representative.

In 1880 I commenced studying Spiritualism, reading among others some essays contained in your above-mentioned work. After some months I gave up that study, having no opportunity of making experiments, but especially because I distinctly comprehended, that first of all I had to study somnambulism in order to be able to judge where the line of separation must be drawn between those phenomena that are to be explained from the nature of man, and those which are to be ascribed to the "spirits."

By my several years' study of somnambulism I was already convinced that Spiritualism is a truth. In a word, somnambulism led me to the discovery of the "spirit" in man himself, and when I afterwards took up the study of Spiritualism again, I found all those analogies existing between the faculties of the somnambulist and the spirits. Somnambulism belongs now to the "unconscious," so far as it presupposes the suppression of sensual consciousness, and only so far I maintain the theory of the "unconscious," but not in any way in opposition to Spiritualism, among whose adherents I openly count myself.

There are two kinds of representatives of the doctrine of the "unconscious." The one supposes a physiological "double-ego," that is to say, the sensual consciousness and the physiological sub-consciousness. Death, so say these representatives, comprises both these halves of our being (nature). But I myself am of quite another opinion. I also believe in two persons of our subject. The sensual consciousness comprises only the one-half of our being, to which the other remains unconscious, but in itself this other half is not unconscious, not sub-conscious, but rather super-conscious; it is not the inferior half of our being, but its cause. Death, therefore, stands between these two halves and annihilates only the terrestrial one. Nobody, therefore, can be more strongly convinced of immortality than I; for this conviction I need not even Spiritualism, however valuable its empirical confirmation of the consequences drawn from somnambulism is to me.

It is also my conviction that the truths of Spiritualism will be the more easily accepted, the more those of somnambulism will be recognised; for death cannot give us anything: it disembodies us, but does not present us with anything. Immortal we can only be on the condition that something lasts that exists already now, though latent for our sensual consciousness. The unconscious is merely something unknown; the soul lies beyond the sphere of our sensual consciousness.

That in this sense I am a metaphysical individualist I have shown in a great number of writings which appeared since the "Philosophy of Mysticism," and I believe you yourself would—in consequence of these writings—regard me as one of your most ardent allies.

You say in the last chapter of the above-named book that Spiritualism throws a remarkable light on the history of civilisation, and you mention, first of all, the demon of Socrates and the oracles. Well, I have written a "Mysticism of the Ancient Greeks" where I explain this demon, the oracles, and the temple-sleep through somnambulism; the mysteries, however, through Spiritualism.

You then speak of the Old and New Testaments, of which only he can have a full understanding who knows Spiritualism and somnambulism. Now, it is true I have written as yet no commentary to the Bible, but only a very short time ago I held in our "Society for Scientific Psychology" a

lecture on the "Speaking in Foreign Languages," in which I have given an explanation of the most astonishing miracle, the Whitsuntide miracle, and that in such a manner that it even might be imitated experimentally.

You then speak of witchcraft, and so have I done, quite agreeing with you, in an essay, "The Witches and the Mediums," in volume I. of my "Studies on Occultism." In volume II. of the same work I have described all the hypnotic, somnambulist, and spiritistic experiments made by myself.

In short, on the whole line I find myself in agreement with you, and can discover but one difference, namely, that I lay a greater stress on the "spirit" within us, the soul, which is unconscious to us, but which has in itself a super-consciousness and which I thought myself compelled to call the "transcendental subject" in order that my opinions might not be confounded with the vulgar psychology, where the conception of the soul is won from the analysis of consciousness.

If I have rightly understood, there exists only this difference, that we do not draw the line of separation for the phenomena in the same place, as you, for instance, consider "clairvoyance" always as inspiration, whereas I suppose an active faculty of the soul necessary for "clairvoyance," which I am not able to explain otherwise, for the mere reason that this analogy shows itself with the spirits too, who cannot have acquired this faculty but by the simple act of dying.

By reclaiming some of the phenomena for the "spirit" within us I diminish, it is true, the truly Spiritualistic material, but the conviction of the truth of Spiritualism can certainly be with none stronger than with him who acknowledges this "spirit" within himself. Is he, moreover, an adherent to the theory of evolution? It is for him, then, a matter of course that a relation of the spirit-home with us here below exists not only nowadays, but that both these halves of the world, each advancing to perfection, must unite more and more closely. I myself am an adherent to the doctrine of evolution; nay more, I have even extended your doctrine and that of Darwin on inorganic nature by showing in my book, "A History of Evolution of the Universe (third edition, Leipzig, 1882)," the cosmical teleology as being founded on indirect selection. Perhaps it is one of Darwin's last letters, in which he stated to me the receipt of this book. Perhaps I dare venture to suppose that you, too, are no opponent to such an extension of your doctrine.

Finally, you utter the conviction that the acceptance of the spiritual creed will be accompanied by most beneficial consequences. Of this I myself am convinced too, and that so strongly, that for the purpose of promulgating these ideas I lately published a novel, "The Cross on the Ferner," in which I treat of somnambulism, hypnotism, and Spiritualism, and which, indeed, seems to be read very much, not only in Germany but also in other countries: a Russian translation is just going to the press and a French one is also intended.

In short, you believe yourself obliged to count me as one of your opponents, whereas for a long time already I have cherished the flattering thought of knowing myself in harmony with you in so many respects; it is, therefore, with a special pleasure that I embrace this occasion to assure you of my excellent reverence, with which I remain, dear sir, yours most truly,

Munich, March 10th, 1892.

CARL DU PREL.