

The Perispirit of Allan Kardec

**The morality of a system does not prove
infallibility in respect to its dogmas.**



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THE SAXON SPIRITUALISTS ARE RATHER CONFUSED between the spirit and the p erisprit. Perhaps they do not distinguish the one from the other, describing the first by the word soul, the second by spirit. Theosophists do the opposite; for them the spirit properly is *Nous*, the spirit. The p erisprit or *Psych e*, is the soul.

Theosophists accept no dogmas, *i.e.*, preconceived ideas or principles, to which everything must be subordinated. They seek truth with wisdom and in good faith, and are willing to accept it from whatever source, even at the cost of the sacrifice of what they have hitherto accepted. Whatever they may teach at the present moment, they are far from thinking that they have settled everything. Such a claim would be that of omniscience; it would be ridiculous. On the day when a new Oedipus shall have found the *complete* solution of that riddle of the ages: "What is man?" on that day the ancient and modern doctrines, the approximations of the Spiritualists themselves, will, like the ancient Sphinx, be flung into the ocean of oblivion.

Theosophists, like the ancient philosophers and their pupil Paul, who said that the physical body was penetrated and kept alive by the p erisprit, *Psych e*, consider man as a trinity: body, p erisprit, spirit.

The Buddhists, who distinguish these three entities, divide the p erisprit still further into several parts. Nevertheless, on the point of approaching perfection — Nirv ana — they hardly admit more than one of these parts: the Spirit.

The Greeks did the same, dividing the p erisprit into life and the passional nature, or *Thumos*. The p erisprit is thus itself a combination: the physiological vitality, *Bios*; the concupiscible nature,¹ *Epithumia*; and the ideality, *Phren*. The p erisprit is constituted of the ethereal substance that fills the universe, hence it is derived from the cosmic astral fluid, which is not spirit at all, because although intangible, impalpable, this astral fluid is objective matter as compared with spirit. Owing to its complex nature, the p erisprit can ally itself intimately enough with the corporeal nature, to escape the moral influence of a higher life. In the same way it can unite closely enough with the spirit to partake of its potency, in which case its vehicle, the physical man, can appear as a God, even during his terrestrial lifetime. If such a union, of the spirit and the p erisprit, does not take place, a man does not become immortal as an entity: the p erisprit is sooner or later dissociated.

¹ [Archaic term for lustful, sexual desire.]

Plutarch says that at death, Proserpine separates the body from the soul (périsprit), after which the latter becomes a genius or *Daimōn*, free and independent. A second dissolution has to occur, under the action of the Good. *Demeter* separates the périsprit from the spirit. The first in time is resolved into ethereal particles; the second ascends, assimilates with the divine powers, and gradually becomes a pure divine spirit.

Kapila, like all the Oriental philosophers, made little of the périsprital nature. It is this agglomeration of gross particles, of human emanations teeming with imperfections, weaknesses, passions, the very human appetites, able, under certain conditions, to become objective, that the Buddhists call *Skandhas*, groups, the Theosophists, soul, Allan Kardec,¹ the périsprit.

The Brāhmanas and the Buddhists say that the human individuality is not secure so long as man has not left behind with the last of these groups, the remaining vestige of terrestrial colouring. Hence their doctrine of metempsychosis, so much ridiculed but so little understood by our Orientalists themselves. Science teaches, indeed, that the material molecules that compose the physical body of man are, by the process of evolution, replaced by Nature into lower physical forms. Well, the Buddhists say the very same in regard to the particles of the astral body; they assert that the semi-material groups of the périsprit are appropriated to the evolution of lower astral forms and unite with them according to their degree of refinement. Consequently, so long as a discarnate man contains a single particle of these *skandhas*, some *parts* of his périsprit will have to enter the astral bodies of plants or animals. So if the astral man is composed of such material that Demeter cannot find a particle of spirit, the individual is dissolved, bit by bit, in the crucible of evolution. This is what the Hindus typify by a period of a thousand years spent in the impure bodies of animals. Theosophists are in essential agreement with this idea.

To Theosophists, the great characters, the geniuses, the poets, the true artists, are spiritually inspired, and are not — at least in general — simply mediums, passive instruments in the hands of their guides. They are, on the contrary, souls (périsprits) richly illuminated, *i.e.*, possessing the spiritual element in a high degree, and therefore able to collaborate with pure Spirits for the spiritualization and elevation of mankind.

In what relates to the phenomena of the périsprit and of mediumship, we believe that the purely passive medium cannot discern good spirits from bad, that to do so he must become a conscious mediator. We also know that though the incarnated man, even if a high adept, cannot compete in power with pure Spirits, who, being liberated from their *skandhas* have become subjective to the physical senses, they can at least equal and even surpass in the matter of phenomenalism what is produced by ordinary mediums.

¹ [Allan Kardec is the *nom de plume* of the French educator, translator and author Hippolyte Léon Denizard Rivail, 1804–69. Kardec is the of five books known as the Spiritist Codification, and the founder of Spiritism or Kardecism.]

Can a child, *i.e.*, a not completely developed man, who passes into the other world, exist there in the conditions prepared for the perfected types of his species, any more than a plant or an animal?

The child does not yet possess a spirit, so to speak; he is merely a soul, and his education has only affected his astral nature, has only dealt with externals.

The cycle of man is not complete so long as he has not passed through terrestrial life. Not one stage of trial or experience can be skipped; he must have been a man before he reaches the state of pure Spirit.

A dead child then is a failure of nature; it must be born again; the same périsprit must in such a case pass through the interrupted trial by means of another birth. The same for the congenital idiot. *These are the only cases of human reincarnation.*

If the child, indeed, who is only a duality, were immortal, why not the animals also? The triad alone survives.

At death, the périsprit becomes the outermost body; within it is formed a more ethereal body, and the whole is more or less overshadowed by the Spirit.

The Elementaries of the human body are, however, not always dissociated at bodily death; it may happen that by a supreme effort they are able to retain some of the third element, and in that way, slowly and with trouble, to ascend from sphere to sphere, throwing off at each step the heavier garment, and becoming clothed in more radiant vestures; finally arriving at perfection, disencumbered of every material particle, and becoming *unities*, Gods.

We said that the man who has not one spark of the divine spirit to save him after death can scarcely be distinguished from the animals.

There are some sad cases of this kind, not alone among the depraved but also among the wilfully blind and the out-and-out deniers. It is, indeed, the will of man, his sovereign power, that partly rules his destiny, and if a man persists in believing in annihilation after death, it will take place. The conditions of the physical life, the kind of death, very often depend on the will.

There are some persons who merely by the force of their resolution, escape the embrace of death, while others yield to trifling maladies. Now, what a man can do with his body, he can also do with his astral body, *i.e.*, with his discarnated périsprit.

About the teachings of Allan Kardec

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Would you permit me to ask you kindly to inform me what are the views of the Occultists regarding such works as those of Allan Kardec? What credit may be attached to the positive statements therein contained on such points as the existence of “guardian angels,” the power of disembodied spirits to choose their own trials and mode of life on re-incarnation? Who, again, were the intelligences who inspired Kardec’s *Spirits’ Book* and *Mediums’ Book*? The morality of these works is beyond dispute. Who then inspired their author, and how far may their detailed theories regarding the unseen world be trusted?

INQUIRER

Bangalore
9th June 1883

Editor’s Note

The works of Allan Kardec teach a system of ethics which merits the encomiums our correspondent gives it. In this code thousands of young persons are being educated, and beyond doubt they will derive from it great moral strength. Since, however, the doctrines of the Spiritist school are not altogether in harmony with those of Occultists, as regards the condition of man after death and the destiny of his monad, we personally have never been enlisted as a follower of the great French philosophy in question. The morality of a system does not prove its infallibility in respect to its dogmas and other teachings. Who inspired Allan Kardec we cannot tell. In some fundamental respects his doctrines are diametrically opposed to ours. With the Spiritists we believe — let us rather say we know — that man is born more than once as a human being; and this not merely upon this earth but upon seven earths in this planetary chain, to say nothing of any other. But as to the rapidity with which and the circumstances under which these reincarnations occur, our Spiritist friends and ourselves are at variance. And yet despite all differences of opinion, including the very great one about the agency of “departed spirits” in controlling mediums and inspiring books, we have ever been on the friendliest terms with the Kardecists and had hoped always to remain so. Recent utterances by our friends — hasty, we think, and likely to be recalled upon reflection — have thrown some doubt over the situation: but this is neither here nor there as regards our correspondent’s query.

CONSTITUTION OF MAN SERIES
THE TEACHINGS OF ALLAN KARDEC

The Occultists do not accept the doctrine of “guardian angels,” for reasons heretofore fully explained, in these pages. They do, however, believe most firmly in the personal, *divine* spirit in man, the source of his inspiration and his all-sufficient “angel” and “guardian.” Only adepts can choose their reincarnations, and even they are strictly limited in their choice by their responsibility to the inexorable law of Karma. According to his *Karma-phala*, or the aggregate consequences of his actions, is every man’s rebirth and final escape, or emancipation, from the necessity for rebirth determined.

Not all of the Spiritists agree with Allan Kardec by any means. The house seems to be greatly divided. We recommend our correspondent to read J.B. Roustaing’s *Four Gospels*, translated into English by Miss Anna Blackwell and Mr. Kirby.

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