

The Evidence of Experience

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Were the phenomenon of the spirit, which is non-material in all its aspects, to be made the subject of experimentation, so that its autonomous existence became fully proven, despite its remoteness from sense perception, it would have a profound effect in causing men to believe more fully in the spirit. This would be the case particularly with those who are unable to understand subtle and complex questions and who are more inclined to accept empirical scientific data than they are the truths of philosophy.

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Spiritualism, the practice of communicating with the spirits of the dead, reached its highpoint in the nineteenth century when it became codified as a science. Numerous personalities throughout the world have observed the possibility of such communication, which may be counted as a living proof for the autonomy and immortality of the spirit.

Divesting themselves of all partiality and prejudice and impelled by genuinely scientific motives, a number of scholars have devoted themselves to painstaking research and study in order to discover the truth of the matter. With their achievements they have been able to demonstrate that the existence of the spirit is no longer a theoretical matter but something clear and straightforward.

Carefully executed experiments have shown that it is definitely possible to establish communication with the spirits of the dead. One may engage in conversation with them and ask their help in solving difficult problems. It often happens, indeed, that people who are utterly unable to solve the most complex problems confronting them are able to solve them through communication with the spirits of the dead.

Spirits have also been shown to possess the remarkable capacity of raising bodies from ground without the intervention of any material cause or bodily energy. (Alam-i Pas az Marg, section 11)

One of the prominent traits of those who enter a trance to communicate with the dead is that they function both as receivers and as transmitters. It may sometimes happen that while in that state they speak in languages they had never learned. They may also find themselves divulging secrets they were not in a position to know.

Still more remarkable is the fact that mediums are able while in a trance to read and to copy inscriptions on objects contained in sealed boxes, although they are quite illiterate!

In short, mediums engage in such inexplicable acts that we are obliged to follow them into the invisible realm of the spirit in our attempt to find an answer.

All we have mentioned has been proved by experiment and it constitutes a refutation of the claims of the materialists, for if the spirit were simply an effect of matter, a physicochemical property of the brain, it would be impossible to explain all these varied phenomena that have been verified experimentally.

We can escape the impasse to which materialist thought leads only when we admit the existence of a supramaterial force that creates such phenomena, for it is not conceivable that they should be the product of material factors.

Although age is not an important consideration for those who establish communication with spirits, those who enter on this path generally choose mediums from among children to receive messages from spirits. This removes the likelihood of trickery, deceit, and recourse to various contraptions, and thus puts an end to all possible objection.

At the same time, experienced and specialized researchers also take part in the sessions where contact is established with spirits. Repeated and careful experiments are carried out in order to remove any lingering doubts, to clarify all ambiguity, and to dispel any notion of autosuggestion on the part of the participants.

Although we can accept the matter under discussion as an established reality, it is like many other truths and realities exploited by those whose trade is trickery and deceit; they demean and dishonor it. One cannot therefore either trust all who claim to be able to communicate with spirits, or reject them with inappropriate arguments; both courses would be contrary to logic. It is a careful examination of the matter that will lead to a perception of the truth and the ability to distinguish the illusory from the real.

Farid Wajdi, author of the Twentieth Century Encyclopedia, lists the names of a handful of European and American scientists from among the many thousands that have worked in this field, and cites the clear evidence provided by the objective experiments they carried out. Many of them were skeptical or negative about the possibility of communicating with the spirits of the dead until it was proven to them; in fact they first entered the field with the intention of totally disproving its bases.

If someone had insisted on the possibility of proving scientifically communication with the spirits of the dead, they would have dismissed it unhesitatingly as an absurdity. But when they saw that whatever experiment was undertaken ended up supporting the claims of their opponents, they surrendered and accepted the facts. Earlier scholars had never taken the trouble to test the claims of the spiritualists, they even regarded the idea of conducting

experiments on the subject with repugnance.

Farid Wajdi adds that specialists in the field believe in the principle that the spirit is not annihilated with the death of the body, because they are unable to explain the extraordinary phenomena that take place in their sessions except in terms of activity by the spirits of the dead.

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Those who do not have any serious arguments to offer try to explain these experimentally tested realities in terms of the unconscious. Can we reasonably accuse all the scholars and experts who work in the field of having been straightforwardly duped by the tricks of swindlers and of placing the seal of scientific approval on a series of delusions? Of affirming the correctness this science without exercising any caution, under the influence of the mediums?

It would be completely irrational and illogical to attribute error to all those scholars. Alfred Russell Dulles, Darwin's partner in discovering the law of natural selection, declared his view on the matter as follows: "When I began investigating the mysteries of communication with the spirits of the dead, I was an absolute materialist and denier of the spirit. No trace existed in my mind of non-material entities or a supranatural world. On the contrary, it was my intention to prove by scientific means the incorrectness of all belief in such things. But as I confronted the experiments that had taken place and the realities they had proven, I gradually came to believe in them myself. The reality of the spirit came to have such an effect on me that I came to believe in it firmly before I was able to find any explanation for it in my mind. I can neither turn away from it in denial nor can I find any material cause for it." (Ibid., p. 72)

Krokis (?) the head of the Royal Academy of Science in England, writes the following in his book entitled Spiritual Phenomena: "Since I do indeed believe in the existence of these phenomena, it would be a kind of fear or literary cowardice if I concealed my testimony from fear of the criticism of mockers who know nothing at all of the subject and are unable to free themselves of their illusions. I will set forth in my book as clearly as I can what I have seen with my own eyes and tested repeatedly through careful experimentation."

From all the experiments that have taken place in sessions for summoning up the spirits of the dead and the conclusions scholars have drawn from them, it is plain that man possesses an energy and personality that outlive his death. That energy undertakes various activities without any need of the physical body. Under certain special circumstances it is possible for the inhabitants of this world to establish communication with the spirits of the departed.

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Another scientific advance that has contributed to the understanding of the autonomy and

immortality of the spirit is hypnotism. This consists of concentrating the gaze for a lengthy period of a point of light to the accompaniment of prolonged suggestion, with the result that the subject enters an artificial dream state, quite distinct from ordinary dreams.

After the subject has fallen asleep, he hears out of all sounds that surround him only those produced by the hypnotist all of whose commands he obeys in his extreme impressionability. The English scholar James Breed (?) was able to build on the investigations of his predecessors to turn hypnotism into a fully fledged science by clarifying the principles according to which hypnotism functions.

After him other scholars in America and Europe devoted their efforts to further developing this science; we can mention in particular Richet, Emile Kue, Van Ouls and Charcot (?). The most important achievement of the last of these was his classification of the different degrees and stages of hypnotic sleep.

In artificial sleep, the hypnotist is able to make the subject submit to his will in such a way that he unhesitatingly executes his commands. The senses of the sleeper cease functioning; he shows no sign of being able to see or to hear, and his senses of touch and taste lack their customary power. Finally, the one thus put to sleep is so overcome by weariness and lassitude that he feels no pain, however much pressure be brought to bear on his body. (Usul-i Ravankavi-yi Freud)

Dr. Philip Carrot, a British anesthesiologist and specialist on hypnotism, wrote the following in the British Journal of Public Health: "Many patients needing surgery have been successfully anaesthetized through the use of hypnotism." He went on to state his belief that it is easier and better to use hypnotism on patients undergoing surgery, because it is a simpler and less dangerous procedure than drugging them. One of the advantages of hypnotism is that it is possible to keep the patient unconscious for many hours without his feeling any pain. (Ittila'at for 23/6/43)

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Magnetism is another branch of knowledge pointing to the autonomy of the spirit. It consists of a mysterious force present in everyone to different degrees. Magnetism differs from hypnotism in that when a person cultivates the magnetic force within him he will be able to influence animals as well as human beings. In addition, magnetic force can be exploited directly, whereas hypnotism requires the use of certain means in order to become effective. The power of magnetism is so effective in man that it enables one to render one's prey or enemy motionless.

Since the most ancient times, people have been aware to some extent of the effects of this

mysterious power. It was however at the end of the eighteenth century that it was put forward for the first time as a scientific discovery. Specialists began to use magnetic waves as a means for curing the sick, and as research progressed, it became apparent that hypnotic trances might be induced by means of magnetism.

Psychiatrists make use of artificially induced dreams to discover the causes for certain psychiatric disorders; they attempt to plunge into the depths of the mind and to discover the true thoughts of the unconscious, the thoughts that the patient would be reluctant to tell the doctor while in a waking state, out of embarrassment or other reasons. Likewise, the patient frankly confesses to certain things that he would never reveal while in a waking state.

The one sent into a trance is so fully subject to the influence of the magnetic force that he does whatever he is told by the one who puts him in the trance, without his own will having the least power to decide.

At more advanced stages, the body itself becomes totally numb, and if one of its limbs is rubbed it will be unable to move, resembling an entirely motionless body. The subject will be unable to hear sounds surrounding him; he sees and hears only the one in whose power he stands.

This passivity sometimes goes so far that he feels the pain of a needle inserted in by the one who controls his trance; and likewise if the controller begins to feel happy, so too will the subject! Other emotions anger, nervousness, excitement will be similarly reflected.

Persons in a magnetic trance are able to speak in languages they have not learned; they know of things that lie beyond the range of their knowledge; and their spirits travel to distant regions. Materialists attempt to explain all this in terms of suggestion and the loss of customary will on the part of the subject. However, their explanations are not convincing. For in addition to that which the material sciences attempt to explain there is a reality within man capable of accomplishing acts that are inexplicable in terms of material criteria. Anyone who tries to discover the truth of the matter will be led to accept this conclusion, step by step. (Farid Wajdi, Da'irah al-Ma'arif, Vol. X, p. 420)

What energy is it that can thus subdue the will of another person and rob his limbs of motion and feeling? If man reflects carefully, will he not be convinced that his existence includes a spirit that is both mysterious and eternal? (Alam-i Pas az Marg, p. 46)

Is it not the method of science to base general laws on objective observations and to strive against delusion? Without any doubt, every new discovery in the fields discussed above decreases still further any appeal the materialistic distorters of reality might have.

Although men have been aware of telepathy at least to some degree for a long time, no careful scientific study of the subject was undertaken before 1882. Beginning with that date, the English Society for Psychic Research has carried out numerous experiments and proven the reality of the phenomenon.

The communication of thoughts between two people is possible over both long and short distances. Communication over short distances takes place by means of the two people standing opposite each other and transmitting their thoughts to each other without speaking or making any gestures. As for communication over a long distance and the size of the distance is of no importance at all it is enough for the two persons, at a prearranged time, to concentrate their thoughts on a single point in order to transmit their mental messages to each other.

These phenomena have been repeatedly tested and proven by specialists and they can be regarded as another remarkable manifestation of the spirit, acting in utter independence of the body.

Ought we not then to believe that the energy ruling over the mechanism of our body is fundamentally different from material energy and the phenomena it produces? As the psychiatrist Kennington puts it, "for the brain to exist and function a few centimeters outside the body is just as impossible as it would be for digestion or the circulation of the blood to take place outside the body."

Henri Bergson writes: "The phenomena declared to exist by psychic science, at least some of which must be regarded as true, cause us to ask why we have waited so long to undertake such a study.

"We will not repeat the subjects we have already discussed, but instead restrict our discussion to a point that appears more certain than anything else. If after the accumulation of thousands of testimonies consistent with each other concerning manifestations of telepathy scientists still insist on denying the reality of this phenomenon, then we can only conclude that human testimony is unacceptable to science and rejected by it. "It is true of course that we have to choose among the various results that psychic science presents to us; that science itself does not regard all its results as equally conclusive; and that it distinguishes between what is certain and what is merely probable or possible.

"But if we take into consideration only that part which psychic science regards as definite, it suffices to give us a sense of a vast and unknown realm that psychic science has only just begun to explore. (Du Sarchishma-yi Akhlaq va Din, p. 354)

Man's ever-increasing curiosity first began to exercise itself on objects that were far removed

from him the stars. Now it is his normal and natural states and circumstances that preoccupy him as he attempts to make out the factors which dominate his existence. One of the topics that has attracted man's attention is that of sleep and dreams. This is understandable, considering the fact that a significant part of man's life is spent asleep in the world of dreams. The various theories that have been put forth on this subject demonstrate the complexity of the subject and reflect all the lengthy experiments experts have conducted. It is a characteristic of man like all living beings to sleep after engaging in effort and tiring activity. As a portion of his vital activity is suspended, the functioning of the body also decreases.

How sleep takes place is itself an important question; despite all the studies that have been made, a definitive answer cannot yet be given. The whole matter is shrouded in a variety of interpretations many of which are the result of hasty and unjustified deductions. All that science knows so far is restricted to certain physical processes which take place in the realm of the body.

There are as yet no indications that permit us to hope for a solution to this problem and it would be incautious to predict the emergence of precise and realistic theories. Nonetheless, the advance of human knowledge may one day enable man to solve this great mystery that confronts him. Still more mysterious than sleep are dreams that configuration of various scenes, images and events in the mind of the sleeper. The phenomenon of the dream confronts us with all kinds of complex and knotty problems.

All the physiological functions of the body, all its non-volitional and reflexive acts, continue during sleep with the utmost regularity. The nerves and the glands, the intestines and the muscles all continue their work. But man has no power of thought or decision; his will is inoperative, and his life resembles that of a monacellular being.

The sleeper looks like a lifeless and prostrate figure, but suddenly he awakens and comes back to life. Sleep and awakening are in fact comparable to death and resurrection. The Noble Qur'an says the following concerning the affinity between sleep and death on the one hand, and awakening and resurrection on the other: "God takes men's souls at the time of their death, and the soul which does not die, He takes in sleep. Then He keeps the soul that is destined to die at that time, and returns the others to life for a set period." (39:42)

In the view of the Qur'an, sleep is outwardly the suspension of the natural forces in man, but it is at the same time a return of man's spirit to his inner being. Sleep is the lesser death, and death is the greater sleep. In both cases the spirit is transferred to a different world. The difference is that on waking up a person is unaware that he has returned from a journey,

whereas for the one who dies all things become clear. Dreams have been divided into several categories. A large proportion of dreams derive from the hopes and desires of the dreamer, or reflect occurrences he has experienced.

Another major category consists of confused dreams that simply reflect man's imaginings and illusions. Then there is a category of dreams of which the defining element is a kind of inspiration; these dreams foretell events. They sometimes reflect an as yet hidden occurrence in its exact and real form and sometimes in symbolic form that can be interpreted by those having the necessary skill. Since the human spirit has an affinity with the supranatural realm, it is bound to depart for that expansive universe once sleep puts an end to its preoccupation with sensory perceptions. There it witnesses certain realities, in accordance with its degree of preparedness and capacity, and it is able to deposit the knowledge thus received in the mind in a way that permits it to be remembered after the sleeper awakens.

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There can be no doubt that confused dreams are connected to certain physical and psychological conditions; they are nothing but a series of illusions and imaginings. Similarly, the appearance in the mind of the dreamer of past events, without any reflection of events yet to come, has no particular value.

This, however, is not the case with dreams the interpretation of which permits one to forecast events that are still in gestation or which, being so clear as to leave no need for interpretation, present to us in the imaginal world the causes and occasions of things in their actual form. Many instances of this kind of dream have been reported in historical sources. They occur, moreover, in the personal lives of many of us, and they cannot all be ascribed to coincidence. They cannot be attributed either to the reminders of past events of the day or to analyses of them that our nervous system provides us with, nor do repressed instincts and desires play any role in them.

Freud interprets dreams as follows: "Generally speaking, what appears to us in the world of dreams consists of the sensory objects of which we have been aware during the day and of wishes which have remained unfulfilled for one reason or another. During the day a man may conceive a desire for a certain woman who is inaccessible to him; at night he gains possession of her in the world of his dreams. A hungry beggar dreams of riches and palaces; an ugly man acquires unparalleled beauty; an impotent old man recovers the vigor of youth; a hopeless and desperate man finds all his wishes fulfilled. In short, all the wishes and inclinations that remain unfulfilled during the day, all the feelings that remain hidden for one reason or another, come into the open and are freely

satisfied in the world of dreams."

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Here I will refrain from mentioning the numerous dreams foretelling the future which are mentioned in historical sources or have been experienced and related to me by countless trustworthy persons. Let me simply recount a dream I had myself. On Saturday, April 24, 1962, a violent earthquake shook the city of Lar, leading to heavy losses of life and damage. About one week before the earthquake, I dreamed that a strong earthquake was shaking Lar, destroying buildings and raising up clouds of dust that covered the sky like thick fog. With this terrifying picture pressing on my mind, I woke up in terror, probably at about midnight. The next day I told some of the notables of Lar and my friends of my dream, and they still sometimes recall the occasion. At the time, they naturally interpreted my dream in different ways, but two or three nights later an earthquake of medium force occurred, causing only moderate losses. One of the religious scholars of the city came to see me and said: "Yesterday's earthquake is the one that you dreamed of." I replied that the brief and relatively harmless earthquake we had just experienced bore no resemblance to the horrifying scenes I had witnessed in my dream. (The person in question still remembers what happened.) Finally April 24 arrived. Toward the end of the day a ruinous earthquake was visited on Lar. The city shook violently, buildings collapsed, clouds of earth and dust rose into the air, and countless people, young and old, men and women, were swallowed up by death. Those who survived the earthquake rushed to the ruined buildings to help the wounded. The sight that presented itself during those grim moments was truly shattering. A particularly remarkable detail is that in my dream I had seen the small child of one of my relatives who lived in a neighboring house. I saw him passing in front of a part of the house that was about to collapse, so I called out to him to get out of the way, which he did. When the earthquake occurred, the only part of the house that collapsed was the one that had done so in my dream; the rest of the house remained standing, and nothing happened to the child, because when the earthquake happened he began running from one corner to the other in panic, moving out of the way of danger just when that particular part of the house began to collapse!

Would be it at all logical to accept as an explanation for the countless dreams of this type which accurately foretell the future the interpretations of materialists who regard all dreams as the result of the appearance in the mind of everyday events or of the fear of the unknown? Can such dreams be regarded, as the Freudians claim, simply as the reflection of repressed desires that come to the surface of the unconscious in order to delude the ego?

How can our perceptive apparatus perceive events that lie beyond the material circumstances surrounding us? How can it become aware of an event that has not yet occurred? Is there any way of explaining such awareness except in terms of a link between the human spirit and the supramaterial world? It must then be the case that man gains awareness from the world of the unseen, from a source which is aware of the future, in just the same way that astronomical facilities permit him to record the rays emitted by the galaxies. Why should it not be accepted that the waves emitted by the world of the unseen may be picked up by the spirit of man, acting as a receiver, with the result that matters that are not knowable by natural means are made manifest in the world of dreams?

Let us take another look at what the leaders leading materialist thinkers say on the general subject of dreams: "Contrary to what was imagined for centuries, dreams do not foretell the future or disclose any mysteries to us. The question of interpretation does not therefore arise. On the contrary, if we fully believe what Freud says, we must agree that dreams depict events out of the past. In other words, dreams result from past occurrences, and are not indications of future occurrences.

"Apart from this, careful experiments have shown that dreams like all other `spiritual' phenomena are an entirely material phenomenon, without any involvement of supernatural forces."(Dr. Arani Khabidan va Khab Didan, pp.15-16)

Is this really the case? Do dreams never inform us of future events or other unknown matters? The materialists are of course free if they wish to ignore realities and to give a totally unrealistic interpretation of dreams that have nothing to do with the thoughts and occurrences of everyday life.

They pretend that their theories represent the pinnacle of perfection and they imagine they have discovered all the mysteries of the universe and the principles that govern the life of man. They suppose that whatever appears to be a mystery or resists explanation in terms of logic quite simply does not exist, so there is nothing left to explain or discover! They should recognize, however, that such an attitude to clear and the self-evident truths is the sign of a spirit in revolt against established truths.

It is always the habit of the materialists, in their attempts to destroy the beliefs of others, to analyze hastily and impatiently whatever does not fit into their narrow framework of thought, imagining themselves able to supply answers to the most complex of questions. However, if one studies matters soberly and patiently and attains some degree of acquaintance with non-sensory phenomena, one's vision expands and one becomes less inclined to accept monodimensional explanations.

It must not be forgotten that theologians have never denied the influence exerted on dreams by past thoughts and perceptions or by wishes and desires, as well as other factors, internal or external. Certain diseases and mental disorders cast their shadow on many dreams. But the phenomenon of the dream cannot be regarded simply as the reflection of the activity of the brain and the nervous system, or of repressed desires. Many dreams may indeed be related to such factors, but this is not the case with dreams that foretell future events. As we have seen above, such dreams cannot possibly be explained by referring to material factors and causes; they represent the distillation of a different form of reality.

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The astounding feats of ascetics must also not be dismissed out of hand. Many people have themselves witnessed their remarkable deeds, apart from which manifest examples of their feats are recorded in numerous books of history.

If we regard the spirit as an epiphenomenon of matter, feats such as these which draw on forces hidden within man are bound to remain inexplicable. All the various phenomena we have discussed in the past two chapters point to the existence of a reality in man that is independent of his physical being, that survives death of the body. This is the only conclusion that profound thought will yield.

If we compare man to an airplane made up of different components, each of which has its own function, we must agree that this airplane needs a skilled pilot to guide and direct it with his expertise. The pilot does not belong to the same category as the components and instruments that make up the airplane, although his existence is absolutely necessary for its functioning. .The spirit is the pilot of the material body