Franz Anton Mesmer

“Mesmerism was, from a philosophical standpoint the most pregnant of all discoveries, even though from the moment it appeared mesmerism propounded more riddles than it solved.” -- SCHOPENHAUER.

Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815) was born on the 23rd of May 1734 at the village of Iznang near Switzerland, on the German side of Bodensee (Lake Constance).

The parish registers of Iznang are kept in the neighbouring town of Radolfszell. The registers testify to the birth and baptism of Franciscus Antonius, son of Antonius Mesmer and his wife Maria Ursula Mesmer. Mesmer’s first name, Franz in German, is sometimes incorrectly given as Friedrich; an error traceable back to the title page of a little book on Mesmer and his work, published the year before his death in 1814. The author was his friend and pupil Carl Wolfart who evidently didn’t know Mesmer’s first name. From his marriage registration and other documents it is clear that Mesmer dropped his first name and was significantly known and recognised as Anton Mesmer.

The saga of Franz Anton Mesmer was exceedingly dramatic and extended far beyond his death. It resulted in a veritable age of Mesmerism, the vitality of which took on international interest and fascination that endured for about 140 years. Through envy, malice, greed, and misunderstanding very many of his friends and learned contemporaries regarded Mesmer's practice of magnetism as quackery, even now in the 21st century his theory of animal magnetism is still credited as having laid the foundations of modern hypnosis and suggestive therapy.

Mesmer’s father, Antonius, was a forester employed by the archbishop of Constance; his mother, Maria Ursula was the daughter of a locksmith. It was a large Catholic family and not particularly prosperous, Franz Anton was the third of nine children. By all accounts, he was of copious intelligence and a somewhat high-minded individual, whose thinking was completely in keeping with his times.

The strength of Mesmerism, due mainly to the evidence of the countless indisputable cures that resulted from its use, ensured that Mesmerism came to constitute one of the first international movements of any kind. And its international vivacity was such that the anti-energetic sentiments in the mainstream modern sciences did not succeed in deconstructing it until about 1920. Even so, Mesmerism could not be erased or forgotten left three long shadows of itself; the first in the guise of hypnotism, the second in the guise of psychical research, and the third in the guise of the energetic mysteries. Now in the 21st Century with the modern understandings of physics and the technology available to measure energy fields; much of what Mesmer discovered can be scientifically demonstrated, and Mesmerism is making a comeback into the healing arts.

After preliminary studies in a local monastic school in Constance, Franz Anton Mesmer commenced the study of philosophy at the Jesuit University of Dillingen, Bavaria, changing in 1752 to theology, presumably as a scholarship student preparing for the priesthood. He continued his studies from 1753 at the University of Ingolstadt, where he soon abandoned theology. It is not known when or from what learning institution he obtained his doctorate in philosophy, but it is assumed that it was indeed awarded by the faculty of the University of Ingolstadt.
Mesmer was later educated in Vienna where he took a degree in medicine which he completed at the age of 32. He soon became convinced that the use of magnets was unnecessary and postulated that everybody possessed a magnetic force, or a fluid, which constantly connects all living things and all living human beings at any distance. He put his theory into a structure and called it Animal Magnetism.

The immediate source of Mesmer’s ethereal fluid was Richard Mead’s (1673-1754) De imperio solis ac lunae in corpora humana et morbis inde oriundis (London, 1704), a work from which Mesmer’s doctoral thesis drew upon heavily enough to perhaps even be considered almost plagiarised. Mead had postulated strongly that gravity produced tides in the atmosphere as well as in water and that the planets could therefore affect the fluidal balance of the human body.

RICHARD MEAD (1673-1754), English physician, eleventh child of Matthew Mead (1630-1699), was born on the 11th of August 1673 at Stepney, London. He studied at Utrecht for three years under J. G. Graevius; having decided to follow the medical profession, he then went to Leiden and attended the lectures of Paul Hermann and Archibald Pitcairne. In 1695 he graduated in philosophy and physic at Padua, and in 1696 he returned to London, entering at once into a successful practice. His Mechanical Account of Poisons appeared in 1702, and in 1703 he was admitted to the Royal Society, to which he contributed in that year a paper on the parasitic nature of scabies. In the same year he was elected physician to St Thomas’s Hospital and appointed to read anatomical lectures at the Surgeons’ Hall. On the death of John Radcliffe in 1714, Mead became the recognized head of his profession; he attended Queen Anne on her deathbed, and in 1727 was appointed physician to George II., having previously served him in that capacity when he was Prince of Wales. He died in London on the 16th of February 1754. Besides the Mechanical Account of Poisons (2nd ed., 1708), Mead published a treatise De imperio solis et lunae in corpora humana et morbis inde oriundis (1704). A Short Discourse concerning Pestilential Contagion, and the Method to be used to prevent it (1720), De variolis et morbillis dissertatio (1747), Medial, sacra, sive de morbis insignioribus qui in bibliis memorantur commentarius (1748), On the Scurvy (1749), and Monita et praecptae medica (1751). A Life of Mead by Dr Matthew Maty appeared in 1755.

The thesis that Mesmer submitted for his Doctorate was titled “Dissertatio physico-medica de planetarum influxu” (The influence of planets in the cure of diseases: See Mesmer’s full thesis on page 80). In modern contexts, this document is mistakenly condemned as Mesmer’s “astrological thesis”. But in his times, the thesis examined magnetic energetic influences that were thought to be universal in nature.

Mesmer observed that the action of the magnetic influences; “consists of alternating effects which may be considered as fluxes of sympathetic systems.” The effects manifest “in the human body with properties analogous to the magnet; there are poles, diverse and opposed, which can be communicated, changed, destroyed and reinforced; the phenomena of inclination is also observable.” In later summarising his thesis, he indicated “the property of the animal body which renders it susceptible to the magnetic influence of the celestial bodies, and to the reciprocal action of the environmental ones, I felt prompted to name, because the fluids permanent radiance in the fashion of the magnet, animal magnetism.” A year later he began practice as a member of the faculty of medicine in what was one of Europe’s most advanced medical centres; for the Vienna school was then in its prime, owing to the patronage of Maria Theresa and the leadership of Gerhard van Swieten and Jan Ingenhousz.

While he was a medical student at the University of Vienna, Mesmer was impressed by the writings of the Renaissance mystic physician Paracelsus (Theophrastus Philippus Aureolus Bombastus von Hohenheim, (1493-1541) and attempted to rationalise a belief in astrological influences on human health as the result of planetary forces through a subtle, invisible fluid. After Paracelsus, many learned men of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – Gloccenius, Burgrave, Helinotius, Robert Fludd, Kircher, and Maxwell- believed that in the magnet they could recognise the properties of that universal principle by which minds addicted to generalisation thought that all natural phenomena might be explained.
These men wrote voluminous books, filled with sterile discussions, with unproven assertions, and with contemptible arguments. Mesmer drew largely from these sources; it can’t be disputed that he had read some of the many books, devoted by early authors to the study of magnetism, although such study was then expressly forbidden.

Showing high intelligence and unusual promise Mesmer had been enabled to take the medical course at the University Medical Faculty in Vienna under van Swieten, who in due course appointed him to a professorship. In the last year of his medical course he submitted his thesis for the degree of Doctor of Medicine. In accordance with custom it was written in Latin, and one or two of the printed texts have survived to this day. An oral examination following a written one took place in November 1765, conducted by the heads of the Faculty seated on a dais and wearing their scarlet robes.

Questions and answers in Latin covered not only the principles and practice of medicine but also more searchingly his special theme. In the following May he was awarded the degree with highest honours. The original diploma, preserved in the Kerner Museum at Weinsburg, Germany demonstrates positive proof of Mesmer's attainments as well as other points of special interest. With a few insignificant omissions it runs in translation as follows:

“The very learned master Anton Mesmer of Meersburg in Swabia, Doctor of Philosophy, having completed several years’ study of medicine and having given written evidence of his knowledge, petitions us to confer on him the doctorate of medicine ................ We have examined him in the whole field of medicine and heard the defence of his thesis on the Influence of the Planets on the Human Body, and he has shown in all respects knowledge and understanding of the art of medicine. We are pleased to bestow upon him the honour he deserves for his distinguished record. Therefore acting with full powers invested in us by Her Apostolic Majesty the Queen Empress Maria Theresa we nominate the said Franz Anton Mesmer on this 31st day of May, 1766, Doctor of Medicine and we formally appoint him to a professional chair and authorise him to practice medicine throughout the region.”

Where Mesmer showed his originality was in taking hold of the so called, universal principle, of the world, and in applying it to the sick by means of contact and passes. However it was a friend of his, the astronomer Maximilian Hell (1720-1792), a court astronomer and Jesuit priest, who used magnets in the treatment of disease, and so influenced Mesmer to conduct his first attempts at healing with a steel magnet.

**Mesmer’s Scientific Rationale**

Modern historians seldom consider Mesmer as a person within his times but assess him according to modern standards as they later developed. And by those later standards Mesmer’s activities consisted of one strange folly after another. Detractors often tend to ignore the evidence of Mesmer’s academic distinction and the thousands of documented healing results he and his students of animal magnetism achieved; instead often pointing with scorn or mockery at the subject of his incorrectly named astrological thesis. In defence of this, Mesmer had no belief whatsoever in astrology or any other preternatural or esoteric theories. Unlike many of the new scientists of the time who still clung to some superstitious beliefs, he believed in god and held a purely rational view of the universe and sought natural causes of seemingly mysterious phenomena.
Many historians have shown a lack of understanding or historical perspective by, instead of investigating Mesmer's education and his early years, appearing amazed that reputable examiners not only approved the subject of his thesis but also awarded Mesmer his medical degree.

At first sight it certainly appears that Mesmer’s thesis subject was provocative. The basic distinction between planets and “fixed stars” however was not always clearly understood and in astrology the influences of the planets were bound up with those of the constellations known as the Ram, the Bull and so on. The names of these groups of stars remain useful for mapping the night sky but have no scientific significance. Their extreme remoteness from the solar system in which earth is a relatively tiny planet undermined the belief in their influence that was prevalent when it was assumed that the earth was the centre of the universe.

Within our solar system, on the other hand, it is obvious that the sun and moon influence the earth through the procession of the seasons, the tides, and in other ways. Thus the question whether or how far the planets can affect individual people would seem not wholly irrational. Mesmer makes no mention of the stars of the astrologers nor does he refer to any particular planets such as Mars, Venus, or Jupiter, it is the forces emanating from the sun and sustaining the planetary system that he deals with. Aware of possible misunderstanding he sought to disarm criticism in a brief foreword of his thesis.

“I shall incur the blame of some people if they infer from the title of my essay that so insignificant a person as I, following the work of the celebrated Mead, I am trying to restore the influence of the stars that has long been banished from medical teaching and to recommend it to the favour and study of physicians.”

Mesmer makes it quite clear that he was not in any way interested in or concerned with astrology, which “professed to foretell the future and thereby cheated its victims”. Contrary to astrology Mesmer was into the nature of purely physical influences on living bodies. Like most researchers he made good use of previous writers on the subject.

Certain theories of Descartes and Paracelsus probably provided a basis for Mesmer’s investigation, but his main idea stemmed from Newton’s laws of gravitation. In a little known work by Mead on the influence of the sun and the moon on human bodies, reference to Newton also occurs. Mesmer’s debt to Mead receives acknowledgement in the footnotes of his dissertation. To avoid confusion the term planets in the earlier sense included the sun and the moon. After pointing out the effects of gravitation on the motions of the planets, tidal and atmospheric changes, Mesmer cites Newton’s hypothesis of “a certain subtle spirit” pervading all material bodies by the force of which they attract one another. Newton also uses “electric and elastic spirit” as an alternative to “subtle spirit” for the invisible but physical medium causing not only the general effects of gravitation but also movements of the human body due to it “vibrations along the filaments of the nerves”. This notion is elaborated in a passage at the end of Newton’s most famous work, Mathematical Principles, and he admits that “these are things that cannot be explained,” owing to lack of sufficient experiments.

Mesmer in his thesis uses the term “animal gravitation” for the force or fluid that animates living bodies, and in later works substituted “animal magnetism.” Its flow had a rhythm analogous to the tides of the ocean. Mesmer’s most original idea was that a disturbance in the ebb and flow of the fluid within a human organism, when out of harmony with the universal rhythm, produced nervous or mental disorder. In support of this view he refers to some of the case histories in Mead’s work and also a notable example from Sydenham. Eight years elapsed before Mesmer modified and expanded his theory on the basis of his own investigations.

Franz Anton Mesmer was no more a quack than some of the 20th century psychologists who must trace their intellectual roots to this man whose name is now a part of our
language. Mesmer's contribution to real science can be distilled to the fact that he understood that illness is not a natural condition. Some kind of blockage of natural forces will inevitably yield stagnation and sickness. An instinctive desire to free the vital forces from restraint kept Mesmer successful as long as his own ability to acknowledge the forces he was using was strong, but the ruling establishment, then as now, more often than not, seems to overwhelm fresh insights concerning the body's spiritual essence, despite the best of intentions.

**Mesmer's Marriage**

By the time he began to propound his theory of animal magnetism, or mesmerism, Anton Mesmer had risen through the educational systems of Bavaria and Austria and had advanced to a position of some social prominence in Viennese society, partly from association by his marriage on January 16, 1768, two years after his medical graduation, to Maria Anna von Posch the wealthy Viennese widow of an army Lieutenant Colonel. By all accounts, the wedding was a splendid affair conducted in the fourteenth century St Stephen’s Cathedral by Cardinal Migazzi, the Archbishop of Vienna. However the marriage was not a happy one, Mesmer found Maria personally unsanitary, stupid, dull, and somewhat crass. Presumably this downside was more than offset by her more positive qualities; she gave him money and respectability, and she already had a teenage son, Franz, and Mesmer had never, and never did have, any children of his own.

Maria’s father must have had reservations about her choice of a spouse, especially one ten years her junior, and although he allowed Mesmer access to her fortune to support his life style, he excluded him from any inheritance of her estate, but bought them a Mansion at 261 Landstrasse, in the most prosperous district of Vienna. The mansion was noted for its gardens, groves, walks and fountains and soon Mesmer also added to the property by building laboratories and a small outdoor theater. Here he often practiced and cultivated his own performances on the cello, clavichord and the glass armonica (*harmonica*).

In 1778 there was a much publicised scandal known as, “The affair of Maria Theresa Paradis.” Maria Theresa Paradis was a namesake of the empress, whom her father served in the confidential post of private secretary. She was born in 1759, appeared to be a normal child for three years, and then woke up one morning unable to see. After an assortment of unsuccessful treatments from the leading physicians of the day Mesmer restored her sight and was then accused of having an affair with her. After Miss Paradis returned to her parents and Mesmer soon found himself thoroughly discredited, without a single defender in the medical profession; he began to think about leaving Vienna. His departure was not hurried; nevertheless it was strongly encouraged by the medical and ecclesiastical community.

Vienna at that time was in the Holy Roman Empire, and the ecclesiastical community had a lot of clout (they didn't call it the Holy Roman Empire for nothing!). Nevertheless, Mesmer was provided with a letter of recommendation from the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Viennese ambassador in Paris, which shows that his government had not repudiated him. When he left Vienna around January 1778, Mesmer took his glass armonica with him but left his wife behind! She needed to stay in Vienna to manage her inheritance, and their relationship at that point seems to have been one of mutual indifference. Mesmer was never to see her again, and twelve years later she died of breast cancer.

**Medical Uses of Magnetic Plates**

Mesmer was one of the many physicians who were exploring cures and healings via magnets. Mesmer apparently innovated, designed, and constructed his own version of magnetic plates. By applying magnetised plates to patient’s limbs, he affected his first cures in about 1773. Unfortunately, what these plates consisted of has been lost. But there are various magnetic plates designed in Japan during the 1980s, which also produce cures, and the application of weak electromagnetic currents to bone fractures
and ulcerous infections has been scientifically and medically confirmed as speeding up healings and cures.

In Vienna Mesmer came to special public attention because of a bitter, and quite public, controversy involving the invention of his magnetic plates, as the priority of this invention was claimed by his earlier friend, the Jesuit priest having the curious name of Maximillian Hell (sometimes spelt as Hehl), a professor of astronomy/astrology at the University of Vienna. Mesmer won the claim, but was quickly involved in another controversy involving the cure of a blind girl. Soon after this the president of the Medical Council appealed to the Empress of Austria to "put an end to this humbug." Denounced as an impostor, Mesmer left Vienna for Paris.

Arriving in Paris in February 1778, he set up what soon became a very lucrative clinic in the Place Vendôme, a poorer quarter of Paris, and another in the nearby village of Créteil. He then began an elaborate campaign to win recognition of his discovery from France's leading scientific bodies. Helped by some influential converts and an ever increasing throng of patients' who testified that they had been cured of everything from paralysis to what the French then called “Vapeurs,” *(hot flushes accompanied by nervous fits and hysterical fainting)*.

In Paris Mesmer seized the public's imagination, and quickly developed novel techniques and equipment to affect cures. This made him a considerable amount of money and with the house in Place Vendome now too small; Mesmer purchased the Hôtel Bouillon in the rue Montmartre, in which he established four baquet’s, one of them for the gratuitous use of the poor. But soon the free baquet for the poor didn’t suffice, so Mesmer magnetised a tree at the end of Rue Bondy, and during the following two years thousands of sick people attached themselves to it with cords in the hope of being cured. The exact nature and materials of the new equipment (Baquet’s) are presumed to have been lost to posterity, but they can still be found with determined investigation. However the social impact, the resulting scandals, and the extraordinary controversies that came to surface around the name Mesmer have never been lost.

Once installed in Paris, Mesmer established himself in the Masonic scene and the occult scene as well; his friends were numerous and included the composer Mozart. He was a Freemason and was instrumental in the formation of The Society of Harmony. Within the Society Mesmer gave lectures and some 300 pupils were educated in the use and methods of Animal Magnetism. Soon there were more than 40 active Societies all over France. He achieved a tremendous success with the public, and with the subscription connected to his name by his pupils, he became a rich man and he was at the height of his influence. In 1785 one of his pupils, in a breach of the secrecy and confidence of his sworn oath, published the doctrines of Mesmer *Aphorismes des M. Mesmer*, which were supposed to be kept a secret from all but students and members of The Society of Harmony.
Mesmer's Magnetic Vats

Mesmer had designed several versions of a large circular vat ("Baquet"), that were filled with "certain substances" apparently consisting of mixtures of various metals and shards of glass. They served to "collect animating magnetism" and transfer it and its sympathetic qualities to the sympathetic systems of the patients. The theory was that the "certain substances" collected and amplified the magnetic forces, and then via hand-held connectors; the forces were transferred to and re-saturated the sympathetic systems inherent in the bodies of the patients.

The methods that Mesmer utilised to affect the transfer tend to boggle a modern imagination. The patients sat around the vats in communal groups, each holding a metal or glass rod, or a mere copper wire or string of thread, the other end of which was pushed into the substances in the vats. Mesmer erected several circular vats, each about a foot high, and experimented with a number of hand-held "connectors" that served as conduits for the animating and re-animating magnetisms. There is no doubt that many cures were attained for ailments strictly physical in their cause, but even more cures were obtained regarding illness mental (psychosomatic) in origin. Mesmer himself indicated that his "techniques" better dealt with what we today refer to as psycho-somatic conditions. Mesmer usually sent physically ill patients to other doctors, and otherwise accepted them only if physical remedies were of no effect.

The Energetic Phenomena of the Vats

Although the exact material constituents of the circular communal vats are presumed lost, the nature of the energetic phenomena experienced by the "patients" has not been. As described (usually too briefly) in most sources, these phenomena consisted of "violent convulsions, cries, uncontrolable laughter, and various physical symptoms," followed by "lethargy" after which the cures became apparent. **WHAT** was cured, and **WHY** it was, remains an historical mystery confounded by expressions of awe, shock, mysticism, mind control, and professional hysteria. On the face of the brief descriptions of the phenomena, it is difficult to know exactly what was actually meant by "violent convulsions." Later scientific criteria established "convulsions" as consisting of quite serious and very painful involuntary contractions of the muscles during which the nervous system goes haywire, sometimes resulting in a coma.

It is also difficult to understand what is meant by "various physical symptoms," or even what was meant by "cries" and "laughter." However, the sum of all of these phenomena quite clearly falls into the category of catharsis of the ecstatic or ecstasy type. And obvious clues regarding this can be comprehended not by studying the phenomena, but by examining **WHO** attended upon the vats. Many had no visible ills to cure. If this particular issue is examined, it will be seen that they came just for the thrill of experiencing the animating, magnetic energies.

The Social Background Regarding the Vats

Mesmer’s reputation had preceded him to Paris, and once installed there he acquired numerous supporters. Principal among these at first was Dr Charles Deslon (sometimes accounted as d’Eslon and pronounced as “DE LON”), medical adviser to the Count D’Artois, and the brother of King Louis XVI. This was high patronage indeed. Deslon was eventually castigated and his practice restricted by the French Academy of Medicine for his pains. In time, however, their ways were to part when Deslon practising independently annoyed Mesmer.
In September of 1780 Deslon asked the Faculty of Medicine to confirm Mesmer’s ideas and techniques, a request that was rejected. None the less, public enthusiasm and high patronage support had grown to impressive heights. Then in March 1781, on behalf of the King, the powerful Minister M. de Maurepas, offered Mesmer 20,000 Louis (a significant amount), and a further annuity of 10,000 if he established a school and agreed to divulge the “secret” of his treatments. Mesmer at first refused, but later accepted a subscription of 340,000 Louis for lectures to pupils. With this financial arrangement, Mesmer increased his vat facilities, and surrounded them with rather impressive environments. These consisted of large rooms noted for the opulence of their furnishings, with enormous reflecting mirrors, the whole room being rather dimly lit.

Mesmer and his vats were mobbed with applicants, among them vast numbers of the aristocracy and royalty. Many memoirs of various members of the aristocracy establish that the visitors included Queen Marie Antoinette and the whole of her court. Well acquainted with the family, Mesmer also saw a great deal of the Mozart’s; and the first production of a Mozart opera, the Bastien and Bastienne, took place in Mesmer’s garden at his Viennese mansion, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) later made room for mesmerism in a scene in Cosi fan tutte.

What Actually Happened at the Vats?

* The lid of the baquet was pierced with holes, from whence there issued forth jointed and movable iron branches, which were held by the patients. Absolute silence was maintained. The patients were arranged in several rows around the baquet, connected with each other by cords passed round their bodies, and by a second chain, formed by joining hands. As they waited a melodious air was heard, proceeding from a pianoforte, or armonicon, placed in the adjoining room, and to this the human voice was sometimes added. Then, influenced by the magnetic effluvia issuing from the baquet, curious phenomena were produced. These are well described by an eyewitness named Bailly:

> "Some patients remain calm, and experience nothing; others cough, spit, feel slight pain, a local or general heat, and fall into sweats; others are agitated and tormented by convulsions. These convulsions are remarkable for their number, duration, and force, and have been known to persist for more than three hours. They are characterised by involuntary, jerking movements of all the limbs, and in the whole body, by contraction of the throat, by twitching in the hypochondriac and epigastric regions, by dimness and rolling of the eyes, by piercing cries, tears, hiccup, and immoderate laughter. They are preceded or followed by a state of languor or dreaminess, by a species of depression, and even by stupor.

The slightest sudden noise causes the patient to start, and it has been observed that he is affected by a change of time or tune in the airs performed on the pianoforte; that his agitation is increased by a more lively movement, and that his convulsions then become more violent. Patients are seen to be absorbed in the search for one another, rushing together, smiling, talking affectionately, and endeavouring to modify their crises. They are all so submissive to the magnetiser that even when they appear to be in a stupor, his voice, a glance, or sign will rouse them from it. It is impossible not to admit, from all these results, that some great force acts upon and masters the patients, and that this force appears to reside in the magnetiser. This convulsive state is termed the crisis. It has been observed that many women and few men are subject to such crisis; that they are only established after the lapse of two or three hours, and that when one is established, others soon and successively begin.
When the agitation exceeds certain limits, the patients are transported into a padded room; the women’s corsets are unlaced, and they may then strike their heads against the padded walls without doing themselves any injury. Mesmer, wearing a coat of lilac silk, walked up and down amid this palpitating crowd, together with Dr M. Deslon and his associates, whom he chose for their youth and comeliness.

Mesmer carried a long iron wand, with which he touched the bodies of the patients, and especially those parts which were diseased; often laying aside the wand, he magnetised them with his eyes, fixing his gaze on theirs, or applying his hands to the hypochondriac region and to the lower part of the abdomen. This application was often continued for hours, and at other times the master made use of passes.

He began by placing himself en rapport with his subjects. Seated opposite to him, foot against foot, knee against knee, he laid his fingers on the hypochondriac region, and moved them to and fro, lightly touching the ribs. Magnetisation with strong currents was substituted for these manipulations when more energetic results were to be produced. The master, erecting his fingers in a pyramid, passed his hands all over the patient’s body, beginning with the head, and going down over the shoulders to the feet. He then returned again, to the head, both back and front, to the belly and the back; he renewed the process again and again, until the magnetised person was saturated with the healing fluid, and was transported with pain or pleasure, both sensations being equally salutary. Young women were so much gratified by the crisis that they begged to be thrown into it anew; they followed Mesmer through the hall, and confessed that it was impossible not to be warmly attached to the magnetisers’ person.” *

*Animal Magnetism; Alfred Binet & Charles Fere, 1894.*

**Spontaneous Sexual Orgasm at the Vats**

*By careful consideration of memoirs, often not consulted by biographers of Mesmer, a complete picture of the “convulsive” catharsis begins to unfold. There is no doubt at all that those holding the connectors sometimes experienced an aspect of ecstatic catharsis known from ancient times, a kind of involuntary auto-orgasm in females and auto-ejaculatory release in males. Hence the connection among the “convulsions,” “cries,” “laughter,” and subsequent “lethargy” tend to fall into place, since these taken altogether are recognisable and familiar constituents of sexual orgasm. And if the frequent convulsions had always been painful or unpleasant, it is quite unlikely that applications to sit at the vats would have been any more numerous than the cases of those willing to try anything and everything to ameliorate their ills. *Because women seemed more susceptible to the influence of magnetism the second and third commissioners reports into Mesmerism over emphasised that women became susceptible to “Sexual Outrage” whilst they were mesmerised. This was a strongly emphasised point in the Commissionaires’ reports to the King and to the Society of Medicine; allowing Mesmer’s enemies in the Faculty of Medicine and the Royal Society the advantage of the Kings disapproval, ensuring the end of Mesmer and Magnetism in France.*

**Mesmeric Trances**

Ecstatic catharsis engendered dramatic and empowering shifts in levels” of consciousness of the kind we would today refer to as heightened or “altered states” and during which many kinds of so-called “paranormal” trance phenomena were experienced. Such phenomena often came to light within many of Mesmer’s vat participants. But a perpetual confusion has settled in regarding this matter, in that mesmerist trance phenomena have been historically confused with hypnosis. Hypnotism can easily be confused as an extension of Mesmerist trance, since it too is a type of altered state. But in actual historical fact, hypnotism as such was not identified until about 1842 by the English surgeon, James Braid (1795-1860). Braid first termed the phenomena as “Neuro-hypnotism,” a phenomenon that occasionally aroused involuntary sexualising energies. Types of hypnotism however had earlier been identified in ancient Persia and India, with probably even more ancient antecedents in Egypt.
Mesmer's Esoteric Involvements

In 1776 an important event occurred in Mesmer's life. One day a stranger appeared at his door, introducing himself as the Count de St. Germaine. "You must be the gentleman whose anonymous letter I received yesterday?" Dr. Mesmer remarked as he took his caller into his study. "Yes," St. Germaine replied, "I am he," "You wish to speak with me on the subject of magnetism?" Dr. Mesmer inquired. "I do," St. Germaine replied. "That is why I came to Vienna." Dr. Mesmer then told his guest of his magnetic experiments, confessing that he was still confused about the higher aspects of magnetism. "Who can enlighten me?" he asked. "I can," said the Count, with the assurance, "it is my duty to do so." The conversation during that afternoon lasted for several hours, and it probably concerned other subjects than that of magnetism alone. From that day on Dr Mesmer's methods changed. Up to that time he had been using magnetized objects. Henceforth he used direct vital transmission, which he called "animal magnetism."

Mesmerism can be correctly described as the most important branch of esoteric magic, and therefore it can't be considered apart from its parent stem. The ancients didn't consider magic as card tricks and illusions or sleight of hand, more so they considered magic as a sacred science, which was inseparable from god and religion. Porphyry and Cicero described it as the divina sapentia, and Plato associated magic with the "gods," these being but the occult powers and potencies of nature, the attributes of that unknown and nameless principle to which he gave the name of a Deity.

Magic is as old as man. It is mentioned in the two oldest documents known at the present day -- the Vedas and the older Laws of Manu. It was taught in the Mystery Schools of Greece, in the Neoplatonic School of Alexandria, and was carried safely through the Dark Ages by solitary students who had been initiated in the secret sciences. Magic was taught by Paracelsus in the sixteenth century, and by Mesmer in the eighteenth. The science of Magic is based upon the postulate that one Vital Principle pervades the entire universe. This Principle is the One Life of our solar system, the one force underlying all the various forces of nature. Magnetism is one of the manifestations of this Vital Principle, and when human magnetism is directed by the will it is known as Mesmerism.

The scientific standing of Franz Anton Mesmer is admitted by all his biographers. His occult standing however is either ignored, ignorantly explained away as Mesmer being an astrologer, or just not so well known. Mesmer was a Mason, and was also an initiated member of two powerful occult Fraternities, the Fraters Lucis and the Brotherhood of Luxor. The latter was the Egyptian branch of the Brotherhood of Lookshoor in Beluchistan, one of the oldest and most powerful of the Eastern Fraternities. Under the order of the "Great Brotherhood," the Council of Luxor selected Mesmer to act as their eighteenth century pioneer, later appointing Cagliostro as a helper, with the Count de St. Germaine to supervise the development of events.

"Animal magnetism" is a fluid, a correlation of atoms on metaphysical planes, which exudes from every human being in a greater or lesser degree. Some people have the power to emit this fluid consciously, through their eyes and fingertips, and most of the healing "miracles" of history are based upon this psycho-physical power in man.

Following his conversation with the Count de St. Germaine, Dr. Mesmer gave up his entire time to healing the sick. The house on the Landstrasse no longer echoed to the strains of Haydn and Mozart. It was now a hospital through which a steady stream of patients flowed from morn to night. However, while Dr Mesmer's fame grew among his patients, it decreased among his colleagues. A physician who used visible magnets was one thing; but one who made cures with an invisible "fluid" was quite another.

Since he based his work and observations on “the facts,” the critical question then becomes what Mesmer considered facts. He began with the ability of men and women, under the influence of animal magnetism, to activate strange powers within themselves,
gain insights into cosmic truths hidden from most of humanity by a veil of ignorance. He had observed a great many subjects, and the history of Mesmerism records many more who manifested super normal powers. Mesmer could no longer be sure where the real sciences left off and the occult sciences began. He was certain that all genuine phenomena could be accommodated within his system, but he could not define “genuine” in such a way as to protect himself from fantastic speculations.

He had written in his doctoral dissertation, and repeated in a series of writings, that hoary fallacies could be shown to have essential truth within them when interpreted scientifically – astrology, alchemy, oneiromancy, divination. Now he will explain them through animal magnetism. In his memoirs he sets down in a series of questions “the facts” to which now he will apply himself:

1. How can a sleeping man diagnose his own illnesses and even those of other people?
2. How, without having any instruction, can he identify the best means of affecting a cure?
3. How can he see objects at any distance, and how can he predict future events?
4. How can a man receive impressions from a will other than his own?
5. Why is this man not always endowed with these faculties?
6. How can these faculties be perfected?
7. Why is this state more frequent, and why does it appear in its most developed form, when the methods of animal magnetism are employed?
8. What have been the effects of ignorance of this phenomenon, and what are they today?
9. What are the evils resulting from the abuse of it?

The first of these two questions refer to a belief held by Mesmer, Puysegur, and many of their colleagues in the Mesmerism movement, the belief that subjects when mesmerised often became sensitive to what was wrong with the ill and therefore could guide the physician. Number three admits the reality of clairvoyance and precognition. Number 4 does the same for mental telepathy. The other six concern animal magnetism as the agent responsible, and its controlled use to heighten supernormal powers, and precautions against its misuse.

Such are Mesmer’s premises. He proceeds to his conclusions by following his theory that mesmerism and hypnotic sleep are conditions in which the outer senses become subservient to the inner sense, and the inner sense becomes in tune with the objective world. The question is how the sense, inner and outer, organise reality. The individual lives in a bewildering world, and it is the specific function of each sense that makes it possible for him to sort his experiences into a coherent order. The eye is responsive to rays of light, the ear to waves of sound. The inner sense unifies the perceptions of all the outer senses, meshing them together into the experience of one individual. This thought goes back to Aristotle, whom Mesmer had read in his student days.

But there is a far more extraordinary function of the inner sense. The inner sense responds to animal magnetism as the eye responds to light. This means that it receives messages directly from the cosmos. According to Mesmer’s explanation of somnambulism, as the outer senses shut down, the somnambulist begins to receive messages and commands from his inner sense, which acts as a surrogate and permits him to “see” when his eyes are closed, to “remember” when memory has lapsed, to answer questions intelligibly when the other avenues to his intelligence are closed.

Mesmer doesn’t go into the sensory lapses of the somnambulist – hypnotic blindness, etcetera – but the explanation from his thesis is evident. These are psycho-somatic symptoms attending the crisis. Animal magnetism rushing through the nervous system affects the outer senses, and just as it may make them more acute, it may also paralyse...
them, depending on the individual, the condition of his nerves, and the commands of the mesmeriser. The inner sense is affected in the same way, sometimes failing, sometimes becoming acute to an astonishing degree.

According to Mesmer the inner sense, he says, is at the bottom of the faculties that seem mysterious. Acting in one way, it is instinct; acting in another, it is aesthetic taste. Mesmerian rapport, that intimate feeling of complete trust between persons, comes from the communication of inner sense and inner sense. The same analysis explains a whole range of ideas obtained in a non rational way, from mere hunches to profound mystical experiences. Momentous consequences follow. Since the inner sense is in touch with the cosmos and with all the interrelated parts of the cosmos, reacting to them in their timelessness, therefore, there seems to be no limit to human knowledge (whatever practical impediments there might be).

Extrasensory perception is only to be expected, to put the matter in modern language. The eye cannot see a suit of cards face down on the table because light is reflected from the backs only. The inner sense can “see” the faces because animal magnetism flows everywhere, through and around objects. The outer sense must have the object within a limited range. The range of the inner sense is limitless, so that there is no reason why an individual might not be clairvoyant enough to perceive things on the opposite side of the earth.

Mental telepathy works through animal magnetism as its medium. One mind thinks thoughts into it, and it carries those thoughts to another mind. There is nothing more puzzling here than the act of the mesmeriser sending animal magnetism streaming into the nerves of his subject. So much of Mesmer’s case is extreme enough, stated with the starkness of occult physics, not experimental science. The occult is more extravagant in his treatment of precognition. In an evil hour, Mesmer undertook to explain the seers, sibyls, oracles, and fortune tellers. He came to the conclusion that the genuine articles could predict the future because they broke the time barrier.

Time in his view is merely a form of our human experience imposed by the outer senses on the material reaching them. The cosmos itself is timeless – past, present, and future being “different vectors in the entire universe.” The inner sense, making direct contact with the cosmos, can see these vectors as they are and follow them. To the visionary it is all one. To his listeners he seems to be speaking of what is, has been, or will be, since their finite outer senses must react in a time frame. The conquest of time gives certain people a privileged view of the “eternal now,” a partial and fragmentary view, no doubt, but still valid. When in their dreams they touch the cosmic source of knowledge, they become capable of predicting future events. Sometimes, when they do not understand the revelation vouchsafed to them, their dreams may be interpreted by those who do understand, and that is the truth in oneiromancy. The fortune tellers fall within the same definition. The inner sense is able, with the assistance of animal magnetism, to see everything in the present. What we call the future is available to it. Perception of the future is therefore no mystery. Since Mesmerism and Somnambulism are by definition conditions governed by the inner sense, somnambulists have all the occult capacities that have puzzled mankind down the ages. They can see through objects, interpret dreams, and prophesy. They can diagnose diseases because the bodies of the ill lie open to their inspection.

Mesmer applies his reasoning to superstitious folklore, in which he finds a kernel of truth. From time immemorial humanity has given credence to oracles, prophets, thaumaturges, witches, magicians, demonologists. The old beliefs were a mixture of true and false, rational and irrational, fact and fraud. Whatever was true, rational and factual came from individuals consulting their inner senses responding to animal magnetism.
These visions appear to those in a pathological condition. Sibyls often inhaled fumes and magicians took drugs so that they might lose control of their normal faculties before entering the prophetic state. The fumes and drugs made them more receptive to animal magnetism. Somnambulism, too, is always pathological, a crisis of one suffering from some mental or emotional abnormality. The somnambulist needs animal magnetism, which while curing him, may also vouchsafe him visions and revelations.

The remaining visionary states – catalepsy, epilepsy, madness – are imperfect forms of somnambulism. Thus, pathology and Mesmerian visions invariably go together. This refers to human beings, but animals, being subject to animal magnetism also possess extraordinary gifts. Instinctive behaviour, so beautifully and mysteriously linked to biological needs, as in the case of bees building a honeycomb, follows from knowledge arrived at in a manner equivalent to enlightenment of the human seer. Can animals see the future? Mesmer held that they could.
The French “Commissionaires” Reports

There were three reports submitted by the Commissionaires. The first report found in favour of Mesmer and Animal Magnetism; so the Royal Society refused to publish it, and another two were quickly requested one for the French Royal Society of Medicine, and one for the King. The report presented to the King was much more damning than the one presented to the Royal Society of Medicine. Knowing the King would be offended the Commissionaires focussed strongly on the supposition that women more easily taken sexual advantage of when they were magnetised. After the French Revolution there were several more reports that favourably proclaimed magnetism and its curative properties. Mesmer’s name was never mentioned in any of these later testaments.

The effect of the first report was instantaneous and remarkable. The advocates of magnetism, as a therapeutic agent, and the believers in the occult features of the phenomena, such as clairvoyance and thought-transference, had scored a triumph. But it served only to exasperate the average scientist and to intensify his prejudices. The other members of the Academy were against the committee. An outcry was raised on all sides. The sanctuary of science became an arena in which the passions were let loose. The Academy refused to have the report printed, only a few lithographed copies being supplied to those who asked for it, and it rests to this day in silent oblivion in the manuscript archives of the institution. Another committee was soon after appointed, being composed of avowed enemies of magnetism, and headed by a member who had openly sworn hostility to the doctrine. The result was what might have been expected. After the examination of two subjects under circumstances which, in the light of what is now known, rendered failure inevitable, the committee made a very undignified report in 1837, announcing the failure to produce the occult phenomena promised, and impugning the intelligence of the former committee. The third report, in 1837, practically killed mesmerism in France for a great number of years.

Report 1

Conclusions of the first Report of the Royal Academy of Medicine of France in 1831

“The contact of the thumbs or of the hands, frictions, or certain gestures made at a short distance from the body, and called passes, are the means employed to connect, or, in other words, to transmit the action of the magnetiser to the magnetised.”

“The means which are external and visible are not always necessary, since, on several occasions, the will, fixedness of stare, have sufficed to produce magnetic phenomena, even without the knowledge of the magnetised.”

“Magnetism has acted on persons of different sexes and different ages.”

“The time necessary to transmit and communicate the magnetic action has varied from one hour to a minute.” “Sleep brought on with more or less readiness, and established to a degree more or less profound, is a real but not a constant effect of magnetism.”

“We are satisfied that it has been excited under circumstances where those magnetised could not see, and were ignorant of the means employed to occasion it. “Magnetism has the same intensity, it is as promptly felt, at the distance of six feet as of six inches, and the phenomena developed by it are the same in the two cases.” “The action at a distance does not seem capable of being exercised with success, except on individuals who have been already subjected to magnetism.”
“During the process of magnetising, insignificant and momentary effects manifest themselves sometimes, which we do not attribute to magnetism alone; such as slight oppression, heat or cold, and some other nervous phenomena, which may be accounted for without the intervention of a particular agent, namely, through hope or fear, prejudice, and the expecting of something strange and new, the ennui occasioned by the monotony of the gestures, the silence and calm observed during the experiments, and, finally, through the imagination, which exercises so great a dominion over certain minds and certain organisations.”

“A certain number of the effects observed have seemed to us to depend on magnetism alone, and are not reproduced without it. These are well attested physiological and therapeutical phenomena.” “We have not seen that a person magnetised for the first time fell into a state of somnambulism; sometimes it was not till the eighth or tenth sitting that somnambulism declared itself.” “We have constantly seen ordinary sleep, which is the repose of the organs of the sense, of the intellectual faculties, and of the voluntary movements, precede and terminate the state of somnambulism.” “We may conclude, with certainty, that this state exists, when it occasions the development of new faculties, which have received the denominations of clairvoyance, intuition, internal prevision; or when it produces a great change in the physiological state, as insensibility, a considerable and sudden increase of strength, and when this effect cannot be attributed to any other cause.” “When once a person has been made to fall into a magnetic sleep, there is not always a necessity to have recourse to contact, and to passes in order to magnetise anew. The look of the magnetiser, and his will alone, has the same influence on the person. In this case, one may not only act on the person magnetised, but even put him completely into somnambulism, take him out of it without his knowledge, out of his sight, at a certain distance, and through closed doors.”

“There usually occur changes, more or less remarkable, in the perceptions and faculties of those individuals who fall into a state of somnambulism by the effect of magnetism.” “Some, amid the noise of confused conversations, hear only the voice of their magnetiser; several answer with precision the questions put to them either by the latter or by the persons near them; others hold on conversations with all the persons around them; however, they seldom understand what passes around them. “Most of the time they are entirely strangers to the external and unexpected noise made in their ears, such as the sound of copper vessels forcibly struck, the fall of any heavy substance, etc.”

“The eyes are closed; the eyelids yield with difficulty to the efforts made with the hand to open them. This operation, which is not without pain, allows one to see the eyeball convulsed and directed towards the upper and sometimes towards the lower part of the orbit.” “Sometimes the sense of smell is, as it were, abolished. One may make them respire hydrochloric acid or ammonia, without their being inconvenienced by it, or without even suspecting it. The contrary occurs in certain cases, and they are sensible to odours.”

“Most of the somnambulists that we have seen were completely insensible. One might tickle their feet, nostrils, and the angle of the eyes by the approach of a feather, pinch their skin so as to produce ecchymosis, prick them under the nails with pins put in to a considerable depth, without their evincing any pain or being at all aware of it. In a word, we have seen one person who was insensible to one of the most painful operations of surgery, and whose countenance, pulse, and respiration, did not manifest the slightest emotion.”

“Whilst they are in this state of somnambulism the magnetised persons we have observed retain the exercise of the faculties which they have while awake. Their memory even appears to be more faithful and more extensive, since they remember what has passed during all the time, and on every occasion that they have been in the state of somnambulism.” “On their awakening they say that they have entirely forgotten all the circumstances connected with the state of somnambulism, and that they never remember
them again. With respect to this point we can have no other surety than their own declarations."

"We have seen two somnambulists distinguish with their eyes shut the objects placed before them; they have told, without touching them, the colour and value of the cards; they have read words traced with the hand, or some lines of books opened by mere chance. This phenomenon took place even when the opening of the eyelids was accurately closed by means of the fingers.

"We met in two somnambulists the power of foreseeing acts of the organism more or less distant, more or less complicated. One of them announced several days, nay several months beforehand, the day, the hour, and the minute when epileptic fits would come on and return; the other declared the time of the cure. Their previsions were realised with remarkable exactness. "Considering that magnetism is a generator of physiological phenomena, and a therapeutic agent, it must find its place in the syllabus of medical subjects, and medical men only should practice it, or watch and superintend its employment."

The report concluded with the following address to the members of the Royal Academy:

"The Commission having arrived at the termination of its labours before the closing of this Report, asked itself whether amid all the precautions with which they had surrounded themselves to avoid all surprise; whether with the feeling of constant distrust with which they had always proceeded, they, in the examination of the phenomena observed by them, had scrupulously performed their duty. What other course, said we to ourselves, could we have followed? "With what distrust more marked or more cautions could we have been influenced?"

Our conscience, gentlemen, has answered us aloud that you could expect nothing from us which we have not done. Then have we been honest, accurate, faithful observers? It is for you who knew us for so many years, for you who see us constantly either in public life or in our frequent meetings, to answer this question. Your answer, gentlemen, we expect from the old friendship of some of you, and from the esteem of all."

"Certainly we do not presume to make you share our conviction regarding the reality of the phenomena observed by us, and which you have neither seen, nor followed, nor studied with us and as we did." "We do not; then, claim from you a blind credence in all that we have reported. We conceive that a considerable portion of these facts are so extraordinary, that you cannot grant it to us; probably we ourselves would presume to refuse you ours, if you came to announce them at this tribunal to us, who, like you, had neither seen, observed, nor studied any of them." "All we require is that you judge us as we should judge you; that is, that you would be convinced that neither the love of the marvellous, nor the desire of celebrity, nor any interest whatever has guided us in our labours. We were animated by motives of a loftier character, more worthy of you—by the love of science, and by the necessity of justifying the hopes which the Academy had entertained of our zeal and devotion."

Report 2

"The commissioners have ascertained that the animal magnetic fluid is not perceptible by any of the senses; that it has no action, either on themselves or on the patients subjected to it. They are convinced that pressure and contact effect changes which are rarely favourable to the animal system and which injuriously affect the imagination. Finally they have demonstrated by decisive experiments that imagination apart from magnetism produces convulsions, and that magnetism without imagination produces nothing."
They have come to the unanimous conclusion with respect to the existence and utility of animal magnetism, that there is nothing to prove the existence of the animal magnetic fluid; that this fluid, since it is non-existent, has no beneficial effect; that the violent effects observed in patients under public treatment are due to contact, to the excitement of the imagination, and to the mechanical imitation which involuntarily impels us to repeat that which strikes our senses.

At the same time they are compelled to add, since it is an important observation, that the contact and repeated excitement of the imagination which produces the crisis may become hurtful; that the spectacle of these crises is likewise dangerous, on account of the imitative faculty which is a law of nature; and consequently that all treatment in public in which magnetism is employed must in the end be productive of evil results. "(Signed) B. Franklin, Majault, Le Roy, Sallin, Bailly, D'Arcet, De Bory, Guillotin, Lovoisier." "Paris, August 11, 1784."

Report 3

"The commissioners entrusted by the king with the examination of animal magnetism have drawn up a report to be presented to his Majesty which ought perhaps to be published. It seemed prudent to suppress an observation not adapted for general publication, but we will not conceal this from the kings’ minister. This minister has charged us to draw up a note designed only for the kings’ eyes. “This important observation concerns morality. The commissioners have ascertained that the chief causes of the affects ascribed to animal magnetism are contact, imagination, and imitation. They have observed that the crisis occurs more frequently in women than in men. The first cause of this fact consists in the different organisations of the two sexes. Women have, as a rule, more mobile nerves; their imagination is more lively and more easily excited; it is readily impressed and aroused.

This great mobility of the nerves, since it gives a more exquisite delicacy to the senses, renders them more susceptible to the impressions of touch. In touching any given part, it may be said that they are touched all over the body, and the mobility of their nerves also inclines them more readily to imitation. It has been observed that women are like musical strings stretched in perfect unison; when one is moved; all the others are instantly affected. Thus the commissioners have repeatedly observed that when the crisis occurs in one woman, it occurs almost at once in others also.

This organisation explains why the crises in women are more frequent, more violent, and of longer duration than in men; it is nearly always due to their sensitive nerves. Some crises are due to a hidden, but natural cause, to an emotional cause to which women are more or less susceptible, and which, by remote influence, accumulates these emotions and raises them to their highest pitch, thus producing a convulsive state which may be confounded with the ordinary crises. This is due to the empire which nature has caused one sex to exert over the other, so as to arouse feelings of attachment and emotion. Women are always magnetised by men; the established relations are doubtless those of a patient to the physician, but this physician is a man, and whatever the illness may be, it does not deprive us of our sex, it does not entirely withdraw us from the power of the other sex; illness may weaken impressions without destroying them.

Moreover most of the women who present themselves to be magnetised are not really ill; many come out of idleness, or for amusement; others, if not perfectly well, retain their freshness and their force, their senses are unimpaired and they have all the sensitiveness of youth; their charms are such as to affect the physician, and their health is such as to make them liable to be affected by him, so that the danger is reciprocal. The long continued proximity, the necessary contact, the communication of individual heat, the interchange of looks, are ways and means by which it is well known that nature ever effects the communication of the sensations and the affections. The magnetiser generally keeps the patient’s knees enclosed within his own, and consequently the knees and all lower parts of the body are in close contact. The hand is
applied to the Hypochondriac region, and sometimes that of the ovarium, so that the touch is exerted at once on many parts, and these, the most sensitive parts of the body.

The experimenter, after applying his left hand in this manner, passes his right hand behind the woman’s body, and they incline towards each other so as to favour this two-fold contact. This causes the closest proximity; the two faces almost touch, the breath is intermingled, all physical impressions are felt in common, and the reciprocal attraction of the sexes must consequently be excited in all its force. It is not surprising that the senses are inflamed. The action of the imagination at the same time produces a certain disorder throughout the machine; it obscures the judgement, distracts the attention; the women in question are unable to take account of their sensations, and are not aware of their condition.

The medical members of the commission were present to watch the treatment, and carefully observed what passed. When this kind of crisis is approaching, the countenance becomes gradually inflamed, the eye brightens, and this is the sign of natural desire. The woman droops her head, lifts her hand to her forehead and eyes in order to cover them; her habitual modesty is unconsciously aroused, and inspires the desire for concealment. The crisis continues, however, and the eye is obscured, an unequivocal sign of the complete disorder of the senses.

This disorder may be wholly unperceived by the woman who experiences it, but it cannot escape the observant eye of the physician. As soon as this sign has been displayed, the eyelids become moist, the respiration is short and interrupted, the chest heaves rapidly, convulsions set in, and either the limbs or the whole body is agitated by sudden movements. In lively and sensitive women this last stage, which terminates the sweetest emotion, is often a convulsion; to this condition there succeed languor, prostration, and a sort of slumber of the senses, which is a repose necessary after strong agitation.

This convulsive state, however extraordinary it may appear to the observers, is shown to have nothing painful or contrary to nature in it, from the fact that, as soon as it is over, it leaves no unpleasant traces in its subjects. There is nothing disagreeable in the recollection, but, on the contrary, the subjects feel the better for it, and have no repugnance to enter anew into the same state.

Since the emotions they experience are the germs of the affections and inclinations, we can understand why the magnetiser inspires such attachment, an attachment likely to be stronger and more marked in women than in men, so long as men are men are entrusted with the task of magnetism. Undoubtedly many women have not experienced these effects, and others have not understood the cause of the effects they experienced; the more modest they are, the less they would be likely to suspect it. But it is said that several have perceived the truth, and have withdrawn from the magnetic treatment, and those who have not perceived it ought to be deterred from its pursuit.

The magnetic treatment must necessarily be dangerous to morality. While proposing to cure diseases which require prolonged treatment, pleasing and precious emotions are excited, emotions to which we look back with regret and seek to revive, since they possess a natural charm for us, and contribute to our physical happiness. But morally they must be condemned, and they are the more dangerous as it becomes more easy for them to become habitual. A condition in to which a woman enters in public, amid other women who apparently have the same experience, does not seem to offer any danger; she continues in it, she returns to it, and discovers her peril when it is too late. Strong women flee from this danger when they find themselves exposed to it; the morals and health of the weak may be impaired.

Of this danger M. Deslon is aware. On the 9th of last May, at a meeting held at M. Deslon’s own house, the lieutenant of police asked him several questions on this point in the presence of the commissioners. M. Lenoir said to him, ‘In my capacity as lieutenant-
general of police, I wish to know whether, when a woman is magnetised and passing through the crisis, it would not be easy to outrage her?’ M. Deslon replied in the affirmative, and it is only just to this physician to state that he has always maintained that he and his colleagues, pledged by their positions to act with probity, were alone entitled and privileged to practice magnetism.

It must be added that although his house contains a private room originally intended for these crises, he does not allow it to be used. The danger exists, however, notwithstanding this observance of decency, since the physician can, if he will, take advantage of his patient. Such occasions may occur daily and at any moment; he is sometimes exposed to the danger for two or three hours at a time and no one can rely on being always the master of his will. Even if we ascribe him some superhuman virtue, since he is exposed to emotions which awaken such desires, the imperious law of nature will affect his patient, and he is responsible, nor merely for his own wrong-doing, but also for that which he may have excited in another.

There is another mode of producing convulsions, a mode of which the commissioners have obtained no direct and positive proof, but which they cannot but suspect; namely a simulated crisis, which is a signal for, or produces in many others, out of imitation. This expedient is, at any rate, needed to hasten or maintain the crises which are an advantage to magnetism, since without them it could not be carried on. There are no real cures, and the treatment is tedious and unprofitable. There are patients who have been under treatment for eighteen months or two years without deriving any benefit from it; at length their patience is exhausted, and they cease to come. The crises serve as a spectacle; they are an occupation and interest, and, moreover, they are to the unobservant the result of magnetism, a proof of the existence of that agent, although they are really due to the power of the imagination.

When the commissioners began their report, they only stated the result of their examination of the magnetism practiced by M. Deslon, to which the order of the king had restricted them, but it is evident that their experiments, observations, and opinions apply to magnetism in general. M. Mesmer will certainly declare that the commissioners have not examined his method, proceedings, and the effects they have produced. The commissioners are undoubtedly too cautious to pronounce on that, which they have not examined, and with which they are not acquainted, yet they must observe that M. Deslon’s principles are those of the twenty-seven propositions printed by M. Mesmer in 1779.

If M. Mesmer has enlarged his theory, it thereby becomes more absurd: the heavenly influences are only a chimera, of which the fallacy has long been recognised. The whole theory may be condemned beforehand, since it is based upon magnetism; and it has no reality, since the animal magnetic fluid has no existence. Like magnetism, this brilliant theory exists only in the imagination. M. Deslon’s mode of magnetising is the same as that of M. Mesmer, of whom he is the disciple. When we place them together, we see that they have treated the same patients, and, consequently, have pursued the same process: the method now in use by M. Deslon is that of M. Mesmer. The results also correspond: the crises are as violent and frequent, and the same symptoms are displayed under the treatment of M. Deslon and of M. Mesmer. Although the latter may ascribe an obscure and inappreciable difference to his method, the principles, practice, and results are the same. Even if there were any real difference, no benefit from such treatment can be inferred, after the details given in our report and in this note, intended for the king.
Public report declares that M. Mesmer’s cures are not more numerous than those of M. Deslon. There is nothing to prevent the convulsions in this case also from becoming habitual, from producing an epidemic, and from being transmitted to future generations; such practices and assemblies may also have an injurious effect upon morality. The commissioners’ experiments, showing that all these results are due to contact, to imagination and imitation, while explaining the effects produced by M. Deslon, equally explain those of M. Mesmer. It may, therefore, reasonably be concluded that, whatever be the mystery of M. Mesmer’s magnetism, it has no more real existence than that of M. Deslon, and that the proceedings of the one are not more useful nor less dangerous than those of the other. “(Signed) B. Franklin, Majault, Le Roy, Sallin, Bailly, D’Arcet, De Bory, Guillotin, Lavoisier.”

“Paris, August 11, 1784.”

During the onslaught that followed the Royal Commission, Deslon remained calm. In considering his best modes of defence he was hoping that his learned colleagues would not be influenced by the wild excess of his adversary and would realise that insults were not arguments. He began his speech by recalling the ordinary rules of courtesy in keeping with the dignity of the assembly, and the proper respect that they should have for one another. He would answer the calumnies later when he had had an opportunity to read the indictment carefully, and he asked that the document should be placed on the chairman’s table. Then after going over the main points of the theory and practice he suggested that the doctors should examine and compare two groups of patients: the first treated by orthodox methods, the second as far as possible of the same types treated by Mesmer’s methods. If the faculty accepted this proposal they would add to their renown by giving proof of their zeal for truth and regard for human welfare.

Deslon’s appeal to his judges’ more liberal sentiments awakened no echo. Having deliberated during his absence they were ready and waiting and gave their verdict when he returned:

An injunction requiring Dr. Deslon to be more prudent in the future
Deslon’s right of voting in the assembly to be suspended for a year
If at the end of the year he had not disavowed Mesmer’s doctrine his name would be erased from the list of Members
The propositions of Magnetism are to be publicly rejected

The report, signed by Le Vacher de la Feutrie, is preserved in the faculty of records. But all was not lost, for it was necessary that two further meetings would have to confirm the findings before Deslon could be deprived of his membership of the faculty. As for Mesmer, no drastic action could be taken in view of the fact that he had qualified in Vienna. In a letter to the Faculty regarding the commission Mesmer wrote: The commission had one gratifying feature, that it lasted only one day; otherwise everything has already been conducted in writing between us.
The negative reports into the findings of Franz Anton Mesmer, Mesmerism, and Animal Magnetism failed to stifle the belief by many medical and lay practitioners that it was in fact a valid method of successful treatment for many physical and Psycho Somatic sicknesses. It is not commonly known that a second investigation lasting more than five years was instigated by The Royal Academy of Paris on the 28th of February 1826 and submitted to The Academy in late 1831. This investigation was conferred because of the obvious success that was resulting from the practice of Mesmerism and Magnetism all throughout Europe, more especially in Germany; where it had become a common healing methodology and could only legally be practiced by Medical Doctors. The full report can be found in the book “Animal Magnetism or Psychodunamy” written by Theodore Leger and published in 1846. The following is an extract beginning from page 161 of the book.

The committee was instituted to investigate somnambulism – to make experiments on this phenomenon, which had not been studied by the commissioners of 1784 – and to render an account thereof to you. They would, therefore, have transgressed the circle you to their operations, if, in seeking to support what they have seen on the authority of those who have observed similar facts, they had swelled their report with foreign matter.

They have related with impartiality what they saw with distrust – stated in order the observations made under various circumstances, with minute, as well as long protracted attention. They can conscientiously offer their, as a faithful description of all they have observed. The obstacles they have had to encounter are known to you. They are in part the cause of the delay attending the presentation of the report, the materials for which have been long in hand. And yet we are far from wishing to excuse ourselves, or being sorry for this delay, since it gives to our observations a character of maturity and reserve, which ought to invite your confidence in the facts we relate, and save us from the reproach of enthusiasm and prepossession that you might have brought against us had we collected them sooner.

We would add that we are far from presuming that we have seen all. We therefore do not pretend to force upon you as an axiom, that there is nothing positive in Magnetism beyond what is mentioned in our report. Instead of assigning limits to this department of physiological science, we, on the contrary, entertain the hope that a new field is open thereto; and being the vouchers for our own observations – presenting them with confidence to those who, after us, may wish to occupy themselves with the subject of Magnetism, we will content ourselves with drawing the following conclusions which necessarily result from the facts embodied in our report:

Conclusions.

1. Contact of the thumbs or hands, frictions or certain gestures made at a short distance from the body, and called passes, are the means used for putting parties in communication, or in other terms, of transmitting the influence of the magnetizer to the magnetized.
2. Exterior and visible means are not always necessary, since on several occasions, the power of volition and fixed gaze have sufficed for the development of the magnetic phenomena, even without the knowledge of the magnetized.
3. Magnetism has acted on persons of both sexes and different ages.
4. The time necessary for transmitting and causing the magnetic action to be felt, has varied from half an hour to a minute.
5. Magnetism does not usually act upon persons in good health.
6. Neither does it appear to act upon all who are sick.
7. At times, when a person is magnetized effects are manifested, which being insignificant and fleeting we do not attribute to magnetism alone – such as a slight oppression, a little heat or cold, and other nervous phenomena, which can be
accounted for without the intervention of a particular agency, namely, by hope or fear – the anticipation and waiting for an unknown or strange result – the weariness resulting from the sameness of the gestures – the silence and inaction persisted in during the experiments – and lastly, by the imagination, whose power is so great over certain minds and certain organisations.

8. A certain number of effects observed have seemed to us to depend upon Magnetism alone, and have not been reproduced without it. These are well-attested physiological and therapeutic phenomena.

9. The real effects produced by Magnetism are very various – it excites some and tranquilizes others. It most commonly gives rise to a momentary acceleration of circulation and breathing – convulsive movements of the fibres of short duration, resembling electric shocks – a greater or less degree of numbness – drowsiness-somnolency – and in a few cases, that state which magnetizers call somnambulism.

10. The existence of a peculiar characteristic, by which to recognise in all cases the reality of the somnambulic state, has not been proved.

11. It may, however, be confidently inferred that this state exists, when it gives rise to the development of new faculties, which have been designated by the terms ‘clairvoyance,’ ‘intuition,’ and ‘internal prevision,’ or produces great changes in the physiological state, as for instance, insensibility, a sudden and considerable accession of strength, and when this effect cannot be referred to any other cause.

12. Since among the effects attributed to somnambulism there are some that may be feigned, somnambulism itself may sometimes be feigned, and thus afford charlatanism the means of deception. Accordingly, in observing these phenomena, which as yet present themselves only as insulated facts that cannot be reduced to any theory, there is no other means of escaping delusion then by the most attentive examination, the strictest precautions, and numerous and varied proofs.

13. Sleep, induced more or less promptly, and made more or less profound, is a real, but not constant effect of Magnetism.

14. It has been demonstrated to us, that it was induced under circumstances which rendered it impossible for the magnetized to see, or to know the means employed for bringing it on.

15. When a person has been once thrown into the magnetic sleep, it is not always necessary to have recourse to contact or passes in order to magnetize him again. The look and the will of the magnetizer have the same influence. In such a case, it is possible not only to act upon the magnetized, but also to put him in a complete state of somnambulism, and rouse him from when out of site, and at a certain distance through closed doors.

16. Changes more or less remarkable are generally effected in the perceptions and faculties of individuals who fall into the somnambulistic state, by the operation of magnetism

"(a) Some, in the midst of the noise of promiscuous conversation, hear only the voice of the magnetizer – several reply with great precision to the questions put to them by the latter, or by the persons with whom they are in communication – others keep up a conversation with all around them: however they seldom hear what is going on in their presence. For the greater part of the time, they are perfectly unconscious of external and unlooked for noises made in their ears, such as the violent concussion of copper vessels, or the fall of an article of furniture near them.

"(b) The eyes are closed, and the lids yield with difficulty to the efforts made to open them with the hand. This operation, which is not unattended with pain, shows the eyeball to be convulsed, and turned sometimes towards the upper, at others towards the lower part of the socket.

"(c) In some cases the sense of smelling appears to be annihilated. They may be made to respire muriatic acid, or hartshorn, without being unpleasantly effected by, or even conscious of it. The contrary takes place in other cases, and they are sensible of odors.
“(d) The majority of the somnambulists seen by us were totally insensible; so that attempts were made to tickle their feet, nostrils, and the corners of their eyes, with a feather – their skin was pinched so as to leave stagnant blood – pins were thrust beneath the nail suddenly, and to a considerable depth, without their evincing the slightest pain, or being conscious of what was done. Lastly we have seen one who was insensible to the most painful of surgical operations, and whose countenance, pulse, or respiration, betrayed not the least emotion.

17. Magnetism is equally intense, and as promptly felt, at the distance of six feet as at that of six inches: and the phenomena developed by it are the same in both cases.

18. Influence at a distance can only, it appears, be exerted with success on such individuals as have already been wrought upon by Magnetism.

19. We have never seen a person, when magnetised for the first time, fall into the somnambulistic state. It has not, in some instances, manifested itself until the eight or tenth sitting.

20. We have uniformly seen an ordinary sleep, which is the repose of the organs of sense, the intellectual faculties, and cessation of voluntary movements, precede and terminate the somnambulic state.

21. The magnetized who have come under our observation, retain, while in somnambulism, the exercise of all their waking faculties. Even their memory appears more faithful and comprehensive, since they recollect all that has happened during the somnambulism, however often they may have been in that state.

22. When awake, they declare that they have entirely forgotten every circumstance attending their somnambulism, and can never recall them. We can have no other guarantee for this, than their own assertions.

23. The muscular powers of somnambulists are sometimes benumbed and paralyzed. At others, their movements are cramped only, and the patients walk or stagger like drunken men, without turning aside from the obstacles they meet within their path: occasionally, however, the reverse of this takes place. There are somnambulists who retain in full the power of directing their movements: nay, we have seen some stronger and more active than when awake.

24. We have seen two somnambulists distinguish, with their eyes closed objects placed before them; point out, without touching the cards, their colour, and value in the game; read written words by hand, or several lines from books opened at random. This phenomenon has taken place even when the eyelids were firmly closed by the pressure of fingers upon them.

25. In two somnambulists, we have met with the faculty of foreseeing organic changes, more or less remote. One of them announced several days, nay months, beforehand, the day, the hour, and minute of an epileptic fit, and of the recurrence of the same; the other foretold the epoch of his cure. Their provisions were realized with remarkable exactness. They seem to is to extend only to organic accidents, either good or bad.

26. We have met with one somnambulist, (and no more) who could designate the symptoms of disease in three persons put into communication with her. However, our researches were not directed to a sufficient number.

27. In order to establish with accuracy the points of affinity between Magnetism and the Art of Healing, it would have been needful to observe its effects on a great number of individuals, and to make daily experiments for a length of time upon the same patients. This not having been done, the committee have had to confine themselves to a description of what they have seen, and that in too limited number of cases, to presume to offer an opinion on this head.

28. Some of the magnetized patients have derived no relief. Others have been more or less benefited; one for instance, in the suspension of habitual pains; a second, in the recovery of his strength; a third, in a respite of several months from epileptic attacks; and a fourth, in the complete cure of a severe paralysis of long standing.

29. Considered as the agent of physiological phenomena, or a therapeutic medium, Magnetism deserves a place on the list of medical acquirements; and,
consequently, physicians alone should practise, or direct the practice of it, as is the case in the countries in the north.

30. The committee, for want of opportunity, have not been able to verify other faculties which somnambulists are said by magnetizers to possess. But they have brought together, and now communicate, facts of sufficient importance, in their opinion, to authorize the ‘encouragement of magnetic researches by the Academy, as a very curious branch of psychology and natural history.’

Having reached the termination of their labors, the committee, before bringing this Report to a close, asked themselves whether – in the numerous precautions against surprise with which they have been armed, the feeling of distrust with which they have uniformly conducted their proceedings, and the examination of the phenomena observed - whether they have scrupulously fulfilled the duties intrusted to them. ‘What other course,’ said we to each other, ‘could we have adopted’? What surer means could we have employed? How could we make our distrust more pointed, and at the same time more discreet than we did? Our consciences, gentlemen, answered boldly, that you could expect nothing from us that we have not done. Lastly, have we acted the part of honest, exact, and faithful observers? It is for you, who have known us for so many years; for you, who meet us in society and in our frequent assemblies, to answer this question. We await your reply, gentlemen, in the spirit of old friends, as we are to a portion of you, and on the consciousness of possessing the esteem of all of you. It is true, we do not presume to flatter ourselves that you will fully participate in our conviction of the reality of the phenomena observed by us, but which you have neither seen, followed up, nor studies as we have.

We do not, therefore, claim of you a blind belief in all the particulars of our report. We conceive that a large portion of these facts are so extraordinary that you can cannot yield us that; perhaps we ourselves should refuse you ours, if, changing positions, you should come and announce them to us, who, as is the case of you today, had seen nothing, studies nothing, traced nothing to its source. We only ask that you judge us as we would you – that is to say, under a conviction that neither a love for the marvellous, a desire for celebrity, nor any interested feeling whatever, has actuated us throughout our labors. We have been animated by higher motives – by motives more worthy of you – the love of science, and an earnest desire to justify the hopes conceived by the Academy, touching our zeal and devotion.

(Signed) Bourdois De La Motte, Pres.
Fouquier,
Gueneau de Mussy,
Guersent,
Itard,
J.J. Leroux,
Marc, Thillaye
“Husson, Reporter.”

N.B. Messrs. Double and Magendie, not having been present at the experiments, have not thought proper to sign the report.

Mesmer Leaves France

Although a great deal has been written about Mesmer’s expulsion from France, he was never actually expelled, more so he departed because of the French Revolution. An attempt for his expulsion was instigated but the facts are vague. The official story holds that in 1784, the “French government” charged the Faculty of Medicine, the Royal Society of Medicine, and the Academy of Sciences, to examine “animal magnetism.”

Nine Commissioners were convened under the presidency of Benjamin Franklin, then in Paris, and included the astronomer, Jean Sylvain Bailly and the chemist J.K. Lavoisier,
both esteemed scientists of the time who both met their deaths during the French Revolution from the invention of one of the other commissioners whose name was Guillotine. The commissioners were restricted to the activity of attempting to establish evidence of a new physical force that was claimed as the agent of the cures. But it is clear that the actual target was Mesmer himself, and that the true purpose was to get rid of him.

Mesmer had fallen out with his past supporter Dr Deslon, because of Deslon's insistence at using all manner of strange contraptions and excuses to support the existence of magnetism. The commission was conducted at Deslon's estate, and although Mesmer was allowed to be present he was not allowed to utter a word and only Deslon was allowed to perform the Magnetism. The commission produced three known reports, but between them the consensus among the Commissioners is quite garbled. Franklin, for example, recommended further examination of the issue. But King Louis XV1, not known for much in the way, of certitude, was somehow stampeded to order Mesmer's expulsion from France, which was effected very quickly.

The first report concluded that Mesmerism was safe and highly effective for curing both physical and mental disease, the second report was lame and rather inconclusive about anything, but the third report, which was given to Louis XV1, was damning and concluded that far from being able to cure any disease, Mesmer's ethereal fluid also did not exist. They termed him a deceiver and ascribed Mesmer's "healings" to the fantasy and imaginings of the individual, and physicians using his method were threatened with the loss of their practice. The only member of the commission to speak positively for Mesmer was the famous botanist Adrian Laurent de Jussieu.

The French Academy of Sciences and the Royal Society of Medicine had initially expressed cautious interest in Mesmerism and after many very positive findings set out in the first report, the Royal Society quickly commissioned two further reports from different sources, accepted the negative findings, decided that Mesmer was a quack and refused to have anything further to do with him. As Mesmer’s clientele and reputation grew, their ire against him escalated into open attacks in magazine articles and the pamphlet press.

Mesmer, his followers, and many people he had cured responded by publishing articles and pamphlets of their own, denouncing the medical establishment of the time as a collection of jealous incompetents fighting to maintain their monopoly over medicine at the expense of public health. The resulting frenzy kept the media busy and the public entertained until the beginning of the French Revolution nine years later brought other matters to the forefront of public attention.

In what then, did Mesmer differ from the physicians of his age? In this: Mesmer thought that he had discovered the secret of directing at will, and by every means, the fluid which sets our nerves in action, and thereby of imparting to them such action as might be requisite either for the preservation of health or for the cure of disease. Mesmer, in fact, laid claim to having arrived at a better knowledge of the laws of life than the physicians who had preceded him". It was this which the Viennese physicians disputed and for which he was repulsed.

Mesmer's theory may have been a mistake, but there can be no doubt that the great end of all his proceedings was the application of a remedy for human suffering. Whatever may be said against Mesmer's theory, and the methods he employed, there can be no question that there was produced such a profound impression upon the system of the patient, as oftentimes to effect the relief or cure of a certain order of malady. Experience has augmented our knowledge; and we now know that the same curative effects may be produced without all those pretensions, which so greatly lead to the ideas of jugglery and imposture.
Moll has pointed out that an influence may be exercised on the nerves as a certainty, though perhaps very limited by distance, which was admitted also by Alexander von Humboldt, and his opinion was concurred in by the well-known anatomist and clinician, Reil. More than once the hypothesis has been put forward of electric activities being called up by mesmeric passes (Rostan, J. Wagner). Tarchanoff has demonstrated that the application of gentle stimulus to the skin will excite in it slight electric currents, and that, moreover, a strong effort of concentration of the will, with the muscular contraction by which it is invariably attended, will also suffice to produce the same. Now, since mesmerists always insist on the necessity of strong tension of the will on the part of the mesmeriser while making his passes, may not a peripheral development of electricity be induced in his person, and passed on to that of the individual he is mesmerizing.

If the first propagators of magnetism had followed the example of that ancient philosopher who contented himself with walking in the presence of one who denied motion—if they had restricted themselves to producing effects without endeavoring to account for them—the cause of magnetism might have had a more favorable reception. But they did not follow this course. Carried away by their enthusiasm, the partisans of Mesmer knew not how to set limits to their faith; they believed they could cure all diseases by one remedy: magnetism. Extending their views to the future, they thought themselves entitled to predict that the agent discovered by Mesmer would operate a considerable modification of our morals.

Not less astonishing than the enthusiasm of the magnetisers was the conduct of the scientific societies who were just as incapable of preserving sufficient coolness to pronounce without prejudice their decisions respecting magnetism. The one party denied all the effects of magnetism, or explained them on erroneous grounds; the other, on the contrary, adopted all that their leader had said and written, and thus carried their belief too far.

The opponents of magnetism had found out a word, “Imagination”, which to them conveniently explained every phenomenon, and consequently saved them the trouble of investigating the subject minutely. If imagination could produce the extraordinary, not to say wonderful, results attributed to magnetism, surely they should have studied its powers carefully. As a member of the Academy pointed out; “The only one who spoke in favor of mesmerism was Mesmer himself,” “possessed of no other secret but that of being able to benefit health through the imagination, would this not always be a sufficient wonder? For if the medicine of the imagination is the best, why should we not make use of it?”

At the time of the commissions the French Academy of Sciences was enjoying a period of unprecedented popularity. Arrogant with success, this youthful embodiment of Science showed all the characteristics of an adolescent. How could there be merit in treatments which savants could not understand? In the report of the Committee handed to the King on August 11, 1784, the members honestly admitted the efficacy of Dr. Mesmer's cures. Some power was at work, they said, but what was the nature of that power? Could it be perceived by any of the physical senses? It could not. Therefore they concluded that "where nothing is to be seen, felt, tasted or smelled, there nothing can exist." Hence the amazing cures which they had witnessed must be due entirely to "the imagination of the patients themselves."

Furthermore, these weighty minds affirmed, that..... Since the commission has found that the fluid of animal magnetism cannot be perceived by any of man's senses, the commission has come to the conclusion that there is nothing to show that the fluid of animal magnetism exists, and that, consequently, this non-existing fluid can serve no useful purpose. Therefore, to proceed with these methods in the presence of others cannot fail in the long run to be unwholesome.
Marie Antoinette promised Mesmer her patronage, and many of the Austrian nobility came to him as patients. But the Academies of Science and Medicine, to whom he immediately addressed himself, refused to respect his theories. In 1779 he published his French Report on Animal Magnetism, declaring that "it is not a secret remedy, but a scientific fact, whose causes and effects can be studied." He frankly admitted that he wished to gain the support of some government courageous enough to give his methods a fair trial and inaugurate a "house where the sick may be treated, and the claims I have made for animal magnetism be tested to the full."

The publication of the third Commissionaires' report caused a sensation. The Clergy attributed his astonishing cures to the Devil. The orthodox physicians denounced him as a charlatan. But the aristocracy of Paris were excited to the verge of madness by his phenomenal cures. Dr. Deslon, physician to the Count d'Artois, promptly rallied to Mesmer's support. A lady-in-waiting who had been cured of paralysis appealed to the Queen for her public recognition of Dr. Mesmer's methods. The Princess de Lamballe, the Duc de Bourbon, the Prince de Condé, and even the popular idol of the day, the young Marquis de Lafayette -- all gave him their ardent patronage. At the Queen's request the government entered into direct communication with Dr. Mesmer in order to keep him in France, and Maurepas, one of the King's ministers, offered him a pension. From 1780 to 1784 Dr. Mesmer was the rage of Paris.

According to the writings of Baron du Potet de Sennevoy; “Paris was deluged with publications on magnetism, some 500 appeared in the space of eighteen months, so that the dispute was warmly argued on both sides, hence the commissioners were exasperated, and their decision was given against the phenomena of mesmerism. In addition, they persecuted the followers of the new doctrine, and a great number of physicians fell victim to their zeal for the propagation of magnetism. Over thirty doctors accused of believing and practicing magnetism were called up in one day to sign a document of declaration against magnetism under a penalty of being struck off the register of practicing physicians. A number of them would not tamper with their conscience, so they were struck off. This act of intolerance, by a body which should have better known how to respect itself, contributed much towards increasing the number of those who no longer favored the new doctrine. Mesmer was ridiculed on the stage, burlesque poems were published against his doctrine, and he himself was travestied in songs which were circulated throughout Paris. Magnetism was the subject of many conversations.”
Voluntary Departure from France?

The claim made by some historians that Mesmer was expelled from France loses credence in consideration of the letter he wrote to Marie Antoinette explaining why he was leaving. The tone and contents all but gives the queen an ultimatum if she wanted him to remain. Marie Antoinette never answered the letter, and when the allotted time arrived Mesmer left France as he had said he would.

Madam: “I can feel nothing but the most sincere gratitude that Your Majesty deigns to take notice of me. Yet my predicament weighs heavily upon me. There are those who have told Your Majesty that my plan to quit France is inhuman and that I intend to abandon the ill who are still in need of my attention. I do not doubt that today some attribute to interested motives my refusal to accept the conditions Your Majesty has offered me.

I am acting, Madam, neither from inhumanity nor from avarice. I dare to hope that Your Majesty will allow me to place the proof before her eyes. But more than anything else, I should remember that she may blame me, and my first consideration must be to make clear my respectful submission to her slightest wish.

With that in mind, and only out of respect for Your Majesty, I tender the assurance of my extending my stay in France until next September 18 and of continuing until that date the treatment of those who continue to rely on my care.

I appeal to Your Majesty to believe that there is no ulterior motive behind this offer. Although I have the honor to make it to Your Majesty, I set aside every indulgence, every favor, and every hope except that of acting under the protection of Your Majesty in the deserved peace and security that have been accorded me in this country since I came here. Finally, Madame, in declaring to Your Majesty that I give up all hope of an agreement with the French Government, I beg acceptance of my most humble, most respectful, and most disinterested deference. I am seeking, Madame, a government that will see the necessity of not permitting a tardy introduction into the world of a truth that, through its effect on the human body, can work changes that knowledge and skill should maintain and direct from the beginning of an illness through a proper regimen to a proper cure. Since the conditions offered to me in the name of Your Majesty would not achieve this, my fixed principles forbid me to accept them.

Where a cause is primarily concerned with the good of humanity, money should not be anything more than a secondary consideration. To Your Majesty, four or five hundred thousand francs more or less, well spent, are nothing. Human happiness is everything. My discovery should be welcomed and myself rewarded with a munificence worthy of the monarch to whom I have appealed. What should acquit me unanswerably of every false imputation, in this respect, is that since my arrival in your country I have not victimized any of your subjects. For three years I have received monetary offers every day. I have had little time to read them, but I can say, without having made an exact count, that I have permitted large sums to slip through my fingers.

My conduct in Your Majesty’s country has always been the same. Assuredly it is not because of avarice or desire for empty glory that I have exposed myself to the ridicule heaped on me by turns of your Academy of Sciences, your Royal Society of Medicine, and your Faculty of Medicine. I have done it because I thought I ought to do it. After their rejection of me, I consider myself at a point where the government would surely take notice of me on its own account. Deceived in this expectation, I have decided to look elsewhere for that which I can no longer reasonably expect here. I have arranged to leave France next August. This is what some call inhumanity, as if my departure were not force on me.
Striking a balance, twenty or twenty five sick persons, whoever they may be, mean nothing compared to the human race. To apply this principle to one Your Majesty honors with her friendship, I have to say that to give Madame the Duchess de Chaulnes alone the preference over the mass of people would be, at bottom, as wicked for me as to neglect my discovery because of my personal interests.

I have constantly found myself compelled to abandon the ill who were precious to me and to whom my care was still indispensible. This was true when I left the land of Your Majesty's birth. It is also my native land. Why did no one accuse me of inhumanity at that time? Why, Madame? Because that serious accusation would have been superfluous. Because my enemies had by more simple intrigues caused me to lose the confidence of your august mother and your august brother.

Madame, one like myself who is always mindful of the judgment of nations and of posterity, who is always prepared to account for his actions, will, as I have done, react to so cruel a check without arrogance but with courage. For he will know that if there are many circumstances in which Kings ought to guide public opinion, there are many more in which public opinion irresistibly shapes royal opinion. Today, as I have been told in Your Majesty's name, your brother has only distain for me. So be it! When public opinion decides, it will do me justice. If it does not do this in my lifetime, it will honor my tomb.

Without doubt, the date of September 18 that I have mentioned to Your Majesty will seem extraordinary. I would like the same date of last year to be remembered, when the physicians of your kingdom did not hesitate to dishonor in my name one of their colleagues to whom I owe everything. On that day was held the assembly of the Faculty of Medicine of Paris at which my propositions were rejected. Your Majesty knows them. I believed then, Madame, and I still live in the persuasion, that after a spectacle so base by the physicians of your city of Paris, every enlightened person should no longer have failed to examine my discovery and that the protection of every powerful person should have been given to it without demur. However that may be, on next September 18 it will be one year since I placed all my hopes in the vigilant and paternal care of the government.

At this time, I hope Your Majesty will judge my sacrifice to be sufficient and to see that I have not fixed a limit out of fickleness, or vain glory, or pique, or inhumanity. I dare to flatter myself that her protection will follow me wherever destiny leads me away from her and that as a worthy protectress of the truth she will not distain to use her influence with her brother and her husband to win their goodwill for me. With the most profound respect I remain Your Majesty's most humble and obedient servant. Mesmer.

Mesmer left Paris for London, and proceeded from there to Austria, Italy, Switzerland, and Germany, continually trying to win the universal acclaim he believed he deserved. Eventually he returned Meersburg, a village near his birthplace. In the meantime, animal magnetism was practiced as a therapy all over Germany. In 1812 professor Karl Christian Wolfart from Berlin visited Mesmer at the request of the Prussian government in order to be educated in his methods. At the same time Johann Ferdinand Koreff (1783-1851) was already in Paris on a similar mission. Wolfart remained Mesmer's staunchest supporter, and instigated the printing of Mesmer's main work, Mesmerismus, oder System der Wechselwirkungen, in Berlin in 1814.

Despite the negative findings of the commission and all his jealous colleagues, it was however the French revolution that ruined Mesmer's practice. During the revolution he lost his entire fortune and fled initially to England. Then in 1798 he returned to France in an unsuccessful attempt to regain his fortune. In 1802 he moved to Versaille and made a settlement with the French government, which granted him a small pension.
In 1803 Mesmer left France for good, first living at Frauenfeld in Thurgau, Switzerland; then he retired to Meersburg, where he quietly practiced medicine from 1807. Here Mesmer apparently led a quiet and contented life, doing a little medicine, playing his glass harmonica, and remaining detached from the outside world until he died on the 5th of March, 1815. It has been incorrectly recorded that after his arrival at Frauenfeld in Switzerland, Mesmer was forbidden by the Swiss Government to practice Mesmerism and so he magnetized a tree near the shores of Lake Constance and used the tree to heal the sick. No evidence is found in support of this.

A three sided memorial at the cemetery on the hill above the ancient village of Meersburg was designed by his friend Karl Wolfart. The memorial bears a sundial in the centre of the top face and various large carved Masonic symbols on all three sides. On the eastern side, Gods eye shining over Mesmer’s name; to the north-west, a representation of the solar system, with his birth date beneath the orbit of the earth; to the south west, a burning torch and a palm branch over the date of his death; and centred within the flat top is a sundial. Mesmer’s grave and monument remain in well preserved condition to this day.

Mesmer was not a poor man. At the time of his death he was employing three servants, and he had a horse and carriage. Soon after his death and before the estate was settled, Dr. Wolfart asked the heirs for Mesmer’s glass armonica, which he said Mesmer had promised him. It was sent to Dr. Wolfart, and has been lost.

**Mesmer’s Last Will and Testament**

“In my last will I name as my universal heirs the six remaining children of my two sisters, to wit, Mathias Schorpf, forester, Crescentia Frostin, widow, Cajetan Strohmayer, Burgomeister of Meersburg, Xavier Strothmayer, doctor, Theresa Maurus, widow, Augusta Fetscherin, saddler, of Meersburg. These six shall divide my entire estate in six equal parts. Anna Maria Seeger of Riedetsweiler shall for her several years of true service rendered to me be paid one hundred gulden after my death. As for my burial, I request that my body be dissected and that the area of the bladder be specially inspected to find out the cause of pains I have suffered for many years. A Louis d’or is to be given to the dissector. As in life I held no office or title, therefore I wish to be buried like an ordinary man. This is my last will which I have signed and sealed with my own hand.” Franz Anton Mesmer.

*From his summer chalet at Riedetsweiler, Mesmer located to a cottage on the German side of Lake Constance in Meersburg; at 11 Vor Burggasse, across the lane from The Holy Spirit Hospital. A few years later he died from bladder cancer which had spread to other organs. It is from his friend Justinus Kerner, thanks to whose book, “Franz Anton Mesmer from Swabia, Discoverer of the Animal Magnetism,” published in Frankfurt on the Main in 1856, that we know much about Mesmer’s last years. Justinus tells us that Mesmer died smiling, a strange thing indeed. Strange, too, is the tale of the magnetisable canary which would fly from its cage, always open, and perch on Mesmer’s head to sing him awake every morning; perch on the sugar basin while he ate his breakfast and anticipate his need by pecking extra lumps into his coffee cup.

The end of the tale, as Kerner relates it, runs; “One evening Mesmer gave the canary bird an extra affection, the next morning Mesmer lay in repose as though he were still alive, but never again did the canary bird fly on to his head to wake him. It ate no more and sang no more and soon it was found dead in its cage”. Far stranger, however, to me (Frankau) at any rate, is the impression I have gathered that when it came to clinical treatment, the discoverer of animal magnetism pinned his whole faith to the therapeutic value of the Mesmeric “crises”, setting little or perhaps even no value on the mesmeric “trance”. *

*An introduction from the Book: Mesmerism, by Doctor Mesmer (1779) and translated into English by Gilbert Frankau (1948).
Franz Anton Mesmer was a Magnetist; he was not a Hypnotist, and he gave much more significance to magnetism and the transference of the Ethereal Fluid than what he did to the trance state, as can be evidenced in the text below from Kerner. Mesmer disliked the Somnambules, and accused them of deliberately implying that Animal Magnetism (Mesmerism) was hypnosis. Mesmer strongly disagreed with the suggestion and those who proposed and promoted it.

*“Through Puysegur’s investigations Animal Magnetism assumed a new phase during the time of Mesmer’s sojourn in France. Puysegur resided at Strasburg, from whence his doctrine spread itself throughout Germany. Puysegur was the first experimenter who, quitting the simple magnetic influence upon the patient, assumed that Somnambulism and its power of inward contemplation alone, constitutes its healing power.

A sick boy, his patient, in whom Somnambulism had unfolded the faculty of inward vision, had led him to these conclusions. In Somnambulism Puysegur believed that he had discovered the veritable Magnetism; and in this spirit gave publicity to his own discovery.

Upon Mesmer’s return to Germany he found that these new ideas had spread throughout the land and this circumstance again greatly embittered his life. Regarding what he considered the dangers of Somnambulism and the Somnambulic treatment, Mesmer has written many papers which betray a wounded and suffering nature that his discovery of magnetism was poorly and ignorantly represented as the effected trance brought about by the Somnambulic treatment, worse still this being a deception to those who postulated it magnetism”. “A quote from Justinus Kerners Biography of Anton Mesmer.

Although it appears Mesmer moved far and often during his last years; Frauenfeld, Constance, and Meersburg, are less than twenty kilometres distance from each other. Lake Constance (Konstanz) is bordered by the three countries of Switzerland, Austria, and Germany. Nowadays a one hour train journey from Zurich airport or a four hour train journey from Geneva airport passes through Frauenfeld to Constance. Modern ferries operate 24 hours a day carrying cars and passengers from Switzerland to Germany on a 20 minute lake crossing from Constance in Switzerland to Meersburg in Germany. Because of the close proximity of the three countries surrounding Lake Constance some poorly researched historians confuse Mesmer as being Swiss, Austrian, or German. Franz Anton Mesmer was born near the shore of Lake Constance close to where the Rhine River flows out of the lake; in the village of Iznang which is in Germany.
Franz Anton Mesmer’s Doctoral Thesis
Physical-Medical Treatise on the Influence of the Planets*

* When reading the following dissertation it is important to understand that when Mesmer refers to “stars” all of the planets and also the moon were referred to as stars in his time. It is this lack of understanding that has caused some scholars of Mesmer to incorrectly refer to the dissertation thesis as “Mesmer’s astrological thesis.”

Foreword

“There are people who will frown upon me and from whom I will incur reproach when they read the title of this small thesis. They will see that a man like myself, though without importance, is undertaking, after so many efforts by the distinguished Mead, to insist on the influence of the stars, a doctrine rejected a long time ago by the action of the scientific leaders of the medical profession. Moreover, I am soliciting doctors anew in order that they study this doctrine and give it their support. In order to minimise at the outset the opposition arising in the minds of such scientists, I emphasise that I do not wish to defend the theory regarding the influence of the stars which was formerly defended by the astrologers, who boast powers to predict events to come and to know the destiny of men and at the same time swindle them of the contents of their purses thanks to a skill filled with deceit.

My purpose is to solely demonstrate that the celestial bodies act on our earth. Furthermore, that all human beings who are here act upon these celestial bodies in turn; that these move, act, and that all parts are changing, and that our human bodies are equally submitted to the same dynamic action. If I can demonstrate and prove by the following treatise that the stars have an influence upon us, it will not only deserve the attention of doctors, but will demand it. To those who concern themselves with the question of knowing from the start if I have succeeded to the goal I have proposed, I rely on the judgement of those who do not allow themselves to be carried away be preconceived ancient opinions in forming their own. I rely on those who do not yield too much to those of certain authority. I rely on those who place themselves in good faith and whose intelligence is led by love of glorious truth. For those who read the works of others with the intention of finding fault therein, who search, as one says, “for a reed in the swamp,” are deserving of blame.

Were these reflections of ours looked into by someone with more free time than myself and a natural bent for it, he might take the matter in hand so as to advance and amplify upon these ideas. The most important rational and methodical manner of treatment lies wherein such a person could demonstrate concisely the origins of the influence of the stars on disease, such would be most useful and desirable.

As far as I myself am concerned, I will work, by means of experiment and continuous observations, within the measure of my meagre forces, to advance this discipline and know it more fully so that all of medical science can profit from it! If my attempt does not, in the long run, produce all that it promises, at least honourable and well instructed men shall praise the good will which I have demonstrated. In case God would favour my efforts, I would then have in front of me, drawn from my work, a truly immense and inestimable profit.”
On the Influence of the Planets

Throughout the ages, mortals, conforming to the teaching of their ongoing observations, have held the influence of the planets in great esteem. The dominant role of the planets was revealed in agriculture, navigation, and medicine more so than in other disciplines. This prevailed up to the time when astrologers appeared who began to corrupt and deform this truth in a very unbecoming manner by their arrogant and innumerable lies.

Recent philosophers, commendably occupied with extirpating the prejudice of the ancients, ended up by eradicating the superstitions of the astrologers so completely to the last trace that the latter have little more in the way of support than do demented old women who arise from rabble and are of foul character.

During this epoch the great Newton arose. He searched the true laws of nature with the aid of geometry, forced to our consciousness the structure of the world itself, and established the laws of attraction, by which the machinery of the universe is governed. Although traces of the understanding of attraction are met with among the most distinguished men of almost all ages, one can nevertheless grant Newton the greatest praise. He clarified to the highest degree the reciprocal attraction of all things. He destroyed by innumerable experiments and observations, the last doubts of the scholars of the same rank as himself because he fortunately applied the same law of attraction to the exploration of celestial phenomena. Let us see to what extent this system can be accommodated to our views, and be made to conform to reason and experiment.

All bodies are mutually attractive or extend towards one another by means of a force which goes from individual particles of matter to all other individual particles. The force by which one body has an effect on the others is accomplished by the union of the forces of the particles which compose the body. Consequently, this force increases in the same proportion as would take place with an increase in the quantity of matter, and it is constantly present in all particles and never varies quantitatively when the bodies do not vary in distance. But when the distance increases, the force decreases exactly to an extent which is square to the increased distance. One calls this reciprocal action GRAVITY and ATTRACTION, and one considers it as a universal and infallible law of nature which is expressed in this triple proposition: (1) All matter is mutually attractive. (2) This attraction is proportional to the quantity of matter. (3) At varying distances, it changes in proportion to the square of the distance. It is necessary to prove by observation of nature’s phenomena that this gravity assumes a role in our planetary system.

The planets, once projected at varying distances proportional to the mass and the impetus of the initial projection (impetus primae projectionis), turn around a centre of gravity common to all the bodies which compose the system; that centre of gravity is little removed from the sun itself, because of the enormous magnitude of the sun which greatly surpasses that of other celestial bodies. In their movements, they trace elliptical lines. The orbits of all the principle planets are thus disposed so that one of the two foci coincides with the centre of the sun; because of this placement it results that the planet, in all its revolutions, sometimes approaches, sometimes moves away from the sun. The distance to the centre of the figure of ellipse varies and depends on the swiftness and direction of the initial projection; the eccentricity is greatest with the farthest planets, and least with those near the sun. A planet does not travel with equal swiftness in all parts of its orbit; it moves more rapidly as it is least removed from the sun. The times during which various arcs are of an orbit are crossed are related by the same quotient as are the areas determined by the lines which stretch (from the points limiting each arc) towards the centre of the sun; and the squares of the times of their periodic orbits present between them the same proportions as do the cubes of their maximum diameters. These laws were discovered for the first time by the very wise Kepler and were confirmed by observations of later astronomers. Mathematicians demonstrated that these phenomena of movement belong to all bodies which move around another body, and that these are held in their orbit by the force which
has its seat in the focus (of the eclipse). These truths are so clear for the mathematicians that they can be deduced reciprocally, one from the other. In each body which moves in a curve, it is necessary to consider two forces which continually act on the body: by one of them the body is bought backward following a tangent, and by the other it is pushed towards a central point; the curvilinear movement results from these forces acting simultaneously.

Thus is the force determined by which the planets are brought towards the sun, but since there is always a similar and opposing reaction to the action, it is necessary that the sun be equally drawn by the planets, and this according to the rapport which exists between their masses and that of the sun; consequently, the sun is subjected to a quasi antagonist force and it is agitated by a small movement while the planets trace their orbits. Now this agitation of the sun has been confirmed by observation.

Since the secondary planets (satellites) turn around the sun with common movement and at the same time as do the primary planets, it is evident that the same force by which the latter are brought towards the sun also attracts the former towards the sun. The irregularities in the trajectories of the satellites - very perceptible irregularities in the case of the moon – confirm this.

The mutual influence of the primary planets is especially established by the fact that they disturb one another considerably in their journey. Astronomers have observed that Saturn deviates somewhat from its path when the planet approaches, which is the largest of the planets; therefore the mutual attraction between Jupiter and Saturn has been established by direct observation. The precise details of the perturbations caused by the above cited laws of attraction can, in fact, be deduced by long and laborious calculation. By the action of Jupiter upon Saturn, its movement of approach towards the sun increases by 1/222. By the action of Saturn on Jupiter, its gravitation towards the sun diminishes by 1/12,512 when this star (Jupiter) maximally approaches Mars. Besides, it follows from the mutual action of the planets that their elliptic trajectories are modified very slowly and that their axes orient themselves successively towards changing directions; these axes would be immobile if the planets were drawn solely towards the sun. Saturn, according to the observations of Flamstead, disturbs the movement of Jupiter's satellites in drawing them a little towards itself; this fact proves that these secondary bodies gravitate towards Saturn and that Saturn gravitates towards them.

It is clearly obvious, from what has been related so far, that the seventeen bodies which compose the planetary system are drawn to each other mutually. It is also known, following certain observations that the movements of the comets depend upon the law of gravitation. Hence, it is gravitation which diverts them from a certain trajectory. However, the curvature of the path depends on the same gravitation. From this it follows that the body whose movement is determined by this gravitation traces an ellipse, a parabola, or a hyperbola, at the focus of which is found in the sun.

Computations concerning the moon lie outside the scope of this work, but I believe it is necessary to expound briefly upon the phenomena of mutual gravitation which occur between the earth and the moon, and the sun. By this means we shall comprehend more easily the overall efficacy of these gravitational forces in order to achieve a more precise comprehension of their influences. Moreover, since the irregularities to which the moon is subjected are entirely like those which disturb other planets and have the same cause, it is licit to apply all things said of the moon to the planets.
The moon moves around the earth in an ellipse, one of the foci of which is occupied by the centre of the earth. The average (median) distance from the centre of the earth to the moon is 60 ½ earth radii. The time of its revolution around the earth is approximately 27 days, 7 hours, and 43 minutes, and in exactly the same period it turns one time around its own axis. The eccentricity of the orbit undergoes several changes in successive revolutions; it increases when the moon is in conjunction or opposition with the sun (syzygy), and diminishes when it is in quadrature (90 degrees away from the sun); the eccentricity is at its maximum when the straight line determined by the apsides is in syzygy. The perturbing force in syzygy is actually two times greater than that which is manifested in quadrature; the average eccentricity is 3 1/3 earth radii.

The plane of the earth forms an angle of about 5 degrees with the plane of the ecliptic. But this inclination is not constant; when the nodes come to find themselves in syzygy, the inclination is the smallest, and in quadrature it is the greatest. Moreover, in the course of movement of the moon around the earth, the line determined by the apsides and that determined by the nodes are not displayed in a similar manner, but the former is displaced in an anterograde direction, the latter in a retrograde direction; the first makes a revolution in almost nine years, and the second in approximately nineteen years. All the irregularities in the movement of the moon which we have verified are a little greater in conjunction than in opposition.

Consequently, when the movement of the moon is considered in its entirety, one can verify that the gravitation of the moon towards the earth diminishes at the approaching of the sun. When the moon is less attracted by the earth, it withdraws more from it (the earth) than it would withdraw if such a decrease of gravitation were not taking place; consequently, the distance of the moon and also the time of its revolution increase in this case, and this time is maximum, all other things being equal, when the distance between the moon and the earth is at its maximum, the earth turning in its perihelion, that is to say closest to the sun.

The earth and all the bodies at its surface gravitate towards the moon. By this force the earth is retained, in its orbit, around the centre of gravity which it has in common with the moon. Consequently, the aqueous particles located on this surface, which strain to be displaced towards the centre of the earth or towards a point in the vicinity of this centre, are also attracted towards the moon and lose part of their weight. Hence, adhering less to the rest of the earth’s mass, the aqueous particles are, by force of this attraction, drawn away from the centre of the earth and raised towards the moon to re-establish an equilibrium with the remaining masses.

Thus the water acquires, thanks to the lunar action, the shape of an oval spheroid in revolution around a great axis which, if it were prolonged, would pass through the moon. It is thus clear that the water which is raised more in the meridian which intersects (the aforesaid axis) and in the opposite meridian than in the intermediate places. Because of the movement (of the earth) around its axis, all places cross the lunar meridian and the opposite meridian each lunar day, meaning that they twice cross the zones where the water is raised by the action of the moon, and twice those (places) where, by the same action, it (the water) is lowered, and thus the sea is everywhere raised and lowered two times each lunar day.

Because of these facts, demonstrated in regard to the relations between the earth and the moon, one can infer the existence of analogous facts concerning the relations between the earth and the sun; similarly the sea is raised and lowered two times each natural day. This agitation is much less strong, because of the immense distance, than that which depends on the moon, but it is subject to the same laws, and the sea is raised conjointly ten feet by the action of the moon and two feet by the sun. The movements caused by the sun and the moon are not distinct but mingled, and it is because of this action that the moon changes so much. This variation changes each day because of the inequality of
between the natural day and the lunar day. The lunar day exceeds the natural day by 51 minutes.

In **syzygy** the water is raised by the convergent actions of the two luminaries; it is, consequently, more elevated. In **quadrature**, the sea rises less since the water, when it is elevated by the action of the moon, is lowered in the same place by the sun, and vice versa. Therefore, while the moon goes from **syzygy** to **quadrature**, the daily elevations of water decrease, day by day; but they increase during the movement of the moon from **quadrature** to **syzygy**. In the new moon, other things being equal, the displacements are greater than in the full moon.

If we examine the luminaries as they leave the plane of the equator, we see that the movement (of water) diminishes; and that the minimum movement concurs with the greatest declination of the luminaries. This fact becomes evident if we envision the case where these would be at the poles; then the axis from the shape of the spheroid would coincide with the earth’s axis, and all parallel sections up to the equator would be perpendicular in comparison with the access of the spheroid and, consequently, circular. When this occurs, the water in each latitudinal circle has the same elevation everywhere, provided that this water is not being subjected to variations by the movement of the earth in these particular places. If the luminaries withdraw from the pole, we see easily that the agitation (of water) progressively increases, until it is at the maximum, the spheroid having turned around on its axis in a perpendicular which finds itself then in the plane of the equator.

It is clear why in **syzygy**, near the **equinoxes**; one observes the greatest tides when the two luminaries approach the equator, where they are (during the **equinox**). The actions of the moon and the sun are greater as their bodies are less distant from the earth. Hence, when the sun is at a relatively small distance, which occurs when the sun exists in the signs of the south, one often observes a maximum elevation of both equinoctial tides, namely before the Spring equinox and after the Fall **equinox**. This fact, however, does not hold true every year, because a variation can be caused by the position of the lunar orbit and by the interval between the **syzygy** and the **equinox**.

Since these facts are established, one can more easily apply this more general doctrine to the atmosphere. Having determined the proportion of air to water, which is about 1 to 1000, we have learned that at the time of the high tide, the atmosphere becomes about 10 or 12 times higher. All the phenomena converge to prove that the ebb and flow take place in the air in the same manner as in water. It is an established observation, that the atmosphere is maximally activated during the equinoxes of Spring and Autumn. We also know that the air, whereas it is calm at any hour, is often more or less agitated by the force of the winds at noon and midnight. It is evident that the same effect occurs when the tide rises to its maximum; this happens when the moon is situated at its zenith or at the opposite place. Everybody notices that the new and full moons produce storms, and, at that time, winds suddenly appear. Such are the effects, which have no other cause than the gravitation of the moon and the sun on the earth; and, since this gravitation is not, as we have said, very different from the force which governs the relations between all other heavenly bodies, one can suppose that the action of the stars on the earth is no less important.

In every era, it has been stated that the most momentous events of nature occur near the equinoxes; they are the most heightened in intensity when new or full moons, eclipses, and conjunctions of planets or comets coincide with the equinoxes. These phenomena have caused great revolutions and have stirred up emotions on the earth. Pliny pointed out the occurrence of annual earthquakes in the Spring and Autumn, and recent scientists have confirmed the reality of this phenomena with completely reliable observations. The famous volcano Ternate erupts regularly in the months of April and September.
Baglivi observed the greatest earthquakes of his time precisely at the moment of the most remarkable conjunctions of the planets. The fury of typhoons at the time of the full and new moons terrifies sailors. A considerable number of observations show that the sudden appearances of comets announce terrible phenomena of nature; violent eruptions of volcanoes, disastrous earthquakes, floods, plagues.

When we realise that all of these things occur in this manner, it becomes more evident that there is almost no change which happens in the heavenly bodies without its influencing the fluids and solids of our earth in agreement. Then, who would deny that the animal machine would, in these circumstances, be agitated to a certain degree by the same causes? The animal is a part of the earth and is composed of fluids and solids, and when the proportion and equilibrium of these fluids and solids are modified to a certain degree, very perceptible effects will occur from this.

Physico-chemical variations of air, the element in which we live, disturb the harmony of the physical body. Who does not know that the air – hot, cold, dry, and humid, in motion, stagnant, rendered foul by various particles – affects all living beings? If the moon can make us be engulfed by an atmosphere raised ten times higher, if it can bring together, from diverse regions, vapours which are scattered over all the horizon and heap them on our necks, if it can then be the cause of winds, heat, cold, clouds, fog, storms, who, I ask, does not clearly see that this star dominates us?

Who would not believe that the effects of aerial turbulence depend directly upon changes in air pressure? For a great massive column of air rises up and is held by the moons attraction; it is held up so that it is hindered from extending any of its effected mass into adjacent areas. Also, according to the observations of Ramazzini, the barometer does not respond to the elevation of the atmosphere. (But it appears possible) that it (the elevation of the atmosphere) has at times produced the aforementioned atmospheric phenomena (winds, heat, etc). This influence of the moon is so evident that it would seem superfluous to illustrate it any further.

There is, in addition, another kind of which acts upon the animal body, an influence which does not seem to depend upon these usual properties of the atmosphere, but rather depends directly on that force which, being prevalent in the vast spaces of the skies, affects the most interior portions of each material body, retains the enormous spheres in their orbits and deviates and disturbs them from their straight line movement. There is a force which is the cause of universal gravitation and which is, very probably, the foundation of all corporal properties; a force which actually strains, relaxes, and agitates the cohesion, elasticity, irritability, magnetism, and electricity in the smallest fluid and solid particles of our machine, a force which can, in this report, be called ANIMAL GRAVITY. Who would not that the most important changes of states are produced in our body by means of substances which, because of their subtlety, we hesitate to “matter”?

Let us take, for example, for example luminous matter; everyone knows it is likely to produce changes in the animal body. In the animal machine, the part of the nervous system which is exposed to the emanating impressions of luminous matter is small, but it is sufficient to move the entire body and produce astonishing changes in the mind and the body. We know that modification of the air which solely affects the nerves belonging to the hearing organ, but is capable of disturbing the animal’s entire constitution; of savory and odoriferous matter we could say the same thing. If, in these circumstances, we affirm the certainty of the existence of a certain power which, being instilled into all parts of the body, affects simultaneously the entire nervous system, the sensorium, and even the nervous fluid, we wonder who could be surprised by the eventuality of a generalised disorder of the entire organism, provoked by all these alterations?

When we have taken all of these things into consideration, the paradox will seem less if we assert that a tide takes place also in the human body, thanks to the same forces which cause the expansion of the sea and also the atmosphere, and that our humours are
agitated in diverse ways in their ducts (vessels), being perturbed, raised and carries more copiously towards the head. In plants, there is a very obvious ascension of the sap at the time of the full moon.

These things coincide with what we have been taught by various cases of sickness. The symptoms of epileptics tend to reappear at the new moon and especially at the full moon, resulting in their being called lunatics (lunaticus) here and there. Galien says, “the moon governs the cycles of epileptics.” Some sailors at St Thomas Hospital in London have marked the new and full moons by their epileptic attacks.

A young girl, according to Bartholin, had a face which suffered from acne which changed with various phases of the moon. A curious case published by Kerking is worth mentioning; that of a French woman endowed with a very pretty fat-cheeked face during the full moon, but whose eyes, nose, and mouth would turn to one side during the decreasing of the moon. She was then turned so ugly that she could not go out into the world until the full moon returned and she regained the beauty of her face.

As noted by Pitcairn, hysterical and hypochondriac sicknesses have been shown many times to have cycles. Doctors have more than once observed cyclic vertigo, paralysis, and tremor. Piso also reported some cases of this kind.

Even a common person knows that the madness of maniacs return in accordance with the revolution of the moon. The ancients affirmed that women's menstrual cycles are started by the moon, and these purgation’s recur without doubt in all women in accordance with the same law if they are not interfaced with by various causes which, in most cases, oppose the forces of this star, such as nourishment, lifestyle, and the infinite differences of temperament, and indefinable forces and influences; it happens that in the regions closest to the equator, where the lunar action is the most powerful, as we have indicated above, the menstrual cycle flows more abundantly, but it diminishes gradually as one approaches the poles.

Periodic haemorrhages in men happen from the same cause (the lunar cycle); Musgrove noted the case of a young man who had bleeding spurts for a year and a half, and this disorder always reappeared at the new moon; he also reported the case of a young man whose left thumb always bled at the full moon.

A certain Irish innkeeper suffered from haemorrhages from the age of 43 until the age of 55, losing nearly four Roman pounds (libra) from his right thumb. The haemorrhages returned almost every month; this disorder had begun at the full moon flowing the equinox of spring.

The unshaken experiments of Sanctorious must not be passed over silently: he discovered that the bodies of men, healthy and nourished in accordance with a moderate diet, increase in weight during the month, gaining one or two pounds; but towards the end of the month, they return to their customary weight in the same way as do women after a (menstrual) attack, however secreting urine (instead of blood) a little more copiously or erratically. Certain ulcers evolve in accordance with the law of the tide of moods: Bagvili mentions a certain man afflicted with a fistula of the colon which usually ejected an enormous quantity of excrement while the moon increased, but the quantity decreased regularly when the moon decreased; the famous Mead adds to this the history of an adolescent who had contracted an ulcer from venereal disease which exuded ichor at all full moons; the flow disappeared at the end of a week, but at the next full moon it always began spontaneously.

Tulp noticed that renal pains increase and decrease during lunar intervals. Van Helmont and Ployer observed that difficulties of respiration often have a monthly progressive rhythm. Galien attributed the periodic nature of acute sicknesses to the power of the
moon, by virtue of which the sick person is often cured on the seventh or fourteenth or the twenty first day.

The epidemic conditions which have occurred over the years should also enter into our discussion. Epidemics, according to the observations of the ingenious Sydenham, do not have the same causes as do other fevers; he observed years which resembled one another as to the temperateness of the air, but each one was infested by a multitude of very different sicknesses, and vice versa. There exists various conditions which owe their birth neither to heat nor cold, neither to dryness or humidity: they depend rather upon some secret and inexplicable alteration occurring in the entrails of the earth, emanating substances from which the atmosphere is contaminated and which predispose the human body to one sickness or to another, there 9in the body) to be started (the sickness); this lasts as long as the condition mentioned above dominates, which, after a period of a few years, ends by disappearing and by making room for another.

These things are illustrated further by a work of the famous Ramazzini on petechial fever, which is truly a pestilential disease which raged in the city and province of Modene. “It was worthy to observe,” he said, “that this fever raged after the full moon and even more so during the dark quarter, but at the new moon it decreased; my observation was consistent with those of other professors and contributed much to the diagnosis and treatment of this fever.” Elsewhere he said: “The events of the 21st of January, 1693, were remarkable; during a lunar eclipse most of the sick people died, moreover, there were some sick that died suddenly at the same time as there was the greatest disturbance of the moon.”

The following case of Bellonius is very characteristic. He said: “While certain doctors from Paris determined the health of a woman of rank, an eclipse of the sun began. They left the sick woman to see the sky, since they weren’t expecting anything bad. But someone called them back to her, for she had fainted just at the moment that the sun was eclipsed. And all were surprised that she only regained consciousness when the light had regained its luminosity.” It is no less worthy to recall that Bacon de Verulam fainted each time that the moon was eclipsed, and that he did not regain consciousness until the luminosity of the star was re-established.

We have discovered that the plague (a sickness the nature and development of which was diligently described by Diemerbroek when it (the plague) raged at Nimegue in 1636) is influenced by the lunar force; he (Diemerbroek) reported that the plague is always worsened at the time of the new and full moon and that nearly all the sick died.

There they are – the examples which we have been able to extract from the writings of past authors; examples which argue in favour of the power of the moon and the sun on men. These examples would have been truly innumerable had not doctors long since rejected, by virtue of too hasty reasoning, this truth which surpasses importance (if we envision it with justice) many other accredited truths like certain ones found in physics and in medicine. Although we could not illustrate the action of the planets with clinical cases, at the least one may infer that the changes in our bodies are not less significant. To those capable of understanding the highest degree of reasoning, one can say that the actions of the moon, earth, and the sun are analogous to those actions of other bodies through absolutely the same agencies, and change by means of the same activities.
One must not think that the influence of the stars on us only has to do with disease. The harmony established between the astral plane and the human plane ought to be admired as much as the ineffable effect of UNIVERSAL GRAVITATION by which our bodies are harmonised, not in a uniform and monotonous manner, but as with musical instruments furnished with several strings, the exact tone resonates which is in unison with a given tone. Likewise, human bodies react to stellar configurations with which they are joined by a given harmony. This reaction is also determined with consideration given to the sex, age, temperament, and various other characteristics, etc.

Thus, with the facts constituted as they are, how few will be those doctors who will not know with unshakable firmness, from the facts themselves, that the influence of the planets must not be held to be a light matter in medicine. Moreover, he who neglects this information acts ignorantly and thoughtlessly! How many things are there in medicine which are much less important and which doctors examine and weigh with the greatest assiduity? But if some vague suspicion were to touch the minds of doctors that there be some things in nature which could disturb and change the uniform economy of the human body and furnish either a cause or a remedy to many a sickness, that would suffice to make them turn their eyes and their minds towards our doctrine in order that they not omit anything which would further their understanding of the cause.

This supposition is neither far-fetched nor badly founded, but it is almost demonstrated, in my opinion, that human bodies are indeed shaken by celestial bodies and their movements. Since human bodies are subjugated to their diverse influences, it would be more useful and judicious if doctors would occupy themselves more diligently with research on the influence of the stars. Consequently, I think that the man who could prove to be an eager recruit by his sagacity, erudition and patience, could apply his mind seriously with a view to elucidate this domain more fully; he would bring much light to the medical discipline and would win the greatest of favour of doctors.

**Glossary:**

**Anterograde** – having a direction similar to that of the general planetary course; directed from east to west.

**Apsides** – pl. Of apsis – in an orbit, the point at which the distance of the body from the centre of attraction is either greatest (the higher apsis) or at least (the lower apsis).

**Conjunction** – the meeting or passing of two or more celestial bodies in the same degree of the zodiac.

**Eccentricity** – deviation from the centre or the line of a circle.

**Ecliptic** – that great circle of the celestial sphere which is the apparent path of the sun; or of the earth as seen from the sun; the plane of the earth's orbit extended to meet the celestial sphere, and inclined to the celestial equator at an angle of about 23 degrees 27’.

**Equinox** – either of the two points where the celestial equator intersects the ecliptic; the time when the sun's centre crosses the equator and day and night are everywhere at the same time.

**Fistula** – a pathologic sinus or abnormal passage leading from an abscess, cavity or a hollow organ to the surface, or from one abscess, cavity, or organ, to another.

**Humor** – a liquid, fluid of any kind. For example; rain, dew, the ocean, milk, wine, tears, saliva, urine.

**Ichor** – a thin watery substance discharged from an ulcer or an unhealthy wound.

**Libra** – a unit of weight or liquid measure.

**Lunaticus** – a crazy person: lunatic. Also an epileptic or one who is moon struck.

**Node** – either of the two points where the orbit of a planet intersects the ecliptic, or where the orbit of a satellite intersects the plane of the orbit of its primary.

**Opposition** – the situation of a celestial body with respect to another, when differing from it in longitude by 180 degrees.

**Petechial fever** – (1) purpure hemorrhagica: land scurvy, a disease characterised by black blue spots, haemorrhages, of the mucous membranes, and prostration of a
thyphoidal nature; it last from a few weeks to several months, and may terminate fatally. (2) Cerebrospinal fever; spotted fever; epidemic cerebrospinal meningitis; an acute infectious disease caused by meningococcus, marked by inflammation of the meninges of the brain and spinal cord. 

**Quadrature** – either of two points on an orbit in a middle position between the syzygies; the two points in an orbit when a celestial body in 90 degrees distant from a second celestial body. 

**Renal** – relating to the kidney or kidneys. 

**Retrograde** – having a direction contrary to that of the general planetary course; directed from east to west (motion is a “backward” direction). 

**Roman Pound** – see Libra. 

**Syzygy** – the point of an orbit, as of the moon, at which the planet is in conjunction or opposition.
Propositions Concerning Animal Magnetism
by Anton Mesmer; 1779

The 27 Propositions of Magnetism

1. A responsive influence exists between the heavenly bodies, the earth, and animated bodies.

2. A fluid universally diffused, so continuous as not to admit of a vacuum, incomparably subtle, and naturally susceptible of receiving, propagating, and communicating all motor disturbances, is the means of this influence.

3. This reciprocal action is subject to mechanical laws, with which we are not as yet acquainted.

4. Alternative effects result from this action, which may be considered to be a flux and reflux.

5. This reflux is more or less general, more or less special, and more or less compound, according to the nature of the causes, which determine it.

6. It is by this action, the most universal which occurs in nature, that the exercise of active relations takes place between the heavenly bodies, the earth, and its constituent parts.

7. The properties of matter and of organic substance depend on this action.

8. The animal body experiences the alternative effects of this agent, and is directly affected by its insinuation into the substance of the nerves.

9. Properties are displayed, analogous to those of the magnet, particularly in the human body, in which diverse and opposite poles are likewise to be distinguished, and these may be communicated, changed, destroyed, and reinforced. Even the phenomenon of declination may be observed.

10. This property of the human body, which renders it susceptible of the influence of heavenly bodies, and of the reciprocal action of those that environ it, manifests its analogy with the magnet, and this has decided me to adopt the term of animal magnetism.

11. The action and virtue of animal magnetism, thus characterized, may be communicated to other animate or inanimate bodies. Both of these classes of bodies, however, vary in their susceptibility.

12. Experiments show that there is a diffusion of matter, subtle enough to penetrate all bodies without any considerable loss of energy.

13. This action and virtue may be strengthened and diffused by such bodies.


15. It is, like light, increased and reflected by mirrors.

16. It is communicated, propagated, and increased by sound.

17. This magnetic virtue may be accumulated, concentrated, and transported.

18. I have said that animated bodies are not all equally susceptible; in a few instances they have such an opposite property that their presence is enough to destroy all the effects of magnetism upon other bodies.

19. This opposite virtue likewise penetrates all bodies: it also may be communicated, propagated, accumulated, concentrated, and transported, reflected by mirrors, and propagated by sound. This does not merely constitute a negative, but a positive opposite virtue.

20. The magnet, whether natural or artificial, is like other bodies susceptible of animal magnetism, and even of the opposite virtue: in neither case does its action on fire and the needle of a compass suffer any change, and this shows that the principle of animal (animating) magnetism essentially differs from that of mineral magnetism.
21. This system sheds new light upon the nature of fire and of light, as well as on the theory of attraction, of flux and reflux, of the magnet and of electricity.

22. It teaches us that the magnet and artificial electricity have, with respect to diseases, properties common to a host of other agents presented to us by nature, and that if the use of these has been attended by some useful results; they are due to animal magnetism.

23. These facts show, in accordance with the practical rules I am about to establish, that this principle will cure nervous diseases directly, and other diseases indirectly.

24. By its aid the physician is enlightened as to the use of medicine, and may render its action more perfect, and can provoke and direct salutary crises, so as to completely control them.

25. In communicating my method, I shall, by a new theory of matter, demonstrate the universal utility of the principle I seek to establish.

26. Possessed of this knowledge, the physician may judge with certainty of the origin, nature, and progress of diseases, however complicated they may be; he may hinder their development and accomplish their cure without exposing the patient to dangerous and troublesome consequences, irrespective of age, temperament, and sex. Even women in a state of pregnancy, and during parturition, may reap the same advantage.

27. This doctrine will finally enable the physician to decide upon the health of every individual, and of the presence of the diseases to which he may be exposed. In this way the art of healing may be brought to absolute perfection.

Declination: The needle of a compass point toward the north magnetic pole declining slightly downward through the bulge of the round earth.

Virtue: The word here means "special power" or "power for good."

Subtle matter: There are, in fact, particles rather like this called neutrinos. Furthermore, radiation is used to treat cancer. Some people, therefore, are still impressed by claims that some sort of "universal" rays or particles can be "accumulated" to produce curative effects such as Wilhelm Reich's "Orgone energy" http://www.orgonomicscience.org

Crisis: Medical practitioners believed that some diseases rose to a crisis point after which "the fever broke" and the patients recovered, unless the crisis killed them. Under some conditions, it was thought safest to bring on the crisis early.

Women: The authorities in Paris had complaints that many young single women attended Mesmer's clinic. It was generally suspected there was some sort of sexual attraction in what went on there. The Government investigation was probably more motivated by moral concerns than by any appetite for scientific accuracy.
Mesmer passed from this world on the 5th of March 1815, James Braid on the 25th of March 1860, and Milton Erickson on the 25th of March 1980.

* From the book Anton Mesmer by D. M. Walmsley
Justinus Andreas Christian Kerner (1786-1862)

In 1856 Justinus Kerner wrote the biography of "Franz Anton Mesmer aus Schwaben, Entdecker des thierischen Magnetismus." (Franz Anton Mesmer from Swabia, Discoverer of the Animal Magnetism).

Justinus Kerner was a noted German poet and physician, born on September 18, 1786, at Ludwigsburg, Württemberg. Kerner studied medicine at Tübingen and practiced as a physician at Wildbad. In addition to books of poetry, he was the author of a remarkable record of supernormal phenomena and experiments in animal magnetism therapeutics: Die Seherin von Prevorst, Eröffnungen über das innere Leben des Menschen und über das Hereinragen einer Geisterwelt in die Unsere (1845). It is the story of Frederica Hauffe, "The Seeress of Prevorst," who arrived in Weinsberg in November 1826 and became Kerner's patient.

Hauffe was the picture of death; she exhibited many frightful symptoms, and fell into trance every evening at seven o'clock and often recited methods of curing for her condition. For a while Kerner ignored her somnambulant condition and declared that he was not going to take any notice of what she said in her sleep, and so began treating her by homeopathic remedies.

The medicine was ineffective, and Hauffe was fast approaching death. In trance she prescribed for herself a gentle course of animal magnetism. Kerner at first wanted nothing to do with the treatment, but he finally became convinced of it after Hauffe was cured by her own somnambulistic suggestions. Kerner then befriended Mesmer and began to study magnetism in earnest. His book, published in 1829, passed through three enlarged editions (1832, 1838, and 1846). Translated by Catherine Crowe, it was published in English in 1845 under the title; The Seeress of Prevorst; or, Openings-up into the Inner Life of Man, and the merging of a Spirit World into the World of Matter. In Germany the book caused a great sensation. Among those who inquired into the case of the Seeress of Prevorst were Kant, Schubert, Eschenmayer, Görres, Werner, and David Strauss.

*An extract from Justinus Kerner's book; “Franz Anton Mesmer; Discoverer of Animal Magnetism.”
1856

After Mesmer's persecution regarding the affair of Middle Paradise, he no longer regarded Vienna as his home. In Munich the public mind appeared to be more favourably inclined for the reception of his discovery. Summoned thither, he exhibited his curative powers upon the sick with the best results; various of these sick people having in vain made use of other modes of healing, and one of them being a member of the Academy of Sciences. Thus his doctrine met with a general recognition, and he was himself received as a member of the Academy of Sciences.

In order to strengthen his own health and also to spread a wider knowledge of his discovery, in 1778 he made a journey through Switzerland and France to Paris. Encouraged by believers in his doctrine, and invited by Le Hoi, the then director of the Academy of Sciences at Paris he laid his discovery in writing before that scientific body. The Academy held an especial sitting for the consideration of Mesmer's doctrine, at which Mesmer was present, quietly keeping in the background.
Then was enacted a scene which merited to have been immortalised by the pencil of a Hogarth. There arose uproar amidst the wise assembly, whose learning was not equal to the comprehension of Mesmer's discovery, and they declared it, in spite of whatever might be urged in its favour, to be the 'product of an excited imagination, as the learned academicians have equally pronounced previously and subsequently many more other natural truths.

It must now be remembered that the same Academy rejected Franklin's discovery of the lightning-conductor, and Jenner's discovery of the cow-pox. It is also known that when the first model of a steam vessel was presented to the Emperor Napoleon, and he desired the Academy to examine and test this discovery, and pronounce a favourable opinion upon it, the wisdom of the academicians declared it to be an entirely untenable invention. Napoleon is known to have exclaimed at a later period, "How foolish was I, not to have relied upon my own simple understanding, rather than upon the wisdom of the Academy!"

We must pass over Mesmer's vain endeavours to bring his discovery under the favourable consideration of the Parisian Medical Society, as well as his repeated attempts with the Academy, and his contests and enmity with that body. Nevertheless, it must not be forgotten that in Lafayette, and through him in Washington, he possessed friends and believers. Subsequent offers from the government, which appear to have favoured Mesmer's views, he did not accept, as they appeared to him calculated — owing to the conditions attached to them — to shield his discovery from false judgment.

Believers in the truth of Mesmer's views induced his most zealous friend, Bergasse, to issue an appeal with reference to Mesmer's discovery, in the French Provinces. A copy of the appeal was found amongst Mesmer's papers, and in it Bergasse observes, that he was compelled to put it forth, in order to protect a shamefully persecuted man from the fate prepared for him by the blind hatred of his enemies." Bergasse called upon the believers in the discovery to form societies for the practical carrying out of the mesmeric theory. This scheme was put into execution; and with such result, that, in the French Provinces, more than half-a-million of francs were subscribed. This money was applied by Mesmer to the establishment of places for magnetic healing.

The sick people, whose confidence led them into these establishments, received until their recovery all attention gratis. The intention of the establishment of these schools was, that the managers of them, who had been instructed by Mesmer himself, should there exercise their power, and be enabled to watch its effects, and preserve it from extraneous influences of the Parisian Medical Society. About twenty of such schools were soon established in the most important French towns. They termed themselves the Society of Harmony.

But all this was carried out amidst the most horrible out-cries and enmity of the medical schools of the metropolis, which expelled any of their members who had dared to express themselves in any degree favourable to Mesmer's doctrine. Nevertheless, Mesmer was recompensed by the fact that during ten years he was enabled to work for the benefit of the suffering, and frequently with the most splendid success. Soon, however, France was occupied with other interests. In that great political change which befell France, Mesmer beheld his scarcely germinating institutions destroyed. His dearest friends and followers were some of them outlawed, whilst others fell beneath the axe of the guillotine; and Mesmer himself was forced, in order to avoid a similar fate, to flee from Paris. He fled, at first; it appears to the frontier of Switzerland. To Paris, however, he again returned when the first storm had passed over, probably led thither for the purpose of gathering together the wreck of his considerable fortune.
It is doubtful whether somnambulism was really known to Mesmer. The accidental discovery of that stage is attributed to one of his disciples, the Marquis de Puysegur. It was while in the act of mesmerising a peasant, a young man of twenty-three, who after only a few passes fell into a profound sleep, unaccompanied by any of the other phenomena of mesmerism. In this state the man was observed to speak to himself in an audible tone, relating his own affairs as if in conversation with another person. The mesmeriser, it is said, had such influence over him that he made him change his conversation at will, and perform the most extraordinary feats by word of command or by simply touching his body. This occurred in 1784, and the reputation of the Marquis was established in the province where he was residing, and it soon spread all over the country.

The Marquis de Puysegur revolutionized the application of mesmerism by first causing the subjects to sleep by means of gentle manipulation, instead of surrounding them with mysticism in dimly lighted apartments filled with sweet odors, and the strains of soft and mysterious music, as was the practice of Mesmer. The kindly Marquis—an excellent man with a benevolent heart that led him to devote his time, his talents, his fortune, to the relief of suffering humanity—conceived an idea of quite charming simplicity, which has been ridiculed ever since. This was to magnetise a big tree, so that people might sit under its shade and wait comfortably to be cured. Yet he developed in his subjects the power of clairvoyance, and demonstrated it in a number of ways, and he caused them to obey mental orders as readily as if the orders were spoken.

Through Puysegur’s investigations, Animal Magnetism assumed a new phase during the time of Mesmer’s sojourn in France. Puysegur resided at Strasburg, from whence his doctrine spread itself throughout Germany. Puysegur was the first experimenter who, quitting the simple magnetic influence upon the patient, assumed that Somnambulism and its power of inward contemplation alone, constitutes its healing power. A sick boy, his patient, in whom Somnambulism had unfolded the faculty of inward vision, had led him to these conclusions. In Somnambulism Puysegur believed that he had discovered the veritable Magnetism; and in this spirit gave publicity to his own discovery. The followers of Puysegur soon became very numerous. They published new works in which they developed the doctrine supported by numerous facts. The phenomena of somnambulism added to the attractions of magnetism. If the enthusiasm with which it was received was less vivid on this second appearance of magnetism, it was however, more lasting.

Upon Mesmer’s return to Germany he found that these new ideas had spread throughout the land and this circumstance again greatly embittered his life. Regarding what he considered the dangers of Somnambulism and the somnambulic treatment, Mesmer has written many papers which betray a wounded and suffering nature that his discovery of magnetism was poorly and ignorantly represented as the effected trance brought about by the somnambulic treatment, worse still this being a deception to those who postulated it magnetism.

Affecting is it thus to observe two great discoverers and benefactors of the human race, through the narrowness of vision inherent in humanity, or through its unconquered egotism, thus blinded to the relative importance of the truth of each other's system, and through this pitiable blindness retarding the calm development of universal truth, of which each possessed a portion, and of which each believed himself the devoted servant. From Strasburg, where Puysegur’s sect had arrived, Mesmer’s doctrine was brought to Bremen. Lavater, giving his allegiance to Puysegur’s system, had received Magnetism on the altogether mystical and religious side. Certain friends and imitators of his having exaggerated his views, the whole subject was exposed to the ridicule of the incredulous and of the utterly ignorant; and thus the very wildest ideas were entertained by the public of Magnetism and Magnetisers.
Lavater, upon his appearance at Bremen, was greeted in the papers by would-be witty comic songs of a most disgusting and silly nature. That Lavater's own views regarding Magnetism, were clear, philosophical, and calm, various passages in his writings bear testimony.

The circulation through Germany of the unfavourable opinion passed upon Mesmer's discovery by the French Academy, damaged Mesmer's reputation immensely; for especially in that age did Germany, not alone as regards dress and manners, but also in matters of opinion, follow the French nation with a pitifully servile imitation. Thus the opinion of a body of men, supposed by their learning and wisdom to be able to embrace and comprehend the whole of the laws of the world, was regarded by Germany as the utterance of an oracle. This feeling existed to so great an extent that no one dared to defend Magnetism through the terror of being culminated. The very name of Animal-magnetism was tabooed.

Dr. Eberhardt Gmelin, of Heilbronn, a contemporary of Mesmer, an intellectual investigator of his discovery, and to whom we owe the possession of six volumes of conscientiously recorded experiences; and much valuable theoretical matter, regarding Magnetism, already, in the year 1787, has said in one of his volumes, that he would willingly entitle his magnetic Researches, "Experiments in the Power possessed by Human Nature through the Means of Living Human Touch," owing to the unconquerable objection in the public mind to the term "Animal Magnetism." In fact, by calling one of his works; "Materials for Anthropology", he thus gave way to the public prejudice against Mesmer's nomenclature. In the same work he thus excellently sketches the opponents to the newest truth of his day: They step forth under the venerable forms of a bombastic orator, of a highly-enlightened and warning teacher, of a dogmatic critic, of an envious colleague, of an exasperated preacher, of a merry comedian, of a flying traveller, of a comic romance-writer, of a would-be witty writer of travesties, of a cheap and rapid annotator of almanack pictures, of a defamatory pressman, of a begging anecdote hunter, of a malicious backbiter, of a haggling pettifogger. With such weapons, and under such forms, has the endeavour been made to fling Mesmerism to the earth?"

Dr. Gmelin was a man in whom no qualification failed to render him a thoroughly competent observer of this subtle power of nature. His observations succeeded in awaking a lively interest in the subject; and that he was an enlightened and thoroughly experienced physician, as well as a clear-seeing psychologist, not even the most prejudiced opponent could deny. His works were full of instruction, even for the unbeliever, and although they might not always work conviction, they prepared the way for it. Before Reil and Humboldt's experiments, in 1778, Dr. Gmelin wrote about a fluid within, or rather upon, the nerves, bearing much relation to electricity, and which he termed nerve juice, or nerve cather; and, in 1793, after the publication of Reil's excellent writings and Humboldt's galvanic experiments, he published other important observations.

Neither did Wienholt in Bremen fare much better than Gmelin, in the opposition which he encountered from the ignorance and stubborn enmity of the learned world. He, in the years 1803 and 1806, wrote upon the subject of Animal-magnetism, at great length, in a sober, searching, and philosophical spirit, and proved it to be a special power of nature, and an extraordinary healing medium. But he also, for a certain time, bore reproaches and was utterly misunderstood. Within fifteen years, however, Wienholt treated, either directly himself or through others, eighty sick persons. The greater number of these were cases which he either beheld abandoned by medical art, or which could only hope for a protracted cure: cases of various kinds of disease, inflammatory as well as chronic, nervous as well as other tedious maladies.
There were individuals of almost every age and rank and of both sexes, married and unmarried; and the magnetic treatment affected these patients in the most remarkable manner. In some of the cases the improvement was only temporary, in others partial, in others — and these not a few — the cure was complete. Weinholt made use of electricity combined with Animal Magnetism in his experiments. In these cases the sleep-waking condition excited the greatest surprise, and became the chief stumbling block.

During the period of Gmelin's and Weinholt's activity in this field of labour, Animal-magnetism attained, through the discovery of Galvanism, to more respectful consideration in the learned world. Already, and principally through Gmelin's researches, to which we have already referred, the existence of a so-called life-atmosphere around the nerves, was believed to exist. This supposition was rendered more probable by Reil's excellent work upon the nerves, and at length was clearly demonstrated by Humboldt's galvanic experiments with animal-fibres, and thus was Animal-magnetism brought nearer to physical science. Equally favourable were the observations of Spallanzani and Fontana. On every side, old conventional opinions and doctrines which had taken deep root were seen to be attacked and destroyed by new opinions and doctrines, and thus people at length accustomed them- selves to enquire with more equanimity into Animal-magnetism, and gradually discovered that it really did contain some truth.

Through Schelling's Nature-Philosophy, other worthy minds were encouraged to cast off the chains of the old systems, and take flights through the illimitable realms of nature. Thus the arrogant tone of the would-be-all-wise was not so universal, and practical physicians who formerly had been opposed to Magnetism, even deigned to operate by its means. The men who at that period principally accepted the Mesmeric theory were K. E. Schelling, W. Hufeland, Klug, Wolfart, Fr. Hufeland, Kuntzmann, Petzold, Nasse, Miller, and other physicians in Berlin.

At a later period followed that remarkable man whom, comparatively speaking, we have only lately lost. Dr. Ennemoser; and who has given forth to the world, both practical and theoretical works upon the subject. Also Eschenmayer has been an invaluable labourer in the field. Dr. Karl Passavant of Frankfort, whom we have also to thank for his researches into Life-Magnetism and Clear-seeing, which have become classical works. Also Count Zappari, and his unfortunate countryman Count Mailath, have both earned our thanks through their peculiar conception and development of the mesmeric doctrine.

It is especially through the exertions of the above-named men that Mesmer's discovery enjoyed a triumph, already before the death of Mesmer; although at a period when personally he was entirely forgotten, and now (in the year 1856), forty years after his death, a yet greater triumph exists in the appearance of magnetic table-turning, and of Reichenbach's discovery of the odyllic light and force. (In 1883, however, more marvellous has become this triumph, through the ever unfolding confirmation of the truth of Mesmer's discovery, as demonstrated by the varied phenomena of Spiritualism; that fuller development of occult force, the dawn of which Dr. Justinus Kerner was one of the first to proclaim.)

It ought not to surprise us, that Mesmer was not comprehended by the learned men of his day, seeing that he was through his views of nature, forty years in advance of his age. Nevertheless it is almost inconceivable that during all these years of the progress of magnetic enquiry, personally, Mesmer should have been forgotten, and this not alone by his opponents, but by those who honoured and practised his doctrine.

Throughout the numerous volumes of the writings of Gmelin and Wienholt upon Animal-magnetism, between the years 1787 and 1805, you may seek in vain for the name of Mesmer. And with other writers it is the same. They well knew what persecution and contempt Mesmer had drawn upon himself, by the expression of opinions which were the same as their own; nevertheless, nowhere throughout these writings does one meet with
one single expression of sympathy with Mesmer: nowhere a defence of him. It seems as
though they dreaded to touch upon that name of "Mesmer," so hooted at by the scientific
world.

Not one of these writers took the trouble to search out the discoverer of that power of
nature which they were themselves thus developing and defending, in order to become
personally acquainted with him, to know what kind of a man he was, to hear from his own
lips the explanation of his theory: to learn from himself the practical part of his doctrine; to
be shown by himself his magnetic manipulation; in short, to drink of the knowledge which
they sought at its very fountain head.

Mesmer, during the greater portion of his later life, took no part whatsoever in the
discussions of the scientific world; took no interest even in the magnetic labours of his
followers. He dwelt in the most perfect retirement at Frauenfeld, a blessing to the sick and
the poor of that neighbourhood. He appears, however, to have deeply sympathised with
the great political changes occurring in Europe. Various of Mesmer's friends in France
sought to recall him into their midst from Switzerland, representing to him that his ideas
would never be comprehended in that country, and seeking to induce him to publish his
writings in the French language. Nevertheless to France Mesmer did not return.

Mesmer was already an old man of seventy-eight, when a circle of his zealous disciples in
Berlin applied to him by letter, through Reil and Karl Wolfart, to visit them, in order that
they might hear his doctrine explained to them by himself. Throughout the rest of
Germany, at this period, Mesmer personally was as one dead. It is easily understood that
Mesmer, who had in his earlier life declined a similar invitation, now in his old age, and
when he was weary of scientific discussion, did not accede to his friends' desire. We have
reason, however, to believe that from this application of his Berlin friends resulted Karl
Wolfart's invaluable edition of Mesmer's writings.

With the greater portion of his fortune, Mesmer had also lost in France the whole of his
papers. Nevertheless, in the later years of his life, during his solitude, Mesmer employed
himself with marvellous patience in re-writing his ideas and experience in French. Many of
these manuscripts fell into my hands amongst the papers discovered at Meersburg. They
are the rough drafts from which Wolfart ultimately made his German translation, and
which was, in 1814, published by Mesmer's authority and under his supervision a year
before the great discoverer's death.

Numerous letters from Wolfart to Mesmer — but, unfortunately, not Mesmer's replies were
amongst the Meersburg papers, throwing much valuable light upon Mesmer's life and
views. It is most pleasant to contemplate the friendly relationship which existed between
Mesmer and his translator; and to observe the sunshine which this happy relationship
cast around the last years of this great man's life. From Frauenfeld, Mesmer removed to
Constance, and from Constance ultimately to Meersburg, where, as we shall see in the
concluding section of our memoir, he calmly sank to rest. In the summer of 1814, Mesmer
removed to the village of Riedetsweiler where he had caused to be prepared for himself a
dwelling in the farm of the peasant Futterer. In Constance, as well as here, and in
Meersburg, he lived entirely for science, and exercised his art with the most beneficial
results; everywhere assisting the suffering poor. Various individuals still live who
remember him with respect and gratitude. Mesmer did not, however, long inhabit this
rustic abode; he moved in a short time to Meersburg.

It is possible that he removed at this period to the neighbourhood of his relatives and to a
town, because he was firmly convinced that he should not live beyond the age of eighty-
one. This idea originated in the circumstance, frequently related by him, of a fortune-teller
— a person who possessed the faculty of entering the magnetic condition through gazing
upon any glittering substance — prophesying that he would attain the age of eighty-one,
but no greater age. This individual had told him at the same time, whilst he was
possessed of a large fortune, that he would lose it. This portion of the prophecy having
been fulfilled, he used frequently to maintain that the former would also prove to be true: as indeed proved to be the case.

In spite of his age and the infirmity disease of the bladder from which he occasionally suffered, both his body and soul appeared full of health and power. That his ardently-pursued and long-continued magnetic manipulations produced no deleterious effects upon his constitution, was owing, probably, to his applying himself, without the interference of any uncongenial occupation, to the development of that influence of which he himself was the discoverer; and with which, through being its discoverer, he was more thoroughly permeated than any other person possibly could have been; and also, that by birth, he possessed a calm, clear, firm, and not easily disturbed nature.

He loved society, and whenever anyone was really agreeable to him, the company of this person was never unacceptable so a well beloved guest might even without offence invite himself to table. Usually Mesmer was very cheerful and conversational. His relatives, especially, were ever welcome. In their seasons of trouble he, also, thought frequently of them. Besides his relatives two intelligent young priests were his frequent visitors. One of these young men had been restored through Mesmer's assistance from a dangerous illness. Both of them were so greatly impressed and penetrated by the importance of Mesmer's conclusions, with reference to religion and to nature, that they became attached to him with a childlike reverence.

Of the learned world but few visited him. Dr. Hirzel, of Gottlieben, occasionally came to see him; and later, in the last years of his life, Dr. Waldmann was intimate with him, and bears witness to the calmness of his mind, even up to his latest breath. In the last years of Mesmer's life, the Bishop Prince Dalberg, in the outset a violent opponent of Mesmer's doctrine, became as warm a believer and friend. He, about the same time as Mesmer, came to reside at Meersburg, Mesmer thus writes to Wolfart, in Berlin, December 26, 1814: "You will have heard that Prince Dalberg has resided here already several months. So as soon as he became aware that I was at this place he recalled his former avowal of disbelief and at every possible opportunity has shown me respect. He gives to the aristocratic residents here, every week a concert, to which I am invited. He has invited me to his table and so forth, and thus in every way he shows that I am no longer indifferent to him."

Mesmer did not possess a garden; nevertheless he was a great lover of flowers, which he cultivated in his room, as well as shrubs, laurels, etc, which he made use of in his magnetic cures. He kept a horse and light carriage, in which he drove out daily. Probably owing to the infirmity already referred to, he was rarely seen on foot. He exhibited towards his horse, as well as to all animals, and especially towards birds, a great affection. Probably through his powerful magnetic influence, my dear friend Franz Mesmer possessed the faculty of taming and attracting animals towards himself. Stories are still afloat regarding him, somewhat exaggerated probably, which recall the history of the Brahmin, who, through magical art, caused a troop of birds to constantly hover above his head, thus accompanying him upon long journeys.

It is related that whenever Mesmer visited the island of Mainau, where it is well known that formerly a considerable number of canaries dwelt, being prevented by the wide expanse of water from escaping from the island, these birds would fly towards the trees and shrubs around Mesmer, and would only settle when and where the wonder worker took his seat. One of these canaries from the island of Mainau was Mesmer's companion at Meersburg until his death; its abode being an open cage in Mesmer's chamber.

Every morning early, the bird would fly forth from its always opened cage, perch upon Mesmer's head whilst he slept, and wake him with its song; nor would the bird allow his friend any peace, until he rose, dressed, and placed himself at the breakfast table. So long as Mesmer drank his coffee, the bird remained perched upon the sugar basin, and pecked the sugar. If Mesmer hesitated to drop a lump of sugar into his cup, the little
creature remarking the hesitation, would drop the lump of sugar. When his master arose from the breakfast-table, the little canary would fly back into its cage. A slight stroke from Mesmer's hand would throw the bird into a sleep as though it were dead, whilst a stroke, the reverse way of the feathers, would awaken it.

Mesmer was, like his bird, accustomed to retire early to rest, usually about the hour of eight; whilst he prepared for sleep, the bird would thrust its head beneath its wing. The observations which Mesmer made upon animals with reference to their inner sense, their instinct, brought him into very near sympathy with them. He studied the proof of the existence of this faculty with profound interest, and expatiating on this theme, always expressed his regret that man alone of all the animal creation should neglect this inner sense, which in him is thus driven to solely assert itself in the magnetic condition, and in the ordinary dream life.

Wolfart, when speaking of his visit to Mesmer at Frauenfeld, refers to the old man's love of playing upon his glass harmonica. He says, "Mesmer was accustomed when supper was over, after a little repose, and when twilight was gathered, to play upon his beloved harmonica when all around and within him seemed harmonious. As his playing became more and more animated, and the tones drawn forth by his hand became more intense, he would accompany the music with his voice, singing in a low tone, and guiding his fingers by the modulation of his voice, which even now in old age was a very agreeable tenor. Thus his soul entered into the music, and such a harmony of the spheres as was this music I have never since heard".

I may mention that Mesmer whilst residing in Paris, was intimately acquainted with the great composer Gluck, and that he frequently inspired him by thus playing upon his harmonica, and was made by him to promise that he would never play otherwise upon these musical bells than thus improvising, without notes or art. This instrument, which he had caused to be made under his own eye in Vienna, and which had followed him about through life, has after his death, been left to me as a remarkable and dear souvenir."

Books, Mesmer did not greatly read; and he has been reproached for not troubling himself with the literature of the time, as though he believed, that through the discovery of universal magnetism he had attained to the limits of science. In his old age, if he were not occupied in driving about or in writing, he was employed in modelling or in drawing. The drawings introduced in Wolfart's work are from his hand. He appears rarely to have attended church; celebrating his worship of God, quietly in his own heart. Mesmer was remarkably temperate, both in eating and drinking. He had an opinion, however, that man distinguished himself from the animals in the necessity for a variety of food, and that in consequence, man is in a much healthier and more natural condition when he is enabled by circumstances to satisfy himself not from one dish alone, but by moderately partaking of a variety of food in small quantities.

Mesmer's Last Days

On the 20th of February 1805, Mesmer felt unwell and did not visit the Cassino, as he was accustomed to do, upon the Sunday. The following day he was not worse, but gradually his illness increased, and upon the 5th of March, feeling his end approach, he begged that his friend, the young priest, Fessler, might be sent for, to play to him upon the glass armonica whilst he departed. Before his friend arrived however Mesmer, smiling, fell asleep forever in this world, seemingly filled with a presentiment of an unending, all-musical, divine harmony awaiting his soul beyond the grave. As if still alive, the body lay untouched till the morning, but the canary did not, as usual, fly forth from its cage to perch upon his head to awaken him. The bird neither sang nor ate any more, and very shortly afterwards it was found dead in its cage.
According to Mesmer’s desire his body was opened and the seat of his disease discovered. Mesmer had left directions in his will that, being without worldly titles and honours, he should be interred very simply, as though he were any other common man; but the inhabitants of Meersburg determined otherwise. Both the clergy and the town citizens gave this great benefactor of the human race a ceremonious funeral; whilst numbers who were indebted to him for health and life followed the procession.

Mesmer’s young friend Fessler spoke the funeral oration above his grave, in the beautiful and ancient graveyard of Meersburg, where a monument was erected to him by his Berlin admirers and disciples.

Above: Rick Collingwood places flowers and a lighted candle on Anton Mesmer’s grave monument at Meersburg in Germany; Jan 2009.

Top Left: A rare photo of Mesmer’s funeral in Meersburg. A complete quality collection can be seen in the Mesmer section at www.mindmotivations.com