

1. The human aura and 'hylic pluralism'

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1.1. Types of fine matter

As mentioned in the introduction, in just about all times and in almost all non-Western cultures there are testimonies of people who claim that we not only have a biological body, but that we also possess a number of fine material bodies, which together make up the so-called aura of a human being. One speaks of a belief in a “hylic pluralism. 'Hulè' is the Greek term for 'substance' and 'pluralism' refers to “a multiplicity.” “Hylic pluralism” thus represents a multiplicity of types of substance.

In addition to or beyond the substance of physics that anyone can determine, according to this view, there exist other, thinner forms of substance and materiality. Such fine substance, it is argued, is at the root of the paranormal, the religious and occult. It plays a decisive role in the life of every human being with regard to health and happiness. So-called sensitives claim to sense this fine substance. The correct interpretation of processes in this fine substance, is called 'clairvoyance'. Moreover, if one can also 'manipulate' them, 'transform' them, then one is a magician or magicianess. Magicians claim that they can influence a person's health, but also that they can change the course of a person's life. In so-called white magic, this happens for the better, in black magic, for the worse.

1.2. In all times, in all places

All archaic, ancient and classical cultures were (and are) familiar with the concept of fine matter. The ancient Egyptian culture knew it as 'maät,' in the East it speaks of 'prana.' Ancient philosophy spoke of 'virtus', the Bible knows it as 'Ruah'; as one of the many forms of Holy Spirit. Esoteric schools speak of 'etheric' and 'astral' dust. Fine dust is especially peculiar to fine material 'beings', 'entities', 'gods', 'goddesses' who possess such fine dust to a greater or lesser degree. In some places this fine dust accumulates more strongly than in other places. Thus, in the Bible, for Moses, Mount Sinai (Exodus 3:14) and the burning bush in which Yahweh showed Himself was a holy place.

Although subtlety is hardly mentioned in contemporary Western philosophy, it was one of the most important themes among the founders of our philosophy: the thinkers of ancient Greece. So too with the so-called presocratics, the philosophers who had just preceded Socrates (-469/-399). Socrates was Plato's teacher. They wondered what “primal matter” the substance behind the visible things, all of reality was composed of. Thus Thales of Miletos (-642/-545) argued that this primordial substance somewhat resembles water because it is particularly fluid. Whoever interprets that in our present biological sense, which is done repeatedly, does not do justice to the fine material reality that precedes it.

Anaximander of Miletos (-610/-547), claimed that the primordial origin of everything was 'a-peiron' indeterminate and rarefied. Anaximenes of Miletos (-588/-524), in turn, assumed that the origin of everything was 'aër', air, breath, soul, 'psuchè', as perceived by the seers and seers, as breath, mist, smoke, air, and similar to the wind. For Herakleitos of Ephesos (-540/-480), the primal ground of everything was movable like fire. One sees that these presocraticists each in their own way put into words this intricacy. They must then apparently have been “seers” to some degree to arrive at such an understanding.

In China, “Chi kung” is a method by which one tries to act on the body through 'chi' or subtle life force. In the West, Paracelsus (1493/1541), among others, spoke of a “fluid. The Melanesians called it 'mana', the Iroquois, a North American Indian tribe, called it 'orenda' and the Dakota Indians spoke of 'wakanda' The inhabitants of Malagasy the former Madagascar, spoke of 'hasina'. They are different names, apparently for the same and commonly perceived reality.

As in just about all religions, even in Christianity the thought of a fine, subtle substance is never far away. For example, in Luke 9:28v, we read that Jesus went up to Mount Tabor with some of the apostles to pray, and there he showed his aura. His countenance thereby took on a radiant light and his clothes became blindingly white. We refer here, for example, to many saints who are often depicted with a halo around their heads. Sensitives claim that when they pray, they feel this fine substance enter their body as a tingling energy. Among other things, their crown chakra or the chakras on their hands are said to open up.

Also in our time we find testimonies of such a fine energy. Thus the Hungarian E. Haich (1897/1994) tells in her book *Initiation*¹, that she asked her husband to think intensely about something, and she would try to catch this thought intuitively, in a psychic way. To her surprise, something very different happened. As she waited for whatever would arise in her imagination, she clearly felt - she just 'saw' it - that from his stomach region a stream of myriads of tiny grains of mist, about ten centimeters in diameter, flowed out and snaked around her body like a lasso, and this also at the level of her solar plexus. Then this fine matter

“pulled” Haig up to the window, “pushed” her arm up, “brought” her hand up to the curtain. Finally, this matter 'forced' Haich to push this aside so that she could see through the window. At that same moment, that mass left her body and she could move freely again. And then it turned out that all this time and with all his thought-power her husband wanted her to perform just that : that she would walk to the window, lift the curtain and look out.

The Leiden professor J.J.Poortman (1896/1970), *Ochêma, history and sense of hylic pluralism*², discusses at length in his book the concept of matter of the various cultures around the globe. Yet, he complains, this theme has been and is repeatedly omitted in our culture while there is often reason to mention this belief in a hylic pluralism. G.R.S. Mead (1863/1933), *The subtle body in western tradition*³, says that the belief in the existence of a fine substance is “one of the oldest persuasions of mankind,” “one of the oldest beliefs of mankind.”

1.3. The radiance of the hand

Phoebe Payne, *Dormant faculties in man*⁴, writes with regard to seeing the radiance of the hand, “Many can catch a glimpse of it, by bringing the fingertips of both hands together in semi-darkness and then slowly pulling them apart, whereby a mist-like emanation can then be seen flowing from one hand to the other. This is most easily seen against a dark background. This subtle double body usually presents itself as a fine, hazy substance, completely enveloping the ordinary physical body and usually silver-gray in color.

The part of the aura, which lies flat around the material body and partially penetrates it, is usually called the double. This is perceived by many, who have barely more than normal eyesight, as a gray, flaky mass. It is especially visible around the head and hands. Sometimes one catches a glimpse of the outer, more luminous part of the aura, while the rather dark band of the double then appears as an empty space. (...) The etheric aura shows itself as a silver-gray fog, radiating straight from the body and most easily seen at the extremities such as the head, fingertips and toes. Many people are able to see this under certain circumstances, such as when holding the hand against a black background in dim light. When viewed in detail, this aura is very finely and intricately composed and divided into several layers with their own delicate colors and special characteristics.”

Similar descriptions are also found in Barbara Brennan, *Light on the aura*⁵ : She writes: “Usually rays of the lighter blue come from the fingertips, toes and head. Most people are able to see those rays from the fingertips after a few minutes. To see the aura, you need “night eyes. The eye then adjusts to the darkness. Therefore, you notice that, for example, you can see the aura of your hand better if you do not look directly at it, but focus your eyes on something just next to your hand that is further away. The light-sensitive cells in the retina of your eyes consist

of rods and cones. The cones are for daytime, to see bright colors, the rods are much more sensitive to lower light intensities, that's what you look with at night, and you need to use those here.”

Dion Fortune, an English occultist of the first half of the 20th century, also mentions in her book *Spiritism*⁶ that our aura “under certain light conditions could be seen even with ordinary sight.”

Many seers and visionaries claim that if they are in a dark room for several hours, they then see all the objects in that complete darkness light up. For example, the aura of the right hand shows itself rather blue, while the left hand emits a yellow-red light.

1.4. Not everything can be perceived optically.

Not all the layers of the aura would be of an optical nature, so it would be pointless to try to explore these last and most tenuous layers with optical instruments. Moreover, these finer layers would be particularly complex in construction. They can only be perceived through the so-called “third eye,” in an exclusively psychic way. Only very few would possess this stronger form of clairvoyance.

The concept of “rarefied, fine or subtle matter” may otherwise have long been abandoned from the scientific standpoint, yet the belief in its existence lives on to this day - hidden or not - in occultisms of all kinds and in dynamically conceived religions. Such religions emphasize the paranormal power that is said to emanate from them. The Latin term “occultus,” by the way, means “hidden.

It may be surprising that while our scientific knowledge in just about every field has seen stormy development, hardly any progress has been made in this fine material field, despite some good evidence. In 1931, some ninety years ago - when a laser, much needed to tune optical parts to each other, was completely non-existent - Fortune⁷ wrote that “its discovery is probably only a matter of time.”

Let's hope her statement is more than a pious wish.

¹ Haich E., *Inwijding*, Deventer, Ankh Hermes, 1978 (// *Einweihung*, Thielle, Fankhauser, 1960), 94 e.v..

² Poortman J.J., *Ochêma*, *Geschiedenis en zin van het hylisch pluralisme*, Assen, Van Gorcum, 1954, (// *History*

of Hyllic Pluralism, Theosophical Society in the Netherlands).

³ Mead G.R.S. The subtle body in western tradition, London, Stuart and Watkins, 1967.

⁴ Payne Ph., Sluimerende vermogens in de mens, 's Graveland, De driehoek, 1948, 42 en 146.

⁵ Brennan B., Licht op de aura, Haarlem, 1991, 89.

⁶ D. Fortune, Spiritisme in het licht der occulte wetenschap, Gnosis, Amsterdam, 1949, p.13. (Oorspronkelijke titel: Spiritism in the light of occult science, London, Rider & Co., ND, 1931.)

⁷ D. Fortune, Spiritisme in het licht der occulte wetenschap, Gnosis, Amsterdam, 1949. P. 10. Oorspronkelijke titel: Spiritism in the light of occult science, London: Rider & Co., ND, 1931