

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

On Psychic Forces and Doubles: The Case of Albert de Rochas

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Abstract—In Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries’ psychical research literature, there were many speculations to explain physical mediumship consisting of the projection of nervous and vital forces from the body. The purpose of this paper is to present an example of these ideas and a translation of part of an article published by Albert de Rochas in 1897 in the *Annales des Sciences Psychiques*. The article was devoted to séances with Eusapia Palladino, and de Rochas suggested the projection of forces to explain telekinesis and materializations, a concept also involving the idea of a fluidic double. The ideas are presented in the context of previous speculations, and of the life and work of its author. The point of this article is not to defend or criticize the validity of the concept, but to contribute to the history of these ideas by rescuing de Rochas from oblivion, which in turn also shows French contributions to Nineteenth-Century psychical research.

Keywords: Albert de Rochas—animal magnetism—psychic force—doubles—exteriorization of sensibility

Introduction

In a book German physician Albert von Schrenck-Notzing published in 1920 about physical mediumship, he referred to “an emanation or projection of vital energies beyond the limits of the human organism” (Schrenck-Notzing 1920:180). This idea was related to concepts of vital forces coming from antiquity (Amadou 1953) and to the movement of mesmerism. Starting in the late Eighteenth Century, many individuals representing such movement popularized the concept of animal magnetism. Franz Anton Mesmer (1779) referred to it as a universal fluid capable of acting at a distance and of affecting inorganic and organic matter. Regarding the latter, Baron Jean du Potet de Sennevoy wrote:

The nervous, active atmosphere of the magnetizer . . . enters in rapport with the passive nervous atmosphere of the magnetized person, and augments the latter to the point that, in some cases, it seems that there is a real saturation of the nervous system. (Du Potet 1868:316; this and other translations are mine)¹

Such magnetic phenomena, which included a variety of physiological and psychological effects, informed an interesting model developed during the Nineteenth Century and later to explain psychic manifestations, which is the topic of this paper. The basic concept was that what was variously referred to as “magnetic,” “vital,” “fluidic,” and “nervous” bodily forces, could cause phenomena such as thought-transference, movement of objects, raps, luminous effects, and materializations when projected from the human body.² Interestingly, such ideas of human radiations were a particular interest of various French researchers, a tradition that began with mesmerism and continued in later years. This was exemplified by many publications, among them overviews such as *La Force Psychique* (Bonnaymé 1908), *Magnétisme Vital* (Gasc-Desfossés 1897), *Pour Photographier les Rayons Humaines* (Girod 1912), and *Les Radiations Humaines* (Montandon 1927). The purpose of this paper is to present a translation of an account of one of these ideas, postulated by Albert de Rochas in the late Nineteenth Century, which was actually a late formulation of concepts of emanations from the body to account for physical phenomena, and part of the neo-mesmeric movement that continued the old mesmeric tradition.³ De Rochas was one of several French neo-mesmerists who continued writing about magnetism during the late Nineteenth Century and later, among them Émile Boirac (1908), Hippolyte Baraduc (1896), Alexandre Baréty (1887), and Hector Durville (1895–1896).

The translation and presentation of an Excerpt from one of de Rochas’ articles is of interest today for various reasons. First, it is a reminder of a conceptual tradition of vital, psychic, and nervous forces (Alvarado 2006, 2008) that, while still present today, are not considered by many current workers in parapsychology who emphasize ideas of nonphysicality (e.g., Kelly 2015, Tart 2009). Second, it is an opportunity to present to modern readers, many of whom presumably are unacquainted with the topic, a fragment of French psychical research theorization from the Nineteenth Century. Third, I briefly present an overview of the work of de Rochas, a figure who is not frequently discussed today.

Magnetic, Nervous, and Fluidic Forces, and Doubles

As seen in the literature of mesmerism and the work of Reichenbach (1849/1851), the conceptual ground for de Rochas’ theorization had

actually been prepared by others before him. Later ideas of emanations from the human body included those of many writers who proposed various concepts to explain the phenomena of Spiritualism, particularly the physical ones. A few early examples from the United States were B. W. Richmond (Brittan & Richmond 1853), Asa Mahan (1855), and E. C. Rogers (1853).

Several other examples appeared as explanations of the phenomenon of table turning (De Gasparin 1854, Thury 1855), which created much publicity. As the well-known French investigator of table-turning Agénor de Gasparin wrote in his classic *Des Tables Tournantes* (Figure 1):



Figure 1. Agénor de Gasparin's *Des Tables Tournantes* (1854)

If my brain, active as a Leyden jar, emits and directs a fluidic current through my nerves, if the other members of the [mediumistic] chain follow similarly, it is evident that it would not be long for us to form sort of an electric battery, by which the influence will be felt according to our thoughts; we will produce a rotation, we will produce, also at a distance, vigorous liftings. (De Gasparin 1854:Volume 1:514)

A variety of similar ideas continued to be postulated and further developed later. This included various sorts of speculations such as those appearing in *Spiritualism Answered by Science* (Cox 1872) and in *Spiritism* (Von Hartmann 1885), and in the Twentieth Century (e.g., Morselli 1908, Sudre 1926) to account for physical mediumship. According to German philosopher Eduard Von Hartmann, the projection of nerve force by mediums was

not a function of those parts of the brain which serve as support to the conscious will, but of deeper-lying layers of the brain which either coincide with those supporting the somnambulant consciousness, or are more approximate to them than to the first. (Von Hartmann 1885:51)

Consequently,

the development of magnetic-mediumistic nerve force is stronger in the somnambulant than in the waking state . . . (Von Hartmann 1885:51)

Somewhat earlier, English physicist William Crookes helped popularize ideas of force through his writings about the physical phenomena of medium D. D. Home. He wrote:

Being firmly convinced that there could be no manifestation of one form of force without the corresponding expenditure of some other form of force, I for a long time searched in vain for evidence of any force or power being used up in the production of these results.

Now, however, having seen more of Mr. Home, I think I perceive what it is that this psychic force uses up for its development . . . after witnessing the painful state of nervous and bodily prostration in which some of these experiments have left Mr. Home—after seeing him lying in an almost fainting condition on the floor, pale and speechless—I could scarcely doubt that the evolution of psychic force is accompanied by a corresponding drain on vital force. (Crookes 1874:40–41)

Many also speculated about the process underlying materialization. A Twentieth-Century example was French researcher Gustave Geley, who argued that the phenomenon consisted of an

anatomy-biologic decentralisation in the medium's body and an externalisation of the decentralised factors in an amorphous state, solid, liquid, or vaporous. (Geley 1924/1927:358)

There were also speculations to account for mental phenomena. Various other forms of bodily radiations or biophysical emanations were postulated in different time periods to account for telepathy (for an overview and bibliography, see Alvarado 2008, 2015).

Interestingly, such ideas were also related to the concept of subtle bodies, or fluidic doubles, believed by many to be able to exteriorize from the body. This was an ancient concept (Mead 1919, Poortman 1954/1978), and one discussed by de Rochas in the Excerpt presented below (for the purpose of this paper, I will not get into discussion of different types of subtle bodies).

The idea of doubles, and more generally, subtle bodies of different sorts, has a long literature, and one that has been connected to psychic phenomena (Alvarado 2009a, Vesme 1898). Various authors such as Adolphe d'Assier (1883/1887) and Carl du Prel (1899/1908) helped to keep alive the concept, not to mention the writings of well-known occultists such as Gérard Encausse (1890) and Annie Besant (1896). Alexander Aksakof (1890/1895) defended the existence of spontaneously produced doubles, seen as apparitions, with some degree of materiality.

In ideas that preceded the concept of a fluidic double discussed by de Rochas as applied to physical mediumship, several Nineteenth-Century writers speculated that the medium's double produced materializations (e.g., Coleman 1865:127–128). Referring to the double, a later writer stated that “the substance composing this counterpart is, to a certain extent, the

nucleus around which all spirits materializing are developed or clothed” (Brackett 1886:126).⁴

Various writers from different branches of occultism also discussed astral bodies and materializations, as seen in *La Magie et l’Hypnose* (Encausse 1897:143) and in *The Ocean of Theosophy* (Judge 1893:150). Considering the cause of magical action on human beings, German philosopher Carl du Prel referred to the astral body. This agent, “when it manifests as an apparition; (double, phantom, materialization) reproduces the outline of the exterior man” (Du Prel 1899/1908:394).

In the de Rochas’ Excerpt reprinted below, he defended the idea of a semi-physical principle between the spirit and the physical body. This idea was by no means new with him. Limiting references to the Nineteenth Century, some examples are the “life” principle of Chardel (1818), the “psychode” of Thury (1855), and the “perispirit” of Kardec (1863).⁵ Several other French writers who were contemporaries of de Rochas discussed the existence of semi-physical fluidic doubles, showing the topic received much attention in some circles. This included, among others, Gabriel Delanne (1909), Hector Durville (1909), and Louis-Sophrone Fugairon (1907).

Interestingly, all these ideas of forces and subtle bodies were interrelated. In a book about “human radiations,” Raoul Montandon (1927:4–5) stated that the existence of the double was vital to “the understanding of nearly all the manifestations which occupy Occultists, Metapsychists, Spiritists, etc.”

Albert de Rochas

In 1914 it was announced that a group of students of psychic phenomena and scientists formed a committee to express their “admiration and sympathy towards the veteran of metapsychic studies” Albert de Rochas (Anonymous 1914), whose scientific jubilee was due. That the man was held in high esteem was evident by the names of these individuals, which included, among others known for their interest in psychic phenomena, physicians Gustave Geley, Eugène Osty, and Albert von Schrenck-Notzing, physiologist Charles Richet, philosophers Henri Bergson and Émile Boirac, and astronomer Camille Flammarion.

Colonel Eugène-August-Albert de Rochas d’Aiglun (1837–1914), who had the title of Count, is one of those psychological researchers in need of study, and a figure forgotten by many contemporary parapsychologists.⁶ According to biographical sources, de Rochas was from an old family from Provence, France. His initial education took place at the Lyceum of Grenoble, and he obtained in 1856 an honorary mention in mathematics. He entered the École Polytechnique in 1857, and in the following years he was in the military service, rising steadily in rank and holding different posts. By 1888 he



Figure 2. Albert de Rochas

became the administrator of the École Polytechnique, after having become Lieutenant Colonel. He hoped this position would provide time for scientific studies, and this was the case until a military superior proclaimed that occult practices were not proper in a military school (de Rochas 1895a:183, see also Gaillard 1902). In a later edition of the of de Rochas' book (1895a), he replied that "as the name indicates, the École Polytechnique was not only a military school and that all sciences were occult before being discovered," and unfortunately "from that moment, I had to abandon the experiments I had initiated in one of the physics laboratories of the institution . . ."

(de Rochas 1899:190). Forced to retire, de Rochas (Figure 2) found himself with the freedom to do what he wanted (see also Anonymous 1915, Curinier no date).

Many of his studies were on topics of military and science history, fortifications, and other issues, among them *La Science des Philosophes et l'Art des Thaumaturges dans l'Antiquité*, a study of the pneumatics of Heron and Philo in which he translated these authors from Greek (de Rochas 1882b), and *La Science Dans l'Antiquité: Les Origines de la Science et Ses Premières Applications* (de Rochas no date circa 1883), about science and technology in ancient times.⁷ Some of this work led him to receive several distinctions and awards. Among others, gold medals from the Society for Greek Studies in 1872 and from the National Congress of Geography Societies in 1882 were conferred on him. In addition, he was elected an Officer of the Legion of Honor (Curinier no date:10).

De Rochas believed that phenomena considered through history to be unexplained would eventually be accounted for as our knowledge of the workings of nature increased. Some phenomena, he stated, were due to unknown principles related to "the nervous organization of exceptionally constituted individuals" (de Rochas 1897a:379). But he was also aware of the tendency of many to dispute the existence of some phenomena "because they rarely occur and we consider the accounts about them as simple legends due to the natural tendency of the human mind towards the marvellous" (de Rochas no date circa 1883:5).

He participated in séances with many mediums and published various books. Several of them were about psychic forces, a topic to which he became an important contributor, and included: *Les Forces non Définies* (1887a), *Le Fluide des Magnetiseurs* (1891), *L'Extériorisation de la Sensibilité* (1895a), and *Les Frontières de la Science* (1902).

His first studies included a followup to Reichenbah's work regarding

perceptions of lights in magnets and in human beings (De Rochas 1895a:Chapter 1). De Rochas, like other neo-mesmerists, held the belief that humans had a “fluid that circulates along the nerves like electricity circulates along the metallic wires of a telegraphic network” (de Rochas 1895a:58). He stated that such fluid exteriorized through the breath, and through the eyes, fingers, ears, and other parts of the body,

Such beliefs were related to de Rochas’ work regarding the “exteriorization of sensibility,” in which a magnetized person projected their tactile sensibility to objects or to the surrounding environment (de Rochas 1892a:Chapter 3, 1892b, 1895a:Chapter 2). While such exteriorization was invisible, it was perceived by some experimental subjects. Figure 3 is a drawing representing such perceptions, in the form of layers, by one of his participants, a man named Albert Levy.

Although many accepted the literal exteriorization explanation (e.g., Gasc-Desfossés 1897:97–105), others mentioned the possible effects of suggestion (e.g., Boirac 1896:215, Croq 1900:Chapter 11:Part 3), something considered by de Rochas but apparently not controlled for in many tests.⁸ In any case, de Rochas’ exteriorization work was widely discussed in both popular (de Rochas 1892b) and scientific (Boirac 1896) forums, including public lectures (Anonymous 1899), giving him much publicity in France and abroad (for an example in the United States, see Gaullieur 1895).

De Rochas also published books about physical phenomena, such as *L’Extériorisation de la Motricité* (1896), and *La Lévitacion* (1897c), and about various other topics (e.g., de Rochas 1904b). He wrote about hypnosis, exploring its stages and effects, and the properties of magnetic procedures and suggestion to induce various manifestations, some of a psychic nature (de Rochas, 1892a, 1893, 1895b, 1900). Hypnotism, he wrote (de Rochas 1892a:75), “is but the entrance hall to a vast and marvelous building . . .”

Other topics covered by this researcher in his writings were medium Eusapia Palladino (de Rochas 1897b), stigmatization (de Rochas 1903), magnetic/hypnotic regression (de Rochas 1905a), spirit photography (de Rochas 1905b), apparitions and materializations (de Rochas 1906b), auras and luminous phenomena (de Rochas 1911b), recollections of previous lives (de Rochas 1911c), and what he referred to as the “suspension of life,” or cases of lack of food intake and prolonged sleep for long periods, and apparent death (de Rochas no date circa 1914).



Figure 3. Layers of sensibility drawn by an experimental subject (de Rochas 1895b)

De Rochas' Excerpt

Article About Eusapia Palladino

The article from which the Excerpt below is taken (de Rochas 1897b) is about the Italian medium Eusapia Palladino, who was at the height of her career during the 1890s.⁹ It is a report of séances de Rochas had with the medium in France held between October 2 and 14 of 1896. The French researcher had many séances with Palladino (e.g., de Rochas 1897b, Sabatier, de Rochas, de Gramont, Maxwell, Dariex, & de Watteville, 1896), and devoted more than half of his book *L'Extériorisation de la Motricité* (1896:1–315) to her, a discussion that is probably the most complete overview of the medium and her phenomena published during the Nineteenth Century.

The 1897 article from which the following Excerpt is taken was mainly a report of séances, which included discussions of the effects of magnetic passes on the medium, which are summarized by the observation that the medium showed behaviors similar to those of other magnetized individuals. It was also said that there seemed to be an invisible sensitive link or connection between her and the objects moved. According to de Rochas, the medium had her arms extended with her fists closed toward a table that was moving. He pinched the surrounding air between the table and Palladino's fists and she uttered a cry and remonstrated him (de Rochas 1897b:10).

It was also reported that the medium's sensitivity was exteriorized, because under magnetization she said she saw on her right side "sort of a phantom and that it was at the location of this phantom that her sensibility was localized" (de Rochas 1897b:7). Such phantoms were also seen by various individuals magnetized by de Rochas, such as the young man Laurent (de Rochas 1895b), and the young woman Maria Mayo (de Rochas 1905a).

Observations of this sort and of the exteriorization of sensibility recorded before 1897 prepared the ground for the ideas appearing in the Excerpt reprinted here, and can be found at the end of that article under the heading "Hypotheses" (pp. 22–28).

Excerpt from de Rochas (1897b)

The moment seems to come for me to attempt a synthesis of all these facts, and I will go from the *postulatum* that in the living man there is a SPIRIT and a BODY.

The spirit we cannot apprehend; all we know is that from it come the phenomena of will, thought, and feeling.

As for the body, it is pointless to define it, but we will distinguish two things: the raw material (bones, flesh, blood, etc.) and an invisible agent which, single or double, transmits to the mind the sensations of the flesh and to the muscles the orders of the mind.

Intimately linked to the body that secretes it during life, it is halted, in most, on the surface of the skin and escapes only through more or less intense effluvia,

depending on the individual, through the sense organs and the most prominent parts of the body, such as the fingertips. This at least are the frequent assertions of subjects who have acquired by certain processes a momentary visual hyperesthesia, which was admitted by the old magnetisers . . .¹⁰

In some people called *subjects* the adherence of nervous fluid to the fleshly organism is weak, so that it can be moved with extreme ease and produce the known phenomena of hyperesthesia and complete insensitivity due either to self-suggestion, that is to say, to the action of the spirit of the subject itself on its fluidic body, or at the suggestion of another person whose mind has contacted the fluidic body of the subject.

Some subjects, even more sensitive, can project their nervous fluid, under certain conditions, out of the skin, and so produce the phenomenon that I studied under the name of *exteriorization of sensibility*.¹¹ It is understood easily that a mechanical action exerted by these effluvia, *out of the body*, can propagate thanks to them and thus go up to the brain.

The exteriorization of motricity¹² is more difficult to understand and I cannot, trying to explain, but resort to a comparison.

Suppose that, in some way, we prevent the nerve agent to reach our hand; it will become a corpse, an inert material as a piece of wood, and nonetheless it will come back under the control of our will when we have given to this inert material the exact proportion of fluid it takes to animate. Let's concede that a person can project the same fluid on a piece of wood in sufficient quantities to soak it in the same proportion; it will not be absurd to believe that, by an unknown mechanism of attractions and electrical repulsions, this piece of wood will act as an extension of the body of this person.¹³

This also explains the movements of tables under the fingers of those called *mediums*, and in general all the movements *with contact* produced on light objects by many sensitives, without significant muscular effort. These movements have been thoroughly studied by Baron de Reichenbach and described by him in five lectures given in 1856 . . .¹⁴

It even includes the production of movements requiring a force greater than that of the medium through the chain which puts at his disposal part of the force of the assistants.

But such a simplistic hypothesis does not account for the formation of hands,¹⁵ and one is led to complete it as follows.

The nerve agent spreads along the sensory and motor nerves in all parts of the body. So we can say that it presents on the whole the same shape as the body, since it occupies the same portion of space, and is called the *fluidic double* of man, without leaving the domain of positive science.

Many experiments, which unfortunately had as guarantor only the evidence of subjects (at least those I have made),¹⁶ appear to establish that this double may reconstitute outside the body, after a sufficient externalization of nerve impulses, such as a crystal is reformed into a solution when it is sufficiently concentrated.

Thus exteriorized the double continues to depend on the spirit and it obeys it with even more ease since it is now less hindered by its adherence to the flesh, so that the subject can move it and build up the material on one or another of its parts in order to make this part perceptible to the ordinary senses.

In this way Eusapia forms the hands that are seen and felt by the spectators.

Other experiments, which are less numerous and, consequently, we should not accept but with great reservations, tend to prove that the exteriorized fluidic matter can be modeled due to the influence of a fairly powerful will, as clay is shaped under the hand of a sculptor.

Presumably Eusapia, after passing through various spiritist environments, conceived in her imagination a John King,¹⁷ . . . and managed to give forms to her own fluidic body, when she made us feel big hands which she produced at a distance, on clay, [and the] impressions of a man's head . . .¹⁸

Thus, everything that my colleagues and I have seen with Eusapia can be explained (even the lights, which would be but very intense condensations of the nervous substance) without the intervention of a spirit other than hers.¹⁹

But if nothing has shown us that John exists, nothing has proved to us either that he does not exist . . .

We obtain in effect a first stage of the release of the fluidic body in the exteriorization of sensibility in the form of concentric layers around the body of the subject. The materiality of the effluvia is demonstrated by the fact that they dissolve in some substances such as water and fat; but, like odor, the reduction of body weight given off is immeasurable by our instruments.

The second stage is given by the coagulation of these effluvia in a sensitive double, but not visible yet to ordinary eyes.

The third stage is visible and tangible materialization, but only of a part of the body. The psychic matter emitted by the medium seems to be able to produce these effects on the condition that it appears in a place sheltered from light vibrations and of the sitter's gaze. The medium may remain in the light, but the materialization forms in a dark recess and very close.

Finally, the fourth stage is the materialization of an entire human form. Here it is almost always that the medium herself is away from light and from the gaze of the sitters; as in the previous case the form only shows up when it acquires a sufficient degree of materiality, but this materiality can be intense enough to withstand several hours of disorganizing influences . . .

In the third and the fourth stages, it is as a galvanoplastic transport of the matter of the physical body of the medium, matter that comes from the physical body to occupy a similar position on the fluidic body. It has been found with a balance, *a very large number of times*, that the medium lost some of its weight and that this weight went into the materialized body . . .²⁰

The most curious case, which so far is unique, is that of Mistress d'Espérance with whom this transport was done with such intensity that some of her own body had become invisible. There was only in its place but a fluidic body of which the double is only an emanation; the spectators could pass their hand across, but she felt it.²¹ This phenomenon, taken to its extreme limit, would lead to the complete disappearance of the body of the medium and its appearance in another place, as is reported in the lives of saints.

In full body materialization, the body is almost always animated by an intelligence different from that of the medium. What is the nature of these intelligences? To what degree of materialization can they intervene to direct the exteriorized psychic matter? These are issues of great interest, but which are not yet resolved.

Concluding Remarks

De Rochas' ideas, which he also presented in other publications (e.g., de Rochas 1895c, 1909), have been forgotten by many, but they received some attention in his day. They were an extension of earlier concepts derived from the writings of the mesmerists, Reichenbach, and many others interested in various forms of psychic phenomena, such as mediumship. This was the case for both ideas of an exteriorized force and a fluidic double, which for de Rochas, and others, were not different concepts.

The theoretical part of the 1897 paper does not seem to have been cited directly, but the ideas were referred to occasionally (e.g., Anonymous 1897, Carrington 1909:269, Flammarion 1907:409), providing support for later similar speculations. In later years, de Rochas (1902:Chapter 1, 1909) discussed the same ideas that appear in the Excerpt, in part using the same words. In a letter he wrote in 1901 to a French writer, de Rochas defended the view that many psychic phenomena supported the idea of the exteriorization of thought, as well as of the sensory and motor powers of the body. This, he believed,

proved the existence of several emanations of various nature which the magnetizers confused under the name of *magnetic Fluid*, and which agree with the theories of the Orientals, of the ancient Greek philosophers, and the first Fathers of the Church about the *fluidic body or soul*, which serve as an intermediary between the Spirit and the Body. (de Rochas 1904b:26)

While de Rochas (1896:477) said he was preparing a book about phantoms of the living discussing the concept of fluidic bodies, he later stated he was not going to publish such a work (de Rochas 1902:1). In later publications he continued to discuss the astral body and attempts to project it from the physical body (de Rochas 1905a, 1906a, 1910, 1911a), but this did not involve out-of-body experiences in the sense that the magnetized person was conscious of being located out of their physical body (as stated by Bozzano 1911:157–168). De Rochas (1900:Chapter 4, 1908) was also interested in the photographic detection of this subtle body, as were other contemporaries, such as Hector Durville (1909).²² Interestingly, the close relationship between the projected sensibility and the concept of a double was supported by sensations perceived by the subject. Similar to those instances in which someone felt pain when an object in which his or her sensibility was embedded was pricked, pain (and other) sensations were also felt when the double, only seen by the experimental participant, was touched at the position where it was reported to be (de Rochas 1905a:5,7, 1910:291, 293, 294).

These ideas influenced later writers about subtle bodies, among them Delanne (1909), Durville (1909), and Lefranc (1911a). Bozzano (1904) argued that de Rochas' work on exteriorization of sensibility contributed to the recognition of the existence of a fluidic double and, in turn, to the recognition that this double could leave the body, showing the spiritual nature of man.²³

Ideas of forces (without emphasis on a double) to explain physical mediumship also continued after de Rochas' 1897 paper. In Germany, Schrenck-Notzing (1920) wrote under the assumption of such concepts, as did Sudre (1926) in France, and Carrington (1921) in the United States. Several others continued this tradition, and some of them, like de Rochas, presented their ideas as explanations of Palladino's mediumship (e.g., Carrington 1909, de Fontenay 1898, Morselli 1908).

The preceding Excerpt is part of the history of ideas about doubles, but also of attempts to explain materializations, and psychokinesis in general. But such ideas, while part of current popular culture, do not appear to interest many modern parapsychologists, particularly those representative of the experimental approach. As pointed out before (Alvarado 2006), some academic parapsychologists have moved away from this biophysical or psychoenergetic tradition, preferring instead ideas based on as yet unspecified non-materialistic concepts (e.g., Kelly 2015, Tart 2009). Others have suggested physical approaches that do not assume force-like mechanisms like the ones postulated by de Rochas and others (e.g., Walker 1975, Jahn & Dunne 2001). The same may be said about semi-physical subtle bodies. For example, recent academic discussions of out-of-body experiences have emphasized psychological and neurological-informed speculations, as I have reviewed elsewhere (Cardeña & Alvarado 2014:189–191).

Seen from this perspective, de Rochas' ideas probably appear to some of our contemporaries as antiquated and of little relevance to explain the riddle of psychic phenomena (and physical phenomena in particular), although there is still interest and belief in such ideas, an example being modern spiritist discussions (Loureiro 1998), which do not seem to interact with current parapsychology.

My interest, however, has not been in the validity of de Rochas' ideas, be they magnetic effluvia or fluidic doubles. My purpose has been that of rescuing from oblivion ideas that are sometimes forgotten by parapsychologists today because they have fallen out of fashion (even if still believed in by some groups), or because they are considered today to be wrong. A history of attempts to understand physical phenomena, however, should not consist only of the things believed to be "correct" today. Such a

perspective reflects current conceptions but do not do justice to the actual developments of the past. De Rochas' theoretical model, bringing together ideas of biophysical emanations and fields, and of subtle bodies, are a reminder of a different era and of different conceptions that provide us with a more complete view of past attempts to understand physical mediumship.

Notes

- ¹ The mesmeric movement, and its concept of animal magnetism, is discussed by Crabtree (1993), Gauld (1992), and Méheust (1999). Also important was the work of Karl von Reichenbach (1849/1851), whose ideas about a force he called Od perceived by some individuals around crystals, magnets, and human beings were widely influential (see Nahm 2012).
- ² I have reviewed in various papers aspects of the development of ideas of body emanations or radiations to explain psychic phenomena (e.g., Alvarado 2006, 2009b, 2011b, Alvarado & Nahm 2011). See also the overviews of Amadou (1953) and Ungaro (1992), and the earlier publications of individuals such as Aksakof (1890/1895:1–21), Montandon (1927), Servadio (1932), and Sudre (1926:Chapter 6).
- ³ On the neo-mesmeric movement, see Alvarado (2009b, 2009c) and Harrington (1988).
- ⁴ Several observations were reported about instances where a materialized figure looked like the medium (e.g., Anonymous 1879:133), what some interpreted to be the medium's double. In later years Polish philosopher and psychologist Julian Ochorowicz (1911–1912) used the idea to explain the invisible hands he photographed with medium Stanislaw Tomczyk, arguing that her astral body could “manifest exteriorly and materialize in a manner sufficient to influence a photographic plate” (Ochorowicz 1911–1912:335).
- ⁵ In an article in a mesmeric journal, it was affirmed that magnetism connected matter and spirit:

The soul touches the fluid and the fluid touches the body, it is through this channel that these two essentially different substances communicate. (Beruyer 1852:170)

The concept of the perispirit was further developed in later years in the spiritist literature (e.g., Delanne 1899), and is still discussed in some circles (Loureiro 1998).

- ⁶ For general information about de Rochas, see Anonymous (1914, no date), Curimier (no date:9–10), Fodor (no date:332), and Marzorati (1914). See also Alvarado (2009b:373–374), Castellan (1955/1960:60–62), Lachapelle (2011:56–58), and Peter (1915).

⁷ See also works about an engineer (de Rochas d'Aiglun 1867), fortifications (de Rochas d'Aiglun 1881), artillery (de Rochas d'Aiglun 1882a), synesthesia (de Rochas 1885), geography and the ancient Greeks (de Rochas 1887b), and messenger pigeons (de Rochas 1890). De Rochas used two versions of his name in his publications, but for convenience I have listed them chronologically in the references, not alphabetically.

⁸ Another critic also mentioned that most of the persons participating in the experiments were familiar with mesmeric ideas, or were experienced subjects, or individuals who had participated in many tests (Dariex 1895). The implication was that subjects could be trained to produce specific phenomena, which may reflect the demands of the environment they were working in. Much of the work of de Rochas was done with such subjects, something that was also common as well with many “star” hysterics and hypnotic subjects during the Nineteenth Century (Alvarado 2009d, Carroy 1991).

Interestingly, de Rochas (1895c:Chapter 3, 1904a) speculated that such exteriorization accounted for the long tradition of spells. This was the case with attempts to influence someone using some object representing them, an object imprinted with their “sensibility.”

⁹ The prominence of Palladino as a research medium during the Nineteenth Century can be appreciated from the overviews of Carrington (1909:28–72) and de Rochas (1896:1–315). Many were the reports about her phenomena during this period, among them those of Aksakof, Schiaparelli, du Prel, Brofferio, Gerosa, Ermacora and Finzi (1893), de Fontenay (1898), Lodge (1894), and Sidgwick (1895). Interestingly, Palladino inspired many others in addition to de Rochas to develop ideas to explain physical phenomena, as I have discussed elsewhere (Alvarado 1993).

¹⁰ Regarding observations of luminous effluvia by mesmerized individuals, an early mesmerist stated: “Most somnambulists see a bright luminous fluid surround their magnetizer, coming out stronger from his head and hands” (Deleuze 1813:82). For particular examples, see Buckland (1850:43), Elliotson (1848:225), and Tardy de Montravel (1785:27–28). Luys (1892) reported similar observations in later years. In this part of the text the author refers to the first chapter of one of his books entitled “On the Objectivity of Effluvia Perceived in the Form of Light During the Hypnotic State” (de Rochas 1895a; see also de Rochas 1894). He also cited a French edition of lectures delivered in 1866 by Reichenbach (no date) in Vienna (see also De Rochas D’Aiglun 1891).

¹¹ For example, in his studies with Mrs. Lux (pseudonym for Mrs. L. Lambert), de Rochas stated:

I charged a photographic plate with her effluvia and placed it first between her hands . . . [after the plate was developed] Mrs. Lux felt when I touched the plate, but she felt nothing when MB [the person who developed the plate] touched it, unless I touched MB myself . . . I pricked on the image of one of her hands: Mrs. Lux fainted. (de Rochas 1895a:104–105)

Lefranc (1911b) reported an instance of “repercussion” in which Mrs. Lambert felt her double was grabbed by an invisible hand. Next day she showed swollenness and redness of the forearm. Photographs of the bruise were presented.

¹² In his book *L’Extériorisation de la Motricité*, de Rochas (1896:ii) defines the term as the induction of movements on stationary objects via a force coming from the body.

¹³ Similarly, Chevillard (1869) wrote in relation to turning tables that:

The table is truly magnetized by the medium’s will . . . The table becomes an organ of the medium–magnetizer, as his arm, his ear, and it will obey for the same reason . . . that my arms obey, when my will commands. (Chevillard 1869:14–15).

¹⁴ De Rochas cites the French edition of these lectures, entitled *Les Effluves Odiques* (Reichenbach no date). The first part of the book has a long introduction by de Rochas entitled “Notice Historique sur les Recherches Relatives aux Effets Mécaniques de l’Od.” Regarding table turning, see de Rochas’ (1896:Part 2, Chapter 1) discussion of the work of Agénor de Gasparin (1854) and Marc Thury (1855).

¹⁵ This is a reference to materializations of hands. De Rochas (1897b:20) reported this phenomenon with Palladino, saying that “fluidic hands,” as well as movement of objects, “must be considered a fact definitively acquired by positive science.” He wrote about materialized hands later (de Rochas 1909). Appearances of hands in séances were well-known before the time when our author was writing (e.g., Adare 1869:135).

¹⁶ Here he cites his article about phantoms of the living (de Rochas 1895b; on de Rochas and doubles see Alvarado 2011a). This work, and that of visual perceptions of lights from magnets and layers of sensibility (de Rochas 1895a), depended on the reports of the magnetized experimental participants.

¹⁷ This was the medium’s spirit control. As de Rochas (1896) wrote:

This John King says he is the brother of Crookes’ Katie King and that he was Eusapia’s father in another existence. It is John who speaks when Eusapia is in a trance; he speaks of her calling her ‘my daughter’ and gives advice on how she should be treated. (de Rochas 1896:16)

Katie King was a full body materialization observed by William Crookes with medium Florence Cook (Crookes 1874:102–112).

¹⁸ De Rochas (1896:132–133) had referred to imprints on clay with Palladino in a previous publication. Describing what happened in an instance in which a clay mould of clenching fingers was obtained, he wrote:

Eusapia groaned, writhed and all her limbs trembled; however, her hands did not leave ours for a moment. Then she said: It is done. (de Rochas 1896:132)

Bozzano (1911:167) interpreted imprints of Palladino's facial features on clay as the influence of "her 'etheric body,' doubled and materialized." Interestingly, de Rochas recounted in a different publication an instance in which he believed that the medium was in a deep hypnotic state and she saw, "to her great surprise, on her right, a blue phantom. I asked her if it was John; she replied no, but that it was that which John used"(de Rochas 1896:17).

¹⁹ Explanations of physical mediumship based on concepts of nervous forces without recourse to discarnate agency were frequent in the literature before de Rochas published his ideas (e.g., Rogers 1853, Von Hartmann 1885).

²⁰ Most of the weighing tests with mediums conducted before de Rochas' article was published do not support this (but see Aksakof 1890/1895:243, and Harrison 1878). Regarding stages of materialization, Alexander Aksakof (1894–1896/1898:13) postulated that there were three of them. This consisted of formations not visible to the naked eye, visible incomplete formations, and materializations of complete bodies.

²¹ On d'Espérance, see Fodor (no date:83–85). Aksakof (1894–1896/1898) has discussed the apparent instance of dematerialization mentioned by de Rochas (see also D'Espérance, no date). There have been other reports of dematerialization of the whole body of mediums (e.g., Roberts 1876).

²² de Rochas added in a footnote:

Some people, especially sensitives, perceive it by sight or touch. I photographed it again with [photographer Paul] Nadar, but I could not repeat the experiment. The spirit photographs appear to be due to the action, on the plate, of the double of the subject modeled by a foreign intelligence, but still invisible in this state. (de Rochas 1897a:27)

See, on photographs of the astral body and its emanations, de Rochas (1900:Chapter 4, 1908). The idea of capturing the spirit of living individuals in photos was present in the early spiritualist literature (e.g., Carter 1875, Moses 1876). Furthermore, there was much interest in the

photographic detection of invisible vital or nervous forces (e.g., Baraduc 1896, Luys & David 1897; see also the overviews of Chéroux 2005 and Krauss 1995).

- ²³ Bozzano developed these ideas in later publications (e.g., Bozzano 1911, 1934/1937), connecting different forms of nonconscious projections (such as autoscopy and many apparitions of the living) to the conscious experience of feeling out of the body, and to the idea of transcending the body and surviving its physical death (see also Alvarado 2005). De Rochas' work was one strand of evidence cited to argue for the existence of a double independent of physical constraints.

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