THE REPORTS of the
ROYAL COMMISION OF 1784 on
MESMER'S SYSTEM of
ANIMAL MAGNETISM and other contemporary documents

New English translations and an introduction by
IML DONALDSO
Contemporary print showing treatment by Mesmer’s Animal Magnetism. The patients seated round the jacquet, a wooden tank filled with bottles of ‘magnetised water’, held iron cranks reaching into the jacquet against the affected parts. A woman on the left is being magnetised by a standing operator; she may possibly be undergoing a crisis.

Image courtesy of Wellcome Images
Introduction to the translations of the Rapports
and other documents.

Mesmer's theory of *Animal Magnetism* and his claims of success in using *Animal Magnetism* to treat patients with a wide variety of diseases raised heated public controversy in pre-revolutionary France and much anxiety among medical practitioners.

Mesmer's proposals for a trial of Animal Magnetism in 1780

In 1780 Mesmer approached the *Faculté de Médecine* in Paris asking it to supervise a trial of the results of his treatment of patients using Animal Magnetism. He insisted that such a trial should be only of the results of his treatment whose details he would not disclose. His proposals involved two groups of twelve patients, who were to be assigned to a group by 'the method of lots', one group to be treated by conventional methods the other by Animal Magnetism. Venereal diseases were to be excluded otherwise he made no conditions about which disorders could be included. The trial was to be overseen by the government but the arrangements were to be made by the *Faculté*. The *Faculté* rejected the proposals out of hand and condemned one of their members, Deslon, who had presented the petition on Mesmer's behalf. Mesmer's proposals seem to have been forgotten and, as far as I know, had not been translated into English before my article on them in the James Lind Library which was also published in print in 2005.

My translation of Mesmer's proposals is reproduced in this book.

The *Faculté*'s dismissal of Mesmer's proposals without any consideration at all caused some public criticism and, eventually, Mesmer approached the Queen, Marie Antoinette

In 1784 Mesmer's claims were investigated by a number of official bodies, most notably by a board of Commissioners set up by order of Louis XVI and his government and by a panel of investigators from the French Royal Society of Medicine. Of these reports much the most important is that by the Royal Commissioners who included Benjamin Franklin and Antoine Lavoisier as well as the then famous astronomer Jean-Sylvain Bailly and a doctor whose name later became infamous and who has been most unjustly treated by history, Joseph-Ignace Guillotin. Contrary to popular belief, Mesmer did not, in fact, practise the techniques of hypnosis which were later associated with his name (*Mesmerism*) though it was probably during experiments with *Animal Magnetism* that these were discovered, or at least came to public attention.

The ‘public’ report of the Royal Commissioners:

There have been two English translations of the text of the Rapport of the Royal Commissioners. The first, published in 1785, the year after the report, is by an unknown translator; it is both accurate and elegantly written, but not easily available. The second translation appeared in 1996 in an American periodical ‘Skeptic’, also not easily available in the UK. It is preceded by a rather populist introduction; the translation itself is generally satisfactory.

When I translated the Rapport I was not aware of these previous translations and I have not made a systematic comparison of my text with theirs though I have noticed one clear misinterpretation of the French text by the 1996 translators.
The ‘secret’ report of the Royal Commissioners, the report of the Société Royale de Médecine and Bailly’s Exposé:

The other reports, the ‘Rapport secret’ of the Royal Commissioners, The report of the Société Royale de Médecine and Bailly’s ‘Exposé’ have not, as far as I know, previously been translated into English. The Secret report was intended only for the eyes of the King and his ministers and deals with the danger to public morals which the Commissioners felt was posed by treatment with ‘animal magnetism’. It speaks for itself as a set of shrewd observations and as an attempt to have vulnerable women protected from the attentions of practitioners who might, by intention or otherwise, take advantage of them.

The medical Commissioners of the Société Royale de Médecine carried out experiments on lines similar to those of the Royal Commissioners but there were fewer of these, the controls were less impressive and they seem to have been less thorough. Their conclusions were that ‘Animal Magnetism’ did not exist. The report of the Société Royale de Médecine is of much less modern interest than the others and I have not included its translation here.

The Exposé of Bailly:

Though the text of this document is fairly easily available it seems to have attracted little attention - certainly not that which its qualities deserve. The Exposé of Bailly differs from the others in its audience; it is the text of a report presented by Bailly to the Académie des Sciences on behalf of the Members of the Académie who had been on the Royal Commission - that is, Franklin, Lavoisier, le Roy, de Borie and Bailly himself. It is of particular interest because, as well as summarizing succinctly the findings of the Royal Commission, Bailly comments on the observations by the Commissioners of the powers of the ‘imagination’ in producing dramatic effects and goes so far as to suggest that they will form the material for a new science (p. 11):

….. But the phenomena observed allow several more results that we shall put forward. These results concern the imitation and the imagination, two of our most astonishing faculties; these are facts for a science now new, that of the influence of the mental on the physical, and we ask that we be permitted in this respect to enter into some preliminary and purely philosophical details.

Some recent critics of the Commissioners have claimed that they were uninterested in explanation of the mechanism of the dramatic effects produced by ‘Animal Magnetism’ and were concerned only to show the falsity of the magnetisers’ claims that they were produced by physical magnetism. Bailly’s comments show that these criticisms are over-simplistic. It seems that his Exposé has been ignored but it shows clearly that the Commissioners were entirely aware of the apparent ‘cure’ of patients by the ‘magnetizers’ and that they did not dismiss the reality of the patients’ claims that their suffering had improved. What they did dismiss were the claims that any of the effects were caused by physical effects produced by the so-called ‘animal magnetism’; they concluded that they were caused by the effects of the whole procedure on the ‘imagination’ of the patients. These effects on the ‘imagination’ they did not attempt to explain in physical terms but they pointed out that effects on people’s behaviour and beliefs produced apparently by non-physical means were not rare; the commonest such effects were induced by the persuasion of demagogues and those claiming spiritual powers, and they cited examples of these. Bailly makes this clear in the Exposé.
Forced to renounce physical proofs we were obliged to seek the causes of these real effects in
the states of mind [of the subjects]. In the rest of our enquiries we ceased to be physicists to
become nothing more than philosophers; and we submitted to examination the affections of the
spirit and the ideas of those exposed to the action of magnetism.

Bailly’s Exposé is a monument to the clarity of thought of a group of eighteenth-century physical
scientists and physicians - for he makes it explicit that, though he speaks to the Académie on behalf of his
colleagues of that body, the opinions and conclusions of all the Commissioners were the same. Having
failed to find a physical cause for the phenomena exhibited by the subjects exposed to ‘animal magnetism’
they do not dismiss these as chimera but seek to explain them, as they say, ‘as philosophers’ and realize
that they have found means of well-controlled experimentation through which such apparently non-
physical effects on human behaviour and on symptoms can be studied. The Exposé does truly herald the
beginnings of a new science - that which we now call experimental psychology - and it does this much
more explicitly than do the ‘reports’. It deserves to be much better known.

It is one of history’s sad ironies that two of the Royal Commissioners - Bailly and Lavoisier - were
executed within a few years of the publication of their reports as ‘enemies of the people’ that is of the
French revolutionary state, and that one of the others, Guillotin, gave his name to what became the
instrument of the Terror. Bailly was Mayor of Paris for a time after the revolution and it was on his orders
that the National Guard dispersed a riot in the Champ de Mars, firing on the crowd when they were
pelted with stones; a number of the rioters were killed and Bailly was later held responsible for their
deaths. During the Terror Bailly was arrested, found guilty of murder, and beheaded at the site of the riot.
Lavoisier was a shareholder in the Ferme Générale a company which advanced tax due to the treasury
then themselves collected the taxes. After the revolution Lavoisier was among the tax collectors - who
had always been detested - arrested, tried and executed.

Though he survived the Terror, Guillotin’s place in history is tragic - he was among those who tried to
persuade the Assemblée Constituante to abolish the death penalty in 1789 and only when this
completely failed did he argue for the introduction of the most humane method of execution which he
could find (he did not, of course, invent the beheading machine) whose instrument was then to become
infamous as the Guillotine. It is not surprising that Guillotin’s descendants changed their name when the
French government refused to rename the Guillotine.

The Editors of the James Lind Library feel that it would be of interest for readers to have easy access to
English translations of the full texts of the ‘reports’ that were published in Paris in 1784 on the examination
of Animal Magnetism; I hope that my translations will fulfill this purpose. Because Mesmer’s methods of
applying ‘animal magnetism’ are not widely known - he was extremely secretive about them - I have
added translations of some passages from an unauthorized publication in 1785 of his instructions to his
pupils. These make it much easier to understand the references made in the Reports to such procedures
as magnetizing trees and applying ‘magnetism’ with different poles to patients and subjects.

The arrangement of the text and footnotes of the translations

The pages of the translations have been numbered to correspond to the page numbers of the original
French text; they are arranged so that the content of the original and translation correspond closely, page
for page. On suitable readers, tapping (or clicking) a page number in the translations of the Public Report
and the Exposé will open an image of the corresponding page of the original French text.

The Rapport and Bailly's Exposé\textsuperscript{4} were translated from copies of the original eighteenth century editions. However, the secret report was translated from the text of the Rapport Secret reprinted in Burdin & Dubois 1841\textsuperscript{6}.

The footnotes of the original (public) Rapport were indicated by letters (a) (b) etc.; here they are indicated by Arabic numbers (1, 2, 3 etc.) and the error produced by the inclusion of two notes (e) in the original has been corrected so that the notes are numbered correctly in the order of their appearance. I have added a few notes of my own which are identified by roman symbols (i, ii and so on).

The French text of the Public report contains a number of marginal notes; these have been presented in the translation as right-justified notes in a distinctive format thus:

Acknowledgements

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the kindness of the Special Collections Department of the Library of the University of Edinburgh who made photocopies and scans for me of the complete text of the Library’s copy of the Royal Commission’s Reports of 1784 and of pages from the anonymous English translation of this report published in 1785.

Images from the original text of the Report of 1784 appear here by permission of the University of Edinburgh; those from the Secret Report and Mesmer’s Aphorisms appear by courtesy of the Gallica library of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. The images of the text of Bailly's Exposé appear with the permission of the Bibliothèque Interuniversitaire de Santé, Paris

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Edinburgh, 2013.

\footnotesize


3 Anonymous Report of Dr. Benjamin Franklin, and other commissioners : charged by the King of France, with the examination of the animal magnetism, as now practised at Paris. Translated from the French. With an historical introduction. London: J. Johnson, no 72 St. Paul's Churchyard; 1785.

4. Shermer, M., Salas, C., Salas D. The first scientific Investigation of the paranormal ever conducted. Testing the claims of Mesmerism. Commissioned by King Louis XVI. Designed, Conducted and Written by Benjamin Franklin, Antoine Lavoisier and others. Translated by


Mesmer and his Animal Magnetism in Paris

Having been effectively thrown out of Vienna where his supposed cures by ‘Animal Magnetism’ had aroused both the enthusiasm of some patients and the enmity of most of the medical establishment, Mesmer went to Switzerland and then to France in 1778 where his reputation had preceded him. In Paris crowds came to see him – some to be treated and some from curiosity.

Mesmer wanted both approbation of his ‘discovery’ of Animal Magnetism and profit from its exercise and he seems to have believed that the best way to do this was to try to persuade the learned societies of Paris to approve his theory and methods. After a number of unsuccessful approaches to the Académie des Sciences and the Royal Society of Medicine, Mesmer paused in his attempt to persuade the learned of the virtues of his theory and concentrated, with great success, on building up a practice treating patients. However, Mesmer really wanted the government’s approval and hence benefit and profit to him; without this he was adamant that he would not divulge his secrets. It seems that his principal concern was for profit rather than for academic fame or distinction.

Some time passed before he approached the Faculté de Médecine but, in the meantime, he had made the acquaintance of one of its Regent Doctors, d’Eslon or Deslon. Deslon became persuaded of the great utility of Mesmer’s method; he said that he did not yet know the nature of the agent involved though he knew the procedure for treatment. He published his observations, just relating the effects he had seen, in 1780. Mesmer and Deslon became friends and the latter agreed, as a professor in the Faculté de Médecine, to propose to the Faculté that they examine the discovery.

The Faculté was far from happy since they had decided they wanted nothing to do with Mesmer, but they could not refuse the request by one of their own. However, they retaliated by agreeing to a M. de Vauzèmes bringing a charge against Deslon of having damaged the reputation of the Faculté by his espousal of the views of Mesmer, to be heard on the same day that Deslon was to make his proposal. The meeting took place on 18 September 1780. De Vauzèmes spoke first and launched a vituperative attack against both Mesmer and Deslon; reading this now one is struck not only by its virulence but also by its baselessness – he proposed that Mesmer’s methods should be rejected out of hand without dignifying them by examination since Mesmer was a charlatan; then, since Mesmer was a charlatan, he claimed that Deslon had demeaned the profession of medicine by associating with him. He went further and proposed that the Faculté should reject out of hand all such claims for new cures which were contrary to the practice of sound medicine. All this was proposed without any evidence whatever about Mesmer’s methods or whether he was indeed a charlatan. Deslon then spoke; his discourse was reasoned and the proposals he presented on behalf of Mesmer for a commission of enquiry were not unreasonable though Mesmer proposed that they be confined to observations on whether his patients improved more or less than did those treated conventionally.

He proposed a trial in which twenty-four patients were to be divided into two groups of twelve, one group to be treated by ‘ordinary methods’ and the other to be treated by Mesmer. To avoid any later
arguments about ‘age, temperament, disease or symptoms’ the patients were to be assigned to the groups by drawing lots and the details of duration of treatment and of the examination of the patients were to be decided in advance. A report of each patient’s state was to be drawn up and signed by the Commissioners, by Mesmer, and by representatives to be appointed by the government; the latter were to be persons not involved in medical practice to avoid any public suspicion of partisanship. All in all it seems a very fair proposition if one accepts that only the change in the patient’s state was to be examined and Mesmer’s method was to remain secret.

However, the Faculté was determined not to have any truck with Mesmer or his practice. It not only rejected the proposals Deslon had presented on Mesmer’s behalf, it also admonished Deslon to behave more circumspectly and threatened that, unless during the next year he repudiated Mesmer’s teachings, his name would be deleted from membership of the Faculté at the end of the year. In the meantime Deslon was forbidden to take part in deliberations at meetings of the Faculté.

Mesmer responded to the rejection of his proposals by publishing them in the Journal de Paris and a good deal of feeling was aroused that the Faculté had acted very arrogantly in dismissing Mesmer and his methods without any examination of these. It must be remembered, however, that Mesmer steadfastly refused to allow his methods to be scrutinised at all and insisted that only the effects of his treatment should be examined.

Mesmer’s proposals that the Faculté rejected on 18 September 1780 largely speak for themselves; they are in many ways remarkably modern in the conditions they set out. The proposal that each patient for the trial should be randomly allocated ‘by the method of lots’ to one of the two groups, to take account of differences between them and their illnesses and to avoid later argument about the outcome, may well be the second earliest instance of random allocation being proposed for a clinical trial. The first such suggestion was, as far as is known in 2013, that by Van Helmont devised about 1643 and published posthumously in the Ortus Medicinae of 1648. However, neither Van Helmont’s trial nor Mesmer’s actually took place.

It may strike the modern reader as extremely odd that anyone could contemplate a trial in which patients with virtually any disease were to be mixed up; random allocation - whatever Mesmer said - could not, to our minds, possibly control for having different mixtures of diseases or different numbers of patients with the same disease in the two groups. I think the key to this apparent contradiction between taking care to make the groups comparable by random allocation at the same time as explicitly allowing the groups to contain different mixtures of patients with any disease whatsoever (except ‘les maladies V…’, probably venereal diseases), is to be found in Mesmer’s theory of disease. He explicitly believed (at least as reported by Deslon) that there was only one disease and only one cure for it; in fact that Animal Magnetism was a universal panacea. All disease was caused, according to Mesmer, by disturbance of the flow within the body of a universal and all-pervading fluid and all was to be cured by correcting the flow of this fluid using his method of treatment by Animal Magnetism. There is a sense in which Galenic medicine also took the view that disease was unitary in nature and was always caused by disturbance of the balance of the humours, so it may be that there would have been no qualms on either side when Mesmer and the Faculté jointly chose the twenty-four patients for the trial, about including any mixture of patients – provided each patient was randomly allocated to a group. Since the Faculté rejected Mesmer’s proposals out of hand further speculation on this is idle.

Ironically, in Van Helmont’s proposed trial of the treatment of fevers with and without blood-letting, it was Van Helmont who believed that diseases were distinct and had distinct causes and his opponents, the
‘Galenists’, who believed that disease was essentially unitary in its causation. Mesmer, as we have seen, took the ‘unitary’ view. However, Van Helmont also believed in a universal remedy (the *Alkahest*), though a very different one from Mesmer.

There is also room for serious doubt about whether Van Helmont’s proposals were ever intended to result in a real trial or whether they were - as I argue elsewhere - just a rhetorical device to support his arguments against the ‘Galenists’. But there seems no reason at all to doubt that Mesmer would have taken part in a trial, provided it was organized on the lines he proposed, had the *Faculté* agreed to it.

Following the rejection of his proposals, Mesmer appealed directly to the French government and to the queen, Marie Antoinette, who, like Mesmer, was Austrian by birth. Eventually, in 1784, two commissions of enquiry were set up - one by the *Societé Royale de Médecine* and the other by a specially appointed Royal Commission. These resulted in the total rejection of Mesmer’s theory by the one commission and of the results of his treatments by the other.

Mesmer was later accused, justly, of unwillingness to participate in trials; indeed, it was not Mesmer’s application of Animal Magnetism but Deslon’s that was examined by the commissions of enquiry of 1784. Mesmer’s refusal to take part in the later trials was because of his complete opposition to allowing his methods - as opposed to the results of his treatments - to be examined. The Royal Commissioners anticipated that Mesmer would deny that his Animal Magnetism was the same as Deslon’s and therefore were prudent enough to state explicitly at the end of their report that they expected him to make just such a denial and that, in advance, they dismissed it as baseless. Their expectations were fulfilled; when the Royal Commission found that there was no basis for belief in the existence of Animal Magnetism, Mesmer made exactly this denial saying it was Deslon’s claims and not his that had been examined and been found to have no basis.
The proposals for a trial of the curative results of Mesmer’s treatment of patients by ‘Animal Magnetism’ read to an assembly of the Faculté de Médecine de Paris by Deslon on behalf of Mesmer on 18 September 1780.

Court de Gébelin’s 10 version of the proposals from a pamphlet dated 31 July, 1783.

From:

Recueil des pièces les plus intéressantes sur le magnétisme animal. 1784. p.133 ff

What proposals did M. Mesmer make to the Faculté de Médecine?

Though the Faculté de Médecine lent its ear to this discourse it made irrelevant objections to M. Mesmer’s proposals; here is the Memoir that he asked to have presented during the same meeting 11.

The discovery of Animal Magnetism resulted in the printing of a Memoir 12 in which it is set out that Nature offers a universal method of curing and of preserving [the health of] Men: that, with this knowledge the doctor can judge with certainty of the origin, nature and progression of all maladies, even the most complicated; that with it he will be able to prevent their increase and bring about their cure without ever exposing the patients to dangerous effects or unfortunate outcomes, whatever their age, temperament and sex.

This system, which is different to all received ideas, has been regarded as being an illusion; the Author of the discovery expected this but he was not slow in justifying his reasoning by deeds.

He undertook, before the eyes of all Paris, a considerable number of treatments and the improvements produced and the cures brought about by Animal Magnetism have incontrovertibly proved the truth of his assertions.

Nevertheless, it must be said that the experiments carried out until the present have been undertaken for so many different reasons that most of them could not be carried to the point of perfection of which they were capable, and that, while some patients followed their treatment with the required constancy and application, many abandoned it to vicarious circumstances.

Had the Author sought only celebrity he would have continued on the same course, but his desire to be more generally useful moved him to behave otherwise.

He aims to convince the government, but the government cannot reasonably come to a decision on such a subject without the aid of the learned.

If there is a body in Europe which, without presumption, may flatter itself as having the most unprejudiced authority about the subject in question it is undoubtedly the Faculté de Médecine de Paris. Addressing the government by its intermediary is thus the most formal proof of the Author’s sincerity and the honesty of his opinions.

Thus he asks the Faculté to take, in accord with and under the formal auspices of the government, the most decisive means of demonstrating the usefulness of his discovery.
Nothing would appear to lead more directly to this end than a comparative trial of the new method against the old ones.

Since the administration of the usual remedies could not be in better hands than those of the Faculté, it is clear that if the new method were to have the advantage over the old, the proofs in its favour would be the more decisive.

Here are some of the arrangements that could be put in place in this respect. It is unnecessary to say that on both sides the greatest freedom of opinion must be upheld, and that each must have equal authority over the patients subjected to each treatment.

1. The intervention of the government must be sought; but, since it is easy to believe that a request from a body such as the Faculté must carry more weight than that from an individual, it would be appropriate that, before anything else, the Faculté should take on itself this negotiation.

2. Twenty-four patients are to be chosen of whom twelve will be reserved to the Faculté to be treated by the ordinary methods: the other twelve will be assigned to the Author who will treat them according to his particular method.

3. The Author excludes from the selection all Venereal diseases.

4. In the first instance written reports will be made of the condition of each patient: each report will be signed by the Commissioners of the Faculté, by the Author and by the persons appointed by the government.

5. The selection of patients will be made by the Faculté or by the Faculté and the Author together.

6. In order to avoid any later argument and all the questions that could be raised about differences in age, in temperament, in diseases, in their symptoms etc. the assignment of the patients shall be made by the method of lots.

7. The form of each comparative examination of the patients, and when these will be carried out, shall be fixed in advance so that no reasonable argument can arise later about the improvement obtained by either method.

8. Since the Author’s method involves little expense, he will not ask for any recompense for his work; but it would seem reasonable that the government should take on itself the costs of the maintenance of the twenty-four patients.

9. The persons appointed by the government shall be present at each examination and shall sign the written reports: however, as it is essential to avoid any suspicion by the Public of special knowledge or of collusion, it will be indispensable that the government’s nominees are not members of any medical body.

The Author flatters himself that the Faculté de Médecine de Paris will not see anything in the above proposals but just homage rendered to its distinction and the desire that a truth which may be of the greatest advantage to the Nation may be seen to prosper by the efforts of a Body dear to that Nation.

I believe that M. Mesmer still holds to these proposals and I am entirely persuaded that he would still be
ready to carry them out were the government so to wish.

.................................

**The Faculté’s response to Mesmer’s proposals presented by Deslon:**

From Bertrand (1826) p.40

Deslon read these proposals at the end of his presentation, placed them on the table and went out to allow the assembly time to deliberate them. When he returned the following resolution was read to him by way of response:

1. M. Deslon is required to be more circumspect in the future.
2. He is to be struck off the list of the Doctors of the Faculté at the end of the year if he has not, by then, renounced his observations on Animal Magnetism.
3. The proposals of Mesmer are rejected.

**References**


5. *Recueil des pièces les plus intéressantes sur le magnétisme animal*. Contents by, or attributed to, several authors; no publisher or place of publication. 1784.

**Notes**

1. Deslon (1780; see note 3) tried to persuade Mesmer that he would be better to use the popularity of his treatment with the ‘people’ to persuade the savants of its merits than to try, as Mesmer wanted to, to seek endorsement from the learned societies and thus to influence the opinion of the populace. Events proved Deslon right.

2. Eslon, Charles d'. *Observations sur le magnétisme animal*. Londres; et se trouve à Paris: Didot:
Saugrain: Clousier. 1780.

3. A translation of the full text of Mesmer’s proposals is appended. MESMER’S PROPOSALS.

4. See the article on Van Helmont’s ‘trial’ in James Lind Library (in process of modification).

5. Except, perhaps, in the case of a trial where only the effect of a remedy on one or a small number of symptoms (for example, pain, nausea) is to be tested without regard to the underlying pathology giving rise to the symptoms.

6. Deslon is quoted as claiming that there is only ‘one Nature, one illness, one remedy; and that this remedy is Animal Magnetism’. Rapport des commissaires chargés par le Roi, de l'examen du magnétisme animal. Imprimé par ordre du Roi. Paris: A Paris, de L'Imprimerie Royale.; 1784. p3.


8. See article on Van Helmont’s proposed trial in the James Lind Library (in preparation).

9. For more information see the article on the Commissions of 1784 in the James Lind Library (in preparation). As the Commissioners pointed out in their report, there was no reason at all to believe that Deslon’s and Mesmer’s theories and practices were different – indeed there was overwhelming evidence that they were the same and that all of them derived from Mesmer, as Deslon most willingly accepted.

10. Antoine Court de Gébelin (1719? - 1784) describes himself at the end of this letter as: Censeur Royal [a member of] various Academies and Perpetual Honorary President of the Museum of Paris. On its title page he is described as the author of the book ‘Le Monde Primitif’. The latter is an extraordinary work. The ‘letter’ in which the text of Mesmer’s proposals for a trial is given is entitled: Lettre de l’auteur du Monde Primitif à messieurs ses souscripteurs. Sur le magnétisme animal; it is dated 31 July, 1783. The souscripteurs were the subscribers to Court de Gébelin’s publication of the Monde Primitif who numbered at least 760 with some, mainly booksellers, subscribing for several copies. The subscribers included the King, Louis XVI, who subscribed for 100 copies, and 8 other members of the French Royal Family; also on the list are Diderot and d’Alembert, authors of the Encyclopédie, Benjamin Franklin, and Joseph Banks who was President of the Royal Society of London from 1778 till his death in 1820. In the ‘letter’ Court de Gébelin apologizes for not producing another volume that year (1783) and explains why he had not been able to continue working on his huge opus after the ninth volume was finished because of an illness from which he believed that Mesmer had cured him. However, he died on 13 May, 1784 without completing any more of the Monde Primitif. In the Recueil the ‘letter’ is followed by an account of Court de Gébelin’s death (which took place in Mesmer’s house) and a postmortem report from which it is clear that he had advanced renal disease.

Bertrand (1826) quotes a shorter version of Mesmer’s proposals in his history of Animal Magnetism in France but gives no source for his text. The earlier and fuller account by Court de Gébelin written less than three years after the event seems preferable.

Bertrand, A. Du magnétisme animal en France: et des jugements qu'en ont portés les
The proposals were presented by Deslon (Charles Nicolas d’Eslon 1750-1786), who was a Regent Docteur of the Faculté and thus had the right of addressing them in spite of the Faculté’s reluctance to entertain any approach from Mesmer. See Bertrand (1826).

Mesmer’s Mémoire of 1779.

The text has: ‘… toutes maladies V……’. Perhaps the suppressed word is vénériennes? Interpreting the word as meaning venereal is a guess by the translator; but it seems a likely rendering since treating venereal disease would have presented clear difficulties for Mesmer because an important part of his regime involved placing his hands, and the metal bars from the bacquet, in contact with the affected parts.

‘… la répartition se feroit par la voie du sort ’ One can be quite certain that this means - and would have been understood in the 18th century as meaning - casting or drawing lots in order to make a random allocation. Nicot, Thresor de la langue française (1606), makes explicit the derivation of sort from the Latin sors, lot or fortune, and faire sort he defines as: sortire, sortem ducere, meaning to cast or draw lots, to appoint by lot. He also gives as a synonym for sort the Latin clerus meaning assignment by lots. Editions of the Dictionnaire de L’Académie Française between 1694 and 1798 include in the definition of sort ‘Sort, signifie aussi, La manière de décider quelque chose par le hasard.’ ‘Sort also means the method of deciding something by chance’.
Lavoisier

Documents on animal magnetism

from


With the exception of those parts which are dated individually the documents are undated.
Royal command to Lavoisier to be one of the Commissioners.

To M. Lavoisier,

of the Académie des Sciences

Versailles, 2 April, 1784.

The King has chosen you, Sir, to proceed with several other persons distinguished by their enlightenment and their experience to the examination of the method or practice derived from the claimed discoveries of the sieur Mesmer, about which the sieur Deslon, doctor of the Faculté of Paris agrees to explain. I do not for a moment doubt that you will fulfil this commission with the zeal and attention which it deserves. When MM. the Commissioners have drawn up a detailed report and their opinion, I shall give an account of it to His Majesty.

I am entirely,

Sir,

Your most humble and most obedient servant.

Le Baron de Breteuil

P.S. It was, Sir, the doctors themselves who wished to combine their report and their opinion with the members of the Académie.
The Commissioners chosen by the King from the Académie des Sciences to examine the effects of animal magnetism take liberty to observe:

That, as physical scientists, their functions must have as their object only to characterise the agent designated by the name animal magnetism and to describe its effect, in general, on the animal economy, or, more generally, on organised beings;

As for matters related to the treatment of diseases, this purpose is entirely foreign to them and is of concern only to doctors. They make the observation only, that the cure of diseases may depend on an infinity of circumstances quite distinct from animal magnetism and it is to complicate the question to make it dependent on this outcome [i.e. the outcome of treatment with animal magnetism]. There are a large number of maladies regarded as incurable which, left to Nature, are cured by her aid alone. In the case of less serious illnesses which are treated according to the rules of medicine, it is often difficult to disentangle that which is due to the art from that which is due to Nature. They believe, in consequence, that the treatment of diseases can lead only to probabilities which could not be converted into certitude except by experiments and observations more numerous and of longer duration than the circumstances permit, and they believe that one cannot deduce from them results sufficiently decisive to pronounce on the present question. They will content themselves, therefore, with making use of patients who have been chosen and admitted, or who will be in the future, in order to make observations on the reality of animal magnetism considered as an agent in general, and they declare that they will not take any part in anything that could be purely medical.

Since we have signed the written report that MM. the Commissioners of the Society of Medicine drew up yesterday, on the state of three sick women who were presented to them, we feel ourselves obliged to declare that, not being medical men, our signature can signify nothing other than our presence at the examination of those patients.
There exists in Nature a universal fluid; it is perhaps better felt than described; Newton called it the *etheral medium*; Descartes, *the universal mover*; the hermetic philosophers, *the universal principle*, etc.

Light, sound, odours communicate by this medium or fluid. They strike first the first parts nearest to the torch or to the scented flower, communicate from globule to globule, and, finally lose themselves in dissipation and remain without force; thus the operation of the fluid could be explained by the laws of movement.

One cannot touch or smell, one cannot perceive this fluid: from this it has no existence! But is attraction, of which the effect is so constant, any better perceived, or the power of the magnet which is touched by the finger; or electricity of which use is made to avoid thunderbolts and even to bring about cures? The electric fluid is nothing but the universal fluid combined, which arises from the rubbing of bodies. Electricity does not create this fluid; electricity makes use of it, and this new system makes its theory [that of electricity] more complicated.

Attraction, which is undefined, has perhaps no cause other than this fluid. Why should one not see this effect in the continual movement of the stars? Why should they not be supplied with a similar fluid which directs them, attracts them and traces their courses? This fluid, however it may be demonstrated, forms the action-space that there is between all bodies. One man can communicate to another the fluid which permeates him and gives him existence. Such is animal magnetism.

This supposed fluid tends always to put itself in equilibrium and it produces cures in certain subjects without their feeling any sensation; one has seen several patients like this who have been cured of obstructions, hydropsies, diseased glands etc.

Here is how it is applied; the patient is placed on a chair, the magnetiser puts himself opposite, also on a chair, applying the inner sides of his knees to the outer sides of the knees of the subject he is going to magnetise. In this position the poles of their bodies are opposed because the right side of the magnetiser is opposite the left side of the magnetised, and his left side opposite the other’s right.

Then one lightly applies the hands to the hypochondria of the patient and leaves them in this position for seven or eight minutes; after that, one moves the hands so that the thumbs are placed on the pit of the stomach; the other fingers of the left hand are on the liver and those of the right hand on the spleen. One leaves them there for some time; after this one moves them from above downwards, beginning with the head, at a distance of six lines from the patient’s body, the index or the thumb of the right hand on the left side of the body, in the direction of the sympathetic nerve, keeping the other hand on the hypochondrium.
Sometimes one moves the two hands in the same sense, the right hand in the direction of the left sympathetic nerve and the left hand in the direction of the right sympathetic. On other occasions one moves the hands on the hypochondria or on the affected parts, observing always to direct the hands from above downwards in the direction of the principal nerves of the parts being magnetised, always with the right hand on the left side and the left hand on the right side, thus always conserving the opposition of poles that constitutes the whole of magnetism.

There is another method of decanting the fluid, as though one could magnetise to a greater or lesser degree, or, which is the same thing, magnetise positively or negatively. For this it suffices to bring the thumb close to the part that one wishes to magnetise, and to withdraw it along a perpendicular line to about a foot and a half’s distance, approaching it and withdrawing it successively without touching the exact spot. One can carry out this experiment on oneself; it suffices to bring the palm of the left hand close to the right thumb and to approach and withdraw it alternately for eight or ten minutes. Few people have done this without feeling marked warmth in the palm of the hand.

No other preparation is necessary except extreme cleanliness and avoidance of tobacco. Everyone carries with him his dose of magnetism, and all magnetisers are more equipped, or less equipped, to produce its effects, in consequence of their health, constitution and stronger organisation. Only the fingers are used, or a bar of iron six inches long, which is hardly necessary. One uses a conductor to distribute or direct the magnetism as one wishes in the same way as with the fingers, but some people claim that an iron bar is more effective because of the smaller surface-area of its extremity.

The bacquet is a barrel of hardwood, one and a half feet deep and four and a half in diameter, completely covered by a lid made of planks well joined together. This lid is pierced around the circumference, at three thumb-breathths from the edge, with a number of holes through which one introduces into the interior of the bacquet as many iron rods bent at right angles as there are patients seated around it; one points the iron bar, outside the bacquet, on to the affected part of the patient; sometimes one sets up a chain of communication between all those who are around it by their giving each other a hand; this makes the magnetism stronger. The bacquet has an inch and a half of sand in the bottom, covered by one and a half to two inches of water, and is fitted with a layer of bottles arranged in a circle, the necks to the outside, and magnetised in the following way.

The bottle to be magnetised is held by its bottom in one hand, the thumb of the other hand is moistened enough to be able to provide six or seven drops of water; the thumb moistened in this way is put into the neck of the bottle, and the bottle (placed on the other hand) is caused to roll in an arc in such a way that the six or seven drops of water provided by the thumb can fall to the bottom of the bottle. After eight or ten seconds the bottle is magnetised and it is corked, being careful that the cork is put in gently so that its approach does not cause evaporation; the bottle can be applied to the stomach of a person susceptible to magnetism and will produce an effect. This experiment has been repeated successfully several times.

The bacquet supplied thus with magnetised bottles establishes communication between all those magnetised, and thus facilitates the action of magnetism on them, and one can in fact magnetise a bottle in the way one supercharges a Leyden jar with electricity.

When the magnetised subject exhibits a crise\(^2\), fainting, convulsion, spasm or delirium, the magnetiser must not be astonished; he is to continue his operation, without this the crise will last a long time and become dangerous if he does not master it. One must never magnetise from below upwards because this can cause accidents, even apoplexy.
When one wishes to discover, using magnetism, which part is affected, one passes the hands over the body, observing the opposition of poles, and the region to which the hand is applied a little firmly becomes very sensitive, if it is the diseased part.
Declaration

Presented by M. de la Fayette to M. the Duc d’Orléans,
to be signed by M. Berthollet.

After having done more than half of M. Mesmer’s course, that is to say, having attended inclusively as far as the second lesson upon Man, as it existed in the course for the month of April, 1784; and, finally, after having been admitted to the rooms for treatment and for crises, I declare that I have not detected the existence of the agent called by M. Mesmer *animal magnetism*. Not believing the doctrine of M. Mesmer on the existence of the magnetic agent, on the direction of the fluid, and on the effects produced by the introduction and emission of currents, I think that the convulsions, the spasms, and the crises that are claimed to be produced by the magnetic procedures are purely an effect of the imagination and have no reality. To assure myself further that I have been more perspicacious than most of those who have done the same course, I agree that, in a year (on 15th May 1785) this opinion, signed by me, shall be placed in the *Journal de Paris*.

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Declaration made and signed by M. Berthollet.

After having done more than half of M. Mesmer’s course of the month of April, 1784, after having been instructed in the practice of animal magnetism by M. Mesmer, and after having been admitted to the rooms for treatment and for crises where I carried out observations and experiments, I declare that I have not detected the existence of the agent called by M. Mesmer *animal magnetism*. I have come to the opinion that the doctrine that we were taught in the course is disproved by the best established truths about the structure of the world and the economy of animals, and that I have seen nothing in the convulsions, spasms and indeed the crises - which are claimed to be produced by the magnetic procedures (when such occurrences have any reality) – which cannot be attributed entirely to the imagination, to the mechanical effect of friction on very sensitive parts, and to the rule known for ages that causes one animal to tend to imitate another and to put itself, even involuntarily, in the same position as another animal that it observes – a rule on which convulsive disorders so often depend. Finally, I declare that I regard the doctrine of animal magnetism and the practice of which it serves as the foundation as entirely chimerical, and I am willing that, from now on, any use that may be desired is made of my declaration.

20 May, 1784.
Explanation of the doctrine of M. Deslon

There is a magnetic fluid which is distributed everywhere and which penetrates all bodies: the earth, the planets and the celestial bodies are nothing other than large magnets, and it is by an effect of their attractive and repulsive forces that the movement of the celestial bodies and all the phenomena of astronomy take place. This doctrine reconciles, according to M. Deslon, Descartes and Newton, occupied space and the vacuum.

Each organised body is also a magnet which has poles; through it circulates a magnetic fluid in such a way that, in presenting to each other the opposed poles, a living being can operate upon another living being.

M. Deslon demonstrates this by the following effects: if one presents oneself opposite an other person and approaches the right foot to his left foot, a communication of magnetic fluid is established between the two individuals and this transfer is made detectable by an impression of heat. If one opposes one’s right foot to the right foot, or one’s left foot to the left foot of the other person one does not produce the same effect except if the person doing the approaching has a very large magnetic power, because in that case the fluid is transmitted even when one presents to each other two poles that are not opposite.

Magnetism acts over quite large distances and passes through solid bodies. Thus one person can magnetise another without touching him, at least if that person is very sensitive, even through a [closed] door but it is necessary that communication has previously been established between the two beings by touch or at least by the gaze.

To direct the magnetism, and to charge the diseased subject with it, one uses the bars fitted to the baquet, a cord that forms a conductor and encircles either the neck or the body or simply the arms or the thighs of the affected party, or touching of the pit of the stomach, the hypochondria or the ovaries. One reinforces the magnetism more by moving the finger along the midline of the body from above downwards. Finally, one can charge a musical instrument with magnetism and it then transmits the fluid along with its sound; in the same way it transmits magnetism to anyone who touches the instrument.

The magnetic fluid is reflected in a mirror, making its angle of incidence equal to the angle of reflection, in such a way that, by directing the finger or the hand equipped with a little iron rod over the image of a person in a mirror, one transmits animal magnetism to him. This fluid is also reflected by trees.

In order to apply these principles to medicine, M. Deslon argues thus: all disease is caused by a morbid humour of which Nature tends to rid itself and brings this about either by resolution or by crises. Thus the efforts of medicine must be directed towards facilitating the progress of Nature and of resolution, or to exciting crises, and it is this that magnetism brings about; all the crises that the agent produces, like all real [i.e. natural] crises, end by an evacuation of some kind, such as sweating, bowel movement or spitting.

Remarks by Lavoisier

This simple exposé, concise as it is, shows how cleverly and with what assurance animal magnetism is presented. It is a mixture of true facts and observations with claimed results from a principle that is completely hypothetical and from this one has succeeded in creating a body of doctrine which is then imposed even on enlightened doctors of medicine.
The skill of the Commissioners consists in following the chain of reasoning and recognising where it is interrupted; in posing facts before reasoning. A good system of logic does not allow the admission of new principles in order to explain facts if these can be explained by other principles that are already known. We shall therefore not admit [the existence of] animal magnetism except to the extent that it will present effects that cannot be assigned to any other cause. We shall investigate whether imagination alone, without magnetism, cannot produce similar [effects] and we shall undertake, therefore, a series of experiments on animal magnetism separately from imagination and on the imagination separately from magnetism. These reflections have suggested the following plan to me.

The Commissioners chosen by the king to examine the method of M. Deslon have already seen enough of it to be justified in suspecting that all the effects that it produces can be explained without introducing into physics and medicine an animal magnetic fluid of which no positive proof demonstrates the existence, and which shares none of the properties of other known fluids, and for which one supposes gratuitously some [properties] which are incompatible with others and with everything that one knows.

The techniques that M. Deslon uses reduce essentially to two: ‘touching’ and the claimed emission of a magnetic fluid that is conducted and condensed, either with the finger or with a little iron rod. We have seen only one effect produced by these two methods: it consists of making some people fall into convulsive states, but without there being any alteration in the pulse nor disturbance of the health.

But one knows that the imagination alone, struck or primed to a certain point, is sufficient to produce these effects, that there exists a host of examples of imitative convulsions; more significantly, ‘touching’ might be able to produce these results when its effects are added to those of the imagination.

The art of drawing conclusions from experiments and observations consists in evaluating the probabilities, and in judging whether they are large enough, or numerous enough, to amount to proof. This type of calculation is more complicated and more difficult than one thinks; it demands great sagacity and is, in general, beyond the powers of most men. It is upon their errors in this type of calculation that is founded the success of charlatans, sorcerers and alchemists; and, in other times, of magicians, enchanters and all those who deceive themselves and attempt to prey on public credulity.

It is above all in medicine that the difficulty of evaluating the probabilities is greater. As the principle of life is, in animals, a force that acts all the time and continually tends to overcome obstacles, and Nature, left to its own resources, cures a large number of maladies, when remedies are employed it is difficult to determine what is due to Nature and what to the remedy. Thus, for all that most people regard the cure of a disease as a proof of the efficacy of the remedy, in the eyes of a wise man this result is only a probability, more or less large, and this probability cannot be converted into certainty except by a large number of results of the same kind.

These reflections have struck MM. the Commissioners on magnetism, and they have recognised that, for a methodical proof of the existence of magnetism by the cure of diseases, it would require, perhaps, the life-time of several men. Therefore they have rejected a type of proof that might lead them to admit [the existence of] an agent which has no reality at all; they have thought that it would rather be necessary to get to the source and to prove that magnetism did not exist in order to conclude that the cures that are attributed to it are not due to that cause.

Once this type of experiment has been excluded, the path which the Commissioners have to follow is simple and self-evident. The methods of procedure of the partisans of magnetism consist in two things: 1st
in touchings; 2nd in various procedures for making the magnetic fluid in one body pass into another [body] at some distance; and the result of these two procedures is to make the patient on whom one operates fall into the state called crise, that is to say, to give him convulsions; but to conclude that the convulsions that very sensitive people exhibit are due to a particular agent, to a magnetic fluid, it would be necessary that one could attribute the convulsions to that single cause alone. For, logically, when an effect can depend on several causes, one cannot conclude that it is due to one rather than to another. Indeed, one knows that the least contradiction, the smallest constraint, an excited imagination, suffice to give convulsions to very sensitive people; in addition, there exist imitative convulsions such as yawning that communicate themselves from one person to another. Thus, if the effects of magnetism, and the convulsions that are sometimes the consequence, can as well be explained by the effects of an excited or exalted imagination, all the efforts of the Commissioners must be directed to distinguishing in ‘magnetism’ those things that are related to physical causes from those that are related to moral causes, the effects of a real agent from those due to the imagination. There is but one method of arriving at this end, that is by magnetising people without their knowledge and by persuading them that they are being magnetised when they are not. By combining these two types of experiment one will obtain separately the effects of magnetism and those of the imagination, and, from this, one will be able to conclude what should be attributed to the one and what to the other. Any experiment that deviates from this plan will obscure the matter instead of illuminating it; for, both in the science and in the arts, a single conclusive experiment is more exact than a large number of others which do not go directly to the purpose.
Plan of experiments

We shall go to Passy, to M. Franklin’s house, at exactly midday.

All the Commissioners will meet M. Deslon and the subjects who are to be magnetized in M. Franklin’s bedroom; there we shall explain in a definite manner that neither M. Deslon nor the other Commissioners shall say a word, except only for a single Commissioner who will question the patient.

Arrange for M. Deslon to magnetize Mme de Roumagné ; M. Franklin with M. Majaud, M. Darat, Mme Moré in the salon ; the Commissioners, M. Guillotin, M. Le Roy, M. de Bory, directly in the other room ; M. Bailly, M. Lavoisier, M. Sallin, through the door.

Then, on the pretext of having experiments to arrange, we shall take the patients to a place in the house where they will be kept under surveillance, each in a separate room; one of them can be put in the salon.

Since the object of the first two experiments is to test the effect of the imagination on people who are not magnetized, but who believe themselves to be, one can do several at once. Thus one will be able to carry out the experiment with the bowl and the one with direct magnetization.

For this purpose, two Commissioners, MM …. will take one of the patients, blindfold him and take him to the bowl, where the required number of chairs will have been set out. A third Commissioner will come in a few moments later, making a little noise, in such a way that the patient will be persuaded that it is M. Deslon. One of the Commissioners, M … will be charged with feeling the patient’s pulse from time to time, and asking him about what he feels, remembering that the object is to make the patient believe he has been magnetized and that he ought to be feeling effects, and slanting his questions in such a way as to confirm him in this idea. Another Commissioner, M …. will carefully record in writing the questions, the replies and all the circumstances. It is important that there is only a single Commissioner who speaks.

If the patient falls into a crise the Commissioners will have nothing to do other than to give him aid, to observe and to record.

However, one of them can absent himself to go and fetch M. Deslon if it is thought to be necessary. But M. Deslon will be required to observe the rule of silence even faced with a patient in crise and even if he should appear to be unconscious. On the other hand, if, after thirty minutes, there has been no effect, one of the two will go and find M. Deslon and get him to approach quietly, while the interrogating Commissioner distracts the patient’s attention by his questions. In addition, since it is not the patient himself whom M. Deslon will magnetize, but the water in the basin, the distance can be great enough that the patient does not notice his presence.

During the same period three other Commissioners will be responsible for the experiment on direct magnetisation of another patient in the salon. M … will be the interrogator, M. …. will keep the records and M. …. will be charged with unaffectedly imitating M. Deslon magnetizing. In this experiment all will be done that one believes most appropriate for deceiving the imagination of the patient so that he cannot doubt that M. Deslon is present. The one whose responsibility is to interrogate will use all convenient methods in his questions; he will even appear on occasions to address remarks in a low voice to M. Deslon who is magnetising, but who is required to work without replying in accordance with our rules.

A few minutes before the end of the time that has been allotted, one will say to the patient : “Look, the experiment is about to finish and we will take you back to the place where you were blindfolded, but
there is one other thing to which we would like you to agree; that is, to remain for another quarter of an hour with your blindfold on so that you can examine your sensations when you are not magnetized and compare them to those that you have just experienced.”

Then one will lead the patient to a room where M. Deslon will have been taken and signal to him to magnetize the patient; but it is likely that we will not have to get to that stage and that the patient will have fallen into *crise* before the end of the thirty minutes when M. Deslon was absent.

So that the procedures are carried out precisely, each Commissioner will take a summary of what he has to do.
The animal magnetic fluid that M. Mesmer claims to have discovered is, as he describes it and in his own words:

“an agent universally distributed throughout the whole of Nature; it is the mechanism of a mutual influence between the celestial bodies, between the earth and animate bodies; it is combined in such a way as not to allow any vacuum; its subtlety is beyond comparison; it is capable of receiving and propagating all the impressions of movement; it is susceptible to flux and reflux. The animal body demonstrates the effects of this agent and it is by insinuating itself into the nerves that it affects them immediately. One recognises, in the human body in particular, properties similar to those of the magnet; in it diverse and opposite poles can be distinguished. The action and the power of animal magnetism can be communicated from one body to other bodies, animate and inanimate. This action takes place at a considerable distance without the intervention of any intermediate body; it is augmented, [when] reflected by mirrors, and communicated, propagated and increased by sound; this power can be accumulated, concentrated and transported. Although this fluid is universal, all bodies are not equally susceptible to receiving and transmitting it; there are even some, though a small number, which have a property so opposed [to it] that their mere presence destroys all the effects of the fluid in other bodies.

Magnetism can, according to MM. Mesmer and Deslon, immediately cure diseases of the nerves and, through them, other diseases; it perfects the action of medicaments; it provokes and controls salutary crises in a way of which one can make oneself master. By its means the doctor is able to know the state of health of any individual, and to judge with certainty the origin, nature and progress of the most complicated maladies; it prevents the worsening of these and leads to their cure without ever exposing the patients to dangerous effects or to annoying consequences, whatever their age, temperament and sex. Nature offers in magnetism a universal means of curing and of preserving Men.”

Such is the agent of which MM. Mesmer and Deslon teach publicly the existence and effects; there is, according to them, only a single disease and only a single remedy and this remedy is animal magnetism. Such a singular and novel doctrine should, according to the custom of all ages, lend itself at once to ridicule and infatuation. The capital, when it was exposed to all this singular novelties, divided into factions and animal magnetism found strong champions in the city, at the court and among doctors themselves. Astonishing cures were reported, the miracles multiplied and the most incredulous were taken aback.

The government could not remain indifferent to a question of this kind that affected the health and the life of its citizens, and, because according to the system of M. Mesmer and his disciples any individual could, simply by practising magnetism, cure anyone, the whole science of medicine would become useless; it would be necessary to close the medical schools, to change the system of instruction, to destroy the corpus of works believed until the present to be the depositories of medical knowledge and to change everything to the study of magnetism. In an affair of this importance the government had to be on its guard against both too facile belief and too unbridled incredulity. It was necessary to acquire information before coming to an opinion; it was essential at least to avoid the reproach of precipitate prejudice. Such are the motives that have given rise to the setting up of the Commission whose report we present. The Commissioners were chosen from the Faculté de Médecine of Paris and from the Académie des Sciences
Their wisdom, their moral qualities, the name of the celebrated Franklin placed at the front, everything about the Commission seemed appropriate to command respect and to inspire confidence.

It was about the middle of the month of April that the Commissioners began their discussions and meetings, and, although they have been criticised by the public for their slow progress, one cannot but be surprised, after reading their report, that people with other business also to attend to, were able to complete such a large number of experiments, to draw up a complete description of them and to present it to the public in about four months.

The Commissioners were first careful to follow the treatment given by M. Deslon and to witness the effects produced there by the practice of magnetism;

“they saw, in the centre of a large room, a circular box made of oak and raised about a foot or a foot and a half, called the *baquet*; the lid, also of oak is pierced by a number of holes from which issue iron rods, cranked and moveable. The patients are arranged in several rows around the baquet and each has his iron rod, which, because of its crank, can be placed directly on the affected part. A cord passed around their bodies joins them together; sometimes a second chain is created through the hands, that is to say, by placing the thumb between the thumb and index of one’s neighbour: one also presses the thumb that one holds. The impression received through the left hand leaves through the right and circulates round.

A pianoforte is placed in a corner of the room and there various airs and movements are played; sometimes the voice and singing are added.”

M. Deslon and all those who magnetise have in their hand a small iron rod ten or twelve inches long which they regard as suitable to act as a conductor of magnetism.

“They move it in front of the face and over the whole body from above downwards, above or behind the head and on the affected parts, observing the distinction of poles which forms part of the science of magnetism. One also acts on the patients by fixing them with the gaze.”

In addition to these general techniques common to all, each patient is magnetised individually by touching them, that is to say, by applying the hands to the hypochondria and to the area of the lower belly.

“Some of the patients are calm and tranquil and show absolutely nothing; others cough and spit and feel some slight discomfarts, local heat or a general warmth, and have sweating. Others are agitated and tormented by convulsions; these are characterised by sudden involuntary movements of all the limbs; by tightening of the throat, by convulsive movements of the hypochondria and epigastrium, by difficulties with their eyes, by piercing cries, tears, hiccoughs, exaggerated smiles; these are commonly followed by expectoration of a cloudy, viscous liquid. Nothing is more striking than the spectacle of these convulsions. One sees looking for each other and throwing themselves on one another, smiling at each other, speaking to each other affectionately and soothing each others’ crises.”

It is mainly the women who are subject to these crises.

After this spectacle of what happens at the public treatment the Commissioners describe the experiments that they have carried out to uncover the causes which produce such singular effects. They first took careful account of that which MM. Mesmer and Deslon call the *magnetic fluid* escapes all the senses.
and that its presence cannot be shown by any physical experiment; that all the means by which it has been thought to make them detectable by the senses were illusory; that it has no relation to either the electric fluid or to that of the magnet. The Commissioners therefore found themselves reduced to demonstrating its existence by its action on animate bodies. M. Deslon insisted that one should rely exclusively on experiments of this kind. The Commissioners thought differently and, on the contrary, they excluded all evidence from the cure of diseases. Here are the reasons that they advance for the route that they have followed.

They say, as did Hippocrates, that it is Nature which cures diseases; the art of medicine cooperates with her; but what is there which could distinguish in a cure what is due to Art and what to Nature? Everyday one sees grave illnesses cured by mutually opposing remedies; among a large number of patients there are almost as many [cured] among those abandoned to Nature as among those treated according to the rules of Art. If, then, diseases are treated by magnetism how could one know if the cure was brought about by the magnetism or by Nature without magnetism? Suppose, the Commissioners said to themselves, that magnetism does not exist would we not expose ourselves to the risk, by treating patients by the practice of magnetism, of giving the credit for Nature’s cures to an imaginary agent? And thus a method that can lead us to admit the existence of a non-existent agent is defective and dangerous.

The treatment of disease thus appeared to the Commissioners to be able to supply only results that are always uncertain and often erroneous. They thought that the uncertainty of this method, and all the causes of illusion that are inseparable from it, could be compensated only by an infinity of cures and by the experience of several centuries, and they rejected a plan which could not conform either to the object of their commission or with the impatience of the government and the public.

These reflections directed their procedures; they began by carrying out experiments on themselves; not at the ‘public treatment’ where the course of their observations would have been disturbed continually, where their doings would have been observed, where each word they spoke would have been commented upon, but at the private baquet installed at M. Deslon’s house, in a room set apart, which he had put at their disposal. They continued for more than three months to attend at the baquet at least once per week, and often to remain there for two hours, to be magnetised regularly there by touching by M. Deslon or by one of his pupils. Sometimes they were there alone, sometimes they took with them patients of their acquaintance and people sufficiently knowledgeable to appreciate their sensations. Neither the Commissioners nor any of those who attended the baquet with them had a crise or anything that approached it.

An unvarying and real cause must produce uniform effects on each occasion when the circumstances are absolutely the same. How then is one to explain the striking difference found between the effects observed at the public treatment and those at the private sessions? In the one case calm and silence, in the other turbulence and agitation; there violent crises, the constant state of an agitated body and spirit, Nature exaggerated; here the body free of pain, the spirit untroubled, Nature following its ordinary equilibrium and course, in a word, an absence of all effects. One had to conclude either that magnetism is not a consistent and real agent or that the circumstances found at the public baquet were not the same as those to be found at the individual treatment.

This comparison began to make the Commissioners suspect that an excited imagination could well count for something in the effects attributed to magnetism and that the crises were reinforced by the presence of a large number of people in crisis. The experiments that they had carried out at Passy, at M. Franklin’s house, did nothing to contradict this opinion. Of seven patients who were magnetised by M. Deslon there
were only three who had shown some slight effects and also he commonest of these effects was a visible consequence of ‘touchings’ continued for a long time. A very young child, scrofulous and almost emaciated, a young girl subject to convulsions, but who was in a state of imbecility, felt absolutely nothing. However, the absence of reason does not remove anything from sensibility, it damps down the power of the imagination: thus the action of the imagination is a necessary condition for the effects of magnetism.

This was just an initial opinion that it was necessary to verify by experiments; the Commissioners felt that, when a phenomenon is the result of a number of causes, one must try to analyse them, to separate them, to find out the influence of each in particular and thus, through all the experiments in which we are going to follow their progress, they have tried to separate the effects of the imagination from those attributed to magnetism, to magnetise without the involvement of the imagination and to bring the imagination into play without its being accompanied by magnetism.

This way of proceeding showed them that it was not necessary to use any of the techniques prescribed for the practice of magnetism in order to produce its effects, that it was sufficient to heighten the imagination of the patients progressively and when one had arrived at the necessary degree of exaltation on could, without magnetism, provoke crises and assuage them and provided that one could make oneself master of the imagination one became at the same time master of all the effects that depend upon it. It was at the house of M. Jumelin, doctor of medicine in the Faculté de Paris, who is at present in Constantinople in the entourage of M. de Choiseul-Gouffier ambassador to the Porte, that the Commissioners carried out the first experiments of this kind. A sufficient number of patients having been assembled there we got them in one after the other, blindfolded them, sat them done and persuaded them that we were magnetising them; then, by carefully managed questions, we caused them to experience impressions of heat and cold, made them perspire and sweat, all the effects attributed to magnetism, although we had not magnetised them in any way at all.

When the type of crise that they had demonstrated had completely passed, we magnetised them without their knowledge, still blindfolded, and the magnetism was then without effect.

This singular fact of the ineffectiveness of magnetism without imagination and the effectiveness of imagination without magnetism was never shown in a more striking fashion that in the experiments carried out at Passy at M. Franklin’s. M. Deslon had sent there two of the most susceptible of his patients to magnetism. We took one of them into the salon, blindfolded, made her sit down and persuaded her that we were going to fetch M. Deslon to magnetise her. In fact, after a few moments, one of the Commissioners entered copying the gait of M. Deslon; we appeared to speak to him and ask him to begin the magnetisation: at the end of three minutes the patients showed a nervous shudder, she had pains in her head and her arm and a tingling in her hands and made involuntary movements of her feet and hands. In a word, the Commissioners saw one of the most characteristic crises even although for the whole duration of the experiment the patient had not been magnetised in any way and we had even avoided feeling her pulse for fear that it could be claimed that we had communicated magnetism to her. On the same day we put another patient in front of and near a closed door; we persuaded her that M. Deslon was on the other side of the door and was magnetising her. It was hardly one minute after she was seated that she began to have shivering, that she was take with convulsions, with chattering of her teeth, twisting of her arms and trembling of the whole body, etc.

A few days previously we had tried out at M. Franklin’s at Passy the effects of a magnetised tree. We chose for the experiment an orchard in which fruit trees with long trunks were planted equally spaced in a line. We asked M. Deslon to magnetise one of them. M. Deslon had brought with him a young man about
twelve years old who was very sensitive to magnetism; he was kept under watch while he experiment was prepared so that there could be no suspicion that he knew what was happening. We took him, blindfolded, and presented him successively to different trees far away from the one that had been magnetised. From the first tree the youth began to have some impressions; these increased gradually at each tree and, at the fourth, although it was not magnetised and was very far from the tree that had been magnetised, the young man fell into a crisis, his limbs became rigid and he lost consciousness.

In another experiment twelve porcelain cups were prepared; M. Deslon was asked to magnetise one of them which had been carefully marked with a sign known to the Commissioners. The cups were presented in succession to a person who had already been tested and was known to be very sensitive to magnetism. At the fourth cup the patient fell into a crisis and, what is more remarkable, when she asked for a drink the magnetised cup was then presented to her and she drank from it quietly and said she was much relieved. The cup and magnetism thus had completely failed in their effect because the crisis took place without magnetism and it was calmed rather than increased at the approach of the magnetised cup.

A few moments later, once the patient was completely recovered, she was taken to a room where she remained alone for almost two hours, the Commissioners being occupied with other experiments during this time. The noise that she was making having attracted some people entirely without knowledge of magnetism, she was found to have fallen again into a crisis only by the belief that she was where she had been magnetised. She knew that she had come in order to take part in some experiments; the approach of anyone, the least noise, attracted her attention, revived the idea of magnetism, and renewed the convulsions.

These experiments proved in a convincing way that the imagination without magnetism produces all the effects attributed to magnetism. It remained to prove in an equally formal manner that magnetism produces nothing without the imagination, and this was the result that the Commissioners approached in the next experiment.

In an apartment we arranged two contiguous rooms joined by a communicating door. The door was taken off and a frame covered with double paper was substituted for it. In one of the rooms was one of the Commissioners, unknown to the person who was to be magnetised; he was seated next to a table and, on the pretext of being busy making a book catalogue, he was on a position to write down everything that happened. In the same room was a woman who was said to be from the provinces and to have some linen to work on. We had chosen a linen worker who had already been used in the experiments at Passy and whose sensitivity to magnetism was known. When she arrived things were arranged in the room so that there was only a single chair on which she could sit, and this chair was placed in the embrasure of the communicating door where she found herself as it were in a niche.

The Commissioners were in the other room and one of them, a doctor, experienced in the art of magnetising and having already produced effects was charged with magnetising the worker through the paper frame and without her knowledge. It is a principle in the theory of magnetism that this agent passes through wooden doors, walls, paper etc. The female worker was thus magnetised in the same way as if it had been in the open and in her presence. In fact she was so magnetised for half an hour at a very short distance, following all the rules of magnetism. During all this time she had made cheerful conversation; asked about her health she replied freely that she was well. At Passy, where, without her being magnetised she believed that she had been, she fell into a crisis at the end of three minutes; thus the imagination alone produced all the effects attributed to magnetism, and magnetism without the imagination did not produce any effect.
Such are the principal and most striking experiments that the Commissioners’ report presents; we shall not follow them in all their details. They might have ended their research and contented themselves with having proved that the animal magnetic fluid did not exist, but it was important that they should follow with care the effects of the exalted imagination in the practice of magnetism, and this is not the least interesting part of their report.

It is usually with the gaze that the person who magnetises seizes (to use the received expression) the subject to be magnetised. It is this gaze that produces the first disturbance of the imagination, which begins the work of magnetisation. Touching, the application of the hands, follows quickly: they are usually carried to the hypochondria, to the epigastric regions and, sometimes, to the ovaries. The hands – the fingers – press on and compress these various regions more or less. The Commissioners examined the physiological effects that must result from this on the colon and on the stomach; they emphasize the close rapport that exists between these two viscera and the uterus. The various responsiveplexuses in this region constitute a veritable nervous centre connected to all the other parts of the body. It is on this nervous centre that the affections of the mind generally make their first impressions, and it is thus that, during large fits of emotion one feels a pressure, a contraction of the stomach. The imagination, excited, first brings the diaphragm into play; during sighs, tears and laughter the diaphragm reacts on the viscera of the lower belly; hence arises the colic which is quite common following agitation; the diarrhoea caused by terror; the jaundice by chagrin.

The tears, the laughter, the coughing, the hiccoughs and in general all the effects seen in what are called the crises of the public treatment, arise therefore from the disturbance of the functions of the diaphragm by physical causes such as touching and pressure; or from the power with which the imagination is endowed to act on this organ, or even more from the combination of these two causes. The circumstances that are combined at the public treatment contribute even more to increase these effects; imposing equipment, harmonious instruments, agreeable singing, a heated atmosphere made noxious by the number of people there, all combine to disturb and to excite the nervous types. A mechanical imitation, which Nature seems to have made a rule for sensitive and organised creatures, determines the rest. In the first hour of treatment, the patients in general show only slight effects; little by little the impressions are spread and reinforced

“as one sees at theatrical presentations where the effect is stronger when there are more spectators and above all in large venues where one is at liberty to applaud. This sign of individual emotion creates a general feeling because everyone participates in it to the degree that he is susceptible. It is, moreover, what one sees in armies on a day of battle when the enthusiasm of courage, just as do terrors and panics, spreads so rapidly; the sound of the drum and military music, the noise of the cannonades and musketry, the cries, the disorder, disturb the organs and move the spirits in the same way and elevate the imagination to the same extent. In this drunken unity, one emotion that is demonstrated becomes universal, it encourages the charge or it causes flight. The same cause gives rise to revolts; the imagination governs the multitude; men gathered in numbers are more susceptible to their feelings, reason has less empire over them, and when fanaticism seizes these gatherings it produces the shakers of the Cevennes, the convulsions of Saint-Médard etc.”

It is in order to arrest this movement, so easily communicated to the emotions, that, during seditions and revolts assemblies are forbidden. It has been realised that, in isolating individuals spirits are calmed, and there is a recent example of this in the young girls of Saint-Roch, in whom separation cured the convulsions that they had when together.
Thus we find with magnetism, or, rather, the imagination such as acts in theatrical performances, in armies, during revolts, [is active] in the crowded assemblies around the baquet; in all of them there is an active and terrible power whose effects one sees with astonishment, while at the same time its cause is obscure and hidden.

Touchings, imagination, imitation, these are the real causes of the effects attributed to this new agent advertised under the name of animal magnetism. The practice of magnetism consists of the art of increasing the imagination by degrees; gaze, pressure, touching seem to act as a preparation, the nerves begin to be agitated, imitation communicates and expands the impressions.

But this claimed magnetism, this imaginary agent, the imagination exalted by the practice of magnetism gives rise to crises; and it remained to discover whether these might be useful, if they could cure or relieve patients.

"Undoubtedly, the Commissioners say, the imagination of patients often has a large influence on the cure of their diseases. This effect is known only by general experience and has not at all been demonstrated by positive experiments, but it seems that one cannot doubt it. It is a common saying that faith is a saviour in medicine; this faith is the product of the imagination: thus imagination acts only by gentle means; this it does by spreading calm to all the senses, and re-establishing order in the functions, in revitalising everything through hope. Hope is Man’s life; anything that offers him the one contributes to giving him the other. But, when the imagination produces convulsions it acts by violent means; this means are almost always destructive. It is only in very rare cases that they can be useful; it is in desperate cases that it is necessary to dislocate in order to regulate anew. Methods of this kind can be useful in medicine only in the way that poisons are. It must be necessity that demands them and good order that employs them. This requirement is brief, the shock must be a single one. Far from repeating it, the wise doctor concerns himself with the appropriate means to repair the necessary damage that it has caused. But, at the public treatment with magnetism, the injury is repeated every day; the crises are long-lasting and violent. The state of such crises being damaging, habituation to them cannot but be deleterious. How can it be supposed that a woman with an affliction of the chest, could, without danger, have crises of convulsive coughing, and forceful expectorations, and, by such violent and repeated efforts weaken and perhaps tear the lungs, organs to which it is so difficult to bring soothing balsms? How can one suppose that a man, whatever his malady, requires, to cure him, to fall into crises where his life seems to be lost, where the limbs become rigid, where, during precipitate involuntary movements he strikes his chest forcibly, crises that end with abundant spitting up of mucus and blood? This blood is neither vitiated nor corrupt; this blood comes from vessels from which it has been torn by [the patient’s] efforts, and which it leaves contrary to the will of Nature. These actions [of animal magnetism] are therefore a real injury and not a curative hurt; it is injury added to disease, whatever the latter may be."

The crises present yet another danger. Man is continually ordered by habit; habit modifies Nature by successive degrees, but she uses it with such power that often she changes it entirely and makes it unrecognisable. Who can assure us that this state of crisis, at first entered into voluntarily, will not become habitual? And if this habit, contracted in this way, were often to reproduce the same accidents, without these being desired, and almost without the aid of the imagination what would be the condition of an individual subjected to these violent crises, tormented in mind and body by their miserable impression, whose days would be divided between apprehension of pain and whose life would be nothing but
enduring torture? Diseases of the nerves, for all that they occur naturally, are the despair of doctors; it is
no part of medical art to induce them. An art is damaging if it disturbs the functions of the animal
economy, pushes Nature to extremes and multiplies the victims of its derangements. An art is the more
dangerous if it not only aggravates maladies by causing repeated accidents by making them degenerate
into habits, but also if this state is contagious, as one might suspect, the procedure of provoking nervous
convulsions and exciting them in public during the treatments, is a way of spreading them in the large
towns, and even of inflicting them on generations to come because the ills and the habits of parents are
transmitted to their offspring.

The Commissioners, having seen that this animal magnetic fluid can not be perceived by any of our
senses, that it has no action on them, nor on the patients that they have submitted to it, and being certain
that the pressures and touchings bring about changes rarely favourable to the animal economy and
disturbances in the imagination that are always irritating; finally, having demonstrated by decisive
experiments that the imagination, without magnetism, produces convulsions and that magnetism without
the imagination produces nothing at all, have concluded unanimously that, on the question of the existence
and the usefulness of magnetism there is nothing to prove the existence of an animal magnetic fluid; that
this non-existent fluid is consequently useless; that the violent effects that are seen at the public treatment
are due to touching and to the imagination set in action and to that mechanical imitation that makes us
repeat whatever strikes our senses in spite of ourselves. At the same time they find themselves obliged to
add, as an important observation, that these touchings, these repeated actions of the imagination in order
to produce crises can be damaging; that the spectacle of the crises is also dangerous because of that
imitation that Nature seems to have set as a law for us, and that, in consequence, all public treatment at
which the practice of magnetism is employed, can only have, in the long run, sinister effects.”

1. *six lignes*; 1.35 cm. *One ligne*, or Paris line, in the French pre-metric system of linear measurement
was equal to 0.225 cm. Twelve lignes equalled one pouce (thumb) or inch) and twelve pouces one pied
or Paris foot of 32.484 cm. (IMLD.)

2. The magnetisers, and hence the Commissioners, used ‘crise’ to mean specifically the ‘convulsive’ state
produced by so-called magnetisation. When the word is used with this specific meaning I have set it in
italics. (IMLD.)

3. Berthollet: Claude Louis Berthollet (1748-1822). Physician to the Duc d’Orléans. In 1784 he was
appointed inspector of dyeworks and director of the Gobelins tapestry factory. A friend of, and
collaborator with, Lavoisier and, with him, a founder of modern chemical nomenclature.

Duc d’Orléans: Louis Phillippe Duc d’Orléans (1725-1785). Father of Phillipe (Égalité), who was
revolutionary but was nevertheless executed in the Terror, and whose son, Louis-Phillipe, became the last
king of France following the 1830 revolution; he reigned from 1830-1848.

La Fayette: Marie Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette (1757-1834) was an
important figure in both the French and the American revolutions.


5. In Lavoisier’s hand (Note by editor of the printed *Mémoires.*)

6. The sections within double quotation marks are marked thus in Lavoisier’s text. The French text of
these passages is the same as (though not always exactly to the word) as portions of the text of the published Rapport. It seems highly probable that they are quotations from the published Rapport or a late draft of it. However, because Lavoisier’s text is undated another possibility is that Lavoisier marked these passages with quotation marks because they were portions of a draft by him which were incorporated in the final report of the Commissioners. (IMLD.)

7. Memoir by M. Mesmer on the discovery of animal magnetism, 1779, p.74 et seq. (Lavoisier)

8. Paris IMLD.

9. MM. Franklin, Majault, Le Roy, Sallin, Darat, Bory, Guillotin, Lavoisier. (Lavoisier)

10. *Grands mouvements* It seems most likely that this is to be taken figuratively rather than literally. (IMLD)
REPORT

OF THE COMMISSIONERS

Charged by the King

With the examination

OF

Animal magnetism.

Printed by order of the King.

PARIS,

At the Imprimerie Royale.

M. DCCLXXXIV.
Report

Of the Commissioners charged by the King

With the Examination of Animal Magnetism.

On 12 March 1784 THE KING named doctors chosen from the Faculté de Paris, Messrs. Borie, Sallin, d’Arcet, Guillotin, to investigate and to report to him an account of Animal Magnetism, practised by M. Deslon: and, on the request of these four doctors, His Majesty named, to proceed with them to this investigation, five members of the Académie Royale des Sciences, Messrs. Franklin, Le Roy, Bailly, de Bory and Lavoisier. M. Borie having died at the beginning of the Commissioners’ work, His Majesty chose M. Majault, Doctor in the Faculté, to replace him.

The agent that M. Mesmer claims to have discovered, which he has called Animal Magnetism, is, as he has described it himself and in his own words, “a fluid distributed everywhere; it is the means by which celestial bodies exert a mutual influence on each other, the earth and on living bodies; it is continuous in such a way that it does not tolerate any vacuum; its subtlety is without compare; it is capable of receiving, propagating and communicating all the influences of movement; it is susceptible of flux and reflux. The animal body demonstrates the effects of this agent; and it is by

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entering the substance of the nerves that it affects them directly. In the human body in particular one recognises properties similar to those of the magnet; there one may distinguish poles equally separate and opposed. The action and the virtues of Magnetism may be communicated to other living and inanimate bodies; this action takes place at an extended distance, without the aid of any intermediate body; it is increased when reflected from mirrors; it is communicated, propagated and increased by sound; this quality can be accumulated, concentrated and moved around. Although this fluid is universal, not all living bodies are equally susceptible to it; there are even those, though they are very few, which have a property so opposed to it that their mere presence destroys the effects of the fluid on other bodies.

Animal Magnetism is able to cure maladies of the nerves immediately, and through these, others; it improves the action of medicaments; it produces and directs salutary crises, in such a way that one can master them; by its means the doctor is able to know the state of health of each individual and judge certainly of the nature and progress of the most complex maladies; it prevents the increase of, and acts towards the cure of these, without ever exposing the patient, of whatever age, temperament or sex, to
dangerous or troublesome effects (1)

Nature offers, in Magnetism, a universal means of curing and preserving man. (2).

Such is the agent that the Commissioners have been charged to examine, and whose properties are avowed by M. Deslon, who accepts all the principles of M. Mesmer. This theory forms the basis of a memoir that was read at M. Deslon’s house on 9 May in the presence of M. the Lieutenant General of Police and of the Commissioners. In this memoir it is set out that there is only one nature, one illness, one remedy and that this remedy is Animal Magnetism. This doctor, in instructing the Commissioners in the doctrine and procedures of Animal Magnetism, showed them its practice, demonstrating the poles, showing them how to touch patients and to direct this magnetic fluid on to them.

M. Deslon agreed with the Commissioners, 1st to prove the existence of Animal Magnetism; 2nd to pass on his understanding about the discovery; 3rd to prove the usefulness of this discovery and of Animal Magnetism in the cure of sick people.

After receiving this understanding of the theory and practice of Animal Magnetism, it was necessary to find out about its effects; the Commissioners were taken, each of them several times, to M. Deslon’s place of treatment.

EXPLANATION OF THE ARRANGEMENTS

They saw, in the middle of a large room, a circular enclosure, made of oak and elevated by about one and a half feet, that is called the baquet; the top of this box is pierced by a number of holes from which emerge moveable cranked iron bars. The patients are placed in several ranks around the baquet, each with his own iron rod which, because of the bend in it, can be placed directly on the affected part; a cord passed around their bodies joins them together; sometimes a second chain is formed by their holding hands, that is to say, by each putting the thumb between the thumb and the index of his neighbour: then the thumb so held is pressed; the influence received on the left leaves on the right and circulates throughout the circle of patients.

A piano forte is placed in a corner of the room and on it are played different airs on various movements; sometimes the sound of the voice and of singing are added.

All those who carry out the magnetisation have in their hand an iron rod ten to twelve inches in length.

M. Deslon declared to the Commissioners, 1st That this rod is a conductor of magnetism; it has the advantage of concentrating it in its point and of making the emanations more powerful. 2nd Sound, in accordance with M. Mesmer’s principle, is also a conductor of magnetism, and, to communicate the influence of the fluid to the piano forte it suffices to bring the iron rod close to it, whoever touches the instrument is charged also, and the magnetism is transmitted by the sounds to the surrounding patients. 3rd. The cord that surrounds the patients, and the chain of thumbs, is there in order to increase the effects by communication. 4th. The interior of the baquet is made in such a way as to concentrate the magnetism;
it is a large reservoir from which it flows by the iron rods that plunge into it.

The Commissioners assured themselves later, by using an electrometer and a non-magnetised iron needle, that the bacquet contained nothing electric or magnetic; and, according to the declaration made to them by M. Deslon about the interior of the cabinet, they recognised there no physical agent capable of contributing to the effects attributed to magnetism.

The patients, arrayed in large numbers and in several rows around the baquet, thus receive magnetism by all these means at once; by the iron rods that transmit it from the baquet, by the cord tied around the body, and by the union of thumbs that communicates that from their neighbours; also, by the sound of the piano forte, or of a pleasant voice, that transmits it through the air. The patients are next magnetised directly by the finger and the iron rod moved in front of the face, above or behind the head and on the affected parts, always observing the distinction of the poles; they are also acted upon by gazing at and fixating them. But, above all, they are magnetised by application of the hands and by pressure with the fingers on the hypochondrium and the region of the lower belly; this application is often continued for a long time, sometimes for several hours.

Thus the patients offer a very varied spectacle according to the various states in which they find themselves. Some of them are calm, quiet and do nothing; others cough, spit, feel slight pain, local warmth or heat all over and sweat; yet others are agitated and troubled by convulsions. These convulsions are extraordinary in their number, duration and force. As soon as a convulsion begins, several others appear. The Commissioners have seen them last for more than three hours; they are accompanied by spitting up of a turbid, watery, viscous fluid, torn from them by the violence of their efforts. Sometimes there have been streaks of blood in it; there was, among others, a sick young man who often produced it in large amounts. The convulsions are characterised by sudden involuntary movements of all the limbs and of the whole body, by the closing off of the throat, by sudden twitchings of the hypochondrium and epigastrium, by agitated movement and turning aside of the eyes, by piercing cries, tears, hiccups and immoderate laughter. They are preceded or followed by a languor and reverie and by a marked weakness and even prostration. The least unexpected sound causes agitation and one sees that changes in tone and in tempo of the airs played on the piano forte influence the patients so that a more lively movement increases their agitation and renews the force of their convulsions.

There is a room covered in mattresses and originally intended for patients affected by these convulsions, a room called des crises; but M. Deslon does not think it appropriate to use it, and all the patients, whatever is happening to them, are together in the public treatment rooms.

Nothing is more astonishing than the spectacle of these convulsions; until one has seen them one can have no idea
of them: and, on seeing them, one is surprised both by the quietness of one group of the patients and by
the agitation that affects others; the various manifestations that are repeated; the sympathies that are
established. One sees the patients seeking each other out and throwing themselves on each other, smile,
speak affectionately and calm each others’ crises. All are subject to the magnetiser; even if they are quite
prostrated his voice, a glance, a sign from him revives them. One cannot but recognise in these regular
effects a great power that agitates the patients and overcomes them, and of which the magnetiser seems
to be the seat.

This convulsive state is incorrectly called a crisis in the theory of Animal Magnetism: according to this
doctrine it is regarded as a salutary crisis of the kind that Nature herself provides, or that the doctor
provokes who is skilled in facilitating it for the treatment of diseases. The Commissioners will adopt this
expression in the rest of this report, and, when they use the word crisis they will always mean the state
either of convulsions or of extremely lethargic prostration produced by the procedures of Animal
Magnetism.

These experiments must have as their first object the demonstration of the existence of Animal
Magnetism. In dealing with this existence one must first set aside the influence of the heavens.

The Commissioners have noticed that among the numerous patients in crisis there are always many
women and few men; that the crises take one or two hours to be established and that, as soon as one
appears, all the others begin successively and in a short time. But, after these general observations, the
Commissioners soon came to the conclusion that occasions of public treatment could not be where they
carried out their experiments. The multiplicity of the effects is the first obstacle;

one sees too many things at once to study one of them in detail. In addition,

GENERAL REMARKS ON PUBLIC TREATMENT:

THE COMMISSIONERS CAN NOT CARRY OUT EXPERIMENTS AT THEM

distinguished patients who come for treatment for the sake of their health might be annoyed by questions;
the minuteness of observing them might disturb or displease them. The Commissioners themselves would
be disturbed by making the observations. They therefore decided that the presence of all of them at this
treatment was not at all necessary; it would suffice that one or two of them went there from time to time to
confirm these first general observations, to make new ones if necessary, and to report to the assembled
Commission.

After having seen the effects at the public treatment it was necessary to disentangle their causes and to
look for evidence of the existence and the utility of Animal Magnetism. Animal Magnetism can well exist
without being useful, but it cannot be useful if it does not exist.

As a result, the principal object of the Commissioners’ scrutiny, and the essential object of their first
experiments, had to be to assure themselves of this existence. This objective was already very extensive
and needed to be simplified. Animal Magnetism embraces the whole of Nature; it is, it is said, the means
by which celestial bodies influence us; the Commissioners believed that they must first set aside this large influence and consider only that part of the fluid that is distributed on earth, without being concerned whence it comes, and demonstrate the action that it has upon us, around us and before our eyes before examining its relations with the Universe.

The most reliable means of demonstrating the existence of Animal Magnetic fluid would be to make its presence apparent to the senses, but it did not take long for the Commissioners to realise that this fluid escapes all our senses. It is in no way luminous and visible as is electricity; its action is not apparent to the eyes like the attraction of the magnet; it has no taste or odour; it operates silently and surrounds you or penetrates you without touch informing you of its presence. If it exists in and around us it is thus in a manner that is absolutely insensible. Among those who profess Magnetism there are some who claim that one sometimes sees it come out of the extremities of the fingers which serve it as conductors, or who believe that they feel its passage when one moves the finger in front of the face and on the hand. In the first case the perceived emanation is nothing but transpiration which becomes perfectly visible when it is magnified by the solar microscope; on the second the impression of cold or of coolness that is shown, an impression that is much more marked when one is hot, results from the movement of the air that follows the finger and whose temperature is always less than that of animal heat. On the other hand, when one brings the finger near the skin of the face which is colder than the finger, and keeps it still, one notices a feeling of warmth which is the animal heat being communicated.

IT IS AN ERROR TO BELIEVE THAT VISION AND TOUCH CAN DETECT ITS PRESENCE.

Again, it is claimed that the fluid has an odour and that one smells it when one brings under the nose either the finger or a conducting iron bar; it is been said that the sensations are different to the two nostrils when one presents the finger or the iron rod with the direct pole or the opposite pole. M. Deslon has carried out the experiment on several Commissioners; the Commissioners have repeated it on several subjects; none of them noticed this difference in sensation between one nostril and the other: and, if on paying attention to it some odour is, in fact, detected, it is because of the presence of iron, indeed of warm iron that has been rubbed; and on presentation of the finger it is due to the presence of emanations of sweat whose odour is often mixed with those of iron which are imprinted on the finger. These effects have been erroneously attributed to Magnetism; they are all due to known natural causes.

NOR IS IT DETECTABLE BY SMELL.

Moreover, M. Deslon has never relied on these fleeting impressions, he has not thought he could produce them as proofs; on the contrary he has declared expressly to the Commissioners that he could only demonstrate the existence of Magnetism by the action of the fluid causing changes in living bodies. This
existence becomes all the more difficult to establish by effects that are demonstrative and of which the cause is not equivocal and by authentic effects which cannot be influenced by moral circumstances; and finally by proofs that are capable of striking and impressing the mind, the only ones capable of satisfying enlightened physicists.

THE INFLUENCE OF THIS FLUID IS DETECTABLE ONLY BY ITS EFFECT OF LIVING BODIES.

The action of magnetism on living bodies can be observed in two different ways; either by the action persisting for a long time and by curative effects in the treatment of diseases or by instantaneous effects on the animal economy and by the observable changes that it produces there. M. Deslon insisted that the first method should be used principally and practically exclusively; the Commissioners did not believe they could do this, for the following reasons:

Most diseases have their seat in the interior of the body. Long experience through many centuries has made known the symptoms that indicate and characterise them; the same experience has shown the method of treating them. In this method, what is the aim of the doctor? It is not to defy and subjugate Nature, it is to assist in her operations. Nature cures the sick, so said the Father of Medicine; but sometimes she encounters obstacles which obstruct her in her course and uselessly consume her forces. The doctor is the minister of Nature; an attentive observer, he observes her progress. If that progress is firm, steady, regular and without deviation the doctor watches in silence and takes care not to trouble her with remedies that are at best useless; if the progress is hindered he aids it; if it goes too slowly or too fast he accelerates or retards it. Sometimes he relies on adjusting the diet to achieve his object; sometimes he uses medicaments.

THE COMMISSIONERS’ REASONS FOR EXCLUDING TREATMENT OF PATIENTS.

The action of a medicament introduced into the human body is a new force combined with that great force that causes life: if the remedy follows the same paths that this force has already opened for the expulsion of maladies it is useful, it is salutary; if its tendency is to open contrary pathways and to divert this action it is damaging. However, it must be pointed out that this effect, salutary or damaging, real though it is, may often escape vulgar observation. The physical history of man demonstrates some very singular phenomena in this respect. One sees that diets of the most opposite kinds do not prevent him from attaining a great age. One sees that people attacked by apparently the same disease are cured by following quite different regimes and by taking quite different remedies; Nature is thus powerful enough to maintain life in spite of a bad diet and to triumph at once over both the disease and the remedy. If she has this power to resist remedies so much the more does she have the power to act without them. The experience of the efficacy of remedies is thus always somewhat uncertain; in the case of magnetism there is a further uncertainty, that of whether it exists. How, then, can one be sure of the action of an agent whose existence is in doubt seeing that one may well doubt the action of medicaments whose existence
poses no problem!

The cure that is most often cited in magnetism’s favour is that of M. le Baron de ***; the court and the
city found it equally instructive. We shall not enter here into a discussion of the facts; we shall not examine
whether the remedies that had been

CURE OF MALADIES DOES NOT PROVE USEFUL.
SECOND REASON.

used previously could have contributed to this cure. We admit on the one hand the great danger in which
the sick man was, and on the other the ineffectiveness of all the means of ordinary medicine. Magnetism
was brought into use and M. le Baron de *** was completely cured. But, could a crise of Nature alone
not have produced this cure? A woman of the people, very poor, who lived at Gros-caillou was attacked
in 1779 by a very well characterised malignant fever; she constantly refused all aid and asked only that a
vase of water beside her should be kept full; she remained quietly on the straw that served her as bed,
drinking the water all day and doing nothing else. The disease developed, passed successively through
different phases and ended in complete cure (3). Mademoiselle G***, living in the Petites-écuries du Roi
had in her breast two glands that gave her much disquiet;

a surgeon advised the use of Le Peintre’s water as an excellent resolver saying to her that if this remedy
was not successful within a month it would be necessary to extirpate the glands. The girl, terrified,
consulted M. Sallin who judged that the glands were capable of resolution; M. Bouvart who was
consulted subsequently was of the same opinion. When she had started the remedies she was advised to
have some diversion; a fortnight later she was taken, at the Opera, by a violent cough and expectoration
so abundant that she had to be taken home; she coughed up over the space of four hours about three
pints of a glary lymph; an hour later M. Sallin examined her breast and found no vestige of the gland. M.
Bovary, called the next day, declared the happy effect of this natural crisis. If Mademoiselle G*** had
taken Peintre’s water Le Peintre would have had the credit for the cure.

Experience throughout all times proves, and doctors recognise, that Nature by herself and without any
treatment cures a great number of the sick. If magnetism had no effect the patients submitted to its
procedure would be, as it were, abandoned to Nature. It would be absurd as a means of demonstrating
the existence of this agent to choose a method that, by attributing to it all the cures of Nature, would tend
to prove that it had a useful and curative effect even if it had no such thing.

The Commissioners agree with M. Mesmer in this. He rejected the cure of diseases when this method of
proving the existence of Magnetism was proposed to him by a Member of the Académie des Sciences:

it is, he said, an error to believe that this type of proof is incontrovertible; nothing proves definitely
whether the doctor or medicine cures the sick. (4).

The treatment of patients thus can only give results that are always uncertain and often false; this
uncertainty could only be dissipated, and all causes of error removed, by an infinite number of cures and,
perhaps, by experience over several centuries. The purpose and the importance of the Commission required more rapid methods. The Commissioners had to rely upon purely physical proof, that is to say, on the immediate effects of the fluid on the living body while separating these effects from all the illusions with which they might be mixed and assuring themselves that they could be due to no cause other than Animal Magnetism.

They decided to carry out experiments on individual subjects who were willing to take part in various experiments that might be devised; and who, some by their simplicity and others by their intelligence, would be capable of giving an accurate and exact account of their experience. The experiments will not be presented here in their order in time but arranged according to the facts that they illuminate.

The Commissioners decided to carry out experiments on themselves first, and to submit themselves to the action of Magnetism.

They were very curious to experience through their own sensations the effects claimed for this agent. They therefore submitted themselves to its effects,

PRECAUTION THAT THEY THOUGHT NECESSARY.

and with such determination that they would not have been disturbed to undergo some accidents and disturbance of health that were clearly recognisable for certain as effects of Magnetism, and that would have put them in a position to resolve straight away, and by their own evidence, this important question. However, in submitting themselves thus to Magnetism the Commissioners took an essential precaution. There is no one, in the best state of health, who, if he is willing to pay close attention, does not detect within himself an infinity of movements and variations, be it an infinitely slight pain, or warmth in different parts of his body; these variations which occur all the time are independent of Magnetism. This fixing of one’s attention on oneself may not be without its own effect. Whatever may be its mechanism, there are so many reports of relations between the volition of the mind and the movements of the body that one cannot say just how far the influence of attention may extend; it seems to be only a succession of volitions directed constantly and uninterruptedly to the same object. When one considers that volition moves the arm as it pleases, can one be sure that attention, focussed on some internal part of the body, cannot there cause slight movements, bring to it warmth and so modify its current state as to produce new sensations? The first concern of the Commissioners had to be not to make themselves too attentive to what was going on within themselves. If Magnetism is a real and potent cause it is not necessary that they should think about it to make it act and be apparent; it should, so to speak, force itself upon and fix their attention and make itself apparent to a mind even intentionally turned away from it.

But in making the decision to carry out experiments on themselves

the Commissioners unanimously resolved to make them upon each other without any outsider present other than M. Deslon to magnetise them, or persons chosen by them; they also resolved not to carry out magnetisation at the public treatment so that they could discuss their observations freely, and be in every case the only, or at least the first, judges of whatever they might observe.

As a result a dedicated room was given them at M. Deslon’s and a baquet for themselves and the
Commissioners went there once each week; they remained there for up to two and a half hours at a time with the iron crank pressed against the left hypochondrium, surrounded by the communication cord and from time to time making the chain of thumbs. They were magnetised either by M. Deslon or by one of his assistants sent in his place, and it was the Commissioners who appeared to be the most sensitive who were magnetised for longer and more often; they were magnetised sometimes with the finger and the iron rod presented to and moved over different parts of the body, sometimes by the application of the hands and pressure with the fingers either on the hypochondrium or on the hollow of the stomach.

None of them felt anything, or at least detected nothing that was of a nature to be attributed to the action of Magnetism.

Some of the Commissioners are of a robust constitution; others have a less strong constitution, and others are subject to indispositions: one of these felt a slight pain in the hollow of the stomach following heavy pressure that had been applied there. This pain lasted all that day and the next and was accompanied by a feeling of fatigue and malaise. A second felt, on the afternoon of one of the days on which he had been ‘touched’, a slight irritation of the nerves, to which he was subject. A third, who was more sensitive, particularly to an extreme instability of the nerves, felt more pain and more marked irritation; but these small inconveniences are the result of perpetual and ordinary variations in the state of health and consequently have nothing to do with Magnetism, or are the result of the pressure applied to the region of the stomach. The Commissioners mention these small details only because of a scrupulous integrity; they relate them because they imposed on themselves the obligation to tell the truth always and about everything.

The Commissioners could not help being struck by the differences between the public treatment and their individual treatment at the baquet. The calm and the silence of the one, the movement and agitation of the other; there, multiple effects and violent cries, the habitual state of the body and spirit distracted and troubled, Nature excited; here, body free of pain, spirit untroubled, Nature keeping her habitual equilibrium and following her ordinary course, in a word the absence of all the effects; here one does not find that great power that is astonishing at the public treatment; Magnetism without energy seems to be stripped of all sensible action.

The Commissioners, having attended the baquet only once per week to begin with wanted to test whether continuity might not have an effect; they attended for three successive days but their sensitivity was unchanged and they obtained no effect. This experiment was carried out and repeated on eight subjects at a time, of whom several had the usual inconveniences: suffice it to conclude that Magnetism has little action, or none at all, in the healthy state, and even in those with slight indispositions. We decided to try the effect on people who were really ill, and we chose these from the class of the people.

Seven patients were collected together at M. Franklin’s house at Passy; they were magnetised in front of him and the other Commissioners by M. Deslon.

The widow Saint-Amand, an asthmatic with swollen abdomen, thighs and legs, and the woman Anseaume who had a swelling of the thigh, felt no effect; little Claude Renard, a child of six, scrofulous and almost
wasted, who had a swollen knee with the limb flexed and the joint almost immobile - an interesting child and more reasonable than his age would suggest - also felt nothing; neither did Geneviève Leroux, a nine year old, who had convulsions and a disease that seemed very similar to that called *chorea sancti Viti*.

François Grenet did notice some effects; he had an illness of the eyes, particularly the right with which he saw hardly at all and where there was considerable swelling. When the left eye was magnetised by approaching it and shaking the thumb close to it for quite a long time, he felt pain in the eyeball and the eye watered. When the right eye - the more affected one - was magnetised he felt nothing; he had the same pain in the left eye but nothing anywhere else.

The woman Charpentier who had been thrown to the ground against a beam by a cow two years earlier had several consequences of her accident; she had lost her vision which she had partially recovered but she had remained in a state of habitual ill health; she said she had two hernias and that her belly was so sensitive that she could not suffer the cords of the belt of her skirts: this sensitivity was due to nerves that were agitated and made very sensitive; the slightest pressure on the region of the abdomen could provoke this sensitivity and produce effects over the whole body by the intermediacy of these nerves.

This woman was magnetised like the others by application of, and pressure from, the fingers; the pressure was painful to her: then, when the finger was directed towards the hernia, she complained of pain in the head; when the finger was placed in front of the face she said that she was becoming unable to breathe. On repeated movement of the finger from above downwards she had sudden movements of the head and shoulders, as one has from a mixture of surprise and fright, and like those of someone in whose face drops of water were thrown. It seemed that she developed the same movements with her eyes closed. The fingers were brought under her nose while she was made to close her eyes and she said that she felt unwell if one continued. The seventh patient, Joseph Ennuyé, exhibited effects of the same kind but much less marked.

Of these seven patients there were four who felt nothing and three others who had some effects. These effects were worthy of the Commissioners’ attention and required scrupulous examination.

To clarify their ideas in this respect, the Commissioners decided to test patients whose circumstances were different,

patients chosen from within society who would be expected to be independent and whose intelligence would make them capable of discussing their own sensations and giving an account of them. Mesdames de B** and de V**, Messieurs M** and R*** were admitted to the private baquet with the Commissioners; they were asked to observe what they felt but without paying too much attention to it. M. M** and Mme de V** were the only ones who felt anything. M. M** had a cold swelling over the whole of the knee joint and pain in the patella.

He said, after being magnetised, that he had felt nothing in his body except at the moment when the finger
had been brought in front of the affected knee; he had thought he felt a slight warmth in the place where
he usually had pain. Mme de V** who suffered from an illness of the nerves,

was several times on the point of falling asleep when she was being magnetised. Magnetised for an hour
and nineteen minutes without interruption, most often by application of the hands, she felt only agitation
and malaise. These two patients came only once to the baquet. M. R**, who was sick with the remain-
of an enlargement of the liver after a badly-treated obstruction, came there three times and felt nothing.
Mme de B**, suffering grave after obstructions, came there constantly with the Commissioners; she felt
nothing; and it must be noted that she submitted to magnetisation with perfect tranquillity, which gave rise
to great astonishment.

Other patients were tested on other occasions, but not around the baquet. One of the Commissioners
was magnetised by M. Deslon for half an hour during an attack of migraine; one of the symptoms of his
migraine is excessive coldness of the feet. M. Deslon brought his foot close to that of the patient, the foot
was not warmed; the migraine took its usual course and when the patient was placed beside the fire he
had the salutary effects that heat always gives him; neither during the day nor the following night did
Magnetism have any effect.

M. Franklin, for all that indispositions had prevented him from going to Paris and taking part in the
experiments that had been carried out there, was himself magnetised by M. Deslon who went to his house
in Passy.

The company was numerous; all those who were there were magnetised.

Several patients who had accompanied M. Deslon felt the effects of Magnetism as they were accustomed
to do at the public treatment; but Mme de B**, M. Franklin, both his relatives and his secretary, an
American officer, felt nothing for all that one of M. Franklin’s relatives was convalescent and the
American officer was sick with a recurrent fever.

These different experiments provide results that need to be brought together and compared, from which
the Commissioners have been able to draw conclusions. Of fourteen patients there were five who
appeared to have demonstrated effects and nine who showed nothing. The Commissioner with the
migraine and the cold feet had no improvement at all from Magnetism and his feet were not warmed at all.
Thus this agent does not at all have the property attributed to it of communicating heat to the feet.
Magnetism is also said to be suitable for making known the variety and seat of diseases by the pain that
the action of the fluid causes there without fail. This would be a most useful property; a fluid that indicated
disease would be a powerful tool in the hands of doctors who are often deceived by equivocal symptoms;
but François Grenet had no sensation and no pain except in the less affected eye. If the other eye had not
been red and swollen one would have believed it to be intact on the basis of the effects of Magnetism. M.
R** and Mme de B**, both suffering from obstructions,

and Mme. de B** very severely, felt nothing and would not have been alerted either to the site or the
nature of their malady. Obstructions, however, are diseases that are said to be particularly sensitive to the
action of Magnetism because, according to the new theory, the free and rapid circulation of the fluid by
the nerves is a means of unblocking channels and destroying obstacles, that is to say, the swellings that are
found there. At the same time it is said that Magnetism is the touchstone of health: if M. R** and Mme de
B*** had not demonstrated the suffering inescapable from obstruction they would have been justified in
thinking themselves to be in the best health in the world. One must say also of the American officer that
Magnetism, said to be an indicator of diseases, had absolutely lost its effect.

The warmth that M. M** felt in the patella is too small and fugitive an effect to draw any conclusion from
it. One might suspect that it arose from the cause described above, of too much attention by the observer:
the same attention produces similar sensations at other times when Magnetism is not employed. The
improvement demonstrated by Mme de V** came no doubt from the constancy and annoyance of the
same situation; and, if she had some movement of the vapours, one knows that the property of nervous
affections is greatly dependent on the attention that one pays to them; it suffices to think about them or to
hear them spoken about to make them reappear. One can imagine what must happen to a woman whose
nerves are very sensitive, magnetised for an hour and nineteen minutes;

she has no thoughts during this time but of the ills that are habitual to her. She could have had a
considerable nervous crisis without one needing to be surprised by it.

Thus there remain only the effects produced on the woman Charpentier, and on François Grenet and
Joseph Ennuyé that could appear to be due to Magnetism.

But on comparing these three cases with all the others the Commissioners were astonished that these
three patients from the class of the people were the only ones who had felt anything, while those from a
higher class endowed with more illumination and more able to give an account of their sensations, felt
nothing. Certainly François Grenet had pain in the eye and watering since the thumb had been brought
very close to his eye; the woman Charpentier complained that when her stomach was touched the
pressure affected her hernia;

and that pressure could have produced some of the effects that the woman demonstrated; but the
Commissioners suspected that these effects were increased by circumstances of custom.

Let us consider the position of a person of the people, and thus ignorant, attacked by a malady and
wishing to be cured, brought with ceremony before a large assembly composed in part of doctors, where
she is given a treatment completely new to her and of which she has persuaded herself in advance that she
is going to demonstrate prodigious actions.

Let us add that she is paid for her cooperation and that she believes she will please us more by
manifesting some effects, and we have natural causes to explain these effects; at the least we have
legitimate reasons to doubt that their true cause is Magnetism.

In addition one may ask why Magnetism had effects on people who knew what was being done to them,
who might be believed to have an interest in saying what they said, while it had no action on little Claude Renard – on that delicate organism of infancy, so mobile and sensitive? The reasonableness and ingenuity of this child assures us of the truth of his evidence. Why did this agent produce nothing in Geneviève Leroux who was in a perpetual state of convulsion? She certainly has sensitive nerves; how is it that Magnetism had no action either in increasing or in diminishing her convulsions? Her indifference and her passivity make one believe that she felt nothing, because the absence of reason did not allow her to suppose that she ought to feel something.

These facts allowed the Commissioners to observe that Magnetism seemed ineffective on those who submitted to it with some scepticism. The Commissioners, even those with the most sensitive nerves, when they had intentionally distracted their attention, and being armed with that philosophical doubt which must accompany all enquiry, did not at all demonstrate the impressions that the three patients from the class of the people felt: and they had to suspect that these impressions, supposing them to be entirely real, were the result of an anticipatory belief and could have been due to the imagination. Their research will now be directed towards a new aim; it concerns destroying or confirming this suspicion and determining just to what extent the imagination can influence our sensations; demonstrating whether it can be the cause, in whole or in part, of the effects attributed to Magnetism.

EXPERIMENTS ARE PROPOSED TO DESTROY OR CONFIRM THIS SUSPICION.

In addition, the Commissioners heard the experiments spoken of that had been made at the house of M. The Dean of the Faculté by M. Jumelin, Doctor of Medicine; they wanted to see these experiments and assembled with him at the house of one of them, M. Majault. M. Jumelin declared that he was not a pupil either of M. Mesmer or of M. Deslon, he had learnt nothing about Animal Magnetism and according to what he had heard said he had deduced some principles and devised some procedures. His principles consisted of regarding the magnetic fluid as a fluid that circulates in the body and which emanates from it but which is essentially the same as that which causes heat; a fluid that, like all others, tends to equilibrium and passes from a body in which there is more to one in which there is less. His procedures are also different from those of Messrs. Mesmer and Deslon; he magnetises, as they do, with the fingers and the conducting iron rod and by application of the hands, but without any distinction of poles.

M. JUMELIN’S METHOD OF MAGNETISING DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF MRS. MESMER & DESLON

FOURTH EXPERIMENT WHICH PROVES THAT USING THIS METHOD THE SAME RESULTS ARE PRODUCED.

Eight men and two women were initially magnetised and felt nothing; finally a woman who is Porter to M. Alphonse le Roy, Doctor of Medicine, having been magnetised on the forehead but without being touched, said that she felt warmth. When M. Jumelin moved his hand around and presented the five extremities of his fingers over all the woman’s face, she said that she felt like a flame which moved around: magnetised on the stomach she said she felt warmth there; magnetised on the back she said that she felt the same warmth there: in addition she said that her body was hot all over and she had a headache.
The Commissioners seeing that of these eleven persons submitted to the experiment only one was sensitive to M. Jumelin’s magnetism thought that this proved only that she had undoubtedly an imagination more easily upset; the occasion lent itself to clarifying this. After the woman’s sensitivity had been well demonstrated it was necessary only to separate her from her imagination, or at least to put her imagination out of action. The Commissioners proposed to bandage her eyes to see what her sensations would be when things were done without her knowledge. Her eyes were blindfolded and she was magnetised; after this the phenomena did not correspond to the places towards which the Magnetism was directed. Magnetised in succession on the stomach and the back the woman felt only heat in her head and pain in her right eye and in the left eye and ear. Her eyes were covered

and M. Jumelin applied his hands to her hypochondria; she said that she felt heat there. Then after several minutes she said that she was going to be ill, and she did, in fact, become ill. When she had recovered she was taken again and her eyes covered; M. Jumelin asked for silence and made the woman believe that she had been magnetised. The effects were the same although nothing had been done to her from nearby or far away; she felt the same heat, the same pain in the eyes and ears and, in addition, she felt heat in her back and kidneys.

At the end of a quarter of an hour a sign was made to M. Jumelin to magnetise her on the stomach; she felt nothing; the same thing happened with the back. The pains in the head remained but the heat in the back and kidneys ceased.

One sees that here effects were produced and these effects were similar to those found in the three patients described above. But they were obtained by different procedures; it follows that the procedures do nothing. The method of Messrs. Mesmer and Deslon, and an opposite method both gave the same result. The distinction of poles is thus a chimera.

THE CONCLUSION IS THAT THE METHOD IS INDIFFERENT, THAT THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN POLES IS CHIMERICAL.

One may observe that, when the woman saw what was going on, she placed her sensations precisely in the part magnetised; but when she did not see she placed them at random MARKED EFFECTS OF THE IMAGINATION.

and in parts very far away from where the Magnetism was directed. It is natural to conclude that the imagination determines these sensations,

true or false. We were convinced of this when we saw that this woman, having rested well, no longer feeling anything, showed all the same effects although she was not magnetised; but the demonstration was made complete by the finding that, after a session of a quarter of an hour, her imagination having no doubt cooled, the effects, instead of increasing, diminished at the very moment that the woman was really magnetised.

And, if she found herself unwell this is something that often happens to women when they are restrained and hampered by their clothes. Application of the hands to the hypochondria could have produced the
same effect on an excessively sensitive woman, but one does not even need that cause to explain the fact. It was very hot, the woman had no doubt had some strong feelings in the first few moments, she had made the effort to submit herself to a new and unknown treatment, and, after an effort sustained for too long, it is not extraordinary that she became enfeebled.

The fainting thus has a natural and known cause, but the sensations that she experienced when she was not magnetised can only have been the effects of her imagination. During similar experiments that M. Jumelin carried out in the same place the next day, in the presence of the Commissioners, on a man with his eyes covered and on a woman with her eyes open, the results were the same; one realised that their replies were evidently determined by the questions that were put to them. The question indicated where the sensation should be; instead of directing Magnetism on to them one did nothing but heighten and direct their imagination. A child of five magnetised next felt nothing but the warmth that he had experienced previously while playing.

These experiments seemed to the Commissioners sufficiently important for them to wish to repeat them in the hope of getting some new insights and M. Jumelin was good enough to participate in this. It is of no use to object that M. Jumelin’s method is a poor one because the proposal at this time was not to test Magnetism but the imagination.

The Commissioners agreed to bandage the eyes of the subjects tested and usually not to magnetise them but to ask them questions in such a way as to indicate the answers to the subjects. This procedure should not lead them into error; it deceived only their imagination. In fact, when they were not magnetised their only response should have been that they felt nothing; and when they were magnetised it should be the impression felt that ought to dictate their response and not the way in which they were interrogated.

In consequence, when the Commissioners arrived at M. Jumelin’s they began by testing his domestic servant. A bandage was applied to his eyes; this was specially-prepared and was used in all the following experiments. The bandage consisted of two cups of gum elastic of which the concavities were filled with eiderdown and the whole was enclosed and sewn into two pieces of material cut to a circular shape. These two pieces of material were attached to each other and had cords that tied behind the head. Placed on the eyes they left between them space for the nose and left breathing free; but nothing could be seen, even daylight, either through, above or below the bandage. Once these precautions had been taken for the comfort of the subjects and to make the results secure, M. Jumelin’s domestic was persuaded that he had been magnetised. He then felt warmth almost all over and movements in his abdomen. His head became heavy and he appeared to be on the point of falling asleep. This proves, as we have said above, that this effect is due to the circumstances and to boredom and not to magnetism.

When he was then magnetised with his eyes open, by presenting the iron bar to his forehead, he felt prickling of the skin there; when his eyes were covered again and the iron bar was presented he did not feel this at all and, when the bar was not presented but he was asked if he did not feel anything on his forehead, he declared that he felt something coming and going across the width of his forehead.
M. B**, a learned man, especially in medicine, when his eyes were blindfolded presented the same spectacle, having effects when one did nothing and often feeling nothing when one did something. These effects were even the same as those which he felt before he had been magnetised in any way, but when he believed he had been magnetised for the previous ten minutes. He reported warmth in the lumbar region which he compared to that of a stove. It is clear that M. B** had a powerful sensation since to explain it he was driven to such a comparison; and this sensation he owed entirely to the imagination.

which was the only thing that was acting on him.

The Commissioners, especially the doctors, made a large number of experiments on different subjects whom they themselves magnetised or whom they made believe that they had been magnetised. They magnetised either with opposed poles or with direct poles, inverted or not, and, in every case they found the same effects; there was no difference in all of these tests other than subjects’ imaginations being more sensitive or less sensitive. (s). They are thus convinced by these observations that the imagination alone can produce various sensations and can elicit pain, warmth and even considerable heat in all parts of the body, and they have come to the conclusion that imagination necessarily accounts in great part for the effects attributed to magnetism. But it must be agreed that the practice of magnetism produces changes in the living body and derangements larger than those that have just been described. None of the subjects who had been magnetised till this stage were affected to the point of having convulsions; there was thus a new topic to study – whether by acting on the imagination it was possible to produce crises similar to those that took place at the public treatment.

Several experiments were planned with this object. When a tree has been ‘touched’ according to the principles and methods of magnetism anyone who stops under it must experience to a greater or lesser degree the effects of this agent; even to the extent of losing consciousness or having convulsions.

We discussed the point with M. Deslon who said that the experiment must succeed provided that the subject was sensitive and we agreed with him to carry it out at Passy in the presence of M. Franklin. The requirement that the subject be sensitive made the Commissioners think that, for the experiment to be decisive and not need repetition, it was necessary that it should be carried out on someone chosen by M. Deslon in whom he had already demonstrated sensitivity to magnetism.

M. Deslon therefore brought with him a young man of about twelve. An apricot tree had been noticed in the garden, well isolated and suitable to conserve magnetism that had been imparted to it. M. Deslon was taken to it alone so that he could magnetise it;
the young man remained in the house with someone who never left him. We would have preferred that M. Deslon not to be present at the experiment but he declared that it might fail if he did not direct his stick and his gaze at the tree to increase its action. Action was taken to put M. Deslon as far away as possible and to place the Commissioners between him and the young man in order to ensure that there could be no signal and to be able to give an assurance that the subject had had no information. These precautions were essential in an experiment for it to be reliable, but they were not oppressive.

Next, the young man, with his eyes blindfolded, was led to four trees in succession which had not been magnetised in any way. He was required to embrace them, each for two minutes, according to the directions given by M. Deslon himself.

M. Deslon who was present a long way away directed his stick towards the tree that was really magnetised.

At the first tree, when he was questioned at the end of one minute, the young man declared that he was sweating with large drops; he coughed, spat and said that he had a slight headache; the distance from the magnetised tree was about twenty-seven feet.

At the second tree he felt confused, and had the same headache; the distance was thirty-six feet.

At the third tree the confusion increased as did the headache; he said he believed he was approaching the magnetised tree; however he was about thirty-eight feet from it.

Finally, at the fourth unmagnetised tree, at forty-eight feet from the tree that had been magnetised, the young man fell into a crise; he lost consciousness, his limbs became extended and rigid and he was carried on to a nearby lawn where M. Deslon attended to him and got him to come round.

THE PATIENT FALLS INTO CRISIS UNDER A TREE THAT IS NOT MAGNETISED.

The outcome of this experiment was entirely against magnetism. M. Deslon wanted to explain the outcome by saying that all trees are naturally magnetised and that their magnetism had also been reinforced by his presence.

THEREFORE THE IMAGINATION PRODUCED THIS CRISIS.

But if this were so a person sensitive to magnetism would not dare to go into a garden without the risk of having convulsions; this assertion is shown to be false by everyday experience. The presence of M. Deslon had no more effect than it had in the coach in which the young man came with him; sitting opposite him the young man was not affected. Had the young man felt nothing even under the magnetised tree one could have said that he was not sensitive enough, at least on that day, but the young man fell into a crise under a tree that had not been magnetised. This effect is therefore one that has no physical cause, or external cause, and can have no other cause than the imagination. The experiment is thus entirely conclusive: the young man knew that he was being taken to a magnetised tree, his imagination was fired then this stimulation increased and, at the fourth tree it had increased to the extent required to produce the crise.

Other experiments reinforced this one and gave the same result.
One day when the Commissioners met together with M. Franklin at Passy they had asked M. Deslon to bring some patients with him and to choose from among his treatment of the poor those who were the most sensitive to magnetism. M. Deslon brought two women and, while he was busy magnetising M. Franklin in another room we separated the two women and put them in two different rooms.

One of them, the woman P** had cataracts on her eyes but, since she still had a little vision her eyes covered with the bandage described above. She was persuaded that M. Deslon had been brought in to magnetise her and silence was requested; three Commissioners were there, one to ask questions, one to write and one to impersonate M. Deslon. We seemed to be addressing M. Deslon and asking him to start but we in no way magnetised the woman. The three Commissioners kept quiet and observed what was going to happen. At the end of three minutes the patient began to feel a frisson in the nerves; then successively she felt pain behind her head, in her arms and a sensation of ants in her hands, as she put it; she became cold, beat her hands, rose from her chair, and tapped her feet: the crise was very clearly marked. Two other Commissioners who were in the room next door with the door closed heard the tapping of the feet and noises of the hands and, though they did not see anything, were witnesses to the noisy scene.

These two Commissioners were with the patient Miss B**, who had a nervous disorder. Her eyes were left open and uncovered. She was seated in front of a closed door and persuaded that M. Deslon was on the other side, busy magnetising her. She had hardly been sitting in front of the door for one minute when she began to feel a frisson in the nerves; after another minute she had chattering of the teeth although she was also warm all over. In the end, after a third minute, she fell entirely into crisis. Her respiration was laboured, she stretched out both arms behind her back twisting them violently and leaning her body forwards; there was a general tremor throughout the body. The chattering of her teeth became so noisy that it could be heard from outside; she bit her hand so strongly that it bore tooth marks.

It is well to remark that neither of these patients had been touched in any way; we had not even taken their pulse so that it could not be claimed that we had communicated magnetism to them, and yet the crises were complete. The Commissioners who had wished to find out the effect of working on the imagination, and judge what part it could play in the crises of magnetism had obtained what they desired. It is not possible to see the effect of this working on the imagination more openly and evidently than in these two experiments. And if the patients declared that their crises were stronger when they were being treated this is because the disturbance of the nerves communicates itself and in general any private individual emotion is increased by the sight of similar emotions.

There was an opportunity to test the woman P** on a second occasion and to see to what an extent she was dominated by her imagination. We wished to carry out the experiment of the magnetised cup: this experiment consists of choosing from among a number of cups one that one magnetises. They are
presented in turn to a patient sensitive to magnetism who should fall into a *crise*, or at least show similar effects, when he is presented with the magnetised cup, and be indifferent to all those that are not magnetised. M. Deslon recommends only that it is necessary to present the cups to the patient by the direct pole so that the person who holds the cup does not magnetise the patient and so that the only effect is due to the magnetism of the cup.

The woman P** was sent to M. Lavoisier at the Arsenal, where M. Deslon was; she began by falling into crisis in the antechamber before having seen either the Commissioners or M. Deslon though she knew that she was going to see them; this was a well-marked effect of the imagination.

When the crisis had settled down the woman was taken to the place for the experiment. Several porcelain cups that had not been magnetised were presented to her; the second cup began to affect her and at the fourth she fell entirely into *crise*. One might claim that she was already in a state of *crise* which had begun in the antechamber and which became reactivated on its own; however, the decisive observation was that, when she was given a drink in the magnetised cup by M. Deslon himself, she drank it calmly and said that she was much relieved. The cup and magnetism thus lacked any effect since the crisis was calmed instead of being increased.

A little time later, while M. Majault was examining the cataracts on her eyes the magnetised cup was presented behind her head for twelve minutes; she in no way perceived it and showed no effect; she was at no time more tranquil because her imagination was distracted and occupied by the examination that was being made of her eyes.

The Commissioners were told that while this woman was alone in the antechamber several people who had nothing to do with magnetism approached her and that the convulsive movements recommenced. It was pointed out to her that she was not being magnetised but her imagination had been so fired that she replied: if you were not doing anything to me I would not be in the state that I am in. She knew that she had come to take part in experiments; anyone approaching or the slightest noise attracted her attention and reawakened the idea of magnetism and renewed the convulsions.

For the imagination to act in a powerful fashion it is often necessary that several cords be touched at once. The imagination is responsive to all the senses; its reaction must be proportional to the number of senses involved and to the sensations received: the Commissioners realised this as a result of the experiment that will now be described. M. Jumelin had spoken to them of a young woman of twenty whom he had caused to lose the power of speech through the action of magnetism; the Commissioners repeated this experiment at his house, the young woman was agreeable to taking part and allowed her eyes to be bandaged.

**TWELFTH EXPERIMENT; THE ACTION GOES AS FAR AS TO CAUSE LOSS OF SPEECH.**

In the first instance we tried to produce the same effect without magnetising her; but, because she had felt, or believed she had felt, the effects of magnetism we did not succeed in striking her imagination enough for the experiment to be successful. When she was really magnetised with her eyes covered we had no
more success. Her eyes were uncovered; thus her imagination was struck both by vision and hearing and
the effects were more marked; but when her head began to become heavy and she felt some problem at
the root of her nose, a lot of the symptoms that she had had the first time returned; however, speech was
not lost. She had noticed herself that that it was necessary that the hand magnetising the forehead should
descend as far as the nose; she remembered that the hand was placed there when she lost her voice. We
did what she asked and, in three quarters of a minute, she became mute; one heard no more than some
inarticulate and mute sounds in spite of visible efforts of her throat to push out the sound and those of the
tongue and the lips to articulate it. This state lasted only one minute; one saw when she found herself in
exactly the same circumstances, the seduction of her spirit and the effect on the organs of the voice were
the same. But it was insufficient that she was informed

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aurally that she was magnetised; it was necessary that vision should give her stronger and more striking
evidence, and it also required that a familiar gesture reawakened her ideas. It seems that this experiment
shows in a marvellous way how the imagination acts, mounting by degrees and requiring several external
supplements to become more effectively striking.

THE GAZE SERVES TO STRIKE THE IMAGINATION.

This power of vision over the imagination explains the effects that the doctrine of magnetism ascribes to
the gaze. Gaze has a pre-eminent power of magnetising; the Commissioners were told that all the gestures
used together do nothing except in a subject who has already been ‘mastered’ by fixing him with the gaze.
The reason for this is simple; it is in the eyes where the most expressive traits of the passions are seated, it
is there that is deployed all that is most important and seductive in the character. The eyes must therefore
have great power over us; but they have this power only because they strike the imagination to a greater
or lesser extent according to the strength of that imagination. All the practice of magnetism thus begins
with the gaze; and its effect is so powerful and has such deep roots, that when a woman newly arrived at
M. Deslon’s, encountered, while coming out of a crise, the gaze of one of M. Deslon’s assistants who
was magnetising her, she fixated him for three quarters of an hour. She was pursued for a long time by this
image; she always saw in front of her that same eye engaged in fixating her and she carried it constantly
for three days in her imagination,

THIRTEENTH EXPERIMENT THAT PROVES THIS EFFECT OF GAZE.

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in her sleep as well as when awake. One sees that all this can produce an imagination capable of
conserving the same impression for so long; that is to say, renewing the same sensation for a period of
three days by itself and by its own power.

THESE EXPERIMENTS ARE UNIFORM AND DECISIVE; THEY PROVE THAT THE IMAGINATION IS SUFFICIENT TO PRODUCE THE EFFECTS
ATTRIBUTED TO MAGNETISM.

The experiments that we have just described agree with each other and are decisive; they allow the
conclusion that the imagination is the true cause of the actions attributed to magnetism. But perhaps the
protagonists of this new agent might object that identity of the effects does not always prove the identity
of the causes. They would accept that the imagination can excite these impressions without magnetism;
but they would maintain that magnetism can also excite them without the imagination. The Commissioners
would easily refute this assertion by reasoning and by the principles of physics, the first of all of which is
never to admit new causes except in absolute necessity. As long as the observed effects can be produced by an existing cause, and one that has been demonstrated by other phenomena, sound physics teaches that the observed effects must be attributed to it; and when it is claimed that a hitherto unknown cause has been discovered, sound physics demands also that it be established and demonstrated by effects that do not belong to any known cause and can be explained only by the new cause. Thus it is for the proponents of magnetism to present other proofs and to seek out effects that can be separated entirely from the illusions of the imagination.

But, since facts are more demonstrative than reasoning and produce more striking evidence, the Commissioners wanted to find out by experiment of what magnetism would be capable when the imagination was not acting.

We were provided with an apartment in which there were two contiguous rooms that communicated through a door. We removed the door and substituted for it a frame covered with a double layer of paper. In one of the rooms was one of the Commissioners to write down what happened and a woman said to be from the provinces who had some linen to work on. We sent for the Dlle. De B**, a linen worker who had already taken part in experiments at Passy and whose sensitivity to magnetism was known. When she arrived things were arranged so that there was only one seat in which she could sit and that seat was placed in the embrasure of the communicating door where she found herself, as it were, in a niche.

The Commissioners were in the other room and one of them, a doctor experienced in magnetism and who had already produced effects with it, was instructed to magnetise the Dlle. De B** through the frame of paper. It is one of the principles of the theory of magnetism that the agent passes through wooden doors, walls etc. A paper frame could not be an obstacle to it; moreover, M. Deslon has established for sure that magnetism passes through paper, and the Dlle. De B** was magnetised as though she had been in view and in his presence.

The magnetising continued, in effect, for half an hour at a foot and a half distance with opposed poles, following all the rules laid down by M. Deslon and that the Commissioners had seen carried out at his house. During all this time, the Dlle. De B** conversed cheerfully; asked about her health she replied freely that she was well: at Passy she had fallen into a crise at the end of three minutes; here she tolerated magnetism without any effect for thirty minutes. But here she did not know that she was being magnetised while at Passy she knew that she was. One sees that the imagination alone produces the effects attributed to magnetism and, that, when the imagination is not active, there are no more effects.

There is only one objection that could be made to this experiment; that the Dlle. De B** could have been indisposed and been less sensitive to magnetism at that time. The Commissioners had foreseen this objection and therefore carried out the following experiment. As soon as we had stopped the magnetising through the paper, the same doctor-Commissioner went into the other room. It was easy for him to get the agreement of the Dlle. De B** to allow herself to be magnetised. He began therefore, to magnetise her, being careful to do as he had in the previous experiment, keeping a foot and a half from her, using only gestures and movements of the index finger and the iron rod; because, had he applied his hands and touched the hypochondria it could have been claimed that the magnetism had acted by this more
immediate application. The only difference that there was between these two experiments was that,

in the first, he magnetised using opposed poles according to the rules while in the second he magnetised using direct poles reversed. By acting in this way he should have produced no effect, according to the theory of magnetism.

However, after three minutes, the Dlle. De B** felt malaise and suffocation; there followed a cut-off hiccup, chattering of the teeth, tightness in the throat and a severe headache; she sat uneasily on the chair, she complied of her kidneys; she struck her foot several times on the parquet then she extended her arms behind her, twisting them strongly as at Passy; in a word there was a convulsive crise that was complete and perfectly characterised. She had these events after twelve minutes whereas the same treatment used for thirty minutes had found her insensitive. Thus there is nothing here but the imagination and it is accordingly to it that these effects belong.

If it was the imagination that started the crise it was again the imagination that terminated it. The Commissioner who was magnetising her said that it was time to finish; he presented to her his two crossed fingers and it is well to observe that, by doing this, he magnetised her by direct poles as he had done previously; thus nothing had changed, the same treatment should have led to the same impressions. But the action was sufficient to calm the crisis; the heat and the headache dissipated. The discomfort was chased from place to place while announcing that it was going to disappear. Thus it was that through the voice that commanded the imagination the pain in the neck stopped, then the feelings in the chest, the stomach and the arms. It needed only three minutes for the Dlle. De B** to declare that she no longer felt anything and was absolutely in her usual state.

IMAGINATION DOES EVERYTHING, MAGNETISM IS VOID ......

These last experiments as well as those that were carried out at M. Jumelin’s have the double advantage of showing at once the power of the imagination and the ineffectiveness of magnetism in the effects produced.

COMBINATION OF SEVERAL CAUSES TO AUGMENT THE

If the effects are even more marked and the crises seem more violent at the public treatment this is because several causes join the imagination and work with it to multiply and increase its actions. One begins with the gaze to master the spirits; touching and the application of the hands follows quickly; it is convenient to develop here the physical effects of these.

These effects are of various sizes: the least are hiccups, disgust, purgation; more considerable are the convulsions that are called crises. The place where touching takes place is in the hypochondria, in the hollow of the stomach and sometimes on the ovaries when it is women who are touched. The hands and the fingers press on and compress these regions to a greater or lesser extent.

The colon, one of the large intestines, runs through the regions of the two hypochondria and the epigastric region that separates them. It is placed immediately below the integument.
It is thus on this intestine that touching acts, on this sensitive and very irritable intestine. Movement alone, repeated movement without any other agent, excites the muscular action of the intestine and sometimes produces evacuation. Nature seems instinctively to suggest this manoeuvre in the hypochondria. The practice of magnetism is nothing but this same manoeuvre and the purgations that it can produce are even more facilitated during magnetic treatment by the frequent and almost habitual use of a real purgative, cream of tarter in a drink.

But while the movement excites principally the colon this intestine offers other phenomena. It becomes more or less distended and sometimes takes up a considerable volume. Hence it communicates to the diaphragm such irritation that that organ goes more or less into convulsion and this is what is called *crise* in the treatment with animal magnetism. One of the Commissioners saw a woman who was subject to a sort of spasmodic vomiting repeated several times each day. Her efforts produced only a viscous turbid liquid, like that expelled by patients in crisis during the practice of magnetism. The convulsion had its seat in the diaphragm, and the region of the colon was so sensitive that the least touch on this part, a strong disturbance in the air, the surprise caused by an unexpected noise, sufficed to excite a convulsion. Thus, this woman had *crises* without magnetism solely because of the irritability of the colon and diaphragm and the women who are magnetised have their *crises* from the same cause and irritability.

The application of the hands to the stomach has equally remarkable physical effects. The application is made directly on this organ. It is operated upon either by strong continuous compression or by light repeated compression, sometimes an agitation is produced by rotating the iron rod when applied to this part; finally the thumbs are passed one after the other over it in rapid succession. The manoeuvres at once induce an agitation in the stomach that is more or less strong and more or less lasting according to whether the subject is more or less sensitive and irritable. One prepares and disposes the stomach to this irritation by compressing it beforehand. This compression acts on the diaphragm and communicates to it the impressions that it receives. It can avoid being irritated only if the diaphragm is not irritated and from this, as with the action of the colon, result the nervous effects about which we have just spoken.

In sensitive women, if one has just simply compressed the two hypochondria without any other movement, the stomach finds itself squeezed and the women become enfeebled. This is what happened to the woman magnetised by M. Jumelin, and that often happens without any other cause when women are too restricted by their garments. There is then no crisis, however, because the stomach is compressed without being agitated and the diaphragm remains in its normal state. The same manoeuvres carried out on the ovaries in women, as well as producing their own peculiar effects, often produce the same effects even more powerfully. The influence and the rule of the uterus over

The intimate relationship between colon, stomach and uterus and the diaphragm is one of the causes of the effects attributed to magnetism. The regions of the lower belly, when they are subjected to different touches, respond by way of various plexuses which form there a veritable nervous centre by means of which - a deduction made from all systems - there exists a certain sympathy, a communication, a correspondence between all the parts of the body; an action and reaction such that sensations excited in
one centre act on other parts of the body; and, reciprocally, a sensation arising in one part disturbs and
brings into action the nervous centre which often transmits the impression to all the other parts.

This explains not only the effects of magnetic ‘touching’ but also the physical effects of the imagination. It
has always been observed that the affections of the spirit make their first impression on this nervous
centre, and this leads to the common saying that one’s stomach feels heavy and that one feels suffocated.
The diaphragm is involved, whence the sighs, tears and laughter. There is also a reaction on the viscera of
the lower abdomen and it is thus that one may explain the physical disorders produced by the imagination.
Sudden displeasure occasions colic, terror causes diarrhoea, chagrin gives rise to jaundice. The history of
medicine contains an infinite number of examples of the power of the imagination and the affections of the spirit. The fear of fire or firm and sustained hope returns the use of the limbs to someone immobile from gout, or to a paralytic; lively and unexpected joy dissipates a quatrain fever that has lasted two months; concentrated attention stops hiccup; those who have become mute after an accident recover their speech following a lively emotion of the spirits. History shows that such emotion is sufficient for recovery of speech and the Commissioners have seen that the activated imagination sufficed to suspend its use. The action and reaction of the physical on the moral and of the moral on the physical have been demonstrated from observations in medicine since such observations began, that is to say since the start of medicine.

Tears, laughter, cough, hiccup and, in general, all the effects seen in what are called crises during the
public treatment thus have their origin either from disturbance of the functions of the diaphragm by some
physical means, such as touch or pressure, or from that power with which the imagination is endowed to
allow it to act on that organ and to disturb its functions.

Were it to be objected that touch is not always necessary to these effects, the reply would be that the
imagination can have sufficient resources to produce everything on its own; above all the imagination
acting during a public treatment, and thus doubly excited by its own movement and by that of the
surrounding imaginations. We have seen what it did in the experiments of the Commissioners on isolated
subjects; one can imagine its effects multiplied on the patients gathered together at the public
treatment. The patients are assembled there in a space small relative to their number; the air is hot
however much care is taken to renew it, and it is always more or less charged with mephitic gas which
acts particularly on the head and on the nervous system. If there is music this is another means of acting
on the nerves to move them.

Several women are magnetised at a time and, at first, show only the effects that the Commissioners found
in many of their experiments. They have remarked that, even at the treatment, it is usually only at the end
of two hours that the crises begin.

Little by little the impressions are communicated from one to another and are reinforced, as one sees at
theatrical performances where the impressions are greatest when there are many spectators, and above all
in the places in which one is free to applaud. The signs of individual emotion establish a general emotion
that is shared by everyone in the degree to which he is susceptible. It is this that one sees in armies on the
day of battle where the enthusiasm of courage spreads as fast as the terror of panic. In this universe of
madness an impression appears and becomes universal; it encourages a charge or it causes flight. The
same cause gives rise to revolts; imagination governs the multitude;

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men collected together are more submissive to their sensations, reason has less rule over them and when
fanaticism presides at such gatherings it produces the *Trembleurs des Cevennes*. (6).

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It is to stop this agitation so easily communicated to the spirit that, in towns in revolt, one forbids
assemblies. Everywhere an

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example acts on the moral condition; mechanical imitation put the physical in train; by isolating individuals
one calms the spirits, by separating them one also causes the convulsions to stop; the nature of these is
always contagious: there is a recent example in the young girls of Saint-Roch who, when they were
separated, were cured of the fits that they had when they were together. (9).

Thus one sees ‘magnetism’ – or, rather, the imagination – acting at spectacles, in the army and in
assemblies of many people as at the baquet, acting by different methods but producing similar effects. The
baquet is surrounded by a crowd of patients; sensations are continually communicated and

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received; in the end the nerves must become fatigued by this usage, they become irritated and the most
sensitive woman gives the signal. Thus all the cords, stretched in unison to the same degree, respond;
cries are multiplied, they mutually reinforce each other, they become violent. At the same time the men,
witnessing these emotions, share them in proportion to their nervous sensibility and those in whom this
sensitivity is greatest and most mobile themselves fall into *crise*.

This great mobility, in part natural and in part acquired both in men and women, becomes a habit. Once
these sensations have been experienced once or more it requires only that one remember them to increase
the imagination to the same degree and to produce the same effects. This is always easy to bring about by
placing the subject again in the same circumstances. Thus there is no need of the public treatment, one has
only to touch the hypochondria, to move the finger and the iron bar in front of the face; these signs are
familiar. It is not even necessary to carry them out; it is sufficient that the patients, their eyes covered,
believe that the signs are being repeated on them and persuade themselves that they are being magnetised;
the ideas are revived, the sensations are reproduced, the imagination by its accustomed means makes the
same phenomena reappear. This is what happens to M. Deslon’s patients who fall into *crises* without the
baquet, and without being excited by the spectacle of the public treatment.

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Touch, imagination, imitation – such are thus the true causes

TOUCH, IMAGINATION AND IMITATION ARE THE TRUE CAUSES OF THE EFFECTS ATTRIBUTED TO MAGNETISM.

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of the effects attributed to this new agent known under the name of Animal magnetism, to this fluid that is said to circulate in the body and to communicate itself from individual to individual; such is the result of the Commissioners’ experiments and of the observations that they have made on the techniques used and the effects produced. This agent, this fluid, do not exist; but, though it is a complete chimera, the idea is not new. Some authors, some doctors from the last century, have dealt with it expressly in their works. The curious and interesting researches of M. Thouret proved to the public that the theory, procedures and effects of animal magnetism proposed during the last century were almost the same as those that have been renewed in this century. Magnetism is thus nothing but an old error. The theory is presented today with a larger structure, necessary in a more enlightened century; but this makes it no less false. Men make, abandon and take up again errors that please them. There are errors that are eternally dear to humanity. How many times has astrology reappeared on earth? Magnetism should remind us of it. People have wanted to tie it to celestial influences so that it would be more seductive and would attract men by the two hopes that touch them most, that of knowing their future and that of prolonging their days.

There is reason to believe that imagination is the principal of the three causes that we have just assigned to magnetism. We have seen from the experiments described that it is sufficient by itself to produce crises. Pressure, and ‘touching’ seem to serve to prepare it; it is by ‘touching’ that the nerves begin to be struck, imitation communicates and expands the impressions.

But imagination is that active and terrible force that produces those large effects that one sees with astonishment at the public treatment. These effects are striking to everyone for all that their cause is obscure and hidden. When one considers that, in the last century, these effects seduced men esteemed for their merit and for their knowledge such as Paracelsus, Van Helmont, Kirker etc. one should not be surprised if today learned, enlightened people and even a large number of doctors have been deceived by them. The Commissioners, when they had been present only at the public treatment where there was neither the time nor the facilities to carry out experiments, could themselves have been led into error. It is essential to have had the freedom to isolate the effects to distinguish their causes; it is necessary to have seen, as they did, the imagination in action, as it were partially, producing separated detailed effects to understand the accumulation of these effects and to form an idea of its power when complete and of the prodigies it produces. But this investigation demands a sacrifice of time and a number of investigations to be pursued that one has not always the leisure to undertake for one’s own instruction or curiosity, that one does not even have the right to follow, unless one is, like the Commissioners, charged with the King’s orders and honoured by the confidence of the public.

M. Deslon does not dissociate himself from these principles. He declared at the committee meeting held at M. Franklin’s on 19 June that he believed that he was able to state that the imagination had the largest part in the effects of animal magnetism; he said that this new agent was perhaps only the imagination itself whose power is so great that it is little known. He assured us that he had always recognised this power in the treatment of his patients and he assured us also that several had been either cured or infinitely relieved. He observed to the Commissioners that imagination directed thus to the relief of suffering humanity would be of great benefit in the practice of medicine (7); and, persuaded of the reality of this power of the

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M. Deslon does not dissociate himself from these principles, and he believes it useful to employ the power of the imagination in medicine.
imagination he invited them to study its progress and effects with him. If M. Deslon is still attached to the original idea that these effects are due to the action of a fluid that communicates itself from individual to individual by touch or under the direction of a conductor, he was not slow to recognise with the Commissioners that only one cause is needed for an effect and, since the imagination suffices the fluid is unnecessary. Doubtless we are surrounded by a fluid that belongs to us; insensible transpiration forms an atmosphere around us of equally insensible vapours; but this fluid only acts like atmospheres, can only communicate infinitely little by ‘touching’ is not directed either by conductors nor by the gaze, nor by intention, is not propagated by sound nor reflected by mirrors and is not capable in any case of the effects that are attributed to it.

It remains to examine whether the crises or the convulsions produced by the techniques of this so-called magnetism in those assembled around the baquet could be useful and cure or relieve the patients.

**THE IMAGINATION IS ALMOST ALWAYS DAMAGING WHEN IT PRODUCES VIOLENT EFFECTS AND CONVULSIONS.**

No doubt the imagination of patients often has a great influence on the cure of their illnesses. This effect is known only by general experience and has not in the least been determined by positive experiments; but it does not seem that one can doubt it. It is a known adage that faith saves in medicine; this faith is the product of the imagination: thus imagination acts only by gentle means, it acts by spreading calm to all the senses, re-establishing order in the functions and rekindling hope. Hope is the life of man; whoever can give him the one contributes to giving him the other. But when imagination produces convulsions it acts by violent means; these means are almost always destructive. It is only in very rare cases that they can be useful; it is in desperate cases that everything must be upset to begin everything again. These dangerous attacks can only be of use in medicine like poisons. They must be commanded by necessity and employed with economy. The benefit is momentary; there must be only one assault. Far from repeating it, the wise doctor occupies himself with means of repairing the necessary harm that it has done; but at the public treatment by magnetism the crises are repeated each day; they are long and violent; since the state of crisis is harmful the habit can only be dangerous. How can one believe that a woman whose chest is affected can have, without danger, the crises of a convulsive cough and forced expectoration; and by repeated and violent efforts exhaust and perhaps tear the lung, in which case one has great difficulty in soothing and relieving it! How can one imagine that a man, whatever his disease, needs, for its cure, to fall into crises where vision seems to be lost, where the limbs become rigid or into precipitate and involuntary movements in which he strikes his chest hard; crises that finish with abundant expectoration of mucus and blood! This blood is neither vicious nor corrupt; this blood comes from the vessels from which it has been torn by the efforts and from which it issues against the wishes of Nature. These effects are, therefore, a real ill and not a curative ill; they are an ill added to the malady, whatever that may be.

These crises have yet another danger. Man is without cease governed by custom; custom modifies Nature by successive degrees but does so so powerfully that often custom changes her almost entirely and makes her unrecognisable. Who will assure us that this state of crises, begun voluntarily at first, will...
not become habitual! And if this habit, thus acquired, often reproduces the same accidents in spite of volition, and almost without the aid of the imagination, what will be the state of an individual subjected to violent *crises*, tormented physically and mentally by their unhappy impression, whose days are divided between apprehension and pain and whose life is nothing but an enduring agony! Maladies of the nerves, for all that they are natural, are the despair of doctors; it is not for the Art to produce them. That Art is dangerous which disturbs the functions of the animal economy, pushes Nature aside and multiplies the victims of these derangements. That Art is the more dangerous when it not only aggravates the maladies of the nerves in recalling past happenings but makes them habitually degenerate. But if this malady is contagious, as one might suspect, the practice of provoking nervous convulsions and exciting them in public during the treatments is a means of spreading them in the large towns and even inflicting them on generations to come because the ills and habits of parents are transmitted to their posterity.

CONCLUSION. THE MAGNETIC FLUID DOES NOT EXIST AND THE METHODS USED TO BRING IT INTO ACTION ARE DANGEROUS.

The Commissioners, having recognised that this animal magnetic fluid cannot be perceived by any of our senses, that it has no effect, either on them or on the patients who are subjected to it; being assured that the pressures and touchings occasion changes which are rarely favourable to the animal economy, and disturbances that are always disturbing to the imagination, having finally shown by decisive experiments that

the imagination, without magnetism, produces convulsions, and that magnetism without imagination produces nothing, have concluded unanimously about the question of the existence and utility of magnetism, that nothing proves the existence of animal magnetism; that this fluid without existence is consequently without use; that the violent effects that are seen at the public treatment are produced by the ‘touching’, by the imagination excited to action and to that mechanical imitation that drives us in spite of ourselves to repeat that which strikes our senses. At the same time they feel that they are obliged to add, as an important observation, that the ‘touching’, the repeated action of the imagination to produce *crises* can be harmful; that the spectacle of these *crises* is also dangerous because of that imitation that Nature seems to have made a law for us; and that, in consequence, all public treatment where the techniques of magnetism are employed can have in the long term only damaging effects. (s).

At Paris, this eleventh of August one thousand seven hundred and eighty-four.

*Signed* B. Franklin, Majault, Le Roy, Sallin, Bailly, d’Arcet, de Bory, Guillotin, Lavoisier.
SECRET REPORT

On animal magnetism, compiled by Bailly

In the name of the same commission

The Commissioners charged by the king with the examination of animal magnetism, in compiling their report which is to be presented to his majesty and which may, perhaps, become public, thought that it would be prudent to suppress one observation that should not be divulged; but they did not think it their duty to deceive his majesty’s minister: this minister charged them to compose a note about it to be placed before his majesty and reserved to him alone.

This important observation concerns moral behaviour; the Commissioners have recognised that the principal causes of the effects attributed to animal magnetism are ‘touching’, imagination and imitation and they have seen that there are always many more women than men in crisis: this difference has as its primary cause the different organisation of the two sexes; women have, in general, more excitable nerves and their imaginations are more vivid and exalted. It is easy to affect it the imagination and to move it. This great excitability of the nerves, while giving them more delicate and exquisite senses, makes them more susceptible to the impressions produced by ‘touching’. In touching them in any part one could say that one touches them all over; this great excitability of their nerves makes them sensitive to imitation; women, as has already been remarked, are similar to stretched sounding strings in unison; it suffices that one be put in motion for all the others instantly to follow it: the Commissioners have seen this several times, as soon as one woman falls into crisis the others do not delay in following her.

This arrangement makes it understandable why women have more frequent longer and more violent crises than men; it is to the sensitivity of their nerves that most of their crises are due. There are some crises that are due to a hidden, though natural, cause; to a certain cause of the emotions to which all women are more or less susceptible, and which by an indirect influence, by accumulation of emotions and by increasing them to a high pitch, can contribute to the production of a convulsive state that can be confused with other crises; this cause is the power that Nature gives to one sex over the other to attract and move it; it is always men who magnetise women.

The relations thus established are no doubt only those of a patient in respect of her doctor; but this doctor is a man; whatever the malady, it does not separate us from our sex, it does not entirely free us of the power of the other; illness can reduce impressions without ever abolishing them. Furthermore, most of the women who come to be magnetised are not really ill; many of them come because of idleness and for amusement; others, who have some indispositions nevertheless preserve their freshness and forces; their senses are complete, their youth has all its sensibility; they have plenty of charms to affect the doctor, they are healthy enough for the doctor to affect them; thus the danger is reciprocal. Long continued proximity, the indispensable touching, the individual warmth that is communicated, mutual glances, are the well-known ways of Nature and the means that she has used for ever to cause unfailingly the communication of
sensations and affections.

The man carrying out magnetisation usually has the woman’s knees held between his; the knees and all the lower parts of the body are thus in contact. The hand is applied to the hypochondria, and sometime lower down to the ovaries; touch is thus exerted simultaneously over many parts and in the region of the most sensitive parts of the body.

Often, the man who has his left hand employed thus passes his right behind the woman’s body; both of them lean toward each other to make this double contact easier. The proximity becomes the greatest possible, face almost touches face, the exhaled breath is inspired, all the physical impressions are instantly shared, and the mutual attraction of the sexes must act with all its power. It is not surprising that the senses light up; imagination, acting at the same time, spreads a certain disorder throughout the whole mechanism; it suspends the judgement, it diverts the attention, the women are not able to take account of what is happening to them, they do not know the state that they are in.

The doctors among the Commissioners, present and attentive at the treatment, have carefully observed what takes place. When this type of crisis is developing, the face becomes flushed by degrees, the eye becomes burning; these are the signs by which Nature announces desire. One sees the woman lower her head, move her hand to her forehead and to her eyes to cover them; her habitual modesty is aroused and makes her take care to hide herself. However, the crise continues and the eyes become troubled; this is an unequivocal sign of complete disorder of the senses: this disorder can be quite unperceived by the woman who suffers it, but it in no way escaped the observant gaze of the doctors. As soon as this sign has appeared the eyelids become moist, breaths are short and interrupted, the chest rises and falls rapidly; convulsions become established as well as brusque and precipitate movements of the limbs or the whole body. In the case of vivacious and sensitive women, the final effect, the end of the sweetest of emotions, is often a convulsion; to this state succeeds languor, enfeeblement and a sort of sleep of the senses which is a necessary repose after a powerful agitation.

The proof that this convulsive state, however extraordinary it may appear to the observer, is in no way unpleasant and contains nothing unnatural for those who experience it, is that, once it is over, there remains no disturbing trace of it. The memory of it is not disagreeable, the women feel better and are in no way reluctant to experience it again. As emotions that are experienced are the germs of affections and leanings, one sees why those who magnetise inspire so much attachment, an attachment that must be more marked and more lively in women that in men since the practice of magnetism is confined to men. Many women have doubtless not experienced these effects, others have remained ignorant of this cause of the effects they have experienced; the more respectable they are the less they will have suspected it. We are certain that many have perceived it and withdrawn from magnetic treatment, but those who do not know about it need to be protected.

The magnetic treatment cannot but be dangerous to the morals. In proposing to cure diseases that need long treatment, emotions that are agreeable and dear are excited, emotions that are then missed, that one seeks to recover because they have a natural charm for us and they contribute to our physical well-being; but morally they are not the less to be condemned and they are the more dangerous because of the ease of falling into the agreeable habit. A state experienced almost in public, among other women who seem to
feel it equally, offers nothing alarming; one stays there, one returns, and one sees no danger until it is too late. Exposed to this danger strong women absent themselves; but the weak can lose their morals and their health.

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M. Deslon is not ignorant of this; M. the Lieutenant General of Police has questioned him in this regard, in the presence of the Commissioners, in a meeting held at M. Deslon’s own house on the 9 May last. M. Lenoir said to him: I ask you, as Lieutenant General of Police, if, once a woman has been magnetised or is in a crise, it would not be easy to abuse her? M. Deslon replied in the affirmative, and, to render justice to this doctor, he has always insisted that only his colleagues, dedicated to honesty by their profession, should have the right to magnetise. One may also say that, although there is a room originally set aside for crises, he does not allow it to be used; all the crises take place before the public gaze, but, in spite of this observance of decency, the danger no less exists that the doctor can, if he wishes, abuse the patient. The occasions recur every day, at all times; he is sometimes exposed to them for two or three hours; who can say that he will always be a master of refusal? And, even supposing him to be possessed of superhuman virtue, when there have been emotions that establish needs the imperious law of Nature will call someone on his refusal and he will reply in vain that he has not committed but that he has caused to commit.

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There is yet another means of exciting convulsions, a means of which the Commissioners have no direct and positive proof but which they cannot help suspecting, that is a simulated crisis which gives the signal for, or which produces, a large number of others by imitation. This is a necessary means for hastening and maintaining crises, crises, moreover, useful to magnetism, without which it would founder.

There are no real cures; the treatments are very long and fruitless. There are patients who go to the treatment for eighteen months or two years without any relief; in the end one becomes bored by it and no longer goes. The crises form a spectacle, they occupy one and are interesting; moreover, to inattentive eyes they are effects of magnetism and proofs of the existence of this agent which is, in reality, nothing but the effects of the imagination.

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In drawing up their report the Commissioners speak only of the examination of magnetism as practised by M. Deslon, because, on the king’s orders, the object of their Commission led them only to M. Deslon; but it is clear that their observations, their experiments and their opinions bear on magnetism in general. M. Mesmer will not omit to say that the Commissioners have not examined his method, nor his techniques nor the effects they produce. The Commissioners, indeed, are too prudent to pronounce on what they have not seen, on that of which they do not have knowledge; however, they must make the observation that the principles of M. Deslon are the same as those in the twenty-seven propositions that M. Mesmer had printed in 1779.

If M. Mesmer announces a larger theory, it will only be more absurd; celestial influences are an old chimera whose falsity has been long recognised; all this theory can be judged in advance by that which magnetism necessarily has for its base, and it can have no reality because the animal fluid does not exist. This brilliant theory exists, like magnetism, only in the imagination; M. Deslon's method of magnetising is the same as M. Mesmer's.
Their effects correspond also; there are crises equally violent, equally repeated, and announced by similar symptoms in the case of M. Deslon as in that of M. Mesmer. What can M. Mesmer claim in stating an unknown and imperceptible difference, since the principles, the practice and the effects are the same? Moreover, if this difference were real, what could one infer about the utility of the treatment in opposition to the conclusions detailed in our report and in this note for his majesty’s eyes?

The public opinion is that there are no more cures for M. Mesmer than there are for M. Deslon; there is nothing to prevent convulsions for him, as for M. Deslon, becoming habitual and expanding into an epidemic in the towns and extending to future generations; his practices and assemblies have the same grave inconveniences for morals.

The experiments of the Commissioners, which show that all the effects are due to touching, to the imagination and to imitation, in explaining the effects obtained by M. Deslon explain equally those produced by M. Mesmer. One may reasonably conclude, then, that, whatever may be the mystery of the magnetism of M. Mesmer, this magnetism cannot be more real than that of M. Deslon, and that the practices of the one are neither more useful nor less dangerous than those of the other.

Signed Franklin, Bory, Lavoisier, Bailly, Meaulent, Sallin, Darcet, Guillotin, Leroy.

Done at Paris, this 11 August 1784.
Notes by the translator

I Baquet: From what they say a little later in the Report it seems that the Commissioners were not shown the contents of the baquet, though they satisfied themselves that they did not give rise to a magnetic field. A detailed description of these contents is given in a little book published in 1785 under the title of ‘Aphorisms de M. Mesmer’ by an adherent of Animal Magnetism, the doctor Caullet de Vaumorel. Though Mesmer seems to have repudiated this work as unauthorised there seems no reason to doubt the authenticity of its contents, said to have been dictated by Mesmer himself to his pupils. In summary, the shallow wooden barrel contained bottles of water, powdered glass or other materials that were ‘magnetised’ individually and arranged radially in layers. For more details of the construction of various types of baquet and related matters see the appended translation of selected parts of the Aphorisms.

II Magnetising trees. In the Aphorisms detailed instructions are given for magnetising trees and setting up treatment of patients under them.

III Despite its absurdity, this is exactly what the adherents of Animal Magnetism claimed – paragraph 304 of the Aphorisms says:

‘The tree is now endowed with all the virtues of magnetism. Healthy people, when they remain for some time close to the tree can feel its effect and the sick, especially those who have already been magnetised, will be violently affected and will have crises.’

IV étourdi: the nearest appropriate translation seems to be ‘confused’; the sense given in 18th century dictionaries is that of being astonished or dazed or possibly stunned.

V ses membres se sont roidis: ‘roidir’ is defined by Nicot (Thresor de la langue française, 1606 ) thus: Se ad firmitatem intendere, Rigescere; that is ‘to stretch out in stiffness, to stiffen’. It is given both as ‘to extend’ and ‘to stiffen’ by 17th and 18th century dictionaries. It seems most likely that, in the context, it means ‘extended and rigid.’

VI This translation is of the text of the Rapport Secret reprinted in: Burdin, C. & Dubois F. Histoire Académic du Magnétisme Animal. Paris, JB. Ballière, 1841 pp 92-100; the extensive, but not particularly illuminating, nineteenth century authors’ footnotes have not been translated and the page numbers refer to the reprinted text, with its first page (92 in the book) re-numbered as 1.
Notes in the original report

1 M. Mesmer’s memoire on the discovery of Animal Magnetism, pages 74 and following.

2 Ibid. Notice to the Reader, page VI.

3 This detailed observation was presented to the Faculté de Médecine de Paris, in an assembly de prima mensis by M. Bourdois de la Mothe, charitable doctor of Saint-Sulpice, who had conscientiously visited the sick woman every day.

4 M. Mesmer, Précis historique, pages 35, 37.

5 M. Sigault, A doctor of medicine in the Faculté de Paris, well known for having devised the operation on the symphasis, carried out several experiments that showed that magnetism is nothing but the effect of the imagination. Here are the details that he gave in a letter to one of the Commissioners dated 30 July.

"Having let it be known in a large house in the Marais that I was an expert in M. Mesmer’s methods, I produced various effects in a lady. My tone, the serious demeanour that I adopted, together with my gestures made a great impression upon her that she wished at first to hide her from me; but, putting my hand on the region of her heart I felt palpitations. Her state of oppression also indicated a tightness in the chest. There were also various other symptoms; her face became convulsed, her eyes were troubled, she eventually fainted after which she vomited up her dinner, passed several stools, and found herself incredibly enfeebled and in a state of collapse. I repeated the same procedure with several people, with more or less success, according to their degree of belief and sensitivity.

A celebrated artist who gives lessons in drawing to the children of one of our Princes, complained for several days of a great migraine; he told me about it on the Pont-royal and after persuading him that I was an initiate in the mysteries of M. Mesmer, almost immediately I took away his pain with a few gestures, to his great astonishment.

I produced the same effect in a young hatter who also had migraine; but in this case when nothing happened with my first gestures I put my hand on the wrong side telling him to look at me. At once he felt tightness in the chest, palpitations and gasping for breath and great malaise. From that moment he no longer doubted the power I had over him. In fact, having put my finger on the affected area I asked him what he felt. He said that the pain was receding. I assured him that I was going to drive it down into his arm and make it come out through his thumb, and I did this vigorously. He took me at my word and was relieved for two hours. Then he stopped me in the street to say that the pain had returned. It seems to me that this effect is the same as that produced by a dentist on the feelings of those who had come to him to have a tooth pulled.

Finally, when I was in the parlour of a convent in the Rue du Colombier a young lady, F.S.G., said to me: 'you go to M. Mesmer’s then!' 'Yes,' I said: 'I can magnetise you through the grille'. At once I presented my finger to her; she became terrified, felt that she had been seized and begged me to stop. Her emotions were so strong that, if I had continued, she would have certainly have fallen into convulsion."

M. Sigault recounted that he himself had felt the power of the imagination. One day when the question arose of magnetising him to convince him, he felt, just as it was decided to touch him, a tightness of the chest and palpitations. But, quickly becoming reassured, all the gestures and procedures of magnetism were employed without making any impression at all on him.
This footnote is the second to be numbered (e) in the original; the sequence has been corrected in the translation. IMLD.

M. le Maréchal de Villars, who put down the troubles in the Cévennes, says: « of this kind I have seen things that I would not have believed if they had not taken place before my eyes; a whole town in which all the women and girls without exception appeared to be possessed by the Devil. They shook and prophesied publicly in the streets…. One of them had the temerity to shake and prophesy before me for an hour. But, of all the follies, the most surprising was that which the Bishop of Alais told me about and that I sent to M. de Chaillard in the following terms:

A gentleman of Mandagors, lord of the area of that name and Maire of Alais, with the highest responsibilities in the town and county, who has also been for some time sub-delegate to M. de Bâville, has just done an extraordinary thing. He is a man of sixty, wise in his behaviour, of plenty of spirit and who has written several works and had them published. I have read several of them, and, before I knew what I have just found out about him, I had found in them a lively imagination.

A prophetess, aged about 27 or 28, had been arrested and brought before M. d’Ablais. He questioned her in the presence of a number of churchmen. This creature, after listening to him, replied with a modest air and exhorted him to stop tormenting the true Children of God, and then spoke to him for an hour in a foreign language of which he understood not a word; as we have seen the Duc de Ferté do previously when he had drunk a little, speaking English in front of the English. I have heard it said about this: I understand well that he is speaking English, but I understand not a word of what he says. That would also have been difficult to understand since he had never known a word of English. This girl spoke Greek, and Hebrew. You will easily believe that M. d’Alais had the prophetess locked up. After several months the girl seemed to have recovered from her wanderings as a result of the care and advice of the lord of Mandagors who had visited her frequently; she was released, and from what the lord of Mandagors had been up to with her it turned out that the prophetess was pregnant.

But the present position is that the lord of Mandagors has resigned from all his charges and passed them on to his son and has said to several people, and to M. the Bishop himself, that it was by God’s command that he had known this prophetess and that the child that will be born will be the true saviour of the world. Because of all this, and in other circumstances, one would do nothing but send M. the Maire and the prophetess to the madhouse. The Bishop suggested to me that he should be arrested. I wanted first to discuss it with M. de Bâville but ordered that he and the prophetess should be watched so that they could not escape: my thoughts were that, in this matter of madmen, an affair concerning a madman of this importance should be dealt with as quietly as possible and so we should try to deal with him carefully, and then to make sure of him. For you will readily realise that, to declare publicly a Maire of Alais as a prophet - a lord of considerable lands, a former sub-delegate of the Intendant, an author and someone previously regarded as wise - among people who are accustomed to hold him in esteem and respect him, all this could make things worse rather than better. All the more so since, apart from the folly of believing that God had ordered him to know this girl, he is very sane in his discourse, as was Don Quixote very wise except when there was a question of chivalry. M. de Bâville’s opinion was the same as mine, not to rush. His children took him quietly to one of his châteaux and kept him there and the prophetess was locked up.” Vie du Maréchal Duc de Villars. Page 325 et seq.

( ) On the day of the ceremony of their first Communion, in the parish of Saint-Roch a few years ago (
1780), after the evening Office there was, as usual, a procession outside. The children were hardly back in the church, and returned to their places, than one young girl felt ill and had convulsions. This affection propagated itself so rapidly that, in the space of half an hour, 50 or 60 young girls of 12 to 19 fell into the same convulsions; that is to say, they had tightness of the throat, swelling of the stomach, suffocation, hiccup and more or less violent convulsions. These events recurred in some of them in the course of the week, but the following Sunday, assembled at the Dames de Saint-Anne, an institution for the education of young girls, a dozen fell into the same convulsions and more would have done so if the precaution had not been taken of immediately sending each child back to its parents. The number of schools had to be increased. By thus separating the children, and only allowing them to be together in small numbers, three weeks sufficed to dissipate entirely this epidemic of convulsions. See, for similar examples, ‘le Naturalism des convulsions’, by M. Hecquet.

M. Deslon had already said in 1780: “If M. Mesmer had no secret other than to make the imagination act effectively for the health, would it not still be a marvellous benefit! For if the medicine of the imagination were always to be the best, why should we not practise the medicine of the imagination!” Obervation sur le magnetism animal pages 46 & 47.

If it were to be objected to the Commissioners that this conclusion applies to magnetism in general, and not only to the magnetism practised by M. Deslon, the Commissioners would reply that the intention of the King was to have their opinion on animal magnetism; they have therefore not exceeded the bounds of their commission. They would also reply the M. Deslon appeared to them learned in what are called the principles of magnetism, and that he is certainly able to produce effects and to provoke crises.

The principles of M. Deslon are the same as those contained in the twenty-seven propositions that M. Mesmer made public in print in 1779. If M. Mesmer announces a larger theory today, the Commissioners are not required to have knowledge of this theory to decide about the existence and usefulness of magnetism; they required only to consider the effects. It is by its effects that the existence of a cause is made manifest; it is by these same effects that its utility can be demonstrated. Phenomena are known by observation long before one is able to arrive at the theory that binds them together and explains them. A theory of the magnet does not yet exist and the phenomena are vouched for by the experience of several centuries. M. Mesmer’s theory is a matter of indifference and is superfluous here; the techniques and the effects, it is these that it was necessary to examine. It is also easy to prove that the essential techniques of magnetism are known to M. Deslon.

M. Deslon has been a disciple of M. Mesmer for several years. He has constantly seen the techniques of animal magnetism used over this time, and the means of exciting and directing them. M. Deslon has himself treated patients in front to M. Mesmer; by himself he has obtained the same effects as with M. Mesmer. Finally coming together, both of them have collected their patients together, both of them have treated patients without distinction, and thus using the same procedures. The method that M. Deslon uses today cannot be other than that of M. Mesmer.

The effects also correspond. There are crises equally violent, equally multiplied and announced by the same symptoms with M. Deslon and with M. Mesmer; these effects therefore, do not belong to one particular practice, but to the practice of magnetism in general. The experiments of the Commissioners show that the effects obtained by M. Deslon are due to touching, to the imagination and to imitation. These are thus the causes of magnetism in general. The observations of the Commissioners have convinced them that these convulsive crises and violent techniques can only be useful in medicine in the same way as poisons; and they have formed the judgement, independently of any theory, that whenever
one seeks to excite these convulsions they can become habitual and damaging; they could expand into an epidemic and perhaps affect future generations.

In consequence, the Commissioners have had to conclude that not only the methods of a particular practice but the techniques of magnetism in general, can, in the long term, be dangerous.
EXPOSÉ

Of the experiments
that were carried out
to examine

ANIMAL MAGNETISM;

Read at the Académie des sciences,
by M. Bailly on his own behalf and on that of
MM. Franklin, le Roy, de Bory and Lavoisier,

on the 4th September 1784 :

In the presence of M. le Comte d’Oëls.
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Gentlemen,

You know that Commissioners were appointed by the king from the faculty of medicine and from this academy to examine animal magnetism and to give their opinion on its existence and on its usefulness. We have presented an account of this to the king and to the public. His majesty was satisfied with our work; the public will make its judgement of it. But the academicians [among the Commissioners] owe the academy and their colleagues a detailed account of their proceedings. This article is intended to set before you the opinions that directed our investigations and the results that our work has produced.

When I say ‘we’, Gentlemen, I understand the whole Commission; nothing has been set aside, the work belongs to all of us: we were all equally motivated by the interests of truth, we were always united, always unanimous. The account that is to be given to you here is in particular homage to our colleagues; but it contains nothing that is not the result of the common labour of the members of both societies.

It is already more than six years since animal magnetism was announced to Europe, particularly in France and in this its capital. But it is only over about the last two years that it has been of particular interest to a considerable number of citizens and that it has become the object of public discussion. Never had a more extraordinary question divided the opinions of an enlightened nation. There was proposed a sure and powerful means of acting on living bodies, a new remedy, a universal agent to cure and prevent disease. Physicists were ignorant of its procedures and they heard talk of nothing but prodigies. Few real cures were cited but many people said they were relieved and the remedy was agreeable enough to raise the hopes of the sick. After some time the secret was revealed. Thus one has seen learned enlightened persons, even those distinguished by their abilities, adopt the theory and the practices that they have been taught; one has seen a number of physicians and surgeons admitted to the
school of magnetism and become its partisans, defending its theory and following its practice. These plaudits of magnetism must cause the best minds to consider and the learned to suspend their judgement. It was under these circumstances that the Commissioners were appointed by the king; the investigation that he ordered was a fruit of the wisdom of his administration. It was a scandal for Europe to see a people enlightened by all the sciences and the arts - a people among whom philosophy has made the greatest progress - forget the teaching of Descartes who was philosophy's reviver, and enfold within its bosom two opposing parties who directed their view and consideration upon the same object but were divided and in conflict over it; one party announcing magnetism as a useful and sublime discovery, the other regarding it as an illusion at once dangerous and ridiculous. The decision was important and indispensable; it was necessary to enlighten the doubters, it was necessary to establish a base upon which either incredulity or confidence could rest. One must not be indifferent to the ill-based reign of false opinions: sciences that grow from truth gain much from the suppression of error: error is always an evil yeast that ferments and ultimately corrupts the mass into which it is introduced. But when the error comes from the empire of science to spread to the multitude, to divide and agitate minds, when it presents a mendacious means of curing the sick and prevents them from seeking other aid, when, above all, it influences at once both mind and body, a good government has an interest in destroying it. The distribution of light is a good employment of authority! The Commissioners enthusiastically agree with the administration’s opinions and embrace the honour of its choice [of them]. When they were taken to the public treatment by magnetism they were at once struck by a very remarkable contrast between the effects produced and the apparently feeble methods employed.

On the one hand there were violent convulsions, long lasting and repeated; on the other, simple touching, gestures and signs: in spite of this the public treatment made it clear that a great power was set in action by these means, for all their feebleness. A spectacle of this kind seems to transport us to the time and reign of the fairies: this control exercised over a number of individuals, the man who wields it, the stick that serves as his instrument, all resemble, in fact, the enchantments of our fables; it is their tales brought into action. But if this spectacle is astonishing it must not be overwhelming. If it has overtaken the faith of a number of spectators brought by a more or less attentive curiosity, above all if it has seduced the sick, always open to self-deception, it did not produce this effect on men chosen for a serious investigation. Their first duty was to be on guard against illusions. They watched each other closely, they made their observations in silence and remained calm amidst excitement, they were able to attend to their reason and to seek enlightenment.

We enquired first by what powers so many surprising effects were produced and for what reasons they were attributed to an unknown and novel fluid, a fluid belonging to and acting upon Man.

The larger and more extraordinary the discovery the more one must be exigent about the choice of proofs. Furthermore, acting as physicists, we sought to detect the presence of the fluid; but this fluid evades all the senses. We were told that its action on living bodies was the sole proof that could be advanced of its existence. You have seen, Gentlemen, in our report the solid reasons that made us reject absolutely the cure of disease as one of the claimed effects of this force. Nature is active at the same time as the remedy; one does not know whether the improvement is due to the remedy or to Nature. Nature sometimes cures without any remedy: how can one be convinced of the existence of an invisible remedy by cures that Nature can accomplish without it? We were forced, therefore, to rely on observation of the
physical action of the fluid upon the animal economy, on changes from moment to moment. But this led us, Gentlemen, into a labyrinth of difficulties. If the primary causes of Nature are simple the final results are the products of vast complication. Man makes no movement that cannot be due to an infinity of causes. A moral as well as a physical being, his affections, ills and movements depend as much upon his thoughts as upon the irritability of his organs.

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The experiments that we carried out on ourselves made us realise that, when the attention is withdrawn, there is no longer any effect. The tests carried out on patients showed us that children, not susceptible to preconceived ideas, detect nothing; that an unwilling mind opposes the action of magnetism even during a state of habitual convulsions and sensitivity of the nerves when such action should be most apparent. If, among a number of patients, some felt slight and equivocal effects, the others detected nothing; we could not but be surprised by this. Is not magnetism claimed to be a universal fluid, to be the principle of life and the great resource of Nature? What sort of agent is it that does not always act under the same conditions? Does its absence of action in some cases not indicate that in the others the action attributed to it is due to other causes? Its effect was missing when we used it to carry warmth to the feet. Its effect was missing when we tested it for its ability to indicate disease. We tried various methods of magnetising, by observing and by neglecting the distinction between poles; all had the same effects. The poles are thus a chimera that has no purpose but to assimilate ‘magnetism’

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to the real magnetism which is one of the phenomena of Nature. Thus it was that, as we advanced in our examination, we saw disappear one after the other the properties attributed to this pretended fluid and the entire edifice, built on an imaginary base, crumbled before us. Forced to renounce physical proofs we were obliged to seek the causes of these real effects in the the states of mind [of the subjects]. In the rest of our enquiries we ceased to be physicists to become nothing more than philosophers; and we submitted to examination the affections of the spirit and the ideas of those exposed to the action of magnetism. Thus, experimenting on subjects with their eyes covered, we saw, in a clear fashion, the effects arise from ideas that we implanted and the effects follow the same path as our questions. When we did not magnetise [the subjects] the effects were the same and corresponded to our questions in the same way.

On the varied and independent effects of magnetism we had to acknowledge the influence of the imagination; but, in the examination of the mental aspects to which we were led by the nature of the enquiry, we followed, as far as was possible, the sure and methodical approach of the sciences; while observing as philosophers we nevertheless followed the procedures of physics.

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We operated as is done in chemistry where, after decomposing substances and discovering their principles, one assures the correctness of the analysis by re-synthesising the same substances from their re-united principles. We said: the effects attributed to magnetism and to a fluid that nothing demonstrates take place only when the imagination is aroused and can be struck. The imagination thus seems to be its principle. We must see whether these effects can be reproduced by the power of the imagination alone. We attempted this and were fully successful. Without being touched and without any sign being used, subjects who believed they had been magnetised felt pain or heat – very great heat. In subjects endowed with more sensitive nerves we produced convulsions and what are called crises. We have seen the imagination so exalted and having become so powerful as to cause speech to be lost in an instant. At the same time we demonstrated the voidness of magnetism by opposing it to the imagination. Magnetism alone, used for thirty minutes, produced no effect; but the imagination put in action in the same person and
using the same methods under absolutely similar circumstances, produced a very strong and well characterised convulsion. Finally, to complete the demonstration,

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to complete the picture of the imagination’s effects, at once capable of agitating and of calming, we caused the convulsion to cease by that same charm that had induced it, by the power of the imagination. If we did not carry out experiments on animals, which are regarded as devoid of imagination, this was because the experiments would have been more difficult and delicate without being more conclusive. In the first place the cure of animal diseases is no more valuable than the cure of human disease; and if we were to rely on acting on animals from moment to moment how would we be able to know what they felt? Since they cannot be interrogated their movements cannot be other than equivocal. In addition, a large reason for rejecting this type of proof is that a universal fluid is proposed, a fluid acting on Man and proper to cure his ills. It would be very strange that effects which were boasted of in the human species could only be made apparent in animals. It was thus in Man that we had to test magnetism and our experiments enabled us to discover only the power of the imagination. We proceeded by proofs of negatives and this path was determined by the nature of things. An opinion is attacked and

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defended by contrary means. A real agent must be demonstrated by positive proofs while a chimerical agent can be excluded only by its lack of effects and the demonstration of its nullity.
The series of experiments that we carried out thus permitted us to conclude and establish that nothing proves the existence of an animal magnetic fluid. Sound physics does not permit recourse to an unknown and insensible fluid to explain effects that can all be produced by the imagination either on its own or combined with touch and imitation.
Such are the causes of the effects attributed to magnetism; such is the outcome of our work. But the phenomena observed allow several more results that we shall put forward. These results concern the imitation and the imagination, two of our most astonishing faculties; these are facts for a science now new, that of the influence of the mental on the physical, and we ask that we be permitted in this respect to enter into some preliminary and purely philosophical details.
Mental man, like physical man, does not exist or become what he is

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except through these two faculties: he is moulded and is perfected by imitation; he acts and becomes powerful through the imagination. Imagination is thus the first means of his perfectibility; it modifies him from birth to death. Without imitation the progress made by an individual would be lost for everyone else; it is by it that traits are effaced in polite and common society so that everyone has the same attitude, and by it that children learn our usages and conventions and bend to our customs, learning the language. The softening of speech is an effect of the same cause. This imitation acts also on the mind; it does not introduce anything really novel but it preserves received ideas, it forms and constitutes national sentiment and, as it most often causes beliefs without the person’s knowledge, it is on its irresistible power that are founded the prejudices that last so long and are so resistant.
Under this faculty all would remain at the same level, everything would be passed on but the level of knowledge and of institutions would never increase. The imagination is the faculty of progress; it is through it that men have traversed the different states of developed society. It is an eminently active faculty, the author of good

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and ill, everything is before it, the future as well as the present, the worlds of the universe as much as the
place where we are. It enlarges all that it touches; it works always expansively and in this expansiveness is
its power. It is by this force that it deploys mental resources and multiplies physical forces; Nature is
obedient to its voice and develops in its entirety. Also, when imagination speaks to the multitude, the
multitude sees neither dangers nor obstacles. A single man commands and the others are only his
instruments. Nations are what their rulers will; armies are what their generals are; this is a truth known
from the time of Alexander to that of Frederick and his illustrious brother.

The imagination, such as we have just painted it, Gentlemen, seems to have a slow and gradual
progression; it is established only by repeated lessons; but, if in society it makes insensible progress, in the
treatment by magnetism it manifests itself by striking phenomena. There, crises are multiplied in proportion
to their violence; they all begin almost at the same time. It seems like a spark that ignites a blaze. This
faculty of communication is very remarkable. We knew that

Man, mechanical in a large number of his actions, bends himself over time to repeat what he sees and
what he hears; but the convulsions of magnetism show us that the same effect takes place instantly at large
and in such a way that a number of suitably disposed individuals are instruments tuned to a unison of
whom one sets all the others in motion.

As for the imagination, one knows the derangements that a lively and sudden impression occasions in the
machinery of Man. Imagination renews or suspends the animal functions; it revives in hope or freezes in
terror. In one night it makes the hair go white; in a moment it returns the use of the limbs or of speech.; it
destroys or develops the seeds of illness, it even causes death. But these astonishing effects belong to
unexpected revolutions. It is the concurrence of circumstances that brings them and chance that seems to
produce them; they do not at all appear to depend on the power and the will of Man. That which we have
learnt - or at least which was confirmed to us by evident demonstration by the examination of the
techniques of magnetism - was that one man can act on another, at any moment and almost at will, by
affecting his imagination; that the simplest gestures and signs can

have the most powerful effects; that the action of Man on the imagination can be reduced to an art and
brought about by a technique in subjects who have faith in it. People speak of 'magnetism of intention';
undoubtedly intention can be sufficient provided it is reciprocal; it establishes a relation and a necessary
dependence between two individuals. That intention which I direct is commanded by my imagination; that
intention that responds to me is exalted by the obedient imagination. The search for an agent that does not
exist thus serves to make known a real power of Man; Man has the power to act on his like, to disturb
his nervous system and to imprint convulsions on him. But this action cannot be regarded as physical; we
do not see that it depends on a fluid which is communicated; it is entirely mental, it is the action of
imagination on imagination. This action is always dangerous; one can observe it as a philosopher and it is
good to know it only to foresee or forestall its effects.

Magnetism will not have been entirely useless to the philosophy that condemns it; it is one more thing to
consign to the history of errors of the human spirit and a great experiment on the power of the
imagination.

END

translation of:

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Bailly JS. Exposé des expériences qui ont été faites pour l’examen du magnétisme animal. Paris: Chez Moutarde. 1784

IML Donaldson; Edinburgh.
RAPPORT

Des Commissaires chargés par le Roi,
de l'Examen du Magnétisme animal.

Le Roi a nommé le 12 mars 1784, des Médecins
choisis dans la Faculté de Paris, M. Borie, Sallin,
d'Arcet, Guillotin, pour faire l'Examen & lui rendre
compte du Magnétisme animal, pratiqué par M. Deslon;
& sur la demande de ces quatre Médecins, Sa Majesté a
nommé pour procéder avec eux à cet Examen, cinq
des Membres de l'Académie Royale des Sciences,
M. Franklin, le Roy, Bailly, de Bory, Lavoirer.

M. Borie étant mort dans le commencement du travail
des Commissaires, Sa Majesté a fait choix de M. Majault,
Docteur de la Faculté, pour le remplacer.

L'agent que M. Meffrer prétend avoir découvert,
qu'il a fait connaitre sous le nom de Magnétisme animal,
est comme il le caractérise lui-même & suivant ses propres
paroles, « un fluide universellement répandu ; il est le
moyen d'une influence mutuelle entre les corps célestes,
la terre & les corps animés ; il est continué de manière à ne
souffrir aucun vide ; sa subsistance ne permet aucune compa-
ration ; il est capable de recevoir, propager, communiquer
A
RAPPORT DES COMMISSAIRES
CHARGÉS PAR LE ROI,
DE L'EXAMEN
DU
MAGNÉTISME ANIMAL.

Imprimé par ordre du Roi.

A PARIS,
DE L'IMPRIMERIE ROYALE
M. DCCCLXXXI V.
toutes les impressions du mouvement; il est susceptible de
flux & de reflux. Le corps animal éprouve les effets de cet
agent; & c'est en s'insinuant dans la substance des nerfs, qu'il
les affecte immédiatement. On reconnaît particulièrement
dans le corps humain, des propriétés analogues à celles
de l'aimant; on y distingue des pôles également divers &
opposés. L'action & la vertu du Magnétisme animal peuvent
être communiquées d'un corps à d'autres corps animés &
inanimés: cette action a lieu à une distance éloignée,
sans le secours d'aucun corps intermédiaire; elle est
augmentée, réfléchie par les glaces; communiquée,
propagée, augmentée par le son; cette vertu peut être
accumulée, concentrée, transportée. Quoique ce fluide soit
universel, tous les corps animés n'en soient pas également
susceptibles; il en est même quoiqu'en très-peu nombre,
qui ont une propriété si opposée, que leur seule présence
détruit tous les effets de ce fluide dans les autres corps.

Le Magnétisme animal peut guérir immédiatement les
maux de nerfs, & médicalement les autres; il perfectionne
l'action des médicaments; il provoque & dirige les crises
salutaires, de manière qu'on peut s'en rendre maître; par son
moyen le Médecin connoit l'état de santé de chaque indivi-
du, & juge avec certitude l'origine, la nature & les progrès
des maladies les plus compliquées; il en empêche l'accroisse-
ment & parvient à leur guérison, sans jamais exposer le
malade à des effets dangereux ou à des suites fâcheuses,
quels que soient l'âge, le tempérament & le sexe (a).

(a) Mémoire de M. Melors sur la découverte du Magnétisme
animal, pages 74 & suivantes.
La Nature offre dans le Magnétisme, un moyen univerfel «
de guérir & de préserver les hommes (b). »

Tel est l'Agent que les Commissaires ont été chargés
d'examiner, & dont les propriétés sont avouées par
M. Deflon, qui admet tous les principes de M. Meffner.
Cette théorie fait la base d'un Mémoire qui a été lu chez
M. Deflon, le 9 Mai, en présence de M. le Lieutenant
général de Police & des Commissaires. On établit dans
ce Mémoire qu'il n'y a qu'une nature, une maladie, un
remède ; & ce remède est le Magnétisme animal. Ce
Médecin en intruisant les Commissaires, de la doctrine
& des procédés du Magnétisme, leur en a enseigné la
pratique, en leur faisant connoître les pôles, en leur
montrant la manière de toucher les malades, & de diriger
sur eux ce fluide magnétique.

M. Deflon s'est engagé avec les Commissaires, 1.° à Propositions
constater l'existence du Magnétisme animal ; 2.° à commu-
niquer les connaissances sur cette découverte ; 3.° à prouver l'utilité de cette découverte & du Magnétisme
animal dans la cure des maladies.

Après avoir pris cette connoissance de la théorie &
de la pratique du Magnétisme animal, il fallait en con-
noître les effets ; les Commissaires se sont transportés,
& chacun d'eux plusieurs fois au traitement de M. Deflon.
Ils ont vu au milieu d'une grande salle, une caisse circu-
laire, faite de bois de chêne & élevée d'un pied ou d'un
pied & demi, que l'on nomme le baquet ; ce qui fait le

(b) Ibid. Avis au Lecteur, page 61.
(4)

deuss de cette caisse est percé d'un nombre de trous, d'où sortent des branches de fer courbées et mobiles. Les malades sont placés à plusieurs rangs autour de ce baquet, & chacun a la branche de fer, laquelle au moyen du coude, peut être appliquée directement sur la partie malade; une corde passée autour de leur corps les unit les uns aux autres; quelquefois on forme une seconde chaîne en se communiquant par les mains, c'est-à-dire, en appliquant le pouce entre le pouce & le doigt index de son voisin: alors on presse le pouce que l'on tient ainsi; l'impression reçue à la gauche se rend par la droite, & elle circule à la ronde.

Un piano forte est placé dans un coin de la salle, & on y joue différents airs sur des mouvements variés; on y joint quelquefois le son de la voix & le chant.

Tous ceux qui magnétisent ont à la main une baguette de fer, longue de dix à douze pouces.

M. Desfons a déclaré aux Commissaires, 1.° que cette baguette est conducteur du Magnétisme; elle a l'avantage de le concentrer dans sa pointe, & d'en rendre les émanations plus puissantes. 2.° Le son, conformément au principe de M. Meßmer, est aussi conducteur du Magnétisme, & pour communiquer le fluide au piano forte, il suffit d'en approcher la baguette de fer; celui qui touche l'instrument en fournit aussi, & le Magnétisme est transformé par les fous aux malades environnants. 3.° La corde dont les malades s'entourent, est distillée ainsi que la chaîne des pouces, à augmenter les effets par la communication. 4.° L'intérieur du baquet est composé de
manière à y concentrer le Magnétisme; c'est un grand
réervoir d'où il se répand par les branches de fer qui y
plongent.

Les Commissaires se sont assurés dans la suite, au moyen
d'un électromètre & d'une aiguille de fer non aimantée,
que le baquet ne contient rien qui soit ou électrique ou
aimanté; & sur la déclaration que M. Deffon leur a faite
de la composition intérieure de ce baquet, ils n'y ont
reconnu aucun agent physique, capable de contribuer
aux effets annoncés du Magnétisme.

Les malades rangés en très-grand nombre, & à plusieurs
rangs autour du baquet, reçoivent donc à la fois le Magné-
tisme par tous ces moyens: par les branches de fer qui
leur transmettent celui du baquet; par la corde enlacée
autour du corps, & par l'union des pouces qui leur
communiquent celui de leurs voisins; par le son du piano
forte, ou d'une voix agréable qui le répand dans l'air. Les
malades sont encore magnétisés directement, au moyen
du doigt & de la baguette de fer, promenés devant le
visage, derrière la tête & sur les parties malades,
toujours en observant la distinction des pôles; on agit sur
eux par le regard & en les fixant. Mais surtout ils sont
magnétisés par l'application des mains, & par la pression
des doigts sur les hypocondres & sur les régions du bas-
ventre; application souvent continuée pendant long-temps,
quelquefois pendant plusieurs heures.

Alors les malades offrent un tableau très-varié par les
différents états où ils se trouvent. Quelques-uns sont
calmes, tranquilles & n'éprouvent rien; d'autres toussent,
Écrasant, sentent quelque légère douleur, une chaleur locale ou une chaleur universelle, & ont des sueurs; d'autres sont agités & tourmentés par des convulsions. Ces convulsions sont extraordinaires par leur nombre, par leur durée & par leur force. Dès qu'une convulsion commence, plusieurs autres le déclarent. Les Commissaires en ont vu durer plus de trois heures; elles sont accompagnées d'expectorations d'une eau trouble & visqueuse, arrachée par la violence des efforts. On y a vu quelquefois des filets de sang; & il y a entr'autres un jeune homme malade, qui en rend souvent avec abondance. Ces convulsions sont caractérisées par les mouvements précipités, involontaires de tous les membres & du corps entier, par le refférement à la gorge, par des souffles des hypochondres & de l'epigastre, par le trouble & l'égarement des yeux, par des cris perçants, des pleurs, des hoquets & des rires immodérés. Elles sont précédées ou suivies d'un état de langueur & de réverie, d'une forte d'abattement & même d'afloppement. Le moindre bruit imprévu caufit des tremblements; & l'on a remarqué que le changement de ton & de mesure dans les airs joués sur le Pian forte, influoit sur les malades, en forre qu'un mouvement plus vif les agitait davantage, & renouveloit la vivacité de leurs convulsions.

Il y a une falle matelassée & destinée primitivement aux malades tourmentés de ces convulsions, une falle nommée des Crifes; mais M. Delfon ne juge pas à propos d'en faire usage, & tous les malades, quels que soient leurs
accidents, sont également réunis dans les fâlles du traite-
tement public.
Rien n’est plus étonnant que le spectacle de ces
convulsions; quand on ne l’a point vu, on ne peut s’en
faire une idée: & en le voyant, on est également surpris & du repos profond d’une partie de ces malades, & de
l’agitation qui anime les autres: des accidents variés qui
se répètent; des sympathies qui s’établissent. On voit
des malades se chercher exclusivement & en se précipitant
l’un vers l’autre, se sourire, se parler avec affection &
ajouter mutuellement leurs crisés. Tous sont fournis à
celui qui magnétise; ils ont beau être dans un affou-
pillage apparent, sa voix, un regard, un signe les en
retire. On ne peut s’empêcher de reconnaître, à ces
effets constants, une grande puissance qui agite les ma-
laides, les maîtrise, & dont celui qui magnétise semble
être le dépositaire.
Cet état convulsif est appelé improprement Criè dans
la théorie du Magnétisme animal: suivant cette doctrine,
il est regardé comme une crise falsaire, du genre de
celles que la Nature opère, ou que le Médecin habilé
t peut provoquer pour faciliter la cure des maladies.
Les Commissaires adopteront cette expression dans la
suite de ce rapport, & lorsqu’ils se serviront du mot
criè, ils entendront toujours l’état ou de convulsions,
u d’affouillage en quelque sorte léthargique, produit
par les procédés du Magnétisme animal.
Les Commissaires ont observé que dans le nombre des
malades en criè, il y avait toujours beaucoup de femmes.
& peut d’hommes; que ces crièses étoient une ou deux heures à s’établir; & que dès qu’il y en avoit une d’établir, toutes les autres commençoient successivement & en peu de temps. Mais après ces remarques générales, les Commissaires ont bientôt jugé que le traitement public ne pouvoit pas devenir le lieu de leurs expériences. La multiplicité des effets est un premier obstacle; on voit trop de choses à la fois pour en bien voir une en particulier.

D’ailleurs des malades distingués, qui viennent au traitement pour leur santé, pourroient être importuns par les questions; le soin de les observer pourroit ou les gêner ou leur déplaire; les Commissaires eux-mêmes feroient gênés par leur discretion. Ils ont donc arrêté que leur affinité n’étant point nécessaire à ce traitement, il suffisit que quelques-uns d’eux y vinssent de temps en temps pour confirmer les premières observations générales, en faire de nouvelles s’il y avait lieu, & en rendre compte à la commission assemblée.

Après avoir observé ces effets au traitement public, on a dû s’occuper d’en démêler les causes, & de chercher les preuves de l’existence & de l’utilité du Magnétisme.

La question de l’existence est la première; celle de l’utilité ne doit être traitée que lorsque l’autre aura été pleinement résolue. Le Magnétisme animal peut bien exister sans être utile, mais il ne peut être utile s’il n’existe pas.

En conséquence le principal objet de l’examen des Commissaires & le but essentiel de leurs premières expériences a dû être de s’assurer de cette existence. Cet objet
objet était encore très-vaille & avoir besoin d'être simplifié. Le Magnétisme animal embrasse la Nature entière; il est, dit-on, le moyen de l'influence des corps célestes sur nous; les Commissaires ont cru qu'il devaient d'abord écarter cette grande influence, ne considérer que la partie de ce fluide répandue sur la terre, sans s'embarrasser d'où il vient, & confier l'action qu'il exerce sur nous, autour de nous & sous nos yeux, avant d'examiner les rapports avec l'Univers.

Le moyen le plus sûr pour confiter l'existence du fluide magnétique animal, serait de rendre la préulence sensible, mais il n'a pas fallu beaucoup de temps aux Commissaires pour reconnaître que ce fluide échappe à tous les sens. Il n'est point lumineux & visible comme l'électricité; son action ne se manifeste pas à la vue comme l'attraction de l'aimant; il est sans goût & sans odeur; il marche sans bruit, & vous entoure ou vous pénètre sans que le tact vous avertisse de sa présence. S'il existe en nous & autour de nous, c'est donc d'une manière absolument insensible. Parmi ceux qui prônent le Magnétisme, il en est qui prétendent qu'on le voit quelquefois sortir de l'extrémité des doigts, qui lui servent de conducteurs, ou qui croient sentir son passage lorsqu'on promène le doigt devant le visage & sur la main. Dans le premier cas, l'émanation aperçue n'est que celle de la transpiration, qui devient tout-à-fait visible lorsqu'elle est grossie au microscope fidaire; dans le second, l'impression de froid ou de frais qu'on éprouve, impression d'autant plus marquée...
qu'on a plus chaud, résulte du mouvement de l'air qui
fuit le doigt, & dont la température est toujours au-
dessous du degré de la chaleur animale. Lorsqu'on
contre un approche le doigt de la peau du visage, plus
froide que le doigt, & qu'on le hisse en repos, on fait
erprouver un sentiment de chaleur, qui est la chaleur
animale communiquée.

On prétend encore que ce fluide a de l'odeur, &
qu'on la sent lorsqu'on porte sous le nez, ou le doigt
ou un fer conducteur; on dit même que ces sensations
sont différentes sous les deux narines selon qu'on dirige
le doigt ou le fer à pôle direct ou à pôle opposé.

M. Deflon a fait l'expérience sur plusieurs Commissaires;
les Commissaires l'ont répétée sur plusieurs sujets; aucun
n'a éprouvé cette différence de sensation d'une narine à
l'autre: & s'il en y faisant attention, on a en effet reconnu
quelqu'odeur, c'est lorsqu'on présente le fer, celle du
fer même échauffé & frotté; & lorsqu'on présente le
doigt, celle des émanations de la transpiration, odeur
souvent mêlée à celle du fer dont le doigt même est
empreint. Ces effets ont été attribués par erreur au
Magnetisme, ils appartiennent tous à des causes naturelles
& connues.

Aussi M. Deflon n'a jamais insisté sur ces impressions
palpables, il n'a pas cru devoir les produire comme
des preuves; & au contraire il a expressément déclaré
aux Commissaires, qu'il ne pouvait leur démontrer
l'existence du Magnetisme que par l'action de ce fluide,
opérant des changements dans les corps animés. Cette
exilencé devient d’autant plus difficile à constater
par des effets qui soient démonstratifs & dont la cause
ne soit pas équivoque; par des faits authentiques, sur
lesquels les circonstances morales ne puissent pas influer;
énfin par des preuves susceptibles de frapper, de con-
vaincre l’esprit, les seules qui soient faites pour satisfaire
les Physiciens éclairés.

L’action du Magnétisme sur les corps animés, peut
être observée de deux manières différentes; ou par cette
action long-temps continuée & par ses effets curatifs
dans le traitement des maladies, ou par ses effets mo-
mentanés sur l’ économie animale & par les changements
observables qu’elle y produit. M. Deslon insistait pour
qu’on employât principalement & presque exclusivement
la première de ces méthodes; les Commissaires n’ont
pas cru devoir le faire & voici leurs raisons:

Le plupart des maladies ont leur siège dans l’intérieur
du corps. La longue expérience d’un grand nombre de
prêtres a fait connaître les symptômes qui les annoncent
& qui les caractérisent; la même expérience a indiqué
la méthode de les traiter. Quel est dans cette méthode le
but des efforts du Médecin; ce n’est point de contrarier
& de dompter la Nature, c’est de l’aider dans ses opéra-
tions. La Nature guérit les malades, & dit le Père de la
Médecine; mais quelquefois elle rencontre des obstacles
qui la gênent dans son cours, qui confument inutilement
de forces. Le Médecin est le Ministre de la Nature;
Observateur attentif, il étudie sa marche. Si cette marche
est ferme, sûre, égale & sans écarts, le Médecin l’observe

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en silence & se garde de la troubler par des remèdes au moins inutiles ; si cette marche est embarrassée, il la facilite ; si elle est trop lente ou trop rapide, il l'accélère ou la retarde. Il se borne quelquefois à régler le régime pour remplir son objet ; quelquefois il emploie des médicaments. L'action d'un médicament introduit dans le corps humain, est une force nouvelle, combinée avec la grande-force qui fait la vie ; si le remède fait les mêmes voies que cette force a déjà ouvertes, pour l'expulsion des maux, il est utile, il est salutaire ; s'il tend à ouvrir des routes contraires & à détourner cette action intérieure, il est nuisible. Cependant il faut convenir que cet effet salutaire ou nuisible, tout réel qu'il est, peut échapper souvent à l'observation vulgaire. L'histoire physique de l'homme offre des phénomènes très-singulariers à cet égard. On voit que les régimes les plus opposés, n'ont pas empêché d'atteindre à une grande vieillesse. On voit des hommes, auxquels ce semble de la même maladie, guéris en suivant des régimes contraires, & en prenant des remèdes entièrement différents ; la Nature est donc alors affez puissante pour entretenir la vie malgré le mauvais régime, & pour triompher à la fois & du mal & du remède. Si elle a cette puissance de réjeter aux remèdes, à plus forte raison s-t-elle le pouvoir d'opérer sans eux. L'expérience de leur efficacité a donc toujours quelque incertitude ; lorsqu'il s'agit du Magnésiome, il y a une incertitude de plus ; c'est celle de son existence. Or comment s'affirmer par le traitement des maladies, de l'action d'un agent dont l'existence est
La cure que l'on cite le plus en faveur du Magnétisme, est celle de M. le Baron de ***; la Cour & la ville en ont été également instruites. On n'entrera point ici dans la discussion des faits; on n'examinera pas si les remèdes précédemment employés ont pu contribuer à cette cure. On admet d'une part, le plus grand danger dans l'état du malade, & de l'autre l'inefficacité de tous les moyens de la Médecine ordinaire; le Magnétisme a été mis en usage & M. le Baron de *** a été complètement guéri. Mais une crise de la Nature ne pouvait-elle pas seule opérer cette cure? Une femme du peuple & très-pauvre, demeurant au Gros-caillou, a été attaquée en 1779, d'une fièvre maligne très-bien caractérisée; elle a refusé combinaison tous les secours, elle a demandé seulement qu'on lui tint toujours plein d'eau un vase qui étroit, auprès d'elle; elle est restée tranquille sur la paille qui lui servait de lit, buvant de l'eau tout le jour, & ne faisant rien autre chose. La maladie s'est développée, a passé successivement par ses différentes périodes, & s'est terminée par une guérison complète (c). Mademoiselle G *** demeurant aux Petites-écuries du Roi, portait au sein droit deux glandes qui l'inquiétaient beaucoup; au

(c) Cette observation détaillée a été donnée à la Faculté de Médecine de Paris, dans une Assemblée de prima mensa, par M. Beaunois de la Mothe, Médecin de charité de Saint-Sulpice, qui a exactement visité la malade tous les jours.
Chirurgien lui conseilla l’usage de l’eau du Peintre, comme un excellent fondant; lui annonçant que si ce remède ne réussissait pas dans un mois, il faudrait extirper les glandes. La Demoiselle éffrayée, consulta M. Sallin, qui jugea que les glandes étaient susceptibles de résolution; M. Bouvart consulti ensuite, porta le même jugement. Avant de commencer les remèdes, on lui conseilla la dilution; quinze jours après elle fut priée à l’Opéra d’une voix violente & d’une expectoration si abondante, qu’on fut obligé de la ramener chez elle; elle cracha dans l’espace de quatre heures, environ trois pintes d’une lymphe graisseuse; une heure après M. Sallin examina le sein, il n’y trouva plus aucun vestige de glande. M. Bouvart appelé le lendemain, constata l’heureux effet de cette crise naturelle. Si mademoiselle G ** * avait pris de l’eau du Peintre, le Peintre aurait eu l’honneur de la cure.

L’observation constante de tous les siècles prouve, & les Médecins reconnaissent que la Nature seule & sans aucun traitement, guérit un grand nombre de maladies. Si le Magnétisme étoit sans action, les malades fous à fes procédés, feroient comme abandonnés à la Nature. Il feroit absurde de choisir pour confiter l’excitation de cet agent, un moyen qui, en lui attribuant toutes les cures de la Nature, tenterait à prouver qu’il a une action utile & curative, lors même qu’il n’en aurait aucune.

Les Commissaires sont en cela de l’avis de M. Meßmer. Il rejeta la cure des maladies, lorsque ce moyen de prouver le Magnétisme lui fut proposé par un Membre.
de l'Académie des Sciences : c'est, dit-il, une erreur de croire que cette espèce de preuve soit sans réplique ; rien ne prouve davantage que le Médecin ou la Médecine guérissent les maladies (d).

Le traitement des maladies ne peut donc fournir que des résultats toujours incertains & souvent trompeurs ; cette incertitude ne sauroit être dissipée, & toue cause d'illusion compensée, que par une infinie de cure, & peut-être par l'expérience de plusieurs siècles. L'objet & l'importance de la Commission demandent des moyens plus prompt. Les Commissaires ont dû se borner aux preuves purement physiques, c'est-à-dire, aux effets momenanéea du fluide sur le corps animal, en dépouil- sant ces effets de toutes les illusions qui peuvent s'y mêler, & en s'assurant qu'ils ne peuvent être dus à aucune autre cause que le Magnétisme animal.

Ils se sont proposé de faire des expériences sur des sujets isolés, qui suffiront bien à prêter aux expériences variées qu'on pourrait imaginer ; & qui les uns par leur simplicité, les autres par leur intelligence, suffisent capables de rendre un compte fidèle & exact de ce qu'ils auraient éprouvé. Ces expériences ne seront point présentées ici suivant l'ordre des temps, mais suivant l'ordre des faits qu'elles doivent éclaircir.

Les Commissaires ont d'abord résolu de faire sur eux- mêmes leurs premières expériences, & de se soumettre à l'action du Magnétisme. Ils étaient très-curieux de recon-

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(4) M. Mather, Précis historique, pages 35. 37-
Précaution
qui il
est vrai
nécessaire, 

notre par leurs propres sensations les effets annoncés de cet agen. Ils se sont donc soumis à ces effets, & avec une résolution telle, qu'ils n'auraient point été sages d'éprouver des accidents & un dérangement de santé, qui bien reconnu pour être un effet certain du Magné-tisme, les aurait mis à même de résoudre sur le champ & par leur propre témoignage cette question importante. Mais en se soumettant ainsi au Magnétisme, les Commissaires ont usé d'une précaution nécessaire. Il n'y a point d'individu, dans l'état de la meilleure santé, qui s'il voulait s'écouter attentivement, ne sentit au-delà de lui, une infinité de mouvements & de variations, soit de douleur infiniment légère, soit de chaleur dans différentes parties de son corps; ces variations qui ont lieu dans tous les temps sont indépendantes du Magnétisme.

Il n'est peut-être pas indifférent de porter & de fixer ainsi sur soi la attention. Il y a tant de rapports, quel qu'en soit le moyen, entre la volon. de l'âme & les mouve-

ments du corps, qu'on ne serait été jusqu'où peut aller l'influence de l'attention, qui ne semble qu'une suite de volontés, dirigées conformément & sans interruption vers le même objet. Quand on considère que la volonté remue le bras comme il lui plait, doit-on être sûr que l'atten-
tion, arrêtée sur quelque partie intérieure du corps, ne peut y exciter de légers mouvements, y porter de la cha-

leur, & en modifier l'état, c'est de manière à y produire de nouvelles sensations? Le premier soin des Commissaires a dû être de ne se pas rendre trop attentif à ce qui se passait en eux. Si le Magnétisme est une cause réelle & puissante,
puissance, elle n'a pas besoin qu'ils y penchent pour agir & pour se manifester; elle doit pour ainsi dire forcer, fixer leur attention, & se faire apercevoir d'un esprit distraint même à de loin.

Mais en prenant le parti de faire des expériences sur eux-mêmes, les Commissaires ont unanimement résolu de les faire entre eux, sans y admettre d'autre étranger que M. Delyon pour les magnétiser, ou des personnes choisies par eux; ils se sont également promis de ne point magnétiser au traitement public, afin de pouvoir discuter librement leurs observations, & d'être dans tous les cas les seuls, ou du moins les premiers juges de ce qu'ils auraient observé.

En conséquence en leur a consacré chez M. Delyon, une chambre séparée & un baquet particulier, & les Commissaires ont été s'y placer une fois chaque semaine; ils y sont restés jusqu'à deux heures & demie de suite, la branche de fer appuyée sur l'hypocondre gauche, entourés de la corde de communication, & faisant de temps en temps la chaîne des pouces. Ils ont été magnétisés, soit par M. Delyon, soit par un de ses Disciples envoyé à sa place, les uns plus long-temps & plus souvent, & c'étoient les Commissaires qui paraissaient devoir être les plus sensibles; ils ont été magnétisés, tantôt avec le doigt & la baguette de fer prénés & promenés sur différentes parties du corps, tantôt par l'application des mains & par la pression des doigts, ou aux hypocondres, ou sur le creux de l'estomac.

Aucun d'eux n'a rien senti, ou du moins n'a rien
Il n'ont peu éprouvé éprouvé qui fut de nature à être attribué à l'action du Magnétisme. Quelques-uns des Commissaires ont d'une constitution robuste ; quelques autres ont une constitution moins forte, & pour sujets à des incommodités : un de ceux-ci a éprouvé une légère douleur au cœurs de l'estomac, à la suite de la forte pression qu'on y a exercée. Cette douleur a subité tout le jour & le lendemain, elle a été accompagnée d'un sentiment de fa-tigue & de maigre. Un second a ressenti l'après-midi d'un des jours où il a été touché, un léger agacement dans les nerfs, auquel il est fort sujet. Un troisième, doué d'une plus grande sensibilité, & sur-tout d'une mobilité extrême dans les nerfs, a éprouvé plus de douleur & des agacements plus marqués ; mais ces petits accidents sont la suite des variations perpétuelles & ordi-naires de l'état de santé, & par conséquent étrangers au Magnétisme, eu résultent de la pression exercée sur la région de l'estomac. Les Commissaires ne sont même mention de ces légers détails, que par une fidélité scrupuleuse ; ils les disent parce qu'ils se sont imposée la loi de dire toujours & sur toute chose la vérité.

Les Commissaires n'ont pas été frappés de la diffé-rence du traitement public avec leur traitement particulier au baquet. Le calme & le silence dans l'un, le mouve-ment & l'agitation dans l'autre ; là, des effets multiplicés, des crises violentes, l'état habituel du corps & de l'esprit interrompu & troublé, la Nature exaltée ; ici, le corps sans douleur, l'esprit sans trouble, la Nature conservant son équilibre & son cours ordinaire, en un mot l'absence
Les Commissaires n’ayant d’abord été au buquet que tous les huit jours, ont voulu éprouver si la continuité ne produisait pas quelque chose ; ils y ont été trois jours de suite, mais leur insensibilité a été la même, & ils n’ont obtenu aucun effet. Cette expérience faite & répétée à la fois sur huit sujets, dont plusieurs ont des inconvénients habituelles, suffit pour conclure que le Magnétisme n’a que peu ou point d’action dans l’état de santé, & même dans cet état de légères infirmités. On a résolu de faire des épreuves sur des personnes réellement malades, & on les a choisies dans la classe du peuple.

Sept malades ont été rassemblés à Pailly chez M. Franklin ; ils ont été magnétisés devant lui & devant les autres Commissaires par M. Deffon.

La veuve Saint-Amand, affaiblit, ayant le ventre, les cuisses & les jambes enfroissées ; & la femme Anceusune, qui avait une grosseur à la cuisse, n’ont rien senti ; le petit Claude Renard, enfant de six ans, scrofuleux, presque étiole, ayant le genou goudré, la jambe fléchie & l’articulation presque sans mouvement, enfant intéressant & plus raisonnable que son âge ne le comporte, n’a également rien senti, ainsi que Geneviève Leroux, âgée de neuf ans, attaquée de convulsions & d’une maladie assez semblable à celle que l’on nomme chorea fœtii Vini. François Gerenet a éprouvé quelques effets ; il a les yeux malades,
particulièrement le droit dont il ne voit presque pas, & où il a une tuméfaction considérable. Quand on a magnétisé l’œil gauche en approchant, en s’agitant le pouce de près & assez long-temps, il a éprouvé de la douleur dans le globe de l’œil, & l’œil a larmoyé. Quand on a magnétisé l’œil droit qui est le plus malade, il n’y a rien senti; il a senti la même douleur à l’œil gauche, & rien partout ailleurs.

La femme Charpentier qui a été jetée à terre contre une poutre, par une vache, il y a deux ans, a éprouvé plusieurs fuites de cet accident; elle a perdu la vue, l’a recouvrée en partie, mais elle est restée dans un état d’infirmités habituelles; elle a déclaré avoir deux défécations, & le ventre d’une sensibilité si grande qu’elle ne peut supporter les cordons de la ceinture de ses jupes; cette sensibilité appartient à des nerfs agités & rendus très-mobiles; la plus légère pression faite dans la région du ventre, peut déterminer cette mobilité & produire des effets dans tout le corps par la correspondance des nerfs.

Cette femme a été magnétisée comme les autres, par l’application & par la pression des doigts; la pression lui a été doucereuse; ensuite en dirigeant le doigt vers la défécante, elle s’est plante de douleur à la tête; le doigt étant placé devant le visage, elle a dit qu’elle perdait la respiration. Au mouvement réitéré du doigt de haut en bas, elle avait des mouvements précipités de la tête & des épaules, comme on en a d’une surprise mêlée de frayeur, & semblables à ceux d’une personne à qui
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On jetterait quelques gouttes d'eau froide au visage. Il a semblé qu'elle éprouvait les mêmes mouvements ayant les yeux fermés. On lui a porté les doigts sous le nez en lui faisant fermer les yeux, et elle a dit qu'elle le trouverait mal si on continuait. Le septième malade, Joseph Emmuyé, a éprouvé des effets du même genre, mais beaucoup moins marqués.

Sur ces sept malades, il y en a quatre qui n'ont rien senti, et les trois autres ont éprouvé des effets. Ces effets méritent de fixer l'attention des Commissaires & demandent un examen scrupuleux.

Les Commissaires pour s'éclairer & pour fixer leurs idées à cet égard, ont pris le parti d'éprouver des malades placés dans d'autres circonstances, des malades choisis dans la société, qui ne puissent être soupçonnés d'aucun intérêt & dont l'intelligence fût capable de décider leurs propres sensations & d'en rendre compte. Mesdames de B** & de V**, Messieurs M** & R** ont été admis au baquet particulier avec les Commissaires; on les a priés d'observer ce qu'ils sentaient, mais sans y porter une attention trop suivie. M. M** & M. de V** sont les feux qui aient éprouvé quelque chose. M. M** a une tumeur froide sur toute l'articulation du genou et il sent de la douleur à la rotule. Il a déclaré après avoir été magnifié, n'avoir rien éprouvé dans tout le corps, excepté au moment qu'on a promené le doigt devant le genou malade; il a cru sentir alors une légère chaleur à l'endroit où il a habituellement de la douleur. M. de V** attaquée de:
mains de nerfs, a été plusieurs fois sur le point de s’ensommer pendant qu’on la magnétiisait. Magnétiisée pendant une heure dix-neuf minutes sans interruption, & le plus souvent par l’application des mains, elle a éprouvé seulement de l’agitation & du malaise. Ces deux malades ne sont venus qu’une fois au baquet. M. R** a malade d’un reflet d’engorgement dans le foie, à la suite d’une forte obstruction mal guérie, y est venu trois fois, & n’a rien senti. M.*** de B** gravement attaquée d’obstructions, y est venue confinée avec les Commis sires, elle n’a rien senti ; & il faut observer qu’elle s’est soumise au Magnétisme avec une tranquillité parfaite, qui venait d’une grande incrédulité.

Différents malades ont été éprouvés dans d’autres occasions, mais non autour du baquet. Un des Commisaires dans un accès de migraine a été magnétiisé par M. Defon pendant une demi-heure ; un des symptômes de cette migraine est un froid excessif aux pieds. M. Defon a approché son pied de ceux du malade ; le pied n’a point été réchauffé, la migraine a eu sa durée ordinaire ; & le malade s’étant mis auprès du feu en a obtenu les effets salutaires que la chaleur lui a confinément procurés, sans avoir éprouvé ni pendant le jour ni la nuit suivante aucun effet du Magnétisme.

M. Franklin, quoique les incommodes l’ont empêché de se transporter à Paris, & d’assister aux expériences qui y ont été faites, a été lui-même magnétiisé par M. Defon qui s’est rendu chez lui à Passy. L’assemblée était nombreuse ; tous ceux qui étaient présents ont été
magnétisés. Quelques malades qui avaient accompagné M. Défion, ont ressenti les effets du Magnétisme, comme ils ont coutume de le ressentir au traitement public; mais M.*** de B***, M. Franklin, ses deux Parentes, son Secrétaire, un Officier Américain, n’ont rien éprouvé, quoiqu’une des parentes de M. Franklin fut convalescente, & l’Officier Américain alors malade d’une fièvre réglée.

Ces différentes expériences fournissent des faits propres à être rapprochés & comparés, & dont les Commissaires ont pu tirer des conclusions. Sur quatorze malades, il y en a cinq qui ont pour éprouver des effets, & neuf qui n’en ont éprouvé aucun. Celui des Commisaires qui avait la migraine & les pieds glacés, n’a point éprouvé de soulagement du Magnétisme, & ses pieds n’ont point été réchauffés. Cet agent n’a donc point la propriété qu’on lui attribue, de communiquer de la chaleur aux pieds. On annonce encore le Magnétisme, comme propre à faire connaître l’essence & surtout le siège du mal, par la douleur que l’action de ce fluide y porte invariablement. Cet avantage feraient précieux; le fluide indicateur du mal, feraient un grand moyen dans les mains du Médecin, souvent trompé par des symptômes équivoques; mais François Gnelet, n’a éprouvé quelque sensation & quelque douleur qu’à l’œil le moins malade. Si l’autre œil n’avait pas été rouge & tuméfié, on aurait pu le croire intact en juger d’après l’effet du Magnétisme. M. R*** & M.*** de B***, tous les deux attachés d’observateurs, & M.*** de B***
très-gravement, n'ayant rien senti, n'auront été avertis ni du siège, ni de l'espèce de leur mal. Les obstructions sont cependant des maladies que l'on annonce comme plus particulièrement soumises à l'action du Magnétisme; puisque suivant la nouvelle théorie, la circulation libre & rapide de ce fluide par les nerfs, est un moyen de débarrasser les canaux & de détruire les obstacles, c'est-à-dire, les engorgements qu'il y rencontre. On dit en même temps que le Magnétisme est la pierre de touche de la santé; si M. R** & Mme de B** n'auraient pas éprouvé les dérangements & les souffrances inséparables des obstructions, ils auraient été fondés à le croire dans la meilleure santé du monde. On en doit dire autant de l'Officier Américain: le Magnétisme annoncé comme indicateur des maux, a donc absolument manqué son effet.

La chaleur que M. M** a sentie à la rotule, est un effet trop léger & trop fugitif pour en rien conclure. On peut soupçonner qu'il vient de la caisse développée ci-dessus, c'est-à-dire, de trop d'attention à s'obserrer; la même attention trouverait des sensations semblables dans tout autre moment où le Magnétisme ne serait pas employé. L'affouillement éprouvé par Mme de V**, vient sans doute de la confiance & de l'ennui de la même situation; si elle a eu quelque mouvement vaporeux, on sait que le propre des affections de nerfs, est de tenir beaucoup à l'attention qu'on y fait; il suffit d'y penser ou d'en entendre parler pour les faire renaitre. On peut juger de ce qui doit arriver à une femme, d'autres...
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dont les nerfs sont très-mobiles, & qui magnétisée durant une heure dix-neuf minutes, n’a pendant ce temps d’autre peine que celle des maux qui lui sont habituels. Elle aurait pu avoir une crise nerveuse plus considérable, sans qu’on dût en être surpris.

Il est donc que les effets produits sur la femme Charpentier, sur François Grenet & sur Joseph Enruyc, qui puissent paroître appartenir au Magnétisme. Mais alors en comparant ces trois faits particuliers à tous les autres, les Commissaires ont été étonnés que ces trois malades de la classe du peuple, soient les seuls qui aient senti quelque chose, tandis que ceux qui sont dans une classe plus élevée, doués de plus de lumières, plus capables de rendre compte de leurs sensations n’ont rien éprouvé. Sans doute François Grenet a éprouvé de la douleur à l’œil & un larmoiement, parce qu’on a approché le pouce très-près de son œil ; la femme Charpentier s’est plainte qu’en touchant à l’estomac la pression répondeit à la délicate ; & cette pression peut avoir produit une partie des effets que la femme a éprouvés ; mais les Commissaires ont soupçonné que ces effets avaient été augmentés par des circonstances morales.

Reprégnons-nous la position d’une personne du peuple, par conféquent ignorante, attaquée d’une maladie & dé- niant de guérir, amenée avec appareil devant une grande assemblée composée en partie de Médecins, où on lui administra un traitement tout-à-fait nouveau pour elle, & dont elle se persuada d’avance qu’elle va éprouver des prodiges. Ajoutons que la complaisance est psych., &...
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qu'elle croit nous sitaire d'avantage en difant qu'elle éprouve des effets, et nous aurons des causes naturelles pour expliquer ces effets; nous aurons du moins des raisons légères de douter que leur vrai cause soit le Magnétisme.

D'ailleurs on peut demander pourquoi le Magnétisme a eu ces effets sur des gens qui n'avoyaient ce qu'on leur firent, qui pouvaient croyer avoir intérêt à dire ce qu'ils ont dit, tandis qu'il n'a eu aucune prête sur le petit Claude Renard, sur cette organisation délicate de l'enfance, si mobile et si sensible; la raison & l'ingénuité de cet enfant affinrent la vérité de son témoignage. Pourquoi cet agent n'a-t-il rien produit sur Geneviève Leroux, qui étoit dans un état perpétuel de convulsions? Elle a certainement des nerfs mobiles, comme le Magnétisme ne s'est-il pas manifesté, soit en augmentant, soit en diminuant les convulsions? Son indifférence & son impassibilité portent à croire qu'elle n'a rien senti, parce que l'absence de sa raison ne lui a pas permis de juger qu'elle dût sentir quelque chose.

Ces faits ont permis aux Commissaires d'observer que le Magnétisme a semblé être nul pour ceux des malades qui s'ont soumis avec quelque incrédules; que les Commissaires, même ceux qui ont des nerfs plus mobiles ayant détourné expér leurs attention, s'étant armés du doute philosophique qui doit accompagner tout examen, n'ont point éprouvé les impressions qu'ont ressenties les trois malades de la classe du peuple, et ils ont dû soupçonner que ces impressions, en les supposant toutes
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réelles, étaient la suite d'une persuasion anticipée, & pouvaient être un effet de l'imagination. Il en a résulté un autre plan d'expériences. Leurs recherches vont être désormais dirigées vers un nouvel objet; il s'agit de détruire ou de confirmer ce soupçon, de déterminer jusqu'à quel point l'imagination peut influer sur nos sensations, & de confirmer si elle peut être la cause en tout ou en partie des effets attribués au Magnétisme.

Alors les Commissaires ont entendu parler des Expériences qui ont été faites chez M. le Doyen de la Faculté, par M. Jumelin, Docteur en Médecine; ils ont désiré de voir ces expériences, & ils se sont rassemblés avec lui chez l'un d'eux, M. Majaut. M. Jumelin leur a déclaré qu'il n'était disciple ni de M. Meßner, ni de M. Deslon, il n'a rien appris d'eux sur le Magnétisme animal; & sur ce qu'il en a entendu dire, il a conçu des principes & s'est fait des procédés. Ses principes consistent à regarder le fluide magnétique animal comme un fluide qui circule dans les corps, & qui en émane, mais qui est essentiellement le même que celui qui fait la chaleur; fluide qui comme tous les autres, tendant à l'équilibre, pâlit du corps qui en a le plus dans celui qui en a le moins. Ses procédés sont également différents de ceux de M. Meßner & Deslon; il magnétise comme eux avec le doigt & la baguette de fer, conducteurs, & par l'application des mains, mais sans aucune direction de pôles.

Huit hommes & deux femmes, ont d'abord été
Mémoires & n'ont rien senti; enfin une femme qui est Portière de M. Alphonse le Roy, Docteur en Médecine, ayant été magnétisée au front, mais sans la toucher, a dit qu'elle sentait de la chaleur. M. Jumelin préménant & main, & présentant les cinq extrémités de ses doigts sur tout le visage de la femme, elle a dit: qu'elle sentait comme une flamme qui se promenoit: magnétisée à l'estomac, elle a dit y sentir de la chaleur; magnétisée sur le dos, elle a dit y sentir la même chaleur; elle a déclaré de plus, qu'elle avait chaud dans tout le corps & mal à la tête.

Les Commissaires voyant que sur onze personnes soumises à l'expérience, une seule avait été sensible au Magnétisme de M. Jumelin, ont pensé que celle-ci n'avait éprouvé quelque chose que parce qu'elle avait sans doute l'imagination plus facile à évanouir; l'occasion était favorable pour s'en éclaircir. La sensibilité de cette femme étant bien prouvée, il se s'agissait que de la mettre à l'abri de son imagination, ou du moins de mettre son imagination en défaut. Les Commissaires ont proposé de lui hander les yeux, afin d'observer quelles seraient ses sensations, lorsqu'on opérerait à son infir. On lui a hante les yeux & on l'a magnétisée; alors les phénomènes n'ont plus répondu aux endroits où on a dirigé le Magnétisme. Magnétisée successivement sur l'estomac & dans le dos, la femme n'a senti que de la chaleur à la tête, de la douleur dans l'œil droit, dans l'œil & dans l'oreille gauche.

On lui a déchiré les yeux, & M. Jumelin lui ayant
appliquée ses mains sur les hypocondres, elle a dit y sentir de la chaleur; puis au bout de quelques minutes, elle a dit qu'elle allait se trouver mal, & elle s'est trouvée mal en effet. Lorsqu'elle a été bien revenue à elle, on l'a repriée, on lui a bandé les yeux, on a écarté M. Junelin, recommandé le silence, & on a fait accroître à la femme qu'elle était magnétisée. Les effets ont été les mêmes quoi qu'on n'agît sur elle ni de près, ni de loin; elle a éprouvé la même chaleur, la même douleur dans les yeux & dans les oreilles; elle a senti de plus de la chaleur dans le dos & dans les reins.

Au bout d'un quart d'heure, on a fait signe à M. Junelin de la magnétiser à l'estomac, elle n'y a rien senti, au dos de même. Les sensations ont diminué au lieu d'augmenter. Les douleurs de la tête sont réduites, la chaleur du dos & des reins a celle.

On voit qu'il y a eu ici des effets produits, & ces effets sont semblables à ceux qu'on éprouvés les trois malades dont il a été question ci-dessus. Mais les uns & les autres ont été obtenus par des procédés différents; il s'en suit que les procédés n'y sont rien. La méthode de M. Methmer & Deslon, & une méthode opposée donnent également les mêmes phénomènes. La distinction des pôles est donc chimérique.

On peut observer que quand la femme y voyoit, elle plaçoit les sensations précérament à l'endroit magnétisé; au lieu que quand elle n'y voyoit pas, elle les plaçoit au hasard, & dans des parties très-éloignées des endroits où on dirigeoit le Magnétisme. Il a été naturel de conclure
que l'imagination détermine ces sensations vraies ou fausses. On en a été convaincu quand on a vu qu'étant bien reposee, ne sentant plus rien, & ayant les yeux bandés, cette femme éprouvait tous les mêmes effets, quoiqu'on ne la magnétisât pas; mais la démonstration a été complete, lorsqu'après une seance d'un quart d'heure, son imagination s'étant sans doute lasse & refroidie, les effets au lieu d'augmenter ont diminué au moment où la femme a été réellement magnétisée.

Si elle s'est trouvée mal, cet accident arrive quelquefois aux femmes, lorsqu'elles sont serrées & gelées dans leurs vêtements. L'application des mains aux hypocondres a pu produire le même effet sur une femme excessivement sensible; mais on n'a pas même besoin de cette cause pour expliquer le fait. Il suffit alors tres-chaud, la femme avoir éprouvé sans doute de l'emotion dans les premiers moments, elle a fait effort pour se soumettre à un traitement nouveau, inconnu, & après un effort trop long-temps soutenu, il n'est pas extraordinaire de tomber en folie.

Cet evanouissement a donc une cause naturelle & connue, mais les sensations qu'elle a eprouvées lorsqu'on ne la magnétisât pas, ne peuvent être que l'effet de l'imagination. Par des experiences semblables que M. Junclius a faites au même lieu, le lendemain, en presence des Commissaires, sur un homme les yeux bandés, & sur une femme les yeux découverts, on a eu les mêmes résultats; on a reconnu que leurs réponses étaient évidemment déterminées par les questions qu'on leur
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faîloit. La question indiquoit où devoit être la sensation; au lieu de diriger sur eux le Magnétisme, on ne faîloit que monter & diriger leur imagination. Un enfant de cinq ans, magnétisé ensuite, n'a senti que la chaleur qu'il avait précédemment contractée en jouant.

Ces expériences ont paru assez importantes aux Commissaires, pour leur faire désirer de les répéter, afin d'obtenir de nouvelles lumières, & M. Jumelin a eu la complaisance de s'y prêter. Il feroit inutile d'objecter que la méthode de M. Jumelin est mauvaise; car on ne se proposoit pas dans ce moment d'éprouver le Magnétisme, mais l'imagination.

Les Commissaires sont convenus de bânder les yeux des sujets éprouvés, de ne point les magnétiser le plus souvent, & de faire les questions avec assez d'adresse pour leur indiquer les réponses. Cette marche ne devoit pas les induire en erreur; elle ne trompoit que leur imagination. En effet, lorsqu'ils ne sont point magnétisés, leur seule réponse doit être qu'ils ne sentent rien; & lorsqu'ils le font, c'est l'impression formie qui doit dicter leur réponse, & non la manière dont ils sont interrogés.

En conséquence les Commissaires s'étant transportés chez M. Jumelin, on a commencé par éprouver son domestique. On lui a appliqué sur les yeux un bandeau, préparé exprès, & qui a servi dans toutes les expériences suivantes. Ce bandeau étoit composé de deux calottes de gomme élastique, dont la concavité étoit remplie par de l'édredon; le tout enfermé & coufi dans deux morceaux d'étoffe taillés en rond. Ces deux pièces étoient attachées...
l'une à l'autre; elles avaient des cordons qui se frôlaient par-dessus. Placées sur les yeux, elles laissaient dans leur intervalle la place du nez & toute liberté pour la respiration sans qu'on pût rien voir, même la lumière du jour, ni au travers, ni au-dessus, ni au-dessous du bandeau. Ces précautions prises pour la commodité des sujets éprouvés & pour la certitude des résultats, on a persuadé au Demeufique de M. Jumelain qu'il était magnétisé. Alors il a senti une chaleur presque générale, des mouvements dans le ventre, la tête s'est appesantie; peu-à-peu il s'est alloupi, & a perdu sur le point de s'endormir. Ce qui prouve, comme on l'a dit plus haut, que cet effet tiens à la situation, à l'ennui, & non au magnétisme.

Magnétisé ensuite les yeux découverts, en lui présentant la baguette de fer au front, il y fient des picotements; les yeux relâchés, quand on la lui présente, il ne la sent point; & quand on ne la lui présente pas, interrogé s'il ne sent rien au front, il déclare qu'il sent quelque chose aller & revenir dans la largeur du front.

M. B**, homme instruit, & particulièrement en Médecine, les yeux bandés, offre le même spectacle: éprouvant des effets lorsqu'on n'agit pas, n'éprouvant souvent rien lorsqu'il agit. Ces effets ont même été tels qu'avant d'avoir été magnétisé en aucune manière, mais voyant l'être depuis dix minutes, il sentait dans les lombes une chaleur qu'il comparait à celle d'un poêle. Il est évident que M. B** avait une sensation forte, puïque pour en donner l'idée il a eu besoin de recourir à une pareille comparaison;
comparaison ; & cette sensation il ne la devoit qu'à
l'imagination, qui feule agissit fur lui.

Les Commissaires, fur-tout les Médecins, ont fait
une infinité d'expériences fur différents sujets qu'ils ont
eux-mêmes magnétisés, ou à qui ils ont fait croire qu'ils
étaient magnétisés. Ils ont indifféremment magnétisé, ou
à pôles opposés, ou à pôles directs & à contre-fens, &
dans tous les cas, ils ont obtenu les mêmes effets ; il n'y
a eu dans toutes ces épreuves, d'autre différence que
celle des imaginations plus ou moins sensibles (c). Ils
se sont donc convaincus par les faits, que l'imagination

(c) M. Sigault, Docteur en Médecine de la Faculté de Paris,
connu pour avoir imaginé l'opération de la syphilis, a fait plusieurs
expériences qui prouvent que le magnétisme n'est que l'effet de
l'imagination. Voici le détail qu'il en a donné dans une lettre
date du 30 Juillet, & adressée à l'un des Commissaires.

« Ayant laïflë croire dans une grande maison, au Narais, que
j'étois attept de M. Melinier, J'ai prédit fur une Dame, différens «
effets. Le ton, l'ai et et que j'aliët, joint à des gelles, lui «
fîsit une très-grande impression qu'elle vouloit d'hor de mer à
diffusuer, mais ayant porçu une voix for la région du cœur, j'ai «
fît que j'apitais. Son état d'opposition défiganit d'autreuis un «
réféttement dans la poitrine. A ces symptômes, s'en joignent «
huit d'aultrès la face devint convulsive, les yeux le troublèrent ; «
elle tomba enfin évanouie, vomit ensuite son âner, eut plusieurs «
garde-robes, & s'est trouvée dans un etat de faiblesse & d'affâlité- «
ment incroyable. J'ai répété le même manège fur plusieurs «
parlantes, avec plus ou moins de succès, selon leur degré de «
croyance & de sensibilité ».

« Un Aréste célèbre, qui donne des leçons de dîfîn aux Étatins
d'un de nos Princes, le plûquoit depuis quelque jours d'une «
grande migraine; il m'en fit part fur le Pont-royal ; j'ai ayant »

E
seule peut produire différentes sensations & faire éprouver de la douleur, de la chaleur, même une chaleur confusible dans toutes les parties du corps, & ils ont

pris l'usage que je sois initié dans les mystères de M. Meffner;

parce qu'il-tôt, au moyen de quelques gestes, je sentais sa douleur à son grand étonnement.

J'ai produit les mêmes effets sur un garçon Chappell auquel aussi d'une migraine, mais celui-ci n'éprouvant rien à mes premiers gestes, je lui portai ma main sur les saules côtés, en lui disant de me regarder. Dès lors il éprouva un serrement de poitrine, des palpitations, des battements, & un très-grand mal-aise. Il ne dit plus dès ce moment, du pouvoir que j'avais sur lui. En effet, ayant posé mon doigt sur la partie affectée, je l'interrogeais si ce qu'il éprouvait. Il me répondit que sa douleur décendait. Je lui assurai que j'allais la diriger vers le bras & la faire sortir par le pouce, que je lui ferais vivement. Il me cria sur ma parole, & fut soulagé pendant deux heures. A cette époque, il m'aurait dit dans la rue, pour me dire que la douleur était revenue. Ce que n'eût, ce me semblait, le même que celui que produisit le Denière sur le moral de ceux qui venaient chercher pour la faire tirer une dent.

De même encore, étant au parler d'un Cuvier, rue du Colombier, F. S. G. une jeune Dame me dit: vous allez donc chercher M. Meffner! Oui, dit-je; & à travers la grille je pus vous magnétiser. En même temps je lui présentai le doigt; elle s'éfaya, se trouva saillie, & me prit en grâce de ce faire. Elle était tellement émue, que si j'eusse été davantage, elle serait tombée insaisissable en convulsions.

M. Sigault a raconté qu'il avait éprouvé lui-même le pouvoir de l'imagination. Un jour qu'il était question de le magnétiser pour la convalescence, il fut, au moment qu'on se détermina à le toucher, un serrement de poitrine & des palpitations. Mais s'étant montré suffisamment éteint, on employa vainelement tous les gestes & tous les procédés du magnétisme, qui ne firent aucune impression sur lui.
conclu qu'elle entre nécessairement pour beaucoup dans les effets attribués au Magnétisme animal. Mais il faut convendre que la pratique du Magnétisme produit dans le corps animé, des changements plus marqués & des dérangements plus considérables que ceux qui viennent d'être rapportés. Aucun des sujets qui ont cru être magnétisés jusqu'ici, n'ont été ébranlés jusqu'à avoir des convulsions; c'étoit donc un nouvel objet d'expérience, que d'éprouver si en remuant seulem. l'imaginaire, on pourrait produire des crises semblables à celles qui ont lieu au traitement public.

Alors plusieurs expériences ont été déterminées par cette vue. Lorsqu'un arbre a été touché suivant les principes & la méthode du Magnétisme, toute personne qui s'y arrête doit éprouver plus ou moins les effets de cet agent; il en est même qui y perdent connoissance ou qui y éprouvent des convulsions. On en parla à M. Deslon, qui répondit que l'expérience devait réussir pourvu que le sujet fut fort sensible, & on convint avec lui de la faire à Puffy en présence de M. Franklin. La nécessité que le sujet fût sensible, fit penser aux Commissaires que pour rendre l'expérience décisive & fière repliquée, il fallait qu'elle fût faite sur une personne choisie par M. Deslon, & dont il aurait éprouvé d'avance la sensibilité au Magnétisme. M. Deslon a donc amené avec lui un jeune homme d'environ douze ans; on a marqué dans le verger du jardin, un abricotier bien isolé, & propre à conserver le Magnétisme qu'on lui aurait imprimé. On y a mené M. Deslon seul, pour qu'il le magnétisât, le
une homme étant resté dans la maison & avec une personne qui ne l'a pas quitté. On aurait désiré que M. Deflon ne fût pas présent à l'expérience, mais il a déclaré qu'elle pourrait manquer s'il ne dirigeait pas la camée & ses regards sur cet arbre pour en augmenter l'action. On a pris le parti d'éloigner M. Deflon le plus possible & de placer des Commissaires entre lui & le jeune homme, afin de s'assurer qu'il ne ferait point de signal, & de pouvoir répondre qu'il n'y avait point eu d'intelligence. Ces précautions, dans une expérience qui doit être authentique, sont indispensables sans être offensantes.

On a ensuite amené le jeune homme, les yeux bandés, & on l'a présenté successivement à quatre arbres, qui n'étaient point magnétisés en les lui faisant embrasser, chacun pendant deux minutes, suivant ce qui avait été réglé par M. Deflon lui-même.

M. Deflon présente & à une assez grande distance, dirigeait sa camée sur l'arbre réellement magnétisé.

Au premier arbre, le jeune homme interrogé au bout d'une minute, a déclaré qu'il sentait à grosses gouttes; il a toussé, craché, & il a dit sentir une petite douleur sur la tête; la distance à l'arbre magnétisé était environ de vingt-sept pieds.

Au second arbre, il se sent étourdi, même douleur sur la tête; la distance était de trente-six pieds.

Au troisième arbre, l'écurdissement redouble ainsi que le mal de tête; il dit qu'il croit approcher de l'arbre magnétisé; il en était alors environ à trente-huit pieds.
Enfin au quatrième arbre non magnétisé, & à vingt-quatre pieds environ de distance de l'arbre qui l'avait été, le jeune homme est tombé en crise; il a perdu connaissance, ses membres se sont roidis, & on l'a porté sur un gazon voisin, où M. Delfon lui a donné des secours & l'a fait revenir.

Le résultat de cette expérience est entièrement contraire au Magnétisme. M. Delfon a voulu expliquer le fait, en disant que tous les arbres sont magnétisés par eux-mêmes, & que leur Magnétisme étoit d'ailleurs renforcé par sa présence. Mais alors une personne sensible au Magnétisme, ne pourrait hésiter d'aller dans un jardin sans risquer d'avoir des convulsions; cette affection ferait démentie par l'expérience de tous les jours. La présence de M. Delfon n'a rien fait de plus que ce qu'elle a fait dans le carrolle où le jeune homme est venu avec lui, placé vis-à-vis de lui, & où il n'a rien éprouvé. Si le jeune homme n'eût rien senti, même sous l'arbre magnétisé, on aurait pu dire qu'il n'étoit pas affez sensible, du moins ce jour-là: mais le jeune homme est tombé en crise sous un arbre qui n'étoit pas magnétisé; c'est par conséquent un effet qui n'a point de cause physique, de cause extérieure, & qui n'en peut avoir d'autre que l'imagination. L'expérience est donc tout-à-fait concluante: le jeune homme savoit qu'on le menoit à l'arbre magnétisé, son imagination s'est frappée, successivement exaltée, & au quatrième arbre elle a été montée au degré nécessaire pour produire la crise.

D'autres expériences viennent à l'appui de celle-ci, &
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fourrent le même résultat. Un jour que les Commissaires

tant tous réunis à Pally chez M. Franklin, & avec

M. Deflon, ils avaient prévu de réunir avec lui

des malades, & de choisir dans le traitement des pauvres,

cents qui seraient le plus sensibles au Magnétique.

M. Deflon a amené deux femmes; & tandis qu'il étoit

occupé à magnétiser M. Franklin, plusieurs personnes

dans un autre appartement, on a séparé ces deux femmes,

& on les a placées dans deux pièces différentes.

L'une la femme P**, a des tais sur les yeux, mais

comme elle voit toujours un peu, on lui a cependant

couvert les yeux du bandeau décrit ci-dessus. On lui a

persuadé qu'on avait amené M. Deflon pour la magné-

tiser: le silence étoit recommandé, trois Commissaires

toient présens, l'un pour interroger, l'autre pour écrire,

troisième pour représenter M. Deflon. On a eu l'air

d'adresser la parole à M. Deflon, en le priant de com-

mencer, mais on n'a point magnétisé la femme; les trois

Commissaires sont restés tranquilles, occupés seulement à

observer ce qui alloit se passer. Au bout de trois minutes

la malade a commencé à sentir un frisson nerveux, puis

successivement elle a senti une douleur derrière la tête,

dans les bras, un fourmillement dans les mains, c'est son

expression; elle se répendait, frappoit dans les mains, se

levoit de son siège, frappoit des pieds: la scène a été

bien caractérisée. Deux autres Commissaires placés dans

la pièce à côté, la porte fermée, ont entendu les batte-

ments de pieds & de mains, & sans rien voir ont été les

témoins de cette scène bruyante.
Ces deux Commissaires étaient avec l'autre malade, la D. B***, attaquée de maux de nerfs. On lui a laissé la vue libre & les yeux découverts; on l'a assise devant une porte fermée, en lui perfusant que M. Delton était de l'autre côté, occupé à la magnétiser. Il y avait à peine une minute qu'elle était assise devant cette porte, quand elle a commencé à sentir du frisson; après une autre minute, elle a eu un claquement de dents, & cependant une chaleur générale; enfin après une troisième minute, elle est tombée tout-à-fait en crise. La respiration était précipitée, elle étendait les deux bras derrière le dos, en les tordant fortement, & en penchant le corps en devant; il y a eu tremblement général de tout le corps; le claquement de dents est devenu si bruyant, qu'il pouvait être entendu de dehors; elle s'est mordu la main & assis fort, pour que les dents soient relâchées marquées.

Il est bon d'observer qu'on n'a touché en aucune manière ces deux malades; on ne leur a pas même tâché le pouls, afin qu'on ne puisse dire qu'on leur ait communiqué le Magnétisme, & cependant les crises ont été complètes. Les Commissaires qui ont voulu connaître l'effet du travail de l'imagination, & apprécier là part qu'elle pouvait avoir aux crises du Magnétisme, ont obtenu tout ce qu'ils espéraient. Il est impossible de voir l'effet de ce travail, plus à découvert & d'une manière plus évidente, que dans ces deux expériences. Si les malades ont déclaré que leurs crises sont plus fortes au traitement, c'est que l'ébranlement des nerfs se
communique, & qu'en général toute émotion propre
& individuelle, est augmentée par le spectacle d'émotions
semblables.

On a eu occasion d'éprouver une seconde fois la
femme P**, & de reconnaître combien elle était domi-
née par son imagination. On voulait faire l'expérience de
la tasse magnétisée : cette expérience consiste à choisir
dans un nombre de tasses, une tasse que l'on magnétise.
On les présente successivement à un malade sensible au
Magnetisme ; il doit tomber en crise, ou du moins éprouver
des effets sensibles lorsqu'on lui présente la tasse magné-
tisée, il doit être indifférent à toutes celles qui ne le sont
pas. Il faut seulement, comme l'a recommandé M. Delfon,
les lui présenter à pôle direct, afin que celui qui tient la
tasse ne magnétisée pas le malade, & qu'on ne puisse avoir
d'autre effet que celui du Magnetisme de la tasse.

La femme P** a été mandée à l'Arscan chez M.
Lavoisier où étaoit M. Delfon ; elle a commencé par
tomber en crise dans l'antichambre, avant d'avoir vu ni
les Commissaires ni M. Delfon ; mais elle savoit qu'elle
devoit le voir, & c'est un effet bien marqué de l'imagi-
nation.

Lorsque la crise a été calmée, on a amené la femme
dans le lieu de l'expérience. On lui a présenté plusieurs
tasses de porcelaine qui n'étoient point magnétisées; la
seconde tasse a commencé à l'émuvoir, & à la quatrième
elle est tombée tout-à-fait en crise. On peut répondre
que l'on était auel equoit un état de crise, qui avoir com-
mencé dès l'antichambre & qui se renouveloit de
lui-même;
lui-même; mais ce qui est décisif, c’est qu’ayant demandé
à boire, on lui en a donné dans la tasse magnétisée par
M. Désflon lui-même ; elle a bu tranquillement & a dit
qu’elle était bien soulagée. La tasse & le Magnétisme ont
donc manqué leur effet, puisque la crise a été calmée au
lieu d’être augmentée.

Quelque temps après, pendant que M. Majault exa-
namait les taches qu’elle a sur les yeux, on lui a présenté
derrière la tête la tasse magnétisée, & cela pendant douze
minutes ; elle ne s’en est point aperçue & n’a éprouvé
aucun effet, elle n’a même dans aucun moment été plus
tranchée, parce que son imagination était distraite, &
occupée de l’examen qu’on faisait de ses yeux.

On a raconté aux Commissaires que cette femme étant
soulevée dans l’antichambre, différentes personnes étrangères
au Magnétisme s’étaient approchées d’elle, & que les
mouvements convulsifs avaient recommencé. On lui a fait
observer qu’on ne la magnétisait pas ; mais son imagina-
tion était tellement frappée, qu’elle a répondu : si vous
ne me faites rien je ne ferai pas dans l’état où je
suis. Elle savait qu’elle était venue pour être soufflée à
des expériences ; l’approche de quelqu’un, le moindre
bruit attirait son attention, réveillait l’idée du Magné-
tisme, & renouvelait les convulsions.

L’imagination pour agir puissamment a souvent besoin
que l’on touche plusieurs cordes à la fois. L’imagination
répond à tous les sens ; sa réaction doit être propor-
tionnée & au nombre de sens qui s’ébranlent, & à celui
des sensations reçues : c’est ce que les Commissaires ont
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reconnu par une expérience dont ils vont rendre compte. M. Junelin leur a avoué parler d'une demoiselle, âgée de 20 ans, à qui il a fait perdre la parole par le pouvoir du Magnétisme; les Commissaires ont répété cette expérience chez lui, la demoiselle a consenti à s'y prêter et à se laisser bâncser les yeux.

On a d'abord tâché d'obtenir le même effet sans la magnétiser; mais quoique l'âge fût ou eût fentir des effets du Magnétisme, on n'a pu parvenir à frapper assez l'âme imagination pour que l'expérience réussît. Quand on l'a magnétisée réellement, en lui laissant les yeux bandés, on n'a pas eu plus de succès. On lui a défendu les yeux; alors l'âme imagination a été ébranlée à la fois par la vue & par l'ouïe, les effets ont été plus marqués; mais quoique la tête commencât à s'appelarner, quoique l'âme fût de l'embarras à la racine du nez, & une grande partie des symptômes qu'elle avait éprouvés la première fois, cependant la parole ne se perdait pas. Elle a observé elle-même qu'il fallait que la main qui la magnétisoit au front, descends vis-à-vis du nez, se soulevant que la main était ainsi placée lorsqu'elle a perdu la voix. On a fait ce qu'elle demandait, & en trois quarts de minute, elle est devenue muette; on n'entendait que quelques sons inarticulés & sourds, malgré les efforts visibles de la gorge pour pousser le son, & ceux de la langue & des lèvres pour l'articuler. Cet état a duré seulement une minute: on voit que se trouvant précéremment dans les mêmes circonstances, la constitution de l'esprit & son effet sur les organes de la
voix ont été les mêmes. Mais ce n’était pas assez que
la parole l’avertit qu’elle étoit magnétisée, il a fallu que
la vue lui portât un témoignage plus fort & plus capable
d’ébranler, il a fallu encore qu’un geste déjà connu,
réveillât ses idées. Il semble que cette Expérience montre
merveilleusement comment l’imagination agit, le monte
par degrés & à besoin de plus de secours extérieurs
pour être plus efficacement ébranlée.

Ce pouvoir de la vue sur l’imagination explique les
effets que la doctrine du Magnétisme attribue au regard.
Le regard a éminemment la puissance de magnétiser; les
signes, les gestes employés ne font communément rien,
a-t-on dit aux Commissaires, que sur un sujet dont on
s’est précédemment emparé, en lui jetant un regard.
La raison en est simple; c’est dans les yeux, où sont
déposés les traits les plus expressifs des passions, c’est-là
que se déploie tout ce que le caractère a de plus impo-
sant & de plus séduisant. Les yeux doivent donc avoir
un grand pouvoir sur nous; mais ils n’ont ce pouvoir
que parce qu’ils ébranlent l’imagination, & d’une ma-
nière ou plus ou moins exagérée suivant la force de cette
imagination. C’est donc au regard à commencer tout
l’ouvrage du Magnétisme; & l’effet en est si puissant, il
a des traces si profondes, qu’une femme nouvellement
arrivée chez M. Delfos, ayant rencontré en sortant de
cric, les regards d’un de ses Disciples qui la magné-
tisait, le fixa pendant trois quarts d’heure. Elle a été
longtemps poursuivie par ce regard; elle voyait toujours
devant elle ce même œil attaché à la regarder; & elle

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l'a porté constamment dans son imagination pendant trois jours, dans le sommeil comme dans la veille. On voit tout ce que peut produire une imagination capable de conserver à long-temps la même impression, c'est-à-dire, de renouveler elle-même & par sa propre puissance, la même sensation pendant trois jours.

Les expériences qu'on vient de rapporter sont uniformes & sont également décisives; elles autorisent à conclure que l'imagination est la véritable cause des effets attribués au Magnétisme. Mais les Partisans de ce nouvel agent, répondront peut-être que l'identité des effets ne prouve pas toujours l'identité des causes. Ils accorderont que l'imagination peut exciter ces impressions sans Magnétisme; mais ils soutiendront que le Magnétisme peut aussi les exciter sans elle. Les Commissaires dénieraient facilement cette assertion par le raisonnement & par les principes de la Physique; le premier de tous est de ne point admettre de nouvelles causes, sans une nécessité absolue. Lorsque les effets observés peuvent avoir été produits par une cause existante, et que d'autres phénomènes ont déjà manifesté, la science physique enseigne que ces effets observés doivent lui être attribués; et lorsqu'on annonce avoir découvert une cause jusqu'alors inconnue, la science physique exige également qu'elle soit établie, démontrée par des effets qui n'appartiennent à aucune cause connue, et qui ne puissent être expliqués que par la cause nouvelle. Ce ferait donc aux Partisans du Magnétisme à présent d'autres preuves, & à chercher des effets qui justifient entièrement dépourvus des
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illusions de l'imaginaire. Mais comme les faits sont plus démonstratifs que le raisonnement, et ont une évidence qui frappe davantage, les Commissaires ont voulu éprouver par l'expérience, ce que ferait le Magnétisme lorsque l'imaginaire n'agirait pas.

On a disposé dans un appartement deux pièces contiguës, & unies par une porte de communication. On avait enlevé la porte & on lui avait substitué un chiffis, couvert & tendu d'un double papier. Dans l'une de ces pièces étoit un des Commissaires pour écrire tout ce qui se passeroit, & une Dame annoncée pour être de Province, & pour avoir du linge à faire travailler. On avait mandé la D.*** B***. Ouvrière en linge, déjà employée dans les expériences de Pally, & dont on connaissait la sensibilité au Magnétisme. Lorsqu'elle est arrivée tout étoit arrangé de manière qu'il n'y ait qu'un seul siège où elle pût s'asseoir, & ce siège étoit placé dans l'embrasure de la porte de communication où elle s'est trouvée connue dans une niche.

Les Commissaires étoient dans l'autre pièce, & l'un d'eux, Médecin, exercé à magnétiser, & ayant déjà produit des effets, a été chargé de magnétiser la D.*** B***, à travers le chiffis de papier. C'est un principe de la théorie du Magnétisme, que cet agent passe à travers les portes de bois, les murs, &c. Un chiffis de papier ne pouvoit lui faire obstacle; d'ailleurs M. Defon a établi positivement que le Magnétisme passe à travers le papier; & la D.*** B*** était magnétisée comme si elle eût été à découvrir & en sa présence.
Elle l'a été en effet, pendant une demi-heure, à un pied & demi de distance à pôles opposés, en suivant toutes les règles enseignées par M. Deflon, & que les Commissaires ont vu pratiquer chez lui. Pendant tout ce temps, la D.* B** a fait gaiement la conversation; interrogée sur sa santé elle a répondu librement qu'elle se portait fort bien; à Paffy elle est tombée en crise au bout de trois minutes; ici elle a supporté le Magnétisme sans aucun effet pendant trente minutes. C'est qu'ici elle ignorait être magnétisée, & qu'à Paffy elle croyait l'être. On voit donc que l'imagination seule produit tous les effets attribués au Magnétisme; & lorsque l'imagination n'agit pas, l'on n'y a plus d'effets.

On ne peut faire qu'une objection à cette Expérience; c'est que la D.* B** pouvait être mal disposée, & se trouver moins sensible dans ce moment au Magnétisme. Les Commissaires ont prévu l'objection & ont fait en conséquence l'Expérience suivante. Aussi-tôt qu'on a caché de magnétiser à travers le papier, le même Médecin-commissaire a passé dans l'autre pièce; il lui a été facile d'engager la D.* B** à se laisser magnétiser. Alors il a commencé à la magnétiser, en observant comme dans l'Expérience précédente, de se tenir à un pied & demi de distance, de n'employer que des gestes, & les mouvements du doigt index & de la baguette de fer, car s'il eût appliqué les mains & touché les hypotonuses, on aurait pu dire que le Magnétisme avait agi sur cette application plus immédiate. La seule différence qu'il y a eu entre ces deux Expériences, c'est que dans
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la première, il a magnétisé à pôles opposés en suivant les règles, au lieu que dans la seconde, il a magnétisé à pôles directs & à contre-fêns. En agissant ainsi, on ne devait produire aucun effet, suivant la théorie du Magnétisme.

Cependant après trois minutes, la D." B** a senti un malaise, de l'écoulement; il est survenu successivement un hoquet entre-coupé, un éclatement de dents, un froissement à la gorge, un grand mal de tête; elle s'est agitée avec inquiétude sur sa chaise; elle s'est plainte des reins; elle frappoit quelquefois presque de son pied sur le parquet; puis elle étendit ses bras derrière le dos, en les sourdant fortement comme à Pissy; en un mot la crise convulsive a été complète & parfaitement caractérisée. Elle a eu tous ces accidents en douze minutes, tandis que le même traitement employé pendant trente minutes l'a trouvée inénérable. Il n'y a de plus ici que l'imagination, c'est donc à elle que ces effets appartiennent.

Si l'imagination a fait commencer la crise, c'est encore l'imagination qui l'a fait cesser. Le Commissaire qui la magnétisait a dit qu'il étoit temps de finir; il lui a présenté ses deux doigts index en croix; & il est bon d'observer que par-là il la magnétisait à pôles directs comme il l'a fait jusqu'alors; il n'y avait donc rien de changé, le même traitement devait continuer les mêmes impressions. Mais l'imagination a suffi pour calmer la crise; la chaleur & le mal de tête se sont dissipés. On a toujours pourvu le mal de place en place, en
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annonçant qu'il allait disparaître. C'est ainsi qu'à la voix
qui commande à l'imagination, la douleur du cou a
cessé, puis successivement les accidents à la poitrine, à
l'estomac & aux bras. Il n'a fallu que trois minutes;
après lesquelles la D. B** a déclaré ne plus rien sentir
& être absolument dans son état naturel.

Ces dernières expériences ainsi que plusieurs de celles
qui ont été faites chez M. Junelin, ont le double avan-
tage de démontrer à la fois, & la puissance de l'imagi-
nation & la nullité du Magnétique dans les effets produits.

Si les effets sont encore plus marqués, si les crises
semblent plus violentes au traitement public, c'est que
plusieurs causes la joignent à l'imagination pour opérer
avec elle, pour multiplier & pour agrandir ses effets.
On commence par le regard à s'emparer des esprits;
à l'attouchement, l'application des mains suit l'incitation; &
il convient d'en développer ici les effets physiques.

Ces effets sont plus ou moins considérables: les moindres
font des hoquettes, des soulèvements d'estomac, des purge-
tions; les plus considérables font les convulsions que l'on
nomme crisés. L'endroit où l'attouchement se porte est
aux hypocondres, au creux de l'estomac, & quelquesfois
sur les ovaires, quand ce sont des femmes que l'on touche.
Les mains, les doigts pressent, & compriment plus ou
moins ces différentes régions.

Sur le colon. Le colon, un de nos gros inévitables, parcourt les deux
régions des hypocondres & la région épigastrique qui les
démarre. Il est placé immédiatement sous les téguments.
C'est donc sur cet intestin que l'attouchement se porte,
sur
sur cet intestin sensible & très-irritable. Le mouvement
feu, le mouvement répété sans autre agent, excite l'action
musculaire de l'intestin & procure quelquefois des évacua-
tions. La Nature semble indiquer comme par instinct cette
manœuvre aux hypocondraques. La pratique du Magné-
tisme n’est que cette manœuvre même; & les purgations
qu’elle peut produire sont encore facilitées dans le traité-
ment magnétique, par l’usage fréquent & presque habituel
d’un vrai purgatif, la crème de tartre en boisson.

Mais lorsque le mouvement excite principalement
l’irritabilité du colon, cet intestin offre d’autres phéno-
mènes. Il se gonfle plus ou moins, & prend quelquefois
un volume considérable. Alors il communique au dia-
aphragme une telle irritation, que cet organe entre plus
ou moins en convulsion, & c’est ce qu’on appelle criée
dans le traitement du Magnétisme animal. Un des Com-
missaires a vu une femme sujette à une espèce de vomis-
sement spasmodique, répété plusieurs fois chaque jour.
Les efforts ne produisent qu’une eau trouble & vis-
quenue, semblable à celle que jetten les malades en criée
dans la pratique du Magnétisme. La convulsion aient son
siège dans le diaphragme; & la région du colon étoit si
sensible, que le plus léger atouchement sur cette partie,
une forte commotion de l’air, la surprise causée par un
bruit imprévu, suffisent pour exciter la convulsion. Cette
femme avait donc des criées sans Magnétisme par la seule
irritabilité du colon & du diaphragme, & les femmes qui
font magnétisées ont leurs criées par la même cause &
par cette irritabilité.
L'application des mains sur l'estomac a des effets physiques également remarquables. L'application se fait directement sur cet organe. On y opère tantôt une compression ferme et continue, tantôt des compressions légères et réitérées, quelquefois un frémissement par un mouvement de rotation de la baguette de fer, appliquée sur cette partie ; enfin on y pousse successivement et rapidement les pouces l'un après l'autre. Ces manœuvres portent promptement à l'estomac un agacement plus ou moins fort et plus ou moins durable, selon que le sujet est plus ou moins sensible et irritable. On prépare, on dispose l'estomac à cet agacement en le comprimant préalablement. Cette compression le met dans le cas d'agir sur le diaphragme, & de lui communiquer les impressions qu'il reçoit. Il ne peut s'irriter que le diaphragme ne s'irrite, & de là résultent comme par l'action du colon, les accidens nerveux dont on vient de parler.

Chez les femmes sensibles si l'on vient à comprimer simplement les deux hypocondres sans aucun autre mouvement, l'estomac se trouve ferré, & ces femmes tombent en foiblisse. C'est ce qui s'est arrivé à la femme magnétisée par M. Jumelin ; & ce qui arrive souvent sans autre cause lorsque les femmes sont trop ferrées dans leurs vêtements. Il n'y a point de criée alors, parce que l'estomac est comprimé sans être agacé, & que le diaphragme reste dans son état naturel. Ces mêmes manœuvres pratiquées chez les femmes sur les ovaires, ouvre les effets qui leur sont particuliers, produisent bien plus puissamment encore les mêmes accidents. On
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connait l'influence & l'empire de l'utérus sur l'économie animale.

Le rapport intime de l'intestin colon, de l'estomac & de l'utérus avec le diaphragme est une des causes des effets attribués au Magnétisme. Les régions du bas-ventre, fournies aux différents attachements, répondent à différents plexus qui y constituent un véritable centre nerveux, au moyen duquel, abstraction faite de tout système, il existe très-certainement une sympathie, une communication, une correspondance entre toutes les parties du corps, une action & une réaction telles que les sensations excitées dans ce centre, ébranlent les autres parties du corps; & que réciproquement une sensation éprouvée dans une partie ébranlée & met en jeu le centre nerveux, qui souvent transmit cette impression à toutes les autres parties.

Ceci explique non-seulement les effets de l'attouchement magnétique, mais encore les effets physiques de l'imagination. On a toujours observé que les affections de l'âme portent leur première impression sur ce centre nerveux, ce qui fait dire communément qu'on a un poids sur l'estomac & qu'on se sent suffoqué. Le diaphragme entre en jeu, d'où les fousins, les pleurs, les ris. On éprouve alors une réaction sur les viscères du bas-ventre; & c'est ainsi que l'on peut rendre raison des désordres physiques produits par l'imagination. Le suffolement occasionne la colique, la frayeur cauze la diarrhée, le chagrin donne la jaunisse. L'histoire de la Médecine renferme une infinité d'exemples du pouvoir

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de l'imagination & des affections de l'âme. La crainte du
feu, un désir violent, une espérance ferme & sournoise, un
accès de colère rendent l'usage des jambes à un goutteux
perclus, à un paralysique ; une joie vive & inopinée dilipe
une fièvre quarte de deux mois ; une forte attention
arrête le hoquet ; des muets par accident, recouvrent
la parole à la fuite d'une vive émotion de l'âme. L'hic-
toire montre que cette émotion suffit pour faire recouvrir
la parole, & les Commissaires ont vu que l'imagination
frappée avait suffi pour en suspendre l'usage. L'action
& la réception du physique sur le moral, & du moral sur
le physique sont démontrées depuis que l'on observe en
Médecine, c'est-à-dire, depuis son origine.

Les pleurs, les râles, la toux, les hoquets, & en
général tous les effets observés dans ce qu'on appelle
les crises du traitement public, naissent donc, ou de ce
que les fonctions du diaphragme sont troublées par un
moyen physique, tel que l'attouchemcnt & la pression,
ou de la puissance dont l'imagination est douée pour
agir sur cet organe & pour troubler ses fonctions.

Si l'on objecte que l'attouchemcnt n'est pas toujours
nécessaire à ces effets, on répondroit que l'imagination
peut avoir affez de ressources pour produire tout par
elle-même ; sur-tout l'imagination agissant dans un tra-
tement public, doublement excitée alors par son propre
mouvement & par celui des imaginations qui l'environ-
ment. On a vu ce qu'elle produit dans les Expériences
faites par les Commissaires sur des sujets isolés ; on peut
juger de ces effets multipliés sur des malades réunis dans
le traitement public. Ces malades y sont rassemblés dans un lieu serré, relativement à leur nombre ; l'air y est chaud, quoiqu'on ait soin de le renouveler ; & il est toujours plus ou moins chargé de gaz méphitique dont l'action se porte particulièrement à la tête & sur le genre nerveux. S'il y a de la musique, c'est un moyen de plus pour agir sur les nerfs & pour les émouvoir.

Plusieurs femmes sont magnétisées à la fois & n'éprouvent d'abord que des effets semblables à ceux que les Commissaires ont obtenus dans plusieurs de leurs Expériences. Ils ont reconnu que même au traitement, ce n'est le plus souvent qu'au bout de deux heures que les crises commencent. Peu à peu les impressions se communiquent & se renforcent, comme on le remarque aux représentations théâtrales, où les impressions sont plus grandes lorsqu'il y a beaucoup de spectateurs ; & surtout dans les lieux où l'on a la liberté d'applaudir. Ce signe des émotions particulières établit une émotion générale que chacun partage au degré dont il est susceptible. C'est ce qu'on observe encore dans les armées un jour de bataille, où l'enthousiasme du courage comme les terreaux paniques s'épropagent avec tant de rapidité. Le son du tambour & de la musique militaire, le bruit du canon, la mousquetterie, les cris, le défordre ébranlent les organes, donnent aux esprits, le même mouvement, & montent les imaginations au même degré. Dans cette unité d'ivresse une impression manifestée, devient universelle ; elle encourage à charger, où elle détermine à fuir. La même cause fait naître les révoltes ; l'imagination gouverne la multitude : les hommes réunis en
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nombre, sont plus fournis à leurs sens, la raison a moins
d'empire sur eux; & lorsqu'le fanatisme préside à ces
assemblées, il produit les Trembleurs des Cévennes (4).

(4) M. le Maréchal de Villiers, qui termina les troubles des
Cévennes, dit: «J'ai vu dans ce genre, des choses que je n'aurais
pas cru, si elles ne s'étoient point passées sous mes yeux; une
Ville entière, dont toutes les femmes & les filles, sans exception,
paraiffaient possédées du Diable. Elles tremblaient & prophétiaient
faire publiquement dans les rues. » Une est la hardiesse de nombrer,
& de prophétiser pendant une heure devant moi. Mais, de toutes
ces folies, la plus surprenante fut celle que me montra M.
L'Évêque d'Alais, & que je montai à M. de Chamillard, en ces
termes.

« Un Montfuir de Maudagors, Seigneur de la terre de ce nom,
Maire d'Alais, possédant les premières charges dans la Ville &
dans le Comté, ayant d'ailleurs été quelque temps Subdélégué
de M. de Bâville, vint de faire une chose extraordinaire. C'est
un homme de soixante ans, sage par ses moeurs, de beaucoup
d'esprit, ayant composé & fait imprimer plusieurs Ouvrages.
J'en ai li quelques-uns, mais dans lesquels, avant que je l'avoit
vu, je n'avoit d'apprécier de lui; il vit imprimer une imagination
qui m'a bien vivement

Une Prophétise, âgée de soixante ans, fut ouverte, il y a
environ dix-huit mois, & menée devant M. d'Alais. Il l'interrogea
en présence de plusieurs Ecclésiastiques. Cette étrange, après
l'avoir écouté, lui répond d'un air modeste, & l'interroge à ne plus
tourmenter les vrais Enfans de Dieu, & puis lui parla pendant une
heure de faire une langue étrangère à laquelle il ne comprit pas
un mot; comme nous avons vu le Duc de la Porte autrefois,
quand il y conduisit un peu lui, parler Anglais devant des Anglais. J'en
ai vu dire, j'entends bien qu'il parle Anglais, mais je ne com-
prends pas un mot de ce qu'il dit. Cela est si difficile aussi à
comprendre, car jamais il n'avoir été un mot d'Anglais. Cette fille
parloit Grec, Hébreu de même.
C'est pour arrêter ce mouvement si facilement communiqué aux âmes que dans les villes fidélités on défend

Vous croyez bien que M. d'Avis fit enfermer la Prophétesse, &
Après plusieurs mois, cette fille parlant une langue de ses égarements par les soins & avis du sieur de Mandagora, qui la fréquentoit, en la laisse en liberté; & de cette liberté, & de celle que le sieur de Mandagora prenait avec elle, il en est arrêté que cette Prophétesse est grande.

Mais le fait prétexte est que le sieur de Mandagora s'est défait de toutes ses charges, les a remises à son fils, & a dit à quelques Particuliers & à M. l'Évêque lui-même, que c'étoit par le commandement de Dieu qu'il avoit connu cette Prophétesse, & que l'enfant qui en naîtrait ferait le vrai Sauveur du Monde. De tout cela & en un autre Pays que celui-ci, l'on se ferait autre chose que d'envoyer M. le Maire & la Prophétesse aux petites Maisons. M. l'Évêque m'a proposè de le faire arrêter. J'ai voulu auparavant en conférer avec M. de Bâville; ordonnant cependant de l'offrir & la Prophétesse aussi, de manière qu'ils ne puissent s'échapper: mais pensant éloigner du milieu des fous, ce qui regarde un fou de cette importance, doit faire le moins de bruit qu'il est possible; qu'il failloit pas considérer s'échapper de le séparer sous douceur, & s'en affrîmer ensuite. Car vous jugez bien que de déclarer publiquement pour Prophète, un Maire d'Avis, un Seigneur de terres & aloes confédérable, ancien Subdélégué de l'Intendant, Auteur & jusqu'alors réputé sage, au milieu de gens qui sont accoutumés à l'éliminer & à le respecter, tout cela pourroit en pervertir plus qu'en corriger. D'autant plus que hors la folie de croire que Dieu lui a ordonné de connaître cette fille, il est très-sage dans les discours, comme écrit Don Guichot très-sage, hors qu'il étoit quelqu'un de Chevalerie. L'avis de M. de Bâville fut comme le mien, de ne pas bruiter. Ses enfants le mesurent quand eût dans un de les Châteaux, où on le rendit, & la Prophétesse fut renfermée. *Vie du Maréchal Dui de Villars. Page 345* & *faire.*
les atroces que Par-tout l'exemple agit sur le moral,
limitation naît de ses vérités les plus vives; en les séparant, on fait
secher également les convulsions, toujours contagieuses de leur nature: on en a un exemple récent dans les jeunes
filles de Saint-Roch, qui séparées ont été guéries des convulsions qu'elles avaient été réunies (f).

On retrouve donc le Magnétisme, ou plutôt l'imagination agissant au spectacle, à l'armée, dans les assemblées
nombreuses comme au baquet, agissant par des moyens différents, mais produisant des effets semblables. Le
baquet est entouré d'une foule de malades; les sensations sont continuément communiquées à une autre;

(f) Le jour de la Cérémonie de la première communion, faite
en la Paroisse Saint-Roch, il y a quelques années (1780), après
l'office du soir, on fut, sans qu'il eût d'ailleurs, la Procesion en
ehors. A peine les enfants furent-ils reçus à l'église, & rendez à
leur place, qu'une jeune fille se trouve mal, & sait des convulsions.
Cette afflication se propagée avec une rapidité extrême, que dans l'église
d'une demi-heure, 50 ou 60 jeunes filles, de 12 à 16 ans, tombèrent
dans les mêmes convulsions; c'est-à-dire, s'étant à la gorge,
rentrent à l'hémore, l'espace, le baquet à la convulsion
plus ou moins forte. Ces accidents se produisirent à quelques-unes dans
le courant de la semaine; mais le Dimanche suivant, étant affirmées
chez les Dames de Saint-Anne, dont l'Institut était défilé
les jeunes filles, douze tombèrent dans les mêmes convulsions, &
il en fut ressenti davantage, si on n'eût eu la précaution de trouver
sur le champ, chaque enfant chez ses parents. On fut obligé de
multiplier les écoles. En sortant ainsi les enfants, & en les tenant
affirmés qu'en petit nombre, trois femmes suffirent pour diffuser
toutefois cette afflication convulsive épicique. Voici pour des
exemples semblables, le Naturalisme des convulsions, par M. Hocquet.
les nerfs à la longue doivent se fatiguer de cet exercice, ils s'irritent & la femme la plus sensible donne le signal. Alors les cordes par-tout tendues au même degré & à l'unisson, se répandent, & les cris s'interlèvent; elles se renforcent mutuellement, elles deviennent violentes. En même temps les hommes témoins de ces émotions, les partagent, à proportion de leur sensibilité nerveuse; & ceux qui cette sensibilité est plus grande & plus mobile, tombent eux-mêmes en crié.

Cette grande mobilité en partie naturelle & en partie acquise, tant chez les hommes que chez les femmes, devient habitude. Ces sensations une ou plusieurs fois éprouvées, il ne s'agit plus que d'en repaître le souvenir, de multiplier l'imagination au même degré pour opérer les mêmes effets. C'est ce qu'il est toujours facile de faire en plaçant le sujet dans les mêmes circonstances. Alors il n'est plus besoin du traitement public, on n'a qu'à toucher les hypocondres, promener le doigt & la baguette de fer devant le visage; ces signes sont connus. Il n'est pas même nécessaire qu'ils soient employés, il suffit que les malades, les yeux bandés, croient que ces signes sont répétés sur eux, se persuadent qu'on les magnétise; les idées se réveillent, les sensations se reproduisent, l'imagination employant ses moyens accoutumés, & reprenant les mêmes voies, fait repaître les mêmes phénomènes. C'est ce qui arrive à des malades de M. Delion, qui tombent en crise sans baquet, & sans être excités par le spectacle du traitement public.

Attaquement, imagination, irritation, telles sont H.
donc les vraies causes des effets attribués à cet agent nouveau, connu sous le nom de Magnésienne animal, à ce fluide que l'on dit circuler dans le corps & se communiquer d'individu à individu; tel est le résultat des expériences des Commissaires, & des observations qu'ils ont faites sur les moyens employés, & sur les effets produits. Cet agent, ce fluide n'existe pas, mais tout chimérique qu'il est, l'idée n'en est pas nouvelle. Quelques auteurs, quelques Médecins du siècle dernier en ont expressément traité dans plusieurs Ouvrages. Les recherches curieuses & intéressantes de M. Thuret, prouvent au Public que la théorie, les procédés, les effets du Magnésienne animal, proposés dans le siècle dernier, étoient à peu-près semblables à ceux qu'on renouvelle dans celui-ci. Le Magnésienne n'est donc qu'une vieille erreur. Cette théorie est présentée aujourd'hui avec un appareil plus imposant, nécessaire dans un siècle plus éclairé; mais elle n'en est pas moins fausse. L'homme fait, quitte, reprend l'erreur qui le flatte. Il est des erreurs qui seront éternellement chères à l'humanité. Combien l'Amérique n'a-t-elle pas reparu de loin sur la terre? Le Magnétique tendroit à nous y ramener. On a voulu le lier aux influences célestes, pour qu'il seul soit davantage & qu'il attire les hommes par les deux expériences qui les touchent le plus, celle de favorir leur areoir, & celle de prolonger leurs jours.

Il y a lieu de croire que l'imagination est la principale des trois causes que l'on vient d'assigner au Magnésienne. On a vu par les expériences citées qu'elle est seule
pour produire des crises. La pression, l'attouchement, semblent donc lui servir de préparations; c'est par l'attouchement que les nerfs commencent à s'ébranler, l'imitation commune & répand les impressions. Mais l'imagination est cette puissance sèvère & terrible qui opère les grands effets que l'on observe avec étonnement dans le traitement public. Ces effets frappent les yeux de tout le monde, tandis que la cause est obscure & cachée. Quand on considère que ces effets ont séduit dans les siècles derniers des hommes célèbres par leur mérite, par leurs connaissances, & même par leur génie, tels que Paracelse, Vanhelmont, Kircher, &c. on ne doit pas s'étonner si aujourd'hui des personnes instruites, éclairées, si même un grand nombre de Médecins y ont été trompés. Les Commissaires admis seulement au traitement public où l'on n'a ni le temps ni la facilité de faire des expériences décisives, auraient pu eux-mêmes être induits en erreur. Il faut avoir eu la liberté d'isoler les effets pour en distinguer les causes; il faut avoir vu comment l'imagination agit, en quelque sorte partiellement, produire ses effets séparés & en détail, pour concevoir l'accumulation de ces effets, pour savoir se faire une idée de la puissance entière & se rendre compte de ses prodiges. Mais cet examen demande un sacrifice de temps, & un nombre de recherches suivies qu'on n'a pas toujours le loisir d'entreprendre pour son intérêt ou sa curiosité particulière, qu'on n'a pas même le droit de suivre, à moins d'être comme les Commissaires chargés des ordres du Roi, & honorés de la confiance publique.
M. Deflon ne s'éloigne pas de ces principes. Il a déclaré dans le comité tenu chez M. Franklin le 10 juin, qu'il croyoit pouvoir poër en fait que l'imagination avait la plus grande part dans les effets du Magnétisme animal; qu'il a dit que cet agent nouveau n'étoit peut-être que l'imagination elle-même, dont le pouvoir est aussi puissant qu'il est peu connu: il affirme avoir constamment reconnu ce pouvoir dans le traitement de ses malades, & il affirme également que plusieurs ont été guéris ou guérisse il laço. Il a observé aux Commissaires que l'imagination avait dirigé au foulage de l'humanité fourraste, ferait un grand bien dans la pratique de la Médecine (7), & persuadé de cette vérité du pouvoir de l'imagination, il les a invités à en étudier chez lui la marche, & les effets. Si M. Deflon est encore attaché à la première idée que ces effets sont dus à l'action d'un fluide, qui se communique d'individu à individu par l'attouchement ou par la direction d'un conducteur, il ne tardera pas à reconnaître avec les Commissaires qu'il ne fait qu'une autre cause pour un effet, & que puisque l'imagination suffit, le fluide est inutile. Sans doute nous sommes entourés d'un fluide qui nous appartient, la transpiration insensible forme autour de nous une atmo-

(7) M. Deflon a écrit en 1780. "Si M. Melier n'avait pas une idée que celui de foulage l'imagination efficacement pour la santé, n'aurait-il pas toujours un lien merveilleux? Car s'il la Médecine d'imagination était la meilleure, pourquoi ne faisons-nous pas la Médecine d'imagination?" Observation sur le Magnétisme animal, pages 46 & 47.
Sphère de vapeurs également insensibles; mais ce fluide n’agit que comme les atmosphères, ne peut se commu-nier qu’insensiblement, ne se diffrage ni par des conduiteurs, ni par le regard, ni par l’intention, n’est point propagé par le son, ni réfléchi par les glaces, & n’est susceptible dans aucun cas des effets qu’on lui attribue.

Il reste à examiner si les crises ou les convulsions produites par les procédés de ce prétendu Magnétisme, dans les assemblées autour du baquet, peuvent être utiles, & guérir ou soulager les malades. Sans doute l’imagination des malades influe fort peu dans la cure de leurs maladies. L’effet n’en est connu que par une expérience générale & n’a point été déterminé par des expériences positives; mais il ne semble pas qu’on en puisse douter. C’est un adage connu que la foi sauvé en Médecine; cette foi est le produit de l’imagination; alors, l’imagination n’agit que par des moyens doux; c’est en répandant le calme dans tous les sens, en rétablissant l’ordre dans les fonctions, en ramenant tout par l’espoirance. L’espoirance est la vie de l’homme: qui peut lui rendre une contribution à lui rendre l’autre. Mais lorsque l’imagination produit des convulsions, elle agit par des moyens violents, ces moyens sont presque toujours détructeurs. Il est des cas très-rares où ils peuvent être utiles; il est des cas décevants où il faut tout troubler pour ordonner tout de nouveau. Ces secousses dangereuses ne peuvent être d’usage en Médecine que comme les poisons. Il faut que la nécessité les commande &
que l'économie les emploie. Ce besoin est momentané; la secousse doit être unique. Loin de la répétir, le Médecin âgé s'occupe des moyens de réparer le mal nécessaire qu'elle a produit; mais au traitement public du Magnétisme, les crises se répètent tous les jours, elles sont longues, violentes; l'état de ces crises étant nuisible, l'habitude n'en peut être que funeste. Comment concevoir qu'une femme dont la poitrine est attaquée puissé sans danger avoir des crises d'une tels convulsive, des expéditions forcées; & par des efforts violents & répétés fatiguer, peut-être déchirer le poumon, où l'on a tant de peine à porter le baume & les adoucissements? Comment imaginer qu'un homme, quelle que soit la maladie, ait besoin pour la guérir de tomber dans des crises où la vue semble se perdre, où les membres se raidissent, où dans des mouvements précipités & involontaires, il se frappe rudement la poitrine; crises qui finissent par un criement abondant de glaies & de sang! Ce sang n'est ici vivé ni corrompu; ce sang sort des vaisseaux d'où il est arraché par les efforts, & d'où il fort contre le voeu de la Nature. Ces effets font donc un mal réel & non un mal curatif; c'est un mal ajouté à la maladie quelle qu'elle soit.

Ces crises ont encore un autre danger. L'homme est dans cette maladie par la coutume; l'habitude modifie la Nature par degrés facceifs, mais elle en dispose si puissamment que souvent elle la change presque entièrement & la rend méconnaissable. Qui nous affrère que cet état de crises, d'abord imprimé à volonté, ne deviendra
pas habituel ! Et si cette habitude, ainsi contraictée, reproduisit souvient les mêmes accidents malgré la volonté, & presque sans le secours de l'imagination, quel serait le sort d'un individu afoissé à ces crises violentes, tourmenté physiquement & moralement de leur impression malheureuse, dont les jours seraient partagés entre l'apprentie suplice & la douleur, & dont la vie ne serait qu'un supplice durable ! Ces maladies de nerfs, lorsqu'elles sont naturelles, sont le désespoir des Médecins ; ce n'est pas à l'Art à les produire. Cet Art est funeste, qui trouble les fonctions de l'économie animale, pousse la Nature à des écarts, & multiplie les victimes de ses délassements. Cet Art est d'autant plus dangereux, que non-seulement il aggrave les maux de nerfs en en rappelant les accident, en les faisant dégénérer en habitude, mais si ce mal est contagieux, comme on peut le soupçonner, l'usage de provoquer des convulsions nerveuses, & de les excitcr en public dans les traitements, est un moyen de les répandre dans les grandes villes : et même d'en affiger les générations à venir, puisque les maux & les habitudes des parents se transmettent à leur postérité.

Les Commisaires ayant reconnu que ce fluide magnétique animal ne peut être aperçu par aucun de nos sens, qu'il n'a eu aucune action, ni sur eux-mêmes, ni sur les malades qu'il lui ont fournis ; s'étant assurés que les pressions & les anciouements occasionnent des changements rares & favorables dans l'économie animale, & des ébranlements toujours fâcheux dans l'imagination; ayant enfin démontré
par des expériences décisives que l'imagination sans Magnétisme produit des convulsions, & que le Magnétisme sans l'imagination ne produit rien; ils ont conclu d'une voix unanime, sur la question de l'existence & de l'utilité du Magnétisme, que rien ne prouve l'existence du fluide magnétique animal; que ce fluide sans existence est par conséquent sans utilité; que les violens effets que l'on observe au traitement public, appartiennent à l'attouche-ment, à l'imagination mise en action, & à cette imitation machinale qui nous porte malgré nous à répéter ce qui frappe nos sens. Et en même temps ils se croient obligés d'ajouter, comme une observation importante, que les attouchemens, l'action répétée de l'imagination, pour produire des crises peuvent être nuisibles; que le spectacle de ces crises est également dangereux à cause de cette imitation dont la Nature semble nous avoir fait une loi; & que par conséquent tout traitement public où les moyens du Magnétisme seront employés, ne peut avoir à la longue que des effets funestes (g).


(g) Si l'on objectait aux Commissaires que cette conclusion porte sur le Magnétisme en général, au lieu de porter seulement sur le Magnétisme parce que M. Daller, les Commissaires répondraient que l'intention du Roi est d'avoir leur avis sur le Magnétisme animal;
Ces principes de M. Delloz sont les mêmes que ceux qui sont renfermés dans les viingt-sept propositions, que M. Meffner a rendues publiques par la voie de l'impression en 1779. Si M. Meffner annonce aujourd'hui une théorie plus vaste, les Commissaires n'ont point eu besoin de contester cette théorie, pour dédaigner l'excellence & de l'utilité du Magnétisme; ils n'ont dû considérer que les effets. C'est par les effets que l'existence d'une cause se manifeste: c'est par les mêmes effets, que l'on utilise peut être démontrée. Les phénomènes sont connus par observation, long-temps avant qu'on puisse en venir à la théorie qui les excluse & qui les explique.

La théorie de l'aimant n'existe pas encore, & ses phénomènes sont confinés par l'expérience de plusieurs siècles. La théorie de M. Meffner est ici inédite & supérieure; les pratiques, les effets, voilà ce qu'il s'agit d'examiner. Or il est aisé de prouver que les pratiques essentielles du Magnétisme sont connues de M. Delloz.

M. Delloz a été pendant plusieurs années Disciple de M. Meffner. Il a vu couramment pendant ce temps, employer les pratiques du Magnétisme animal, & les moyens de l'exécuter & de le diriger. M. Delloz a lui-même traité des maladies devant M. Meffner; éloigné, il a opéré les mêmes effets que chez M. Meffner. Ensuite rapprochés, l'un & l'autre ont réuni leurs malades, l'un & l'autre ont traité indépendamment ces malades, & par conséquent en suivant les mêmes procédés. La méthode que fait aujourd'hui M. Delloz, ne peut donc être que celle de M. Meffner.

Les effets se correspondent également. Il y a des crises aussi violentes, aussi multiples, & annoncées par des symptômes semblables chez M. Delloz & chez M. Meffner; ces effets n'apparaissent donc point à une pratique particulière, mais à la pratique du Magnétisme en général. Les expériences des Commissaires démontrent
que les effets obtenus par M. Delion, sont dûs à l'attouchement, à l'imagination, à l'animation. Ces causes sont donc celles du Magnétisme en général. Les observations des Commissaires les ont convaincus que ces crises convulsives & les moyens violents, ne peuvent être utiles en Médecine que comme les poisons; & ils ont jugé, indépendamment de toutes théories, que partout où l'on cherche à exciter des convulsions, elles pourront devenir habituelles & nuisibles; elles pourront se répandre en épizodie, & peut-être s'étendre aux générations futures.

Les Commissaires ont dû conclure en conséquence que non-seulement les procédés d'une pratique particulière, mais les procédés du Magnétisme en général, pouvoient à la longue devenir funestes.
EXPOSÉ DES EXPRÉNCE
QUI ONT ÉTÉ FAITÉS POUR L'EXAMEN
DU MAGNÉTISME ANIMAL.

Lu à l'Académie des Sciences, par M. BAILLY,
en son nom & au nom de MM. FRANKLIN,
E ROY, DE BORY & LAVOISIER,
de 4 Septembre 1784.

Imprimé par ordre du Roi.

Sur la Coppie imprimée au Louvres.

A PARIS,
Chez MOUTARD, Imprimeur-Libraire de la Reine,
& de l'Académie Royale des Sciences, Hôtel de
Cluny, rue des Mathurins.

M. DCC. LXXXIV.
EXPOSE
DES EXPERIENCES
Qui ont été faites pour l'Examen
du Magnetisme animal.
Lu à l'Academie des Sciences, par
M. BAILLY, en son nom & au nom
de MM. FRANKLIN, LE ROY,
de BORY & LAVOISIER, le 4
Septembrè 1784.
En presence de M. le Comte D'OELS.
MESSIEURS,
Vous savez que des Commissaires ont été
choisis par Le Roi dans la Faculte de Medicine
& dans cette Academie, pour examiner le Magnetisme animal, & pour donner leur avis sur sot
A
existence & sur son utilité. Nous en avons rendu compte au Roi & devant le Public. Sa Majesté a été satisfaite de notre travail ; le Public & l'Europe vont le juger.

Mais les Académiciens doivent à l'Académie & à leurs Confrères un récit détaillé de leur conduite. Cet Écrit est destiné à mettre sous vos yeux les vues qui ont dirigé nos recherches, & les résultats que nos travaux ont produits.

Quand je dis nous, Meilleurs, j'entends la Commission entière ; rien n'a été distingué, le travail appartient à tous : également guidés par les intérêts de la vérité, nous avons été toujours unis, toujours unanimes. Le compte qui va vous être rendu ici, est un hommage particulier de vos Confrères ; mais il ne renferme rien qui ne soit le résultat du travail commun des Membres des deux Compagnies.

Il y a déjà plus de six ans que le Magnétisme animal a été annoncé à l'Europe, sur-tout en France & dans cette Capitale ; mais ce n'est que depuis deux ans environ qu'il a intéressé particulièrement un assez grand nombre de Citoyens, & qu'il est devenu l'objet de l'entretien public. Jamais une question plus extraordinaire n'avait partagé les esprits dans une Nation éclairée. On proposait un moyen sûr & puissant d'agir sur les corps animés, un remède nouveau, un agent...
universel pour guérir & prévenir les maladies. Cet Art étoit un mystère. Les Physiciens en ignoroient les procédés, & ils n'entendoient parler que de fes prodiges. On croyoit peu de cures réelles; mais beaucoup de personnes se disoient soulagées, & le remède plaisoit affez pour soutenir l'espérance des malades. Depuis quelque temps le secret a été communiqué. Alors on a vu des personnes instruites, éclairées, distinguées même par leurs talents, adopter la théorie & la pratique nouvelle qu'on leur enseignoit; on a vu un nombre de Médecins & de Chirurgiens admis à l'Ecole du Magnétisme, en devenir les partisans, en défendre la théorie, en suivre la pratique. Ces témoignages rendus au Magnétisme devaient donner à penser aux meilleurs esprits, & faire suspendre le jugement des Savans. C'est dans ces circonstances que les Commissaires ont été nommés par le Roi; l'examen qu'il a ordonné est un fruit de la sagacité de son administration. C'était un scandale pour l'Europe de voir un Peuple éclairé par toutes les Sciences & par tous les Arts, un Peuple chez qui la Philosophie a fait les plus grands progrès, oublier la leçon de Descartes qui en est le Restaurateur, & renfermer dans son sein deux partis opposés, qui unissent leurs vues & leurs pensées sur le même objet, mais qui se diviseoient & se combattaient; l'un en annonçant le
Magnetisme comme une découverte utile & sublime, l'autre en le regardant comme une illusion à la fois dangereuse & ridicule. La décision était importante & indispensable ; il fallait éclairer ceux qui doutaient, il fallait établir une base, sur laquelle pussent venir se reposer ou l'incrédule ou la confiance. On ne doit pas être indifférent sur le règne mal-fondé des fausses opinions ; les Sciences, qui s'accroissent par les vérités, gagnent encore à la suppression d'une erreur : une erreur est toujours un mauvais levain qui fermente & qui corrompt à la longue la masse où elle est introduite. Mais lorsque cette erreur sort de l'empire des Sciences pour se répandre dans la multitude, pour partager & agiter les esprits, lorsque qu'elle présente un moyen trompeur de guérir à des malades qu'elle empêche de chercher d'autres secours, lorsque tout elle influe à la fois sur le moral & le physique, un bon Gouvernement est intéressé à la détruire. C'est un bel emploi de l'autorité, que celui de distribuer la lumière ! Les Commissaires se sont empresés d'entrer dans les vides de l'Administration, & de répondre à l'honneur de son choix.

Transportés au traitement public du Magnétisme, ils ont d'abord été frappés d'une opposition très-remarquable entre la nature des effets produits, & l'insuffisance apparente des moyens
employés. D’une part, ce sont des convulsions violentes, longues & multipliées; de l’autre, de simples attouchements, des gestes & des signes: & cependant le traitement public fait reconnaître une grande puissance mise en action par ces moyens, tout foibles qu’ils sont. Un pareil spectacle semble nous transporter au temps & au règne de la fée: cet empire exercé sur un nombre d’individus, l’homme qui en dispose, la baguette qui lui fournit l’instrument, tout ressemble en effet aux enchantements de nos Fables; ce sont leurs récits mis en action. Mais si ce spectacle étonne, il ne doit pas subjuguer. S’il a pu surprendre la foi d’un nombre de Spectateurs, conduits par une curiosité plus ou moins attentive; s’il a séduit sur-tout les malades, toujours prêts à se tromper eux-mêmes, il n’a pu produire cet effet sur des hommes choisis pour un examen sévère. Leur premier devoir était d’être en garde contre l’illusion. Ils se sont mutuellement surveillés; ils ont observé en silence; & reflets de sang-froid au milieu de l’enthousiasme, ils ont pu écouter leur raison & chercher la lumière.

Nous avons d’abord demandé par quels ressorts étoient produits tant d’effets surprenants, & quelles étoient les raisons qui les faisoient attribuer à un fluide inconnu & nouveau, à un fluide qui appartient à l’homme & qui agit sur...
l'homme. Plus cette découverte était grande & extraordinaire, plus on devait être difficile sur le choix des preuves. Ensuite, procédant en Physiciens, nous avons cherché à reconnaître la présence du fluide; mais ce fluide échappe à tous les sens. On nous a déclaré que son action sur les corps animés, étoit la seule preuve que l'on puisse administrer de son existence. Vous avez vu, Messieurs, dans notre Rapport, les raisons solides, qui, parmi les effets prétendus de cette action, nous ont fait rejeter absolument la cure des maladies. La Nature agit en même temps que le remède; on ne sait si le fouillage appartient au remède ou à la Nature. La Nature guérit quelquefois sans remède; comment se convaincre de l'existence d'un remède invisible, par des guérisons que la Nature peut opérer sans lui? Nous avons donc été forcés de nous borner à observer l'action physique du fluide, opérant sur l'économie animale des changements momentanés. Mais alors, Messieurs, nous sommes entrés dans un dédale de difficultés. Si les premières causes de la Nature sont simples, les derniers résultats sont le produit d'une vaste complication. L'homme ne fait pas un mouvement qui ne puisse être dû à une infinité de causes. Étre moral & physisque, ses affections, ses maux, ses mouvements dépendent autant de sa pensée que de l'irritabilité de ses
organes. Les expériences que nous avons faites sur nous-mêmes, nous ont fait reconnaître que, lorsqu'on détourne son attention, il n'y a plus aucun effet. Les épreuves faites sur les malades nous ont appris que l'enfance, qui n'est pas susceptible de prévention, n'éprouve rien, que l'aliénation d'esprit s'oppose à l'action du Magnétisme, même dans un état habituel de convulsions & de mobilité de nerfs où cette action devrait être le plus sensible. Dans un nombre de malades, si les uns ressentent des effets légers & équivoques, les autres ne sentent rien, & nous avons dû en être surpris. Le Magnétisme n'est-il pas annoncé comme un fluide universel, comme le principe de la vie & le grand ressort de la Nature ! Qu'est-ce qu'un agent qui n'agit pas toujours dans des circonstances semblables ? L'absence de son action dans certains cas, n'indique-t-elle pas que dans les autres l'action qu'on lui attribue appartient à d'autres causes ? Il a manqué son effet, quand nous l'avons employé pour porter de la chaleur aux pieds. Il a manqué son effet, quand nous l'avons interrogé comme capable d'indiquer les maux. On a essayé différentes méthodes de magnétiser, en observant, en négligeant la distinction des pôles ; elles ont eu les mêmes effets. Les pôles sont donc une chimère, qui n'a d'autre objet que d'assembler le nouveau Magnétisme au
véritable Magnétisme, qui est un des phénomènes de la Nature. C'est ainsi qu'en avançant dans notre examen, nous voyions disparaître l'une après l'autre les propriétés attribuées à ce prétendu fluide, & que l'édifice entier, posé sur une base idéale, s'écrouloir devant nous.

Forçés de renoncer aux preuves physiques, nous avons été obligés de chercher les causes des effets réels dans les circonstances morales. Nous avons, dans la suite de nos opérations, cessé d'être Physiciens, pour n'être plus que Philosophes, & nous avons soumis à l'examen les affections de l'esprit & les idées des individus exposés à l'action du Magnétisme. Alors en opérant sur des sujets qui avaient les yeux bandés, nous avons vu d'une manière évidente cette action naître des idées que nous excitions, & les effets suivre la même marche que nos questions. En ne magnétisant pas, les effets étaient les mêmes, & répondant de même à nos questions.

A ces effets variés & indépendants du Magnétisme, nous avons dû reconnaître l'influence de l'imagination; mais dans l'examen moral où nous conduisait la nature de la question, nous avons suivi, autant qu'il a été possible, la marche certaine & méthodique des Sciences; observant en Philosophes, nous avons encore emprunté les procédés de la Physique. Nous avons opéré,
comme on fait en Chimie, où, après avoir décomposé les substances, découvert leurs principes, on s'assure de l'exacGitude de l'analyse, en recomposant les mêmes substances à l'aide de ces principes réunis. Nous avons dit : Les effets qu'on attribue au Magnétisme & à un fluide que rien ne manifeste, n'ont lieu que lorsque l'imagination est avertie & peut être frappée ; l'imagination semble donc être le principe : il faut voir si on reproduira ces effets par le pouvoir de l'imagination seule. Nous l'avons tenté, & nous avons pleinement réussi. Sans toucher & sans employer aucun signe, les sujets qui ont cru être magnétisés ont senti de la douleur, de la chaleur, & une chaleur très-grande. Sur des sujets doués de nerfs plus mobiles, nous avons produit des convulsions & ce qu'on appelle des crîsés. Nous avons vu l'imagination affez exaltée devenue affez puissante pour faire perdre en un instant la parole. Nous avons en même temps prouvé la nullité du Magnétisme, en le mettant en opposition avec l'imagination. Le Magnétisme seul employé pendant trente minutes, n'a rien produit ; & aussitôt l'imagination mise en action a produit sur la même personne, avec les mêmes moyens, dans des circonstances absolument semblables, une convulsion très-forte & très-bien caractérisée. Enfin, pour compléter la démonstration, pour
achever le tableau des effets de l'imagination, également capable d'agiter & de calmer, nous avons fait cesser la convulsion par le même charme qui l'avait produite, par le pouvoir de l'imagination.

Si nous n'avons pas fait d'expériences sur les animaux, que l'on regarde comme privés de l'imagination, c'est que les expériences auroient été plus difficiles & plus délicates, sans être plus concluantes. D'abord la cure des maladies des animaux ne prouve pas davantage que la cure des maladies des hommes; & quand nous nous bormorons à agir sur les animaux momentanément, comment connoltrons-nous ce qu'ils éprouvent? Ne pouvant les interroger, leurs mouvements ne peuvent être qu'équivoques. D'ailleurs une grande raison pour rejeter cette espèce de preuve, est qu'on annonce un fluide universel, un fluide agissant sur l'homme, & propre à guérir ses maux; il serait singulier qu'on en vantât les bons effets sur l'espèce humaine, & qu'on ne pût les rendre sensibles que sur l'espèce animale. C'est donc sur l'homme que nous avons dû éprouver le Magnétisme, & nos expériences ne nous ont fait découvrir que le pouvoir de l'imagination. Nous avons procédé par des preuves négatives, & cette marche était déterminée par la nature des choses. Une opinion est attaquée &
défendue par des moyens contraires. Un agent réel doit être démontré par des preuves positives, tandis qu’un agent chimérique ne peut être exclus que par le manque d’effets & par la démonstration de sa nullité.

La suite d’expériences que nous avons faites; nous a permis de conclure & d’établir que rien ne prouve l’existence du fluide magnétique animal. La faîne Physique ne permet pas de recourir à un fluide inconnu & insensible, pour expliquer des effets qui peuvent tous être produits par l’imagination, ou seule, ou combinée avec l’attouchement & l’imitation.

Telles sont les causes des effets attribués au Magnétisme; tel est le résultat de notre travail. Mais les phénomènes observés permettent encore quelques résultats que nous allons proposer. Ces résultats concernent l’imitation & l’imagination, deux de nos plus étonnantes facultés; ce sont des faits pour une science encore neuve, celle de l’influence du moral sur le physique, & nous demandons qu’il nous soit permis d’entrer à cet égard dans quelques détails préliminaires & purement philosophiques.

L’homme moral, comme l’homme physique, n’existe & ne devient tel qu’il est que par ces
deux facultés : il se forme, il se perfectionne par l'imitation ; il agit, il devient puissant par l'imagination. L'imitation est donc le premier moyen de la perfectibilité ; elle le modifie, depuis la naissance jusqu'à la mort. Sans l'imitation, les progrès d'un individu seraient perdus pour tous les autres : c'est par elle que dans la société polie & habituelle les caractères s'effacent, & que tous les individus ont la même physionomie ; c'est par elle que les enfants apprennent nos usages, nos conventions, se plient à nos habitudes, s'instruisent de la langue. La prononciation, adoucie par un long usage, est un effet de la même cause. Cette imitation agit également sur les esprits : elle n'introduit pas les vérités nouvelles, mais elle conserve les idées reçues ; elle forme & constitue l'esprit national ; & comme le plus souvent elle fait croire sans examen, c'est sur son pouvoir irrésistible que sont fondés les préjugés qui ont une durée si longue & une résistance si puissante.

Avec cette faculté tout se fera au même terme, tout se fera communiqué ; mais le niveau des connaissances & des institutions ne s'élèvera jamais. L'imagination est la faculté progressive : c'est par elle que les hommes ont parcouru les différents états de la société perfectionnée ; faculté éminemment active, auteur des biens &
des maux, tout est devant elle, l’avenir comme le présent, les mondes de l’Univers comme le point où nous sommes. Elle agrandit tout ce qu’elle touche; elle va sans cette exagération, & cette exagération fait sa force. C’est par cette force qu’elle déploie les ressources morales & qu’elle multiplie les forces physiques: à fa voix la Nature obéit & se développe toute entière. Aussi, quand l’imagination parle à la multitude, la multitude ne connaît plus de dangers ni d’obstacles. Un seul homme commande, & les autres ne sont que des instrumens. Les Nations font ce que veulent les Souverains, les Armées ce que font leurs Généraux; & c’est une vérité connue depuis Alexandre jusqu’à Frédéric & son illustre frère.

L’imitation, telle que nous venons de la peindre, Messieurs, semble avoir une marche lente & graduée; elle ne s’établit que par des leçons répétées: mais si dans la société elle a des progrès insensibles, dans le traitement du Magnétisme elle se manifeste par des phénomènes frappants. Les crises y sont d’autant plus multipliées qu’elles sont plus violentes, elles commencent toutes à peu près dans le même temps. Il semble que ce soit une étincelle qui allume un incendie. Cette facilité de communication est très-remarquable. Nous savions que
l'homme, machinal dans un grand nombre de ses mouvements, se plie à la longue à répéter ce qu'il voit & ce qu'il entend ; mais les convulsions du Magnétisme nous montrent que le même effet a lieu instantanément, en grand, & de manière qu'un nombre d'individus, convenablement disposés, font des instrumens montés à l'unison, & dont un seul fait mouvoir tous les autres.

Quant à l'imagination, on connaît les dérangements qu'une impression vive & subite a souvent occasionnés dans la machine de l'homme. L'imagination renouvelle ou suspend les fonctions animales ; elle ranime par l'espérance, ou elle glace par la terreur. Dans une nuit elle fait blanchir les cheveux, dans un instant elle rend ou l'usage des jambes, ou la parole ; elle détruit ou elle développe le germe des maux ; elle donne même la mort. Mais ces effets surprenans appartiennent à des révolutions inopinées. C'est le concours des circonstances qu'elles amène, & le hasard qui semble les produire ; ils ne paroissent point dépendre de la puissance & de la volonté de l'homme. Ce que nous avons appris, ou du moins ce qui nous a été confirmé d'une manière démonstrative & évidente, par l'examen des procédés du Magnétisme, c'est que l'homme peut agir sur l'homme, à tous moments, & presque à volonté, en frappant son imagination ; c'est que les gestes & les signes les plus simples peuvent
avoir les plus puissans effets; c'est que l'action que l'homme a sur l'imagination peut être réduite en Art, & conduite par une méthode sur des sujets qui ont la foi. On parle du Magnétisme d'intention; sans doute l'intention peut suffire, pourvu qu'elle soit réciproque; elle établit entre deux individus une relation & une dépendance nécessaires. L'intention que je dirige, c'est mon imagination qui commande; l'intention qui me répond, c'est l'imagination qui s'exalte & qui obéit. La recherche d'un agent qui n'existe pas, furt donc à faire connoître une puissance réelle de l'homme; l'homme a le pouvoir d'agir sur son semblable, d'ébranler le système de ses nerfs, & de lui imprimer des convulsions. Mais cette action ne peut être regardée comme physique; nous ne voyons pas qu'elle dépende d'un fluide communiqué; elle est entièrement morale, c'est celle de l'imagination sur l'imagination. Action presque toujours dangereuse, que l'on peut obéir à un Philosophe, & qu'il n'est bon de connoître que pour en prévenir les effets.

Le Magnétisme n'aura pas été tout-à-fait inutile à la Philosophie qui le condamne; c'est un fait de plus à consigner dans l'histoire des erreurs de l'esprit humain, & une grande expérience sur le pouvoir de l'imagination.

FIN.
Aphorisms

of

M. Mesmer

Dictated at the assembly of his Pupils
and in which will be found his principles,
his theory & the means of magnetising; the whole forming a body of Doctrine set out in 344 paragraphs, to facilitate
the application of the Commentaries to Animal Magnetism:

The work published by M.C. de V.
Doctor in the household of MONSIEUR.

_________________________
Scilicet ut possem curvo dignoscere
rectum,
Atque inter silvas Acadæmi quærere
verum.

_________________________
At PARIS
And is to be found at the house of M. QUINTET,
the elder, Master of Pharmacy, rue du marché aux
Poirées, at the corner of the gate of the former Corn Hall.
1785 With permission
English translations of extracts from the *Aphorisms de M. Mesmer* Paris, 1785.

An unauthorised publication by one of his pupils of Mesmer’s teachings on Animal Magnetism.

Translated by IML Donaldson
APHORISMES
DE
M. MESMER,
DICTÉS À L'ASSEMBLÉE DES ÉLÈVES,
& DANS LESQUELS ON TROUVE SES PRINCIPES, SA THÉORIE & LES MOYENS DE MAGNETISER ; LE TOUT FORMANT UN CORPS DE DOCTRINE DÉVELOPPÉ EN 344 PARAGRAPHS, POUR FACILITER L'APPLICATION DES COMMENTAIRES AU MAGNETISME ANIMAL ;
tragé mis au jour par M. C. de V.
Médecin de la Maison de Monsieur.

Seul est ut possis curvo dignoscere rectum,
Atque inter sitivas Academi quaerere verum.

있는 Liv. II. Ep. 2.

APRÈS.
E. se trouve chez M. Quinquet,
J'ainé, Maître en Pharmacie, rue du marché aux Poires, au coin de la porte de l'ancienne halle au blé. 1785. Ayez permission.
Aphorisms

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Translator’s introduction

Though he was happy to write in general terms of his theory of Animal Magnetism and its use in the treatment of disease, Mesmer was very secretive indeed about the details of his methods. He wanted to keep the very profitable practice of Animal Magnetism to himself and was only prepared to reveal his methods - in exchange for large fees - to a group of pupils whom he believed that he had bound by solemn undertakings not to reveal them. It turned out that the pupils’ understanding of the undertakings were rather different from Mesmer’s; not surprisingly they expected to be allowed to practise Animal Magnetism in exchange for the large sums of money with which they had parted in fees. Not surprisingly, the details leaked out but Mesmer’s secrecy has meant that there are few sources easily available of the details of his beliefs and even fewer of the instructions for their practical application to the treatment of patients.

However, knowledge of some of the details of the practice of the ‘magnetisers’ is helpful in understanding parts of the Report of the Royal Commission set up by Louis XVI in 1784 to examine ‘Animal Magnetism’. For this reason it seems worthwhile to present this short series of translations from a work that was published, without Mesmer’s permission, by one of his pupils, Caullet de Vaumorel. Though Mesmer himself repudiated this account of his methods there is no reason to doubt the claim that it is closely based on the Mesmer’s lectures to his ‘pupils’. The author, Louis Caullet de Vaumorel (born 1743) is described as ‘Doctor in the household of MONSIEUR’; presumably this was the household of Louis-Stanislas-Xavier, Comte de Provence, eldest brother of Louis XVI to survive the Revolution, who later became Louis XVIII; he was heir presumptive to the French throne at the time of the book’s publication.
Extracts from the text of Mesmer's *Aphorisms*

The nature of Animal Magnetism:

**pp 52 – 58 (paras 158 – 175)**

158. The vital principle, being a part of the universal movement and obeying the common laws of the universal fluid, is thus subject to all the impressions of the influence of the celestial bodies, of the earth and of the particular bodies that surround it.

159. This faculty or property of Man of being susceptible to all these relationships is that which we call *Magnetism*.

160. Man, who is continually placed in currents, universal and particular, is penetrated by these currents; the movement of the fluid modified by the various organisations becomes tonic. In this state it follows the continuity of the body as long as possible, that is to say it flows towards the most salient parts.

161. Currents enter and leave these most salient parts, the extremities, when any body capable of receiving them is opposed to them. In these cases the currents re-entering a point are reinforced.

162. These points of current flow or of tonic current are those that we call *poles*. These poles are analogous to the ones that are seen in the magnet.

163. Thus there are currents leaving and re-entering, poles that destroy themselves and that reinforce themselves as in the magnet; their communication is the same. It suffices to create one pole for another, its opposite, to be formed at the same time.

164. On an imaginary line joining the poles there is a centre or point of equilibrium where there is no action, that is to say, where no direction predominates.

165. These currents can be propagated and communicated over a considerable distance either by a continuum or by contiguous bodies or by a fluid such as water or air.

166. All bodies whose shape contains a point or angle serve to receive the currents and become *conductors* of them.

167. One may regard conductors as the openings of holes or canals which serve to make the currents flow.

168. The currents, always conserving the tonic character that they have received, can penetrate all solid bodies and liquids.

169. The currents can be communicated and propagated by all the means in which there is continuity be they solid or fluid and in rays of light and by the continuity of the oscillations of sounds.

170. The currents can be reinforced.

171. 1st By all causes of common movement such as the movements of the intestines and parts of the body, sounds, noises, the wind, friction, of electric and other kinds, and by bodies already endowed with movement such as the magnet and living bodies.
172. 2nd By communication of the currents to hard bodies in which they can be concentrated and assembled as in a reservoir to be distributed later in various directions.

173. 3rd By the quantity of bodies to which the currents are communicated; as this principle is not a substance but a modification, its effect increases like fire according to how much it is communicated.

174. If the current of Magnetism is consistent in its direction with the general current or with the Magnetic current of the world, the overall effect that results is the increase in intensity of all the currents.

175. These currents can also be reflected in mirrors according to the laws of light.

Theory of the techniques

Pp 81 – 90 (paras. 236 – 240)

236. In the theory of the general system it was set out that universal currents are the cause of the existence of bodies, and that anything that can accelerate these currents produces the intensity or increase of the properties of these bodies. According to this principle, it is easy to conclude that if it were within our power to accelerate the currents we could, by increasing the energy of Nature extend at will the properties of any body and even re-establish those that had been weakened by some accident; but, as the waters of a river cannot return to their source to increase the speed of their flow, in the same way the constituent parts of the earth, subject to the laws of universal currents, cannot act upon the original source of their existence. If we cannot act immediately upon the universal currents, does there not exist for all bodies in general, particular means of acting on one or the other by accelerating reciprocally the flows of the currents that traverse their interstices.

237. As universal and reciprocal gravitation exists between all celestial and terrestrial bodies, there exists in the same way a particular and reciprocal gravitation between the constituent parts of the earth and the whole and between the whole and each one of the parts and, finally, of all the parts on each other. This reciprocal action between all bodies take place by entering and leaving currents in a more or less direct manner, following the analogy of the bodies. Thus of all bodies the one which can act most effectively on Man is his own likeness. It suffices that a man be near another man to act on him by increasing the intensity of his properties.

238. The respective positions of the two beings who act on each other is not without importance. To decide what this position should be we must consider each as composed of various parts each possessing a form or particular tonic movement; by this means one concludes that the two beings have the greatest possible influence on each other when they are place so that their analogous parts act on each other in the most exact opposition. For two men to act as strongly as possible on each other it is thus necessary that they are placed facing each other. In this position they provoke the intensity of their properties in a harmonic manner and they can be considered to form but a single whole. In a single isolated man when one part suffers all the action of life is directed towards that part to destroy the cause of the suffering; in the same way when two men act on each other, the entire action of this union acts on the affected part with a force proportional to the increase in its mass. Thus one can say in general that the action of Magnetism increases by virtue of masses. It is possible to direct the action of Magnetism more particularly on to this or that part; to do this it suffices to establish the most precise continuity between the parts that must be touched and the individual who touches. Our arms can be considered as conductors suitable for establishing continuity. It follows, therefore, form what has been said about the most advantageous
position for two beings acting on each other, that, to maintain the harmony of the whole, one must touch parts on the right with the left arm and vice versa. From this necessity arises the opposition of poles in the human body. These poles, as one sees in the magnet, oppose each other: they can be changed, communicated, destroyed or reinforced.

239. To understand the opposition of poles Man must be considered as divided in two by a line drawn from above downwards. All the points on the left can be considered to be poles opposed to the corresponding points on the right side. But since the emission of currents occurs more strongly at the extremities, in fact we only consider the extremities as poles. The left hand becomes the pole opposed to the right hand, and so on. Then, considering these same extremities as a whole, and considering opposing poles within each, in the hand the little finger is the pole opposed to the thumb, and the second finger participates in the properties of the thumb and the fourth in those of the little finger and the middle finger which appears to be the centre or equator of the magnet, is devoid of any special property. The poles of the human body can be communicated to animate and inanimate bodies which are variously more or less susceptible according to their greater or lesser analogies with Man and according to the thinness of their parts. It suffices to set up one pole within any body for the opposing pole to be established immediately. The pole established is destroyed when the same part of the body is touched in the inverse sense to that with which one first touched and one reinforces the pole already established by touching the opposite pole with the other hand.

240. The action of animal Magnetism can be reinforced and propagated by bodies animate and inanimate. Since this action is augmented by masses, the more one adds magnetic bodies one to the other in such a way the poles do not oppose each other, that they touch by opposite poles, the more one reinforces the action of the Magnetism. The most suitable bodies for propagating and reinforcing Magnetism are living bodies [animals], followed by vegetable bodies and among inanimate bodies, iron and glass are those which act most intensely.

The bacquet, magnetising trees and related matters.

pp. 131 - 151 (paras. 296 – 308)

296. A bacquet is a sort of round vessel, square or oval, of a diameter proportionate to the number of patients that one wishes to treat. Thick staves are assembled, painted and jointed in such a way as to be hold water; it is about a foot deep, the upper part is one or two inches wider than the bottom and is covered by a lid in two pieces which encloses the assembly in the vessel, with its edge applied immediately to that of the vessel to which it is fixed by two large screws. In the interior you arrange bottles in radial spokes converging from the circumference to the centre; you place more all the way round, the bottoms against the vessel wall, one layer thick, leaving between them the necessary space to receive the neck of another. Once this first arrangement is complete you put in the middle of the vessel a bottle, upright or lying down, from which all the rows radiate, first using half-bottles then with larger ones when the divergence of the rows permits this: the bottom of the first is at the centre, its neck is in the bottom of the next in such a way that the neck of the last one touches the circumference. The bottles must be filled with water, corked and magnetised in the same way, it is desirable that this is all done by the
same person. To increase the activity of the bacquet, a second and third layer of bottles are put on top of the first. However, commonly, one makes a second layer which, beginning in the centre, covers a third, half or three quarters of the first layer. One then fills the vessel with water to a certain depth, but always enough to cover the bottles; to this can be added iron filings, or powdered glass or similar material, about which I have various [different] opinions.

297. Bacquets are also made without water by filling the space between the bottles with glass, filings and sand. Before putting in the water or other materials one marks on the lid the places where holes are to be made to receive the iron [rods] which must rest between the bottoms of the first bottles, at four or five inches from the wall of the bacquet. The irons are a kind of rod made of pliable iron which enter in a straight line almost to the bottom of the bacquet and are bent where they come out in such a way that they can rest against a point obtuse to that which one wants to touch, such as the forehead, the eye, the stomach etc. etc.

298. From the inside or the outside of the bacquet, attached to a piece of iron, arises a very long cord that the patients apply to the part in which they are suffering; they form chains by holding this cord and putting the left thumb on their neighbour’s right thumb, or vice versa in such a way that the inside of one thumb touches the other. They come as close together as they can, to touch each other at the thighs, knees and feet so that they form, so to speak, a single continuous body in which the magnetic fluid circulates continually and is reinforced by the various points of contact. This is added to by the position of the patients who are facing each other. There are also iron rods long enough to reach the second row [of patients] through the gaps in the first row.

299. Individual bacquets are also made, called magic or magnetic boxes, for the use of patients who are not able to come to the treatment or those who, because of the nature of their illness, require continuous treatment. These boxes are more or less complex; the simplest contain only one bottle lying down, filled with water or powdered glass, enclosed in the box from which emerges a rod or a cord. A simple bottle on its own that one applies to the affected part is even more useful. Several of these can be placed underneath a bed, upright and containing iron [rods] sealed into the neck; they produce a very considerable effect. The most usual boxes are rectangular coffers, of height and length proportionate to what they are to hold. The height should not usually exceed that of a couch, which is about ten or twelve inches. In them are placed four or more bottles as desired, prepared and arranged as in a bacquet. If the box is to be put under a bed half-bottles are used, half of them filled with water and half with [powdered] glass. Those full of water are corked, those holding glass have a little iron conductor sticking out of the bottle, in the neck of which it is sealed, and passing through and protruding from the lid of the box by an inch. The space between the bottles is filled with powdered glass either dry or dampened; a cord wound around the neck of each bottle makes them communicate and leaves the box through a hole in its wall. The lid is sliding and fixed by a screw. The box is placed under the bed and the cords that come out on the right and left are taken on to the bed or between the sheets, or on to the covers, to reach the patient.

300. Boxes that are to be used during the day are made with bottles filled with water or glass, prepared and stacked as in the large bacquets; a cord and iron rods can be put in them to make family boxes.

301. The more dense the material filling the bottles the more active it is. If one could fill them with mercury they would be very much more powerful.

302. There are several ways of increasing the number and activity of the currents. If you want to ‘touch’ a patient very forcefully, collect together in his room as many people as possible, set up a chain that begins
with the patient and ends with the magnetiser; a person at his back or with a hand on his shoulder increases his action. There are very many other ways, impossible to detail, like sound, music, the gaze, mirrors, etc.

303. The magnetic current keeps its effect for a little time after it leaves the body, a little like the sound of a flute that dies away with distance. Magnetism at a certain distance produces a larger effect than if it is applied immediately.

304. After Man and the animals, it is plants and above all trees that are most susceptible to animal magnetism. To magnetise a tree under which you want to set up treatment you choose a young one that is vigorous, branched and, as far as possible, without knots and with straight fibres. Although any kind of tree can be used, the oak, elm or hornbeam are to be preferred. Having chosen your tree you put yourself some distance to the south of it and you establish a right and a left side that will form the two poles, and the midline will be the equator. Using the finger, an iron [rod] or a stick you follow from the leaves along the ramifications and branches to a large branch, you conduct the currents to the trunk and right down to the roots. You begin again until you have magnetised the whole side then you magnetise the other in the same way and using the same hand, because the rays that diverge as they come out of the conductor converge at a certain distance and are not subject to repulsion. The north is then magnetised using the same procedures. When this has been done you come close to the tree and, after magnetising the roots if any are visible, you embrace it and present to it all your poles successively. The tree is now endowed with all the virtues of magnetism. Healthy people, when they remain for some time close to the tree can feel its effect and the sick, especially those who have already been magnetised, will be violently affected and will have crises. To set up treatment there, you attach cords at a convenient height to the trunk and the principal branches, in number and length proportional to the people who are to assemble there and who, facing the tree and placed in a circle - either on chairs or on straw – and putting the cords around the affected parts as they would at the bacquet, and making chains when this is possible, have crises as at the bacquet, but more gently. The curative effect is much more prompt and active in proportion to the number of patients who increase the energy by multiplying the currents, the forces and the contacts. The wind, stirring the branches of the tree, adds to its action. The same effect is produced by a stream or waterfall if one is lucky enough to have one in the place chosen. If several trees are close together, one magnetises them and puts them into communication by cords that pass from one to another. Patients find an odour that they cannot define at the trees, it is most disagreeable to them; they retain it for some time after leaving them and smell it again when they return. One cannot be certain how long a tree retains its magnetism. It is believed that it may last several months; the most prudent thing is to renew it from time to time.

305. To magnetise a bottle you take it by its two extremities which you rub with your fingers, carrying the movement to the edges. You remove the hand from one extremity after the other while compressing the fluid, so to speak. You deal with a glass or a vase in the same fashion and magnetise thus the fluid that it contains. You take care in presenting it to whoever is to drink it, to hold it between the thumb and the little finger and to make them drink it in this direction; the patient will find in it a non-existent taste if it is drunk in the opposite direction.

306. A flower or any object is to be magnetised by touch in a principled and vigorous fashion.

307. A bath is magnetised by rubbing its two ends with the fingers, the rod or the cane and bringing them down to the water in which one describes a line in the same direction and repeats this several times. The water can also be agitated in different directions, but always insisting on the direct line whose large current
unites the small ones alongside it and is reinforced by them. If the patient in the bath finds the water too cold, one plunges a cane into it and directs current into it by rubbing; this action makes the patient feel a sensation of heat that he attributes to the water. In places where there is a bacquet or trees one brings a cord from them which supplements all the other preparations. If one cannot magnetise [the bath] oneself I believe that several bottles of magnetised water poured into the bath may produce the same effect. A little sea salt thrown into the bath increases its tonicity.

308. A cylindrical glass, or one of another shape, with an opening at the top may be placed in the centre of the bacquet. The opening is suitable for a conductor coming from outside or inside the room, an iron rod of length proportional to the height of the ceiling, of which the lower end terminates in a funnel or digitation that passes through a hole in the opening of the bacquet where it is sealed to the opening in the glass vessel whose circumference is pierced by several lateral holes that communicate with the layers of bottles; the conductor can also be made of glass.

1. Bacquet: Spelled thus the word appears in Nicot’s *Thresor de la langue française* (1606) and in the first edition of the *Dictionnaire de L’Académie française*, (1694), but not in later editions, meaning ‘a type of little barrel with very low sides’. Baquet in modern French has the corresponding meaning. IMLD.