

*Spirit and Matter, when in space
and time, are dual aspects of One
Cause, and mutually convertible*



Abstract and train of thoughts

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On the fundamental unity of subject and object.

Mind cannot be denigrated as a by-product of brain activity by controversialists, who are part of Büchner's marionettes and automata. 3

Consciousness may be explained as a peculiar property of matter under some of its conditions. "Facts" exist only in the consciousness of the beholder, and represent no external and independent reality. 4

Panpsychism is that phase of pantheism which regards all matter as saturated with a potential psyche — which alone perceives itself and makes the body a "reality." 4

Force is a physical existence, and the real substance of matter at the same time. 5

Feelings and thoughts, have neither extension as matter does, nor mechanical division of parts, place, form, or outline. 6



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[There may be some doubt as to the authorship of this review of a pamphlet by Sundaram Iyer, F.T.S. (Madras, 1887), but its general trend and phraseology suggest that it was written by H.P. Blavatsky, especially as the subject-matter is of a kind that was pointed out by her on many other occasions. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

Under the above title the author issues an address delivered at the last convention of the delegates of the Theosophical Society at Adyar. Metaphysicians, who note with interest all criticisms of Western psychology from the Oriental standpoint, will welcome the appearance of this extremely able and instructive *brochure*, which constitutes the first instalment of Absolute Monism. The object of the writer is to discuss the point whether an examination of all theories, as to relations of mind and body, “does not lead us to the Unistic theory that Mind is Matter, and Matter is Mind.” He endeavours to merge the apparent dualism of subject and object into a fundamental unity:

Is Mind a product of organized matter? No for organized matter is only a combination of material particles, as is unorganized matter. How is it, then, that there is the manifestation of Mind in the one case, and not in the other? . . . Can subjective facts ever emerge out of a group of molecules? Never; as many times never as there are molecules in the group. And why? Because Mind cannot issue from No Mind (p. 13). [12]

Mind cannot be denigrated as a by-product of brain activity by controversialists, who are part of Büchner’s marionettes and automata.

The line of argument adopted *versus* Materialism — the doctrine that mental facts are the *resultant* of chemical changes in the brain; force and matter being the only Ultimates of Existence — is unquestionably forcible. Mind can never be resolved into a “by-product” of brain activity, for several valid reasons.

Consciousness may be explained as a peculiar property of matter under some of its conditions. “Facts” exist only in the consciousness of the beholder, and represent no external and independent reality.

If mind is not inherent in matter, it cannot be evolved by mere nervous complexity. The combination of two [13] chemical elements cannot result in a compound in which something more than the constituent factors are present. It is sometimes urged that, since the properties of substances are often altogether changed in the course of chemical combinations — new ones arising with the temporary lapse of the old — consciousness may be explained as a “peculiar property” of matter under some of its conditions. Mr. Sundaram Iyer meets this objection ably. “Aquosity,”¹ it is said, is a property of oxygen and hydrogen in combination, though not in isolation. To this he answers, “chemical properties are either purely subjective facts or objective-subjective ones” (p. 57). They exist only in the consciousness of the percipient, and represent no external and independent reality. Psychologists of the type of Huxley would do well to recall this fact, apart from the considerations springing from other data.

Panpsychism is that phase of pantheism which regards all matter as saturated with a potential psyche — which alone perceives itself and makes the body a “reality.”

Our author is loud in his praises of *Panpsychism*, that phase of pantheism which regards all matter as saturated with a potential psyche. He speaks of the “catholicity, sublimity and beauty . . . not to say the philosophy, and logic, and truthfulness of this creed of thought.” It is, however, clear that some of the authorities he cites in support of this view, more especially Clifford,² Tyndall,³ and Ueberweg,⁴ represent a phase of thought which is too materialistic to do justice to an elevated pantheistic concept. Clifford’s *conscious mind-stuff* sublimated materialism, and Ueberweg speaks of those “sensations” present in “inanimate” objects which are “concentrated” in the human brain, as if they represented so many substances to be weighed in scales. Instructive and thoughtful as is the discussion of this subject (pp. 32-63), its value would have been increased by a survey of the pantheistic schools of German speculation, so many of whose conclusions are absolutely at one with esoteric views as to the Logos and the metaphysics of consciousness.

After discussing the primary and secondary (so-called) qualities of matter as tabulated by Mill,⁵ Hamilton⁶ and others, Mr. Sundaram Iyer passes on the question: “What is force?” [14]

¹ [wateriness]

² [William Kingdon Clifford FRS, 1845–1879, English mathematician and philosopher.]

³ [John Tyndall FRS, 1820–1893, Irish physicist. He made discoveries in the realms of infrared radiation and the physical properties of air, proving the connection between atmospheric CO₂ and what is now known as the greenhouse effect, in 1859.]

⁴ [Friedrich Ueberweg, 1826–1871, German philosopher and historian of philosophy.]

⁵ [John Stuart Mill, 1806–1873, English philosopher, political economist, and civil servant. One of the most influential thinkers in the history of classical liberalism, he contributed widely to social theory, political theory, and political economy.]

⁶ [Sir William Hamilton, 9th Baronet FRSE, 1788–1856, Scottish metaphysician.]

Force is matter . . . it may be related to matter in . . . four ways:

Firstly, it may be an extraneous power to matter, acting upon it from without;

Secondly, it may be an inherent power in matter, influencing it from within, but yet distinct from the substance of matter;

thirdly, it may be an innate power in matter, influencing it from within, and not distinct from the substance of matter; or

Fourthly, it may be a function of the substance of matter (*pp.* 76-77).

After an interesting criticism of current theories, he concludes that:

Function is simply the phenomenal effect of the latent cause, namely force, but never force itself. This potential existence, which is in matter, *is a physical existence*. If not, it cannot, as shown before, produce any impression whatsoever upon or in the substance of matter.

Matter is force and force is matter. It is not quite evident, however, whether this position is strictly reconcilable with the remark that

. . . the primary qualities of matter are all simplifiable into . . . extension and [its] motion [actual or possible].

Force is a physical existence, and the real substance of matter at the same time.

If force is a *physical existence*, and the real *substance* of matter at the same time, we get back no further into the mystery of what things-in-themselves really are. Physical existence remains the reality behind physical existence and the realization of matter and force, as aspects only of one basis, in no way simplifies the crux.

It is not clear, moreover, what is the exact meaning the author intends by the use of the word “force.” Is it motion — molar or molecular — or the unknown cause of motion? According to Professor Huxley, “force” is merely an expression used to denote the *cause* of motion, whatever that may be. We only *know* this cause in its *aspect* of motion, and cannot penetrate behind the veil in order to grasp the Noumenon of which motion is the phenomenal effect. The necessity, therefore, of recognising the fact that *motion* is all that falls within the cognizance of sense, forbids the (profane) scientist to use the term “force” as representative of anything but an abstraction. The question is complicated by the consideration that the *substantiality* of various so-called “forces” appears most probable, and that this substantiality becomes [15] objectively real to sense, only on a plane beyond this — the domain of matter in its order of physical differentiations.

The materialistic doctrine that force merely = a motion of matter, is contradicted by the fact that, as shown by Mill, *motion can be temporarily neutralized*. Lift a heavy weight on to a shelf and the mechanical energy expended in the act is latent in the potentiality of the weight to fall to the ground again. There is *no immediate equivalent*, as the attraction of the earth for the object remains the same (the now greater distance tending to diminish the amount, though in a very minute degree).

It may be further noted that, granting Mr. Sundaram Iyer's definition of matter as "*extension pure and simple*," to be correct (p. 112), it is difficult to understand how he predicates this barren content as endowed with *motion* (p. 83). What moves?

The rest of the *brochure* is taken up with some excellent criticism of current conceptions of atoms, space and heterogeneity (a creed now so sorely wounded by Mr. Crooke's "Protyle"). Dealing with one of the late Mr. G.H. Lewes' utterances, the author remarks with great truth:

By some mysterious law of occurrence the self-contradictions of the bulk of the erudite and enlightened are in point of gravity, palpableness, and number in direct proportion to their erudition and enlightenment.

With how many contrasted *dicta* from the pages of our Büchners, Spencers, Bains *etc., etc.*, could this conclusion be supported.

One word before we close. Is the title of the work well chosen? It appears to us the least satisfactory sentence which has been traced by the writer's pen. The definition of "mind as matter and matter as mind" not only offers no solution of the great psychological problem discussed, but does injustice to the contents of the work itself.

In the process of definition we "assemble representative examples of the phenomena," under investigation and "our work lies in generalizing these, in detecting community in the midst of difference." Now, there is *no community whatever* between mental and material facts. For as Professor Bain¹ writes: [16]

Feelings and thoughts, have neither extension as matter does, nor mechanical division of parts, place, form, or outline.

Extension is but the first of a long series of properties all present in matter, *all absent in mind*. . . . Our mental experience, our feelings and thoughts, have no *extension*, no *place*, no *form*² or *outline*, or *mechanical division* of parts; and we are incapable of attending to anything mental until we shut off the view of all that.³

The phenomenal contrast of mind and matter is not only at the root of our present constitution but an essential of our terrestrial consciousness. Duality is illusion in the ultimate analysis; but within the limits of a Universe-cycle or Great Manvantara it holds true. The *two* bases of manifested Being — the Logos (spirit) and Mūlaprakṛiti (Matter, or rather its Noumenon), are unified in the absolute reality, but in the Manvantaric Māyā, under space and time conditions, they *are contrasted though mutually interdependent aspects of the ONE CAUSE*.

¹ [Alexander Bain, 1818–1903, Scottish philosopher and educationalist in the British school of empiricism and a prominent and innovative figure in the fields of psychology, linguistics, logic, moral philosophy and education reform. He founded *Mind*, the first ever journal of psychology and analytical philosophy, and was the leading figure in establishing and applying the scientific method to psychology.]

² Nevertheless *objectively* viewed thoughts are actual entities to the occultist.

³ *Mind and Body*, pp. 125, 135

SPIRIT AND MATTER ARE MUTUALLY CONVERTIBLE
SUGGESTED READING FOR STUDENTS



- “Adventures and Peregrinations of the Metaphysical Atom,” and “Blavatsky on the Force of the Mineral Monas” plus “Diagram 2 - The Force of the Mineral Monas,” in our Secret Doctrine’s Third Proposition Series.
- “Forces and States of Consciousness” and “Principles and Forces in Nature and Man” — Diagram and Instructions, in our Buddhas and Initiates Series.
- “Life is an indestructible universal force,” in our Constitution of Man Series.
- “Modifications of Consciousness,” in our Major Works Series.
- “Opposite and opposing forces are convertible,” in our Living the Life Series.
- “The Seven Forces of Nature Secret” and “What is Matter and what is Force,” in our Secret Doctrine’s First Proposition Series.

