

Materialism, Spiritualism, Monism



THREE SCIENTIFIC VIEWS are laid before us with regard to changes in thought by present-day philosophers:

Postulate: “Every mental change is signaled by a molecular change in the brain substance.” To this:

- 1 Materialism says: the mental changes are caused by the molecular changes.
- 2 Spiritualism (believers in a soul): the molecular changes are caused by the mental changes. [Thought acts on the brain matter through the medium of Force focussed through one of the principles.]
- 3 Monism:¹ there is no causal relation between the two sets of phenomena; the mental and the physical being the two sides of the same thing [a verbal evasion].

To this occultism replies that the first view is out of court entirely. It would enquire of No. 2: And what is it that presides so judicially over the mental changes? What is the *noumenon* of those mental phenomena which make up the external consciousness of the physical man? What is it which we recognize as the terrestrial “self” and which — monists and materialists notwithstanding — does control and regulate the flow of its own mental states? No occultist would for a moment deny that the materialistic theory as to the relations of mind and brain is in its way expressive of the truth that the *superficial* brain-consciousness or “phenomenal self” is bound up for all practical purposes with the integrity of the cerebral matter. This brain-consciousness or personality is mortal, being but a distorted reflection through a physical basis of the *mānasic* self. It is an instrument for harvesting experience for the *Buddhi-Manas* or monad, and saturating it with the aroma of consciously-acquired experience. But for all that the “brain-self” is real while it lasts, and weaves its Karma as a responsible entity. Esoterically explained it is the consciousness inhering in that lower portion of the *Manas* which is correlated with the physical brain.²



¹ Cf. “Monism is a word which admits of more than one interpretation. The ‘monism’ of Lewes, Bain and others, which endeavours so vainly to compress all mental and material phenomena into the unity of One Substance, is in no way the transcendental monism of esoteric philosophy. The current ‘Single-Substance Theory’ of mind and matter necessarily involves the doctrine of annihilation, and is hence untrue. Occultism, on the other hand, recognizes that in the ultimate analysis even the *Logos* and *Mūlaprakriti* are *one*; and that there is but One Reality behind the *Māyā* of the universe. But in the *manvantaric* circuit, in the realm of *manifested* being, the *Logos* (spirit), and *Mūlaprakriti* (matter or its *noumenon*), are the dual contrasted poles or bases of all phenomena — subjective and objective. The duality of spirit and matter is a fact, so long as the Great *Manvantara* lasts. Beyond that looms the darkness of the ‘Great Unknown,’ the one *Parabrahman*.” *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (PSYCHOLOGY, THE SCIENCE OF THE SOUL) VIII, p. 334 *fn*.

² *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (PSYCHOLOGY, THE SCIENCE OF THE SOUL) VIII, pp. 339-40. [Frontispiece by Elloumi Mourad]