

Spirit, Spirits, Spiritualism



Spirit

The lack of any mutual agreement between writers in the use of this word has resulted in dire confusion. It is commonly made synonymous with *soul*; and the lexicographers countenance the usage. In Theosophical teachings the term “Spirit” is applied solely to that which *belongs directly to Universal Consciousness*, and which is its homogeneous and unadulterated emanation. Thus, the higher Mind in Man or his *Ego* (Manas) is, when linked indissolubly with Buddhi, a spirit; while the term “Soul,” human or even animal (the lower Manas acting in animals as instinct), is applied only to Kāma-Manas, and qualified as the *living soul*. This is *nephesh*, in Hebrew, the “breath of life.” Spirit is formless and *immaterial*, being, when individualized, of the highest spiritual substance — *Śuddasattva*, the divine essence, of which the body of the manifesting *highest Dhyānis* are formed.

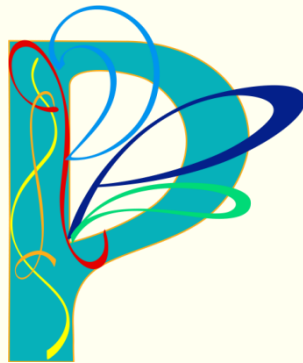
Spirits

Therefore, the Theosophists reject the appellation “Spirits” for those phantoms which appear in the phenomenal manifestations of the Spiritualists, and call them “shells,” and various other names.¹ Spirit, in short, is no *entity* in the sense of having form; for, as Buddhist philosophy has it, *where there is a form, there is a cause for pain and suffering*. But each *individual* spirit — this individuality lasting only throughout the manvantaric life-cycle—may be described as a *centre of consciousness*, a self-sentient and self-conscious Centre; a state, not a conditioned individual. This is why there is such a wealth of words in Sanskrit to express the different States of Being Beings and Entities, each appellation showing the philosophical difference, the plane to which such *unit* belongs, and the degree of its spirituality or materiality. Unfortunately these terms are almost untranslatable into our Western tongues.

¹ See “Sūkshma Śarīra.”

Spiritualism

In philosophy, the state or condition of mind opposed to materialism or a *material conception* of things. Theosophy, a doctrine which teaches that all which exists is animated or informed by the Universal Soul or Spirit, and that not an atom in our universe can be outside of this omnipresent Principle — is *pure* Spiritualism. As to the belief that goes under that name, namely, belief in the constant communication of the living with the dead, whether through the mediumistic powers of oneself or a so-called *medium* — it is no better than the materialization of spirit, and the degradation of the human and the divine souls. Believers in such communications are simply dishonouring the dead and performing constant sacrilege. It was well called “Necromancy” in days of old. But our modern Spiritualists take offence at being told this simple truth.²



² *Theosophical Glossary: Spirit, Spirits, Spiritualism*

Suggested reading for students.



More commonly confusing words.

- ADULTERY, LUST, MALICE
- ADYTUM AND ASYLUM
- AETHER AND ETHER
- AGNOSTICISM, ATHEISM, MONISM
- AION, ETERNITY, DURATION
- APPREHENSION AND COMPREHENSION
- ASTRAL LIGHT IS A TERM VERY LITTLE UNDERSTOOD
- AURA AND MAGNETISM
- BUDDHA AND PRINCE SIDDHARTHA BUDDHA
- BUDHISM IS INNER WISDOM
- CELIBACY, CONTINENCE, MONASTICISM
- CHEMIST AND ALCHEMIST
- CHILIASTS, MILLENNIUMISTS, MILLENARIANS
- DARKNESS IS INNER LIGHT
- DEVOTION, WORSHIP, LOYALTY
- EMANATION AND RADIATION
- EMBLEM AND SYMBOL
- GRAIKOS, HELLENE, HELLAS
- HIGHER SELF AND HIGHER EGO
- IMAGINATION AND IMITATION
- JIVA AND JIVATMAN
- JNANA AND YAJNA
- KAMIC VERSUS MANASIC ACTION
- KARMA AND KRIYA
- KARMA, NEMESIS, ADRASTEIA, THEMIS
- KOSMOS AND COSMOS

CONFUSING WORDS SERIES
SPIRIT, SPIRITS, SPIRITUALISM

- KRONOS AND CHRONOS
- LAUGHTER, SMILES, TEARS
- LIGHT AND HEAT
- LUST, JEALOUSY, PHYSICAL LOVE
- MAGNETISM, MESMERISM, HYPNOTISM
- MATERIALISM, SPIRITUALISM, MONISM
- MUZIRIS, MNIZURIN, MNOUZIRIS
- NIRVANA AND PARINIRVANA
- PANTACLE AND PENTACLE
- RAJA AND RISHI
- REMEMBRANCE, RECOLLECTION, REMINISCENCE
- SKANDHA, SHLOKA, STANZA, SUTRA
- SPIRITUALISM IS A PHILOSOPHY OF YESTERDAY
- SVABHAVA AND SVAYAMBHU
- TELETE, MYESIS, EPOPTeia
- THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL OCCULTISM
- THEOSOPHIST AND THEOSOPHER
- TRANSMIGRATION, REINCARNATION, GILGULIM
- TRIRATNA AND TRISHARANA
- TRUE AND FALSE PERSONALITY
- UNITY AND DUALITY
- VACH IS NOT MERE SPEECH
- VEDANTA, BUDDHISM, THEOSOPHY
- VRIL AND BOVRIL
- WILL AND DESIRE
- YOGIS AND MAHATMAS

