

*Today's psychology lacks
entirely knowledge of the soul.*



Abstract and train of thoughts¹

The twin sciences of psychology and metaphysics have fared worse than any other science, and have been so separated in Europe as to have become in their ignorance mortal enemies.

Modern psychology is a misnomer, even though it is claimed that it has “reached conclusions of great generality and truth, regarding all that can be known to man.” 5

The modern psychologist, dealing only with the superficial brain-consciousness, is far more materialistic than the all-denying materialism itself. 5

Brain-consciousness, or “personality,” is the consciousness inhering in the lower portion of the mortal manas-mind, which is correlated with the physical brain. It is a mere instrument for harvesting experience on behalf of the immortal Buddhi-Manas or Monad, and imparting to it the aroma of consciously-acquired experience. 8

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On the brutal foot of materialism. 12



¹ Title page illustration: The Ugly Duchess (1513) by Quentin Matsys.

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First published in *Lucifer*, Vol. XIX, No. 110, October 1896, pp. 97-102. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (PSYCHOLOGY, THE SCIENCE OF THE SOUL) VIII pp. 333-40.¹

Ethics and law are, so far, only in the phases where there are as yet no theories, and barely systems, and even these, based as we find them upon *a priori* ideas instead of observations, are quite irreconcilable with one another. What remains then outside of physical science? We are told,

Psychology [is] the Science of the Soul, of the Conscious Self or Ego.

Alas, and thrice alas! Soul, the Self, or Ego, is studied by modern psychology as inductively as a piece of decayed matter by a physicist. Psychology and its mother-plant metaphysics have fared worse than any other sciences. These twin sciences have long been so separated in Europe as to have become in their ignorance mortal enemies. After faring poorly enough at the hands of mediaeval scholasticism they have been liberated therefrom only to fall into modern sophistry. Psychology in its present garb is simply a mask covering a ghastly, grimacing skeleton's head, a deadly and beautiful upas flower growing in a soil of most hopeless materialism.

Thought is to the psychologist metamorphosed sensation, and man a helpless automaton, wire-pulled by heredity and environment.

writes a half-disgusted hylo-idealist, now happily a Theosophist.

¹ [Compiler's Note introducing the preceding essay, on the "Substantial Nature of Magnetism,"* on page 315 of the present Volume:

As is obvious from the above reference, this very valuable essay from the pen of H.P. Blavatsky was published posthumously. The actual time when it was written cannot be determined at present with any degree of accuracy, especially as the text contains no very definite clues to this effect. The same applies to the essay entitled: "Psychology, The Science of the Soul," which is made to follow the present one. These two essays are definitely inter-related, and have at least one passage in common. It is very probable that they were written at approximately the same period. While no definite date is known, it can, nevertheless, be stated that the present essay was written later than January 1887, because it quotes from T. Subba Row's lecture on the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, delivered at the Adyar Convention in December, 1886; it is, of course, quite possible that the essay was not written until after the launching of *Lucifer* in September 1887. It is, however, very doubtful that it would have been written after the publication of *The Secret Doctrine*, in the Fall of 1888, because it mentions the Section on the "Monads, Gods, and Atoms," in that work, and refers to it as being in Volume I, Book II, while this Section is to be found in Vol. I, Book I, Part III, of the final text of the work. It is, therefore, very likely that this essay was penned before the final version of H.P. Blavatsky's monumental *opus* had been fully drawn up.

The same line of reasoning applies to the essay on Psychology, which follows the present one. It may be that both essays were intended for *The Theosophist* but were laid aside for one reason or another and not submitted. It seems, therefore, plausible to publish both of these essays at the end of the year 1887, as a mean value in time, fairly closely approximating the probable period at which they were written. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.

*This article can be found under the title "Blavatsky on the Hermetic Fire of the Mind," in our Blavatsky Speaks Series. — ED. PHIL.]

And yet men like Huxley preach this man automatism and morality in the same [334] breath. . . . Monists¹ to a man, annihilationists who would stamp out intuition with iron heel, if they could. . . .

Those are our modern Western psychologists!

Everyone sees that metaphysics instead of being a science of first principles has now broken up into a number of more or less materialistic schools of every shade and colour, from Schopenhauer's pessimism down to agnosticism, monism, idealism, hylo-idealism, and every "-ism" with the exception of psychism — not to speak of true psychology. What Mr. Huxley said of Positivism, namely that it was Roman Catholicism *minus* Christianity, ought to be paraphrased and applied to our modern psychological philosophy. It is psychology, *minus* soul; psyche being dragged down to mere sensation; a solar system *minus* a sun; *Hamlet* with the Prince of Denmark not entirely cast out of the play, but in some vague way suspected of being probably somewhere behind the scenes.

When a humble David seeks to conquer the enemy it is not the small fry of their army whom he attacks, but Goliath, their great leader. Thus it is one of Mr. Herbert Spencer's² statements which, at the risk of repetition, must be analysed to prove the accusation here adduced. It is thus that "the greatest philosopher of the nineteenth century" speaks: [335]

The mental act in which self is known implies, like every other mental act, a perceiving subject and a perceived object. If, then, the object perceived is self, what is the subject that perceives? Or if it is the true self which thinks, what other self can it be that is thought of?³ Clearly, a true cognition of self implies a self in which the knowing and the known are one — in which subject and object are identified; and this Mr. Mansel⁴ *rightly holds to be the annihilation of both!* So that the personality of which each is conscious, and of which the existence is to each a fact beyond all others the most certain, is yet a thing which cannot truly be known at all; *the knowledge of it is forbidden by the very nature of thought.*⁵

¹ 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.

² [Herbert Spencer, 1820–1903, English philosopher, biologist, anthropologist, and sociologist famous for his theory of social Darwinism whereby superior physical force shapes history. Spencer coined the expression "survival of the fittest," in *Principles of Biology* (1864) after reading Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*. The term strongly suggests natural selection, yet Spencer saw evolution as extending into realms of sociology and ethics, so he also supported Lamarckism.]

³ The Higher Self or Buddhi-Manas, which in the act of self-analysis or highest abstract thinking, partially reveals its presence and holds the subservient brain-consciousness in review. [H.P. Blavatsky]

⁴ [The Very Reverend Henry Longueville Mansel, D.D., 1820–1871, English philosopher and ecclesiastic.]

⁵ *First Principles*, pp. 65–66. [p. 55 in 6th ed., New York & London: D. Appleton & Co., 1927. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

The italics are ours to show the point under discussion. Does this not remind one of an argument in favour of the undulatory theory, namely, that “the meeting of two rays whose waves interlock produces darkness”? For Mr. Mansel’s assertion that when self thinks of self, and is simultaneously the subject and object, it is “the annihilation of both” — means just this, and the psychological argument is therefore placed on the same basis as the physical phenomenon of light waves. Moreover, Mr. Herbert Spencer confessing that Mr. Mansel is right and basing thereupon his conclusion that the knowledge of self or soul is thus “forbidden by the very nature of thought” is a proof that the “father of modern psychology” (in England) proceeds on no better psychological principles than Messrs. Huxley and Tyndall have done.¹

Modern psychology is a misnomer, even though it is claimed that it has “reached conclusions of great generality and truth, regarding all that can be known to man.”

We do not contemplate in the least the impertinence of criticizing such a giant of thought as Mr. H. Spencer is rightly considered to be by his friends and admirers. [336] We mention this simply to prove our point and show modern psychology to be a misnomer, even though it is claimed that Mr. Spencer has “reached conclusions of great generality and truth, regarding all that can be known to man.” We have one determined object in view, and we will not deviate from the straight line, and our object is to show that occultism and its philosophy have not the least chance of being even understood, still less accepted in this century, and by the present generation of men of science. We would fain impress on the minds of our Theosophists and mystics that to search for sympathy and recognition in the region of “science” is to court defeat. Psychology seemed a natural ally at first, and now having examined it, we come to the conclusion that it is a *suggestio falsi* and no more. It is as misleading a term, as taught at present, as that of the Antarctic Pole with its ever arid and barren frigid zone, called southern merely from geographical considerations.

The modern psychologist, dealing only with the superficial brain-consciousness, is far more materialistic than the all-denying materialism itself.

For the modern psychologist, dealing as he does only with the superficial brain-consciousness, is in truth more hopelessly materialistic than all-denying materialism itself, the latter, at any rate, being more honest and sincere. Materialism shows no pretensions to fathom human thought, least of all the human spirit-soul, which it deliberately and coolly but sincerely denies and throws altogether out of its catalogue. But the psychologist devotes to soul his whole time and leisure. He is ever boring artesian wells into the very depths of human consciousness. The materialist or the frank atheist is content to make of himself, as Jeremy Collier² puts it,

¹ We do not even notice some very pointed criticisms in which it is shown that Mr. Spencer’s postulate that “consciousness cannot be in two distinct states at the same time,” is flatly contradicted by himself when he affirms that it is possible for us to be conscious of more states than one. “To be known as unlike,” he says, “conscious states must be known in succession.” (See *The Philosophy of Mr. H. Spencer Examined*, by Rev. James Iverach, M.A., pp. 15-16.)

² [Jeremy Collier, 1650–1726, English theatre critic, non-juror bishop, and theologian.]

. . . a very despicable Mortal . . . no better than a Heap of Organized Dust; a stalking machine; a Speaking Head *without a Soul in it*. His Thoughts are bound up by the Laws of MOTION. [His Actions are all prescribed.]¹

But the psychologist is not even a mortal, or even a man; he is a mere aggregate of sensations.² The universe and [337] all in it is only an aggregate of grouped sensations, or “an integration of sensations.” It is all relations of subject and object, relations of universal and individual, of absolute and finite. But when it comes to dealing with the problems of the origin of space and time, and to the summing-up of all those inter- and co-relations of ideas and matter, of ego and non-ego, then all the proof vouchsafed to an opponent is the contemptuous epithet of “ontologist.” After which modern psychology having demolished the object of its sensation in the person of the contradictor, turns round against itself and commits *hara-kiri* by showing sensation itself to be no better than hallucination.

This is even more hopeless for the cause of truth than the harmless paradoxes of the materialistic automatists. The assertion that “the physical processes in the brain are complete in themselves” concerns after all only the registrative function of the material brain; and unable to explain satisfactorily psychic processes thereby, the automatists are thus harmless to do permanent mischief. But the psychologists, into whose hands the science of soul has now so unfortunately fallen, can do great harm, inasmuch as they pretend to be earnest seekers after truth, and remain withal content to represent Coleridge’s “Owlet,” which

Sailing on obscene wings athwart the noon,
Drops his blue-fring’d lids, and holds them close,
And hooting at the glorious sun in heaven,
Cries out, “Where is it?”³

And who more blind than he who does not want to see? [338]

We have sought far and wide for scientific corroboration as to the question of spirit, and spirit alone (in its septenary aspect) being the cause of consciousness and thought, as taught in esoteric philosophy. We have found both physical and psychical sciences denying the fact point-blank, and maintaining their two contradictory and clashing theories. The former, moreover, in its latest development is half inclined to believe itself quite transcendental owing to the latest departure from the too brutal teachings of the Büchners and Moleschotts. But when one comes to analyse the difference between the two, it appears so imperceptible that they almost merge into one.

¹ [Essays Upon Several Moral Subjects: In Two Parts. London 1722, pp. 178-79]

² According to John Stuart Mill neither the so-called objective universe nor the domain of mind — object, subject — corresponds with any absolute reality beyond “sensation.” Objects, the whole paraphernalia of sense, are “sensation objectively viewed,” and mental states “sensation subjectively viewed.” The “Ego” is as entire an illusion as matter; the One Reality, groups of feelings bound together by the rigid laws of association.

³ [These lines are from a poem entitled *Fears in Solitude*. The two lines immediately preceding the ones quoted above are:

Forth from his dark and lonely hiding place,
(Portentous sight!) the owlet Atheism,

— Boris de Zirkoff.]

Indeed, the champions of science now say that the belief that sensations and thought are but movements of matter — Büchner's¹ and Moleschott's² theory — is, as a well-known English annihilationist remarks, “unworthy of the name of philosophy.” Not one man of science of any eminence, we are indignantly told, neither Tyndall, Huxley, Maudsley, Bain, Clifford, Spencer, Lewes, Virchow, Haeckel, nor Du Bois-Reymond has ever gone so far as to say that:

Thought *is* a molecular motion, but that it is the *concomitant* [not the *cause* as believers in a soul maintain] of certain physical processes in the brain. . . .

They never — the true scientists as opposed to the false, the sciolists — the monists as opposed to the materialists — say that thought and nervous motion are the *same*, but that they are the “subjective and objective faces of the same thing.”

Now it may be due to a defective training which has not enabled us to frame ideas of a subject other than those which answer to the words in which it is expressed, but we plead guilty to seeing no such marked difference between Büchner's and the new monistic theories.

Thought is not a motion of molecules, but it is the concomitant of certain physical processes in the brain.³

Now what is a concomitant, and what is a process? A concomitant, according to the best definitions, is a thing that accompanies, or is collaterally connected with another — a concurrent and simultaneous companion. [339] A process is an act of proceeding, an advance or motion, whether temporary or continuous, or a series of motions. Thus the concomitant of physical processes, being naturally a bird of the same feather, whether subjective or objective, and being due to motion, which both monists and materialists say *is* physical — what difference is there between their definition and that of Büchner, except perhaps that it is in words a little more scientifically expressed?

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.]

¹ [Friedrich Karl Christian Ludwig Büchner, 1824–1899, German philosopher, physiologist, and physician who became one of the exponents of 19th century scientific materialism.]

² [Jacob Moleschott, 1822–1893, Dutch physiologist and writer on dietetics. He is known for his philosophical views in regard to scientific materialism. He was a member of German Academy of Sciences Leopoldina.]

³ [Look up “Lombroso's apotheosis of materialism,” in our Mystic Verse and Insights Series. — ED. PHIL.]

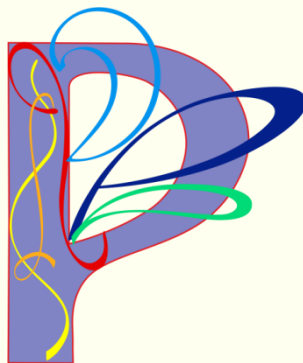
- 3 Monism: there is no causal relation between the two sets of phenomena; the mental and the physical being the two sides of the same thing [a verbal evasion].

To this, Occultism replies that the first view is out of court entirely.

Brain-consciousness, or “personality,” is the consciousness inhering in the lower portion of the mortal manas-mind, which is correlated with the physical brain. It is a mere instrument for harvesting experience on behalf of the immortal Buddhi-Manas or Monad, and imparting to it the aroma of consciously-acquired experience.

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. [340] 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.

H.P. BLAVATSKY



Suggested reading for students.



On the soul of the spiritual man lit by its own light.

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- WOE FOR THE LIVING DEAD



On the brutal foot of materialism.

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