

# Psychic & Noetic action

an article by H. P. Blavatsky

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Devotional reading: Voice of the Silence

p. 4 “Hall of sorrow...” to p. 10 “...Master’s voice.”

Part I (p. 11-15 in US Ed. pamphlet)

p. 11: Thus, the whole conclave of psycho-physiologists may be challenged to correctly define Consciousness, and they are sure to fail, because Self-consciousness belongs alone to man and proceeds from the SELF, the higher Manas. Only, whereas the psychic element (or *Kama-manas*) is common to both the animal and the human being — the far higher degree of its development in the latter resting merely on the greater perfection and sensitiveness of his cerebral cells — no physiologist, not even the cleverest, will ever be able to solve the mystery of the human mind, in its highest spiritual manifestation, or in its dual aspect of the *psychic* and the *noetic* (or the *manasic*), or even to comprehend the intricacies of the former on the purely material plane — unless he knows something of, and is prepared to admit the presence of this dual element. This means that he would have to admit a lower (animal), and a higher (or divine) mind in man, or what is known in Occultism as the "personal" and the "impersonal" *Egos*. For, between the *psychic* and the *noetic*, between the *personality* and the *individuality*, there exists the same abyss as between a "Jack the Ripper," and a holy Buddha. Unless the physiologist accepts all this, we say, he will ever be led into a quagmire. We intend to prove it.

As all know, the great majority of our learned "Didymi" reject the idea of free will. Now this question is a problem that has occupied the minds of thinkers for ages; every school of thought having taken it up in turn and left it as far from solution as ever. And yet, placed as it is in the foremost ranks of philosophical quandaries, the modern "psycho-physiologists" claim in the coolest and most bumptious way to have cut the Gordian knot for ever. For them the feeling of personal free agency is an error, an illusion, "the collective hallucination of mankind." This conviction starts from the principle that no mental activity is possible without a brain, and that there can be no brain without a body. As the latter is, moreover, subject to the general laws of a material world where all is based on necessity, and where there is no spontaneity, our modern psycho-physiologist has  *nolens volens*  to repudiate any self-spontaneity in human action. Here we have, for instance, a Lausanne professor of physiology, A. A. Herzen, to whom the claim of free will in man appears as the most *unscientific* absurdity. Says this oracle: —

"In the boundless physical and chemical laboratory that surrounds man, organic life represents quite an unimportant group of phenomena; and amongst the latter, the place occupied by life having reached to the stage of consciousness, is so minute that it is absurd to exclude man from the sphere of action of a general law, in order to allow in him the existence of a subjective spontaneity or a free will standing outside of that law" — *Psychophysiologie Generale*

For the Occultist who knows the difference between the psychic and the noetic elements in man, this is pure trash, notwithstanding its sound scientific basis. For when the author puts the question — if psychic phenomena do not represent the results of an action of a molecular character whither then does motion disappear after reaching the sensory centers? — we answer that we never denied the fact. But what has this to do with a free will? That every phenomenon in the visible Universe has its genesis in motion, is an old axiom in Occultism; nor do we doubt that the psycho-physiologist would place himself at loggerheads with the whole conclave of exact scientists were he to allow the idea that at a given moment a whole series of physical phenomena may disappear in the vacuum. Therefore, when the author of the work cited maintains that the said force does not disappear upon reaching the highest nervous centers, but that it is forthwith transformed into another series, viz., that of psychic manifestations, into thought, feeling, and consciousness, just as this same psychic force when applied to produce some work of a physical (e.g., muscular) character gets transformed into the latter — Occultism supports him, for it is the first to say that all psychic activity, from its lowest to its highest manifestations, is "nothing but — motion."

Yes; it *is* MOTION; but not all "molecular" motion, as the writer means us to infer. Motion as the GREAT BREATH (*vide Secret Doctrine*, vol. I, *sub voce*) — *ergo* "sound" at the same time — is the substratum of Kosmic-Motion. It is beginningless and endless, the one *eternal life*, the basis and genesis of the subjective and the objective universe; for LIFE (or Be-ness) is the *fons et origo* of existence or being. But molecular motion is the lowest and most material of its finite manifestations. And if the general law of the conservation of energy leads modern science to the conclusion that psychic activity only represents a special form of motion, this same law, guiding the Occultists, leads them also to the same conviction — and to something else besides, which psycho-physiology leaves entirely out of all consideration. If the latter has discovered only in this century that psychic (we say even spiritual) action is subject to the same general and immutable laws of motion as any other phenomenon manifested in the objective realm of Kosmos, and that in both the organic and the *inorganic* (?) worlds every manifestation, whether conscious or unconscious, represents but the result of a collectivity of causes, then in Occult philosophy this represents merely the A, B, C, of its science. "All the world is the *Svara*; *Svara* is the Spirit itself" — the ONE LIFE or *motion*, say the old books of Hindu Occult philosophy. "The proper translation of the word *Svara* is the *current of the life wave*," says the author of *Nature's Finer Forces*, and he goes on to explain: —

It is that wavy motion which is the cause of the evolution of cosmic undifferentiated matter into the differentiated universe. . . . From whence does this motion come? This motion is the spirit itself. The word *atma* (universal soul) used in the book (*vide infra*), itself carries the idea of eternal motion, coming as it does from the root, AT, or eternal motion; and it may be significantly remarked, that the root AT is connected with, is in fact simply another form of, the roots AH, breath, and AS, being. All these roots have for their origin the sound produced by the breath of animals (living beings). . . . The primeval current of the life-wave is then the

same which assumes in man the form of inspiratory and expiratory motion of the lungs, and this is the all-pervading source of the evolution and involution of the universe. . . .

So much about *motion* and the "conservation of energy" from old *books on magic* written and taught ages before the birth of inductive and exact modern science. For what does the latter say more than these books in speaking, for instance, about animal *mechanism*, when it says: —

From the visible atom to the celestial body lost in space, *everything* is subject to motion . . . kept at a definite distance one from the other, in proportion to the motion which animates them, the molecules present constant relations, which they lose only by the addition or the subtraction of a certain quantity of motion.

But Occultism says more than this. While making of motion *on the material plane* and of the conservation of energy, two fundamental laws, or rather two aspects of the same omnipresent law — *Svara*, it denies point blank that these have anything to do with the *free will* of man which belongs to quite a different plane. The author of *Psychophysiologie Generale*, treating of his *discovery* that psychic action is but motion, and the result of a collectivity of causes — remarks that as it is so, there cannot be any further discussion upon spontaneity — in the sense of any native internal proneness created by the human organism; and adds that the above puts an end to all claim for *free will!* The Occultist denies the conclusion. The actual fact of man's psychic (we say *manasic* or *noetic*) *individuality* is a sufficient warrant against the assumption; for in the case of this conclusion being correct, or being indeed, as the author expresses it, the *collective hallucination of the whole mankind throughout the ages*, there would be an end also to psychic individuality.

Now by "psychic" individuality we mean that self-determining power which enables man to override circumstances. Place half a dozen animals of the same species under the same circumstances, and their actions while not identical, will be closely similar; place half a dozen men under the same circumstances and their actions will be as different as their characters, i.e., their *psychic individuality*.

## Part II (p. 19 – 28)

p. 19 We agree: "not the slightest need," of a creator of "that special" or any other Force. Nor has anyone ever claimed such an absurdity. But between creating and guiding, there is a difference and the latter implies in no way any creation of the energy of motion, or, indeed, of any special energy. Psychic mind (in contradistinction to manasic or noëtic mind) only transforms this energy of the "unit-being" according to "a nature and laws of its own" — to use Ladd's felicitous expression. The "unit-being" creates nothing but only causes a natural correlation in accordance with both the psychical laws and laws of its own; having to use the Force, it guides its direction, choosing the paths along which it will proceed, and stimulating it to action. And, as its activity is *sui generis* and independent, it carries this energy from this world of disharmony into its own sphere of harmony. Were it not independent it could not do so. As it is, the freedom of man's will is beyond doubt or cavil. Therefore, as already observed, there is no question of creation, but simply of guidance. Because the sailor at the wheel does not create the steam in the engine, shall we say that he does not direct the vessel? And, because

we refuse to accept the fallacies of some psycho-physiologists as the last word of science, do we furnish thereby a new proof that free will is an hallucination? We deride the animalistic idea. How far more scientific and logical, besides being as poetical as it is grand, is the teaching in the Kathopanishad, which, in a beautiful and descriptive metaphor, says that: "The senses are the horses, body is the chariot, mind (kama-manas) is the reins, and intellect (or free will) the charioteer." Verily, there is more exact science in the less important of the Upanishads, composed thousands of years ago, than in all the materialistic ravings of modern "physico-biology" and "psychophysiology" put together!

**p. 20:** The knowledge of the past, present, and future, is embodied in Kshetrajna (the "Self").  
— *Occult Axioms*

REFERENCE: Theos. Gloss. – *Kshetrajna*. . . .p.181

## II (p. 22-28)

**p. 22:** Now, since the metaphysics of Occult physiology and psychology postulate within mortal man an immortal entity, "divine mind," or Nous, whose pale and too often distorted reflection is that which we call "Mind" and intellect in men — virtually an entity apart from the former during the period of every incarnation — we say that the two sources of "memory" are in these two "principles." These two we distinguish as the Higher Manas (Mind or Ego), and the Kama-Manas, i.e., the rational, but earthly or physical intellect of man, incased in, and bound by, matter, therefore subject to the influence of the latter: the all-conscious SELF, that which reincarnates periodically — verily the WORD made flesh! — and which is always the same, while its reflected "Double," changing with every new incarnation and personality, is, therefore, conscious but for a life-period. The latter "principle" is the Lower Self, or that, which manifesting through our organic system, acting on this plane of illusion, imagines itself the Ego Sum, and thus falls into what Buddhist philosophy brands as the "heresy of separateness." The former, we term INDIVIDUALITY, the latter Personality. From the first proceeds all the noëtic element, from the second, the psychic, i.e., "terrestrial wisdom" at best, as it is influenced by all the chaotic stimuli of the human or rather animal passions of the living body. No gap...

**p. 23:** The "Higher EGO" cannot act directly on the body, as its consciousness belongs to quite another plane and planes of ideation: the "lower" *Self* does: and its action and behavior *depend on its free will and choice* as to whether it will gravitate more towards its parent ("the Father in Heaven") or the "animal" which it informs, the man of flesh. The "Higher Ego," as part of the essence of the UNIVERSAL MIND, is unconditionally omniscient on its own plane, and only potentially so in our terrestrial sphere, as it has to act solely through its *alter ego* — the Personal Self. Now, although the former is the vehicle of all knowledge of the past, the present, and the future, and although it is from this fountain-head that its "double" catches occasional glimpses of that which is beyond the senses of man, and transmits them to certain brain cells (unknown to science in their function), thus making of man a *Seer*, a soothsayer, and a prophet; yet the memory of bygone events — especially of the earth earthy — has its seat in the Personal Ego alone. No memory of a purely daily-life function, of a physical, egotistical, or of a lower mental nature — such as, e.g., eating and drinking, enjoying personal sensual

pleasures, transacting business to the detriment of one's neighbor, etc., etc., has aught to do with the "Higher" Mind or EGO. Nor has it any direct dealings on this physical plane with either our brain or our heart — for these two are the organs of a power higher than the *Personality* — but only with our passional organs, such as the liver, the stomach, the spleen, etc. Thus it only stands to reason that the memory of such-like events must be first awakened in that organ which was the first to induce the action remembered afterwards, and conveyed it to our "sense-thought," which is entirely *distinct from the "supersensuous" thought*. It is only the higher forms of the latter, the *superconscious* mental experience, that can correlate with the cerebral and cardiac centers. The memories of physical and *selfish* (or personal) deeds, on the other hand, together with the mental experiences of a terrestrial nature, and of earthly biological functions, can, of necessity, only be correlated with the molecular constitution of various *Kamic* organs, and the "dynamical associations" of the elements of the nervous system in each particular organ.

Therefore, when Professor Ladd, after showing that every element of the nervous system has a memory of its own, adds: — "This view belongs to the very essence of every theory which considers conscious mental reproduction as only one form or phase of the biological fact of organic memory" — he must include among such theories the Occult teaching. For no Occultist could express such teaching more correctly than the Professor, who says, in winding up his argument: "We might properly speak, then, of the memory of the end-organ of vision or of hearing, of the memory of the spinal cord and of the different so-called 'centers' of reflex action belonging to the chords of the memory of the medulla oblongata, the cerebellum, etc." This is the essence of Occult teaching — even in the Tantra works. Indeed, every organ in our body *has its own memory*. For if it is endowed with a consciousness "of its own kind," every cell must of necessity have also a memory of its own kind, as likewise its own *psychic* and *noetic* action. Responding to the touch of both a physical and a *metaphysical* Force, the impulse given by the *psychic* (or psycho-molecular) Force will act from *without within*; while that of the noetic (shall we call it Spiritual-dynamical?) Force works from *within without*. For, as our body is the covering of the inner "principles," soul, mind, life, etc., so the molecule or the cell is the body in which dwell its "principles," the (to our sense and comprehension) immaterial atoms which compose that cell. The cell's activity and behavior are determined by its being propelled either inwardly or outwardly, by the noetic or the psychic Force, the former having no relation to the *physical* cells proper. Therefore, while the latter act under the unavoidable law of the conservation and correlation of physical energy, the atoms — being psycho-spiritual, *not physical units* — *act under laws of their own*, just as Professor Ladd's "Unit-Being," which is our "Mind-Ego," does, in his very philosophical and scientific hypothesis. Every human organ and each cell in the latter has a key-board of its own, like that of a piano, only that it registers and emits sensations instead of sounds. Every key contains the potentiality of good or bad, of producing harmony or disharmony. This depends on the impulse given and the combinations produced; and the force of the touch of the artist at work, a "double-faced Unity," indeed. And it is the action of this or the other "Face" of the Unity that determines the nature and the dynamical character of the manifested phenomena as a resulting action, and this whether they be physical or mental. For the whole life of man is guided by this double-faced Entity. If the impulse comes from the "Wisdom above," the Force applied being noetic or spiritual, the results will be actions worthy of the divine propeller; if from the "terrestrial, devilish wisdom" (psychic power), man's activities will be selfish, based solely on the exigencies of his physical, hence animal, nature. The above may sound to the average reader as pure nonsense; but every

Theosophist must understand when told that there are *Manasic* as well as *Kamic* organs in him, although the cells of his body answer to both physical and spiritual impulses.

Verily that body, so desecrated by Materialism and man himself, is the temple of the Holy Grail, the *Adytum* of the grandest, nay, of all, the mysteries of nature in our solar universe. That body is an Aeolian harp, chorded with two sets of strings, one made of pure silver, the other of catgut. When the breath from the divine Fiat brushes softly over the former, man becomes like unto *his* God — but the other set feels it not. It needs the breeze of a strong terrestrial wind, impregnated with animal effluvia, to set its animal chords vibrating. It is the function of the physical, lower mind to act upon the physical organs and their cells; but, it is the higher mind *alone* which can influence the atoms interacting in these cells, which interaction is alone capable of exciting the brain, *via the spinal "center" cord*, to a mental representation of spiritual ideas far beyond any objects on this material plane. The phenomena of divine consciousness have to be regarded as activities of our mind on another and a higher plane, working through something less substantial than the moving molecules of the brain. They cannot be explained as the simple resultant of the cerebral physiological processes, as indeed the latter only condition them or give them a final form for purposes of concrete manifestation. Occultism teaches that the liver and the spleen-cells are the most subservient to the action of our "personal" mind, the heart being the organ *par excellence* through which the "Higher" Ego acts — through the Lower Self.

p. 25 Nor can the visions or memory of purely terrestrial events be transmitted directly through the mental perceptions in the brain — the direct recipient of the impressions of the heart. All such recollections have to be first stimulated by and awakened in the organs which were the originators, as already stated, of the various causes that led to the results, or, the direct recipients and participators of the latter. In other words, if what is called "association of ideas" has much to do with the awakening of memory, the mutual interaction and consistent interrelation between the personal "Mind-Entity" and the organ of the human body have far more so. A hungry stomach evokes the vision of a past banquet, because its action is reflected and repeated in the personal mind. But even before the memory of the personal Self radiates the vision from the tablets wherein are stored the experiences of one's daily life — even to the minutest details — the memory of the stomach has already evoked the same. And so with all the organs of the body. It is they which originate according to their animal needs and desires the electro-vital sparks that illuminate the field of consciousness in the Lower Ego; and it is these sparks which in their turn awaken to function the reminiscences in it. The whole human body is, as said, a vast sounding board, in which each cell bears a long record of impressions connected with its parent organ, and each cell has a memory and a consciousness of its kind, or call it instinct if you will. These impressions are, according to the nature of the organ, physical, psychic, or mental, as they relate to this or another plane. They may be called "states of consciousness" only for the want of a better expression — as there are states of instinctual, mental, and purely abstract, or spiritual consciousness. If we trace all such "psychic" actions to brain-work, it is only because in that mansion called the human body the brain is the front door, and the only one which opens out into Space. All the others are inner doors, openings in the private building, through which travel incessantly the transmitting agents of memory and sensation. The clearness, the vividness, and intensity of these depend on the state of health and the organic soundness of the transmitters. But their reality, in the sense of trueness or correctness, is due to the "principle" they originate from, and the preponderance in the Lower Manas of the noëtic or the phrenic ("Kamic," terrestrial)

element. For, as Occultism teaches, if the Higher Mind-Entity — the permanent and the immortal — is of the divine homogeneous essence of “Alaya-Akasa,”<sup>15</sup> or Mahat, — its reflection, the Personal Mind, is, as a temporary “Principle,” of the Substance of the Astral Light. As a pure ray of the “Son of the Universal Mind,” it could perform no functions in the body, and would remain powerless over the turbulent organs of Matter. Thus, while its inner constitution is Manasic, its “body,” or rather functioning essence, is heterogeneous, and leavened with the Astral Light, the lowest element of Ether. It is a part of the mission of the Manasic Ray, to get gradually rid of the blind, deceptive element which though it makes of it an active spiritual entity on this plane, still brings it into so close contact with matter as to entirely becloud its divine nature and stultify its intuitions. p. 27

p. 28(...) And this is how the great Mage of the XIXth century [Eliphas Levi] corroborates the foregoing when speaking of the Astral Light:— We have said that to acquire magical power, two things are necessary: to disengage the will from all servitude, and to exercise it in control. The sovereign will (of the adept) is represented in our symbols by the woman who crushes the serpent’s head, and by the resplendent angel who represses the dragon, and holds him under his foot and spear; the great magical agent, the dual current of light, the living and astral fire of the earth, has been represented in the ancient theogonies by the serpent with the head of a bull, a ram, or a dog. It is the double serpent of the caduceus, it is the Old Serpent of Genesis, but it is also the brazen serpent of Moses entwined around the tau, that is to say, the generative lingha. It is also the goat of the witch-sabbath, and the Baphomet of the Templars; it is the Hylé of the Gnostics; it is the double-tailed serpent which forms the legs of the solar cock of the Abraxas; finally, it is the Devil of M. Eudes de Mirville. But in very fact it is the blind force which souls (i.e., the lower Manas or Nephesh) have to conquer to liberate themselves from the bonds of the earth; for if their will does not free “them from this fatal attraction, they will be absorbed in the current by the force which has produced them, and will return to the central and eternal fire.”<sup>16</sup> The “central and eternal fire” is that disintegrating Force, that gradually consumes and burns out the Kama-rupa, or “personality,” in the Kama-loka, whither it goes after death. And verily, the Mediums are attracted by the astral light, it is the direct cause of their personal “souls” being absorbed “by the force which has produced” their terrestrial elements. And, therefore, as the same Occultist tells us:— All the magical operations consist in freeing one’s self from the coils of the Ancient Serpent; then to place the foot on its head, and lead it according to the operator’s will. “I will give unto thee,” says the Serpent, in the Gospel myth, “all the kingdoms of the earth, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.” The initiated should reply to him, “I will not fall down, but thou shalt crouch at my feet; thou wilt give me nothing, but I will make use of thee and take whatever I wish. For I am thy Lord and Master!” And as such, the Personal Ego, becoming at one with its divine parent, shares in the immortality of the latter. Otherwise ... Enough, however. Blessed is he who has acquainted himself with the dual powers at work in the ASTRAL Light; thrice blessed he who has learned to discern the Noëtic from the Psychic action of the “Double-Faced” God in him, and who knows the potency of his own Spirit — or “Soul Dynamics.”

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