

A Synopsis of Baron du Prel's "Philosophie Der Mystik"

by Bertram Keightley

Reprinted from the Transaction of the London Lodge of the Theosophical Society
Reprinted from "Theosophical Siftings" Volume - 1 - 1888

The Theosophical Publishing Society, England

[Page 1] KANT'S Critique of Pure Reason is a most convincing demonstration that no knowledge is possible for us outside the limits of experience, since *à priori*, and apart from experience, we can know only the abstract forms of pure thought: the laws imposed by our nature on the external world of phenomena as given to us in "intuition" (Anschauung). Since, however, these laws are inherent in *us* and apply to that which we call the "Not-self" only in so far as *our* consciousness is concerned, it follows that the limits of true knowledge are for us the limits of our possible experience.

Advancing from this ground, Dr. Du Prel states the problem which his work is an attempt to solve, the problem which lies at the root of all Mysticism, of all Occultism, nay, even of spiritual progress itself, as follows: —

"Is our true Ego entirely contained in our *self*-consciousness ? "

"The extent of knowledge and self-knowledge possible to any organised being is determined by the number of its senses, and by the degree of stimulus to which they respond, *i.e.*, by its psycho-physical limit of sensation. In biological evolution this limit has always been variable, and thus, not only have the senses been differentiated in the succession of living forms, but the consciousness of their possessors has been enlarged as well."

These remarks suggest the following somewhat different statement of [Page 2] the fundamental problem: Is not a man a being whose consciousness is distinguishable as dual from the existence of a variable limit of sensation; the consciousness of the one form (at present outside the range of our *ordinary* experience) including that of the other; while the latter (our normal consciousness) is not distinctly cognizant even of the existence of their integral unity ?

The problem, thus stated, is clearly a legitimate rider to the Kantian philosophy, since it implies nothing more than an inquiry into the possibility of any extension of the present limits of our experience and the conditions of such extension.

That such an enlargement of our field of observation is possible is more than suggested by the Theory of Evolution, as well as by the past history of Knowledge itself. A careful consideration of this branch of the

inquiry very properly forms the Introduction to the subject under consideration. In order to give a clear idea of the method pursued, we shall analyse at some length one or two chapters; translating freely from the text and adding only the connecting links.

The Introduction consists of an investigation as to the possibility of a real growth of Knowledge. At the outset, Dr. Du Prel remarks that the logical instinct of mankind always leads them to adopt a line of conduct in harmony with their conception of the riddle of existence, and that therefore men's moral progress is necessarily dependent on the growth of knowledge; and thus, if knowledge admits of growth, we may hope to attain to a better state of things; to a form of culture tinged at least with loftier ideals. He then continues: — "Now, the most common of popular assumptions is that knowledge not only can, but does, grow. Unfortunately, however, this belief is largely coloured with misconceptions; the first and most serious of which is the idea that this growth proceeds solely in breadth, not in depth. True progress ever goes deeper; yet each generation fancies that it leaves merely surface work to be done by its successors. The second misconception lies in the expectation that the riddle of life will become more intelligible to us through the increase of knowledge. The contrary has in truth been the case up to the present, and will be for a long time to come; although that expectation may some day be realised."

"We have, therefore, two questions to examine:

"1st) . In how far does the human mind progress in depth ?"

"2nd) What contribution can it bring to the solution of the Riddle of the Universe ?"

After showing by the examples of Copernicus and Kant that the real [Page 3] advance of knowledge has been in depth rather than in mere surface extension, the author pursues:

"The modern Theory of Evolution follows, consciously or not, the lines traced out by Kant. Biological Evolution began with the simplest organisms and has reached in the most complicated human being its highest point for the moment, Thus, a tree stands in but very few and very simple relations to external nature; it responds to sunshine and rain, wind and weather, and unfolds itself accordingly. In the animal kingdom these relations to the surrounding external world have increased in number and extent; and hand in hand with organic, advances also intellectual evolution."

"From the oyster to man, the growth of consciousness proceeds parallel with that of organisation. But even supposing the organic evolution had reached its close, the domain of human consciousness would still receive additions through the advance of the technical and theoretical sciences."

"Thus, from the standpoint of every animal organism, external nature is divided into two unequal parts, the inequality of which increases as the organism descends in the scale of life. On one side is that portion of nature with which its senses connect it; while the rest of nature is transcendental to it: *i.e.*, the organism in question stands in no conscious relation to that part of nature. This frontier line has been continually pushed backwards and onwards during the progress of biological evolution: the number of the

senses having increased, as have also their working powers."

"Thus, what Fechner has termed the 'psycho-physical threshold' has been steadily pushed back in proportion as the senses differentiated, and responded to ever-weakening degrees of physical stimulus; while stimuli falling below this threshold do not enter into consciousness at all. So that the biological advance, as well as the growth of consciousness implies a constant pushing back of the frontier-line between the realms of Thought and Reality, at the expense of the transcendental and unknown, and to the profit of the known world."

"This is the view of Darwin, who has proved the necessary existence of a transcendental world for every organism. It is also that of Kant, who demonstrated the same fact by his distinction between the 'Thing in Itself' and the 'Appearance'".

The opposite of this is the view held by the materialists, who regard the eye as simply a mirror for appearances. According to them, the world exists in our brain as it is in reality outside of us.

Materialism, therefore, rests upon an assumption with which it stands [Page 4] or falls; viz., that all that is real is perceivable by the senses. Thus Feuerbach, one of the most consistent and philosophical thinkers of that school, writes: "The object of the senses, or the sensuous is alone truly real, and therefore Truth, Reality, and sensuousness are one". But this assumption that to every force in nature there is a corresponding sense, stands in direct contradiction with the fact that our consciousness is demonstrably a growing product of biological development. For the forces of magnetism and electricity escape our sensuous preception, and their very existence would be unprovable if they could not transform themselves into equivalent amounts of other forces which do appeal to our senses. The world remains an unsolved problem, only because Perceptibility and Reality do not coincide; for were they coincident, a few centuries would suffice to discover all truth.

Pursuing this line of argument, Du Prel next reaches the following conclusion: Our consciousness in its relation to the Real is therefore imperfect, both quantitatively and qualitatively; quantitatively, because we have not as many senses as there are natural forces which act upon us; qualitatively, because objects become transformed in the process of sensuous cognition: thus, what in nature is ethereal vibration becomes in consciousness light; while aerial vibration becomes sound. Therefore, not only are there more things than senses, but further, the things themselves are different in Reality from our Conceptions of them. In other words, "Consciousness does not exhaust its object, which is the Universe".

Passing then to the second branch of his problem, he continues:

"We have dealt, hitherto, with the first only of the two great riddles placed before the mind of man, the Universe. Let us now consider the second, Man himself."

"As the world is the object of Consciousness, so is the Ego that of Self-consciousness. As Consciousness strives to penetrate its object, the world, and to define it logically, so does Self-

Consciousness its object, the Ego. As regards consciousness and the universe, the materialistic view has at least been repulsed; but materialism still flatters itself with the hope of resolving all psychology into physiology. But even were this hope fulfilled, there would still remain the unsolved problem, whether self-consciousness does indeed exhaust its object."

"Such a question is quite as legitimate here as was a similar question in regard to consciousness: and we have every ground to suppose that both questions must be answered in the negative, and that the same relation obtains between self-consciousness and the Ego, as between consciousness and the world. Both analogy and the history of evolution support this view; for if Nature spent some ten million years in developing man's consciousness [Page 5] to the point of realising the riddle of the universe, and the difficulty of its metaphysical problems, it would hardly seem likely that, in contrast thereto, self-consciousness should have been perfect in man from its very dawn, not susceptible of development, but a finished product from its earliest appearance. And this is what is implied in the assertion that our self-consciousness embraces its object, our Ego, in its entirety."

Summing up the arguments contained in the Introduction or first chapter, we are led to the conclusion that consciousness does not exhaust its object, but is, on the contrary, engaged in a ceaseless process of adaptation to it, which is still very far from being even approximately completed. Similarly, it would seem at least highly probable that the adaptation of our Self-consciousness to its object, our true Ego, is also far from complete or perfect; and that the failure, so far, to demonstrate the existence of a Soul in man, by no means warrants the assumption that it does not exist at all.

It has been shown that the purely materialistic view of science is incompetent to explain fully the very facts upon which science itself rests; while the Law of Evolution, its last and greatest generalisation, requires by its fundamental assumption of the unbroken continuity of natural laws, that man should be capable of an indefinite amount of further progress — a result which can only be achieved if knowledge can grow in depth as well as breadth; implying thereby a further development of man's faculties of observation.

The second chapter is occupied with an investigation into the scientific importance to be attributed to "Dream".

Now dreaming itself implies mental activity, while it is an acknowledged fact, that dream pictures differ very largely from the contents of our waking consciousness, a fact which proves them to come from a region from which we are shut out when awake. Du Prel, therefore, concludes that the nerve stimuli which form the basis of these dream-pictures must lie, during waking, below the threshold of sensation, and hence that, during sleep, this threshold must be displaced. Now the region thus brought into sensation may lie either in ourselves or in the outer world. In the former case the heightened sensibility during sleep would be of interest only for the physician; but in the latter, sleep would beget a relation between ourselves and the outer world different from that of waking, and which might well give to dreams real meaning and importance.

"Waking to external life is partly subjective, partly objective: it embraces our bodily sensations, and extends also to the world without us. It may, therefore, naturally be asked whether the internal awakening

of dream has also both characteristics; *i.e.*, whether the displacement of the [Page 6] threshold of sensation can give rise to a relation with the outer world of which we are not aware in our waking moments."

"The answer must be affirmative. Physiology has long since proved that the contents of our waking consciousness come to us through the senses; but this consciousness is limited by those very senses themselves. There exists, therefore, a more intimate connection between ourselves and nature than we are aware of. There are sounds inaudible to our ears; rays, which produce no sensation of light in our eyes; substances, which do not affect our taste or smell. Although, then, our sensuous consciousness disappears in sleep, we still remain immersed in the general life of nature, to which we belong as the part of the whole. Sleep can only suspend our relation to nature through the senses, but never that relation of which, though present, we remain unconscious in our waking hours. The latter, sleep can but bring into consciousness, since it displaces the limit (Schwelle) of sensation."

Sleep has, therefore, not merely the negative aspect of suspending the waking consciousness, but also a very positive one, in that it brings into prominence a relation existing between ourselves and nature, of which we are unconscious when awake.

Further, we find that the vast majority of dreams, especially those of deep slumber, are totally forgotten; while, when awake, we could not possibly forget in an hour or two what we have clearly and distinctly seen. This fact is physiologically incapable of any other explanation than that our waking and dreaming consciousness are functions of separate organs, or that, at least the dream of deep sleep depends on the action of other brain-strata than those in activity during waking. For, if from the identity of our consciousness on successive days, we infer an identity of the organ of consciousness; then, from a difference of consciousness, we must infer a difference of organ.

But the fact that dreams are remembered at all implies a ground common to both; thus the confusion and the illogical, meaningless character of such remembered dreams — those of light and imperfect slumber — may well be due to an admixture of elements from our normal consciousness among the ordered and logical memories of the dream-state during profound sleep.

"Now we fall asleep and awaken gradually, and the dreams we remember belong to the transition state between the two, in so far as the organs active in waking and dreaming are common; such dreams are, therefore, confused, because they lack organic unity, being the mixed product of the partial activity of two organs. Such remembered dreams will, therefore, usually consist of fragments from our waking thoughts; of the true products of the dream-organ itself; and lastly, of pictures arising from vegetative stimuli within our own organism." [Page 7]

In this middle state, then, between waking and deep sleep, we must not expect to find the characteristic functions of the pure dream-organ. Since, however, as will be seen later, the course of a dream becomes not only connected and logical, but even directed by definite purpose, as soon as the causes of disturbance are removed, we may assert that the foolish and meaningless part of dreams are due to the partial activity of the organ, whose full functions are displayed during waking; while its reasonable and connected part proceeds from the undisturbed action of that organ which is specially concerned with

dream-activity.

It remains to show the existence of connected, reasoned dreams, marked by conscious purpose. This Du Prel proves —1st, from the phenomena of sleep-walking, when the dreamer translates his dream-thoughts into action and 2nd, from those of somnambulism, [The words *Somnambulism* and; *Somnambule* are not used in their etymological sense, but denote throughout this paper a state of mental activity during trance.] where the dreamer can express his thoughts in words.

We find, then, reason to attribute the irrationality of dreams in general to the action of external disturbing causes, and we should, therefore, expect that the deeper the slumber and the more these sources of error are excluded, the more rational will dream-thought appear. First, however, we must show that thinking does still go on in deep — nay, in the deepest possible slumber.

“Here somnambulism comes to our help. Whether produced by mesmeric manipulation, or, as sometimes happens, spontaneous, it is a condition of sleep to which is united an internal awakening, and in it ordered, connected and logical series of ideas made their appearance. The connection with the outer world through the senses has vanished from the somnambule's consciousness, while his insensibility to physical stimuli has enormously increased; and in their place a new and ordered, though partially limited connection with the outer world has arisen. The 'I' of *waking* consciousness has disappeared from the self consciousness of the somnambule. This self-consciousness, indeed, now includes the contents of the former, in their entirety and in logical order, not in fragments merely, as in ordinary dreaming; but these contents are not referred to the inner, waking 'I', but to another strange 'I'. The same 'subject' is thus split up into two personalities; a state of things also occasionally found in ordinary dreaming.”

Du Prel thus finds in somnambulism a dream-state susceptible of accurate observation, and one which bears out to some extent his former conclusions as to “dream” in general. But, leaving a detailed investigation of its phenomena for a later section he passes on to consider the [Page 8] metaphysical value attaching to the existence of the dream-state itself.

After a general review of the position, Du Prel points out that regularity and logical order are observed in such dreams as, from the extremely short time they have occupied, may fairly be considered as, on the whole, free from outside disturbance. This shows that the organ active during dreaming produces logical and connected representations, which, however, as a rule, become confused in our remembrance, owing to the admixture of elements derived from these organs which become active as we awake.

He cites Schopenhauer and Fechner in support of his belief in the existence of a special organ, whose activity constitutes dreaming; and shows from numerous instances the marked difference both in form and matter existing between our dream-thoughts and those of waking life. He then proves that this state of things, of which the existence is widely admitted by investigators of very different schools, is in reality equivalent to an alternation of two personalities within the limits of a single subject, and therefore bears out the hypothesis of a transcendental Ego existing in man.

Next, he gives a clear and concise sketch of the results arrived at hitherto in this direction, in their

bearing upon the two great philosophical problems — Man and Nature; and in analogy with the definition of the “transcendental world”, as that portion of Nature lying outside the domain of our consciousness, he suggests the term “transcendental subject” in man (“subject” meaning the whole human being) as proper to be used in opposition to the “empirical or self-conscious Ego”; remarking, however, that the former can only be considered as a “transcendental *Ego*”, if it be shown to be capable both of knowing and of self-consciousness.

If now the empirical or personal consciousness be capable of development, it follows that the boundary between it and the transcendental subject cannot be impassible; and we should therefore expect to find occasional evidences of the existence of this higher self. But the thread which holds together the personal consciousness is the faculty of memory, and hence any such evidence of the presence of faculties properly belonging to the transcendental part of man ought to be accompanied by modifications of this faculty. And thus our usual forgetfulness of such dreams as occur in deep sleep is merely what we ought to expect, and we shall find but seldom any signs of abnormal faculties under normal conditions; and they must therefore be sought in abnormal states, such as somnambulism.

Summing up the conclusions reached in this chapter, Du Prel indicates the *à priori* conditions under which such a transcendental Ego in man (if it exists at all) may be expected to manifest itself, and the form which such [Page 9] manifestations must necessarily take, as logical consequences of its existence as defined. These results he stated as follows:—

“If a transcendental Ego possessing self-consciousness and the capacity of knowing exists at all, the following facts must be capable of logical, scientific proof: —

“1) The existence of a dual consciousness in man.

“2) A regular alternation of the two states of consciousness.

“3) Modifications of the faculty of memory in connection with this alternation.

“4) The functions of Knowing and Willing must operate in both states, and probably subject to: —

“5) Modifications of the standards of space and time (since these are known to be the special and characteristic modes of perception and thought of our present, actual consciousness).”

Should these logical consequences of the hypothesis be found to fit in with observed facts, there will then be a great probability in favour of the truth of the hypothesis itself.

The third chapter deals with the dramatic aspect of dreaming under its two forms: — 1st, as affecting our normal measure of time, by substituting in its place what may be termed a transcendental standard; and

2nd, as producing a dramatic division of the Ego.

It has often been noticed, both by patients and doctors — many of them practised and highly-trained observers — that under the influence of anaesthetics, either the mental processes go on at an enormously greater rate, so that the patient seems to himself to have lived through a series of eventful years in a few short seconds; or, on the other hand, he awakes with a merely general impression of having been unconscious for many hours. The abnormal rapidity and crowding together of thought and feeling, proved by these observations, have also been noticed and described by opium and hashish eaters, as well as by many of those who have been nearly drowned.

Now the investigators [See the works of Volkelt, Hennings, Lemoine, Maury Scherner, Richter, Steffens, &c.] who have occupied themselves with experiments on dreaming have succeeded in tracing many dreams to external causes, and in most cases they have found that the catastrophe of the dream, to which its entire course led up, could be unmistakably identified with the external stimulus which woke the sleeper. This seems to imply that the *effect* — the dream and its climax — *precedes* its cause — the external stimulus awakening the dreamer. And this holds equally good both in natural dreams and those excited for experimental purposes; so that it is a very common, almost nightly occurrence, and cannot, therefore, be [Page 10] ascribed to chance coincidence. We have thus to solve the following problem: — How can a dream, excited by a given external stimulus, and seeming to cover a lapse of years, end with a climax which is merely the original stimulus itself in disguise: the stimulus which at the same time awakens the sleeper; the stimulus, and the seemingly prolonged dream leading up to the climax, and the awakening at that climax, being thus all included in an imperceptible (to us) period of time ?

Now Helmholtz has proved experimentally that nerve-stimuli require a definite, measurable time for transmission; and Fechner has also shown that their transformation into conscious sensation further requires an additional time. And the only possible solution of the above problem is that, under certain conditions, the mental processes take place independently of this physiological time-measure; so that the whole series of dream-events, explaining, leading up to, and culminating in the catastrophe which wakes the sleeper, are interposed between the moment when the stimulus in question reaches the consciousness by some direct avenue, and the moment when the same stimulus reaches it through the normal channel — the nervous and cerebral system.

Since, then, conscious mental processes can thus go on at a much greater rate than the normal, physiological nerve-time admits of, it follows that this mode at least of consciousness is independent of the physical nervous system, and is subject to a different and much smaller time-measure. But this is practically to admit that our consciousness has two different laws in two different states — *i.e.*, that its functions are dual; hence that it may itself be regarded as a duality.

Again, if dreams are not to be regarded as inspirations, we must ourselves be their architects. But dream places us amidst events unfolding themselves dramatically; so much so, that every dream involves dramatic division of the Ego, since what we think dialogues (in dreams) can be in reality but monologues. More still; we are not only actors and spectators in the play-house of dream, but a part of ourselves goes into the stage itself, since the whole drama — scenery, actors, and spectators, are of our creation.

This suspension of our subjective unity, however — this externalisation of internal processes — is only possible so long as we do not consciously grasp the fact of their being internal; so long as we do not knowingly produce, but have them, as it were, given to us. All, therefore, depends on the relation of these externalised processes to consciousness; and this relation must lie either in the mental or in the physical region.

Now, of internal physical processes the only ones which can thus be projected as objective, without our recognising them as internal, are the [Page 11] automatic and vegetative functions of circulation, digestion, etc. Hence, when in dream the subject is split up into several persons, the plane of this cleavage, so far as it is produced by physical causes, must be that dividing conscious and voluntary from unconscious and involuntary functions and movements. And again, since every stimulus must attain a certain minimum limit before it can excite in us conscious sensation — which limit, as the line dividing conscious from unconscious thinking and feeling, is called the psycho-physical threshold or limit; and since all internal stimuli which pass this limit enter into consciousness, while those falling below it remain in the region of the unconscious, it follows that in the dramatic division of the subject in dream, the plane of this cleavage — so far as the division is due to psychical changes — must be this very psychophysical threshold or limit itself.

Du Prel then enters on a detailed and convincing proof of these conclusions by an examination of the recorded observations of the most famous scientific psychologists, some of them belonging to the extreme materialistic school. The following are some of the instances: —

Van Esk had a patient afflicted with asthma, who, on falling asleep, regularly suffered from the following dream: — Her deceased grandmother came in through the window, and kneeling on her chest, endeavoured to suffocate her.

In a case reported by Schindler, a somnambule, in one of her illnesses, saw her deceased aunt enter the room with the words "This sick girl is in danger of dying, but will recover with my help". Subsequently, in a more advanced state of trance, the same patient characterised this vision as a mere personification of her condition, which had intensified itself from a vague feeling into a dramatic picture.

This last case shows that the subjective meaning of such visions is only perceived when we become conscious of the difference between the one state and the other. Similarly we recognise, after each awakening, our dream-pictures as illusions, while in the dream itself they are taken as realities. With the change of state there comes a disbelief in the reality of the perceptions of the previous state. The existence of a standard of comparison does away with the illusion, but as a rule the standard can only be attained through a change of state, which allows of a comparison between the two sets of perceptions. In all conditions in waking, as in every stage of sleep-life, man consists, as it were, of two halves ; as far as either his waking or his dreaming consciousness extends, so far extends his "I" (his self-consciousness). Whatever wells up from the unconscious, and crosses the threshold of consciousness, the dreamer conceives as belonging to the "Not-self". Thus the dualism of conscious and unconscious, the [Page 12] dividing psycho-physical threshold, is the common cause both of the dramatic division of the Ego in dream and also of the illusion, in virtue of which we hold the dream to be real. A remarkable illustration of this is afforded by one of Werner's somnambules, who had prescribed for herself a journey for the benefit of her health. Werner asked her how she would be, when away on her journey, and she replied, "My

Albert" (in spiritualistic phrase, her spirit-guide) "cannot then approach me so closely, because you will not be there; but still he will come and help me as much as possible". Translated into physiological language, and stripped of its dramatic garb, this means that she would miss the mesmeric treatment, but that the effects of that already undergone would remain with her.

The foregoing are cases of the dramatisation of physical conditions or states. The following are cases which take their origin in mental or psychic stimuli or conditions.

Boswell relates of Dr. Johnson that the latter dreamt he was engaged in a contest of wit with a stranger, who proved himself Johnson's superior, much to the Doctor's annoyance. On this Du Prel remarks: "No wonder; the dreamer Johnson was split up into two persons along the cleavage plain of the threshold of consciousness; of whom one, the stranger, worked with unconscious talent, the other, Johnson, with conscious reason; and therefore got the worst of it". Another case is taken from Maury, who relates that once when learning English he dreamt of conversing with some one in that language; and, wishing to tell him that he called upon him the previous day, he used the words, "I called for you yesterday". The other, however, at once declared that the expression was wrong and corrected it with "I called on you yesterday". On awaking, Maury looked up the question and found that his critic was right.

Then, taking the fact of this dramatic division of the subject in dream as granted, and assuming also as proved that the plane of cleavage is in all cases the plane (for the moment) dividing the conscious from the unconscious, Du Prel proceeds to draw the following inferences, which he derives by analysis from the foregoing propositions: —

1st. It is, therefore, *psychologically* possible that a subject should consist of two personalities, without the latter recognising their mutual identity, or their identity with the common subject; or, in other words, that man is psychically dual.

2nd. It is further *psychologically* possible that between the two personalities existing in a single subject, intercourse should take place without their recognising their own underlying identity.

The consideration of natural sleep leads inevitably to that of its abnormal phenomena, and especially those of natural and artificial somnambulism. [Page 13] In dealing with the former of these, Du Prel cites a number of the best authenticated cases of very protracted sleep brought on by nature herself as a means of cure, and lays just and necessary emphasis upon the need of always bearing in mind the radical difference between "*causa*", and "*conditio*"; between the adequate cause of an occurrence, and the condition which, though necessary for its appearance, is still not the producer of it. He points out that the deep and prolonged sleep of nature, in which clairvoyance sometimes makes its appearance in the indication of appropriate remedies, is the *condition*, not the *cause*, of that clairvoyance. Just as, in artificial somnambulism, the mesmeric passes are the mediate cause of the deep sleep which ensues; but neither they nor the sleep itself are the cause, but merely the condition of the clairvoyance which often accompanies that state.

Du Prel then considers at some length the recorded facts and conditions of mesmeric clairvoyance,

pointing out that these abnormal faculties are clearly alluded to in the Vedas, and that they afford the strongest experimental proof of the existence of a soul in man; a soul, that is, not identical with our present daily consciousness, which, being bound up with our physical organism, must be modified if not destroyed with it, but a soul in the wider sense of a conscious transcendental Ego. In support of the genuineness and reality of clairvoyance itself, he quotes the unanimous report of a special commission of eleven doctors of the Paris Academy of Medicine, which in 1832, after prolonged and exhaustive investigation, fully confirmed the existence and genuineness of these abnormal faculties.

Furthermore, Du Prel shows that all these phenomena do not appear suddenly or *de novo* in the somnambulant state, but that they are, on the contrary, merely extensions and modifications of phenomena whose presence and action may be traced even in ordinary dreaming. Then, after refuting Dr. Braid's Hypnotic explanation of mesmerism by opposing the evidence of other observers to his, he concludes the chapter by saying :—

“In fact, somnambulism furnishes the most convincing proof of another order of things besides the sensuous, as also that man is interwoven with this transcendental order through that side of our consciousness which lies beyond the ken of our personal Ego in its normal state. Somnambulism proves that Schopenhauer and Hartmann were right in basing that passing form known as man upon Will and the Unconscious; but it proves also that this Will is not blind, and that that of which our personal Ego is unconscious is not *in itself* unconscious; and further, that between our personal selves and the Universal Substance, there must be interposed a transcendental subject, a knowing and willing being. Thus man's individuality extends beyond his passing phenomenal form, and life on earth is but one of the forms of existence possible to his true self”. [Page 14]

Among the many strange phenomena of sleep, there occur cases in which our dreams represent the state of our bodily organs, and these cases Du Prel considers in the fifth chapter, under the heading “Dream — a Physician”. Instances are cited in considerable number which show that our state of health not only gives the keynote to our dreams, but even becomes symbolically portrayed in them with surprising accuracy. Hence he concludes that in dream we are much more vividly conscious of our bodily condition than when awake; a circumstance only explicable from a displacement of the psycho-physical threshold or limit of sensation taking place during sleep.

Then, passing to the diagnosis of their own and others peoples' diseases which so often characterizes somnambulant clairvoyance, he infers, after examination of a series of remarkable instances of this faculty, that the vague and usually sub-conscious feeling of our own physical condition becomes conscious and definite in somnambulism, owing to a displacement of the threshold of consciousness following the exclusion of all external stimuli. Hence the statements of clairvoyants as to matters not relating to their own bodily state should be received with great caution, and should not be encouraged or sought after, since the sources of error to which clairvoyants are exposed must be much greater in dealing with facts not in direct physical relation to their consciousness, than in taking cognizance of such facts as present themselves spontaneously, from the displacement of the psycho-physical threshold.

In explanation of the diagnosis itself, Du Prel observes that the most advanced scientists have seen reason to ascribe “sensibility”, *i.e.*, the foundation of consciousness itself, to the ultimate atoms of which their so-called “dead matter” consists. He points out that the brain and the solar plexus are two almost

anatomically distinct centres, each of which may well be the seat of a form of consciousness, that of the solar plexus being in our waking state below the level of our consciousness; and he inclines, therefore, to the view that the latter is the centre of that consciousness which takes cognizance of our bodily states in detail, or at least is closely connected with it. And he finds a confirmation of this opinion both in statements of the clairvoyants themselves, and in the ancient records and traditions of the East.

After an exhaustive examination of the facts bearing on the subject, Du! Prel comes to the conclusion that this whole series of facts is due in the main to two causes. 1st) To an alternating and mutual relationship between Will and Idea; and 2nd) to a displacement of the psycho-physical threshold. Thus Will, or desire, excites or calls up an idea; and, *vice versa*, an Idea calls up or excites the desire or will to realise it. We are thus brought to the conclusion that our normal self-consciousness does not [Page 15] exhaust its object, our Self, but embraces only one of the two personalities forming our subject. Man is thus a monistic and a dual being: monistic as subject or individual; dual as person.

Now it is apparent on reflection that the existence of personal consciousness depends mainly on that of memory, and further, that reasoning, thought, and action depend for their value on the clearness with which our memory retains past experience and on the presence of mind with which we draw therefrom our conclusions as to the future. It is, therefore, not too much to say that in proportion as a creature rises in the scale of life its memory expands; while, on the other hand, every disturbance of the sense of personal identity in madness or mental disease is accompanied by derangement of this faculty.

But in the chapter on Dream, it was proved deductively that if our Ego is not entirely contained in self-consciousness, then some modification of the faculty of memory must accompany any manifestation of the inner kernel of our being. And to denote this latter, the word "soul", or "psyche", may appropriately be used, not in its theological, but in its purely philosophical sense; not as opposed to "body", but as denoting that element in us which lies beyond our normal consciousness and is divided from the latter by the psycho-physical threshold.

Before proceeding to analyse the disturbances which have been observed in the faculty of memory, we must draw a distinction between *Memory*, *Recollection*, and *Reproduction*. The power of the psychic organisation to recall past sensuous impressions as images is *memory*. This is the common root of both recollection and reproduction. When an image recurs without its being recognised, it is reproduction only; recollection implying reproduction accompanied by recognition as well. But memory does not embrace all the images and sensations of past life, and we may well seek the reason and law of their selection.

According to Schopenhauer, whose opinion is now widely accepted, the selection depends on the will, which he considers the indispensable basis of memory. With this opinion Du Prel agrees, so far as the will is here regarded as determining the *contents* of memory; but he points out that the possibility of reproduction and recollection proves that the forgetting of an image cannot be equivalent to its annihilation or total obliteration from our nature. It follows, therefore, that such forgotten images and thoughts must as much inhere in some basis as those not forgotten inhere in the will. And as this basis is not to be found within our self-consciousness, it must be sought without it. But the mere atomic and molecular changes in the physical brain are insufficient to account for the facts, and hence the basis sought must lie in a (to us) unconscious part of the soul. [Page 16]

Du Prel then shows that on Schopenhauer's own premises he ought to have recognized in brain and intellect the objectified Will to know the things of sense, and should therefore have concluded that Will in itself is not necessarily blind, since, just as the eye cannot see itself, so neither can our intellect see itself; *i.e.*, recognise in itself through pain and pleasure more than a metaphysical aspect of Will; while any second attribute of that Will, which Schopenhauer considers as the root of Being, must remain unknown and unperceived by the intellect as such.

To apply this to memory. Assuming that our metaphysical Will has two aspects or attributes — Willing and Knowing — the Will, as the basis of intellectual memory, would decide *its* contents, *i.e.*, those of our empirical consciousness; while in the latter attribute — Knowing — would be found the real basis of memory in general, the common receptacle of all images and thoughts without distinction. Forgetfulness would therefore be confined to our brain-consciousness, and would not extend to its transcendental side, which alone, in union with the will, would embrace our whole being.

But we have shown that it is only during sleep and analogous states that our transcendental Ego can manifest itself, and we therefore now pass on to consider the enhancement of memory and the extent and evidence of its latent riches, in dream, mesmeric somnambulism, and other abnormal states.

On all these subjects ample experimental evidence is adduced by Du Prel, from the published records of the most scientific observers; but as it would require too much space to deal with it here in detail, we shall content ourselves with indicating the general conclusions he arrives at. Du Prel demonstrates: —

1st) That the reach and clearness of memory is largely increased during sleep.

2nd) That the latent wealth of memory is enormous, and that its existence has been recognised by many competent observers in cases of madness, idiocy, fever, accident, etc.

3rd) That these latent riches become most apparent and striking in somnambulism, while in that case the subsequent and complete forgetfulness proves the previous absence from physical consciousness of these stored-up treasures of memory, which are far too complex and minute to be capable of preservation as mere molecular alterations of the brain structure.

We now come to a class of cases in which memory, which links as by a bridge our successive states of consciousness into a united whole, is so completely wanting, that, looking only to the difference between the successive states of the same person, we may well speak of "alternating consciousness". These cases go far towards giving an empirical and experimental [Page 17] proof that a single subject or Ego can split up into a dual personality.

Besides the well-known absence of memory after mesmeric trance, the same phenomenon has frequently occurred spontaneously. Du Prel cites and discusses the principal instances on record, but of these we shall quote only one, that of a Miss R-----, given by Dr. Mitchell in IV. Archiv für thierischen Magnetismus.

“Miss R----enjoyed naturally perfect health, and reached womanhood without any serious illness. She was talented, and gifted with a remarkably good memory, and learnt with great ease. Without any previous warning she fell one day into a deep sleep which lasted many hours, and on awakening she had forgotten every bit of her former knowledge, and her memory had become a complete *tabula rasa*. She again learned to spell, read, write, and reckon, and made rapid progress. Some few months afterwards she again fell into a similarly prolonged slumber, from which she awoke to her former consciousness, *i.e.*, in the same state as before her first long sleep, but without the faintest recollection of the existence or events of the intervening period. This double existence now continued, so that in a single subject there occurred a regular alternation of two perfectly distinct personalities, each being unconscious of the other and possessing only the memories and knowledge acquired in previous corresponding states.”

This very remarkable case is illustrated and confirmed by many others analogous to it, and fully justifies us in assuming at least the empirical *possibility* of a *conscious* individuality in man, of which his normal self is totally unconscious. This hypothesis also goes far to explain many curious phenomena observed in abnormal mental states which hitherto have defied explanation.

Du Prel then proceeds to apply these facts and conclusions to build up a consistent and adequate theory of memory. Having cleared the ground by proving the utter inadequateness of the materialistic theory to explain even the facts which it admits, let alone those of abnormal memory which we have just examined; putting aside the almost unthinkable attributes with which the materialists find themselves forced to endow their “atoms” in order to make their mere combinations and permutations the sole basis of memory; leaving aside even these glaring absurdities, there still remains a residuum of admitted fact which their theory cannot explain, *viz.*, our recognition of previous images and sensations, the *unity* of our consciousness, and lastly, the fact that these two factors are in a great measure independent of each other, which could not possibly be the case if both were merely due to blind atomic combinations.

But a correct theory of memory must also explain “forgetfulness”. Now, [Page 18] what happens when we forget ? Simply a disappearance from our sensuous everyday consciousness. This, however, cannot imply the annihilation of what is forgotten; otherwise its reproduction would be and remain impossible. And hence, as the theory of material traces on the brain is considered by Du Prel to be untenable, there must be a psychic organ which has the power of reproducing a mental image even when that image, as a product of its past activity, has been annihilated; and further, this organ must lie without our self-consciousness, and therefore can only belong to the (*quo-adnos*) Unconscious. But, if this organ possessed merely and only the latent potentiality of reproduction, and did not rather take up the mental image as a product into itself and there preserve it unchanged, then we should be forced to distinguish between the conscious and the unconscious within this organ itself. Since, if not, the image would, in being forgotten, merely sink back into the purely “Unconscious”, and no reason or explanation could be given why or how this “Unconscious” could return on a sudden to consciousness. Such an explanation would be none at all, and we are therefore driven to conclude that this organ is *not* in itself unconscious, and that accordingly it possesses not a merely latent potentiality of reproduction, but that it takes up into its own consciousness the images which disappear from ours.

This hypothesis, further, has the advantage of explaining how an enlargement of the field of memory can take place through a simple displacement of the psycho-physical threshold, as is the case in mesmerism, etc.

Let us compare this theory with that of the materialists. The latter assert that every thought or image leaves behind a material trace on the brain. Hence every recollection would be equivalent to an extension of the *sensuous* consciousness — the only one they recognise — beyond its previous sphere, whereby the trace so left behind becomes "illuminated", while it otherwise would remain in "darkness". But in reality we find that it is in sleep and similar states that the memory is enhanced, and that in proportion as sleep deepens, *i.e.*, in proportion as sensuous consciousness grows feebler and disappears. Whence it follows that memory cannot be a mere extension of sensuous consciousness. On the other hand, when we forget anything, our theory teaches that nothing is changed in its mental representation, which neither becomes, in some inexplicable manner, unconscious nor yet is annihilated, but there takes place an alteration in the subject or individuality of the man. This subject has a dual consciousness and is separable into two persons; so that in forgetting, as in remembering, a simple transfer of the representation in question takes place between these two persons of the same subject. [Page 19] The thought does not become unconscious, but one of the two persons of our true self, the "I" of everyday life, becomes unconscious of the existence of that thought.

What we forget is not annihilated as thought; what we remember is not begotten afresh as thought, but merely transferred into sensuous consciousness.

We have now reached the last chapter of this outline of a philosophy of Mysticism, in which Du Prel applies the results already obtained to establish the existence and indicate the nature of a monistic soul or individuality in man. In spite of the inevitable repetition which it will involve, we shall follow at least the general outlines of his argument, with the hope of bringing to a focus the proofs scattered throughout the book, and of enforcing the importance and validity of the author's conclusions.

First, then, it must be borne in mind that man, like every other organism in the scale of life, faces in two directions — gazing, as it were, on the past and the future; bearing within him the footprints and outlines of Nature's past development and history, but showing also the rudimentary organs and dormant faculties which he is destined to develop in the future. And to these dormant faculties, promises, as it were, of new worlds of experience and knowledge, belong the so-called abnormal powers and senses which have already occupied our attention. They are the germs of man's transcendental capabilities, the re-actions of his soul on impressions received from without, which, however, usually remain unnoticed and unperceived because they fall below the normal limit of sensation.

Second. In addition to the arguments already brought forward (from the phenomena of memory, etc.) for the existence of a principle in man, beyond and higher than the known laws of nature, it may be urged that the existence of organised matter proves the action of some agency, which suspends for the moment the operation of the usual laws of chemical affinity, and brings about atomic and molecular combinations of the most unstable and ephemeral character, which could never come into existence were the atoms free to follow their normal affinities; and this organising principle throughout nature may well be identified with the transcendental subject of the organism under consideration.

Thirdly. It has been shown that the Ego, individuality, or Subject in man embraces two distinct personalities, since in somnambulant and allied states the knowledge and memories present in the subject's consciousness are radically different from those present in his normal state; while further, the sense of individuality, far from being lost or weakened — as it ought to be on the Pantheistic theory of

Hartmann — or fading away into the Universal Unconscious, becomes, on the contrary, more strongly [Page 20] marked, while new psychic powers and faculties make their appearance in those states.

That we are, indeed, entitled to speak of two personalities in one and the same subject is fully borne out by the fact that the antagonism between them often extends to the mode and contents of their activity, *e.g.*, when a somnambule asleep prescribes for himself, and insists upon a remedy which is abhorrent to him when he awakes. Such instances show that the transcendental subject regards the man's situation from a purely objective, impersonal standpoint, and is as indifferent to his fate as to a stranger's — as, indeed, should be the case if the two sides of man's nature are divided by the threshold of sensation. This view is further confirmed by the dramatisation of dream-life already dealt with.

We are thus led to consider that higher Self within us (of which we are unconscious) as individual and conscious, but independent of our senses. Pursuing further the consideration of this transcendental subject and its functions, the following thoughts suggest themselves.

The transcendental Subject or Ego being thus interposed between man and the synthetic unity of existency called God, Nature, or the One Life, we should expect some fresh light to be thrown on those fundamental contradictions, which neither Theism, Pantheism, nor Materialism has been able to interpret or explain: the contradiction, for instance, between man's undying desire for happiness and the misery and suffering of his existence. Now, no view of existence, which regards man as called into being from nothingness at birth by a foreign external power (*i.e.*, as only *then* becoming an individual entity), can possibly attribute these miseries and sufferings to causes generated by himself. To reconcile the contradiction we need a view, which, while recognising to the full the ills of life and the overbalance of its suffering and misery, shall regard man's birth and life as the free act of his very being itself; a being whose individuality cannot, therefore, begin with birth, and hence must have more than a mere transient importance, must last beyond the brief moment of life's passing. If, then, I am the creation of my own actions — as both Fichte and Schelling admit — there must then be a duality of persons within me. So, alone, can I be the cause of myself, for my individuality can well be the cause and producer of my earthly personality, provided that only the sensuous, earthly personality takes its rise at birth, and Earth-life would thus result from the tendency of the individuality towards incarnation. The actual proof of this view, however, can only be given through real facts and arguments; and Du Prel then proceeds to analyse the circumstances causing the birth of any given individual, and to examine the metaphysical basis of "Love" in its bearing on human evolution. The evidence thus obtained is most [Page 21] conclusive and suggests many lines of further investigation, but is too long for quotation, and too condensed to admit of a useful summary.

In the Chapter on Memory it was proved that the passage from Consciousness into the Unconscious really implied a passage from the personal memory into the transcendental subject or individuality. At this point the materialistic theory of evolution loses sight of the process, and confesses its inability to explain how acquired mental habits and memories can be transmitted hereditarily.

Now, what is true as to the passing of memories out of consciousness, must be equally true of thought and ideas in general, of which the accumulated contributions constitute our psychic talents and powers. The individuality thus appears as the heir of our psychic earnings during life, and especially so of moral qualities and development, since the forms of intellectual knowledge (space and time) are the most

modified by death, which does not equally effect the moral nature. (See the phenomena and observations of the mesmeric death-trance and other states.)

In somnambulism we have found evidence that the process of life is not simply engaged in calling into existence ephemeral beings and then annihilating them; but that on the contrary, the object of earthly existence is the growth and strengthening of the individuality. This must be the reason why it seeks incarnation, since physical man is the common point determining, on one hand, the evolution of the individuality, on the other that of the species.

But the stress of evolution must fall wholly on the development of the species, if we assume, with the materialists, that the acquired talents and progress of the individual are only stored up in his germ-cells, by which the type of the next generation is determined; while the individual himself is finally annihilated by death. Clearly this assumption contradicts that universal law of nature, admitted by the thinkers of all schools alike, the "*lex parsimonioe*", the law of least effort. For would not far less energy be expended in producing a given progress, if the individual stored up his own mental and moral progress in successive lives for the future advantage of himself and the world, instead of merely bequeathing the objective fruits of his labours to succeeding generations ? If it be not so, then nature is wasteful of her forces, careless of the means she employs, and acts in contradiction with herself.

We found, however, in the transcendental subject, the psychic faculties of normal waking life, and if, therefore, this higher individuality but stretches, as it were, its feelers into the material world through the senses, and if, as seems almost certain, our sensuous being is capable of psychic evolution, then so also must be our true Self, our Individuality. In other [Page 22] words the individuality must absorb the essence of our conscious activity, and grow, as grows a tree-trunk from the nourishment brought it by leaf and branch.

This granted, it follows that the evolution of the individuality cannot be confined to a single earth-life, but that the distinct personal and individual character, with which we come into the world, must have been previously acquired by the same means through which it grows and expands in this life. Hence our individuality or transcendental subject must have grown into what it actually is through a long series of successive existences.

Thus, not only is the existence in general, but also the individuality of man metaphysically determined and shown to be his own creation; for as in our dreams we are unconsciously the poets, managers and even scene-painters of the plays therein enacted, so also is our individuality or Self the Synthesis of the threads by which destiny guides us through life, although the fact that this is so is not patent to our sensuous consciousness.

We will now state in brief this, at least partial, solution of the problems of life and death as a whole, and then pass on to consider its ethical bearing and the answer it gives to that mightiest of all questions — What is the purpose of life ?

The human psyche exhibits faculties which are *physiologically* inexplicable, not during the exaltation and

greatest activity of sensuous consciousness, but, on the contrary, during its complete suppression. Hence it follows that the soul must be something more than a mere product of the organism, and thought something other than a mere secretion of the brain.

Still the soul can and must be conceived of as material, but of a materiality lying as far above that of the body, as the materiality of the latter is removed from that of a stone.

Soul and consciousness are not identical conceptions. As belonging to the transcendental world the soul is unconscious, but not in itself, only in respect of the brain-consciousness. Thus the mesmeric trance which produces on the one hand the phenomena of clairvoyance, is, on the other, attended by so complete a suppression of the brain-consciousness, that the most serious surgical operations can be performed in it painlessly. This relatively, but not in itself, unconscious Ego, as the true substance of the individual, is united together with man's personal Ego, the basis of our normal everyday consciousness, into one single subject, which is, however, divided into two personalities. The man who alternately sleeps and wakes is one single subject, possessing, however, two alternating forms of consciousness, which have but few points of contact between them. [Page 23]

Hence man is not called upon to play his part in the history of the Cosmos merely as a part of the species. Man is no mere passing phantom, forced to serve another's purpose by some strange fatality, but, on the contrary, he himself, as an individual being, is capable of infinite progress towards absolute perfection.

But what is the purpose of life, the true end and object of existence ? We have seen that life's sufferings, spurring us on to progress and deeds of love and charity, thus become means to expand and develop our individuality. But they have an even more direct purpose, for in them lies that purifying power recognized alike by Christian and pessimist, by poets and thinkers. We can still say with the pessimist that through earthly suffering the will to live is checked and brought to rest; remembering, however, that this holds true but of the desire for earthly life; while the Nirvana we strive for is not absolute annihilation, but transcendental Being, and is to be attained, not through quietism and idleness, but through untiring effort on the battle-field which we ourselves have chosen for ourselves. Therefore may we say with Eckhard the Mystic, "The fastest steed to bear ye to perfection is suffering", or with the wise Hebrew, the author of Ecclesiastes, "Sorrow is better than laughter, for through sadness is the heart made wiser".

One thing alone is acknowledged by all thinkers alike as the actual result of earthly existence — the growth and enhancement of the individuality. And we shall attain earth's true object and fulfil its highest purpose by subordinating our personal interests to those of our true selves, our Individuality — in other words, by serving the cause of Universal Brotherhood; for the individuality is but an expression of the supreme synthetic unity. The entire contents of ethics may be summed up in the precept; that the personality shall serve the individuality. Thus the highest rule of conduct is impersonality and unselfishness — love and charity,