

## About Theosophy, Spirit, and Matter

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**Abstract:** The article presents some achievements in the development of modern scientific knowledge, which prove the need to change the Newtonian-Cartesian paradigm - to establish the spirit and consciousness as leaders in the studies, and put in the second place of the matter and its categories. The proofs are discovered in the development of quantum physics, transpersonal psychology, and the conclusions of representatives of the social sciences. This evidence is used to justify the need to study the theosophical doctrine of Helena Blavatsky with the leading themes in it — the unified reality, man, and the evolution of his consciousness.

**Key words:** theosophy, Helena Blavatsky, spirit, matter, consciousness

This article is a trial to show that in the development of modern scientific some directions prove the need for research and analysis of topics in the theosophical doctrine of Helena Blavatsky. That still denied doctrine is considered unscientific due to the predominant intangible nature of its conclusions. A leading role in The Secret Doctrine (1888) has consciousness as a personal and suprapersonal theme. Thus matter, fundamental to the Newtonian-Cartesian paradigm, acquires a secondary character, and the spirit comes to the fore. All topics in Blavatsky's theosophy connect with the spirit-matter. In the scope of this notion, which Blavatsky herself explicitly formulated only in The Key to Theosophy (1889), are developed various fields of knowledge such as quantum physics, transpersonal psychology has developed in recent decades. The article presents just a few examples, without detailing the scientific developments in these areas. The aim is to reveal some of the reasons for discovering theosophical alternatives to modern civilization, whose main feature is a risk.

### 1. What is Theosophy?

The name of theosophy unites the meaning of the ancient Greek θεός — God and σοφία — wisdom or Divine wisdom. Different definitions range from “Religious Philosophy”, “Modern Movement Founded in the United States in 1875, based on Buddhist and Brahmanical Theories”, and “Doctrine of the Knowledge of God”. The fluctuations also lead to interpretations of theosophy in a broad and narrow sense, and this division has been gradually overcome in recent years, without moving in the direction of a unified and generally accepted definition.

In the late 19th century, Helena Blavatsky gave some explanation for this lack, saying of attempts to formulate theosophy accurately: “The religion of wisdom is the essence and foundation of all world religions and philosophies. It is taught and practiced by a select few from the moment one becomes a thinking being. There is a purely divine ethic in practical theosophy. The definitions given in the dictionaries are simply meaningless, they are nonsense

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stemming from religious superstition and ignorance of the true spirit of the early Rosicrucians and medieval philosophers, who are called theosophists” (Blavatsky H., 1895). In *The Key to Theosophy*, Blavatsky points out: “The ethical system of theosophy is clear enough for anyone who would like to become a follower. It is the best collected from the teachings of the world’s greatest reformers. In it, you will find the ideas of Confucius and Zoroaster, Lao Tzu and the Bhagavad-gita, the commandments of Gautama Buddha and Jesus of Nazareth, of Hillel and his school, and of Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and their schools” (Blavatsky H.).

## 2. The Main Themes

The main themes of theosophical knowledge are related to consciousness. In the first place is the Absolute — the One Consciousness, an all-pervading being who is everywhere in the visible and invisible world. The absolute is the only unchanging reality, and each definition is only a faint resemblance to its essence. The absolute is the IT from which the whole visible universe originates and where it dissolves after the end of active life. In Indian philosophy, this topic contains the concepts of Brahman, Parabraman, Mulaprakriti. As in Ancient India, so in the theosophical doctrine of Helena Blavatsky, the Absolute is an eternal movement of consciousness, in which huge periods of noumenon and phenomena alternate. The phenomena originate from the unified noumenal world of the Absolute, where the noumenans of all things reside during pralaya — the period of the rest of the universe. During the activity of the universe, called just as in India — manvantara, according to the cosmic laws of rebirth, for continuous ascending evolution, for cause and effect — karma, from the noumenon arise the phenomena — cosmic matter, stars, suns, planets, beings. All of them become again part of the eternally pervasive essence of the Absolute Consciousness at the end of the manvantara or after the end of the Great Age of Brahma with a duration of 311 040 000 000 000 years. Everything in the phenomenal world is weekly — bodies, beings, processes. This is another theosophical axiom. The evolution of bodies and beings in the phenomenal world takes place in seven circles. First, the spirit descends lower and lower into the matter and after the maximum compaction, it begins to rise, spiritualizing and enriching matter. Then spirit and matter ascend to a higher evolutionary level and enrich the spark of the Absolute — the Monad, which is present in all phenomena - with the lessons learned.

## 3. Paradigm Shift and Albert Einstein

The main themes of theosophy develop in the field of metaphysics. From a philosophical point of view, other areas of scientific knowledge developed in this field in the 20th century. The scientific paradigm is changing by bringing energy to the forefront in its various manifestations, including as consciousness, while the matter is losing its leading character and the Newtonian-Cartesian paradigm remains in the background. Evidence of this is quantum physics and the discoveries that began in 1905 with Albert Einstein's theory of relativity. Legend (according to some, it is his niece's claim) states that he did not part with the volume of *The Secret Doctrine*, but sometimes legends are more than facts. In this case, the facts of quantum theory have been proven by over a century of research by scientists in the field of elementary particles or as noted by physicist Jordan Georgiev: “Modern physics shows us that our known solid, static, deterministic and immutable reality of isolated beings is rather a fluid, dynamic, synchronous and variable reality of interconnected processes in constant interaction and exchange of energy and information (...) in this comprehensive and multifaceted interacting unity consciousness and ultimately man plays a huge role. At a certain level, it seems to create a visible reality (Nikolova A., Georgiev J., 2016, pp. 141–142).

#### 4. Paradigm Shift and Fritjof Capra

In *The Secret Doctrine*, man and his consciousness as a manifestation and an integral part of the One Reality, of the Absolute, are the main subject and goal of the whole multifaceted exhibition made by Helena Blavatsky. Through it, she asserts that everything on the planets and in universes, are connected, interacting and interdependent, and the motion and energy of electromagnetism (Fohat) are constant and pervasive. It was this movement that another scientist, Fritjof Capra, realized as Shiva's Dance in *The Tao of Physics*, proving the connection between the ideas of ancient Indian philosophy and quantum physics (Capra F., 1994), to the conclusion that “the philosophy of mysticism is the most consistent philosophical basis of all scientific theories” (Capra F., 1994, p. 5).

Capra proves that the parallels between Eastern thought and physics of the 20th century are multidirectional. They are found in the general picture of the world. As well as in the experience as a method of acquiring knowledge — experiment and observation in physics and contemplation in mystical practices of ancient India. Both cases require solid training. As well as in the unity of object and subject as a community of the visible and the invisible. Also in the dynamic of the universe, in the synthesis of space and time. In *The Tao of Physics*, Fritjof Capra evaluates modern society from the perspective of these communities, and although his assessment was made in the mid - 1970s, it is relevant today: “I am convinced that the worldview based on is the theory of modern physics, is incompatible with the current structure of our society, devoid of the harmonious interconnectedness inherent in nature. For the transition to such a dynamic balance, it is necessary to change the socio-cultural structure of society and to carry out a cultural revolution in the true sense of the word. The survival of our civilization depends on our ability to make this transition. Ultimately, it depends on our ability to assimilate some of the YIN<sup>1</sup> principles of Eastern mysticism and to learn to perceive the world as a whole, in harmony with the whole universe” (Capra F., 1994, p. 180). The unity of everything in nature and the universe, in all spheres and areas of visible and invisible life as a conscious self-reproducing and self-sustaining system are at the heart of Fritjof Capra's latest concept, formulated as *The Systems View of Life*<sup>2</sup>.

Even before Capra, the question of the new relationship between matter consciousness and society was considered by notable scholars of the 20th century. In 1950, Einstein defined the mission of scientists as follows: “Man is part of the whole, which we call the universe, a part limited in space and time. He feels himself, his thoughts and feelings as something independent — a kind of optical illusion of human consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison, limiting our possibilities to personal desires and attachment to several close people. Our mission must be to free ourselves from this prison, expanding our circle of mercy to include all living beings and all nature with its beauty. No one can achieve this completely, but the pursuit of such a state is, in itself, part of the liberation and inner harmony” (Teplitskaya N.).

Before Einstein, another great scientist, Max Planck, considered the father of quantum theory, said, “We must look at consciousness as a fundamental force and matter as a derivative of it” (Teplitskaya N.).

#### 5. Paradigm Shift and David Bohm

The unorthodox ideas of one of the most important theoretical physicists of the 20th century, the American scientist David Joseph Bohm, have been recognized as contributions to quantum theory, neuropsychology, and

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<sup>1</sup> Yin is the feminine principle of energy in Chinese philosophy, it is inseparable and harmonious with Yang — masculine energy, these two opposites are constantly flowing into each other, forming the Eternal Limit — dynamic and harmonious unity.

<sup>2</sup> Capra Course, *The Systems View of Life*, 12 lectures, 25.09.2019-18.12.2019, available onlien at: <https://fall.capracourse.net/>.

philosophy of mind. Bohm's ideas about the leading role of consciousness about the matter, about the unity and holographic nature of the universe, about the illusory nature of the world, are identical with leading aspects of the theosophical doctrine of Elena Blavatsky and the mystical teachings of East and West. Professor Bohm is convinced that consciousness is a subtler form of matter, and that "the division of the universe into living and inanimate matter makes no sense" — an idea that is being discovered and is among the founders of The Secret Doctrine. The American scientist points out that "even the rock is alive in a sense, because life and information are present not only in matter but also in "energy", in "space", in "time", in "the whole Universe" (Teplitskaya N.).

David Bohm asks a very interesting and always relevant question: when and where in the past has humanity gone astray, leading to countless conflicts, divisions, and destructions. The scientist's answer is that the degradation of humanity is in the implicit consciousness. It has been going on for centuries and can be called a human tragedy because it has led to violence, corruption, riots, self-delusion. Bohm's assessment is that the current pragmatic scientific approach has contributed significantly to people's misperceptions of reality. The reason for the chaos in human relationships is in our fragmented, atomistic false thinking (Teplitskaya N.). The awakening of the mass consciousness can only happen through a change in the consciousness of the individual, Bohm believes.

## **6. Paradigm Shift and Stanislav Grof**

Among the humanitarian concepts close to the main themes of theosophy is transpersonal psychology in its specific research by Stanislav Grof. The American scientist with Czech roots and education puts spirituality at the forefront of his work as a psychiatrist and scientist. He motivates that with his many years of empiric experience as a doctor. According to Grof, spirituality is a decisive and fundamental property of the human psyche, a special kind of interaction between the individual and the cosmos, and is essentially a personal and private affair (Grof S., 2001, p. 149). From the observation of the spiritual experiences of his patients, Grof describes states such as memories of past lives, clarification of causal relationships in them and subsequent treatment of the patient, spiritual ecstasy of the relationship with unconditional consciousness (Grof S., 2001, p. 204). These are all questions and topics from the discourse of the theosophical doctrine of Helena Blavatsky. From the point of view of his experience as a doctor and scientist in the field of transpersonal psychology, Stanislav Grof points out the reasons for the crisis of modern civilization: "In the past, violence and greed have tragic consequences only for the individual, his family, and the environment. They do not threaten the evolution of the human species as a whole and, of course, do not pose a threat to the ecosystem and biosphere of the planet. Even after the most devastating wars, nature has been able to recover for decades. But in the 20th century, this situation changed radically. Accelerated technical progress, production growth, massive population growth, and, above all, the discovery of nuclear energy have changed the old balance forever" (Grof S., 2001, p. 21).

According to Stanislav Grof, it is no coincidence that "interest in the spiritual has grown rapidly in recent decades" because more and more people realize that true spirituality based on deep personal experience is an unusually important dimension of life. From the escalation of the world crisis caused by the materialistic orientation of Western technological civilization, it is clear that today we are paying too high a price for not acknowledging and rejecting the spiritual principle. We have thrown out of our lives the power that nourishes, strengthens, gives meaning and significance to all human existence (Grof S., 2001, p. 100).

## 7. Criteria for Super Scientific Knowledge

Russian astrophysicist Lev Gindilis, working on the global SETI program, which seeks intelligent extraterrestrial life, has been discussing scientific and super scientific or meta scientific knowledge for decades (Gindilis L. M., 2012). In his works, he emphasizes the mutual penetration of knowledge accepted by science and non-scientific knowledge such as art, religion, esoteric, occultism. Gindilis emphasizes that the terms “mysticism”, “occultism”, “esotericism” for years have been burdened with all sorts of prejudices and in the minds of people have lost their original high meaning. The scientist supports what Helena Roerich wrote in the 1930s that the underestimation and rejection of everything that bears the label “occult” is the result of the emergence of many sham occult organizations that have nothing to do with occult knowledge. This is a thesis that Helena Blavatsky advocated in the last quarter of the 19th century in her books. Like Helena Roerich, Lev Gindilis supports the need for a new terminological substantiation of non-scientific knowledge and quotes the words of E. Roerich, who says that the term “esoteric”, for example, sounds outdated and unnecessary (Gindilis L. M., 2012, p. 149).

Gindilis formulated 4 criteria for super scientific knowledge, assuring that “it remains entirely on the foundations of science and operates within the scientific methodology” (Gindilis L. M., 2012, p .153): 1) The reliability (authenticity) of the source; 2) The language of the source must correspond to the scientific language of the era to which it relates; 3) To what extent can the source precede its epoch in the knowledge it gives and which is based on those existing in the epoch of the creation of the source; 4) One must know well the era of the Source, the state of the science of that time. “As for the criterion of super scientific knowledge itself, it is established based on the content of the source. In this case, two forms of the criterion can be distinguished - weak and strong. The knowledge contained in the source must partly overlap with the knowledge of his age (otherwise the document will remain completely useless), and may in part exceed this knowledge” (Gindilis L. M., 2012, p .154), Gindilis said, citing *The Secret Doctrine*, *The Letters of the Mahatmas*, and the books in the “Living Ethics” series as meeting the above four criteria.

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In 2003, Blavatsky’s researcher Denis Dudinski published a list of 39 facts from the modern exact sciences — mostly from physics, astronomy, biology, about which Helena Blavatsky wrote and pointed out at the end of the 19th century (Dudinsky D., 2003). Whether this list corresponds to the scientific truth is a question that must be investigated and sufficient scientifically substantiated and recognized facts presented to accept the list unreservedly. Some of Helena Blavatsky’s predictions come true: Blavatsky knew about the equivalence of energy and mass, shown in 1905 by Einstein in his famous formula; he also wrote about the photon discovered by Einstein in 1905; knows about the Brownian motion explained by Einstein in 1905; she is aware of the inner connection of space and time discovered by Einstein; knows about the electron before its discovery in 1897; envisages a huge leap in the discovery by the science of the secrets of nature in the late 19th and early 20th centuries; the leap in science was marked by the following discoveries: the discovery of the mysterious and completely unexpected phenomenon of X-rays in December 1895 by William Conrad Roentgen; the discovery of radioactivity by Anthony Henry Becquerel in 1896; the discovery and proof of the existence of the electron by Sir J. Thomson in 1897; the discovery of alpha and beta particles from Rutherford; she knows that matter can originate from waves, etc. (Dudinsky D., 2003, pp. 54–60).

The development of scientific knowledge in its diversity and totality in the first decades of the 21st century opens a new page — the page of the so-called Sofia disciplines, whose name comes again from the Greek Sophia — wisdom. They study the universe as a whole, as an interconnected and interdependent unity of knowledge and wisdom. In this, they differ from the “logical” sciences, whose name often ends with “logic” — again from the Greek logos/word, doctrine, essence, and which study a particular subject within its framework. With each science-Logia can be indicated discipline-Sofia. Thus Theosophy corresponds to Theology (Epstein M., 2019, pp. 115–118). This correspondence limits the subject of Theosophy, but opens up opportunities for a full and detailed study and presentation of various aspects of theosophical teaching. It makes great sense to analyze the themes of theosophy as possible alternatives to modern civilization, whose main feature is a risk.

From the presentation so far it is clear that leading scientists insist on the inclusion of consciousness in the algorithm of research in various disciplines. In its deep essence, theosophy is a different type of philosophy of consciousness, whose views are directly and indirectly related to the development of human society. All the works of Helena Blavatsky ultimately aim to show and prove that positive change in society must begin with a change in personal consciousness. The process of change includes the discovery and acceptance of theosophical axioms such as infinite ascending evolution, the immortality of the spirit and the law of reincarnation, the knowledge of the action of karma, spiritual cultivation based on unconditional love and compassion. Regardless of the utopian from a modern point of view nature of these axioms and aspirations, their discussion is possible and constructive perspectives for scientific criticism and analysis.

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