



Soul of Psychology, Spirit of Theology- A Review

Ms. Manisha

PU, India

ABSTRACT

Psychology was once defined as the study of soul. However, with the modernization in the field and research that is conducted from years, the soul of psychology vanished and was replaced by study of behaviour. The concept of the soul was present in early Greek thinking and has been an important feature of many philosophical and religious systems. Science has ignored the soul of psychology and focused on materialism, positivism and reductionism. However, the soul still exists and is the sole of person's identity in the terms of moral, emotional and aesthetic experiences. Is that soul similar to the spirit of theology?

Keywords: Soul, Spirit, Psychology, Theology, Nativistic, Appetitive, Pineal gland, Meditate, Neurotic, Spiritual, Psychic, Melatonin, Endocrine, Trinity.

Introduction

Earlier Greek psychology defined Psychology as the *Science of Soul*: Psyche which means *soul* and logos which means *to study*. According to **Aristotle's** psychology, the element of the mind is nothing but the soul. **Aristotle (384-322 BC)** thinks of the soul as a general principle of life. He defines the soul as the first actuality of a natural body which potentiality has life and the soul dies at the demise of the body. His theory claims that psychology is concerned not only with humans but with plants and animals too. In other words, Aristotle claims that psychology is concerned with giving an account of all those activities that are characteristics of living things. Plato, unlike **Aristotle** had conjectured that man is a composite of soul that is non-physical and a body, which is physical. **Plato (424-348 BCE)** was the first person in the history of philosophy to believe that the soul was both the source of life and mind. Plato's psychology is nativistic but leaves ample evidence for developmental influences. The search of soul and its' location have been a subject of much speculation. Though many scholars believed that soul is located in the body. However, it was **Galen** who used **Plato's** description of the soul and emphasized on the logic in the brain, the spirited in the heart and the appetitive in the liver. Since centuries, some great physicians, psychologists and neuro-scientists have done a good amount of studies to validate the location of soul in the physical dimension and some have reached to the conclusion that it is in the middle of the brain somewhere between the hypothalamus and pituitary gland. **Rene Descartes (1590-1650)** was highly interested in anatomy and physiology. He paid too much attention on these subjects and discussed the pineal gland both in his first book, **The Treatise of Man (1637)** and then in his last book, **The Passion of the Soul (1649)**. Nowadays in the medical research, it is found that the pineal gland is an endocrine organ that produces the hormone melatonin in amounts that vary with the time of day. **Galen (130-210 CE)** who was a Greek medical doctor and philosopher who discussed the pineal gland in his writings. He explained that this gland resembles to nuts found in the cones of the stone pine and due to its appearance, it is called pineal gland. According to **Galen** the body is the instrument of the soul and it is adapted to the habits and facilities of the soul. The use of various organs depends on the soul. The human soul grows until death. **Glen** commented that the pineal gland is just a "gland" partly because of its appearance and partly because it appeared to support local blood vessels, which he believed to be the function of all glands. Unlike **Galen, Descartes** thought that the pineal gland is the part of the body with which the soul is most immediately associated. He reasoned that the pineal gland must be responsible for the dual function of sleeping and waking. Descartes argued that the pineal gland is the seat of the soul. Brain scans suggest that the area surrounding the gland is activated when people meditate. Now the question is that is psychology a part of theology or vice-versa. Psychology is the study of soul, mind or human behaviour whereas theology gives specific instructions on how one might become more emotionally and spiritually healthy. The soul connects with the spirituality through meditation. Meditation is a process that joins/connects the soul with the divine power.

Many spiritual scholars believe that neurosis is nothing but spiritual immaturity. **NEUROSIS** is not as pathological labelled disorder, but as the organism's natural response to developmental and environmental stresses on the path to maturation. It is a developmental challenge, the surmounting of which brings maturity or wisdom. Mental illness was believed to be due to supernatural power or possession by evil forces. With the work of ancient Greeks and Romans, society's mental illness was viewed as medical condition. The focused on the concept of soul and that gained the interest of many psychologists and modern day physiologists. Thus, study of soul got its relevance in the subject of psychology. However, with the research of various psychologists, the soul has no mass. Psychologists do not need to assume that people have souls. They believe that there is no need of soul to treat addiction, phobia, anxiety and depression. Their work is to modify behaviour. It is said that psychology lost its soul in 1930s. By this time, psychology became a discipline of science by relying on experimentation and control. Soul is a hypothetical concept and is of no use in cognitive and emotional dysfunction. Rather the brain is the centre of all the activities. Manipulation of the brain is sufficient to alter emotions and mood. Brain is the centre where thinking takes place,

sensations become perception, where decisions are made, memories and beliefs are held. As **D.K. Johnson** said: *There is nothing left for the soul to do.*

We have seen the existence and death of soul with the research on the topic in scientific realm but what is the spirit in theology? Does that soul of psychology still exist in the spirit of theology? Is it the person's identity in the terms of moral, emotional and aesthetic experiences? Is that soul similar to the spirit of theology? Firstly, there is overlap in the entities, which psychology and theology take in their central object of study. Theology is the study of God (Theos) and psychology is in the study of soul or mind (Psyche). The human being is made in the image of God, and that image is supposed to reside in the human soul. In theological sense, *soul* is a combination of spirit (breath of life). Genesis 2:7- "**And the Lord God formed man of dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.**" Theological concept emphasizes that God is the centre of human existence because of divine intervention; human being is free from the sins of the body that means the body and soul are detached. The body perishes but the soul is unchanging entity that never dies but exists in other realms. Famous psychologists and scholars like Freud, Jung and Skinner did not believe in the theological concept of trinity. Their theories or rather psychological theories are based on the concept of soul and mind. As for them religions are systems of healing for psychic illness. This false idea about God leads to plenty of other false ideas about man. Theology studies the critical spiritual issues that psychology is unable to diagnose. The *soul* in psychology disappears after death of the body. However, theology says that the soul is reunited with God. Ecclesiastes 12:7- "**Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return to God who gave it.**" Spirit of theology is an experience of connecting with the higher power and involves a search for the meaning in life. Spirituality can benefit your mental health and helps to face personal challenges. Psychology at times incorporates theological concepts to address human sufferings. Moreover, theology reflects the concepts of psychology to deal with the unutterable soul trouble. The unknown future beyond death is still a mystery but what remains is just the soul of our existence.

Conclusion

Both psychology and theology needs to be integrated. Psychology studies the human behaviour and theology is an elaboration of the existence of divine and humanity. One studies the existence of humankind from earth's perspective and the other studies the existence and spiritual growth of humanity. How theology intersects with psychology is not always static but at each developmental phase, our lived practice of both may acknowledge as valuable resources. Many of the human mental issues can be solved by spiritual meditation. Spiritual meditation gives peace to our disturbed soul in the midst of a stress- filled world. It helps to calm our souls in God's presence. A wandering mind gathers torments that are a concern for the soul but the spiritual yearning maybe an invitation from our soul to calm the storm and find the truth of existence. The soul of psychology never died it is still there lingering in the shadows. Let it merge with the spirit of theology to go beyond the realm of existence.

Author Note

Manisha is a Psychologist cum Counsellor, a Master's degree holder in Clinical Psychology and Applied Counselling, Masters in Business Administration, Graduate in Education and Honours in Psychology with fifteen years of experience in the field of Educational and School Psychology. This article is based on the field study/experience and is not a part of any affiliated research programme.

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