

THE NATURE OF THE SOUL

presupposes a correct acquaintance with the human organism, especially the brain, the chief organ of psychic activity. The great majority of "psychologists" have little or no acquaintance with these anatomical foundations of the soul, and thus it happens that in no other science do we find such contradictions and untenable notions as to its proper meaning and its essential object as are current in psychology. This confusion has become more and more palpable during the last thirty years, in proportion as the immense progress of anatomy and physiology has increased our knowledge of the structure and the functions of the chief psychic organ.

What we call the soul is, in my opinion, a natural phenomenon; I therefore consider psychology to be a branch of natural science—a section of physiology. Consequently, I must emphatically assert from the commencement that we have no different methods of research for that science than for any of the others; we have in the first place observation and experiment, in the second place the theory of evolution, and in the third place metaphysical speculation, which seek to penetrate as far as possible into the cryptic nature of the phenomena by inductive and deductive reasoning. However, with a view to a thorough appreciation of the question, we must first of all put clearly before the reader the antithesis of the dualistic and the monistic theories.

The prevailing conception of the psychic activity, which we contest, considers soul and body to be two distinct entities. These two entities can exist independently of each other; there is no intrinsic necessity for their union. The organized body is a mortal, material nature, chemically composed of living proto-