

## Brain Mind and Soul

An extract from *Your Soul* by Peter Bruce

<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B008ZX3MJK/>

What is the difference between brain, mind and soul? If you ask this question to a group of people you will get many different answers.

Following on from the theme of animating spirit, human intelligence works on at least three levels, responding to the animal spirit, the human spirit and the spirit of faith.

The animal brain responds through sense perception. Animals are neurologically hard-wired to respond to their environment. For example, with the onset of winter, birds will migrate from deep in the southern hemisphere to northern hemisphere locations. They don't appear to learn this behaviour – it is neurologically patterned. A young foal is able to walk very soon after birth, but with human babies this takes a year. Their young brains are learning so much and creating new neurological patterns. Some mammal brains are larger than human brains, so clearly the size of the brain isn't the determining factor for human intelligence.

The human spirit activates our intellect and consciousness, transcending the animal spirit. We are self-aware and are able to construct our own worlds. While the animal brain is mostly hard-wired, humans have the capacity to create new neural networks that pattern human behaviour and thinking for us. We can establish new patterns, and, if they don't become habitual, discard them later if needed. This creative power we have, enables us to manifest all manner of social creations, such as sports clubs, musical genres, the concept of hire purchase – a vast and limitless array of human conceptions. It gives rise to a galaxy of diverse human expression.

To those that deny the spirit, human consciousness is the highest expression of intelligence – and as good as it gets. And the diversity of expression of the human spirit generates good and evil in our world.

But the spirit of man has two aspects: one divine, one satanic – that is to say, it is capable of the utmost perfection, or it is capable of the utmost imperfection. If it acquires virtues, it is the most noble of the existing beings; and if it acquires vices, it becomes the most degraded existence.<sup>i</sup>

The spirit of faith opens a whole new realm to our intelligence. It makes us complete as humans and creates a new and infinite dimension to our intelligence. It provides the way to transcend the limitations of our conscious mind.

The fourth degree of spirit is the heavenly spirit; it is the spirit of faith and the bounty of God; it comes from the breath of the Holy Spirit, and by the divine power it becomes the cause of eternal life. It is the power which makes the earthly man heavenly, and the imperfect man perfect. It makes the impure to be pure, the silent eloquent; it purifies and sanctifies those made captive by carnal desires; it makes the ignorant wise.<sup>ii</sup>

Note here that the subconscious mind does not figure much in the Bahá'í Writings. Shoghi Effendi reinforces this – “There is nothing definite in the Teachings concerning the subconscious mind's relation to the spirit of man.”<sup>iii</sup> However, Shoghi Effendi does say in the same passage that the “rational faculty is a manifestation of the power of the soul”. It would seem then, that our human intelligence can be conceptualised as a combination of our animal, human and spiritual natures. When the body dies, the soul is animated through the spirit of faith.

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<sup>i</sup> `Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 144

<sup>ii</sup> `Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 144

<sup>iii</sup> , *Shoghi Effendi, Lights of Guidance*, p. 509