THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SPIRIT

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The Psychology of Spirit

The Science of Spirit in contrast to psychological thinking

The question of the human soul has occupied mankind since the beginning of its history. When Aristotle wrote his dissertation 'On the Soul' in the year 350 B.C., psychology had already attained scientific rank, although it was still embedded in philosophy. Since that time, there have been repeated attempts to find something valid about mental behaviour. Yet not until the last 100 years has psychology existed as an independent branch of science. The doctor and philosopher Wilhelm Wundt of Leipzig contributed decisively to this new science by summarizing all the theories and findings which had appeared up to his time. By 1879, he had founded the first psychological laboratory in the world, which produced many great psychologists. Since then, psychology has been recognized as an independent and experimental science.

However, psychology as we know it today — after its stormy 20th century development — represents no unified scientific system. Rather, under the name of psychology, we find a multiplicity of very different, partly even contrary, directions of research. Some efforts in their beginnings show a strong similarity to Christian Science, while others stand in direct opposition to it. As a result, it is not meaningful to generalize and speak simply of psychology, as if there were one single, binding doctrine.

Despite this divergence of theories and research, we see that today psychological explanations and conceptions influence almost all spheres of human life. Even if we know nothing about psychology and never come into direct contact with any particular school of psychology, we can hardly withdraw from today's general mental climate which is so strongly stamped with psychological thought. From the raising of children to the care of the elderly, we are besieged by psychological advice. Therefore if we contrast "psychology, or the Science of Spirit, God" (369:25), with the psychology of human thinking, we must see that we are not judging or even attacking one or the other psychological doctrine. Rather, from the standpoint of Christian Science, we are much more concerned with uncovering and becoming conscious of the extent to which we let ourselves be influenced by the general mental atmosphere — by the belief
that the problems of human behaviour and society can be solved through psychological methods. In this contrast between psychology as the Science of Spirit and the psychology of human thinking, there is no intent to criticize, only to clarify the different standpoints and methods.

The roots of psychology. Although its second major root is physiology, psychology essentially grew out of philosophy. Philosophy is defined as the striving of the human spirit to understand the nature and relationships of all things. Physiology is a biological science, occupying itself with the processes of material life. Thus psychology is the child of two areas of research, both of which are anchored in the human-material system of reference: first, the human spirit always strives for understanding and investigates humanly incomprehensible things (philosophy); second, the human always wants to explore materially tangible, physical processes (physiology). In contrast to this standpoint of psychology, Christian theology has always attempted to explain the ‘soul’ as the non-material part of man coming from God; yet Christian theology has provided no scientifically valid evidence for its claims, since it fundamentally lacks a scientific approach to its subject ‘God’.

The Science of Spirit, God, on the other hand, rests on the divine system of reference alone and relies wholly on a divinely scientific method. Its origin is Spirit, God, not the human spirit or human-material thinking; consequently, its methods are purely spiritual. If we keep in view this important distinction, we already rid ourselves of much misunderstanding.

Psychological thinking cannot serve as a stepping-stone to the understanding of Christian Science. Psychology — like medicine — is based on a world-model which is fundamentally dualistic. For example, psychology goes out from the belief that man ideally represents a harmonious union of body, soul (psyche) and spirit. Precisely what is meant by ‘soul’ cannot be explained with a short definition. But in every case, psychological thinking means by the term ‘soul’ something that is not purely spiritual, but is rather a quantity which can be stamped by inner or outer material factors, a mental realm which can be filled with all possible contents. Thus, like medicine, psychology — and with it psychotherapy — works with material, psychophysical (material-mental) means. Often human conversation stands in the centre of treatment; besides this, all other possible measures — such as suggestion or psychopharmacy — support the treatment. As a result, psychology and psychotherapy distinguish
themselves from the classical school of medicine by their different object of investigation. They no longer have only the bodily good of man in view, but before all else, his mental good. They search for the laws and rules that determine mental processes.

Because psychology and psychotherapy have turned away from the materialism of the 19th century and taken the realm of the mental as their central concern, many who aspire toward the spiritual are strongly attracted to these mental disciplines. Why? The renunciation of the physical-material is falsely equated with an inclination toward the spiritual. Similarly in Christian Science, whoever has only a superficial concept of Christian Science sees in it merely a system of 'right thinking'. This superficial and false concept gives rise to the erroneous view that psychology and Christian Science have much in common: for both, the body is not of central interest. However this view rests on misunderstanding. Wherein lies the difference?

Whereas psychology assumes a dualism of body and soul, Christian Science is opposed to dualism. It rests on the principle of the unity of being, in which God, Spirit, is the only. From this basis of spiritual monism, the truly spiritual goes far above the realm of the mental — above human thinking, feeling and dualistic beliefs. As the "Science of Spirit, God", Christian Science is not a discovery of the human spirit. Rather, the textbook of Christian Science, 'Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures' by Mary Baker Eddy, presents those categories of divine being through which God reveals itself. Thus, the standpoint of Christian Science is completely different from that of psychology. Whereas psychology seeks to grasp mortal man as a corporeal being, Christian Science explains spiritual man as an expression of the nature and activity of God, Spirit. Further, Christian Science shows how an understanding of spiritual manhood has a healing effect on us.

This fundamental difference in aim between psychology and Christian Science shows that psychological thinking cannot be regarded as a first step to Christian Science. The investigation of all that comprises the material, mortal man with his thinking and feeling cannot help us understand anything about the nature and essence of the spiritual man, that which is the reflection of God. We cannot reach genuine conclusions about true being if our starting-point is the duality of the human-material system of reference. Psychology and psychotherapy stand no nearer to
Christian Science than does medicine. They are equally material: medicine is physically-material throughout; psychology and psychotherapy are mentally-material. But in each case, "Christian Science differs from material science" (123:30).

Progress through psychology. Like medicine, psychology has its successes. For example, by far the most important contribution of psychology has been to awaken the consciousness of man to the realm of the mental. Many areas of research—medicine, education, the social sciences, jurisprudence—have received new impulses through psychology and found these new insights of much practical use. Seeing this undeniable progress, we very often assume that the conspicuous success of psychology proves its validity and recommends psychology as a right path. Thus the question arises again and again: Why should we choose either Christian Science or psychology? Why can't we combine the two, relying on one teaching whenever we have no success with the other? Is the progress won through medicine and through psychology bad?

Christian Science allows no mingling. From the standpoint of Christian Science, the question must be put differently. The issue is not whether the progress obtained through investigation in the various fields of knowledge is good or bad. There is nothing to be gained by denying the blessing of so many genuine discoveries appearing in the course of the evolution of mankind. The textbook of Christian Science explicitly holds: "In the material world, thought has brought to light with great rapidity many useful wonders" (268:1-2). Rather, the question is: What gives rise to these "useful wonders"? What law of divine being stands behind the phenomenon of irresistible evolution in the history of mankind? What motivates this progress, touching all areas of human life?

Christian Science declares: "progress is the law of God" (233:6). The student of Christian Science will always acknowledge without envy the successes of other fields of knowledge and rejoice over every advancement of use to mankind. But as Christian Science also shows, genuine progress does not come from the human spirit; it is only possible because perpetual unfoldment belongs to the nature of divine being. The source of all true progress — regardless of which human sphere progress is manifested in — is God, the one infinite Being. It must therefore be our first concern to study that Science which demonstrates God as the Principle of this one Being. We must more and more school ourselves in the categories of
spiritual being. As we do this, we naturally separate ourselves from all the human-material, limited conceptions of existence — from limited conceptions of God, of man, of the universe and of what constitutes true progress. Step by step, we drop the human-material system of reference as the foundation of our perceptions and abandon the very basis on which psychology rests. Therefore it is impossible in practice to mingle Christian Science with psychology. The more we culture the spiritual foundations of the first, the less we think, reason and perceive from the limited concepts of the second.

**Mental self-knowledge in Christian Science**

In a short paragraph with the title “Anatomy defined” (462:20-463:4), the 13th chapter of the textbook specifies the foundation of the psychology of Spirit. This explanation appears in the chapter “Teaching Christian Science” with good reason. The 13th chapter deals primarily with the state of consciousness of the true representative of Christian Science, who, through strict adherence to God (that is, to the seven synonymous terms for God), attains the perfect standard. In other words, the chapter explains how strict adherence to Mind, Spirit, Soul, Principle, Life, Truth and Love establishes in us an attitude that makes us Principle-idea, the true Christian Scientist. Through this impersonal attitude, we see that the true Christian Scientist is not a human person but the idea of divine self-perfection. This divine self-perfection reflects itself in consciousness when, through mental self-knowledge, we maintain a divinely correct concept of what constitutes our true self. We learn to discover who we are from the standpoint of the categories of divine being and stop defining ourselves according to the human-material system of reference. Accordingly the spiritually conceived mental self-knowledge or psychology makes quite definite demands on us — spiritual demands to which human thinking must bow. What are these demands?

*The demands of mental self-knowledge.* If we read the section in the textbook on mental anatomy, we find the following definite and distinct demands. With analysis, or the “dissection of thoughts,” we should:

1. discover the quality, quantity and origin of thoughts (Mind);
2. order thoughts rightly (Spirit);
3. excise or destroy error (Soul);
4. base ourselves on the right mental anatomy that Christian Science teaches (Principle);
5. give up false methods and find the true methods of life (Life);
6. attain dominion over the body (Truth);
7. fulfil the predetermined goal and so effectively overcome disease (Love).

Many lines of psychology would agree to most of these demands. However, this partial agreement as to what should be done gives a further reason why psychology sometimes exercises such a strong power of attraction over us. Instead of accepting this attraction to psychology, we should recognize the crucial difference, namely, the difference in how these demands are to be fulfilled, for methods differ greatly. This cannot be otherwise. To grasp its subject, psychology appeals to everything which is at the disposal of human thinking. By contrast, Christian Science teaches that the student must never substitute “his own views for Truth” (462:11); everyone who “would demonstrate the healing of Christian Science” must abide strictly by the rules of Truth, that is, by that which God declares and knows. All “deductions from material hypotheses… differ from real Science because they are not based on the divine law.” (273:7)

How does the psychology of Spirit provide us with a wholly spiritual method of mental self-knowledge? To answer this question we must consider more closely the divine law of mental anatomy or mental self-knowledge as it is stated in the textbook on pages 462:20 — 463:4. Different from every other teaching, this method of mental self-knowledge rests on the activity of the nature of God as Mind, Spirit, Soul, Principle, Life, Truth and Love. Mental self-knowledge teaches us as students of Christian Science how to recognize our true self. Specifically, through seven demands, we see how we can accept our divinely based and formed mentality.

Mind

“All, when conceived of spiritually, is mental self-knowledge, and consists in the dissection of thoughts to discover their quality, quantity, and origin.”

In order to discern the cause of a certain behaviour, a psychologist uses the method of dissecting or analyzing thoughts. In place of the earlier judging and condemnation, today’s method is one of analysis. This
method tries to explain where particular mental dispositions come from and wherein lie causes for actions arising from such dispositions. We find this method being used everywhere. For example in jurisdiction, psychological opinion is playing an ever greater role. If we look at what we think and feel with a knowledge programmed by psychology, we encounter numerous mental and material causes interior and exterior to ourselves which explain why we think, feel and act precisely as we do. Our thoughts may still be negative, untrue or self-destructive, yet if we continue the analysis long and intensively enough, we almost always find a reason which makes everything explicable. Though our mentality is false and destructive, we feel justified, for it has a cause.

To give due credit to psychology, it is quite an important advancement for human society to abandon the old religious and oppressive method of condemning people for what they do. As psychology teaches, it is far better to try to find a solution through understanding the problem. Nonetheless, measured by divine law, there is a very great danger in this method. In as much as one believes that one finds the cause for thinking and feeling as one does in human, mental and material circumstances, the existence of the most destructive tendencies in men become immediately legitimated. If there is a cause for negative beliefs, then their expression and activity is not only inevitable but also justified. Once we find and accept such a cause for a disharmonious or sick condition, the condition becomes a steadfast reality for us. Rather than liberating us, this method entrenches us in the problem.

From the standpoint of Christian Science, it is “mental quackery to to make disease a reality — to hold it as something seen and felt — and then to attempt its cure through Mind.” (395:21) As students of Christian Science, we go out from the fact that divine Mind, God, is the first and only cause of all that has ever existed in being. From this divine origin, the divine qualities of every true activity can be explained. If the dissection of our thoughts shows that a thought agrees with the nature of divine Mind — thus indicating that its origin is in God, Mind — then this thought has the quality of an idea and must be as perfect as its divine origin. By contrast, if the thought does not originate in divine Mind, but in conscious or unconscious human-material thinking — from mortal mind — then it has only the quality of an illusion.

As a result, the spiritually-scientific analysis of thoughts is not con-
cerned with ferreting out a multiplicity of different positive or negative human causes. Instead, "Science says: All is Mind and Mind's idea. You must fight it out on this line." (492:19) In order to meet the demand of discovering the quality, quantity, and origin of thoughts, we must adhere to the understanding of Christian Science; specifically, we must see that everything which does not flow from the one and only cause of divine Mind does not exist in reality. If we follow the full implications of this fact, we realize that the human mind is incapable of making this right analysis; only the divine Mind, which knows only ideas, can analyze correctly. Therefore true mental self-knowledge cannot proceed from the suppositions of the human mind; it must be based on divine Mind-reading — on the activity of the divine Mind forever knowing its own ideas.¹

Spirit

"Are thoughts divine or human? That is the important question."

How can we rightly value thoughts, feelings and the types of behaviour that these thoughts foster? Those influenced by the new views of psychology take a particular position on this question. The traditional judgement-scale of good and evil, according to which everything has been classified, is now yielding more and more to a new scale for valuation. This development follows quite naturally from the psychological method of analysis: as soon as thoughts and feelings (independent of their quality and origin) are regarded as necessary effects of self-existent causes, the moral and theological standard of good and evil no longer seems helpful or applicable. Instead, one is inclined to classify thoughts, feelings and ways of behaviour as neither good nor evil, but as necessities enabling us to survive as well as we can. Changes in character are no longer motivated by a desire for moral improvement but rather from the necessity of guaranteeing the physical and psychological survival of the individual and of making his life in society bearable.

Again, to give due credit to psychology, this tendency to abandon good-bad judgements of people represents a certain advancement. All too often, the quick condemnation of a person comes from ignorance about the complex relationships that give rise to his conduct.

¹ See also: Max Kappeler, 'The Development of the Christian Science Idea and Practice'. p. 50.
Nonetheless, as with the method of psychoanalysis, there lies a great danger in this material-survival standard of valuation. To replace the moralistic, purely human and usually ignorant criticism, psychology has offered no true, divine standard to enable us to distinguish between that which is correct and that which is false. The important question: Are thoughts divine or human? is not asked.

Christian Science, on the other hand, gives this standard. Christian Science declares that God is Spirit—the good, the only reality, that which alone constitutes true substance. Thus the understanding of reality that we need in order to distinguish whether a thought is divine or human can only come from Spirit. No mortal can correctly value events, behaviour or thoughts, for mortals rely wholly on the human-material system of reference. What we need, to value all things rightly, is a certain criterion to sort out what is good (that is, divine) from what is false (that is, human and material). How else could we promote the right in ourselves as well as separate ourselves from that which is false? This distinction can only be made from a higher standpoint than human thinking; it must come from the understanding which Spirit brings. Spiritually conceived, it is irrelevant whether a thought or a feeling is considered humanly good or humanly bad. Rather, the central question is: What is real? What is the reality underlying all being? Again this question can only be answered by an understanding which comes from God, Spirit. If the thought is divine, then it comes from the divine Mind, has the quality of an idea and so is real. By contrast, if the thought is human, it is unreal; its father is not divine Mind, but mortal mind, that which brings forth nothing but illusions.

Why is such a sharp distinction necessary? Mental self-knowledge, as Christian Science teaches it, represents a purifying process. Step by step, everything is discarded in us which does not reflect the divine self-perfection. This spiritual capacity to clearly distinguish what is real from what is unreal (i.e. which thoughts are divine and which are human) is absolutely necessary for us to proceed with mental self-knowledge and its practical purification. When we sort out the divine from the human, we recognize the illusion in human thought and must deal with it accordingly, as the next step shows.
Soul

"This branch of study is indispensable to the excision of error."

Scarcely anyone who conceives of man through psychology will agree with this demand of Soul to excise error. Why? The answer lies in the different concepts of the self of man. What do we identify as our true self? Much is said of the self of man — of our identity. By and large, however, we regard everything which we consciously or unconsciously carry within ourselves and express as belonging to our identity. This concept of identity gives rise to the psychological teaching that we must accept our difficulties as part of our ego, our self. According to this view, one's aim should be to learn to accept oneself completely — with all one's weaknesses, eccentricities and shortcomings. Indeed to do this is to accept one's humanity.

This conception develops inevitably from the standpoint and method of modern psychology already explained. Specifically, if the negative in man represents a reality — a reality resulting from self-existent causes — then it would be cruel to classify this reality, upon which we have scarcely any influence, as erroneous, false and even worthy of annihilation. Consequently most psychologically oriented therapies reject the very concept of sin. This step is definitely positive insofar as it overcomes the old moral conception that the 'sinner' (i.e. whoever has difficulties with himself and therefore does not behave according to the norm) must be led to betterment through penance. Today through psychology, we see more and more confirmation of what Paul emphasized centuries ago, namely, that man cannot change or better himself by his own power. Accordingly we should not be condemned for our 'sins' — our difficulties — but rather should be helped.

Nonetheless, this humanly beautiful attitude is flawed. If we examine it more closely from the standpoint of Christian Science, we discover a serious error. What is it? In the process of trying to spare the person, this view spares the error, the sickness which torments the person. It takes away the possibility of perfection and health because it identifies us with the very defects that we want and need to abandon. Rather than freeing us from error and error's effects, this view unwittingly binds us to error.

By contrast, the mental self-knowledge taught by Christian Science exercises no false tolerance toward error but rather demands and pre-
cipitates error's destruction. Like psychology, Christian Science demands that we discover, completely accept and affirm man's true identity. However, this identity is not determined by the human-material system of reference, but only by God. The definition of the nature of God in Christian Science includes the aspect of God as Soul. Soul is that great factor in being which bestows unchangeable identity on everything which Mind creates and which Spirit understands as the only reality; because God is Soul, nothing that is of a divine origin can ever lose its nature of perfection. Man, as the reflection of divine self-perfection, can have only a divinely perfect self. To preserve the identity of man's perfect self, Soul translates itself to us as that divine power which transforms everything which does not correspond to perfection. God, Soul, puts the consuming fire on us, burning up everything sick, bad and ungodly, and thereby radically annihilating or excising error from human consciousness and experience.

If we know and love God as Soul, we sense the blessing of this third demand. We recognise that the excision of error — the dropping of all thoughts that are not of God — is unavoidable. Only this radical destruction of error frees our self from all that does not truly belong to it. Thus only through "the excision of error" can we find our actual, divine mission: our true identity comes to light. No method which accepts that which is faulty and insufficient as part of our self, our identity, can make us free or show our true destiny. God is the Soul of man (see 280:26); therefore God, Soul, alone bestows on man his true self. Soul understands the true man only as the reflection of divine being, untouched by anything ungodly.

Where have these three demands of spiritually-conceived psychology led us? The dissection of thoughts in the Christianly scientific sense does not turn us to the conceptions and phenomena of human knowledge but rather utilizes the standard of the seven synonymous terms for God. Mind answers our question about the quality and origin of our thoughts. From this standpoint, we can measure through Spirit whether we are culturing divine thoughts in our consciousness, which alone are good and real, or whether we are sunk in human thoughts and views which are not divinely good and which therefore have no reality. This leads us through Soul to the consistency of our true self, by which we steadfastly give up the feelings, desires and thoughts in us that Mind
and Spirit have shown to be false. We let Soul so transform us that everything which does not correspond to the divine perfection of our true selfhood is destroyed. These three steps rest on the Science of divine Principle.

**Principle**

"*The anatomy of Christian Science teaches...*"

Modern psychology clearly states that we cannot grasp man completely; we can only describe certain aspects of man. For example, psychology can deal with man with respect to his individual characteristics, to his family relations, to his role in society, etc. There are even currents within modern psychology which maintain that psychological research cannot understand the truth about man, since there is absolutely no truth independent of the concepts of the scientists.

In practice, someone seeking psychological advice often finds that from the standpoint of psychology, there is no absolute solution to his question; rather he is always advised according to the personal position of his counsellor toward this or that theory or method. In other words, the direction of his treatment depends on many external and arbitrary factors — for example, on the type of relationship that develops between him and his therapist, or even on the decision of his adviser on the psychological doctrine to be used as the basis of treatment.

By contrast, the dissection of thoughts as presented in the textbook does not rest on persons and varying theories but on an established divine Principle — on God. The steps which Mind, Spirit and Soul dictate to us always lead to solutions and answers, for behind this method lies "the divine Principle and Science of all healing" (20:31). It is this Principle which encompasses all answers within itself and summarizes them in the system of Science. Through Mind, Spirit and Soul, we have the principle of solution, effective for all men regarding all problems and questions at all times and in all circumstances. There is no question that does not find an answer through this fundamental, absolute Principle. This divine Principle — embracing the Principle of the psychology of Spirit and its true spiritual method of life — is taught through Science. How? Specifically, the anatomy of Christian Science teaches us to understand our true self through Mind, Spirit and Soul. Thus the spiritually scientific dissection of thoughts involves neither the person of a therapist
nor our own personal thinking; that which is personal cannot inform us of what we are or where our way leads. Instead, as we turn to the anatomy of Christian Science, we no longer depend on persons partially contradicting one another or on limited and contradictory doctrines; rather, we let our being — our true self — emerge from the comprehensive system of divine metaphysics, which includes within itself the spiritually correct answer to all questions.

Life

"... when and how to probe the self-inflicted wounds of selfishness, malice, envy, and hate. It teaches the control of mad ambition."

The question: how can we get along with our self and with our environment? raises the issue of our individuality. 'Individuality' usually means the characteristic traits that distinguish one person from all other persons. Thus we believe that every person is unique because each has certain predispositions, each has enjoyed a certain upbringing, and each has been exposed to different environmental conditions. Through these different conditionings, specific character traits and abilities grow up in each one of us. These different sets of traits then give us our unchangeable individuality — or so we believe.

This human concept of what constitutes our individuality almost inevitably results in behaviour-patterns which cause "self-inflicted wounds": selfishness, malice, envy, hate, ambition. Why? If we go out from the belief that man's individuality is primarily that which distinguishes us from others, then it is only natural that we act in the interests of this separate individuality, making us occasionally selfish, malicious, envious, hate-filled and ambitious. In our false conception, individuality means allowing ourselves certain characteristics and abilities by denying ourselves many others. A chain of false conclusions ensues: we constantly compare ourselves with what others are, have and can do; we believe we must be selfishly concerned for our own advantage, so as to have a better individuality than another; thus we are glad even though another suffers a defeat; eventually we develop a passionate, malignant disposition toward others whom we believe to have greater abilities than our own. When we feel that our individuality is lacking — as a separate individuality always is — we try to be more satisfied with our individuality by going forward with humanly unsurpassing zeal; we ambi-
tiously strive for goals that we ourselves have set. However much may be accomplished by these efforts, they all follow from a false method of life.

In Christian Science, the dissection of thoughts leads to true methods of life. Science declares God to be not only Mind, Spirit, Soul and Principle, but also Life—the infinite divine individuality of being. Through Life, we perceive where the true individuality of man lies: in God, not in mortal characteristics. Etymology can help us somewhat with the clarification of the concept. Individuality comes from the Latin ‘individuus’, which means ‘inseparable’. In reality, the individuality of the true man consists in the fact that man is inseparable from God, inseparably one with the divine Principle of all being. Therefore man always reflects all that God is—all of the divine nature. Man lacks no single quality or divine characteristic but always expresses perfect individuality: in other words, man is always inseparably bound to all that belongs to divine being.

This does not mean either that there are repetitions in infinite being or that man is not unique. However, man’s uniqueness consists, not in lacking something that another has, but rather in bringing all qualities in being to expression in a unique way. As soon as we realize that our individuality is not curtailed by a few characteristics but that we can bring infinite individuality to expression, we never again deny ourselves or others anything. We no longer experience our own individuality with a consciousness of deficiency and so stop making comparisons. We express much more true fatherhood toward our individuality: for example, we love our spiritual individuality; we grant it the infinite fullness of all divine qualities; thus we win a constructive, positive attitude toward our true self.

In this way Christian Science shows us, through an understanding of God as Life, the true method which enables us to abandon the false attitude of life along with the false concept about individuality that this false attitude brings. Selfishness, malice, envy and hate have no place in the understanding of Life.

Life also teaches the control of “mad ambition”, that which plays an especially large role in human experience. What is ambition? Ambition goes back to the false concept that individuals, through their own abilities and special efforts, can accomplish something outstanding—something
that raises them above the others. This belief is so deeply anchored in human feelings that it requires special attention. Even someone who is not ambitious in the usual sense must be vigilant. Above all, spiritual study must be wholly free of ambition, for otherwise it does not lead far. Thus it is vitally important to always honestly examine oneself: Why do I seek the Science of being? With all my heart, what do I hope to attain from it? What is my dream? If we must confess to ourselves that we want to know more than others, that we would like to play a certain role in the circle of our fellow students (even if only a quite modest one), or that we dream of being admired, then we must handle ambition in ourselves. How? We must turn to Life and recognize that our true way of life is not controlled by our own ambitious goals, but is divinely determined. This divine way of life always leads us to the highest and best goal — namely to that point where we know ourselves in every situation to be inseparably united with our divine Principle.

"It unfolds the hallowed influences of unselfishness, philanthropy, spiritual love."

Unselfishness, philanthropy and spiritual love refer to three aspects of the love that Life bestows. First, as we overcome our false concept of individuality and love man's true individuality, we give up our mortal self; we become unselfish — free of the material self and its characteristics defined in the first degree of depravity (see 115:20). Second, this love of true individuality expresses itself as philanthropy — as one of the beautiful human transitional qualities included in the second degree (see 115:25), which we well perceive as moral. Third, a true concept of what constitutes individuality leads us to spiritual love, that which reflects reality in the third degree of understanding (see 116:1). In this way, the attitude of love — working in the realm of the physical, the moral and the spiritual — constitutes the true method of Life. As we adhere to this method, we stop the practice of constantly inflicting wounds on ourselves. Instead we receive "hallowed influences" of spiritual individuality, effecting healing in us and in the world.

Truth

"It urges the government of the body both in health and in sickness."

The resolution of questions and conflicts in the mental realm must also have a good effect on the physical realm — on the body. Therefore we
quite often place great value on reminding ourselves that body, soul (psyche) and spirit work together. Unlike in Mary Baker Eddy’s time only a hundred years ago, it is generally recognised today that a reciprocal effect exists between these three realms. More and more, we hear the demand to treat man not only as a possessor of bodily organs but also as a possessor of mental dispositions, which must be taken into consideration as well. This general tendency certainly marks an advancement, which Christian Science can acknowledge.

Contrary to general belief, Christian Science does not merely set the body aside. However here again, Christian Science proceeds from different assumptions. Christian Science does not attribute the same significance to the material body as it does to the other realms. Instead Christian Science teaches that the three realms of body, soul (psyche) and Spirit function according to a specific hierarchical order. Within this order, Spirit stands in the highest position. Spirit stamps the realm of the mental or psychical, and this realm, in turn, has influence on the body, on the physical. In this way, Christian Science clarifies the question of which realm has supreme dominion. To the question: Is man subject to the physical realm, the body with all its material functions? Christian Science says no. In agreement with the Bible, Science explains that God, Truth, bestows dominion on man.

At this point, it is important to realize that the question of man’s dominion over the body is not raised right at the beginning, but only at the sixth stage with Truth. We cannot begin with demonstrating dominion, for then our concept of man is still bound in materiality. The so-called material man, the mortal, can never win dominion over itself or over the material body. Only the consciousness of Truth gains dominion. How can we establish such a consciousness of dominion in ourselves? We gain dominion by following the anatomy of Christian Science and fulfilling the demands that are explained in the first five themes of Mind, Spirit, Soul, Principle and Life.

Love

“The Christian Scientist, through understanding mental anatomy, discerns and deals with the real cause of disease.”

Mental self-knowledge, by enabling the Christian Scientist to discern and effectively deal with the actual cause of every disharmony, fulfils its
physician can do nothing but utilize the very human consciousness that he hopes to investigate. It suggests that the human spirit is to be grasped by the human spirit. Through this method, how can the material physician ever obtain clarity on the subject of man or consciousness?

By contrast, the mental self-knowledge of Christian Science never delivers man to material, mortal thinking. Self-knowledge does not mean that the mortal, material man must analyze his human self. Self-knowledge means rather that God, the all-encompassing and all-inclusive One, translates itself to us so that, through the spiritual understanding of God's nature and being, we can understand what constitutes the true self of man. Thus self-knowledge in Christian Science always leads to the divine goal. It consists, not in groping in the darkness of human beliefs about the nature of our true self, but rather in gaining a clear understanding of what we truly are. Then, as we know ourselves divinely, we can no longer be blinded by the illusions of mortal thinking which would otherwise obscure this clear vision of spiritual selfhood.

Summary

In this way, the psychology of Spirit always compels us to fulfill a great, fundamental demand. For all questions about our self, our starting-point must never be: Why am I imperfect, bad or unhappy? Why do I act wrongly? Why do I feel negative and filled with counterfeit beliefs? Rather, our starting-point must always be: What do Mind, Spirit, Soul, Principle, Life, Truth and Love show me about my true being?

— Mind points out that divine Mind is the one great cause from which all true thoughts flow. All ungodlike thoughts in us have no real cause; therefore they can never have the quality of ideas but must be recognized as mere illusions.

— Spirit shows us how to answer the important question of whether we are entertaining divine or human thoughts. We know that in reality Spirit bestows on us only divine thoughts — only that feeling, desiring and thinking which has its origin in Mind, in God. With this criterion—do thoughts come from God or from human belief? — Spirit enables us to sort out our thoughts and value them rightly.

— Soul gives us the firmness to excise, through the transforming power of Soul, everything in ourselves which we recognize as ungodlike. Through
goal. How? If we derive our methods from what the nature of God tells us about the true self of man — not from the conceptions of the human spirit — we find the cause for all suffering. What is this cause of suffering? It consists:

— in the illusion that mortal mind can be causative and bring forth disharmonious effects (the counterfeit of Mind);
— in the illusion that the false effects coming from mortal mind are real (the counterfeit of Spirit);
— in the illusion that anything ungodlike belongs to the identity of the true man (the counterfeit of Soul);
— in the illusion that any human theory can correctly inform us about our true self (the counterfeit of Principle);
— in the illusion that our individuality is comprised of separate and finite sets of mortal characteristics (the counterfeit of Life);
— in the illusion that man can exercise no dominion over himself and the body (the counterfeit of Truth);
— in the illusion that the actual cause of our difficulties cannot be found (the counterfeit of Love).

"The material physician gropes among phenomena, which fluctuate every instant under influences not embraced in his diagnosis, and so he may stumble and fall in the darkness."

What happens if we abandon the rule of the seven synonymous terms for God and follow other methods of self-knowledge? The text vividly describes the consequences, very similar to what we hear more and more today from circles of psychology; namely, we grope in the dark. Material methods never lead to the understanding of real causes; they show only phenomena — never the noumena behind them. Furthermore the human sciences investigate ever more thoroughly the realm of the subconscious and the unconscious. Yet even so, these investigations take mankind further and further into realms that elude every human control. We find ourselves faced with a confusing multitude of individually, collectively and universally operating belief-processes, upon which mortals exercise not the least influence or comprehension. The more accurately one investigates mortal man, the more opaque the processes become, until finally the mortal emerges as a mere plaything of forces and necessities to which he must helplessly surrender. To compound the confusion, the material
the destruction of error, our perfect identity — our divine self and our true destiny — comes to light.

— Principle shows us that this ordered process of spiritually conceived self-knowledge provides the solution to all questions. We are informed through Science what we are and which way we should go.

— Life shows us our true individuality as inseparable from divine Principle. From this inseparable unity with God comes the true attitude of life. All false methods of coping with life disappear.

— Truth gives to this consciousness of right mental anatomy divine dominion over all realms — not only over the mental realm but also over the physical realm, over the body. This dominion exercises its power in every situation, in health and in sickness, in Truth and in belief.

— Love fulfils the goal of the dissection of our thoughts. It leads to perfect clarity about our true self.

With that, we establish in ourselves the perfect standard of the Principle-idea and culture that spiritual attitude which, through “scientific obstetrics” (463:5-20), can give birth to every new spiritual development.

Note

When quoting from ‘Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures’ by Mary Baker Eddy only the page and line number are given in brackets.