

Register 23/6/21

DISEASE AND MATERIALISM.

PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS.

(By the Rev. John Blacket.)

With keen interest and much appreciation I read Mr. Hackett's articles on "Disease and Materialism." Disease, it is true, was curiously touched upon, but the articles were a polemic against the materialistic and mechanical theory in relation to man and the universe. Mr. Hackett has called public attention to a subject compared with which all other subjects fade into insignificance. He has presented the scientific argument against materialism. May I be permitted to present the philosophical, which I think is more effective than the scientific. The first thinker to avow himself frankly a materialist was La Mettrie, a French philosopher and physician (1745). He held that "the brain was the soul, endowed with fibres for thinking just as the legs have muscles of motion." When body and brain collapsed, man became extinct.

—The Vital Question.—
The question of supreme importance is—has man a spiritual nature distinct from a material form? Is there a real distinction between mind and matter? The materialist affirms that there is no distinction; that mind is simply the product of or another phase of matter; that the subject who perceives is composed of the same substance as the object perceived; that there is not more in the one than in the other. If the assumption of the materialist is true—if man is one with his material surroundings—then we ask—What is the explanation of the difference between the two; for abysmal difference there absolutely is? We know the material—not as part of ourselves, but as something external and altogether dissimilar from our inner selves. We can stand aside and make matter objective. We can burn it, boil it, eat it, pulverise it, dissect it. We can treat it in our circumstances. We can treat it in almost any way that we please except annihilate it. If we cannot actually sweep it out of existence, we can virtually think it out of existence, as Bishop Berkeley did in his theory of universal immaterialism. To think that an entity that is so subject to mind, that it so much within the power of mind, that is so dependent upon mind, and dissimilar from mind—to think that such an entity is the creator of mind, is surely foolish. Such an assumption reminds me of a lad whom I once met in the Adelaide hills, who tried to account for the sky by the smoke and steam of the locomotive, and in response to my question—"Who made the world?" said "Father M—," evidently his parish priest.

—Antithesis of the Material.—
The spiritual is the antithesis of the material. The difference between the two is "longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." Instead of matter giving birth to mind, or being its explanation, it is only by mind that we become conscious of matter. Lotze, in his "Microcosmos," has well said—"Among all the errors of the human mind it has always seemed to me the strangest that it could doubt its own existence, of which it alone has direct experience, or take it at second hand as the product of an external nature which we know only by means of the knowledge of the very mind to which we would fain deny existence." We have just noted that the soul knows itself as distinct from matter or from the body. This thought suggests another—that the self or soul is conscious of itself as imprisoned, restricted, or limited. If the soul were one with its material limitations, it would not be conscious of them. Consciousness of the limit implies that the soul is greater than the limit. It is "Critique of Pure Reason" Kant speaks of that "inextinguishable desire on the part of the soul to gain a footing by any means somewhere beyond the limits of experience." The soul is ever rebelling against its limitations, and tries to pass beyond them. It tries to search out the unsearchable; to measure the immeasurable; to compass the inimitable. The profundity of the soul is to be seen in the profundity of the problems with which it deals. Verily it "doth not yet appear what we shall be." In his "Bampton Lecture" (1894), Illingworth says:—"There are abysmal depths of personality which startle us at times by the vastness of the vistas which they half disclose. We are dimly aware of undeveloped capabilities within us—capabilities of energy, intelligence, and love—which we cannot conceive ultimately frustrated and functionless." The soul knows that it is in a house of clay, but not of that house of clay. The very hunger and thirst of the soul for something which does not come under the notice of the senses proves that, although in the world, it is not of the world.

more than Matter and Energy.—

In the constitution of man's nature there is something more than mere matter and energy. Matter has no power of self-control. If it is at rest or in motion it will always remain so until some exterior force is brought to bear upon it. A stone—a lump of clay—cannot originate its own motion. In the body of man we find that matter moves without the intervention of an external power, and moves in an intelligent direction. On a materialistic basis, how is this to be explained? If there be nothing more in the body of man than is common to the material universe, how is it that matter moves itself, and controls its movements, and Newton's law of inertia is broken? A human body is in a state of rest. It rises. The fingers strike the keys of a piano, and melody is the result; it takes a brush and palette, and paints a picture; it takes a composing stick, and sets up some speech in type. What is it that does so? To say that it is matter is nonsense, for matter has no power to move itself, let alone give to itself intelligent direction. To say that it is energy that

makes the body rise, that produces the music, that paints the picture, that arranges the type, is equally foolish. Of course, energy has some part to play; but it is something that is used—that is employed. The crucial point is—Who or what employs the energy? Who or what controls it? Who or what gives to it intelligent direction? It is mind. This proves that mind is distinct from matter and energy. The latter is simply something taken into the body in the form of food. It is not something that can produce mind, but something that mind can exert or employ. The soul can subordinate the energy which is taken into the body—can make it do its bidding—just as it can subordinate the lightning flash, the running water, or the wind. All that energy can account for is mere activity—not the determination of that activity. In no way can it explain self-consciousness, thought, volition, feeling.

—Questions that Demand an Answer.—

Thought, volition, feeling demand a subject. What is it that thinks, determines, feels? The soul replies:—"I think! I determine! I feel!" The materialist or monist objects "It is the brain," he says, "the brain thinks! The brain determines! The brain feels!" Professor Haeckel, the high priest of materialism, speaks of the brain or the soul (entities that he regards as the same) as "perceiving sensations." What does this mean? By the brain we must understand the matter of which it is composed—fat, albumen, phosphorus. Which of these thinks, feels, determines? Do they all do it in concert? We do a wrong, and feel condemned. Is it the matter of which the brain is composed—the material atoms—that feels condemned? A great temptation assails us. We strive against it; overcome it. We are conscious of a sense of satisfaction. Something within seems to say—"Well done, good and faithful servant." The victory has ennobled us. Is it the matter of which the brain is composed—he material atoms—that feels satisfied and ennobled? A man gives way to some terrible sin. Overwhelmed with remorse, like Judas, he hangs himself. Is it the matter of which the brain is composed—the material atoms—that feels remorse, and commits suicide? Waves of sound and of light fall upon the ear and the eye. The process is purely mechanical; the substances on which they fall are material. But there is something behind ear and eye that is conscious of these waves, that transforms them. Mere mechanical movements become sweet strains of song, and undulations in the ether become a beautiful rose, a many-coloured rainbow, or a magnificent landscape. What is it that works the transformation; that changes the mechanical and material into the spiritual; that is not only conscious of the change, but revels in it, speculates upon it, and advances theories in relation to it? Can it be the mere atoms of which the brain is composed, or the energy that underlies matter? Could the purely material and mechanical within the body transcend and transform the mechanical and material outside the body? We have a desire to seek the supernatural, to be brought into union and communion with something which the inner nature needs. Is it the matter of which the brain is composed—the material atoms—that feels this desire? Is it the purely material that posits and seeks the spiritual? We might run the whole gamut of our mental and moral nature in this way, but the few notes which we have sounded must suffice. There is in man a unity of consciousness. He knows himself as one person. How could a multiplicity of material atoms give birth to unity of consciousness? Of the brain itself Dr. Carpenter says:—"It has been positively established, alike by experiment upon animals and observation of the phenomena of disease and accident in man, that the substance of the cerebrum is itself insensible—that is, no injury done to it, or physical impression made upon it, is felt by the subject of it."

Yet it is the seat of those faculties which make up what we call mind. How could this be if it were merely the brain which is conscious?

—Self-consciousness.—
The matter of which the brain is composed, and the energy which we are able to exert, are taken into the body, and hourly pass away from the body, but self-consciousness remains. Since we came into existence the brain has changed many times; yet we know ourselves as the same beings to-day and in all the days which have gone by, and can assume that we shall be the same for ever. There is the passing stream of atoms, but the same abiding person. The brain changes, but the person remains. What further evidence do we want that the person is not the passing energy, nor the changing brain?

Herald 23/6/21

DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICS.

The University of Adelaide proposes to give during this session a series of demonstrations of physical apparatus and effects, which shall be open to members of the public, by invitation, free of charge. These demonstrations, it is thought, will appeal especially to technical experts, electricians, teachers, of science, and others who have interests in relation to the physical sciences. The series for 1921 will include the following subjects:—(1), Production of high vacuum; (2), liquid air, and low temperature phenomena; (3), spectroscopy and types of spectra; (4), X-rays; (5), high frequency oscillations; (6), wireless telephony.

The demonstrations will be held at 4 p.m. on the first Friday of each month, and each will occupy approximately one hour. The first, on "Production of High Vacuum," will be given on Friday, July 1, at 4 p.m., in the Physics Lecture Theatre. Persons who desire to attend this demonstration or any others of the series are requested to communicate with the Professor of Physics, care of the Registrar, University, North terrace.

Advertiser 23/6/21

MUSHROOMS AND TOADSTOOLS.

An Adelaide business man who returned from a visit to Mount Gambier on Tuesday brought with him a specimen of supposed toadstool, concerning which, he said, a controversy had been raging in the South-East. There was a large field near Mount Gambier where they had been growing in abundance for weeks past, some as big as a medium-sized plate. People had been seen gathering them, presumably to take home and eat, but as there was a general belief that they were toadstools, and therefore poisonous, other people who had scrupulously avoided touching them when searching for mushrooms were rather mystified because they had not heard of any ill effects resulting among their more venturesome fellow-townsmen. A representative of "The Advertiser" showed the specimen to Professor Osborn at the University, and he at once identified it as a boletus luteus. It had a brown cap, and was rich yellow underneath. Professor Osborn said "mushroom" was not a scientific term, but the name popularly given to certain species of the toadstool and its near allies which were edible. The species universally recognised as suitable for human food was the agaricus campestris. There were many other fungi, however, some of which were edible and some of which were not, and these were all designated "toadstools." The boletus was one of the toadstools that could be eaten. It was a native of Europe, and was found in or near pine woods in autumn. On

the Continent the people collected for food a greater variety of fungi, including the boletus, than was the practice in England or Australia. Personally he would not care to eat the boletus. Speaking of the general belief in Australia that toadstools are poisonous, Professor Osborn said some were undoubtedly injurious, but people varied a good deal in the way the ordinary mushroom affected them. Some complained of feeling ill after eating mushrooms, and no doubt they would also feel upset after eating the boletus. The true mushroom had what were termed gills on the under side, ranged like the leaves of a book radiating out from a common centre, and the spores should be iron pinkish in the immature fungus to a dark purple in the full-grown mushroom, which should peel readily, and have a pleasant smell. Peeling, however, was not a sufficient test in itself, as was illustrated in the case of the boletus.

Critic 22/6/21

ELDER CONSERVATORIUM.

The sixth concert of the 1921 series was given on Monday evening when Miss Maude Puddy, Mus. Bac., gave a pianoforte recital. There was a tremendous house. Her opening number was Bach's Italian concerto rendered with delightful ease and expression. The next item, Chopin's "Fantaisie in F Minor, Op. 49," in which Miss Puddy had every opportunity for displaying her command of the instrument, it was a brilliant performance. Charming novelty was imparted by a group of descriptive items by Schumann. Child studies so delicately and artistically delineated by Miss Puddy that the theme of the title was easily followed. They included "Of Foreign Lands and People," "The Strange Story," "Playing Tag," "Child's Petition," "Quite Happy," "Revery," "At the Fireside," "Knight of the Hobby Horse," "Almost too Severe," "Frightening," "Child Falling Asleep," "The Poet Speaks," John Ireland's "Ragamuffin," was capitally rendered, and Leschetizky's "Humoresque" and "Arabesque" were loudly applauded, and the recital was brought to a brilliant close with Moszkowski's "Melodia Appassionata." It was one of the most enjoyable concerts of the season.

Dr. E. Harold Davies has resigned the position of organist and choirmaster of the Kent Town Methodist Church, which he has held continuously for nearly 25 years. On Thursday afternoon a presentation was made to him of a cheque, together with framed photographs of the church and organ. The presentation was made by Mr. James Gartrell, on behalf of the trustees and donors, and his remarks were supported by several others present. Dr. Davies feelingly responded. He mentioned that seven members of his choir had a combined service of 250 years.

Advertiser 24/6/21

Dr. E. Harold Davies has resigned the position of organist and choirmaster of the Kent Town Methodist Church, which he has held continuously for nearly 25 years. On Thursday afternoon a presentation was made to him of a cheque, together with framed photographs of the church and organ. The presentation was made by Mr. James Gartrell, on behalf of the trustees and donors, and his remarks were supported by several others present. Dr. Davies feelingly responded. He mentioned that seven members of his choir had a combined service of 250 years.

Register 25/6/21

UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICS.

It is proposed to give during this session a series of demonstrations of physical apparatus and effects, which shall be open to members of the public, by invitation, free of charge. These demonstrations, it is thought, will appeal especially to technical experts, electricians, teachers of science, and others who have interests in relation to the physical sciences. The series for 1921 will include the following subjects:—(1) Production of high vacuum; (2) liquid air and low temperature phenomena; (3) spectroscopy and types of spectra; (4) X-rays; (5) high frequency oscillations; (6) wireless telephony. The demonstrations will be held at 4 p.m. on the first Friday of each month, and each will occupy approximately one hour. The first, on "Production of high vacuum," will be given on the afternoon of July 1, in the physics lecture theatre.

Register 28/6/21

AUSTRALIA AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS.

Great interest has recently been manifested, and it continues to grow, in regard to international affairs, the position of Australia in the society of nations, her position with respect to the British Empire and its self-governing States, and her relationship to the League of Nations. The governing authorities of a State can more effectively adopt a wise policy if the people take an interest and seek enlightenment in the great questions of the day. There are, no doubt, hundreds of people in Adelaide who are interested in the League of Nations; but do they all possess adequate knowledge of the origin, structure, and real aims of the League, and of its relations to international law and diplomacy, to enable them to express a sound opinion? To acquire this knowledge an opportunity is now afforded by the University of Adelaide. A course of three extension lectures is to be given by Professor Coleman Phillipson, beginning this evening.