

PHILOSOPHY THESIS NUMBER ^{Three}~~TWO~~.

∇ - - - - -

"THE MATERIALIST PHILOSOPHY."

PHILOSOPHY ONE: DARTMOUTH.

- - - - -

Written by Richard G. Eberhart - May 6, 1924.

A-

THE MATERIALISTIC PHILOSOPHY.

To begin this paper we will first develop the general principles of materialism; then apply it to various realms of experience; and finally present a short critique of the system.

Materialism, in opposition to idealism, begins with the assertion that the ultimate reality of matter is the only truth, and it considers the object, rather than the subject, as the basis for all deductions and indeed the ~~only~~ only real thing. Reality, then, consists of an infinite number of mass particles. It follows at once, then, that being is material substance, that structures in nature operate by a blind mechanism, and that there is no purpose in the phenomena of Nature. This last robs life of all its meaning according to idealism, which recognizes the potency of freedom and will.

The epistemology of materialism includes the primary statement that all human knowledge comes from sensation, which is a physical product of nerve impulses. As to nature, it holds that the mind takes a photograph of the external world and knowledge is therefore secondary while the object or picture is the prime actuality. The motives that lead men to materialism are first theoretical, as in most philosophy; and second, non-theoretical, in that it is a mental emancipation from the superstition and false credulity of unproven gods and practices because it arises out of a desire to control the external world. Furthermore, success in control of the external world resupports

material conceptions and it is therefore a useful means to definite action.

Returning now to the more detailed nature of materialism, we will discuss atomistic and scientific materialism. In atomistic materialism, the old Greeks, including the Latin poet Lucretius, assumed that matter is composed of ultimate infinite particles that exist and move in empty space. "Atoms and the void are the original and indestructible data of reality." They supposed atoms differed in size, form, and shape. While moving in space these atoms impinge on one another and rebound. This incessant movement and falling together produces a vortex movement and makes a world. Ours is merely one in an endless chain, swinging aimlessly. All elements are made of these microscopic and powerful particles. "There is simply everlasting motion of mass particles in space."

The essence of atomistic materialism is stated in four tenets: first, all qualitative changes in experience are reducible to quantitative terms; second, the whole content of mind is reducible to the motion of mass particles in space; third, all secondary qualities of objects - color, sound and taste perceived unconsciously with size, shape and weight - do not exist in themselves but are merely phenomena of the human organism; and fourth, whatever happens is an endless process resulting from blind mechanical motion.

Scientific materialism is a bit more rational. It holds that what we perceive is largely determined by our already achieved mental structure and outlook, but that fundamentally, again, matter is the only kind of being. Scientific materialism has advanced so greatly in the last few years that now the atom is subdivided into electrons and protons, negative and

positive points of electricity. Matter is therefore the result of the action of centers of electrical charges on our sense organs. Indeed, our sense organs, bodies and brains are but constellations of electrons. "This new theory makes matter to consist of non-matter in motion."

This view that all thought and experience are complex microscopic movements of mass particles in space is further expressed in saying that brain secretes ~~brain~~ thought as liver does bile: therefore, "man is what he eats." The materialist says that if the blood to the brain stops, then one is unconscious; mental disorders follow lesions of brain tissue; and old age is the result of a running down of the machine while complete cessation of physical functions cuts off thought. Mind and consciousness are only attributes of the nervous system.

Examination of these doctrines leads us to the conclusion in criticism that it is obviously true we do observe mind changes following bodily processes, but the converse is also equally true. And this converse justifies a compromise between both idealism and materialism, in the form of dualism. Mind is certainly dependent upon the nervous system and yet, also, the power of the mind to influence the body cannot be denied and is well attested in fact. "In critical situations, under the influence of strong emotion, conviction, fear, pity, loyalty to duty, the mind makes the body do unexpected and otherwise impossible things." In fact, animals with the greatest degree of this consciousness dominate the world.

Materialism stipulates that the real object, ~~being~~ being non-purposive and mechanical, has the primary and secondary qualities before mentioned. The difficulty arises that secondary qualities are inherent in matter as well as primary ones, which the mater

ialsit cannot well explain. No one ever perceived the one set of qualities without the other unconsciously."

Materialists are divided into the following classes: Naive materialists, who have had no philosophical training and therefore ~~disappreciated~~ the immaterial facts of consciousness; cosmological materialists, whose dominate thought is the formation of a comprehensive world scheme; anti-religious materialists, among their number Hobbes, who establish hostility of attitude toward set dogmas; medical materialists, physicians who are naturally biased toward explaining health and disease of mind by that of body; and scientific materialists, the highest calibre, who seek truth without prejudice.

Applying the philosophy to realms of experience, we will begin with the physical world.. We ~~but~~ have to repeat that no interior aspect of human experience is considered and the world is looked upon as non-purposive and mechanically operated by a blind force. In the biological domain the materialist finds ~~rendevous~~ for an "I told you so" in the undeniable fact of protoplasm, which is a compound of certian chemicals with ~~xxx~~ curious properties of life. Materialism cannot, after all, explain why man can actually construct protoplasm which will exist for a time but die from lack of the Vital Force: they cannot know what the true meaning of life is, after all. And so they take the easiest and most obviously sound conclusion that life is purposeless and biology a fact that reveals this truth. Thus, biologically speaking, about dreams Hobbes thinks that "dreams are caused by the distemper of some of the inward parts of the body, divers distempers which need cause different knids of dreams,"

Then, in the social domain, Hobbes has a chapter on the

primary functions of speech, the uses of which he categories. First speech is for registration by cogitation; second to show others the knowledge we have attained; third to make known our wills and purposes and lastly to delight ourselves. The corresponding abuses are set forth as wrong registration, metaphorism, falsehoods and abusive invective. He also states, "For words are wise mens counters, they do but reckon by them: but they are the money of fools, that value them by the authority of an Aristotle, a Cicero, or a Thomas....." The futility of society from his point of view may be deduced from the statement that "no discourses whatsoever can end in absolute knowledge of fact, past or to come." Nothing can be known absolutely, which puts a ban on the hope of humanitarians in reaching any sort of perfect state. Knowledge from reasoning is only conditional and from sense is but factual. One mans value in the world is "as of all other things, his price; - so much as would be given the use of his power."

The moral, aesthetic and religious ideas he has advanced in the few chapters we have now read may be summed up collectively. Reason is the sum total of a number of "parcels" and is nothing but the marking and signifying of our thoughts for the purpose of "proceeding from one consequence to another." There are the animal passions of vital and voluntary motion which operate all human desires and determine morals. In religion we do not have faith in a creed but rather in the opinion we hold of the person who says a certain thing which we take for granted and have faith in ^{him} "and the honor done in believing, is done to him only ." Man is the only authority, then. Yet, in the chapter on religion he admits that man, in reasoning back and back and over again, come to the conclusion of "One First Mover" but "the opinion that such spirits are incorporeal or immaterial

could never enter into the mind of any man by nature," We are ignorant and we fear: superstition has led men to religion, says the materialist. Aesthetic experience would be entirely an illusion within the mind of man, based on the actuality of focused attention on a real object, but it could not carry with it the idealists' significance of aestheticism.

In criticism, the point that weighs at an even balance in my mind centers around the question of ego. I am unable to evaluate my own ego. Idealism appeals to me, it opens a wide vista to the imagination and those subtleties deepest in ones nature, it invests one with a realization of his own freedom where Mind is the one reality. And materialism turns around and says we might as well be "bloomin' idols made o' mud" in that all is material and physical life but a huge question mark with death holding the trump as joker. ^{materialism} ~~It~~ is all very logical; it ^{spots} ~~has~~ facts and data; it pulls one out of the clouds to the thing that ~~is~~ is apparently most real. And my problem is to determine whether idealism appeals to me because it offers a haven of comfort and strength that satisfies the ego, or whether the "shadowy" things of one's experience may after all be a vestige of some profound reality.