

CRITICISMS AND DISCUSSIONS.

THE MONISM OF "THE MONIST,"

COMPARED WITH PROFESSOR HAECKEL'S MONISM.

Professor Haeckel is a dear old friend of mine. Though my senior in years he has always been very cordial to me, nor has our friendship been marred in the least by my criticism of his conception of monism. In fact it was quite impossible to make him reply to my strictures and I found out that it takes two to quarrel. He answered me in his letters and repeated it orally in conversation, "We mean the same," and I am only sorry that he cares so little for the differences to which I attach much importance.

Like Haeckel I accept the scientific world-conception which can only be monistic. I reject like him any kind of dualism, especially spiritism, viz., the belief in the existence of spirit in itself. At the same time I believe in evolution, not only the evolution of animals, but also of mankind, especially of human thought, of science, of religion and religious beliefs and institutions. Religious ideas are not mere fancies or inventions of a fraudulent priesthood; they originated with reference to the realities and the needs of life.

While my friend Haeckel would interpret the God-idea to mean matter and energy, as he said in a letter published in *The Open Court* for September 17, 1891,¹ I insist that the God-idea has always had in its historic development a moral significance. It always stood for justice, righteousness, truth, goodness, etc., and on the ground

¹ Compare also the following articles on Monism: "Professor Haeckel's Monism and the Ideas God and Immortality," *Open Court*, V, 2957-8. Cf. also the author's articles: "Professor Haeckel's Monism," *The Monist*, II, 598, in answer to Haeckel's "Our Monism," *The Monist*, II, 481; "Haeckel's Theses for a Monistic Alliance," *The Monist*, XVI, 120; "Monism, Dualism and Agnosticism," *Open Court*, I, 209; "The Religious Character of Monism," *Open Court*, II, 1381, in reply to "Christianity and Monism" by Dr. Gustav Carus, *Open Court*, II, 1379; "Professor Haeckel's Confession of Faith," *Open Court*, VII, 3528; and Mr. Edward C. Hegeler's article "What the Monistic Religion is to Me," *Open Court*, I, 725.

of this consideration I define God as "the authority of conduct." I claim that we can trace such authority of conduct in our experience and so I declare that it exists; it is a natural law; it is the same law according to which mankind develops higher and ever higher. There is punishment for wrong doing, there is a curse on sin, there is a blessing on righteousness; and the factors in objective reality which cause these results whatever they may be, have been personified and are called God. We can make no mistake in retaining this impressive name as one of the most important terms in our language.

The moral law is ultimately the same law as the totality of all the laws of nature; it is merely the application of the law of cause and effect to social conditions, and this God-conception may fairly well be characterized as nomotheism. God is the lawdom of the world, and by lawdom I understand what the Germans call *Gesetz-mässigkeit*. Lawdom is the world's constitution as a law-ordained whole, consistent with itself in all details so as to appear as a system of uniformities. Thus the cosmic order makes the impression as if it were governed by an omniscient and omnipresent ruler, and the obvious efficiency of this intrinsic and immanent order has led to its personification as God. Atheism is wrong when denying with the name God this moral law of the world. Atheism is right only in so far as the constitution of the cosmos is not an individual being such as we poor mortals are, but theism is right when it insists on the objective significance of truth and of right and of all other ideals as a real factor in the formation of mankind. This is a God-conception which the atheist can not deny if he but believes in ideals, moral or scientific or artistic. It is the God-conception of science.

Nomothetism is neither the traditional theism nor is it pantheism, for the God of science is not identical with the All, nor is it a deification of nature. The God of science is neither matter and energy nor the totality of all existent things; it is the law that shapes them, the factor that governs their origin and growth, the eternal norm which determines the destiny of the world as a whole and also in its parts. It is the intrinsic consistency which exists in and by itself and would exist even if nature did not exist, and so it is in the literal sense of the word (though not in the traditional interpretation) supernatural.

It might be well to add that it would be wrong to call the God of science "impersonal" because God is the factor which creates personality, and so God is the condition of personality, and this higher and more scientific conception of God we prefer to call

“superpersonal.” God is not less than a human person, he is more. He is the standard and supreme norm of personality.

In the opinion of spiritualists I am perhaps just as much a materialist as Professor Haeckel, but I insist on the paramount significance of what is called spirit, soul, mind, and of all the spiritual values of life. In fact there are no higher values than spiritual ones, and material goods possess value only so far as they are or can become serviceable for spiritual enhancement.

The soul originates in and through brain functions, but it is unsubstantial and non-energetic. The spiritual is constituted by the meaning of the several brain functions, by their significance, and above all by their purpose. Meaning is not made of matter nor does it consist of energy. Meaning is neither brain nor nervous function. It is a mere relation, and one might consider it as non-existent, in the sense that it is not a concrete thing. Meaning is the reference of one thing to another. Meaning originates when certain definite forms of feeling or sensations stand for certain definite realities. From these simple beginnings mind grows.

There is one point that must be emphasized: Form is more important than matter, and the relational of greater consequence than energy. Thus it comes to pass that the spiritual, this significance of brain functions, becomes hyperphysical. Though non-material and non-energetic, it is real, being an efficient factor in moulding things and guiding the affairs of life. Without this meaning of brain functions, without this purpose-pursuing quality of living beings, or as we commonly say, without the spiritual, without the presence of the soul, life would be a senseless jumble, and the world would be a mere chaotic display of physical forces. From this subtle quality of meaning alone rise all the wonders of human aspiration and moral endeavor, all values of life and also our religious and artistic ideals.

I cannot enter here into further details of how on the basis of this monistic conception many important problems find their proper solution. I will note only two: First, man is held responsible for his acts, and the thought of his responsibility enables him to criticize himself, to control and to judge of his several impulses, and to rise beyond his present condition by improving his character. This is practically the meaning of the belief in freedom of will.

Further, evolution means the continued life of former generations, which is an immortality in the race, and presupposes that all of man's most individual tendencies are preserved to serve as a basis for further progress. In the souls of the generations to come there

are many mansions for "those immortal dead who live again in minds made better by their presence" being "the choir invisible whose music is the gladness of the world."

Professor Haeckel thinks that there is a streak of dualism left in my conception of monism, but he is mistaken. He simply fails to understand my use of the words "God," "soul" and "immortality," while in my opinion he has not carried out his monistic principle into a full appreciation of the spiritual values of life. The origin and nature of the soul has to be explained without resorting to dualistic or vitalistic assumptions, and that is the work which I have done.² I recognize that the soul is not merely an accidental byplay of the functions of matter, and that in it the universe reveals itself in its full grandeur. Though the soul is not matter and not energy, it is the highest efflorescence of the development of natural forces. Professor Haeckel knows this all very well, but in his writings he shows himself so much the advocate of natural science *versus* superstition that he associates the words "God" and "soul" with a reactionary conception of religious dogmatism. Professor Haeckel ought to realize that a scientific conception of God and soul is possible, for he endorses fully Goethe's God-conception, and sees no dualism in it.

The truth is that there is not only matter and energy, but there are also the relational conditions; there is form, and form is more important than substance. Meaning originates from form, just as differently shaped letters represent the various sounds. There is a similarity or at least a correspondence between the things sensed and the several sensations, and their similarity makes the several sensations represent the several things sensed. Sensations are feelings that have acquired meaning, and from meaning rises the whole domain of spirit.

We must consider that Professor Haeckel is a naturalist, not a philosopher, and he has paid little attention to a consideration of religious questions. Nor is there any harm in this for we can not expect him to be at home everywhere. He was brought up in circles

² A condensed statement of my philosophy has appeared in English, German and French under the title *The Philosophy of Science* and an Italian version is in preparation. It explains in the short space of less than fifty pages the most important problems and treats among other topics the following subjects: The foundation of mathematics and logic, cause and reason, organized nature, subject and object, personality and self, the origin of consciousness, preservation of form in the flux of life, memory the soul-builder, truth the measure of man, pleasure and pain, free will, immortality, and the God of science.

of a very narrow-minded conception of an unprogressive protestantism and had much trouble to rid himself of the dualistic errors which placed him from the start in a wrong attitude towards religion. For a long time he was very patient with his antagonists, and it is quite excusable if here and there he goes a little too far. Have not his enemies gone too far in their attacks on him? They have painted him as black as a devil. I need not add that Haeckel's love of truth, his sincerity, his scientific honesty, and the kindliness of his character are genuinely religious.

As to the main point, however, concerning my differences with Professor Haeckel, I feel sure that he agrees with me better than with himself, and I hope he will pardon me for the statement.

EDITOR.

SCHOPENHAUER ON NEWTON AND HOOKE.

[In connecton with Mr. Philip E. B. Jourdain's article on "Robert Hooke as a Precursor of Newton," we venture to publish these extracts from Schopenhauer's writings to call attention to his position with regard to the priority of the discovery of the laws of gravitation between Newton and Hooke. Although some of the details may be inaccurate, Schopenhauer often hits the nail on the head. It cannot be denied that indirectly or directly, Hooke provided a great stimulus for Newton.—ED.]

In order to appreciate the great value of the gravitation theory which Newton perfected, to say the least, and placed on a positive foundation, we must recall the state of perplexity in which thinkers had been for millenniums with regard to the movements of the celestial bodies. Aristotle represented the universe as composed of transparent concentric spheres, the outermost of which contained the fixed stars, each of the succeeding ones a planet, and the last the moon; the nucleus of the machine was the earth. Now, what the power was that kept this system constantly in rotation was a question to which he had nothing to say except that there must be a *πρῶτον κινῶν* somewhere—and this answer men have since been so kind as to interpret as theism, whereas he did not teach the existence of a creative God, certainly not that the universe is eternal, and barely a first motive energy in his cosmology. But even after Copernicus had replaced that fabulous construction of the world-machine by the correct one, and also after Kepler had discovered the laws of its motion, there still remained the old perplexity with regard to the motive force. Aristotle had assigned to the spheres