

PHILOSOPHICAL NOTES

Philosophical Doctrines. What is monism? It is the philosophical doctrine that all of creation is made of one sort of stuff. There is one fundamental material of which all and everything is composed. Democritus was a monist in that his 'atoms,' which were so called because they could not be cut into anything more fundamental, constituted everything by a compounding.

But in addition to Democritus there have been monists of widely different beliefs. Spinoza introduced the concept of pantheism which is monistic in that all of creation is in God and made of God. The basic stuff of Berkeley's monism consisted of mind.

Moderns give the impression sometimes that historical philosophic positions are for history and not for them—implying that something new has been produced in the very recent past that permits them to view past doctrine from a superior, objective position. Just what this position is cannot be determined. The only things that come out in a frank manner are agnosticism and a denial of all historical positions.

There is one position not generally recognized as philosophical, which in effect *is* philosophical in that it represents a view of creation. This is the idea that there is no need for philosophy in the study of the disciplines. It is a modern position and is taken equally by theologians, scientists, historians, humanitarians, and engineers.

But the very denial of the use of philosophy, being itself a philosophical doctrine, will someday be given a name and listed along with monism, dualism, agnosticism and other doctrines when the history of our time is written.

Correspondences. A problem of philosophy occurs in any form of dualism. What is the mediation between the two elements of the dualism? The idea of pre-established harmony has as its purpose to accept dualism without assuming any burden to explain such mediation—none is required.

In Swedenborg's philosophy the relation between the spiritual and the natural is effected by influx. Influx is however a stumbling block for many. So often people who accept much of Swedenborg's philosophy in other respects cannot accept the doctrine of influx. "There is no way to establish empirical evidence for it," they say.

Yet influx from what is within to what is exterior is not the

whole of Swedenborg's philosophy. For example, in his treatment of the intercourse between the soul and body it is an intercourse and not a one-way affair.

The sense perceptions convey images from what is in the external world to the brain. Thus if we have not accepted a form of idealistic monism but have accepted the reality of the external world *and* of the brain images then we have evidence every wakeful moment of our sensating life of a correspondence between two worlds—the world that is exterior to us and the world of imagery in our brain. The fact exists but the “how” is no more explained than influx. That the intercourse does exist we know. Its means we do not understand.

Swedenborg calls the relation of the external world and the brain a “communication.” He says it is neither an influx nor a harmony but what he calls an “acquired correspondence.” See *Rational Psychology* 161. This number also discusses a possible physical explanation of this correspondence by means of activities in the brain responding to those in the senses.

Interest a Criterion? The tendency to question the use of philosophy may arise from the fact that most sciences are growing so rapidly that only by specialization can one keep any appreciable contact with new developments. Specialization in a field prevents consideration of what is beyond its borders.

Philosophy requires a large look at things. Most questions in philosophy reach over into two or more fields of specialization. The specialist by definition is one who cannot take the broad view. Anyone else who does take it will in turn have the specialists to deal with. Who then can study philosophical questions?

J. A. V. Butler in the preface to his recent book *Science and Human Life* says:

The new knowledge is derived from many specialized branches, and although there are many who have an expert knowledge of one or two of them, no one can have more than a superficial knowledge of the whole. The author is well aware of the dangers of venturing outside his own specialty, and that he may be told that like the cobbler he should stick to his last. However, if it is conceded that a wide view is desirable, it is not easy to see who should undertake it. Perhaps the only real qualification is interest; . . .

Of course there must be some further qualifications, but at least interest is a primary one.

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