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Sydelmatic : III

I.

m. John D. Shaner:

The Significance for Religion of the Basic Positions Taken By James, Eddington, Lloyd Morgan, Bergson, Brightman and John O'Han.

Since the advent of the use of modern scientific method, Religion has had to face some old problems in new forms in order to maintain its metaphysics. Because the new method was so immediately successful, not only was it given general acceptance, but also the cosmology which it assumed. Thus the philosophy of materialistic determinism has been given general and uncritical support. Any theory of values which could be brought under world-view of a cause-effect mechanism was denied any validity. It is against the claims of this world-view that religion has had its great modern struggle to maintain itself. The struggle has been difficult, mostly because of the unthinking popular support given to this pseudo-science. All departments of life have come under this hostile applied metaphysics.

However, except that it has been given new clothes and apparently undeniable support from the findings of the laboratory and practical living, this new cosmology is essentially the same one that has always opposed religion. Thinkers with social insight have always seen that a materialistic philosophy of life is completely insufficient as an explanation of life or a guide to its proper living. Ever since this type of social insight appeared among men, there have been those who cling to its views in spite of all apparent evidence to the contrary. In our time we are experiencing a gradual return to their ideas. Sociologists, historians, philosophers and even physicists themselves are beginning to desert the mechanistic position. Some of these first^{rate} representatives in their fields are doing so for various reasons. However the majority changing their views on the basis of independent evidence. Each in his own field is no longer able to find valid support for this cause-effect cosmology. In some cases religion is given full support, in some cases the support is reluctant but in all cases the absolute denial of its claims has ceased.

In James James: -

Let us deal with the Physicists first. In our time it is almost inevitable that a physicist turn philosopher. Modern physics has discovered a world that cannot be explained by comparing it with a machine, however complex. It has given us a world which cannot be pictured in physical concepts.

it is a world of mathematical formulae, understandable only of the higher mathematician. Thus the only man who is willing to venture into the metaphysics of ontology is one of these mystifying students. However of their independent findings they have given the world a cosmology which has important significance for the validity of Religion's claims. Some of these are comprehensible to the persistent layman.

Physics does little more than present the consequences of modern "physical" thought as it denies mechanical causation. Experimental physics in dealing with both radiation and gravitation has had revolutionary results upon the classical insistence upon a mechanical explanation for everything. By experiment it can be shown that light does not always behave in a way that can be explained by an analogy with corpuscles. In some respects radiation full kinds, behaves as a wave. Any prediction of its behaviour in material forms is inadequate as an explanation, with modern circumstances. Physics is unable to explain physical phenomena because radiation waves do not behave mechanically. With the modern theory of the electron atom, all physical reality is reduced to radiation. Thus the physical world itself is placed in the realm of the unknown and unpredictable.

No experimentation with Radioactivity has resulted in any evidence as to how its process is caused, or to which particle will disintegrate next. What can be predicted is the number of atoms which will break down. Thus the only way in which even physical science can rest on a determinate basis is in the nature of a statistical average.

The great blows to mechanical determinism have come from the "quantum" theory and the theory of relativity. Both have fulfilled theoretical expectations in the test of practical experiment. The quantum theory states that energy itself comes in small but indivisible "quantities" whose behavior is unpredictable. Relativity - in the form of the Fitzgerald contraction has made it impossible for man to determine whether there is an ether drag on the earth and consequently whether there is any ether at all. The mechanical explanation of waves or particles in a medium is destroyed. There can be no absolute measurement of anything in the physical world. Gravitation must therefore, in this sphere of reference, be incapable of explanation in any absolute mathematical formulae. However of considerable help as a fourth dimension a geometry of space can be worked out which gives a simpler explanation and an absolute one for the phenomena of gravitation. However, the significant point is this, that such an explanation is not.

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mechanical. According to it gravity is not a push or pull. It is not a mechanical force acting in according to mechanical law. Rather it is a phenomenon of the universe, because that is its nature. It acts according to a mathematical formula because somehow the universe is mathematical.

Thus Jeans comes forth with his position which has significance for religion. The world cannot be explained by comparing it to a machine but by attributing it to a thinking mind - a mind that thinks mathematically. The fourth dimensional continuum cannot be given a physical likeness. It is comprehensible only in a mathematical formula. The universe is a great thought rather than a great machine.

This is as far as Jeans will take us. He is not facing the problem of knowledge. Epistemology is a question he completely fails to deal with. Thus he does not reject mechanical causation on the basis of Hume's famous argument from epistemology. His rejection is due to the pure pursuit of truth in the realm of physical science. Mechanism has been inadequate for explaining the behavior of the physical world itself, studied even without being critical of the theory of knowledge. This is Jeans' contribution. He has found evidence for believing that the universe is the work of a thinking mind. Its only likeness to ours however is that it is mathematical. Its relationship with goodness beauty and truth Jeans is willing to leave to other minds. His experiments with show him no necessary connection. Certainly however his position believes Religion of its most formidable opponent in "scientific thought."

A. S. Eddington:-

Eddington is in the same trend of modern scientific thought. He however carries its implications further with reference to religion, and at least attempts to face the epistemological problem.

Like Jeans he holds that the theories of "relativity" and "quantum" have changed the metaphysics of the scientist. Mechanical physics are gone for good. Mathematical symbolism has taken the place of mechanical explanation. The fourth dimensional continuum with its notion of finity but unbounded spacial space is impossible of mechanical explanation. Gravity is explained better by not using a mechanical explanation.

However Eddington advances on Jeans in several considerations. He limits the realm of physical science mainly to a very small field of inquiry. The physicist usually uses the inventory method. He seldom deals with arrangement. He seldom deals with the organization as a whole. This of course limits the

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extent of his knowledge. Certainly from this small beginning he cannot speak ex cathedra: in this realm only he finds exact causal relationships.

Fourth, Eddington points out that science is never dealing with reality but always with symbols. It is not with the thing that science deals but with scientific readings of the thing. He deals with abstractions from reality. The physical properties of an object are simply the measures of various physical sciences to its presence. - Physics must completely ignore the fact of whether there can still be a thinking object.

However in viewing the physical world Eddington sees one phenomenon that in order to deal with science must concern itself with the whole. This is in connection with the second law of Thermodynamics. Here, where time is given consideration, it is found that events take place in a sequence which cannot be reversed. Certain changes take place in the arrangement of the physical world which cannot be undone. This is entropy. In entropy, Eddington sees the one, rather insignificant, variable in the physical world of the moral idea of progress. Certainly here is a process going on in the world - not just an endless chain of cause and effect. However the reason that this view of arrangement can come under the scientist's study is that it obeys mathematical laws. Although each part in the process is unpredictable the whole process can be predicted according to the law of averages.

Nevertheless, here the idea of becoming and the possibility of process or progress is shown as definite part of the physical world.

However his main contribution is to the epistemological problem. Eddington sees that physics is limited in this main way. It takes no recognition of consciousness. In explaining physical phenomena it goes in a circle. While all the time claiming to be concrete it is really studying the phenomenal behavior of matter. It can explain the measurable relationships within the known world. But it cannot as yet explain the main mystery of how it is known. Physics can explain the physical world in a cycle, but it has no place in the cycle for the knowing mind. This is its great limitation. It ignores consciousness.

According to Eddington mind is the first and direct object of experience, and the most important property of the known physical world is that it is capable of being known. The fundamental property of matter is to be known in consciousness. At least for man's mind the one test of existence of reality is this - that it can be known. Thus Eddington denies to science the judgment of

whether a thing exists or not. It is rather the jurisdiction of the intuitive mind. That same judgment which knows that mind exists and is experienced. The judgment of science, which are supposed to be concrete and really number readings. To give abstract explanations in this field is to say nothing of the nature of reality.

This Edgington also, except for his slight concessions in the matter of Entropy, is mostly negative in his contribution. He gives absolute and scientific reasons for limiting the domain of science and in no way belittles. He dissociates even this limited field from mechanical causation and he gives importance to the activity of the mind. Edgington binds up mind and the potentiality of being known with all reality. This type of theory gives room for Religion to make her claims for the reality of moral values. It does not establish them.

For some time biology had followed the whole trend of science in attributing everything to mechanical causation. Evolutionary theory, on the basis of the struggle for existence, explained all development. Religion could make no claim in the face of this for the dignity & freedom of man and the importance of his character. Man was an over-complicated animal, - no more. Modern biologists have begun to dissent this position, although in this they were later than the physical scientists. However their findings have had significance for religion in that it has freed her from the direct opposition of the claims of scientific biology.

Bergson

Bergson can hardly be called a philosopher. His ideas are not too well systematized. - he makes too many all inclusive statements, simply because at the time he seems to feel like it. He makes unphilosophic statements not realizing the full implications of what he is saying. He ignores certain problems. However he does make emphases which are necessary and which have important implications for Religion.

The first is his insistence on the full dynamic quality of life. Life is the basic activity. Like the pure dynamism he insists that the true reality is change and becoming. The immediate knowledge of conscious life is the basic knowledge of men. Intellect is a result of this activity. It is an agency to serve this activity. It is valuable because it selects. Because it excludes certain things in order to concentrate on others. It takes still life

views of life, but life is really moving on all the time. It cannot be divided. Conscious states are not separated but interpenetrated. There is a unit of consciousness -- self conditioned. As important to life as intellect is instinct and intuition. Bergson points out that instinct has taught the bees to form as complex and well working society as any man was able to organize with his intellect: -

His statement like the latter Bergson demonstrates his general notions in philosophic fields. However he is in his work, making a necessary emphasis. That is that physical life can only be explained if something besides mechanical causes and effect is in the environment. Only life can have life and Bergson insists that the basic element in the cosmos is some kind of dynamism is sound. His insistence on the limitations of the intellect because of its selective capacity is also valid. This reality is not confined to some narrow theory or preconceived laws of abstract thought, but has something of the freedom and variety of life as a whole. This is Bergson's contribution. He realizes that the universe cannot be explained in terms of a machine. He goes further than the physicists and is not satisfied with the explanation of the universe as a mathematical formula. Nothing can explain its variety, its endless change, and yet its unity, its dynamic quality without life of some kind. An organicist world view is necessary.

In thinking thus Bergson has probably raised more problems than he solves. He does not work out his position to the full. The validity of his stand is almost taken for granted. He seems to be taking the view that because his idea is a new explanation, it needs no defence. At least to substantiate his claims he presents little evidence. However his beginnings have given other men a lead. His main significance for religion is that he opened consideration of this view -- that some form of the dynamic principle of life is basic in the universe and that the world of science and the intellect are abstractions from it: - even so is the known physical world.

Lloyd Morgan: -

Lloyd Morgan attacks the problem of evolution from the scientific standpoint and in the end, finds the standpoint wanting. The fact of howbeit is a problem in evolution which no scientific explanation can really explain. Simply of showing that the process has been indistinguishably.

gradual, science has not solved the problem. The point is still that between space-time - and matter, Between matter - and life and Between life and consciousness there are absolute differences which no amount of shading off can eliminate. This world does emerge:- something is there which can in no way be the result of any previous arrangement. Emergents are not necessitants..

In the process of evolution Bergson sees its apex in some form of Deity. The process seems destined to reach a being whose knowledge and behaviour are perfect. The only explanation is that the plan was there from the beginning. Deity and purpose are essential to the process. God is therefore a philosophic necessity.

It has been claimed that Morgan is here giving a poor basis for a belief in God. McDougall among others wants a more demanding reason for accepting religion. However in centering on evolution Morgan is happy. Hence we do have a real denial of mechanistic determinism. Certainly there is evidence of purpose. Emergent evolution is the beginning of biological science to admit Teleology. That Morgan does not see all the implications of this admittance is no denial of the importance of the fact that he does admit Teleology. This is his main contribution.

Brightman:-

Brightman takes much from those that have gone before him. He assumes that the one impediment to the belief in a personal God is the problem of evil. In this of course he builds much on what has gone before. For him the God of the mathematicians and Hegelian's type of God is of no religious significance. He desires a personal God, a God that is responsive, whose interest is in people. He is right in concluding that the problems of pain and evil are the main arguments to that type of God, once that mechanistic determinism has been eliminated. For Brightman, atheism has grown out of the problem of evil and this is the problem with which he spends most of his time.

Brightman has learned this from the temper of our scientific age. And that is to be humble about one's intellectual capacities. He demonstrates a fine conception of truth when he presents his views only as "a Philosophy of Religion." He thus admits that there is truth and that man can comprehend it in part. He denies that we can ever know

ultimate reality all in all, but he nevertheless believes that we ought to seek tirelessly to understand part of it.

After facing the world Brightman cannot see how God can be omnipotent, omniscient and perfect at the same time, all so why the imperfections in the world? Whence evil? Not wishing to lose the values to be gained from belief in a personal God, Brightman forces the problem back to Him. In God himself is an unresolved conflict. He himself is limited by something incomplete in his own nature. He is in process. Evil is the evidence of this incompleteness.

Thus we have a basis for prayer. Thus does man meet God. God is given a new awareness, this development is achieved through the prayers of man. In this way man is given some freedom within the process, although how, is not altogether worked out. Man is free to accomplish as far as the limits of God's nature permits him.

In Brightman we have an attack on an old problem for Religious thought. He feels and believes mightily that he does not need to attack the all including tendency of mechanistic determinism. It is dead. But the aged old problem of evil is still present. His main contribution to religion is that it represents a valiant attempt to reconcile the idea of a personal God to this ~~problem~~ problem. However the fact that the conflict is in God does not solve the dualism. Nor does the making of God's life a process of development permit man enough freedom. The making of God into a process, no matter how spiritual, still makes him a process. There is still that basic determinism present. In the true full sense, God is not personal.

Furthermore evil is more than arrested development. This view does justice neither to evil nor to God. However in his solution Brightman is getting at something basic. Evil is the result of an inability to see what is right, and this at least is man's lot. However even more truly is evil the result of an ability to do otherwise when right is known and this is man's habit. Nevertheless the recognition of the almost persistent problem of evil of Brightman is sound. In so doing he came close to the hearts of his and our generation. This is his contribution to religion.

John Oman:

The basic position of John Oman is most significant for religion. This is because of his method and scope as well as his final decision. The man is as important for what he includes, for his basic approach to life as for his position. His main contention is that there is a real supernatural environment as sure as, if not more so than there is a natural environment. Religion is based not on a mental state, not on a social phenomenon, not on a ideology, but on a real environment.

Oman establishes the validity of this environment in several ways. His approach is so vast and all inclusive. He is acquainted with the history of philosophic thought and is able to bring his critical faculties to bear upon it. He is fully acquainted with and ~~sharply~~ estimates the significance of the modern trend in physical theory. He knows modern biology and psychology. Yet he still sees inestimable values in the way of the poet and the thought of a child. Here we have no mean theologian, and one who approaches the problem in a completely unprejudiced manner. He finds religion in the everyday environment of men. He sees its slow development through history. The supernatural is an indispensable part of ordinary environment. Although "wholly other" in matters of significance, it is not wholly apart in matters of contact.

It is difficult to present the man's ideas because they are so all inclusive. Each problem is so inseparably part of another problem because his analysis is so keen. However the most successfully counter attacks the attacks of Religion on several scores. As most of our men have done he attacks mechanism. He is completely thorough in his attacks. Mechanism is for use not for a cosmology. It has validity even for science only as it is a use for freedom. Mechanism can explain none of the most ordinary phenomena. It cannot sustain the origin of a self of any kind. It cannot explain any knowledge of our environment. Its great problem is the problem of evil, as a cosmology. Complete and all inclusive, it is completely discredited.

He deals with those thinkers who call Religion an illusion. If religion is simply projected feeling into a mechanical universe, Oman asks whence the origin of the self. If it is the sanctioned group for the purpose of extending the group life, why is it that so often in the history of religion men have stood out against society. Another sceptic

claims that Religion is simply projected will. It has held the field because by so projecting man has been able to better himself and his environment. Nevertheless it is still illusion. Oman attacks this position full blast. Out of his attack he makes one of his basic points. If this practical test for the validity of an environment is denied, what test is left for validity? For any environment, success within it depends on the extent to which its validity is apprehended. Within the so-called concrete natural environment, this is the only usable test for validity. Oman has no patience with those who would apply one test of reality to the supernatural and another to the natural. To deny the validity of the practical reason, with reference to any environment is to deny the fact that the human mind can know reality of any kind. Thus Oman rightly places the natural and supernatural environment on the same level as far as validity to the human mind is concerned. If the practical reason, in action, can discover aspects of either realm, it has equal right to attribute reality to either.

Another objection to Religion which Oman deals with is that the variety of religious beliefs points to the fact that there is no absolute environment behind it all. However because religion has made mistakes & no reason for denying the validity of the Supernatural. For all the varied theories of the physical universe no one thinks of denying its validity. Oman is completely frank as he looks at the history of religion. Because of its higher possibilities it has committed greater crimes. This has been due to the fact that humanity, in its thinking, always includes something of the original content in the form of its ideas. Fixed ideas have retarded man's development in religious lines. However from the beginning of the appearance of religion man has shown an awe, that was more than fear, he has sought values other than his immediate profit. He has concluded that he moved in an environment ^{which was} not simply the exaltation of the natural. In these things man has acted with reference to a realm which is not simply superficial or complex material values. Thus in the history of religion is to be found, in spite of its variety, a basic unity. There is the sense of the Holy, the Judgment of the sacred and the objective environment of supernatural essence. Thus in the study of religion's history and of its essential being Oman discovers its validity. There is a world which manifests more than natural values which stir the sense of the whole and demand to be esteemed sacred.

all this does not establish any absolute contrast to this environment as O man fully realizes. Perhaps his greatest contribution to Religion is this humility that man as yet does not know any thing absolutely except that he must seek truth.

as well as in the history of religion, O man finds reason for believing in the supernatural in the problems of epistemology. Any dealing with the problem of reality is basically a dealing with the problem of knowledge. In this O man gives a ~~much~~ better presentation of the same thing that Bergson is trying to get at. He attacks the cartesian method as a method for establishing validity of existence to any thing. The intellect is limited to abstraction. In order to be useful, it must be selective. As a result its perception is not expansive. containing not all inclusions. Rather for judging the validity of existence perception is used. Here the mind is in a more receptive condition. Thus we go to the mind of the child or the poet for the true consideration of validity. Here we find that everything is individualized and each individual thing enters the mind as meaning not impact. The man is not a large boy but another thing altogether. Everything is individualized and yet all is a unity. The mind takes cognizance of its environment as meaning not as impact. We don't see lightwaves we see colour. We don't hear vibrations from a violin, we hear melody. The environment enters the individual mind as meaning, not as mechanical impact. Meaning is qualitative. Thus O man goes on to show that all quantitative judgments are originally qualitative. The Supernatural is not an outcome of the natural, but rather the sensation is renewed.

Epistemology must also admit of an individual mind. Thus man must seek an environment which is equal to the task of attributing all knowing and the mind that knows as it maintains its individuality. This was also Eddington's suggestion.

Thus to give the natural world any meaning at all, a supernatural realm must be assumed.

O man also goes to evolution to show the necessity of a supernatural environment, as the other men have pointed out, no mechanical explanation will suffice to explain the absolute changes in the process. Certainly the origin of the self - even to be selfish, is impossible in a mechanistic world. The problem of evil cannot be explained in any other way than by a supernatural environment, and to put it into a necessary process is not to give a satisfactory explanation. The Evolution of man is its hardest

phenomenon to explain. That thing should emerge a being who can stand apart from his environment, who can say "no" to it long enough to reason about it, or make tools to change it, or ridicule its claims, is a wonder which cannot be explained by the exalting of the natural. The struggle for existence this is as important as the struggle for life. The only way evolution can be explained is to carry mind down, not exalt nature up. The only thing to do is conceive an environment which would be capable of such manifestations.

Thus from several considerations and from several fields of inquiry, man gives as much reason as can be given for believing in the reality of a supernatural environment. He puts religion on a as firm a basis as any knowledge of any reality, and within the accepted existimology - (and what other is there to accept) he places consecration of quality foremost. However in so doing he does not give Religion any right to dogmatism. The environment is there, but it is not fully known. "a Pursuit for more light requires loyalty to the light we have." But the finest and highest loyalty is to the tasking & judging aright the supernatural because there is denied absoluteness to any human judgment of it. --- Religion is given its validity and warned as to what is its field.