

*Body and Will.* By HENRY MAUDSLEY, M.D. Kegan Paul, Trench, and Co. 1883.

*Prolegomena and Ethics.* By the late J. H. GREEN. Clarendon Press. 1883.

Anyone who wishes to realize in its clearest form the wide divergence of the materialist and idealist currents of English thought about mental problems cannot do better than read together the two remarkable books which we have bracketed for review. Their writers are typical of the schools they represent, and have arrived, each for himself, at perhaps the clearest and most logical theory to be deduced from their respective lines of argument. Yet their conclusions are, as nearly as may be, diametrically opposed; or, at least, they are on the face of them contradictory, and no clue as yet appears by which the contradiction may be solved or explained away.

Dr. Maudsley lands us, by a process which to him, and, doubtless, to most of his readers, seems obvious and inevitable, at the conclusion that mind and all its products are a function of matter, an outcome of interacting and combined atomic forces not essentially different in kind from the effervescence that follows a chemical combination or the explosion of a fulminate. It is a new form of force, more complex and wonderful than others; but yet the mathematical result of them, inevitably fated from the beginning—if there ever was a beginning—and fated to exist in this way and in no other; for the universe is bound in an iron net, and the picturesque phantasy of chance or choice is only the delusion of the fool.

Professor Green, summing up, before his unexpected and untimely death, the philosophical results of many years of hard and conscientious wrestling with the problems of German and English thought, announces to us, on the contrary, that nature and matter have no reality but as a function of that spiritual principle, which alone truly *is*, and which is manifest to our consciousness in the double aspects of thought and will. He does not in truth call it God, though perhaps the ordinary reader would follow his argument better if he did so. In any case, it is that which is neither matter nor the result of matter—which was not caused, but is free—which is in its essence un-subject to time or space, for it transcends and creates

them. In the universe, as we in our partial experience can come to know it, it is revealed to us as law—as reason manifest in order and harmonious interdependence of relations; for things are to the thinker only meeting-points of relation. In our own lives it is made manifest, not adequately nor all at once, but by a gradual development in which the rational, spiritual possibilities of our nature are at first latent or vague, though necessarily implied in all our conscious human life, and become by degrees, in the very work of knowing and experiencing, more fully realized and conscious of themselves. In the moral aspect of nature this spiritual principle is seen in the form of an imperative law, and therefore implies a freedom that is not possible to phenomena in the order of physical or natural causation. The existence of the absolute imperative of duty thus guarantees to us of itself that we are not atonic resultants, and that, whatever may befall us, we can never say that circumstances and not ourselves have made us what we are. If we are, in some as yet unexplained way, so limited in our spiritual growth and movement by the phenomena of organic and natural forces that they *seem* to govern our life, we are none the less endued with the power to make them the servants of our real selves, and by them to work out a destiny that is in the best sense free. Nor is there any divorce between this moral side of our being and that aspect of it which is commonly described as thought, or reason, or mind. For will is no *extra* quality or entity in human life, but is only reason going out in act, as thought or knowledge is reason taking in the data of nature, by which alone it is allowed to accomplish its own growth. What Mind, Reason, Spirit, Will might be if we could transcend the framework of space and time and think of it without the complications of brain and nerves, youth and age, sleep and disease, life and death—what God, in a word, may be—Professor Green does not profess to tell us. Indeed, his speculation is strangely modest, and he is almost too anxious to answer outside difficulties from the scientific and materialist standpoint, when it would have made his meaning easier if he had gone his own way boldly. But he tells us enough to allow any painstaking student fully to appreciate that point of view which, uncommon as it seems superficially to have become, is yet held powerfully, even in England. Dr. Maudsley is contemptuous about “metaphysics,” and the barren heights of speculation. In a busy age like ours, with scientific work

of practical utility pressing on every hand for investigation and experiment, and with any number of interesting results, capable of being verified by weight and measure and exhibited by the electric light to admiring audiences, it is perhaps not wonderful that mere hard thinking, which is dry and difficult, and will never be understood of the vulgar, should be at a discount. But for those who study Mental Science with an honest desire to solve problems the most momentous in the range of human effort, and especially for those whose practical work is along the borderland where mental and physical facts are inextricably tangled together, it may not be useless to remember, once in a way, that there are two views on the subject of the relation of Body and Mind, and that the idealists (to give them a misleading name) are not necessarily either ignorant or mad.

The special reason for bracketing Prof. Green with Dr. Maudsley is that he, at least, does not ignore the difficulties raised for the metaphysician by evolutionary biology. It may be worth while, perhaps, for clearness sake, to state at once his view of the relation between the spiritual and the material side of human life. After explaining at length his fundamental view that human experience, or knowledge, or self-consciousness, cannot be a part of the process of nature, since it is itself conscious of that process, and that the simplest chain of perceptions *is not* a series of phenomena, but implies necessarily "the existence of an eternal consciousness in man" as the basis of any and every mental act, he goes on to inquire how the presence of this eternal principle can be reconciled with the fact that our consciousness varies and grows in the lives of each of us, in apparent obedience to physical conditions of organism? "It seems," he says at p. 72, "to have a history in Time. It seems to vary from moment to moment. It apprehends processes of becoming in a manner which implies that past stages of the becoming are present to it as known facts; yet is it not itself coming to be what it has not been? It will be found, we believe, that this apparent state of the case can only be explained by supposing that in the growth of our experience, in the process of our education to know the world, an animal organism, which has its history in time, gradually becomes the vehicle of an eternally complete consciousness. What we call our mental history is not a history of this consciousness, which in itself can have no history,

but a history of the process by which the animal organism becomes its vehicle. 'Our consciousness' may mean either of two things: either a function of the animal organism, which is being made, gradually and with interruptions, a vehicle of the eternal consciousness, or that eternal consciousness itself, as making the animal organism its vehicle and subject to certain limitations in so doing, but retaining its essential characteristic as independent of Time, as the determinant of becoming which has not and does not itself become."

Dr. Maudsley will complain of this as being "words—mere words," and he may also complain that the words are not very easily understood; but if he and his school will give them their attention, they will, at least, not be able to say that that they do not state a tangible theory. Dr. Maudsley's own suggestion is in another direction. "The gulf between the conception of the movements of cerebral molecules and the self-consciousness of will-energy may well be due," he thinks at p. 101, "to the different ways of acquiring them. Molecular Action and Will may be one and the same event seen under different aspects, and to be known as such one day from a higher plane of knowledge. For if the object and the brain are alike pervaded by such a hyper-subtile ether; and if the impression which the particular object makes upon mind be then a sort of pattern of the mentiferous undulations as conditioned within it by its particular form and properties; and if the mind in turn be the mentiferous undulations as conditioned by the convoluted form and the exceedingly complicated and delicate structure of the brain, then it is plain we have eluded the impassable difficulty of conceiving the action of mind upon matter—the material upon the immaterial—which results from the notion of their entirely different natures." Is this theory any clearer than the other?

In fact, this theory does not really touch the point which the disciples of Prof. Green would put to Dr. Maudsley at all. If you could get outside your own mind and consciousness and percipient thought—if you could once effect the *salto mortale* from my notion of things, phenomena, facts—call them what you will—to objects or facts outside and independent of all consciousness or perception, then the materialist might get under way, and with ingenious theories of this kind might explain much. But how is he to leap off

his own shadow? What is a fact? How can he ever dissociate an object, however apparently independent of his personal control, from the one necessary condition that it must, as far as he knows or ever can know it, have been cast in the moulds of human thought and knowledge? Everything he ever heard or saw, or knew by reading, or imagined by recombining the elements of his remembered perceptions, is a "fiction of his mind," in some sense, if not in Hume's. He may picture to himself a glacial landscape with its appropriate fauna, and no man visible. Yet neither ice, nor animals, nor earth, nor air, nor time, nor space, are or could be anything if consciousness or mind could be supposed annihilated out of the universe of being. The very talk of a universe, of being—of *nothing*, if you will—implies and involves a conscious mind to which these notions are related. It is not necessarily my mind or yours—it may not be necessarily any individual or limited intelligence such as we know among ourselves—but Mind, as such, somewhere and somehow, is a condition precedent of the existence of anything. Let a man try to think the universe back to the nakedest of beginnings—to a diffused nebula of atoms equal and indifferent in everything except their distances from one another, and already he will find, if he thinks it out, that a hundred categories are involved in its picture which *are* mind, and are as unthinkable, apart from mind, as a poem or a syllogism.

To return, however, from this rather fundamental criticism. It is, of course, to be recognised by all that for all the practical problems of Mental Science as it is applied in pathology, in education, in civilization, in a thousand forms, it is bound to take strict account at every step of the physical concomitants of consciousness; and is, indeed, more concerned with these than with the idealist side of things, however true that in itself may be. In this aspect, nothing could be better than the third part of Dr. Maudsley's book on "Will in its Pathological Relations," although, even there, he is terribly polemical. But we must reserve what we have to say of it, and of the singular Hymn of Pessimism with which it closes, for another number.

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