

Agnosticism Not Tenable.

Agnosticism is the neutral ground occupied by scientists and others concerning Theism and Materialism. A la Webster: "Opposed alike to dogmatic skepticism and to dogmatic theism." Can such an attitude be honestly and reasonably maintained?

Theism and its associate dogmas are either reasonable or unreasonable. If the former, these beliefs should be accepted by every honest man and woman. If the latter, they should be peremptorily rejected. We have no moral right to antagonize theists if the fundamental tenets of their faith are rational. If irrational, it is our duty to renounce them and to fearlessly proclaim our belief in Naturalism, or Materialism, and its incidental Atheism. Because rejecting theism settles the problem and absolutely establishes the invulnerableness of Materialism. There is room for doubt of the agnostic attitude only if the degree of reasonableness of the two beliefs is alike or approximately so.

But what are the facts? Materialism embraces and implies all facts, all existence, every science, every object of knowledge, everything terrestrial, all truth, every cause, every effect, everything conceivable and inferable, in short, the great aggregate of all existence. Whatever is comes legitimately under the head of Materialism, and whatever is known to science can be classified by this greatest and universal science of all sciences.

What does theism imply? Nothing!—fables, traditions, myths, superstitions.

What is Materialism? Positivism, naturalism, the science of the universe and all its innumerable phenomena, incidentally, or rather as a matter of course, "dogmatically skeptical"—concerning what? A solitary fact? A single truth? No! Simply skeptical concerning absurd traditions of the dark ages and the unverified asseverations of theists of all ages and countries.

Materialism dogmatically affirms that when it knows that twice two is four, that twice two cannot possibly equal five or any other number but four. The one established fact makes the other impossible. So it likewise affirms that abstract existence today being a self-evident fact; such existence (in its elementary form) must be eternal—hence never was created and, hence the fallacies of Theism. And nature, pre-occupying infinite expanse, necessarily excludes a God—in whatever form conceived—from occupying the same space also.

Science proclaims that whatever is personal cannot be infinite and whatever is infinite cannot be personal, hence a personal God—"a theological cramp," Emerson calls it (though the impersonal God he

believed in is vastly more irrational!) is a natural impossibility.

Science furthermore—even in its school books—affirms that man is an animal. He is bred and born an animal and where such animal is not, there man is not. When such animal dies and is disintegrated, such individual man can exist no more. As the existence of man is not known to science before the existence of the animal so it knows nothing of the existence of man when the animal exists no more. And the animal is the ego, mind or consciousness of man, and the ego is this animal (though science may not yet be able to explain psychical phenomena); because in the absence of such animal structure, mind is never manifest. All these are well known facts; all else is conjecture, delusion, affirmation without evidence, hence all this must be rejected.

To insist then that Materialism is as irrational as Theism, or more so, as Huxley has done, is unreasonable or dishonest, prostituting our intellects. It is debasing the greatest of all positive sciences to the level of an hypothesis, and exalting the absurd myths of the ape-men to the dignity of reasonable probabilities. It is placing on the same plane of rationalism, absolute truth and mildest conjecture.

When Tyndall said: "The order and energy of the universe I hold to be inherent and not imposed from without, the expression of fixed law and not of arbitrary will exercised by what Carlyle would call an 'Almighty Clockmaker,'" and when Huxley, the originator of Agnosticism, and Spencer endorsed this sentiment, it proved beyond doubt and cavil that all three of these great thinkers are dogmatic Atheists, all they said to the contrary notwithstanding.

To further prove the inconsistency of Huxley and the fact that he positively was a Materialist and, incidentally, an Atheist, in spite of his cowardly attempt to shield himself from the stigma still associated with this God-denying name, and so unpopular among his friends and associates, I will submit the following from his own writings.

"We are not here to enquire what we would prefer but what is true." * * "Science is teaching the world that the ultimate court of appeal is observation and experiment, and not authority." (What has he "observed"—nature or a God?)—"Does man originate in a different way from a dog, bird, frog or fish? The reply is not doubtful for a moment; without question, the mode of origin in the early stages of the development of man are identical with those of the animal immediately below him in the scale; without a doubt in these respects he is far nearer to apes than the apes are to the dog." * * "In the interest

of scientific clearness I object to saying that I have a soul, when I mean all the while that my organism has certain mental functions, which, like the rest, are dependent on its molecular composition, and come to an end when I die." (Is this Materialism or Agnosticism?) * * "It is true that if philosophers have suffered, their cause has been amply revenged. Extinguished theologians lie about the cradle of every science, as the stangled snakes beside that of Hercules." (Who but a radical Atheist would thus speak about the only men who teach God?) * * "But supposing the phenomena of spiritualism to be genuine—they do not interest me. If anybody would endow me with the faculty of listening to the chatter of old women and curates in the nearest cathedral town, I should decline the privilege, having better things to do, and if they talk in the spirit world no more sensibly and wisely than their friends report them to do, I put them in the same category. The only good that I can see in a demonstration of the truth of Spiritualism is to furnish an additional argument against suicide. Better live a crossing-sweeper than die and be made to talk twaddle by a 'medium' at a guinea a seance." —[Wettstein, in Free Opinion.

Much Ado About Nothing.

If a man think himself something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.—[Paul.

This text affirms, in the first place, that a man may think when he is nothing. We infer, then, that nothing can think. Nothing, also, is of the male sex. Nothing is very liable to be egotistical and conceited. Nothing may be a man, may think himself something and get fooled. What a physiognomical study it would be to observe the features of that man, who is nothing, perplexed over the mistake he had made in thinking himself something.

Nothing may be a married man, and his wife is commanded by the inspired apostle, "If she will know anything, let her ask her husband at home."

Nothing has a never-dying soul to save, and is liable to be roasted forever in hell. Nothing, when he is a man, is made in the image of God, and woman is made in the image of nothing.

God is everywhere. Let us make an experiment and see if we can find him.

The weight of the atmosphere will sustain a column of mercury about twenty-nine inches high. Let us take a tube forty inches long and fill it with mercury. We will insert the open end into a vessel of mercury. The mercury will settle down to twenty-nine inches, leaving an empty space, or vacuum in the upper end of the tube, eleven inches long. That space, in the

language of science, contains nothing. In the language of theology, it contains God. God must be there, for he is everywhere. That space does not contain a part of God, for he is invisible and devoid of parts. God is unchangeable—all alike. Hence, God is sheer emptiness, and theology is that science which explains our relations and obligations to a vacuum.

D. PRIESTLEY.

Past, Present, and Future.

The one great law of nature is change and progress. Nothing stands still. All is onward. The art, science, philosophy, and culture of ancient Greece have given way to the progress of the Nineteenth century. We need only look through the powerful lens of the telescope of history to convince us that evolution rules the world in spite of the barricades placed by the bloody hands of the trinity—ignorance, superstition, and fear. It is not only our privilege but our duty to discard all that proves detrimental to progress, unreliable and unworthy of our confidence, and to accept in its place the true, the noble, and the just. That which admits of no advance, no progress, is a parasite sucking the life blood of truth. The law of evolution applies to religion as well as all else. Evolution makes no distinction of class nor creed. The noisy babble of the brook, the steady flow of the river, the sullen roar of the ocean, all speak the life-giving word, ONWARD.

Many years ago the crocodile was worshipped as a god. Now, all wonder how any intelligent being could be so blind. We have evolved still further. Secularists, in their turn, look with the same amazement upon the Christian, who kneels to his imaginary god. But in our pride we must not forget that Secularism, too, is evolving and has evolved. We can look back to the time when Liberalism meant simply to doubt the creeds and dogmas of the Christian and to cry out for liberty. All this is past. The true Secularists realizes that something must be done; that the world is well fitted for a paradise and now is the time. He looks with pity upon the crime and misery which exist today, and realizes that conditions must be changed. He realizes that morality is the most pressing demand of the age—an absolute necessity, and should be the basis, the foundation of life. Morality is not a creed, it is science. The old time liberal destroyed; the Secularist builds. His foundation completed, he steadily advances, brick by brick, stone by stone, until the structure is completed—a lighthouse sending its rays to safely guide the wanderer over the shoals of life, at last leading the way to a couch cushioned