

The Origin of the Ego.

Concluded from 1st page.

idared colonies of the generalized ganglionic type, it has its seat in a diffuse form in the main regulative ganglia, and as yet furnished but a vague sentiment of a general individuality. In the fourth, or in the vertebrates, it is housed in a special organ subsequently super-added; here it had its modest birth, developed little by little, and ended at the summit of the scale by becoming the mighty Ego of man.

Virtual, diffused or centralized, its role in all animals is to afford individuals the sentiment of their conservation, of their needs, and to force them to obey the injunctions of nature on penalty of annihilation. In its highest degree it comprises memories of the past, acts, sensations and thoughts, the sum total of its internal and external impressions; it gives the individual the sentiment of its present corporeal existence and the notion even of its faculties and intellectual operations. Animals provided with hemispheres alone think, man alone knows that he thinks; 'cogito ergo sum'. The Ego is the consciousness of self — it is the Soul.— [Science and Faith.

Whence Am I? What Am I?

In answer to these old questions we give our second extract from Dr. Topinard's new book on "Science and Faith". It is the last word of science on the subject of SELF, and must be thoroughly read.

In our first extract, in last Torch, we had the question of the origin of life explained; and now we add a hint or so to enable the reader to reach over from that exposition to the present one. Now catch on!

We saw that in our first forms of life, the protozoa, the plastids or cells were separate or loosely joined together. When they became more closely attached, but not so as to form a tissue, they were called merids (from the Græek 'meros', a part), but when the cells co-operate they make a zoid or meta-zoic animal; and when the cells combine their separate zoids, they become a tissue of cell centers, which is called a deme, or people of cells (from Greek DEMOS—a people) that is an undifferentiated aggregate of cells.

When some of these cells, by division of labor and function, become specially adapted to receive and answer to external impressions, we have the beginning of a ganglion. When there are a number of these ganglia in a metazoic animal, their action is felt more or less by each other along lines of cell-fibres which thus become nerves. Thus we have a lot of communicating ganglia in an ever-acting animal body. Now the professor's story goes on from there to tell how the Ego results from their cell and nerve interaction against the envi-

ronment, and their constant attempts to hold their own against it. The result is, as he shows, a noto-chord (back-string of nerve cells) is formed, as in the amphioxus, then the "proliferation" (budding out) of more nerve cells and tissues at the head; then the large or brain ganglion thus formed, becomes the court of appeals and regulator of all the other ganglia; and this regulative function is the beginning of constant and sentient reaction which, as it is constantly repeated, is a central stream and stress constantly going on, which we recognize as the sense of self, Ego, and memory. Thus the Ego or soul is a constant flowing together of nerve changes and their sensations. That is, it is a PROCESS, and not an entity, a thing, a spirit or a spook!

If convenient, read with this exposition the corresponding part of Haeckel's Evolution of Man, or any other modern work of biology touching this subject, and observe as far as you can the actions and reactions of the lower forms of life.

In order to understand and appreciate the new things and ideas of a new science we must get familiar with them. Then their "mystery" will disappear, and a peculiar delight and even joy will take its place, which will pay a thousand-fold for the labor and thought they have cost us. The highest pleasure in the world is the pleasure of learning? T. B. W.

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