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EDITORIAL

MECHANISM, ORGANISM AND LIFE.

Man is an indivisible whole of extreme complexity. No simple representation of him can be obtained. There is no method capable of apprehending him simultaneously in his entirety, his parts and his relations with the outer world. In order to analyse ourselves we are obliged to seek the help of various techniques, and therefore to utilise various sciences. Naturally, all these sciences arrive at different conceptions of their common object. They abstract only from man what is attainable by their special methods. We know man as composed of distinct parts relative to which are used concepts some of which are specific to him, others belonging to all living beings and still others belonging to those of chemistry, physics and mechanics. Our idea of man varies according to our beliefs and feelings. A materialist looks at him as a piece of mechanism, a vitalist regards him as an organism and a spiritualist takes him to be an unique, individual conscious personality. All these views are correct and true from their relative standpoints. But all these concepts do not exhaust their subject. The error of the 19th century physiology lies in the fact that it has endeavoured to reduce man entirely to physical chemistry. This unjustified generalisation of

the results of sound experiments is due to over-specialisation. Concepts are indispensable but they should not be misused or indiscriminately mixed up. They must be kept in their place in the hierarchy of sciences. Man is certainly a mechanism but he transcends it and is an organism as well.

So in this article, we will try to elaborate the implications of the concepts of mechanism and organism.

Machine—What it is:

A machine or a mechanical system, will be a combination of material parts, so adapted and collocated that motion put into one of them from the outside, is transmitted and distributed through all the rest; and the parts by inhibiting and balancing one another's movements, producing a joint result which consists in setting something else in motion and producing change of position in space.

Thus a mechanism consists in transference of motion from one body to another by external shock and impact; as one rolling ball communicates its movements to another by striking against it.

The characteristics of a mechanical system are as follows:—

(1) The movements are derived from motor force applied to it from the outside; its parts are so adapted to one another in shape, size or position, that they transmit the motion from one to another by external impact and yet by their interaction produce one joint result.

(2) It follows from this that a mechanical system is not a real but only an artificial whole—it has in it no central power of self-construction, self-evolution or self-preservation. Its parts are brought together and held together, not by a power of self-realisation working from within any one of them or in the whole, but by many different forces coming in from the outside and passing out from one part into another; a mechanism has no internal unifying and self-regulating principle.

(3) The parts of a machine are all external to one another and have nothing in common beyond their being

material and capable of receiving and transmitting motion. They must have determinate collocations and adaptations.

Organism—What it is:

An organism is not artificially made, but grows—not put together by the forces acting from the outside but evolved by a single power working from within—a self-evolving, self-sustaining unity.

In an organism the result has something to do with its own production. Indeed organic growth can be shown to be the self-realisation or self-development of an idea or a purpose present in it from the beginning and evolving and co-ordinating all the parts from within.

Thus the plan or idea contained in the evolving force from the beginning, manifests itself as the energy of *Life*—the unifying and controlling power of the whole over the parts—differentiating and co-ordinating the parts and making them co-ordinate together for its own more perfect realisation. The parts derive their form and function from the whole; and the whole makes itself to be what it is by evolving and sustaining the parts as its organs. In other words, the evolving power reacts from the whole upon the parts, making them subservient to its own plan or idea; and thus raises itself into being the “life” of the organism.

Life:

The self-realising energy of purpose or idea which evolves the organism from within, making all its parts work together for the good of the whole and from the whole reacts upon and controls the parts, differentiating and co-ordinating them as its organs—is what we understand by the life of the organism.

Therefore, the life is both the beginning and the resultant of the organism. It is its beginning because it is the power which evolves it from the primordial cell onwards. It is the resultant because the organism is the system of means by means of which it completes and perfects itself and makes itself to be concrete life.

And this control of whole over parts, of purpose over means, in which life seems to consist, manifests itself especially in—

(1) the power which the organism has of exposing its own molecules to oxidation for the production of heat and force;

(2) the power of applying part of the force thus acquired to change its own form and position, in such a way as to resist external forces and adapt itself better to outward circumstances and thereby preserve itself;

(3) the power of applying part of it to seizing and drawing into itself materials from outside assimilating them to its own substance (digestion) thereby making up for what has already been oxidised and increasing its own bulk and making possible the sub-division and multiplication of cells in which growth consists;

(4) the power of modifying its cells and integrating them into different organs, adapted to the different functions of circulation, respiration, excretion, digestion, co-ordination, etc., and co-ordinating the work of these organs so as to make them co-operate for the good of the whole system;

(5) the power (when its growth and self-differentiation can grow no further) of giving off cells in the form of buds or germs which grow into new organisms, thereby preserving its species for unknown ages.

The Nature of the Human being:

It is an organism which evolves the system of mechanically related parts and works in it and through it. Here mechanism is not ultimate but instrumental to a power behind it. Like a machine it is both simple and complex. But the machine is primarily complex and secondary simple; whereas man is primarily simple and secondarily complex. He originates from a single cell. In the course of process of structural elaboration, the embryo retains the functional simplicity of the egg. The cells seem to remember their original unity, even when they have become the

elements of an innumerable multitude. They know spontaneously the functions attributed to them in the organised whole, *e.g.*, the function of a leucocyte, a red blood cell, epithelial cells, etc. The spontaneous tendency toward formation of organs by their constitutive cells, like the social aptitude of the insects is easily evident in the study of the human organism. It cannot be explained in the light of our present mechanical or physico-chemical concepts. An organ builds itself by techniques very foreign to the human mind. It is engendered by cells which, to all appearances, have a knowledge of the future edifice, and synthesise from substances contained in blood plasma the building material and even the workers.

Thus we find that the human being transcends mechanism and is in reality an organism. Homœopathy studies the human being from this organismal outlook. The auxiliary subjects to modern medicine, *e.g.*, Anatomy, Physiology, Pathology, etc.—all try to study the human being from the standpoint of mechanism which is under the sway of physico-chemical forces. Herein lies the basis of the ideological conflict between Homœopathy and the so-called modern scientific medicine.

Hahnemann made his position very clear when wrote the following in his memorable article under the caption, "Spirit of the Homœopathic medical doctrine" (1813):—

"Human life is in no respect regulated by purely physical laws, which only obtain among inorganic substances. The material substances of which the human organism is composed no longer follow, in this vital combination the laws to which material substances in the inanimate condition are subject; they are regulated by the laws peculiar to vitality alone, they are themselves animated and vitalised just as the whole system is animated and vitalised. Here a nameless fundamental power reigns omnipotent, which abrogates all the tendency of the component parts of the body to obey the laws of gravitation, of momentum, of the "vis inertiae," of fermenta-

tion, of putrefaction, etc., and brings them under the wonderful laws of life alone—in other words, maintains them in the condition of sensibility and activity necessary to the preservation of the living whole, a condition almost spiritually dynamic”.

B. K. S

**STUDY OF INDIGENOUS SYSTEM OF MEDICINE
AND OF HOMŒOPATHY
RECOMMENDATIONS BY HEALTH MINISTERS'
CONFERENCE**

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 5.—The Health Ministers' Conference which concluded its 3-day session on Saturday, 2. 9. 50 urged that adequate provision be made at the Centre and in the Provinces for starting institutions for Diploma courses in indigenous system of medicine.

It recommended that adequate provision be also made for Post-graduate Course in Indian medicine for graduates in Western medicine and for research and investigation in Ayurveda and Unani.

The Conference accepted the recommendations of the Indigenous Systems of Medicine Committee and the Homœopathic Enquiry Committee. It passed six resolutions on the basis of the recommendations of these two committees dealing with the following subjects: Indigenous systems of medicine and homœopathy, recruitment of senior health personnel, the establishment of a Central Council of Health, the role of voluntary organisations like missions and philanthropic bodies, the establishment in Calcutta of a training centre for maternity and child health personnel and the danger to public health from the sale of spurious drugs.