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## EDITORIAL

### A HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL STUDY OF THE EVOLUTION OF MEDICAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE WEST

The earliest preoccupation of man in his awakened thoughts and as also his inevitable and ultimate preoccupation is the search after pure Truth. In all ages and climes a section of men appeared, who did not want millions but replies to their questions. The history of civilisation of men is the record of successive answers to their queries and consequent moulding of life and its activities, both individual and collective, according to the varying lights they received from their solution of problems. The great experiment which mankind has attempted upon itself, called Medicine, is not as yet ended, and indeed as all earthly things, will never be brought to a perfect end, because it is an experiment which deals with the most intricate secret of nature, life.

Ever since the days of Aristotle mankind has been in quest of the "substance" of which the universe is made. Towards the later part of the 16th century Gallileo distinguished the primary qualities of things, dimensions and weight, which are easily measurable, from their secondary qualities, form, colour, odour, which cannot be measured.

The qualitative was separated from the quantitative. By the 17th century the doctrine of the fundamental substance of the universe was embodied in the materialistic theory of the Universe according to which the universe was composed of featureless stuff-matter—as its fundamental component, and of secondary qualities, which were of minor importance. Matter was something tangible; something that had mass-weight. The quantitative matter expressed in mathematical language, brought science to humanity. The qualitative came to be neglected. The abstraction of the primary qualities of the objects was legitimate; but overlooking of secondary qualities was not. This mistake had momentous consequences.

Following Aristotelian era man's knowledge of the universe grew in depth and width but held a synoptic view wherein Philosophy and Science did not come to parting of ways. What we designate by Physical Science was labelled as Natural Philosophy. Men had the curiosity and urge to know all and explain all—but lacked the proper method of acquiring knowledge regarding the universe. Speculations reigned supreme. Reason was adulterated with much fancy and imagination. A new consciousness began to dawn on the European Mind during the Renaissance Period. So long man used to interpret facts of Nature in terms of their pre-conceived mental notions. A change in point of view came into being. They sought to discover those ideas or concepts which arose from controlled experiment or observation and in turn led to further experiment and observation. Nothing was to be accepted which could not lend itself to experimental verification. Thus was laid the foundation of the Inductive process of reasoning, first promulgated by Lord Bacon of England in his immortal work "Novum Organum." Science came to be regarded as an exact and systematic statement of knowledge concerning some subject or group of subjects, gained and verified by exact observation and correct thinking, specially as a system of ascertained facts and principles

covering and attempting to give adequate rational expression to a great natural group or division of knowledge *e.g.* Sciences of Astronomy, Botany, Chemistry, Physics, etc. Philosophy came to be regarded as a corpus of general principles, laws or causes that furnish the rational explanation of anything—the rationale by which facts of any region of knowledge are explained. Science turned out to be analytic whereas Philosophy sought to be synthetic. Science came to be dominated by a passion for intellectual clarity and mathematical exactitude. Hence those subjects which did not lend themselves to mathematical precision were not cultivated with the same zeal which was displayed for material scientific subjects. Inexact sciences like Biology, Medicine, which is but a department of Biology and Psychology etc., were sought to be based on the conceptions of exact sciences—and this led to confusion of categories. The materialistic school of thought overlooked the basic human experience that the universe is not a single creation but a triple—material, vital and mental. Each order of existence is as much real as the other. Psychology, Biology and matter—each forms a relevant subject for scientific study. But they seem to form a series in the hierarchy of knowledge. The concepts of the psychological knowledge, occupying the highest rank cannot be reduced to those of physical sciences.

In the 17th century Science took over from the materialistic philosophy the notion of matter as the basic component of nature. Physics elaborated it in detail, describing its structural and dynamic properties, while Chemistry reduced it to chemical compounds and units. When biology in the 17th century began to branch off from philosophy, like other Sciences it took over from philosophy the notion of matter as the principal basic element of the universe; and for biology this matter took the form of the body, which could be studied from the point of view of both its physical and its chemical properties. Anatomy and Physiology fulfilled rôles similar to that of Physics while

Bio-chemistry concerned itself with the body's chemical composition. At first all these departments of biology were necessarily descriptive.

At the beginning of the 19th century medicine decided to break away from the mystical philosophical notions in which it was steeped and to become a science. There were, however, no sciences other than materialistic ones, and no material other than the matter, worth considering. Consequently medicine turned to those branches of biology which were already in existence. Since medicine deals with "health" and "disease" the former branches of descriptive biology had to transform themselves into applied anatomy, physiology and chemistry—i.e., applied to the needs of medicine. Medical thought accepted from philosophy not only the notion of matter as the Supreme Reality, but also the conception of secondary qualities having little bearing on the essentials of the Universe. Hence *clinical manifestations*, and especially symptoms, came in part to be treated as secondary qualities—i.e., qualities worthy of study only inasmuch as they are useful for recognising the state of matter itself concealed behind them.

In the middle of the 19th century, bacteriology began its sweeping career. This did not clash with medicine's fundamental notion of matter, but merely added the belief that this matter may be destroyed by other living matter resulting in material organic diseases.

Medicine could have followed the anatomical, the physiological or bacteriological line. In other words, it could have become either applied anatomy, or applied physiology or applied bacteriology, but instead it chose to become a medley of all of them, and by so doing completely lost its individuality. Medicine is swayed to and fro by the discoveries made in each of those departments of biology, and appears ever eager to yield to their influence. Medicine began to career as an anatomical science because at the moment when it decided to become a science, descriptive

anatomy being already well developed and pathological anatomy already in existence, a sure materialistic foundation was ready for adoption. Medicine assimilated also the philosophical doctrine of determinism—i.e., the belief that everything must have a cause. The definition of cause, since it is considered to be a philosophical problem, is avoided, but this notion of cause is deeply woven into medical theory and partly also into medical practice, and indeed of the very texture of medical knowledge—so that the present Scheme of medicine can aptly be called "Causal medicine."

The men of modern medicine have confused the conceptions relevant the category of life with those suited to physical sciences. Medicine, really belongs to a department of Biology. In medicine the nature of the stimulus imparted by a drug to the performance of functions by the organism can never be expressed adequately in terms of physics and chemistry. The character of stimulus belongs to the domain of life. The mechanical cause in the physical world can not be made synonymous with the "creative" cause in the field of life, which should be rather regarded as ends, the operation of which is of such a character that difficulties about action at a distance disappear and that the ends themselves take external shape in the form of phenomena as a whole which has no existence outside its members and the material in which it expresses and conserves itself, maintaining unbroken the identity of the organism through its course from its conception to death, notwithstanding metabolism and constant change in material.

The 18th century has been rightly called the age of Theories and Systems and even in the early part of the 19th century classification of diseases attracted much more attraction than at present. Linneus and Cuvier built up the sciences of Botany and Zoology, after they effected a complete classification in their respective fields. The medical men, in their attempt to make their medicine look

quite scientific and to bring medicine "on par" with other departments of science, were busy with preparing a formal classification of diseases in various ways. But they committed the same logical mistake of adopting the order of classification which is appropriate for descriptive Sciences like Botany and Zoology. They all overlooked the point that disease is not a morbid entity, if by this commonly used expression is meant a rigid, unchanging sequence of characteristic events and that diseases are not comparable to animal or botanical species. The modern medicine is still striving to find a suitable classification of diseases which will be satisfactory enough to fulfil the requirements of the pathologists, the clinicians and the pharmacologists. Diseases which are nothing but processes of disturbed functions do not necessarily hold pace with morphological changes and *vice versa*. It is well-known that in all diseases the pathological changes are the expression of the end results of the disease whereas symptoms are the expression of progress of the disease and therefore it must be evident how difficult it is in the majority of diseases to bring about a classification which would make pathology and clinic absolutely coincide.

I am not decrying the methods of Science *viz.*, the methods of observations, experimentations, analysis, classification, deduction, generalisation, etc. They have done infinite good to our attempt at arriving at truth. The scientific method of knowledge is the method of inducing Nature to reveal their own way of being and proceeding without hastening to put upon them our own impositions of idea and imagination. The spirit and techniques of Science are our most precious possessions. In order to find again the right direction we must return in thought to the men of Renaissance, imbue ourselves with their spirit, their passion for empiric observation and their contempt for vain speculative philosophical systems. But we must radically differ from them and attribute to life and mind the same importance as to matter. It is indispensable

that our thoughts should embrace all aspects of reality. Instead of discarding the residues of scientific abstractions we will utilise those residues as fully as the abstractions. We will not accept the tyranny of the quantitative, the superiority of mechanics, physics or chemistry. We will renounce the intellectual attitude generated by the Renaissance and its arbitrary definitions of the real. But we must retain all the conquests made since Gallileo's time. We should study the human being from an organismal point of view which transcends that of mechanism. The metaphysics of life may not be ascertained with normal human knowledge; but Science of life can be built through the methods commonly accepted in all other branches of Science, whether physical, biological or psychological. Modern Science obsessed with the greatness of its physical discoveries and the idea of sole existence of Matter, has long attempted to base upon physical data even its study of soul, mind and life and of those workings of nature in man and animal in which a knowledge of psychology is as important as any of the physical sciences. Its very psychology founded itself upon physiology and the scrutiny of brain and nervous system. So long as Mind and life along with Matter are not accepted as fundamental verities of the universe, so long as the reorientation in outlook is not reflected in the field of medicine—the pursuit of medical Science would not be worth the name and the medical art would not be as fruitful as it should be. A new consciousness is dawning up on us. The physicians here and there, have started to talk about psycho-somatic medicine and "Adaption syndromes" etc. As such a change in outlook would shake pedagogy, medicine, hygiene, psychology and sociology I am afraid, the rank and file of the 'so called' modern scientific medical profession, would not easily give up this faith.

B. K. S.

## THE MIDNAPORE HOMŒOPATHIC MEDICAL COLLEGE AND HOSPITAL

The foundation-stone laying for the College building and the Hospital opening ceremony.

We are glad to announce that a very happy function took place at Midnapore on the 12th February last when His Excellency Dr. Katju, Governor of West Bengal, very graciously performed the opening ceremony of the Hospital and laid the foundation-stone for the Jhargram Raj College Building of the Midnapore Homœopathic Medical College and Hospital. There was a distinguished gathering in the spacious compound of the College; all the high officials, the Chairman and members of the Midnapore District Board and the Town Municipality and the elites of the town were present in the meeting. Dr. Bankim Behary Chaudhuri, D.M.S., Secretary to the College read out the Annual Report of the institution. Rai Devendra Mohan Bhattacharya Bahadur, the President of the Governing Body of the institution, in a neat little speech addressed the gathering and requested His Excellency Dr. Katju to open the Hospital and to lay the foundation-stone of the College premises. His Excellency addressed the meeting in a very feeling tone, eulogised the homœopathic system of treatment and expressed his personal conviction in the mode of treatment and wished all success for this new and unique adventure *viz.*, the starting of the Homœopathic institution in a moffussil town. He also expressed his desire that both the Government and the public should co-operate in the noble cause.

We are publishing in this issue, the Annual Report of the new institution for the year 1948-49. We hope our readers will be happy to learn about the details of the praise-worthy attempt on the part of the authorities of the Midnapore Homœopathic Medical College. We pray to God that their achievements be crowned with success in near future.

B. K. S.