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CRITICAL NOTES

CRITICAL NOTES ON IMMORTALITY

REVEREND JAMES LINDSAY, D.D.

ANNICK LODGE, BY IRVINE, SCOTLAND

IN the *Hibbert Journal* for July, 1917, appears an article on "Survival and Immortality" by Dean Inge, of St. Paul's, London.

The article has many good qualities, but ought not to be allowed to pass without criticism. It will leave many readers thinking he has left eternal values for them very much "in the air," and provided an immortality of "not very graspable conception." I wish to point out some ways in which the paper might have been made more satisfying and effective.

He quotes Münsterberg, "every doubt of absolute values destroys itself," etc., and adds, "it is not necessary or desirable to follow Münsterberg in identifying valuation with will." In one sense, that is true, and strongly to be maintained, but it is very misleading without proper qualification or explication. It would be an entirely wrong impression that it is never "necessary" nor "desirable" to connect "will" with valuation. Much misapprehension would have been saved if Dean Inge had anywhere observed the well-accepted distinction by philosophical writers into truth or reality values (for the reason), and will and feeling values, from which Münsterberg cut off feeling in his one-sided preference for will. Dean Inge says, further, of Münsterberg,—“he talks of the will judging; but the will cannot judge.” True enough, and it is pleasing that Dean Inge has preserved a sufficiently robust intellectualism not to have succumbed to the one-sided and unsatisfactory Voluntarism now frequent. “In contemplating existence,” he says, “we use our will to fix our attention, and then try conscientiously to prevent it from influencing the verdict.” Quite true, when “Contem-

plating existence" or reality values, but it leaves entirely aside the place and function of will in the other class of values, those willing and feeling values, which are those generally meant in value-writing. It is the frequently overdone stress on this latter class of values—which, it is said, cannot be absorbed by rationality—that makes much value-writing tend to depreciation of existence or reality values. This, in contravention of the fact that, as Dean Inge properly enough urges, reality is the support of value. The fact that existence may be regarded as, in a sense, "itself a value" is no reason for not recognizing the well-observed distinctions between existence and value, and there is certainly less care in the paper to distinguish the two kinds of value I have spoken of than there might have been. This, although I should not care to doubt "the ultimate identity" of existence and value, if that phrase—not unexceptionable—be taken to mean that they can be run back into a common source.

But this brings me to what I think the main defect of the paper. He claims "objectivity" for the values of Goodness, Truth and Beauty, as much "objective reality" for them, indeed, "as for anything in the world revealed to our senses." This world of values is "the real world"; and in it we find "our own immortality." Now, whether one accepts this theory of values in its entirety or not, is no present concern: what I am concerned with is, that it leaves the inquirer about immortality with this world of values, declared absolute and objective, on his hands, and there is no more trouble about it. The only way in which it is at all brought home to his bosom and his business, as men used to say, is in the words,—"In so far as we can identify ourselves in thought and mind with the absolute values, we are sure of our immortality." Not modern psychology alone will think this a very intellectualistic way of putting the case for values that are so largely affective and volitional. Not many intelligent readers, I fear, will find this offer of immortality anything but shadowy, tenuous, unreal. That ethereal and disem-

bodied values are going to float into eternity will not seem to help *them* much towards an understanding of their relation to immortality. Nor will they think it any less unreal, when they find "the idea of the 'self' " declared to be "a halfway house which belongs to no order of real existence"; and again, that "the question whether it is 'my' soul that will live in the eternal world seems to have no meaning at all." If Dean Inge thinks he can thus cut loose and adrift all reality of the soul or self, and then go on to make any hopeful appeal to men on immortality, he is grossly self-deluded. He has unwittingly committed the offence for which he rebukes Höffding and Santayana, has stripped away the reality that should have been the support of value. Of course, I do not at all accept his interpretation, either of the "self," which is in flat and unsupported contradiction to the results of modern philosophical discussion, which carry a clearly defined idea of the self, or of what he is pleased to call "an abstract ego," on which he is at least not so impressively careful and discriminating as to carry much weight of conviction. His remarks on personality, too, are so lacking in what is essential, and so badly want supplementing, as not to be at all satisfactory. It sounds very well to say "we" are not "shut off from realisation and possession of the eternal values" here, but, after his evisceration of self, ego, and personality, he might have told us what really are the denuded and poverty-stricken "we," that are still supposed able to realise and possess. Apparently, it is the "soul," of which he merely tells us that it is "not in time." But a "soul" which is allowed to figure as unrelated to self, or ego, or personality, is so unusual a presentation in modern idealistic thought as not to make a very satisfactory form of concrete appeal. To ask a man what he shall be advantaged if, for even a world's value, he loses or casts away a self "that belongs to no order of real existence"—a soul which it has "no meaning at all" for him to call "my" soul—would be very like setting up a spiritual mockery or perpetrating a spiritual outrage. For this

neither the psychological vagaries nor the metaphysical aberrations of our time would be any adequate excuse. Dean Inge's true and fine, but not self-consistent, insistences, later, on the maintenance of "individuality" in the future life have by himself been too completely discounted and undermined, for the case for immortality to be in anything but a bad way. Even so sceptical a thinker as Dr. Bradley could have taught the Dean some better wisdom in dealing with the self in this connection.

To come back to the Dean's world of threefold values, whose declared "objectivity" we shall not now examine: he seems to think idealism has done enough when it has said that "man does not make values any more than he makes reality." But he must surely know that to leave us with such a generality does not advance us in the least, seeing that the concern of a really idealistic philosophy is just with the fact that man *does both*, and with the senses in which he does so. He might have quoted Münsterberg with advantage here, that the world of "eternal values, if it exists," is "certainly not something which hangs" in an atmosphere of its own, "eternally separated from our consciousness." And further, "the values stand above the individual. But they would become meaningless if they were conceived as independent of the conditions of consciousness." The only point I am here concerned with is that, as has been well enough noted in our time, consciousness is individual in its character. Until Dean Inge gets there, and grapples with the implications involved for the theme of immortality, talk of the eternal world being "about" and "within" us will remain as pithless as it is pious, and men's purchase on immortality will remain exceedingly small. It seems a pity that it should be so, when, as I believe, the case for "survival and immortality" is susceptible of stronger treatment and more powerful presentation than it has ever had before.