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Philosophical Questions of the Day

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Source: *Science*, Vol. 7, No. 170 (May 7, 1886), p. 426

Published by: American Association for the Advancement of Science

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1761861>

Accessed: 09-09-2018 16:31 UTC

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Incidentally one gets interesting glimpses of English habits. Thus the habit of cutting bank-notes in two, and transmitting the two halves in separate envelopes by post, — to guard against loss or theft in transmission, — still exists. Mr. Rae advises managers not to issue notes to “any one who, you have reason to suspect, would straightway cut them in halves, and despatch them by the first post as a remittance to London.” And notes of local country banks are sometimes preferred by people in rural parts to Bank-of-England notes. Ignorance and prejudice of this kind on monetary matters are possible only in a rather stolid and slow-moving community like that of rural England. Again, the country banks handle deposits in a way differing from methods in this country. They charge an eighth of one per cent on all transactions, whether of money deposited or checks cashed. On the other hand, they allow to depositors interest on their accounts from day to day, at the rate of from two to two and one-half per cent. No such practice, we believe, exists in London or in this country. The expense of handling an account, and the gain from deposits, are allowed to offset each other, — a rough-and-ready but simple process. The more punctilious arrangement of the English country banks is characteristic of their general business habits.

F. W. TAUSSIG.

#### PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTIONS OF THE DAY.

THE reader who has no previous acquaintance with Von Hartmann cannot be advised to begin with this volume; but whoever has a moderately good knowledge of the great pessimist's views and methods will find these brief essays both instructive and amusing. Von Hartmann here uses all his well-known dialectic arts, sets his various opponents to fighting among themselves with all his old, somewhat trite but always charming ingenuity, parades for the reader's benefit a large part of his imposing and finely drilled terminology, and retells in his pleasing way much of his philosophical romance. The tireless activity, the immense reading, the skilful writing, and the attractive personality of the author are all freely displayed. Nobody else in this generation can do what Von Hartmann has done: so much is clear. Nobody else can make both pessimism and abstract metaphysic so popular; nobody else can join such a talent for advertising with such a genuine speculative genius; and to nobody else has Heaven granted such various talents, literary, commercial, scientific, journalistic, philosophical,

*Philosophische Fragen der gegenwart.* Von EDWARD VON HARTMANN. Leipzig und Berlin, Friedrich, 1885. 8°.

and quasi-philosophical. Whether the result of the use made of these powers in Von Hartmann's case has been to produce a philosophy, every reader must judge for himself as he can. For our part, we can make nothing of the outcome, in so far at least as it is Von Hartmann's. His stubborn insistence upon giving to his account of the absolute the form of an historical romance is his most characteristic and fundamental philosophical blunder. One cannot regard even elementary geometry as a story: its truths are contemporaneous. How much less, then, can an incoherent narrative, such as Von Hartmann gives of the ‘weltprocess,’ exhaust or even fairly begin an exposition of the philosophy of the absolute, in case, namely, there is any philosophy of the absolute possible at all? And as for Von Hartmann's pessimism, this whole conception of a balance-sheet of pleasures and pains as a test of the value of life seems to us unpsychological, and opposed alike to the common sense of mankind and to the demands of speculative thought upon ethical problems. Deeper truth there indeed is in Von Hartmann's writings, and much of it; but, so far as our knowledge of his works goes, this deeper truth represents rather the common property of idealists than any creation of Von Hartmann's. But one thing, at least, must be admitted by the unkindest of critics; viz., that if there is in Von Hartmann, as we must hold, only the spoiling of a philosopher, our pessimist still remains one of the best philosophers ever so completely spoiled.

Of the twelve essays in this volume, all brief and all interesting, the most valuable, to our mind, are the first, ‘Die schicksale meiner philosophie in ihrem ersten jahrzent;’ the fourth, ‘Uebersicht der wichtigsten philosophischen standpunkte;’ the fifth, ‘Zur pessimismus-frage;’ the sixth, ‘Zur religious-philosophie;’ the tenth, ‘Die grundbegriffe der rechtsphilosophie;’ and the eleventh, ‘Kant und die heutige erkenntnistheorie.’ Of these, the first is by far the most directly and universally attractive, because it brings Von Hartmann's personality to the front most of all, and is a fine example of his frequently used device of joining the methods of autobiography with those of metaphysic, to the great advantage of the general reader, if not to the advantage of his philosophy itself.

JOSIAH ROYCE.

THERE have been but sixty cases of death from hydrophobia in Philadelphia during the past twenty-five years, the largest number, seven, occurring in 1869.