

Refutation of Western Materialism on the Basis of Jaina Philosophy

Muni Mahendra Kumar B. Sc. (Hons)

Materialism is found expounded in the Western philosophy right from the period of the ancient Greek philosophers upto the present age. Here we do not intend to go into discussion of its historical evolution and the minor differences in its various forms. We shall only try to discuss it in general and compare it with the Jaina view.

Definition of Matter :—Lenin gives the following definition of matter : "We ask; is a man given objective reality when he sees something red or feels something hard etc. or not ?...If you hold that it is given, a philosophical concept is needed for this objective reality, and this concept has been worked out long, long ago. This concept is matter. Matter is a philosophical category designating the objective reality which is given to man by his sensations, and which is copied, photographed and reflected by our sensations, while existing independently of them.¹ This definition of matter comes very close to the Jaina definition of *pudgala* viz. "*pudgala* is that which possesses in itself the qualities of touch, taste, odour and colour." Even though the Jaina philosophy denies the possibility of perception² of the ultimate atoms (*paramāṇu*) of matter through sensory means, it accepts the quality of *mūrtatva*, being objectively existent even in a *paramāṇu*. Also both the materialism and the Jaina philosophy recognise matter as an objective reality. In the words of Lenin, "...the sole property of matter, with whose recognition Philosophical Materialism is bound up, is the property of being an objective reality, of existing outside our mind."³

Reality of Soul :—Whereas materialism and the Jaina philosophy hold similar views regarding the reality of matter, they differ from each other regarding the reality of soul. According to the Jaina metaphysical view, all the five *astikayas* including soul are ultimate realities, whereas according to materialism, only the matter is the ultimate reality, while reality of soul is denied. There is, however, a difference between the old materialism and the modern dialectical or scientific materialism. Whereas the former considers soul or consciousness to be identical with matter,⁴ the latter holds an opposite view. Dialectical materialism as well as epiphenomenalism consider mind to be different from matter; all the same mind is not attributed a status of an ultimate reality. In contrast to this, the Jaina philosophy asserts an independent existence of soul.

Refutation of Materialism :—There are three important arguments adduced in proof of materialism :

- (i) The Methodological Argument,
- (ii) The Mechanical Argument,
- (iii) The Cosmological Argument⁵

We shall try to examine critically these arguments one by one.

The Methodological Argument :—Bahm⁶ says that the assumption of an immaterial psychical substance which is persistent, independent and distinct from the body is prescientific and unscientific. Whoever holds such view is still on the level of the nature-people, who conceive every process as the act of an invisible demon. Experience reveals nothing more than the body and its organs. Everything which this organism does, and which transpires within it, must be conceived as the functions of its organs. The assumption of a psychical substance is a metaphysical dogma which is at once superfluous and untenable and which exact science must eliminate entirely.

This argument readily wilts upon examining from epistemological and psychological points of view. For the assertion that knowledge is essentially a characteristic of soul (or a psychical reality) is not a metaphysical dogma but an epistemological fact. That only "living beings" are capable of "knowing" is an empirical fact and at once serves as a criterion for distinguishing "life" from "matter". The whole process of "knowledge" cannot be fully explained merely on physiological basis. Hence, a "psychical reality" is an empirical necessity. Also, all the psychical processes such as thinking, experiencing, remembering, feeling and willing are unexplainable on mere physiological or material definitions. Thus, we have to assume a psychical substance distinct from the body, and as such, this assumption is neither unscientific nor contradictory to experience, as alleged by the above argument.

The materialists try to endorse the methodological argument on the following line of reasoning :

"At any rate experience never reveals any psychical substance distinct from the psychical processes, which must be regarded as substrate of our thinking, feelings, and willing. It is characteristic of psychical processes that they always appear to us only as occurrences, as effects in which there is no room for a substantial substrate. If, however, inspite of this fact we speak of a soul or mind, our authority for this mode of speech really lies in what we have previously described fundamental apperception. The function of judgement, once evolved, can only appropriate a thought-content in the form of subject and predicate. So long as psychology uses this soul-concept in the same manner as the physicist speaks of magnetism and electricity, where magnetic and electric phenomena are most certainly all that is really given, so long as the soul is only regarded as the subject of psychical processes and is not considered as a self exstant substance, this form of expression cannot be called unscientific. As soon, however, as we assume a psychical substance apart from the body, having independent existence and even continuity of existence after death, we are then going beyond evidence given in psychical experience. Every substance, however, no matter how thoroughly everything materialises, is eliminated from it, is still always represented to the mind under a material aspect. Everything which persists must, by the very necessity of our ways of thinking, occupy space and hence be material. The assumption of a soul-substance, which materialism so strenuously and indeed so justly rejects, therefore, finally leads to materialism."⁷

This reasoning is, however, erroneous in itself. It follows from the above statement that the materialist is at least ready to recon the existence of psychical processes. Now it is as simple as anything to deduce the existence of a psychical reality from the psychical processes. For, the modern physics has shown that experience never reveals any physical substances distinct from the physical processes, and still it is only these processes which give the materialists (and other realists) a clue to the objectively real existence of matter. In the same way, if psychical reality is deduced from the psychical processes, which are otherwise unexplainable, how it becomes unscientific and contrary to experience ?

There is another flaw in the above reasoning. It is argued that everything which persists must, by the very necessity of our ways of thinking, occupy space and hence be material. This statement can be divided into two parts : (a). that, which persists must occupy space, and (b). that which occupies space is material. Deduction of (a) is based on the very necessity of our ways of thinking. This is acceptable.⁸ But how (b) is deduced ? Extension in space does not necessarily mean materiality. Hence it would be wrong to conclude that psychical reality is material. The fact is that psychical reality does occupy space, but it is not material.

Further, materialism is, in the words of W. Jerusalem, proved to be unscientific thus : "Strict scientific method, which aims to confine itself to the description of facts, teaches us that there is something given in our ordinary experiences as well as in our most profound emotions, which is essentially distinct from everything perceivable by sense, from everything material."⁹

Again it may be added here that materialism is insufficient to explain the phenomena of extra-sensory perception, clairvoyance, telepathy, memory of previous births, etc. Numerous instances of such phenomena have certainly been known to have taken place and the parapsychologists all over the world are busy now-a-days with their investigations on these events. Especially the cases of memory of previous lives which is termed as extra-cerebral-memory avowedly confirm the existence of the psychical reality distinct from body having independent existence and even continuing to exist after death.¹⁰

Thus the methodological argument completely falls to the grounds.

2. The Mechanical Argument :—The main argument put forward by the materialists to sustain their view is based on the law of the conservation of matter and energy (or mattergy).¹¹ According to this law, the total amount of matter and energy (or mattergy) always remains constant; it can neither be increased nor diminished. All becoming consists only of the transmutation of energy into different forms. Now, the materialists contend that if we assume a psychical substance (mind or consciousness) as something distinct from body and non-physical, the above law gets violated. For, if the life-energy, which is found to get increased as a result of the reactions of the physical substance (such as food, water, heat) is different from the physical energy, it

would mean that the energy in the form of increased life-energy is newly created (for it being non-physical it cannot be considered to be the transmutation of physical energy). Again if the non—physical mind causes the physiological motion, (such as contraction of muscles) through its own initiative, it would mean that new energy is created in the form of the physiological motion (for the resultant energy being physical, it cannot be considered as the transmutation of non-physical energy.) Thus, the above assumption contradicts the principle of the conservation of mattergy and it is therefore to be rejected as unscientific.¹²

Now this argument of the materialists can be disproved thus.¹³ The application and validity of the principle of the conservation of mattergy is limited to physical and chemical processes. But this law is utterly inadequate for the explanation of vital processess. The centralized organisation of all organic being, the remarkable adaptation of all parts to a common purpose, all this cannot be explained in physico-chemical terms. As a matter of fact, the mechanical argument is not an argument, but merely a presupposition. It is only by assuming from the start that every process i.e., vital as well as physical can be explained and described according to the physico-chemical laws, that this protest of the materialists against the violation of the principle of the conservation of mattergy can have any meaning. But if we are guided by the facts, rather than by a definite theory, we must concede that the principle of the constancy of energy contributes absolutely nothing toward simplifying and explaining what really takes place in the sphere of the organic and psychical. The facts which have been established at this point, as well as the present stage of mental evolution, much rather require an entirely different principle of explanation. As a matter of fact, this is conceded by noted scientists. As Wundt¹⁴ has shown, there is kind of creative synthesis active here, whose nature and governing principles still require more careful investigation. The mechanical argument loses its force the moment we relinquish the materialist presupposition and abide by the most unassailable facts of our own experience.

Further, when we examine the above argument in the light of the Jaina Philosophy, we at once get convinced of the former's futility. It may be recalled here that according to the Jaina view :

(a) Each of the five *astikayas* constituting the universe is an independent reality.

(b) The principle of conservation is contained in the very definition of reality,¹⁵ according to which it is created and destroyed with respect to its modes while it remains constant with respect to its substance. It follows, then, the *pudgala* (mattergy) ever remains *pudgala* and soul ever persists as soul, in spite of the incessant changes in their modes; that is to say, soul never transforms into matter nor matter transforms into soul.

(c) Consequently, there are two independent principles of conservation : The principle of the conservation of *pudgala* and that of the conservation of soul. According to the former, the total amount of *pudgala* (which would include both matter and all kinds of material energy) remains constant, while according to the latter, the spiritual reality (which would include the soul and its energy) never perishes. The former one is the same as the scientific law of the conservation of matter.

Now on the basis of these facts, the above contention of the materialists can easily be refuted. It can be seen that the vital processes are governed by both the soul's energy as well as physiological (physical) energy. The former is inherent in the soul itself while the latter is obtained through transmutation of physical substances (food, water, etc.) into the basic elements of the body (blood, chyme, semen etc.) which subsequently get transformed into the form of physiological energy. Now, in the above argument the term "life-energy" is used in the transmutation of food, etc; but it is clear that the processes involving such a transmutation are essentially *paudgalika* (or we may say mattergic). Hence the energy created thus cannot be considered to be different from physical energy. In other words, the soul's energy cannot be created through the transformation of food etc. It is, in fact, inherent in the soul itself. When the vital energy of the body is said to get increased, it means that the physiological processes transmute food, etc. into the basic elements of the body which serve as the sources of the physiological (physical) energy for carrying on the life-processes. Thus, there is no question of creation of new energy and hence, the law of the conservation is not at all contradicted.

Further, in the reverse process, when it is said that the soul causes the physiological movements through its own initiative, it does not mean that new energy is created in the form of physiological motion. Actually the physiological motion is produced through the transmutation of the physiological energy already stored in the body. The soul's energy (or the will-power) inherent in the soul acting as a governing agent causes the transmutation to take place without itself being diminished. Hence, in this case also, there is no contradiction of the law of the conservation and consequently, the materialist's argument becomes untenable.

3. *The Cosmological Argument* :—The materialists claim to base this argument on purely scientific facts. The modern scientific theories, according to them, have proved that "there was a time when our earth was a glowing gaseous nabulae. At that time, organic life could not have existed upon it, there could have been no human beings and hence no mental activity. It was only after the earth had sufficiently cooled off, and the conditions for the origin of organic life were given, that plant and animal life came into being from which man also was evolved at a later stage. Hence mental life came into existence with organic life and is limited to the presence of its physiological conditions. There is no meaning, therefore, in assuming mind as something distinct from the organism because its origin is connected with the organism and they will certainly perish together".¹⁶

The modern materialists, on the basis of this theory of earth's formation, conclude that 4000 million years¹⁷ ago, when the earth came into existence there was no life, and hence there was no existence of anything like soul or consciousness of mind. It was 2900 millions years after the birth of the earth that life came into existence. The existence of mammals and birds extend over only to 60 million years while that of man only 1.5 million years. Thus mind is only a very late production. It should therefore be considered only as a qualitative transformation of matter itself, and not as an ultimate reality,

Now the cosmological argument can be shown to be invalid not only on logical basis but on scientific basis too. Modern scientific investigations have made it clear that neither the universe nor "life" is merely confined to the earth¹⁸. Not only this, but the recent researches tend to show that "life" is older than the "earth". The scientists of Bradford University have found in the meteorites some material identical to the one found in the living cells. Commenting on this recent development, the critic of *The Times of India*¹⁹ observes : Is there life elsewhere in the universe and was there life before the earth was formed ? Sceptics and legend-lovers continue to say 'no' and would want a flying saucer with extra-terrestrials in it taken to their door-step before they would believe any such thing. But they have to think again : new evidence has been gathered which shows that *life did evolve independently of what happened on the earth*. Chemical analysis made at Bradford University shows that material identical with sporopollenin, which can only be formed inside living cell, has been found in meteorites. The usual argument advanced here is that it is a contaminant. But since the chemical forms four percent of the meteorites weight, the local contamination theory fails".

"Sporopollenin is the biological material that forms the outer coating of pollen grains. Ordinary physical processes could not have created it on the planet's surface because in such conditions it is unstable and quickly decomposes. It is also felt that *the theory that life on the earth evolved by natural processes out of a prebiotic soup of inorganic chemicals is not necessarily tenable*. The Bradford Researchers think that the earth was *seeded with life from outside from another world or worlds*". Thus it can be seen that the cosmological argument has got subverted on the scientific basis.

Now we shall try to clinch the cosmological argument on logical basis. It is a matter of common experience that living objects essentially differ from material objects in that former possess "consciousness" where as the latter does not. Now the law of material cause, which is accepted as a fundamental law in logic, states that the quality which is intrinsically non-existent in a substance cannot be created by any kind of transformation. But the above hypothesis of the qualitative transformation assumes the production of "life" from "matter" which essentially lacks "consciousness". Thus, it is inconsistent with the above law, and hence, it must be rejected as illogical.

Also the materialists leave unanswered the important question such as how and why consciousness was created from matter.²⁰ The eminent writer on the history of the universe, J. G. Bennett, in his conclusive remarks on the 'Origin' of Life" expresses this thus.²¹ "The conclusion that we are bound to draw from all these considerations is that the fortuitous origin and evolution of life and human culture on the earth must be rejected as contrary to the well-established laws of probability and thermodynamics.

"This is, as is well recognised even by mechanistic biologist, not the only serious difficulty. Inert matter is insensitive, life is sensitive. When and how did sensitivity arise from insensitivity? Again, man is conscious and entertains ideas of value and purpose. Inert matter is unconscious and the whole argument in favour of mechanistic theories is that they do not require any assumptions as to conscious purposes at origin of life, How then could consciousness and purposefulness have arisen in a world from which they were previously totally absent."

Further he writes²² : "The obvious difficulty of believing that sensitivity and consciousness could be produced by chemical reactions of inert matter, has led materialistic and mechanistic scientists to make the assumption that these properties must be associated with all matter and make themselves apparent when living bodies having a high degree of organisation, have evolved. Such hypotheses are unsatisfactory inasmuch as they do not account for the transition from the 'atomic' to the 'organic' state of consciousness." Thus the cosmological argument is untenable on logical grounds too.

Lastly, let us consider the argument in the light of the Jaina view. The Jaina philosophy asserts that all substances including soul and matter have been existent in the universe since ever and will continue to exist till eternity.²³ No new soul is ever created in the universe. Infinite number of souls go on transmigrating from one life to another. Thus birth of a new organism is nothing but transmigration of a soul from its previous life.

It is also asserted by the Jaina theory that a suitable structure or matter is required to serve as a nucleus (or birth place) for the soul to take birth in. The nucleus is called as *Yoni*. There are different kinds of *Yonis* for different species. The *yonis* may be composed of totally lifeless matter or of bodies of living organisms or of a combination of both.²⁴ Formation of *yonis* takes place by the suitable combination of the ultimate atoms (*paramāṇus*) or the molecules (*skandhas*) which continually undergo the processes of "fusion" and "fission" throughout the universe.

Now the fact ascertained by the scientists that no life existed on the earth for a long time (nearly 3000 million years) after formation of the earth can be explained on the basis of the Jaina view as follows :

It is highly probable that at the time of formation of the planet earth, the *yonis* were wanting and this condition might have prevailed over for a period of 3000 million years. Also it is unlikely that during this period the environment could have been

congenial for sustenance and growth of living organisms. Hence, the earth would have remained devoid of living beings. Later on, when as a result of the natural processes, the *yonis* would have been formed and also, the environment would have become amicable for sustaining life, the souls (already existing in other parts of the universe) would have started to take birth in the *yonis* and thus would have begun "life" on the earth. Thus it can be said that the assertion of the Jain philosophy that soul and matter are two independent substances having beginningless existence in the universe convincingly explain the origin of life on the earth without either contradicting the scientific facts or contravening the logical principles.

Thus, all the three arguments adduced in proof of materialism are shown to be fallacious as well as inconclusive.

Reference

1. *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, p. 84.
2. *Sparśa-Rasa-Gandha-Varṇavān Pudgalah; Jain Siddhānta Dipikā* I 11.
3. *Op. cit.*, p. 184.
4. Arch J. Bahm : *Philosophy—An Introduction*; Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1964, pp. 192.
5. W. Jerusalem : *An Introduction to Philosophy*; Macmillan, New York, 1926. p. 1+2
6. *Ibid*; p. 142
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 143-144.
8. The Jain philosophy, in fact, asserts that extension in space is an inherent quality of all the realities except the space itself (i.e., the ethers, matter and soul.)
9. *Op. cit.* p. 145.
10. The discussion of parapsychological researches in itself is an independent subject and is beyond the scope of the present article. The reader however is referred to various books and journals published on the subject by different institutes of parapsychology.
11. In modern science after the discovery of theory of relativity, the two separate laws of the conservation of mass and the conservation of energy have been conglomerated into a single law of the conservation of mass and energy (or mattergy).
12. W. Jerusalem, *op. cit.* pp. 142-143.
13. *ibid*; pp. 146-147.
14. Willhelm Max Wundt (1832-1920), the founder of experimental psychology and author of *Grundzuges der Physiologischen Psychologie*.
15. *Umaswati : Tattwārthsūtra*, chapter 5.
16. W. Jarusalem, *op. cit.* p. 143.

17. J.G. Benkett : *The Dramatic Universe* Vol. IV; Hodder Stoughton, London, 1966, pp. 120-21
18. Coronet, Vol. XXVI, No. V. p. 30.
19. Dated, 30th. August, 1969, Bombay.
20. Cf. Bahm, *op. cit.*, p. 203.
21. *The Dramatic Universe*, Vol. IV, pp. 113-114.
22. *ibid*, pp. 123.
23. Many of the cosmological questions cannot be answered without accepting beginningless and endless existence of the fundamental substances.
24. Umāswāti, *Tattwārthsūtra*, 2-32.

लेखसार

जैनदर्शन के आधार पर पाश्चात्य भौतिकवाद का निराकरण

मुनिश्री महेन्द्रकुमार, बी० एस्सी० (ऑनर्स)

पाश्चात्य विचारधारा में यूनानी दार्शनिकों के युग से लेकर आज तक जगत् और जीवन के संबंध में भौतिकवाद का ही मुख्यतः आश्रय लिया गया है। इसके अनुसार आत्मा या चेतनत्व की प्रक्रिया भौतिक तत्त्वों या क्रियाओं का ही एक विकसित रूप माना जाता है। इस सिद्धान्त में तार्किक, यांत्रिक तथा लोकवादी आधार पर शरीर और आत्मा की अभिन्नता प्रतिपादित की जाती है। विद्वान् लेखक ने इस लेख में भौतिकवादियों के इन तीनों ही प्रकार के तर्कों को नवीन वैज्ञानिक परामनोविज्ञानी तथा अन्य ग्रहों की संरचना से संबंधित तथ्यों के आधार पर तथा विशिष्ट बौद्धिक तर्कों के सहारे सारहीन प्रमाणित किया है। उन्होंने बताया है कि द्रव्यमान तथा ऊर्जा के संरक्षण के नियम के समान आत्मोर्जा के संरक्षण का नियम भी होना चाहिये क्योंकि शरीर और आत्मा स्वतन्त्र एवं एक-दूसरे में अपरिवर्तनशील द्रव्य है। उमास्वाति के द्वारा प्रस्तावित योनियों के आधार पर उन्होंने 'विश्व के उद्भव' के सिद्धान्त को भी जैन दर्शन सम्मत सिद्ध किया है तथा आत्मा के पृथक् अस्तित्व के विरोध में दिये गये तर्कों को अपूर्ण बताया है।