

THE LIMITATIONS OF SCIENCE

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The limitations of science by Louis Trenchard More

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LOUIS TRENCHARD MORE

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BY

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Hypotheses non fingo. Quicquid enim ex phænomenis non deducitur, hypothesis vocanda est; et hypotheses seu metaphysicæ, seu physicæ, seu qualitatum occultarum, seu mechanicæ, in philosophia experimentalis locum non habent. In hac philosophia propositiones deducuntur ex phænomenis, et redduntur generales per inductionem.—NEWTON.

PREFACE

THE separate chapters of this book have already been published as essays in periodicals. The first, second, third, and seventh appeared in *The Hibbert Journal*; the fourth, in *The Philosophical Magazine* and in the *University of Cincinnati Studies*; the fifth, in *The Monist*; and the sixth, in *The Unpopular Review*. But they have been rewritten and enlarged so as to form chapters for a connected discussion of the Limitations of Science. This was not a difficult task since I have had this purpose in mind from the beginning.

CINCINNATI,
December 2, 1914.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I SCIENCE AS A SYMBOL AND A LAW . . .	I
II THE METAPHYSICAL TENDENCIES OF MODERN PHYSICS	32
III DESCARTES AND HIS INFLUENCE ON RECENT SCIENCE	69
IV THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD	107
V THE CLASSICAL AND THE NEW MECHANICS	142
VI SKEPTICISM AND IDOLATRY IN SCIENCE . .	187
VII SCIENCE AS THE ARBITER OF ETHICS . .	212
INDEX	263

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CHAPTER I

SCIENCE AS A SYMBOL AND A LAW

Les théories contemporaines sont sur ce point d'accord avec l'histoire; elles consacrent la prépondérance dans le domaine scientifique, de l'hypothèse atomistique.—HANNEQUIN.

It has grown to be an axiom in modern thought, that the hope of discovering the laws of nature and our relation to them by metaphysical reasoning is impossible. The term metaphysical reasoning will be used consistently to mean the method introduced by the Greek philosophers who, however they might differ in minor matters, were pretty well agreed in looking upon what we call nature as something which could be investigated subjectively; that is, things are as we think them to be. It is thus directly contrary to the physical method, which maintains natural phenomena and laws to be entirely objective and independent of our thought; according to this method no theory or fact can be established unless it is completely verified by experimental tests.

So little in the long years since Plato and Aristotle has been done by the metaphysical philosophers to add