

**IDEAS TOWARDS THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE
RUDIMENTS OF A SCIENCE OF
NATURAL PSYCHOLOGY; PART I**

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Ideas Towards the Establishment of the Rudiments of a Science of Natural Psychology; Part I by
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PREFACE.

It is a long standing custom for unknown or inexperienced Authors to preface their productions with an apology. In many cases such preface is superfluous, but in the present instance the Author feels it due to himself to state that this brochure was written, a few pages once a week, the subject rarely entering his mind during the intervening time. It is consequently rather a series of loose thoughts than a consecutive argument.

The physical sciences only occasionally come into casual collision with religious opinion; Psychology, to be of any practical value, must investigate the origin, and discuss the truth, of the ideas which constitute the basis of all law and morality; and in this point of view a science of Psychology which does not grasp the whole subject of religion, resembles an astronomy ignoring the influence of the sun. There may be doubts as to how far free discussion ought to be allowed, but nothing, not even angry controversy, can be much worse than a stagnation of fixed ideas which sets some men up on a pinnacle of self-conceit as the only receptacles of truth, leaving daily increasing numbers in the darkness of doubt and disbelief.

If we had a few men of infallible reasoning powers, and a great mass of mankind willing, without exercising their own judgment, to accept as true whatever might be promulgated by the superior few, discussion would be needless, and all mankind might live in harmony. But we have neither the infallible few nor the acquiescing multitude.

An earnest and eloquent man can always carry away the minds of many others into an enthusiasm, and cause them to believe that what he teaches them is true; but the time is passing away in which any man can cause others to accept a dogma by the mere authoratative assertion of it, and we are approaching a time when men who are perfectly orthodox, but neither earnest nor eloquent, will have few believing followers unless they can give "a reason for the faith that is in them"; and when such reasons will be of little avail unless they can be substantiated in the face of full, free, and temperate discussion.

That many errors in politics, supported by ancient enthusiasms, have been dissipated by free discussion, the events of our own times amply prove. That other errors in politics, and in other subjects, may still continue to be so supported, and may ultimately be dissipated by the same means, to the great advantage of the community, is at least within the limits of possibility, and consistent with past experience.

RUDIMENTS
OR
NATURAL PSYCHOLOGY.

CHAPTER I.

MATTER, FORCE, AND MIND.

IN Mechanical Science, matter is defined as being *inert*. That is, as not moving otherwise than as it is moved by some power or force external to itself.

But we have no experience of matter existing in a state of absolute rest ; and even that state of relative repose which constitutes mechanical inertia, implies the continuous operation of active causes. In order, therefore, to account for the existing order of things, and to explain the incessant activity of nature, we assume the existence of various *Forces*—as *Gravitation*, *Chemical Affinity*, *Heat*, *Electricity*, and the like—by which forces we conceive an inert substratum of matter to be moved or to resist motion.

The operations of these assumed forces, constitute the *Laws of Nature*; and although it may be that nature has but one law, or motive power, and that these forces are but so many varieties or intensities of motion, yet, if that were proved, we should not the less require the same number of names to express the different kinds of motion. Light may be only a higher intensity of that motion which we call heat; but there are differences in the phenomena of heat and light which render it absolutely necessary that we should have words whereby to distinguish the one from the other. We are under the like necessity in regard to all other forces of nature.

We are conscious that there exists within ourselves a faculty of will, purpose, and design, by which we can govern the motions of our own limbs, can adapt means to an end, and can, to a limited extent, control some of the operations of external nature, and harmonize our existence with the conditions by which we may be surrounded. This internal, discriminating, and directing power, we term *mind* or *intelligence*. The study of this power is the province of *Psychology*.

In the physical sciences, *knowledge* becomes *power*, by revealing to us—1st, the source or mode of evolution; and 2nd, the *laws* which regulate the activity of those forces by which natural phenomena are controlled. Thus, through knowing—1st, how heat may be generated; 2nd, how heat may be concentrated and controlled; and 3rd, how it operates upon various substances; our *knowledge* of heat has become a great and useful *power*.

Psycheal knowledge will, in like manner, become a

useful power, when it gives the intellect such an understanding of the source of its own evolution, and of the laws of its own activity, as may be practically applied to control and cultivate its own development, so as to promote the moral elevation of mankind, and to harmonize the social and political relations of communities.

The possibility of this result involves the assumption that psychical power has, like the physical forces of nature, a source of evolution and definite laws of action ; that its force may be quantitatively increased and qualitatively modified, so as to produce those higher and better results which are desired. We cannot assume this ; but it is open to us to enquire whether such is the fact or not.

The pride of intellect revolts against the idea that there is any intimate or necessary connection between mind and matter. We feel a difficulty in admitting that there can be any analogy between mental activity and the physical forces of nature. Heat, light, and electricity, have no self control, no voluntary or self derived increase of power, no persistent individuality. Natural forces are evolved during certain atomic changes of matter ; when evolved, the force operates according to fixed mechanical laws ; and when the antecedent atomic changes cease, the force ceases to be evolved. But we seem to feel within ourselves that our mind and our ideas have an inception and a persistent existence not attributable, like heat or light, to atomic motions of matter ; that mind has a power of self control and of voluntary increase ;