

**ENGLISH PHILOSOPHERS.  
HARTLEY AND  
JAMES MILL**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649599448

English Philosophers. Hartley and James Mill by George Spencer Bower

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**GEORGE SPENCER BOWER**

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JAMES MILL**



*ENGLISH PHILOSOPHERS*

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HARTLEY

AND

JAMES MILL

BY

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London

SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, & RIVINGTON

CROWN BUILDINGS, 168, FLEET STREET

1881

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04-2.245, M.

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# HARTLEY & JAMES MILL.

## Part I.

### THEIR LIVES.

#### CHAPTER I.

##### DAVID HARTLEY.

DAVID HARTLEY, the son of a clergyman residing at Armley in Yorkshire, was born on the 30th of August, 1705. He was educated at a private school, and, in 1720, entered at Jesus College, Cambridge, of which society he subsequently became a fellow. Owing to conscientious scruples with reference to the Thirty-nine Articles, he abandoned his preparation for the clerical profession, for which he was originally intended; and thenceforth applied himself to the study of medicine. Commencing practice at Newark, he afterwards removed to Bury St. Edmund's, and thence to London. In the later years of his life, he took up his residence at Bath. In the exercise of his functions as a physician, he was sympathetic, assiduous, and skilful. He especially devoted himself to the study and cure of the stone, and was the author of several medical pamphlets on Mrs. Stephens' medicine for that disease,<sup>1</sup> besides

<sup>1</sup> "Observations made on the persons who have taken the medicament of Mrs. Stephens," 1738. "View of the present evidence for and against Mrs. Stephens' medicine as a solvent for the stone, containing 155 cases"



being the instrument of finally procuring for her the reward of 5000*l.* offered by Parliament.<sup>2</sup> He is said to have written against Dr. Warren in defence of inoculation for smallpox; and several other of his medical disquisitions are to be found in the *Philosophical Transactions* of the time. He was twice married, and had issue by both marriages. He died on the 28th of August, 1757, at Bath, of the disease which he had so patiently investigated in his lifetime.

Both the philosophical and the moral character of Hartley were no less conspicuous in his life than in his writings. Philosophically, he was remarkable for patience of research, variety of study, thorough scientific candour, and a constant readiness to receive new impressions and ideas. Morally, he was distinguished by modesty, unaffected openness, and benevolence. In the one case, his inquisitiveness of intellect well qualified him for a writer on the connexion between body and mind, and their reciprocal influence on one another,—a kind of inquiry where alertness in the seizing of analogies is above all things requisite; in the other, his sympathy of heart was of eminent service to him in the observation and appreciation of moral phenomena.

His great work *On Man* occupied sixteen years of slow thought and toil in maturing (1730—1746); and even for some years before 1730, "the seeds of this work were lying in latent germination," as he himself used to tell his friends. One cannot fail to notice the results of this steady and persistent investigation, (extending over so long a period, and [of which his own was one], "with some experiments and observations," 1739. "Directions for preparing and administering Mrs. Stephens' medicine in a solid form," 1746 (in the *Gentleman's Magazine*). A large ingredient in this medicine was soap, of which the unfortunate Hartley was said to have himself consumed 200 lbs. before he eventually died of the disease.

<sup>2</sup> *Gazette*, June, 1739.

into so many different fields), in the astonishing wealth of illustrative matter by which the principles laid down in his book are confirmed. It was first published in two volumes in 1749. Another edition by Dr. Priestley with elucidatory dissertations appeared in 1775. In this the vibration theory, and most of the Second Part on theological questions, were omitted. But the book was, notwithstanding, practically almost ignored till 1791. In 1801, Hartley's son published the entire work, in three volumes, from the German of the Rev. Dr. Herman Andrew Pistorius, rector of Poseritz, in the island of Rügen, accompanied with the latter's notes and essays.<sup>2</sup> Hartley himself was not at all sanguine as to the chances of the immediate acceptance of his novel theory. "He did not expect that it would meet with any general or immediate reception in the philosophical world, or even that it would be much read or understood; neither did it happen otherwise than as he had expected. But at the same time he did entertain an expectation that, at some distant period, it would become the adopted system of future philosophers. That period" [writes his son in 1801] "seems now to be approaching,"—and by this time it has arrived, and a formidable and industrious school of philosophy, known as the Association Psychology, has been constituted on the lines sketched out by him.

From a very early age, Hartley had a fancy for natural science, experimental philosophy, and mathematics, which he studied under the tuition of a celebrated man in his day, Professor Saunderson. To optics, statics, and other special departments of science, he devoted himself in company with Dr. Hales, Dr. Smith (then Master of Trinity College, Cambridge), and some other members of the Royal Society. He

<sup>2</sup> This is the edition to which the references throughout this work are made.

was a keen observer, in the exercise of his professional duties, of physical peculiarities and habits, and mental diseases and defects; and acquired early the habit of sound and rapid generalization, which proved so useful to him in the construction of his philosophical system. Historical and chronological researches also claimed a large portion of his spare time; and he was on intimate terms with N. Hooke, the Roman historian. In chronology, so far as physical science could be brought to bear on its numerous problems, as indeed in all kinds of natural science, he was an ardent admirer and disciple of Newton, whose *Principia* and other works first suggested to him the theory of vibrations. He was much interested in all schemes for the reformation of language, either as written, (e.g. methods of short-hand), or as written and spoken both; and welcomed proposals of universal and philosophical languages and dictionaries, and similar fresh ideas.

But it was to mental science, ethics, and theology that Hartley's tastes were principally drawn. In regard to these subjects, the intellectual atmosphere in which he lived was that of Edmund Law, Warburton, Butler, and Jortin, who were his intimate associates and fellow-labourers both in these fields and in that of ecclesiastical history. It was, however—as he himself acknowledges, with his usual candour—from one Mr. Gay that he derived the germ of his association theory—at all events, as applied to morals. It was only the germ, however, that he obtained; and how fruitful Gay's two short treatises became in Hartley's hands it only needs a comparison of them with the latter philosopher's second volume to show. In the latter part of his life he corresponded very much with Dr. Priestley on their common subject.

Nor did Hartley neglect the more distinctly humanizing studies of history, poetry, and art. Of the first of these