

**ZETETIC ASTRONOMY. EARTH  
NOT A GLOBE! AN  
EXPERIMENTAL INQUIRY INTO  
THE TRUE FIGURE OF THE EARTH**

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**SAMUEL BIRLEY ROWBOTHAM (PARALLAX)**

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THE TRUE FIGURE OF THE EARTH**



[Entered at Stationer's Hall.]

ZETETIC ASTRONOMY.  
EARTH NOT A GLOBE!  
AN EXPERIMENTAL INQUIRY  
INTO THE  
TRUE FIGURE OF THE EARTH:  
PROVING IT A PLANE,  
WITHOUT AXIAL OR ORBITAL MOTION;  
AND THE  
ONLY MATERIAL WORLD  
IN  
THE UNIVERSE!

BY "PARALLAX."

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## ZETETIC ASTRONOMY.

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THE term "zetetic" is derived from the Greek verb *zeteo*; which means to search or examine—to proceed only by inquiry. None can doubt that by making special experiments and collecting manifest and undeniable facts, arranging them in logical order, and observing what is naturally and fairly deducible, the result will be far more consistent and satisfactory than by framing a theory or system and assuming the existence of causes for which there is no direct evidence, and which can only be admitted "for the sake of argument." All theories are of this character—"supposing instead of inquiring, imagining systems instead of learning from observation and experience the true constitution of things. Speculative men, by the force of genius may invent systems that will perhaps be greatly admired for a time; these, however, are phantoms which the force of truth will sooner or later dispel; and while we are pleased with the deceit, true philosophy, with all the arts and improvements that depend upon it, suffers. The real state of things escapes our observation; or, if it presents itself to us, we are apt either to reject it

wholly as fiction, or, by new efforts of a vain ingenuity to interweave it with our own conceits, and labour to make it tally with our favourite schemes. Thus, by blending together parts so ill-suited, the whole comes forth an absurd composition of truth and error. \* \* These have not done near so much harm as that pride and ambition which has led philosophers to think it beneath them to offer anything less to the world than a complete and finished system of nature ; and, in order to obtain this at once, to take the liberty of inventing certain principles and hypotheses, from which they pretend to explain all her mysteries.”\*

Copernicus admitted, “ It is not necessary that hypotheses should be true, or even probable ; it is sufficient that they lead to results of calculation which agree with calculations. \* \* Neither let any one, so far as hypotheses are concerned, expect anything *certain* from astronomy ; since that science can afford nothing of the kind ; lest, in case he should adopt for truth things feigned for another purpose, he should leave this study more foolish than he came. \* \* The hypothesis of the terrestrial motion was *nothing but an hypothesis*, valuable only so far as it explained phenomena, and not considered with reference to absolute truth or falsehood.” The

\* “An Account of Sir Isaac Newton's Discoveries.” By Professor Maclaurin, M.A., F.R.S., of the Chair of Mathematics in the University of Edinburgh.

Newtonian and all other "systems of nature" are little better than the "hypothesis of the terrestrial motion" of Copernicus. The foundations or premises are always unproved; no proof is ever attempted; the necessity for it is denied; it is considered sufficient that the assumptions shall *seem* to explain the phenomena selected. In this way it is that one theory supplants another; that system gives way to system as one failure after another compels opinions to change. This will ever be so; there will always exist in the mind a degree of uncertainty; a disposition to look upon philosophy as a vain pretension; a something almost antagonistic to the highest aspirations in which humanity can indulge, unless the practice of theorising be given up, and the method of simple inquiry, the "zetetic" process be adopted. "Nature speaks to us in a peculiar language; in the language of phenomena, she answers at all times the questions which are put to her; and such questions are experiments."\* Not experiments only which corroborate what has previously been *assumed* to be true; but experiments in every form bearing on the subject of inquiry, before a conclusion is drawn or premises affirmed.

We have an excellent example of zetetic reasoning in an arithmetical operation; more

\* "Liebig's Agricultural Chemistry," p. 30.