

**WHAT NATURE IS: AN
OUTLINE OF SCIENTIFIC
NATURALISM**

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What Nature Is: An Outline of Scientific Naturalism by Charles Kendall Franklin

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BY

CHARLES KENDALL FRANKLIN

Author of "The Socialization of Humanity" and
"The Future of the Human Race"



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1911

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I am now convinced, that no great improvements in the lot of mankind are possible, until a great change takes place in the fundamental constitution of their modes of thought. The old opinions in religion, morals and politics, are so much discredited in the more intellectual minds as to have lost the greater part of their efficiency for good, while they have still life enough in them to be powerful obstacles to the growing up of any better opinions on these subjects. When the philosophical minds of the world can no longer believe its religion, or can only believe it with modifications amounting to an essential change of its character, a transitional period commences, of weak convictions, paralyzed intellects, and growing laxity of principle, which can not terminate until a renovation has been effected in the basis of their belief, leading to the evolution of some faith, which they can really believe: and when things are in this state, all thinking or writing which does not tend to promote such a renovation is of very little value, beyond the moment.—

John Stuart Mill.

WHAT NATURE IS
AN OUTLINE OF SCIENTIFIC NATURALISM

I

PRELIMINARY ORIENTATION

Humanity is no longer looked at from a traditional point of view. A consensus of the scientific thought of the world places Man at the head of the animal kingdom and explains his existence by natural law. Life has existed upon the earth for millions of years. In mankind, to-day, it has reached conscious existence. After arriving at maturity, and rejecting our allegorical and symbolical theory of things inherited from the past as inadequate and insufficient, and looking about us at Nature, studying matter and energy in chemistry and physics, investigating the facts of life and mind in biology and psychology, and meditating upon the phenomena of human action and conduct in economics and sociology, we are ushered into the real mystery of things, and not to find a solution is to suffer intolerable pain at our bafflement. Hence Man's eternal search for truth. But the life of the individual is so brief, and the historic period of humanity so short—at farthest not over ten thousand years—that, owing to lack of time for research and the accumulation of materials, the action and interaction of the elements and energies of Nature, even to-day, are deemed incomprehensible to the individual, and syste-

matic accumulations of knowledge of them form no part of the heritage of the race. Nevertheless, the necessity for a credible system of philosophy which will explain the Universe and man's relation to it to supplant our traditional theory of things is apparent to all inquiring minds. Its demand is insisted upon by the most advanced moralists of all nations.

Science teaches us that a rational system of living can be based only upon a rational theory of the Universe; hence it is the starting-point in the solution of the practical problems of life that immediately confront us; it is the foundation of the philosophy which will direct the future socialization of the race. While the constitution of our minds demands a philosophy of everything, yet our investigations of Nature so far, have shown us that it is unlimited and absolutely inconceivable. The human mind today is not commensurate with the Universe, but only with Nature immediately around us. In order to conceive a thing, we must limit it; but for every limit the mind places upon the Universe, there appears an unlimited Universe beyond. Still, as the human mind is a reaction of the environment, some subsequent discovery must of necessity, in the course of its development, make the Universe conceivable, as the discovery of the rotundity of the Earth and the development of the sciences of physics and