

**PRINCIPLES OF THE HUMAN
MIND DEDUCED FROM PHYSICAL
LAWS; A SEQUEL TO ELEMENTS
OF ELECTRO-BIOLOGY; APRIL 11,
1849**

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Principles of the human mind deduced from physical laws; a sequel to Elements of electro-biology; April 11, 1849 by Alfred Smee

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ALFRED SMEE

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MIND DEDUCED FROM PHYSICAL
LAWS; A SEQUEL TO ELEMENTS
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1849**

PRINCIPLES
OF
THE HUMAN MIND

DEDUCED FROM PHYSICAL LAWS;

BEING A SEQUEL TO

ELEMENTS OF ELECTRO-BIOLOGY;

TOGETHER WITH THE LECTURE

On the Voltaic Mechanism of Man,

DELIVERED AT THE LONDON INSTITUTION

APRIL 11, 1849.

BY

ALFRED SMEE, F.R.S.

SENIOR SURGEON TO THE ROYAL GENERAL DISPENSARY,
SURGEON TO THE BANK OF ENGLAND, AND TO THE CENTRAL LONDON OPHTHALMIC HOSPITAL,
AND LECTURER ON SURGERY.



LONDON:
LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN & LONGMANS,
PATERNOSTER ROW;
AND
HORNE, THORNTHWAITE & WOOD,
123, NEWGATE STREET.

M.DCCC.XLIX.

P R E F A C E.

SOME years since, M. Roret, the distinguished French publisher, did me the honour of causing to be made a translation into the French language, of my "Elements of Electro-Metallurgy" in which it met with as signal a success as the original edition in this country.

As soon as M. Roret received my work on Electro-Biology, he also caused it to be immediately translated, and kindly wrote to me to know whether I desired to make any additions to the English text.

After a careful consideration, I determined to write a short Epitome of the Principles of the Human Mind, deduced from Electro-Biology, to form an Appendix to that work.

But, after the remarkable kindness with which the work has been received in this country by my friends and the public, I feel that it would be a want of courtesy, if not an act of ingratitude, to allow farther remarks upon the same subject, however unimportant

they may be, to appear in a foreign country before they were issued in the English language.

I apprehend that the time is fast approaching, when no other system of mental science will be acknowledged but that which is based upon physical laws and the structure of the brain; and if my researches shall be found hereafter to have contributed to the development of true Philosophy, I shall indeed feel more than amply rewarded for the hours of anxious but delightful labour spent in its development.

7, FINSBURY CIRCUS.

Sept. 18th. 1849.

PRINCIPLES OF THE HUMAN MIND.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE EXTERNAL WORLD.

1. OUR ideas of the external world arise, primarily, from an action upon the ultimate nervous fibres of the organs of sensation, by the specific stimulus competent to excite each organ of sensation respectively.

2. Each primitive nervous fibril is called a unit; the repetition of units, *Number*.

3. That which is competent to act upon these nervous fibrils is called *Matter*.

4. Whenever matter undergoes any change which renders it appreciable to our senses, it is said to evince *Force*.

5. The definite combination of nervous fibres excited to action, determines the *character of the idea* presented to the mind, such as form, position, magnitude.

6. Each combination may be expressed by a word or cypher, and forms a definite image. The use of words is called *Language*.

7. The sum total of all the possible combinations of the ultimate nervous fibrils, excited to action, comprises all the possible images which can be represented to the mind.

8. Inasmuch as the possible combination of all the nervous fibrils is immensely numerous, so are the

images which may be reflected in the mind immensely numerous.

SENSES.

9. An idea is represented to the mind when any one or more of the filaments of either specific organ of sensation is excited without reference to the definite image thereby produced.

10 This solitary idea, derived from the filaments of the eye, is termed, *Vision*; of the ear, *Hearing*; of the nose, *Smelling*; of the palate, *Tasting*; of the skin, *Feeling*; and, probably, from the nerves communicating the changes occurring in our own body, *Personality*.

COMBINATION OF SENSES.

11. The perfect knowledge of any object is obtained by impressions received by the sum of the organs of sensation.

12. But as matter may exist without exciting all the organs of sensation at one time, we determine the combination of senses which has concurred to give us the knowledge of any external object.

INFINITY.

13. An idea is represented from the excitement of one or all the nervous fibrils of any organ of sensation indiscriminately. This idea is infinite, inasmuch as it is indivisible, incapable of addition and represents totality.*

* Infinity is sometimes confounded with its hyperbolic use in the sense of endless number.

TIME.

14. Our knowledge of the external world at any given period, is the sum total of the images from all our senses.

15. These images represented to the mind are perpetually changing.

16. When images change, one remains; the other changes perhaps several times before the first changes. The relation of these changes to each other is termed *the time of their occurrence*; that which changes the least frequently is said to be of *the longest duration*.

CAUSE.

17. In the change of images, when one specific image never appears without a similar antecedent, and the matter in the external world which gave rise to the first image set in motion the second—the antecedent image is said *to cause* the second image.

18. The mind finds great difficulty in distinguishing between concomitance and cause, because the matter which produces an antecedent image may not set in motion the matter which produced the second image.

PLEASURE AND PAIN.

19. When images of the external world are produced with a certain intensity—the idea of *Pleasure* is excited—when with a greater intensity, the idea of *Pain*.*

* Every action of our lives is either pleasurable or painful; and thus we perceive how vastly the former state preponderates over the latter.