

Probability, as the Guide of Life.

Of all the tendencies in philosophical, psychological and pedagogical writings and research there seems to be none which is more prominent than the insistence on the motor phase of psychic life. The fact that such a tendency is making itself felt, must be taken, like all facts as a symptom—not for its value as a fact but in reference to that to which it points. It is significant too in coming at a time when a greater extension of democratic principles has been to some extent worked out, when the importance of the function and life of the individual has come more clearly to consciousness. For it is now a common-place that the freeing and enlarging of the life of the individual is the desideratum in political, social religious and intellectual matters.

This freeing and enlarging bears with it its own responsibilities and gains. If man insists on being his own arbiter and director, he inevitably finds himself paying the penalty of it in being left by his fellows to take care of himself. Such is the inevitable result and guerdon of perversity. This "minding" his own business, the strictest sense of the term has not been lost sight of by the common consciousness, for it is quietly and tepaceously held that thus only can one benefit by the suggestions and results of individual experiences. This principle then tacitly held by the plain man overtly defined and earnestly acted upon by the practical business man contains the germ of the psychological principle to which I would especially refer, and upon which it is maintained the only real educational progress can be built. The statement of it may be brief, and is simply this:—that the organism being a bundle of tendencies toward expression receives certain values in these expressions, which tend to react into the organism to modify it and control future manifestations. Take the earliest movements of the child as a familiar example. One sees that the demand for action is urgent, and that these actions are at first wandering and lacking in definite co-ordination. The most casual observation is sufficient to make this evident. In the wandering vagueness presently some obstacle is met, and if the child is not too young some quality will attach to the experience received from contact. If light falls within his field of vision he is actively absorbed in it, and if his hand should, under the guidance of instinct—which is only a survival of purposive action—meet the flame the movement comes slowly but surely to have a quality which *we* may call pain; similarly another experience might give him a result in which satisfaction or pleasure would predominate, but whatever experience is had it must be viewed in the light of the original movement. That is one must not think *an* original stimulus, and then *a* response, and then *another* stimulus and *a* response. This would imply and expresses the greatest disintegration in the psychic life in its simplest processes and elemental relations. There is, of course an impulse, but, it is an impulse to do