

The background of the entire image is a scenic landscape. It features a calm body of water, likely a lake or a wide river, nestled between rolling hills and mountains. The vegetation on the slopes appears to be a mix of green and brown, suggesting a natural, perhaps autumnal, setting. The sky is filled with soft, grey clouds, creating a diffused light across the scene. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

***THOMAS  
TROWARD***

***CHANGING  
ONE'S  
THINKING  
CHANGES  
ONES' LIFE***

**Thomas Troward**

# **Changing One's Thinking Changes Ones' Life**

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# **The Edinburgh Lectures on Mental Science**

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## **FOREWORD.**

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This book contains the substance of a course of lectures recently given by the writer in the Queen Street Hall, Edinburgh. Its purpose is to indicate the *Natural Principles* governing the relation between Mental Action and Material Conditions, and thus to afford the student an intelligible starting-point for the practical study of the subject.

T.T.

March, 1904.

# I. SPIRIT AND MATTER.

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In commencing a course of lectures on Mental Science, it is somewhat difficult for the lecturer to fix upon the best method of opening the subject. It can be approached from many sides, each with some peculiar advantage of its own; but, after careful deliberation, it appears to me that, for the purpose of the present course, no better starting-point could be selected than the relation between Spirit and Matter. I select this starting-point because the distinction--or what we believe to be such--between them is one with which we are so familiar that I can safely assume its recognition by everybody; and I may, therefore, at once state this distinction by using the adjectives which we habitually apply as expressing the natural opposition between the two--*living* spirit and *dead* matter. These terms express our current impression of the opposition between spirit and matter with sufficient accuracy, and considered only from the point of view of outward appearances this impression is no doubt correct. The general consensus of mankind is right in trusting the evidence of our senses, and any system which tells us that we are not to do so will never obtain a permanent footing in a sane and healthy community. There is nothing wrong in the evidence conveyed to a healthy mind by the senses of a healthy body, but the point where error creeps in is when we come to judge of the meaning of this testimony. We are accustomed to judge only by external appearances and by certain limited significances which we

attach to words; but when we begin to enquire into the real meaning of our words and to analyse the causes which give rise to the appearances, we find our old notions gradually falling off from us, until at last we wake up to the fact that we are living in an entirely different world to that we formerly recognized. The old limited mode of thought has imperceptibly slipped away, and we discover that we have stepped out into a new order of things where all is liberty and life. This is the work of an enlightened intelligence resulting from persistent determination to discover what truth really is irrespective of any preconceived notions from whatever source derived, the determination to think honestly for ourselves instead of endeavouring to get our thinking done for us. Let us then commence by enquiring what we really mean by the livingness which we attribute to spirit and the deadness which we attribute to matter.

At first we may be disposed to say that livingness consists in the power of motion and deadness in its absence; but a little enquiry into the most recent researches of science will soon show us that this distinction does not go deep enough. It is now one of the fully-established facts of physical science that no atom of what we call "dead matter" is without motion. On the table before me lies a solid lump of steel, but in the light of up-to-date science I know that the atoms of that seemingly inert mass are vibrating with the most intense energy, continually dashing hither and thither, impinging upon and rebounding from one another, or circling round like miniature solar systems, with a ceaseless rapidity whose complex activity is enough to bewilder the imagination. The mass, as a mass, may lie

inert upon the table; but so far from being destitute of the element of motion it is the abode of the never-tiring energy moving the particles with a swiftness to which the speed of an express train is as nothing. It is, therefore, not the mere fact of motion that is at the root of the distinction which we draw instinctively between spirit and matter; we must go deeper than that. The solution of the problem will never be found by comparing Life with what we call deadness, and the reason for this will become apparent later on; but the true key is to be found by comparing one degree of livingness with another. There is, of course, one sense in which the quality of livingness does not admit of degrees; but there is another sense in which it is entirely a question of degree. We have no doubt as to the livingness of a plant, but we realize that it is something very different from the livingness of an animal. Again, what average boy would not prefer a fox-terrier to a goldfish for a pet? Or, again, why is it that the boy himself is an advance upon the dog? The plant, the fish, the dog, and the boy are all equally *alive*; but there is a difference in the quality of their livingness about which no one can have any doubt, and no one would hesitate to say that this difference is in the degree of intelligence. In whatever way we turn the subject we shall always find that what we call the "livingness" of any individual life is ultimately measured by its intelligence. It is the possession of greater intelligence that places the animal higher in the scale of being than the plant, the man higher than the animal, the intellectual man higher than the savage. The increased intelligence calls into activity modes of motion of a higher order corresponding to itself. The



higher the intelligence, the more completely the mode of motion is under its control: and as we descend in the scale of intelligence, the descent is marked by a corresponding increase in *automatic* motion not subject to the control of a self-conscious intelligence. This descent is gradual from the expanded self-recognition of the highest human personality to that lowest order of visible forms which we speak of as "things," and from which self-recognition is entirely absent.

We see, then, that the livingness of Life consists in intelligence--in other words, in the power of Thought; and we may therefore say that the distinctive quality of spirit is Thought, and, as the opposite to this, we may say that the distinctive quality of matter is Form. We cannot conceive of matter without form. Some form there must be, even though invisible to the physical eye; for matter, to be matter at all, must occupy space, and to occupy any particular space necessarily implies a corresponding form. For these reasons we may lay it down as a fundamental proposition that the distinctive quality of spirit is Thought and the distinctive quality of matter is Form. This is a radical distinction from which important consequences follow, and should, therefore, be carefully noted by the student.

Form implies extension in space and also limitation within certain boundaries. Thought implies neither. When, therefore, we think of Life as existing in any particular *form* we associate it with the idea of extension in space, so that an elephant may be said to consist of a vastly larger amount of living substance than a mouse. But if we think of Life as the fact of livingness we do not associate it with any idea of extension, and we at once realize that the mouse is quite as

much alive as the elephant, notwithstanding the difference in size. The important point of this distinction is that if we can conceive of anything as entirely devoid of the element of extension in space, it must be present in its entire totality anywhere and everywhere--that is to say, at every point of space simultaneously. The scientific definition of time is that it is the period occupied by a body in passing from one given point in space to another, and, therefore, according to this definition, when there is no space there can be no time; and hence that conception of spirit which realizes it as devoid of the element of space must realize it as being devoid of the element of time also; and we therefore find that the conception of spirit as pure Thought, and not as concrete Form, is the conception of it as subsisting perfectly independently of the elements of time and space. From this it follows that if the idea of anything is conceived as existing on this level it can only represent that thing as being actually present here and now. In this view of things nothing can be remote from us either in time or space: either the idea is entirely dissipated or it exists as an actual present entity, and not as something that *shall* be in the future, for where there is no sequence in time there can be no future. Similarly where there is no space there can be no conception of anything as being at a distance from us. When the elements of time and space are eliminated all our ideas of things must necessarily be as subsisting in a universal here and an everlasting now. This is, no doubt, a highly abstract conception, but I would ask the student to endeavour to grasp it thoroughly, since it is of vital

importance in the practical application of Mental Science, as will appear further on.

The opposite conception is that of things expressing themselves through conditions of time and space and thus establishing a variety of *relations* to other things, as of bulk, distance, and direction, or of sequence in time. These two conceptions are respectively the conception of the abstract and the concrete, of the unconditioned and the conditioned, of the absolute and the relative. They are not opposed to each other in the sense of incompatibility, but are each the complement of the other, and the only reality is in the combination of the two. The error of the extreme idealist is in endeavouring to realize the absolute without the relative, and the error of the extreme materialist is in endeavouring to realize the relative without the absolute. On the one side the mistake is in trying to realize an inside without an outside, and on the other in trying to realize an outside without an inside; both are necessary to the formation of a substantial entity.

## **II. THE HIGHER MODE OF INTELLIGENCE CONTROLS THE LOWER.**

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We have seen that the descent from personality, as we know it in ourselves, to matter, as we know it under what we call inanimate forms, is a gradual descent in the scale of intelligence from that mode of being which is able to realize its own will-power as a capacity for originating new trains of causation to that mode of being which is incapable of recognizing itself at all. The higher the grade of life, the higher the intelligence; from which it follows that the supreme principle of Life must also be the ultimate principle of intelligence. This is clearly demonstrated by the grand natural order of the universe. In the light of modern science the principle of evolution is familiar to us all, and the accurate adjustment existing between all parts of the cosmic scheme is too self-evident to need insisting upon. Every advance in science consists in discovering new subtleties of connection in this magnificent universal order, which already exists and only needs our recognition to bring it into practical use. If, then, the highest work of the greatest minds consists in nothing else than the recognition of an already existing order, there is no getting away from the conclusion that a paramount intelligence must be inherent in the Life-Principle, which manifests itself *as* this order; and thus we see that there must be a great cosmic intelligence underlying the totality of things.

The physical history of our planet shows us first an incandescent nebula dispersed over vast infinitudes of space; later this condenses into a central sun surrounded by a family of glowing planets hardly yet consolidated from the plastic primordial matter; then succeed untold millenniums of slow geological formation; an earth peopled by the lowest forms of life, whether vegetable or animal; from which crude beginnings a majestic, unceasing, unhurried, forward movement brings things stage by stage to the condition in which we know them now. Looking at this steady progression it is clear that, however we may conceive the nature of the evolutionary principle, it unerringly provides for the continual advance of the race. But it does this by creating such numbers of each kind that, after allowing a wide margin for all possible accidents to individuals, the race shall still continue:--

"So careful of the type it seems  
So careless of the single life."

In short, we may say that the cosmic intelligence works by a Law of Averages which allows a wide margin of accident and failure to the individual.

But the progress towards higher intelligence is always in the direction of narrowing down this margin of accident and taking the individual more and more out of the law of averages, and substituting the law of individual selection. In ordinary scientific language this is the survival of the fittest. The reproduction of fish is on a scale that would choke the sea with them if every individual survived; but the margin of destruction is correspondingly enormous, and thus the law

of averages simply keeps up the normal proportion of the race. But at the other end of the scale, reproduction is by no means thus enormously in excess of survival. True, there is ample margin of accident and disease cutting off numbers of human beings before they have gone through the average duration of life, but still it is on a very different scale from the premature destruction of hundreds of thousands as against the survival of one. It may, therefore, be taken as an established fact that in proportion as intelligence advances the individual ceases to be subject to a mere law of averages and has a continually increasing power of controlling the conditions of his own survival.

We see, therefore, that there is a marked distinction between the cosmic intelligence and the individual intelligence, and that the factor which differentiates the latter from the former is the presence of *individual* volition. Now the business of Mental Science is to ascertain the relation of this individual power of volition to the great cosmic law which provides for the maintenance and advancement of the race; and the point to be carefully noted is that the power of individual volition is itself the outcome of the cosmic evolutionary principle at the point where it reaches its highest level. The effort of Nature has always been upwards from the time when only the lowest forms of life peopled the globe, and it has now culminated in the production of a being with a mind capable of abstract reasoning and a brain fitted to be the physical instrument of such a mind. At this stage the all-creating Life-principle reproduces itself in a form capable of recognizing the working of the evolutionary law, and the unity and

continuity of purpose running through the whole progression until now indicates, beyond a doubt, that the place of such a being in the universal scheme must be to introduce the operation of that factor which, up to this point, has been, conspicuous by its absence--the factor, namely, of intelligent individual volition. The evolution which has brought us up to this standpoint has worked by a cosmic law of averages; it has been a process in which the individual himself has not taken a conscious part. But because he is what he is, and leads the van of the evolutionary procession, if man is to evolve further, it can now only be by his own conscious co-operation with the law which has brought him up to the standpoint where he is able to realize that such a law exists. His evolution in the future must be by conscious participation in the great work, and this can only be effected by his own individual intelligence and effort. It is a process of intelligent growth. No one else can grow for us: we must each grow for ourselves; and this intelligent growth consists in our increasing recognition of the universal law, which has brought us as far as we have yet got, and of our own individual relation to that law, based upon the fact that we ourselves are the most advanced product of it. It is a great maxim that Nature obeys us precisely in proportion as we first obey Nature. Let the electrician try to go counter to the principle that electricity must always pass from a higher to a lower potential and he will effect nothing; but let him submit in all things to this one fundamental law, and he can make whatever particular applications of electrical power he will.

These considerations show us that what differentiates the higher from the lower degree of intelligence is the recognition of its own self-hood, and the more intelligent that recognition is, the greater will be the power. The lower degree of self-recognition is that which only realizes itself as an entity separate from all other entities, as the *ego* distinguished from the *non-ego*. But the higher degree of self-recognition is that which, realizing its own spiritual nature, sees in all other forms, not so much the *non-ego*, or that which is not itself, as the *alter-ego*, or that which is itself in a different mode of expression. Now, it is this higher degree of self-recognition that is the power by which the Mental Scientist produces his results. For this reason it is imperative that he should clearly understand the difference between Form and Being; that the one is the mode of the relative and, the mark of subjection to conditions, and that the other is the truth of the absolute and is that which controls conditions.

Now this higher recognition of self as an individualization of pure spirit must of necessity control all modes of spirit which have not yet reached the same level of self-recognition. These lower modes of spirit are in bondage to the law of their own being because they do not know the law; and, therefore, the individual who has attained to this knowledge can control them through that law. But to understand this we must inquire a little further into the nature of spirit. I have already shown that the grand scale of adaptation and adjustment of all parts of the cosmic scheme to one another exhibits the presence *somewhere* of a marvellous intelligence, underlying the whole, and the



question is, where is this intelligence to be found? Ultimately we can only conceive of it as inherent in some primordial substance which is the root of all those grosser modes of matter which are known to us, whether visible to the physical eye, or necessarily inferred by science from their perceptible effects. It is that power which, in every species and in every individual, becomes that which that species or individual is; and thus we can only conceive of it as a self-forming intelligence inherent in the ultimate substance of which each thing is a particular manifestation. That this primordial substance must be considered as self-forming by an inherent intelligence abiding in itself becomes evident from the fact that intelligence is the essential quality of spirit; and if we were to conceive of the primordial substance as something apart from spirit, then we should have to postulate some other power which is neither spirit nor matter, and originates both; but this is only putting the idea of a self-evolving power a step further back and asserting the production of a lower grade of undifferentiated spirit by a higher, which is both a purely gratuitous assumption and a contradiction of any idea we can form of undifferentiated spirit at all. However far back, therefore, we may relegate the original starting-point, we cannot avoid the conclusion that, at that point, spirit contains the primary substance in itself, which brings us back to the common statement that it made everything out of nothing. We thus find two factors to the making of all things, Spirit and--Nothing; and the addition of Nothing to Spirit leaves *only* spirit:  $x + 0 = x$ .

From these considerations we see that the ultimate foundation of every form of matter is spirit, and hence that a universal intelligence subsists throughout Nature inherent in every one of its manifestations. But this cryptic intelligence does not belong to the particular *form* excepting in the measure in which it is physically fitted for its concentration into self-recognizing individuality: it lies hidden in that primordial substance of which the visible form is a grosser manifestation. This primordial substance is a philosophical necessity, and we can only picture it to ourselves as something infinitely finer than the atoms which are themselves a philosophical inference of physical science: still, for want of a better word, we may conveniently speak of this primary intelligence inherent in the very substance of things as the Atomic Intelligence. The term may, perhaps, be open to some objections, but it will serve our present purpose as distinguishing *this* mode of spirit's intelligence from that of the opposite pole, or Individual Intelligence. This distinction should be carefully noted because it is by the response of the atomic intelligence to the individual intelligence that thought-power is able to produce results on the material plane, as in the cure of disease by mental treatment, and the like. Intelligence manifests itself by responsiveness, and the whole action of the cosmic mind in bringing the evolutionary process from its first beginnings up to its present human stage is nothing else but a continual intelligent response to the demand which each stage in the progress has made for an adjustment between itself and its environment. Since, then, we have recognized the presence of a universal

intelligence permeating all things, we must also recognize a corresponding responsiveness hidden deep down in their nature and ready to be called into action when appealed to. All mental treatment depends on this responsiveness of spirit in its lower degrees to higher degrees of itself. It is here that the difference between the mental scientist and the uninstructed person comes in; the former knows of this responsiveness and makes use of it, and the latter cannot use it because he does not know it.

### III

## THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT.

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We have now paved the way for understanding what is meant by "the unity of the spirit." In the first conception of spirit as the underlying origin of all things we see a universal substance which, at this stage, is not differentiated into any specific forms. This is not a question of some bygone time, but subsists at every moment of all time in the *innermost* nature of all being; and when we see this, we see that the division between one specific form and another has below it a deep essential unity, which acts as the supporter of all the several forms of individuality arising out of it. And as our thought penetrates deeper into the nature of this all-producing spiritual substance we see that it cannot be limited to any one portion of space, but must be limitless as space itself, and that the idea of any portion of space where it is not is inconceivable. It is one of those intuitive perceptions from which the human mind can never get away that this primordial, all-generating living spirit must be commensurate with infinitude, and we can therefore never think of it otherwise than as universal or infinite. Now it is a mathematical truth that the infinite must be a unity. You cannot have two infinities, for then neither would be infinite, each would be limited by the other, nor can you split the infinite up into fractions. The infinite is mathematically essential unity. This is a point on which too much stress cannot be laid, for there follow from it the most important consequences. Unity, as such, can be neither