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George Combe

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# The Constitution of Man

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THE  
**CONSTITUTION OF MAN**

CONSIDERED IN

RELATION TO EXTERNAL OBJECTS.

BY

GEORGE COMBE.

“ Vain is the ridicule with which one sees some persons will divert themselves, upon finding lesser pains considered as instances of divine punishment. There is no possibility of answering or evading the general thing here intended, without denying all final causes.”—BUTLER'S *Analogy*.

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## PREFACE.



THIS Essay would not have been presented to the Public, had I not believed that it contains views of the constitution, condition, and prospects of Man, which deserve attention; but these, I trust, are not ushered forth with any thing approaching to a presumptuous spirit. I lay no claim to originality of conception. My first notions of the natural laws were derived from an unpublished manuscript of Dr SPURZHEIM, with the perusal of which I was honoured some years ago; and all my inquiries and meditations since have impressed me more and more with a conviction of their importance. The materials employed lie open to all. Taken separately, I would hardly say that a new truth has been presented in the following work. The parts have all been admitted and employed again and again, by writers on morals, from SOCRATES down to the present day. In this respect, there is nothing new under the sun. The only novelty in this Essay respects the relations which acknowledged truths hold to each other. Physical laws of nature, affecting our physical condition, as well as regulating the whole material system of the universe, are universally acknowledged, and constitute the elements of natural philosophy and chemical science. Physiologists, medical practitioners, and all

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## PREFACE.

who take medical aid, admit the existence of *organic laws*: And the science of government, legislation, education, indeed our whole train of conduct through life, proceed upon the admission of laws in morals. Accordingly, the laws of nature have formed an interesting subject of inquiry to philosophers of all ages; but, so far as I am aware, no author has hitherto attempted to point out, in a combined and systematic form, the relations between these laws and the constitution of Man; which must, nevertheless, be done, before our knowledge of them can be beneficially applied. The great object of the following Essay is to exhibit these relations, with a view to the improvement of education, and the regulation of individual conduct.

But, although my purpose is practical, a theory of Mind forms an essential element in the execution of the plan. Without it, no comparison can be instituted between the natural constitution of man and external objects. Phrenology appears to me to be the clearest, most complete, and best supported system of Human Nature, which has hitherto been taught; and I have assumed it as the basis of this Essay. But the practical value of the views now to be unfolded does not depend on Phrenology. This theory of Mind itself is valuable, only in so far as it is a *just exposition* of what previously existed in human nature. We are physical, organic, and moral beings, acting under the sanction of general laws, let the merits of Phrenology be what they may. Individuals will, under the impulse of passion, or by the direction of intellect, hope, fear, wonder, perceive, and act, whether the degree in which they habitually do so, be ascertainable on phrenologi-



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cal principles or not. In so far, therefore, as this Essay treats of the known qualities of Man, it may be instructive even to those who contemn Phrenology as unfounded; while it can prove useful to no one, if it shall depart from the true elements of mental philosophy, by whatever system these may be expounded.

I have endeavoured to avoid all religious controversy. “The object of Moral Philosophy,” says Mr STEWART, “is to ascertain the general rules of a wise and virtuous conduct in life, in so far as these rules may be discovered by the unassisted light of nature; that is, by an examination of the principles of the human constitution, and of the circumstances in which Man is placed\*.” By following this method of inquiry, Dr HUTCHESON, Dr ADAM SMITH, Dr REID, Mr STEWART, and Dr THOMAS BROWN, have, in succession, produced highly interesting and instructive works on Moral Science; and the present Essay is a humble attempt to pursue the same plan, with the aid of the new lights afforded by Phrenology.

\* Outlines of Moral Philosophy, p. 1.

EDINBURGH, 9th June 1828.

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