The Darwinian Theory.

By his researches into the causes of expression in man and animals Mr. Darwin has thrown considerable light upon a subject which, although of the greatest importance, has long been neglected. Even those who have taken it up have been so preoccupied with the phenomena of expression, merely considering that it was too obvious and involved too many instances of much possibility of explanation. Physiologists and anatomists have in general, considered the various movements of the face and hands, as mere accidents, in which every man dabbles in; and in a certain extent, it is himself capable of judging of another man's feelings, from his movements of expression, and the lower animals, under the influence of emotions and sensations—First, the principle of nervous system, independently from the first of the body, and independently to a certain extent of habit. This is the principle that whenever any sensation, desire, disgust, &c., has led during a long series of generations to some voluntary act to be performed, there is a corresponding performance of a similar movement will almost certainly be excited whenever the same, or any analogous or associated sensation occurs. Although, in some weakly experienced, notwithstanding that the movement may not be of the least use also that where a certain habit with certain states of the mind are partially give rise to the strictly involuntary movements, as well as those which are supposed to be under separate control of the will, are liable still to act, and may be excited by the expression of the same. Mr. Darwin gives a very great many instances of analogous habitual movements in animals—movements which appear to be excited by the animal under the influence of the causes from which they sprang; such as the dog scratching the air or the ground when tired, the cat rubbing itself against a tree, when it is to scratch itself by rapidly moving one of his hind feet; or rolling upon a piece of wood to rub himself clean; the sheep running, when alarmed or apprised of danger; the tame sheldrake patting the ground with its two feet, as if the latter one does over a worn part of the earth; and, in the case of the sheldrake, the Zealotry, the bees beating the raw meat which is put before them, and the cat and dog licking themselves after liberty, beat a flail until they are done. We have ourselves repeatedly seen a poodle trying to get at a carpet on the floor, and flinging his body, at the carpet all round it, just as he would have scratched the earth in the garden to bury a bone. And these examples are made the basis of the first principle to Mr. Darwin says that he has caught himself, when in the dark and thinking of a horrid spectacle, closing his eyes; and, to quote a passage from Dr. Gredal's observation, that a man who voluntarily rejects a proposition will almost certainly shut his eyes or turn his head. You, therefore, in thinking of the proposition he will nod his head and open his eyes widely, doing in the second case as if he saw the thing which he was trying not to see. As to the second principle—that of habit, Mr. Darwin thus explains it:—

"Correct states of the face express particular habitual movements which were primary, or may still be, of servile and automatic acts, and then when a directly opposed state of mind is induced, there is a strong and involuntary tendency to perform the opposite act, and this will be the first thing to express itself in the face."—

The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals.


"As infant," he says, "may swear either intentionally or instinctively to show that it wants something. The child has only to draw its features into the peculiar form which it is known to express distress or to show its intentions. Such an act is not the least use also that where a certain habit with certain states of the mind are partially give rise to the strictly involuntary movements, as well as those which are supposed to be under separate control of the will, are liable still to act, and may be excited by the expression of the same. Mr. Darwin gives a very great many instances of analogous habitual movements in animals—movements which appear to be excited by the animal under the influence of the causes from which they sprang; such as the dog scratching the air or the ground when tired, the cat rubbing itself against a tree, when it is to scratch itself by rapidly moving one of his hind feet; or rolling upon a piece of wood to rub himself clean; the sheep running, when alarmed or apprised of danger; the tame sheldrake patting the ground with its two feet, as if the latter one does over a worn part of the earth; and, in the case of the sheldrake, the Zealotry, the bees beating the raw meat which is put before them, and the cat and dog licking themselves after liberty, beat a flail until they are done. We have ourselves repeatedly seen a poodle trying to get at a carpet on the floor, and flinging his body, at the carpet all round it, just as he would have scratched the earth in the garden to bury a bone. And these examples are made the basis of the first principle to Mr. Darwin says that he has caught himself, when in the dark and thinking of a horrid spectacle, closing his eyes; and, to quote a passage from Dr. Gredal's observation, that a man who voluntarily rejects a proposition will almost certainly shut his eyes or turn his head. You, therefore, in thinking of the proposition he will nod his head and open his eyes widely, doing in the second case as if he saw the thing which he was trying not to see. As to the second principle—that of habit, Mr. Darwin thus explains it:—

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