

Matter

1890 | Logic and Spiritualism [R] | W 6:393; CP 6.585

Feelings over whose relations to their neighbors habit has acquired such an empire that we detect no trace of spontaneity in their actions, are known as dead matter.

1891-08-29 | Letters to Christine Ladd-Franklin | W 8:387

...I suppose matter is merely mind deadened by the development of habit.

1892 | The Law of Mind | W 8:155; CP 6.158

...what we call matter is not completely dead, but is merely mind hidebound with habits. It still retains the element of diversification; and in that diversification there is life.

1898 | Cambridge Lectures on Reasoning and the Logic of Things: The Logic of Continuity | RLT 261; CP 6.201

...dead matter would be merely the final result of the complete induration of habit reducing the free play of feeling and the brute irrationality of effort to complete death.

1902 | Uniformity | CP 6.101

The hypothesis suggested by the present writer is that all laws are results of evolution; that underlying all other laws is the only tendency which can grow by its own virtue, the tendency of all things to take habits. Now since this same tendency is the one sole fundamental law of mind, it follows that the physical evolution works towards ends in the same way that mental action works towards ends, and thus in one aspect of the matter it would be perfectly true to say that final causation is alone primary. Yet, on the other hand, the law of habit is a simple formal law, a law of efficient causation; so that either way of regarding the matter is equally true, although the former is more fully intelligent. Meantime, if law is a result of evolution, which is a process lasting through all time, it follows that no law is absolute. That is, we must suppose that the phenomena themselves involve departures from law analogous to errors of observation. But the writer has not supposed that this phenomenon had any connection with free will. In so far as evolution follows a law, the law of habit, instead of being a movement from homogeneity to heterogeneity, is growth from difformity to uniformity. But the chance divergences from law are perpetually acting to increase the variety of the world, and are checked by a

sort of natural selection and otherwise (for the writer does not think the selective principle sufficient), so that the general result may be described as “organized heterogeneity,” or, better, rationalized variety. In view of the principle of continuity, the supreme guide in framing philosophical hypotheses, we must, under this theory, regard matter as mind whose habits have become fixed so as to lose the powers of forming them and losing them, while mind is to be regarded as a chemical genus of extreme complexity and instability.