

PHILOSOPHY, LANGUAGE, AND GENERAL SCIENCE.

Outlines of Psychology. By HAROLD HÖFFDING, Professor at the University of Copenhagen. Translated by MARY E. LOWNDES. 12mo, pp. 365. New York: Macmillan & Co. Price, cloth, \$1 50.

Elementary psychology receives in this volume both valuable treatment and original study, which, as it includes all mental phenomena, with a unique interpretation of their laws and of the development of the mental history of the race, must attract the attention of physiologists and psychologists. The author does not regard psychology as a branch of metaphysics, or as one of the physical sciences, but as distinct in itself, with laws and phenomena of its own, and therefore suggests an independent method of investigation as a necessity to an understanding of the problem in hand. He very properly eschews the German method, which involves a metaphysical conception of consciousness, and the English school of psychologists, who are prone to corrupt the inquiry with physiological hypotheses. It

is confessed that the task of interpreting the mind is great enough if one may be aided by the German and English methods; it is greater if the investigator proposes to proceed without either. However, Professor Höffding, eliminating every foreign element from the problem, has the advantage that always arises from the simplicity of the truth one seeks to understand; and, free from the bias of the schools, he is at liberty to adopt any method that may contribute to the end he has in view. It is true his method is not new in itself, but it is new in its application to psychology. The old empirical method, in the hands of Hobbes and Hume, eventuated in materialism, while our author indirectly employs it against every form of physiological conclusion. He holds that conscious life is known to man only through the consciousness, and that it must be studied as other things are studied. The existence of mind is a matter of experience; hence, it should be studied as an experience. This is the key to the book. It is easy to criticise the starting-point by saying that it leads forward but not backward; that while it may conduct the investigator to the phenomena of mental action, with their producing laws, it will not conduct him back to the genesis of mind or to its mysterious nature, or to the secret of its self-sustaining power. The author might reply that with the latter psychology, as a science, has nothing to do, but that it accomplishes its purpose in reflecting mental life as it manifests itself in consciousness. Whatever the value of the criticism, it appears that the author deals more with the one view than with the other. In the general treatment of the subject he cannot avoid the tripartite division of the psychological elements into those of cognition, feeling, and will; but in their separate treatment, and in the attempt to demonstrate their interaction in a final mental act, he is forcible in style and suggestive of original research. He discusses sensation and its relation to ideas with rare clearness, though the subject itself is obscure, and estimates feeling as an original element of character. Just where may be located the center of psychological gravity—whether it is at the center of consciousness or in what he calls "vital feeling," as distinguished from other feelings, or in primitive will—he does not exactly declare; but this is a great mystery. He, however, pursues the main subject with an intellectual zeal that allows little deviation or circumlocution, and the result is, not an abstruse but a strong and transparent development of our mental life as reflected in human experience. We cannot follow the author in all his deductions; but that he has investigated thoroughly and conscientiously, adding to our knowledge of a subject that still baffles with its mysteries, no one of his readers will doubt. The book is an advance in psychological study.