



Practical Idealism

William DeWitt Hyde

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This book might perhaps be entitled "The Statement and Application of Idealism." The author sets forth in a simple and popular fashion the cardinal doctrine of idealism, that the world in which we live and find ourselves at home is a world which thought has built up. And he pauses (especially in the later chapters of the volume) to show also how the principles of philosophical idealism can be applied to the various problems of modern life. The practical aim of the book, the author informs us, "precludes the discussion of ultimate metaphysical problems, and confines it to those concrete aspects of philosophy which lie closest to the common concerns of men." (p. vi). The work falls into two main divisions, dealing respectively with 'The Natural World,' and 'The Spiritual World.' Under the former heading, we find chapters tracing the procedure of intelligence in constructing the various worlds of sense-perception, of association, of science, and of art. "The Spiritual World" includes the world of persons, the world of institutions, the world of morality, and the world of religion. President Hyde's discussions are throughout vigorous and interesting. He quotes extensively though not indiscriminately. His pages are addressed to the practical man of affairs, rather than to the student of philosophy who 'sits apart' in academic seclusion. But the author discusses practical affairs—problems of education and religion, as well as questions connected with the social and political conditions of the present day—from a philosophical standpoint. Indeed, the book illustrates the close and living connection which exists between philosophy and the most concrete and practical matters of human life. The following quotation may be regarded as typical of the more practical discussions of the book: "The province of the school is to show the child that the same reason and law and love that animate the home also rule the universe. Instead of being a foreign and unexplored country, peopled perchance by superstition with fantastic shapes and hostile powers, the world of nature and humanity, through the interpretation given in the school, becomes familiar, friendly, homelike, and endeared. The school is established to make the child at home in this large world of men and things; the master of its forces, the minister of its laws, the possessor of its treasures, the sharer of its joys" (p. 176). —The Philosophical Review, Vol. 7



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