

# THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

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## MECHANISM, FROM THE STANDPOINT OF PHYSICAL SCIENCE.<sup>1</sup>

THROUGHOUT the modern period science has, upon the whole, moved toward mechanistic interpretations, theories, and conceptions of the forms and functions of living things. Even in the seventeenth century Harvey's great work, the reflections of Galileo and Descartes, and such applications of the new science as Borelli's, brought forth a mechanical physiology. At the end of the eighteenth century Lavoisier, and a little later Saussure, found the true path of chemical physiology; while Lavoisier and Laplace in collaboration founded thermal physiology.

During the nineteenth century every department of physical science has been tested and found useful in the study of organic phenomena, and at length we have won a certain measure of success in describing 'living matter' as a physico-chemical system.

Meantime this movement, though often checked by great and possibly insuperable obstacles, has never been reversed. The

<sup>1</sup> The papers which appear as articles in this number of the Review form the contributions of the five leaders to the Discussion which has been arranged for the next meeting of the American Philosophical Association, to be held at Harvard University on December 27 and 28, 1918. The papers as here published have grown out of a preliminary meeting and conference of the writers. At this meeting a "Basis of Reference" was drawn up to serve as a common background for the separate papers. This has been already published in the *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology, and Scientific Methods*, Vol. XV, No. 17 (Aug. 15, 1918), and is reprinted among the 'Notes' at the end of this number.—Ed.