

# SCIENCE

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1913

THE STUDY OF MAN<sup>1</sup>

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IN that most amusing and instructive dialogue, entitled "Theætetus," the author Plato makes Socrates enter into a discussion with the youth by offering help as a skillful midwife to deliver him of a true and logical answer to the puzzling question: What is knowledge? When the youth replies,

According to my present notion, he who knows perceives what he knows, and therefore I should say that knowledge is perception,

Socrates proceeds—perhaps not altogether fairly—to identify his doctrine with the celebrated saying of Protagoras. This saying is about all we know of the positive teachings of him who was esteemed to be the founder of the Sophists. The proposition as expressed in the same Dialogue runs as follows:

Man is the measure of all things; of that which is, how it is; of that which is not, how it is not.

Even in the time of Plato the Sophists had translated this proposition into the doctrine: For every person, that is true and real which appears so to him. From this doctrine it was no long step to the conclusion, that there is possible for man only a subjective and relative, not an objective and universal truth.

From the time of Protagoras to the present, the view of the nature, authority, and limits, of perception by the senses, which his celebrated *dictum* embodies, has been the chief source both of popular and of scientific and philosophical scepticism; while the resulting doctrine of the relativity of all human knowledge, in its most

<sup>1</sup> Address of the vice-president and chairman of Section H—Anthropology and Psychology—Cleveland, 1913.

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