

ing on the most important concerns of life. Men began to hear with surprise, not unmingled with some vague hope of ultimate benefit, that not only births, deaths, and marriages, but the decisions of tribunals, the results of popular elections, the influence of punishments in checking crime, the comparative value of medical remedies and different modes of treatment of diseases, the probable limits of error in numerical results in every department of physical inquiry, the detection of causes, physical, social, and moral—nay, even the weight of evidence and the validity of logical argument—might come to be surveyed with that lynx-eyed scrutiny of a dispassionate analysis, which, if not at once leading to the discovery of positive truth, would at least secure the detection and proscription of many mischievous and besetting fallacies.”

Both ways of approaching the intricate phenomena of nature and history, that of mechanics dealing with the general laws of motion and of lifeless masses, and that of statistics dealing with the arithmetical properties of large numbers of units, leave out of consideration that hidden and mysterious phenomenon to which alone is attached, if not order and method, yet certainly all that commands interest in the created world: the factor of life—the existence of individuality. The view which Laplace took of the universe or of human affairs is an attempt to see how far science and reasoning can go while disregarding the principle of individuality.¹ The

26.
Laplace
gained his
results by
disregard-
ing the prin-
ciple of in-
dividuality.

¹ See Clerk Maxwell on ‘Science and Freewill’ (Life by Campbell and Garnett, p. 438): “Two kinds of knowledge, which we may call for convenience dynamical and statistical. The statistical method of

investigating social questions has Laplace for its most scientific and Buckle for its most popular expounder. Persons are grouped according to some characteristic, and the number of persons forming