



Your Mind and How to Use It

By William Walker Atkinson (December 5, 1862 – November 22, 1932)

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The first chapter of *Your Mind and How to Use It* (1911) includes a succinct definition of the mind that suggests the difficulty of dealing with something that is abstract by its very nature.

“Mind is defined as ‘the faculty or power whereby thinking creatures, feel, think, and will.’ This definition is inadequate and circular in nature, but this is unavoidable, for mind can be defined only in its own terms and only by reference to its own processes. Mind, except in reference to its own activities, cannot be defined or conceived. It is known to itself only through its activities.”

Fortunately modern psychology has focused on what we can know, and in this book the author “bends all its energies upon discovering the laws of mental activities and states and developing methods whereby the mind may be trained to perform better and more work, to conserve its energies, and to concentrate its forces.” The first section treats the mechanics of the mental states produced by the nervous system, the brain, and the sense organ. The second group describes the facts of consciousness and its planes. The third delves into the many mental processes and faculties that taken together comprise what we think of as “the mind”: attention, perception, memory, imagination, instincts, the various kinds of emotions, intellect, ideas and concepts, judgment, reasoning, and will. It is meant to be a handbook that the reader will use continuously, revisiting sections as understanding enlarges and self-control improves, as countless readers have done for over 100 years.

William Walker Atkinson (December 5, 1862 – November 22, 1932) was an American attorney, publisher, writer and a leader of the New Thought movement. Although he is largely forgotten, he wrote over 100 books under his name and a variety of pseudonyms; many have been continuously in print since the early 1900’s. He was born in Baltimore, married at age 26, and pursued a successful business and legal career until suffering a complete breakdown in the late 1880’s. He found healing and vitality through the emerging discipline of New Thought, and started writing about it. He moved to Chicago, a center of the New Thought movement, and became editor and publisher of *Suggestion*, *New Thought*, and *Advanced Thought* magazines. He then teamed up with publisher Sydney Flower to publish most his books under various imprints of the Psychic Research and New Thought Publishing Company. He wrote 13 books on yoga and Indian philosophy using the pseudonym Yogi Ramacharaka, taking the name from a spiritual teacher who lived from 1799 until the late 19th century. Other pseudonyms include Theron Q. Dumont and Swami Panchadasi.