

# "Personal Power" by William Walker Atkinson – OVERVIEW

This document summarizes key concepts from excerpts of William Walker Atkinson's "Personal Power," focusing on the nature of the self, will, desire, and how to cultivate personal power. Atkinson presents a philosophy that emphasizes the power of the individual to shape their reality through conscious direction of mental faculties. His ideas draw upon both Western psychological thought and Eastern philosophical concepts. The recurring idea of the "I AM I" as the core of the self and the source of power is central to his framework.

## I. THE NATURE OF THE "I AM I" AND THE MASTER SELF

- **Fundamental Self-Consciousness:** Atkinson asserts that at the core of every individual, beyond changing thoughts and feelings, lies a fundamental self-consciousness expressed as "I AM I." This is not merely a thought, but the recognition of one's own existence and being.
- *"With impressions from the outside world, and also the reports of memory, temporarily inhibited or shut-off, your consciousness would be driven back upon that fundamental, essential, and ultimate report: 'I AM I'."*
- **The Master Self:** The "I AM I" consciousness is identified with the "Master Self," the true, unchanging essence of the individual, which transcends the fluctuating states of mind.
- *"This 'I AM I' or Master Self is the permanent subject of your thinking processes and activities, and yet is superior to them and capable of rising above them."*
- **Permanent Subject:** The Master Self remains constant, while thoughts and feelings are transient. Atkinson uses the analogy of a stream: the thoughts are the ever-changing water, while the "I AM I" is the unchanging observer on the bank.
- *"The stream of thought may flow past, ever-changing, ever-passing, ever-becoming, never the same for even two consecutive moments; but the Thinker on the banks of the stream remains ever the same identical 'I AM I' or Master Self"*
- **Not the Will but the Willer:** Atkinson is also clear that Will is a tool of the Master Self, not the Master Self itself.
- *"Whatever else your Master Self may be, or may not be, it certainly is not your Will, in its parts, or in its totality."*
- **Connection to Ultimate Reality:** The "I AM I" is not just an isolated entity, but a point of contact with a greater, universal reality.
- *"It is a focalized centre of Something or Somewhat infinitely greater—the point of contact between the Universal and the Particular, the Unmanifest and the Manifest, the Uncreate and the Create, the Infinite and the Finite."*

## II. THE NATURE OF WILL AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

- **Will as a Tool:** Atkinson emphasizes that the Will is a powerful tool that the Master Self uses to direct mental states, actions, and, ultimately, one's life. The Will is the director and master, not the "I AM I" but the power that the "I AM I" can direct.
- **The Importance of Definite Purpose:** Successful attainment requires a clear understanding of one's desires and aims. Shifting purpose and conflicting desires dissipate mental energy.
- *"Hazy, indefinite Ideals result in scattered purpose and misdirected energy. The man who wants one thing today, and another thing tomorrow, will likely get neither."*
- **Insistent Desire:** A strong and unwavering desire, similar to a drowning person's desire for air, is a vital element for success. The intensity of desire fuels the power of the will.
- *"Desire has been aptly spoken of as 'The Flame which generates the Steam of Will.' The stronger the Flame, the greater the quality and power of the Steam."*
- **Persistent Determination:** The ability to persistently apply the Will to achieve a goal is crucial. It involves steadfastness, firmness of purpose, and perseverance in the face of obstacles.
- *"The characteristics of Persistent Determination are stability, perseverance, fixedness of purpose, tenacity, doggedness, and persistent application."*
- **Stages of Will:** The process of the Will unfolds through five stages:
  1. **Desire:** The initial want or need.
  2. **Deliberation:** Weighing the options.
  3. **Decision:** The "making up of the mind".
  4. **Determination:** Taking action on that decision.
  5. **Voluntary Action:** The actual carrying out of the Will.
- **"Willing to Will":** This concept represents the ability to deliberately use the Will to strengthen and direct itself. Will is not a fixed resource but something that develops over time and usage.
- *"Will Power is self-developed and self-trained. Will Power applies its energies to itself, and by means of this it tends to perfect and improve itself."*

## III. THE POWER OF DESIRE AND ITS CULTIVATION

- **Desire as a Force:** Desire is a fundamental force, and when properly harnessed, it is a source of motivation and action. However, not all desires are equal. Superficial and transient desires should be distinguished from the deep, essential, and permanent ones.
- **Testing Desire:** Atkinson offers several tests to evaluate one's true desires.

- **"Wanting it Hard Enough":** Is the desire strong enough to compel action and sacrifice?
- **Full Content of Desire:** Weigh the implications of a desire, considering its impact on the future and on others.
- **Depth of Desire:** Focus on desires that are deeply rooted in one's being, not fleeting whims.
- **The Struggle of Desires:** Atkinson portrays the pursuit of dominant desires as a battle, where weaker desires must be overcome. This reinforces the idea that not all desires are equally worthy.
- *"By a strange psychological law these surviving candidates have taken on much of the strength and energy of those which they have defeated in the struggle; the victors will have absorbed the vitality of those whom they have defeated."*
- **Latent Desire Power:** He describes a "great reservoir of Desire Power" within each individual, waiting to be activated and directed.
- *"There abides within you a great store of latent, dormant Desire Power... It rests there, comparatively inactive on the surface, but ever manifesting a peculiar churning ebullition proceeding from its great depths."*
- **Paying the Price:** Attaining one's desires requires sacrifice and the willingness to pay the price, whether in effort, time, or the relinquishment of other desires.
- *"Said the gods to man, "Take what thou wilt—but pay for it!"*
- **Temptations:** Many temptations will arise that try to "sidetrack" the process of gaining a dominant desire. The capacity to overcome the desire for immediate gratification in favor of greater future benefit is a test of one's true want.
- *"Particularly difficult to overcome and conquer are those temptations which induce you to relinquish your desire for future attainment in favor of the gratification of present desires."*

#### IV. FAITH, ACTION, and the Master Formula

- **Faith's Role:** Atkinson emphasizes the importance of faith and confident expectation in realizing one's desires. Doubt, distrust, and disbelief paralyze desire power.
- *"Faith encourages and sustains, promotes and maintains Desire in its highest degree of efficiency; Doubt, Disbelief, Distrust and Unfaith retard and restrict, inhibit and paralyze this efficient manifestation of Desire."*
- **Will Action:** Will action, in its dynamic aspect, is the vehicle by which one moves toward attainment. It is the application of the Will to complete an action.
- **Master Formula:** Atkinson articulates a "Master Formula" for action incorporating the elements of:

1. **Clear Vision:** Knowing what is desired.

2. **Strong Desire:** "Wanting it hard enough."
3. **Confident Expectation:** Believing in success.
4. **Persistent Determination:** Steadfastly working towards the goal.
5. **Balanced Compensation:** Willingness to "pay the price".

## V. HABIT, ATTENTION, AND WILL TRAINING

- **Habit Formation:** He offers specific rules for cultivating habits of Will, emphasizing a strong initial push, avoiding exceptions, and frequent repetition.
- *"In launching a new habit, employ a strong initiative... Never allow even a single exception or failure to occur until the new habit has become well-established...In establishing a habit, you should repeat the performance of the associated action as frequently as possible."*
- **Direction of Attention:** The ability to direct attention is crucial. The Will must decide which ideas gain dominance, encouraging positive ideas and starving negative ones.
- *"The Will is able to determine which of the motives influencing it shall become the stronger; it accomplishes this by deciding which of two alternative sets of ideas shall occupy the field of attention during the desire-conflict."*
- **Will-Training Exercises:** Atkinson suggests various exercises to develop Willpower, including performing unpleasant tasks, practicing self-denial, engaging in seemingly trivial tasks for the sake of strengthening the Will, and tempering the Will through deliberate assertion in small ways.
- *"Keep the faculty alive by a little gratuitous exercise every day. That is, be systematically ascetic or heroic in little unnecessary points; do every day something for no other reason than that you would rather not do it..."*
- **Conscience of Will Values:** By consistently choosing actions that align with one's standards, an inner "conscience of Will values" develops, guiding future decisions.
- *"If you proceed with proper earnestness and determination in the work of building up and establishing your Table of Will Values based upon your chosen Fixed Standard, and then proceed to apply the standards of that Table honestly and conscientiously, then, before long you will find that you have established what may be called a Conscience of Will Values in your subconscious mental being."*

## VI. MENTAL POWER, THOUGHT ATTRACTION AND RESISTANCE

- **Thought as a Force:** Atkinson emphasizes that thoughts are vibrations with the power to attract like vibrations. Maintaining positive, noble thoughts attracts positive experiences and vice versa.
- *"You sometimes bring upon yourself veritable whirlwinds of hate-thoughts by sending forth strong thought-vibrations of that kind. The old saying that,*

*"Curses, like chickens, come home to roost," has a practical realization in cases such as we have just mentioned."*

- **Thought Induction:** He discusses the influence of thought waves and currents and emphasizes that you are more likely to be influenced by like thoughts and vibrations to your own thoughts.
- **The Positive Centre:** The concept of the "I AM I" is central to the idea of a positive centre, an inner place of power where the Real Self resides.
- *"You should persevere in this recognition and realization until you are able to feel yourself as this "I AM I"—until you can actually feel that "I Am HERE" at the very centre of your being. When you have reached this stage of the consciousness of Egohood, you will realize that YOU are superior to mental changes and physical changes, and that nothing in the outside world can really affect your position of security and power."*
- **The Protective Aura:** One's own personal thought-aura, filled with positive thoughts, acts as protection from negative influences.

## VII. THE SENSES, LOGICAL JUDGEMENT, and CHARACTER ANALYSIS

- **Mechanism of the Senses:** Atkinson briefly describes the mechanics of hearing, smell, taste, sight, and touch.
- **Logical Judgement:** Logical judgement is built on three fundamental laws: identity (a thing is what it is), non-contradiction (a thing cannot both be and not be), and excluded middle (a thing either is or isn't).
- **Character Qualities:** Atkinson defines a number of key character traits and their "positive," "deficiency-negative," and "excess-negative" expressions. For example:
- **Concentrated Attention:** Positively expressed as focused attention, deficiency-negatively as "lack of concentration," and excess-negatively as "over-concentration"
- **Persistent Determination:** Positively expressed as perseverance, deficiency-negatively as "Lack of Persistency," and excess-negatively as "Stubborn Obstinacy".
- **Stability:** Positively expressed as steadiness, deficiency-negatively as "Instability", and excess-negatively as "Inertness".

## VIII. THE REPRODUCTIVE FORCE AND SEX POLARITY

- **Nature's Energy:** Atkinson notes that nature devotes tremendous energy to reproduction, using that same energy for regeneration of the individual's own activities.
- **Reversal of Energy:** He points out that ancient occultists discovered the ability to harness reproductive power for regeneration.

- **Secretions:** Atkinson notes that the prostatic fluid, semen, is secreted at the moment of ejaculation and that continuous expulsion and secretion is a perversion of nature.
- **Polarity:** Atkinson suggests that male and female polarities have an attraction for each other.

**CONCLUSION:**

Atkinson's work presents a comprehensive framework for understanding and cultivating personal power, centred around the concept of the "I AM I." He emphasizes the power of the Will to direct one's desires and actions and to shape one's reality. By understanding and mastering the principles of Will, Desire, Attention, and Thought, individuals can achieve their goals and live a life of purpose and mastery. His work blends psychology with philosophical ideas to empower the individual.