



Personal Power

Insights from William Walker Atkinson

This document explores key concepts from William Walker Atkinson's "Personal Power," focusing on the nature of the self, will, desire, and methods to cultivate personal power. Atkinson presents a philosophy emphasising the individual's ability to shape reality through the conscious direction of mental faculties, blending Western psychological thought with Eastern philosophical concepts. The central idea of the "I AM I" as the core of the self and the source of power forms the foundation of his framework.



by OL booksummary



The Nature of the "I AM I" and the Master Self

At the core of Atkinson's philosophy lies the concept of fundamental self-consciousness, expressed as "I AM I." This is not merely a thought but the recognition of one's own existence and being. Atkinson asserts that beyond changing thoughts and feelings, this core consciousness remains constant.

The "I AM I" consciousness is identified with the "Master Self," the true, unchanging essence of the individual that transcends fluctuating states of mind. Atkinson uses the analogy of a stream: thoughts are the ever-changing water, while the "I AM I" is the unchanging observer on the bank. He emphasizes that the Master Self is not the Will itself, but rather the entity that wields the Will as a tool.

Importantly, Atkinson views the "I AM I" not as an isolated entity, but as a point of contact with a greater, universal reality. He describes it as "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."



The Nature of Will and Its Development

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 not the "I AM I" itself, but the power that the "I AM I" can direct. Successful attainment requires a clear understanding of one's desires and aims, as shifting purpose and conflicting desires dissipate mental energy.

Insistent desire, likened to a drowning person's desire for air, is vital for success. The intensity of desire fuels the power of the will. Equally important is persistent determination, which involves steadfastness, firmness of purpose, and perseverance in the face of obstacles.

Atkinson outlines five stages of Will:

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

A key concept is "Willing to Will," which represents the ability to deliberately use the Will to strengthen and direct itself. Will Power is not a fixed resource but something that develops over time and usage. As Atkinson states, "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."

The Power of Desire and Its Cultivation

Atkinson views desire as a fundamental force that, when properly harnessed, becomes a source of motivation and action. However, he emphasizes that not all desires are equal, and one should distinguish between superficial, transient desires and deep, essential, permanent ones.

To evaluate one's true desires, Atkinson offers several tests:

- "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.

Atkinson portrays the pursuit of dominant desires as a battle where weaker desires must be overcome. He describes a "great reservoir of Desire Power" within each individual, waiting to be activated and directed. However, attaining one's desires requires sacrifice and the willingness to pay the price, whether in effort, time, or the relinquishment of other desires.

Atkinson warns of temptations 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. As he states, "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."



Faith, Action, and the Master Formula

Atkinson emphasizes the crucial role of faith and confident expectation in realizing one's desires. He asserts that doubt, distrust, and disbelief paralyze desire power, while faith encourages and sustains it. As he puts it, "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, in its dynamic aspect, is presented as the vehicle by which one moves toward attainment. It is the application of the Will to complete an action. Atkinson articulates a "Master Formula" for action incorporating five key elements:

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".

This formula encapsulates Atkinson's approach to personal power, combining the mental aspects of vision and desire with the practical elements of expectation, determination, and compensation. It provides a structured framework for individuals to pursue their goals and manifest their desires.



Habit, Attention, and Will – Training

Atkinson offers specific rules for cultivating habits of Will. He emphasizes a strong initial push, avoiding exceptions, and frequent repetition. As he states, "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."

The ability to direct attention is crucial in Atkinson's framework. The Will must decide which ideas gain dominance, encouraging positive ideas and starving negative ones. He explains, "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."

To develop Willpower, Atkinson suggests various exercises:

- Performing unpleasant tasks
- Practicing self-denial
- Engaging in seemingly trivial tasks for the sake of strengthening the Will
- Tempering the Will through deliberate assertion in small ways.

He advises, "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..."

By consistently choosing actions that align with one's standards, Atkinson believes an inner "conscience of Will values" develops, guiding future decisions. This internal guide becomes a powerful tool in maintaining one's chosen path and reinforcing the strength of one's Will.



Mental Power, Thought Attraction, and Resistance

Atkinson emphasizes that thoughts are vibrations with the power to attract like vibrations. Maintaining positive, noble thoughts attracts positive experiences and vice versa. He warns, "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."

The concept of thought induction is discussed, highlighting the influence of thought waves and currents. Atkinson suggests that individuals are more likely to be influenced by thoughts and vibrations similar to their own. This underscores the importance of maintaining positive thought patterns to attract beneficial influences and experiences.

Central to Atkinson's philosophy is the idea of the "Positive Centre," an inner place of power where the Real Self resides. He advises, "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 Ego-hood, 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."

Atkinson also introduces the concept of the "Protective Aura," suggesting that one's personal thought-aura, filled with positive thoughts, acts as protection from negative influences. This reinforces the idea that cultivating positive mental states not only attracts beneficial experiences but also serves as a shield against harmful external forces.

Character Analysis and Personal Development

Atkinson's work extends to character analysis and personal development. He 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".

This framework provides a nuanced understanding of character traits, emphasizing the importance of balance and the potential pitfalls of both deficiency and excess in any quality.

Atkinson also touches on the concept of logical judgment, which he bases 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). This logical foundation is crucial for clear thinking and decision-making.

In conclusion, Atkinson's work presents a comprehensive framework for understanding and cultivating personal power, centered 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, offering a path to personal growth and self-realization.