

Review: A New Study of Psychology

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A NEW STUDY OF PSYCHOLOGY.*

I.

MORE frequently than other students of philosophy, both the theoretical and the practical investigators of ethical problems have to take counsel of related departments of philosophical research. Theology, the philosophy of nature, and psychology, are all significant, if not for the first formulation, then at all events for the development of an ethical theory. This fact it was which justified, in my own mind, the somewhat elaborate treatment that, in the first number of this journal, I gave to a recent book on theism. May I not plead a still stronger justification for a study, in this number, of a new book on psychology? The effort to state one's ethical principles in such a fashion as to make them independent of the capricious facts of inner and outer nature, the effort to say, as Kant said, that the moral law needed only the reason to formulate it, is an effort which we have all learned, nowadays, to respect,—and even to make for ourselves,—but also, in the outcome of our work, to modify. Above all, as one must recognize, the ethical theorist must take account of the psychological data that will affect the final statement of his doctrine in its application to mankind. "Eternal and immutable morality" remains merely a pious wish unless one shows, in psychological terms, how the moral law looks after it has entered the mind and heart of man. Professor Höffding's assertion, in the first number of this journal, of the principle of the psychological relativity of ethics, has, from any point of view, an important measure of justification.

If one asks what departments or special problems of psychological research especially and primarily concern the student of ethics, one naturally takes one's start from the doctrine of

* "The Principles of Psychology." By William James, Professor of Psychology in Harvard University. In Two Volumes. New York. Henry Holt & Co., 1890.

the will itself. The theory of motives, and of the relation of will and intellect, here immediately attract one's attention. Yet there can be no fruitful treatment of these topics except on the basis of a general notion of the structure of the conscious subject himself. It would be a long tale to set forth the almost numberless crudities of fundamental psychological theory with which ethical systems have often burdened themselves. In general one can say that the psychological concepts used by many ethical writers, even in recent times, have been too often, like those employed by pedagogical systematizers, essentially antiquated, and that only a comparatively few ethical treatises have taken pains to keep in touch with the advance of psychological discussion. It is here, as elsewhere in research, the case, that those who apply a science too frequently content themselves with the principles that were in vogue in a previous generation, while those who lead in the advance of a line of investigation have little time to think of its applications. In the theory of motives, and in the general doctrine of the will, it is too customary for writers on morals to confine themselves to decidedly simple and outworn fashions of psychological formulation. Their categories may thus indeed seem to serve the immediate ends of their own discussions; but are far too *naïve* and elementary for the present state of research in the science whose results they pretend to borrow. To discuss the problem of free will without knowing anything of the recent researches upon reflex action, upon the "feeling of effort," and upon the "automaton" theory, is to miss the kind of maturity that a wide experience, and a continual revivifying of our ideas by fresh empirical illustrations, is needed to bring. And I, who say this, certainly do not speak as one who hopes for any true and yet merely empirical *solution* of the free-will problem itself. What I do mean, however, is that if speculation must often transcend experience, in its reflective questionings at least, if not in its systematic assertions, it is still true that you have no right to transcend what you fail to appreciate; and that experience is everywhere full of fresh suggestion to the speculative inquirer. The marriage of experience and speculation is not the des-

otic sovereignty of either. Kant taught us already how close to phenomena the loftiest of theories must cling, even at the moment when its speculative reflection has the *a priori* or "transcendental" interest of which Kant himself was so fond. Know the most recent empirical formulation of the facts upon which you mean to reflect, and *then* reflect as profoundly, and, if necessary, as "transcendentally" as you can: that is the lesson of Kant's own method, just as it was the secret both of such success as he won, and of such failure as his old-fashioned empirical psychology necessarily involved. Well, even as the free-will problem must be but crudely discussed, in our time, by any one who is not acquainted with the interesting alternatives that recent empirical psychology suggests in its discussions of effort, of reflex action, and of other similar processes; just so, as I confess, there is something very sad about the crudity and *naïveté* of many ethical writers who nowadays still treat the question of pleasure and pain as motives, without the least sense of the entirely novel light in which modern biological research, and, yet more, modern pathological psychology, have put all the problems involved in this question. When I find a man still asking himself whether or no the good Samaritan could have been moved to his charitable deed by anything besides the "pleasures of sympathy," or the "pains of pity," and whether any man can act solely from the so-called "disinterested" motives; when I find such inquiries pursued in the old-fashioned way, by a simple, introspective analysis of this superficial and momentary consciousness of ours, I feel as if I saw men fighting a tournament in mediæval armor. Has such a simple-minded inquirer ever considered investigations concerning the comparative psychology of the will, investigations of the type that were so prettily summed up, some years ago, in Schneider's fine book, "*Der Thierische Wille*,"—a book as crude, to be sure, in its own way and form of speech as it was deep in its suggestiveness? Has this inquirer, again, never heard of the pathology of the will, and of the beautiful dissections of motive that disease furnishes to the lover of human nature? Have such studies never got him out of the Philistinism that

confines its psychology to the deliberative moments of a few sane and commonplace men in their least passionate decisions? Or has such an investigator, once more, never reflected on the manifold biological relations of what we call our "motives," or our "temperaments,"—relations suggested by the words "heredity" and "evolution"? If such things have indeed occurred to him, then let him not neglect to examine them further, merely because they are but "empirical" matters after all. For what is more "empirical" than the superficial study of the passing consciousness, with which so many writers on the theory of motive have generally contented themselves? Bentham is here not more empirical than Dr. Martineau, when the latter, for instance, assures us in his "Study of Religion" (vol. ii. p. 229) that "No one can sincerely deem himself incapable by nature of controlling his impulses," and proves this personal superiority to motives by nothing better than a frequent appeal to his own immediate inner consciousness. Dogma against dogma, what is there to choose, between the empiricism of a clergyman of admirable training and character, who tells us that he finds himself always capable of rising superior to the play of motives, and the other empiricism of a lover of abstract formulæ, who says that pleasure and pain are our masters, and that every moment proves it? If, then, we are thus to have conflicting experiences presented as arguments, let us at least go the whole length of experience, compare its facts over a wider range, examine its varieties, its caprices, its endless wealth of varied mental symptoms. Then at least, if we have so far decided nothing, we shall at least have got the problem in shape for our speculative reflection. We shall at least have escaped the narrowness of judgment involved in believing whatever we seem to find in our own momentary choices.

Such are a few first suggestions of the kind of aid that a wider study of psychology can give to the student of special ethical problems. It is indeed true, as I myself have tried to show in previous studies of the subject,* that philosophical

* Such as the one contained in my "Religious Aspect of Philosophy" (Boston, 1885).

ethics has one province of its own, where, by reason of its own chosen abstractness, it is free from the dominion of psychology, and where the empirical facts can illustrate, but never either confirm or refute its principles. This is precisely that province of ethics which deals with the moral law as such in its ideal character. But just because of the speculative dignity of ethics in this its own field of abstract research, we must be the more careful lest, in dealing with the empirical illustrations, applications, and approaches that lie all about the central citadel of ethical philosophy, we offer an unworthily superficial analysis of the mental data which concern so noteworthy and genuinely exalted a doctrine. Speculation, divorced from a wide study of experience, is itself in great danger of degenerating into so much the more shallow an empiricism, just as empirical study, when it refuses to countenance speculation, usually falls prey to the most fantastic kind of dogmatic metaphysics. This often-illustrated paradox is receiving fresh illustrations in our own day. As there are learned psychological students who are actually in terror all the while lest somehow they might be guilty of making philosophical assertions, so there are students of philosophy who dread the contamination of the empirical facts of mental science. And as those who fear philosophy are so much the surer to give themselves over sooner or later to vague philosophizing, so those who condemn most fiercely empiricism are the most likely to content themselves with an especially narrow and ill-chosen set of experiences.

Synthesis of speculation and experience means, then, health, maturity of insight, a sense of the alternatives that philosophy has to consider, a sense of the profound principles that experience involves. Hence, for my part, I welcome most cordially from the point of view of the philosophic student books that, like Professor James's treatise before us, offer novel suggestions, treat psychology from a relatively novel outlook, have philosophical bearings, unite keen introspection with a wide range of comparative study, and so help us towards the desired many-sidedness of insight. Shall I weary the ethical student, then, if I describe this treatise at some length?

I I.

Few books more frankly avow their limitations, and especially their philosophical limitations, than does the present work. We usually regard our philosophical doctrines, if we have any, much as young mothers do their first-born. We may even fear to try to express how much we love them, or what faith we have in them. What we are sure is that they are as they ought to be, that we have an incommunicable assurance of something final and complete about their type, and that we pity the cold world which cannot understand this dearness of our treasures. Our author feels no such tenderness regarding his own speculative presuppositions. He has presuppositions indeed. He states them as plainly as he shows us their incompleteness. He does not try, as many nowadays do, to hide the fact that every psychologist who is more than an elementary student or a Philistine must really formulate philosophical hypotheses, whether or no one is man enough to confess the fact and to take the responsibility for it. Professor James is well aware that you can go no distance in studying mental life or its symptoms without at least tentative philosophical reflections, vague or definite, conscientious or cowardly. And Professor James himself is indeed as conscientious about his philosophical presuppositions as he is tentative. The limitation that I mention lies partly in this tentativeness itself and partly in the curiously intermediate position that our author's chief metaphysical hypothesis occupies among the various possible views as to the nature of mind. I shall endeavor in what follows to state this hypothesis, to indicate its value as a provisional means of formulating the facts and problems of psychology, and then to suggest a little of the wealth of the contents of these volumes, bearing in mind, as I do so, especially the needs of the student of ethics, to whose undertakings Professor James offers many especially valuable contributions. It is true that among the limitations of content which are avowed in the preface stands prominent the omission of a special chapter on the moral sentiments. But the book is full of stimulus to the ethical student.

First, then, as to the method and presuppositions of the work as a whole. We have become accustomed, heretofore, to three fairly distinct types of treatment in text-books of psychology, in so far as they were at all frank with their theoretical presuppositions. The first type is the old-fashioned one. For that psychology was the science of the "mind." The mind was an entity, of whose nature we might otherwise know much or little, but of which we at all events knew that it had a certain substantial unity. This entity might or might not be endowed with various faculties or powers. It usually was so endowed. The various types of mental facts as experience presented them were classified with reference to what power of the mind they stood for or resulted from. Their organization was explained by the mind's own unity; their sequence was due to the relations between the mind and other things.

This theory failing to give complete satisfaction as a means of explaining the mechanism of mental facts (as, for instance, in case of the "laws of association") it was supplemented, or often was succeeded, in the treatment of many authors, by the theory of the "ideas," and their "associations." This theory, whose first beginnings date from the seventeenth century, and in particular from Locke, was much elaborated by the association school, was given a classical elaboration of statement by Herbart, and has widely entered into modern psychological literature. Its methods were originally conceived after the analogy furnished by the science of mechanics. The simple ideas of the mind were defined in much the same way as the particles in mechanics. They had mutual attractions and repulsions, which in the case of the psychology of Herbart gave rise to extremely complicated hypothetical processes, most of which went on below the level of consciousness. The resultants of the attractions and repulsions of the elementary ideas were perceived in the sequence of mental states as they appeared in consciousness. Or again, as in the somewhat simpler psychology of the English Association schools, where the effort to give a complete mechanics of the attractions and repulsions of ideas was seldom if ever elabo-

rated, the attempt was made to explain by certain simple laws of association not only the occurrence of ideas in memory, but the formation of higher conscious processes, such as those of will, belief, and even reasoning. In case of both the Herbartian and the Association schools, the fundamental hypothesis of psychology was thus the existence of simple ideas and their relative permanence in nature, even when they were out of consciousness.

A third method of psychological science has been developed only in recent years. Abandoning the hope of a sufficient analysis of mental states or powers by means of mere introspection, the modern experimental or neurological school has frequently endeavored to confine its investigations to the facts and laws of the nervous system, with only such use of introspection as was found absolutely indispensable, and with only such analysis of mental life as was required for the purposes of experimental investigation. It has of course been very common to combine this method with more or less analysis of the sort practised by the Association school; and in recent literature we have even one curious case of a writer who has set side by side in the same book an old-fashioned analysis of the mind into its faculties after the taste of the Scottish school, and a fragmentary collection of experimental observations drawn from the literature of modern physiological psychology.

One great merit of Professor James's book consists in the fact that it does not adopt primarily any one of these three familiar points of view. Professor James has a great deal to say of nervous processes; and he does not neglect the unity of consciousness, and still he has found a way of treating psychological doctrine so novel and yet so natural that one can only be surprised at the relative novelty of the undertaking itself, when one observes how obvious the point of view is when once it has been assumed. This point of view one may best describe by calling it the naturalist's point of view of psychology. Instead of analyzing the mental states into ultimate atomic ideas after the fashion of the physicist, instead of appealing to the conception of the entity called the

mind, after the fashion of traditional metaphysical psychology, Professor James adopts as his unit in mental analysis a conception suggested by the analogy of that unit which we are accustomed to call the simple Function in the other biological sciences. In analyzing physiological processes, it is customary not to seek in the ultimate molecular constitution of tissues, nor in the elementary mechanical and physical and chemical processes that go on in these tissues, for the ultimates of the biologist's analysis. We should like to get at these molecular processes if we could, but we cannot. On the contrary, the naturalist is provisionally content when he has analyzed the complex process far enough to discover the relatively simple functions that enter into it; these and their relations he describes. What constitutes a simple function is of course incapable of exact definition. The conception is once for all a teleological notion. The simple function is as much of the process as can be understood alone, and as has significance in itself. Now in Professor James's account of mental life, the units of his mental processes are such functional units. What he calls very frequently the passing moment, with its content and its form, with what is directly present to it, and with the "fringe" or conscious tendency with which this content is always or at least frequently surrounded: this is Professor James's mental unit. Of such moments the mental life consists. Our author is never weary of pointing out the vanity of so analyzing this moment into ultimate constituents as to forget that its unity is a fact of experience, and not a product of any association of ideas that could have a permanent existence outside of it. In this fashion the facts of mind come to possess for Professor James at once the kind of unity which the mind theory was accustomed to demand as a postulate of psychology, and the direct empirical reality which the students of the association ideas used to pretend to be seeking, although their theory was often very far from being merely empirical. One might thus define Professor James's unit as so much of the mental process as may be supposed to run parallel to a relatively simple nervous function in the cortex of the living brain, in so far as this

cortex functions with a certain unity. The value of this point of view for purposes of descriptive psychology seems to us very great. The curse of the psychology of the Association school has frequently been over-analysis. Of this the now somewhat famous mind-stuff hypothesis has shown an important but unsatisfactory consequence. Mental life has been analyzed until nothing but mind-dust remains, and the misfortune has been that this mind-dust was as mythical, or at any rate as hypothetical in its character, as ever the unitary mind of the older hypotheses had been. In consciousness, at any rate, absolutely simple ideas do not occur. The ideal unity of the Associationist school had to be sought below the level of consciousness. It was in vain, for example, that one called a musical melody an association of tone ideas. The tones themselves, even when there were no chords, were not simple ideas. Physical analysis showed that their causes were complex. Psychological hypothesis, seeking complexity in the mental elements wherever there seemed to be complexity in the physical causes, was forced to imagine atomic elements of the simplest ideas of tone, elements that in the last analysis might correspond to the single pulsations of the waves of sound as they were transformed into nerve vibrations. Perhaps even something simpler might need to be sought for. But for Professor James all this hypothetical analysis of mental life into unconscious elements, of which it might be constituted, in case they existed and were capable of combining to form it, has small interest. The unconscious in every form, and above all the unconscious mind atom, he steadfastly rejects. In the other direction, however, his use of the simple "passing moment" as his unit is such as to enable him, with greater skill indeed than philosophical finality, to avoid those questions concerning the unity of the mind as a whole, and the inter-relation of the moments in one Self, which have taken up so much time in the traditional psychology whose basis was the entity called mind.

No better brief account of the general point of view thus suggested can be given than the following passages furnish. Professor James says in his preface, page 5 :

“I have kept close to the point of view of natural science throughout the book. Every natural science assumes certain data uncritically, and declines to challenge the elements between which its own ‘laws’ obtain, and from which its own deductions are carried on. Psychology, the science of finite, individual minds, assumes as its data, (1) thoughts and feelings, and (2) a physical world in time and space with which they coexist, and which (3) they know. Of course these data themselves are discussable, but the discussion of them (as of other elements) is called metaphysics, and falls outside the province of this book.”

And, again, at the close of his chapter on “The Consciousness of Self,” another passage, which may be understood very fairly by itself, is equally expressive :

“To sum up, now, this long chapter. The consciousness of self involves a stream of thought, each part of which as ‘I’ can (1) remember those which went before, and know the things they knew ; and (2) emphasize and care paramouly for certain ones among them as ‘me,’ and appropriate to these the rest. The nucleus of the ‘me’ is always the bodily existence felt to be present at the time. Whatever remembered past feelings resemble this present feeling are deemed to belong to the same ‘me’ with it. Whatever other things are deemed to be associated with this feeling are deemed to form part of that ‘me’s’ experience ; and of them certain ones (which fluctuate more or less) are reckoned to be themselves constituents of the ‘me’ in a larger sense,—such are the clothes, the material possessions, the friends, the honor and esteem which the person receives, or may receive. This ‘me’ is an empirical aggregate of things objectively known. The ‘I’ which knows them cannot itself be an aggregate, neither for psychological purposes need it be considered to be an unchanging metaphysical entity like the soul, or a principle like the pure ego, viewed as ‘out of time.’ It is a thought, at each moment different from that of the last moment, but appropriative of the latter, together with all that the latter called its own. All the experimental facts find their place in this description, unencumbered with any hypothesis save that of the existence of passing thoughts or states of mind. The same brain may subserve many conscious selves, either alternate or coexisting ; but by what modifications in its action, or whether ultra-cerebral conditions may intervene, are questions which cannot now be answered.

“If any one urge that I assign no *reason* why the successive passing thoughts should inherit each other’s possessions, or why they and the brain-states should be functions (in the mathematical sense) of each other, I reply that the reason, if there be any, must lie where all real reasons lie, in the total sense or meaning of the world. If there be such a meaning, or any approach to it (as we are bound to trust there is), it alone can make clear to us why such finite human streams of thought are called into existence in such functional dependence upon brains. This is as much as to say that the special natural science of *psychology* must stop with the mere functional formula. *If the passing thought be the directly verifiable existent, which no school has hitherto doubted it to be, then that thought is itself the thinker*, and psychology need not look beyond. The only pathway that I can discover for bringing in a more transcendental thinker would be to

deny that we have any direct knowledge of the thought as such. The latter's existence would then be reduced to a postulate, an assertion that there *must* be a *knower* correlative to all this *known*; and the problem *who that knower is* would have become a metaphysical problem. With the question once stated in these terms, the spiritualist and transcendentalist solutions must be considered as *prima facie* evidence on a par with our own psychological one, and discussed impartially. But that carries us beyond the psychological or naturalistic point of view."

The passage is long, and suggests many more considerations than I have time to develop. But I have desired to give in a typical instance the author's method of work. This life of passing thoughts into which consciousness is analyzed, needs, according to Professor James, only the one fundamental hypothesis *that the moments as they pass really know one another, that the present is actually acquainted with the past*, in order to give as a resultant of the whole life such unity as we need for purposes of psychological science. As to this relation of knowledge itself, whereby the various moments are united in one life, it will be seen that Professor James frankly regards it as ultimate for the psychologist. Frankly, moreover, he admits the possibility of a very different philosophical interpretation of this relation of knowledge from that which he himself finds it convenient to make use of. As to the significance which I have just attributed to this point of view, in its relation to the task of descriptive psychology, the whole book is a sufficient proof of the value of Professor James's unit as a standard of measurement, as it were, in psychological description. The live moment, the passing thought, once its cognitive power assumed, becomes, in Professor James's hands, an extremely plastic and at the same time an empirically applicable conception. In terms of it the stream of consciousness itself, the growth of self-consciousness, the phenomena of discrimination (upon which latter Professor James lays great stress), the facts of the time-consciousness, and numerous other of the problems of descriptive psychology, receive a treatment that to my mind bears everywhere the marks of vitality, and of the naturalist's loving attention to real processes in live things. To many, indeed, in these days, especially among the students of experimental psychology,

the descriptive side of the doctrine has become highly unsatisfactory. I have often felt myself, although I am no experimenter, that were it not for the significant suggestions of modern pathological psychology, the attention of the student would be sure to be drawn constantly more and more away from the descriptive examination of the inner life to the mere observation of its external symptoms. I confess to finding my interest in a large number of purely introspective questions aroused afresh by Professor James's keen scrutiny and vigorous treatment, and I can only attribute his success in great measure to the essential significance of this relatively novel point of view which I have been thus far expounding.

But I spoke at the outset of the philosophical limitations which Professor James so frankly avows. One sees now where they lie. These multitudes of passing moments are indeed the ultimates for the naturalist. But even for him they must possess, as we have seen, that mysterious cognitive function which must needs become the starting-point of a new philosophical inquiry. The cognitive function itself has been an old topic of interest for the present writer, who has ventured to publish more than one discussion of it, and who still finds unshaken by any of Professor James's analyses, his own conviction that these little selves, these homunculi of Professor James's empirical descriptions, can find no logical resting-place short of that conception of the logical unity of self-consciousness, which Professor James himself finds of so little service in psychology. As a fact, meanwhile, the universal self of post-Kantian idealism is indeed no psychological conception, and Professor James doubtless does well to leave it out of account in his descriptive undertaking. I mention my own view here only to suggest that I do not accept the naturalist's attitude as final, any more than, as I conceive, Professor James himself does. Here, as everywhere in his book, there is a charming willingness manifest, to abandon all provisional assumptions whenever they shall prove no longer serviceable, a willingness that, as I said, is as rare in philosophy as it is advisable.

I have spoken above of the curiously intermediate posi-

tion that our author's chief metaphysical hypothesis occupies among the various possible views as to the nature of mind. It is now evident wherein this intermediate character consists. The metaphysical hypothesis referred to is the one expressed in the just-quoted words of Professor James, "If the passing thought be the verifiable existence, then that thought is itself the thinker, and psychology need not look beyond." Intermediate, as I say, this hypothesis between the mind theory on the one hand, with which it shares the notion of the unity of the thinker, even although this thinker is but momentary, and the hypothesis of the atomic idea, on the other hand, with which it shares the tendency to accept and to describe in relatively simple terms the empirical facts of the passing consciousness. An interestingly intermediate position this hypothesis also holds with respect to the question of the relation of the nervous system to the mind. Instead of saying, on the one hand, that the mental, as the manifestation of a spiritual entity, is something whose unity cannot be expressed with any sort of relation to the nervous facts, this doctrine, dealing only with the passing moment, in each case, is able very closely to relate the content of the moment with the type of nervous function then going on. On the other hand, there is no effort on Professor James's part to make the parallelism between the mental and physical so close as to seek after the fashion of the mind-stuff theory for the mental atoms that correspond to the ultimate constituents of the physical process. Once more, it is the unity of the function which on both sides is determinant for Professor James.

Of the strictly physiological portions of our author's book, one who, like myself, is relatively a layman can for the first only say that they are full of learning and suggestiveness. Of the relations between some of these physiological discussions and the problems that interest the ethical student I shall have a word to say farther on.

III.

The contents of the two large volumes, whose method has now been suggested, may next be summarized. An opening chapter speaks in general of the close relation between mental process and cerebral conditions, and outlines the scope of psychology. Chapters ii., iii., and iv. treat of questions of nervous physiology, discussing first the "Functions of the Brain," in the light of an independent analysis of the recent literature, then sketching certain "general conditions of brain-activity, and passing, under the head of "Habit," to a treatment of the phenomena of the "plasticity of neural matter" and its consequences, as shown in the formation of nervous habits. Here it is (on pp. 122-127) that the author makes his first excursion into the realm of practical application, under the heading "Ethical Implications of the Law of Habit." These implications are indeed treated in a strictly practical fashion, and possess, as they are stated, novelty of form rather than of matter. The most noteworthy bit of advice is one on p. 124, founded on the implications of the physiological theory of nervous habits,—“Seize the very first possible opportunity to act on every resolution you make. . . . It is not in the moment of their forming but in the moment of their producing *motor effects* that resolves and aspirations communicate the new 'set' to the brain” Thus, as Professor James would illustrate (p. 127), “The physiological study of mental conditions is the most powerful ally of hortatory ethics.”

Chapters v. and vi., of the first volume, discuss two allied problems of wide theoretical interest,—“The Automaton Theory” and the “Mind-stuff Theory.” To the latter Professor James opposes the presuppositions of his naturalist's point of view. “Mind-stuff” is an absurdity, because every moment of consciousness has its unity as well as its ingredients. The “Automaton Theory,” for the rest, is an effort to express the relations of mind and brain by making them merely parallel; and by setting consciousness over against the mental facts as their ineffective accompaniment.

The only proof, however, that can be given for this theory is a metaphysical one, founded on *a priori* views of the nature of causation. The naturalist himself rejects such dogmatism about what sort of causation is possible. For him you first of all take the facts of life as they come, and you take them without endeavoring to give them more than a tentative philosophical formulation. You analyze them indeed, but your theories are provisional. "The particulars of the distribution of consciousness, so far as we know them, point to its being efficacious" (p. 138). The higher a brain, the more unstable its reactions would be likely to be, unless they were somehow directed. "A high brain may do many things, and may do each of them at a very slight hint. But its hair-trigger organization makes it a happy-go-lucky, hit or miss affair. . . . The performances of a high brain are like dice thrown forever on a table. . . . All this is said of the brain as a physical machine pure and simple." But admit that consciousness is efficacious, and the problem is much simplified. In short, it is better to be straightforward and so far relatively uncritical with our naturalist's point of view. We may hereby gain philosophically in the end.

The sense in which consciousness is efficacious for Professor James is a point, however, that of course has especial interest for the ethical student. In fact, our author's point of view with regard to this matter is, in view of the triteness of the subject, a relatively novel one. Its nature cannot be made clear without some further reference to the very interesting analysis of the nature of consciousness, which appears in chapters viii., ix., x. We may defer the discussion of the matter until the completion of our general sketch of the contents of the work. Attention, Conception, Discrimination, and Comparison are discussed in chapters xi. to xiii. Chapter xiv. on Association, and chapters xv. and xvi. on Time and Memory, complete volume first. Volume second opens with a series of discussions on the traditional topics which are commonly so prominent in psychological text-books: Sensation and Imagination, and the Perception of Things. Chapter xx., on the Perception of Space, contains a very lengthy state-

ment of a theory which Professor James has previously expounded in *Mind*. The ethical student finds no matters that especially concern his own undertakings until he reaches chapter xxi., on the Perception of Realities. Under this head Professor James discusses the Psychology of Belief, whose voluntary and essentially ethical character he vigorously defends and copiously illustrates. Chapters xxii. and xxiii., on Reasoning and on the Production of Movement, are once more chiefly theoretical. On the other hand, chapters xxiv. to xxvi. will throughout interest the student of ethics. The author's interesting analysis, in chapter xxiv., of Instinct in Man, his equally interesting defence, on page 403, of the thesis that man has "more instincts than any other mammal," the now somewhat noted and decidedly original account of the Emotions, in chapter xxv., whose basis is an essay published, in 1884, in *Mind*; and, finally, the remarkable analysis of the Will itself, in chapter xxvi., form, when taken together, the core of the most significant ethical doctrine suggested in the work. Chapter xxvii. is devoted to the phenomena of Hypnotism. Chapter xxviii. makes an excursus into the Theory of Knowledge, to discuss necessary truths and the effects of experience.

The contents of our work thus suggested in general, we may return to matters which chiefly concern the ethical student. It will be seen that Professor James's general analysis of consciousness, as we have already suggested its nature, is of considerable importance for the formulation of the problems of applied ethics. In the first place, no one can fail to notice the connection of the conventional discussions of the theory of motive in ethical treatises, with one or the other of those theoretical views concerning the nature of mind, both of which, as we have seen, are inconsistent with the naturalist's point of view in psychology, as we have found Professor James expounding it. With considerable and unwise *naïveté* the theory of motive has usually regarded the mind as either a spiritual entity, upon which the motives acted, much as forces act in disturbing the equilibrium or in directing the motion of a body in space, or else has treated the mind as a bundle of

ideas, and the motives as certain individual ideas among the rest, linked to their fellows according to the laws of association. The poverty as well as the elementary character of these categories is obvious. The problem of free will, for instance, from the point of view of the first way of stating the theory of motive, becomes the largely metaphorical question whether the mind is able in any wise to direct its own path in the midst of the opposing forces that solicit it to turn this way or that, or where it is after all bound to follow the mechanical "resultant" of all the forces. On the other hand, the theory of motive, from the point of view of the Association school, is concerned with the similarly metaphorical and question of the fashion in which the somewhat mythical or, at any rate, hypothetical "ideas" attract and repel one another when we are determined to action of any sort. From the point of view of Professor James's analysis the problem is much more subtle, and at the same time more empirical, because once for all the field of the consciousness of the moment is from his point of view so complex a thing. Here is the passing thought of Professor James's analysis, at once a unity and a manifold of impressions. It has a "fringe" or "tendency," it is linked with the past and future by a mysterious "cognitive" tie, it stands in a most intimate relation to the whole condition of the brain cortex at the moment; in short, it suggests by the wealth of its relations a vast number of possible alternatives, both as to its causation and as to its significance. If these alternatives were mere consequences of an arbitrarily invented theory, they would be indeed unwelcome complications of problems which, as every student knows, are already complex enough. But in view of the fact that, as has been said, both introspective and comparative examination of the mental processes and of their organic relations seem to justify Professor James's description as at all events a much better provisional account of the facts of mental experience than the opposing theories have been, all this complication of the facts is instructive rather than disheartening, and aids to give the problems of motive and will a very valuable formulation. The nature of this formulation can best be made clear

by a few words concerning our author's treatment of "Reflex Action," and of its relations to the mental process.

That consciousness runs parallel in some fashion or other to the nervous "reflexes" is now a familiar commonplace of the text-book. Adherents of older psychological theories are accustomed nowadays to admit this parallelism even where they can make nothing of it. Considerable difference exists indeed as to the use of the term reflex action, and many writers are accustomed to insist upon limiting the application of the term itself to those nervous adjustments which are not attended with consciousness. But whatever may be said about the convenient term, there can be but little question on the whole as to the thing. If reflex action be defined as equivalent to nervous adjustment in general,—that is, as including all those processes whereby an organism, in Spencer's phrase, "adjusts inner to outer relations,"—then there can be no question that even the highest conscious processes accompany such nervous adjustments. Without continual stimulation from without, be that stimulation slight or great in amount, there is little or no normal cortex activity discoverable, while, on the other hand, every stimulation, as Professor James frequently and skilfully illustrates, produces more or less obviously its' appropriate adjustment. Accompanying such adjustment runs the train of conscious activity itself. In what way now, in the case of voluntary activity, or of those mental states which tend towards activity (*e.g.*, the emotions), is the nervous related to the conscious process? In the interpretation which shall answer this question there are even to-day the widest possible differences among psychologists. Those who make use of the traditional theory of the mind as an entity would be disposed to say that a volition, whatever its other nervous concomitants may be, *precedes* the initiation of the nervous process which results in the carrying out of the volition, and is therefore, relatively speaking, a foreign and independent fact, of whose nature you can give an account only in mental terms. Others, who have used rather the categories of the Association school, have regarded the voluntary impulse as corresponding to, or else as the beginning of, the motor

outflow of the nervous discharge itself. Such writers have insisted on the existence of what they have called a "feeling of effort or of innervation." Some writers, like Wundt, have essayed a sort of synthesis of this notion with the former one, and have found in the conscious act of initiating a motion something which Wundt defines as the "apperception" of the motor act in question. This "apperception" has been something intermediate between the free act of the old-fashioned "ego" and the "ideas" of the Associationists. It has been conceived as something capable of determining in another than a mechanical sense the direction of the nervous discharge, and as being in its nature at least partially parallel to the outgrowing nervous current itself. In short, the alternatives suggested by the facts of experience have even thus far been regarded as decidedly numerous. It is Professor James's merit to have defined in this region yet one more alternative. At first sight this alternative seems indeed, as described at the outset of our author's account, to be one that threatens to do away with the efficacy of consciousness altogether. The "feeling of effort," says Professor James, "is, on the whole, rather a *result* of the motor activity as expressed in the consequent organic condition than a feeling that accompanies the nervous outflow itself. So far Professor James is indeed at one with a considerable number of recent writers. The assumption of a distinct feeling of innervation seems to him unnecessary. There is no introspective evidence of the feeling of innervation. And as to the act of volition itself, Professor James says, on page 501, of vol. ii., that "an anticipatory image of the sensorial consequences of a movement, plus (on certain occasions) the fiat that these consequences shall become actual, is the only psychic state which introspection lets us discern as the forerunner of our voluntary acts." On the whole, then, as Professor James has it (on page 519), the "idea of the end tends more and more to make itself all-sufficient." A vast number of acts come to appear in this way as what our author calls "ideomotor acts." In recognizing these Professor James is again once more in agreement with a considerable number of modern writers. Every rep-

resentation of a movement involves more or less the movement itself. As the present volume says (page 527), "try to feel as if you were crooking your finger while keeping it straight. In a minute it will fairly tingle with the imaginary change of position." In case of "deliberate action" there is the presence in mind of several different and antagonistic ideas of action, no one of which is yet carried out, just because they all are antagonistic. After this fashion we have both in the case of the single volition and also in case of the deliberate action nothing so far but *the conscious process corresponding to the faint nervous excitation which would itself result from the carrying out of the act in question*, and which, in so far as no nervous process antagonizes, passes over immediately into the completed act itself. Thus far, indeed, there is no novel alternative, only a denial of the necessity of any consciousness corresponding to the feeling of innervation. In the complex case of deliberation and hesitation the consciousness consists of a number of ideas of antagonistic ends, or results of action; and this consciousness corresponds to many simple nervous processes, each one of which is a faint repetition of previous nervous experiences of the results of a completed motor process. Where then, in all this, is there so far room for any conscious process which could be regarded as interfering dynamically with the nervous mechanism? Previous brain conditions and present stimulation result in the arousing of the ideomotor nervous processes. The consciousness of the single act, or of the deliberate hesitation between two acts, accompanies and so far reflects this simple or complex nervous condition. If one now takes into account that, in Professor James's interesting theory of the emotions, he identifies them also, even the most stirring and significant, with masses of sensation that stand for diffuse nervous excitations, aroused in general in a reflex way, one sees the road apparently clear for a theory of the connection between the nervous and the mental process, which would render the latter entirely inefficacious. As to the emotions themselves, they are, as Professor James skillfully argues, connected, just in proportion to their apparent vigor and passionateness, with diffuse physical excitation,

superficial or visceral, or both. There is no reason for supposing that their conscious content is otherwise than correspondent to this physical excitation itself, or that the excitation needs any but a reflex explanation. In a given environment the complicated organism responds by this wave of excitement, which may itself be either a case of skilful adjustment, or an accident of maladjustment, and which may be due either to normal or to abnormal organic conditions. Consciousness *runs parallel to this excitement*, in so far as the excitement is the source of disturbances of a sensory character. Where then is the room for any dynamic interference of conscience? The mental act of will which was to initiate bodily acts becomes so far merely an idea of the end which might result if a given remembered act were carried out. The will accompanies an ideomotor process. Even in deliberation there is thus far nothing essentially new. Even in passion, in longing, in the most active of emotions, consciousness is so far but the accompaniment of a reflex. But just here appears a new consideration, and one very characteristic of our author's whole point of view.

Throughout his whole discussion, namely, the *content* of consciousness, however complicated it may be, however significant it may appear, is described with immediate reference to its nervous concomitants. The greatest ingenuity is shown in taking advantage of every indication which experience suggests, in order to illustrate the intimacy and the minuteness of the connection. What distinguishes consciousness, however, from a mere accompaniment of the reflex processes is with Professor James something rather about the *form* of the consciousness, or about the peculiar "tendency" that after all can still be found in the moment, apart from its content. So much, however, does Professor James's method resist any abstract statement that it is best once for all to mention the point where the true activity of consciousness appears in his account. "We reach," says he, "the heart of our inquiry into volition when we ask by what process it is that the thought of any given object comes to prevail stably in the mind" (page 561). The idea, as we have seen, of an end is

already the accompaniment of the initiation of the act which tends towards that end. *Motives*, so-called, are *ideas of ends* which, owing to their conflict, are unable to pass over into acts so long as they remain mere motives. The experience of deciding a conflict of motives is, then, *the experience of the triumph of one idea of the end over other ideas*. The act of voluntary decision is experienced as an *act of conscious attention to an idea*, and nothing else. Volition is primarily a relation, says Professor James, "not between ourself and extra mental matter, but between ourself and our own states of mind. It is unqualifiedly true that if any thoughts *do* fill the mind unqualifiedly such filling is consent." If then the problem of volition is the problem of attention to an idea, the question of the activity of consciousness as affecting motor processes becomes the question *whether attention is in every case and in every shading a mere accompaniment of the reflexes of adjustment themselves*. If in consciousness an idea once present and of itself already tending to rise or to fall in clearness can be as it were reinforced or held by an inner deed of choice, then there will be in consciousness something more than what is merely parallel to brain process. It is indeed impossible to determine by direct psychological experience whether such a genuine free will, such a genuine indeterminism of attention does exist. The decision as to such a reality as this is for Professor James to be made solely upon ethical grounds. He says, page 572, "My own belief is that the question of free will is insolvable on strictly psychologic grounds. After a certain amount of effort of attention has been given to an idea, it is manifestly impossible to tell whether either more or less of it *might* have been given or not. To tell that, we should have to ascend to the antecedents of the effort, and defining them with mathematical exactitude, prove, by laws of which we have not at present even an inkling, that the only amount of sequent effort which could *possibly* comport with them was the precise amount which actually came. Measurements, whether of psychic or of neural quantities, and deductive reasonings such as this method of proof implies, will surely be forever beyond human

reach. No serious psychologist or physiologist will venture even to suggest a notion of how they might be practically made. We are thrown back, therefore, upon the crude evidences of introspection on the one hand, with all its liabilities to deception, and, on the other hand, upon *a priori* postulates and probabilities. He who loves to balance nice doubts need be in no hurry to decide the point. . . . Taking the risk of error on our head, we must project upon one of the alternative views the attribute of reality for us; we must so fill our mind with the idea of it that it becomes our settled creed. The present writer does this for the alternative of freedom, but since the grounds of his opinion are ethical rather than psychological, he prefers to exclude them from the present book."

I have summarized at some length, and still with an unfortunately abstract fashion of condensed statement, the author's discussion of volition, because I think it very valuable to have the new alternative here suggested brought to the attention of ethical students. This notion that there is, after all, but *one* act that can possibly be an act of free will, and this an *act of attention* to an idea already presented to consciousness, is closely related to a number of views that have already been expounded in the course of modern ethical discussion. Yet I know of no other psychological writer who has made so much of this alternative from the point of view of his own doctrine, or who has brought it into so close a relation to the physiological data, as they are at present before us. I may as well refrain here from any philosophical criticism of Professor James's alternative, partly because my office is here only that of a reporter, not that of one who presents his own views; partly, too, because I mean to print ere long, in another place, my own philosophical notions as to the problem of the will. But I wish very heartily that the readers of this report may be induced to study for themselves our author's vigorous and suggestive chapters. As for the notion itself, that the only activity of consciousness is the purely intellectual activity of confirming or withdrawing attention to an idea already suggested, that the only "fiat" possible is the fiat,—“Let this idea which is now mine remain mine (or cease to be mine),”—no-

body who knows the literature of ethics or of religion can fail to see how widespread has been, not indeed the philosophical formulation, but the practical use of this notion in the past. The "sin against the Holy Ghost" was mainly a sin of attention. One knew the light, which had divinely shone in the darkness, and one chose thereupon to comprehend it not.

This topic leads us back to the question of pleasure and pain as motives. And here Professor James shows us the value of the naturalist's point of view, which studies live creatures as if they were alive, and is willing to examine the passing moment as the wealthy thing that it is, without looking for vague and purely schematic abstract statements whose universality shall be as evident as their inadequacy. The importance of real pleasures and pains as motives, especially in the mature consciousness, is unquestionable; but how can the naturalist observe the reflexes of live creatures in all the enormous complexity of their nervous life, and still suppose that our half-conscious gestures as we talk, or the passing shades of expression on our countenances, are the results of the "pleasure" that they give us or of the "pain" that they reduce? How, again, studying the inner life itself, can one call the restless, "headlong rush of consciousness" (to quote a phrase of our author's), whereby we hasten from moment to moment of life, an expression of the "desire for pleasure?" How, again, are "insistent ideas," which are found in all gradations from the normal to the most abnormal forms, cases of the "search for pleasure?" A "fixed idea" may be a painful one, and usually is so. Yet it persists, and *just because it is painful*. Or again, when the tongue wears itself sore on the point of a broken tooth in a sort of longing to make out what that is which is thus intruding into the mouth; when a man at the edge of a precipice painfully desires to leap down, and shudders, and desires afresh; or, finally, when a tune that we hate "runs in our heads,"—are these cases of a flight from pain, or a pursuit of pleasure? Upon facts similar to these Professor James founds his interesting criticism of pleasure and pain as motives. I have already pointed out how full of suggestion such considerations are. Ethical writers who have

wished to vindicate "disinterestedness," or to show how the still small voice of duty may triumph over the loudest calls of pleasure and pain, have begun too high up in the scale of psychological analysis their conflict with Bentham and the Hedonists. The fact is that the ordinary theory of motives in hedonistic discussions of the ethical problem is founded upon psychological analysis such as no naturalist ought for a moment to regard as adequate to the reflexes of living organisms. The voluntary activities begin, as Professor James points out, by impulsion from behind, not by attraction as before. The "idea-motor" acts, even on a very high plane, express the presence of the "idea of an end," and this end may itself, as in case of the idea of jumping over the precipice, be very painful. Yet does it tend to carry itself out. On the highest plane, when we "balance motives," and decide by a "fiat," the triumphant idea may be a very pale one or a comparatively painful one. It wins then because we attend to it, and whether or no attention is free, certain it is that attention often rather *determines pleasure and pain themselves*, than is determined by them.

IV.

A number of tentative suggestions have now been set down as they come to us from Professor James's book. Throughout, as will be seen, the value of his very wealthy volumes lies rather in their manifold study of facts, in their wide range, in their novelty of suggestion, than in their systematic finish. The book will probably be accused of formlessness. The accusation is one that the author may receive with equanimity. Psychology is at present an essentially tentative, growing, suggestive, and formless doctrine. Whoso gives his book finished shape is sure, nowadays, to contribute fallacious generalizations to his science, instead of empirically well-founded summaries. For some years past, the wiser teachers of psychology have been accustomed to send their pupils to the monographs rather than to the text-books for aid in fruitful private study. What was this custom but a confession that the day for the "system of psychology" is past. Systems of

philosophy we shall always have, and for a good reason. The text-book of psychology must be wisely tentative, suggestive, unfinished. That is what is true of Professor James's book. The naturalist does not live amidst sharply-defined forms, but among moving and plastic live creatures. What he can offer us is verity of description, keenness of analysis, heartiness of appreciation, philosophical suggestiveness of outlook. And Professor James, with his robust temperament, so fearlessly expressed in his fine and manly style, with its brilliancy, its oddities, and its vigor, has offered us just this. His "passing moments," which can "know" and which can freely "attend," which are "self-related," and which have "unity," and which are still so intimately bound to the "neural process," have just the paradoxical and hypothetical character which requires one, in one's philosophy, to go beyond them, and to declare them but illusory expressions in phenomenal form of an infinitely deeper truth, while they have meanwhile the vitality and the plasticity which will make them long valuable to the student of empirical psychology, and vastly significant to the inquirer in ethics.

JOSIAH ROYCE.

THE INNER LIFE IN RELATION TO MORALITY:
A STUDY IN THE ELEMENTS OF RELIGION.*

IF we had to classify human feelings and emotions, we might do so in respect to the narrowness or the extent of the objects to which they attach. They would thus fall into a series of concentric circles, of which the body and its wants would be the centre. Beyond the feelings of pleasure and pain in connection with it would be the feelings of sympathy and affection which rise in the presence of a world of beings like ourselves. Beyond that again would be the feelings which have for their object the more general aspects of the world at large, such as the æsthetic emotions. Finally, beyond all these would be the emotions, which are proper to the

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