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Title: The Mind and Its Education

Author: George Herbert Betts

Release Date: December 29, 2006 [eBook #20220]

Language: English

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THE MIND AND ITS EDUCATION

by

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Revised and Enlarged Edition

New York
D. Appleton And Company
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Printed in the United States of America

PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION

Authors, no doubt, are always gratified when their works find favorable acceptance. The writer of this text has been doubly gratified, however, at the cordial reception and widespread use accorded to the present volume. This feeling does not arise from any narrow personal pride or selfish interest, but rather from the fact that the warm approval of the educational public has proved an important point; namely, that the fundamental truths of psychology, when put simply and concretely, can be made of interest and value to students of all ages from high school juniors up, and to the general public as well. More encouraging still, it has been demonstrated that the teachings of psychology can become immediately helpful, not only in study or teaching, but also in business or profession, in the control and guidance of the personal life, and in the problems met in the routine of the day's work or its play.

In effecting the present revision, the salient features of the original edition have been kept. The truths presented are the most fundamental and important in the field of psychology. Disputed theories and unsettled opinions are excluded. The subject matter is made concrete and practical by the use of many illustrations and through application to real problems. The style has been kept easy and familiar to facilitate the reading. In short, there has been, while seeking to improve the volume, a conscious purpose to omit none of the characteristics which secured acceptance for the former edition.

On the other hand, certain changes and additions have been made which, it is believed, will add to the strength of the work. First of all, the later psychological studies and investigations have been drawn upon to insure that the matter shall at all points be abreast of the times in scientific accuracy. Because of the wide use of the text in the training of teachers, a more specific educational application to schoolroom problems has been made in various chapters. Exercises for the guidance of observation work and personal introspection are freely used. The chapter on Sensation and Perception has been separated into two chapters, and each subject given more extensive treatment. A new chapter has been added on Association. The various chapters have been subdivided into numbered sections, and cut-in paragraph topics have been used to facilitate the study and teaching of the text. Minor changes and additions occur throughout the volume, thus adding some forty pages to the number in the original edition.

Many of the modifications made in the revision are due to valuable suggestions and kindly criticisms received from many teachers of the text in various types of schools. To all who have thus helped so generously by freely giving the author the fruits of their judgment and experience he gladly renders grateful thanks.

CORNELL COLLEGE,

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THE MIND AND ITS EDUCATION

CHAPTER I

THE MIND, OR CONSCIOUSNESS

We are to study the mind and its education; but how? It is easy to understand how we may investigate the great world of material things about us; for we can see it, touch it, weigh it, or measure it. But how are we to discover the nature of the mind, or come to know the processes by which consciousness works? For mind is intangible; we cannot see it, feel it, taste it, or handle it. Mind belongs not to the realm of matter which is known to the senses, but to the realm of _spirit_, which the senses can never grasp. And yet the mind can be known and studied as truly and as scientifically as can the world of matter. Let us first of all see how this can be done.

1. HOW MIND IS TO BE KNOWN

THE PERSONAL CHARACTER OF CONSCIOUSNESS.--Mind can be observed and known. But each one can know directly only his own mind, and not another's. You and I may look into each other's face and there guess the meaning that lies back of the smile or frown or flash of the eye, and so read something of the mind's activity. But neither directly meets the other's mind. I may learn to recognize your features, know your voice, respond to the clasp of your hand; but the mind, the consciousness, which does your thinking and feels your joys and sorrows, I can never know completely. Indeed I can never know your mind at all except through your bodily acts and expressions. Nor is there any way in which you can reveal your mind, your spiritual self, to me except through these means.

It follows therefore that only _you_ can ever know _you_ and only _I_ can ever know _I_ in any first-hand and immediate way. Between your consciousness and mine there exists a wide gap that cannot be bridged. Each of us lives apart. We are like ships that pass and hail each other in passing but do not touch. We may work together, live together, come to love or hate each other, and yet our inmost selves forever stand alone. They must live their own lives, think their own thoughts, and arrive at their own destiny.

INTROSPECTION THE ONLY MEANS OF DISCOVERING NATURE OF CONSCIOUSNESS.--What, then, is mind? What is the thing that we call consciousness? No mere definition can ever make it clearer than it is at this moment to each of us. The only way to know what mind is, is to look in upon our own consciousness and observe what is transpiring there. In the language of the psychologist, we must _introspect_. For one can never come to understand the nature of mind and its laws of working by listening to lectures or reading text books alone. There is no _psychology_ in the text, but only in your living, flowing stream of thought and mine. True, the lecture and the book may tell us what to look for when we introspect, and how to understand what we find. But the statements and descriptions about our minds must be verified by our own observation and experience before they become vital truth to us.

HOW WE INTROSPECT.--Introspection is something of an art; it has to be learned. Some master it easily, some with more difficulty, and some, it is to be feared, never become skilled in its use. In order to introspect one must catch himself unawares, so to speak, in the very act of thinking, remembering, deciding, loving, hating, and all the rest. These fleeting phases of consciousness are ever on the wing; they never pause in their restless flight and we must catch them as they go. This is not so easy as it appears; for the moment we turn to look in upon the mind, that moment consciousness changes. The thing we meant to examine is gone, and something else has taken its place. All that is left us then is to view the mental object while it is still fresh in the memory, or to catch it again when it returns.

STUDYING MENTAL STATES OF OTHERS THROUGH EXPRESSION.--Although I can meet only my own mind face to face, I am, nevertheless, under the necessity of judging your mental states and knowing what is taking place in your consciousness. For in order to work successfully with you, in order to teach you, understand you, control you or obey you, be your friend or enemy, or associate with you in any other way, I must _know_ you. But the real you that I must know is hidden behind the physical mask that we call the body. I must, therefore, be able to understand your states of consciousness as they are reflected in your bodily expressions. Your face, form, gesture, speech, the tone of voice, laughter and tears, the poise of attention, the droop of grief, the tenseness of anger and start of fear,--all these tell the story of the mental state that lies behind the senses. These various expressions are the pictures on the screen by which your mind reveals itself to others; they are the language by which the inner self speaks to the world without.

LEARNING TO INTERPRET EXPRESSION.--If I would understand the workings of your mind I must therefore learn to read the language of physical expression. I must study human nature and learn to observe others. I must apply the information found in the texts to an interpretation of those about me. This study of others may be _uncritical_, as in the mere intelligent observation of those I meet; or it may be _scientific_, as when I conduct carefully planned psychological experiments. But in either case it consists in judging the inner states of consciousness by their physical manifestations.

The three methods by which mind may be studied are, then: (1) text-book _description and explanation_; (2) _introspection_ of my own conscious processes; and (3) _observation_ of others, either uncritical or scientific.

2. THE NATURE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

INNER NATURE OF THE MIND NOT REVEALED BY INTROSPECTION.--We are not to be too greatly discouraged if, even by introspection, we cannot discover exactly what the mind is. No one knows what electricity is, though nearly everyone uses it in one form or another. We study the dynamo, the motor, and the conductors through which electricity manifests itself. We observe its effects in light, heat, and mechanical power, and so learn the laws which govern its operations. But we are almost as far from understanding its true nature as were the ancients who knew nothing of its uses. The dynamo does not create the electricity, but only furnishes the conditions which make it possible for electricity to manifest itself in doing the world's work. Likewise the brain or nervous system does not create the mind, but it furnishes the machine through which the mind works. We may study the nervous system and learn something of the conditions and limitations under which the mind operates, but this is not studying the mind itself. As in the case of electricity, what we know about the mind we must learn through the activities in which it manifests itself--these we can know, for they are in the experience of all. It is, then, only by studying these processes of consciousness that we come to know the laws which govern the mind and its development. What it is that thinks and feels and wills in us is too hard a problem for us here--indeed, has been too hard a problem for the philosophers through the ages. But the thinking and feeling and willing we can watch as they occur, and hence come to know.

CONSCIOUSNESS AS A PROCESS OR STREAM.--In looking in upon the mind we must expect to discover, then, not a thing, but a process. The thing forever eludes us, but the process is always present. Consciousness is like a stream, which, so far as we are concerned with it in a psychological discussion, has its rise at the cradle and its end at the grave. It begins with the babe's first faint gropings after light in his new world as he enters it, and ends with the man's last blind gropings after light in his old world as he leaves it. The stream is very narrow at first, only as wide as the few sensations which come to the babe when it sees the light or hears the sound; it grows wider as the mind develops, and is at last measured by the grand sum total of life's experience.

This mental stream is irresistible. No power outside of us can stop it while life lasts. We cannot stop it ourselves. When we try to stop thinking, the stream but changes its direction and flows on. While we wake and while we sleep, while we are unconscious under an anæsthetic, even, some sort of mental process continues. Sometimes the stream flows slowly, and our thoughts lag--we "feel slow"; again the stream flows faster, and we are lively and our thoughts come with a rush; or a fever seizes us and delirium comes on; then the stream runs wildly onward, defying our control, and a mad jargon of thoughts takes the place of our usual orderly array. In different persons, also, the mental stream moves at different rates, some minds being naturally slow-moving and some naturally quick in their operations.

Consciousness resembles a stream also in other particulars. A stream is an unbroken whole from its source to its mouth, and an observer stationed at one point cannot see all of it at once. He sees but the one little section which happens to be passing his station point at the time. The current may look much the same from moment to moment, but the component particles which constitute the stream are constantly changing. So it is with our thought. Its stream is continuous from birth till death, but we cannot see any considerable portion of it at one time. When we turn about quickly and look in upon our minds, we see but the