THE IMITATIVE FUNCTIONS, AND THEIR PLACE IN HUMAN NATURE.
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THE IMITATIVE FUNCTIONS, AND THEIR PLACE IN HUMAN NATURE.

I HAVE been led of late, in connection with certain philosophical inquiries, to begin the study of a subject the general interest of which, for teachers, for students of any region of art, and for lovers of human nature at large, seems to me so considerable, that I am now disposed to ask for the coöperation of a larger public in the pursuit of the research. At the same time, I may as well take the opportunity which this paper affords to explain, as well as I can, why I have begun this task, and why I see so much reason to hope for good results from the further consideration of the matter.

I.

THE object of this study is, directly speaking, psychological, and relates to the nature, the scope, and the significance of what may be called, in general, the imitative functions of mankind. No functions are, in one sense, more familiar. None are more frequently interesting. We all are aware that children are imitative,

that both among children and among adults virtue and vice alike are, under favorable circumstances, "catching"; that fashion has, in certain matters, an irresistible sway; that not only commercial panics, and mobs, and "fads," but also great reform movements, and disciplined armies, and such historical events as the conversion of nations in the old days from heathenism to Christianity, all illustrate, in their several ways, the potency of imitative tendencies; and that art itself, at least according to Aristotle's famous definition, is essentially imitation. We know that there are sometimes epidemics of crime or of suicide. We know that the doleful prevalence of the current popular melody is due, not to a love of music, but to the insistent force of the imitative tendency. Turn, thus, which way we will, the familiar presence of the imitative functions in human life impresses itself upon us.

"Verily," says M. Tarde, an eminent French sociologist, in his remarkable book, "Les Lois d'Imitation" — verily, "*La société, c'est l'imitation*," or as one may freely translate, "Imitation of imitations," saith the professor, "in society all is imitation." In this extreme form, of course, the assertion does indeed remind us of many qualifications; but of these we shall speak further on.

Were I anxious, then, for mere illustrations of the frequency of the imitative functions in the life of man, I should indeed have no trouble in getting my fill of them, without other aid than that of my own eyes. But with the mere confirmation of their frequency, the question of their real significance is first brought really to the front. And along with this question there come before us a vast number of others, all interesting to the student of human nature. How, in the growth of the individual, do these imitative functions arise? Are any of them truly instinctive, or are all of them, as Alexander Bain has contended, acquired functions, due to experience? Or, in other words, does man learn to imitate because he is brought up in a social environment; or, on the contrary, is he capable of life in a social environment only because he is first, by nature and instinct, an imitative animal? What is the history of the imitative functions in childhood? When, and in what order, do they appear? How are they related to the growth of the childish reason, conscience, imagination, insight, skill? Of what use can the imitative functions, at any age, be made for the development of the child's intellect and will? Such are the first psychological questions that come to one's mind in this connection. It may already, in general, be clear how serviceable the study of such problems can become both to teachers and to all others interested in the psychology of childhood.

But a wider scope still has of late been given to the psychological study of the imitative functions by the results of research in the domain of hypnotism. How deep-seated the imitative functions are, it has needed hypnotic research not so much to demonstrate as to illustrate, and to bring, through illustration, to our clearer scientific consciousness. The principal positive value of hypnotism for psychology, up to the present time, has consisted in the fact that the apparently marvelous, and, at first sight, even miraculous-seeming, phenomena of the hypnotic state have served to make the familiar facts of the prevalence of imitation in human life look, for the time, in these singular illustrations, unfamiliar; so that, in consequence, the attention of psychologists has been attracted to the matter in a new way and from a new side. That this is the principal service rendered by hypnotism to psychology was first pointed out at some length by the aforesaid M. Tarde, who herein, I believe, followed up a suggestion of Taine's. In a paper first published in 1884, early in the history of hypnotic research,— a paper which was later incorporated into the book called "Les Lois d'Imitation,"— M. Tarde asserted and developed the interesting formula that what the individual hypnotizer is to his sleeping and abnormally plastic subject, such, almost precisely, is society to the waking and normally plastic man.

The hypnotized subject believes what the hypnotizer says, and supposes this belief to be his own conviction; does what his hypnotizer suggests, and believes, or may believe, that he does this of his own free will; has suggested hallucinations of taste, sight, smell, or suggested emotions, and believes these to be his own independent and individual experiences. Well, just so the waking man usually believes, concerning politics, concerning the state of business, concerning religion, whatever the people of his party, or set, or faction, or profession, or sect, declares to be the truth; and he supposes, nevertheless, that his mind is his own. The waking man, moreover, as to all the endlessly numerous deeds of convention and custom, does what his portion of society declares to be the proper thing, and fancies all the while that he is choosing of his own free will. Finally, the waking man's emotions — as, for example, his esthetic emotions — are usually at the mercy, or, at all events, deeply under the influence, of social suggestion; and even his sensations and perceptions are not exempt from this influence.

Illustrations are here easy. What is beautiful in decorative art the community at large learns by social suggestion. Esthetic tastes as to domestic interiors, and as to the architecture of

private dwellings, are subject in every generation to changes which work upon individuals in almost precisely the same way as hypnotic suggestions made to sleeping subjects work during experiments in hypnotism. One hears that this or this is admirable in the way of house-building or of decoration. Society declares the fact; and forthwith one perceives with one's own eyes, if one is but an average man, that this is indeed beautiful, just as the people say; and one is naïvely unaware that if all the people had said that it was ugly, one would equally have observed that fact instead. Even so, too, as to our sensations, or, at all events, as to our immediate reaction of liking or of dislike in presence of our sensations. Everybody has many acquired tastes. Some people, to be sure, have liked olives from the first taste of them; but many have not. Yet, as the saying goes, if you eat in succession seven olives, you will henceforth like them. It would be more psychological to say that after you have received seven quasi-hypnotic social suggestions from your neighbors, each suggestion being strong enough to make you try to behave toward olives as the rest do, then, at length, your immediate sensations may yield, and henceforth the olives will taste as the other men say that they taste—namely, good. It is in such a fashion that one becomes a connoisseur in the world of mere sensations of taste and of smell, just as before in the world of art. The connoisseur as to wines, teas, perfumes, dinners, and other such sensory experiences, is a person of fairly keen native sensory discrimination, whose actual discriminations, and expressions of like and dislike, have been subjected to a long course of quasi-hypnotic social training. His tastes are never purely, or even largely, his own, although it is his game, as connoisseur, to pretend, and often his fate, as social bondman, to believe, that they are his own. Were they, however, original, he would not be reckoned as a connoisseur, but as a barbarian.

Such are some of the possible illustrations of M. Tarde's interesting thesis. In bringing them forward here in my own way, and with my own choice determining their selection, I am of course well aware that there are other factors at work besides the conventional or suggested factors, and that, too, even in the most conventional regions of life — factors which, despite all our imitativeness, determine our individual varieties of taste. We never reach perfect agreement with our neighbors as to these things of convention. A certain stubborn variety of individual caprice consciously forms a pleasant social contrast to our more imitative judgments. And so for the rest, despite all conformity, there are many social conventions which themselves require of the individual, within certain limits, a certain degree of individuality and of nonconformity.

But here is only one of the many cases where the imitative functions become, as we shall later more fully see, beautifully, and almost inextricably, entangled with the "temperamental" varieties of function in the individual. And it is this entanglement, as we shall find, that constitutes the very soul of the significance of the imitative functions, which, when properly developed, do not lead at all to the suppression of originality, but may actually form the condition of the growth of individuality, and of the only true independence of opinion and of ideals that is possible to man. But of this hereafter. Moreover, it is this same endless entanglement of imitative or "suggested" factors in taste and in belief with individual factors that makes the psychology of the imitative functions of man so complex and fascinating a problem for the student of human nature.

If the social phenomena in themselves, considered thus, serve to indicate by their universality, as it were, the breadth, the extent, of the imitative functions of humanity, certain of the well-known phenomena of hypnotism, viewed apart, tend especially to bring to mind the depth, the inner potency, of these functions in the life of each individual. It is true, as we have seen, that, viewed on the whole, the plasticity of the hypnotic subject is not something essentially novel, but is substantially the normal social plasticity of a man set at work under somewhat abnormal conditions. It is, however, also true that, under these abnormal conditions, there appear some unexpected special consequences of the general imitativeness of man — consequences that startle us by the indications which they give of the depth to which the imitative tendency reaches in its influence upon our unconscious, yes, upon even our lower physiological, life.

That by suggestion you can make a man notice what he would otherwise overlook is a strictly normal and familiar fact. Much, if not all, of that marvelous acuteness of senses which is often shown by hypnotic subjects seems, in the opinion of many observers, to be only a case of this directly or indirectly suggested concentration of attention upon his own fainter experiences on the part of the hypnotized subject. And so far the anomalies of hypnotism would seem to be related only to the peculiar conditions under which the hypnotic subject is influenced, and to the extraordinary source of the influence, which is here not, as normally, the authority of society in general, but the voice of his hypnotizer. Yet, in addition, it is indeed true that, in case of hypnotism, there also appear certain other aspects of the imitative functions — aspects which, in the case of the normal social influences, may also be present, and which prob-

ably are present, but which are there masked by their more obvious and conscious accompaniments; while, in case of the hypnotic subject, these other aspects come to light. Hypnotic suggestion, namely, is found to influence not only the acuteness of one's perceptions and the course of one's conscious habits, but the performance of a good many bodily functions that usually seem to have small relation to the will. Circulation, digestion, and general functional nervous conditions of a decidedly manifold sort, have been found to be more or less subject to hypnotic suggestion. To be sure, this sort of influence is seldom without very decided limits, which vary endlessly from person to person. But the fact remains that, in a given person, the imitative plasticity which leads him to follow out so faithfully the ideas which his hypnotizer suggests may lead him also to alter relatively deep and unconscious organic functions, such as he has never explicitly learned to influence by his will, and such as, normally, neither he nor his fellows would be aware of influencing. Yet, as many considerations make probable, what the hypnotic experiment thus brings to light cannot well be anything new in kind. Doubtless our organisms are at all times deeply plastic to suggestions; only this plasticity, on account of the complexity of our normal functions, remains masked until the hypnotic experiment, working upon a much simplified state of affairs, brings it to light.

But if our imitativeness thus actually extends far beyond the region of our conscious and voluntary life, one sees at once that one has to do with functions the basis of which probably lies deep down among the inborn and instinctive tendencies of our nature. And of such probably instinctive and original imitativeness childhood gives us many indications. For children often appear to sympathize imitatively with the expressed emotions of their elders even when there is no adequate basis in the previous childish experience for the emotions in question. A young child, taken unkindly to a funeral, or forced by unhappy fortune to witness one in the family, has suggested to him, in the faces and behavior of his elders, emotions of a depth and intensity for which his own experience can give no basis. These elders themselves know why they sorrow. The young child knows very dimly, or perhaps realizes not yet at all, why death is what it is, and means what it does. Yet sometimes he shows on such occasions an overwhelming sense of the horror of the situation, a sense which people usually refer to his direct and inborn dread of death and of his surroundings. There is, in fact, probably present some such original instinct concerning death; but very likely this instinct does not account for the whole of the child's horror, or yet perhaps for the larger part of it. This larger part is probably due rather to a contagion of emotion, the origin of which lies in another instinct — that of imitation. The child, without consciousness of the reason, assumes, by instinctive imitation, the expressive bodily states and attitudes of his elders, and accordingly, since our emotions are, in part at least, the results rather than the causes of our bodily states of emotional expression,[1] the child, having imitated the organic expression, consequently in some measure imitates the emotion, without at all well comprehending why the emotion ought to be felt. If everybody else at the funeral conspired with his fellows to seem gay and to talk merrily, it is unlikely that the child's own original instincts about death would be enough to terrify him. He would then very likely look at the corpse rather with wonder than with horror.

Just so, too, it is in youth, or even throughout life, so long as we retain any freshness of sympathetic experience. With the aid of certain deep and instinctive tendencies to assume imitatively the bodily attitudes or the other expressive functions of our fellows, functions which may be in part internal as well as external, we are able to share the emotions of others even when these emotions relate to matters that lie far beyond our own previous experience. When one first witnesses a serious accident, or attends another through a painful illness, or sees a friend suffering from some tremendous personal grief, one gets a sense of what this calamity means — a sense which may far transcend one's power to recall similar experiences in one's own life. There are some people, to be sure, who sympathize, like the maids of Andromache when she parted from Hector, or like the comforters of Gudrun when she sat tearless over Sigurd's body, or like Polonius himself, only by recalling, in the sufferer's presence, their own present or past griefs. "Truly, I in youth suffered many things of love — very near this." But such sympathy is not the only sort or the most spontaneous. The emotions of the theater carry the sensitive spectator, especially when he is young, far beyond any memory of his own experiences. Notice such a spectator, and you will see him imitating unconsciously, by play of feature, or possibly even by gestures of hands, arms, or body, the actor whose skill absorbs him. But meanwhile, through this imitation, he is ex-

1 To this fact Professor James has recently given an expression in his now well-known theory of the emotions — a theory according to which "we do not cry because we feel sorry, but feel sorry because we cry." This theory, in its extreme form, may be inadequate. There can be little doubt that it expresses an important part of the truth.

periencing something of emotions before unknown to him — the sorrows of *Lear*, the remorse of *Macbeth*, the agony of *Othello*. To him these experiences seem as novel as if they had been original happenings in his own life. Such are the quasi-hypnotic suggestions of the stage. They often give us, as we say, wholly new insights into life.

As for other instances of the depth of such imitative emotions, there will be known to many of us cases of sensitive young women who, at the sight of accidents, or bodily ailments (say in elder women), misfortunes the causes of which they themselves have never yet experienced, are quite capable of feeling suggested internal pangs, or serious, if temporary, physical derangements, of the imitative, and at the same time partly instinctive, character of which there can be little reason to doubt. Nor are women alone in such imitative sufferings. Many men have felt such, and have been surprised at their vigor. The emotions of mobs, moreover, have the same character of imitative contagion, going much beyond the previous personal experiences of many, or perhaps, most members of the mob. In an important sociological monograph, entitled (in its French translation) "La Foule Criminelle," an Italian criminologist, Signor Scipio Sighele, has recently treated at length the problem of the psychology of mobs, and has dwelt much on the analogy between these phenomena, and those of hypnotic suggestion. It seems impossible to interpret such cases without supposing that the imitative functions of man have a very profound instinctive basis, and are by no means as purely secondary and acquired functions as Alexander Bain has supposed. So much, then, for the lessons derived from hypnotism, and from daily life, concerning the depth and significance of imitation in man.

III.

But now, as regards the uses and the results of the imitative functions in human life, the foregoing general indication of their breadth and their depth is only the merest beginning of a comprehension of the part they play in our education and in our consciousness. It is not because they are common, or because they are, in deepest origin, partly instinctive, that I lay such stress upon them. It is because they are, in their proper and almost inextricable entanglement with our individual or temperamental functions, absolutely essential elements of all our rationality, of all our mental development, of all our worth as thinkers, as workers, or as producers; it is, too, because this value of imitation as the necessary concomitant, and condition, and instrument, of all sound originality is still so inadequately understood by teachers, by critics of art, by students of human nature generally — it is on these accounts that I deem the study of the imitative functions probably the most important task in the psychology of the immediate future. The mental relations of the imitative functions are what I therefore have, next, briefly to indicate. This I may here do in the most summary form, thus:

It is a commonplace that most of our rational thinking (some psychologists incorrectly say, *all* of our rational thinking) is done in language. Well, language is very obviously a product of social imitation; is, therefore, a case of human imitativeness in every individual who learns it. So, then, without imitativeness, no higher development of rational thought in any of us. Only the imitative animal can become rational. So much for a beginning. But the fruitfulness of the imitative functions does not cease here. It is, in the second place, well recognized that our social morality, whatever else within or without us it implies, is in one direction dependent upon our regard for the will, the interest, the precepts, or the welfare of our fellows. Now such regard is, in its turn, dependent upon our power, by imitation, to experience and to comprehend the suggested will, interest, authority, and desires of those about us. So, then, without imitativeness, no chance for the development of the social conscience. The imitative functions, in combination of course with other functions, but still with essential significance, as factors in the whole process, are thus at the basis of the development of both reason and conscience. Nor yet is this all. Reason not only uses language as an instrument, but it aims at a certain well-known goal; it aims at the imitation in conscious terms of the truth of things beyond us. Reason thus not only depends upon imitative functions; it is explicitly imitative in its purposes. Just so, too, conscience is not only based, as to its origin, upon social imitations, so that you educate the childish conscience through obedience and through authority; but conscience, too, is in its goal explicitly imitative. It sets before us ideals of character, and then bids us imitate them. These ideals are, in general, personal. Conscience says: Such and such a self, thus and thus employed in reasonable service, is the right sort of self for you. You conceive such an ideal self. Now, in your practical life, imitate this conception. One imitates the ideal — precisely as, in childhood, the little boys imitate the big boys. Man the imitative animal is thus at the very heart of man the rational and man the moral animal, no matter how high in the scale the developed man may rise.

Yet the psychological importance of the imitative functions is not even thus to be exhausted. It is an odd fact, and one of vast sig-

nificance, that all of us come by our developed personal self-consciousness through very decidedly imitative processes. Of this fact a later discussion may give a fuller account. It is enough now to remind observers of children how full of proud self-consciousness is the little boy who drives horse, or who plays soldier, or who is himself a horse, or a bird, or other creature, in his play. To be what we call his real self is, for his still chaotic and planless inner consciousness, so long as it is not set in order by his imitativeness, the same as to be nobody in particular. But to be a horse, or a coachman, or a soldier, or the hero of a favorite story, or a fairy, that is to be somebody, for that sort of self one first witnesses from without, or finds portrayed in the fascinating tale, and then imitatively assimilates, so that one thereupon conceives this new self from within, and rejoices in one's prowess as one does so.

Nor does this process of acquiring one's selfhood vicariously, as it were, cease with childhood. My various present social functions I have, in the first place, imitatively learned. Others, my guides and advisers, first showed me the way to these functions; for it was thus that I learned to move in company, to speak, to assume the outward forms of my calling, to conduct myself as just this particular kind of social organ. Now I myself, as what the psychologist calls an "empirical ego," am just now, for myself as well as for my fellows, the man who possesses, among other things, such and such a calling, position, office, rights, and aptitudes. Of all these things I had no knowledge in childhood. I had to learn my whole social trade; I learned it by imitations. But now that I have got such a calling and place, my knowledge of it determines for me, all the while, my current notion of who I am. I am what my profession and my social relations define me to be. Thus it is actually true that just as my social guides — my parents, teachers, advisers, friends, critics — together gave me, through my love of imitating them and of being influenced by their characters, by their conduct, and by their ideals — just as they, I say, gave me a knowledge of my calling, so too they have furnished me with the very material of my present self-consciousness. Self-consciousness itself, in each one of us, is a product of imitation.

Reason, conscience, self-consciousness — these are significant possessions. Yet without imitativeness we should never have come by any one of them. They are results, and, as they stand, are even now embodiments of imitation. Such is my present thesis. Nor is this statement itself more than the beginning. As a fact, I hold that far more specific mental products than have yet been named — for instance, specific beliefs of reason, such as the so-called "axioms" at the basis of science — can be explained as determined in their nature by the special conditions under which the imitative functions of mankind have been developed. But herewith, indeed, I reach topics that lie far beyond the scope of the present paper, and within the domain of the deepest problems of philosophy.

IV.

And now for the announcement of the immediate practical purpose of this paper. I have written it for the sake of getting aid in the collection of facts. I venture, then, herewith to invite teachers, other observers of children, and observant persons generally, to communicate to me, either through letters addressed to the editor, or through letters addressed direct to me, their own past or future observations of certain classes of facts which may be accessible to them, and which, if collected, compared, and kept on record, may prove of service in studying the still much neglected question of the psychology of imitation. What is most needed is the coöperation of many independent observers; and owing to the nature of the facts concerning which I shall here ask, such observers will be able to contribute many useful data for comparison, even where the observers themselves are not experts in psychology. Meteorological societies have derived much assistance from non-expert observers, who, scattered over wide regions of country, have agreed to take the trouble to note such simple phenomena as the time of the first clap of thunder heard at the beginning of a thunder-shower at a given place, the direction whence and whither a thunder-cloud came and went, the duration of the attendant shower, and similarly obvious phenomena of the weather. Just so, could I get many psychological data of certain kinds from various independent observers, widely sundered in place, and widely differing in their opportunities, I should be aided in guiding certain of my intended investigations into the nature, the development, and the factors of these imitative functions of mankind.

In answer to any of the following questions, I ask, then, for independent observations, drawn as directly as possible from life, and described as fully as possible. Teachers and observant parents will be most likely to have such information to give; but in some cases my questions call for observations made by a person upon himself, and in these, as well as in most of the other cases contemplated by my questions, there will be other persons besides teachers and parents who may have facts to offer. All plain statements, written with the internal evidences of interest and of watchfulness, will be

welcome, whether made by persons acquainted with psychology or not. The use that can be made of such data, when once they come to hand, is capable of being submitted to pretty careful tests, such as the individual writers cannot well know in advance. The specific purposes of some of my questions will not at once be obvious to every reader. It is enough to say, in general, that all my questions bear upon some topic connected with the natural history of imitation. [1]

SCHEDULE OF QUESTIONS ON IMITATIVE FUNCTIONS.

1. *The General Question of the Place of Imitation in Child-Life.* Throughout our country there are now to be found a considerable number of groups of parents or of teachers who, in one way or another, are engaged in organized observations of children on the lines laid down by Preyer, in his well-known book on "The Mind of the Child." I shall be glad to receive, as time goes on, from any persons or circles engaged in this kind of definite and organized labor, information of any and every sort bearing upon the first appearance, and later development, of the imitative functions of infants and young children. For the benefit of all such persons, I may add that the best special observations of the imitative functions in their early stages, so far as I know, are those published by Professor J. Mark Baldwin in the journal "Science," for 1891 (p. 113), for 1892 (p. 15), and that these papers of Professor Baldwin's have been of great service in directing attention to the theoretical importance of this topic, and will be an excellent guide to any future observer of the imitative functions of children. In a future paper I hope to return to the mention of Professor Baldwin's work, to which I already owe much.[2]

2. *Imitative Games.* All the games of childhood are of course in general due to imitation. But there is one sort of game that deserves to be called above all *the* imitative game. It is the type that I have mentioned, in passing, already. But I am especially anxious to get as many descriptions as possible, drawn from the life, of just such games, and of the children that play them. In Professor James's larger "Psychology," Vol. II. p. 409, the type of sport in question is thus described:

> The dramatic impulse, the tendency to pretend one is some one else, contains this pleasure of mimicry as one of its elements. Another element seems to be a peculiar sense of power in stretching one's own personality, so as to include that of a strange person. In young children this instinct often knows no bounds. For a few months in one of my children's third year, he literally hardly ever appeared in his own person. . . . If you called him by his name, H——, you invariably got the reply; "I 'm not H ——, I 'm a hyena, or a horse-car," or whatever the feigned object might be.

Now, what is psychologically important about games of this sort is, first, that they are usually relatively *original imitations.* They are not, like the traditional childish games, handed down from an immemorial antiquity. Each child chooses, as it were, his own dramatic games of personation. The more the child's own private experience determines the thing, the more individual, eccentric, or stubborn the choice, the more characteristic is an imitative drama of this sort. The second importance of this type of mimicry lies in its before-mentioned deep, and, as I think, momentous relations to the whole development of character and of self-consciousness in the child. A third element of significance consists in the wonderful fixity and almost delusional persistence and vividness with which a mimicry of this sort is often kept up by a given child. But very transient, if vigorous, fits of such mimicry also have great interest.

I am accordingly extremely anxious to get all the fresh and exact accounts that I can of cases of this phenomenon of personation, or systematic mimicry, either in one child alone, or in any small group of children, who, playing together, do not merely repeat some of the old traditional games of childhood, but invent their own drama. In case of each child concerned I shall be glad of as full an account as possible of the whole story of its imitative game, and of all the details of its life and character that seem to be relevant to the matter in hand. For a detailed comparison of such instances must throw light on the psychological mechanism of the processes involved. Cases of fixed family games of mimicry, confined to one family group of children, and apparently invented by them, will also be very welcome if accompanied by pretty full accounts of the children concerned.

In some cases those adults who are good at recalling their own childhood will have personal remembrance of experiences of this sort, and will be able to tell of such mimic and unreal child-lives lived for months or years alongside of their real lives—fancied lives that have left traces behind in memory such as often prove

[1] Answers to any of these inquiries may be sent either to the editor of THE CENTURY MAGAZINE, or to Josiah Royce, 103 Irving Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

[2] The highly important paper on imitation in "Mind" for January, 1894, and the recent volume on "Mental Evolution in the Child and the Race," both by Professor Baldwin, have appeared since the text of the present paper was written. They should be consulted by all students of this topic.

of no small import for the feelings and character of the mature person. Any one who can tell pretty fully of experiences of this sort may be sure that the story will have a very real psychological interest.

3. *Imitative naughtiness.* It is often said by observers of children that if you tell a child one story of a good boy, and of his ways and rewards, and another story, no more vivid in detail, of a bad boy, and of his deeds and downfall, you will pretty certainly find the effect, other things being equal, to be that the child will manifest far more interest in imitating the naughty boy of the latter story, and in taking his risks, than in imitating the good boy, and in winning the praises showered upon him. The case is here the well-known one of the "lilies and languors of virtue." Unquestionably, childhood contains great numbers of cases where what may be called unintended counter-suggestion, the process of setting a child to imitate an undesirable fashion of life by means of your very efforts to keep him from such imitation, takes effect, and does mischief. Now of course I do not hope, by any collection of incidents, to solve so complex a psychological question as that of this frequent and primary attractiveness of evil in the heart of the natural man, when first such a heart contrasts ill with good. Into that frequent result far too many mental factors enter for us to hope to deal with it in any simple way. But still I have a reason for wishing to collect instances of such "counter-suggestions"; *i. e.*, cases where a child has been apparently tempted to do the wrong merely by hearing that it *is* the wrong, as well as instances where children have seemed from the start disposed to imitate evil examples rather than good, to admire bad big boys rather than good ones, to be forced to build fires in dangerous places just because they have learned of the danger, in a word, to be fascinated by mischief merely because it *is* mischief. That this may, and often does, happen we all know. Why it happens, no particular instances can in general make clear. But what I now want is no theory on *this* topic, but as concrete and precise a story as possible of individual instances, reported from the life, which may seem to fall under this general head, and to illustrate this well-known and frequent tendency. It is needless to explain why such stories may serve the purpose of throwing light on the imitative functions. It is enough that, if told freshly and circumstantially, and, as I say, from the life, they will help me, although those who tell them cannot well foresee how they can do so, and will therefore be all the more able to tell them without any presuppositions or prejudices.

4. *Imitative emotions* aroused in the minds of inexperienced persons. Observers of children and of youth, as well as self-observant persons of all ages, may have cases coming under their notice, either in their own inner lives, or in the lives of people under their charge, where the sympathetic or imitative contagion of emotion appears to give to a sensitive person emotional states that far transcend anything in his own previous experience. Of such cases I have spoken earlier in this essay. The emotions of the theater, the precocious emotions of young children on noteworthy occasions,— *e. g.*, at funerals,— the reactions of sensitive people at the sight of disease and of accidents, are all cases in point. For the sake of guiding possible future inquiries into matters of this kind, I want, as a general basis, a collection of individual instances, reported just as they appear to the observers to have taken place, the person who had the experience, and the circumstances, being described as precisely as possible. The study of a branch of natural history has to begin with just such collections of individual experiences, which may be valuable even when the circumstances seem to the persons concerned relatively insignificant or even trivial.

5. The study of the imitative functions is useless without a consideration of their opposites, the functions which appear to be the reverse of imitative. There are some eccentric or wilful children whose life seems to their parents or teachers a life of almost persistent refusal to imitate models. They will not play with the other children, they live much alone, they do not love what the family is most accustomed to show interest in, they seem to be determined from the outset to choose their own way, and to walk in it. In later youth such characters become especially noteworthy and perplexing. I want a collection of descriptions of such persons — children or youth, portrayed just as they seem to their often very much-concerned parents, teachers, or other friends. These eccentric types are of the utmost interest for the study of the imitative functions. How they will prove so, I can best show when the accounts are before me.

SUCH are some of the matters of natural history concerning which I just now ask for assistance from kindly disposed persons. Of the precise value of a collection of such reports it is impossible to give any fuller account without going into technical details beyond my present limits. Suffice it to say that all serious efforts to answer any of the foregoing questions will be valuable. Where, in writing to me personally, correspondents have occasion to mention persons or incidents that they wish to keep private, they may be sure of my discretion. In using my returns I shall never make in any way pub-

lic any names or personal details without express permission, and shall keep confidential statements in a safe place, where they will surely be destroyed without further examination in case of my death.

As for the further importance of a study of the psychology of imitation, I hope before long, as I have said, to have an opportunity to present considerations bearing on the numerous points which have been touched, but not developed, in the present paper. Especially do the close relations between imitation and originality need clarifying before teachers and critics of art, and of other imitative human activities, can learn to avoid certain extremely prevalent errors, which, as I believe, only psychological analysis can duly expose. As a fact, originality and imitation are not in the least opposed, but are, in healthy cases, absolutely correlative and inseparable processes, so that you cannot be truly original in any direction unless you imitate, and cannot imitate effectively, worthily, admirably unless you imitate in original fashions. The greatest thinker, artist, or prophet is merely a man who imitates inimitably something in the highest degree worthy of his imitation. The current confusion of imitativeness with slavishness, the frequent assertion that children and idiots imitate more frequently than do sound and intelligent and reflective adults, the frequent exhortations to teachers that they shall make their young charges *not* imitative *but* spontaneous in thought (as if one could become rationally spontaneous except through imitation), all such errors rest on a false separation of imitativeness and spontaneity, a separation which can be avoided only through a careful psychological study of these fascinating processes.

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