Review

Reviewed Work(s): Psychology by William James

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of attention is the fundamental form, the problem of volition resolves itself into the problem of voluntary attention. Volition results from a more or less complex aggregation of motives which exhaust the possible alternatives of present action. In general these motives are comprised in two classes — affects and ends — and the value of the affects lies in brightening and strengthening the ends. But this picturing of ends is not different from the picturing of anything else — it is an ordinary act of apperception. "Just as soon as the elements of the end-complex cease to act as partial influences, causing the movements of attention by their very vividness, and the attention gets its hold upon its integrated content as a grand related *situation*, the fiat goes forth" (p. 355). Volitional apperception is therefore a case of general apperception with an "explicit motor reference." Lack of space prevents anything more than the above presentation of the bare skeleton of Professor Baldwin's views in regard to voluntary action, as it prevents any discussion of them. It is one of the most satisfactory parts of a book which, taken as a whole, distinctly raises the level of psychological thought in America.

FRANK ANGELL.

Psychology. By WILLIAM JAMES, Professor of Psychology in Harvard University. New York, Henry Holt & Co., 1892. — pp. xiii, 478. [American Science Series, Briefer Course.]

This is an abridgment of the author's *Principles of Psychology*, which appeared in two large volumes in 1890. About two-fifths of the volume is new, either in matter or form; the rest is 'scissors and paste.' The omissions have the effect of condensing, but not of obscuring; indeed, the results stand out more clearly when extricated from the processes and raw materials in which, throughout the larger work, they were left embedded. But a mistake was surely made in dropping the fine chapter on the Perception of Reality (Vol. II, pp. 283–322). On the other hand, the additions have been most judicious. The new chapters on the various senses are indispensable to students who come to psychology without some knowledge of physiology. It is unfortunate that a new section on the Feelings also could not have been inserted, but there is a vague promise of it for a later edition. The statement that 'harmful' and 'useless' states of consciousness are not treated, because they form the subject-matter of psychiatry and æsthetics (pp. 4–5), is misleading and unnecessary.

Although the number of text-books in psychology is rapidly increasing, and some of them are of unusual merit, teachers and students will alike welcome the new competitor with which Professor James has enriched the market. It has great and unique excellences. In the

first place, Professor James has the gift of sight and insight. When he looks into his mind, he actually sees what is a-doing or a-happening there. In power of introspective vision, he has no equal among living psychologists. In the second place, he has the gift of tongues, — the artist's faculty of vividly and accurately describing what he has observed. Accordingly, the book before us is a wonderfully graphic portrayal of the concrete facts of our mental life. This in itself is a great matter. For if, as I agree with Professor James in thinking, psychology is still in the condition of chemistry before Lavoisier (p. 468), the great desideratum, without which theorizing will be of little avail, is facts, more facts, and more accurate facts. But apart from this service to the science, what a service it is to the student to force him to look steadily at his entire conscious states as they are concretely present to him! Professor James casts out the *definite* images of traditional psychology. He bids us look at every state of consciousness in connection with the "halo or penumbra that surrounds and escorts it" (p. 166).

But though by endowment an introspective psychologist, Professor James is thoroughly at home in experimental and physiological psychology. The results of such objective investigation he combines most happily with his own descriptions. When he figures as a physiologist merely, as in the chapter on the Functions of the Brain, he evinces a rare power of interpreting technical subjects to the apprehension of the unscientific intelligence. Here and everywhere throughout the volume he has a way of gathering up the substance of an exposition or argument, and discharging it in a brilliant flash that makes the dullest vision tingle. "Splice the outer extremity of our optic nerves to our ears, and that of our auditory nerves to our eyes, [and] we should hear the lightning and see the thunder" (p. 12). "The Object . . . of the baby [consciousness] is one big, blooming, buzzing Confusion" (p. 16). "The impulse to pray is a necessary consequence of the fact that whilst the innermost of the empirical selves of a man is a Self of the *social* sort, it yet can find its only adequate *Socius* in an ideal world" (p. 192).

The standpoint of the text-book is the conception of psychology as a natural science. The aim is to describe and explain states of consciousness. We have already spoken of the descriptive work, let us now turn to the explanatory. Here Professor James seems scarcely consistent. He insists, in accordance with the postulates of current psychology, that mental action, as to its happening, though not as to its nature, is the effect of brain-action, that is, of mechanical processes. But if this is, as he holds, the fundamental working hypothesis of the science, then, just because it explains everything in a general way, it explains nothing in particular. Suppose we knew the cerebral processes

corresponding to every change of consciousness, psychology would not have achieved its mission; it would still need to interpret the relations of the parts of the subjective series to one another, and of complexes to their elements. Of course Professor James does so explain them; but the physiological counterpart, which is surely the starting-point merely, seems to him the goal of psychological explanation. To meet its demands, he imagines cerebral processes which are sometimes nothing more than a transliteration of the psychical. His object, no doubt, is to work the physiological hypothesis "for all it is worth," in order that its results may be brought out as fully as possible. But has not this praiseworthy desire sometimes led him to underestimate the value of purely psychological explanation?

Another result of "the materialistic task" (p. 7) is the almost inevitable tendency to eliminate activity from consciousness. When Professor James is confronted by the automaton theory of mind and the necessitarian theory of volition, he declares, though not very emphatically, for the spontaneous activity of the Ego (pp. 103–104, 444–452). But elsewhere throughout the book the Self is conceived as too exclusively passive, except perhaps in the chapter on Attention. Now it might be objected that this is a question of metaphysics rather than of psychology. But as Professor James writes a chapter on The *Stream* of Consciousness, and analyzes the Self (chap. xii) into a "*Stream* of thought, each part of which as 'I' can remember those which went before," *etc.*, he would scarcely admit that psychology had nothing to do with the activity or passivity of mind. The question is a burning one among German psychologists at the present day. Professor James suggests in the Epilogue (p. 467) that the activity of consciousness is "rather a *postulate* than a sensibly given fact." It is a pity that, even as a 'postulate,' it had not received fuller recognition in the body of the book. The *Outlines* of Professor Höffding, who also denies any immediate consciousness of mental activity, is nevertheless permeated with the interpretative influence of that 'postulate.'

I have given prominence to what I consider a defect in the volume, because in almost every respect it is an admirable text-book. The larger work, which is an ornament to American thought and scholarship, has proved itself a matchless treatise for class-room use in the hands of students who have had elementary courses in psychology and metaphysics. The abridgment is likely to win even greater favor as a manual for beginners. Besides the excellence of the typography and paper, it commends itself by a wealth of facts, an orderliness of arrangement, a recentness and variety of interest, and a clear, forcible, and glowingly stimulating style.

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