Dr. Schiller's Analysis of the Analysis of Mind

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DR. SCHILLER'S ANALYSIS OF *THE ANALYSIS OF MIND*

DR. SCHILLER'S article dealing with me in this JOURNAL (Vol. XIX, No. 11) is a model of philosophical discussion: the points which he discusses are fundamental, and the divergences between him and me which he notes concern vital problems. He and I are agreed, I think, that it is impossible to produce logical arguments on either side of the questions which divide us. Philosophies which differ radically necessarily involve different logics, and therefore can not be proved or refuted by logic without question-begging. Accordingly, the remarks which I shall have to make will be of the nature of rhetoric rather than logic.

Dr. Schiller begins by deploring my atavistic tendency to return to Hume. To this I plead guilty at once. I regard the whole romantic movement, beginning with Rousseau and Kant, and culminating in pragmatism and futurism, as a regrettable aberration. I should take "back to the 18th century" as a battle-cry, if I could entertain any hope that others would rally to it. What I object to about the intervening period is summed up in Lord Tennyson's "noble" words:

> **But like a man in wrath, the heart**
> **Stood up and answered: I have felt.**

I dislike the heart as an inspirer of beliefs; I much prefer the spleen. I take comfort in Freud's work, because it shows what we are to think of the heart, which, he says, makes us desire the death of our parents, and therefore dream that they are dead, with a hypocritical sorrow in our very dreams. The heart is the cause of the anti-rational philosophy that begins with Kant and leads up to the "will to believe." The heart is the inspirer of atrocities against negroes, the late war, and the starvation of Russia. (See McDougall's *Social Psychology,* which attributes actions of this kind to "the tender emotion.") People who believe in the heart agree with Dr. Schiller's dislike of "abstract analysis in search of the 'simple' and elemental, conducted from the standpoint of an extraneous observer." Why I like them I do not know, though probably any

"extraneous observer" could tell me. But I can suggest reasons which might lead other people to believe in them.

I begin with the question of the "extraneous observer." For reasons, some of which I have set forth in *The Analysis of Mind*, I hold self-knowledge to be very precarious and deceptive. What little I know about myself I owe to the observations of candid friends. The greater reliability of external observation is shown by the usual scientific tests—power of prediction, *etc.* The whole method of psycho-analysis is a vindication of the trained outside observer. Dr. Schiller, of course, is not advocating old-fashioned introspection, which makes one's ego an object and tries to duplicate it into observer and observed. He is advocating what he calls "activist psychology," according to which activity is the fundamental thing. Now it may be that I am an unusually lazy person, but the fact is that I know nothing of "activity." I observe that my body moves in various ways, but so do other bodies, living and dead. I observe that when my body moves there are certain sensations, and sometimes before it moves there are other sensations which may be called "tension" or "strain." Sometimes also the movement is preceded by images of it, particularly in the case of a difficult movement, such as a high dive. That is to say, I can discover various correlations of perceptions of bodily movements with other perceptions of bodily states, or with images, before, after, or at the same time as, the perceptions of the bodily movements. But I am utterly at a loss to recognize this "activity" which is supposed to be the very essence of life. I am forced to conclude that I am not really alive.

As for "abstract analysis in search of the 'simple' and 'elemental,' " that is a more important matter. To begin with, "simple" must not be taken in an absolute sense; "simpler" would be a better word. Of course, I should be glad to reach the absolutely simple, but I do not believe that that is within human capacity. What I do maintain is that, whenever anything is complex, our knowledge is advanced by discovering constituents of it, even if these constituents themselves are still complex. It is customary in philosophy to speak ill of "abstraction," and to use as laudatory epithets such phrases as "concrete fulness," "the richness of the living flux" *etc.*, generally supported by the opinion of Mephistopheles on the relation of theory to life. For my part, I am regretfully compelled to differ with Mephistopheles on this point. And even if I did not, theory is the business of philosophy, and if theory is bad, it is better to give up being a philosopher. Modern philosophers have not the courage of their profession, and try to make their systems ape real life

till they become indistinguishable from jazzing. Meanwhile science pursues a quite different course. The more it advances, the more abstract and analytical it becomes; and the more abstract and analytical it becomes, the more it is able to increase our knowledge of the world. Philosophy, to save its face, has invented a theory that scientific knowledge is not real knowledge, but that there is an extra superfine brand of knowledge to be obtained in philosophy, not by observation of the world, but by giving way to our wishes—particularly the wish to think that we can know without taking trouble. This is to my mind a complete delusion. I do not believe that there is any way of obtaining knowledge except the scientific way. Some of the problems with which philosophy has concerned itself can be solved by scientific methods; others can not. Those which can not are insoluble.

I do not doubt that the difference between those who like analysis and those who dislike it is temperamental. I can not prove that analysis is the right method except by using analysis, which would beg the question—I will not even deny that the mystics (as one may call the opponents of analysis) *might* have had the best of it in practice. But in arguing with a pragmatist it is permissible to point to the extraordinary fruitfulness of science, which uses analysis, as against the sterility of philosophy, which rejects it. Nay more, as against such an opponent it is permissible to point out that analysis enables us to produce the necessaries of life and defeat competitors—which ought, on pragmatist grounds, to be the ultimate test of truth. I therefore make no apology for using analytic methods. If they have dropped out of philosophy since Kant introduced the "practical reason," so much the worse for philosophy. I respect Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, all of whom employed the analytic method. I do not believe that Kant or Hegel or Nietzsche or the more modern anti-rationalists have contributed anything that deserves to be remembered.

I pass by the question of the relation of Kant to Hume, as of merely historical interest, remarking only that, whatever may have been Kant's *intellectual* debt to Hume, the difference between their temperaments and desires was very great. The next point of importance in Dr. Schiller's paper concerns the relations between psychic elements. He says of me: "This psychological analysis assumes that it can start with an indefinite plurality of entities or facts, out of which psychic structures can be built. . . . Russell, for example, may sometimes be found to declare that his 'main thesis' is that 'all psychic phenomena are built up out of sensations and images *alone*.' Actually these structures do require (and employ)

a minimum of mortar, both in Hume and in Russell. This is introduced under the names of 'association,' 'causality,' 'memory,' 'expectation,' and sundry 'relations,' such as 'meaning.' But their presence and activity are so little emphasized that they are even verbally denied, as in the passage just quoted."

This passage shows a misunderstanding which is truly astonishing. If I said "the walls of my house are built of bricks and mortar alone," should I be supposed to be asserting or implying that my walls were indistinguishable from a heap of separate bricks and a puddle of mortar? It is obvious that the bricks in the wall have a structure, that the structure consists of relations between the bricks, that these relations are given empirically in whatever sense the bricks are given, and that the relations are something other than the materials of which the walls are built. Similarly in the passage which Dr. Schiller quotes, I did not suggest or imply that sensations and images would constitute all psychic phenomena without suitable relations, any more than that bricks and mortar would constitute a house while they remained in haphazard heaps. And so far from not emphasizing the relations required, the discussion of them forms a large part of the book. In fact, it will be seen from the last two pages of the book that these relations are what I regard as giving mind its character, for I say that mind consists chiefly in number and complexity of habits, and habits are obviously constituted by relations. I do, however, most strenuously deny that the relations which I observe, whether in the mental or the physical world, are *a priori* principles of synthesis in the Kantian sense. When I look at a wall, I perceive parts with spatial relations; so I do when I contemplate a complex visual image. Relations and terms are given together, and are alike empirical. Not of course all relations, or all terms—some are inferred, but the inference would be impossible unless some were empirical data.

Dr. Schiller continues: "The plurality, which common-sense, Hume, and Russell, all treat as a *datum,* is not present in the original experience, and is at best a construction resulting from a course of philosophic reflection." This statement seems to me to be an instance of a very common fallacy in psychology, namely the assumption that nothing is happening in a man's mind except what he is aware of. This assumption is often supported by an appeal to James's remarks on the "psychologist's fallacy," but in fact such support is illusory. James argues, very correctly, that a given situation will not have precisely the same effect upon a layman as upon a psychologist, because the psychologist has trained himself to a certain kind of reaction. I am willing to believe that, before

James's time, there were psychologists who committed this fallacy, but since his time it is the opposite fallacy that has become common. It is now constantly assumed that if a savage, a baby, or a monkey has an experience which he or it does not discriminate into related parts, then the experience in question does not consist of related parts. It would be exactly as valid to argue that because Newton's apple did not know it was falling, therefore it was not falling, and the theory of gravitation may be dismissed as an example of the "psychologist's fallacy."

The notion that a savage or an animal is the best judge as to the general nature of his own mental processes is not held in any other context. Even in civilized and highly educated people, psycho-analysts detect all kinds of processes of which they are unconscious. Nevertheless, when a savage shows that he is muddle-headed as to the muddle in his head, it is assumed that we ought to learn to be equally muddle-headed, and that no clear account of his muddle is possible. This favoritism seems to indicate a bias in favor of muddle. For my part, I regard muddle as a phenomenon like another. I see no more reason to be muddled in investigating a muddle than to be muddled in investigating anything else. One might as well maintain that a theory of wind ought to blow one away, or that a theory of undulation ought to make one seasick. Savages are muddled as to what is going on, whether inside them or outside them, and their account is not to be accepted. Therefore, when Dr. Schiller says "the plurality . . . is not present in the original experience," he is misled by the ambiguity of the word "experience." I should say: "The plurality is present in the original occurrence, but is not experienced." I should add that, however sophisticated we become, most of what happens to us is not experienced by us; in regard to most of the occurrences of our lives, we are as unconscious as Newton's apple.

The next point to be considered concerns Dr. Schiller's statement that my "method is *not* concerned with the actual course of mental development, but with an ideal description of its products. It takes an *adult* mind and rearranges its contents in a systematic and esthetically pleasing order." This statement seems to me partly true and partly false. I deny that I am not concerned with the actual course of mental development, and also that I take an adult mind in the sense intended. I admit that I rearrange the contents in a systematic and esthetically [or logically] pleasing order, but then that is the very business of science. As for taking an adult mind, I begin with Thorndike's animals in cages, which may have been adult animals, but were not "adult minds" in the sense re-

quired for Dr. Schiller's point. I have tried throughout to take account of whatever can be learnt about infant and animal psychology. It is partly for this reason that I have been concerned to praise behaviorism, which has adopted the only method by which infant and animal psychology can be made scientific. But when I had (as I thought) exhausted what could be learnt by behaviorist methods, and felt obliged to call in the aid of introspection, I was compelled to have recourse to the adult mind, because unfortunately I am adult. Dr. Schiller appears to possess some mysterious method, other than behaviorism, by which he can ascertain what goes on in the minds of infants and animals, and he implies that it is more like what goes on in his mind than like what goes on in mine. As for that, I must take his word for it. But even then I am not obliged to admit that they have true beliefs as to what goes on in their own minds.

What Dr. Schiller is really objecting to is, I suppose, that my method is not historical or evolutionary. I have, it is true, discussed the process of learning somewhat fully, but I am equally interested in processes which are not progressive. I think the interest in development which came in with evolution is a barrier to the elementary understanding of the simpler facts upon which any solid science must be built. Laplace's *Mécanique Céleste* presupposed Galileo, Kepler, and Newton, who treated the solar system as a stable adult. Similarly there will be no beginning of a genuine science of psychology so long as people are obsessed by such complex facts as growth and progress. I know it is customary to treat life as essentially progressive. But this seems to be a sheer mistake. If a census could be taken of all the organisms now living, I have no doubt that an immense majority would be found to be unicellular, and to have made no appreciable progress since the origin of life. And to the remainder, decay is quite as natural as growth. Yet Dr. Schiller does not reproach me with having paid too little attention to senility.

Some of Dr. Schiller's criticisms are quite beyond my comprehension. He says, as an objection to me, "a biologically possible analysis can not start from anything less than the whole process involved in an act, *viz.*, a response to stimulation which is salutary, or harmful, and is selected accordingly." Who would suppose, reading this, that this is the very thing I do start from? It is the same thing that I have called a "behavior-cycle," and I have put it at the beginning, as being characteristic of living organisms. I observe, however, (*a*) that a process of this kind is complex, and therefore susceptible of logical analysis; (*b*) that when we come

to the more elaborate processes which we are aware of carrying out, we find need of elements which it does not seem necessary to assume in order to account for the responses of an amœba; (c) that "response to stimulation," as we ourselves experience it, often involves something that may be called, in some sense, awareness of the stimulus, and thus lands us with the problem of perception and even of memory.

I have only one more subject to discuss, namely the subject. It is surprising to find Dr. Schiller sticking up for the old-fashioned soul, and quoting with disapproval the remarks about the ghost of the subject, which once was the full-blooded soul, which I adapted from William James.[1] He does not apparently notice that the remark to which he objects is a paraphrase of James's, but his attitude shows that he is less in agreement with James than is commonly supposed. The background of their thoughts is very different. James's mind was a battle-ground of medical materialism and the mysticism suggested by Swedenborg. His learned self was scientific and his emotional self cosmic; neither led him to attach great value to the ego. On the other hand, Dr. Schiller's learned self is primarily hellenic. He is fond of claiming affinity with Protagoras, who would hardly have suited James. Idealism is to him what James called a "live option"; at one time he collaborated in a work called *Personal Idealism*. It seems to follow that the parts of James's work with which I sympathize most are those with which he sympathizes least. This case of the soul is one of them. On this question I can safely leave the argument to James's American successors, from whom I have learnt many of the doctrines advocated in *The Analysis of Mind*.

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LONDON.

CRITICAL REALISM AND THE EXTERNAL WORLD[1]

ESSAYS in Critical Realism is offered as a new solution of an old epistemological problem. Its authors, a group of philosophers who differ on many important metaphysical points, have here united upon certain matters connected with a theory of knowledge. This theory of knowledge, it is hoped, will enable us all to satisfy our natural cravings to be realists. "An honest man . . . is a realist at heart."[2] It is maintained that, if non-realistic phi-

[1] See the quotation from him in *Analysis of Mind*, p. 22.

[1] Read at the meeting of the Western Division of the American Philosophical Association, at Lincoln, April 14, 1922.

[2] P. 184 (Mr. Santayana). Unless otherwise stated the references are to *Essays in Critical Realism*. The name of the author quoted will in each case be noted.