MIND

A QUARTERLY REVIEW

OF

PSYCHOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY.

I.—PSYCHOLOGY—A SCIENCE OR A METHOD?

No student of Locke and Hume can read the psychological works of the present day without feeling anxiety for the future of the study of Mind or Experience. The modern psychologist is profoundly dissatisfied with his subject; the exact and the classificatory sciences, by the brilliance of their methods and results, fill him with envy; he is painfully conscious that mental phenomena are not definite enough to be the objects of a science; he must therefore connect them with other phenomena which are. Hence the "Physiological Psychology" of our day. But surely this is not psychology, or the study of experience, but physiology. Let us keep clearly before our minds that psychology is the study of experience, and inquire whether it has the marks of a Science or of a Method—whether it is a speculative, or a practical study.

The objects of a Science properly so called may be of two kinds: they may be either such as admit of exact measurement, as the objects of the different branches of physics—heat, light, electricity, &c.; or such as admit of being classified on a natural or genealogical principle. Now, do the objects of mental science fall under either of these heads? They cannot be measured or expressed mathematically. There are no formulæ for the various experiences of which we are conscious. The formulæ for nervous action belong to physiology, not to

the study of experience. At first sight it may appear that the objects of mental science may be classified; but the classification of one's own experiences is not one which bears any real resemblance to a classification of organs or organisms revealing genealogical connections, and thus opening up a history of development. In making this latter statement, we do not forget the just claims of Comparative Psychology to recognition as a department of study; but we think that its value is at present overrated. Its scientific claims are based on the fact that its classifications reveal genealogies. We may admit this fact, without assigning a very high scientific place to the study. The genealogies made out by comparative psychology strike us as extremely unsatisfactory. At best, we have a few beliefs and sentiments traced back to earlier forms—often by the aid of a good deal of mere guessing; but nothing in the way of results really entitling the study to be called a science. It is not a science in the same sense in which comparative philology, for instance, is a science. Here the results are not only numerous, but as definite as those in any other classificatory science; and moreover the comparative philologist has certain principles—*e.g.*, Grimm's law—derived from his comparative studies, which enable him to proceed deductively. It may be said that the comparative psychologist has the laws of mental association which enable him to treat the genealogy of mental states deductively. But our knowledge of the laws of mental association was not derived from the comparative study of mind, but from the introspection of our own consciousness. They were formulated long before the days of comparative psychology. This, of course, would not affect the scientific claims of comparative psychology if we could be sure that the laws of mental association as employed by the comparative psychologist are true expressions of the actual ways in which psychical development has taken place, as we are sure that Grimm's law is the formula for phonetic changes which have actually taken place. The laws of mental association, as given in our manuals of psychology, are, doubtless, correct expressions of the ways in which ideas are actually called up—the evidence which we have for them being our own personal consciousness of them. But they are, after all, expressions of the widest generality; they are not the *media axiomata* upon which a deductive psychology can rest. Its *media axiomata*, or really fruitful premisses, must give more particular information respecting the *kinds* of ideas which are contiguous or similar, and the *kinds* of connections which are novel or inseparable in different individuals or races. Real premisses of this sort can be abstracted only from the special study of

these individuals or races. It is a matter of the greatest difficulty for the psychologist not to apply *directly* the general laws of association which his own consciousness supplies him with—his own contiguities, similarities, surprises—to the minds of low races; if, in his desire to avoid this error, he does not fall into its opposite and ascribe to them modes of association as unlike his own as he can make them. What guarantee then have we that the so-called deductive method of comparative psychology is not more akin to Scholasticism than to *Naturforschung*? How shall we distinguish between *Culturgeschichte* and simple introspection? That this is not an idle question, any one may satisfy himself who reads Adolf Bastian's *Der Mensch in der Geschichte*, a work in which comparative investigations are dominated by simple introspection of the worst kind—that against which Bacon and Locke protested when they called upon men to return to the data of their senses and the thoughtful examination of their own faculties. This fundamental introspection Bastian, who merely exaggerates the tendency of a large school, neglects for the introspection of *notiones temere a rebus abstractæ*. Hence his works have two aspects. They are at once systematic and confused. A brilliantly red line of theory connects fact with fact, and yet any sensible reader perceives that these facts are most of them irrelevant, because the well-informed author has evidently not realised them for himself in his own mind. The chief danger, it appears to us, of the present crisis in the study of psychology is that the novel facts and attractive generalisations of *Culturgeschichte* are insensibly casting discredit upon the thoughtful introspection of one's own adult experience, without which real knowledge and correct conduct are impossible. At the same time, psychologists, more and more impressed by the impossibility of giving an exact scientific account of subjective states and their mutual relations, are turning their attention from these states to their physiological accompaniments, in the hope of thus constructing a scientific psychology. Because there can be no science of subjective experience, they show a tendency to ignore it, and to stamp introspection, as compared with physiology, as a waste of time. Mill condemns simple introspection, but, at the same time, maintains the existence of a science of psychology distinct from physiology.

Students of Locke, Berkeley and Hume do not require to be reminded that it is by Introspection, and not by Comparison, that these thinkers conduct all their principal inquiries. Their method is to turn the reader's attention from meaningless words to his own actual thoughts—to ask him what he is

conscious of in his own mind when he uses such words as *Substance* and *Cause*. Such appeals to the reader's own consciousness are essential to the old method of English psychology. Locke, Berkeley and Hume cannot with any justice be claimed as adherents of the comparative method, although, doubtless, they occasionally use it. The question then presents itself—Was their psychology a science at all? It certainly has not the marks required of the science of psychology by the modern English school. We venture to say that this school in setting up a *science* of Psychology has broken the English tradition. The English tradition was to study mind not in order to construct a science of mind, but in order to find a *method* which should bear fruit in objective inquiries. The great merit of the Locke-school is that it swept away the merely phantastical and verbal sciences of mind which Animism and Scholasticism had bequeathed. But it did not construct another science of mind of its own to take their place. It saw clearly that to do so would be to create a new animism and scholasticism. The one object which Locke, Berkeley and Hume kept constantly before them was to put men in full possession of their own minds as organs for the discovery of truth and the critical estimation of scientific and other ideas. The passage in Locke's "Epistle to the Reader" is well known where he says—"Were it fit to trouble thee with the history of this Essay, I should tell thee that five or six friends meeting at my chamber and discoursing on a subject very remote from this, found themselves quickly at a stand by the difficulties that rose on every side. After we had a while puzzled ourselves without coming any nearer to the resolution of those doubts which perplexed us, it came into my thoughts that we took a wrong course; and that before we set ourselves upon inquiries of that nature, it was necessary to examine our own abilities and see what objects our understandings were or were not fitted to deal with. This I proposed to the company, who all readily assented; and thereupon it was agreed that this should be our first inquiry."

Locke, Berkeley and Hume were critics. They found science and ethics cultivated securely in a spirit of debased conventionalism. They supplied the torpedo-shock by asking questions like these—"Do you understand what you are talking about when you use this word and that?"—"Do men really hold this and that belief which you ascribe to them?"—"Can they desire or do this or that which you say it is their duty to desire or do?" By such appeals to their individual consciousness men were roused from their "dogmatic

slumber," and put in possession of their natural faculties. It will be readily admitted, we think, that logical method, as we now understand and use it, would be impossible, did the interpretation of experience continue to postulate the conceptions of *material substratum* and *necessary connection*. So long as men held that Truth is the correspondence between perceptions and substrata, their science could be only verbal, if it did not degenerate into Pyrrhonism. It was Locke and Berkeley who pointed out that Truth is the correspondence between the order of ideas and the order of perceptions, and Hume who made it impossible for men to rehabilitate this latter order as a quasi-substratum. Without this foregoing criticism, our Inductive Logic, or the Method of estimating the constancy of sequences, would have been impossible. Locke, Berkeley and Hume supplied what we may call critical prolegomena to the Logic of our day. They showed once for all that we must use our senses; that we must acquiesce in the order of sensible phenomena; that correct reasoning is the exact mental reproduction of this order; and that we must not try to explain particular connections, or render them plausible to ourselves by postulating general propositions or a metaphysical bond. Nearly all that is of fundamental importance in modern logic is thus contained in Locke and his two followers. Locke, besides his indication of the true source of knowledge, supplied a theory of Reasoning, which is identical with Mill's; Berkeley further developed this theory by means of his fertile suggestion that scientific discovery is a hermeneutic of Signs; and Hume, probably profiting by Berkeley's refutation of the assumption of the optic writers, said nearly all that is said by modern logicians in their chapters on Causation. The moderns deserve all credit for the manner in which they have followed out the lines thus laid down by their great predecessors in logical method; but it is all the more surprising that they display so little appreciation of the spirit in which these lines were drawn. The great conceptions with which the old school enriched them were obtained, as we have pointed out, by a habit of thoughtful introspection; any fair mind setting itself to the work of self-examination could not fail to see that all its scientific knowledge comes from without, that it infers one particular from another, and that it is never conscious of anything like a necessary bond connecting phenomena. To hold other beliefs than these, though natural, implies want of thought. Modern writers have accepted, in Logic, the results of this thoughtful attitude—but, we venture to think, only dogmatically; the real attitude of their own minds is different. They maintain, as psychologists, that

introspection is essentially fallacious. They therefore have an end in view which Locke and Hume did not contemplate, when they examined Human Understanding according to the introspective method. We do not, of course, maintain that the comparison of the data of introspection with the inferred experiences of other people, and, where possible, of the lower animals, does not give valuable results of a certain kind; but we protest against the growing tendency to allow this sort of *Culturgeschichte* to cast discredit upon the thoughtful examination by the adult of his own adult experience. It may be said that *Culturgeschichte* interprets adult experience, and aids thoughtful self-examination. It certainly ought to do so, and to a certain extent actually does; but to a much greater extent, we fear, it dissipates the mind amid a mass of often irrelevant narrations, and, after all, gives no laws which are properly scientific, because they have not been obtained by the employment of the recognised methods of science, which are admitted to be inapplicable to sociological phenomena. The laws extracted from *Culturgeschichte* constitute, perhaps, a Philosophy of History or Civilisation—an extremely wide subject—too wide to be called Psychology, we think, and too vague to rank as a science. The growth of religious, moral and scientific ideas is certainly an important and interesting study. But it is not a science because it is interesting, nor is it practically so important as the thoughtful inspection of our own common experience which can be carried out very well without its aid. That it is not practically important in Logic is proved by the fact that, as we have seen, logic owes its fundamental conceptions to introspection as practised by Locke, Berkeley and Hume. In Ethics it may be thought that the results of *Culturgeschichte* are of more importance. But we do not think that they are. They are, at any rate, virtually ignored by a thinker like Mr. Sidgwick who, in his epoch-making book, returns to the old English attitude of thoughtful attention to one's own adult experiences. Against this *practical* importance of introspection what *scientific* claims has comparative psychology to urge? It furnishes miscellaneous narrations, but not scientifically definite laws. And if it be urged that a man may come back from *Culturgeschichte* to the study of his own mind, and find himself able to give a strictly scientific account of his thoughts, feelings and volitions, we answer that the psychologists of the present day do not think so, but feel obliged to connect mental states with their physiological correlates. Now, as the physiology of the nervous system is obviously not the study of Mind, what becomes of the science of Psychology? Μάταιον τὸ εἶδος. *Culturgeschichte*

is not a science; and introspection even in the light of *Culturgeschichte* is not a science; and physiology is not psychology.

Psychology then, if we retain the word, is a *critique*, a Method, a certain thoughtful attitude in science, morals and literature. It is the critical examination of my own adult opinions, desires and tastes in relation to present objects. *Culturgeschichte* leads me away from this contemplation of myself. It may be useful as supplying materials for a natural method of educating and influencing others, by showing the ways in which beliefs and habits have been formed; it may convince men of the impossibility of civilising all races after one pattern; and in other ways it may bear practical fruit; but it has rendered the thoughtful attitude of Locke and Hume unpopular, and this is a serious evil. No amount of information respecting the evolution of belief or sentiment, and no amount of mental physiology can ever take the place of acquaintance with my own real opinions and desires. Modern works on mental science, with very few exceptions, forget this. The conditions of ideation, the origin of moral and æsthetic feelings, and such like, are fully discussed; but we look in vain for a home-question like this—"After all, do I really desire nothing for myself but Happiness." Individualism—thoughtful reference to one's own experience—is indeed a rare quality now; hence our books are not likely to live as classics. Mr. Sidgwick's *Methods of Ethics* is an exception. Its attitude is eminently personal and reflective, and, for this reason, we venture to think that it will live, and take classical rank beside Locke and Hume.

In conclusion, that we may not be misunderstood, let us repeat that we look upon *Culturgeschichte* and Physiological Psychology as studies of great interest and importance, worthy in every sense of the devotion and ability now given to them; but surely they would be dearly bought at the price of making us less accustomed to reflect upon our own personal experience, which is all in all to us. There ought naturally to be no more antagonism between *Culturgeschichte* or Physiological Psychology and the thoughtful attitude than there is between geology or astronomy and the thoughtful attitude; but, as a matter of fact, there is more. To prevent this matter of fact being construed to the disadvantage of the thoughtful attitude is the object attempted in the present paper. Let us prosecute our comparative studies and our physiology by all means; but let us not allow them to discredit the habit of reflecting upon our own thoughts, desires and tastes; for upon the cultivation of this habit our knowledge, conduct and happiness ultimately depend.

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