

VII.—DISCUSSION.

BRIEF CRITIQUE OF "PSYCHO-PHYSICAL PARALLELISM".

A DECADE or two ago, the hypothesis commonly known as "psycho-physical parallelism" seemed to have made a permanent capture of the major part of the serious students of man's mental life. More recently some of the recognised authorities in psychology have dissented from its tenets as representing anything like a complete and final solution of the problem of the relations of body and mind. This dissent has not been wholly without influence upon the majority. Thus the attitude of mind assumed toward the problem may be said at the present time to divide psychologists into the following three classes: (1) those who still accept the hypothesis of psycho-physical parallelism but, for various reasons, do not choose to re-examine and restate this hypothesis; (2) those who are indifferent to, or weary of, all discussion of this and similar problems; and (3) those who regard the entire subject as so profound a mystery that the problem it proposes is essentially and eternally insolvable. In opposition to any of my colleagues who may belong to either of these classes I wish to maintain briefly three counter propositions: (1) The hypothesis of psycho-physical parallelism sorely needs re-examination by its advocates, and it cannot be stated in any form which will satisfy the demands for explanation of the phenomena. (2) Indifference to the problem of the relations of man's body and mind is, both from the theoretical and the practical point of view, inconsistent with the most serious work in psychology. (3) This problem is no more essentially mysterious and insolvable than are all the profounder problems of psychology; but it is a problem for philosophy to consider, while the scientific psychologist adopts a quite different working hypothesis from that of psycho-physical parallelism. These conclusions I should wish to establish, did time permit, by a detailed discussion of the following points.

1. All the data for any theory as to the relations of body and mind originate within the unity of the so-called "stream of consciousness". These data consist of occurrences in, or portions of, one experience; and this experience may be called the conscious life of the mind. In this life, and in accordance with its constitution and

with the laws of its development, perceptions and apperceptions of things—the visible or felt parts of the body included—and states of self-consciousness are alike experienced as connected together. Nor is this connexion simply temporal, a sequence of time merely. It is true that the different items of the one experience do, in fact and as actually experienced, follow each other in time. They exist in the "stream of consciousness" as a sequence. This is true. But it is also just as true that they appear in consciousness as connected in what is irresistibly believed to be a *dynamical* way. Certain feelings of activity or passivity, certain conations and so-called deeds of will, are essential elements of some of these experiences. Nay; it may the rather be claimed that such feelings and conations are inseparable from every state of consciousness. It is these, chiefly if not wholly, which give to the reality of our experience the appearance—and, as I believe, the experienced fact—of a dynamical connexion existing between certain items of this experience. I am not now dealing with the explanation of this apparent dynamical connexion; nor am I attempting the detailed introspective or experimental analysis of the experience of it. I am only stating the fact that the different items of experience appear connected, within the unity of the conscious life, in a dynamical way.

2. Just as patent as the fact of this temporal and dynamical connexion of the different items in the one so-called "stream of consciousness" is the fact of a certain *diremption* of the experienced phenomena by the activity of discriminating consciousness. The phenomena actually become divided; and the act of division is both a condition and also a product of the growth of intellect. Two great classes of the phenomena come to be distinguished. These are the phenomena assigned to things as their subject, and the phenomena assigned to the Self. And this distinction, so far as it rests upon data of experience, is not confused, but the rather confirmed by the fact that certain of the psychoses come to occupy a rather unique position in the sum-total of experience. Their very nature is such that for certain purposes of classification the discriminating consciousness of the individual may set them in a sort of opposition to the Ego and speak of them as belonging rather to the body; while for other purposes it may feel inclined and entitled to regard them as part of the same Self. Thus, in some sort and to some extent, all adult intellectual development regards the body as not identical with the Ego but, the rather, as the body of the self.

There is, of course, no time in this connexion to estimate the meaning and the value of this diremption of the one experience and the resulting classification of the phenomena; or to defend it against the attempts made to minimise its importance in view of recent investigations in the fields of comparative, genetic, or abnormal psychology. The distinction, however it arose, exists as the one unchanging test of soundness of intellect. It is essential to in-

tellectual development; it is perennial, irrevocable, and fundamental in the evolution of the race.

3. These two classes of phenomena, or experiences, those of which we designate the *Ego* as the subject and those which we feel obliged, or at liberty, to consider as phenomena of the physical organism, are experienced in such connexions in time, and with such characteristic colouring from feeling and conation, more or less inhibited, that they are inevitably regarded as standing to each other in actual dynamical relations. All our experience of the two classes of states tends to confirm this impression—tends, if you please, to “rub it in hard,” to embed it in the very marrow of the frame-work of experience. Observed changes, produced by other things upon the thing-like body, are followed by changes in self-conscious states; and changes in the latter are followed by changes in the former; while the very nature of the changes, as well as of the transitional feelings accompanying the changes, establishes in experience what we are forced to consider as a real dynamical connexion of the two. Nor is this the whole of the mind’s irresistible conclusion. For man, whatever may be true of the lower animals or of the ancestors of man before they were human, is through and through metaphysical. If I may sum up in this phrase his whole mental procedure with regard to reality,—call it the having of “innate ideas,” or inference instinctive or logical, or belief, or what you will,—man possesses, and cannot help constantly using, an “ontological consciousness”. It is *reality* that he imagines, infers, knows, believes in, as the sufficient and only account of his experience. He is, therefore, bound to be a metaphysician, whatever psychology or any other science may hold to the contrary, with regard to the felt dynamical relations of these two classes of phenomena united in the one “stream of consciousness”. Therefore, he imagines, infers, believes in, and knows, two real beings, his body and his mind, to be dynamically related in the one experience.

4. On drawing the conclusions of this “ontological consciousness” out into popular language they amount to this: the being which is known as the subject of conscious states and the being which is known as the body belonging to that subject are known to exist in actual, reciprocal, causal relations. The full significance to experience of the problem which is thus put before psychology and philosophy can be stated in no other way than just this. If we have any experience which entitles us to use such words as “reality,” “connexions in reality,” “cause,” “causal connexion,” “causal influence,” etc., then our particular experience of the character of these two classes of phenomena, and of the relations which arise and maintain themselves between the two in the one stream of consciousness, entitles us to use these words when speaking of body and mind.

5. For, moreover, the very conceptions of “cause” and “causal relations” or “causal influence” arise in this self-same experience

of what takes place when states of consciousness that are predominatingly states of feeling and conation, and states that are perceptions of conditions or changes of the bodily organism, follow each other in reciprocal dependence. Take out of the stream of consciousness, out of the experienced life of the soul, the red-blood of felt-strivings, of successful or inhibited willing, of pain and pleasure following upon observed changes in superficial or more interior parts of the body, and the empirical data for all our meta-physical conceptions would be gone. There would no longer be any demand upon psychology to interpret the "stream of consciousness," with its unity in duality, in terms of ontological consciousness. When, then, either physicists or psychologists, or both acting in conjunction, deny the validity of the ontological interpretation of the psychological facts, they are passing quite beyond the limits of the working hypothesis which is alone legitimate for both kinds of work. They should both be called sharply to account for the transgression at the final court of appeal, which is philosophy. And I have little hesitation in affirming that, so far as my acquaintance with the subject goes, not one of the modern advocates of the hypothesis of psycho-physical parallelism has ever given evidence of having bestowed the needed criticism upon the categories which the statement of the hypothesis necessarily involves. What is it to be, in reality, a cause? What do we mean by actual causal relations or connexions? What is it really to be, as all things and minds are; and what to be related as every individual man's body certainly seems to be reciprocally related to that same individual's mind?

6. But to return to the empirical point of view. From this point of view, and judged impartially by the evidence which appears from this point of view, the hypothesis of psycho-physical parallelism is most unscientific. It is, indeed, either unintelligible, or inadequate, or plainly false. With regard to some of the indefinitely numerous and complex relations which do actually reveal themselves to science as maintained between the phenomena ascribed to the *Ego* as their subject and the phenomena ascribed to the physical organism as their subject, it has all of these defects as a hypothesis. How, briefly stated, shall we clearly understand the figure of speech embodied in the word "parallelism"? Plainly not in the geometrical or spatial meaning. Nor can it be strictly interpreted in terms of a temporal or time series. So far as experience shows, what we have is interdependent sequences, with impressive dynamic accompaniments, between these two classes of phenomena. But such an experience is the very one on which we build up our theories of reciprocal causation. Moreover, the time-series of psychoses differs from the time-series of neuroses—so far as we know anything about the latter—in several important ways. And there are few of the reigning fallacies of psychology more mistaken than that which has embodied itself in the comparison of the life of the mind in time to a continuously flowing "stream". Still

further, there are important and essential factors and activities of psychic life and psychic development which cannot be related to changes in the bodily element in any such manner as to justify the word "parallelism"; and this, for the very good reason that in respect of these factors and activities psychic and physical phenomena are decidedly *not* parallel. And no legitimate interpretation of the figure of speech involved in the uses of this word can justify the hypothesis. I repeat, therefore, that the very terms in which the hypothesis states itself are, when the attempt is made to render their figurative meaning into conceptions of scientific value and scientific accuracy, either unintelligible, or inadequate, or plainly false.

Let me call attention again at this point to the data for all our theorising. These data are facts of experience which place the two classes of phenomena in felt dynamical relations within the unity of the mind's life. The explanation which discriminating, "ontological consciousness" gives of this experience refers the two classes of phenomena, thus related, to two real beings as their subjects, or centres of attachment, as it were. It is essentially the same kind of an explanation which the intellect gives of all such experienced relations. Indeed, the very concepts which we employ in all explanations arise out of the same experience.

7. *A fortiori* does the hypothesis psycho-physical parallelism, when, as always of necessity happens, it becomes metaphysical, either fail fully to apprehend, or else quite completely contradict, the proper meanings and applications of the categories which it employs. The truth is that it, too often, sets out with the claim to establish itself in a purely scientific way upon an empirical basis; and beginning to feel weakness here, because so many of the facts are difficult of arrangement under such an hypothesis, it makes the leap into what it has perhaps warned all psychologists against as being the dark night of metaphysics, the "death kingdom of abstractions"—in this case, not well abstracted from well-ascertained empirical data.

8. Psycho-physical science—in the broadest meaning of this term—or the classified and organised knowledge of the empirical data—so long as it remains faithful to its inherent limitations, as well as stoutly defensive of its own rights within its legitimate domain, does not essentially alter the popular conceptions. These conceptions regard the body and the mind as belonging to different classes of beings and yet as reciprocally influencing each other in a unique way. They not only authorise, but they even demand (and the demand is itself based upon the deepest experiences of the soul) the theory of dynamic relations established between the two, which are worthy of being called "causal," and which may be investigated as determined and determining; while at the same time doing honour to the claims of each to a place in the world of reality as known by a trustworthy experience. What science discovers is not "parallelism," but an infinitely subtle and com-

plex network of relations. Our science builds itself up and gains the legitimate respect of all the other students of science according as it is able to amplify and make more accurate man's knowledge of these relations. It actually finds the relations to be far more deep-seated, as it were, and indefinitely more intricate than had formerly been supposed. And although psycho-physical science, like all the other most nearly allied sciences, has been discovering facts much more rapidly than it has been able to establish legitimate generalisations, or formulæ, or laws, upon the basis of these facts, this science is hopeful as to future discoveries. But if the sum-total of its announcement of results—no matter with what flourish of trumpets or expanding use of scientific phraseology the announcement may be made—comes only to this: Every psychical event, no matter what, is paralleled by some physical or nervous event, we know not what, then, for my part, I shall blame no worker in any other field of science for neglecting and despising psychology. What occurrences in consciousness are dynamically, or otherwise, related with precisely what occurrences in the bodily organism? What are the formulæ that express these relations? What are those most general principles of their behaviour and their relations in that reciprocal dependence which characterises the development of the body and the development of the mind? and, How may we, in accordance with the facts, conceive of the essential nature of each?—these, and such as these, are the problems before psycho-physical science. And the scientific barrenness, coupled with its mythological vagueness, of the hypothesis of psycho-physical parallelism has been, in my judgment, a distinct detriment to the cause of a progressive psychology. It has done what all statements that employ ill-chosen figures of speech always do; it has obscured the real state of the case, and the real issues at stake.

9. But, finally, our philosophical nature is no more satisfied to leave the problem of the relations of man's body and man's mind in the condition in which both the popular conceptions and the working theory of science leave it, than to leave any of the problems which appear before the mind in so unsettled a condition. The philosophy of Mind, like all philosophy, seeks to establish the higher and the profounder unities. It finds the life of the soul and the life of the body united in experience in a manner which, while it is perhaps no more ultimately mysterious or even more suggestive than the temporary union of oxygen and hydrogen (whose formula we know), is of infinitely more ethical and æsthetical interest. This union is also, as I have already said, infinitely complex and subtle; and the more we examine it, the more do the complexities and subtleties of it come to view. Ontological consciousness seeks then to be satisfied. It requires some tenable conception of a real bond, or underlying unity, for body and mind. And as philosophy reflects upon the data of facts and laws which psycho-physical science hands over to it, philosophy sees ever more clearly that this bond

must be found in the Being of the Cosmos itself. For in this Being man, both body and mind, has his being; and in the nature of the Cosmos must somehow be found the more ultimate explanation of the infinitely varied, complicated and subtle interrelations of the two. This necessity is especially placed upon the problem which psycho-physical science hands over to philosophy. For in the microcosmos the Cosmos is revealed as nowhere else. But how we shall conceive of this Cosmos so as to satisfy the conditions, as best we may, not only of this psycho-physical problem but of all our more ultimate scientific problems, general philosophy and the philosophy of religion strive to show.

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