

SHORTER CONTRIBUTIONS AND REPORTS.

PROFESSOR GROOS AND THEORIES OF PLAY.

Professor Groos's book on *Animal Play*—to which renewed attention is given by its appearance in English dress—invites discussion and criticism from several points of view. In the first place, we must regret that human play is deferred for separate treatment, for assuredly the child is preëminently animal in its plays. A monkey which delights in snapping open a match-safe and a child which does the same are at the same stage and should be treated together. To divide plays into animal and human, and animal, into plays of birds, mammals, etc., has little significance.

Professor Groos sets forth elaborately the practice theory of play. Play is the expression of developing instinctive tendencies, an anticipatory, tentative practicing, which accomplishes no immediate serious service. Thus the kitten pounces on the straying leaf, and so practices for pouncing on its prey. We may express it by saying that Nature here shows her prentice hand, or that here is Nature's school, but no forced attendance, no specified time, no set lessons, and only free, spontaneous, pleasant activity. Under natural selection this play period of instinct has been developed, wherein the energies of the protected young act in non-serious forms in preparation for mature life.

To this theory of play we must object that instinct as such needs not practice, and again that instinct fully formed at birth is the more advantageous. If the kitten could at once seize a mouse as a chick does a grain of wheat, it would be much to its advantage. If the prey of cats were of definite size, color and motion, and always appeared at the same distance, an instinct would work at the first occasion; but as it is, instinct cannot cover the varying complexity, but intelligent play practice is called in. The kitten has the instinct to spring, but the regulating for size, distance, etc., is acquired intelligently. The learning may be by hereditary impulse, but yet it is better to define play in terms of intelligence rather than in terms of instinct.

But much of the developing activity of animals can scarcely be brought under the term play as psychic. Thus the young bird, flut-

tering and trying its wings, seems not playing, but serious, as also the child taking its first steps. But when the bird becomes skilled in flying, it flits playfully, and when the child is able to run easily, it delights in running plays. A large proportion of Professor Groos's examples of play fall under work. The imperfect, immature, practice is not thereby play, as, for instance, the calf sucks your finger as seriously as it does the teat. Real sucking play we see in children sucking through straws. Play belongs to childhood rather than to infancy, though both are full of developing activities.

We must, then, dissent from bringing all the inceptive preliminary activities of young animals under play. Further, it is not proved that play as fact of biologic history originates in these activities. Has it yet been shown that play does not appear first as life method among organisms adult from the start, long before a youth period emerges? Some micro-organisms seem to swim playfully, and a sham alarming and attacking is seen among adults low in the scale of life. It is quite conceivable that play started with adult practice, and was conserved and developed through natural selection, at length becoming most prominent in earliest phases of life period, and so making the youth time. The adult practicing among his mates must be harmless, and so easily became sportive, that is, practice-work became play, a pleasing method of unreality.

Another outlook for the origin of play is in the one-sided form, teasing. A very combative animal, having no enemy to fight, will be led to attack its mates, but not violently, as that would break up all its associations, but teasingly. This tendency is so strong in the horse that we have the term 'to nag.' The tricks of boys and the chaffing and practical jokes of men are plainly a low form of play, and perhaps point toward the primitive form. The scare game is also a very popular and crude play with animals and children. To rouse real though groundless fear gives an aboriginal delight in sense of power both to achieve and deceive. After a time the teased one would learn that its best defense is not to resent, but to play back, and hence arises full, two-sided, mutual play. The teasing hypothesis of the origin of play is, like practice of young or adult, a possible mode which ought to be kept in mind by the investigator.

One point which deserves notice in this connection, but which does not appear to be touched on by Professor Groos, is the relation of the play of domestic animals to the play of their wild congeners. Though the dog has been domesticated for millenniums, its play is wild and wolfish, and so contrary to practice for its adult life. The colt

in its play rears, kicks and bites—wild habits which have to be overcome in its domestic life. The colt does not play at drawing loads, nor the collie at driving sheep. Selection by man is but a kind of natural selection, and we might expect some preparatory play, or at least some reduction in the period of wild play. But is this the case? Though young domestic animals do not have tame plays, yet they may play at work taught by man, as the elephants at Bridgeport sometimes playfully practice standing on their heads. It is probable that many wild animals are more playful than their tame congeners largely because intelligence and alertness are more required in the wild state. Wild sheep are a case in point. But if man had bred the sheep for intelligence rather than wool, would not the domestic sheep be more playful than the wild? Some breeds of dogs, being bred for their playfulness, are doubtless far more playful than any wild dogs. But what we need here, as everywhere on play, are data.

Another point which is not considered by Professor Groos is the close relationship of play and work, which requires a study of both to understand either. The life of animals and children is a complex of play and work, a rapid passing from one to the other. Man, adult and civilized, is the only persistent player or worker. Birds in building or nesting seem to be continually interrupting play with work and work with play. A boy begins to pile wood in the shed as play, but as soon as it is felt to be work he ceases, unless you offer a wage. The start is often play, but the continuance work. In most plays the pressure of companions makes some continue playing against inclination, that is, makes them work. From dead earnest to pure play is a long series of mergent psychoses. Pure play and work are rare, most activities being merely dominantly one or other.

We have noted that preparatory activity of young is not always play, and *vice versa*. Thus the fledgling, coaxed and compelled in its learning to fly by its parents, is plainly working, and the colt rearing, kicking, and doing just what he must not do as adult, is plainly playing. Now, both reversion and recapitulation are practically ignored by Professor Groos. But it is certainly worth inquiring whether play tendencies of survival origin may not exist, say among monkeys. Is not there a general psychic embryology which has play forms? The place for reversion in the play of youth is evident in such actions as climbing, swinging, playing with stones, animal plays and plays with animals, deceit plays—civilization is founded on truth—hunting, fishing, camping. That these latter sports appeal little to the gentler sex may be due to the inherited reminiscence of camp

drudgery of savage life, and the fact that the excitement of the chase was not then their part. Indeed, anticipatory play is more common with woman than reversionary, because reversion is mainly joyless. If the work methods of past life are the plays of to-day's life, the works of to-day will be the play of 'beyond-man' millenniums hence.

If we divide all conscious activities into work and play, we have a difficulty in distinguishing them in the *plexus* of life. Take the commonest actions in daily routine, as the morning toilet. Here, many are merely mechanical, and so neither work nor play. But so far as consciousness enters it is generally work for men and play for women. In walking down town one will often go several times through the variations of work, play and the mechanical. But play is constantly emerging in life as activity for its own sake. Thereby it is amateurish, is not a means, and has no wage. Is then pleasurable work play? Professor Groos remarks (p. 253) that bird courtship, while being set a 'real end, yet may have the psychological aspect of mere play,' because of 'satisfaction' in the exercise. But we think that 'satisfaction' applies to work. Work-pleasure is satisfaction in results achieved by effort, but play-pleasure is not satisfaction; rather it is the immediate, fleeting, inherent pleasure in the act itself. Fresh, free, joyous spontaneity is the mark of play, which begins, ceases, re-begins when, where and how it pleases. And play-pleasure has no form of its own, but is that of power, skill, competition, possession, etc., that is work-pleasure, so pointing to work as the origin of play.

Professor Groos's definition of play, 'instinctive activity exerted for purposes of practice or exercise, and without a serious intent,' begs the question. 'Not of serious intent' means play, and that is what he is defining. Practice, being less serious than the thing practiced, easily degenerates into play, but, so becoming less efficient than serious practice, it would not be favored by natural selection. We often see play originating as degenerate practice, as when a company assemble to practice for an exhibition, but this completely spoils the practice. The less playful practice is, the better it is. We surely grant all that can be said for practice, yet much play is recapitulation or embryologic, and reversionary or degenerate or recreative, or it may be wanton. Plays of the degenerate type are gambling, drunkenness, debauchery and similar amusements, and, indeed, all degeneration belongs under play rather than under work. In degenerate activities play freedom is only subjective; there is really bondage. And all play freedom is false and unreal as being mere hereditary impulse, and in so far as the play world is one of unreality and illu-

sion. Rational and real freedom lies in work; the captain of an Atlantic liner has a truer and higher freedom than a boy sailing a mimic craft in a pond. It is easy to idealize play as spontaneous practice, perfectly free, pure and joyous, but at best play is only conservative, and very often is reversionary and even degenerate. Play is a low form of life; and it might be said to be on the whole of more disservice than service, and to be supplanted in the highest evolution of man by work-satisfaction, of which we already see some evidences.

Play, as we have noted, may be described as fresh, free, joyous, spontaneous, impulsive, self-contained activity, whether practice or any other mode. The unseriousness of a practice does not of itself make play, for the unseriousness may be carelessness and laziness, the reverse of play.

To the elements of play we have mentioned are we to add shamming? It might seem that activity which did not contain shamming must be earnest, and so not playful, but earnestness enters into play, and makes it real play. In shamming, the activity is so far unreal, and if playful, doubly so. That is shamming, deceit, guile, is a work form of activity evolved in the struggle of existence, and may, like any other, become play. Shamming play is then merely one definite kind, rather than, as Professor Groos would make it, a phase general to later forms. Much of later play is not mock activity, but a real activity used as a pleasure in itself. The boy driving his ponies is playing as well as the boy who is playing horse by driving his companion or riding a stick, and the man yachting is playing as well as the child sailing chips in a tub. So any activity once fully integrated through work by race or individual may be either played or played at, both modes growing side by side through the whole history of play.

Professor Groos traces æsthetics to shamming play. But the only fine art for which such play could account is realistic portraiture. However, mere *resemblance* is not art. An interest in clever counterfeits of reality for the skillful way they deceive is plainly not the æsthetic feeling for the intrinsic beauty of the thing. Do not 'What a good likeness!' and 'What a beautiful picture!' indicate different mental states? Now the method of development shows the method of origin, and the method of progress in fine art is plainly one of severest toil. Æsthetics must then originate as work-form under natural selection as mode of socialization, specially in sexual relation, and becoming integrated, reappears, like other integrated activities, in play form. Struggle, effort, is the initiating and developing factor in evolution, and how is art an exception by a unique relation to play?

To the artist and art-lover art is the most serious and highest work. If art originated in shamming play we should expect the earliest art-plays of children to have this form. But we see children showing a crude æsthetic enjoyment in whistling and drumming, which cannot be accounted deceptive play. Woodpecker music—unnoticed by Professor Groos—is a similar play. So also if animals and children show æsthetic appreciation of bright colors, this cannot be based on deceptiveness. (We have discussed the subject more fully in 'Evolutionary Psychology of Feeling,' Chapter XVII.)

As to classification of plays Professor Groos's scheme is certainly not shown to be a complete and connected natural whole. He omits humor, which ought to be discussed as a possible play with the very highest animals; and scare plays are unnoticed. My dog took the same delight in coming up quietly behind a small dog and giving a terrifying bark as does the child in jumping out from a corner and crying boo! Fighting and hunting plays are hardly to be separated as two distinct kinds. He makes the *rationale* of fighting play among non-predacious animals to be preparation for struggle for the female; but do not also young females fight, and may not such fighting be preparatory to struggle for food and for defense of young? He makes courtship a division of plays, but it is plain that 'calf love' and flirtation are in strict sense the only love plays, that is, playing love and playing at love. Again does not imitative play enter into all kinds of play?

But what we need as a basis of classification is a thorough scientific record and study of the facts. For instance, a continuous study of a dog from birth to death for play and work with photographs and phonograms would be a first step in a science of play, if made by a psychologist familiar with dogs. The records which Professor Groos uses, as made by travellers and naturalists, are mostly incidental observations of slight value. However, it is plain that, since any voluntary activity may be played, the classification of such activities becomes that of plays also. Thus among children even winking and breathing may be used playfully, and we also have finger plays, toe plays, etc. But such an anatomical or physiological classification is little fruitful for psychology. It would see more in such stages as simple play, play and plaything, playing at, player and person played to. As any psychosis may become a play form, a genetic classification of psychoses would apply to plays. Any psychosis well integrated as instinct in the race or as habit in the individual—habit plays are lawyers' jokes among lawyers, etc.—may issue in play. Play is

a peculiar emotion which may invest any action. Play is probably the earliest of the complex emotions. Its distinctness in kind is shown by the fact that we can define it only in terms of itself; when we say an action is playful we have but used the simplest terms, and every one who can play recognizes the peculiar psychosis implied. Play is a generic general phase of emotionalism, which may express itself in the form of any intellectual or feeling mode or of any outward activity.

HIRAM M. STANLEY.

LAKE FOREST, ILL.

THE STRUGGLE FOR A SPIRITUAL CONTENT OF LIFE.¹

Eucken's latest and most significant work has as yet received no adequate notice in the English or American philosophical magazines. The following is an attempt to give the reader some understanding of the methods and conclusions of this remarkable contribution to the metaphysics of our time.

While the reviewer is, of course, responsible for the general run of the following, he has taken the liberty of paraphrasing the text in numerous places. In this connection it may be well to say that the paper was submitted to Professor Eucken, who advised its publication in its present form.

He who, to-day, raises the question of the meaning of existence and the goal of our activity is caught up not only by the stream of the time, but also by a great flood which springs out of the world's history. The answer to which he is carried is clear and simple. Man belongs to nature—he is a part of her—body and soul. She surrounds us from outside; she rules us from within. She points out to us the only way to truth. When man in his pride and strength turns from nature, his home, and pictures to himself the existence of an independent world of spirit, he has only fallen into error—he has only gone out in search of a fabulous realm. And this vain thought of a spiritual world is only a bar to truth and to happiness. As such it is to be fought and conquered.

With this thought of our time has come a great turning-point in history. Through it there arises the hope of a return to primitive,

¹Der Kampf um einen geistigen Lebensinhalt; von Rudolf Eucken, Professor in Jena. Veit & Comp., Leipzig. 1896.