

## Tendencies in Modern Psychology.

A MODE of thought that describes itself as *new* loses as well as gains by its choice of title. Some there are who will be attracted by the adjective, for the spirit which Paul found at Athens is not wholly absent from the modern world; some there are who will be repelled, for it is still possible to be devoted to an idea for no better reason than that it is old. For both these classes the current of their feeling may flow on undisturbed: the one will find a new amusement, the other a new occasion for reasserting ancient loyalties. But in the case of the New Psychology, there is a large class of serious-minded persons who are profoundly disquieted. They are not hostile to new ideas, nor wedded to traditional forms of statement. But they have come to cherish certain ideas as expressing for them their highest sense of values. They have a conviction that Determinism is not the last word concerning human conduct; they make it their constant effort, "forgetting the things that are behind and stretching forward to the things that are before," to "press on toward the goal"; they believe it is possible to "move upward, working out the beast." When they turn to the picture of mental life and its operations presented by the New Psychology, they find little to support these hopes, but much to make them fear that the two are incompatible. To consider how far such fears have justification is the object of this article.

Professor James says somewhere that every innovation has to run through three stages. First it is ridiculed as too preposterous for serious consideration; then it is allowed to contain some truth, but nothing to speak of; while finally it is held to be so true that it is what the older view has been saying all along. There are signs that the New Psychology is reaching this third stage, for recent writers are discovering lines of affiliation with orthodox views. This is important and valuable, for after all Freud is no psychological Melchizedek.

With these aspects, however, we are not now concerned; our interest lies in those that are unmistakably new.

To one feature of the movement the claim to novelty must be allowed: it has captured the popular imagination. Psychological topics are discussed not merely in colleges and universities, but in the workshop, the tram, and the family circle. That books on Psychology should rank with "best sellers" and lectures on Psychology prove a serious rival to the cinema is surely

a great achievement. No doubt a morbid interest and an unclean imagination contribute to this result; there are still many who will spend the greater part of the night in a queue to secure admission to the Bywater trial. But when all allowance has been made for these, it remains true that the public interest is sustained by a recognition that Psychology is at last becoming concrete and practical, concerned not so much to provide a basis for systems of philosophy as to explain the common life of common men. There is substantial justice in the complaint of Tansley that the older Psychology was abstract and academic. Confining its data to the clearly-conscious aspects of mental life and restricting its method to introspection, it over-emphasised perception and intellection, processes which are necessarily fully conscious, to the neglect of half-conscious or unconscious processes which are of vital importance. The advance of recent years consists chiefly in the recognition and analysis of these non-rational processes due in the main to the spread of biological conceptions of mind and to the interest in psycho-pathology.

It is not easy to find descriptive terms which will apply equally well over all parts of the wide field of modern psychological inquiry. For the exponents of the new methods are already organised into various schools, not all speaking the same language nor worshipping the same gods. There is the Vienna school of Freud, the Columbus of the movement; the Zurich school of Jung, more sympathetic to ethical and religious values than Freud; the new Nancy school of Coué, whose methods have been so brilliantly systematised by Baudouin; there is also the important school of British psychologists, most of whom are also medical men, called by Valentine the Neo-Freudians, and including W. H. R. Rivers, B. Hart, W. Brown, Crichton Miller, and J. A. Hadfield.

With the school of Coué I do not propose to deal at all. The questions its method raises belong to another order of thought, though the recent volume of Baudouin on Psycho-Analysis shows that the points of view are not so far apart as at first appeared. Of the British school also I shall have little to say. Without a doubt, the therapeutic applications of the new theories account largely for their wide acceptance. But we must beware of confusing two quite distinct things. Psychology is an explanation of mental processes, their conditions and development. Psychiatry is a totally different science however close may be its dependence upon Psychology. It cannot be too strongly insisted that he who would be a mental healer must be more than a psychologist. As reasonably would a man profess to be a surgeon on the strength of acquaintance with a set of surgical instruments. Only an expert, trained both in general medicine and in psychology, can be trusted to deal with mental systems so delicately

poised and so easily damaged. But an understanding of the processes involved may help us to know when and how expert treatment may be useful; as we see the fatal ease with which the abnormal mind accepts and elaborates a suggestion it will certainly beget caution lest any word of ours should swing a mind unhinged the further from its bearings.

It is to the doctrine of Freud and Jung, and, for the purposes of Social Psychology, McDougall, that what I have to say is primarily related. Speaking quite generally we may regard the significant contribution of the new movement to the understanding of mental life as consisting in the Enlargement of the Meaning of Personality, (a) Intensively: in the Psychology of the Unconscious; (b) Extensively: in the Psychology of Society.

#### THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE MEANING OF PERSONALITY.

The conception of personality which has in the main dominated Psychology is that which we find in Locke, a closed personality accessible only through the senses, Bunyan's City of Mansoul, with its Eargate, Eyegate, etc. It is true that later work has refined upon this first analysis, but chiefly in the way of distinguishing a larger number of sensory elements and gaining a more accurate idea of the processes through which these are elaborated into the complex experiences of adult life. It is true also that psychologists have long recognized the fact that consciousness is modified by unnoticed factors, that sub-conscious influences contribute to conscious experience. But these were regarded as residual traces of previous experiences, psychological, or psycho-physical dispositions. All this the New Psychology would include within the region of the fore-conscious, or the co-conscious, and then go on to insist that this forms merely a fragment of the content of personality. For it, Mind is a highly organised product whose fundamental activities are non-rational and largely unconscious. "The power of conscious reasoning is a later development, playing but a minor part, even in the most highly developed human being, on the surface so to speak of the *firmly built edifice of instincts, emotions, and desires, which form the main structure of the mental organism.*"\* This "firmly built edifice" is composed of associated elements called *complexes*. It is characteristic of a complex that it is organised round an instinct, that the elements composing it are held together by a common feeling tone, and that the stimulation of any one of the elements tends to call the rest into consciousness through the medium of this common tone. In a perfectly balanced mind these complexes function in complete harmony

\*Tansley: *The New Psychology and its Relation to Life*, p. 14. Italics mine.

with each other and in fair accord with reality. Behind the complexes themselves we have to conceive of a store of psychic energy which, when attached to a complex and discharging itself through conative channels, is termed *Libido*. Not the whole of this psychic energy is thus appropriated; in normal individuals there is a mass of energy in reserve, available for various purposes as they arise. So far the description contains nothing distinctively human. We touch the specifically human factor in the notion of mental conflict. This is the struggle which takes place between complexes the conations of which would lead to incompatible actions. The major conflicts, which constitute the staple of dramas and novels, are those between sex and morality, sex and religion, patriotism and family. Such a state of conflict is characterised by emotional tension and paralysis of action, and in the nature of things cannot long continue. The mind employs a variety of instruments for resolving the conflict—segregation, rationalisation, projection, phantasy, repression, sublimation, etc. Of these, repression and sublimation are the only ones that space will allow me to deal with. Sublimation is the name given to the process whereby the energy pertaining to a primitive and lower instinct is employed in a new and derived—i.e. higher—form. It is an attractive concept, if we could be sure that it is possible. No doubt it often happens that in the effort to escape a strong but unwelcome impulse we turn to some other activity; and since the original impulse is not easily resisted we must needs become absorbed in our new occupation. But this is substitution. It is not using the energy of the original impulse to do work foreign to its own tendency.

Repression is the most drastic method of dealing with a mental conflict. It consists in banishing one of the combatants from consciousness. We have recourse to it when some strong desire, which we think we ought not to satisfy, is present to the mind, when we refuse to look some unpleasant fact squarely in the face. Experience shows that attention tends to withdraw itself from the pleasure or dissatisfied cravings and we may so habitually repress certain desires that they cease to trouble us. We fondly imagine that they are dead. But the characteristic doctrine of the New Psychology is:

- (a) That they are not dead, but repressed into the unconscious;
- (b) That they are constantly striving to find expression in consciousness;
- (c) That they manifest themselves there in distorted and symbolic forms, particularly during sleep;
- (d) That they may so thoroughly disturb mental equilibrium as to disrupt in various ways the unity of personal consciousness.

To this we must add that in Freud's view such repressed desires form the whole content of the unconscious, and for the most part consist of sexual\* impulses unconsciously repressed during childhood. Other psychologists insist that the unconscious comprises many elements other than repressed sexual desires, viz. lapsed memories, racial inheritance, etc., but all insist that the unconscious is the basis of the entire mind and manifests itself in indirect and symbolic form in our clearly conscious life. Conscious processes are constantly manifesting themselves as fragments of a larger whole, and what we call ourselves is just so much of this unconscious material as we have managed to organize into relatively stable and coherent form.

With this hopelessly inadequate account of the enlargement of Personality by carrying it down into the depths of the unconscious, I pass to consider a second direction in which modern psychology is enlarging our conception of Personality, viz. by the recognition that the self is a *social* self. Though it is long since Aristotle declared that man is a creature destined for society, the dictum seems to have been remembered only in the philosophy of society. Social psychology is a relatively young department of the science, and it has not yet got its problem sufficiently clear. Too often it contents itself with descriptions of the unorganised crowd or of the mental life of society, as it finds collective expression in laws, customs, institutions, constitutions, and forms of worship. But its real problem is the way in which the character, conduct, and beliefs of men are modified by the fact that they live in definite relationships with their fellows. Towards the solution of this problem we have made a promising beginning. McDougall's *Social Psychology* marks a very definite advance towards a social psychology; but, as he himself says, accepting the statement of one of his critics, "he seems to do a great deal of packing in preparation for a journey on which he never starts." † And the reason he never really starts is probably not unconnected with the fact that his vision of social facts is imperfect. It is not enough to postulate the gregarious instinct.‡ The gregarious instinct is simply an impulse to herd together and is satisfied by the mere presence of a multitude. The social impulse is something both wider and deeper, including an impulse to act together and in fellowship to shape common rules of action. What McDougall does is to exhibit several motives that contribute to social life by making one individual interested in other individuals; what he fails to do is to recognize any definitely social motive, any motive that would

\* Freud interprets the term "sexual" widely.

† McDougall, *The Group Mind*, Pref. viii.

‡ See the spirited criticism of "Gregariousness" in Findlay's *Introduction to Sociology*, pp. 69-74.

make group activity interesting. As Findlay says, "The outstanding fact is surely that enormous enrichment of experience; the multiplied avenues of enjoyment, when once the creature has learned to communicate and to understand the art of social intercourse *with a few*."\* Only upon the recognition of the social motive can we build securely a system of social ethics. Ethics based upon self-seeking tendencies can find no better ideal than the super-man, a figure that looms not obscurely through much recent ethical work. Nor is the self-seeking attitude rectified merely by reference to altruistic tendencies. Altruism is only incidentally social; it sees the "alter" as an "other" and not as a member of a group. Such recognition only perpetuates class consciousness, and make more distant the time when the organisation of conduct shall have for its aim the rendering of social service and the organisation of society have for its object the furtherance of group activity in its highest forms.

The link of connection between these two branches of psychology is found in the appeal they make in common to Instinct for the explanation of human conduct. It is a fundamental tenet of the New Psychology that all actions and the conations leading to them are motivated by and gain their energy from instinctive sources. The strength with which the complexes struggle in mental conflicts depends upon the instinct round which they are organised; the evolution of social behaviour is referred to the Herd Instinct with its instruments, Suggestion, Convention, and Authority. But it is more than probable that something is here being overlooked. It is quite true that we gain a real insight into human behaviour by interpreting it in terms of specific response to appropriate stimulus, response which uses the inherited mechanisms that the psychologist calls instincts. But it is not true that these instincts are the only primitive factors conditioning our responses. The native equipment of man includes aptitudes as well as instincts. These native aptitudes do not provide readymade reactions to stimuli. The child who has a gift for music does not break into song at some special stimulus. He shows an interest in music, learns it readily, exhibits some originality. But these native aptitudes are important factors in motivation.

Further, neither instincts nor capacities operate mechanically; they are subject to control. And the control is the important element. Only in sub-human forms of life is this control automatic and instinctive; man may and does indulge his appetites beyond the requirements of his body. It is, of course, possible to reply that this control is in form inhibition, not a source of positive impetus. But if we have learned Hume we see that this is not a distinction that can legitimately be made.

\* Findlay, *op. cit.*, p. 80. Italics original.

"Nothing can oppose or retard the impulse of passion but a contrary impulse; and if this contrary impulse ever arises from reason, this latter faculty must have an original influence on the will, and must be able to cause as well as hinder any act of volition."\*

#### PROBLEMS RAISED BY THE NEW PSYCHOLOGY.

I am conscious that in this hurried review I have raised more problems than I can solve. There may be some compensation in the fact, which those who know the subject intimately will easily recognise, that I have left many more unraised. My estimate of the tendencies must be brief and from considerations of space dogmatic.

It is to be expected that in the enthusiasm of the new discoveries many generalisations which cannot be permanently maintained should be made. Certainly its treatment of the rules of evidence is very cavalier. But this will pass, in the inevitable criticism which it will provoke and provide. That the movement is on right lines is evident from the striking cures to which its applications lead. That there are perils in it is also true. But we may draw its own lesson and minimise the risks by looking them in the face. On three points I offer a word or two of suggestion.

1. *Physical and Psychical Causality.* The postulate on which the New Psychology works is that the law of Causation holds within the realm of consciousness. This is indeed true of all psychology, but it receives a fresh emphasis in the new teaching. We mean by Causality the connection of any event with the series of conditions out of which it arises. Apart from this connectedness no science would be possible. Psychology is justified in claiming psychical causality as its indispensable postulate, but it does not follow therefrom that the connection is of the kind that we meet in the physical realm. Physical causation definitely involves the assumptions that the quantity of energy is constant and that cause and effect are equivalent. These assumptions are found to work in the physical realm, but if we apply them in the psychical realm we are met by the fact that psychical energy is not a constant. Instead of a law of conservation of energy we have a law of increasing psychical energy and effects that are more than their causes. Consequently, while we can read the psychical series backward with tolerable accuracy we cannot read it forward except in very general terms; and this is due not merely to the complexity of events but to the very nature of the psychical process. Hence the admission of psychical causality does not involve determinism in morals.

\* Hume: Treatise, Book II., Part III., Section III.

That is a question which remains to be settled on metaphysical grounds.

2. *The Utility of Repression.* The Freudian doctrine is distinctly that by repression the unwelcome complex is not destroyed. It opens up a fearful prospect, before which the Ancient Mariner with his dead albatross pales into insignificance. What, then, of forgiveness? "Who blotteth out all your iniquities" is the hope that stands between us and despair. But there is nothing in Repression that inhibits us from "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ." Confession is the *removing* of a repression; it brings the offending memory back into consciousness and consciously repudiates it. "If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

In another way the question of Repression may trouble us. Is Repression always harmful? Biologically and psychologically it may always be so as involving a waste of energy and a danger to mental equilibrium. But if not the best way, it may be better than the worst. If we are not able to offer "our bodies as living sacrifices," better to buffet them and to keep them in subjection than leave them to work unrighteousness. There may be occasions where hand or eye or foot so offend that we must cut them off and cast them from us that our soul may live.

3. *The Relation of Origins and Values.* The New Psychology is constantly bringing us up by referring what seem to us worthy motives to some primitive instinct, particularly the sexual. Whether they are rightly so analysed is a question of fact on which all the members of the school are not in agreement. But supposing they are. What then? Surely nothing of their present value is affected. The real question is what they now are, not whence they sprang. "Even if there could be no doubt about the sexual origin of music, still it would be a poor, unaesthetic generalisation to include music in the category of sexuality. A similar nomenclature would lead us to classify the cathedral of Cologne as mineralogy because it was built of stones."\* This is but to relearn the lesson we had first to learn when Darwin shocked the modern world into thinking straight.

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\* Jung, *Psychology of the Unconscious*, p. 40.