

## DISCUSSION AND REPORTS.

### THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE WILL.

A recent article by A. Pfänder from the Psychological Seminary of Munich offers a detailed criticism of several modern attempts to analyze the inner experience of will-action (*Das Bewusstsein des Wollens*, *Zeitschrift für Psychologie*, Vol. 18, pp. 321-367). It was my attributed duty and, at the first reading, also my intention to write an objective report of this careful essay; but at the second reading I changed my intention and the editor was kind enough to reconsider after that also my duty. An article, the arguments of which follow, critically, the arguments of others, can hardly be reported without repeating not only the critic's, but also the criticised discussions, and that would lead us too far into detail. Thus it may be sufficient to report that the author rejects every analysis which tries to exclude a special will element, that is, which reduces the will to a complex of sensations. The final word leads to the theory of Lipps, who gives to the will its fundamental place.

Instead of a further abstract of the paper, it may be allowed to me to mention a few points in the defense of my little book on the will (*Die Willenshandlung*, 1889), the criticism of which makes up the first half of Pfänder's paper, the second half being devoted to James, Kuelpe, Ribot, Baldwin, Wundt and Lipps. I wish to mention a few points in which Pfänder misunderstands my meaning, and, above all, I wish to add a general word about the whole question, a word which I have had for a long time on my lips, especially since Mr. Seth and others have chosen that first essay of mine as the whipping-boy of physiological psychology.

I have tried to show that we can decompose the psychical facts of the will into elements which are by principle coördinated with the elements of the idea and that the most essential rôle belongs to the fact of anticipation. The fact that an end is anticipated before it is reached by our own activity makes up a chief characteristic of the will, as only that anticipation of the end allows associations about its consequences and thus the stopping of the possible action through the inhibitory function of the association. I showed how also in the case of inner

will-action the result is determined by the anticipation, and how the so-called innervation-feeling is in the same way the anticipation of the movement sensations which will result from the action.

Pfänder first denies some of my facts. He does not allow that, if we try to remember an idea, the idea itself precedes the inner action which brings about the reproduction. Of course, if we try to remember a name, the name itself is not in consciousness, but, as I said in my book, an  $x$  which is given in such relations to other ideas that it can be only the sought name. Pfänder says: The idea is present or is not present; an acknowledgment of such an  $x$  as substitute destroys the theory. He does not see that such substitute, which is of course quite different from the idea itself in regard to its sensational structure, is perfectly identical with it in regard to its associations, and that for my whole theory this side alone is essential. If  $x$  can awake and inhibit the same associations and actions as the concrete idea, its existence is an anticipation of the idea in the only respect in which it was in question, namely, as the center of functional relations. I think he is more correct in another point. He says that the innervation-feeling which accompanies inner activities is not an anticipation of later actions, because such actions are not produced. That is true, but I should say, it does not militate against my theory of innervation-feelings because that accompaniment of inner activity is hardly felt as feeling of innervation, it is felt merely as feeling of activity which only by its fusion with the characteristic succession of ideas becomes part of a will act.

Pfänder misinterprets, secondly, some parts of my discussion by taking the conception of anticipation too narrow. I did not mean only that the memory image comes before the perception, but that it comes before the perception with a feeling of relation to the future. It is anticipated as something which will be realized in the future. This feeling of reference to the future includes not the slightest volition, it is merely the feeling that preparation for its appearance is still possible; in other words, it is the sensational accompaniment of a special set of preparatory motor adjustments. In the same way it is no objection that our will to act can exist without the later realization of the anticipated motion; we have then will, but not a will-action. In such a case we have the anticipation of an effect thought as realized in the future and the anticipation of the feeling of the action which brings about such effect together with the inhibition of all ideas which would produce antagonistic actions; whether under these circumstances the action really results or is stopped by an outer obstacle, is without con-

sequences for the feeling of volition. I did not pay much attention to this case, as my book was especially devoted not to the will, but to the willed action. The deciding point remains also here that the active will can be decomposed into a system of passively felt, not actively willed elements.

But just upon this general point is the real bearing of Pfänder's whole criticism; all the previous special discussions are secondary. If all the claimed sensations were given together by outer influences, for instance by electrical stimulation of the different nervous parts, we could never understand how they can form that consciousness of activity which characterizes the real will. A man in such a case, Pfänder says, would feel that something is happening to him, that a complicated surprising cramp has attacked his body, but he would not believe that he himself is doing something. It would seem perhaps a sufficient answer that as long as such artificial synthesis is not made experimentally, it is not essential whether we can understand the result or not; those who have never heard that a stereoscope really exists, would be probably not less skeptical about the claim that the perception of two flat pictures gives the impression of one plastic object.

But such an answer would be misleading. Pfänder's criticism, which coincides here fully with that of Seth and scores of others, is not to be rejected because we can show that our psychological analysis is right, but above all because we have never claimed for our analysis what they criticise. My critics ought to show that my analysis of the psychological facts of the will is incorrect, and, instead of that, they show only that the analysis of the psychological facts is not a description of the real will. But who in the world has pretended that it is? I analyze the contents of consciousness which I find as soon as I transform the will into a complex of psychological phenomena, and they cry behind me: Stop thief; the real will is primarily not given as a content of consciousness which you find as describable object but as something which you must feel and will as your active function. Of course, such active function it is; only as such—it is not a phenomenon and therefore not describable and explainable, and if you want it as object of psychology, that is, of the science which describes and explains mental life, you must transform mental life into a set of objects and substitute in that service the psycho-physical personality for the real center of subjective functions.

To quote my own words from a recent paper, I may say once more: "As soon as the psychologist enters into the study of the will, he has absolutely to abstract from the fact that a complicated substitution

is the presupposition for his work. He has now to consider the will as if it were really composed of sensational elements and as if his analysis discovered them. \* \* \* There is nothing more absurd than to blame the psychologist because his account of the will does not do justice to the whole reality of it, and to believe that it is a climax of forcible arguments against the atomizing psychology of to-day if philosophers exclaim that there is no real will at all in those compounds of sensations which the psychologist substitutes. Certainly not, as it was just the presupposition of psychology to abstract from that real will. It is not wiser than to cast up against the physicist that his moving atoms do not represent the physical world because they have no color and sound and smell. If they sounded and smelled still, the physicist would not have fulfilled his purpose." (*Atlantic Monthly*, May, 1898, p. 613.)

Of course, this may appear as a postscriptum. But my critics have no right to quarrel with me; I have never hidden my views and I have not essentially changed them. I have not only my students as witnesses that I have for many years characterized the rôle of psychology in this way, but I can call the little book itself to the stand. To be sure, I have always held the opinion that a monograph on a special subject has not the duty to report the author's views of all other things in the world. When I wrote an essay on the will as psychophysiological process, I did not feel obliged to discuss also the will in so far as it is a factor in the real world. I thought it sufficient to emphasize in the beginning that I was there not dealing with the will in so far as it is object of epistemological, metaphysical, ethical and practical reality, I wished to consider it only in that unreal transformation in which it belongs to psychology. To make my meaning perfectly clear, I ended the whole book by the words: "The will is an explainable complex of sensations seen from a psychophysical standpoint, but the deepest mystery seen from the standpoint of metaphysical reality." How much emotion my friends would have saved if they had taken the trouble to read not only the half of the sentence, but the whole!

I confess I should not write to-day the closing sentence as I did there ten years ago. I should avoid calling the ultimate reality a metaphysical one as there is no other reality while the world of physical and psychical phenomena is unreal. And I should still less call it a mystery, as this expression means that it is unexplained while it ought to be explained; I should say to-day that it is unexplained and unexplainable only in so far as the categories of explaining sciences, that is of physics and psychology, are applied to it, but, as the real will be-

longs to a subjectifying system to which the categories of the objectifying sciences do not apply, the question whether it can be explained does not come up at all. It is beyond causality, as it is beyond space or weight. An explanation would have no meaning for it, it must be interpreted and appreciated, not described and explained, but it is not, therefore, mysterious. I should thus prefer to close my book with the words: "The will is a describable and explainable complex of sensations if it is thought as transformed into a psychophysical phenomenon; this analysis, on the other hand, cannot say anything about the real will which belongs to the primary world, the more as this transformation of the real world into a describable system is itself a function of the real will."

Perhaps my critics would say here, that this escape to epistemological questions does not help the fate of my theory, as even then, when the task of the psychological analysis is reduced to this secondary treatment, we have to debate whether the elements of this unreal world are sensations only, that is, elements of ideas, or also volitions which cannot be coordinated with ideational elements. But I am convinced that even in this point the matter has to be handed over to epistemology, and all the psychophysical family quarrels about the muscle sensations and so on do not count much till we understand what we intend in general by our psychophysical research. We may debate about the ways which lead to the goal, but it is meaningless to discuss whether we ought to approach the goal or to depart from it.

Is it really only a specialistic caprice when some psychologists try to decompose all mental life into such elements only as are possible elements of ideas? Is it not rather the mere consequence of the presuppositions which constitute psychology? To be sure, in the detailed work, it is not necessary that the specialist remains always conscious of the epistemological purposes which give to his science logical value and meaning, but if he is doubtful about the general direction, he must look for his orientation indeed to the philosophical principles.

Psychology has nothing to do with interpretation and appreciation; it seeks to describe and to explain mental phenomena. It presupposes, therefore, that mental life is by principle describable. Description demands decomposition into elements and fixation of the elements for the purpose of communication. There is no description without communication, but mental states are never, and under no circumstances, directly communicable. We can awake and suggest mental facts in others, but we can never share a mental fact with others. Directly communicable is only the physical world which is the world

of common experience. We can communicate mental states, therefore, only indirectly, by connecting psychical experiences with the physical world; there was never a psychical fact which was communicated otherwise. This connection with physical facts for the purpose of fixation in the service of communication can pass, of course, through many stages, from the most indefinite popular reference to physical objects and situations to the most exact connection with measured physical processes, but there is no escape from the physical connection. It is, therefore, absurd to think that the relation of mind to body, of psychical to physical facts, comes in play only as soon as the explanation of the facts begins; no, the simplest description has its ultimate basis in the reference to communicable physical facts. In ordinary life we connect the whole mental state with a reference to a physical situation as a whole; in psychology we seek the determining physical connections for the distinguishable psychical parts, but the principle is the same.

But every science presupposes that its aim can be reached with ideal completeness, and it is its duty to transform the objects in thought till the ideal fulfillment of the purpose is at least thinkable. In its preparatory stages psychology finds plenty of possibilities from which it can select in connecting psychical and physical facts; for instance, the mental fact and its physical cause or its physical effect or its physical accompaniment and so on. Each of these possibilities has its importance for some stage of psychology, but no one can represent the final stage, as no one allows an epistemologically ideal connection. There exists only one connection between psychical and physical facts which is independent of empirical observations and of empirical confirmation, the relation between the psychical idea and the physical object which is meant by the idea. This relation stands high beyond empirical chance because it is based on epistemological identity; those two experiences are in reality one which has become double only from a twofold way of looking at it. The idea is thus the only mental state which can be communicated and described by a connection which is logically necessary. If all mental states were ideas, the description would be easy. On the other hand, a mental state which cannot be described after the scheme of the description of ideas can never be perfectly described.

Psychology of the feelings, emotions, judgments, volitions would remain thus on a lower level of description if one possibility was not open. The ideas which correspond to the physical objects show discriminable parts; these parts may be called sensations and the sensa-

tions stand thus to the factors of the physical object in the same logically ideal relation in which the ideas stand to the whole objects. Emotions and volitions are not ideas, but if they were complexes of elements which are possible elements of ideas, that is, sensations, then their elements would be describable and they themselves thus describable in terms of their elements. Emotions and volitions can be communicated only if they are complexes of sensations, and therefore, as psychology has its aim in describing all mental facts, psychology has the duty to transform these states till they are represented by a complex of possible elements of ideas. To the instinctive service of this duty the well-known theories about the structure of emotions arose, and in this service I wrote my book on the Will.

The leading aim of the book, which is for Mr. Seth an 'ingenious caricature,' is then just as valid for me to-day as ten years ago. Of course I see to-day many details, especially about the feelings, otherwise than in my first essay, and with this in mind I said once jokingly in print that it was the product of guileless adolescence. But if Mr. Douglas in a kind defense against Mr. Seth's attacks pats me on the back and repeats the excuse of my youth as if I had given up the principle of the treatment, I must decline the defense. I should change to-day details, but the principle that the will, as soon as it is transformed into a psychophysical object, must be thought as a complex of sensations, was independent of the bold aggressiveness of my 'adolescence' and is still my present belief while "I am grown peaceful as old age to-night."

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### WHAT IS A PSYCHICAL FACT ?

In the September number of the *Educational Review* Professor Münsterberg announces that "the psychical fact as such is for philosophical reasons just as undescrivable as it is unmeasurable, since it is the object which by principle exists for one only and which remains, therefore, ever incommunicable." It will be remembered that in his articles in the *Atlantic* Professor Münsterberg used this theory of the nature of mental facts as the chief prop to his thesis that the phenomena with which psychology deals can not be studied or talked about under the headings time, space and energy. It seems time for some one to join issue with him on this epistemological question, one of vital importance to general method in psychology, especially since he