

PSYCHOLOGIST AND DIAGNOSTICIAN

Psychology has been studied by human beings from the beginning no doubt. Indeed the higher animals doubtless study the psychology of other animals. We have scholarly students of psychology at least as far back as Aristotle. He wrote a book on this subject which we still possess.

What is known as experimental psychology began before the middle of the 19th century with the studies of such men as Weber, Fechner, Helmholtz and Wundt. Many Americans went to Germany for the study of psychology forty to fifty years ago. In consequence American psychology has for the most part followed the German tradition. William James and Stanley Hall were influenced by that tradition but were not dominated by it.

In 1887 when the first psychological laboratory was established in Indiana University there were fewer than a dozen experimental psychologists in the United States. At the International Congress of Psychology held in New Haven last September a thousand psychologists were present of whom about two-thirds were from the United States.

The subject has developed in so many ways that no man is an authority over the whole field. There have been developed widely different and conflicting theories as to the fundamental principles of psychology. Thus we have the psychology of Freud in one direction; the behaviorism of Watson in another antagonistic direction; the so-called Gestalt psychology which represents another point of view, and still other conflicting fundamental theories.

Very few persons of any intelligence will doubt the

importance of the vast developments in psychology within the past fifty years. Psychologists of distinction have expressed the view that much of the painfully exact experimental work has not led to results of importance.

The German-American psychology has been influenced by the analogy of physics and by the desire for extreme precision. In many instances the work so done proves to be of little or no value because the experimenter however exact has not found a vein with pay gold. In respect to one such study William James quoted the lines from Southey:

" 'But what good came of it at last?
Quoth little Peterkin.
Why, that I can not tell, said he;
But 'twas a famous victory. ' "

I wish to make it clear that I believe fully in the great importance of much that has been done in this field by the methods developed along the line of German-American tradition. I may say that my own work through years was of this type.

My special purpose now is to express the view that we require a group of psychologists who shall unite thorough training in modern scientific psychology with thorough training in modern scientific medicine. A great many important advances in science are made by men who bring to bear upon the problem the methods of two widely different departments of science. Thus we have the physical chemist who unites ^{the} training of the physicist and the chemist. What I wish to say is that, in addition to the different types of psychologists we now have, we need a large number of men who are thoroughly trained in the spirit and in technique of medicine as well as in the spirit and technique of scientific psychology. A man who has only the latter may and often does make important scientific contributions but he can not be a diagnostician. He can not be a diagnostician unless he has in a considerable degree the training of the physician.

No doubt the best of our psychiatrists have the double training to which I refer. What I am thinking of is a group of psychologists who attack the problems of scientific psychology with both types of training. These men may be concerned in a relatively small degree with metaphysical problems as to the nature of body and mind. No doubt many physicians are interested in that important problem but the physician's primary concern in presence of a man is to discern what the situation is before him and what can be done about it.

I believe there would be a great clarification of the science of psychology if we had a group of men devoted to the science of psychology who after the manner of the physician would leave in the background all metaphysical problems and devote themselves to the diagnosis of human beings whom they have the opportunity to study.

I should be glad if some of the young men and young women in the School of Medicine would elect to devote themselves to the study of psychology in the way which I have indicated.

William Lowe Bryan.