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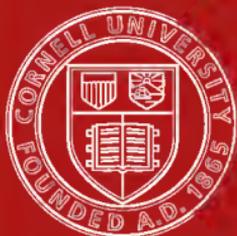
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CONDUCT OF THE MIND SERIES

EDITED BY

JOSEPH JASTROW

PSYCHOLOGY
IN DAILY LIFE

PSYCHOLOGY IN DAILY LIFE

BY

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INTRODUCTION TO THE CONDUCT OF MIND SERIES

It is the purpose of the series to provide readily intelligible surveys of selected aspects of the study of mind and of its applications. In this self-conscious age, inquiring minutely into the nature of the forces that direct the endeavors of men, psychology has come to its own. Recent advances have made possible definite and enlightening accounts of the mental processes; the psychological laboratory has refined, extended, and controlled the data; the evolutionary conception has coördinated conclusions derived from widely different sources. Particularly has the psychology of the social relations been given a central position in the practical world, where endowment, motive, and circumstance meet. The emotional as well as the intellectual, the æsthetic as well as the moral, the occupational as well as the relational impulses and expressions of men have been duly recognized as part of the psychological endowment—as integral aspects of human nature.

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The desire to apply this knowledge reflects the stress of the practical temper; the need of adaptation of the mental equipment to the complex conditions of modern life is insistent. Mental economy enforces the importance of shaping career to capacity; the conservation of mental resources enters vitally into the problems of national welfare. The varied liability of the mind to defect and decay, to distortion and vagary, to degeneration and reversion, sets in relief the critical importance of sanity, which is a eugenic endowment exercised in a wholesome environment. From these several sources there has resulted a sense of psychological value by which to gauge the worth of the educational and cultural provisions which society organizes for the maintenance of its cherished ends. Furthermore, the ready intercourse of mankind has conferred a cosmopolitan and an humanitarian outlook, mingling and comparing, while yet contrasting, national and local standards and ideals. The products of intellectual, as of other achievements, are seen to belong not to one race or to one era or to one order of culture. The beginnings of mind in the animal world, the growth of mind in childhood and in the race, contribute notably to broaden the conception of its mature capacity and its potential future.

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To set forth and interpret the significant conclusions within this engaging realm forms the dominant motive of the present undertaking. The project, if too ambitiously conceived, invites failure. The practicable procedure favors the selection of a modest aspect or phase of the psychological domain, and its presentation as a concrete distribution upon which the larger illumination of a comprehensive survey has been brought to bear. The importance of principle is to be emphasized throughout. In simpler situations a shrewd empirical tact suffices; in complex ones sound practice is more and more dependent upon sound theory. Knowledge of principles is needed to offset the limitations of experience and the narrowness of interests; the corrective of application is needed to make principles real and vital. The search for panaceas as for rules of thumb is futile; yet the desire for a royal road to learning has a strange attraction for the direct democratic temper. Psychology, like all science, exacts a patient analysis, which discountenances a too ready leap at conclusions and hasty application. Yet science does well to utilize the actual interests of men to build upon them the knowledge that makes for power. To supply the foundation in principle for the guidance of practice is to be the consistent motive in the several volumes of the

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series. To make that guidance effective requires a judicious appeal to popular interest, and an adaptation of the material to the needs of the every-day reader with serious purpose.

To give the largest freedom in adapting the presentation to the varied requirements of the several topics and the individual bent of the contributors, it is proposed to permit the volumes to assume such length, form, and construction as circumstances determine. The singleness of purpose and unity of design will appear in the support of each contribution to the general plan, and in their common appeal to the popular interests in the affairs of the world of mind, in the regulation of mental conduct.

JOSEPH JASTROW

INTRODUCTION

The present volume follows the general plan of the "Conduct of Mind" series, which is to interpret selected areas of the mental domain, and to bring the relevant principles to bear upon popular interests and practical concerns. The illumination of practice by principle in matters psychological, is the keynote of the undertaking. By the nature of the subject the unity of the present volume is selective rather than consecutive; the common bearing of the exposition is directed to the expressions of mental procedure in ordinary activities. An appeal is made to varied types of interests, suggestive, also, of wider application. The closer study of a typical mental product serves to bring forward relations not apparent in a superficial survey. This is desirable in that the psychological excursion—here personally conducted by an able exponent—lies for the most part in a region of fair familiarity. To see familiar things in a new relation, to penetrate a little deeper into their meaning, is often quite as

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profitable as to tour through new territory with opportunity only for casual observation. The volume combines both procedures.

The preëminence of the subject of "play" for illustrating psychological principles, as exercised in daily life, is apparent. Play goes back to the beginnings of intellectual spontaneity, and taps a source that vitalizes the mental life at all stages. It represents one of the most generic of mental attitudes. Its purest expression is characteristic of the early ages of life, in which impulse is less hampered by imposed purpose, and natural growth sets its own course. Obedient to the general principle that what lies deep persists, the impulse continues to infuse occupation with a peculiar quality. The spirit of play makes the game of life; the skill in exercising it makes the artist. Pursuits, however varied, however subject to other motives and obligations, conform to the primary patterns of mental activity. In a wholesome sense the introduction of the element of venture, of satisfaction in exercise, supports interest and conserves vigor. Conversely, the adaptation of occupation to the psychological nature will wisely follow the clue thus indicated.

Play in occupation, as in relaxation, fulfills its function in so far as it engages the whole man. The adult is capable of becoming absorbed in work,

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as is the child in play. The capacities drawn upon have undergone systematic training, and are directed to acquired desires replacing natural ones and involving composite satisfactions. Since such is the condition of the mental life, as we live it, we acquire an interest in the constituent processes that sustain our activities. In this group memory represents the conservative factor; it is selected as a type of the mental mechanism. Certain aspects of its operations are set forth, showing how we hold what we have gained, invest it in new venture, and direct it to further service. The subject leads naturally to the larger mental economy of which it forms a part. Efficiency becomes the test. The problem of the conduct of mind is presented as the regulation of work and play. Mental health results from the establishment of a psychological régime suited to the endowment and to the demands made upon it by the concerns of daily life. The process of living, which is real and earnest, enforces attention to the close adjustment of process to result. Psychology contributes a perspective in which essentials stand apart from details, and principles from minute application. It shows in how far the process is the same, however diverse the expression, in how far the problems are the same, though stated in different terms.

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The dominance of law in the expressions of the mental equipment receives a striking confirmation in the apparent exception to its rule, which we call an illusion. True perception, which maintains the organism in its relation to the environment, and illusion, which plays it false, are of one nature. A reliable adjustment to the usual involves liability to error in the presence of the unusual. The senses remain law-abiding, even when the exception is treated as the rule, or conflict of conditions entails confusion. If extended to complex situations, in which judgment and inference outweigh perception, the application to daily life becomes more direct and suggestive.

Every science develops a technique in pursuit of special problems. The results of the laboratory often seem remote from the occupations of men. The concluding chapter brings the two in relation. It selects a given range of endowment—that of musical ability—central in one of the professions and conditioning one of the great pleasures of life—and describes how the psychologist proceeds to take the measure thereof. The investigation acquaints the reader with the painstaking steps by which conclusions are established, shows the dependence of proficiency, vocational or otherwise,

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upon endowment, and the importance of accuracy in determining the basis thereof.

In such eclectic manner, but with a singleness of purpose, the volume covers certain areas of contact between the results of psychology and the practical expression of mental processes in current situations and occupations. The *rapprochement* will serve to quicken the appreciation of the message which psychology brings to daily life, to deepen understanding, and thereby extend control. The simple statement of the text and the familiarity of the range of illustration will recommend the volume to the increasing numbers of readers and students whose natural bent and occupation gives them an interest in the conduct of mind.

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