

## PROFESSIONAL REVIEW.

## "PSYCHOLOGY." \*

The fact that "Psychology," by Professor Robert S. Woodworth, Professor of Psychology in Columbia University, U.S.A., has passed through ten editions since first published in 1922, is proof of the growing interest in this subject; and the increasing number of nurses who are turning their attention to psychology can hardly do better than study this carefully written and comprehensive book.

The author in his opening chapter tells us that psychology can be defined as the "science of the activities of the individual," and that the definition contains two terms which deserve some attention even though their meaning may seem obvious—the terms "individual" and "activity." "The human individual originates as a fertilised ovum, grows in its mother's womb, is born at the life age of nine months, and passes through the stages of babyhood, childhood, youth, adulthood, and old age to death. During this life history he remains the same identical individual in spite of many changes.

"In defining psychology as the science of the individual's activities, we do not mean that the individual should be studied in isolation. He must be seen in his environment, and his activities must be seen as participations in more inclusive natural and social processes. We might mention the environment in our definition, and say that psychology is the science of the activities of the individual in relation to his environment.

"Activities of the individual. The word 'activity' is used here in a very broad sense. It includes not only motor activities like walking and speaking, but also cognitive activities like thinking and seeing, and emotional activities like laughing and crying and feeling happy or sad. . . .

"Interaction between individual and environment. The environment is constantly doing things to the individual and the individual is constantly doing things to the environment. Environmental processes strike the individual, the individual's activity is changed in consequence, the result of this change in the individual's activity is some change in the environment which thereupon affects the individual and causes his activity to change again. This interaction goes on continually. . . .

"The first principle of psychology is contained in the definition, and is that the individual acts as a unit. Without this fundamental principle, often called the 'organismic principle' it would be impossible to explain anything in psychology. But:—

"The organism is not simply 'one,' it is a system of many parts, of many organs, of many, many, living cells. Thus the individual's activity is complex at the same time that it is unitary.

"The organism participates in environmental processes while still maintaining its individuality. Far from being simply responsive to the environment, far from being simply moulded by it, the individual makes demands upon the environment; he has needs, desires, goals.

"Many of the individual's activities are 'synthetic,' i.e., they combine and integrate activities which were previously performed separately.

"Science cannot accept a general impression derived from past experience (the easy way of psychologising) as the final answer to any question. It takes it only as a tentative answer, and asks if any one has an alternative to be considered. As soon as there are two or more clean-cut alternative answers to a question, science is eager to put them to the test of facts in the hope that the facts will rule out some of the alternatives and leave one answer in possession of the field. Even then the answer reached is not necessarily final; facts later discovered may disprove

it. Science will not accept any view as champion as long as there is a contesting view in the ring. A view awaiting the decision of the facts is what science calls a *hypothesis*. General impressions derived from past experience have the status of hypotheses, not of conclusions.

## Child Development.

"The difficulty of controlling conditions is very troublesome in attempts to study child development or the effects of heredity and environment. The experimenter will not subject a child to unfavourable conditions. He will not voluntarily give the child a diet so inadequate as to stunt the child's physical growth, in order to see whether the intelligence also is stunted."

## The Genetic Method.

"When a process, such as the child's mental development, must not be interfered with drastically, the requirement of controlling the conditions cannot be fully met, and psychology has to resort to a genetic, or follow-up method. The development is observed as it proceeds. . . .

"Often, however, a significant development occurs that could not be anticipated. We find a genius, or an insane person, a criminal, or a 'problem child' before us, and we desire to know how he came to be what he is. We are forced to adopt a substitute for the genetic method by reconstructing the individual's history as well as we can from his memory, the memory of his acquaintances, and such records as may have been preserved. This case history method has obvious disadvantages, but, as obviously, it is the only way to make a start towards answering certain important questions."

"One fact to be noted about the case history method is that up to the present time it has been employed mostly upon individuals whose behaviour is abnormal in some respect. Either they have broken down mentally, or their conduct has become socially objectionable." If such a boy is taken to a clinic the staff of experts goes into his history, medical, psychological, and social. "They win the boy's co-operation by their friendly spirit, and make it clear to him that they want to help him by first understanding him. They know that the misconduct has causes which should be discovered, ten to one it is not mere depravity but depends on his environment and on his own limitations."

We have indicated, by the above instances, the introduction to this difficult but extraordinarily interesting subject, a subject, moreover, which the more we explore it, the more fruitful we shall find it, and the more productive of good results in regard to those with whom our work brings us in contact.

## Freud's Theory of Dreams.

Reference is made to Freud's theory of dreams. The Freudian holds that dreams are the symbolic expression of wishes that are unconscious because they have been repressed.

"The Unconscious," according to Freud, "consists of forbidden wishes—wishes forbidden by the moral and social standards of the individual. A repressed wish does not peaceably leave the system, but sinks into an unconscious state in which it is still active.

"The objection of Jung and Adler to Freud's theory that the dream is an expression of the individual as he is, rather than of the individual as he once was, seems well taken.

"Another objection is that Freud overdoes the sex motive or 'bibido.' His analysis of human motives is incomplete. . . . Freud has given an impressionistic picture . . . by no means to be accepted as a true and complete map of the region."

To those who desire to give steady and serious attention to the subject of psychology, we recommend with confidence Professor Woodworth's book on this subject. M. B.

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