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THE ANALYSIS OF MIND

BY

BERTRAND RUSSELL, F.R.S.

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THE ANALYSIS OF MIND

LECTURE I

RECENT CRITICISMS OF "CONSCIOUSNESS"

THERE are certain occurrences which we are in the habit of calling "mental." Among these we may take as typical *believing* and *desiring*. The exact definition of the word "mental" will, I hope, emerge as the lectures proceed; for the present, I shall mean by it whatever occurrences would commonly be called mental.

I wish in these lectures to analyse as fully as I can what it is that really takes place when we, e.g. believe or desire. In this first lecture I shall be concerned to refute a theory which is widely held, and which I formerly held myself: the theory that the essence of everything mental is a certain quite peculiar something called "consciousness," conceived either as a relation to objects, or as a pervading quality of psychical phenomena.

The reasons which I shall give against this theory will be mainly derived from previous authors. There are two sorts of reasons, which will divide my lecture into two parts:

- (1) Direct reasons, derived from analysis and its difficulties;

- (2) Indirect reasons, derived from observation of animals (comparative psychology) and of the insane and hysterical (psycho-analysis).

Few things are more firmly established in popular philosophy than the distinction between mind and matter. Those who are not professional metaphysicians are willing to confess that they do not know what mind actually is, or how matter is constituted; but they remain convinced that there is an impassable gulf between the two, and that both belong to what actually exists in the world. Philosophers, on the other hand, have maintained often that matter is a mere fiction imagined by mind, and sometimes that mind is a mere property of a certain kind of matter. Those who maintain that mind is the reality and matter an evil dream are called "idealists"—a word which has a different meaning in philosophy from that which it bears in ordinary life. Those who argue that matter is the reality and mind a mere property of protoplasm are called "materialists." They have been rare among philosophers, but common, at certain periods, among men of science. Idealists, materialists, and ordinary mortals have been in agreement on one point: that they knew sufficiently what they meant by the words "mind" and "matter" to be able to conduct their debate intelligently. Yet it was just in this point, as to which they were at one, that they seem to me to have been all alike in error.

The stuff of which the world of our experience is composed is, in my belief, neither mind nor matter, but something more primitive than either. Both mind and matter seem to be composite, and the stuff of which they are compounded lies in a sense between the two, in a

sense above them both, like a common ancestor. As regards matter, I have set forth my reasons for this view on former occasions,¹ and I shall not now repeat them. But the question of mind is more difficult, and it is this question that I propose to discuss in these lectures. A great deal of what I shall have to say is not original; indeed, much recent work, in various fields, has tended to show the necessity of such theories as those which I shall be advocating. Accordingly in this first lecture I shall try to give a brief description of the systems of ideas within which our investigation is to be carried on.

If there is one thing that may be said, in the popular estimation, to characterize mind, that one thing is "consciousness." We say that we are "conscious" of what we see and hear, of what we remember, and of our own thoughts and feelings. Most of us believe that tables and chairs are not "conscious." We think that when we sit in a chair, we are aware of sitting in it, but it is not aware of being sat in. It cannot for a moment be doubted that we are right in believing that there is *some* difference between us and the chair in this respect: so much may be taken as fact, and as a datum for our inquiry. But as soon as we try to say what exactly the difference is, we become involved in perplexities. Is "consciousness" ultimate and simple, something to be merely accepted and contemplated? Or is it something complex, perhaps consisting in our way of behaving in the presence of objects, or, alternatively, in the existence in us of things called "ideas," having a certain relation to objects, though different from them, and only symbolically representative of them? Such questions are not easy to

¹ *Our Knowledge of the External World* (Allen & Unwin), Chapters III and IV. Also *Mysticism and Logic*, Essays VII and VIII.

answer; but until they are answered we cannot profess to know what we mean by saying that we are possessed of "consciousness."

Before considering modern theories, let us look first at consciousness from the standpoint of conventional psychology, since this embodies views which naturally occur when we begin to reflect upon the subject. For this purpose, let us as a preliminary consider different ways of being conscious.

First, there is the way of *perception*. We "perceive" tables and chairs, horses and dogs, our friends, traffic passing in the street—in short, anything which we recognize through the senses. I leave on one side for the present the question whether pure sensation is to be regarded as a form of consciousness: what I am speaking of now is perception, where, according to conventional psychology, we go beyond the sensation to the "thing" which it represents. When you hear a donkey bray, you not only hear a noise, but realize that it comes from a donkey. When you see a table, you not only see a coloured surface, but realize that it is hard. The addition of these elements that go beyond crude sensation is said to constitute perception. We shall have more to say about this at a later stage. For the moment, I am merely concerned to note that perception of objects is one of the most obvious examples of what is called "consciousness." We are "conscious" of anything that we perceive.

We may take next the way of *memory*. If I set to work to recall what I did this morning, that is a form of consciousness different from perception, since it is concerned with the past. There are various problems as to how we can be conscious now of what no longer

exists. These will be dealt with incidentally when we come to the analysis of memory.

From memory it is an easy step to what are called "ideas"—not in the Platonic sense, but in that of Locke, Berkeley and Hume, in which they are opposed to "impressions." You may be conscious of a friend either by seeing him or by "thinking" of him; and by "thought" you can be conscious of objects which cannot be seen, such as the human race, or physiology. "Thought" in the narrower sense is that form of consciousness which consists in "ideas" as opposed to impressions or mere memories.

We may end our preliminary catalogue with *belief*, by which I mean that way of being conscious which may be either true or false. We say that a man is "conscious of looking a fool," by which we mean that he believes he looks a fool, and is not mistaken in this belief. This is a different form of consciousness from any of the earlier ones. It is the form which gives "knowledge" in the strict sense, and also error. It is, at least apparently, more complex than our previous forms of consciousness; though we shall find that they are not so separable from it as they might appear to be.

Besides ways of being conscious there are other things that would ordinarily be called "mental," such as desire and pleasure and pain. These raise problems of their own, which we shall reach in Lecture III. But the hardest problems are those that arise concerning ways of being "conscious." These ways, taken together, are called the "cognitive" elements in mind, and it is these that will occupy us most during the following lectures.

There is one element which *seems* obviously in common among the different ways of being conscious, and that is,

that they are all directed to *objects*. We are conscious "of" something. The consciousness, it seems, is one thing, and that of which we are conscious is another thing. Unless we are to acquiesce in the view that we can never be conscious of anything outside our own minds, we must say that the object of consciousness need not be mental, though the consciousness must be. (I am speaking within the circle of conventional doctrines, not expressing my own beliefs.) This direction towards an object is commonly regarded as typical of every form of cognition, and sometimes of mental life altogether. We may distinguish two different tendencies in traditional psychology. There are those who take mental phenomena naïvely, just as they would physical phenomena. This school of psychologists tends not to emphasize the object. On the other hand, there are those whose primary interest is in the apparent fact that we have *knowledge*, that there is a world surrounding us of which we are aware. These men are interested in the mind because of its relation to the world, because knowledge, if it is a fact, is a very mysterious one. Their interest in psychology is naturally centred in the relation of consciousness to its object, a problem which, properly, belongs rather to theory of knowledge. We may take as one of the best and most typical representatives of this school the Austrian psychologist Brentano, whose *Psychology from the Empirical Standpoint*,¹ though published in 1874, is still influential, and was the starting-point of a great deal of interesting work. He says (p. 115):

"Every psychical phenomenon is characterized by what the scholastics of the Middle Ages called the inten-

¹ *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkte*, vol. i, 1874. (The second volume was never published.)

tional (also the mental) inexistence of an object, and what we, although with not quite unambiguous expressions, would call relation to a content, direction towards an object (which is not here to be understood as a reality), or immanent objectivity. Each contains something in itself as an object, though not each in the same way. In presentation something is presented, in judgment something is acknowledged or rejected, in love something is loved, in hatred hated, in desire desired, and so on.

"This intentional inexistence is exclusively peculiar to psychical phenomena. No physical phenomenon shows anything similar. And so we can define psychical phenomena by saying that they are phenomena which intentionally contain an object in themselves."

The view here expressed, that relation to an object is an ultimate irreducible characteristic of mental phenomena, is one which I shall be concerned to combat. Like Brentano, I am interested in psychology, not so much for its own sake, as for the light that it may throw on the problem of knowledge. Until very lately I believed, as he did, that mental phenomena have essential reference to objects, except possibly in the case of pleasure and pain. Now I no longer believe this, even in the case of knowledge. I shall try to make my reasons for this rejection clear as we proceed. It must be evident at first glance that the analysis of knowledge is rendered more difficult by the rejection; but the apparent simplicity of Brentano's view of knowledge will be found, if I am not mistaken, incapable of maintaining itself either against an analytic scrutiny or against a host of facts in psycho-analysis and animal psychology. I do not wish to minimize the problems. I will merely observe, in mitigation of our prospective labours, that thinking, however it is to be

analysed, is in itself a delightful occupation, and that there is no enemy to thinking so deadly as a false simplicity. Travelling, whether in the mental or the physical world, is a joy, and it is good to know that, in the mental world at least, there are vast countries still very imperfectly explored.

The view expressed by Brentano has been held very generally, and developed by many writers. Among these we may take as an example his Austrian successor Meinong.¹ According to him there are three elements involved in the thought of an object. These three he calls the act, the content and the object. The act is the same in any two cases of the same kind of consciousness; for instance, if I think of Smith or think of Brown, the act of thinking, in itself, is exactly similar on both occasions. But the content of my thought, the particular event that is happening in my mind, is different when I think of Smith and when I think of Brown. The content, Meinong argues, must not be confounded with the object, since the content must exist in my mind at the moment when I have the thought, whereas the object need not do so. The object may be something past or future; it may be physical, not mental; it may be something abstract, like equality for example; it may be something imaginary, like a golden mountain; or it may even be something self-contradictory, like a round square. But in all these cases, so he contends, the content exists when the thought exists, and is what distinguishes it, as an occurrence, from other thoughts.

¹ See, e.g. his article: "Ueber Gegenstände höherer Ordnung und deren Verhältniss zur inneren Wahrnehmung," *Zeitschrift für Psychologie und Physiologie der Sinnesorgane*, vol. xxi, pp. 182-272 (1899), especially pp. 185-8.

To make this theory concrete, let us suppose that you are thinking of St. Paul's. Then, according to Meinong, we have to distinguish three elements which are necessarily combined in constituting the one thought. First, there is the act of thinking, which would be just the same whatever you were thinking about. Then there is what makes the character of the thought as contrasted with other thoughts; this is the content. And finally there is St. Paul's, which is the object of your thought. There must be a difference between the content of a thought and what it is about, since the thought is here and now, whereas what it is about may not be; hence it is clear that the thought is not identical with St. Paul's. This seems to show that we must distinguish between content and object. But if Meinong is right, there can be no thought without an object: the connection of the two is essential. The object might exist without the thought, but not the thought without the object: the three elements of act, content and object are all required to constitute the one single occurrence called "thinking of St. Paul's."

The above analysis of a thought, though I believe it to be mistaken, is very useful as affording a schema in terms of which other theories can be stated. In the remainder of the present lecture I shall state in outline the view which I advocate, and show how various other views out of which mine has grown result from modifications of the threefold analysis into act, content and object.

The first criticism I have to make is that the *act* seems unnecessary and fictitious. The occurrence of the content of a thought constitutes the occurrence of the thought. Empirically, I cannot discover anything corresponding

to the supposed act ; and theoretically I cannot see that it is indispensable. We say : " *I* think so-and-so," and this word " *I* " suggests that thinking is the act of a person. Meinong's " act " is the ghost of the subject, or what once was the full-blooded soul. It is supposed that thoughts cannot just come and go, but need a person to think them. Now, of course it is true that thoughts can be collected into bundles, so that one bundle is my thoughts, another is your thoughts, and a third is the thoughts of Mr. Jones. But I think the person is not an ingredient in the single thought : he is rather constituted by relations of the thoughts to each other and to the body. This is a large question, which need not, in its entirety, concern us at present. All that I am concerned with for the moment is that the grammatical forms " *I* think," " you think," and " Mr. Jones thinks," are misleading if regarded as indicating an analysis of a single thought. It would be better to say " it thinks in me," like " it rains here " ; or better still, " there is a thought in me." This is simply on the ground that what Meinong calls the act in thinking is not empirically discoverable, or logically deducible from what we can observe.

The next point of criticism concerns the relation of content and object. The reference of thoughts to objects is not, I believe, the simple direct essential thing that Brentano and Meinong represent it as being. It seems to me to be derivative, and to consist largely in *beliefs* : beliefs that what constitutes the thought is connected with various other elements which together make up the object. You have, say, an image of St. Paul's, or merely the word " St. Paul's " in your head. You believe, however vaguely and dimly, that this is connected with

what you would see if you went to St. Paul's, or what you would feel if you touched its walls ; it is further connected with what other people see and feel, with services and the Dean and Chapter and Sir Christopher Wren. These things are not mere thoughts of yours, but your thought stands in a relation to them of which you are more or less aware. The awareness of this relation is a further thought, and constitutes your feeling that the original thought had an " object." But in pure imagination you can get very similar thoughts without these accompanying beliefs ; and in this case your thoughts do not have objects or seem to have them. Thus in such instances you have content without object. On the other hand, in seeing or hearing it would be less misleading to say that you have object without content, since what you see or hear is actually part of the physical world, though not matter in the sense of physics. Thus the whole question of the relation of mental occurrences to objects grows very complicated, and cannot be settled by regarding reference to objects as of the essence of thoughts. All the above remarks are merely preliminary, and will be expanded later.

Speaking in popular and unphilosophical terms, we may say that the content of a thought is supposed to be something in your head when you think the thought, while the object is usually something in the outer world. It is held that knowledge of the outer world is constituted by the relation to the object, while the fact that knowledge is different from what it knows is due to the fact that knowledge comes by way of contents. We can begin to state the difference between realism and idealism in terms of this opposition of contents and objects. Speaking quite roughly and approximately, we may say that

idealism tends to suppress the object, while realism tends to suppress the content. Idealism, accordingly, says that nothing can be known except thoughts, and all the reality that we know is mental; while realism maintains that we know objects directly, in sensation certainly, and perhaps also in memory and thought. Idealism does not say that nothing can be known beyond the present thought, but it maintains that the context of vague belief, which we spoke of in connection with the thought of St. Paul's, only takes you to other thoughts, never to anything radically different from thoughts. The difficulty of this view is in regard to sensation, where it seems as if we came into direct contact with the outer world. But the Berkeleyan way of meeting this difficulty is so familiar that I need not enlarge upon it now. I shall return to it in a later lecture, and will only observe, for the present, that there seem to me no valid grounds for regarding what we see and hear as not part of the physical world.

Realists, on the other hand, as a rule, suppress the content, and maintain that a thought consists either of act and object alone, or of object alone. I have been in the past a realist, and I remain a realist as regards sensation, but not as regards memory or thought. I will try to explain what seem to me to be the reasons for and against various kinds of realism.

Modern idealism professes to be by no means confined to the present thought or the present thinker in regard to its knowledge; indeed, it contends that the world is so organic, so dove-tailed, that from any one portion the whole can be inferred, as the complete skeleton of an extinct animal can be inferred from one bone. But the logic by which this supposed organic nature of the world is nominally demonstrated appears to realists, as it does

to me, to be faulty. They argue that, if we cannot know the physical world directly, we cannot really know anything outside our own minds: the rest of the world may be merely our dream. This is a dreary view, and they therefore seek ways of escaping from it. Accordingly they maintain that in knowledge we are in direct contact with objects, which may be, and usually are, outside our own minds. No doubt they are prompted to this view, in the first place, by bias, namely, by the desire to think that they can know of the existence of a world outside themselves. But we have to consider, not what led them to desire the view, but whether their arguments for it are valid.

There are two different kinds of realism, according as we make a thought consist of act and object, or of object alone. Their difficulties are different, but neither seems tenable all through. Take, for the sake of definiteness, the remembering of a past event. The remembering occurs now, and is therefore necessarily not identical with the past event. So long as we retain the act, this need cause no difficulty. The act of remembering occurs now, and has on this view a certain essential relation to the past event which it remembers. There is no *logical* objection to this theory, but there is the objection, which we spoke of earlier, that the act seems mythical, and is not to be found by observation. If, on the other hand, we try to constitute memory without the act, we are driven to a content, since we must have something that happens *now*, as opposed to the event which happened in the past. Thus, when we reject the act, which I think we must, we are driven to a theory of memory which is more akin to idealism. These arguments, however, do not apply to sensation. It is especially sensation, I think, which is

considered by those realists who retain only the object.¹ Their views, which are chiefly held in America, are in large measure derived from William James, and before going further it will be well to consider the revolutionary doctrine which he advocated. I believe this doctrine contains important new truth, and what I shall have to say will be in a considerable measure inspired by it.

William James's view was first set forth in an essay called "Does 'consciousness' exist?"² In this essay he explains how what used to be the soul has gradually been refined down to the "transcendental ego," which, he says, "attenuates itself to a thoroughly ghostly condition, being only a name for the fact that the 'content' of experience *is known*. It loses personal form and activity—these passing over to the content—and becomes a bare *Bewusstheit* or *Bewusstsein überhaupt*, of which in its own right absolutely nothing can be said. I believe (he continues) that 'consciousness,' when once it has evaporated to this estate of pure diaphaneity, is on the point of disappearing altogether. It is the name of a nonentity, and has no right to a place among first principles. Those who still cling to it are clinging to a mere echo, the faint rumour left behind by the disappearing 'soul' upon the air of philosophy" (p. 2).

He explains that this is no sudden change in his opinions. "For twenty years past," he says, "I have mistrusted 'consciousness' as an entity; for seven or

¹ This is explicitly the case with Mach's *Analysis of Sensations*, a book of fundamental importance in the present connection. (Translation of fifth German edition, Open Court Co., 1914. First German edition, 1886.)

² *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, vol. i, 1904. Reprinted in *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (Longmans, Green & Co., 1912), pp. 1-38, to which references in what follows refer.

eight years past I have suggested its non-existence to my students, and tried to give them its pragmatic equivalent in realities of experience. It seems to me that the hour is ripe for it to be openly and universally discarded" (p. 3).

His next concern is to explain away the air of paradox, for James was never wilfully paradoxical. "Undeniably," he says, "'thoughts' do exist." "I mean only to deny that the word stands for an entity, but to insist most emphatically that it does stand for a function. There is, I mean, no aboriginal stuff or quality of being, contrasted with that of which material objects are made, out of which our thoughts of them are made; but there is a function in experience which thoughts perform, and for the performance of which this quality of being is invoked. That function is *knowing*" (pp. 3-4).

James's view is that the raw material out of which the world is built up is not of two sorts, one matter and the other mind, but that it is arranged in different patterns by its inter-relations, and that some arrangements may be called mental, while others may be called physical.

"My thesis is," he says, "that if we start with the supposition that there is only one primal stuff or material in the world, a stuff of which everything is composed, and if we call that stuff 'pure experience,' then knowing can easily be explained as a particular sort of relation towards one another into which portions of pure experience may enter. The relation itself is a part of pure experience; one of its 'terms' becomes the subject or bearer of the knowledge, the knower, the other becomes the object known" (p. 4).

After mentioning the duality of subject and object, which is supposed to constitute consciousness, he proceeds in italics: "*Experience, I believe, has no such*

inner duplicity; and the separation of it into consciousness and content comes, not by way of subtraction, but by way of addition" (p. 9).

He illustrates his meaning by the analogy of paint as it appears in a paint-shop and as it appears in a picture: in the one case it is just "saleable matter," while in the other it "performs a spiritual function. Just so, I maintain (he continues), does a given undivided portion of experience, taken in one context of associates, play the part of a knower, of a state of mind, of 'consciousness'; while in a different context the same undivided bit of experience plays the part of a thing known, of an objective 'content.' In a word, in one group it figures as a thought, in another group as a thing" (pp. 9-10).

He does not believe in the supposed immediate certainty of thought. "Let the case be what it may in others," he says, "I am as confident as I am of anything that, in myself, the stream of thinking (which I recognize emphatically as a phenomenon) is only a careless name for what, when scrutinized, reveals itself to consist chiefly of the stream of my breathing. The 'I think' which Kant said must be able to accompany all my objects, is the 'I breathe' which actually does accompany them" (pp. 36-37).

The same view of "consciousness" is set forth in the succeeding essay, "A World of Pure Experience" (*ib.*, pp. 39-91). The use of the phrase "pure experience" in both essays points to a lingering influence of idealism. "Experience," like "consciousness," must be a product, not part of the primary stuff of the world. It must be possible, if James is right in his main contentions, that roughly the same stuff, differently arranged, would

not give rise to anything that could be called "experience." This word has been dropped by the American realists, among whom we may mention specially Professor R. B. Perry of Harvard and Mr. Edwin B. Holt. The interests of this school are in general philosophy and the philosophy of the sciences, rather than in psychology; they have derived a strong impulsion from James, but have more interest than he had in logic and mathematics and the abstract part of philosophy. They speak of "neutral" entities as the stuff out of which both mind and matter are constructed. Thus Holt says: "If the terms and propositions of logic must be substantialized, they are all strictly of one substance, for which perhaps the least dangerous name is neutral-stuff. The relation of neutral-stuff to matter and mind we shall have presently to consider at considerable length."¹

My own belief—for which the reasons will appear in subsequent lectures—is that James is right in rejecting consciousness as an entity, and that the American realists are partly right, though not wholly, in considering that both mind and matter are composed of a neutral-stuff which, in isolation, is neither mental nor material. I should admit this view as regards sensations: what is heard or seen belongs equally to psychology and to physics. But I should say that images belong only to the mental world, while those occurrences (if any) which do not form part of any "experience" belong only to the physical world. There are, it seems to me, *prima facie* different kinds of causal laws, one belonging to physics and the other to psychology. The law of gravitation, for example, is a physical law, while the law of association

¹ *The Concept of Consciousness* (Geo. Allen & Co., 1914), p. 52.

is a psychological law. Sensations are subject to both kinds of laws, and are therefore truly "neutral" in Holt's sense. But entities subject only to physical laws, or only to psychological laws, are not neutral, and may be called respectively purely material and purely mental. Even those, however, which are purely mental will not have that intrinsic reference to objects which Brentano assigns to them and which constitutes the essence of "consciousness" as ordinarily understood. But it is now time to pass on to other modern tendencies, also hostile to "consciousness."

There is a psychological school called "Behaviourists," of whom the protagonist is Professor John B. Watson,¹ formerly of the Johns Hopkins University. To them also, on the whole, belongs Professor John Dewey, who, with James and Dr. Schiller, was one of the three founders of pragmatism. The view of the "behaviourists" is that nothing can be known except by external observation. They deny altogether that there is a separate source of knowledge called "introspection," by which we can know things about ourselves which we could never observe in others. They do not by any means deny that all sorts of things *may* go on in our minds: they only say that such things, if they occur, are not susceptible of scientific observation, and do not therefore concern psychology as a science. Psychology as a science, they say, is only concerned with *behaviour*, i.e. with what we *do*; this alone, they contend, can be accurately observed. Whether we think meanwhile, they tell us, cannot be known; in their observation of the behaviour of human beings, they have not so far found any evidence

¹ See especially his *Behavior: an Introduction to Comparative Psychology*, New York, 1914.

of thought. True, we talk a great deal, and imagine that in so doing we are showing that we can think; but behaviourists say that the talk they have to listen to can be explained without supposing that people think. Where you might expect a chapter on "thought processes" you come instead upon a chapter on "The Language Habit." It is humiliating to find how terribly adequate this hypothesis turns out to be.

Behaviourism has not, however, sprung from observing the folly of men. It is the wisdom of animals that has suggested the view. It has always been a common topic of popular discussion whether animals "think." On this topic people are prepared to take sides without having the vaguest idea what they mean by "thinking." Those who desired to investigate such questions were led to observe the behaviour of animals, in the hope that their behaviour would throw some light on their mental faculties. At first sight, it might seem that this is so. People say that a dog "knows" its name because it comes when it is called, and that it "remembers" its master, because it looks sad in his absence, but wags its tail and barks when he returns. That the dog behaves in this way is matter of observation, but that it "knows" or "remembers" anything is an inference, and in fact a very doubtful one. The more such inferences are examined, the more precarious they are seen to be. Hence the study of animal behaviour has been gradually led to abandon all attempt at mental interpretation. And it can hardly be doubted that, in many cases of complicated behaviour very well adapted to its ends, there can be no prevision of those ends. The first time a bird builds a nest, we can hardly suppose it knows that there will be eggs to be laid in it, or that

it will sit on the eggs, or that they will hatch into young birds. It does what it does at each stage because instinct gives it an impulse to do just that, not because it foresees and desires the result of its actions.¹

Careful observers of animals, being anxious to avoid precarious inferences, have gradually discovered more and more how to give an account of the actions of animals without assuming what we call "consciousness." It has seemed to the behaviourists that similar methods can be applied to human behaviour, without assuming anything not open to external observation. Let us give a crude illustration, too crude for the authors in question, but capable of affording a rough insight into their meaning. Suppose two children in a school, both of whom are asked "What is six times nine?" One says fifty-four, the other says fifty-six. The one, we say, "knows" what six times nine is, the other does not. But all that we can observe is a certain language-habit. The one child has acquired the habit of saying "six times nine is fifty-four"; the other has not. There is no more need of "thought" in this than there is when a horse turns into his accustomed stable; there are merely more numerous and complicated habits. There is obviously an observable fact called "knowing" such-and-such a thing; examinations are experiments for discovering such facts. But all that is observed or discovered is a certain set of habits in the use of words. The thoughts (if any) in the mind of the examinee are of no interest to the

¹ An interesting discussion of the question whether instinctive actions, when first performed, involve any prevision, however vague, will be found in Lloyd Morgan's *Instinct and Experience* (Methuen, 1912), chap. ii.

examiner; nor has the examiner any reason to suppose even the most successful examinee capable of even the smallest amount of thought.

Thus what is called "knowing," in the sense in which we can ascertain what other people "know," is a phenomenon exemplified in their physical behaviour, including spoken and written words. There is no reason—so Watson argues—to suppose that their knowledge is anything beyond the habits shown in this behaviour: the inference that other people have something non-physical called "mind" or "thought" is therefore unwarranted.

So far, there is nothing particularly repugnant to our prejudices in the conclusions of the behaviourists. We are all willing to admit that other people are thoughtless. But when it comes to ourselves, we feel convinced that we can actually perceive our own thinking. "Cogito, ergo sum" would be regarded by most people as having a true premiss. This, however, the behaviourist denies. He maintains that our knowledge of ourselves is no different in kind from our knowledge of other people. We may see *more*, because our own body is easier to observe than that of other people; but we do not see anything radically unlike what we see of others. Introspection, as a separate source of knowledge, is entirely denied by psychologists of this school. I shall discuss this question at length in a later lecture; for the present I will only observe that it is by no means simple, and that, though I believe the behaviourists somewhat overstate their case, yet there is an important element of truth in their contention, since the things which we can discover by introspection do not seem to differ in any very fundamental way from the things which we discover by external observation.

So far, we have been principally concerned with knowing. But it might well be maintained that desiring is what is really most characteristic of mind. Human beings are constantly engaged in achieving some end: they feel pleasure in success and pain in failure. In a purely material world, it may be said, there would be no opposition of pleasant and unpleasant, good and bad, what is desired and what is feared. A man's acts are governed by purposes. He decides, let us suppose, to go to a certain place, whereupon he proceeds to the station, takes his ticket and enters the train. If the usual route is blocked by an accident, he goes by some other route. All that he does is determined—or so it seems—by the end he has in view, by what lies in front of him, rather than by what lies behind. With dead matter, this is not the case. A stone at the top of a hill may start rolling, but it shows no pertinacity in trying to get to the bottom. Any ledge or obstacle will stop it, and it will exhibit no signs of discontent if this happens. It is not attracted by the pleasantness of the valley, as a sheep or cow might be, but propelled by the steepness of the hill at the place where it is. In all this we have characteristic differences between the behaviour of animals and the behaviour of matter as studied by physics.

Desire, like knowledge, is, of course, in one sense an observable phenomenon. An elephant will eat a bun, but not a mutton chop; a duck will go into the water, but a hen will not. But when we think of our own desires, most people believe that we can know them by an immediate self-knowledge which does not depend upon observation of our actions. Yet if this were the case, it would be odd that people are so often mistaken

as to what they desire. It is matter of common observation that "so-and-so does not know his own motives," or that "A is envious of B and malicious about him, but quite unconscious of being so." Such people are called self-deceivers, and are supposed to have had to go through some more or less elaborate process of concealing from themselves what would otherwise have been obvious. I believe that this is an entire mistake. I believe that the discovery of our own motives can only be made by the same process by which we discover other people's, namely, the process of observing our actions and inferring the desire which could prompt them. A desire is "conscious" when we have told ourselves that we have it. A hungry man may say to himself: "Oh, I do want my lunch." Then his desire is "conscious." But it only differs from an "unconscious" desire by the presence of appropriate words, which is by no means a fundamental difference.

The belief that a motive is normally conscious makes it easier to be mistaken as to our own motives than as to other people's. When some desire that we should be ashamed of is attributed to us, we notice that we have never had it consciously, in the sense of saying to ourselves, "I wish that would happen." We therefore look for some other interpretation of our actions, and regard our friends as very unjust when they refuse to be convinced by our repudiation of what we hold to be a calumny. Moral considerations greatly increase the difficulty of clear thinking in this matter. It is commonly argued that people are not to blame for unconscious motives, but only for conscious ones. In order, therefore, to be wholly virtuous it is only necessary to repeat virtuous formulas. We say: "I desire to be kind

to my friends, honourable in business, philanthropic towards the poor, public-spirited in politics." So long as we refuse to allow ourselves, even in the watches of the night, to avow any contrary desires, we may be bullies at home, shady in the City, skinflints in paying wages and profiteers in dealing with the public; yet, if only conscious motives are to count in moral valuation, we shall remain model characters. This is an agreeable doctrine, and it is not surprising that men are unwilling to abandon it. But moral considerations are the worst enemies of the scientific spirit and we must dismiss them from our minds if we wish to arrive at truth.

I believe—as I shall try to prove in a later lecture—that desire, like force in mechanics, is of the nature of a convenient fiction for describing shortly certain laws of behaviour. A hungry animal is restless until it finds food; then it becomes quiescent. The thing which will bring a restless condition to an end is said to be what is desired. But only experience can show what will have this sedative effect, and it is easy to make mistakes. We feel dissatisfaction, and think that such-and-such a thing would remove it; but in thinking this, we are theorizing, not observing a patent fact. Our theorizing is often mistaken, and when it is mistaken there is a difference between what we think we desire and what in fact will bring satisfaction. This is such a common phenomenon that any theory of desire which fails to account for it must be wrong.

What have been called "unconscious" desires have been brought very much to the fore in recent years by psycho-analysis. Psycho-analysis, as every one knows, is primarily a method of understanding hysteria and

certain forms of insanity¹; but it has been found that there is much in the lives of ordinary men and women which bears a humiliating resemblance to the delusions of the insane. The connection of dreams, irrational beliefs and foolish actions with unconscious wishes has been brought to light, though with some exaggeration, by Freud and Jung and their followers. As regards the nature of these unconscious wishes, it seems to me—though as a layman I speak with diffidence—that many psycho-analysts are unduly narrow; no doubt the wishes they emphasize exist, but others, e.g. for honour and power, are equally operative and equally liable to concealment. This, however, does not affect the value of their general theories from the point of view of theoretic psychology, and it is from this point of view that their results are important for the analysis of mind.

What, I think, is clearly established, is that a man's actions and beliefs may be wholly dominated by a desire of which he is quite unconscious, and which he indignantly repudiates when it is suggested to him. Such a desire is generally, in morbid cases, of a sort which the patient would consider wicked; if he had to admit

¹ There is a wide field of "unconscious" phenomena which does not depend upon psycho-analytic theories. Such occurrences as automatic writing lead Dr. Morton Prince to say: "As I view this question of the subconscious, far too much weight is given to the point of awareness or not awareness of our conscious processes. As a matter of fact, we find entirely identical phenomena, that is, identical in every respect but one—that of awareness—in which sometimes we are aware of these conscious phenomena and sometimes not" (p. 87 of *Subconscious Phenomena*, by various authors, Rebman). Dr. Morton Price conceives that there may be "consciousness" without "awareness." But this is a difficult view, and one which makes some definition of "consciousness" imperative. For my part, I cannot see how to separate consciousness from awareness.

that he had the desire, he would loathe himself. Yet it is so strong that it must force an outlet for itself; hence it becomes necessary to entertain whole systems of false beliefs in order to hide the nature of what is desired. The resulting delusions in very many cases disappear if the hysteric or lunatic can be made to face the facts about himself. The consequence of this is that the treatment of many forms of insanity has grown more psychological and less physiological than it used to be. Instead of looking for a physical defect in the brain, those who treat delusions look for the repressed desire which has found this contorted mode of expression. For those who do not wish to plunge into the somewhat repulsive and often rather wild theories of psycho-analytic pioneers, it will be worth while to read a little book by Dr. Bernard Hart on *The Psychology of Insanity*.¹ On this question of the mental as opposed to the physiological study of the causes of insanity, Dr. Hart says:

"The psychological conception [of insanity] is based on the view that mental processes can be directly studied without any reference to the accompanying changes which are presumed to take place in the brain, and that insanity may therefore be properly attacked from the standpoint of psychology" (p. 9).

This illustrates a point which I am anxious to make clear from the outset. Any attempt to classify modern views, such as I propose to advocate, from the old standpoint of materialism and idealism, is only misleading. In certain respects, the views which I shall be setting forth approximate to materialism; in certain others, they approximate to its opposite. On this question of

¹ Cambridge, 1912; 2nd edition, 1914. The following references are to the second edition.

the study of delusions, the practical effect of the modern theories, as Dr. Hart points out, is emancipation from the materialist method. On the other hand, as he also points out (pp. 38-9), imbecility and dementia still have to be considered physiologically, as caused by defects in the brain. There is no inconsistency in this. If, as we maintain, mind and matter are neither of them the actual stuff of reality, but different convenient groupings of an underlying material, then, clearly, the question whether, in regard to a given phenomenon, we are to seek a physical or a mental cause, is merely one to be decided by trial. Metaphysicians have argued endlessly as to the interaction of mind and matter. The followers of Descartes held that mind and matter are so different as to make any action of the one on the other impossible. When I will to move my arm, they said, it is not my will that operates on my arm, but God, who, by His omnipotence, moves my arm whenever I want it moved. The modern doctrine of psycho-physical parallelism is not appreciably different from this theory of the Cartesian school. Psycho-physical parallelism is the theory that mental and physical events each have causes in their own sphere, but run on side by side owing to the fact that every state of the brain coexists with a definite state of the mind, and vice versa. This view of the reciprocal causal independence of mind and matter has no basis except in metaphysical theory.¹ For us, there is no necessity to make any such assumption, which is very difficult to harmonize with obvious facts. I receive a letter inviting me to dinner: the letter is a

¹ It would seem, however, that Dr. Hart accepts this theory as a methodological precept. See his contribution to *Subconscious Phenomena* (quoted above), especially pp. 121-2.

physical fact, but my apprehension of its meaning is mental. Here we have an effect of matter on mind. In consequence of my apprehension of the meaning of the letter, I go to the right place at the right time ; here we have an effect of mind on matter. I shall try to persuade you, in the course of these lectures, that matter is not so material and mind not so mental as is generally supposed. When we are speaking of matter, it will seem as if we were inclining to idealism ; when we are speaking of mind, it will seem as if we were inclining to materialism. Neither is the truth. Our world is to be constructed out of what the American realists call "neutral" entities, which have neither the hardness and indestructibility of matter, nor the reference to objects which is supposed to characterize mind.

There is, it is true, one objection which might be felt, not indeed to the action of matter on mind, but to the action of mind on matter. The laws of physics, it may be urged, are apparently adequate to explain everything that happens to matter, even when it is matter in a man's brain. This, however, is only a hypothesis, not an established theory. There is no cogent empirical reason for supposing that the laws determining the motions of living bodies are exactly the same as those that apply to dead matter. Sometimes, of course, they are clearly the same. When a man falls from a precipice or slips on a piece of orange peel, his body behaves as if it were devoid of life. These are the occasions that make Bergson laugh. But when a man's bodily movements are what we call "voluntary," they are, at any rate *prima facie*, very different in their laws from the movements of what is devoid of life. I do not wish to say dogmatically that the difference is irreducible ; I think

it highly probable that it is not. I say only that the study of the behaviour of living bodies, in the present state of our knowledge, is distinct from physics. The study of gases was originally quite distinct from that of rigid bodies, and would never have advanced to its present state if it had not been independently pursued. Nowadays both the gas and the rigid body are manufactured out of a more primitive and universal kind of matter. In like manner, as a question of methodology, the laws of living bodies are to be studied, in the first place, without any undue haste to subordinate them to the laws of physics. Boyle's law and the rest had to be discovered before the kinetic theory of gases became possible. But in psychology we are hardly yet at the stage of Boyle's law. Meanwhile we need not be held up by the bogey of the universal rigid exactness of physics. This is, as yet, a mere hypothesis, to be tested empirically without any preconceptions. It may be true, or it may not. So far, that is all we can say.

Returning from this digression to our main topic, namely, the criticism of "consciousness," we observe that Freud and his followers, though they have demonstrated beyond dispute the immense importance of "unconscious" desires in determining our actions and beliefs, have not attempted the task of telling us what an "unconscious" desire actually is, and have thus invested their doctrine with an air of mystery and mythology which forms a large part of its popular attractiveness. They speak always as though it were more normal for a desire to be conscious, and as though a positive cause had to be assigned for its being unconscious. Thus "the unconscious" becomes a sort of underground prisoner, living in a dungeon, breaking in at long intervals

upon our daylight respectability with dark groans and maledictions and strange atavistic lusts. The ordinary reader, almost inevitably, thinks of this underground person as another consciousness, prevented by what Freud calls the "censor" from making his voice heard in company, except on rare and dreadful occasions when he shouts so loud that every one hears him and there is a scandal. Most of us like the idea that we could be desperately wicked if only we let ourselves go. For this reason, the Freudian "unconscious" has been a consolation to many quiet and well-behaved persons.

I do not think the truth is quite so picturesque as this. I believe an "unconscious" desire is merely a causal law of our behaviour,¹ namely, that we remain restlessly active until a certain state of affairs is realized, when we achieve temporary equilibrium. If we know beforehand what this state of affairs is, our desire is conscious; if not, unconscious. The unconscious desire is not something actually existing, but merely a tendency to a certain behaviour; it has exactly the same status as a force in dynamics. The unconscious desire is in no way mysterious; it is the natural primitive form of desire, from which the other has developed through our habit of observing and theorizing (often wrongly). It is not necessary to suppose, as Freud seems to do, that every unconscious wish was once conscious, and was then, in his terminology, "repressed" because we disapproved of it. On the contrary, we shall suppose that, although Freudian "repression" undoubtedly occurs and is important, it is not the usual reason for unconsciousness of our wishes. The usual reason is merely that wishes are all, to begin with, unconscious,

¹ Cf. Hart, *The Psychology of Insanity*, p. 19.

and only become known when they are actively noticed. Usually, from laziness, people do not notice, but accept the theory of human nature which they find current, and attribute to themselves whatever wishes this theory would lead them to expect. We used to be full of virtuous wishes, but since Freud our wishes have become, in the words of the Prophet Jeremiah, "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." Both these views, in most of those who have held them, are the product of theory rather than observation, for observation requires effort, whereas repeating phrases does not.

The interpretation of unconscious wishes which I have been advocating has been set forth briefly by Professor John B. Watson in an article called "The Psychology of Wish Fulfilment," which appeared in *The Scientific Monthly* in November, 1916. Two quotations will serve to show his point of view:

"The Freudians (he says) have made more or less of a 'metaphysical entity' out of the censor. They suppose that when wishes are repressed they are repressed into the 'unconscious,' and that this mysterious censor stands at the trapdoor lying between the conscious and the unconscious. Many of us do not believe in a world of the unconscious (a few of us even have grave doubts about the usefulness of the term consciousness), hence we try to explain censorship along ordinary biological lines. We believe that one group of habits can 'down' another group of habits—or instincts. In this case our ordinary system of habits—those which we call expressive of our 'real selves'—inhibit or quench (keep inactive or partially inactive) those habits and instinctive tendencies which belong largely in the past" (p. 483).

Again, after speaking of the frustration of some im-

pulses which is involved in acquiring the habits of a civilized adult, he continues :

“ It is among these frustrated impulses that I would find the biological basis of the unfulfilled wish. Such ‘wishes’ need never have been ‘conscious,’ and *need never have been suppressed into Freud’s realm of the unconscious*. It may be inferred from this that there is no particular reason for applying the term ‘wish’ to such tendencies ” (p. 485).

One of the merits of the general analysis of mind which we shall be concerned with in the following lectures is that it removes the atmosphere of mystery from the phenomena brought to light by the psycho-analysts. Mystery is delightful, but unscientific, since it depends upon ignorance. Man has developed out of the animals, and there is no serious gap between him and the amœba. Something closely analogous to knowledge and desire, as regards its effects on behaviour, exists among animals, even where what we call “consciousness” is hard to believe in; something equally analogous exists in ourselves in cases where no trace of “consciousness” can be found. It is therefore natural to suppose that, whatever may be the correct definition of “consciousness,” “consciousness” is not the essence of life or mind. In the following lectures, accordingly, this term will disappear until we have dealt with words, when it will re-emerge as mainly a trivial and unimportant outcome of linguistic habits.

LECTURE II

INSTINCT AND HABIT

IN attempting to understand the elements out of which mental phenomena are compounded, it is of the greatest importance to remember that from the protozoa to man there is nowhere a very wide gap either in structure or in behaviour. From this fact it is a highly probable inference that there is also nowhere a very wide mental gap. It is, of course, *possible* that there may be, at certain stages in evolution, elements which are entirely new from the standpoint of analysis, though in their nascent form they have little influence on behaviour and no very marked correlatives in structure. But the hypothesis of continuity in mental development is clearly preferable if no psychological facts make it impossible. We shall find, if I am not mistaken, that there are no facts which refute the hypothesis of mental continuity, and that, on the other hand, this hypothesis affords a useful test of suggested theories as to the nature of mind.

The hypothesis of mental continuity throughout organic evolution may be used in two different ways. On the one hand, it may be held that we have more knowledge of our own minds than those of animals, and that we should use this knowledge to infer the existence of something similar to our own mental processes in animals