

PHILOSOPHICAL NOTES

Rational Psychology. The article on this subject in this issue brings to an end the present series by the Rev. Erik Sandstrom. Some related notes will therefore be appropriate.

The subject of psychology has an interesting history. Aristotle seems to have been the first to treat of it under a specific heading. The Latinized title of his work was *De Anima*. Earlier, Plato treated of psychological topics but not under a separate heading. They must be gathered together from various places in his writings. But when his psychology is assembled, it appears that even he had predecessors in the treatment of the soul as a philosophical topic. (For the non-originality of Plato in this respect coupled with a modern judgment that his work should not be regarded seriously as "scientific psychology" see *Plato—The Man and His Work*, E. Taylor, p. 281.)

Swedenborg's work, left by him in MS without a title, has suffered changes in its title over the years since it was first published. The Latin edition was called *De Anima* by the editor, J. F. Im. Tafel, in 1849. The first page of this edition is reproduced, as is Tafel's preface, in the first English edition translated and published by Sewall in 1900. But Sewall gave to the work the title, *The Soul or Rational Psychology*. The Rogers-Acton edition appeared in 1950 under the title *Rational Psychology*. Without investigating the reasons for these choices I observe only the evolution or change of the title. (See "Introduction by the Editor," page v of the 1950 edition, for the reason that *Rational Psychology* was chosen as the title for that edition.)

Between the date when *De Anima* was published by Tafel in 1849 and the date when *Rational Psychology* was published by Rogers and Acton in 1950, the name "rational psychology" had all but vanished from the list of disciplines treated by scholars.

The place of psychology, as it was known by philosophers from Aristotle to Swedenborg, has been taken by a discipline that is quite different. Of the various branches of psychology that have sprung up, that which is known as "experimental psychology" comes closest to treating of the same topics as were previously treated of

under "rational psychology." However, "soul" as well as "discrete degrees" between levels of mental activity is a term foreign to modern psychology. The term "behavioral psychology" is a general term which includes, besides experimental psychology, social, developmental, and general psychology. (Cf., e.g., the 1966 M.I.T. Press Catalogue for recent listings in psychology in the fields mentioned.)

From Rational Psychology to the Present Time. The nature of rational psychology is described by Swedenborg in the opening paragraph of his "An Introduction to Rational Psychology" in the *Economy of the Animal Kingdom* as follows :

Psychology is the science which treats of the essence and nature of the soul, and of the mode in which she flows into the actions of her body ; consequently it is the first and last of those sciences which lead to the knowledge of the animal economy. But whereas the soul has her residence in a place so sublime and eminent (no. 270), that we cannot ascend to her, and attain to the knowledge of her, except by a particular and general investigation of the lower and accessible things of her kingdom ; or whereas she lives withdrawn so far within, that she cannot be exposed to view until the coverings under which she is hidden are unfolded and removed in order : it hence becomes necessary that we ascend to her by the same steps or degrees, and the same ladder, by which her nature, in the formation of the things of her kingdom, descends into her body. (EAK I, 579.)

The above was written in 1741. William James, physiologist-psychologist-philosopher, writing in 1906, one and a half centuries later, had the following to say :

For a hundred and fifty years past the progress of science has seemed to mean the enlargement of the material universe and the diminution of man's importance. The result is what one may call the growth of naturalistic or positivistic feeling. Man is no lawgiver to nature, he is an absorber. She it is who stands firm ; he it is who must accommodate himself. Let him record truth, inhuman though it be, and submit to it ! The romantic spontaneity and courage are gone, the vision is materialistic and depressing. Ideals appear as inert byproducts of physiology ; what is higher is explained by what is lower and treated forever as a case of "nothing but"—nothing but something else of a quite inferior sort. You get, in short, a materialistic universe, in which only the tough-minded find themselves congenially at home. (*Pragmatism and Other Essays*, p. 11)

Who are the "tough-minded" ? James had distinguished earlier between the "tough-minded" and the "tender-minded" by summarizing the mental make-up of these two types as follows :

THE TENDER-MINDED

Rationalistic (going by "principles")
 Intellectualistic
 Idealistic
 Optimistic
 Religious
 Free-willist
 Monistic
 Dogmatical

THE TOUGH-MINDED

Empiricist (going by "facts")
 Sensationalistic
 Materialistic
 Pessimistic
 Irreligious
 Fatalistic
 Pluralistic
 Sceptical

He asks the reader :

Pray postpone for a moment the question whether the two contrasted mixtures which I have written down are each inwardly coherent and self-consistent or not. . . .

(To depart for a moment from the topic now being considered, I wonder why he places "monistic" and "pluralistic" as he does.)

These quotations from James do not specifically deal with the history of psychology but instead with the general change in scientific temper. James is a happy choice as an authority because he speaks from a background involving three disciplines: anatomy, psychology and philosophy. Since the time of James it has become increasingly difficult to find anyone who can speak in an authoritative way from such a wide perspective of the history of thought using all three of these areas.

Important Differences in Modern Psychology from Swedenborg's Psychology. This note does not intend to list the changes which are important from the point of view of the modern psychologist. I wish only to bring out two differences important to the understanding of Swedenborg's psychology :

1. The discarding of the concept of "soul" and
2. The lack of any effect upon the history of thought of Swedenborg's doctrine of discrete degrees.

Apparently the changes in other respects in psychology in the intervening years constitute not a simple growth nor even evolution, but a radical departure from the discipline known as rational psychology.

A Higher Psychology? The Writings treat of what in a sense is a higher psychology than any psychology in the history of

thought—higher even than the psychology described by Swedenborg in his book *The Rational Psychology*.

An example of this higher psychology is the following: “With man there is knowledge, intelligence, and wisdom.” (CL 130) Of course the Writings do not use the expression, “higher psychology,” and so far as I know no one has used it in this connection. I use it here only in order to call attention to the several ways in which man can be regarded which are not ordinarily involved in psychology. For example, as in the quotation given: as an active thinking spirit, namely as to his knowledge, or as to his intelligence, or according to wisdom.

These three degrees of the activity of man’s thinking spirit are proper to him as a gatherer of knowledge, as one who is capable of reasoning, and as one capable of living according to truth, respectively.

Another example of higher psychology appears in the consideration of degrees of truth. See AC 1495 where the list is given as :

memory-knowledges
rational truths
intellectual truths
celestial truths

Each of these has its own seat in the mind. The orderly flow of truths, according to the Writings, is from the celestial through the intellectual downward. Nevertheless in order that this may be possible, it is necessary that each of these seats be opened by instruction, beginning with the lowest, that is, with memory-knowledges, and proceeding upward. This is the task that is involved in New Church education.

The first example illustrates how psychology is extended into higher discrete levels when we include those aspects of man that are learned from revelation. The second example illustrates how educational psychology may be similarly extended.

Science, Philosophy and Religion. The study of rational psychology involves all three of these. Each has its share in the work *Rational Psychology* written by Swedenborg. Science and philosophy enter explicitly.

Religion enters implicitly. Had Swedenborg not written the

theological Writings, I do not think we could establish this last idea. But he did. The moral character of the soul laid down in the *Rational Psychology* is now recognized as consistent with that religion based upon revelation. The complete nature of this moral character cannot be realized without the Writings.

This dependence of the orderly and moral development of the mind upon revelation is to be contrasted with the origin of ethical principles as in the following: 1. upon enlightened self interest as in pragmatism; or 2. upon rationalism as with the ethics of Spinoza; or 3. upon the ethics of Plato and Aristotle—the origin of which seems to depend as much upon the negative principle of protest against the skeptical conclusions of the sophists as upon any single positive principle.

To gather knowledges and hence to fill the memory is to appeal to science. To use reason is to be philosophical. To be in wisdom is to live according to religion, and this involves living consciously the truths that have been arrived at—even those arrived at through activities of the lower levels of the mind.

But when we try to relate intellect and wisdom in this manner, we are relating our philosophical views of psychology with religious views of psychology—that is, with such things as are suggested in the previous note, “A Higher Psychology?”

Thus religion and philosophy as disciplines ought properly to be considered together at the same time by the same mind.

Possible Relations between Philosophy and Religion. In the above notes I have set down a belief that it is necessary to relate the two disciplines of religion and philosophy when one studies man's psychology.

It is possible we need to make use only of science when interested only in the anatomy of the brain. It is possible we need also to consider only religion when considering the pursuit of a good life through application of truths in use. But in the detailed study of the seats of several levels of activity in man's mind and of the degrees of truth with him we enter a psychology in which either science or religion alone seems inadequate.

This accordingly brings religion and philosophy into direct association with each other at the same time in man's thinking.

But philosophers do not now, nor did they except on rare

occasions in the past, consider this mutual relationship between religion and philosophy to be essential.

Two alternate views are common :

1. That when religion and philosophy are considered at the same time, there appears a disparity or incongruity between them leading to conflicts.

2. That the influence of religion and philosophy in time is one of emphasis ; at one time it is religion that holds sway, at another time it is philosophy.

F. M. Cornford relates these two views. The former situation is described in one place as a "sort of border warfare" :

The words, Religion and Philosophy, perhaps suggest to most people two distinct provinces of thought between which, if (like the Greeks) we include Science under Philosophy, there is commonly held to be some sort of border warfare. (*From Religion to Philosophy*, F. M. Cornford, p. v.)

The second view is represented by Cornford as follows :

It is, however, also possible to think of them as two successive phases, or modes, of the expression of man's feelings and beliefs about the world. . . . (p. v.)

It is evident from the title of Cornford's book that this last is the view he is developing, *i.e.*, first in time there is religion, then at a later time philosophy appears. But it should be noted that under such a view philosophy takes the place of religion. This is quite another thing than the view that, when philosophy is developed, it and religion bear a relation to each other.

The time-sequence relation wherein philosophy takes the place of religion is also described by Windelband :

The development which Greek philosophy had taken, and the ever more sharply pronounced opposition to the religion of the people into which it had come, brought with it the result that the special task of that wisdom for the conduct of life which the post Aristotelian philosophy sought, was to find a *compensation for religious faith*. (p. 157)

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