

"I'll row you o'er the ferry. It is not for your silver bright, But for your winsome lady,"

he was to receive the lady for his pay. Similarly, I recently found that one of my own children was reading (and accepting) a verse of Tennyson's In Memoriam as

"Ring out the *food* of rich and poor, Ring in *redness* to all mankind,"

and finding no inward difficulty.

The only safeguard against this sort of misconceiving is to insist on varied statement, and to bring the child's conceptions, wherever it be possible, to some sort of practical test.

Let us next pass to the subject of Apperception.

#### XIV. APPERCEPTION

'Apperception' is a word which cuts a great figure in the pedagogics of the present day. Read, for example, this advertisement of a certain text-book, which I take from an educational journal:--

#WHAT IS APPERCEPTION?#

For an explanation of Apperception see Blank's PSYCHOLOGY, Vol. ---- of the ---- Education Series, just published.

The difference between Perception and Apperception is explained for the teacher in the preface to Blank's PSYCHOLOGY.

Many teachers are inquiring, "What is the meaning of Apperception in educational psychology?" Just the book for them is Blank's PSYCHOLOGY in which the idea was first expounded.

The most important idea in educational psychology is Apperception. The teacher may find this expounded in Blank's PSYCHOLOGY. The idea of Apperception is making a revolution in educational methods in Germany. It is explained in Blank's PSYCHOLOGY, Vol. ---- of the ---- Education Series, just published.

Blank's PSYCHOLOGY will be mailed prepaid to any address on receipt of \$1.00.

Such an advertisement is in sober earnest a disgrace to all concerned; and such talk as it indulges in is the sort of thing I had in view when I said at our first meeting that the teachers were suffering at the present day from a certain industrious mystification on the part of editors and publishers. Perhaps the word 'apperception' flourished in their eyes and ears as it nowadays often is, embodies as much of this mystification as any other single thing. The conscientious young teacher is led to believe that it contains a recondite and portentous secret, by losing the true inwardness of which her whole career may be shattered. And yet, when she turns to the books and reads about it, it seems so trivial and commonplace a matter,--meaning nothing more than the manner in which we receive a thing into our minds,--that she fears she must have missed the point through the shallowness of her intelligence, and goes about thereafter afflicted with a sense either of uncertainty or of stupidity, and in each case remaining mortified at being so inadequate to her mission.

Now apperception is an extremely useful word in pedagogics, and offers a convenient name for a process to which every teacher must frequently refer. But it verily means nothing more than the act of taking a thing into the mind. It corresponds to nothing peculiar or elementary in psychology, being only one of the innumerable results of the psychological process of association of ideas; and psychology itself can easily dispense with the word, useful as it may be in pedagogics.

The gist of the matter is this: Every impression that comes in from without, be it a sentence which we hear, an object of vision, or an effluvium which assails our nose, no sooner enters our consciousness than it is drafted off in some determinate direction or other, making connection with the other materials already there, and finally producing what we call our reaction. The particular connections it strikes into are determined by our past experiences and the 'associations' of the present sort of impression with them. If, for instance, you hear me call out A, B, C, it is ten to one that you will react on the impression by inwardly or outwardly articulating D, E, F. The impression arouses its old associates: they go out to meet it; it is received by them, recognized by the mind as 'the beginning of the alphabet.' It is the fate of every impression thus to fall into a mind preoccupied with memories, ideas, and interests, and by these it is taken in. Educated as we already are, we never get an experience that remains for us completely nondescript: it always *reminds* of something similar in quality, or of some context that might have surrounded it before, and which it now in some way suggests. This mental escort which the mind supplies is drawn, of course, from the mind's ready-made stock. We *conceive* the impression in some definite way. We dispose of it according to our acquired possibilities, be they few or many, in the way of 'ideas.' This way of taking in the object is the process of apperception. The conceptions which meet and assimilate it are called by Herbart the 'apperceiving mass.' The apperceived impression is engulfed in this, and the result is a new field of consciousness, of which one part (and often a very small part) comes from the outer world, and another part (sometimes by far the largest) comes from the previous contents of the mind.

I think that you see plainly enough now that the process of apperception is what I called it a moment ago, a resultant of the association of ideas. The product is a sort of fusion of the new with the old, in which it is often impossible to distinguish the share of the two factors. For example, when we listen to a person speaking or read a page of print, much of what we think we see or hear is supplied from our memory. We overlook misprints, imagining the right letters, though we see the wrong ones; and how little we actually hear, when we listen to speech, we realize when we go to a foreign theatre; for there what troubles us is not so much that we cannot understand what the actors say as that we cannot hear their words. The fact is that we hear quite as little under similar conditions at home, only our mind, being fuller of English verbal associations, supplies the requisite material for comprehension upon a much slighter auditory hint.

In all the apperceptive operations of the mind, a certain general law makes itself felt,--the law of economy. In admitting a new body of experience, we instinctively seek to disturb as little as possible our pre-existing stock of ideas. We always try to name a new experience in some way which will assimilate it to what we already know. We hate anything *absolutely* new, anything without any name, and for which a new name must be forged. So we take the nearest name, even though it be inappropriate. A child will call snow, when he sees it for the first time, sugar or white butterflies. The sail of a boat he calls a curtain; an egg in its shell, seen for the first time, he calls a pretty potato; an orange, a ball; a folding corkscrew, a pair of bad scissors. Caspar Hauser called the first geese he saw horses, and the Polynesians called Captain Cook's horses pigs. Mr. Rooper has written a little book on apperception, to which he gives the title of "A Pot of Green Feathers," that being the name applied to a pot of ferns by a child who had never seen ferns before.

In later life this economical tendency to leave the old undisturbed leads to what we know as 'old fogyism.' A new idea or a fact which would entail extensive rearrangement of the previous system of beliefs is always ignored or extruded from the mind in case it cannot be sophistically reinterpreted so as to tally harmoniously with the system. We have all conducted discussions with middle-aged people, overpowered them with our reasons, forced them to admit our contention, and a week later found them back as secure and constant in their old opinion as if they had never conversed with us at all. We call them old fogies; but there are young fogies, too. Old fogyism begins at a younger age than we think. I am almost afraid to say so, but I believe that in the majority of human beings it begins at about twenty-five.

In some of the books we find the various forms of apperception codified, and their subdivisions numbered and ticketed in tabular form in the way so delightful to the pedagogic eye. In one book which I remember reading there were sixteen different types of apperception discriminated from each other. There was associative

apperception, subsumptive apperception, assimilative apperception, and others up to sixteen. It is needless to say that this is nothing but an exhibition of the crass artificiality which has always haunted psychology, and which perpetuates itself by lingering along, especially in these works which are advertised as 'written for the use of teachers.' The flowing life of the mind is sorted into parcels suitable for presentation in the recitation-room, and chopped up into supposed 'processes' with long Greek and Latin names, which in real life have no distinct existence.

There is no reason, if we are classing the different types of apperception, why we should stop at sixteen rather than sixteen hundred. There are as many types of apperception as there are possible ways in which an incoming experience may be reacted on by an individual mind. A little while ago, at Buffalo, I was the guest of a lady who, a fortnight before, had taken her seven-year-old boy for the first time to Niagara Falls. The child silently glared at the phenomenon until his mother, supposing him struck speechless by its sublimity, said, "Well, my boy, what do you think of it?" to which, "Is that the kind of spray I spray my nose with?" was the boy's only reply. That was his mode of apperceiving the spectacle. You may claim this as a particular type, and call it by the Greek name of rhinothérapeutical apperception, if you like; and, if you do, you will hardly be more trivial or artificial than are some of the authors of the books.

M. Perez, in one of his books on childhood, gives a good example of the different modes of apperception of the same phenomenon which are possible at different stages of individual experience. A dwelling-house took fire, and an infant in the family, witnessing the conflagration from the arms of his nurse, standing outside, expressed nothing but the liveliest delight at its brilliancy. But, when the bell of the fire engine was heard approaching, the child was thrown by the sound into a paroxysm of fear, strange sounds being, as you know, very alarming to young children. In what opposite ways must the child's parents have apperceived the burning house and the engine respectively!

The self-same person, according to the line of thought he may be in, or to his emotional mood, will apperceive the same impression quite differently on different occasions. A medical or engineering expert retained on one side of a case will not apperceive the facts in the same way as if the other side had retained him. When people are at loggerheads about the interpretation of a fact, it usually shows that they have too few heads of classification to apperceive by; for, as a general thing, the fact of such a dispute is enough to show that neither one of their rival interpretations is a perfect fit. Both sides deal with the matter by approximation, squeezing it under the handiest or least disturbing conception: whereas it would, nine times out of ten, be better to enlarge their stock of ideas or invent some altogether new title for the phenomenon.

Thus, in biology, we used to have interminable discussion as to whether certain single-celled organisms were animals or vegetables, until Haeckel introduced the new apperceptive name of Protista, which ended the disputes. In law courts no *tertium quid* is recognized between insanity and sanity. If sane, a man is punished: if insane, acquitted; and it is seldom hard to find two experts who will take opposite views of his case. All the while, nature is more subtle than our doctors. Just as a room is neither dark nor light absolutely, but might be dark for a watchmaker's uses, and yet light enough to eat in or play in, so a man may be sane for some purposes and insane for others,--sane enough to be left at large, yet not sane enough to take care of his financial affairs. The word 'crank,' which became familiar at the time of Guiteau's trial, fulfilled the need of a *tertium quid*. The foreign terms 'déséquilibré,' 'hereditary degenerate,' and 'psychopathic' subject, have arisen in response to the same need.

The whole progress of our sciences goes on by the invention of newly forged technical names whereby to designate the newly remarked aspects of phenomena,--phenomena which could only be squeezed with violence into the pigeonholes of the earlier stock of conceptions. As time goes on, our vocabulary becomes thus ever more and more voluminous, having to keep up with the ever-growing multitude of our stock of apperceiving ideas.

In this gradual process of interaction between the new and the old, not only is the new modified and

determined by the particular sort of old which apperceives it, but the apperceiving mass, the old itself, is modified by the particular kind of new which it assimilates. Thus, to take the stock German example of the child brought up in a house where there are no tables but square ones, 'table' means for him a thing in which square corners are essential. But, if he goes to a house where there are round tables and still calls them tables, his apperceiving notion 'table' acquires immediately a wider inward content. In this way, our conceptions are constantly dropping characters once supposed essential, and including others once supposed inadmissible. The extension of the notion 'beast' to porpoises and whales, of the notion 'organism' to society, are familiar examples of what I mean.

But be our conceptions adequate or inadequate, and be our stock of them large or small, they are all we have to work with. If an educated man is, as I said, a group of organized tendencies to conduct, what prompts the conduct is in every case the man's conception of the way in which to name and classify the actual emergency. The more adequate the stock of ideas, the more 'able' is the man, the more uniformly appropriate is his behavior likely to be. When later we take up the subject of the will, we shall see that the essential preliminary to every decision is the finding of the right *names* under which to class the proposed alternatives of conduct. He who has few names is in so far forth an incompetent deliberator. The names--and each name stands for a conception or idea--are our instruments for handling our problems and solving our dilemmas. Now, when we think of this, we are too apt to forget an important fact, which is that in most human beings the stock of names and concepts is mostly acquired during the years of adolescence and the earliest years of adult life. I probably shocked you a moment ago by saying that most men begin to be old fogies at the age of twenty-five. It is true that a grown-up adult keeps gaining well into middle age a great knowledge of details, and a great acquaintance with individual cases connected with his profession or business life. In this sense, his conceptions increase during a very long period; for his knowledge grows more extensive and minute. But the larger categories of conception, the sorts of thing, and wider classes of relation between things, of which we take cognizance, are all got into the mind at a comparatively youthful date. Few men ever do acquaint themselves with the principles of a new science after even twenty-five. If you do not study political economy in college, it is a thousand to one that its main conceptions will remain unknown to you through life. Similarly with biology, similarly with electricity. What percentage of persons now fifty years old have any definite conception whatever of a dynamo, or how the trolley-cars are made to run? Surely, a small fraction of one per cent. But the boys in colleges are all acquiring these conceptions.

There is a sense of infinite potentiality in us all, when young, which makes some of us draw up lists of books we intend to read hereafter, and makes most of us think that we can easily acquaint ourselves with all sorts of things which we are now neglecting by studying them out hereafter in the intervals of leisure of our business lives. Such good intentions are hardly ever carried out. The conceptions acquired before thirty remain usually the only ones we ever gain. Such exceptional cases of perpetually self-renovating youth as Mr. Gladstone's only prove, by the admiration they awaken, the universality of the rule. And it may well solemnize a teacher, and confirm in him a healthy sense of the importance of his mission, to feel how exclusively dependent upon his present ministrations in the way of imparting conceptions the pupil's future life is probably bound to be.

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## XV. THE WILL

Since mentality terminates naturally in outward conduct, the final chapter in psychology has to be the chapter on the will. But the word 'will' can be used in a broader and in a narrower sense. In the broader sense, it designates our entire capacity for impulsive and active life, including our instinctive reactions and those forms of behavior that have become secondarily automatic and semi-unconscious through frequent repetition. In the narrower sense, acts of will are such acts only as cannot be inattentively performed. A distinct idea of what they are, and a deliberate *fiat* on the mind's part, must precede their execution.

Such acts are often characterized by hesitation, and accompanied by a feeling, altogether peculiar, of resolve, a feeling which may or may not carry with it a further feeling of effort. In my earlier talks, I said so much of our impulsive tendencies that I will restrict myself in what follows to volition in this narrower sense of the