THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RIBOT AND CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT.*

THE conditions of speculation that had become established by French thought for two centuries were completely overthrown by the events of 1789 and the social revolutions and political upheavals which took place in the nineteenth century. Instability and *malaise* are such important factors that the groups in power are compelled to dread the temporary character of scientific truth and to enlist philosophers in defense of the beliefs to which they owe their cohesion. To eclecticism first, and then, under the July Monarchy, to spiritualism, they set the task of confronting free research with thoughts placed in the service of social truths. There comes into existence an esthetic doctrine of feeling which flatters the secret needs of the inner life, captivates attention and prevents due apprehension of the full scope of the scientific movement. After the tempestuous days of July, this doctrine denounces the tendential, provocative and revolutionary character of positivism, against which it pronounces sentence of exclusion, the surest effect of which is to discredit the work of biologists, positivists and the critical school, and to hand over opinion, in a defenseless condition, to the action of Anglo-Saxon ferments. Now, in England and Germany, where science is mainly of a technical and utilitarian nature, scientific evolution has not aroused the effort of critical reflection which is one of the fundamental tenden-

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cies of French philosophy; it has merely brought to birth a new emotion. Urged on by collective disciplines and needs, speculation becomes enfevered and the rhythm of thought is accelerated; the study of life, civilizations, languages, peoples, religions, customs, literature and art has revealed the incessant becoming which moves beneath beings and institutions and which the stereotyped processes of the intellect are powerless to hold and to stabilize. To obtain the mastery, there is needed the combination of two hostile powers: feeling and a more uncompromising science. At the cost of a reconciliation, wherein we see a degeneration of science and artistic sensibility, which have both become impoverished, there arise such metaphysical systems as those of Schelling, Hegel and Spencer. Widely known in France, they bring about a philosophic diversion and give thought a fresh orientation, a new conception of human experience which sets free the passional elements of our nature and the blind forces of the world.

It was in such an atmosphere that the personality of Ribot was moulded.

I. RIBOT AND HIS WORK.

An easy, mobile and somewhat dreamy sensibility, hostile to constraint of every kind; a gift of comprehension and assimilation, along with a natural *finesse*: all these make Ribot peculiarly susceptible to the influences of the period in which he lived. Enamored of the spirit of truth, he desires to know the essence of things; all the same, he received from the vague teaching of his masters—where we see naturalism working along with the dynamism of Leibniz and Maine de Biran—neither the scientific mind nor the discipline which reveal to the young man the world of ideas, and rouse in him that intellectual emotion without which there can be no profound attachment to truth. Besides, in himself he possesses too keen a sense of the con-

crete, of the complexity of the real, of the true quality of beings and things, not to be speedily convinced of the poverty of logical measures, not to distrust thought itself. On the other hand, his impressionability and the measured character of his imagination do not allow him to find motives of uneasiness in inner meditation, to see in passionate outbursts more than a temporary alienation of the person, or to seek in his dealings with men and the daily intercourse of life for the elements of a moral or plastic creation. To him, being seems to bear within itself only a false and deceptive power. And Ribot, who secretly despises unactual considerations, is instinctively carried out of himself and feels drawn toward the philosophic, human or artistic works of his age. These he studies with a sympathetic curiosity sufficiently mistress of itself for no play of metamorphosis to distort their proportions and contour; and sufficiently plastic to discover, beyond the concatenations, the dialectical oppositions and the technical modes of expression, the emotion that animates them. He tends only to find his own particular tendencies in the study of contemporary tendencies; he tends only to acquire directions. The critical consciousness of modern sensibility becomes the first moment of a capture of self-consciousness. Still, however immediate they appear, the paths of feeling are frequently but the more tardy and uncertain. Ribot is so ready to grasp detail that he finds some difficulty in withdrawing from the diversion of impressions; his critical proceedings have long betrayed a kind of timidity, a defect of intellectual assurance, so to speak. Like Stendhal, he attained to complete self-possession only at a very late period of his life, when he was about forty years of age.

First we see him yielding to the fashions of the time, his infatuation for English thought which openly breaks with positivism[1] and secretly accepts the Biranian spiritual-

[1] *La psychologie anglaise contemporaine* (1870), pp. 100-103 and p. 244.

ism of the "School." In Stuart Mill and Spencer, Ribot finds again the same concern for the concrete man, the same freedom of investigation, the same latent metaphysics, the same sense of life in which the contrast is brought out with the little he yet knows of French thought, the traditions of the "School." He forgets that in them may be found the survival of the discipline which insures the perennity of the work of the ideologists and of Auguste Comte, the survival of the mental habits to which the opposition of eclecticism to science prevents their precise signification from being restored. Above all, he sees that there is being effected a seizure upon the intellect, which the Restoration, the Monarchy of July, and even to a greater degree the Second Empire have converted into too docile an instrument of power. From the year 1870, in the *Psychologie anglaise contemporaine,* he reacts less against French thought than against the Imperial University, at all events as much against a meanness and a servility which shock the conscience of a Vacherot, a Taine or a Renouvier as against the formal and metaphysical tendencies of instruction.[2] A work of political quite as much as of philosophical polemics, and even more so, the *Psychologie anglaise,* in which reasons of feeling outweigh those of logic, contrasts the obligatory moralism of the Empire as well as the authoritative dogmatism of Comte with the free criticism of the English, who, guardians of the tradition of all great scientific minds, have succeeded in safeguarding that "freedom of investigation without which there is no philosophic mind." Following their example, he desires to maintain in us our integrity of character and the free play of the critical faculties. At the same time, Ribot contrasts the forces of the past with those of the present; he distinctly proclaims the irremediable disrepute of meta-

[2] Cf. Ribot's article "M. Taine et sa psychologie" in *Revue philosophique,* 1877, p. 25, and Renouvier's *Essais de critique générale,* 2d Essay, "Traité de psychologie rationnelle," 1912 edition, Vol. I, p. 156.

physics, the coming of a scientific era and the liberation of psychology. In him is concentrated the entire secret work of the Second Empire. His simple, unstudied and direct exposition renders these new truths accessible to all who remain outside the operations of the school, the subtilties of logic and the refinements of culture; and who value scientific knowledge according to the practical facilities it provides. Thus there comes about the *annonciation* of a mental revolution.

But this reaction against a form of thought that sprang from the eclecticism of Cousin and holds sway in Latin countries is inadequate; it risks being ineffective if the materials of psychology continue to be wanting. All the works undertaken by Ribot during a period of ten years: on Hartley, on heredity, on Schopenhauer's philosophy and Taine's psychology, on contemporary German psychology, his translation of Spencer's *Principles of Psychology* in collaboration with Espinas, the lucid criticism of which determines the essential traits of the biological movement and of experimental psychology in Italy, the foundation of the *Revue philosophique* in 1876—all have one and the same end in view: to bring before the French public a new way of dealing with the phenomena of consciousness, to place at their disposal the effective instruments of Anglo-Saxon thought, and to spread broadcast the results obtained. This vast preliminary survey, comprising the work of Stuart Mill, Spencer, Bain, Herbart, Wundt, Lazarus and Steinthal, and Horwicz, shows how numerous are his attempts at a revival of psychology. The study of animals, human physiology and pathology, the study of languages and civilizations, have made it possible to set up new branches which are assigned to descriptive psychology: comparative psychology, morbid psychology, evolutionary psychology, the study of character. The English school, rich in *ensemble* works, is still mainly systematic and

descriptive; the German school, rich in monographs, aims at a greater scientific strictness by the application of technicalities peculiar to experimental sciences. Both of these, however, show common characteristics. Imbued with the principle of evolution, they recognize that the study of the human soul can be no more than a study of its genesis and its dynamism. Abandoning all ontological speculation on the nature of consciousness, alien to spiritualism and to materialism alike, they tend only to seek in biological and social factors for the *conditions of existence* of the phenomena of consciousness. Psychology becomes "the study of the phenomena of mind in all animals by considering them, not in their adult form, but in the successive phases of their development." Consequently, it is a science which sets before itself an end analogous to that of the sciences of life. The descriptive method of the English, the delicate processes of experimental psychology and of psychophysiology, the complex technicalities of the psychophysicists which are substituted for inadequate introspection and *esprit de finesse,* tend only to give psychology an ever greater exactitude. And Ribot insists on setting all these forth with like impartiality, without regarding his personal preferences; he is anxious to prejudge no result and to leave the path open to all methodological attempts made in the most varied directions. For it is advisable that each mind should retain its freedom to collaborate in an impersonal and international work of science in the form which best appeals to its character and capacity and to the distinctive genius of the nation to which it belongs.

Nevertheless, when brought in contact with foreign thought, Ribot finds his distinctive originality and gradually discovers his own particular tendency. He advances prudently and circumspectly, not forgetting that psychology has only just issued from the realm of metaphysics, that its first consideration should be to establish itself as

a science by becoming objective, and that it would be somewhat hasty to attempt to introduce, into the study of psychological phenomena, measure and calculation and the quantitative method that are proper to those sciences that have reached maturity.[3] In this transitional period, wherein alone the *qualitative* method is necessary, we must guard against attributing too much to physiology "for the psychologist derives no advantage from insisting on a physiology that is devoid of solidity";[4] all exclusivism and intransigeance are opposed to the spirit of induction. There is no necessity to receive a scientific credo or to profess unadulterated empiricism. To demonstrate that ontological preoccupations must remain foreign to psychology is not to dismiss them in imitation of Auguste Comte; Ribot willingly acknowledges that these preoccupations correspond to a legitimate necessity of the mind,[5] and he confesses that "it is perhaps a necessity inherent in all psychology, even experimental, to start from some metaphysical hypothesis."[6] Thus, Ribot is consistent all the time. The conciliatory and supple attitude he naturally adopts is in conformity with an empiricism which, less critical than the empirical rationalism of Claude Bernard, accepts as objective facts even the suggestions of one's inmost experience. In the absence of all speculative or moral preoccupation, the profound impression that feeling possesses a concrete reality, a sort of sentimental mysticism, the dialectical confirmation of which Ribot finds in the *World as*

[3] *L'hérédité* (1873), pp. 217, 218, 219, 220-221. Cf. *Psychologie allemande contemporaine* (1879), pp. xx-xxi.

[4] *Maladies de la personnalité* (1885), p. 166. Cf. *Psychologie anglaise* (1870), p. 109. "Deliberately to reject the resources of psychological analysis and thus to build up the theory of mind on nothing more than the data which physiology can at present supply, I look upon as a mistake. However imperfect be the science of mind, I have no hesitation in affirming that it is far more advanced than the corresponding part in physiology, and to leave the former for the latter seems to me an infraction of the true rules of the inductive method."

[5] *Psychologie anglaise*, p. 21.

[6] *Psychologie allemande*, p. 28.

Will and as Idea, gives direction to his investigations. The dull effort of feeling chooses the elements of crystallization from among the tendencies of contemporary psychology and biology. Ribot thinks less of making a thorough examination of the study of mind than of undertaking the study of feeling, which is more in accordance with his inclinations. Now, contemporary schools, engrossed in questions of sensation, perception and imagination, have scarcely touched upon this study; in Spencer, Bain and Horwicz we hardly find anything but outlines, analyses and suggestions; whereas Taine's historical labors prevented him from giving to the *Emotions and the Will* the close investigation which his book *On the Intellect* demanded. It is in Schopenhauer's attempt to reach, beyond the abstract mind and the empty forms of thought, a concrete reality constitutive of the individual, that Ribot finds fertile suggestions. Schopenhauer restores its autonomy to the psychology of feeling by giving to Bichat's classic distinction between organic life and animal life, as generally accepted in the nineteenth century (by Comte and Spencer, among others), an interpretation free from any intellectualistic preoccupation. Organic life, which is primitive though secondary to philosophers eager to place the specificity of the psychic in the higher forms of the mental life, becomes fundamental and preponderant to the metaphysician who desires to reach the very heart of being. Consequently, Ribot transposes this metaphysic of the Will into terms of positive thought and enters into possession of a working hypothesis the terms of which he asks biology to define.[7]

While the French school is flourishing, scientific circles begin to see that an anatomical knowledge of the brain affords no knowledge of cerebral functions; the theory of cerebral localizations, which has been substituted for phrenology, has been reduced to its right proportions; the recent

[7] *Philosophie de Schopenhauer* (1874), pp. 71-73.

discovery of the pneumo-gastric and of the great sympathetic as autonomous systems independent of the nervous system, the investigations of Claude Bernard on irritability and organic sensibility, the clinical and anatomic-pathological studies made possible by the work of Charles Robin in general anatomy and undertaken at the suggestion of Charcot, enable us to become better acquainted with organic life, its workings and its relations to mental life. Influenced by this scientific current, Ribot, who has an inductive mind, a taste for "factual detail, psychological curiosities, exceptions without which we cannot get to the root of things,"[8] and who has found in Taine's method a confirmation of this taste,[9] half separates himself from Spencer's ideological system of which he retains only the postulate according to which the principle of evolution springing from embryology and extending to the development of the species is applicable to mental life, along with the theory of mind as a function and a mechanism for adapting oneself to the outer world. But he dreads too much "the somewhat scanty clearness of Condillac and Destutt de Tracy" not to part company with Taine. He begins to study medical jurists and French alienists, and in the uninterrupted sequence of investigations into mental pathology undertaken by Pinel, Esquirol, Lélut, Moreau de Tours, Baillarger, Cerise, Longet, Duchenne de Boulogne, Durand de Gros and Brière de Boismont, he gives evidence of the method of the clinician, the positive spirit and an aversion from the systems which characterize the works of the ideologists. He then attains to the idea of his pathological method, and, without suspecting it, resumes

[8] *Philosophie anglaise,* pp. 249-250.

[9] Taine, Preface of *L'intelligence* (1870) and *Correspondance,* Vol. III (4th ed.), p. 253, letter to Jules Soury. "The novelty of my book consists in its being entirely made up of trifling facts, significant instances, individual observations, descriptions of atrophied or hypertrophied psychological functions." This method, common to Taine and Ribot, is also in a sense the one used by Destutt de Tracy. Cf. R. Lenoir, "Psychologie et logique de Destutt de Tracy," in *Revue philosophique,* December, 1917, p. 532.

connection with one of the most fruitful and one of the most misunderstood epochs of French thought. This contact, after a constant and profound study, brings about a reconciliation between his nature and the tendencies of his age.

Then only, when about forty years of age, within a period of thirty years during which the German school declines and becomes eclipsed by the prestige of the American school, Ribot brings his contribution to psychology in the form of monographs and memoranda dealing with special subjects. Circumstances, the necessities of instruction, the inevitable variations of thought, impel him by degrees to extend his domain, to pass from the lower to the higher functions, to pure psychology, to substitute for the pathological method originally employed in studies on memory, personality and will, a descriptive method more compatible with the study of attention, general ideas, feelings and the creative imagination. Still, it would not be quite correct to judge by the outer decisions of his thought in interpreting this modification as an implicit recognition of the barrenness and inadequacy of experimental psychology. In Ribot the transformation came about "slowly, involuntarily, almost without his being aware of it." It is nothing but an expansion of his nature. Remembering the profound influence that the *Maladies de la mémoire* had exercised over the minds of men and seeing an ever more fruitful school of mental pathology, Ribot's critics might have thought there would follow a rupture; they located his originality as being where exclusively it was not, as being in some technical process. Now, Ribot's method, though occasionally pathological, is *concrete* in its essence. Ribot indeed knew, as did Claude Bernard, that "the true method is that which holds in the mind without stifling it, and which, as far as possible, allows it to face itself; which guides it and at the same time respects its creative originality and the spontaneity of science: most precious qual-

ities." Like him, too, Ribot made a profound impression only because he did not doubt his own spontaneity and was able to establish a secret unity between his nature and his work. In every subject he investigates, he keeps close to the concrete individual. This sole aspiration insures the inner coherence of a work from which all logical unity appears to be absent, the life of a work whose immediate or distant reverberations have moulded European thought.

II. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RIBOT.

Too long has psychology regarded consciousness through the forms of thought, used the analytical method, accepted abstract and formal appearances, and thus failed in its essential duty: to get at the concrete being, the real person.

Now, mental activity cannot be decomposed: the person forms a synthetic whole the apprehension of which eludes both analysis and an intuition of consciousness which lasts scarcely more than a few seconds. States of consciousness, discontinuous and always unstable, are raised up and supplant one another by a transmission or a conflict of forces of the nervous elements which produce them within the limits of the present.[10] If they are not "will-o'-the-wisps which alternately shine and die out," it is because there is something that unites them. This bond, which some have regarded as a transcendental entity and others as a form which keeps the sensations piled together, as it were, cannot be given by reflection, since the real personality does

[10] Ribot rightly insisted on the fact that the present alone is given in consciousness. Cf. *Evolution des idées générales* (1897), p. 181. "The present has the privilege of appearing before consciousness as the duration-type, the standard, the measure to which everything should be related: and it cannot be otherwise, since indeed (a thing too frequently forgotten) we live only in the present; the past and the future do not exist for us, are known by us only on condition they become present and occupy our present consciousness. The present is the only psychological element which, consciously or unconsciously, gives a content and a reality to duration. It is essential to rid oneself of the opinion, sanctioned by many authors, that the present is only an inapprehensible moment a transition, a passing, a flash, a mathematical point, a zero, a nothing: on the contrary, it is it alone that lasts, now for a long, now for a short period."

not assert itself by reflection, but by acts. "To grasp the real concrete personality and not some abstraction which takes its place, is not simply a matter of retiring into one's consciousness with closed eyes and obstinately questioning it: on the contrary, we must open our eyes and observe. The child, the peasant, the workman, the millions of people in street and field who have never heard mention of Fichte or of Maine de Biran, who have never read a single dissertation on the self and the not-self, nor even a single line of psychology, each have their own distinctive personality and instinctively affirm it every moment of their lives."[11] This instinctive affirmation dwells in the vague feeling of the body; the spontaneous, natural feeling of our self, present in every healthy individual, is the expression of the coordination and the consensus of the organism. "This coordination of the innumerable nervous activities of organic life is the basis of the physical and psychic personality, all other coordinations depend upon and are added to it; it is the interior man, the material form of his subjectivity, the final reason of his mode of acting and feeling, the source of his instincts, feelings and passions, and, as they said in the Middle Ages, his principle of individuation."[12] Consequently, the self in its simplest form is a coordination of psychological tendencies and states whose proximate cause must be sought in the concurrence of the vital energies. The continuity of the mental life arises from the continuity of the organic substratum underlying it; and the psychological expression of cœnesthesia is found in the character.[13]

If we now follow the order in which the psychological functions appear in specific evolution and in individual evolution, we find that they have their source in character. The pathological study of memory, will and personality

[11] *Maladies de la personnalité*, p. 88.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 161.

[13] *Maladies de la volonté* (1882), p. 30.

at least establishes this irrefutably, and enables us to hit upon the law of dissolution. Thus, according as we quit purely organic states and pass from physical into affective, and from affective into intellectual states, we find that they express the totality of individual tendencies, then a smaller and smaller part of the individual tendencies, until the activity of the physical and that of the social environment almost completely take the place of that of the person. As psychological phenomena become more complex, their physiological importance decreases and their motor power diminishes. These preliminaries prove that the character is really at the starting-point of all psychic phenomena, whatever be their degree of complexity.

And so the psychologist's task is defined. Reversing the order followed by the intellectualistic psychologists, he must circumscribe the distinctive contribution of the person in the life of the mind, in contrast to the contribution from the outer world, and must determine its nature and modalities. No doubt the work is a complex one for we must take into account the intervention of factors that have appeared at different moments of evolution. The direct data of biology and the indirect data of pathology, however, prove that irritability, which is constitutive of the individual, develops along two parallel lines, motricity and sensibility, in which the whole of psychology will shortly subsist.

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Since consciousness manifests itself in change, and change has its first condition in movement, movement shows itself as the fundamental condition of knowledge. Motor activity is at the very starting-point of mental life, and motor elements necessarily appear in the constitution of all our states of consciousness, either as bodily movements or as kinesthetic sensations or motor images. For not only are our movements accompanied by distinct specific sensa-

tions, links between the organic and the special sensations. but we also retain, within ourselves, images that represent movement, and we possess a motor memory which allows of the revival of the external movements themselves. For "if the motor apparatus had not its own memory, images or residua, no movement whatsoever could either be learned or become habitual."[14] Accordingly habits, motor manifestations, are included in tendencies, in the specific sensations of sight and hearing,[15] in ideas,[16] in the "dynamic" assocations which constitute the effective conditions of memory,[17] in the immediate associations resulting from a kind of irradiation of movement and in the mediate associations resulting from a kind of transmission of movement. Thus, in the various modes of knowledge, the motor element is seen to have its place as an intrinsic part of a complex whole.

Certain phases of the mind, such as doubt, surprise, conviction, astonishment, belief[18] and attention, which Ribot had investigated long before a psychology of attitudes had been constituted, seem to correspond to a particular mode of motor activity, devoid of matter and content, "an extrinsic means of support and resistance without which states of consciousness would remain a plastic and fluid matter." Thus, "motor activity permeates and envelops our psychic life and constitutes the solid part of it. Physiologically, it depends on the motor nervous system, both central and peripheral, acting in voluntary or spontaneous impulsions, and also on the sensitive nervous system which transmits the kinesthetic impressions to the cortical layer of the brain. Psychologically, in the form of presentations

[14] *Psychologie de l'attention* (1888), p. 78.

[15] *La vie inconsciente et les mouvements* (1914), p. 28.

[16] *Evolution des idées générales,* p. 147, and *Psychologie de l'attention,* pp. 75-86.

[17] *Maladies de la mémoire* (1881), pp. 50, 51, 163.

[18] *Essai sur l'imagination créatrice* (1900), p. 93.

and representations, it contributes toward the formation of each state of consciousness and toward their association; in a word, it constitutes those general and momentary inclinations that are called attitudes."[19]

Thus beneath our states of consciousness there remains a kinesthetic portion which we are unable to apprehend directly since it is our sensibility that reveals our inner states to us and this sensibility is not free from all elements of knowledge. These elements and these motor mechanisms, which are not accompanied by consciousness, are the skeleton, as it were, the permanent element which remains when the consciousness withdraws. In them lies the possibility of an unconscious motor activity, for motor phenomena possess an inherent tendency to organize and solidify. They have a latent role apart from their effective role. It may be that they constitute that "unconscious" of which so much has been said, with the desire to present either an intellectualistic interpretation of it, or else a mystical one, by appealing, now to a subconsciousness, now to a superconsciousness which, according to Myers and William James, would appear to constitute "a link between the human and the divine." If we accept a highly plausible physiological hypothesis, the unconscious acts simply after the fashion of an "accumulator of energy." In certain circumstances, the unconscious activity comes up into the foreground, takes the place of consciousness, annihilates the life directed toward the exterior world, and shows itself as a power alien to the individual. According to this interpretation, motor activity is at the root of all creation, of mechanical invention, art and religion.[20] It accounts for the phenomenon of inspiration which it strips of its element of mystery, since it results from a dual interversion of the normal state. If the fundamental mechanism of functions

[19] *La vie inconsciente et les mouvements,* p. 41.

[20] *Imagination créatrice,* Chap. iii.

like attention, the will, creation, which are connected with movement, eludes us, that is because there enter into consciousness only the two extremes, the beginning and the end, and all the rest takes place in the realm of physiology.

And so a subterranean life exists, a dynamic unconscious,[21] which is "a latent state of activity, of incubation and of elaboration," and which regards motor activity as the background of mental activity.

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Among the various movements of the body, the organic, motor, vasomotor and muscular reactions are accompanied by a particular psychological equivalent, the affective state. Under whatever form[22] it offers itself and whatever degree of complexity it reaches, this is nothing else than the representation of organic sensibility, the direct and immediate expression of vegetative life; it has its cause in cœnesthesia. True, this interpretation, manifest for the purpose in view and long ago formulated by Spinoza in a less strictly scientific fashion, has but recently been extended to the lower emotions, the necessary manifestations of life, by Lange and James. It may be carried to the higher emotions; for, however complex the social and personal elements which combine in their formation, these modes of affective life could not dispense with an organic support. And Ribot, after examining, in their relations with organic life, the primary emotions—fear, the tender emotion, the selfish emotion, the sexual emotion—endeavors to show that the feelings, regarded in their concrete form at the very mo-

[21] *Logique des sentiments* (1905), p. 79. Ribot mostly shows himself very reserved on the question of the unconscious and refuses to declare himself categorically on "this inexplicable problem and the semblances of explanations" which have been given of it. He contents himself with distinguishing between two acceptations of the term unconscious: the *static* unconscious, "comprising habits, memory and in general all organized knowledge," and the *dynamic* unconscious. Cf. *La vie inconsciente,* p. 55, and *Psychologie des sentiments* (1896), pp. 173-175.

[22] On the classifications of affective life, to which Ribot attributes only a methodological value, see *Logique des sentiments,* pp. 24 and 67, and *Essai sur les passions* (1907), pp. 1-7.

ment they are felt and experienced, are accompanied by physiological conditions. Thus, the religious emotion is closely connected with the instinct of preservation; the moral and intellectual emotions with physical modifications and disturbances; the esthetic emotion with the excitation of sensorial elements, as demonstrated by the contemporary German school.[23] The passions themselves, which are prolonged and intellectualized emotions that have so far eluded analysis by reason of their very complexity, must have physiological — perhaps even pathological — conditions which Ribot endeavors to suggest in his *Essai sur les passions*. And so all the modalities of the affective life are attributed to the organic or vegetative life, to nutrition, to the life of relation, and, more generally, to the preservation and development of the individual. As Spinoza had already set forth in a famous scholion of his *Ethics* (III. Prop. 9, Schol.), and subsequently Schopenhauer, we find tendency beneath desire, beneath "will." And tendency is no more than "the possibility, which becomes a reality, of acting in a certain direction and with a determined end in view. The internal and external sensations, which incite it to pass from a state of potentiality to one of action, are but occasional causes. The fundamental phenomenon is still a motor one, i. e., appetition, sensation, attraction, repulsion."[24]

Tendency, however, has two fronts, one facing the unconscious, the other facing the consciousness and illumined by pleasure and pain. Beneath this latter front it becomes a new factor in the psychological life of the individual, a result which may serve as a starting-point for some new work, either conscious or unconscious. The conscious affective state seems endowed with spontaneity and with a finality of its own similar to that kind of internal finality invoked by biologists, for "the individual as a purely affective

[23] *Psychologie des sentiments*, I, Ch. viii. [24] *Essai sur les passions*, p. 55.

being aims at one object alone, the satisfaction of his desires; and in the individual each special tendency aims at its own special end and good."[25] In whatever form it be, the affective life permeates the mental life.

At first, the affective states become one with sensation and perception, which, like them, are of primary formation. Afterward, however, they occur in the functions of secondary formation, the conservation and revival of images, the interplay of images, elementary logical associations and operations. They also work with the intellect, a function of adaptation to the physical environment which contributes to the preservation of the individual and which has long retained the practical and utilitarian character it had at first. Later on, in the mental functions of tertiary formation, a distinct scission takes place between the affective life and the intellectual life, and their differentiation culminates in an opposition and an antagonism: on the one hand, the logical processes become cleansed of every element of feeling; on the other, we have the will and the creative imagination established. The world of knowledge and the interior world have won their autonomy and are each living a life of their own.

In a certain number of monographs Ribot describes some of the stages of the affective life; he is inclined to prefer those in which the interior life is seen in a state of comparative purity. Stating the principle of the existence of purely affective states and the secondary nature of pleasure and pain as different expressions of one and the same fundamental rhythm of life, he attempts to prove the existence of an affective memory.[26] He shows the interior life, which is naturally anarchical, divided between "states which mutually impede, exclude, destroy one another."[27]

[25] *Psychologie des sentiments*, p. 410.

[26] *Psychologie des sentiments*, I, Ch. xi, and *Problèmes de psychologie affective* (1900), Ch. ii.

[27] *Logique des sentiments*, p. 15.

But if some vital need arises, there is agreement between all the tendencies connected with the principle of conservation. Desires, aversions, beliefs become the starting-point of pragmatical reasonings, indifferent both to truth and to contradiction, and tending only to rationalize instinct. This *logic of the feelings*, from which rational logic has gradually disentangled itself owing to the control of experience, to the progress of technics, to an ever closer adaptation of reasoning to the nature of things, remains side by side with rational logic, even in modern times. The conditions of life which created it, maintain it in being. And not only is there a logic of the feelings, there is even, for the man who thinks, an instinctive mode of adapting oneself to things: *intuition*. "This state (considered as a simple psychic fact and independent of the metaphysical inductions that have been drawn from it) consists in feeling rather than in knowing. Analogous to a sensation rather than to a perception, intuition resembles a sudden and confused divination which baffles rationalism."[28] That direct form of apprehension, of spontaneous adjustment, which is included in feelings of sympathy, indeed seems to prove that logical thought is but one of the forms of knowledge.

Besides those kinds of survival which have eluded the domain of logical thought there are more complex states, such as the *creative imagination*. Creation has partially affective origins. "All invention takes for granted a need, a desire, a tendency, an unsatisfied impulse, frequently a very unpleasant state of gestation. In esthetic creation, we find the emotional factor at the outset as the prime mover, and afterward connected with the various phases of creation as their accompaniment. But affective states become more and more the material of creation."[29] There are functions that have but very tardily attained their

[28] *Psychologie affective*, pp. 100, 101, pp. 115-177, and note on pp. 115, 116, 117 (Judd's passage dealing with intuition).

[29] *Imagination créatrice*, p. 27.

development "and which presuppose the preponderance of the interior life in the sentimental form, i. e., a very rich substratum of various and complex emotions, qualified to form combinations, oppositions and contrasts of every kind." The *affective creative imagination* combines purely affective states, "emotional abstracts," which have become released from past feelings, by virtue of a mechanism analogous to that of abstraction and generalization. Living a life of their own, they group themselves to form partial systematizations. In reverie or impressionism we see outlined embryonic affective creations. In religious mysticism, where love is the first cause of invention, the affective creations are accompanied by a state of enduring belief. In the art of the symbolists, whose mechanism Ribot analyzes with considerable acumen though disclaiming all thought of criticism or capacity for worthy judgment, "sensation dies away in emotion and the artist invests things with his own affective color," "things are replaced by the emotion of things." The artist then has to struggle "against the obstacle of verbal expression which is ill suited to him, which impedes him, and, by an instinctive or deliberate effort, attempts to conceal his methods from the (musical) type form." Not so much interpreting the thought as the feeling, he confers on words, by various processes, an emotive value. But the affective creative imagination reaches its type form only in musical creation. No doubt, in its modes of expression, musical creation is subordinate to mechanical invention and also to scientific invention; in its nature it reflects an inner life which has no further contact whatsoever with the world of knowledge; and it was not without a certain amount of reason that Schelling, Hegel and Schopenhauer regarded music as a liberation. Thus we have revealed the struggle of creative imagination to attain its independence, to free itself progressively from objective conditions until the time comes when emotion,

living its own distinctive life, obtains the mastery over the individual, or else spreads out over things, expands and becomes a kind of absolute.[30]

There is still, however, in the order of action, a state characterized by the preponderance of the inner life in the form of hierarchical coordination, already sketched in the phenomenon of spontaneous attention where interest and the play of tendencies determine our attitude: a state which consists of the voluntary act. A reaction peculiar to the individual, "adapted to very complex, very variable and very impermanent conditions, differing from one individual to another and from one moment to another in the same individual," volition presupposes the intervention of intellectual activity.[31] Considered, however, as a simple state of consciousness, it is a phenomenon of choice which amounts to the establishment of a relation of agreement between one tendency or several contradictory tendencies with the totality of the conscious, subconscious and unconscious states which at that very moment make up the person, the self. "The choice is always based on an affinity, an analogy of nature, an adaptation."[32] As a stage toward action, therefore, volition sets up a balance between present tendencies and permits of an orientation of the action which may be in conformity with our character and which may cause to translate itself into action that one of our tendencies which shows the greatest affinity with it. For the final reason of the choice lies in the character. And so, contrary to the opinion of the intellectualists who regard the volun-

[30] *Imagination créatrice,* III, Ch. ii. Cf. *Logique des sentiments,* Ch. iv, and *Psychologie des sentiments,* II, Ch. x.

[31] *Maladies de la volonté,* p. 26. "Intelligence being a correspondence, a continual adjusting of internal to external relations, and, in its highest form, a perfectly coordinate adjustment, the coordination of these states of consciousness implies that one of the movements which expresses them. When an object is chosen, it acts after the fashion of what the metaphysicians call a final cause: it carries with it the choice of the means adapted to attain to it. Consequently, adaptation is one result of the mechanism of mind."

[32] *Ibid.,* p. 27.

tary phenomenon as absolutely new and as the manifestation of a metaphysical principle of liberty, the will comes from below. "Volition is not an event coming from no one knows where; it drives its roots into the depths of the unconscious and beyond the individual into the species and the race. It comes not from above, but from below: it is a sublimation of the lower elements."[33] The study of mental diseases shows that its fluctuations and changes for the worse closely depend not only on the weakening of the motor power but also on the changes for the worse experienced by the personality. It is an affirmation, a hierarchical coordination which presupposes the momentary unity of the inner life, for "the outer unity of life is itself but the expression of the inner unity." It is a state in which ideas are placed at the service of passion, an increasingly complex coordination of tendencies. In consequence it contrasts with the normal conditions of the affective consciousness which presupposes perpetual change and discontinuity; in consequence it takes place very seldom, a sort of "lucky accident." Only from time to time does the individual free himself from automatism, from the habits, passions and imitations in which he is imprisoned, and in an act expresses complete adaptation to the inner conditions of life. The voluntary act is the one which best reflects the character and is the most perfect expression of the constitution and organism of the person.

Thus we find indicated the fundamental place held by the organism, the person and the character. In the order of action and in that of knowledge, in both the lower and the higher functions, we invariably find the element of the self in so far as it reacts, "an extremely complex product which heredity, physiological circumstances both before and after birth, education and experience have contributed

[33] *Maladies de la volonté*, p. 150.

to form."[84] To be complete, therefore, we must here reinstate the effects of civilization. Alongside of the depths of the individual self we find the social self. But Ribot, who in another connection recognizes the specificity of the social,[85] includes it in his studies—and that for the very reason of their biological trend—only as a secondary element, and contents himself with summarily indicating its role in the formation of the character, the constitution of the higher feelings, and the constitution of the voluntary attention which is no more than a "sociological phenomenon." The evolution of the mental faculties shows that the inner life is alike their origin and their goal. The inner world more and more completely adapts itself to outer environments for the needs of active life, knowledge is established and gradually the impersonal elements become weakened, the initial provocative conditions of action become simple technical means and fade away before a complete and unconditional affirmation, a free expansion of the inner life. The being is no longer satisfied with giving a personal stamp to its activity. It must still obey the suggestions of imaginary life and express a sort of absolute reality in which the self is reabsorbed, mystical ecstasy or musical creation.

III. RIBOT AND CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT.

Thus, if we release Ribot's work from the secondary problems and the hypotheses, the justifications of detail, the accessory aspects which constitute its purely technical part,

[84] *Maladies de la volonté*, p. 30.

[85] In Ribot we find a latent sociology even though he did not always clearly distinguish the arguments which affirm, from those which deny the specificity of the social, and showed too great confidence in Tarde's occasionally fantastic results. In *Psychologie des sentiments* (II, Ch. viii), however, dealing with moral and social feelings, he admits the existence of a tendency to live in society, the existence of a clan as one type of society, a social molecule, the existence of a gregarious society to which, along with Durkheim and in opposition to Espinas, he subordinates the family society. The specificity of the social is thus, to him, an idea in a germinal state. He distinguishes between animal and human societies and proves that the social tendency, which is their starting-point, is one product of the conditions of existence.

this appears to be its essential nature: a study of the inner life in its divers manifestations, scientific both in purpose and in fact, though involved in a latent metaphysics. Ribot has extracted from the inner life, which becomes the more fixed and abundant the more we pass from the lower to the higher forms, a working hypothesis that eludes criticism. In doing this, he disturbs the balance of psychological studies at a time when music is entering into the manners of the age, when symbolism is being contrasted with naturalism and color being substituted for design in the plastic arts. Certain aspects of his investigations may connect him with Destutt de Tracy, with Cabanis, with Laromiguière, with Maine de Biran and with Stendhal; all the same he indicates a new phase which it may be advisable for us to regard as the intervention of a period quite as much as the intervention of a mind. Before Ribot, the French psychologists had investigated the relations between organic and mental life and had determined, so far as the resources of biological science at that time permitted, the part played by organic inclinations in the whole of the mental life. Destutt de Tracy in his *Eléments d'idéologie* and his *Théorie de la volonté*, Cabanis in his *Rapports du physique et du moral de l'homme*, Maine de Biran in his dissertations on *Habitude* and on the *Décomposition de la pensée*, and Stendhal throughout his works, had all made a thorough examination of motility, sensibility and passion.[36] The scientific habits of their age, however, had instilled in them a concern for a precise and exact terminology. They undertook a critical examination of concepts. Their pre-

[36] Cabanis has already remarked in his *Rapports du physique et du moral de l'homme* (ed. 1824, 10th Mem., Vol. III, pp. 145, 146), that the analyst philosophers, from Condillac onward, remember only the impressions that come from without, to the detriment of internal impressions. Cf. *op. cit.*, 2d Mem., pp. 56, 93, § IV, § V, and *Premières déterminations de la sensibilité*.

On Maine de Biran see the learned studies of Victor Delbos in *Figures et doctrines de philosophes* (1918), and *Philosophie française* (1919); on Stendhal, the work of H. Delacroix, *Psychologie de Stendhal* (1919). On Destutt de Tracy, my own essay: "Psychologie et logique de Destutt de Tracy" in the *Revue philosophique*, December, 1917.

cautions, their verbal exactitude — which our contemporaries, obeying their intuition, regarded as nothing more than obscurity and barrenness—become all the more pronounced in proportion as the states of consciousness examined become more uncertain and less strictly determined; into the unconscious and the subconscious they mean to flash the light of intelligence. They are deeply attached to science, the working of the mind, the higher forms of mental activity. And so, whatever importance they attach to sensibility, they regard both the organic and the affective life as distinct from conscious life; in the order of time, they are primitive; in the order of values, they have but a secondary importance. Ribot, on the other hand, looks upon the notion of affective life as fundamental in the order of values.

Then a process of irradiation interrupts the dissociation of the concepts used in psychology. Since the principal distinction set up by Maine de Biran between "feeling" and the fact of "feeling oneself cognizant" disappears, the concept of consciousness grows dim, takes on a new meaning and becomes identified with the concept of sensibility. The concept of sensibility itself simultaneously covers organic manifestations and certain modalities of conscious life, thus confusing the biological acceptation and the usual psychological one. On the other hand, the concept of intelligence becomes void of all positive content. Thus Ribot cannot free himself from the limitations he originally imposed on his investigations, in a natural feeling of reaction against intellectualistic psychology. As emotion extends and permeates every aspect of conscious life, it becomes impossible for him to see distinctly the function of the mind: the uniting and concentrating of the life within us and the insuring of a communion and participation among men in higher forms of reality which do not recognize the individual as such and break up the narrow circle of instincts and

desires. Following in this the example given by Taine, he substitutes for function an abstract logical mechanism and then, if the latter is unproductive, he expresses astonishment.[37]

Hence the method which Ribot thinks evolutive is only retrogressive. Passing suddenly from the evolved forms of mental life to what we suppose to be primitive forms, and then combining these elements to attain to concrete reality, we remain the victims of verbal constructions that have no scientific character whatsoever. The state of "the primitive man" as described by Spencer and the English anthropologists, the likelihood of an original fusion between sensibility and intelligence, cannot be made arguments which entitle us to rob logical life of its own distinctive value and of the preeminence it has won in the course of mental evolution. However great the distinction between inferior societies and modern societies, sociological labors do not show that feeling is anterior to logic; they only prove the simultaneity of the two.[38] Speculation, too, which ventures beyond these observations, is powerless to explain the transition from animality to humanity, unless it simplifies the question extremely and regards idea as no more than a degradation of tendency. However it be, the identification of consciousness with the immediate feeling we have of ourselves and an ambiguous study of sensibility which is not counterbalanced by a parallel study of intelligence, may help to curb English associationism by the introduction of a dynamic point of view and introduce some clearness into the psychology of movements.

[37] Cf. *Evolution des idées générales.* On many points, Ribot would seem to have found a precursor in Taine. Cf. "M. Taine et sa psychologie" in *Revue philosophique,* 1877, p. 23. Like the latter, Ribot wholly accepts the results of ideological analysis concerning the mechanism of intelligence reduced to *abstraction* and *generalization.* This formal explanation then enables idea to be volatilized, as it were, and concept—whose social nature is thus disregarded—to be reduced to a simple motor scheme.

[38] Cf. Lévy-Bruhl, *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures,* I, Ch. ii, especially p. 113.

This, however, is at the cost of a certain obscuring of general psychology. And Ribot would seem to be undoing piecemeal the work of Auguste Comte and of Renouvier.

* * *

After this intrinsic examination, it is perhaps advisable to consider Ribot's work as it manifests itself.

His intellectual probity and clarity of exposition, his documentary wealth and largeness of view have won for Ribot a degree of legitimate authority both in France and abroad. After first concentrating attention on a domain totally new to generations brought up in the ignorance of the eighteenth century, he brought together the scattered efforts of alienists, doctors and physiologists, formulated problems, showed that clinical studies were a means and not an end, and supplied a technique and working hypotheses. In this respect, his efforts bear a certain analogy with those of Claude Bernard. Like this latter, he neglected ready-made science in order to consider more especially science in the making. Like him also, he attacked the scientific circles even more than the philosophers. His earlier works on the *Diseases of Memory, Personality and Will* have given birth to a school which has taken up the study of somnambulism, hysteria, psychasthenia, dual personality and mental alienation with the object of placing mental pathology on a firm basis.[39]

The pathological investigations, however, of which Ribot was the initiator, and which, as he readily acknowledged, characterized the school of French psychology, were in his mind and work only at the moment of his investigation. Sufficiently acute, even sufficiently artistic, not to limit sensible manifestations to organic manifestations alone, his criticism of symbolism and his excellent ideas

[39] Cf. Pierre Janet in the fine homage he pays to the "Œuvre psychologique de Ribot," *Journal de psychologie normale et pathologique,* July-August, 1915, pp. 276-279.

on music show what advantage may accrue to the psychologist from the study of artistic activity. Like Taine in the Preface of his *Intelligence,* he draws attention to the still unexplored domain of artistic creation, imaginary life and character. He opens out the path for new studies and his hidden influence may be seen in most of the works published in the course of the past twenty years.

Finally, while desirous of accomplishing a scientific work, Ribot attempted to dominate and transcend his age and to restore its independence to human thought. In order to judge of the great renown of his labors and of their claim on our gratitude, we must remember the situation in the world of thought previous to 1870. The artificial atmosphere, the lack of contact with popular forces, prevented these generations which Zola shows to be "stifled between the final convulsions of the Empire and the laborious parturition of the Republic" from uniting once more with a living past. Being of more recent birth, they have been forced to reconstruct the intellectual edifice. They have had the honest and rough labor, the audacity and the hesitation, of new men, of men who make themselves. Their work was first a feverish contact with European thought, a wide investigation, accumulated material and documents of every kind upon which the coordinating activity of the mind might subsequently work. And they confined themselves to the present owing to the fact that historic events had cut them off from human experience. Thanks to them, France was enabled to shake off the torpor of the Empire; organic needs were enabled to manifest themselves, the entire revolt of the inner life to merge into Bergson,[40] and the entire revolt of the social forces isolated from the Republic into Durkheim.[41] The generations also which were

[40] Cf. my essay: "Réflections sur le Bergsonisme," *Nouvelle revue française,* Dec., 1919.

[41] In my study on "Emile Durkheim, et la conscience moderne," *Mercure de France,* June 16, 1918, I have attempted to bring out this aspect, so essential,

indebted to them for the capacity of embracing wider perspectives, were enabled to repudiate them. They were dimly conscious of their disgrace, and nobly bore the burden of it. For they had divined the cost of scientific discipline to our civilization; they had made up their mind to reject cultural truths and embrace the truths by which a people lives; they knew they were not laboring in vain when they combined speculation with the criticism of morals. There is something touching, even painful, in the efforts whereby a Ribot, an Espinas "in the service of science" gave the best of themselves to bring about an intellectual renaissance in France.

For, if there is a certain ingratitude and lack of historic sense in forgetting services rendered, there may perhaps be an inexplicable dependence, a renunciation of all critical freedom, in the fact of hiding from ourselves the imperfections of their work. This is a work which must await its fruition and which will be fully effective only if it is transcended, if its secret intentions happen to be fulfilled; and justice will perhaps be rendered it by those who find in their very remoteness that recoil attitude so propitious for an impartial appreciation. They will desire a renaissance. And yet, in whichever direction we turn, belated systems of metaphysics, psychological and sociological disciplines: all leave behind the same lack of satisfaction. Everywhere the effort to attain to objective knowledge fails; everywhere organic attempts prove abortive. This is because men's minds are too deeply engrossed in the times in which they live not to feel the rebound of "that revolution which was wrought in human opinions and of the displacement effected in the relative value of things" and announced by Renan in 1866. The doctrine of evolution, of which they bear the stamp and against which they

in my opinion, to the understanding of the influences which produced Durkheim, and of the social ethics which was one of the most constant objects of his thought and teaching.

react, is but a philosophy of modern English industry and its technical innovations in which may be revealed a trans formation in the economic estimate of intellectual values, a transformation which carries with it the momentary depreciation of intellectual life.

Now, events appear to be accelerating this struggle in which the future of civilization is at stake. From 1914 to 1919 human experience has been enriched by silent meditation born of human suffering, and we have discovered that a thought is judged by its power of expansion, its organizing value, its sufficiency from the human standpoint. We have learned that science, disinterested speculation, the forms of unactual thought, are mainly important owing to their ethical character. We are at the outset of a transformation in the moral estimate of human values, where types of humanity, instead of neutralizing one another, are opposed to one another. Perhaps we shall go so far as to seek in a sort of meditation, in looking back upon our civilization, for a truth by which we may be able to live and which expresses a profound agreement between ideas and morals. We shall then find in the very essence of French thought, in humanism, a wide and all-embracing inspiration, which will enable us to follow the tendency of modern societies toward an uncertain future, without sacrificing any of the requirements present at every moment of our history—requirements sufficiently complex to demand the mediation of thought, sufficiently vital for all speculation to be vain which does not first insure to them inner balance and social harmony. Then, fronting a state of chaos, France will uphold the rights and dignity of thought.

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