

faith in instincts and that every one who writes a textbook manufactures a new definition and compiles a novel list. This does appear to be the usual procedure, but there are notable exceptions. Titchener considered instinct one of the catchwords of popular psychology which did scientific harm, and thought that, until there was more factual data on the subject, there could be no acceptable definition or classification of instincts. The opinions of Dunlap and Yerkes are especially worthy of attention because they have both worked experimentally with animals and have had ample opportunity to observe "instinctive" action where it is neither moral,

æsthetic nor religious. Their remarks make valid criticism of their colleagues. Yerkes says that "instinct is one of those historical concepts which has been overgrown by meaning. It is so incrustated with traditional significance that it is almost impossible to use it for the exact descriptive purpose of science." And Dunlap points out the results of this traditional significance.

Practically, we use the term instinctive reaction to designate any reaction whose antecedents we do not care, at the time, to inquire into; by acquired reaction, on the other hand, we mean those reactions whose antecedents we intend to give some account. But let us beware of founding a psychology, social, general, or individual, on such a definition.

## Ethics

### THE PROBLEM OF MOTIVE

BY H. M. PARSHLEY

THE behavioristic psychology seems to me to fail at an important point, salutary as it is in its insistence upon objective, unbiassed observation. Whether we can ever penetrate the consciousness of another or not, we certainly have to deal with our own private awareness; and it is difficult to see how any psychology can be complete or even passably satisfactory which fails to derive its data from introspection as well as from observation. Ethics certainly involves the consideration of motives, values, and ideals; and a scientific ethics requires genuine knowledge about these elusive matters. The primary facts in this field are the subjective feelings and ideas of which we are directly conscious; they belong to a realm of being which many philosophers are prone to regard as distinct in character from the material and therefore beyond apprehension by the method of science. But it is unnecessary to adopt this pessimistic belief. If behaviorism is really unable and unwilling to dig out and give us real knowledge about subjective things, there may well be other psychological methods that can do so.

It seems to me important to get this

idea out into the light and have its implications clearly understood, for, in my opinion, the chief support of obscurantism at this moment is the notion that motives, values, and ideals, unlike material things, are beyond the range of scientific study, and thus afford a free and exclusive field in which religion and philosophy may disport themselves authoritatively without challenge. If you don't go to church, listen to some Modernist clergyman broadcasting his sermon over the radio. The chances are very good that you will hear him say that we must accept science in its proper sphere and believe nothing that is in plain contravention of scientific knowledge in any sphere. "But," he will go on to say, "today as never before the world needs spiritual guidance. At a time when standards are falling all about us, when vice and crime are rampant and nothing seems to be held sacred, at this time when the old sanctions and the old taboos have lost their force, we can be rescued from a hopeless materialism only through motivation by faith in the values and ideals of religion."

Very good; values and ideals are important elements in human conduct. But which religion shall it be? Christianity? No doubt. But shall it be the values and

ideals expressed by Jesus in the New Testament or those taught by some modern branch of the church? Shall we sell all and give to the poor, turn the other cheek, and take no thought for the morrow, or shall we be prosperous Episcopalians? Religion gives too many, too diverse, and too arbitrary answers to command our respect and confidence. The old sanctions and taboos *are* losing their force. Motives, values and ideals are sensed as matters of feeling for the most part; but I venture to maintain that they grow out of the fundamental urges by way of human needs, desires and aims, and that therefore they can be studied, controlled, and judged by their fruits—scientifically, like other items of behavior. To set them apart in some vague and inaccessible realm of the spirit is simply to erase them from rational thought. To give them over into the keeping of priests and philosophers whose competence we distrust is to obscure the way to truth about them.

But beyond question the scientific study of these matters is peculiarly difficult, although I see no reason to agree with those who pronounce it impossible. We cannot lay a motive upon the dissecting table or fix it under the lenses of a microscope, to be sure; but neither can we treat electricity or life in that fashion. Nevertheless, we understand a good deal about these forces, and we can manage them pretty much as we will—better than a witch doctor, at least. So with the mental forces that undeniably influence a good deal of our behavior. It is certainly possible to study the facts about their occurrence and propagation and note the results that they produce. I consider it nonsense to say, as is the fashion even among scientists, that science consists in measurement, understood in the narrow sense—"the recording of pointer settings." The discovery and statement of facts, if only it be thorough and honest, may also take the form of description, or narration, or homology, or introspection, and all these are more important than the measurement that

sometimes serves to make a scientific description more precise than it would otherwise be. It is well to view with suspicion those who so eagerly advance to limit the scope of scientific curiosity. It may well be that *their* motives need careful investigation.

We have been led to suppose that acts should be judged not only by their consequences but also by the motive that lies behind them. Murder for gain is regarded as worse than murder for infidelity; and premeditated murder is held to be worse than murder in the heat of anger. This attitude seems to me to be based upon two assumptions, of which the first is safer than the second. We assume, first, that it is possible to determine motivation, and, second, that the person acting exercises free will, and may sometimes choose deliberately to do wrong in conscious defiance of certain fixed community standards. The result of our entertaining these assumptions is expressed in our legal punishments. Society visits the most severe penalties upon those who seem to violate its rules with malice aforethought, and such penalties are always tinged with the color of revenge. But if we believe that the culprit fell from grace by accident and under the compulsion of forces beyond his control, we are less disturbed by envy, disgust, anger, or disapproval, and are thus willing to forego the pleasures of vengeance, in a measure.

Now, the biological reason for law in some form is the necessity for social cohesion with its accompanying restrictions on individual freedom. And punishments, in the case of a foresighted and habit-forming animal, most certainly tend to discourage infraction of the rules. That this should be questioned seems absurd enough in view of the methods of the lion tamer and the football coach. I believe that envy, jealousy, and revenge are almost unmitigated evils, and hold that they have no proper place in a rational penology; but if they were totally eliminated there would still remain the necessity for punishment.

For punishment simply serves to substitute a motive for socially desirable action in place of one that leads to undesirable deeds. The chain of cause and effect remains complete, though a new link, a new cause, has been introduced. Punishment, foreseen in imagination, is a compelling motive that unquestionably affects behavior. It causes an individual to act in a manner that suits his fellows and prevents him from causing injury. It certainly deters every one of us from numerous small infractions, even though we may not be among those who would run amuck and do promiscuous rape and murder except for the fear of the law.

There is, however, some reason for the current debate over the efficacy of, say, capital punishment. In times when execution was a common penalty for petty crimes, it is said that pickpockets were wont to practice their art in the crowd that gathered under the very shadow of the gallows; and there is general agreement that unusual mental abnormality may drive certain types of humanity to commit offenses with a force that is quite beyond control by any fear of punishment. But in such cases there are obviously many other factors to be considered. An ignorant and squalid populace is always on the verge of disorder, and severe punishment is but another drop of misery in a cup already full; while a people that lives in comfort is much more likely to appreciate both the advantages of regular behavior and the discomforts of the dungeon or the noose.

In the matter of abnormality we admittedly have to do with exceptional circumstances, and here the gravest questions arise when border-line cases have to be dealt with. How shall we regard the motives of a man who may be slightly insane, who is perhaps perverted, who seems to labor under a special psychological compulsion that leaves most of his behavior untouched? Here it is obvious that science is our only hope. If psychiatrists are competent (even within present limita-

tions) and employed as neutral and unbiassed observers (not in our present ridiculous fashion as special advocates of one side or the other!), they, and they alone, are able to tell us the truth in this important department of ethics.

Motive is a difficult subject, and psychology has a great deal to discover about it; but I think that there is a simple way to view the whole question, for those who wish to maintain a scientific attitude. We can regard motive as the immediate cause of an act, the last link in the chain; and where, as is often the case, it is possible to ascertain our motives, simple scientific honesty requires that they be taken into account. We are interested in consequences, and while several acts may be of the same nature, it often happens that the consequences, near and remote, may be quite different in the various cases. If a man in the delirium of fever reaches out and strangles his nurse, society need not fear the decimation of a valued profession, once he is cured of his malady. But if an ignorant father kills the doctor because his son dies of typhoid fever, society may well detain the offender until his educational defects have been remedied. Again, if an obviously intelligent and well-favored individual shoots his neighbor because he comes home and finds the neighbor making a friendly call, no one's life is safe while the marksman is at large, and he must be shut up where unsentimental warders will curb his urge for reform.

This difference in consequences corresponds to a difference in motives, and the detection of correspondences is characteristic of the method by which science seeks the truth. Those who hold this view of motive are not under the necessity of determining once for all, here and now, the validity of the second assumption—that free will is a reality; while waiting for evidence on this question, they can be content to leave it temporarily as a subject for the harmless exercises of creative thinkers.

# A PASTOR'S DAUGHTER

BY ETHEL BROWN

THE way of the transgressor is proverbially hard; but the way of the transgressor who is a Baptist preacher's daughter is well-nigh unbearable. In my case the Mendelian structure was not right for the job. My mother, who had danced her way through a carefree girlhood among the hedonists of her Southern State straight into the responsibilities which residence in a parsonage entails, painted for me glamorous pictures of her girlhood, and then became a little distressed when the consecrated life was not to my liking. A bit of the pride, a deal of the unbridled spirits, and much of the love of gaiety which were her family's dominant characteristics entered into me, and made the standards set up in the South for Baptist clergymen's children hard for me to attain.

As I think back now over the first decade of my life, it seems that the tragedy of those years can be summed up in my unachieved ambition to possess a floppy silk hat lined with pink satin, an accordion-plaited pink dress, and slippers strapped about the ankles with pink ribbons. That costume was the symbol of the things I missed in childhood because I was a Baptist preacher's daughter. It was worn every Saturday afternoon by the Episcopal children who attended the classes of an Episcopal dancing instructor who taught each Saturday afternoon in Hibernian Hall. Of course, I could not have clothes like that! As my father pointed out with much kindness and sound logic, there was no place for me to wear them. I had very nice Sunday dresses—a brown serge for Winter with perfectly fitting brown kid

gloves, brown shoes, and a little brown velvet hat piped with blue; white lawns for Summer, equipped with either pink or blue sashes—and my school dresses were plentiful, with never a button missing or a snag unmended. But how I did long for that floppy hat and that dress of plaited silk!

The longing was not so much for the fluffy clothes as for the pleasures that seemed to fill to overflowing the lives of the Episcopalian children. First through chance and later through choice, my playmates did not come from Baptist homes. My mother did not avail herself of the free instruction she might have had for her daughter, but contributed through my tuition to the support of a Victorian lady who, with the help of her sisters, conducted a select school where girls were taught as much of the three R's as ladies were then thought likely to need, a language that passed for French—for "the French of Paris was to her unknown," and much about good manners and the absurdity of crediting the rumor that the North had been victorious in the skirmish of the sixties erroneously called the Civil War. The pupils were preponderantly Episcopalian. These children were my friends. We played together; we studied together. On Saturday afternoons I was desolated when they went to dancing-school, wearing floppy hats, plaited silk dresses, and slippers strapped with ribbons about their ankles.

They invited me to their parties, of course. I went—dressed in one of the white lawn Summer dresses and pink or blue sashes; but I never had any parties of my