

Psychology as a Science of Self
III. The Description of Consciousness
Mary Whiton Calkins (1908c)

Classics in the History of Psychology

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First Published in *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, 5, 113-122.

THE main problem of this section is the following: to indicate briefly how the doctrine of the self as basal fact of consciousness is essential to the adequate description of our actual experience. I have described the self, in the preceding section, as persistent, inclusive, unique, and related; and I must now try to show that these distinctions are always implied in a full account of any experience.

This proposed description of consciousness, in terms of the characters of the conscious self, can not take the place of the so-called structural analysis of consciousness into elements. On the contrary, the structural analysis, which is common to all forms of psychology, must supplement the description peculiar to self-psychology. From the structural standpoint consciousness, though conceived as self, is regarded (spite of its inherent relatedness and persistence) as if in artificial isolation from surrounding phenomena and as if momentary. The results of the analysis of consciousness, thus conceived, are the so-called elements of consciousness. Concerning the nature of these elements there is, as is well known, much discussion. I have elsewhere argued[1] for the recognition of three groups of them: (1) sensational, or substantive, elements, (2) attributive elements (including at least affections and feelings of realness), and (3) relational elements. For lack of time I shall not here repeat my reasons for this classification since my present concern is rather to outline and to estimate the different forms of psychological procedure than to discuss any one of them in detail. It is, however, worthy of note that the tendency of contemporary psychology is everywhere toward a supplementation of the older view[2] which recognized only sensational, or at most sensational and affective, elements. Structural psychologists who, like [p. 114]

Titchener, oppose the doctrine are, I think, misled by their inclination to classify psychic phenomena by reference to physiological distinctions.[3]

Since, however, the basal fact of psychology is the conscious self, immediately known as persistent, inclusive, unique, and related, it is evident that a structural analysis, although essential, does not supply a complete description of any conscious experience. Such analysis is, in fact, subsidiary to the study of these characters of the self as other-than-momentary-and-isolated. It must be borne in mind, throughout, that -- on this view -- our consciousness always includes in varying proportion and degree the awareness of the inclusiveness, the persistence, the uniqueness, and the relatedness of the self: only, therefore, as emphasized, or as further differentiated, may these characters serve to distinguish one form of consciousness from another. So far, now, as I can observe, the consciousness of myself as including self is equally present in all kinds of experience and is not, therefore, a distinguishing mark of any; the awareness of persistence is emphasized in recognition, in anticipation, and in the other experiences which involve a consciousness of past or of future; the emphasized consciousness of uniqueness -- in other words, the individualizing consciousness -- is a factor in many kinds of experience (It should be noted that although uniqueness is primarily a character of the self -- not merely the I, or myself, and the related other self, but even the impersonal object of consciousness may be individualized.) The consciousness, finally, of at least two sorts of self-relatedness is characteristic of all sorts of experience. My consciousness is always known (immediately or reflectively) as either receptive or assertive, and as either egoistic or altruistic -- that

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is, as emphasizing either my central subject-self [p. 115] or else that other-than-self, to which I am related. And when this "other" is an other self, then the altruistic consciousness becomes a sharing, or sympathetic, experience.

For brevity's sake I propose, in place of a detailed description from both these standpoints, an annotated summary of the main results of such a description of consciousness; an in order that the summary may in some sense represent the full conclusions of this

PSYCHOLOGICAL CLASSIFICATION OF

	PSYCHICAL PHENOMENA.			RELATED NON-PSYCHICAL PHENOMENA.	
	<i>Through emphasis of dominant structural elements:—</i>	<i>As unique, persistent and related.</i>		<i>Physiological excitation: in particular, of</i>	<i>Biological reaction:—</i>
		<i>Immediately known as:—</i>	<i>Reflectively known as:—</i>		
Perception.	Sensational.	Receptive.	Sharing with unparticularized other selves; Particularizing impersonal object.	End-organs; Afferent fibers; Sense-centers.	Immediate.
Imagination (and Memory).	Sensational.		Receptive; Private; Particularizing impersonal object.	Association fibers; Sense-centers.	(Relatively) immediate.
Thought ⁵	Relational (non-temporal).		Receptive; Sharing with unparticularized other selves.	Association-centers (?); Association fibers (?).	Delayed.
Recognition and Anticipation.	Relational (temporal).	Persistent.	Receptive. ⁴	Association centers (?); Association fibers (?); Sense-centers.	Immediate or Delayed.
Emotion.	Affective.	Receptive; Individualizing; Egoistic or Altruistic.		Frontal lobes (?); Rolandic areas; Unstriped muscles.	Delayed and Interrupted.
Will.	Relational; Attributive (feeling of realness).	Assertive; Individualizing; Egoistic.		Cortical centers; Skeletal muscles (Excitations following consciousness).	Delayed and Selective (Reactions following consciousness).
Faith (or Loyalty).	Relational; Attributive (feeling of realness).	Assertive; Individualizing; Altruistic (sympathetic).		Cortical centers; Skeletal muscles (Excitations following consciousness).	Delayed and Adaptive (Reactions following consciousness).

[p. 116] series of papers I shall include an enumeration of the more important physiological and biological phenomena which I have treated as explaining, or at least as serving to classify, consciousness.[6] I must, however, say explicitly that only the general outline of this scheme is drawn with confidence. It will, I trust, be modified not only by my critics, but by myself, and it needs at many points to be filled in by the results of observation, both experimental and purely introspective.[7]

I ought not to discuss in detail these different experiences, so briefly described, for, in essentials, this account of consciousness closely resembles that, which I have elsewhere given. Certain

amplifications and corrections of my earlier statements must, however, be mentioned. The first of these is purely verbal: I have replaced the terms "passive" and "active" by the more closely descriptive expressions "receptive" and "assertive." By this usage I hope to meet the objection that consciousness is never rightly viewed as passivity, while I retain a distinction in itself important.[8]

A more important amendment of my teaching is the following: I have tried to differentiate carefully between immediate and inferred distinctions; that is, between the immediately experienced factors of a given consciousness and the characters which, in the effort to classify, we reflectively attribute to it.[9] This change, I [p. 117] think, meets the most frequent objection of detail to my description of conscious experiences. I have heretofore said that perception and imagination, indistinguishable on the basis of structural analysis (since both are sensational), may be opposed in that the perceiver is conscious of himself as sharing the experience of unparticularized other selves. To this account of perception many of my critics have replied by the assertion that their consciousness in perceiving certainly does not include this awareness of similarly conscious other selves.[10] No one, however, has denied that we reflectively make this distinction, that we say "I was perceiving, for these others also shared my experience" or "I imagined it, for no one else shared the vision." This means that even though there be no immediately experienced difference between perception and imagination there is still a distinction in psychological terms -- that is, that we reflectively describe perception as a sharing, a common experience. The description of imagination as self-consciousness is (as, indeed, I have always taught) in exclusively reflective terms. Not at the time of imagining, but in later psychologizing moments, does one compare one's imagining with one's perceiving and realize its privacy.

A third amplification of my earlier account of consciousness is the distinction of the other-than-self, of whom one is always conscious, according as it is personal or impersonal, that is, self or not-self. [11] In this way I have tried to meet the objection of those of my critics who believe that I have heretofore conceived the [p. 118] relations of the self as too exclusively personal, leaving out of account the fact that the self is aware of its relations to situations, objects, and ideas, as well as of its relations to persons.[12] It is evident that most of the characters which I attribute to consciousness hold equally whether or not the other-than-self be conceived as personal or impersonal, as self or as external. The self may be receptive in relation to person or to thing, it is "altruistic" when it lays stress on the other-than-self, however regarded; it may individualize other self or object. Only the conception of sharing or sympathizing requires the conception of the other-than-self as personal.

It is noticeable that this explicit recognition of the other-than-self as either impersonal or personal facilitates the description of perception and thought by ascribing to each a twofold object.[13] In perceiving and in thinking I am conscious (immediately or reflectively) not only of selves who share my experience, but of the impersonal object of our common experience; and both together constitute the total object of my consciousness, that is to say, my environment. Similarly, sympathetic emotion and faith in a person may have impersonal as well as personal object: for instance, I may sympathize with Lieutenant Peary in his yearning for the North Pole. In egoistic emotion and in will, on the other hand, my object is either personal or impersonal. Thus, I dislike person or thing, and I dominate other self or impersonal environment. It should be noticed that the impersonal object of emotion or of will is distinguished in the following way from the impersonal object of imagination or of perception: both objects are particularized, that is, looked on as unique, but the object of emotion or of will is always immediately known as particular, whereas the object of perception or imagination is only reflectively individualized. My admiration or my distaste for a certain house includes a consciousness of its uniqueness, whereas I perceive or imagine the house without being conscious of it as either particular or general, and only later, on reflection, classify it as a "this," not an "any."

This suggests a necessary expansion of the account of thought as given in the summary, which precedes, -- an account there abbreviated for sheer lack of space. There are two main forms of thought which differ with respect to two characters of the impersonal object of thought. The first is generalization, in which the imper- [p. 119] sonal object is immediately known as unparticularized, or general: we generalize when we discuss animal or triangle or choice in general, that is, when we are conscious of any animal or triangle or choice, and not of some special beast or figure or decision. In the other forms of thought -- for example, in comparison and in causal thinking -- the impersonal objects of our thinking may be known (but reflectively, and not immediately) as individualized, that is, as

particular. One traces the relation of this explosion to that lighted fuse, and one compares the odor of this rose with the fragrance of this lilac. Generalization differs, therefore, from the other forms of thought in that its impersonal object is (1) immediately (not reflectively) realized as (2) non-individualized. All forms of thought are, on the other hand, alike in the reflective consciousness of sharing with unparticularized other selves;[14] and all are essentially receptive forms of consciousness, though most often occurring as result of volition. It is true that one conventionally describes thought as "active," or "voluntary," but as a matter of fact one is as receptive in one's consciousness of a given relation as in the consciousness of blue or of red. The attitude of thought is, in truth, radically different from the assertiveness of will; and we call thought voluntary, or active, only because of the voluntary attention to a given topic and the voluntary inhibition of distracting objects which, ordinarily, precede it.

It will serve to review and still further to elucidate all these principles of description if I dwell in slightly greater detail on the nature of emotion. I have described emotion as essentially an affective consciousness, immediately realized as individualizing, either egoistic or altruistic (often sympathetic), and receptive. The first of these epithets is the result of structural analysis and will not be disputed. On the other hand, it does not go without saying that emotion is a, receptive experience. For when one reflects upon the tumult of passion, the wildness of grief, the excitement of joy, one is tempted to regard emotion as preeminently an assertive kind of consciousness. I believe, however, that this view of emotion either

confuses bodily movement with the mental attitude of assertiveness (activity, in the narrower sense of that term), or that it gives the name emotion to an experience which is really a compound of emotion and will. By assertive consciousness I am sure that we mean either the imperious, dominating attitude which characterizes will, or the adoptive, espousing, acknowledging attitude of faith. And [p. 120] though emotion may, it, is true, be accompanied or followed by assertive consciousness, in itself it is no such assertive attitude, but a consciousness of receptive relation to the other-than-myself.

More distinctive than the realized passivity of emotion is its doubly individualizing character. On the one hand, my consciousness of my own individuality is vivid in my emotions -- in my likings and dislikings my hopes, my shame, my envy. Even esthetic emotion offers only a seeming exception, for my individuality, though altered, is not lost in it.[15] And I am equally conscious, in emotion, of the uniqueness of the other-than-self. I do not love "any" kindly person, or despise cowards in general, and I am not esthetically thrilled by "scenery": I love this person, and no other, however similar, will take the place; I scorn this particular turncoat; I feel the beauty of this misty ocean outlook. Within the class of emotions, thus defined, the most important distinction is that between the egoistic emotions, which conceive the other-than-self as merely ministering to narrow personal feeling, and the altruistic emotions especially sympathetic personal feeling -- in which one merges oneself in the happiness or in the unhappiness of another self. But I resist the temptation of commenting in more detail on this distinction and on other forms of consciousness, in the fear of obscuring the boundary outlines of my conception.

It is necessary, in conclusion, to consider certain fundamental objections to this theory of consciousness. Besides the criticisms already discussed, two serious objections have been brought forward. The first, which is urged by Titchener, is the following: self-psychology has no right to the use of structural analysis. "How a process consciousness," Titchener says,[16] "and an ego-consciousness can be analyzed into the same elements without the reduction of the latter to the former I can not see." [17] If by conscious self (Titchener's ego-consciousness) were meant a special kind of idea, this comment would obviously be correct. But by "conscious self" is meant, as has been shown, the concrete reality of which the idea is a mere abstraction. It follows that; all the positive content of the idea must be attributed to the self. In truth the analysis into elements is an analysis of the self's consciousness when the self is conceived without reference to other selves or to its own past or future. It is an analysis essential to the full understanding of the self, but it certainly is not an exhaustive account of our awareness of self. [p. 121]

The final criticism of this view of psychology assumes the general correctness of the description of consciousness in terms of self, but argues that such a description is unnecessary. The only detailed statement of this difficulty is, so far as I know, that of Professor Margaret F. Washburn. She states the issue clearly. Self-psychology, she holds, while often possible, "is not, therefore, a necessary

adjunct to process psychology." [18] For instance, she says: "Let us take the emotion of sympathetic joy. I can describe this as the attitude in which I recognize and rejoice in the existence of joy in another self. I can also describe it perfectly well in terms of process psychology. The emotion of joy in general may be structurally analyzed into the sensational elements of the idea or ideas occasioning the emotion, the sensational elements resulting from the bodily changes involved, and the resultant affective tone derived from all these sensational components. When the emotion is one of sympathetic joy, the only modification that our structural analysis needs is this: the occasioning idea is, in such a case, an idea of the emotion, that is, a weakened reproduction of the emotion associated with certain ideas which mean to us the personality of another -- ideas of his appearance and movements or words, perhaps. When I think of my friend's joy I think of how he looks, what we will do and say, etc. My idea of his personality may be analyzed structurally into sensational and affective elements quite as well as my consciousness of the bodily effects of my emotion."

To my mind, Miss Washburn offers, in this passage, an admirable structural analysis of sympathetic joy and a convincing demonstration that such an analysis is inadequate. The elements of consciousness" which she names are indeed discoverable, but the enumeration falls far short of describing the emotion. In fact, Miss Washburn seems to me to yield the case for the opposition to self-psychology, by admitting that a consciousness of the "personality of another" does belong to sympathetic joy. For the analysis which she attempts of this consciousness of personality, in the statement to which I have given the emphasis of italics, is assuredly defective. The very expression "idea of personality" is a misleading one, if idea is taken in the technical sense. Assuredly, Damon could never be conscious of suffering with Pythias if Damon-being-conscious-of-Pythias consisted in one complex idea and Pythias-suffering consisted in another. My consciousness of my friend's appearance and words does indeed include these elements sensational and affective, but it includes more than this, else it would be impossible to explain why a feeling of joy [p. 122] does not accompany every complex of similar verbal and visual images; whereas, notoriously, two people looking and speaking alike may be objects, respectively, of my sympathy and of my indifference.

The failure of this effort to show the unessential character of description in terms of self-psychology leads me to reaffirm the assertion that an adequate account of consciousness includes, with an analysis into structural elements, an account of the self as unique, persistent, and in relation to an environment personal and impersonal. The merely structural psychologist's treatment of emotion, thought, recognition, and the rest is indeed true so far as it goes, yet it goes but part way toward portraying the tumultuous chaos of the conscious life. And psychology is both defective and artificial so long as it undertakes observation, experiment, and scientific description in disregard of the basal fact of the science.

Footnotes

[1] Cf. "An Introduction to Psychology," Chapters VIII.--X.; "Der doppelte Slandpunkt in der Psychologie," pp. 14-32.

[2] For recent indications of this tendency, cf. Stumpf, "Erscheinungen und Psychische Funktionen," Berlin, 1907; and R. S. Woodworth, "Imageless Thought," this JOURNAL, VOL III., pp. 701 ff., especially p. 705.

[3] Cf. Philosophical Review, 1906, Vol. XV., p. 93, for Titchener's criticism of the conception of relational elements. If I am right, the controlling reason for his refusal to recognize relational elements is the difficulty of assigning their exact nerve correlates. (For a similar comment on Titchener's procedure cf. Angell, "The Province of Functional Psychology," loc. cit., pp. 81-82.) This reasoning is, however, inadmissible since psychological description should not take its cue from physiology. In his constructive treatment of relational experiences Titchener is driven to what seems to me the absurdity of describing them as essentially cases of verbal association. He says, for example: "We speak of a comparison of two impressions when the ideas which they arouse in consciousness call up the verbal associate 'alike' or 'different,' ("An Outline of Psychology," §85; 85). This is surely an improbable hypothesis. The mere presence of verbal imagery obviously is not a distinctive mark of comparison, and if Titchener's meaning is that comparison is characterized essentially by the specific verbal images "alike," "different," then, on his principles, the German whose verbal reaction is "gleich" or "verschieden" would be incapable of discrimination.

[4] Memory and recognition are often, and thought is commonly, the result of assertive

consciousness (will).

[5] For amplification cf. below, pp. 118, 119.

[6] It will be understood that the statements (necessarily condensed) of the table which follows attempt only to name distinguishing physiological correlates of the different kinds of consciousness. In no case, therefore, do they claim to be complete. In particular, they omit all reference to the motor accompaniments of sense consciousness (and the corresponding brain excitations), and to the excitation of sense centers during thought., emotion, will, and the like.

It will be noted, also, that will and faith are classified by reference to physiological and biological phenomena which follow, and do not precede, consciousness. In the ordinary "causal" use of the term, these phenomena could not, therefore, be named explanatory, though they may certainly be used as supplementary means of classifying will and faith.

[7] I may take this occasion to thank Dr. Jodl for constructive criticism of this sort in a review in the *Zeitschrift für Psychologie and Physiologie der Sinnesorgane*, 1906, Bd. 40, p. 306.

[8] Cf. Royce's opposition of "docility" to "mental initiative," in his "Outlines of Psychology."

[9] This procedure is rather an explanation than a description of consciousness, though the explanation is through reference not to physiological or biological, but to psychic facts. Thus, the phenomena to which in this ease perception is linked are not facts of nerve structure, but unparticularized selves sharing the perceiver's experience. Purely psychological explanations in terms not of selves, but of ideas or of functions, also occur: for example, a particular train of imagination may be explained as due to the frequency or vividness of occurrence, in previous experience, of ideas similar to its initial image. I make these comments in order to show that my conception of psychology does not imply the doctrine (which, indeed, I heartily repudiate) that explanation is of necessity in non-psychic terms. (Cf. a valuable paper by Professor G. M. Stratton on "Modified Causation for Psychology," *Psychological Bulletin*, 1907, Vol. IV., pp. 129 ff.) For purposes of classification it is, however, clearly better to confine oneself, so far as possible, to descriptive distinctions.

[10] For the criticism, cf. H. J Watt, *Archiv für die Gesamte Psychologie*, 1906, p. 117; F. Arnold, *Psychological Bulletin*, 1905, Vol. 11., p. 370; M. F. Washburn, this *JOURNAL*, Vol. II. p. 715. It is fair to add that I have admitted in my different discussions the possibility that the "community" in perceiving is a reflectively observed character. Cf. "An Introduction to Psychology," p. 172, and "Der doppelte Standpunkt in der Psychologie," p. 44.

[11] Cf. my former statements of this distinction with reference to emotion, will, and faith: "An Introduction to Psychology," pp. 276 f., 310, 311; "Der doppelte Standpunkt in der Psychologie," pp. 63 ff. I still think, however, that the distinction between "external" and "internal" is not essential to the basal outlines of a psychological classification, and I am convinced that a division founded simply on these relations of the self must, be insufficient. Professor Angell, for example, in his "Psychology" considers consciousness under two heads: (1) "cognition," which informs us of objects and relations external to ourselves, and (2) "feeling," which informs us of our own internal condition. The insufficiency of the principles is evident in that Angell is driven to include under cognition "concepts," "judgments," and "meanings," which surely may be internal as well as external -- one may, for example, have a conception of feeling, and one may reason about, volition.

[12] Cf. K. Bühler, *Deutsche Literaturzeitung*, 1906, p. 312; F. Arnold, *Psychological Bulletin*, 1905, Vol. II., p. 371.

[13] The need of some. Such modification of my account of thought was indicated by Professor M. F. Bentley in a review published in the *American Journal of Psychology*, 1902, Vol. XIII., p. 167.

[14] Cf. Professor J. M. Baldwin's conception of thought, in particular his discussion of "community . . . the common or social factor in all the processes of thought," in the *Psychological Review*, Vol. XIV., p. 400.

[15] Cf. "An Introduction to Psychology," pp. 278-279.

[16] It will be remembered that mental process is Titchener's synonym for "idea" or "psychic content." For criticism of his right to use the term cf. the first paper in this series, this JOURNAL, Vol. IV., p. 678.

[17] Philosophical Review, 1900, Vol. X.V., p. 93. Cf. M. F. Washburn, loc. cit., p. 716.

[18] This journal Vol. II., p. 715. Miss Washburn, it will be noted, follows Dr. Titchener in the use -- unjustified as I have tried to show -- of the word "process."

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