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CHAPTER I

HUMAN PERSONALITY

It is a commonplace saying that ignorance and prejudice die hard. It is not, however, so easily perceived that the death of this ignorance and prejudice almost invariably gives rise to their re-birth in new forms which may be no nearer to the expression of the truth than the old forms they have replaced. So also is there re-birth of universal truths, of those grand synthetic generalizations, which obtain with more or less persistence among all peoples and in all times. With truth there can be nothing fundamentally new, yet its re-expression in terms of current experience may come with all the force and attractiveness of novelty. But the barrier to its reception is just this ignorance and prejudice in the public mind, which it is the function of education to remove. Thus we find many words and phrases in the literature of all nations bearing testimony to the confused and contradictory nature of current beliefs and to the survival of old notions as to the meaning and import of the human personality. These beliefs fall into two main classes. According to the first and more popular class, a "person" is the combination of a body, or physical organism, with a permanent, more or less independent, soul-entity which animates it; and for this class the great work of education consists in the harmonising of these two factors. With the second class of beliefs, the body is regarded as the ultimate fact; the mind or character being considered as a quality or function of the physical organism, to be developed like a plant by contact with a suitable "environment." The propounders of this doctrine, although admitting that much may be due to "heredity," insist, neverthe-

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less, that the child is born fundamentally "good," and that the whole function of education is the skilful drawing out of its innate excellences.

Now controversialists holding opposed doctrines, while vainly imagining that they have established the validity of their own thesis by an elaborate refutation of their opponents' point of view, are apt to exclaim "Both doctrines cannot be true." Well, perhaps not, but they can both be false, as indeed, almost invariably, they are.

Common ground as between opponents, there necessarily must be. There is common ground in language, though it nearly always presents difficulties. Obviously too, opponents share much in their familiar environments. In expressing differences of opinion, whether in discussion or in exposition, it is no doubt well to discover as much common ground as is strictly relevant, even to insist upon it; but where we find points of fundamental difference it is cowardly and dishonest to ignore them, or to slur them over. The frank acknowledgment of serious differences often helps towards their removal and paves the way towards mutual understanding. Our object, certainly, should be to avoid barren controversies, especially such as are mainly verbal. In previous editions the term "psychology" often occurred. This word has now become so ambiguous owing to its peculiar use in different schools of thought that in the present edition its occurrence is much less frequent. There are for example "dualistic" psychologies and "monistic" psychologies. The presentation of life and thought sketched in these pages is neither monistic, nor is it dualistic. Our basis may, therefore, be conveniently indicated by the compound word "psychophysical" to escape from this ambiguity. According to a dualistic system, living organisms are compounded arbitrarily out of two factors which are said to be absolutely distinct, though they interact. E. B. Tylor gave the name "animism" to this system. In the "animistic" view of life, "spirits" are separate entities

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capable of existing and disporting themselves wholly apart from, and quite independently of, any physical organism. According to a "monistic" or "materialistic" view, mind is a mere function of matter, while matter itself is regarded as the ultimate "reality." Inasmuch as this form of psychology is concerned primarily with the *behaviour* of the organism, it is often spoken of as "behaviourism."

Crude generalizations of either kind must as far as possible be avoided and their special nomenclature discarded, in order to clear the mind from misconception preparatory to giving serious and unbiased consideration to the results and conclusions of modern research on fundamental problems.

This done, it may be stated positively, as a fact which has been clearly demonstrated, that the human personality under a thoroughgoing analysis exhibits, not a permanent and unalterably separate entity, but a vast combination or aggregation of variegated, fluctuating, loosely organised and interdependent physical and psychic phases and potentialities, of which no more than a minute fragment makes its presence manifest to our ordinary, or "normal" waking consciousness. An illustration, offered by the late Mr Frederick Myers, will be found helpful provided that the analogy is not pressed too far. It compares personality to an iceberg, ever changing in structure and substance, the great bulk of which is always invisible and submerged. This iceberg simile is defective in that it might suggest a certain *rigidity of structure* as a quality of personality, as also a certain *fixity* in the proportion between its visible and invisible factors. The periodic emergence of a whale above the surface of the ocean might, in these respects, offer a more useful figure.

As we approach to anything in the nature of fixity and permanence so we approach the impersonal.

We are all familiar with such phrases as being or not being in a "mood" for anything: we speak of an attentive or a careless mood, a pleasant or a nasty mood, etc. We recognise the mental

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phenomena to which such phrases apply and as a rule we accept them as important factors in our lives, but we often misinterpret their meaning or put them down as inexplicable.

Scientific research explains the mystery by indicating the nature of the human personality. The evidences of recent research have shown that an individual is composed of a vast number and great variety of correlated psycho-physical complexes[1].

A "complex" may be defined as a group[2] or system or aggregate of associated or combined ideas[3], linked together in some experience, or succession of experiences, with corresponding emotions, perceptions, "memories," interests, range of beliefs, actions and volitions; linked in such a manner as to be capable of so dominating certain functions of the brain and nervous system as to generate a consciousness[4], or a feeling in conjunction

[1] The expression "psycho-physical complex," usually abbreviated throughout as *complex*, does not necessarily imply any specifically pathological condition as assumed in the writings of "psychoanalysts." The word "complex" is used here as the equivalent of the Latin *complexus*, i.e., a "complex whole" (see *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, under this head). It means simply a *factor* in the ordinary composition and growth of personality, as revealed by analysis, or critical examination of the processes of life and mind.

[2] Neither "group," nor "system," nor "aggregate" is quite a suitable term to express that arrangement of ideas associated or combined in a complex. "Vortex" might perhaps serve, though it would too much suggest analogy with fluid motion. "Dynamic or syndynamic system" would probably be the least objectionable.

[3] There may be philosophical objections to the treatment of ideas as entities or units, just as there may be metaphysical objections to the hypothetical atoms and molecules with which science has made us conceptually familiar. In both cases, however, it is mainly a question of practical convenience in nomenclature and symbolism. Further, with ideas it might even seem expedient to use an extended similitude, and speak of *associated* ideas as those grouped by a process of *admixture* or *solution*, while *concepts* might be held to represent those *combined* by a process of natural affinity.

[4] The term "consciousness" implies transitory phases of *mind*, yielding conditions of *awareness* in great variety. These conditions usually involve the focusing of attention upon specific phenomena. The term "subconscious," as applied to mind, indicates such conditions of its development as are differentially active, while not specifically focused, and are yet capable of being focused. "Unconscious mind" is used to denote the potentiality of

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with those ideas, of egoistic or individualistic self-hood, however transitory and imperfect in its manifestation.

The stimulation of one element of a complex, generally speaking, excites activity in some or all of the rest. Notwithstanding their transitory independence in functioning, all complexes are really allied to one another, more or less correlated and interdependent, but are imperfectly co-ordinated in their manifestation. According to the rise and fall of different complexes in the field of vivid or focused consciousness, or in a less degree according to their tendency to assert themselves subconsciously, so is one's change of mood.

To speak, as many do, of *the* subconscious "mind" or "self" is very misleading. There is no definite self-entity that remains always subconscious, nor, for that matter, does there exist any veritable psychic mass, called by the Freudians "the unconscious," which they tell us is invariably fixed somewhere in the personality out of all contact with consciousness. The most trustworthy results of modern research confirm the belief of early investigators that all complexes, which, for the time being, are below the threshold of consciousness, however deeply they may be imbedded in oblivion, however they may be isolated by dissociation or by inversion, or however they may be clustered together in groups by their affinities, are ever tending by reason of their inherent vitality to assert themselves in the personality's functioning in any way that they can find power and opportunity to do so effectually. An individual may not be fully, or indeed at all aware of this tendency, or of its manner of functioning, but the tendency is a factor nevertheless.

mind, i.e., mind which is psychically undeveloped, individually undifferentiated, or unprepared for focusing, as being *outside* human consciousness in the sense of never having been assimilated with it. It should be noted in this connection that Dr Sigmund Freud, of Vienna, and his school speak of "*the unconscious*" as covering all those mental phases which, in accordance with the above nomenclature, should be called *dissociated subconscious* activities.

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The element of "emotion," sometimes called "feeling," is of great importance in the functioning of a complex, as determining its relative capacity for persistent and isolated activity, and is dealt with more fully in a separate chapter. It will suffice for the moment to say that the term "emotion" is used here as an expression for the energy of likes and dislikes, as also for such comparative notions as "preferences" and "choice of evils," which are characteristic of the bulk of our ordinary thoughts. As Sir Charles Sherrington aptly remarks in his *Integrative Action of the Nervous System*: "Emotion 'moves' us, hence the word itself." We should bear in mind, however, to avoid confusion, that the more familiar signification attached to the term is usually expressive of some manifestation of emotional excess or discord.

The formulation of psycho-physical complexes was foreshadowed, though somewhat vaguely, by Herbart in his enunciation of what he terms "apperception masses."

The types of complexes are very various; they may be classified roughly as belonging to three main orders:

1. The minor variety, which is by far the most numerous kind, and is, generally speaking, the more limited in its range and more transitory. These complexes have their genesis in what are ordinarily called "events," or specific experiences; as for example a particular meal, a game, a privation, a lesson, an accident, a dispute, a punishment, an illness, a success or a failure. Even such a conglomerate of events, closely associated in our thoughts as constituting in themselves the peculiar incidents of our lives in the nature of "personal experiences" great or small, forms the basis of a minor complex.

2. The intermediate variety, comprising various intellectual and moral concepts of a co-ordinating, syndynamic and synthetic nature. These complexes have definite relations to certain specific "environments," both material and psychic. To this order, viewed as transcending mere personal experiences, belong our systematised notions of (*a*) the physical and biological worlds,

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for example, heat and cold, light, colour, electricity, sound, weight, gravitational attraction, number, time, space, force, motion, energy, radiation, and the qualities and composition of matter; thus also our ideas of life, action and reflex, decay, disease and death, the bodily organs and senses, hunger, nourishment, and growth; (*b*) moral qualities, such as kindness and cruelty, diligence and idleness, intelligence and stupidity, honesty and deceit, generosity and greed, modesty and boastfulness, individual responsibility and reciprocal obligations; (*c*) institutional ideas, customs, ordinances, social order and distinctions, history, geography, laws of justice, equity, and speech. The element of personal experience, although an undoubted factor in the development and acquisition of all such concepts, is subordinated to the idea of their universality. These complexes are in fact the equivalents of "concepts" in the philosophic or scientific sense.

3. The Great Complex[1], i.e., the personality or character as a co-ordinated whole. This complex, though rarely awakened as a vivid synthetic consciousness, shows a tendency towards an occasional and imperfect emergence as "conscience." It is in complete harmony within, and with the Universal Life, when truly awakened; and it gains, thereby, infinite mental freedom and power.

The strength and worth of our *personality* are determined by the quality, the mobility, the elasticity and the co-ordination of the complexes out of which it is composed.

At any moment a specific complex, or several simultaneously (forming a "co-consciousness"), may emerge into the field of normal, waking, focused or vivid consciousness. The rest, the vast majority, remain for the time being submerged; exercising, no doubt, a vague kind of subtle influence in our thoughts and

[1] The phrase "Great Complex" is borrowed from the *Mahā-Sudassana-Sutanta*; translated by Prof. Rhys Davids in the *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*. See Vol. III, p. 214 *note*.

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actions, though "automatically," unvolitionally and, so to speak, surreptitiously. There is an abundance of evidence, however, that while submerged in subconscious strata of our existence, our dormant complexes do not persist in a static condition, but are subject to continual change. Nor do they remain isolated, for it has been demonstrated by means of hypnotic experiments[1] that, after successive emergence, they reappear modified by the assimilation of qualities and tendencies derived from allied or complementary complexes; even, be it said (though the fact is generally disputed), by psychic interaction with the subconscious elements of other personalities[2].

The same ideas, or, to speak more correctly, similar concepts, may occur in various complexes, though allied to different feelings. Thus, for example, the idea *food* would present itself as attractive or the reverse according to the condition of the stomach and nervous system, functioning with the mood then dominant.

Let us now consider the origin and growth of complexes. They are the outcome of experience, both physical and psychical, though to what degree or in what manner respectively we shall not attempt to consider here. It will be enough at this juncture to point out that, although the distinction made between the physical instrument of thought and the psychical powers is not to be regarded as amounting to independence, or absolute separateness of function, yet for the better understanding of educational processes precise terminological definitions of these fundamental concepts are of very great scientific importance. The clearly

[1] See *The Dissociation of a Personality* by Morton Prince, M.D. (Longmans & Co.). Dr Prince shows that complexes, even when highly dissociated, can merge themselves into one another while they are below the threshold of consciousness.

[2] Professor Henri Bergson, de l'Académie française, in a lecture delivered in London, said he considered the evidence in support of the belief in subconscious interaction of thought and feeling between different individuals, was positively overwhelming. He insisted that this kind of "psychic osmosis" was always in action, more or less, though generally unnoticed; but suggested that a too erratic or pronounced development of the process would become "highly embarrassing."

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established scientific data and formulae of the physical world, relating as they do to phenomena so remote from the processes usually called psychical, may of course be treated, for specific practical purposes, as pertaining to forces operating independently of ordinary thought. There is, however, a danger in doing this arbitrarily or dogmatically. The danger arises out of a forgetfulness of the innumerable changes which such data and formulae have undergone in the past and are continually undergoing: a forgetfulness which is liable to engender a too arrogant belief in their absolutely fixed and universal nature; and in the infallibility, for all purposes, of the "scientific method." This is not meant by way of detracting from the value of the scientific method as an instrument of research; nor is it intended as disparaging its important achievements in practical spheres. It is merely a reminder that the method is based upon the systematic observation and correlation of phenomena or *appearances*, which sometimes prove deceptive. To illustrate the danger incurred by too strong an insistence upon universality inhering in the findings of the scientific method, attention need only be drawn to the confusion and revolutionary effects brought recently into the scientific world through the advent of the principles of relativity.

It cannot be too strongly insisted upon that complexes are not static entities, but that they are each one ever changing and developing through their tendency to strengthen and perpetuate themselves by adaptation to or assimilation with their respective environments or that aspect of real life to which they are complementary in the existing world "outside." In this struggle our various complexes compete, conflict and co-operate. In other words, each complex "ego" seeking intermittently to assimilate or to destroy the "non-ego" gives rise to a change in both. It is this process which is most important and obtrusive in the functioning of individualised life.

Vision, in a spiritual sense, is one of a complex's manifold phases, dependent on the manner of its emergence into vivid

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consciousness. A complex has many phases. The word may therefore be said to express, in a comprehensive fashion, the embodiment, potentiality, continuity, cause and outcome of *specific experience*. It is sometimes the equivalent of what we vaguely call a "habit." Its essential mark, however, is its power, latent or active, of generating a feeling and awareness of definite, though transitory, self-hood. It is just because all complex *subjects* can be postulated as *objects* of thought, that they can never be properly regarded as separate, unconditioned, or permanent. The "vision" generated through their strongly emotional emergence is sometimes liable to inversion (see Chapter VIII). It might perhaps be asked whether a word, with so elastic a signification, is really of much value; and indeed some exception has been taken to its use on the ground that it "covers almost all mental processes as well as almost all physical conditions." But is this objection fair? Would it not be as reasonable to object to the phrase "chemical compound," because it covers practically every variety of material object? The same chemical substance may occur as a solid, a liquid, a gas, as a crystalline or an amorphous material, as also in allotropic varieties. We must have a word to connote those recurrent, intermittent and persistent egocentric or individualistic phases, the functioning of which helps to explain and simplify the various processes made manifest in personality. Herbart's phrase "apperception masses" is certainly not more suitable. *Spirit*, *soul*, *will* and *mind* are all too ambiguous, and, although more familiar, they are all much discredited. *Mood* is too vague, so are *habit*, *memory* and *motive*. What serious objection is there to *complex*? It has already come into use, and it is readily adopted as soon as it ceases to sound unfamiliar.

Now each fresh stimulative contact of the organism with some chosen or "accidental"[1] environment makes an addition

[1] An environment is called "accidental" when its presence is unexpected, or unusual; or where there is an absence of full awareness as to its relativity and proximity to the occasion. (See Chapter VI.)

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