

**THE GROUNDWORK
OF PSYCHOLOGY,
PP. 7-248**

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BY

G. F. STOUT, M.A. CAMB., M.A. OXON., LL.D. ABERDEEN

FELLOW OF THE BRITISH ACADEMY; PROFESSOR OF LOGIC AND METAPHYSICS
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. ANDREWS; LATE FELLOW OF ST. JOHN'S
COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, AND WILDE READER IN MENTAL PHI-
LOSOPHY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD; EDITOR OF
"MIND"; AUTHOR OF "A MANUAL OF PSY-
CHOLOGY"; ETC.



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PREFACE

THE aim of this book is to present a general view of mental process and mental development which shall be comprehensive and yet not vague and sketchy. I have attempted to omit all matter which can be omitted without interfering with my main purpose. Thus I have passed by all questions of detail connected with the Psychology of the Special Senses. My endeavor has been to present only what is essential to insight into the constitution of our mental life as a whole.

The work is a new one. It is not an abridgment of my *Manual of Psychology*. Even where the matter presented is substantially the same, the mode of presentation is different. The two books have no more in common than is inevitable in works on the same subject by the same person. In some respects the *Groundwork* is in my own opinion an improvement on the *Manual*, because, since the *Manual* was written, my own views on certain questions have become more clear and precise. One distinctive feature of the present work is the free use which it makes of material derived from observation of young children.

I am indebted to Mr. A. F. Shand for a valuable chapter on the Psychology of the Tender Emotions. I am also indebted to him for many useful suggestions mainly gathered from manuscript notes which he kindly communicated to me.

My best thanks are also due to Mr. Boyce Gibson and Mr. H. Sturt for their kindness in looking over proofs and in offering valuable suggestions and criticisms. The index is the work of my brother, Mr. J. F. Stout.

G. F. STOUT.

JUNE 19, 1903.

the recognized identity of its object. I am one in so far as my world is one.

Conditions of Psychological Process. — We come now to the third of the questions with which we started. Psychology investigates the conditions of the occurrence of psychical states. What are these? In part they are themselves psychical. They fall within the process of consciousness itself. Conscious life is a development in which preceding stages form the basis and presupposition of succeeding stages. But this internal development is not self-supporting. It requires a multitude of contributory conditions which are not themselves psychical states or processes. The flow of individual consciousness is closely connected with and constantly dependent on a particular bodily organism with its organs of sense and movement. The psychologist cannot give a systematic account of psychical process without reference to these bodily conditions. He is also compelled at every step to recognize the existence of what are called psychical or mental *dispositions*, inherited and acquired. Our actual experience at any moment is determined by conditions which are not themselves actual experience, but the abiding after-effects left behind by prior experiences. I recognize a man to-day because I met him yesterday, although I may not have thought of him in the interval. This can only be because my experience of yesterday has left behind an after-effect which has persisted through the intervening time and now determines my present experience. This residual after-effect is an acquired disposition.

Again, what are called in ordinary language friendship and enmity are acquired dispositions of a complex character rather than actual psychical processes. Friendship

involves such actual psychical processes as being glad at a person's prosperity, grieved at his misfortune, rejoiced to meet him, sorry to part from him, and so on. But these psychical states are merely partial and transient manifestations of the permanent friendly disposition. This is the abiding condition of these varying phases of actual emotion.

The difference between the musical faculty of a Mozart and that of a man who can hardly learn to tell one note from another is a difference in inherited disposition.

There are three ways in which dispositions may be regarded by the psychologist. Primarily he knows them by the manner in which they operate in determining psychical process. It is from this point of view that he is led in the first instance to *posit* their existence at all. So regarded, they are merely permanent possibilities of psychical process. But of course they must in reality be more than this. A naked possibility is nothing. A possibility must be founded in the constitution of actual existence. What kind of actual existence does a psychical disposition possess? It is sometimes said to be an unconscious state, or modification of the subject, and the subject considered as the possessor of such unconscious states or modifications is called a soul. Against this I have nothing to say. It may well be nearer to the ultimate truth than any other statement. But to the psychologist the conception of a soul is not helpful. He has no independent means of knowing anything about it which could be useful to him. For him the term "soul" is virtually only another name for the total system of psychical dispositions and psychical processes. But he has another clue which is more useful. Psychical dispositions, as well as psychical processes, have physiological correlates in states of nervous tissue. A psychical disposition is

represented on the physiological side by a permanent modification of the substance of the brain. This may be called a physiological disposition. I do not say that the physiological disposition is identical with the psychical. But the two correspond in such a way that for psychological purposes it is within limits a valid procedure to treat them as identical.