

world; whether it had limits in space or was unlimited, whether it had a beginning in time or was eternal, etc. Just so regarding the study of mental phenomena. The earliest speculations concerning mind were directed to the metaphysical problems of the nature of the soul, its origin, and the like, with very scanty attention to the actual behaviour of mind as seen in mental phenomena. And this metaphysical attitude was the predominant one, not only in ancient, but still more so in mediæval, and scarcely less so in modern times.

In the writings of Locke—one of the most scientific men of his age—one can see this metaphysical tendency very strong. Though his method was avowedly that of simply looking into his own mind, to see what could be observed there, yet on almost every page of his *Essay* we find metaphysical discussions concerning matters which lie utterly beyond the reach of observation. Indeed it can scarcely be questioned that metaphysics—much as it has been decried in certain quarters—will always be, as it always has been, the most attractive field of human inquiry; and that all purely scientific pursuits are followed in the hope—tacit or avowed—of their leading some day towards a solution of those transcendent problems which the human spirit cannot help putting to itself concerning the universe, the soul, and the Divine nature.

But while all this is true, it is, on the other hand, coming to be recognized in our day that the persistent pursuit of purely metaphysical questions, without regard to the phenomena that lie open to observation and experiment, is not only an endless process of “threshing old straw,” but is also a sin against the logical canons of investigation, which require us to take account of everything that promises, in any way, to aid us in making advances toward the solution of the questions in hand.

The psychology of the past forty years is therefore following the example set by the other sciences, and atoning for the sin spoken of, by becoming more and more inductive, more cognizant of fact and phenomenon, and less purely metaphysical. The ultimate aim of psychology, I make bold to say, is a metaphysic of the soul; just as the ultimate aim of physical science is a metaphysic of the material universe. But in the meantime the psychologist is bound to recognize, with his fellow-workers in every other department of investigation, that our metaphysic must shape itself in conformity with, and proceed upon the basis of, all ascertained and ascertainable matters of fact.*

*Of course there are two sides to this, as to every other truth. The pursuit of scientific observation and experiment presupposes certain