

This conviction is very much strengthened by the ordinary occupations of our life, which consist to a large extent, and with many of us almost exclusively, in dealings with or acting among other persons; and even when we retire into the sanctuary of our own individual thoughts, we find these again almost exclusively occupied with memory pictures of what we term our external life. And though it is the special task of mental philosophers—be they scientific, philosophical or purely literary—to take special cognisance of the subjective side of our experience, it has always proved extremely difficult to carry through this introspective view consistently, and not to lapse again and again into a contemplation of the external world.

The reasons of this are manifold, and some of them quite obvious, but there is one circumstance which stands out prominently.

Psychologists, to whichever of the above-mentioned classes they belong, whether students of psycho-physics, introspective thinkers or psychological novelists, deal almost exclusively with the adult mind. This induces them to attach most importance to mental features and abilities which have been acquired in the course of adolescence, but many of which are much less marked or perhaps totally absent if we go back to the period of childhood or infancy.

This remark leads us on to a contemplation of mental phenomena from a point of view which has been rarely occupied but which seems to throw a new light upon the paradox mentioned above.