

THE
PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

THE PRIORITY OF INNER EXPERIENCE.

IN the following pages I wish to say something about a metaphysical theory frequently introduced into works on psychology. The discussion of ordinary questions in psychology is carried on without reference to metaphysical theories; and the standpoints of the two sciences are kept fairly distinct. When, however, an attempt is made to show the metaphysical significance of psychological theories, the two standpoints are liable to be confused. From this confusion, I believe, we have that doctrine which Wundt calls "the priority of inner experience."

That inner experience is in some sense prior to outer experience; that it is somehow an immediately given original *datum* from which outer experience is derived or inferred, — is a thought frequently encountered in popular idealistic philosophy. At first glance we should say that, whereas nothing is more certain than that we have ideas, it is less certain whether there are real things corresponding to those ideas. "That we have cogitations of some sort is the *inconcussum* in a world most of whose other facts have tottered in the breath of philosophic doubt."¹ In other words, mind is something whose existence we cannot doubt, whatever we may think of the existence of matter. Inner experience, as Wundt says, is prior to outer experience.

I think it can be shown that any consistent use of the terms "inner" and "outer" experience, or their equivalents, forbids

¹ *Psychology*, William James, I, 185.