

THE  
PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

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THE PSYCHOLOGICAL DOCTRINE OF FOCUS AND MARGIN.<sup>1</sup>

IF it is true that misery loves company, those persons who feel despondent over the present situation in philosophy may console themselves with the reflection that things are not so bad as they might be. Our friends, the psychologists, are afflicted even as we are. The disagreements of experts as to both the subject-matter and the method of psychology are as fundamental as anything that philosophy can show. A spirit of revolt is abroad in the land, and psychology is once more on trial. The compact which provided that psychology should be admitted to the rank of a natural science, on condition that it surrender its pretension to be the science of the soul and confine itself to the study of consciousness, is no longer considered binding. The suspicion is growing that consciousness is nothing more or less than an attenuated form of the soul that it pretends to displace. Consequently the psychology without a soul to which we have just become accustomed is now attacked on behalf of a psychology without a consciousness, on the ground that this latter standpoint alone can give assurance against entangling alliances between psychology and metaphysics.

From the side of philosophy this situation is interesting, not only to such as may crave the comfort that springs from the spectacle of distress, but also to those who take a more hopeful view of present-day tendencies. The question that is at issue is fundamentally the question of the nature of consciousness, which

<sup>1</sup> Delivered as the presidential address at the meeting of the Western Philosophical Association, University of Chicago, April 9, 1914.