PROFESSOR WILHELM WUNDT.

BY DR. J. BLUWSTEIN.

[On August 16 Prof. Wilhelm Wundt celebrated his eightieth birthday. The official oration on that occasion was delivered by Dr. Bluwstein, and we here translate it from advance proofs sent us by the author with the kind permission of Dr. Ludwig Stein, the editor of *Nord und Süd,* in the August number of which appeared Dr. Bluwstein's address.—ED.]

IN this day of most extreme specialization—which only too often means self-imposed limitation—in this day of specialists and special departments of science, there lives a great man to whom we give only the recognition he merits when we place him in the same category with Aristotle and Leibnitz. Like them he is master of the immeasurable knowledge of his own age and at the same time has opened up new realms to the inquiring mind.

We often think of great men only in their externalities....For Wundt his eightieth birthday signifies no conclusion and no cessation from his labors; for him it is only an incident of the calendar. ....A day in which so many others would long since have survived their best efforts, in which they would have lost all comprehension of their own better selves, closes one of his most fruitful years. *Kleine Schriften, Elemente der Völkerpsychologie,* the sixth revised and enlarged edition of his *Grundzüge der physiologischen Psychologie,* likewise revised and enlarged new editions of his *Ethik* and *Völkerpsychologie,* including with all these his tireless activity as an instructor—truly an unprecedented record!

Wundt never repeats his works. He continues his labor on them all the time and points out beyond them—this is his life. His biography is easily told because his works have provided all its important events. Born August 16, 1832, he became a physician at the age of twenty-three and afterwards instructor of physiology. He had already written a number of strictly scientific works in the domain of physics and physiological investigation of sense-impres-

sions when he set himself the task of restoring philosophy as a science. At that time he was only thirty years old. Since then half a century has passed in which he has been carrying out his program. *Grundzüge der physiologischen Psychologie, Völkerpsychologie, Logik, Ethik, System der Philosophie*—these are his five chief works which open up as many new luminous paths of science. We have room here for only a few fleeting glimpses at them.

At the time when Wundt was entering upon his work, German philosophy had come to a period of ferment and transition. The great old systems of the philosopher-poets had lost their power over minds grown weary of speculation. There no longer existed any realization of the beauty which lies in trying to create an all-embracing artistically complete system. It is easy enough to understand the supreme calm of Hegel's alleged retort to the remark that his theory of the planets did not agree with the facts—"Then all the worse for the facts!"

As a thinker Wundt combines the universalism of the classic German philosophers with the undivided desire for certainty, for the aim of all modern inquiry. He transferred the spirit of natural science, which had its climax in the irrefragable establishment of facts, to the boundless realm of the soul. Thus he made the first attempt at a scientific philosophy. Reality betrayed its inmost secrets to the naturalist who approached it in a scientific manner by observation and experiment.

Now the magic of the unexplorable, incalculable, inaccessible phenomena of the soul, behind which preconceived opinions had so long carried on their desolate game, was henceforward to yield to the philosopher's sense of reality. Thus arose a psychology which endeavors to appropriate all conceivable modes of procedure known to scientific research. The first psychological institute was called into being by Wundt at Leipsic, and to-day it has counterparts all over the world. It afforded an unusual spectacle. Alternating current machines and all sorts of difficult mechanical apparatus were employed in the investigation of the soul. In place of that too often arbitrary self-contemplation indulged in by the early psychologists who were so fond of dwelling upon the highest and most complicated revelations of psychic life, a group of scholars established laws based on an overwhelming mass of facts in the realm where formerly the imagination had had full scope. Soul becomes nature; thought is grasped in its temporal course, in its physiological limitation. Naturally the most elementary processes of the inner life are dealt with

first—sense-impressions and reflex judgments—but more than all have we to do here with the directing of new investigation and not with the distance already covered.

The soul is not humiliated by the fact that it is comprehended in its natural relation to law, for this it does itself as the inquiring spirit. Never yet has self-knowledge injured the pride of man. Overzealous scholars may belittle the great leading thoughts of the master and may solemnly brand the means of the experiments as their only end. Wundt has more than once expressly warned against overestimating the power of psychological explanation possessed by experiments. Yet he has untiringly emphasized in his works the originally creative nature of consciousness, which cannot be reached by the current simplifying explanations of the materialistic sort.

Nature with its eternal laws must be fathomed in the realm of mental creations, and not until then will the way to their full comprehension be opened up. Thus after the experimental psychology of the individual the psychology of nations must be constructed on the basis of analogy. From those wonderful creations of society—language, art, religion, customs—Wundt seeks to derive the most original nature of the soul. A titanic work lies before us which cannot be worthily presented in such a sketch. The conceptual life of humanity has been disclosed by the comparative observation of all known languages in depths to which the psychology of the individual might never aspire. Art and religion have led to the laboratories of the ever creative imagination, of the emotion which thirsts for deliverance; customs, social organizations of every kind reveal the common will and draw us nearer to the hidden mainsprings of history. The conclusion of the whole work is still to emerge from the silent study of the indefatigable scholar.

Psychology to Wundt is the central science of the mind. The peculiarly human element appeals intelligibly only to the one who possesses the ability sympathetically to place himself within the complete reality of the experience of others. Mental life in its progress is a unique whole. In the spirit of this view, for which our whole modern age distinctly speaks, our philosopher has constructed those other mental sciences, logic and ethics.

To Wundt there is no purely abstract formal truth, no scholastic, unfeeling and mind-benumbing logic. The consciousness of truth gradually frees itself from accompanying ideas and feelings. Where then is truth? First of all it is where it has overwhelmingly shown the perfection of its power in the proud history of human inquiry, in the marvelous attainments of the modern knowledge of nature.

So Wundt's *Logik* leads us into the laboratory of the specialist where we become acquainted with the method of procedure used in seeking and groping for truths. To experience with a chemist or an economist his special results, to allow oneself to be seized by his peculiar joy in the solution of the problem—this is what is taught by the methodology of the sciences which comprises the greatest part of that work.

In order to have grown to such a task a man would have to master all the sciences which have advanced beyond the stage of mere hypotheses. Wundt was particularly fitted to perform this difficult and complicated task. After he had traveled the paths of all hte several sciences and had brought their results into a magnificent artistically arranged whole he devoted himself to a cosmogony of modern philosophy. What he calls his "system of philosophy" is not a continuous system. His craving after certainty, his uprightness of purpose, forbade him to fill up the gaps by falsehoods. Every separate science arrives at hypotheses which lead to the boundaries of what is known at the time. If such hypothetical concept-formations are combined with the positive elements of science from which they logically follow to the prophetic mind, the result may not perhaps be an "exact" philosophy, but probably one which harmonizes with the scientific consciousness of the times.

But there is another realm which an almost universal judgment declares can not be purified by contact with sober science but is degraded by it—and this is the moral life. How in our eagerness for universal formulas can we become acquainted with the primeval consciousness of duty? What business has science whose ideals are mathematics and mechanics with the liberty of the free moral agent? Wundt replies to this in his *Ethik* by showing how the wonderfully beautiful flower of morality draws its vitality from roots remaining hidden in the soil of actuality, how the consciousness of duty must spring from the necessarily limited consideration of man for his fellows in social life. Too often do we hear sermons telling how men ought to live; too seldom is account taken of how they really live. "Love your enemies," was the command; war between civilized states the fact. Only after the purely natural psychical and social origin of morality has been convincingly demonstrated does the inquirer point to heights radiating with hope and the joy of struggle when the command shall have become fact,—to an actualized humanity. Human nature must prepare the way for humanity and it will do so according to all scientific anticipation. From the family, the race, the state, must be developed by historical

necessity the great unity of mankind. Wundt distinguishes most clearly his own views expressed in the *Ethik* from the guaranteed facts ef his science. He himself whose thoughts are never stationary, who is constantly readjusting himself, calls forth the freedom of contradiction when he speaks to us as man to man. The thought often points beyond its originator.

The scientific consciousness of our age finds its purest expression in Wundt's unprecedented production. Certainly the desire for truth has not yet exhausted the entire man. The psychical assumption of an investigator who is sure of his results is a prudence and caution which must appear to the impatient specialist, recklessly bent upon severing Gordian knots, as feeble indecision and incompleteness. Charges have also been brought that Wundt's thought leaves unappreciated in the uniform daylight of certainty the tragedy of the deeper reality which is comparatively intelligible to the emotional artist. It is hardly necessary to remark further that such accusations lack serious import when they require of one man riches of a psychical sort which can only be revealed bq the fellowship of many men.

Perhaps a remark in the preface to the second edition of his *Physiologische Psychologie* best characterizes Wundt's labors. He remarks that "unawares" to himself one volume of the first edition had become two volumes because he had kept pace with the progress of the young science he had created. "Unawares!" Thus does nature create; thus a great spirit creates in his unpretentious eminence. Fortunately for mankind nature sometimes shows that she is proud of her most worthy creation, the mind. Nature keeps the indefatigable scholar in his eightieth year in her protection far from the consequences of her inflexible laws. So may she continue to preserve him for a long series of years for his work and for humanity!