

Chapter 18

Excerpts from Washburn's *The Evidence of Mind*



Margaret Floy Washburn
Edited by Joel Katzav

1 **Abstract** This chapter includes Margaret Floy Washburn's discussion of the basis of
2 inferences about animal minds and her discussion of what it is like to be an amoeba.

3 18.1 The Evidence of Mind¹

4 *Inferring mind from behavior*

5 In this chapter we shall try to show that there exists no evidence for denying mind to
6 any animals, if we do not deny it to all; in other words, that there is no such thing as
7 an objective proof of the presence of mind, whose absence may be regarded as proof
8 of the absence of mind.

9 To begin with, can it be said that when an animal makes a movement in response to
10 a certain stimulus, there is an accompanying consciousness of the stimulus, and that
11 when it fails to move, there is no consciousness? Is *response to stimulation* evidence
12 of consciousness? In the case of man, we know that absence of visible response does
13 not prove that the stimulus has not been sensed; while it is probable that some effect
14 upon motor channels always occurs when consciousness accompanies stimulation,
15 the effect may not be apparent to an outside observer. On the other hand, if movement
16 in response to the impact of a physical force is evidence of consciousness, then the
17 ball which falls under the influence of gravity and rebounds on striking the floor
18 is conscious. Nor is the case improved if we point out that the movements which
19 animals make in response to stimulation are not the equivalent in energy of the
20 stimulus applied, but involve the setting free of energy stored in the animal as well.
21 True, when a microscopic animal meets an obstacle in its swimming, and darts

¹ From the chapter 'The Evidence of Mind' as it appeared in the 1917 edition of *The Animal Mind*, pp. 27–37.

M. F. Washburn · J. Katzav (✉)
School of Historical and Philosophical Inquiry, University of Queensland, Brisbane, QLD,
Australia
e-mail: j.katzav@uq.edu.au

© The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2023
J. Katzav et al. (eds.), *Knowledge, Mind and Reality: An Introduction by Early
Twentieth-Century American Women Philosophers*, Women in the History of Philosophy
and Sciences 18, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-24437-7_18

189

22 backward, the movement is not a mere rebound; it implies energy contributed by the
23 animal's own body. But just so an explosion of gunpowder is not the equivalent in
24 energy, of the heat of the match, the stimulus. Similarly it is possible to think of the
25 response made by animals to external stimuli as involving nothing more than certain
26 physical and chemical processes identical with those existing in inanimate nature.

27 If we find that the movements made by an animal as a result of external stimulation
28 regularly involve withdrawal from certain stimuli and acceptance of others, it is
29 natural to use the term "choice" in describing such behavior. But if consciousness
30 is supposed to accompany the exercise of choice in this sense, then consciousness
31 must be assumed to accompany the behavior of atoms in chemical combinations.
32 When hydrochloric acid is added to a solution of silver nitrate, the atoms of chlorine
33 and those of silver find each other by an unerring "instinct" and combine into the
34 white precipitate of silver chloride, while the hydrogen and the nitric acid similarly
35 "choose" each other. Nor can the fact that behavior in animals is adapted to an end be
36 used as evidence of mind; for "purposive" reactions, which contribute to the welfare
37 of an organism, are themselves selective. The search for food, the care for the young,
38 and the complex activities which further welfare, are made up of reactions involving
39 "choice" between stimuli; and if the simple "choice" reaction is on a par with the
40 behavior of chemical atoms, so far as proof of consciousness goes, then adaptation
41 to an end, apparent purposiveness, is in a similar position.

42 Thus the mere fact that an animal reacts to stimulation, even selectively and for
43 its own best interests, offers no evidence for the existence of mind that does not
44 apply equally well to particles of inanimate matter. Moreover, there is some ground
45 for holding that the reactions of the lowest animals are unconscious. This ground
46 consists in the apparent lack of variability which characterizes such reactions. In our
47 own case, we know that certain bodily movements, those of digestion and circulation,
48 for example, are normally carried on without accompanying consciousness, and that
49 in other cases where there is consciousness of the stimulus, as in the reflex knee-
50 jerk, it occurs after the movement is initiated, so that the nervous process underlying
51 the sensation would seem to be immaterial to the performance of the movement.
52 These unconscious reactions in human beings are characterized by their relative
53 uniformity, by the absence of variation in their performance. Moreover, when an
54 action originally accompanied by consciousness is often repeated, it tends, by what
55 is apparently one and the same process, to become unconscious and to become
56 uniform. There is consequently reason for believing that when the behavior of lower
57 animals displays perfect uniformity, consciousness is not present. On the other hand,
58 an important reservation must be made in the use of this negative test. It is by no
59 means easy to be sure that an animal's reactions are uniform. The more carefully the
60 complex ones are studied, the more are variability and difference brought to light
61 where superficial observation had revealed a mechanical and automatic regularity. It
62 is quite possible that even in the simple, apparently fixed response of microscopic
63 animals to stimulation, better facilities for observation might show variations that do
64 not now appear.

65 This matter of uniformity *versus* variability suggests a further step in our search
66 for a satisfactory test of the presence of mind. Is mere *variability* in behavior, mere

67 irregularity in response, to be taken as such a test? Not if we argue from our own expe-
68 rience. While that portion of our own behavior which involves consciousness shows
69 more irregularity than the portion which does not, yet the causes of the irregularity
70 are often clearly to be found in physiological conditions with which consciousness
71 has nothing to do. There are days when we can think clearly and recall easily, and
72 days when obscurities refuse to vanish and the right word refuses to come; days when
73 we are irritable and days when we are sluggish. Yet since we can find nothing in our
74 mental processes to account for this variability, it would be absurd to take analogous
75 fluctuations in animal behavior as evidence of mind. So complicated a machine as an
76 animal organism, even if it be nothing more than a machine, must show irregularities
77 in its working.

78 Behavior, then, must be variable, but not merely variable, to give evidence of
79 mind. The criterion most frequently applied to determine the presence or absence
80 of the psychic is *a variation in behavior that shows definitely the result of previous*
81 *individual experience*. "Does the organism," says Romanes, "learn to make new
82 adjustments, or to modify old ones, in accordance with the results of its own individual
83 experience?" (641, p. 4). Loeb declared that "the fundamental process which occurs in
84 all psychic phenomena as the elemental component" is "the activity of the associative
85 memory, or of association," and defines associative memory as "that mechanism by
86 which a stimulus brings about not only the effects which its nature and the specific
87 structure of the irritable organ call for, but by which it brings about also the effects of
88 other stimuli which formerly acted upon the organism almost or quite simultaneously
89 with the stimulus in question." "If an animal can be trained," he continued, "if it can
90 learn, it possesses associative memory," and therefore mind (429, p. 12).

91 The psychologist finds the term "associative memory" hardly satisfactory, and
92 objects to the confusion between mental and physical concepts which renders it
93 possible to speak of a "mechanism" as forming an "elemental component" in "psy-
94 chic phenomena," but these points may be passed over. The power to learn by indi-
95 vidual experience is the evidence which Romanes, Morgan, and Loeb will accept as
96 demonstrating the presence of mind in an animal.

97 Does the absence of proof that an animal learns by experience show that the animal
98 is unconscious? Romanes is careful to answer this question in the negative. "Because
99 a lowly organized animal," he says, "does *not* learn by its own individual experience,
100 we may not therefore conclude that in performing its natural or ancestral adaptations
101 to appropriate stimuli, consciousness, or the mind element, is wholly absent; we can
102 only say that this element, if present, reveals no evidence of the fact" (641, p. 3).
103 Loeb, on the other hand, wrote as if absence of proof for consciousness amounted
104 to disproof, evidently relying on the principle of parsimony, that no unnecessary
105 assumptions should be admitted. "Our criterion," he remarked, "puts an end to the
106 metaphysical ideas that all matter, and hence the whole animal world, possesses
107 consciousness" (429, p. 13). If learning by experience be really a satisfactory proof of
108 mind, then its absence in certain animals would indeed prevent the positive assertion
109 that all animals are conscious; but it could not abolish the possibility that they might
110 be. Such a possibility might, however, be of no more scientific interest than any one
111 of a million wild, possibilities that science cannot spare time to disprove. But we

112 shall find that learning by experience, taken by itself, is too indefinite a concept to be
113 of much service, and that when defined, it is inadequate to bear the whole weight of
114 proving consciousness in animals. Such being the case, the possibility that animals
115 which have not been shown to learn may yet be conscious acquires the right to be
116 reckoned with.

117 The first point that strikes us in examining the proposed test is that the learning
118 by experience must not be too slow, or we can find parallels for it in the inanimate
119 world. An animal may be said to have learned by experience if it behaves differently
120 to a stimulus because of preceding stimuli. But it is one thing to have behavior
121 altered by a single preceding stimulus, and another to have it altered by two hundred
122 repetitions of a stimulus. The wood of a violin reacts differently to the vibrations
123 of the strings after it has “experienced” them for ten years; the molecules of the
124 wood have gradually taken on an altered arrangement. A steel rail reacts differently
125 to the pounding of wheels after that process has been long continued; it may snap
126 under the strain. Shall we say that the violin and the rail have learned by individual
127 experience? If the obvious retort be made that it is only in living creatures that learning
128 by experience should be taken as evidence of mind, let us take an example from living
129 creatures. When a blacksmith has been practising his trade for a year, the reactions
130 of his muscles are different from what they were at the outset. But this difference
131 is not merely a matter of more accurate sense-discrimination, a better “placing” of
132 attention and the like; there have been going on within the structure of his muscles
133 changes which have increased their efficiency, and with which consciousness has had
134 nothing to do. These changes have been extremely slow compared to the learning
135 which does involve consciousness. In one or two lessons the apprentice learned what
136 he was to do; but only very gradually have his muscles acquired the strength to do it
137 as it should be done. Now among the lower animal forms we sometimes meet with
138 learning by experience that is very slow; that requires a hundred or more repetitions
139 of the stimulus before the new reaction is acquired. In such a case we can find
140 analogical reasons for suspecting that a gradual change in the tissues of the body
141 has taken place, of the sort which, like the attuning of the violin wood or the slow
142 development of a muscle, have no conscious accompaniment.

143 We must then ask the question: *What kind of learning by experience never, so*
144 *far as we know, occurs unconsciously?* Suppose a human being shut up in a room
145 from which he can escape only by working a combination lock. As we shall see
146 later, this is one of the methods by which the learning power of animals has been
147 tested. The man, after prolonged investigation, hits upon the right combination and
148 gets out. Suppose that he later finds himself again in the same predicament, and
149 that without hesitation or fumbling he opens the lock at once, and performs the feat
150 again and again, to show that it was not a lucky accident. But one interpretation of
151 such behavior is possible. We know from our own experience that the man could not
152 have worked the lock the second time he saw it, unless he consciously remembered
153 the movements he made the first time; that is, unless he had in mind some kind of
154 idea as a guide. Here, at least, there can have been no change in the structure of
155 the muscles, for such changes are gradual; the change must have taken place in the
156 most easily alterable portion of the organism, the nervous system; and further, it

157 must have taken place in the most unstable and variable part of the nervous system,
 158 the higher cortical centres whose activity is accompanied by consciousness. In other
 159 words, we may be practically assured that consciousness accompanies learning only
 160 when the learning is so rapid as to show that the effects of previous experience are
 161 recalled in the guise of an idea or mental image of some sort. But does even the most
 162 rapid learning possible assure us of the presence of an idea in the mind of a lower
 163 animal? Where the motive, the beneficial or harmful consequence of action, is very
 164 strong, may not a single experience suffice to modify action without being revived in
 165 idea? Moreover, animals as high in the scale as dogs and cats learn to solve problems
 166 analogous to that of the combination lock so slowly that we cannot infer the presence
 167 of ideas. Are we then to conclude that these animals are unconscious, or that there
 168 is absolutely no reason for supposing them possessed of consciousness? Yerkes has
 169 criticised the "learning by experience" criterion by pointing out that "no organism...
 170 has thus far been proved incapable of profiting by experience." It is a question rather
 171 of the rapidity and of the kind of learning involved. "The fact that the crayfish need a
 172 hundred or more experiences for the learning of a type of reaction that the frog would
 173 learn with twenty experiences, the dog with five, say, and the human subject with
 174 perhaps a single experience, is indicative of the fundamental difficulty in the use of
 175 this sign" (814). Nagel has pointed out that Loeb, in asserting "associative memory"
 176 as the criterion of consciousness, offers no evidence for his statement (524). The fact
 177 is that while proof of the existence of mind can be derived from animal learning by
 178 experience only if the learning is very rapid, other evidence, equally valid on the
 179 principle of analogy, makes it *highly improbable that all animals which learn too*
 180 *slowly to evince the presence of ideas are therefore unconscious.* This evidence is of
 181 a *morphological* character.

182 *Inferring mind from structure*

183 Both Yerkes and Lukas urge that the resemblance of an animal's nervous system
 184 and sense organs to those of human beings ought to be taken into consideration in
 185 deciding whether the animal is conscious or not. Lukas suggests that the criteria
 186 of consciousness should be grouped under three heads: morphological, including
 187 the structure of the brain and sense-organs, physiological, and teleological. Under
 188 the second rubric he maintains that "individual purposiveness" is characteristic of
 189 the movements from which consciousness may be inferred; that individual purpo-
 190 siveness pertains only to voluntary acts, and that voluntary acts are acts "which are
 191 preceded by the intention to perform a definite movement, hence by the idea of this
 192 movement." We have reached the same conclusion in the preceding paragraph. The
 193 third test of the presence of consciousness, the teleological test, rests on the consid-
 194 eration: "What significance for the organism may be possessed by the production of
 195 a conscious effect by certain stimuli?" (445). This test, however, being of a purely a
 196 priori character, would seem to be distinctly less valuable than the others.

197 Yerkes proposes "the following six criteria in what seems to me in general the
 198 order of increasing importance. The functional signs are of greater value as a rule
 199 than the structural; and within each of the categories the particular sign is usually of

200 more value than the general. In certain cases, however, it might be maintained that
 201 neural specialization is of greater importance than modifiability.

202 I. Structural Criteria

- 203 1. General form of organism (Organization).
- 204 2. Nervous system (Neural organization).
- 205 3. Specialization in the nervous system (Neural specialization).

206 II. Functional Criteria

- 207 1. General form of reaction (Discrimination).
- 208 2. Modifiability of reaction (Docility).
- 209 3. Variability of reaction (Initiative)" (814).

210 The terms "discrimination," "docility," and "initiative" in this connection are
 211 borrowed from Royce's "Outlines of Psychology" (649).

212 If resemblance of nervous and sense-organ structure to the human type is to be
 213 taken along with rapid learning as co-ordinate evidence of consciousness, it is clear
 214 that here also we have to deal with a matter of degree. The structure of the lower
 215 animals differs increasingly from our own as we go down the scale. At what degree of
 216 difference shall we draw the line and say that the animals above it may be conscious,
 217 but that those below it cannot be? No one could possibly establish such a line. The
 218 truth of the whole matter seems to be this: *We can say neither what amount of*
 219 *resemblance in structure to human beings, nor what speed of learning, constitutes*
 220 *a definite mark distinguishing animals with minds from those without minds, unless*
 221 *we are prepared to assert that only animals which learn so fast that they must have*
 222 *memory ideas possess mind at all.* And this would conflict with the argument from
 223 structure. For example, there is no good experimental evidence that cats possess
 224 ideas, yet there is enough analogy between their nervous systems and our own to
 225 make it improbable that consciousness, so complex and highly developed in us, is in
 226 them wholly lacking. We know not where consciousness begins in the animal world.
 227 We know where it surely resides—in ourselves; we know where it exists beyond a
 228 reasonable doubt—in those animals of structure resembling ours which rapidly adapt
 229 themselves to the lessons of experience. Beyond this point, for all we know, it may
 230 exist in simpler and simpler forms until we reach the very lowest of living beings.

231 **18.2 The Mind of the Simplest Animals²**

232 *The Mind of Amoeba*

² From the chapter 'The Evidence of Mind' as it appeared in the 1917 edition of *The Animal Mind*, pp. 44–52.

233 Now what light does the behavior of Amoeba throw upon the nature of the animal's
 234 possible consciousness? The first thought which strikes us in this connection is that
 235 *the number of different sensations occurring in an Amoeba's mind, if it has one, is*
 236 *very much smaller than the number forming the constituent elements of our own expe-*
 237 *rience.* We human beings have the power to discriminate several thousand different
 238 qualities of color, brightness, tone, noise, temperature, pressure, pain, smell, taste,
 239 and other sensation classes. Thus the content of our consciousness is capable of a
 240 great deal of variety. It is hard to see how more than three or four qualitatively different
 241 processes can enter into the conscious experience of an Amoeba. The negative reac-
 242 tion is given to all forms of strong stimulation alike, with the single exception of
 243 food. We shall in the following chapter discuss more fully the nature of the evidence
 244 that helps us to conjecture the existence of different sensation qualities in an animal's
 245 mind; but it is clear that where an animal so simple in its structure as the Amoeba
 246 makes no difference in its reactions to various stimuli, there can be no reason for
 247 supposing that if it is conscious, it is aware of them as different. The reaction to
 248 edible substances is, however, unlike that to other stimulations. The peculiarity of
 249 edible substances which occasions this difference must be a chemical one. In our own
 250 case, the classes of sensation which result from the chemical peculiarities of food
 251 substances are smell and taste; evidently to a water-dwelling animal smell and taste
 252 would be practically indistinguishable. We may say, then, that supposing conscious-
 253 ness to exist in so primitive an animal as the Amoeba, we have evidence for the
 254 appearance in it of a specific sensation quality representing the chemical or food
 255 sense, and standing for the whole class of sensations resulting from our own organs
 256 of smell and taste. The significance of the positive reaction is harder to determine. It
 257 seems to be given in response not to a special kind of stimulus, but to a mechanical
 258 or food stimulus of slight intensity. In our own experience, we do not have stimuli
 259 of different intensity producing sensations of different quality, except in the cases of
 260 temperature and visual sensations. We do, however, find that varying the strength of
 261 the stimulus will produce different affective qualities; it is a familiar fact that moderate
 262 intensities of stimulation in the human organism are accompanied by pleasantness,
 263 and stronger intensities by unpleasantness. The motor effects of pleasantness and
 264 unpleasantness in ourselves are opposite to each other in character. Pleasantness
 265 produces a tonic and expansive effect on the body, unpleasantness a depressive and
 266 contractive effect. In the Amoeba, the positive and negative reactions seem to be
 267 opposed. The essential feature of the negative reaction is the checking of movement
 268 at the point stimulated; that of the positive reaction is the reaching out of the point
 269 stimulated in the direction of the stimulus. This much evidence there is for saying
 270 that besides a possible food sensation, the Amoeba may have some dim awareness
 271 of affective qualities corresponding to pleasantness and unpleasantness in ourselves.
 272 It should, however, be borne in mind that wide differences must go along with the
 273 correspondence. In us, pleasantness brings a thrill, a "bodily resonance," due to its
 274 tonic effect upon the circulation, breathing, and muscles; unpleasantness has also its
 275 accompaniment of vague organic sensation, without which we can hardly conceive
 276 what it would be like. In an Amoeba, it is clear that this aspect, as found in human

277 consciousness, must be wholly lacking. Again, in the human mind pleasantness and
 278 unpleasantness are connected with various sensation qualities or complexes; we are
 279 pleased or displeased usually “at” something definite. The vagueness of the affective
 280 qualities in an Amoeba’s consciousness can only be remotely suggested by our own
 281 vague, diffused sense of bodily well-being or ill-being; and this is undoubtedly given
 282 its coloring in our case by the structure and functioning of our internal organs.

283 As for the peculiar behavior of an Amoeba suspended in the water and deprived
 284 of solid support, the stimulus for this must lie within the cell body itself. If any
 285 consciousness accompanies it, then the nearest human analogy to such consciousness
 286 is to be found in organic sensations, and these, as has just been said, must necessarily
 287 be in the human mind wholly different in quality from anything to be found in an
 288 animal whose structure is as simple as the Amoeba’s.

289 A consequence of this lack of qualitative variety in the sense experiences of an
 290 Amoeba is a lack of what we may call complexity of structure in that experience.
 291 The number of stimulus differences which are in the human mind represented by
 292 differences in the quality of sensations is so great that at any given moment our
 293 consciousness of the external world is analyzable into a large number of qualitatively
 294 different sensations. At the present instant the reader’s consciousness “contains,”
 295 apart from the revived effects of previous stimulation, many distinguishable sensation
 296 elements, visual, auditory, tactile, organic, and so on. The Amoeba’s consciousness,
 297 if it possesses one, must have a structure inconceivably simpler than that of any
 298 moment of our own experience.

299 A second point in which the mind of an Amoeba must, if it exists, differ from
 300 that of a human being, consists in its *entire lack of mental imagery of any sort*.
 301 Not only has the Amoeba but three or four qualitatively different elements in its
 302 experience, but none of these qualities can be remembered or revived in the absence
 303 of external stimulation. How may we be sure of this? If our primitive animal could
 304 revive its experiences in the form of memory images, it would give some evidence
 305 of the influence of memory in its behavior. Indeed, as we shall learn, it is possible, in
 306 all probability, for an animal’s conduct to be influenced by its past experience even
 307 though the animal be incapable of reviving that experience in the form of a memory
 308 image. Therefore, if we find no evidence that the Amoeba learns, or modifies its
 309 behavior as the result of past stimulation, we may conclude *a fortiori* that it does not
 310 have memory images.

311 Now it would be stating the case too strongly to say that past stimulation does
 312 not affect the behavior of Amoeba at all. In the first place, this animal shows, in
 313 common with all other animals, the power of “getting used” to certain forms of
 314 stimulation, so that on long continuance they cease to provoke reaction. “Thus,”
 315 Jennings says, “Amoebae react negatively to tap water or to water from a foreign
 316 culture, but after transference to such water they behave normally” (378, p. 20).
 317 Such cessation of reaction occurs when the continued stimulus is not harmful. In
 318 a sense, it may be called an effect of experience; but there is clearly no reason for
 319 supposing that it involves the revival of experience in the form of an idea or image.
 320 We have parallel phenomena in our own mental life. A continued stimulus ceases
 321 to be “noticed,” but the process involves rather the disappearance of consciousness

322 than the appearance of a memory image. Jennings, however, is inclined to think that
323 preceding stimulation may modify the Amoeba's behavior in a way more nearly
324 suggesting memory in a higher type of mind. He describes an interesting observation
325 to illustrate this. A large Amoeba, *c*, had swallowed a smaller one, *b*, but had left a
326 small canal open, through which the swallowed one made efforts to escape, which
327 were several times foiled by movements on the part of the large Amoeba toward
328 surrounding it again. Finally it succeeded in getting completely out, whereupon the
329 large Amoeba "reversed its course, overtook *b*, engulfed it completely again, and
330 started away." The small Amoeba contracted into a ball and remained quiet until
331 through the movements of the large one there chanced to be but a thin layer of
332 protoplasm covering it. This it rapidly pushed through, escaped completely, and was
333 not pursued by the large Amoeba (378, pp. 17–18).

334 Of this performance Jennings says: "It is difficult to conceive each phase of action
335 of the pursuer to be completely determined by a simple present stimulus. For example
336 ... after Amoeba *b* has escaped completely and is quite separate from Amoeba *c*, the
337 latter reverses its course and recaptures *b*. What determines the behavior of *c* at this
338 point? If we can imagine all the external physical and chemical conditions to remain
339 the same, with the two Amoebae in the same relative positions, but suppose at the
340 same time that Amoeba *c* has never had the experience of possessing *b*—would its
341 action be the same? Would it reverse its movement, take in *b*, then return on its former
342 course? One who sees the behavior as it occurs can hardly resist the conviction that
343 the action at this point is partly determined by the change in *c* due to the former
344 possession of *b*, so that the behavior is not purely reflex" (378, p. 24).

345 If it is true that an Amoeba which had not just "had the experience of possessing *b*"
346 would not have reversed its movement and gone after *b* when the latter escaped, still
347 we cannot think it possible that *c*'s movements in so doing were guided by a memory
348 image of *b*. It may be supposed that the recent stimulation of contact with *b* had left
349 a part of *c*'s protoplasm in a condition of heightened excitability, so that the weak
350 stimulus offered perhaps by slight water disturbances due to *b*'s movements after
351 escaping produced a positive reaction, although under other circumstances no reac-
352 tion would have been possible. (Compare the observation of Schaeffer, just quoted,
353 on Amoeba's ability to react to objects not in contact with it.) In any case, there is
354 no evidence that Amoeba's behavior is influenced by stimulation occurring earlier
355 than the moments just preceding action; no proof of the revival of a process whose
356 original effects have had time to die out; and it is upon such revival that the memory
357 images which play so much part in our own conscious life depend.

358 Let us consider for a moment some of the results of the absence of this kind
359 of material in the possible mental processes of Amoeba. In the first place, such a
360 lack profoundly affects the character of the experiences which the animal might be
361 supposed to receive through external stimulation. If we call the possible conscious
362 effect of a mechanical stimulus upon the Amoeba a touch sensation, the term suggests,
363 naturally, such sensations as we ourselves experience them. In normal human beings
364 touch sensations are accompanied by visual suggestions, more or less clear, of course,
365 according to the visualizing powers of the individual, but always present in some
366 degree. Fancy, for example, one of us entering a room in the dark and groping about

367 among the furniture. How constantly visual associations are brought into play! Not
 368 once is a mere touch impression apprehended without being translated into visual
 369 terms; the forms and positions of the articles encountered are thought of immediately
 370 as they would appear if the room were lighted. The difficulty we have in thinking
 371 of a touch sensation with no visual associations illustrates the difference between
 372 our sense experience and that of an animal incapable of recalling images of past
 373 sensations.

374 It is equally obvious that in the absence of memory ideas, not only must the
 375 Amoeba lack processes of imagination and reasoning, but there can be nothing like
 376 the continuous self-consciousness of a human being, the "sense" of personal identity,
 377 which depends upon the power to revive past experiences. It is even possible that
 378 the "stream of consciousness" for an Amoeba may not be a continuous stream at all.
 379 Since its sensitiveness to changes in its environment is less developed than that of
 380 a human being, and there are no trains of ideas to fill up possible intervals between
 381 the occurrences of outside stimulation, the Amoeba's conscious experience may be
 382 rather a series of "flashes" than a steady stream. And for the Amoeba, again, we must
 383 remember that even such a series would not exist as such; the perception of a series
 384 would involve the revival of its past members. Each moment of consciousness is as
 385 if there were no world beyond, before, and after it.

386 Another consequence of that simplicity of structure which results both from the
 387 rudimentary powers of sensory discrimination and from the absence of memory
 388 ideas in the Amoeba's mind is that there can be no distinction, within a given mental
 389 process, between that which is attended to and that which is not attended to, between
 390 the focus and the margin of consciousness. Given a consciousness which at a certain
 391 moment is composed of the qualitatively different elements *A*, *B*, *C*, and *D*, we
 392 can understand what is meant by saying that *A* is attended to, is in the foreground of
 393 attention, while *B*, *C*, and *D* remain in the background. But given, on the other hand, a
 394 creature whose conscious content at a certain time consists wholly of the qualitatively
 395 simple experience *A*, it is evident that attention and inattention are meaningless
 396 terms. Different moments of its consciousness may differ in intensity; but attention,
 397 involving, as it does, clearness rather than intensity, arises only when mental states
 398 have become complex and possess detail and variety within their structure.

399 References

- 400 Jennings, H. S. (1906). *Behavior of the lower organisms*. Columbia University Press.
 401 Loeb, J. (1900). *Comparative physiology of the brain and comparative psychology*. Putnam.
 402 Lukas, F. (1905). *Psychologie der niedersten Thiere*. Wien und Leipzig.
 403 Nagel, W. A. (1899). *Review of Loeb: Vergleichende Gehirnphysiologie u. s. w. zool. Cent., Bd. 6,*
 404 *S. 11.*
 405 Romanes, G. J. (1885). *Jellyfish, starfish and sea-urchins*. D. Appleton & Co.
 406 Royce, J. (1903). *Outlines of psychology*. Macmillan.
 407 Yerkes, R. M. (1905). Animal psychology and criteria of the psychic. *The Journal of Philosophy,*
 408 *Psychology and Scientific Methods*, 2(6), 141–149.