

Principles of Psychology v1 - Chapter 5: The Automaton Theory

Citation:

James, W. (1890). *The principles of psychology*, Vol. 1. Henry Holt and Co.

- The author affirms that however numerous and delicately differentiated the train of ideas may be, the train of brain events that runs alongside it must be an exact match, and we must postulate neural machinery that offers a living counterpart for every shading, however delicate, of the history of its owner's mind.
- The author asserts that the conciseness of good news is the direct antecedent of the feeling of joy, with the belief in the conclusion; the automaton-theory must have proof between conception and belief.
- The author attests that the 'conscious automaton theory is a radical and straightforward conception of how specific facts may occur; according to the automaton-theory, specific feelings (i.e., sorrow, compunction, desire, joy, love, etc.) are the only the correlate of some nerve-movement whose cause lay wholly in a previous nerve-movement.
- The author avows that the particulars of the distribution of consciousness point to its being desirable; the brain is a tool that produces possibilities but no certainties.
- The author believes that if influenced by efficacy, the consciousness reinforces the positive possibilities and limits the negative; consciousness is practical, it must be so through its casual efficaciousness, through common sense.
- The author maintains that metaphysics is the effort to think clearly; mind-stuff is the theory that our mental states are aggregates, expressed in their most comprehensive form.
- The author affirms that if evolution is to work smoothly, consciousness in some shape must have been present at the very ongoing of things.
- *Question:* Does this mean that consciousness is a vessel confined to the limitations of the environment?
- *Answer:* This can be answered by psychological evolutionism.
- The author asserts that it is a well-known fact that pleasures are generally associated with benefits, pains with bad experiences; all the fundamental vital processes illustrate this law.
- The author attests that if pleasures and pains have no effectiveness, one does not see (without some such theoretical rational consistency as would be scouted by the

automaton-theory) why the most harmful acts, such as a broken bone, might not give thrills of delight, and the most necessary ones, such as breathing, cause agony.

- The author avows that the contention that another man's will, a feeling in his consciousness that I cannot observe, is part of the train of physical facts I may perceive is nonsense; it is an aggregate of words whose corresponding ideas will not go together.
- The author believes that the brain is a vessel of feelings and emotions somehow mixing, and in which in multiple events occur, we can witness the statistical results.