

wife, or to make his children happy. Several of these motives may function simultaneously. A list of separate motives may, therefore, fail to do justice to the complexity of human activities.

The classification of motives in a hierarchy of dependability has the advantage of indicating with what degrees of assurance we may expect a given motive to appear in any given individual. Hunger, sex, aggressiveness, and acquisitiveness, for example, belong in four different categories, arranged in a descending order of dependability.

#### C. A TENTATIVE CLASSIFICATION OF DEPENDABLE MOTIVES

(1) Motives which are absolutely dependable, have a definite physiological basis, and admit of no exceptions. Social factors play a part in their manifestations, but do not determine their existence. These include *hunger, thirst, the need for rest and sleep, the elimination of waste products* from the body, and similar organic requirements; also *activity drives* and "*esthetic drives*."

(2) Motives which have a definite physiological basis, are found in all societies, but admit of exceptions in the case of individuals. Social factors not only determine the manner of their expression, but may also in certain circumstances cause them not to appear. These include *sex, post-maternal behavior*, and possibly also *self-preservation*.

(3) Motives which have an indirect physiological basis and occur with great frequency, but admit of exceptions both in groups and in individuals. These include *aggressiveness, flight*, and probably also *self-assertiveness*.

(4) Motives which have no known physiological basis, but which occur with some frequency either because of social factors common to the majority of human communities, or as a means to the satisfaction of practical interests. They are primarily means to an end, but may come to function as ends in themselves. These include *gregariousness, the paternal motive, the pre-maternal motive, the filial motive, acquisitiveness, and self-submission*.

The list of possible motives is not complete, and many others might certainly be added.

## 12. HABIT \*

*William James (1842-1910)*

### A. THE IMPORTANCE OF MAKING HABIT OUR ALLY

The great thing in all education is to *make our nervous system our ally instead of our enemy. For this we must make automatic and habitual, as early as possible, as many useful actions as we can*, and guard against the growing into ways that are likely to be disadvantageous to us, as we should guard against the plague. The more of the details of our daily life we can hand over to the effortless custody of automatism, the more our higher powers of mind will be set free for their own proper work.

There is no more miserable human being than one in whom nothing is habitual but indecision, and for whom the lighting of every cigar, the drinking of every cup, the time of rising and going to bed every day, and the beginning of every bit of work, are subjects of express volitional deliberation. Full half the time of such a man goes to the deciding, or regretting, of matters which ought to be so ingrained in him as practically not to exist for his consciousness at all.

### B. FOUR MAXIMS FOR ESTABLISHING HABITS

In Professor Bain's chapter on "The Moral Habits" there are some admirable practical remarks laid down. Two great maxims emerge from his treatment. The first is that in the acquisition of a new habit, or the leaving off of an old one, we must take care *to launch ourselves with as strong and decided an initiative as possible*. Accumulate all the possible circumstances which shall reenforce the right motives; put yourself assiduously in conditions that encourage the new way; make engagements incompatible with the old; take a public pledge, if the case allows; in short, envelop your resolution with every aid you know. This will give your new beginning such a momentum that the tempta-

\* *Principles of Psychology* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1890), Vol. I, Chap. IV, pp. 122-127. Reprinted by Permission of the publishers.

tion to break down will not occur as soon as it otherwise might, and every day during which a breakdown is postponed adds to the chances of its not occurring at all.

The second maxim is: *Never suffer an exception to occur till the new habit is securely rooted in your life.* Each lapse is like the letting fall of a ball of string which one is carefully winding up; a single slip undoes more than a great many turns will wind again.

A third maxim may be added to the preceding pair: *Seize the first possible opportunity to act on every resolution you make, and on every emotional prompting you may experience in the direction of the habits you aspire to gain.* It is not in the moment of their forming, but in the moment of their producing motor effects, that resolves and aspirations communicate the new "set" to the brain.

No matter how full a reservoir of maxims one may possess, and no matter how good one's *sentiments* may be, if one has not taken advantage of every concrete opportunity to *act*, one's character may remain entirely unaffected for the better. A tendency to act only becomes effectively ingrained in us in proportion to the uninterrupted frequency with which the actions actually occur, and the brain "grows" to their use. Every time a resolve or a fine glow of feeling evaporates without bearing practical fruit is worse than a chance lost; it works so as positively to hinder future resolutions and emotions from taking the normal path of discharge.

As a final practical maxim, relative to these habits of the will, we may, then, offer something like this: *Keep the faculty of effort alive in you by a little gratuitous exercise every day.* That is, be systematically ascetic or heroic in little unnecessary points, do every day or two something for no other reason than that you would rather not do it, so that when the hour of dire need draws nigh, it may find you not unnerved and untrained to stand the test. The man who has daily inured himself to habits of concentrated attention, energetic volition, and self-denial in unnecessary things, will stand like a tower when everything rocks around him, and when his softer fellow-mortals are winnowed like chaff in the blast.

#### G. HOW HABIT CONDITIONS OUR FATE

The physiological study of mental conditions is thus the most powerful ally of ethics. The hell to be endured hereafter, of which theology tells, is no worse than the hell we make for ourselves in this world by habitually fashioning our characters in the wrong way. Could the young but realize how soon they will become mere walking bundles of habits, they would give more heed to their conduct while in the plastic state. We are spinning our own fates, for good or evil, and never to be undone. Every smallest stroke of virtue or of vice leaves its never so little scar. The drunken Rip Van Winkle, in Jefferson's play, excuses himself for every fresh dereliction by saying, "I won't count this time!" Well! he may not count it, and a kind Heaven may not count it; but it is being counted none the less. Down among his nerve-cells and fibers the molecules are counting it, registering and storing it up to be used against him when the next temptation comes. Nothing we ever do is, in strict scientific literalness, wiped out. Of course, this has its good side as well as its bad one. As we become permanent drunkards by so many separate drinks, so we become saints in the moral, and authorities and experts in the practical and scientific spheres, by so many separate acts and hours of work.

Let no youth have any anxiety about the upshot of his education, whatever the line of it may be. If he keeps faithfully busy each hour of the working-day, he may safely leave the final result to itself. He can with perfect certainty count on waking up some fine morning, to find himself one of the competent ones of his generation, in whatever pursuit he may have singled out. Silently, between all the details of his business, the *power of judging* in all that class of matter will have built itself up within him as a possession that will never pass away. Young people should know this truth in advance. The ignorance of it has probably engendered more discouragement and faint-heartedness in youths embarking on arduous careers than all other causes put together.