AMONG those who connect themselves with the practice of psychological treatment we notice egotists, weathercocks, weak visionaries, and vagabonds. Egotists practise not so much psychology as the insistence upon their own views. Weathercocks practise psychology when the wind blows favourably, but a truculent newspaper article is sufficient to make them veer in a new direction. Weak visionaries practise psychology in the sense that they will not practise anything ordinary. Vagabonds take it up as they take up anything that has not strongly-defined barriers, and use it as a kind of conjuring trick, for they only feel themselves alive when they are playing ingenious rôles. These people are not interested in psychology. They are interested in certain forms of imagination by which they are dominated. These sorts of people are attracted most easily to the uncertain and fluctuating growing-point of human investigation. Their presence constitutes one difficulty that psychological treatment encounters.

But another difficulty lies amidst those people who are interested in psychology itself, for there are determinists and voluntarists, intellectualists and emotionalists, pragmatists and metaphysicians, and many others, and they speak with different voices and with equal sincerity. So there is no unity. This difficulty belongs to life itself. Life produces many different types, which are in essential disagreement concerning the way life is to be looked at. Moreover, it is just when unity is most aimed at and needed by men that the danger of falling into diversity seems to be greatest. The myth of the Tower of Babel is not easily put out of the mind in these days. Why should we be dominated by this idea of unity? Can unity ever be?

These are ordinary difficulties. But there is another, and this perhaps is one of the main difficulties with which psychological medicine has to contend in this phase of its development. The public has not yet attained to a conscious conception of practical psychology, for which nevertheless it experiences an unconscious need. At the same time, it is possible to say that psychology has
not yet found proper room among the scientific conceptions on
the nature of things that still hold sway. In science in general,
as in Europe in general, certain conceptions still prevail, and al-
though some discoveries have already been made which contradict
these conceptions, the scientific game is still played rather stiffly
with regulation moves. Better stiffly than loosely; yet it is
certain that the trend of scientific investigation has been increas-
ingly from grosser to finer matter. Psychology is probably a
question of the study of finer matters—finer, that is, than those
which compose vitamins. The tremendous power for health or disease
that is possessed by vitamins is already understood by a few people.
Take this idea one step further, and the tremendous power that may
be possessed by still finer matter—mental attitudes and emotional
attitudes—upon the state of health becomes capable of realization.
The key may be in matter of the finest sort, that can be influenced
only by the finest psychological touch—by the finest knowledge and
feeling. But the important thing at the present stage is that a simple
conception of psychology should be conveyed to people in general.
For they are still in that state in which they either believe, or do not
believe, in psychology; as once they were in the state of either
believing or not believing in chemistry, physics, astronomy, physiology
or biology—or any science. The majority of people are indeed
probably hostile to the conception of psychology. This is partly
based on a certain form of superstition that enslaves man. When
Simpson discovered chloroform, the attitude was taken up that
chloroform was immoral, because it spared people from suffering in
operations and childbirth. God wished people to suffer. Simpson
discovered chloroform. God’s purpose was defeated. Therefore
Simpson was immoral. Simpson replied that the use of anaesthetics
was supported by Biblical narrative. God had thrown Adam into a
deep sleep when he made woman. This form of superstitious hostility
certainly exists as a factor in opposing the birth of a general concep-
tion of psychology.

But a yet greater factor is the general ignorance or mis-
interpretation of what psychology aims at. This is partly due to the
rather narrow view that certain psychological theories have taken
concerning the meaning of practical psychology. What does a
hostility to psychology mean? It means a hostility to the idea that
the nature of man’s life depends largely on unrealized attitudes he
takes towards it; that ‘mind-forged manacles’, as Blake called them,
are the commonest sources of misery, and that by looking inside
himself for the cause of many difficulties that he only sees outside
himself he will discover a new world of possibilities and a new
explanation of his life. When Butler drew his picture of the city in
which everyone who had physical disease, even a cold, was tried by jury and sentenced to imprisonment, while those who had psychological trouble were treated in the same spirit as we treat physical illness, he reversed existing values. By so doing he made the conception of psychology a living thing. What is accepted as inevitable by us, or punished by law, was to those people just what they sought treatment for. But with us a bad-tempered man may upset the life of the office he works in, and upset his own life, and everyone accepts it. But if the same man has an attack of jaundice everyone expects him to have medical treatment. The idea that bad temper may have its own etiology and treatment does not yet reach people. They would certainly think it foolish not to have jaundice treated, but the ordinary psychological disturbances of humanity are accepted as inevitable. The conception behind psychology is not yet manifest to most people.