

QUOTATION

WOODWORTH ON THE LANGUAGE OF PSYCHOLOGY

Instead of “memory”, we should say “remembering”; instead of “thought” we should say “thinking”; instead of “sensation” we should say “seeing, hearing”, *etc.* But, like other learned branches, psychology is prone to transform its verbs into nouns. Then what happens? We forget that our nouns are merely substitutes for verbs, and go hunting for the *things* denoted by the nouns; but there are no such things, there are only the activities that we started with, seeing, remembering, and so on.

Intelligence, consciousness, the unconscious, are by rights not nouns, nor even adjectives or verbs; they are adverbs. The real facts are that the individual acts intelligently—more or less so—acts consciously or unconsciously, as he may also act skillfully, persistently, excitedly. It is a safe rule, then, on encountering any menacing psychological noun, to strip off its linguistic mask, and see what manner of activity lies behind.

—Woodworth, R. S. *Psychology* (Rev. Ed.)
New York: Holt, 1921. Pp. 5-6.