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SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

BY

CHARLES BIRD

PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

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SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

PREFACE

During the past twenty-five years, the fruits of research in social behavior have been made available to all who have access to psychological journals. Unfortunately, however, college students do not have time enough to explore original sources thoroughly. A textbook can never become an adequate substitute for the specific researches which embody the data of any field of inquiry. Yet even a textbook will serve usefully the needs of students desiring a working knowledge of a scientific discipline providing it represents faithfully the major trends of inquiry, presents enough data to reveal the bases of interpretations and theories, and focuses attention even more upon social problems than upon the specific researches themselves.

Whoever attempts to examine all of the researches now intimately related to the social behavior of men faces a task of forbidding proportions; moreover, in making the attempt, he can not escape from interpreting data and emphasizing facts and principles in the light of his own points of view. An interpreter, however, can try sincerely to catch the spirit of inquiry, leaving to the inquisitive student the privilege of discovering whether or not conclusions drawn have a substantial base in facts. In this book I have tried primarily to relate a large number of experimental studies to a wide range of social problems. A secondary aim has been to reveal the fundamental behavior processes underlying social adjustments. Thus my purpose has been not to assemble researches but rather to clarify, and if possible show the solutions for, social problems through the medium of research.

The last point deserves emphasis. Students are often told that social psychology has significant contributions to make to the explanation and solution of social problems; yet, after completing a college course in the subject they feel that they are equipped with a set of principles which they can put to little practical use. They have obtained no sure grasp of the processes underlying the actions of men under a definable set of conditions or of the techniques which may be used to secure similar conduct from other groups of people. Their judgment is crisply summed up in the verdict, "Too theoretical." In planning the materials of this book, I have followed the rule that

cited researches must contribute something toward the understanding of human social behavior. Certainly theory and practice need not be divorced, for each vitalizes the other. Laboratory studies, designed to clarify understanding of social behavior, must be pointed toward social behavior as it is displayed outside laboratories, for otherwise useful generalization is not achieved. Field studies, case histories, or biographies must not escape from controls approximately as rigid as those which give us confidence in laboratory experiments, or else the generalization will be seen to be distorted.

It is impossible to present all of the data of social psychology and their interpretations within a single volume. Selection is necessary. The major fields covered in this book do not represent merely the author's choice, although he has a marked interest in them. Students have coöperated in selecting the topics; the author has then decided what should be included under each topic. In following students' preferences, I open myself to the criticism that inexpert and immature laymen have dictated what is to be considered the field of social psychology; furthermore, some of my colleagues may suspect that in this case there must be some degree of "writing down" to student levels. Neither criticism is warranted. Students who have reached the upper years in college or the graduate school have had contact with both social and natural sciences as well as with contemporary social problems. Although aware of these problems they do not know precisely what psychology has to offer for their explanation or solution. They do not select bizarre problems when invited to indicate which topics especially interest them. In the end it is the author who must accept responsibility for tempering (if not dampening) their enthusiasms by making clear the magnitude of such social problems and the paucity of information which we can command when we try to understand them.

To the criticism that an instructor must "write down" to students because he invites them to express their choice of topics, the contents of the book is a better answer than any argument. It may not be amiss to point out that students quickly resent either elaboration of the obvious or mere repetition of the principles which they picked up in an elementary course in psychology.

To secure guidance in making a selection of what might be most useful, students enrolled in courses in social psychology were asked four questions: "What topics would (1) help you most to understand human beings in their social relationships? (2) have most value to you personally? (3) be most interesting? (4) challenge most your

intellectual curiosity?" The students were told to rate for *interest,* but they understood from the instructions given them that interest was to stand for the general trend of preference with respect to each of the four specific questions asked. Twenty-seven topics were listed. Each was to be marked on a four-step scale: *no interest, slight interest, moderate interest, marked interest.* I have selected the topics for which more than 80 per cent of all votes cast were *moderate* or *marked interest.* As far as possible, such topics as emotion and personality, which also received a high interest rating, have been worked in as integral components of behavior in concrete social situations rather than as unique aspects of behavior. This method of selecting topics should result in a presentation of social psychology which is adapted to the needs of students who already have an acquaintance with general psychology.

My indebtedness to colleagues, both in psychology and sociology, is indeed great. I wish to acknowledge my obligations to the many research workers whose studies are directly referred to as well as to those whose names appear only in the bibliographies. Several publishers and editors have generously granted permission to reproduce tables, figures, or excerpts. It is a pleasure to thank them and to make acknowledgments in the main body of the text. I have also profited from the kindly interest and criticism of graduate students who have requested to use the manuscript while preparing for the ordeal of their preliminary Ph.D. examinations. Likewise, it is a pleasure to express an appreciation to Miss Dreda M. Harper for expert typing service.

More directly I am indebted to several friends who have rendered aid beyond what I had a right to expect. Professor F. S. Appel, of the University of Minnesota, has read and made suggestions related to the three chapters dealing with Suggestion, Propaganda, and the Behavior of Crowds. Mr. F. S. Pease of the D. Appleton-Century Company has generously given me the benefit of editorial skill. Especially, however, I wish to express appreciation to Dr. Richard M. Elliott, editor of the Century Psychology Series, and to Dr. Dorothy M. Andrew, both of whom have read the manuscript entirely and have offered many suggestions and useful criticisms.

CHARLES BIRD.

The University of Minnesota

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The Field of Social Psychology

Students who have completed a course in general psychology, if they are curious to explore further or if they *must* take advanced courses, approach social psychology wondering what the subject is all about. Their excursions in an elementary course have brought within their grasp the characteristics of reflexes, instincts, emotions, and the principles of learning; then, too, they can claim acquaintance with fundamental concepts underlying the measurement of intelligence, aptitudes, and personality traits. They seem to realize that their psychological knowledge is better described as a body of information rather than as a set of skills, for they have not been required to grapple with problems in a way to insure that they now have command over techniques or a sure grasp of principles. In discussions, they display a better appreciation of reactions taken separately than they do of these same reactions as attempted adjustments of a complete individual to the demands of a physical and social environment. With candid frankness they admit their inability to apply psychological principles to concrete, personal, and social problems; yet they are often skeptical of the value of trying to remedy this deficiency by exploring further into psychological fields. Many of them, therefore, approach social psychology as they would a surprise package—they hope for something useful while preparing themselves against disappointment.

Among the more alert of these students doubts of the practical importance of social psychology as now taught have been created by a casual examination of the currently used textbooks. In examining chapter headings, they have too often found a repetition of the same topics met in the elementary course in less complete form. Discussions of instincts, emotions, and personality, even though mildly spiced with practical applications, appear again to require a mastery of principles rather than a comprehension of methods and results which spring from close contact with men in their social relationships and which can be adapted to further investigation. The prospect is not inviting, and

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social psychology seems to be only a more extensive account of very dull concepts.

We must not conclude that these students dislike abstract principles or seek discussions of social problems carried on only in simple terms. They desire to understand social behavior, not as thoughtful lay observers see it but as it appears to psychologists, who, presumably, are expert in discovering finer and yet more significant relationships. Their request is not that scientific cloth should be cut according to the easiest pattern to slip into. They will quickly weary of the elaboration of what is obvious in social behavior. Because their interests are rooted in actual contacts with urgent social problems, they welcome insights into hitherto unappreciated difficulties of interpretation or control of social conditions; likewise, they are ready to modify their own interpretations in the light of substantial experimental evidence. Even their enthusiasm for action can be tempered by facts and particularly by a knowledge of the care needed to avoid creating greater social problems while attempting to do something about existing ones. Social psychology, to-day, through experimental studies and the keen insights of trained observers, promises these students a fulfillment of their desire to know what forces and conditions operate in the creation of human adjustments and maladjustments. Inevitably, unbridled expectation will be checked by some knowledge of the amount of human effort necessary to bring under control even the simplest social processes.

There is no need to review all the motives which students bring to the study of social psychology. Yet the questioning attitude of a small number deserves special consideration. A few students, impressed by the emphasis placed upon experimental evidence in general psychology, approach social psychology hoping to discover something substantial, something which only confirmation through experiment can provide. No longer need the student of social psychology return from his quest empty-handed. Research has at last made a contribution to the understanding of social processes once thought too complex to be included within the domain of science. Experimental social psychology is very young, but its discoveries stand out appealingly against the background of earlier speculations. Even students who find experimental data cold and forbidding at first may find in them the promise of utility, and then they too will be challenged to further inquiry.

What then is the field of social psychology, or, more appropriately, what segments of the field do we propose to examine? Perhaps we can do little more now than point the way along which we shall

travel, leaving to succeeding chapters a more detailed charting. Primarily our concern will be with social behavior which has yielded to measurement or to some form of objective expression, as well as with principles having explanatory value and based upon controlled investigations. Only rarely will we need to draw upon a background of knowledge that has not been gleaned within the field of social psychology itself. On such occasions we must be prepared to entertain explanations with greater caution and with due regard for contradictory points of view.

The field of social psychology may best be indicated in terms of the problems already brought under control although, admittedly, not yet completely investigated. We are concerned with motivation or the dynamic factors in behavior which impel men to action; likewise, our concern must include incentives, or the forms of appeal designed to tap motives. These interrelated processes, incentives and motives, invite study from all men who want to understand and to control the behavior of people. Closely related to motives are the variety of attitudes which have been established under the impact of cultural conditions. How to measure opinions in order to deduce accurately the attitudes of people is a problem now receiving attention not only from professional psychologists but from men in business and in positions of responsibility in government. Whereas earlier we knew in a general way the prevailing attitudes toward institutions and nationality or ethnic groups, now we gain insight into the attitudes of people representing different political parties, churches, or business organizations, and even different age levels and income groups. The information obtained by carefully arranged inquiries not only affords insight into opinions and their structure but permits the control of men as coöperators in many forms of endeavor.

The spread of literacy is transferring the control of people from rulers and leaders who use brute force to those who appreciate the persuasive power of words and other vehicles of meaning such as pictures and cartoons. Social psychologists are alert to the problems which as yet are dimly appreciated by laymen who have not concerned themselves with the broad implications of suggestion and propaganda. Psychologists realize that suggestion and its elaboration as propaganda can be used for exploitation as well as for securing coöperative endeavor in the interest of the majority of a population. But their concern at present is primarily with establishing the facts of suggestion and suggestibility, and with an analysis of propaganda, in order to discover which forms of appeal are more effective than others in securing

endorsement and action. Effort is centered upon discovering the influence of age, sex, amount of education, prestige, and the mode of presentation, for example, in determining the degree of acceptance of suggestion; or it is directed toward a comparison of spoken appeals with written appeals. These are basic problems whose clear definition will eventually remove haphazard efforts in applied psychology.

In all areas of inquiry thus far mentioned the social psychologist seeks to discover the personality traits which make an individual responsive to incentives, lead him to express particular opinions, or make him ready to accept suggestions. He also attempts to delineate the social conditions which have given form to motives, attitudes, and suggestibility. His interests are scientifically channeled as much as they are directed toward practical applications of his findings. Furthermore, he attempts to trace the development of personality traits having social significance. Social psychology is not concerned with everything that an individual does during his waking hours, but social psychology throws light indirectly upon activities usually thought of as personal and individualistic.

More recently, social psychology has brought within its boundaries the important areas of mental growth and decline, or, stated differently, of the problems associated with age. Population changes, particularly the shift in age groups now clearly evident in most occidental nations, alter both social conditions and the social interactions which yield the data of social psychology. A series of intriguing questions may be raised now and answered later. Are social institutions, such as schools and colleges, churches, theaters, recreational centers, libraries, and factories, adapted to the personality changes occurring with increasing age? Does the greater difficulty in learning new habits underlie the growing conservatism of old people? Is the declination in intelligence, so noticeable beyond the age of fifty to sixty years, offset by the richer experience of men? Should men be released from industry because they are too slow at forty to keep pace with machines, or should differences in skill be respected without regard for age? Should many old people be denied broad social contacts, or should social institutions be adapted to changing levels of ability? These, and many other questions, the social psychologist seeks to answer in terms of controlled inquiries.

No attempt has been made to exhaust, by example, the field of social psychology. The field is best defined in terms of what social psychologists are doing through researches and analyses. Yet it is not possible to capture these researches and analyses and to do justice

to them within a single book. Selection is necessary. All we can hope to achieve is a selection which will most faithfully represent the present stage of development. This we have attempted in succeeding chapters. Before we plunge into the specific areas of social psychology, however, there is an advantage in considering a few basic principles.

Social Situations and Social Behavior

A social situation cannot be defined apart from the behavior of individuals. Although the properties which are assumed to constitute a situation can be analyzed into forms of physical energy, for example, into photic, chemical, mechanical, thermal, and electrical energy, each capable of giving rise, respectively, to vision, taste and smell, hearing and pressure, temperature changes, and pain, in actual social behavior previous experience serves to interpret these properties or stimuli. It is incorrect, therefore, to say that a situation is a pattern of stimuli. Too much has been left out of the picture in the definition. We do not merely *hear* a conversation; we *understand* it, and we may act in terms of its meaning. Similarly, we do not *see* an apple; we *perceive* it, we fit it into a category of experience, and, when we are hungry, we regard it as a food object. The organization or form of stimulation does have a significance which cannot be ascribed to the separate stimuli. New relationships arise when stimuli are combined or even juxtaposed, but these relationships are always interpreted by an individual in the light of his previous experience.

One of the problems confronting the social psychologist is the discovery of conditions which when altered will change the social behavior of organisms. He must, therefore, compare and contrast many situations and correlate them with the responses of individuals, and, in the process, he must describe all of the conditions. These conditions will include the physical environment as well as the behavior of other human beings when they interact directly or when they are passive observers. This is, of course, only a preliminary step in his program, yet it is an important one.

It is also essential to know the biological properties of the reacting individuals. Many of these may be measured by procedures which are standardized in several branches of science. Physical characteristics like height and weight or even skin color may play an important part in social interaction. Hunger, thirst, and sex drives and the many internal conditions related to body chemistry have a way of exteriorizing themselves and of altering human relationships. Individual dif-

ferences in intelligence, special aptitudes, emotional intensity and duration, and physical strength, for example, set limits to the amount and the complexity of the social environment which can be interiorized. These differences, therefore, are basic to the phenomena comprising human variability. They confront us whenever we are concerned with motivation, with competition and coöperation and their demands upon inequalities in skill, with age and its influence upon intellectual resiliency and speed of movement, or with delinquency in its relation to intelligence.

But biological factors alone will not account adequately for differences in social behavior, nor will the situation in which the individual reacts at a particular moment. It is imperative to know the social conditions which have molded the individual throughout his life history, as well as the traditions, customs, standards of value, and laws which are potential determiners of his conduct. An individual picks up conduct which mirrors the typical and accepted ways of his various social groups, but he also learns to deviate from custom as specific reactions are integrated under the demand of relatively unique problems. In so far as many social conditions can be met by ability levels far below the maximum performance of the most expert individual, biological differences will play an insignificant part in differentiating people and social emphases will determine the form or type of conduct. A moron can learn to stop his car before a traffic signal with as much skill as a genius and yet fail to grasp the principles of automobile insurance. Similarly, most of us learn to satisfy biological motives according to the rules and approved methods of our society. Hunger dictates that we should eat to survive, but society determines how we shall eat. The contribution of biological factors to human variability is more noticeable when hierarchies of skill are under consideration.

The social psychologist attempts to establish relationships between biological and social phenomena. There is no arbitrary rule permitting the selection of either as possessing intrinsic advantages. Under some conditions native characteristics are the more important determiners of behavior and under other conditions learned activities seem basic to the differences among people in skill, customs, and attitudes. At least three constellations of factors must always be taken into account, namely, the personality of the individual as it reflects biological and cultural determination, the materials constituting the situations to which he reacts, and the individuals with whom he is interacting. They form an interlocking system of forces.

Since an individual retains many of the reactions he has learned, it follows that with a growing experience his behavior is decreasingly dependent upon stimulation from the immediate surroundings. His activities are only partly a consequence of the immediate situation. A single feature of a complex situation may initiate a train of responses, and often preconceptions and preferences may serve to misinterpret the actual stimuli. Simple, universal responses such as reflexes are often elicited by stimuli, but complex patterns of behavior are directed by neural mechanisms in the manipulation of the environment. Situations which have already satisfied personality needs are selected again, and new situations are controlled to attain objectives. It is necessary to know, therefore, how much of the social world an individual has incorporated into himself. One of the tasks confronting social psychologists is the tracing of situations which have operated to socialize the individual.

It is generally agreed that most social behavior is a reciprocal interplay of personalities. When individuals interact with each other and coördinate their efforts, or when their interaction is governed by rules and codes, group behavior arises. Not all reactions of people to each other are social responses. We avoid collision with a person on the sidewalk just as we avoid a fire hydrant. Social behavior implies interaction between or among persons. This interaction may occur in face-to-face contacts, or it may take place indirectly through the medium of symbols. Objects, therefore, have social values. Pictures, letters, or books are social stimuli, and, according to the experience of the auditor, a symphony may be loved not for its tone quality and structure but for its capacity to arouse emotions having association with a friend. There is no hard and fast rule for differentiating between persons and objects as social stimuli, since both gain their distinctive social values from the interactions of individuals.

Social psychology, therefore, is a branch of science which studies the relationships arising as individuals interact with each other and with the stimulus objects constituting the social situation. These relationships are not dependent upon individual behavior alone. They cannot be obtained by summating each individual's responses because the mutual interplay of persons and objects creates a new and unique situation. A complete description of social events includes both the attributes of individuals and the changes in the environment constantly taking place in consequence of social interaction. Group behavior gets its distinctive character from the situations created by interaction.

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