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PSYCHOLOGY

A SOCIAL APPROACH

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PREFACE

This book is very much a student's textbook. The authors have assumed that the reader has no familiarity with statistics and thus have avoided complex methodological discussions. The use of technical vocabulary has been kept to a minimum, and the technical terms which have been employed are defined in a glossary for the convenience of the reader. The book is intended to be used either as the sole textbook for a one-semester course in introductory psychology or in conjunction with other materials in a longer course. There are now many excellent supplementary materials available for use in introductory psychology courses, including a reader designed to accom-

pany this text (*Readings in Psychology: Foundations and Applications*). It is the authors' belief that these materials have made the single, large introductory psychology textbook outdated. The present book is intended to provide a theoretical framework for the integration of supplementary materials when used in a longer course.

When the first edition of this book was published, it was the only introductory psychology textbook placing its main emphasis on man as he functions in his environment. Now there are several introductory texts with this emphasis. The way the field is developing necessitates such a change, and the first edition of this book attempted to organize and conceptualize the environmental approach. Since it was published, the field of psychology has accumulated new evidence important to this approach. The second edition incorporates some of this body of evidence and new understandings relevant to this growth.

When the scientific method first developed, the problems with which it could deal were quite limited. For a phenomenon to be investigated scientifically, it needed to be influenced by relatively few variables, and these variables had to be ones which could easily be controlled in simple experimental situations. Early science thus succeeded largely by isolating phenomena from their environments in order to achieve control of the relevant conditions. Its greatest achievements came in areas, such as Newtonian mechanics, where a broad range of events could be deduced from a few simple principles.

As more complex phenomena were analyzed, however, ideas about the nature of scientific theories changed also. Many phenomena are destroyed by removing them from their environments, and many cannot be accounted for in terms of simple theories. Complex phenomena are often better understood by studying them directly than by trying to deduce them from observations on simpler phenomena. Newtonian mechanics, for example, are not so much wrong as irrelevant to the understanding of most of the problems of modern physics.

Traditional psychological theories about man, such as Hull's learning theory, which for years served as the main theoretical framework for the field of psychology, have begun to stand in relation to contemporary psychology as Newtonian mechanics stood in relation to physics on the eve of the age of indeterminacy. They are not adequate to serve as a framework for the developing field, and

are irrelevant to many areas of compelling attention. Such phenomena as Harlow's research on contact comfort, the work of the European ethologists, and Milgram's research on obedience simply cannot be dealt with within the old framework.

What is happening to the field of psychology may be understood from the perspective provided by Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.¹ Kuhn distinguishes between periods of chaos in a scientific discipline and quite distinct periods of more orderly investigation when there is a widely shared framework of explanation. In the more orderly periods, research is guided by generally accepted theory which suggests what problems are important to the field and predicts the results of experimental investigations of those areas. The research largely consists, in other words, of demonstrating that the theory's answers are indeed the correct ones. As the research inspired by a particular theoretical orientation accumulates, however, some of the results are not the ones the theory would have suggested. Eventually, large accumulations of research findings incompatible with the old orientation build up, causing people to perceive the inadequacy of the old theoretical framework. As some theorists go on defending the old framework, and others start proposing new (although often less inclusive) theoretical formulations, a period of confusion, conflict, and revolutionary change is ushered in. In the physical sciences, such periods of confusion have formed part of the Copernican, Newtonian, and Einsteinian revolutions. The field of psychology is at the present time undergoing such a scientific revolution. The present edition of this text is intended, as was the first, to be a small contribution to that revolution.

One final note: If psychology is to survive as a profession and as a field of study despite the very real apprehensions of many thoughtful people today regarding possible misuse of its techniques and power, then a growing orientation toward caring about peoples' actual individuality and needs may be timely. This orientation can indeed be discerned within its constantly exploding body of knowledge. This book is dedicated to the effort to communicate that new orientation.

David F. Wrench
Chris Wrench

Notes and Acknowledgments

1. Kuhn, Thomas S. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. Second edition, enlarged, volume II, number 2, of *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science*, 1970.

CONTENTS

PREFACE	ix
PART ONE <i>Basic Processes</i>	1
ONE INTRODUCTION	3
<i>The field of psychology</i>	3
<i>The history of psychology</i>	5
<i>Enduring theoretical controversies</i>	18
<i>Theory and data in psychology</i>	21
TWO PERCEPTION	31
<i>Introduction</i>	31
<i>The human senses</i>	36
<i>Perception as an active process</i>	39
<i>Organization of perception</i>	45
<i>Innate and learned factors in perception</i>	50

THREE LEARNING	69
<i>Introduction</i>	69
<i>Innate foundations of learning</i>	70
<i>Some basic types of learning</i>	74
<i>Stimulus-response learning</i>	77
<i>The learning of ideas</i>	87
FOUR THINKING AND REMEMBERING	103
<i>The nature of remembering</i>	103
<i>Forgetting</i>	110
<i>Efficient learning and remembering</i>	115
<i>Creative problem solving</i>	124
FIVE MOTIVATION AND EMOTION	135
<i>Introduction</i>	135
<i>Design features of motivational systems</i>	136
<i>Some specific motives</i>	147
<i>Emotion</i>	154
<i>The measurement of motives</i>	160
SIX PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	169
<i>Introduction</i>	169
<i>Stages of development</i>	173
<i>Mechanisms of defense</i>	190
<i>Cognitive dissonance</i>	195
SEVEN GROUP PARTICIPATION AND IDENTITY	205
<i>Introduction: The transformation of society</i>	205
<i>Success, failure, and aspiration</i>	209
<i>The development of independence</i>	215
<i>Maturity, culture, and identity</i>	218
<i>Social origins and socialization</i>	223
PART TWO <i>The Psychological Perspective Applied</i>	235
EIGHT STRATEGIES AND SYMPTOMS	237
<i>Introduction</i>	237
<i>Neurosis</i>	241
<i>A psychosis: Schizophrenia</i>	246
<i>The effects of psychotherapy</i>	258
NINE ATTITUDES AND ATTITUDE CHANGE	275
<i>The nature of attitudes</i>	275
<i>Attitudes and behavior</i>	278
<i>Bases of attitude change</i>	281
<i>Group affiliation</i>	295

TEN PREJUDICE	315
<i>Introduction</i>	315
<i>The politics of racism</i>	319
<i>The expression of aggression</i>	326
<i>Personality factors in prejudice</i>	333
<i>Situational factors in prejudice</i>	339
<i>Prejudice in attitude and prejudice in behavior</i>	344
 ELEVEN CREATING EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONS	351
<i>Introduction</i>	351
<i>Small group processes</i>	354
<i>Achieving organizational goals</i>	368
 GLOSSARY	389
 NAME INDEX	407
 SUBJECT INDEX	411

PART ONE

BASIC
PROCESSES

ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Field of Psychology

Psychology is one of the fields concerned with understanding human experience and behavior. As such, it shares some interests, methods, and theories with each of the other fields concerned with the study of man. For example, it shares with biology an interest in man as an organism adapting to an environment; with anthropology, an interest in the ways that, and the extent to which, the individual may be influenced by his culture; and with sociology and anthropology, an interest in social structure.

Each field studying human beings, however, has concentrated its efforts on certain problems and methods which are central to that particular view of man. The nature of social disorganization is a major topic from a sociological perspective, whereas it is given only minor attention by the economist. The study of documents may be an important approach for the historian or political scientist, but would be of little use to an anthropologist who is concerned primarily with prehistory. Psychology similarly has limited itself to studying man from a particular point of view and through the use of certain methods. Some of the choices which psychologists have usually made in the past are as follows:

1. Psychology has concentrated on the study of human beings. While animals are often studied, this research is more often to obtain results which might be applicable to human beings than to satisfy curiosity about a particular nonhuman species.
2. Psychology has most frequently been interested in the single individual. Physiological psychologists sometimes study individual nerve cells, and social psychologists sometimes compare cultures, but the central concern of the field has been with the individual human being.
3. Psychology has made the experiment its preferred method. Experiments may be in error through their artificiality, and thus need to be supplemented by other types of data. They are also inappropriate for studying some of the things in which psychologists are interested. Nevertheless, where they can be appropriately used, they are a powerful tool and have been the favorite one in the field.
4. Psychology has studied both behavior and experience. Behavior is life viewed from the outside, and experience is life viewed from within. Although some theoretical approaches have excluded one or the other from the field of psychology, it has been more usual to consider the study of both of them essential to understanding human beings.
5. Psychology has been concerned both with the ways in which individuals are similar and with the ways in which they differ. There are some principles, called *nomothetic*, which apply to all relatively normal individuals. An example would be that the receptors for vision are found in the retina of the eye. Other principles, called *idiographic*, may describe the behavior of only one individual, such as, "John is always grumpy when he has to talk to Mr. Cartwright." Psychologists have been concerned with trying to discover both of these types of principles.

6. Finally, psychology has made use of statistical techniques. Human behavior is highly variable and only imperfectly understood. If a person limits himself to drawing generalizations that will precisely fit all the cases he has studied, there is relatively little he can say. Because of this, psychologists have also drawn generalizations which are only true on the average or in a probabilistic sense. Statistics, the study of distributions and probabilities, has thus been a major tool of the psychologist.

It can be seen that there is no simple way of defining the field of psychology which will clearly distinguish it from the other fields that study man. As with other psychological principles, we shall have to state our definition in probabilistic terms. Many, but not all, of the activities of psychologists fit the following definition: *Psychology is the science of individual experience and behavior, studied primarily through experimental and statistical means.*

If that is what psychology has been, what should it be in the future? Each psychologist will have his own answer to this question. The authors' view is embodied in this textbook. They would like to see the field of psychology composed of those generalizations about man which are relevant to understanding man's functioning on a social level. In line with this goal, they have attempted in this book, while covering the field of psychology as it now exists, to give greatest emphasis to those principles which can currently contribute most to our understanding of socially relevant human behavior.

The History of Psychology

THE BRITISH ASSOCIATIONISTS

Systematic speculation on man's nature is found in many sources stretching back into antiquity. Many individuals and traditions of thought can be regarded as contributing historically to the development of a field of study known as psychology. Nevertheless, a main stream of intellectual activity which merits particular attention developed among certain British philosophers of the eighteenth century who, because of similarities in their beliefs, are classified together. The two most important aspects of their beliefs are referred to in the two different names they are sometimes given. Sometimes they are called *empiricists* because they believed that ideas are not inherited but learned from experience, and sometimes *associationists* because

of their interest in how ideas are associated with one another. (It is, of course, possible to be an empiricist without being an associationist, or to be an associationist without being an empiricist. John Locke and his followers, however, were generally both.) In being both empiricists and associationists, they raised the central problem of the future field of psychology and provided an answer to it.

The problem was where ideas come from. Their origin was not a problem if ideas came from God or the devil, as in popular belief of that time, or were assumed to be inherited as earlier philosophers had tended to believe. Plato, for instance, held the position that we had once known everything but that our memories were a bit bad and we needed to be reminded. This was, for him, a strong argument in favor of believing in reincarnation: if we had not lived before, how could we know so much? Similarly, Descartes held that there were some ideas which did not come from experience but which yet presented themselves to the mind with such certainty that they had to be believed. The rejection of innate ideas is the central theme of Locke's "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding," published in 1690, and it is the step which made a field of psychology necessary.¹ This point is made clear in the best-known quote from Locke's essay:

All ideas come from sensation or reflection—*Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas; how comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer in one word, from experience. In that all our knowledge is founded, and from that it ultimately derives itself. Our observation, employed either about external and sensible objects, or about the internal operations of our minds, perceived and reflected on by ourselves, is that which supplies our understanding with all the material of thinking. These two are the fountains of knowledge, from whence all the ideas we have, or can naturally have, do spring.*²

It will be noticed in this quotation that Locke did not carry empiricism as far as some of the later members of the school. He believed that, while ideas are not inherited, the capacity for perceiving the world is, and that a person can learn by paying attention to the operations of his mind. Others, such as George Berkeley and David Hartley, developed the positions that we must learn to perceive and that all ideas are compounds of ideas of sensations. No longer was observing the operations of the mind a source of knowledge.

“Compounds of ideas” provides the clue to the other important role which associationism was to play in the history of psychology. Ideas were believed to be associated with one another, and, on the basis of this association, complex ideas built up out of simple ones. The answer to the question of where ideas came from was thus to look for the laws of association. Consciousness, like a chemical compound, could be analyzed into elements, and the laws of association were thought to govern how the elements combined to make the compounds. On the basis of introspection, the associationists suggested what the laws might be. For Hume, for example, there were three: resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect. If automobile tires make you think of doughnuts, your thought is an example of associating ideas because of similarity of shape. Associating salt with pepper would follow a law of contiguity—associating things because they are frequently found together. If turtles make you think of turtle soup, it is perhaps association of cause and effect.

NINETEENTH-CENTURY PHYSIOLOGY

The associationists did not carry out experiments or carefully controlled observations, but based their conclusions on thinking about their everyday experiences. Thus, while they anticipated the subject matter and some of the principles of later psychological theories, they did not anticipate their experimental methods. These methods were more a legacy from a second major forerunner of the field of psychology, the investigation of the physical nature of man by anatomists and physiologists. A publication of Charles Bell in 1811 will serve as an example.

Although speculation about man is old, systematic study of him is not. Anthropologists are perhaps not fanciful to suggest that the reason animals are represented in considerable anatomical accuracy in cave paintings, while men are either very crudely sketched or not shown at all, is that early man often had strong religious taboos against any representation of human beings. (This type of belief can be seen in the more recent notion that the possession of an image of a person by a witch could give the witch a power over him.) In any case, man has been the last thing subject to scientific investigation. At the time Bell wrote, some people were just beginning to feel that perhaps man's anatomy might be amenable to scientific investigation. There still are many people who believe his thoughts, impulses, and emotions are outside the sphere of science. The novelty of study-