SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

AN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

BY

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

IN this little book I have attempted to deal with a difficult branch of psychology in a way that shall make it intelligible and interesting to any cultivated reader, and that shall imply no previous familiarity with psychological treatises on his part; for I hope that the book may be of service to students of all the social sciences, by providing them with the minimum of psychological doctrine that is an indispensable part of the equipment for work in any of these sciences. I have not thought it necessary to enter into a discussion of the exact scope of social psychology and of its delimitation from sociology or the special social sciences; for I believe that such questions may be left to solve themselves in the course of time with the advance of the various branches of science concerned. I would only say that I believe social psychology to offer for research a vast and fertile field, which has been but little worked hitherto, and that in this book I have attempted to deal only with its most fundamental problems, those the solution of which is a presupposition of all profitable work in the various branches of the science.

If I have severely criticised some of the views from which I dissent, and have connected these views with the names of writers who have maintained them, it is

because I believe such criticism to be a great aid to clearness of exposition and also to be much needed in the present state of psychology; the names thus made use of were chosen because the bearers of them are authors well known for their valuable contributions to mental science. I hope that this brief acknowledgment may serve as an apology to any of them under whose eyes my criticisms may fall. I owe also some apology to my fellow-workers for the somewhat dogmatic tone I have adopted. I would not be taken to believe that my utterances upon any of the questions dealt with are infallible or incapable of being improved upon; but repeated expressions of deference and of the sense of my own uncertainty would be out of place in a semi-popular work of this character and would obscure the course of my exposition.

Although I have tried to make this book intelligible and useful to those who are not professed students of psychology, it is by no means a mere dishing up of current doctrines for popular consumption; and it may add to its usefulness in the hands of professional psychologists if I indicate here the principal points which, to the best of my belief, are original contributions to psychological doctrine.

In Chapter II. I have tried to render fuller and clearer the conceptions of instinct and of instinctive process, from both the psychical and the nervous sides.

In Chapter III. I have elaborated a principle, briefly enunciated in a previous work, which is, I believe, of the first importance for the understanding of the life of emotion and action—the principle, namely, that all emotion is the affective aspect of instinctive process. The adoption of this principle leads me to define emotion more strictly and narrowly than has been done

by other writers; and I have used it as a guide in attempting to distinguish the more important of the primary emotions.

In Chapter IV. I have combated the current view that imitation is to be ascribed to an instinct of imitation; and I have attempted to give greater precision to the conception of suggestion, and to define the principal conditions of suggestibility. I have adopted a view of the most simple and primitive form of sympathy that has been previously enunciated by Herbert Spencer and others, and have proposed what seems to be the only possible theory of the way in which sympathetic induction of emotion takes place. I have then suggested a modification of Professor Groos's theory of play, and in this connection have indulged in a speculation as to the peculiar nature and origin of the emulative impulse.

In Chapter V. I have attempted a physiological interpretation of Mr. Shand's doctrine of the sentiments, and have analysed the principal complex emotions in the light of this doctrine and of the principle laid down in Chapter II., respecting the relation of emotion to instinct. The analyses reached are in many respects novel; and I venture to think that, though they may need much correction in detail, they have the merit of having been achieved by a method very much superior to the one commonly pursued, the latter being that of introspective analysis unaided by any previous determination of the primary emotions by the comparative method.

In Chapters VI., VII., VIII., and IX. I have applied Mr. Shand's doctrine of the sentiments and the results reached in the earlier chapters to the description of the organisation of the life of emotion and impulse, and have built upon these foundations an account which

is more definite than any other with which I am acquainted. Attention may be drawn to the account offered of the nature of active or developed sympathy; but the principal novelty contained in these chapters is what may, perhaps, without abuse of the phrase, be called a theory of volition.

Of the heterogeneous assortment of ideas presented in the second section of the book I find it impossible to say what and how much is original. No doubt almost all of them derive from a moderately extensive reading of anthropological and sociological literature.

I have tried to make the reading of the book easier by confining to footnotes the discussion of some difficult questions of secondary importance.

Among those from whose views I have ventured to express dissent in certain respects is Mr. A. F. Shand. I have, however, adopted and made great use of his theory of the sentiments, and I would take this opportunity of saying how much I feel myself, in common with other psychologists, indebted to him for this theory, and how much I have profited, not only by his too scanty published work, but also by exchange of views in conversation.

I have pleasure also in acknowledging kind help received from Dr. C. W. Saleeby, who has read the proof-sheets of this book.

I hope that this book may be followed shortly by another which will build upon the foundations laid in this one, and will contain a discussion of the general principles of collective psychology or the psychology of groups, and an attempt to apply those principles to the study of the most interesting and important form of collective mental life, the life of peoples.

W. McD.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

I HAVE to return thanks for a number of kindly appreciations and valuable criticisms of this book. I hope to profit by the latter, but have not yet assimilated them so completely as to have ventured to make any alteration of the text. This edition differs from the first, therefore, only in that a few verbal slips have been rectified.

I take this opportunity to guard myself against two misunderstandings. Although I have argued that we must accept determinism in psychology, I do not hold that the acceptance of determinism implies the acceptance of psycho-physical monism, with its implication, or rather postulate, that all human action can be explained in terms of mechanical causation. I hoped that my recognition of final causes on p. 263, and sentences on pp. 26, 27, and 44, would sufficiently show that I hold to the reality of teleological determination of human and animal behaviour. As regards the free-will problem, although I think we must accept determinism in psychology and in the social sciences as a methodological postulate, I am very willing to believe in a little dose of free-will if the conception can be made intelligible to me; but it still continues to elude my grasp.

In view of the remarks of several critics, I think

it worth while to say very explicitly that I do not mean to use the word "sentiment" as a synonym for "complex emotion." The distinction is fundamental to all the constructive part of the book.

It has been pointed out to me that the distinction I have drawn between magic and religion in the footnote on p. 306 was proposed by Sir Alfred Lyall in an essay in the first volume of his "Asiatic Studies." I hasten to acknowledge the fact, and to apologise for having put forward the suggestion as though it were a novel one.

Since the demand for a second edition of my book after less than a year from the date of its publication seems to show that it may find its way into the hands of a considerable number of readers, I feel, more keenly than before, the need for public acknowledgment of my indebtedness to other psychologists. I would, therefore, repair what now seems to me a serious omission from the preface to the first edition, by indicating my friends Professors William James, Lloyd Morgan, and G. F. Stout as the writers from whose works I have acquired my notions as to the nature of instinct and conation and their role in mental life, and whom I would like to claim as spiritual fathers of whatever is of value in this book.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

IN this edition I have made good a few omissions. Of these additions the principal are the paragraphs on remorse and on the food-seeking impulse, which will be found on pages 158 and 83 respectively.

No other considerable alterations have been made.

W. McD.

I HAVE added to this edition a supplementary chapter on theories of action, in which I have set forth, more explicitly than in the body of the book, the general theory of action which underlies the whole exposition; and, in order to justify it and to set it in stronger relief, I have added some criticisms of other theories of action that have been and still are widely accepted. This supplementary chapter is probably too technical and controversial to interest the general reader; but I hope that it may render the book more useful to serious students of the moral sciences.

W. McD.

March, 1912

PREFACE TO EIGHTH EDITION

IN this edition I have attempted to make good a serious defect of the earlier editions by adding a supplementary chapter on the sex instinct. No other changes have been made; for, although discussions of the topics of this volume and criticisms of my views have appeared in two important works recently published (namely, Professor Thorndike's "Original Nature of Man" and Mr. A. F. Shand's "Foundations of Character"), I have not yet sufficiently digested them; and I must hope to be able to profit by them in preparing a later edition.

W. McD.

Oxford,
April, 1914

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SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

AMONG students of the social sciences there has always been a certain number who have recognised the fact that some knowledge of the human mind and of its modes of operation is an essential part of their equipment, and that the successful development of the social sciences must be dependent upon the fulness and accuracy of such knowledge. These propositions are so obviously true that any formal attempt to demonstrate them is superfluous. Those who do not accept them as soon as they are made will not be convinced of their truth by any chain of formal reasoning. It is, then, a remarkable fact that psychology, the science which claims to formulate the body of ascertained truths about the constitution and working of the mind, and which endeavours to refine and to add to this knowledge, has not been generally and practically recognised as the essential common foundation on which all the social sciences—ethics, economics, political science, philosophy of history, sociology, and cultural anthropology, and the more special social sciences, such as the sciences of religion, of law, of education, and of art—must be built up. Of the workers in these sciences, some, like Comte,

and, at the present time, M. Durkheim, repudiate the claim of psychology to such recognition. Some do lip service to psychology, but in practice ignore it, and will sit down to write a treatise on morals or economics, or any other of the social sciences, cheerfully confessing that they know nothing of psychology. A certain number, perhaps the majority, of recent writers on social topics recognise the true position of psychology, but in practice are content to take as their psychological foundations the vague and extremely misleading psychology embodied in common speech, with the addition of a few hasty assumptions about the mind made to suit their particular purposes. There are signs, however, that this regrettable state of affairs is about to pass away, that psychology will before long be accorded in universal practice the position at the base of the social sciences which the more clear-sighted have long seen that it ought to occupy.

Since this volume is designed to promote this change of practice, it is fitting that it should open with a brief inquiry into the causes of the anomalous state of affairs at present obtaining and with some indication of the way in which it is hoped that the change may be brought about. For there can be no question that the lack of practical recognition of psychology by the workers in the social sciences has been in the main due to its deficiencies, and that the only way of establishing it in its true place is to make good these deficiencies. What, then, are these deficiencies, and why have they so long persisted? We may attempt very briefly to indicate the answers to these questions without presuming to apportion any blame for the long continuance of these deficiencies between the professed psychologists and the workers in the social sciences.

The department of psychology that is of primary

importance for the social sciences is that which deals with the springs of human action, the impulses and motives that sustain mental and bodily activity and regulate conduct; and this, of all the departments of psychology, is the one that has remained in the most backward state, in which the greatest obscurity, vagueness, and confusion still reign. The answers to such problems as the proper classification of conscious states, the analysis of them into their elements, the nature of these elements and the laws of the compounding of them, have but little bearing upon the social sciences; the same may be said of the range of problems connected with the relations of soul and body, of psychical and physical process, of consciousness and brain processes; and also of the discussion of the more purely intellectual processes, of the way we arrive at the perception of relations of time and place or of likeness and difference, of the classification and description of the intellectual processes of ideation, conception, comparison, and abstraction, and of their relations to one another. Not these processes themselves, but only the results or products of these processes—the knowledge or system of ideas and beliefs achieved by them, and the way in which these ideas and beliefs regulate conduct and determine social institutions and the relations of men to one another in society are of immediate importance for the social sciences. It is the mental forces, the sources of energy, which set the ends and sustain the course of all human activity—of which forces the intellectual processes are but the servants, instruments, or means—that must be clearly defined, and whose history in the race and in the individual must be made clear, before the social sciences can build upon a firm psychological foundation. Now, it is with the questions of the former classes that psychologists have