

SOCIAL
PSYCHOLOGY

JAMES REINHARDT

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF
PERSONALITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

JAMES MELVIN REINHARDT, PH.D.

Professor of Sociology,

University of Nebraska

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TO
L. L. BERNARD
EMINENT SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGIST

PREFACE

THIS BOOK does not attempt to deal with all of the topics that may be legitimately included under the general subject of social psychology. The interest here has been primarily in the individual personality and modes of adjustment which arise as a result of experience in the socio-cultural environment. It is recognized that hereditary constitution and acquired organic factors resulting from accidents, diseases of one sort or another, glandular disturbances, and so forth, exert a profound influence upon the development and use of mental and temperamental qualities. Nevertheless, the point to which this book gives particular attention is the fact that in all cases, except in extreme instances where the powers of thought have not developed or where memory has been completely wiped out by accident or disease, the individual functions consciously in relation to social values inherent in a culture pattern. As a matter of fact, behavior, even in the case of extreme deviants from the norm, is always defined in terms of the accepted standards of a group, and the methods of dealing with deviants and the burdens which they place upon society appear as normal aspects of the society as a whole.

I wish it were possible to acknowledge my indebtedness to all those who have in one way or another contributed to the writing of this book. I feel a keen sense of indebtedness to Professor L. L. Bernard, whose writings have been a constant source of stimulation and inspiration. His brilliant work on *Instinct* appeared two years before I offered my first course in Social Psychology at the University of North Dakota, and his *Introduction to Social Psychology* was my first class text. The influence of William Stern and Kurt Lewin is in evidence in parts of this

book. Their writings have helped to give form and expression to many of my own observations. My obligations to the biologists, particularly Pearl, Stockard, and Jennings, to the cultural anthropologists, and to those who have studied personality through the medium of various testing devices, will also be apparent.

I am indebted to Professor Floyd House for valuable criticism; to Dr. J. O. Hertzler, Dr. Earl H. Bell, Benjamin Small, and Robert Mossholder for many helpful suggestions. I am especially obligated to Loren Eiseley, who contributed many valuable suggestions, particularly in connection with the chapter on "Personality and Culture." Grateful acknowledgment is also made to Marceline Brown, who typed the entire manuscript and offered many valuable suggestions.

JAMES M. REINHARDT.

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SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

THE THESIS on which this book is written is that social psychology must be concerned with the behavior of individuals as influencing and as conditioned by socio-cultural factors, and by conventionalized forms of expression and interaction that inhere in what the anthropologist calls culture patterns. The individual's peculiar social relations, as with members of a family, neighbors, friends, and co-workers, and the wider systems of conventionalized values and value systems, such as income, education, occupation, rank, class, "beliefs," rituals, and so forth, into which one is born and reared are conceived as dynamic factors influencing behavior through the meanings which they give to life and by the way they affect individual effort. From this point of view, an adequate social psychology cannot develop from observations and descriptions of interaction alone. It is necessary to know also what kinds of personalities are interacting, how individual desires are directed, and toward what fundamental ends. Certain fundamental human values are deeply rooted in the cultural life of the group. Individual experiences, however, differ even within relatively small and segregated groups. Consequently, what may appear to the observer to be identical situations may have very different meanings for different individuals. Moreover, objects, actions, "beliefs," that possess the same general character of meaning for different individuals do not necessarily occupy the same position in their respective ranges of value. It seems important, therefore, to study the way socio-cultural experiences

determine one's range of values and thus affect behavior in varying degrees and ways.

The interaction of all these factors gives rise to more or less consistent ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. As will be noted, reactions that may appear unintelligible on the surface often become quite understandable when viewed in the light of total experience. The point of view taken in this book gives the human personality an important place in the study of social behavior.

The human personality cannot be adequately defined in terms of specific abilities or traits considered alone. We agree with Myerson¹ that personality is not the mere sum of the individual's powers and characteristics any more than a "picture is the sum of various colors and shades." It appears to be a unified functioning of the emotions, intelligence, and overt actions, the prolonged result of which is a behavior pattern or outline that provides consistency within the organism. This consistency does not always appear to the observer. In fact, the overt behavior of the individual seems often to run along diverse paths or to have no path to follow. The apparent inconsistencies, however, seem to us to indicate—at least within a broad range of "normality"—some inner consistency that cannot easily be destroyed by conflicting pressures from the outside. The theoretical basis for this view is the interpretations of certain lines of evidence that will be advanced later.

Personality "types" may be due to many factors. As Myerson suggests, the organic basis of personality and the patternized modes of individual adjustment are in the "interaction of nervous centers, viscera, and internal glands." This interaction of internal factors, however, is affected not only by the hereditary structural and functioning capacity of the acting tissues, but also by numerous and complex environmental forces

¹ See A. Myerson, *Social Psychology*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., New York, 1934.

that play upon the organism in various ways and according to varying degrees of pressure. The more one is made aware of the importance of these interacting influences the more he is likely to feel the total inadequacy of any "single-cause" explanations of so-called personality types or of "type" patterns of adjustment. The same applies to attempts to account for certain broad nationality, class, or racial similarities of behavior in terms of some peculiar inborn qualities. It will be shown that similar organic disturbances do not necessarily produce the same reactions to what appear to be identical objective stimuli. On the other hand, different organic disorders may be associated with similar outlines of behavior in different individuals.

Furthermore, an examination of the scientific literature on the subject from various angles suggests very strongly that what may be associated with peculiar organic factors in one case may appear in relation to specific individual experiences in another, and also that the experiences themselves are observed to have significance for the personality only in relation to a particular pattern of cultural values. The complex factors that operate in different ways to produce deviations from the normal modes of behavior operate with similar variations to produce "normal" behavior. In fact the term "normal" has no fundamental significance apart from the group's standards of value.

The human environment. The human environment differs from that of the lower animals in respect to the nature and complexity of man's social life. The social life of man involves technologies and technological equipment, social institutions and their organizations, arts, a discriminating language, systems of morality, ethics, and religion, customs, myths, legends, and traditions. These are included in the meaning of culture and they give meaning to personality. They define the appropriate modes of adjustment according to class, color, age, sex, and station in life. The fundamental value forms that inhere in the culture determine to a large extent the current attitudes toward and

interpretation of particular individuals, races, classes, and nationalities; they also affect the use of inorganic forces in the outer world, such as water, mountains, land, and mineral resources, and of organic factors, such as plants and animals.

Difficulty of evaluating various influencing factors. The evidence points also to the fact that marked individual differences and perhaps to a lesser extent racial differences in behavior exist because of differences in inherited factors. We know also that acquired organic factors profoundly influence behavior. Since the total personality is a fusion resulting from the interactions of all these forces, it becomes extremely difficult to evaluate their relative rôles separately. One fact seems to stand out clearly, however, and that is that in all cases except in those relatively rare instances where some biophysical influence has prevented the development of any powers of logical thought or where memory has been wiped out by accident or disease, cultural values exert a tremendous influence upon behavior, even under the pressure of profound organic disturbances. This fact would seem to necessitate an intelligent analysis of these standards in relation to any other possible influencing factors in a total situation. Such an understanding is essential to a definition and explanation of "normal" behavior under varying conditions and in different societies. In other words we need to know not only something of individual experience as revealed in a case history, but also something of the "race" experience which has left its marks upon the individual through the standards of value which have been crystallized in and through that experience.

The dangers of indiscriminate speculations. The dangers of trying to explain human personality or human types on the basis of some narrowly restricted line of inquiry is not necessarily inherent in the restrictive methods of the investigator. The investigator may be, and often is, quite aware of the necessity of drawing upon the results of observations in related fields in order to obtain a rounded picture of the problems. He may simply go

as far as his own techniques will permit and state conclusions from his own data. The chief danger, it seems, arises from the fact that even restrained conclusions on the part of the investigator tend to fall into the hands of propagandists who speculate upon them more or less indiscriminately to advance a cause. The propagandist may not intend to mislead. He may be actuated by no other desire than to do good, and he often does good. The danger appears when he gives scientific importance to speculations that have far-reaching social consequences. The scientist himself becomes a propagandist when he uses his prestige as a scientist to defend a prejudice. If the propagandist is indiscriminating, the mass from whom he derives support is even less so. Thus the opinions of a noted scientist in the field of biology may profoundly influence the thinking of many people on questions not answerable by the methods of biological science. For example, crime is a social fact defined in legal terms. What constitutes a crime may depend upon whole complexes of factors that inhere in the cultural norms of society; the relative strength of various interest groups that press lawmaking bodies for protection; the intelligence and interests of the lawmakers; the relative insecurity of individuals and groups within a social order; the nature and efficiency of law-enforcing machinery; the prevalence of individual and group prejudices; and so forth. Crime rates rise and fall with changing conditions without regard to changes in the biology of a race. Hence, to speak of crime as if it were a fact of biological inheritance is a form of speculation which has no basis in fact. Yet such speculation is not infrequently engaged in by people who pose as experts or who quote the opinions of experts in the use of methods and techniques that are not applicable to psycho-social data. As a matter of fact, if laws are passed by stupid people, as has often been done, they may and sometimes do incur the contempt of intelligent men. One might then speculate that certain persons inherit a ten-

dency to pass unwise laws, while others inherit a tendency to break them—in other words, criminal tendencies.

Statements compared. We may illustrate the fundamental character of the problem before us by comparing certain widely publicized remarks emanating from the Human Betterment Foundation with the cautious statements on the same point by a noted experimental biologist. According to the Human Betterment Foundation,²

. . . the increasing complexity of culture and science has resulted in the failure of the more intelligent part of the population to produce enough children even to replace their own numbers. . . . On any theory of heredity it is clear that under existing conditions the average level of intelligence and of physical and mental fitness in the American population is declining steadily from generation to generation. The exact rate of this decline is debatable. *The fact that the decline exists is not debatable.*³

Every civilized country faces a similar situation [the situation of a declining superior race stock] and the past two or three decades have seen a vigorous and determined attempt to meet the problem on a scale which has not been used since the vain attempt of Augustus to prevent the disappearance of the Roman people, more than 1900 years ago.

We quote now from a noted biologist. On the subject of contraceptive methods of birth control, Raymond Pearl says:⁴

. . . the socially and economically more fortunate classes of mankind have practiced contraception more regularly, frequently, and effectively than the less fortunate social and economic classes

²From E. S. Gosney, *Eugenic Sterilization*, p. 1, Human Betterment Foundation, Pasadena, 1934. Reprinted by permission.

³The italics are mine.

⁴From Raymond Pearl, "Biology and Human Trends," *Journal of the Washington Academy of Sciences*, vol. 25, No. 6, pp. 265-266, June 15, 1935. Reprinted by permission.

with consequently reduced reproductive rates. It is contended that this has brought about a steady deterioration and degeneration of man as a species and will continue to do so until all progress is stopped. After prolonged study of the matter, it is my opinion that the alleged detrimental consequences of this class differential fertility upon the aggregate biological and social fitness and worth of mankind, while doubtless present in some degree, have probably been greatly exaggerated in the reformer's zeal to make his case. . . . There are certain considerations that must be mentioned because they have been so consistently overlooked or suppressed. The first is the tacit assumption that lies at the very root of the argument. This assumption is that generally speaking and with negligible exceptions, the more fortunate social and economic classes are in that position because they are composed of not only mentally, morally, and physically, but also genetically superior people. But it may be alleged with at least equal truth that these very people who are regarded as mentally, morally, and physically superior are that way in no small part only because they and their forebears have been fortunate socially and economically.

Again from Pearl:

In absolute numbers the vast majority of the most superior people in the world's history have in fact been produced by mediocre people or inferior forebears; and, furthermore, the admittedly most superior folk have in the main been singularly unfortunate in their progeny, again in absolute numbers. . . . In human society as it exists under present conditions of civilization, many a gaudy and imposing phenotype masks a very mediocre or worse genotype . . . and most eugenic selection of human beings is, and in the nature of the case, must be based solely upon phenotypic manifestations.⁵

Also from Pearl:

It is a curious fact that at every stage of man's history from at least the time of Plato, and indeed a century before that, there have

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 266.