

FUNDAMENTALS OF

GENERAL
PSYCHOLOGY



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PREFACE



THE present work is in a sense a revision of the author's *Fundamentals of Objective Psychology* published in 1928; but it is also a clear advance over that work, sufficient to warrant a new title. Much water has flowed under the bridge since the older manuscript was completed in 1927. New fields of research have led to mines of new factual material. New facts, in their turn, have demanded strikingly new and fruitful characterizations and interpretations. Certainly the psychology of today is enormously richer because of the developments of the decade. Objectivism (behaviorism) may fairly be said to have accomplished its mission of restoring the equilibrium of a science of human nature that had gone exclusively mind-gazing with the extreme post-Wundtian introspectionists. On the other hand, the ultra-simple and flinty concepts of the molecular behaviorism have been liberalized by a number of independent developments that have somehow combined to enrich the picture of genus *Homo sapiens*. More adequate observations of the phenomena of ontogenetic development have brought the principle of maturation back to its former importance and have provided for it an experimental substructure formerly lacking in the speculations of recapitulative and functional psychologies. The formerly unappreciated Gestaltist aspects of visual perception have led to a re-examination of other fields as well and the routing out of deceptively simple atomisms wherever they may be lurking. The masses of detailed clinical accounts accumulated by the psychoanalysts and near-psychoanalysts have, by their sheer weight, forced the psychologists to realize that their first concern is, after all, not with an abstract man but with people. The actual complexities of neural functioning which have come to light recently

have served to discredit the use of neurons and of reflex arcs as complete explanatory bases of behavior. From many different laboratories, clinics, and surveys have come protests that *l'homme machine* is not a machine but a motivated organism and is to be interpreted by principles of life as well as by principles of mechanism. There have come, moreover, the belated reminders that man is not a biological but a bio-social organism and is a product of cultural determinants as much as of protoplasmic. Quite recently the vector and topological descriptive methods have re-emphasized the fact that behavior is not something residing in the organism but must be handled, from first to last, as unique organism-environment relationships. All these and other yeasts have been leavening the loaf. What the immature student and the thoughtless layman realize all too little is that, like newer concepts in physics or any other field of science, each advance does not destroy the older view but amplifies it.

A word on pedagogical assumptions. The teaching of beginning courses in psychology today in America may be said to vary — even vacillate — between two extremes. The student-centric view, as I will style it, emphasizes the humanizing of all studies so that they will arise naturally out of queries expressing the curiosity of the student; and psychology especially is thought by many as the opportunity to help the student in his orientation and practical problems. The science-centric view, *per contra*, is the more established one in which the interest of the student is assumed and in which all emphasis is placed on the presentation of the subject-matter as a field of human endeavor and as a body of knowledge. The author cannot escape the conviction that both aims are realizable by the competent teacher; that psychology can be taught on just as dignified a plane as any other field of natural science (which is not realized on many campuses, it must be confessed) with as great a stress on facts and on methodology in lecture and laboratory; and that, human nature being about the most interesting thing in all the world, the study thereof ought to be approachable from the direction of intrinsic human — I had almost written humane — problems. That the author has succeeded well in doing both in the present textbook he would be the last to suppose; but he will say that he has consistently kept before him the ideal of incorporating both by persistently stating leading psychological problems and then suggesting careful appraising of the evidence.

The order of topics and chapters is not to be considered rigid in any sense at all, and it is to be expected that the individual teacher will adopt an order to suit best his own presentations. He will also omit sections or perhaps even whole chapters which he feels unnecessary for his particular purpose.

I wish to acknowledge my debt to my colleague, Dr. A. G. Bayroff, who has read the entire manuscript, and whose criticisms and advice throughout the work have been of very great value in technical, in theoretical, and in pedagogical matters. I am indebted also to my colleagues, Mr. D. D. Wickens and Mr. D. K. Spelt, for detailed and most helpful criticisms of certain chapters. For reading one or more chapters and for special advice I owe much to others of my colleagues — Dr. English Bagby, Dr. Harry W. Crane, Mr. Wallace Nygard, and Mrs. Carol H. Nygard, and also to Dr. D. K. Adams of Duke University and Professor Hermon W. Martin of Emory University.

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