INTRODUCTION TO

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

DAVID J. SCHNEIDER

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The University of Texas at San Antonio

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Dedicated to the memory of Joseph C. Schneider

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PREFACE

This book was written for the traditional one-semester, undergraduate social psychology course. *Introduction to Social Psychology* can be used in courses consisting almost entirely of psychology majors, or in those that include students from business, communications, and criminal justice, as well as other social science majors. All psychological concepts are explained in enough detail to allow the motivated student to comprehend the material without previous psychology courses.

The book focuses on theoretical issues and the use of empirical methods to test these theories: I have emphasized larger themes over the description of specific studies and "facts." The smaller details of social psychology, so important to research scientists, are crucial building blocks, but they nevertheless change and decay with some rapidity. I would like to see students emerge from a social psychology course with some sophistication about the major theories in the field and with a healthy respect for both the values and the pitfalls of empirical research. I would also hope that students would incorporate many of the basic themes of social psychology—the importance and subtlety of social pressures, the shaping of our knowledge about the immediate world by social and cultural factors, the interplays between biological and social–cultural forces—into a working knowledge about their worlds, and that this would enrich and broaden their lives.

I have been guided by a strong belief that social psychology, like the rest of psychology, is an integral part of the liberal arts, and that a study of social psychology is an important route to a humane perspective on the world. I have given some emphasis to philosophical foundations of our discipline and to its historical evolution. While I have tried to point out problems with the purely empirical approach and with various experiments and experimental paradigms, I hope I have also communicated the highest respect for the basic aims of empirical social psychology. We do not dominate the truth market, but we have an important corner of it. In the final chapter, I explicitly discuss problems with traditional social psychology approaches, empirical and theoretical. I have not avoided value issues. In my version of the liberal arts, social psychology should contribute to the abilities of students to be morally committed yet epistemologically tolerant. It is not my purpose to promote any particular political, moral, or ideological view other than that generally held within our scientific community, and in both my writing and my teaching I try to avoid preaching and hectoring. However, students do need to confront value questions in the context of science, and we ought not assume that the "is" of science and the "ought" of morality and politics are as easily separated in the complexities of modern civilization as they can be within the classroom.

"Real-world" examples introduce most chapters. These examples come from a political or historical event, are drawn from ethnographic studies of other cultures, or are reproductions of conversations and descriptions of less-cosmic everyday events. They are meant to capture attention and to illustrate some (but not all) of the major issues of the chapters they introduce in a context that I hope will remind students that social psychology does have a voice in the real world.

The book is organized into four parts. In Part One, Chapter 1 introduces the field and its major guiding theories, and Chapter 2 deals with research issues. Part Two deals with social cognition, with chapters on social cognition (Chapter 3), person perception (Chapter 4), the social self (Chapter 5), language and

communication (Chapter 6), attitudes and attitude change (Chapter 7), and internal versus external controls over behavior (Chapter 8). Part Three concerns social behavior, with chapters on socialization (Chapter 9), groups (Chapter 10), social influence (Chapter 11), interpersonal attraction (Chapter 12), relationships (Chapter 13), prosocial behavior (Chapter 14), aggression (Chapter 15), and prejudice and discrimination (Chapter 16). Part Four, consisting of Chapter 17, surveys issues of application and the state of our present knowledge.

The ordering of the chapters is based partially on philosophical grounds and partially on practical ones. In terms of the former, a case can be made for beginning with the cognitive bases of social behavior, a case that reflects the continuing, strong phenomenological bases of social psychology. An understanding of social behavior presupposes an understanding of how people think about their social environments. Practically, given the present status of the field and the recent emphasis on social cognition models, it is simply easier to begin with the social cognition material. I fully recognize that no reader of any text approves fully of the author's ordering of chapters. I would hope that the integration I have attempted would not interfere with those who prefer to order chapters differently in class presentation. I strongly encourage anyone who wishes to read or teach the chapters in a different order to do so.

Although *Introduction to Social Psychology* begins with a substantial emphasis on the cognitive underpinnings of social behavior, I have also emphasized traditional motivational and social variables whenever appropriate. Social cognition plays a more central role in this textbook than in many others, but I strongly believe that the study of social behavior is the ultimate raison d'être of our field. I therefore have tried to make a strong case for that perspective throughout. For example, the chapter on language and communication reinforces the idea that social and cultural variables not only affect the meanings we give to verbal and nonverbal behaviors but also structure their manifestations. Similarly, the chapter on the self suggests that both our identities and our self-evaluations are based on reactions of other people, cultural definitions, and socialization experiences, as well as on more purely cognitive processes. In the chapters dealing with social behavior, social and group variables, of course, are given even more weight.

Most of the chapters are traditional in content, but there are in this (as in any) text some chapters less bound by consensus. One of these is Chapter 9, on socialization, traditionally a foundation of the field. Chapter 6, on language and communication, also deals explicitly with what historically have been major issues within social psychology, but which are issues often ignored in modern texts. Furthermore, this chapter allows an extended treatment of nonverbal behavior in the context of social communication—its rightful home, in my opinion. It is also unusual to have a special chapter on the self (Chapter 5), yet research on self-schemata, self-perception, and self-evaluations is now so extensive as to justify separate treatment. The fact that our selves are forged in the crucible of social interactions is a point worth making strongly. Chapter 8, on internal and external controls over behavior, deals explicitly with attitude–behavior relationships and the prediction of behavior from personality variables. This chapter provides a bridge between purely cognitive and largely behavioral approaches to social phenomena.

There are no separate chapters on applications issues; rather, I have elected to include discussions of applications in appropriate chapters. For example, issues of crime are discussed in the aggression chapter, eyewitness testimony in the social cognition chapter, juries in the groups chapter, sex roles in the socialization and prejudice chapters, and behavior in large organizations in the communications and groups chapters. I believe

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that applications ought to be discussed at their point of origin, so to speak, lest they get lost in the shuffle at the end of the course and lest they become divorced from basic research and theories. Thus, the decision not to have separate chapters on applications to real-life problems has been based on my respect for the importance of those issues rather than on any desire to hide them away.

A number of people have worked hard and effectively to get this book done. Alice Jimenez typed an early draft before I discovered the magic of computers. My colleagues at the University of Texas at San Antonio have been tolerant of my demands for lengthy periods of time each week free of major responsibilities. The following people provided many helpful suggestions in their reviews of the manuscript: Jennifer Crocker (State University of New York, Buffalo), John Dovidio (Colgate University), Frederick Gibbons (Iowa State University), E. Tory Higgins (New York University), James Hilton (University of Michigan), George Levinger (University of Massachusetts, Amherst), Norman Miller (University of Southern California), Richard Moreland (University of Pittsburgh), Suzanne Pallak (Georgetown University), Bernadette Park (University of Colorado), James Weyant (University of San Diego), and David Wilder (Rutgers). I especially want to thank Marcus Boggs, College Department editor at Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, for his sage advice, warm support, and friendly conversations; Karl Yambert, manuscript editor, for his many good suggestions for improvements and for his good humor and tolerance in dealing with mine; Maggie Porter, art editor, for her work on the photos and art; and Amy Dunn and Martha Berlin, production editors, for turning the manuscript into printed pages. It has been a pleasure to work with all of them.

Finally, although writing books does have its pleasant moments, the pleasures tend to be vague, distant, tied to future accomplishments, and ethereal. The costs and pains, however, are clear, immediate, and insistent. Unfortunately one's family has to share those costs but experiences few of the larger and higher pleasures. My family has been tolerant and supportive. Doris did far more than her share to keep the home fires burning while maintaining her own career and did so with a minimum of grumbling and a maximum of good humor and support. My daughters, Kris and Caitlin, tried to stay out of my way, forgave my bad moods (I hope), and helped with various typing and bibliographical tasks. These remarkably nice and special people deserved better than they got.

David J. Schneider

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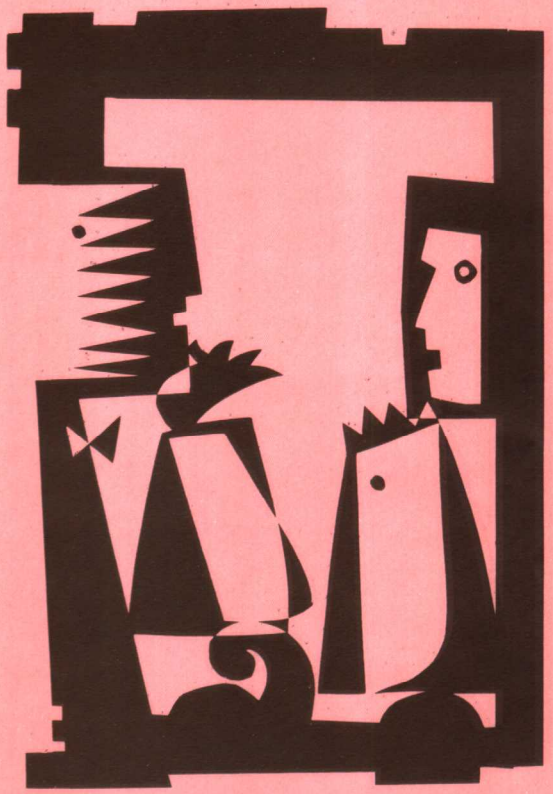
PART ONE

INTRODUCTION



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

THE NATURE OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY
- Definition
- The Concerns of Social Psychology
- Human Nature and Motivation

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THE COMPLEXITY OF SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

PLAN OF THIS BOOK
- Social Cognition
- Social Behavior

CHAPTER SUMMARY

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Most of the time I go about my business of being a social psychologist and hardly think what the field is, let alone what it could or should be. I doubt that most physicians, lawyers, or stockbrokers (or for that matter students) spend much of their time wondering about the higher meanings of their chosen roles either. But occasionally I spiral to a higher plane and am forced to think about what it is that I am.

One such occasion is at a party when talking to a stranger who asks me what I do. I usually say I am a social psychologist. At that point I get one of several reactions. Once in a while I am talking with someone who knows something about social psychology, at least enough to pose an interesting question or make a provocative observation. But, in my experience, other reactions are more common. People I call (privately to be sure) *Fraidy-Cats* stammer a bit, look frightened that I am about to "psych" them out, and then depart quickly in search of a freshened drink. Little do they realize that most psychologists are about as inept as the next person in figuring others out and behaving gracefully in social situations. *Mini-Experts* take the opportunity to instruct me in their favorite theories of why various parts of the social world do or do not function effectively; unfortunately, this is often about as illuminating as hearing a medieval monk discuss the workings of a modern automobile. *Know-It-Alls* (often lawyers or businesspersons, in my experience) insist that formal social psychology is irrelevant to the Real Social World (which seems to reach its richest manifestation in courtrooms and advertising agencies, I guess). When I draw a Know-It-All as my conversational partner, I usually suggest that *my* drink needs freshening.

But the response I like best, and the one that is also most common, usually begins somewhat along the lines of "that must be interesting, but I guess I'm not exactly sure what social psychology is." Rather than define the field (which seems vaguely pompous when one is balancing crackers and cheese, a drink, and the demands of polite conversation), I usually try to give a catalog of topics social psychologists study: conformity, attitude change, why people do or do not get along with one another, how groups function, leadership, aggression, helping, and how we form impressions of one another. Most people then seem to relax a bit because there's nothing so very threatening about these topics. In fact most seem to find them interesting.

Social psychology is the study of how people think about, evaluate, and respond to their social experiences.

THE NATURE OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

DEFINITION

This isn't a cocktail party, of course, and here I can be considerably more precise. ***Social psychology*** may be defined as the study of

how people think about, evaluate, and respond to their social experiences.

Thinking about Social Experiences Social psychologists are deeply interested in how people *think about* their social worlds. Often we are more interested in how people perceive things than in what those things are really like. For example, last week I handed back an exam in a statistics course and commented that the students needed to study more. Students in statistics courses tend to grumble (as I did when I took such courses), but on this day several students were muttering in a more hostile fashion than usual. When I talked to several of them later, they complained that I had a hostile attitude toward students. Because I did not feel this was accurate, I asked how they came to this conclusion. They said that I had made my comment about more study in a surly tone of voice (perhaps true—I was disappointed in the exams) and that they felt I was trying to make them the culprits when I had not spent enough time in class on the material. My past behavior also had contributed to their perceptions: after the last exam I had apparently smiled when talking about the lowest grades and this was interpreted as evidence that I relished giving low grades. The students had been discussing me after class for some weeks, and the consensus was that I was out to get them. From my perspective their perceptions were wrong, but the important point is that it was their perceptions of my attitudes toward them, and not my "true" attitudes, that affected their reactions to me.

Evaluating Social Experiences Social psychology deals with *evaluations*. My statistics students decided that I was angry and hostile and they evaluated me negatively as a consequence. Such evaluative responses (usually called *attitudes*) are important. You probably took this social psychology course because you have at least mildly positive attitudes toward psychology courses, the professor, or the time it was offered. You like some people, dislike others, have more or less positive attitudes about a whole range of political and social issues. Almost all your social experiences have an evaluative tinge to them, and such evaluations affect your social behavior. Although such matters are complex, as a first approximation we might say that you are likely to approach (cognitively or behaviorally) those things you like or evaluate positively and avoid those you dislike.

Evaluations are social in another way as well: almost all your attitudes have been acquired in a social context. For example, many of your political, social, and religious attitudes show clear influences of your socialization by parents. In a way, your evaluations and attitudes are a partial summary of your entire social experience.

Responding to Social Experiences Finally, social psychologists are interested in our *behavioral responses* to our social situations. Much, if not quite all, of our everyday behavior is explicitly or implicitly social. It is explicitly social when it directly affects others. The fact that my comment to the students about studying harder affected their attitudes and their behavior toward me makes my comment social. Sometimes behavior is more implicitly social. For example, when you study instead of watching TV because you want to please your parents by making good grades, we can think of your behavior as social, even though your decision is made alone.

Thus, thoughts, evaluations, and behavior are social when they are related to people or social events. They may also be social in the added sense that our relationships, real or imagined, with others affect them. Social psychology deals both with cognitive and behavioral responses to social stimuli and with social causes and consequences of such responses.

THE CONCERNS OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

A Scientific Discipline Social psychology is far from unique in dealing with a wide range of human social behavior. For example, great novelists and playwrights provide provocative

analyses of human behavior. Philosophers speculate systematically about the psychological underpinnings of social life. The analyses of novelists and philosophers are often penetrating and often convincing. What gives social psychologists the right to think they can improve on this?

One problem with literary and philosophical analyses is that we have no compelling way of knowing whether they are incorrect, incomplete, or misleading. You may or may not be convinced by Proust or Plato, but in either case someone will disagree with you for reasons that are not demonstrably false. On the other hand, most social psychologists share the fundamental conviction that their ideas and assertions are to be tested through empirical, scientific methods. Such methods do not guarantee truth, but they do force their practitioners to be clear and explicit about most of their assumptions, and they do specify criteria for making statements about truth. We will have more to say about such methods in the next chapter.

Thus, most social psychologists are committed to the scientific study of social behavior and experiences. Science has marched on throughout this century, and as social psychologists have joined the parade with their methodological drums and bugles, they have left their literary and philosophical approaches behind. Whether this has been a wise development can be debated, because science does not solve all intellectual problems and in fact introduces constraints that create others. But most social psychologists would agree that scientific methods, with all their faults, still provide the best means of validating the general principles of human social behavior.

Relationships with Other Disciplines So social psychology differs from literary and philosophical approaches in the use of empirical methods, but other psychological disciplines and social sciences also study social behavior empirically. **How does social psychology differ from these other areas?**

Social psychology overlaps other areas of psychology such as developmental, personality, and abnormal psychology. In one sense social psychology serves as a basis for these other disciplines. For example, developmental psychologists might use principles of conformity to explain how parents influence their children. The clinical psychologist might be interested in whether people with mental or behavioral problems perceive others differently than do those who are more "normal." One could put the matter that way, but in point of fact, each of these areas is just as likely to contribute to social psychology as to borrow from it. It would be an impoverished social psychology indeed that could not learn from the rich processes of social influence inherent in child rearing or that could not find sources of hypotheses in the study of deviant behaviors. However, although there is considerable overlap among these specialties, they do differ in their focus, with social psychologists attending most closely to the social context of human thought and behavior.

The relationship between personality and social psychology is special enough to require extended comment. Historically the two disciplines have dealt with the same basic phenomena—complex human behavior in a social milieu—but have approached them from different perspectives. Social psychologists have concentrated on how social situations and stimuli affect the generalized, "average" person. Personality psychology, on the other hand, has been more concerned with the study of individuals and how they differ.

Naturally the two approaches complement one another. On one hand, situations clearly have a great deal to do with how people behave. For example, most people are relatively quiet in the library, more animated in the cafeteria, and loud and excited at a close football game. People in the same situation often behave similarly (glance around when you attend your next large lecture class). **Given all the ways your fellow students could be dressed and could be behaving, you might**

be struck by how little variability they display. On the other hand, it is also clear that even in the same situation (such as a lecture) there are some, even major, differences in the ways people act. Not everyone is smiling at the professor's jokes, a few people seem to be asleep, and some are attentive and taking notes—some even look interested.

It is surely important to recognize both that people do differ fundamentally and that people in similar situations often show remarkably similar behavior. You have surely discovered the necessity of using a logic both of situational forces and of individual differences. For example, most of your friends understand general rules about being polite so you can predict that almost all of them will help you with something minor such as loaning you a pencil. On the other hand, if you need a special favor such as borrowing a car or getting a ride to a city 50 miles away, you will probably think a bit about which friend to approach and how to tailor your request to his or her personality. So to understand social behavior we will need to know something about social forces, such as rules of politeness, as well as about how different kinds of people behave in similar situations. In Chapter 9 we will consider in detail the relationships between situational controls on behavior and individual differences.

Finally, what is the relationship of social psychology to the other social sciences, especially sociology? Many sociology departments teach courses in social psychology: social psychology actually has deep historical roots in sociology as well as in psychology.

Today sociologists and psychologists tend to have different perspectives and methodologies. It has become popular to speak of the two social psychologies—the *sociological* social psychology and the *psychological* social psychology—and to urge that there be more intellectual interchange between the two (Backman, 1983; House, 1977; Stryker, 1983). Naturally, psychologists look to other psychologies for their bearings. Therefore psychological social psychology tends to be heavily influenced by learning, perception, and cognitive psychologies, and focuses on the thoughts and behaviors of individuals. Sociologists, on the other hand, are more interested in the behavior of aggregates of people and in the mutual relationships between people and their social, economic, and political structures. So, for example, in an election the psychologist would be interested in how individual voters process election information and perceive the candidates, whereas the sociologist might lean more toward examining socioeconomic determinants of voting behavior. There are also differences in the research methods the two groups use. Psychologists tend to do experimental studies, whereas sociologists are more inclined to study social phenomena in their natural forms. This text focuses on the psychological perspective but we will also borrow heavily from the sociological tradition at various points. Both perspectives are necessary for a full understanding of social behavior.

HUMAN NATURE AND MOTIVATION

Although social psychology as a formal area of study is relatively recent, concern with social behavior is not. From ancient times, philosophers, historians, and storytellers have been interested in the causes of human behavior in social situations. As people have continued to speculate about these matters, it has usually been assumed that certain motives, desires, passions, and impulses are basic and shared by all people. There is, or so it is asserted, a basic human nature that may be modified by experience, or that may be repressed, inhibited, or redirected by society, but that remains a basic ingredient in all behavior.

Basic Motives When we consider people and their social relations, one obvious question is whether people are naturally social or naturally egoistic (that is, oriented to the needs of others or interested principally in one's own individual welfare). This question has been de-

bated for centuries, but the opposing positions were articulated most clearly by two opposing schools of Greek and Roman thought—the Stoics and the Epicureans. The Stoic school, which began about 300 B.C., preached that all people are a part of a natural, rational world order and as such have responsibilities toward fellow humans, namely to help others and promote the happiness of all. The Stoics recognized that people can be selfish but believed selfishness could be overcome if people would only submerge their emotions and remain detached from the world. To Stoics, human nature was fundamentally socially oriented but could easily be corrupted by emotional concerns for pleasure, fame, and material reward.

The opposite position was taken by the Epicurean school, which began about the same time. Epicureans believed that people were essentially interested only in their own pleasures and survival. Society and concern for others are not natural but arise because people need to band together for protection and to secure a satisfactory economic life. People can learn to be helpful and cooperative but it is not a part of their basic human nature to be so.

According to one view, people are naturally cooperative and have the strong potential for being concerned for others; according to the other, people seek their own pleasures, often at the expense of others. Each position has trouble accounting for the full range of human behavior. If you are inclined to believe that humans are naturally concerned with others, you must contend with the record of countless wars and thousands of years' evidence of our cruelties to one another. You will have to find convincing reasons for these corruptions of human nature. You might, like philosophers Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Karl Marx, suggest that the corrupting element is society itself and therefore look with suspicion at any social form, afraid that it will thwart whatever is genuine in people.

If, on the other hand, you believe human nature is basically egoistic and pleasure-seeking, you will not be surprised by war and cruelty. Instead your main problem will be how to account for the emergence and maintenance of society. If individuals are basically looking out for their own welfare, why should they become civilized? How can order and cooperation arise from the competition of individuals? Why should self-interested people subject themselves to the limitations and restraints of society?

Naturally these are not the only themes in the history of social thought, but they have been amazingly persistent and they echo strongly in modern psychology. However, modern psychologists have generally been reluctant to make strong claims about basic human nature because any theory of human behavior must be flexible enough to incorporate learning and culture in addition to biological influences. Each of us is capable of behaving in a given situation in any number of ways depending on many factors—past experiences, what we have been taught, how present circumstances are perceived, inherited abilities—and it is hard to make strong statements about our basic human nature in light of this realization.

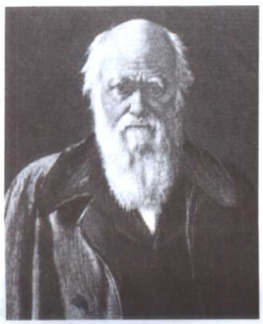
Modern Assumptions This does not mean, of course, that psychologists can avoid making assumptions about general motives underlying human behavior. In this chapter we consider several basic approaches social psychologists have taken to questions of basic human tendencies. Those who have proposed these models have generally been seeking answers to the question, What makes people behave the ways they do in social situations? It will be convenient to refer to each of these models in terms of a metaphor: (1) person as animal, (2) person as profit seeker, (3) person as physical field, (4) person as scientist, and (5) person as actor. These metaphors are meant to suggest that people have some of the behavioral attributes characteristic of other animals, business people, objects subject to physical forces, scientists, and actors. It is not necessary

to choose among these metaphors; each of them is a partial and, within limits, valid description of human motivational and behavioral tendencies.

PERSON AS ANIMAL: BIOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF MOTIVATION

INSTINCT

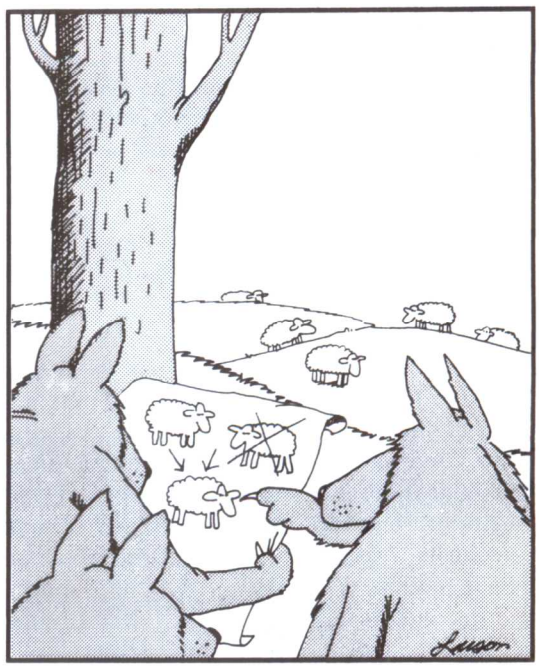
Darwin For centuries people believed that human nature was something vaguely biological. With the development of Charles Darwin's (1859) theory of evolution, such ideas finally acquired a firm scientific basis. Darwin suggested that certain biological structures (for example, long legs) and behavioral dispositions (for example, the desire to compete) help animals survive long enough to reproduce themselves. Natural selection will favor certain characteristics in the sense that those individuals possessing them are the most likely to survive and to have offspring that inherit the favorable characteristics. Darwin tended to emphasize competition as a master biological imperative, because animals who could compete successfully for the best breeding privileges, feeding territories, and sites to rear young would naturally have a greater likelihood of passing on their competitive advantages. Those who followed Darwin also argued that many other behavioral tendencies would also have survival value.



Charles Darwin

Instinct Theories During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many social scientists argued that social behavior is governed by inborn behavioral tendencies, called ***instincts.*** The basic idea behind such instinct theories was that animals must do certain things (such as eat) to survive as individuals and do other things (such as reproduce) for the species to survive. Because such tendencies promote survival, they may well be genetically based. Thus we are all endowed with certain compelling instincts that both energize and guide behavior.

Sigmund Freud, an influential instinct theorist, argued that there are two large categories of such instincts: aggressive and sexual. But he faced the problem of how to account for the enormous diversity of human behavior with



Natural selection at work.

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