

The Renewal of "Psychological" Psychology

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Abstract

What is the state of contemporary Psychology, which maladies can eventually be identified, and which cure should then be prescribed? This is a central question for a Danish version of theoretical psychology: Anthropological Psychology. The target article for this issue of this journal is written by Daniel N. Robinson, and he asks exactly this question in his own very personal and dedicated way, thereby inviting us to participate in an important discussion "across the sea" with himself and other distinguished commentators: (1) Psychology is fragmented (2) Each enclave is isolated, each one only able to comprehend and explain the importance of its own projects (3) The fragmentation of psychology is caused by an increasing indifference to the main core of what defines general psychology. (4) There can be no accumulation of knowledge, no authentic progress when a failed theory continues to animate research. As a cure Robinson offers four features, which he sees as the most defining ones of human nature and psychology itself: (1) the civic, (2) the moral, (3) the aesthetic, (4) the transcendental.

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Inventing the Subject: The Renewal of "Psychological" Psychology

1 A Plea for Impatience

The invitation from Profs. Cawasjee and Bertelsen to develop a target article to which distinguished scholars would respond is appreciated but daunting. It is appreciated, for it is predicated on the judgment that I might have something to say sufficiently important to justify the time and labor of scholars who have influenced my own thinking. It is daunting in part because of my wariness toward "originality" in Psychology, combined with an aversion to those forms of theorizing now widely adopted by the psychological community. At the same time, I readily reject the aim and the very possibility of a "purely descriptive science" of anything. In this Hamletian condition, each temptation to go beyond the welter of facts, toward something that might justify the labor that went into their production, is countered by Thomas Reid's useful reminder that "theories are the creatures of men". Alas, one begins to empathize with Wittgenstein's choice of philosophical homily as perhaps the best way to suggest what may otherwise call for volumes.

As the pages that follow include sharp criticism of contemporary Psychology, I would underscore three qualifications at the outset. First, nothing in what follows will be or is intended to be a new theory, a veiled or express program of research, an "original breakthrough". I shall have comments to make on what is now described in such terms, noting the decidedly inflationary trends in recent decades. What needs to be noted here, however, is the distinction between the critical and the constructive dimensions of analysis. The former seeks to locate barriers to progress and coherence within a discipline. The latter offers clear alternatives with arguments for their superiority. Often but certainly not always the critic has such alternatives in mind. But one who discovers, say, a fatal flaw in the mathematics on which the "Big Bang" theory depends may have no alternative theory at all. The point is that the adequacy of criticism is independent of the adequacy or even the existence of alternatives.

The second qualification would have the criticisms presented here understood as a measure of the seriousness with which its targets are taken, and an estimation of their importance. A lifelong student of Psychology, its deep roots and rather tangled branches, I recognize its estimable assets but, as with many others, I am not blind to its defects. A disputable line may be drawn dividing the activities within any

important field of inquiry into "urgent business" and "business as usual". In the latter domain, Psychology can be seen as healthy and productive. The former domain, I shall argue, is virtually unpeopled, scarcely visible, widely doubted even as to its reality.

As for the third qualification, I note that recognition of the general prosperity in that domain in which Psychology conducts its "business as usual" must not be taken as in any way compensating for failures in the matter of its urgent business. Indeed, the usual business has become an attractive distraction, something of a defense against charges of irrelevancy. Thus, though the criticisms offered here reflect genuine respect for those who, in the past as well as the present, have made Psychology a subject worthy of criticism, I must conclude that too many in their patrimony or in their thrall have done much to reduce this worthiness.

The second qualification requires elaboration. Criticism itself is often thinly concealed theorizing in its own right, the implicit theories now brought in through the back door, so to speak. Having expressed some aversion to current modes of theorizing, I should outline its sources.

To begin, the character of contemporary Psychology appears to some as fragmented, complacent, self-congratulatory and intellectually arid. The discipline that once engaged the attention and devotion of the likes of Alexander Bain and J. S. Mill, William James and Wilhelm Wundt, Alfred Binet and Pierre Janet, Sigmund Freud and Wolfgang Kohler, now routinely serves up a diet of the trite, the irrelevant, the perfunctory, the formulaic, relieved if at all by the implausible and even the incredible. Scores of introductory texts rehearse the same "findings", designed to show how a sound "methodology" is able to wrest nature's jealously guarded secrets concerning mental and social life. The "findings", however, owing largely to this same "methodology", rarely make contact with anything of consequence in either mental or social life; a mental and social life whose most compelling contents are drawn from just those moral, aesthetic and the uniquely personal realms that are and must be stubbornly inaccessible to the "methodology".

Some who agree with the diagnosis might think that what is needed are more integrative "models" of complex mental and social phenomena. If so, I can now identify more precisely the theories I judge to be without profit. These are theories that generate unwholesomely high ratios of distraction to insight; theories of the well known analogical or metaphorical sort according to which, e.g., brains are

switchboards or computers, mental "processes" are "modular", human endeavors are of an "as if" (i.e., "intentional stance") type, motives and emotions are "genetically hardwired", etc.

I refer here to one or another theory likely to be featured in NEWSWEEK within weeks of its appearance in the journals, touted now as a "groundbreaking" treatise from a "leading figure" located at one of our "major research universities". That no part of the topography of thought ever hosted so much groundbreaking on a nearly daily basis seems incapable of exciting the slightest bit of suspicion.

I would hope not to be misunderstood. I readily acknowledge that progress in the developed sciences is, indeed, largely the gift of theoretical insights, often arising from seeming incongruities at the level of observation. However, granting that the Newtonian cosmos was constructed by way of a brilliantly simplified model of two-body interactions, we may recognize the leap from this to broad social and political events as less a leap of faith than of foolishness. In a word, "Warfare" is not an elaboration of two-body interactions! Nor do persons undertake significant projects "as if" they had goals in view. Nor is much gained by believing that the biochemical and physiological complexities of the nervous system are recoverable from a set of boxes labeled, "short term memory", "central processor", and "output"; nor is emotion "in" the limbic system; nor, for that matter, has any brain ever had any emotion. The list could be expanded to pages.

Comparably wasteful are speculations as to whether human beings are rational, whether they are aware of the "real" sources of their yearnings, whether they have free will, whether they can comprehend each other's utterances, whether words have sufficiently fixed meaning to be translatable over time and across cultures. Queries of this nature must always be answered *yes and no*. An unblinking and categorical "yes" or "no" has probably never been seriously defended by anyone other than that ubiquitous foil, the *Strawman*.

An example will be useful. Studies of decision-making, nuances of subjective probability, the fallacy of the Lottery Paradox, the Prisoners' Dilemma - these and many other instances may be readily adduced in support of the patent truth that human beings are not logic-chopping devices. Note, however, that, as long as rationality is defined solely in terms of logically or mathematically valid modes of problem-solving, there will be no end to instances of documented non-rationality. What we have here is but another version of what William James dubbed *the psychologist's fallacy*. Selectively tailored definitions, coupled with lockstep and simplistic research, will "discover" a feature of reality virtually non-existent beyond the protected duchy of the "psych lab", or one that is widely recognized and readily accommodated in daily life. Perhaps it is worth noting that research establishing the non-rationality of human beings presupposes a community of rational and logical beings capable of understanding the findings and their implications. Were it otherwise, the very studies challenging human rationality must fall on deaf ears.

A second example is that of unconscious motivation. For this discovery Freud regarded his work as on a par with that of Copernicus and Darwin. One allegedly removed the earth (and therefore its occupants) from the center of the

heavens; another removed the barriers that once placed humanity alone within the kingdom of mental life; Freud would now deliver the third and decisive blow by disclosing that our most significant undertakings are impelled by forces of which we are utterly oblivious. (Might today's attempts to match the shock-value of this unlikely trio be indebted to the celebrity of those who came before us?) Celebrity aside, it is not beside the point to note that Freud here, as in so many other places, indulged the hyperbolic tendencies of his own thoughts and vanities. The sense one has of one's own centrality is not now and never has been based on stellar transits or Cartesian coordinates. Recall Sartre, in a state of intense pain, declaring, *I am my ear*. It is in the very nature of experience, of motivation, of thought, that it is centered on the owner, wherever that person might live. The egocentric perspective is not derived but given.

As for the genealogy advanced in *Descent of Man*, the genealogy which gave us an ancestor "a hairy quadruped with pointed ears and a tail", it was Matthew Arnold who, having read these lines, calmly observed that there must have been something in this ancestor that inclined him to Greek! What Arnold was underscoring is the range of perspectives that might be brought to bear on the question of human nature. On one account, the question is in some sense settled by understanding the remote origins uncovered by genetics and evolutionary science. On a radically different account, the question is in some other sense settled by examining what the creature at issue has achieved under favoring conditions. Whether one finds the essence of human nature in seas of DNA or on the Acropolis is, then, not a matter for science to judge; it is a matter for *judgment* to judge. A defective idea earns no credit simply by being "revolutionary".

I will not dilate on other ostensibly revolutionary notions. The alleged untranslatability of discourse beyond the ambit of a given culture is one of those bits of learned worry that survives only the sober ambience of the seminar room. It is never clear in such accounts just what constitutes the "given culture", nor is it clear what the standard is by which to establish that "all" the original "meaning" has been recovered by a later age, a different Folk, etc. Do we understand *Medea* as did the contemporaries of Euripides? To answer this we would have to know how they understood it, which, of course, means we would need the use of that very transcultural bridge allegedly exploded by the theory. Similarly, to contend that meaning is "socially constructed" out of local resources and for local purposes says nothing about the size, range, stability and complexion of the locale and the purposes of their denizens. There seem to be instances in which *the human race throughout recorded history* is the proper reference. Obviously, the word "atom", which to the ancient Greek meant something like "too small to slice" (*a tomos*), means something different to us. We know this, presumably, in part because we know what it meant in Athens ca. 400 B.C.

Last by way of introductory illustrations is the matter of free will which is, to be sure, the *quaestio vexata* of the thinking classes. It is, however, also unanswerable in any final way. The practical and, indeed, theoretical burden of the question is finally to be borne not by the metaphysician, less by the neuroscientist, but by moralists and jurists as attempts

are made to assess the degree of personal responsibility *reasonably* assigned to an actor. The very project presupposes the efficacy of good arguments in convincing those whose receptivity to such arguments is "determined", as it were, only in so far as the auditors are themselves reasonable

All this notwithstanding to the contrary, radical views on these and related issues have the benefit of highly respected advocates possessed of (by?) spirited and often imaginative defenses. The defenses are typically drawn from theoretical models of one or another sort, promising to render a more coherent account than any available through the putatively limited resources of riders on the Clapham Omnibus. We are assured that much has been learned through such conceptual models; so much so as now to call for whole teams of investigators and theorists drawn from psychology, computer science, philosophy of mind, neurology, physiology, sociology.

A rather different reality emerges from a more disinterested quarter. Here one finds not daringly original themes, but somewhat prosaic melodies now scored to accommodate five-part harmony. The final product is promissory, the "teams" or team-leaders assuring at least themselves that progress is leading to an ever fuller and more "scientific" understanding of mental life, brain function, whatever. The wider audience is expected to share this confidence owing to the specialized training of these teams of professionals, each capable of placing one piece of the puzzle into its proper space.

As it is widely taken to be a sign of the health and maturity of Psychology that it is included centrally within these vast team projects, it will be of some profit to examine specialization and professionalism in contemporary Psychology and the orthodoxies it sustains.

2 A Coda on Professionalism and Its Orthodoxies

When historians in future centuries consider the rapid growth of the biological and physical sciences in the 20th century, they surely will cite the discovery of the double helix and of Relativity Theory as the primary engines of progress. These two developments called for nothing less than a redirection of thought, of research, of perspective on the entire range of issues that constitute the staples of biological and physical science. When historians in future centuries consider the rapid growth of Psychology in the 20th century, there would seem to be no corresponding achievements on which to base an explanation. Psychology's prosperity is far less the bounty of discovery than of what is most economically termed its *professionalization*.

The professionalization of Psychology, especially contemporary academic psychology, is a byproduct of the two great wars of the 20th century. The psychometric and the therapeutic needs created by a world engaged in armed conflict were addressed directly and with acknowledged success by psychologists highly trained in psychometrics,

research design, clinical diagnosis and therapy. With the breakout of hostilities marking the Second World War, it was no longer surprising to find psychologists contributing not only in these areas, but also in human factors, personnel training, research in perception and information-processing - a wide and rich range of war-related practical and conceptual problems. The long hoped for status as science seemed finally to be conferred by an ever larger portion of the established scientific and civic communities.

The next great leap (whether or not judged as forward depending on one's overall perspective) was instigated by the Cold War and, more specifically, the priority of the U.S.S.R. in launching Sputnik in 1957. The U.S. response was a truly massive increase in funds for scientific research at colleges and universities. All of the science departments were major beneficiaries in several respects, some tangible, some less so. Owing to scholarships, fellowships and greatly expanded opportunities for employment, students voted with their feet as they marched away from the humanities and toward science and engineering. Mathematics and Physics, which had long attracted chiefly those with a calling, now enjoyed the attention and allegiance of larger and larger numbers of the better students. The formation and rapid growth of NASA, with its presidentially mandated mission of manned space flights, provided still additional responsibilities for psychologists, now teamed with specialists in medicine and physiology, electrical engineering, equipment design, applied physics.

The grants and contracts awarded to support these projects were of a magnitude unheard of in academic science and undreamed of in departments of Psychology. As success in attracting and retaining such financial support depended centrally on records of achievement speciously "quantified" in the form of publications in major peer-review journals there was a less than orderly transformation of the traditional standards of academic excellence. To put the matter tersely, *Goodby, Mr. Chips!*

The proliferation and enlargement of programs generated an apparently enduring need for highly trained doctoral students who would first assist and ultimately conduct so-called "leading edge" research programs; doctoral students occasionally located at the better colleges but chiefly at the major research universities. Here they would join established investigators, many too busy to be sidetracked by the quaint expectations of the undergraduate body. Fortunately, with so many doctoral students now on the scene, the undergraduates would enjoy the "benefit" of advanced students teaching them. Apart from the transparent scandal of this in the matter of an education dubiously called "higher", one patent effect of the entire process was the creation of a two-tiered faculty: A highly productive, richly supported cadre whose achievements give status (and income!) to the host institution; and all the rest. Predictably, "the rest" soon became restless, and have since that time attempted to professionalize their own subjects. How else to explain, e.g., the conversion of Departments of Literature into some weird combination of cultural studies, social science and deconstructionist grammatologies? Perhaps a more pernicious side effect has been the domination of the House of Intellect by a swollen

administrative bureaucracy with little understanding of the vocation of teacher and a poorly concealed hostility toward its historic claims.

Within Psychology proper these developments have had an especially powerful effect, everywhere to be seen. There are departments publicly displaying an Honor Roll - actually called an honor roll! - listing members of the faculty who have published some criterion number of research articles in peer-review journals. There are departments in which sharply critical appraisals of current research or methods of research have resulted in threatened lawsuits based on an allegedly "hostile environment". Meanwhile, the activities within the major departments rarely go beyond "business as usual", as the ever more productive member of the faculty toils away to publish the expected five to ten "significant and original works" each year! If accurately described, such an output would reduce Newton himself to a three-toed sloth. Within such a framework there is room for little beyond what Thomas Kuhn called normal science and what a rather more severe student, following Francis Bacon, might call worship of the Idols of the Tribe; those arising from an addiction to preconceived ideas.

The great threat to any intellectual enterprise is lock-step orthodoxy, the vice of sloth now inserting itself into the life of thought. If this is a truism, it is nonetheless ignored by the dominant segments of the psychological community in their various academic enclaves.

At a superficial level, the entrepreneurial character of academic life would seem to be the expected (even if less than desirable) consequence of specialization. Just as specialists in plasma physics may find it difficult to convey their methods and problems to those in, say, soil chemistry, it is not surprising that specialists in, say, memory-priming have cordial associations with those down the corridor who are studying the effects of prejudice on perception. To the extent that this is a sufficient account of the fragmented nature of the discipline, however, the situation would appear to be nothing less than hopeless. For, once ultimate achievements are reached, we would then expect that the memory-priming community could converse only among themselves. They would be unable to see, let alone cross such bridges as might permit them to ship treasure to the needy. The latter, of course, would have no idea of what was in the box in any case, even if they could be taught to call it a "beetle". For such specialists there may be even worse news: Just in case resources become ever scarcer and competition for them fiercer, the memory-primers might then expect no support from other enclaves, each fighting to preserve its own little duchy, each able to comprehend and explain only the importance of its own projects.

This is all in the fine print. What is more readily apparent is that explanations of the current state of affairs, based on some sort of "information explosion", are simply belied by the facts. Consider only the leading psychology text in the English-speaking world in the second half of the nineteenth century. Before William James's *Principles* there was the two-volume classic by Alexander Bain: *The Senses and the Intellect* (1851) and *The Emotions and the Will* (1855). These contain a thousand pages of detailed facts and findings

drawn from anatomical, physiological and clinical research. The two volumes are highly technical, composed by a person of erudition and high intelligence and addressed to comparably prepared minds. James's *Principles* is yet another veritable warehouse of information, a treatise that is by far still the best introduction to Psychology on offer, but no less original and affecting for all its careful attention to detail. Thus, it is not the explosion of information that has fragmented the discipline, but the ever increasing indifference - which of necessity spawns ignorance - of practitioners to the problems and perspectives animating activity in fields different from their own. In a word, it is *the triumph of profession over vocation*. Put another way, it is the transformation of a life of the mind into what is finally a career. What the careerist protects and practices are the very orthodoxies by which a profession is identified. Thus do the journals of psychology each month serve as reassurances that progress is being made, thanks to the right methods, adopted by all competent and well trained "workers in the field", as they prefer to be called.

This characterization is less evaluative than descriptive of the preparation, activities and stated aims of those now filling Psychology programs in the more influential settings. The question of whether this state of affairs is good for the soul is beside the point at issue here. The question rather is how such a state of affairs gives character to the discipline and either limits or promotes forms of authentic progress that would justify continuing fidelity to the entire project. Note, however, that progress is an elusive concept. The witch-hunters added to their databases regularly, publishing ever more fine-grained "evidence" of witchcraft. So, too, have recent astrological predictions been refined as a result of radio telescopes. But there can be no authentic progress where a failed theory continues to animate research, or where the successful theory is, itself, too trite to warrant assessment.

Rephrased and by way of another example, consider the followers of Joseph Lavater in the nineteenth century. One might discover that these physiognomists were happy and productive citizens with healthy children and good digestion. On this basis, one could heartily recommend physiognomy as a career choice. If, however, the aim is that of developing a discipline able to reach a fuller and truer understanding of the human condition, its challenges, assets and liabilities, there would be very good reasons for abandoning the entire project. At a minimum, there would be good reasons to discourage the next generation of scholars and scientists from investing their own intellectual capital in it.

What of today's theories? Consider the burgeoning field of cognitive neuroscience. At least a dozen putatively major works appear each year, announcing some new discovery about the mind, not least of which is the discovery that there's no such entity. But this not so little library of putatively original works can be collapsed into a small set of fundamental propositions. To wit:

- (a) What has traditionally been taken to be the two worlds of mind and matter is, in fact, but one

- world, and that a physical world (though, by the way, consciousness is still a problem).
- (b) "Mind" is a generic term standing for a set of functions which, once fully accounted for, leave nothing "mental" as such in the remainder.
 - (c) The functions causally brought about by or mediated by or reliably correlated with events in the brain have been shaped by evolutionary forces and are explicable in terms of an emerging evolutionary psychology.
 - (d) A neurophysiological account of events in the brain cannot capture the qualia characteristic of mental life and thus cannot convey what it is like to be the subject of such experiences.
 - (e) Human nature, as such, is not *essentially* anything, but merely contingently what it is found to be at a given time and place. It is constructed out of the social and discursive resources of meaning-sharing communities whose values must be understood in terms of local conditions and affordances.

Within limits, these are reasonable if challengeable contentions, surprising only to the extent that they are regarded as somehow more credible in light of that ubiquitous arbiter of truth, *current research*. At least since the time of Galen there has been little doubt but that mental powers depend on the functional integrity of the brain, a thesis more or less taken for granted in the body of Hippocratic teaching. At least since the time of Gall (and his detractors) the problem and the program of localization of function has been central within what we now call the brain sciences. As for today's energetically defended functionalism, no one experienced in such fields as Engineering Psychology, Psychophysics or Information Processing can find anything original in the claim that the best characterization of a system is in terms of the transfer functions that express the relationship between inputs and outputs. The formula is straightforward: Find a device, whether composed of wires, clystrons and steel or, for that matter, cooking oil and goose feathers, whose output, in response to incident radiation, satisfies the radar equation and that device is *ipso facto* a radar.

Thus, the numerous rephrasings and permutations of such proposals stand as *business as usual*. What was once dismissed as "pop" Psychology (with suitable attention to jargon and to by now a self-conscious mode of philosophical composition) presents itself now as "leading edge" thinking. To whom? Chiefly to those who either have no scholarly preparation in any of the cognate fields or to those who share precisely the same orthodoxies as the authors.

A further word here regarding orthodoxies is in order and, lest I cause unnecessary ire, I will use examples from a nearly forgotten past. Consider the issues that consumed so much energy in the 1950s and 1960s in the then prosperous field of *Learning Theory*. From the sheer volume of pages devoted to controversies, the unsuspecting might think that anarchy had replaced orthodoxy. O. Hobart Mowrer's two-factor theory looked nothing like Hull's drive-reduction account which seemed to some the most respectable as theory

because of its Hempelian character. But then there was Skinner's avowed indifference to theory as such, even as Tolman's studies made abundantly clear that some findings were intelligible only on the assumption that the behavior had internal "cognitive" determinants. Meanwhile, Estes stripped away such psychological notions and presented an austere associational model based on probability statistics, even as neo-Pavlovians attempted to absorb instrumental behavior into the framework of respondent conditioning. What busy workshops, these!

Amidst all the competing claims, however, a fog-like atmosphere of sameness hung, year in and year out. None of the disputants was prepared to accept as a working hypothesis that the behavior of non-human animals in settings unlike anything found in the natural world could not plausibly serve as a model of anything significant at the level of human thought, feeling and activity. None of the disputants left much room for the possibility that the very Darwinian rationale of the research had placed the theoretical cart before the confirmatory horse. And few would think aloud as to whether the 2X2 factorial design, the specially constructed apparatus, the clicks of microswitches, really should be the *conditiones sine qua non* if fellow disputants were to be taken seriously.

Orthodoxies are revealed more vividly by what they exclude than by what they affirm. Consider the variety of core precepts adopted by the world's religions and how great the surface conflicts are. But then consider that core of *protected convictions* absent which the very notion of a religion is rendered jejune. Again, orthodoxies often thrive amidst variety, but are more fully revealed by their exclusions. With this in mind, I would offer four of the most defining features of human nature - human psychology itself - and suggest that only self-limiting orthodoxies continue to exclude these from sustained and programmatic attention within what we are pleased to call scientific Psychology. The four are the *civic*, the *moral*, the *aesthetic* and the *transcendental*. These have been the chief sources of the greatest and most enduring of human needs, endeavors, values and goals, the evidence for this being human history itself. It would have been reasonable to assume that, after centuries of inquiry into the nature of human nature, and after a century of relentless, programmatic and richly funded research within the academic world of Psychology, something of value might have been discovered here. If not, then it might be time to invent a Psychology prepared to take both itself and human nature seriously.

3 The Civic Dimension of Life

There is a subspecialty within contemporary Psychology referred to as Political Psychology. I note this in order to say that I will not consider it at all, except to record its failure to reach anything of consequence regarding the sense and the implications of the ancient claim that man is a political and social animal, shaped by his political world: *Polis andra didaske*. Most identified with the current specialty devote themselves to polling data, studies of attitudes, demographic variations, etc. The overall exercise is one of *counting*, with

critical interpretation, not to mention dread "value judgments" held to a minimum.

This is instructively contrasted with the quite different Political Psychology developed by Aristotle and usefully refined and explicated by a legion of scholars thereafter. This realistic and subtle subject did not fail to attract the attention of Wundt, from whom it received enlightened and enlightening attention in both his (officially neglected) ethical and anthropological treatises. What is the subject? Briefly, it is a subject testing a profound metaphysical thesis that labors under such controversial headings as *foundationalism* and *essentialism*. The subject of Political Psychology addresses fundamental questions including but not limited to the following:

- a. What sort of creature is presupposed by any political theory or form of political organization, and which features of this creature are essential if the theories and forms of political organization are to be intelligible?
- b. Just in case there are essential properties, absent which a civic form of life is impossible, to what extent must that very form of life continue to nurture and otherwise respect just those properties?
- c. Where forms of civic life have failed significantly as per (b) above, what special problems attend attempts by those from favored political environments to make improving contact with those from unfavored or less favored civic worlds?
- d. If, in some sense, persons are "constructed" by prevailing civic and social conditions, are there essential human features again presupposed for such structuring to take place in the first instance?
- e. In what respects is the period of early childhood development accessible to essentially social and civic influences, and what form does such influence take?
- f. If the answer to (d) is affirmative, and if it includes such basic powers as those of selection, choice, judgment and deliberation, then what limits are thereby imposed on social constructionist theories?
- g. In matters of this sort, what kind of evidence would be taken as authoritative, and what modes of inquiry are most promising as the means by which to unearth such evidence?

It was Aristotle's understanding that all forms of social organization have some point or goal for the sake of which the organizing steps were taken. As he notes in his treatise on natural science, if the art of shipbuilding were in the wood, ships would exist by nature. Ships offer evidence of shipbuilders in the service of still other persons with aims and plans likely to be realized as a result of there being sea-going vessels. Why, then, do political communities exist, and who brings them into existence?

There have been whole libraries of thought and theory offered in response to these questions, most of them defending

one or another form of *contractarianism* or *utilitarianism* or (consistent with Aristotle) *perfectionism*. The first two of these, for the sake of brevity, can be collapsed into one: States are brought about and preserved to fulfill useful purposes as these are identified by the inhabitants. Among the useful purposes are personal happiness, freedom from pain and suffering, the protection of life and property. But, as Aristotle himself was quick to note, these ends are readily secured by pirates and brigands. Indeed, whole cultures of vice and crime might well secure the lives and possessions of their own members, supplying in the process all varieties of pleasant and useful commodities.

A utilitarian theory explains some but surely not all of the aims that would be realized by any political community likely to enjoy the fidelity of those living under its banner. What would have to be added to the list of *desiderata* is the promise of a special kind of fulfillment, captured by the ancient Greek *eudaimonia*. Aristotle argued that this form of "happiness" or flourishing is not the achievement of a moment or even a month, but the achievement of a lifetime; the achievement of a form of activity understood as *life properly lived*. For Aristotle, this called for the cultivation of that condition of moral excellence under which are subsumed the several virtues.

It is not my intention here to defend this or that theory. The hasty summaries merely point to the essentially *psychological* presuppositions of any developed political theory, for any such theory is or includes of necessity a theory of human nature. The summaries also convey the scope of the matter, thereby making clear that astonishingly tiny fraction of the whole in which contemporary psychology has shown but a casual interest.

Nested within an authentic Political or Civic Psychology is an even more controversial set of questions. We live now in nations that are and, to some extent, strive to be multicultural, within a larger world that is and promises to remain pluralistic. Variations around a central and defensible theme is to be cherished. Nonetheless, variations that include the systematic suppression or neglect of the potentiality for a full, decent and flourishing life are not to be cherished but, where possible, identified and reformed. Note, then, that the rejection of essentialism may supply a warrant for indifference, whereas the adoption of untested versions of essentialism may supply a warrant for political and cultural hegemony. The suggestion that such matters fall beyond the ambit of Psychology would be comical were it less dangerous.

Is this a plea for greater funding of "cross-cultural research"? The very question betokens just those orthodoxies that are a barrier to serious thought. As with political psychology, today's cross-cultural researchers are primarily counters and catalogers, painstaking in their avoidance of fundamental moral issues. The value-neutral shibboleth is official in these quarters and helps explain why these studies of life are so lifeless.

The same value-neutral posture is affirmed in clinical psychology, and with kindred consequences. The broad aim of clinical psychology is presumably therapeutic. Therapy, however, proceeds from a defensible nosology by which to identify healthy and pathological conditions. Psychological

therapies can be no different; there must be a basis on which to promote change. Psychological therapies incorporate some sort of theory of human nature and the conditions required for its health. These conditions are fundamentally social, even civic. To be neutral in these domains is to be ready to assist the commandant of the Concentration Camp whose efficiency scores are falling!

Research and theory within Psychology is or should be derivative, the source being a more basic science. The very fact of *civic* life makes clear that the foundational science is not Physics or, alas, Biology. The foundational science is *Political Science* which, itself, is likely to be grounded in a still more foundational science which, without embarrassment, earlier centuries dubbed *Moral Science*. To any who would now invent a *psychological* Psychology, and one worth having, I would say, *Begin here*.

4 Aesthetics as a Theory of Motivation

Sometimes etymology reveals what technical usage conceals. The Greek *aisthEsis*, which means perception by the senses, often especially by a kind of *feeling*, is neutral as regards any particular thing sensed (*aisthEtos*) by the percipient (*aisthEtEs*). Thus understood, *aesthetics* refers to what is *sensible* to creatures equipped with the means by which to sense and to feel. To this point, there is no evaluation, only classification: Some entities qualify as an *aisthEtos* and some do not. Some entities, qualifying as an *aisthEtos* for one species of *aesthetes*, do not for another. Thus, electromagnetic radiation falling in the ultraviolet region will be sensed by the honeybee but not by the beekeeper. Creatures, including human creatures, have their motives inextricably bound up with their sensations, including those that are inner feelings. In this most basic sense, aesthetics is central to any realistic psychology of motivation.

The orthodoxies of positivism, however, legislated certain empirical events out of the arena of scientific respectability. What was seen, heard or palpated, smelled or tasted, would qualify as an instrument of verification. What was *felt*, however, to the extent it was an allegedly *private* event, was summarily disqualified. Only through some strange translation might the inner world gain entry into the outer world in which Psychology found its authorized subject matter. The translation? Why, *operationism*, of course. Thus, there would be no place for *hunger* as such, until recast as *hours since the previous feeding* or *percent weight loss*. (Presumably, it is a "confound" that, under conditions of severe malnutrition and starvation, persons lose their appetites; or that, by the logic of the case, persons would be hungriest at the moment of death from starvation).

It is a fact of the phenomenology of experience itself that the distinction between the public and the private must be largely argumentative. Are the reversible figures of the perception textbooks public or private? What is "seen" is seen under this or that *aspect*, determined by the vagaries of

Jamesian *selection*, itself subject to arrest, distraction, shifts in valuations and therefore saliency. Intersubjective agreement, the positivist's universal solvent, actually restates the problem and does not solve, let alone dissolve it. Just what is it that two percipients agree to when recording their agreement? It is only that the apple is red or the semaphore octagonal? Once the *world* is present as context, the agreement is cordial, not veridical, as each percipient establishes the terms by which the world's *aisthEtos* vie for a place within the mind's public places.

Songs and statues, pictures and plays constitute possible worlds, some of them now gone but recoverable, some on the horizon, some actual but for some reason unreachable. All this is *sensed* by the *aisthEtEs* under various and shifting aspects shaped by the pressures of the moment and the longer range aspirations absent which experience would be no more than sensation. These sensibles excite the imagination, but in ways not unlike the excitation aroused by mundane objects. The seen apple suggests (causes one to imagine) a sweet taste. The *adagio* of the Schubert Quintet in C Major suggests (causes one to imagine) an intimate *liaison* between kindred spirits. Always? Nothing in the domain of mental and social life is *always*. The point of relevance is not a problem in sampling statistics but the frequency with which what is imagined is what moves one to act. The point of relevance is that some sensibles are powerfully motivating and thus present a worthy Psychology with a worthy subject of inquiry.

The aesthetic domain, wrongly thought of as private, is consummately *public*, even civic and - in the pristine sense of the term - *political*. Late in the 18th Century Schubert made ink marks on scored paper, some of the marks permitting him and his brother to share something deeply personal as Schubert's untimely death drew near. Two centuries later, assembled in a large auditorium, a thousand persons, few of whom can read the marks on scored paper, hear sounds produced by five *virtuosi* striving to recover the sensibles that Schubert sought to convey. Over time, into places now with different customs, an originating idea offers itself as an *ideal*: part of a world of possibilities, perhaps within reach, if only the reach of imagination itself. Serious, responsible adults are made to weep by such mere sound, as they can be terrorized by words on a page referring to worlds that have never been. They laugh as Plato's symposiasts offer theories of gender. They are empathically shamed by the disgraceful conduct of a literary figment. They are moved to war by rhetoric, to sacrifice by tales of the saintly, to dark reflections by oil on canvas or Requiems in minor keys. How does all this come about and operate so incessantly wherever human communities have left a record? That the aesthetic dimension of life serves some sort of evolutionary function would not be the last word on the matter even if it were the right word which, I would argue, it assuredly is not.

There is a robust theory of human nature contained within a robust theory of aesthetics. Its "verification" will not be by way of laboratory studies of pitch discrimination or the affective quality of hue, less in the patches of light arising from the MRI. The sense in which all art is politics - the sense in which art is one instrument by which fundamental social

purposes are made vivid or are exposed to criticism or are established as official is the sense in which aesthetics is itself a *political* science, finally something of a moral science. To any who would now invent a *psychological* Psychology, and one worth having, I would say, *Begin here*.

5 Transcendental phenomenologies¹

James's *Gifford Lectures* remain not only a classic statement of the centrality of the religious outlook in human affairs but an illustration of just how open to this outlook the true and radical empiricist must be. It is in *the varieties of religious experience* that one discovers various and unique combinations of affective, cognitive and conative states at once yielding and vindicating that most elusive of psychological phenomena, *belief*. When philosophical texts define knowledge as justified true beliefs, those benefiting from something called a "rational warrant", they raise more issues than they settle. Hume was neither alone nor the first to discover a fundamental problem with inductive arguments. In acknowledging that the future is under no logical obligation to mimic the past, he cast whole libraries of our most confident expectations as no more than habits of mind. The first step in meeting Hume's challenge is to recognize it as so utterly counterintuitive as to be practically useless and (therefore?) philosophically flawed.

What is it that would or could "justify" a belief? That the principles of the internal combustion engine are, in fact, going to mimic their past operation is the basis on which we expect the automobile to transport us to the market on the morrow. Just *why* we believe in the perpetual operation of these principles does not finally or merely depend on past success. The belief is grounded in a more fundamental belief that physical reality is law-governed, that physical objects and events in some way possess *causal powers*, and that it is these very powers that allow distinctions to be made between real effects and mere coincidences.

The proof or rational warrant we have for this conviction, if Thomas Reid was right (as I think he was), is not found in the objects of perception. A creature destitute of any conception of a power would never conclude, on the basis of "constant conjunctions" of events in the external world, that one of the conjoint events was the *cause* of the other. Rather, it is from the immediate, intuitive recognition of ourselves as *agents* that we draw inferences regarding comparably predictable events in the external world. One might guess that, as early as fetal life, there is sufficient psychological development to allow the ontogenetically developing thumb to reach the already sensitive lips. No motive, no matter how

great, impels actions which the actor firmly believes to have no hope of succeeding. Thus, apart from musculoskeletal reflexes, nearly every goal-orientated bit of behaviour has some ingredient of belief as a precondition. From the Greek word for faith (*pistis*) we might refer to this ingredient as *pistic*. It is not a species of opinion (*doxa*) and thus does not arise within a *doxastic* state. Rather, it is undeliberated. When the outcomes envisaged on the basis of this *pistic* state fail to occur, the response typically is one of surprise or amazement, in ways different from what ensues when a strongly held opinion is disconfirmed.

Knowing immediately that one's own actions express the agentic power one has in bringing them about, one draws the inference that comparable actions by others express comparable powers. The inference is strongest where the intelligibility of the action is established by some goal or objective thereby realized. As regards first-person understandings, "design without a designer" is ruled out, except perhaps under hypnotic suggestion or during a sleep-walk. Third-person accounts are parasitic on these and therefore, in most instances, "design without a designer" is rendered implausible by the indubitable relationship between conduct and the express purposes of the actor. Thus, the Thomistic proofs for the existence of God rather formalize what has probably been the Folk grounding of religious belief since a time out of memory.

It is not my purpose, however, to assess the arguments of deists or theists or atheists. I would have the term *transcendental* understood as the quality of an experience or feeling or idea not constrained by or readily explicable in terms of the spatio-temporal dimensions of the ambient material world. On this understanding, most of what are merely hallucinatory experiences would be ruled out on the grounds that plausible explanations are forthcoming from, e.g., neurology or neurochemistry or some such. Reflections on one's actually lived life, on the summons of conscience, the power of art, the depth of feeling excited by the presence of another, the hopelessness attending the absence or loss of another - reflections on all this, and the situating of all this within the mindless physicality of a largely empty cosmos - excite thoughts of sublimity, of the eternal, of the omnipresent. The terms vary over history and place, differ in childhood and old age, typically are inadequate as descriptions and accounts. The connection with the aesthetic domain is frequent, even one of dependency. The connection with the civic domain - which includes principled associations, committed friendships, patterns and generations of family life - is less apparent, perhaps less essential. In any case, many persons when queried will identify the transcendental episodes as the most meaningful, the most deeply informing, in comparison to which the balance of life is reduced to one of waiting.

Whole nations have been unified by these considerations and have waged relentless wars and campaigns of conversion so that the revealed "truths" shall prevail. Individual lives have been willingly sacrificed in devoted service to the subject or object or content of these transcendental phenomena. Geniuses have claimed them to be the source of creativity. The world's historic felons have

¹ I would have the term "phenomenologies" understood here in the general rather than the technical philosophical sense. I use it not as would Hegel or Husserl or various neo-Kantians, but as referring to the more readily accessible contents of experience and the thoughts and sentiments arising from experience. I thank Edward Pols for urging this clarification.

pointed to them as justifications. Socrates had such states in mind in referring to "divine madness". Persons of faith speak of a holy spirit, etc. Firm beliefs are attached to these experiences, and the beliefs then ground many of life's most significant undertakings; even life's entire point. To any who would now invent a *psychological* Psychology, and one worth having, I would say, *Begin here*.

6 Toward a Science of Human Nature

The American Psychological Association now has some fifty divisions, a membership on the region 100,000, professional journals galore. Nearly every college and university (more than 3,000 in the U.S. alone) hosts a Department of Psychology whose offerings are among the more popular with students. In an attempt to offset the fragmentation, even eradication of disciplinary identity, a number of departments have reconstituted themselves under such headings as, Cognitive Neuroscience; thirty years ago the same concession to fashion produced Behavioral Science departments. In both instances, the self-consciousness of the participants was (is) embarrassing.

Psychology is not a discipline to be given away; it is one that is uniquely qualified to receive direction, inspiration, its full and proper *subject matter*, equally from the developed sciences and the humanities. Human mental life produced both, has found purposes for both, has derived much of its very identity from both. Nonetheless, Psychology cannot be *everything*, so choices and refinements are essential. I would offer the following, if chiefly to excite useful debate:

1. It might now be time to open the cages, let the birds fly south and the rats find their way back to barns and marshes. Whatever the study of non-human animals might yield at the level of fact, it is doubtful in the extreme that it will contribute significantly to an understanding of the civic, aesthetic, moral and transcendental dimensions of human life. Evolutionary psychology, I would suggest, is less a guide here than a distraction, however rich Evolutionary Biology may be in its scientific yield and promise. Find creatures with the power not only radically to alter the world as it is given but to do so in a deliberate manner based on a critical appraisal of themselves and of that very world, and the conditions under which an Evolutionary Psychology would be credible are simply eliminated.
2. There will always be systematic and informing research in the field of sensory psychology and psychophysics. This research has unearthed lawful relationships on a par with those obtained in the most developed experimental sciences. It is useful as a pedagogical device for instructing students in just how research should be done; on what it means to establish relevant experimental controls; in the difference between counting and actual *measurement*. It is also the bridge that is firmest and most direct for those who would journey from Psychology to the biological and even physical sciences and then back again. Every good department should have this work and its overarching perspective featured.
3. Clever studies intended to mimic or simulate complex social contexts and interactions might best be retained to generate informing critiques of experimental modes of inquiry. However, Psychological studies of obedience - I refer to these owing to their fame and alleged significance - capture just about *nothing* of what actually took place among and at the bidding of the Nazis. The best simulations of life are found in art, in literature, in theatre. Psychology programs should greatly expand the students' access to these and incorporate them selectively in those spaces within the curriculum created by the rejection of *marginalia*.
4. "Research methods and statistics". Ah!, the very title says all that needs to be said. One searches nearly in vain for a developed experimental science built with the lockstep tools of analysis of variance. There is, however, a great need for offerings in *Measurement and Classification*, where students come to grips with the basis on which natural kinds are identified, taxonomies constructed, etc. In this connection, it is not without benefit to repeat my praise of psychophysical research. The lawful features of sensory information-processing compare favorably with lawful relationships found in any of the biological sciences and permit explanations and predictions of the performance of sensory systems under a wide variety of conditions. How interesting, then, that in this field of inquiry the "methodology" is really quite straightforward and statistics is rarely invoked. (I well recall Clarence Graham, in an advanced seminar in Perception, saying to a small group, "If you need statistics, you don't have an effect".)
5. Intellectual and social history and the literature of biography afford a useful database. The educated psychologist is educated in world history, social and cultural history, the study of lives and epochs. Absent instruction and perspective drawn from these areas, the psychologist is but a technician, the student a would-be technician.
6. Collegial rather than entrepreneurial modes of disciplinary organization are long overdue. It might be time to turn back much of the funding, to eliminate the bureaucracies that go with it, and, along with able and devoted students, to reclaim the university from those now rather clumsily planning its days and its future. No one who would be taken seriously sets out to publish five or ten "original and significant" works each year? or each lifetime! The first step toward the examined life is the one that frees us from the treadmill.

7. As organs go - and speaking now with the decided bias of one whose doctorate was earned in Neuropsychology - the brain is surely more interesting than, say, the spleen or transverse colon. What makes it interesting is its non-accidental association with those events, states and processes we refer to as psychological. Reduce these, eliminate them, trivialize them, and, in just that proportion, the brain sciences become reduced, eliminated, trivial. Psychologists thus have an important service to perform *vis a vis* the Brain Sciences; viz., supplying them with *a psychology worth having*. This service not only can be performed without much attention to what the brain is doing but, perhaps, only by looking away from the brain and toward lived life.

As promised, I have burdened readers with neither a theory nor a breakthrough. There may be even additional virtues in these few pages.