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SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AS HISTORY

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An analysis of theory and research in social psychology reveals that while methods of research are scientific in character, theories of social behavior are primarily reflections of contemporary history. The dissemination of psychological knowledge modifies the patterns of behavior upon which the knowledge is based. It does so because of the prescriptive bias of psychological theorizing, the liberating effects of knowledge, and the resistance based on common values of freedom and individuality. In addition, theoretical premises are based primarily on acquired dispositions. As the culture changes, such dispositions are altered, and the premises are often invalidated. Several modifications in the scope and methods of social psychology are derived from this analysis.

The field of psychology is typically defined as the science of human behavior, and social psychology as that branch of the science dealing with human interaction. A paramount aim of science is held to be the establishment of general laws through systematic observation. For the social psychologist, such general laws are developed in order to describe and explain social interaction. This traditional view of scientific law is repeated in one form or another in almost all fundamental treatments of the field. In his discussion of explanation in the behavioral sciences, DiRenzo (1966) pointed out that a "complete explanation" in the behavioral sciences "is one that has assumed the invariable status of law [p. 11]." Krech, Crutchfield, and Ballachey (1962) stated that "whether we are interested in social psychology as a basic science or as an applied science, a set of scientific principles is essential [p. 3]." Jones and Gerard (1967) echoed this view in their statement, "Science seeks to understand the factors responsible for stable relationships between events [p. 42]." As Mills (1969) put it, "social psychologists want to discover causal relationships so that they can establish basic principles that will explain the phenomena of social psychology [p. 412]."

This view of social psychology is, of course, a direct descendent from eighteenth century thought. At that time the physical sciences had produced marked increments in knowledge, and one could view with great optimism the possibility of applying the scientific method to human behavior (Carr, 1963). If general principles of human behavior could be established, it might be possible to reduce social conflict, to do away with problems of mental illness, and to create social conditions of maximal benefit to members of society. As others later hoped, it might even be possible to transform such principles into mathematical form, to develop "a mathematics of human behavior as precise as the mathematics of machines [Russell, 1956, p. 142]."

The marked success of the natural sciences in establishing general principles can importantly be attributed to the general stability of events in the world of nature. The velocity of falling bodies or the compounding of chemical elements, for example, are highly stable events across time. They are events that can be recreated in any laboratory, 50 years ago, today, or 100 years from now. Because they are so stable, broad generalizations can be established with a high degree of confidence, explanations can be empirically tested, and mathematical transformations can be fruitfully developed. If events were unstable, if the velocity of falling bodies or the compounding of chemicals were in continuous flux, the development of the natural sciences

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would be drastically impeded. General laws would fail to emerge, and the recording of natural events would lend itself primarily to historical analysis. If natural events were capricious, natural science would largely be replaced by natural history.

It is the purpose of this paper to argue that social psychology is primarily an historical inquiry. Unlike the natural sciences, it deals with facts that are largely nonrepeatable and which fluctuate markedly over time. Principles of human interaction cannot readily be developed over time because the facts on which they are based do not generally remain stable. Knowledge cannot accumulate in the usual scientific sense because such knowledge does not generally transcend its historical boundaries. In the following discussion two central lines of argument will be developed in support of this thesis, the first centering on the impact of the science on social behavior and the second on historical change. After examining these arguments, we can focus on alterations in the scope and aims of the field suggested by this analysis.

IMPACT OF SCIENCE ON SOCIAL INTERACTION

As Back (1963) has shown, social science can fruitfully be viewed as a protracted communications system. In the execution of research, the scientist receives messages transmitted by the subject. In raw form, such messages generate only "noise" for the scientist. Scientific theories serve as decoding devices which convert noise to usable information. Although Back has used this model in a number of provocative ways, his analysis is terminated at the point of decoding. This model must be extended beyond the process of gathering and decoding messages. The scientist's task is also that of communicator. If his theories prove to be useful decoding devices, they are communicated to the populace in order that they might also benefit from their utility. Science and society constitute a feedback loop.

This type of feedback from scientist to society has become increasingly widespread during the past decade. Channels of communication have developed at a rapid rate. On the level of higher education, over eight million students are annually confronted by course offerings in the field of psychology, and within recent years, such offerings have become unexcelled in popularity. The liberal education of today entails familiarity with central ideas in psychology. The mass media have also come to realize the vast public interest in psychology. The news media carefully monitor professional meetings as well as journals of the profession. Magazine publishers have found it profitable to feature the views of psychologists on contemporary behavior patterns, and specialty magazines devoted almost exclusively to psychology now boast readerships totaling over 600,000. When we add to these trends the broad expansion of the soft-cover book market, the increasing governmental demand for knowledge justifying the public underwriting of psychological research, the proliferation of encounter techniques, the establishment of business enterprises huckstering psychology through games and posters, and the increasing reliance placed by major institutions (including business, government, military, and social) on the knowledge of in-house behavioral scientists, one begins to sense the profound degree to which the psychologist is linked in mutual communication with the surrounding culture.

Most psychologists harbor the desire that psychological knowledge will have an impact on the society. Most of us are gratified when such knowledge can be utilized in beneficial ways. Indeed, for many social psychologists, commitment to the field importantly depends on the belief in the social utility of psychological knowledge. However, it is not generally assumed that such utilization will alter the character of causal relations in social interaction. We do expect knowledge of function forms to be utilized in altering behavior, but we do not expect the utilization to affect the subsequent character of the function forms themselves. Our expectations in this case may be quite unfounded. Not only may the application of our principles alter the data on which they are based, but the very development of the principles may invalidate them. Three lines of argument are pertinent, the first stemming from the evaluative bias of psychological research, the second from the liber-

ating effects of knowledge, and the third from prevalent values in the culture.

Prescriptive Bias of Psychological Theory

As scientists of human interaction, we are engaged in a peculiar duality. On the one hand, we value dispassionate comportment in scientific matters. We are well aware of the biasing effects of strong value commitments. On the other hand, as socialized human beings, we harbor numerous values about the nature of social relations. It is the rare social psychologist whose values do not influence the subject of his research, his methods of observation, or the terms of description. In generating knowledge about social interaction, we also communicate our personal values. The recipient of knowledge is thus provided with dual messages: Messages that dispassionately *describe* what appears to be, and those which subtly *prescribe* what is desirable.

This argument is most clearly evident in research on personal dispositions. Most of us would feel insulted if characterized as low in self-esteem, high in approval seeking, cognitively undifferentiated, authoritarian, anal compulsive, field dependent, or close-minded. In part, our reactions reflect our acculturation; one need not be a psychologist to resent such labels. But in part, such reactions are created by the concepts utilized in describing and explaining phenomena. For example, in the preface of *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950), readers are informed that "In contrast to the bigot of the older style, (the authoritarian) seems to combine the ideas and skills of a highly industrialized society with irrational or anti-rational beliefs [p. 3]." In discussing the Machiavellian personality, Christie and Geis (1970) noted

> Initially our image of the high Mach was a negative one, associated with shadowy and unsavory manipulations. However . . . we found ourselves having a perverse admiration for the high Machs' ability to outdo others in experimental situations [p. 339].

In their prescriptive capacity such communications become agents of social change. On an elementary level, the student of psychology might well wish to exclude from public observation behaviors labeled by respected scholars as authoritarian, Machiavellian, and so on. The communication of knowledge may thus create homogeneity with respect to behavioral indicators of underlying dispositions. On a more complex level, knowledge of personality correlates may induce behavior to insubstantiate the correlates. Not so strangely, much individual difference research places the professional psychologist in a highly positive light. Thus, the more similar the subject is to the professional in terms of education, socioeconomic background, religion, race, sex, and personal values, the more advantageous his position on psychological tests. Increased education, for example, favors cognitive differentiation (Witkin, Dyk, Faterson, Goodenough, & Karp, 1962), low scores in authoritarianism (Christie & Jahoda, 1954), open-mindedness (Rokeach, 1960), etc. Armed with this information, those persons unflattered by the research might overcompensate in order to dispel the injurious stereotype. For example, women who learn they are more persuasible than men (cf. Janis & Field, 1959) may retaliate, and over time the correlation is invalidated or reversed.

While evaluative biases are easily identified in personality research, they are by no means limited to this area. Most general models of social interaction also contain implicit value judgments. For example, treatises on conformity often treat the conformer as a second-class citizen, a social sheep who foregoes personal conviction to agree with the erroneous opinions of others. Thus, models of social conformity sensitize one to factors that might lead him into socially deplorable actions. In effect, knowledge insulates against the future efficacy of these same factors. Research on attitude change often carries with it these same overtones. Knowing about attitude change flatters one into believing that he has the power to change others; by implication, others are relegated to the status of manipulanda. Thus, theories of attitude change may sensitize one into guarding against factors that could potentially influence him. In the same way, theories of aggression typically condemn the aggressor, models of interpersonal bargaining are disparaging of exploitation, and models of moral develop-

ment demean those at less than the optimal stage (Kohlberg, 1970). Cognitive dissonance theory (Brehm & Cohen, 1966; Festinger, 1957) might appear to be value free, but most studies in this area have painted the dissonance reducer in most unflattering terms. "How witless" we say, "that people should cheat, make lower scores on tests, change their opinions of others or eat undesirable foods just to maintain consistency."

The critical note underlying these remarks is not inadvertent. It does seem unfortunate that a profession dedicated to the objective and nonpartisan development of knowledge should use this position to propagandize the unwitting recipients of this knowledge. The concepts of the field are seldom value free, and most could be replaced with other concepts carrying far different valuational baggage. Brown (1965) has pointed to the interesting fact that the classic authoritarian personality, so roundly scourged in our own literature, was quite similar to the "J-type personality" (Jaensch, 1938), viewed by the Germans in a highly positive light. That which our literature termed rigidity was viewed as stability in theirs; flexibility and individualism in our literature were seen as flaccidity and eccentricity. Such labeling biases pervade our literature. For example, high self-esteem could be termed egotism; need for social approval could be translated as need for social integration; cognitive differentiation as hair-splitting; creativity as deviance; and internal control as egocentricity. Similarly, if our values were otherwise, social conformity could be viewed as pro-solidarity behavior; attitude change as cognitive adaptation; and the risky shift as the courageous conversion.

Yet, while the propagandizing effects of psychological terminology must be lamented, it is also important to trace their sources. In part the evaluative loading of theoretical terms seems quite intentional. The act of publishing implies the desire to be heard. However, value-free terms have low-interest value for the potential reader, and value-free research rapidly becomes obscure. If obedience were relabeled alpha behavior and not rendered deplorable through associations with Adolph Eichman, public concern would undoubtedly be meagre. In addition to capturing the interest of the public and the profession, value-loaded concepts also provide an expressive outlet for the psychologist. I have talked with countless graduate students drawn into psychology out of deep humanistic concern. Within many lies a frustrated poet, philosopher, or humanitarian who finds the scientific method at once a means to expressive ends and an encumbrance to free expression. Resented is the apparent fact that the ticket to open expression through the professional media is a near lifetime in the laboratory. Many wish to share their values directly, unfettered by constant demands for systematic evidence. For them, value-laden concepts compensate for the conservatism usually imparted by these demands. The more established psychologist may indulge himself more directly. Normally, however, we are not inclined to view our personal biases as propagandistic so much as reflecting "basic truths."

While the communication of values through knowledge is to some degree intentional, it is not entirely so. Value commitments are almost inevitable by-products of social existence, and as participants in society we can scarcely dissociate ourselves from these values in pursuing professional ends. In addition, if we rely on the language of the culture for scientific communication, it is difficult to find terms regarding social interaction that are without prescriptive value. We might reduce the implicit prescriptions embedded in our communications if we adopted a wholly technical language. However, even technical language becomes evaluative whenever the science is used as a lever for social change. Perhaps our best option is to maintain as much sensitivity as possible to our biases and to communicate them as openly as possible. Value commitments may be unavoidable, but we can avoid masquerading them as objective reflections of truth.

Knowledge and Behavioral Liberation

It is common research practice in psychology to avoid communicating one's theoretical premises to the subject either before or during the research. Rosenthal's (1966) research indicated that even the most subtle cues of experimenter expectation may alter the be-

havior of the subject. Naive subjects are thus required by common standards of rigor. The implications of this simple methodological safeguard are of considerable significance. If subjects possess preliminary knowledge as to theoretical premises, we can no longer adequately test our hypotheses. In the same way, if the society is psychologically informed, theories about which it is informed become difficult to test in an uncontaminated way. Herein lies a fundamental difference between the natural and the social sciences. In the former, the scientist cannot typically communicate his knowledge to the subjects of his study such that their behavioral dispositions are modified. In the social sciences such communication can have a vital impact on behavior.

A single example may suffice here. It appears that over a wide variety of conditions, decision-making groups come to make riskier decisions through group discussion (cf. Dion, Baron, & Miller, 1970; Wallach, Kogan, & Bem, 1964). Investigators in this area are quite careful that experimental subjects are not privy to their thinking on this matter. If knowledgeable, subjects might insulate themselves from the effects of group discussion or respond appropriately in order to gain the experimenter's favor. However, should the risky shift become common knowledge, naive subjects would become unobtainable. Members of the culture might consistently compensate for risky tendencies produced by group discussion until such behavior became normative.

As a general surmise, sophistication as to psychological principles liberates one from their behavioral implications. Established principles of behavior become inputs into one's decision making. As Winch (1958) has pointed out, "Since understanding something involves understanding its contradiction, someone who, with understanding, performs X must be capable of envisioning the possibility of doing not X [p. 89]." Psychological principles also sensitize one to influences acting on him and draw attention to certain aspects of the environment and himself. In doing so, one's patterns of behavior may be strongly influenced. As May (1971) has stated more passionately, "Each of us inherits from society a burden of tendencies which shapes us willy-nilly; but our capacity to be conscious of this fact saves us from being strictly determined [p. 100]." In this way, knowledge about nonverbal signals of stress or relief (Eckman, 1965) enables us to avoid giving off these signals whenever it is useful to do so; knowing that persons in trouble are less likely to be helped when there are large numbers of bystanders (Latané & Darley, 1970) may increase one's desire to offer his services under such conditions; knowing that motivational arousal can influence one's interpretation of events (cf. Jones & Gerard, 1967) may engender caution when arousal is high. In each instance, knowledge increases alternatives to action, and previous patterns of behavior are modified or dissolved.

Escape to Freedom

The historical invalidation of psychological theory can be further traced to commonly observed sentiments within western culture. Of major importance is the general distress people seem to feel at the diminution of their response alternatives. As Fromm (1941) saw it, normal development includes the acquisition of strong motives toward autonomy. Weinstein and Platt (1969) discussed much the same sentiment in terms of "man's wish to be free," and linked this disposition to the developing social structure. Brehm (1966) used this same disposition as the cornerstone of his theory of psychological reactance. The prevalence of this learned value has important implications for the long-term validity of social psychological theory.

Valid theories about social behavior constitute significant implements of social control. To the extent that an individual's behavior is predictable, he places himself in a position of vulnerability. Others can alter environmental conditions or their behavior toward him to obtain maximal rewards at minimal costs to themselves. In the same way that a military strategist lays himself open to defeat when his actions become predictable, an organizational official can be taken advantage of by his inferiors and wives manipulated by errant husbands when their behavior patterns are reliable. Knowledge

thus becomes power in the hands of others. It follows that psychological principles pose a potential threat to all those for whom they are germane. Investments in freedom may thus potentiate behavior designed to invalidate the theory. We are satisfied with principles of attitude change until we find them being used in information campaigns dedicated to changing our behavior. At this point, we may feel resentful and react recalcitrantly. The more potent the theory is in predicting behavior, the broader its public dissemination and the more prevalent and resounding the reaction. Thus, strong theories may be subject to more rapid invalidation than weak ones.

The common value of personal freedom is not the only pervasive sentiment affecting the mortality of social psychological theory. In western culture there seems to be heavy value placed on uniqueness or individuality. The broad popularity of both Erikson (1968) and Allport (1965) can be traced in part to their strong support of this value, and recent laboratory research (Fromkin, 1970, 1972) has demonstrated the strength of this value in altering social behavior. Psychological theory, in its nomothetic structure, is insensitive to unique occurrences. Individuals are treated as exemplars of larger classes. A common reaction is that psychological theory is dehumanizing, and as Maslow (1968) has noted, patients harbor a strong resentment at being rubricated or labeled with conventional clinical terms. Similarly, blacks, women, activists, suburbanites, educators, and the elderly have all reacted bitterly to explanations of their behavior. Thus, we may strive to invalidate theories that ensnare us in their impersonal way.

Psychology of Enlightenment Effects

Thus far we have discussed three ways in which social psychology alters the behavior it seeks to study. Before moving to a second set of arguments for the historical dependency of psychological theory, we must deal with an important means of combatting the effects thus far described. To preserve the transhistorical validity of psychological principles, the science could be removed from the public domain and scientific understanding reserved for a selected elite. This elite would, of course, be co-opted by the state, as no government could risk the existence of a private establishment developing tools of public control. For most of us, such a prospect is repugnant, and our inclination instead is to seek a scientific solution to the problem of historical dependency. Such an answer is suggested by much that has been said. If people who are psychologically enlightened react to general principles by contradicting them, conforming to them, ignoring them, and so on, then it should be possible to establish the conditions under which these various reactions will occur. Based on notions of psychological reactance (Brehm, 1966), self-fulfilling prophecies (Merton, 1948), and expectancy effects (Gergen & Taylor, 1969), we might construct a general theory of reactions to theory. A psychology of enlightenment effects should enable us to predict and control the effects of knowledge.

Although a psychology of enlightenment effects seems a promising adjunct to general theories, its utility is seriously limited. Such a psychology can itself be invested with value, increase our behavioral alternatives, and may be resented because of its threats to feelings of autonomy. Thus, a theory that predicts reactions to theory is also susceptible to violation or vindication. A frequent occurrence in parent–child relations illustrates the point. Parents are accustomed to using direct rewards in order to influence the behavior of their children. Over time, children become aware of the adult's premise that the reward will achieve the desired results and become obstinate. The adult may then react with a naive psychology of enlightenment effects and express disinterest in the child's carrying out the activity, again with the intent of achieving the desired ends. The child may respond appropriately but often enough will blurt out some variation of, "you are just saying you don't care because you really want me to do it." In Loevinger's (1959) terms, ". . . a shift in parentmanship is countered by a shift in childmanship [p. 149]." In the popular idiom, this is termed reverse psychology and is often resented. Of course, one could counter with research on reactions to the psychology of

enlightenment effects, but it is quickly seen that this exchange of actions and reactions could be extended indefinitely. A psychology of enlightenment effects is subject to the same historical limitations as other theories of social psychology.

PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY AND CULTURAL CHANGE

The argument against transhistorical laws in social psychology does not solely rest on a consideration of the impact of science on society. A second major line of thought deserves consideration. If we scan the most prominent lines of research during the past decade, we soon realize that the observed regularities, and thus the major theoretical principles, are firmly wedded to historical circumstances. The historical dependency of psychological principles is most notable in areas of focal concern to the public. Social psychologists have been much concerned, for example, with isolating predictors of political activism during the past decade (cf. Mankoff & Flacks, 1971; Soloman & Fishman, 1964). However, as one scans this literature over time, numerous inconsistencies are found. Variables that successfully predicted political activism during the early stages of the Vietnam war are dissimilar to those which successfully predicted activism during later periods. The conclusion seems clear that the factors motivating activism changed over time. Thus, any theory of political activism built from early findings would be invalidated by later findings. Future research on political activism will undoubtedly find still other predictors more useful.

Such alterations in functional relationship are not in principle limited to areas of immediate public concern. For example, Festinger's (1957) theory of social comparison and the extensive line of deductive research (cf. Latané, 1966) are based on the dual assumption that (*a*) people desire to evaluate themselves accurately, and (*b*) in order to do so they compare themselves with others. There is scant reason to suspect that such dispositions are genetically determined, and we can easily imagine persons, and indeed societies, for which these assumptions would not hold. Many of our social commentators are critical of the common tendency to search out others' opinions in defining self and they attempt to change society through their criticism. In effect, the entire line of research appears to depend on a set of learned propensities, propensities that could be altered by time and circumstance.

In the same way, cognitive dissonance theory depends on the assumption that people cannot tolerate contradictory cognitions. The basis of such intolerance does not seem genetically given. There are certainly individuals who feel quite otherwise about such contradictions. Early existentialist writers, for example, celebrated the inconsistent act. Again, we must conclude that the theory is predictive because of the state of learned dispositions existing at the time. Likewise, Schachter's (1959) work on affiliation is subject to the arguments made in the case of social comparison theory. Milgram's (1965) obedience phenomenon is certainly dependent on contemporary attitudes toward authority. In attitude change research, communicator credibility is a potent factor because we have learned to rely on authorities in our culture, and the communicated message becomes dissociated from its source over time (Kelman & Hovland, 1953) because it does not prove useful to us *at present* to retain the association. In conformity research, people conform more to friends than nonfriends (Back, 1951) partly because they have learned that friends punish deviance in contemporary society. Research on causal attribution (cf. Jones, Davis, & Gergen, 1961; Kelley, 1971) depends on the culturally dependent tendency to perceive man as the source of his actions. This tendency can be modified (Hallowell, 1958) and some (Skinner, 1971) have indeed argued that it should be.

Perhaps the primary guarantee that social psychology will never disappear via reduction to physiology is that physiology cannot account for the variations in human behavior over time. People may prefer bright shades of clothing today and grim shades tomorrow; they may value autonomy during this era and dependency during the next. To be sure, varying responses to the environment rely on variations in physiological function. How-

ever, physiology can never specify the nature of the stimulus inputs or the response context to which the individual is exposed. It can never account for the continuously shifting patterns of what is considered the good or desirable in society, and thus a range of primary motivational sources for the individual. However, while social psychology is thus insulated from physiological reductionism, its theories are not insulated from historical change.

It is possible to infer from this latter set of arguments a commitment to at least one theory of transhistorical validity. It has been argued that the stability in interaction patterns upon which most of our theories rest is dependent on learned dispositions of limited duration. This implicitly suggests the possibility of a social learning theory transcending historical circumstance. However, such a conclusion is unwarranted. Let us consider, for example, an elementary theory of reinforcement. Few would doubt that most people are responsive to the reward and punishment contingencies in their environment, and it is difficult to envision a time in which this would not be true. Such premises thus seem transhistorically valid, and a primary task of the psychologist might be that of isolating the precise function forms relating patterns of reward and punishment to behavior.

This conclusion suffers on two important counts. Many critics of reinforcement theory have charged that the definition of reward (and punishment) is circular. Reward is typically defined as that which increases the frequency of responding; response increment is defined as that which follows reward. Thus, the theory seems limited to post hoc interpretation. Only when behavior change has occurred can one specify the reinforcer. The most significant rejoinder to this criticism lies in the fact that once rewards and punishments have been inductively established, they gain predictive value. Thus, isolating social approval as a positive reinforcer for human behavior was initially dependent on post hoc observation. However, once established as a reinforcer, social approval proved a successful means of modifying behavior on a predictive basis (cf. Barron, Heckenmueller, & Schultz, 1971; Gewirtz & Baer, 1958).

However, it is also apparent that reinforcers do not remain stable across time. For example, Reisman (1952) has cogently argued that social approval has far more reward value in contemporary society than it did a century ago. And while national pride might have been a potent reinforcer of late adolescent behavior in the 1940's, for contemporary youth such an appeal would probably be aversive. In effect, the essential circularity in reinforcement theory may at any time be reinstigated. As reinforcement value changes, so does the predictive validity of the basic assumption.

Reinforcement theory faces additional historical limitations when we consider its more precise specification. Similar to most other theories of human interaction, the theory is subject to ideological investment. The notion that behavior is wholly governed by external contingency is seen by many as vulgarly demeaning. Knowledge of the theory also enables one to avoid being ensnared by its predictions. As behavior modification therapists are aware, people who are conversant with its theoretical premises can subvert its intended effects with facility. Finally, because the theory has proved so effective in altering the behavior of lower organisms, it becomes particularly threatening to one's investment in autonomy. In fact, most of us would resent another's attempt to shape our behavior through reinforcement techniques and would bend ourselves to confounding the offender's expectations. In sum, the elaboration of reinforcement theory is no less vulnerable to enlightenment effects than other theories of human interaction.

IMPLICATIONS FOR AN HISTORICAL SCIENCE OF SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

In light of the present arguments, the continued attempt to build general laws of social behavior seems misdirected, and the associated belief that knowledge of social interaction can be accumulated in a manner similar to the natural sciences appears unjustified. In essence, the study of social psychology is primarily an historical undertaking. We are essentially engaged in a systematic account of contemporary affairs. We utilize scientific methodology, but the results are not scien-

tific principles in the traditional sense. In the future, historians may look back to such accounts to achieve a better understanding of life in the present era. However, the psychologists of the future are likely to find little of value in contemporary knowledge. These arguments are not purely academic and are not limited to a simple redefinition of the science. Implied here are significant alterations in the activity of the field. Five such alterations deserve attention.

Toward an Integration of the Pure and Applied

A pervasive prejudice against applied research exists among academic psychologists, a prejudice that is evident in the pure research focus of prestige journals and in the dependency of promotion and tenure on contributions to pure as opposed to applied research. In part, this prejudice is based on the assumption that applied research is of transient value. While it is limited to solving immediate problems, pure research is viewed as contributing to basic and enduring knowledge. From the present standpoint, such grounds for prejudice are not merited. The knowledge that pure research bends itself to establish is also transient; generalizations in the pure research area do not generally endure. To the extent that generalizations from pure research have greater transhistorical validity, they may be reflecting processes of peripheral interest or importance to the functioning of society.

Social psychologists are trained in using tools of conceptual analysis and scientific methodology in explaining human interaction. However, given the sterility of perfecting general principles across time, these tools would seem more productively used in solving problems of immediate importance to the society. This is not to imply that such research must be parochial in scope. One major shortcoming of much applied research is that the terms used to describe and explain are often relatively concrete and specific to the case at hand. While the concrete behavioral acts studied by academic psychologists are often more trivial, the explanatory language is highly general and thus more broadly heuristic. Thus, the present arguments suggest an intensive focus on contemporary social issues, based on the application of scientific methods and conceptual tools of broad generality.

From Prediction to Sensitization

The central aim of psychology is traditionally viewed as the prediction and control of behavior. From the present standpoint, this aim is misleading and provides little justification for research. Principles of human behavior may have limited predictive value across time, and their very acknowledgment can render them impotent as tools of social control. However, prediction and control need not serve as the cornerstones of the field. Psychological theory can play an exceedingly important role as a sensitizing device. It can enlighten one as to the range of factors potentially influencing behavior under various conditions. Research may also provide some estimate of the importance of these factors at a given time. Whether it be in the domain of public policy or personal relationships, social psychology can sharpen one's sensitivity to subtle influences and pinpoint assumptions about behavior that have not proved useful in the past.

When counsel is sought from the social psychologist regarding likely behavior in any concrete situation, the typical reaction is apology. It must be explained that the field is not sufficiently well developed at present so that reliable predictions can be made. From the present standpoint, such apologies are inappropriate. The field can seldom yield principles from which reliable predictions can be made. Behavior patterns are under constant modification. However, what the field can and should provide is research informing the inquirer of a number of possible occurrences, thus expanding his sensitivities and readying him for more rapid accommodation to environmental change. It can provide conceptual and methodological tools with which more discerning judgments can be made.

Developing Indicators of Psycho-Social Dispositions

Social psychologists evidence a continuous concern with basic psychological processes, that is, processes influencing a wide and varied range of social behavior. Modeling the experi-

mental psychologist's concern with basic processes of color vision, language acquisition, memory, and the like, social psychologists have focused on such processes as cognitive dissonance, aspiration level, and causal attribution. However, there is a profound difference between the processes typically studied in the general experimental and social domains. In the former instance, the processes are often locked into the organism biologically; they are not subject to enlightenment effects and are not dependent on cultural circumstance. In contrast, most of the processes falling in the social domain are dependent on acquired dispositions subject to gross modification over time.

In this light, it is a mistake to consider the processes in social psychology as basic in the natural science sense. Rather, they may largely be considered the psychological counterpart of cultural norms. In the same way a sociologist is concerned with measuring party preferences or patterns of mobility over time, the social psychologist might attend to the changing patterns of psychological dispositions and their relationship to social behavior. If dissonance reduction is an important process, then we should be in a position to measure the prevalence and strength of such a disposition within the society over time and the preferred modes of dissonance reduction existing at any given time. If esteem enhancement appears to influence social interaction, then broad studies of the culture should reveal the extent of the disposition, its strength in various subcultures, and the forms of social behavior with which it is most likely associated at any given time. Although laboratory experiments are well suited to the isolation of particular dispositions, they are poor indicators of the range and significance of the processes in contemporary social life. Much needed are methodologies tapping the prevalence, strength, and form of psychosocial dispositions over time. In effect, a technology of psychologically sensitive social indicators (Bauer, 1969) is required.

Research on Behavioral Stability

Social phenomena may vary considerably in the extent to which they are subject to historical change. Certain phenomena may be closely tied to physiological givens. Schachter's (1970) research on emotional states appears to have a strong physiological basis, as does Hess's (1965) work on affect and pupillary constriction. Although learned dispositions can overcome the strength of some physiological tendencies, such tendencies should tend to reassert themselves over time. Still other physiological propensities may be irreversible. There may also be acquired dispositions that are sufficiently powerful that neither enlightenment nor historical change is likely to have a major impact. People will generally avoid physically painful stimuli, regardless of their sophistication or the current norms. We must think, then, in terms of a *continuum of historical durability*, with phenomena highly susceptible to historical influence at one extreme and the more stable processes at the other.

In this light, much needed are research methods enabling us to discern the relative durability of social phenomena. Cross-cultural methods could be employed in this capacity. Although cross-cultural replication is frought with difficulty, similarity in a given function form across widely divergent cultures would strongly attest to its durability across time. Content analytic techniques might also be employed in examining accounts of earlier historical periods. Until now, such accounts have provided little except quotations indicating that some great thinker presaged a pet hypothesis. We have yet to tap the vast quantities of information regarding interaction patterns in earlier periods. Although enhanced sophistication about behavior patterns across space and time would furnish valuable insights regarding durability, difficult problems present themselves. Some behavior patterns may remain stable until closely scrutinized; others may simply become dysfunctional over time. Man's reliance on a concept of deity has a long history and is found in numerous cultures; however, many are skeptical about the future of this reliance. Assessments of durability would thus have to account for potential as well as actual stability in phenomena.

While research into more durable dispositions is highly valuable, we should not therefore conclude that it is either more useful or desirable than studying passing behavior pat-

terns. The major share of the variance in social behavior is undoubtedly due to historically dependent dispositions, and the challenge of capturing such processes "in flight" and during auspicious periods of history is immense.

Toward an Integrated Social History

It has been maintained that social psychological research is primarily the systematic study of contemporary history. As such, it seems myopic to maintain disciplinary detachment from (*a*) the traditional study of history and (*b*) other historically bound sciences (including sociology, political science, and economics). The particular research strategies and sensitivities of the historian could enhance the understanding of social psychology, both past and present. Particularly useful would be the historian's sensitivity to causal sequences across time. Most social psychological research focuses on minute segments of ongoing processes. We have concentrated very little on the function of these segments within their historical context. We have little theory dealing with the interrelation of events over extended periods of time. By the same token, historians could benefit from the more rigorous methodologies employed by the social psychologist as well as his particular sensitivity to psychological variables. However, the study of history, both past and present, should be undertaken in the broadest possible framework. Political, economic, and institutional factors are all necessary inputs to understanding in an integrated way. A concentration on psychology alone provides a distorted understanding of our present condition.

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