THE TWO INGREDIENTS OF HISTORY

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Though it is now more than a century since the foundation of the first psychological laboratory by WUNDT and psychology's declaration of independence, psychologists are still deeply divided amongst themselves ideologically and methodologically. In 1980 the British Psychological Society published a volume entitled *Models of Man* (1), which purported to provide "a reasonable representation of present day opinion on psychology". It is not too harsh to say that the main impression gained by the reader was one of a considerable degree of conceptual confusion among psychologists, and a quite inadequate recognition of the historical origins of this confusion. No one seemed to appreciate how far back in time the major divide between behaviourists and humanists goes, or how deep are its roots. References were made to WUNDT and BRENTANO, and occasionally to LOCKE and LEIBNIZ. But no one referred to the Greeks or to the split that occurred between the Ionian materialists and the Italian idealists at the beginning of European thought. Yet this is where the troubles of contemporary psychology began. To understand the conceptual problems of psychology, and, as Dr. Kelvin pointed out in his paper (2), the basic problems are conceptual, we have to go back to the beginnings. The history of psychology

did not commence in 1879, or even in 1650. SOCRATES in PLATO's *Phaedo* (3) pointed out the difficulties of behaviourism over two thousand years ago. The two conflicting models were proposed in their essential contrast by Greek thinkers, and so far from there being, as one discusant in the Models Symposium proposed (4), "no cross-fertilization between them", ARISTOTLE proposed a reconciliation which prevailed, with neo-Platonic and theological modifications, for many centuries. We cannot, of course, return to undiluted Aristotelianism to-day as a remedy for our problems. His physics, his physiology and his methodology are all out-moded. But we can, perhaps, still learn from him. Indeed one contemporary philosopher considers that his psychophysical model is, in its essentials, still the 'best buy' (5). It has certainly been the most enduring model in the whole history of psychology. And ARISTOTLE, it is worth noting, began his *De Anima* with an account of the theories of his predecessors. He was not only the first systematic psychologist, but also the first historian of psychology. History helped him in his working out of the conceptual problems of psychology, and perhaps it can help us too. It is tempting amid the excitment of on-going research and the opening up of new vistas to discard the past as 'old hat'. As we look back, however, we perceive that no revolution in human thought, or human affairs, has been able to do this. The influence of the past has always persisted through change, and to understand the present and to plan for the future it has always been necessary to remember the past.

There are various motives for the study of history. It can be studied for its own sake; but this is the historian's role, not that of the psychologist. It can serve as an entertaining side-line in the search for buried treasure, for forgotten anticipations of contemporary findings in the work of our predecessors. Over the last hundred years in particular so much has been produced that there may well be forgotten nuggets in the journal literature of the past -just as MENDEL's work lay overlooked in an obscure journal for over thirty years. In his recently published SHERRINGTON lectures on the physiology of muscle, Sir Andrew HUXLEY notes how observations can be ignored for fifty years, and then found to be right after all (6). In psychology the same thing happens, no doubt, quite frequently. There was a lot of interesting material in Lloyd MORGAN's early writings which anticipated the work of later learning theorists, and many Freudian doctrines had their precursors. But the discovery of hidden treasure, though fun, is not the main reason for the study of history. History is ultimately important because it provides perspective; it helps to give us a sense of direction; it helps us to escape from the blinkers of present paradigms; and it makes us aware of the richness of psychology's heritage. As FARRELL recently pointed out, "when one takes on overall view through the historian's spectacles...one comes away with a relatively optimistic picture of the prospects of psychology" (7). I agree: we need the historian's spectacles if we are to see beyond or contemporary confusions and impasses.

If this is so, the relatively undeveloped state of the history of psychology in Great Britain should be a cause of some concern to British psychologists. We have no centre of excellence devoted to this aspect of our discipline; we have as yet no section

of the British Psychological Society concerned specially with it, though there are prospects that this will before long be remedied; we have no journal devoted to the history of psychology, and only fairly rudimentary archives. The situation compares unfavourably with that in the United States, where development over the last two decades has been considerable -a Division of the American Psychological Association with its own Newsletter, a journal devoted to history, a central library and Archives, and several centres of excellence. Three years ago Dr. LOVIE of the University of Liverpool and I sent out a brief questionnaire to universities and polytechnics in Great Britain to ascertain the extent to which the history of psychology was taught. We were grateful for an approximately ninety percent response. The answers revealed a patchy, but by no means negligible, interest in the history of psychology. Out of fifty-five departments replying, thirteen gave a full compulsory course on history, eight an optional course, and seven a part course. Eighteen departments, moreover, required some historical reading, and a further thirty recommended it. All the departments offering a course, or including substantial historical material in other courses had at least one member of staff interested in history. Twenty-three institutions took the *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences.* The beginnings are there, but they need developing and focussing. What are the main needs?.

If history is to be done at all, it needs doing well. It requires scholarship, and it requires imagination. It requires both these ingredients. Unfortunately the history of psychology has not always manifested these qualities.

In a seminal article on "Scholarship and the History of the Behavioural Sciences", published seventeen years ago (8), Dr. Robert YOUNG of King's College, Cambridge, made some critical comments on the way the history of psychology was taught and written. He noted the lack of exacting scholarly standards; the mistakes, omissions and doubtful interpretations which mar many of the standard histories of psychology; their undue reliance on secondary authorities, and the tendency of historians of psychology to ignore scientific and cultural context. Though the situation is beginning to be rectified -in this country partly as a result of the work of Dr. Robert YOUNG himself, and in America by a growing band of historical researchers- YOUNG's criticisms are still far from inapplicable. Indeed there is some danger, as history textbook follows history textbook, of growing distortions, which remind one of the transmogrifications of 'The War of the Ghosts' in BARTLETT's famous story (9). YOUNG in his article spoke of the danger of taking BORING's *History of Experimental Psychology* (10) as a definitive work. In spite of its many merits, he pointed out its rather numerous errors omissions and distortaions. BORING was good on German experimental psychology of the nineteenth century (though recent criticisms have picked holes in him even there), but he was often quite inadequate outside this particular area; and his distortions unfortunately have been repeated.

Let me refer once again to ARISTOTLE as an example. I make no apologies for doing so, as ARISTOTLE was the founder of our discipline, and his influence is not

dead yet. Almost every single statement made by BORING in his short account of ARISTOTLE is misleading (11), and he fails totally to give an adequate account of ARISTOTLE's psychology. Yet BORING is quoted by his successors. Thus WATSON writes: "The psychology of learning to-day still deals with these principles first formulated by ARISTOTLE. As BORING said 'ARISTOTLE laid down the basic principles of memory -similarity, contrast and contiguity- which have not yet ceased to dominate theoretical thinking about learning'"(12). This, I need hardly say, is a most distorted account of ARISTOTLE's theory of memory, which, as a recent commentator has noted, "is fuller than that to be found in the best known British empiricists" (13). So far from being an associationist ARISTOTLE regarded recollection as "a sort of reasoning, a sort of search" (14). The principles of similarity, contrast and contiguity receive one casual passing reference in ARISTOTLE and are a very minor feature of his theory. In a more recent text (15) the distortion goes further. We are given the impression that ARISTOTLE, born according to this author not in Northern Greece, but in Asia Minor, was the father of modern learning theorists and behaviourists. ARISTOTLE! -who believed in purpose, who believed in the possibility of choice; and who believed in the divine component in human reason!.

Why should these solecisms still continue?. Aristotelian scholarship has advanced enormously in the last fifty years, and our understanding of ARISTOTLE's psychology has been greatly deepened -not so much as a result of the scholarly researches of psychologists themselves, as of those of classicists, philosophers and theologians. Volume IV of the series, *Papers of Aristotle* (16), which was published recently and dealt with "Psychology and Aesthetics" contains a bibliography of sixteen pages, most of it recent work. Important treatises on ARISTOTLE's psychology have been published within the last few years in places as far apart as Kyoto and Louvain (17). It is the proper job of historians of psychology to absorb this material, and to apply to it the same exacting standards as they apply to their experimental work. YOUNG's demand for a sound level of scholarship in our treatment of the history of psychology is still highly pertinent.

What does scholarship imply?. It implies an examination of, and a search for, first-hand source material, it requires a critical analysis both of this material, and even more of derivitive and second-hand reproductions; it involves a reconstruction of the context of the material and of the intellectual and social forces that shaped it; and finally it means an interpretation and evaluation in the light of all the evidence. The historian strives for objectivity; he seeks to ascertain 'wie as eigntlich gewesen ist', what really took place, and like the physical scientist he submits his interpretations to the test of falsification. These were the principles of scientific history established by RANKE and the great German historians of the nineteenth century, and these are still the principles which must be followed, and have been, as YOUNG notes, only imperfectly followed, by historians of psychology.

But is another ingredient in history, if history is to be valuable, and to this YOUNG made no reference; this is the component of imagination. Without imagination

scholarship on its own can kill a subject. It bogs down in minutiae, becomes a preserve of specialists, and its dry-as-dust pedantry ceases to be of any general interest. If the history of psychology descends to this level the working psychologist would understandably wash his hands of it. History is saved and brought to life by imagination. The point was made by Professor Trevor ROPER on retiring from the Chair of History at Oxford three years ago. He entitled his lecture "History and Imagination" (18), and in it he pointed out that "in the end it is the imagination of the historian, not his scholarship or his method (necessary though these are), which will discern the hidden forces of change". Trevor ROPER, of course, was not the first to point this out. Giambattista VICO, the modern founder of the philosophy of history, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, maintained that *fantasia* (imagination) was the essential gift of the historian (19). Imagination, indeed, serves for the historian the same purpose as theory serves for the scientist. It guides and directs all his investigations. It would be inappropriate to speak of theory in history, because, as VICO was the first to see, there is an essential difference between the subject matters of historical and of scientific enquiries. But imagination serves the same regulative function as theory.

Imagination involves two things: it involves evaluation: and it involves the search for significant trends. The events of the past are infinitely numerous; so the historian must select, must have an eye for significance. A few years ago, while on a holiday in Italy, I crossed the Rubicon. History has not, as far as I am aware recorded this particular fact. It has rightly regarded it as of no particular importance, though in some ways my crossing was far more impressive than CAESAR's. I travelled at not less than twenty times the speed of CAESAR, in a sophisticated piece of machinery, which a hundred years ago not even the science fiction writers had envisaged. Looked at purely physically as an event my body crossed this rather insignificant rivulet from north to south as did CAESAR's but the circumstances were totally different, and it if from differing circumstances that significance is derived. CAESAR's crossing marked the point of decision, the crucial move in his take-over of the Roman state, and it became thereby a turning point in world history. This is a crude example of what the historian must necessarily do all the time. He must select his facts in the light of their significance. And this requires imagination. There is a point in Lytton STRACHEY's cynical observation, "Ignorance is the first requisite of the historian, ignorance which simplifies and clarifies, which selects and omits" (20). That is why the statistical approach advocated by CARDNO and others is only of limited and subsidiary value to the historian (21). Significance for the historian is only rarely statistical significance. CAESAR's crossing of the Rubicon was a unique event, and history is above all a sequence of unique events.

Imagination, secondly, involves a search for general trends. For RANKE this was the correlative of the scholarly examination of data, and the establishment of what really happened. The historian, he maintained, had to look beyond the particulars to the universal trends that give them meaning. As E.H. CARR put it in his Trevelyan lecture some years ago, "The historian is not really interested in the unique, but what is general in the unique" (22). There are obviously enormous dangers in this process

of generalising. History can become distorted by biasses and ideologies. The advice of Lord ACTON, Cambridge's famous Regius Professor of History at the turn of the century, to persons about to write history was simply -"don't". But to anyone succumbing to the temptation he observed that "in the moral sciences prejudice is dishonesty. A historian has to fight against the temptation special to his mode of life, temptation from country, class, church, party and so on. The most respectable of these influences are the most dangerous" (23). Nevertheless the risk must be run since without the search from general trends history degenerates into a meaningless catalogue. The answer to biasses and ideologies is not to abandon the search for general trends, but a critical examination of proposals, argument and counter argument, and the subjection of conclusions to the test of falsifications. With these safeguards imagination need not be more dangerous to the historian than theory is to the scientist.

Given these two essential ingredients, scholarship and imagination, the history of psychology could prove an immensely valuable component of the science of psychology. Working psychologists, engaged on research, or active in the field of applications, may be, almost certainly will be, too busy themselves to undertake historical research. There will have to be specialist historians, backed up by the necessary resources, whose job it is to carry out historical studies, and to present them in a way that is interesting and meaningful to their colleagues. And what will the working psychologist gain?. He will gain a certain vision and inspiration. He will see beyond the inevitable frustrations, difficulties and controversies of the present, to the larger movements of which thay are part. As FARRELL argued, psychology has progressed, and history enables the psychologist to see this. It provides us all with encouragement, and a sense of the importance of the task on which we are engaged. For psychology is a central discipline, and has been since the beginning of European thought. It is linked at once to the physical and biological sciences, to the social sciences and humanities, and to philosophy. It is as ARISTOTLE observed (24) not only the most demanding of all studies; it is also, for human geings, the most important. So it would pay psychologists to study their history, and to see that it is done with as much professional expertise as possible. In our own day Dr. Josef BROZEK, to whom this Festschrift is dedicated, has done much to further this cause, and I gladly join in my congratulations to him.

NOTES

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