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Psychology and the American Ideal

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Three recent criticisms of personality and social psychology are noted: the historical, the dialectical, and the interdependence theses These three theses are applied to a critical examination of existing trends in theory and practice, in particular to concepts of androgyny, of mental health, and of moral development. The position is developed that existing conceptions in these and other areas emphasize a cultural and historical thesis of self-contained individualism; syntheses of opposing or desirable characteristics are located within the person rather within an interdependent collectivity. By viewing these and other psychological concepts against this background, we can better understand that (a) these (e.g., androgyny) are not fundamental psychological principles; (b) alternative conceptualizations are both possible and perhaps even more desirable; and (c) in an era in which collective problem solving is necessary, the perpetuation of self-contained, individualistic conceptions can stifle psychology's efforts to contribute to resolving contemporary social issues

A review of the emerging critique of social and personality psychology reveals three important theses: historical, dialectical, and interdependence. I will first briefly examine each of these, next use them as the basis for a critical analysis of the ideal social character contained within psychology's theories, and finally probe the broader implications of this ideal for psychology's role in social problem solving.

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The Historical Thesis

Gergen (1973) offers one of the clearest statements of the historical thesis:

> In essence, the study of social psychology is primarily an historical undertaking. We are essentially engaged in a systematic account of contemporary affairs . . . 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 (pp 316; 318)

According to this thesis, psychology (social psychology in particular) is the study of contemporary social history; our ideas arise

within and refer back to the historical context of their use and are not to be considered fundamental in the natural-science sense. Our concepts are not literal (i.e., context free) but rather are indexical (see Bar-Hillel, 1954; Garfinkel, 1967; Wilson, 1970); their meaning depends on knowing something about the context of their origin and use. Gergen qualifies his analysis, however, suggesting that some phenomena we study are historically durable and resistant to contextual influence, while other phenomena, the less durable, are affected by their historical context.

Recently, I applied the historical thesis to the examination of the concepts of justice as equity and as equality (Sampson, 1975b). I noted that while both conceptions had historical precedents, an equity principle of justice and human relationships was especially congruent with a capitalistic economic system. The latter connection between a supposedly fundamental social-psychological principle (equity) and a contemporary economic system has been noted by several others as well (e.g., Bakan, 1966; Block, 1973). Here we see that our ideas and comprehension of human social behavior are better understood as historically located principles rather than as psychological universals describing fundamental aspects of human behavior.

The Dialectical Thesis

The dialectical view has recently been stated by Riegel (1976). While he has restricted himself to an examination of a dialectical approach in developmental psychology, his ideas and his manifesto are clearly intended to apply more broadly to all branches of the discipline A dialectical version of psychology is concerned with "the study of actions and changes" (Riegel, 1976, p. 696), with conflict and contradiction rather than with equilibrium or stability. A dialectical analysis searches for those contradictions that create individual and cultural growth and development.

Rychlak (1968) had earlier offered an insightful analysis of dialectical thinking within personality psychology. It was his contention that "dialectical terminology presents us with the *most accurate* picture of the fundamental human condition" (Rychlak, 1968, p. 255). A dialectical perspective argues that we grow through a process of becoming; that this process consists of a series of oppositions; our status at any one time is the synthesis of previous theses and antitheses; each synthesis, however, is simply another part of this ever emerging process; it forms another thesis, and so forth.

Carlson (1972) likewise has called for the use of a dialectical principle in the study of personality. She suggests that the polarities of psychological understanding (e.g., masculine–feminine; agency–communion; instrumental–expressive) "are not merely ends of a scale, but qualities coexisting within the individual" (Carlson, 1972, p. 22). Carlson continues by noting that such polarities

> have received little conceptual elaboration and virtually no serious attention as frameworks for inquiry on personality dynamics Since polarities have proven useful intellectual tools elsewhere in the social sciences and humanities . . . it is surprising that psychologists have neglected the heuristic value of making explicit the dynamic aspects of polarities hidden in currently popular formulations. (p. 22)

In Carlson's thinking, as with the other dialectical approaches, polarities are connected by a relationship of oppositeness; they imply tension, and "their integration is a developmental task for the individual and for a viable social group" (Carlson, 1972, p. 20). This type of dialectical formulation has recently been expressed in Bem's concept of psychological androgyny (Bem, 1974, 1975). One and the same person embodies both masculine and feminine qualities; androgyny is presumably the synthesis of these opposing tendencies. I return to this example in a later section of this article.

The Thesis of Interdependence

The thesis of interdependence has been clearly stated recently by Pepitone (1976) His analysis echoes the earlier formulations found in the symbolic interactionist approaches (e.g., Blumer, 1966; Mead, 1934)

and also in the Lewinian field-theoretical approach (Lewin, 1951). Pepitone questions the adequacy of a purely individual psychology that ignores the normative aspects of behavior. Individuals are the interdependent parts of larger systems; the determinants or sources of behavior are said to be characteristics of these interdependent, collective systems. In concert with the Mead-Blumer model, Pepitone argues that "the causes of behavior cannot be clearly and validly specified unless one defines the contours of the system or unity in which the causal processes operate" (1976, p. 642). Basically, the thesis of interdependence argues that a purely individual psychology cannot "account for a large portion of the behavior that social psychologists try to explain" (p. 652). Given this inadequacy, Pepitone argues for "a reorientation in both theory and research methodology" (p. 652), so that psychology can more adequately represent the collective, interdependent (and normative) determinants of most behavior.

A complete development of the argument in support of these three theses can be found in the original articles and supplementary material to which I have referred. It is not my aim to develop further the cases or documentation that each author has provided. Rather, my goal in this article is to use these three theses and their relationships to examine what I feel to be an important conclusion regarding the main thrust and implication of much of social and personality psychology. Each thesis directs our attention to a particular shortcoming and necessary modification of our existing ways of thinking.

I would like to begin my own analysis concretely by focusing these three principles on the emerging theories of male and female role behavior, in particular the concept of androgyny. It should be understood that I have selected this focus for illustrative purposes; it does not represent the only area in which this analysis can be applied. Androgyny does represent a useful case example, however, one that should facilitate our understanding the larger implications of the analysis. But before we deal with this example, we must first establish a foundation: the cultural ethos or climate within which this concept and others have emerged.

Self-Contained Individualism

According to the historical thesis, we must turn to our contemporary society in order to more fully grasp the cultural and historical bases for our psychological concepts. Although there is no definitive contemporary history upon which we can draw, a predominant theme that describes our cultural ethos is *self-contained individualism*. Our culture emphasizes individuality, in particular a kind of individual self-sufficiency that describes an extreme of the individualistic dimension. This individualistic theme led Gergen, for example, to comment that "if our values were otherwise, social conformity could be viewed as prosolidarity behavior" (1973, p. 312) and Pepitone to note that his arguments in support of the interdependence principle "may not be persuasive to social psychologists raised in the (highly normative) individualistic tradition" (1976, p. 643). Under the rubric of egocentrism, Hogan (1975) has examined several important aspects of this individualistic cultural and psychological perspective:

> It seems clear that the dominant temper of American psychology, particularly in those branches that deal with the whole person, his development, and his social behavior, is wedded to an individualistic perspective . To the degree that this is true, much American psychology can be plausibly described as theoretically egocentric (p 534)

Many aspects of the recent debate over Campbell's article on the genetics of altruism can be understood within this context (see Campbell, 1975, for the original statement and the May 1976 issue of the *American Psychologist* [Vol. 31, pp. 341–384] for further aspects of the debate). Several critics have noted that human interdependency is culturally built into the organism and does not require a genetic argument to support it (e.g., Goldschmidt, 1976) and, furthermore, that there is no necessary opposition between egoism (i.e., individualism) and cul-

ture. Campbell's own position, however, develops from an individualistic perspective that opposes egoism against altruism. From this view, it appears as though culture is lined up against the individual, but in this case, the confrontation is beneficial, as culture compels otherwise egoistic persons to behave altruistically.

This issue is highlighted in a quotation from Bryan (1972), who notes some of the costs of altruism:

> A helpful person may well be intrusive (e.g., invade our privacy), moralistic (e.g., prevent us from "doing our thing"), or simply conforming to the status quo of proprieties . . . a helpful person with all of his "good" intentions may well violate a variety of personal freedoms that we cherish. (pp. 101–102)

This passage clearly contains the opposition posited between prosocial acts and individual freedom. This opposition, however, flows from an individualistically oriented cultural ethos. The ideas, "invasion of privacy" or "being prevented from doing our own thing," are statements whose meaning is understandable within an individualistic context; they would be alien within a more collectivistic cultural ethos. Egoism and altruism are in opposition only in an individualistic setting; their opposition is not written in granite, genetics, or our fundamental human psychology.

The self-contained quality of contemporary individualism has been recognized by several persons (e.g., Sampson, 1975a, especially Chapter 9; Sobo, 1975, refers to this quality as narcissism). The self-contained person is one who does not require or desire others for his or her completion or life; self-contained persons either are or hope to be entire unto themselves. Self-containment is the extreme of independence: needing or wanting no one. It is fundamentally antithetical to the concept of interdependence.

Although self-contained individualism is an extreme, it is not unreasonable as a description of an emerging cultural ideal, at least among certain segments of contemporary American society. It forms the basis of our national energy policy, in which self-sufficiency is an oft-stated goal. It forms the pattern of behavior of many persons, many of whom wish to contain within their own household units the multitude of products that they are unwilling to share on a larger, community-wide basis.

I am reminded of a Sunday morning radio program I recently heard. The clergyman was reporting the results of a discussion he had conducted with several groups of young people. He gave them a problem to deal with in their small discussion groups: Describe an ideal community that was conscious of energy conservation. The young people indicated that this ideal community would be one in which each family had several cars, a washer, dryer, several television sets, high-fi equipment, lawnmowers, and so forth. Their ideal also included several less material matters, but products comprised an important part of their ideal community. The clergyman asked them why their ideal needed so much duplication of equipment, why several households could not have a shared, central supply depot. Their near-unanimous reply was that cooperation and sharing of that sort would be too difficult. One need only think of university departments, which like that ideal community, attempt to gather unto themselves their own arsenal of supplies and equipment. Likewise, we are reminded of Hardin's analysis of the tragedy of the commons (1968) as well as Platt's recent analysis of social traps and social fences (1973). In all of these, self-interest directs individuals to gather as much as they can for themselves, disregarding the larger costs to others and to the sense of community. It would appear that the clergyman's young people are not simply reflecting an adolescent stage of development, but rather something more fundamental to their culture, an ethos which adults share.

Androgyny: The Dialectical Synthesis

The dialectical thesis in personality and social psychology has recently emerged in the context of masculinity and femininity or Bakan's (1966) analysis of agency and communion. In both cases, we have two

polarities and a unifying, ideal synthesis. The synthesis for Bem (1974, 1975) and for Spence, Helmreich, and Stapp (1975) involves androgyny, an integration of masculine and feminine qualities. For Bakan, this synthesis involves a balancing of agency and communion.

Bem has argued that the androgynous pattern may "come to define a more human standard of psychological health" (1974, p. 1962). Androgyny increases the individual's flexibility and ability to deal with situations that are both masculine and feminine in their press. She notes that sex-typing restricts "one's behavior in unnecessary and perhaps even dysfunctional ways" (Bem & Lenney, 1976, p. 53). Spence et al. (1975) argue and present supportive data that indicate that high self-esteem corresponds with a more androgynous orientation. Likewise, Bakan's (1966) analysis suggests that agency needs to be controlled by communion and vice versa.

It appears, therefore, that one of the most important areas of recent theory and research in which the dialectical thesis has been pursued involves the case of androgyny. The opposition and conflict between qualities is recognized, as is their synthesis. Furthermore, research that tests this formulation finds it a more useful way of understanding sex-related behavior than the previous nondialectical formulations.

Dialectics and the Cultural Ideal

The combination of the historical and the dialectical perspectives, when applied to the case of androgyny, highlights the thesis of this article. The dialectical synthesis that androgyny is said to represent is congruent with an individualistic principle; on its surface and in its analysis, androgyny, as a valued individual synthesis of masculine and feminine characteristics, is incongruent with the thesis of interdependence. The ideal person is androgynous, a self-contained male-and-female, one who has balanced within him- or herself the principles of agency and communion. An individualistic perspective leads us to locate the dialectical synthesis within the individual rather than within an interdependent system of which the individual is a part. Thus the union of the historical and the dialectical theses in this and numerous other instances brings us into a direct conflict with the third critique, the thesis of interdependence.

If we began with a different historical perspective, however, we could arrive at a dialectical synthesis that is consistent with a principle of interdependence. Suppose that rather than sharing a highly individualistic, self-contained ethos, we lived in a time or a place in which a more collectivistic ethos pervaded. According to the historical thesis, we would expect our theories of human behavior to reflect this ethos. As Gergen (1973) has noted, under a collectivist historical and cultural ethos, we would probably interpret all highly individualistic or self-contained human tendencies as alienating and as opposed to social integration. The self-contained, androgynous individual might well turn out to be the cultural alien rather than the ideal.

This latter possibility of an alternative social arrangement was contained in Benedict's (1970) early view of a highly synergistic society, it is also a part of Deutsch's (1949) view of a cooperative, promotively interdependent relationship. Benedict's highly synergistic society is one in which

> the individual's goals of self-interest are related to collective goals of mutual benefit . . . personal rewards are intimately tied into collective rewards; one attains personal goals, thus, by means of mutual, joint action. In such societies, one person's gain is everyone's gain (Sampson, 1976, p. 83)

Contrasting, low-synergy societies are those "in which personal gain is something privately sought, separable from mutual benefit for all" (Sampson, 1976, p. 83).

It would seem reasonable to suggest that in a more collectivistic (highly synergistic) cultural milieu, dialectical syntheses would more likely be located within an interdependent system rather than necessarily within the individual. In this view, androgynous individuals who are entirely self-contained would be excessively atomistic and

isolated from their fellow human beings; they would not be the cultural ideal.

This is an important point. What I am suggesting, using androgyny as my illustrative example, is that two rather differing perspectives regarding the location of the synthesis between opposing sex-role tendencies can be developed. The first perspective, fitting a self-contained individualistic society, locates such syntheses *within* the individual. Its cultural ideal therefore is the person who contains unto him- or herself all the esteemed and valued qualities of the culture. In this case, each person contains the best of the male and the best of the female characteristics. An alternative perspective, fitting a more collectivistic, highly synergistic society, locates the syntheses between opposing qualities within the interdependent collectivity. The cultural ideal is the person who at some level recognizes his or her interdependency with others in order to achieve satisfaction and completion as a human being.

The androgynous ideal, therefore, fits our contemporary historical and cultural context but conflicts with the third critical thesis regarding interdependence. In this connection, it is important to note that I am *not* disputing the research findings involving androgyny and self-esteem and androgyny and improved adaptability. I am attempting to locate these outcomes in their proper historical and cultural context and view them thereby as syntheses that are uniquely suited to our contemporary individualistic and self-contained ideal.

Likewise, by placing the concept of androgyny within its historical and cultural setting, we can see that androgyny is neither a necessary, an inevitable, nor a fundamentally more desirable psychological quality. Within a culture that emphasizes self-contained individuality, the androgynous individual may be described as having achieved the cultural ideal, as contrasted with persons who are sex-typed as masculine or feminine. An alternative social system, one of high synergy, might very well prefer a more sex-typed ideal and find the androgynous character to be least well adapted to the cultural matrix.

Interdependent Dialectical Syntheses

We will shortly examine other implications that follow from a self-contained individualistic perspective, as compared with an interdependent alternative. But first, let us examine what is meant by locating a synthesis of opposing characteristics within the system of interdependent persons rather than within one individual. First, we note that both Carlson (1972) and Riegel (1976) introduce a dialectical analysis that allows *as one possibility* a synthesis that is located within an interdependent relationship rather than within the individual as such. For example, Carlson states:

> Here one must be prepared to consider manifestations of polarities: (a) at different levels (e.g., conscious/unconscious) within the person, (b) in developmental sequences (e.g., psychosocial crises), and (c) in transactions with other persons and situations (e.g., resolution of male–female polarity in heterosexual love. (1972, p. 23)

Carlson's third point (c) contains the essential idea that polarities may be synthesized between two interdependent persons; thus, she implies that syntheses are not *necessarily* or *inevitably* to be located *within* the single individual. The androgynous solution to the male–female polarity, therefore, may be only one of several solutions. That it is held up as ideal seems more to reflect a self-contained, individualistic historical and cultural pattern than any fundamental psychological principle.

Riegel (1976) introduces the concept of an outer dialectic to convey the same possibility of locating dialectical syntheses between interdependent persons, in addition to syntheses within the single individual. Riegel's example of the orchestra offers us one useful model for such interdependent syntheses.

Bales' analysis of group leadership proves especially instructive in further clarifying the meaning and some implications of locating a dialectical synthesis within an inter-

dependent system (Bales, 1955, 1958). Although his dialectically opposed principles are not directly formulated as masculine versus feminine, Bales' emphasis on the instrumental functions of leadership on the one hand and the expressive functions on the other readily lends itself to a masculine–feminine, agency–communion interpretation.

It was Bales' contention (with substantial supporting research data) that the instrumental and expressive functions were sufficiently opposed in their operation that it was rare to find what he termed the great man leader: that is, a single person who embodied both functions. The most likely synthesis for leadership was found in two specialist types within a given group: the task specialist (instrumental functions emphasized) and the maintenance specialist (expressive functions emphasized). In other words, Bales located the synthesis between the two opposing functions within the interdependent group of persons rather than within any one individual. His leadership ideal is really not the great man but rather the interdependent system that effectively utilizes the two kinds of specialists.

We learn several important lessons from Bales' work. First, we are reminded that our focus is on functions and not necessarily on traits of particular persons. This is especially important to recognize in the area of sex-role behavior. There is no requirement that females perform "expressive functions" nor that males perform "instrumental functions." Who performs what functions is a different issue. What is important, however, is that sets of functions be performed and integrated (i.e., the synthesis) and that the performance and its synthesis need not be (and rarely are) the entire province of a single individual.

The second lesson we learn from Bales involves the distribution or location of functions. Leadership functions need not be nor are they typically all performed by the designated leader. The performance is carried on within the interdependent collectivity and not by any one individual. To state this in a slightly different way, what we can now see clearly are at least two alternative possibilities for locating instrumental and expressive functions:

1. The opposing functions and their synthesis can be located entirely within the same individual. But as Bales notes, this is a very rare and unusual pattern, and, furthermore, it may not even be the most desirable pattern.

2. The opposing functions and their synthesis can be located within an interdependent system. Bales suggests the emergence of role specialists, each of whom emphasizes one function; together they provide the necessary synthesis for the group.

Although it would take us beyond the scope of the present article, it is important for us to note still another possibility, varying as a function of temporal rather than the spatial (i.e., location) factor we have been discussing. This temporal possibility is suggested by Carlson (her second point [b] in the previous discussion of her work). It has also been suggested by Hogan (1976). The essential idea is that a person may accomplish a synthesis of opposing characteristics at different parts of his or her life cycle. For example, agency may dominate early in life to be replaced by communion later in life. Given this temporal possibility, it would seem even more restrictive to insist that syntheses be not only located within the individual but also at a particular moment of his or her life cycle.

Undoubtedly, other alternatives are possible. The point, however, is that the location of the synthesis within the individual is only one of several possibilities. There is no fundamental requirement that this be so; rather, the assumed desirability of locating masculine–feminine syntheses within the individual, to continue with our example, seems to reflect the historical and cultural ethos of self-contained individualism. In emphasizing androgyny in this way, social and personality psychology is presenting an ideal, which, though congruent with existing cultural themes, is not the only possibility, nor for that matter perhaps even the most desirable possibility.

Psychology acts as though it has discovered something fundamental about persons; it holds this something aloft as an ideal to be achieved. By ignoring the cultural and historical conditions that present this as the ideal, it fails to provide an adequate assessment of alternatives or the implications that derive from its ideal. For example, does self-contained individualism offer a reasonable way of dealing with the massive problems that confront a complex and interdependent world?

It seems that we have adopted only one form of synthesis as the preferred mode, in part because we are blinded by our own cultural heritage and have difficulty in seeing its impact on our formulations, in part becaue we have few theories or methods that direct us towards alternative formulations. What I am saying, therefore, is that within an individualistic historical and cultural ethos, the self-contained individual, the androgynous type for example, is the ideal. In an alternative system, however, that same character is neither ideal nor perhaps desirable. Androgyny as a sign of good health thereby reflects an individualistic social arrangement in which persons wish to be self-contained and self-sufficient in order to be successful.

I am also implying (and will shortly examine this point) that a self-contained individualism that recommends androgyny as the ideal has not been empirically demonstrated to be a healthful or productive social arrangement. All that has been empirically demonstrated is the usefulness of androgyny in our existing cultural pattern. But if that pattern itself is opposed to health, then so too is any specific manifestation of it, such as androgyny. If anything, to reinforce this as the ideal seems to contribute to further human isolation and alienation and to thwart necessary cooperative ventures that build upon and recognize the needs of interdependence for their solution. Authoritarian systems of governance would seem most likely if the self-contained ideal is fully realized. How else to govern this group of excessive individualists?

The ideal in an interdependent framework is not the one individual who has accomplished a synthesis within him- or herself; the ideal is to be able to work out one's personal function in harmony with others who are working out theirs. And all of this occurs in recognition that one's actions are vital to the maintenance of the collective enterprise. This will sound excessively utopian only to self-contained, individualist ears. It is not excessively utopian, but rather descriptive of a different cultural and historical ethos in which interdependence rather than independence is the dominating theme.

Psychology's Self-Contained Individualism: Further Examples

The perspective I am proposing differs from the usual point of view within social and personality psychology. Adrogyny is only one example of the individualist cultural press to locate the ideal synthesis within individuals rather than within interdependent systems. We will briefly examine several other cases. What we are looking for are statements regarding the psychological ideal that reveal a self-contained or individualistic image. These related ideals describe the individual as the possessor of all the valued qualities of the culture or see collective endeavors as thwarting individual self-realization.

The Teacher-Scholar

Perhaps this is not so much a psychological thesis as it is a dominant perspective within which most academics do their work. Thus, it serves as the background culture. which undoubtedly plays a part in affecting the conceptions we formulate. The model is of the teacher-scholar, the *one* person who embodies within him- or herself the full range of perhaps opposing qualities that compose being a good teacher and a good scholar. This ideal is not simply the result of our apparent abhorrence of specialization. rather it seems to reflect a more profound and worrisome abhorrence of interdepend-

ence, of locating the synthesis of opposing qualities within interdependent collectivities and not inevitably nor even desirably within the individual. Universities long for their own great man or woman and have difficulty in approving either the scholar who cannot or will not teach or the teacher who cannot or will not perform scholarship.

Mental Health

In general, our contemporary views of mental health emphasize a self-contained, individualistic ideal: The person who possesses all the qualities from whatever listing of positive traits we choose, for example, self-actualization, autonomy, or mastery (Jahoda, 1958). We have difficulty in thinking of these traits as functions that can be located within an interdependent collectivity rather than within the single individual. Thus, the burden for good health is the individual's; he or she must come to possess all that is good and desirable.

What would health and illness look like, however, if we envisioned these in interdependent terms? In this formulation, we would not expect the individual as such to be the repository of all that was good, healthful, and desirable, but we would seek health or illness within the larger, collective unit. This conception is not new to proponents of family therapy. The labeled sick patient (e.g., child) is said to represent some attribute of the larger family system; treatment must be oriented towards that system and not solely the individual member. We are reminded here of one of Lewin's own principles: "The re-educative process has to fulfill a task which is essentially equivalent to a change in culture" (Lewin & Grabbe, 1945, p. 59). What Lewin was pointing out was the basic interdependency that linked person with person. As Benne (1976) has recently noted:

> Counseling and therapy have traditionally sought to facilitate change in persons with little or no assumption of responsibility for facilitating changes in the cultural environment in which people function outside the counseling or therapeutic setting. This tends to place the entire burden of behavioral adjustment or adaptation upon the individual. . . . There is now a tendency to involve significant other persons and their common culture in the process of re-examination, re-evaluation and commitment to change along with the person who has felt the environmental stress most deeply. (p. 33)

Only a self-contained, individualistic model locates so much within the person and places so great a burden of responsibility on the person for his or her transformation back into health. The interdependent thesis would argue, as we have noted, that health and illness are aspects of larger systems and are not located entirely within the single person.

There are implications of this formulation for both theory and practice. Our theories in particular would have to reflect alternatives to a self-contained, individualistic perspective. We would note that *one* healthful possibility, but not the only one nor necessarily the most desirable one, involves the individual who contains the totality of positive (healthful) qualities. An alternative, however, would be people who contain only some healthful qualities; they must be located in supportive and completing contexts with others who contain other kinds of healthful qualities so that all may mutually benefit. Once we think in these terms, we can take a new look at treatment programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Synanon, or even halfway houses, to name but a few.

Our tendency has been to see these programs in individualistic terms; we see them as substituting a somewhat healthful dependency on the group for a disturbed dependency on alcohol, drugs, or delinquent behavior. But, we still think of these as only halfway stations on the way to full independence. And we see the person with continuing dependence on them as weak or not fully "cured." The formulation I am developing sees these in more interdependent terms; they are not halfway stations, but full and important completions for an interdependent mode of living together. They reflect an important and I think healthful synthesis, one, however, that is seen in less than a fully positive light *because* of our cultural emphasis on a self-contained individualism.

In other words, mental health need not be

seen in terms of independent functioning for the individual, but rather interdependent functioning for a collective unit or group of persons. No one member contains all the healthful qualities, but the group as an ongoing unit does. The individual is not seen to be any the weaker or less secure because of his or her interdependencies on others for maintenance, but rather can be seen as accomplishing an alternative cultural ideal, one that may even prove to be more beneficial in the long run.

Socialization

We are eager to help persons become autonomous and independent. Our socialization goals try to facilitate persons' emergence from their embeddedness in the family, in school, and in other collective settings to take their place, on their own two feet, as autonomous (self-contained) individuals. We seem to prefer independence to interdependence, even though some lip service is paid to the latter. Few efforts are directed toward training in interdependence; our goals are to accomplish our cultural ideal, the self-contained individual who in many respects no longer requires his or her collective roots to provide guidance.

Some of my own research (Sampson, Fisher, Angel, Mulman, & Sullins, Note 1), later confirmed by Mantell (1974), provides an excellent reflection of this particular view. My study compared indicted Vietnam war draft resisters with military cadets (Mantell's comparison group were Green Berets); data and conclusions suggested the importance of autonomous and independent thinking as a basic foundation to becoming a resister. The cadet and Green Beret groups were dependent on their group standards and culture. From one perspective, we would argue, as I did, that the "good person," the "moral person," the "responsible person" is one who can think and act independently of his or her group contexts; who can evaluate issues by separating self from group. Is this not also Kohlberg's (1968, 1969) ideal, the person who has transcended his or her own culture and collectivity, who is able to reason, to formulate, and to think in broader terms? Recently Hogan (1975) and Riegel (1976) reached a similar conclusion about the Kohlberg-Piaget formulations.

I think it reasonable now to moderate my own earlier conclusion by locating it squarely within its proper historical and cultural context. Independence from group pressure may be a necessary prerequisite to "moral" reasoning and behavior in an individualistic ethos, but this does not mean that we have discovered a universally true, fundamental fact concerning individual psychological functioning. Thus, we would have to take exception not only to what my own and Mantell's work has implied but also to the implication of Kohlberg's and others' analyses of moral development.

In what cultural and historical context does the greatest good involve being able to break apart from one's collective base to stand alone, self-sufficient and self-contained? In the context of an individualistic society, in which individualism and self-containment is the ideal, the person who most separates self from the group is thereby seen as embodying that ideal most strongly; the person who remains wedded to a group is not our esteemed ideal.

We can take this line of analysis one step further. The very cognitive capabilities that are said to be required to take distance and separate self from group and thereby facilitate progressive moral development operate within the context of an ethos that values and emphasizes individualism. To be sure, Kohlberg has tempered his scheme with a universalistic set of standards regarding human welfare, but the main thrust of the cognitive–developmental argument involves the person's capacity to remove self from group embeddedness. I add, parenthetically, that these cognitive abilities not only reflect a kind of self-contained individualism, but moreover a masculine (that is, agentic) thesis as well. It should come as no surprise, however, that a masculine cultural ideal is adopted as though it were a universal cultural ideal. That is, masculine-agentic cognitive abilities to separate self from others

are taken to be an ideal rather than the alternative feminine-communal abilities to merge self with other. But, again, does this not simply reflect a historical and cultural emphasis and not something more fundamental in the human condition?

What would a high level of moral development be, however, in a more collectivist arrangement? Would we not think of an individual who is skillful in forever seeing self as separate from group as a less than desirable character? Would we not be inclined to view the most moral character as the person who was most in concert with his or her group's own ideals?

We are well aware of the degree to which the development of abstract cognitive abilities helps persons take distance from and separate from others; such abilities help us avoid merging with objects and others. And yet, if we take those abilities to their extreme, they would represent, in a collective cultural system, persons who were incapable of merging with their groups, of seeing their own interests and the group's interests to be coincident. In other words, the cognitive–developmental thesis itself is rooted to a self-contained, individualistic context; as it is applied, therefore, to issues of moral growth and development, it disposes us to view the moral ideal as one who can stand up in defiance of the group and collective rather than as one who can successfully work within the interdependent context of the group. Furthermore, to emphasize *separating* rather than *uniting* cognitive capabilities is to reinforce an agentic principle over a communal principle; the masculine ideal is imposed as *the* ideal.

Culturally, we are fearful of this kind of group-based loyalty and collectivism. But converting this fear into a theory about some fundamental, objective psychological truth regarding human growth and development seems misguided; it is but another reflection of our individualistic cultural bias creeping into our theories of human behavior. It is within a heavily individualistic system that we pit individual against group and come out rooting for the success of the individual over the group. This does mark our present era; indeed our cheers are not without merit in many cases. But we do our science a disservice if we believe that this is an inevitability carved in granite, for then we fail to see the historical individualism (and agency) of our perspective and fail to offer helpful alternatives (e.g., a more collectivist view). And, as we propagate our views in the guise of psychological truths, we may even be contributing to the destruction of necessary cooperation and interdependence.

Equity Theory

I, among others, have already examined how certain aspects of equity theory continue to reflect an individualistic thesis (see Sampson, 1975b). Defining equity within a larger system of relationships has escaped the attention of many social psychologists who continue to search within the psychology of the individual for his or her demands for personal equity rather than within the group or collectivity for less individualistic principles.

Encounter, Sensitivity, and the Growth-Group Movement

The growing and seemingly never-ending developments within the sensitivity training, or growth-group, movement seem likewise heavily burdened with the self-contained individualistic thesis. The greatest good is individual self-expression; the group and the culture are seen as the evils that thwart freedom and independence. What has happened to the concept of interdependence in such settings? Persons are helped to separate themselves even further from others. Although much of this work takes place within a group context, it appears to be more a case of parallel play than of real interdependence. Too often, I have seen individuals so wrapped up in themselves that they are incapable of reaching out to others; they evidence little interest in the goings on until it is their turn. And this narcissistic focus is reinforced by many who facilitate such

growth experiences. Growth has come to mean individual growth at the expense of the growth and recognition of interdependence.

Self-Contained Individualism: A Further Note on History

I have raised questions in this paper about some of our cherished psychological beliefs and ideals. Few will actively applaud the ideal of a self-contained individualist; many will find it disturbing to tolerate placing androgyny, mental health, and cognitive and moral development within the purview of this kind of analysis. I have contributed to these areas in my own work; I find my own analyses disturbing in their implications as well. If I am casting the first stone, therefore, it is from a position of equal guilt and complicity. Does my own work (e.g., applauding the qualities of the resisters and bemoaning the qualities of the cadets) also truly conform to an individualistic ideal that I now find potentially destructive of human welfare? As I have suggested in this article, I think it does. But I could not let matters rest there; I pondered the questions of why and found some helpful understanding in the analysis that the sociologist Nisbet (1966) made concerning Max Weber. Let me first spell that out and then connect it to the theme of this paper.

Weber's analysis of bureaucracies (1947) led him to focus on the concept he termed *rationalization*. This is not the psychologist's principle of justification and excuse-making, but rather the dynamic force of the bureaucratic organization. To rationalize a human activity is to abstract it and to impersonalize it; rationalization eliminates the personal and the unique from organizational practice. As Nisbet notes, Weber was struck by the important and beneficial consequences that derived from the creation of large bureaucracies and their operational process of rationalization. Both bureaucratization and rationalization, like Fromm's concept of freedom (1941), were "creative and liberating." But, as Nisbet comments, their liberating qualities were based on their being posed in opposition to the stifling structures of organization that characterized the Middle Ages. In other words, so long as rationalization and bureaucratization were forces opposing excessively personalized, traditional, and familial forms of organization, the overall effect was liberating for human welfare.

What happened, however, is captured eloquently by Nisbet:

> With the gradual diminution and desiccation of this structure . . . rationalization threatens now to become, not creative and liberating, but mechanizing, regimenting, and ultimately, reason-destroying. (Nisbet, 1966, p. 294)

One piece of the dialectic running its course without opposition from the other soon becomes a threat in its own right.

Now, let us apply this same mode of thinking to individualism. In the context of the "overorganized and reason-destroying" quality of collective life, individualism, self-containment, freedom from the group, and standing apart (or trying to) as a unique individual—all seem to be bold and liberating gestures. Yet, even as overorganization and rationalization can destroy reason when their dialectical opponent is missing, excessive individualism and the pursuit of a self-contained ideal likewise can destroy reason and human life. Being a self-contained individual —needing or wanting no one, avoiding interdependence and contact with others so as to secure one's own satisfaction—seems to be good so long as it is held in opposition to overdomination and submergence in the collective. But that same force fails and is destructive when it becomes the guiding perspective.

We are experiencing individuals' efforts to break free from those interdependencies that have bound and constrained them. Our psychological theories are responsive to this cultural ideal. But this ideal has its moment in time; we need to see it against the wider backdrop of history. Our contemporary psychological ideal is the person who fights against interdependent collective activity; this is as ill-equipped and ill-informed an ideal as a psychological principle of the Middle Ages that offers an ideal of the

"organization man or woman," a person who has lost uniqueness and individuality and has submitted to impersonal, rationalized bureaucratic rule.

A self-contained ideal fails us at just that moment when interdependence is necessary both to solve our problems and to do so in a democratic rather than autocratic manner. Self-contained individualism can be governed only at great cost to human welfare. Interdependence, not self-sufficiency, holds out the best hope for democratic processes of governance and national problem solving. Is it so paradoxical to note that only in recognition of our group belongingness and collective needs, rather than our independence and self-sufficiency, can we be democratically governed? The tragedy of the commons is a tragedy for persons who pursue self-contained individualism as their ideal. Such persons require strong, autocratic governance to control their appetites. Democratic problem solving builds upon a sensitivity to collective interests and interdependence. Hogan (1975) and Barker (1960) reached a similar conclusion, though Barker's analysis came at this issue from a different theoretical perspective.

Basically, my heroes and much of the psychological ideal have been those resisters and others (e.g., androgynous types, persons of advanced "moral development") who have been able to stand up in defiance of the group or who have contained within themselves all the desirable qualities of their culture. While this is understandable in our historical and cultural context, like rationalization and bureaucratization, the liberating effects of such self-contained individualism soon pale and become unliberating and reason-destroying when they become the driving force of history at a time when major social issues demand interdependence.

Toward a Conclusion

I think that it is possible to outline several consequences that derive from an individualistic as contrasted with a more interdependent focus:

1. A substantial burden of personal responsibility for success or failure is placed on the individual within the individualistc perspectve; responsibility is located within the larger community in the interdependent perspective. Basically, if individuals are supposed to achieve within themselves a synthesis of opposing characteristics or possess all the desirable qualities of their culture, then the burden is upon them to measure up to this standard. The community is not the responsible unit; society is not the responsible unit; the burden falls squarely on the shoulders of the individual. Is it any wonder that failure or fear of failure wreaks its havoc on so many? Is it any wonder that persons shy away from competition or rush headlong into it, trying to take everything unto themselves? We stand by and cheer their successes. Where are we when they have failed?

2. As Caplan and Nelson noted (1973), by placing so heavy a burden on the individual, we likewise place the burden for resolving problems and inducing change squarely in the hands of the individual. The collectivity again is spared its complicity. We search for the failing person, the evil person, the disturbed personality and neglect the larger network of persons within which the "target" is located. Likewise, we consider the person who requires a continuing system of supportive, interdependent relations to be weak or not quite cured and returned to health. Thus we fail to entertain as a serious alternative the maintenance of collectives that resolve crises, rather than individuals who must carry the entire weight individually.

3. Psychology plays an important role, even more so as it has become the new popular ideology, religion, and justifier for a variety of social programs. That role can continue to serve an isolating, atomizing, individualizing, and alienating function, or it can help refocus us on the fundamental interdependencies that need nurturance as well.

We have examined the role that psychological thinking plays in confirming an individualistic, self-contained ideal. Excessive individualism leads to alienation and es-

trangement; it isolates person from person; it separates us from the very nutrient soil out of which we were cast in the first place. Interdependence is inbred early as we form our basic attachments to parents and others; yet we see the breakdown of those attachments espoused as an ideal in the island-like ethos of our contemporary culture.

We are not rushing headlong into a new, exciting, and liberating age. Societal disorder reflects a basic inability to cope with our interdependencies; persons avoid their connections with others; avoid the basic human bonds that are essential for human survival and enhancement. Our psychological theories must do more than reflect what is, they must place what is in the context of our existing ethos and then provide some helpful, empirical guidelines regarding the consequences of that ethos and alternative possibilities.

In the present context, androgyny as self-contained individualism and morality as independence or transcendence from collective loyalties may be related to high self-esteem and personal success. But in the long run, how can a society manage its complex problems of energy and population policy and its welfare programs, for example, while supporting so individualistic an outlook? How can human welfare be based on people's detachment from others and their seeking to be self-contained? How can a democratic system of governance survive when collective interests and recognition of vital interdependencies are felt to be too constraining? Will psychology be in the forefront of tomorrow's problem solving or remain in the backwater, a chronicler of today's troubles and an ideological contributor to our cultural breakdown?

Psychology plays an important role in reinforcing an individualistic, self-contained perspective; it helps play down the importance of interdependent values. It locates syntheses of opposing qualities within persons rather than within interdependent systems and thereby "gives away" (Smith, 1973) an unattainable and I think undesirable model of ideal human behavior.

If collective solutions to problems are necessary, what important role can psychology have if its approaches are so heavily individualistic and even anticollectivist? The value bias of the discipline thwarts effective problem solving on anything other than a purely individual level, and even there, more problems seem to be created than resolved (e.g., placing so heavy a burden on individuals to contain everything within themselves).

What can be done? First, on the theoretical level, we need to reconceptualize our subject matter, building on some of the ideas proposed earlier by Lewin and Blumer and Mead as well as the recent ideas suggested by Pepitone and others. We must look for dialectical processes and syntheses within systems and not simply within persons taken individually. We must focus as much of our thinking on the interdependencies that tie us as on the individuating qualities that separate us. Our theories of personality must deindividuate themselves; we must develop conceptions of personality similar to that proposed by Sullivan (1953), for example, in which personality is located in the interpersonal field and not packaged entirely within the individual. Reconceptualizing in this manner will run counter to the immediate historical thrust of our society, but I suspect we will be early in line for a coming, more collectivistic thrust.

Methodologically, we must begin to focus our research and our observation techniques on the level of interdependent systems; we must seek ways to evaluate balance and equilibrium within systems rather than within the parts of the system. Lewin's and others' early work on the interpersonal Zeigarnik effect (e.g., Lewis, 1944; Lewis & Franklin, 1944), aspects of which have been followed up by Hornstein and his associates (e.g., Hornstein, 1972), provides us with one important example.

Psychology does have a role to play. As an active participant in that field, I hope that our role will be directed towards human welfare. In this article, I have suggested some ways in which our present thinking

seems to run counter to this goal. Psychology has been describing the American ideal, but we have a larger task before us than that.

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