

## THE NEED FOR SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY<sup>1</sup>

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On the surface it is just coincidence that the foundation of this association and the publication of the 'Principles of Psychology' of William James were so nearly contemporaneous, their respective dates being, as you know, 1891 and 1890. In view, however, of the depth and breadth of the influence of James, we who are celebrating to-day our twenty-fifth anniversary are at liberty, I think, to consider the coincidence as more than chronological, and to date back by one year the gestation of our association. At all events, it would be ungrateful to engage in any discussion of the past and future of social psychology without recalling the few rich pages of the 'Principles' which are devoted to the social self, and, in the discussion of instincts, to the native reactions of human beings in the presence of one another. Big books have been written since which are hardly more than an amplification of suggestions found in these few pages. When, for example, a few years later, the *Socius* became the hero of a psychological drama, not many recalled that he had already been introduced under that very name in the pages of James.

Again it is outwardly a mere coincidence that the work of Tarde on the 'Laws of Imitation' was published in the year in which the 'Principles' saw the light of day, and that practically all of Tarde's work fell within the decade lying between 1890 and 1900. But behind the pure coincidence there was the recognition of the need for social ends of a more scientific treatment of collective human nature, and the important rôle of psychology in building up the new social science. While James confined himself to pregnant suggestions concerning the new forms which human experience and

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selfhood take on because of the presence of other human selves, Tarde attempted an ambitious interpretation of almost all facts of social organization, progress and degeneration in terms of certain rubrics to which he gave a psychological quality. For more than a decade his work and that of his followers in France and in the United States—among whom we may cite in diverse directions Baldwin and Ross-dominated social psychology and almost sociology. I shall not rehearse the old discussions about Imitation as a psychological fact and a social force. I shall assume with most of contemporary psychological critics that as a descriptive and explanatory conception it misplaced emphasis and tended to distort facts. But nevertheless we cannot minimize the immense power of this stage of social science in popularizing the idea of social psychology, and in bringing into recognition many facts, such as the importance of prestige, fashion, sensitivity to the beliefs of others, the difficulties which innovation, no matter how reasonable, has to meet, etc., facts which are permanently imbedded in social science. Tarde himself was certainly one of the most stimulating and varied of writers, and I do not think we shall ever outgrow some of his contributions, although to my mind they are found rather in logic than in psychology—such as the necessity for reducing the gross phenomena of social life into minuter events which may then be analyzed one by one. The most fruitful of his psychological conceptions was ahead of his time and went almost unnoticed. It was that all psychological phenomena can be divided into the physiological and the social, and that when we have relegated elementary sensation and appetite to the former head, all that is left of our mental life, our beliefs, ideas and desires, falls within the scope of social psychology.

I hope I may find general agreement in pointing to the work of McDougall and Thorndike respectively as indicative of the next great force in social psychology, together with such writings as those, upon the social side, of Graham Wallas. Aside from valuable contributions in detail, the significance of these contributions lies, to my mind, in recalling social psychology from the wrong track in which the Imitation and

Suggestibility schools had set it going. For those schools gave the dawning science a wrong twist in carrying over into science the old popular and practical antithesis of the individual and the social, and thus setting up two independent and even contrary sciences—individual and social psychology. As a concrete illustration of the absurd results to which this antithesis led, it is perhaps sufficient to refer to those bizarre writings on the psychology of the crowd in which it was assumed that the psychology of the individual left to himself is reflective and rational, while man's emotional obsessions and irrationalities are to be accounted for by the psychology of association with others. From the root of all such aberrations we were recalled the very moment the problem was presented not as one of the relationship of a mythical psychology of an isolated individual mind to the even more mythical psychology of a mass or crowd or public mind, but as the problem of the relationship of original or native activities to acquired capacities and habits. Henceforth our social psychology is placed upon the sure ground of observation of instinctive behavior; it can develop upon the basis of fact undistorted by the requirement of meeting preconceived notions imported from without. The whole question of imitation, for example, reduces itself to one of fact: Is imitativeness one of the original tendencies of human nature. If so, what is its intensity and mode of working in conjunction with the other unlearned activities?

The popularizers of science will doubtless remain half a generation behind this as well as other scientific advances, but for those who have learned the lesson of recourse to fundamental responses, the way is opened for emancipation from the greatest foe with which social science has had to contend—which I shall take the liberty of calling the monistic. How often have we been invited to build up our social, political, and ethical explanations in terms of some single and supposedly dominant mental constituent! How often discussions and disputes have been, at bottom, only a question as to which of rival single claimants we shall yield allegiance. Instincts to power, to control of others, fear of authority, sex, love of

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pleasure, of ease, all have been appealed to, and explanations constructed in terms of one or another exclusively. Henceforth it is, I submit, pure wilfulness if any one pretending to a scientific treatment starts from any other than a pluralistic basis: the complexity and specific variety of the factors of human nature, each operating in response to its own highly specific stimulus, and each subject to almost infinite shadings and modulations as it enters into combination and competition with others. The conception of social psychology resulting from this mode of approach becomes essentially one with that set forth by Professor W. I. Thomas in his paper on the province of social psychology at the St. Louis Congress of Arts and Science in 1904. On the one hand our problem is to know the modifications wrought in the native constitution of man by the fact that the elements of his endowment operate in this or that social medium; on the other hand, we want to know how control of the environment may be better secured by means of the operation of this or that native capacity. Under these general heads are summed up the infinity of special and difficult problems relating to education on the one hand and to constructive modification of our social institutions on the other. To form a mind out of certain native instincts by selecting an environment which evokes them and directs their course; to re-form social institutions by breaking up habits and giving peculiar intensity and scope to some impulse is the problem of social control in its two phases. To describe how such changes take place is the task of social psychology stated in generalized terms.

I hope I do not need to disclaim an attempt to give in even the barest summary the history of social psychology during the past twenty-five years. My object has been quite other. I have only wanted to refer to some salients in the intellectual fortifications constructed during this period for the sake of pointing out, in equally general terms, something of what now confronts us, waiting, nay demanding, to be done. Before passing on to this point, I feel I must avert possible misunderstanding by mentioning two allied factors which have also influenced the development of which I have spoken. One is

the application of statistical methods to psychological research; the other, the behavioristic movement. Neither was devised primarily in the interests of social psychology. The requirements of education have, however, been a powerful agency in promoting the former, while education presents, of course, one phase of the problem of social control. Speaking more broadly, social phenomena are of a kind which demand statistical mathematics rather than the type of mathematics which has been evolved especially for use in dealing with physical facts. Condorcet's great essay on 'The Progress of the Human Mind' forecasts a future in which human arrangements would be regulated by science. In dealing with the influence of mathematical science he points to the newly developing theory of probabilities as that branch of mathematics which is fraught with infinite potentiality for control of social progress. I think it is only fair to see in statistical psychology a step forward, short and halting though it be for the immediate present, in the realization of Condorcet's prophecy.

The behavioristic movement inevitably tends to confirm the tendency of which I have already spoken in connection with the writings of James, McDougall, and Thorndike. It transfers attention from vague generalities regarding social consciousness and social mind to the specific processes of interaction which take place among human beings, and to the details of group-behavior. It emphasizes the importance of knowledge of the primary activities of human nature, and of the modifications and reorganizations they undergo in association with the activities of others. It radically simplifies the whole problem by making it clear that social institutions and arrangements, including the whole apparatus of tradition and transmission, represent simply the acquired transformations of original human endowments.

This provides the possibility of a positive method for analyzing social phenomena. I shall avoid engaging in passing in the disputed question of the value of an introspective psychology. But it seems almost self-evident that even if introspection were a valid method in individual psychology,

so called, it could not be of use in the investigation of social facts, even though those facts be labelled social mind or consciousness. Yet one has only to look at the writings of the Austrian and German school of "folk-psychologists" (say of Wundt, obviously the most important) to see how this treatment has been affected by an assumed need of making the method and results of social psychology conform to the received categories of introspective psychology. From such deforming of facts the behavioristic outlook immediately redeems us; it represents not an improvement in detail but a different mode of attack. It is not as yet possible to estimate the significance of this alteration. In my opinion, however, the chief cause of the backwardness of social psychology has resided in the artificiality of the endeavor to adapt the rubrics of introspective psychology to the facts of objective associated life. The opening of another road of approach may therefore be expected to emancipate inquiry.

I thus come to the explicit statement of the purpose of my reminiscent sketch. The aim was to justify the presentation of the conviction that the quarter century in which this Association has existed marks just the emancipation of social psychology from influences which prevented its development on its own feet and its own merits, while the work done on lines which (as it seems to me) must be abandoned, have nevertheless done the great service of enforcing the vast field open to a social psychology, and the great need it has to serve. I turn accordingly from the past to the future, or if you will from prophecy taking the guise of history to prophecy frankly avowing itself as such.

I foresee, then, a great reflex wave from social psychology back into general psychology. An important conclusion in the psychology of native activities does not seem to have been drawn as yet by those who would base a scientific psychology upon this foundation. The conclusion seems inevitable that since 'mind' does not appear in the original list of instincts, it represents something acquired. It represents a reorganization of original activities through their operation in a given environment. It is a formation, not a datum; a pro-

duct, and a cause only after it has been produced. Now theoretically it is possible that the reorganization of native activities which constitute mind may occur through their exercise within a purely physical medium. Empirically, however, this is highly improbable. A consideration of the dependence in infancy of the organization of the native activities into intelligence upon the presence of others, upon sharing in joint activities and upon language, make it obvious that the sort of mind capable of development through the operation of native endowment in a non-social environment is of the moron order, and is practically, if not theoretically, negligible.

The net outcome of the newer type of psychological method is thus an unexpected confirmation of the insight of Tarde that what we call 'mind' means essentially the working of certain beliefs and desires; and that these in the concrete—in the only sense in which mind may be said to *exist*—are functions of associated behavior, varying with the structure and operation of social groups. Speaking in general terms, there is no more a problem of the origin of society than there is of the origin of chemical reactions; things are made that way. But a certain kind of associated or joint life when brought into being has an unexpected by-product—the formation of those peculiar acquired dispositions, sets, attitudes, which are termed mind. This by-product continually gains in relative importance. It increasingly becomes the significant acquisition among all the varied reorganizations of native tendencies. That anything which may properly be called mind or intelligence is not an original possession but is a consequence of the manifestation of instincts under the conditions supplied by associated life in the family, the school, the market place and the forum, is no remote inference from a speculative reconstruction of the mind of primitive man; it is a conclusion confirmed by the development of specific beliefs, ideas and purposes in the life of every infant now observable.

On the face of it, this conclusion has implications only for the theory of psychology. But slight scrutiny makes obvious its consequences for the struggle to gain control of the forces

forming society. The ultimate refuge of the standpatter in every field, education, religion, politics, industrial and domestic life, has been the notion of an alleged fixed structure of mind. As long as mind is conceived as an antecedent and ready-made thing, institutions and customs may be regarded as its offspring. By its own nature the ready-made mind works to produce them as they have existed and now exist. There is no use in kicking against necessity. The most powerful apologetics for any arrangement or institution is the conception that it is an inevitable result of fixed conditions of human nature. Consequently, in one disguise or another, directly or by extreme and elaborate indirection, we find the assumed constitution of an antecedently given mind appealed to in justification of the established order as to the family, the school, the government, industry, commerce and every other institution. Our increased knowledge of the past of man has, indeed, given this complacent assumption a certain shock, but it has not as yet seriously modified it. Evolution in the sense of a progressive unfolding of original potencies latent in a ready-made mind has been used to reconcile the conception of mind as an original datum with the historic facts of social change which can no longer be ignored. The effect on the effort at deliberate social control and construction remained the same. All man could do was to wait and watch the panorama of a ready-formed mind unroll. The French school of imitation, and its present successor, the Durkheim school of collective mind, has practically the same outcome as the German school of Volk-geist in this respect. All are engaged in explaining the past and present, and (if they predict at all) in predicting the future on the basis of the past. The new point of view treats social facts as the material of an experimental science, where the problem is that of modifying belief and desire—that is to say mind—by enacting specific changes in the social environment. Until this experimental attitude is established, the historical method, in spite of all the proof of past change which it adduces, will remain in effect a bulwark of conservatism. For, I repeat, it reduces the rôle of mind to that of beholding and recording the oper-

ations of man after they have happened. The historic method may give emotional inspiration or consolation in arousing the belief that a lot more changes are still to happen, but it does not show man how his mind is to take part in giving these changes one direction rather than another.

The advent of a type of psychology which builds frankly on the original activities of man and asks how these are altered, requalified and reorganized in consequence of their exercise in specifically different environments brings with itself the experimental attitude, and thereby substitutes the interest in control for the interest in merely recording and what is called 'explaining.' If mind, in any definitely concrete sense of that word, is an offspring of the life of association, intercourse, transmission, and accumulation rather than a ready-made antecedent cause of these things, then the attitude of polite aloofness or condescending justification as to social institutions has its nerve cut, and with this the intellectual resources of sanctified conservatism disappear. Instincts become mind when they are organized and directed with reference to the ends of attention, esteem, and endeavor which are supplied by the shared life of the place and time. The kind of mind they become depends upon the kind of objects of attention and affection which the specific social conditions supply. The task of unravelling the arrangements which exist into elements of native instinct and past acquisitions is indeed an infinitely complex and difficult one; not the less hard and extensive is the job of showing how this and that association with other persons develops this and that intellectual and emotional disposition—or mind—in this and that individual having his own peculiar original endowment. But if the history of human achievement in knowledge proves anything, it is that the all-decisive discovery is that of an effective and fruitful method. When men once hit, after endless awkwardness, upon the right road, the rest takes care of itself. Scientific movement becomes orderly and cumulative in the very process of occurring. Social and mental phenomena become intelligible because they come within the scope of the experimental method of attack. And again the

history of science testifies to a conclusion which may also be arrived at theoretically—the introduction of the experimental method is all one with interest in control—in modification of the future.

There is a genuine modesty, and there is a stupid simulation of modesty which is only a mask for lazy complacency. No science has so much cause to be humble about its actual achievements as has social science, including social psychology. But in prospect, in possibility, social science seems to me to stand about where physical science stood three centuries ago in the early years of the seventeenth century. There is the same halting and obstructed tendency to move from the attitude of the outside spectator, classifier and justifier of things as they are outwardly given to that of the active participant and modifier, from that of wholesale organization to that of retail reorganization. The experimental method in physical matters brought with it a technique of control—a technique of invention and construction. Specific desired ends can be formulated in specifically analyzed terms; the conditions of their attainment stated; these conditions subdivided into known and unknown factors, and some definite estimate made as to the practicability, at the given time, of attacking the problem. That we are without any such technique in social matters is self-evident. That the attainment within reasonable time of a similar technique stands and falls with the possibility of developing a human psychology which shall be experimentally applicable to the understanding of social affairs is not, however, self-evident, and is my excuse for reiteration.

I venture accordingly to repeat a thought which I had the honor of presenting before this association some years ago. The need of social control is, of course, as old as associated life itself. But the need of that control at the present time is tremendously accentuated by the enormous lack of balance between existing methods of physical and social direction. The utilization of physical energies made possible by the advance of physics and chemistry has enormously complicated the industrial and political problem. The question of the

distribution of economic resources, of the relationships of rich and poor was never so acute nor so portentous as it is now; and this state of affairs is as much the result of progress in physical science as is the recognition of the Copernican astronomy. The present war is too vast and too tragic to permit one lightly to summon it as evidence for any merely theoretical thesis. But is it not, I ask, a demonstration made to order of those old words of Thomas Hobbes? "The utility of moral and civil philosophy is to be estimated, not so much by the commodities we have from knowing those sciences as from the calamities we receive from not knowing them." Such a conception is not fashionable just now; it is easier to place blame upon fate or upon the innate wickedness of human nature as seen in this or in that set of human beings. But the ultimate fate is the fatality of ignorance, and the ultimate wickedness is lack of faith in the possibilities of intelligence applied inventively and constructively.

Physical science has got to the point of bringing even the ends of the earth into physical, forceful relations with one another, and to the point of mobilizing all its resources for a contest in aggression and endurance. We are overwhelmed by the consequences of the very sciences into which have gone our best thought and energy for these last few hundred years. We apparently do not control them; they control us and wreak their vengeance upon us. Yet how infantile and pusillanimous are those who talk about the bankruptcy of science and who blame the increase of knowledge for our situation. Physical knowledge, and the consequent technique of control of physical forces, has far out-run social knowledge and its technique. The recourse of a courageous humanity is to press forward in the latter until we have a control of human nature comparable to our control of physical nature.

From the point of view of the psychology of behavior all psychology is either biological or social psychology. And if it still be true that man is not only an animal but a social animal, the two cannot be dissevered when we deal with man. Hence it is that subsequent years have enabled me to find added meaning in words which I spoke before this association

years ago, and which in conclusion I venture to repeat. "We are not called upon to be either boasters or sentimentalists regarding the possibilities of our science. . . . But we are entitled in our daily work to be sustained by the conviction that we are not working in indifference to or at cross purposes with the practical strivings of a common humanity. The psychologist in his most remote and technical occupation with mechanism may be contributing his bit to that ordered knowledge which alone enables mankind to secure a larger and to direct a more equal flow of the values of life."