THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PSYCHOLOGISTS.¹

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"Who will guard the guards" is quoted glibly enough, in many contexts, yet the question "Who will psychologise psychologists"? is seldom asked. Seeing no reason why the behaviour and motives of psychologists should not be studied as if they were ordinary people going about their business, I select for study some prominent directions in which psychology is now proceeding, attempt to relate them to modern social and economic conditions, and discuss whether psychology is now heading in directions along which it is likely to benefit humanity.

Let us assume that psychology can be defined as the positive science of experience and behaviour. Those who hold that only the objective study of behaviour is scientific may be reminded that some descriptive word must be found for the description and explanation of the facts of experience. I care little whether that word be "psychology", so long as the study is pursued, for, except in the opinion of extreme behaviourists, experience is important. For example, there are many heart-searchings about the partial failure of the Government's scheme for removing school-children from districts threatened by air-raids. Some of the difficulties are economic, but most of them are psychological. Moreover, economic forces act upon peoples' experience, and are matter for psychology. Even when the behaviour of children or of parents has been exemplary, their home-sickness or feelings of inferiority can be studied best by direct questioning.

However psychology be defined, it ought not to exclude the direct examination of human experience. Now, since the

¹ Amplified from the notes of a lecture given at the John Rylands Library on the 16th November, 1939.
psychologist himself behaves towards his physical and social environment in a characteristic way, and thus satisfies certain desires wholly or partly, consciously or unconsciously, a psychology of psychologists is conceivable.

The satisfaction of wants, including the want to study psychology, is achieved in ways which depend not only upon the individual's history, but also upon his economic circumstances, and upon his particular niche in the society which supports him. For, as Professor J. D. Bernal points out in *The Social Function of Science*, scientists have lost their amateur status. Most psychologists nowadays are completely professionalised; a fact which inevitably influences the directions along which their science is developing. Study of the sociological setting of psychologists' activities therefore promises valuable results, for the development of all the sciences has greatly depended upon the idiosyncrasies of prominent workers, and upon the economic and social encouragement they succeeded in winning.

Our first problems are: What special qualities of personality and character, acting in conjunction with special opportunities, cause some people to become (a) psychologists, (b) psychologists of a particular kind?

Nobody can state, from purely theoretical considerations, the elementary wants which are satisfied by the study of psychology. The investigator must work backwards from the facts obtainable concerning the lives of psychologists. Such data may be direct accounts of experience, as in the *History of Psychology in Autobiography*; they may have been collected and regarded from a particular aspect, as in R. C. Oldfield's "Some Factors in the Genesis of Interest in Psychology", or may be culled from *The Letters of William James* or *The Thought and Character of William James*. A questionnaire might also be sent to present-day psychologists willing to answer very intimate inquiries.

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3 Edited by Carl Murchison, vols. i, ii, iii, 1930, 1932, 1936, Oxford University Press.
To discover in a short time fundamental motives for becoming a psychologist may be impossible. It would have been easier when most psychologists were quasi-amateurs. However, when reading modern accounts of psychology, let us bear in mind that some people may have become psychologists not only because they were scientifically interested in human beings but because they liked them.

Almost certainly the person whose attitude towards the world is predominantly extraverted, is unlikely to be attracted by psychology so strongly that he will desert or lose interest in other studies. And many a psychologist will probably admit that the early attraction of this study was the light which it cast upon some trait of his own which he had hitherto regarded as peculiar or puzzling. Attitude-type, in Jung’s sense of the term, therefore is a valuable concept in our study.

This thought inevitably suggests the study of a contrast between more or less introverted psychologists, and the question whether a behaviourist, where he is naturally of this way of thinking and has not adopted it as a protective coloration, is just an extremely extraverted psychologist.

Perhaps psychologists may eventually be differentiated by some such set of divisions as Spranger makes in his theory of predominant values. We may be able to recognise the one-sided theoretical, aesthetic, economic, religious, political, and social psychologist.

Oldfield points out, with examples, how often the decision to become a psychologist has been the result of conflict between interests, a conflict which the eventual study of psychology was able to resolve. These fights seemed to centre round the respective claims of ‘natural science’ (in the conventional sense of that word) religion, philosophy, and history. The new interest in psychology offered a compromise and a reconciliation, allowing the tendencies harmonious expression in unified activity upon a single field of material.

Pierre Janet’s conflict was between a taste for natural science (botany in particular), “dissection, precise observation, and classification”, and a religious mystical tendency never wholly controlled. This confession may throw light upon the elegant analysis of minds which one sees in his writings.
Oldfield writes:

William James's conflicts of interests and difficulties of vocational decision, aggravated by a superbly delicate moral sensibility, are too numerous and complex for brief record to do them justice. One quotation must suffice to illustrate the intensity of the doubts to which he was subject. He writes in 1868, at the age of 26: "I have not got started properly on any line of work yet, but am hovering and dipping about the portals of psychology. The fact is that I am about as little fitted by nature to be a worker in science of any sort as anyone can be, and yet... my only ideal of life is a scientific life." But later in the same letter he decides that "All in all, even the sweepings of morality are better than chemical reactions," and adds, "Thus do I lash my tail and start myself up again...."

Oldfield postulates two specific interest-tendencies, the empiric and the systemic. The empiric is a propensity to treat material in its aspect of relating to experimental fact; the systemic, a propensity to treat material in its aspect of possessing internal structure. Not only does psychology satisfy both these tendencies in some people, but the conflict observable in a few living psychologists may be between attempts to satisfy these tendencies equally. Possibly these may be leanings towards extraversion and introversion respectively.

He shows that among psychologists proper, and even among those whose contributions to the subject have been mainly philosophical, there is a 'somewhat surprising' prevalence of scientific interests. Examples are Bain, Fechner, Lloyd Morgan, Drever, William James, McDougall, C. S. Myers, Ward, Lotze, Frobes, Titchener, Stanley Hall, Stumpf, and Woodworth. The existence of scientific, often co-existing with philosophical, interests is interpreted as the manifestation of an empiric interest-tendency.

Strong interest in mathematics appears to be a less common occurrence in the budding psychologists, so far as the printed records of their lives show. "In only one or two cases is mathematical interest so strong, or ability so great, that the individual considered finding an academic vocation in this subject."

Not surprisingly, philosophical interests played a great part in the early lives of those psychologists old enough to have had their biographies recorded. For until very recent years, psychology was approached through, and regarded by many as a branch of philosophy.
It is reasonable to interpret the maintenance of such interests, concurrently with other pursuits, as evidence of the operation of some general systemic interest tendency."

Of religious tendencies Oldfield writes:

There can be no denial of the fact that the content of religious knowledge and experience may in itself suggest problems of psychological import. But it may be that this fact does not exhaust the possible connexions between religion and psychology. Religious teaching frequently provides for the growing child the first body of more or less coherent psychological material. It offers admirable opportunity for the working of the systemic interest-tendency, as any casual study of children's theological systems will show. I will suggest that early religious interests afford evidence of the operation of the systemic interest-tendency, later to find a nicer balance with the empiric in becoming directed upon the problems of 'man and his mental life'. In this suggestion there is, of course, no implication that all early religious interests are the product of the systemic tendency, or that it alone can ever be effective in their production.

I wish now to ask the question "Is Psychology becoming less human?" It is conceivable that people who first choose, and then succeed in an occupation, do so because they have an unusual liking for the material with which they deal. Yet it would be naive to suppose that all zoologists love animals, all teachers love children, or that all bacteriologists love bacilli. Perhaps, the suggestion that some psychologists are 'shy' will not seem far-fetched. Extensions of this idea, however, may need explanation.

In his urbane summary of *A Hundred Years of Psychology,* Professor J. C. Flügel, illustrating Dr. Alfred Adler's belief that one's original inferiority in some respect may be converted into a superiority by constant exercise and effort, remarks:

as when Demosthenes, the stammerer, became one of the greatest of orators, when Sandow, the weakling boy, became a recognised strong man of his day, or again, when a person gifted with exceptionally little insight into the thoughts and motives of his fellows compensates by becoming a psychologist.

Knowing many psychologists, including Professor Flügel, I take his remark seriously. Not all psychologists like human beings more than anything else, or handle them unusually well. This raises some important questions. Are shy psychologists common? Is their number increasing? If so, how will this influence the theoretical and practical development of the study?

1 London, Gerald Howe.
Many psychologists, as we have remarked, like people in general. Others, however, are introverted or class-conscious, and some psychologists who are psychotherapists, regard the human mind as a conglomeration of catastrophes. Pained and disapproving, they write as if it seldom shows tenderness, self-sacrifice, aesthetic sensibility, charm, or humour. Since, however, they see these aspects of personality less often than unlovable ones, we may pardon their pessimism. A dentist is often jolly, yet some psycho-analysts assert proudly that their own relationships with patients are impersonal and neutral. One might comment that tuners of damaged pianos may be forgiven if they forget about Beethoven and Debussy, Schnabel and Horowitz, but we seldom look to the instrument-repairer for musical criticism. It is only fair to add that some psychotherapists leave the normal mind severely alone.

It is interesting to consider the degree of aloofness with which, in any one instance, a psychologist can justifiably view his material. Detachment seems desirable in some branches of child psychology. Adoring parents seldom assess their infant’s mental development in comparison with that of a thousand children of similar age, sex, and environment. Recent accounts of children’s early mental life lay almost exclusive stress upon their behaviour, comparing it with established norms. Yet detachment, though it could be maintained in observing the whole cycle of human development from birth to maturity, is unprofitable when sentiments and complexes influence the behaviour of the person studied. At the moment, for example, American and English psychologists can observe the difficulties of refugee adolescents who try to adjust themselves to a new culture-pattern. An account of their behaviour with no attempt to discover its underlying sentiments would be arid, even stupid.

In remarking that some psychologists like people, it is recognised that a few may love their fellow-men too much to judge them impersonally. Yet some forms of psychological judgment—perhaps all—are impracticable without sympathy, since the psychologist’s task is to observe minutely and describe accurately as well as to explain satisfactorily. To-day, for excellent reasons, psychologists are often immigrants from the older sciences.
They may bring with them some attitudes common in these studies, including a distaste for intimate personal acquaintance. Connected with this fact, perhaps, is the claim that the study of mathematics purges the mind of sentimentality—even if it implants a sentiment for mathematics.

A laboratory may be an ideal refuge for thinkers whose affection for human beings is subnormal. Some researchers particularly enjoy working on public holidays, when all 'ordinary' scientists are away. Since the building's freedom from human distractions implies a corresponding increase in laboratory resources; who, it may be asked, would not choose to work then? Quite a number. I think—and I have spent twenty-five years among scientific laboratory workers in this country and others—that there are often deep-lying psychological reasons for the unsociable ones' pleasure in solitude, and for the disdain which they may feel for the ordinary holiday-maker.

This aversion sometimes appears in another form. In 1916, Mr. Wilfred Trotter wrote of Freud's system:

However much one may be impressed by the greatness of the edifice which Freud has built up and by the soundness of his architecture, one can scarcely fail, on coming into it from the bracing atmosphere of the biological sciences, to be oppressed by the odour of humanity with which it is pervaded.¹

While accepting the metaphor with a slight demur (for there is a biology of the tropical swamp, and some of the bracing effects biologists feel may arise from quarrels about the origin of life or the inheritance of acquired characteristics) one may comment that a discourse upon life which excludes consideration of human experience is evidently incomplete. About the odour of humanity—de gustibus... There are people—mothers for instance—who like some human odours, and prefer them to the scents which scientists may send in aeroplanes to mothers in other countries. If in the last fifty years a few thousand scientists had conquered their distaste for the smell of humanity, instead of presenting the world with its present war-weapons, we should be better off today.

Unsociable youths may leap at a chance to study man from the eyrie—or the ivory tower—of a laboratory, instead of face to

face in the real world, where they might be expected to show enthusiasm or sympathy, even to risk making fools of themselves in the eyes of austere scientists. It has even been suggested that one force causing some people to study non-human material is a desire to avoid having to show affection to or even to bother with human beings, and this line of argument would turn the tables on the *soi-disant* 'anti-sentimental' scientist.

Let us broadly contrast some 'human' directions of psychological activity with others. First come all those impressions of, or judgments about, other people which involve actual confrontation. Upon what kinds of data do we base our conclusions? Upon a first, or a later general impression, upon our immediate reaction to the other person's total behaviour, including subtle manifestations, change of facial colour, nervous twitches, 'accessory movements' and the like. They are not comparable with the pointer-readings at which many scientists aim, but people who can interpret signs of personality will not apologise for that. At any moment, all over the world, millions of important personality-judgments, based upon observation of facial expression and of nuances in speech, are being made. Some psychologists try to study such judgments scientifically, to discover their bases, to determine their validity and reliability. Such investigations have many pitfalls, and fear of them may be the reason why there are few workers in this field.

When meeting someone for the first time you may 'see' him or her as beautiful, conceited, or vulgar. The judgment, however, may be more characteristic of you than of the average person in your own community. You may have strong racial, national or personal prejudices about beauty, or be a victim of the insinuations of a film-star's publicity agent. You may have a mother-complex or a feeling of inferiority towards an upper-class, and of superiority towards a lower-class, way of speaking. Indeed, a judgment about personality may tell us much about the judge as well as about the person judged, especially in a socially-stratified country, or in one where racial or colour prejudices are powerful and widespread.

From this fact certain conclusions have been drawn. A comfortable one is that since beauty is assumed to be in the eye
of the beholder, it cannot be scientifically studied. This may be an honest belief or merely result from the habit of dodging difficult, important problems by claiming absolution from an undefined authority called 'Science'. Another inference is possible. If a high percentage of the members of a certain community make the same judgment (as when thousands of people think X, an actress, to be beautiful, or Y, a member of a certain race, to be unattractive) it is psychologically real, for its economic, legal, and social implications are often serious, not only for the individual but for thousands like him. We see the importance of this reality in Central Europe to-day. The separation of almost purely individual judgments from those which are almost ubiquitous is a psychological task, and techniques for it are being worked out.¹

In this study of personality, investigators who are unafraid of human beings will presumably be happy. Not a few 'shy' psychologists, however, work at this subject, as mathematical computers or markers of printed forms. They need never meet the people whose personalities they examine. Is their contribution less weighty because of this? Cannot they serve valuably behind the fighting-lines? Only, I think, in subordinate capacities, doing clerical or mathematical work, arising out of researches directed by psychologists in contact with the people studied. Otherwise, there may grow up dangerous non-human techniques of psychology, excusing the investigator from meeting human beings, but allowing him instead to interview unembarrassing sheets of paper. In this way, misleading maps of the mind will be constructed by absentees who, perhaps, are ignorant of flooded areas. People who, highly intelligent as judged by the usual tests, find it hard to get on with others, may for this reason prefer measuring the sensitivity of hundreds of 'subjects' to a geometrical-optical illusion, to studying shyness or clumsiness. Mental tests can be given to groups of examinees by one whose attitude resembles that of the pre-war sergeant-major, insensitive to subtle mental differences between individuals. Many of these tests were actually developed and used in army conditions, which

¹ Cf. G. W. Allport, Personality, a Psychological Interpretation, 1937, London, Constable.
justified large-scale, high-speed work, and a certain absence of analytic criticism, yet a little of this war atmosphere seems to have clung to the technique of group-testing up to the present time.

What does the ordinary educated man hope that psychology will eventually achieve? He believes that psychologists will throw light upon human behaviour-relationships. To do this requires study of the impact of personalities, of the nature of attractiveness, charm, wit, and humour, of various kinds of friendship, as well as of sexual and parental desire, of repulsiveness, distrust, and hatred. The main efforts of psychologists, however, are not in fact turned in these directions to-day.

The very nature of interests offers urgently important problems, since propaganda can manufacture or stifle enthusiasms in a way and at a rate which the last generation would have thought impossible. Some psychologists are cataloguing the interests of different people, and ascertaining the ages at which typical ones arise ‘naturally’. At the moment, however, their apparently unnatural rise is puzzling. Recently, after hearing a psychological address on the average interests of English adolescents, I reflected sadly upon the young Germans who have taken such a keen interest in the wielding of rubber truncheons upon old, defenceless people.

To drop for a moment the detached terms of the psychologist, the stupidity and wickedness of civilised people most urgently need investigation. Some natural scientists may quieten their consciences by believing that it is the psychologists’ duty to tackle the job, and perhaps they are right. If so, a visit to a psychological congress might disappoint them. They would hear discussions of sensation, perception, memory, thinking, behaviour, skill, and of the application of results obtained in these fields to practical questions of industry, education, and medicine. They might hear much about intelligence, but it would often be the kind of intelligence characterising those human beings who have invented the diabolical toys before which civilised nations shiver in fear. They would hear about the attempted analysis of the mind into ‘factors’. They might find a section of social psychology, though more of its discussions, I think, would be about
broad questions of group-relationships than about social adjustments between single personalities, or about the influence of single personalities upon nations.

Interesting as these subjects might be to the visitors, only a few of the reported investigations might seem likely to advance the study of personalities, their clashes and their harmonious adjustments. If a psychologist were to hear the scientists express disappointment, his reply, couched in their language, might be to ask for patience, since the 'factors' discussed are supposed to exist not in one mind but in the mind-in-general. Eventually, but not yet, they may be gathered up into formulae which would 'prescribe' the intellectual, emotional, and volitional make-up of vivid personalities, like, let us say, Queen Elizabeth, Wagner, if they were living; and of Charlie Chaplin. A flaw in this argument, however, can be exhibited by examining the last-named personality. Of late, Chaplin's films have appeared so infrequently, that, at least in England, children unfamiliar with his technique and allusions sometimes do not think him funny. When the 'same' personality is judged as 'very funny' and 'not funny', a stiff problem is presented to factor-analysers. Consider the changed attitude towards W. S. Gilbert's puns and his persistent gibes at unmarried women. To many people the puns are boring and the gibes tasteless.

A personality, therefore, may simultaneously be described by antonyms. In contrast, chemists have discovered no substances which are simultaneously very acid and not acid. This fact need not disconcert the psychologist, for analogies in the outer world can be found. A substance is hard or heavy, a man tall or short, only in comparison with something or someone else; even if the quality in question is absolutely measurable. But though the technique of factor-analysis may now be adequate for handling numerical data, one doubts whether in this branch of study the fact that it takes two to make a personality-judgment has been sufficiently respected.

Perhaps these new attempts at 'personalistics' are merely techniques of climbing towards the peak at which everyone is aiming—the description and explanation of Personality and Character. At present, however, these methods seem to head
away from this goal. The détours may eventually be justified, but how do the factor-analysers propose to get back?

In his desire to admit as few complexities as possible into his observations, the scientist narrows the scope of his inquiry. He works, for example, with a point-source of light or sound of a single wave-length. Sometimes the psychologist copies this procedure with advantage, but he may be tempted to do this to the detriment of his observations. He may, also, fall into the bad habit of omitting data which would not impress the physicist. For example, while many of the psychologist's data are percepts, awarenesses of actual objects present to the senses; many more, fulfilling identical functions, are images. At the moment of writing, a visual image of my watch tells me that it is about time for the radio news-bulletin. Since I saw the watch a few minutes ago, this observation does not appear to be exciting, yet its commonplaceness may obscure its psychological significance. Not only the percept or image, the peg upon which the experience is hung, but also its interpretation is important. In this example, the fact that this particular watch keeps almost perfect time imparts to a glance at it a feeling of confidence. This clearly does not depend upon physical events causing the sight of the watch, for I have never seen its works. Consequently the aspect of the watch which might seem to the physicist the real one, is in this example the least important.

Can we, however, transform our interpretation of this experience into a form which a physicist would approve? I doubt it. Much has been written about 'stimulus' producing 'response', and 'situation' producing 'behaviour'. Yet when these formulæ fit the events, if indeed they ever do, they are of the simplest kind; 'slot-machine' examples, so to speak. Sometimes the behaviour when perceived leaves no doubt as to the meaning of a situation. Insult a man, and he knocks you down. So the text-book example might run. Yet does this event happen frequently in ordinary life? More often, you say something which annoys him; his colour changes, his lips tighten, his voice alters in tone, and his words are 'sung' on as unusual speech-melody. His answer may even be "Thank you very much". A written record of it might suggest gratitude. Heard
with understanding, the words mean hatred or sarcasm, but only to one who belongs to the same culture-pattern. Most foreigners in England find the language easy to read, difficult to speak and hear, yet only those with delicate ears realise that English speech-melodies are often hard to discriminate, and harder still to copy.

If one is to live happily in a civilised country, sympathetic interpretation of others' speech and general behaviour is necessary. Stress is laid here upon this fact because it is usually avoided by the behaviourist. Let us illustrate this. It is, let us say, a fine Sunday. One neighbour mows his lawn in his worst clothes; another, in his best, departs in a car as loud to the eye as to the ear. You may hardly notice these actions if they express the neighbours' mental peculiarities with which you are familiar. But the reversal of their rôles would surprise, and if you are psychologically inclined, puzzle you. Your interpretation of the behaviour is at least as important as your observation of it.

A bare account of the movements of a man's limbs and trunk may interest a physiologist, but means little to a psychologist, unless he regards them as expressive movement. For example, it is easy to appreciate the different degrees of psychological interest offered by a word deliberately spoken to convey an order, and by a grunt emitted by someone unexpectedly 'winded'. In all psychological observation some degree of interpretation is necessary. For this reason, any aim at pure objectivity in psychology is likely to fail.

An abstract style of writing enables some psychologists to achieve a flight from reality. The desire for this may be prompted by their sentiments and complexes; a subject which needs more analytical study. Yet this direct line of investigation is less popular than the search for purely objective data about sentiments and complexes, by using 'attitude-scales', printed forms upon which the subject indicates the relative intensity with which he likes or dislikes a thing, person, or institution. Other psychologists devise experimental settings of their problems. Quantitative measurement is thus possible; an improvement when the set-up does not keep the 'subject' of the experiment at arm's length, metaphorically as well as literally. Least satisfactory is the absentee psychologist who directs his investigation by remote
control. In his study he performs mathematical calculations upon data sent by his agents, who may have obtained them on printed forms. Though this procedure reduces the odour of humanity, it seems open to the charge of 'escapism'.

Contrasted with these are psychologists who seek the face-to-face interviews; social workers, investigators of juvenile delinquency, vocational advisers, and ethnologists. The attitude of these researchers towards their theme and the nature of the results they obtain are indubitably human. These students are usually ready to record their technique, so far as it can be done verbally, for the guidance of others. In How to Interview, W. v. D. Bingham and B. V. Moore have described such work in detail. Other aspects of it are treated in The Study of Society.

The type of psychologist who obviously specialises in the interview is the psychotherapist. His activities may seem to be the most human work in the world. He talks with people in trouble or disgrace, he is admitted to their confidence, and at times he saves souls. The intimacy of his knowledge of other people cannot be doubted. All psychologists would be the better for a training in the establishment of such close social relationships. Yet, if we wish to know how a psychotherapist works, short of actual eaves-dropping, we are usually limited to reading his written statements. These seldom give a good idea of his methods, even if he has the talents of a first-class playwright, novelist, and anthropologist. He may, indeed, be swayed by motives which discourage overtness. One is the desire for secrecy. To report satisfactorily an interesting recent case would require so many references to living people, especially to the patient's relatives and friends, that the task is seldom attempted. Moreover, no technical method can yet reproduce at a reasonable cost the actual speeches of the doctor and patient over long periods. Even if this becomes financially possible, the speeches would be worth recording only if the patient were unaware that what he was saying was being preserved.

The doctor, therefore, usually writes a summary from his notes. Since in therapeutic conversations few facts are noted in

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1 New York, Harper & Brothers.
the patient's presence, the summary must be based chiefly upon the doctor's memory. Consequently the choice of the items omitted or elaborated is influenced by his own complexes. Even the writing down of a 'key' sentence which (with some reservations) we may believe to have been recalled accurately, gives only the conventional representation of the sounds spoken, with no hint of the patient's facial and postural expression, his intonation, speech-melody, and other imponderables which may have influenced the doctor's decision. Moreover, a busy man, writing for readers who want inferences and conclusions, is tempted to 'telescope' his data. Since, like most psychotherapists, he earns his living in competition with others, he may have little time or incentive to develop the best possible method of expounding his technique verbally. Ultimately, of course, some judgments of a first-class psychiatrist may be comparable to an expert's detection of a forged 'old master' or a taster's classification of a wine. Perhaps we shall never have a description of these latter performances in verbal or chemical terms. Yet even if in our present pattern of society, at the expense of much time and trouble, the average psychiatrist could communicate the basis for his judgments, there are many reasons why he will not be encouraged to try. It must not be forgotten, too, that subtle interpreters of speech, facial expression, and gesture may be artists, with no desire to write about the subject. Here, as elsewhere, art conceals art.

Some work in this field could be cited as partial evidence against these assertions. But since the last war the factors described above have led to a progressive encapsulation of the medical psychologist's activities; a fact to be deplored by scientists. A contributory factor may have been the depersonalisation of psychological methods in certain directions and the tendency of many psychologists to 'leave the medicals to do their job'. What would happen, however, to scientific medicine if all physiologists, anatomists, and physicists took this point of view?

It might seem that to people whose chief interest is in human

beings, almost anything written about them would be interesting. This, however, seems scarcely true, for some would be very tired by a few hours’ reading of certain sociological journals. For this, there may be several reasons. One, perhaps, is the modern fashion of writing abstractly, and of eschewing concrete examples, even when they would damage one’s case. Another may be the anaemia which pervades the style of some ‘impersonal’ writers on psychology and sociology. The present-day enthusiasm for measurement may partly account for these developments. Yet, though the cardinal dimensions of a beautiful face, body, or house are important from a scientific standpoint, a numerical table which presented them merely as variants from an average, without indicating their very special significance, would make dull reading. There may, indeed, be a modern tendency in sociology and psychology to confuse measurability with significance. Possibly for this reason, Professor Pierre Janet, the doyen of psychotherapists, recently exhorted an international congress to remember that psychology is a subtle study.

Like any other ordered programme of investigation, that of the modern psychologists must necessarily be sub-divided. It is nearly as difficult to be ‘a’ psychologist to-day as to be ‘a’ physicist. Yet the analogy ought not to mislead us, for in one respect there is a significant difference between physics and psychology. A psychological event is unique. Analytic psychologists may regard it as ‘part’ of a unitary personal experience, though to phrase it thus, illegitimately creates the part. The part may lose its factual meaning when considered in isolation, both from the total momentary experience, and from the ‘past’ of the individual experiencer. In this respect, comparison with the study of physical objects would be misleading. Let us assume, for example, that the resistance of a certain filament in a new electric bulb, taken from a box of bulbs guaranteed to be almost identical, is \( x \) ohms. If that particular filament had been put into an adjacent bulb, its resistance would have been the same. The physicist can consider resistance in general. If the resistance in an electric bulb disappoints expectations, the personality of the bulb is not blamed.

Some psychologists, by procedures resembling factor-analysis,
hope to discover general psychological laws, comparable to physical laws. Yet the 'intelligence' of one child, indicated by I.Q. 130, would lose much of its meaning if, by a miracle, it could be transferred and made to function in the child next door; for children, unlike electric bulbs, are seldom comparable as units. Personality, character, temperament, and factors in the social and material environment seriously affect the ways in which intelligence is allowed to work. I.Q. 130, characterising the schoolboy heir of a rich and cultured lawyer, might function differently if transplanted into the son of a needy burglar. A highly intelligent scientific researcher may adjust himself badly to his fellow-creatures, and some men, 'second-rate' when examined by academic standards, secure and hold important posts by using their social intelligence. It is therefore reasonable to ask any working psychologist whether he believes that the techniques which he espouses will help him better than any others, to understand human beings, or whether he is isolating entities only for purposes of further theoretical study.\(^1\) The answer that he hopes to discover mental laws akin to physical ones, would seem to put the cart before the horse.

Recent writers have portrayed the development of particular scientific studies, relating their peculiarities to their social, cultural, and economic settings. Professor J. D. Bernal has done this in *The Social Functions of Science*. He demonstrates that there is, and always has been, very little 'pure' science; that most scientific work has been performed with utilitarian aims, and that even Leonardo da Vinci wrote flattering letters to royal persons to try to sell his inventions for purposes of war. Does not this throw some light upon modern developments of psychology? If the professor of a science desires a considerable extension of study in some particular direction, he must get a rich man to subsidise a special laboratory, or, if public funds are the only resource, he must obtain the co-operation of colleagues in the senior sciences. Since they are busy men, they will most easily understand and approve investigations which use techniques and apparatus similar to their own. For this there are

several possible reasons. First, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Secondly, it often takes a long time for the average researcher in the physical sciences to grasp the psychological point of view, since the whole of his training, to say nothing of his early interests, have led him away from it. Finally, scientists who sit on committees know that, at least in England, grants are easier to obtain for psychological work resembling physics or chemistry, for it may produce results of immediate short-range value, especially when war is believed to be imminent.

Books are obtainable describing the more spectacular—occasionally the more grotesque—ways in which some eminent scientists have differed from the average man, but few writers have shown how, in certain instances, the development of research in a science has depended upon the special desires of a few dominant men. The influence of Rutherford upon physics is a case in point. Thorndike’s guidance of much American psychology is well known. The admirable development of experimental psychology has led in certain quarters to what Prinzhorn described as an organised attempt to protect a vested interest, and this is an example of a movement almost universal among professional workers. It would be interesting to speculate upon the extent to which Freud’s pattern of psychology is attributable to his race, upbringing, and profession, his early social discouragement, and the fact that he never travelled widely. J. B. Watson’s behaviourism is said to have been a youth movement, revolting against the icy reception which his seniors gave to animal psychology. P. E. Vernon has shown that, in 1933, German and American views upon the proper ways to study Personality were poles apart, and that as time went on, the average psychologist in each of these lands tended to recognise the published researches from the other country less and less.¹ Recent events have not decreased this gap, indeed, they have sent to America many of the German psychologists whose outlook was international.

Are modern psychologists afraid to be interesting? I feel compelled to ask whether there is not an almost puritanical tendency

¹ *British Journal of Psychology*, 1933-4, xxiv, pp. 156-177.
nowadays causing many psychologists to avoid studying subjects of undoubted popular interest. This austere aloofness is not the prerogative of psychologists, yet, together with anthropologists and sociologists, they have recently been criticised for neglecting their proper studies. The Institute of Public Opinion in this country, by its very choice of subjects to investigate, and the lively, even noisy, Mass-Observation movement in England suggest that the students of the human mind are fiddling while Rome burns.

In fairness to both sides, it might be pointed out that the day before these lines were written, *The Study of Society* appeared over the names of seventeen of the reproached ones. Yet many of these would readily admit that a large number of important and popularly interesting subjects are barely mentioned in this book.

The meanings attached privately by academic people to the word 'popular', if examined closely, might explain some of this avoidance. Contempt for the common people is still widespread in many Universities, though not so openly expressed as formerly. A recent interesting book about one of our oldest English Universities expresses it explicitly in many places, and it would be dishonest to pretend that one does not hear it in ordinary conversation. It was even suggested recently as a matter for serious study by a well-known anthropologist.

There is, however, a subtler reason for this avoidance. I think it can be described as a belief that since a subject which interests everybody has no rarity value, he who writes about it will have no honour in his own country. For years everyone has known that millions of people, excluding ourselves, crowd in the summer to Coney Island and to Blackpool, yet a few *de-haut-en-bas* references to this weakness, as an illustration of men's gregarious instinct, were as much as the average social psychologist felt that these phenomena deserved. Recently, an account of Mass-Observation was broadcast in Great Britain, and the usual comment was made (not, perhaps, with complete fairness) that the Universities took no interest in it. A critic in one of our most democratic English newspapers immediately asked who could expect Oxford University researchers to be interested in what a shopgirl said on her holiday at Blackpool. Would
Oxford be interested in an authentic record of what a Greek slave-girl said about her mistress?

Some of the most striking omissions from general treatises on psychology seem to concern just those matters which, to many, make life interesting; for example, fashions and local and social differences in clothing and speaking. Since in some academic circles clothes and speech are stereotyped and taken for granted by the leading people, one could scarcely expect changes in them to be regarded as significant. Again many a social psychologist seems conscientiously to have squeezed all cultural values, charm, wit, and fun out of his raw material before he began work. The films and the radio are two of America's chief interests, and their influence upon the success of fashions is very considerable. The radio may become the chief maker or breaker of the world's peace. Yet, so far, the number of psychologists regarding these as attractive subjects for study is very small. In some towns England's early attempts at organising people for air-raid precautions were made difficult by the social stratification of the inhabitants, but this subject is only beginning to appear in psychology books. Before the Great War, the idea of the inevitability of warfare seems to have been challenged by few psychologists other than William James, and to-day plenty of them seem to get along happily without bothering about such problems.

Enough has possibly been said to make it clear that in the past there have been sociological factors which kept psychologists away from problems of general interest, especially the questions of individual tastes and standards. The reply might be that they differ so much that it is difficult to study them. If so, the answer must be made that since individual differences are a very lofty development of culture, and the degree of their tolerance is a measure of democratic civilisation, they ought to be described and recorded while they still exist. The most urgent problem for psychology, however, is to understand how men get on with each other. For even to-day there are millions of friendly people left in the world.