

that control the system's parts. Moreover, some minitheories in psychology are similar. Korte's (1915) theory of the phi phenomenon, Gestalt psychology's prototypical whole, was an early example. Korte set forth three laws that stated the interactions among intensity, temporal separation, and the spatial distance of two stimuli that produce optimal apparent motion.

One could hope that such theorizing is what the holistically inclined psychologists have in mind when they argue for a psychology of totalities. That is not the case at all, however. These psychologists imagine that the whole is somehow different from and greater than its parts. The whole gives meaning to the parts and is in charge of them. These fantasies reify the whole and make it worthy of a name, like "whole child" or "total personality." Now this baptized agency does things and owns things. It knows itself, or if it does not, it finds itself and seeks self-actualization. It has personal freedom and human dignity; a self-concept and assorted different selves; internal locus of control and out-of-body experiences. This orgy of hypostatization—the assumption that abstract concepts are physical things with mandated names—creates a voodoo psychology that mistakes spirit words for explanations.

### *Affect and Reaction Tendency*

These ill-advised opinions gained acceptance in some quarters with the revolt against the positivistic science of psychology early in the second half of the twentieth century. The most unattractive aspect of that revolution was (and is) the corruption of scholarship by politically inspired assaults on truth. Putting more faith in their autistic notions of what ought to be than scientific evidence of what is, the devotees of political correctness commit a moralistic fallacy. When the outcomes of research appear to violate their values, they insist that the results cannot be true. They have dismissed studies of obedience, the life expectancies of left-handed people, and race differences in IQ on the basis of such biases. And in their scorn for science, they fail to realize that facts cannot be established by the method of proclamation or that how they feel about a finding has no bearing on its truth.

The politically correct attitude is deficient in cognition. It is mindless affect made manifest in mindless doing. In the colleges and universities, the champions of political correctness advocate an antiacademic curriculum that emphasizes feeling over information, intuition over evidence, and moral right and wrong over intellectual right and wrong. They promote the appreciation of diversity instead of skills and knowledge as the goal of education. They dishonor teaching by

turning instruction into touchy-feely therapy, where the students' attitudes, announced in consciousness-raising psychobabble, are as highly valued as anything the professors or the textbooks have to offer.

The leaders of this anti-intellectual crusade treat the evils in the world as targets of condemnation rather than as issues to be understood. Their interest in fixing problems is distinctly secondary to their urge to fix the blame. When it comes to social action, they take stands and sometimes establish programs, unencumbered by a need for evidence. Politics instead of science have dictated their positions on abortion, affirmative action, gun control, bans on certain advertising, whether tests are biased against women and the members of certain minority groups, and whether homosexuality and shyness are mental illness.

These positions and the campaigns to which they lead are surely well intended, but they are not the stuff that rational solutions to the problems of humankind are made of. Quoting William James one final time, "With mere good intentions, the road to hell is proverbially paved" (James 1890a, 1:125).

### *Summary and Conclusion: The Hope of Application*

As everybody says today, the world is going to hell in a handbasket. The problems that bedevil it are mainly behavioral, and eventually the knowledge of psychology will be the key to their solution. What psychology has to offer for this purpose is a scientific understanding of behavior; applications exploit the science of psychology and draw their strength from it. A key component in psychology's program to give itself away must be to educate the public about the science of psychology.

That task will not be easy. Although people routinely think in terms of the hypotheses about behavior that this book identifies as fundamental, applied to human conduct, the scientific methods that lie behind these principles clash with established ways of thought. Probably it is the mistrust that grows out of this conflict of scientific sense and common sense that leads many people to regard a science of psychology as intrusive and coercive—and, fortunately, impossible.

Contemporary psychology is ill prepared to deal with its image problem, for two reasons. There is very little coherence in its subject matter, and too frequently the supporters of its popular perspectives violate the rules of science. Many of the cognitive psychologists have disowned empiricism and appointed mythical mental managers to oversee the business of the mind, failing to understand that processes without overt expression are beyond the reach of science. Some of the

biological psychologists have such an obsession with the machinery of the body that they neglect behavior, failing to understand that mechanisms without behavioral expression are not the business of psychology. In reckless celebration of the psychologist's fallacy, the holists have mounted a campaign against analysis, failing to understand that a nonanalyzing science is an inarticulate science.

A particularly difficult internal problem that confronts psychology when it turns to application is a mindless preference for "politically correct" remedies, based on social science reflexes, which render science irrelevant to advocacy. But if psychology is to help in conquering the problems of the world, it must stick to its scientific guns. It must make its contribution in the honest coin of scientific knowledge, not the phony currency of politically correct affect.

Moreover, direct social advocacy is beyond the limits of the discipline's authority. Immediate responsibility for the application of psychology belongs not to psychology itself but to other agencies. To protect its integrity as a science, psychology must refrain from direct social action and restrict itself to providing those other agencies with knowledge that will help them make wise decisions.



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