

The Lack of an Overarching Conception in Psychology

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As a broad, sprawling field, American psychology has become increasingly molecular, making it inordinately difficult to discern or formulate an overarching conception that would counter the centrifugal forces that make psychology a conglomeration of interests for which there is no organizing center. To illustrate the lack of such a conception and its adverse consequences, the major works of two people who had such a conception but who have had no influence on psychology are discussed. One of them is John Dollard, who in the mid-thirties wrote *Criteria for the Life History*, which was nothing less than an indictment of the lack of such an overarching conception. The other is Alexis de Tocqueville who wrote *Democracy in America*. How was this young Frenchman, who spent nine months in this country before the middle of the nineteenth century, able to write a book that explained so well the American character? What "psychology" permitted him to understand so much, to describe so clearly the individual in the larger picture? Dollard spelled out his conception, De Tocqueville did not. An attempt is made to formulate De Tocqueville's overarching conception.

If anything validly characterizes psychology in the post World War II era, it is its ever increasing involvement in matters of public policy. Before that war psychology was a small, academic field, seemingly content, as one colleague put it, to explore and understand the secrets of "mother nature." There were, of course, individuals and groups concerned with the place and uses of psychology in the social order; they were a vocal but relatively uninfluential force. They were perceived as activists: thoughtful, respectable but not vital to the development of psychology as a science. And it was as a developing science—reflected in the substance and goals of graduate education as well as in the pronouncements of the American Psychological Association—that psychology was seen as a contributor to the public welfare. Those were the days when the substance of journals and books was suffused with issues surrounding learning and personality theories. And these theories were, as I have discussed elsewhere (Sarason, 1981), about the individual organism.

Society was not a backdrop for these theories; it simply was not in the picture. I was not being facetious when I said that if Thorndike, instead of putting one animal in the maze, had put two or three or more into it, American psychology would have taken on a different cast, one more appropriate to the realities of social existence.

The point is that any discipline, then or now, is in a transactional relationship to its societal surround, reflecting as well as impinging upon that surround. The fascination of history lies in the way it illuminates how those who came before us were unable to grasp the nature of those transactional relationships. As I tried to show in my book *Psychology Misdirected* (1981), at best our grasp is inevitably incomplete. The word inevitable is jarring to the sensibilities of many people who need or like to believe that it is possible fully, or even largely, to un-imprison themselves from a world view they assimilated in the process of socialization into a particular part of society, at a particular point in its historical development. This issue, I need not emphasize, is peculiarly important in psychology, suggesting as it does that theories of human behavior, their substance and formal appearance to the contrary notwithstanding, always reflect and are restricted by axioms in a world view that we dimly sense, if we sense them at all, and most of us do not make that effort. World views, like Freud's construct of the unconscious, can never be fully mined and expressed, and to the extent that they can, it requires a truly special effort. Psychological theorists have never made the effort or given signs that they recognize the problem. Psychological theories, like their creators, do not have socially virginal births.

So, for example, from the vantage point of many decades we say that Freud's description and conception of female sexuality rested on, among other things, his imprisonment in a world view in which women had a certain place, role, and characteristics. His conceptions, we now say, are inexplicable apart from his socialization into and embeddedness in a particular society at a particular time. Similarly, John Stuart Mill's conception of women, written in 1869 and utterly different from that of Freud, is not understandable apart from a stream of British political theorists who were occupied with individual liberty.

The point of this paper is not that psychological theorists and theories reflect time, place, and social history. That is an obvious point, albeit one that is at best glossed over and at worst avoided. My major point is that this neglect has enormous implications for how psychology serves the public welfare. More specifically, this neglect renders psychology impotent to comprehend the nature and direction of changes in world view and attitudes between generations, changes that have and will alter our society and its place in this world. Since World War II, psychology as science and profession has suffused the societal ambience in myriad ways. Indeed, as a large and highly organized field on the state and national levels, psychology has been vigorously pro-

moted on the basis that what is good for psychology is good for society. If that sounds crass and unfair, I suggest that you read the *American Psychologist*, beginning with its first issue in 1945. It will be hard to escape the conclusion that psychology has been on an onward and upward course from which society has reaped many benefits. Soul-searching discussions of how psychology and psychologists may have had adverse effects are extraordinarily infrequent in the pages of that house organ. For further confirmation I suggest that you peruse the collection of presidential addresses to the American Psychological Association (Hilgard, 1978). Aside from John Dewey's address there is no glimmer at all of the possibility that the psychological enterprise may have socially problematic features, or that by virtue of being in and of the society it has been rendered insensitive to, indeed blinded to, ongoing changes in the society. The fact is that in the post World War II era, psychology has been a reactor to rather than a predictor of these changes and their possible consequences. Race, gender, handicap, aging, poverty, education, deinstitutionalization, the psychological consequences of the atomic bomb, new living styles, youth in revolt—in regard to all of these problems, psychology got into the act after the drama had begun to unfold and, I must add, after money was provided to participate.

I recognize, of course, that in regard to each of these problems there were individual psychologists and psychiatrists (before and after World War II) who valiantly tried to illuminate what was at stake. Aside from the fact that they were few in number and relatively uninfluential in moving their professions, their thinking and contributions derived hardly at all from any psychological theory but rather from knowledge, experiences, and moral-political sensitivities not contained in or formally derivable from theory. They endeavored to apply their theories in order to enlarge our understanding and to inform action. But that endeavor raises three interrelated questions. Why did not our theories direct us to problems that would change us, our society, our world? Can you have a very serious and viable theory of human behavior, even on a very general level, that does not attempt to interconnect the individual with structural, historical, political-economic, and ideological features of the individual's society? If we accept the fact that the theorist, as an individual and as a psychologist, is not understandable apart from his or her socialization into a particular society at a particular time, should not that obvious and brute fact be reflected in the substance and scope of theory? The thrust of these questions is that a psychological theory should be one that integrates societal as well as individual variables. And by societal I do not mean social.

In psychology the term social refers to description and understanding of interactions and transactions between individuals or in this or that kind of group, e.g., between child and parent, child and peers, etc. That has been a productive focus but a very limiting one because it totally ignores the fact

that any interaction between individuals directly or indirectly bears the stamp in the here-and-the-now of societal variables. For example, no one contests the assertion that every society has a social structure, the substance and strength of which contributes to an individual's sense of identity and which in diverse ways governs interactions with others. To the anthropologist societal structure is a psychological variable just as is gender: it is not a sometimes present sometimes absent "variable," just as gender is not. But unlike gender which has some concrete, palpable referents, the concept of social structure is far more abstract and its referents to observable behavior are more difficult to discern or to demonstrate.

Difficult for whom? Has there ever been a society the members of which were unaware that it had a structure that, so to speak was a difference that made a difference in the lives of its members? Has there ever been a society that was unaware that other societies and cultures had, among other things, a different structure than it had? In short, in the lives of people social structure is a psychological fact and variable, no less important to take into account than parents and siblings. The difficulty that the social scientist encountered in developing the concept of social structure inhered in the observation that members of a society, by virtue of the socialization process, could not fathom the pervasive psychological impact of structure. What the members of a society could say about structure was but the tip of an iceberg for the exploration of which a conceptual sonar was necessary.

Psychological theories—of the personality, child study and human development stripe—have not concerned themselves with social structure, that amalgam of concepts (historical, political, economic, legal and psychological) without which no society or any of its members is comprehensible. So, for example, when we say that we are *Americans* or *Australians*, we are paying tribute to the fact, albeit usually unknowingly and superficially, that our psychological bloodstream contains the derivatives of a distinctive societal history and structure, i.e., we are products of a present that contains the past that is carrying us to a future. We learn this when for the first time we visit—better yet, have to live in—another society. Then we realize how incompletely we grasp the determinants of our sense of personal identity, our sense of social identity, our psychology. Then we realize that to say that social structure is a sociological, economic, political, or historical variable, or a combination of these, is valid but misleading. No psychological theory, especially of the developmental type, that purports to be serious and comprehensive can avoid the issues surrounding the origins and nature of the sense of identity. But none of these theories contains the faintest recognition of social structure as a psychological variable.

What about social class? Social class is not synonymous with social structure but is both a cause and an effect of social structure. There have been

literally thousands of psychological studies in which social class was a variable. Psychological theorists have been cognizant of social class, respectful of its importance, but in no direct or formal way have they included it in their theories. Differences in social class are treated like differences in climate: significant, omnipresent, but not intrinsically important in a psychological sense. It is ironical that in the early Yankee City studies by Warner (1964), social class was a psychological variable in that it entered into the formation of personal and social identity and colored the individuals' perceptions and conceptions, i.e., who went to what church, who was invited to whose house, to what organizations one belonged, one's sense of place, one's sense of identity. The reason Warner's studies had the impact they did was that it was obvious that the psychological significance of social class went far beyond what people were aware of and could report. Social class was a psychological variable in that it entered into and became part of experience; it manifested itself in myriad ways in the context in which the individual was embedded; and it was absorbed, so to speak, in equally myriad ways by the individual from the time of birth onward. As a psychological variable, social class did not lend itself easily to quantification and study. And so short cuts were developed, i.e., indexes (like education, income, place of residence, occupational level) that had the gloss of quantification facilitated by obtaining large samples, and gave promise for illuminating other psychological variables.

Social class quickly became an "in" variable. But it no longer was a psychological variable. It said as much—really as little—about human behavior as the IQ does about problem-solving. In the pursuit of shortcuts, psychology was again demonstrating its insensitivity to the nature and structure of social milieus. In riveting on the individual organism—how it learns and changes, the impediments and facilitators to change and growth—psychology was blind to how social milieus are structured and change. Psychological theory was about individuals, not individuals in contexts. Although psychology has long struggled to overcome the mind-body dichotomy, there is no sign today that it sees any problem in the way it dichotomizes the individual and the social environment.

In an attempt to clarify what I have said, as well as to add to the basis of my concluding remarks, I will now talk about two individuals: John Dollard and Alexis de Tocqueville. John Dollard is perhaps best known for his classic *Caste and Class in a Southern Town* (1937/1957). For my present purpose what is most remarkable about this book is that when you are through reading it, you cannot pigeonhole it. If you are an anthropologist, you could say that it is an anthropological study. If you are a sociologist, you would take pride in it as a sociological study. And it would be understandable if a political scientist placed it in his or her field. For all of these fields the book has relevance for their formal theories, i.e., the ethnographic data have significance

for how one conceptualizes human behavior. And for a very good reason that is paradoxically both obvious and subtle. What is obvious is that for Dollard any theory of human behavior that distinguished between psychology and social milieu—that began by dichotomizing them, implied that they had phenomenologically different existences or statuses—was missing the point.

Put another way, if you began with something in principle akin to the mind-body dualism, you were arbitrarily separating what in nature is organically integrated. For Dollard, what required explanation was not how each part of the dichotomy became related but how this inevitable, indissoluble unity arose and developed. From the moment of conception the individual organism has structure, but that structure is incomprehensible apart from the fact that it always is dynamically a part of a larger surround, i.e., the part and the surround are a unity, our language to the contrary notwithstanding. It is that kind of unity that powered Dollard's implicit theory of human behavior and engenders in the reader the feeling that his or her understanding of human behavior has been enlarged and deepened. In psychology, where Dollard's book does not have the status of a classic, the book was early on pigeon-holed as an anthropological-sociological study that was relevant to psychology primarily for what it said about race relations. It was not viewed as raising important general questions about how we conceptualize human behavior. I shall qualify my remarks about this book in a moment but first I have to make some brief comments about another book by Dollard published two years earlier in 1935.

The title of the 1935 book *Criteria for the Life History* was an unfortunate one, conveying the impression that it was a kind of manual to be used for an introductory course for social workers or other beginning clinicians. It was infinitely more than that because what Dollard did was to examine cases written up by leading theorists (e.g., Freud, Adler) from the standpoint of their understanding and use of the concept of culture. And in the main he finds them wanting, riveting as most of them do on what is essentially the asocial or acultural individual. The position he takes is succinctly stated in the following excerpt:

The formal view of culture provides an indispensable backdrop for individual studies but via it we do not arrive at theories of meaningful action. As soon as we take the post of observer on the cultural level the individual is lost in a crowd and our concepts never lead us back to him. After we have "gone cultural" we experience the person as a fragment of a (derived) culture pattern, as a marionette dancing on the strings of (reified) culture forms. A culture-personality problem can be identified in every case by observing whether the person is "there" in full emotional reality; if he is not there, then we are dealing with a straight cultural or institutional study. If he is there and we can ask how he feels, then we have a culture-personality problem. It is stressed emphatically that there are no personality problems alone. Personality problems are always culture-personality problems. (p. 5)

For Dollard the life history was not an exercise in bringing together the

individual and culture but rather its goal was to describe the individual in culture. As he put it (*italics his*): "*we want to know how a new person is added to the group*, what I have called the group-plus-one hypothesis. Every dilemma that could be tabbed as psychological would then be seen as an aspect of acculturation of a person into group life" (p. 277). In calling for a "unified world view" John was quite clear that he viewed mainstream psychology as wallowing in a conceptual disaster that simply could not explain human behavior, that could not recognize the nature and force of social reality.

The life history book was startlingly radical in that it pulled the rug out from under psychology and the other social sciences. We are presented with a view inordinately difficult to grasp because our language and theoretical traditions are so suffused with dichotomies—heredity *and* environment, culture *and* personality, the individual *and* the group, economics *and* political science—that, however convenient they may be for establishing and sustaining the social science disciplines, they do violence to the truly seamless web of our social existence.

Now, back to *Caste and Class in a Southern Town* because that book has a surprising and prodromal feature that illustrates how difficult it was for Dollard to adhere to and to apply his revolutionary view of the social animal. In the very first paragraph of that book he says:

The researcher cannot always be sure that the book he starts to write is the one it will be given him to finish. My original plan was to study the personality of Negroes in the South, to get a few life histories, and to learn something about the manner in which the Negro person grows up. It was from my wish to make a study of a community, to consider the intricate problem of the cultural heritage of the Negro, or to deal with the emotional structure of a specific small town in the deep South. I was compelled, however, to study the community, for the individual life is rooted in it. (p. 6)

Why did Dollard expect that he could obtain life histories without having to study the community in which these individuals had been socialized? Having written what he did in the life history book, that first paragraph is both surprising and inexplicable. But it is to his everlasting credit, perhaps because he had written the book, that he saw that his life histories would be inadequate if he did not see them in the context of their community, if he did not take seriously the strictures of a unified field view. As a consequence, we get a picture of people *in* culture, not of people *and* culture. Not culture *and* economics, not culture *and* politics, not past *and* present, not blacks *and* whites, but rather an attempt at a Breughel-like picture of the social cauldron. Not a cubistic, abstract-expressionist mode of conveyance of ideas and concepts but a creative, stirring, controlled, and integrated series of vignettes from which a wholeness of feeling, perception, and conception emerges. The individual in culture emerges consistent with Dollard's "unified view."

I said that the first paragraph in the second book was prodromal. What I mean by prodromal is contained in these questions: Why did John Dollard subsequently get involved with learning theory? Why did he, together with Neal Miller, become immersed in a learning theory that was about the individual organism and which at its stimulus-response root assumed a cleavage between inside and outside, between the individual and his or her surround? Those were the days when the role and intricacies of learning theory preoccupied American psychology. And these were learning theories derived and illustrated by thousands of studies of the Norway rat. What attracted Dollard to go in that direction? From a distance, part of the answer seems clear: he was housed in Yale's Institute of Human Relations which also housed the Department of Psychology. John came to Yale as an assistant to the great anthropologist, Edward Sapir, without whom the history of American anthropology and psychiatry cannot be written. Orally and in writing, Dollard said numerous times that whatever was distinctive in his thinking and writing stemmed directly from Sapir, a fact that becomes obvious if you consult Mandelbaum's edition (1949) of a selection of Sapir's papers. Sapir died within a few years of coming to Yale from the University of Chicago. It is fair to say that with Sapir's death Dollard was alone, setting the stage, so to speak, for other influences to enter his life. And those influences were in abundance in the Institute of Human Relations. In this regard let us listen to him in his 1957 preface to the reprinting of *Caste and Class in a Southern Town*:

... by identification with Neal E. Miller, Carl I. Hovland, Samuel A. Stouffer and others, I came under pressure of the experimentalists on methodological grounds. I had to amplify my mathematical and statistical background. I had to learn something of psychophysical methods as applied to scaling and rating, and hence to test and scale construction. The importance of reliable and valid data was greatly raised up in mind.

He goes on to say that if he were doing *Caste and Class in a Southern Town* in 1957 he would "insist on an analysis of individual habit and learning. As Miller and I have said in our *Social Learning and Imitation*, to understand man, one must know the *principles* on which he learns as well as the *conditions* under which he learns." But why did Dollard not recognize that he was adopting a learning theory that was preoccupied with principles and not conditions? Why did he, so to speak, remove himself from an analysis of social contexts? In that 1957 preface he says: "... if I were trying to do over this job . . . I would unscramble the caste and class picture after the manner of W.L. Warner and his group. In this study I omitted the role of white upper class, neglected the relations between groups in lower class, and failed to clarify the relations between parallel classes in the two castes. My study also omits consideration of the important role of social cliques in organizing societal life" (p. 7). When Dollard—sociologist, anthropologist, psychoanalyst— "be-

came" a psychologist, the development of a "unified field view" was aborted, replaced by a focus on the individual in the abstract.

Toward the end of Dollard's career, I had a three-hour, rambling conversation with him in the course of which I asked what attracted him to learning theory, an attraction that seemed to be a dramatic change in theoretical orientation. His answer was quick and brief: what he was after was, in his words, the "glue" that brought and kept together culture and personality. That metaphor both fascinated and puzzled me. On the one hand, it indicated that he was still wrestling with the inextricable unity in the culture-personality transaction. On the other hand, he had chosen a "glue" that for all practical purposes virtually ignored culture and society, i.e., a "glue" comprised of ingredients (principles) that virtually guaranteed that an analysis of individual behavior would ignore the patterning and complexity of *conditions*. The very concepts of the singular stimulus and response were on opposite poles from those in the vision that he struggled to explicate in those two early books. That the ultimate aim of the Dollard and Miller efforts was unexceptionable goes without saying. They were always clear about what was at stake: how the substance and patterning of culture became part of the individual's view of self and world. That was (and is) the central problem. They chose a means that was inadequate to the task.

I am reminded here of Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* where he struggled with the crucial and omnipresent problem of the origin and nature of aggression, and ends up offering us the internal, aculturally derived death instinct. Psychology and psychiatry have been amazingly successful in ignoring the social world. This is not happenstance because psychology begins and ends with the visible, palpable individual, making only token gestures to the social atmosphere which existed before the individual entered this world: John Dollard's the group-plus-one formulation. We now know, contrary to William James, that for the neonate the world is not a big, buzzing bloody confusion. The neonate comes into the world with the capacity to perceive figure-ground relations—not figure *and* ground because there is no figure without ground. Unfortunately, psychological theorists have yet to understand that the individual is incomprehensible apart from the social milieu in which he or she is grounded. To reiterate what Dollard said (1935): "It is stressed emphatically that there are no personality problems alone. Personality problems are always culture-personality problems" (p. 5). How simple to state! How easy it is to ignore!

And now for De Tocqueville who, I venture to say, is a kind of household name in American social science (not psychology), but who aside from political scientists has not had all that many readers. My interest in De Toqueville is reflected in the question: How could a thirty-year old Frenchman in 1830 come to the United States, presumably to study prisons and penitentiaries

and then write a book amazingly illustrative of the behavior of Americans and their social institutions? And he was in this country for only nine months, before jets, telephones, radio, television and other inventions we consider essential to seeing and grasping our world. That he described inordinately well, validly, and succinctly the American political institutions requires no elaboration. But characterizing his book *Democracy in America* (1945) as both a political treatise or manual is both true and fantastically misleading. As I read him, as I have reread him, De Tocqueville was out to describe American society and its diverse cultures—their historical origins and vicissitudes—and to show how they were the ground from which emerged distinctively American ways of thinking and acting. Nowhere does De Tocqueville spell out his “psychology” and that, I believe, is because he had no psychology independent of history, social institutions, and social contexts. It is not possible for me here to document that conclusion or to demonstrate by scores of excerpts how he was able not only to describe recognizably American ways of thinking and acting but also to suggest the directions that changes in society would take. De Tocqueville, like John Dollard, was interested in how the transactions among people, institutions, and social structure and class make for social change—intended and unintended. For De Tocqueville the nature and direction of changes in American society would be fateful for the entire world. I cannot resist quoting the following from the last page of his first volume:

There are at the present time two great nations in the world, which started from different points, but seem to tend towards the same end. I allude to the Russians and the Americans. Both of them have grown up unnoticed; and while the attention of mankind was directed elsewhere, they have suddenly placed themselves in the front rank among the nations, and the world learned their existence and their greatness at almost the same time.

All other nations seem to have nearly reached their natural limits, and they have only to maintain their power; but these are still in the act of growth. All the others have stopped, or continue to advance with extreme difficulty; these alone are proceeding with ease and celerity along a path to which no limit can be perceived. The American struggles against the obstacles that nature opposes to him; the adversaries of the Russian are men. The former combats the wilderness and savage life; the latter, civilization with all its arms. The conquests of the American are therefore gained by the plowshare; those of the Russian by the sword. The Anglo-American relies upon personal interest to accomplish his ends and gives free scope to the unguided strength and common sense of the people; the Russian centers all the authority of society in a single arm. The principal instrument of the former is freedom; of the latter servitude. Their starting-point is different and their courses are not the same; yet each of them seems marked out by the will of Heaven to sway the destinies of half the globe. (p. 452)

Permit me the liberty of imagining that we can ask De Tocqueville what variables we have to take into account if we are to understand human behavior. Or we could ask: “To which variables did you attend that permitted you in such a short period of time to hold up a mirror in which we recognize so much of ourselves even in 1989?” Here is what De Tocqueville might say.

"The first point I would have to make is that human behavior has to be seen and explained in terms of two distinct but related spheres or contexts. The two are really one but if initially you do not keep them apart, things get really complicated. The first sphere is what I would call the immediate or local one by which I mean family, neighborhood, community. This is a sphere or context in which an individual becomes a particular person, a distinctive one. Although that person, if you ask, is very much aware of how the local context has become part of his or her being, that awareness is always limited.

"But then there is the second sphere—what we call the larger society—without which the nature, structure, and dynamics of the first is not comprehensible. The person is aware of this sphere but he or she has less understanding of how that second sphere—no less than the first—has become part of his or her sense of identity. To a foreigner like me it was immediately obvious that if I wanted to understand the thought, actions, and world view of Americans it was absolutely essential that I see them at every point in terms of those two spheres. That, I assume, is the case wherever you are observing and explaining human behavior. But the problem is even more complicated in that our sense of identity always has a time or historical dimension, i.e., a view of ourselves that contains a past, present and future in relation to the two spheres. Here too, if you ask people to talk about this dimension, you find that their description and explanation leave out much that to a foreign observer seems absolutely crucial. That is to say, what they will say may be quite valid but very incomplete as an explanation. The task of the observer or theoretician is to see behavior in terms that address but go far beyond what people are aware of. This is what I was implying when I said in my introduction to my book: 'A new science of politics is needed for a new world.' I clearly meant by a new science of politics one that took seriously how individuals became persons, how they absorbed the atmosphere of the two spheres, how they took their social places in the spheres, and how changes in persons and spheres came about. I think I made it quite clear in my book that what was at stake in creating a new science of politics was how to understand and influence the course of human society in general and American society in particular. May I remind you of what I said immediately before the sentence about 'a new science of politics' for a new world:

The Christian nations of our day seem to me to present a most alarming spectacle; the movement which impels them is already so strong that it cannot be stopped, but it is not yet so rapid that it cannot be guided. Their fate is still in their own hands; but very soon they may lose control.

The first of the duties that are at this time imposed upon those who direct our affairs is to educate democracy, to reawaken, if possible, its religious beliefs; to purify its morals; to mold its actions; to substitute a knowledge of statecraft for its inexperience, and an awareness of its true interest for its blind instincts, to adapt its government to time and place, and to modify it according to men and to conditions. A new science of politics is needed for a new world. (De Tocqueville, p. 7).

“People and conditions! Without understanding the one you cannot understand the other. It is a duality, like the two spheres, that is really a unity. People are in the conditions and the conditions are largely people.

“It is obvious in my book that I consider geography, climate, and resources as omnipresent variables in influencing human behavior. You cannot escape that conclusion when you come to America from the old country. But that is precisely the same conclusion Americans come to when they go to any foreign country for the first time. I found that Americans were aware of the significance of these variables but again in an incomplete way.

“For example, I spent a good deal of time in my book describing and explaining how and why people in the North were so different from those in the South. People in the North and South were quite aware of differences between themselves but, generally speaking, their explanations were woefully inadequate to explain how these variables became everpresent influences in their lives, institutions, and communities. And in regard to North and South, you will remember that I emphasized two other variables, again distinct but highly interrelated: demography and religion. From their very beginnings the North and South differed significantly on these variables which in myriad ways determine not only the contents and directions of people’s thinking but their social, class, and caste structure and dynamics as well. You will recall how concerned I was about how the issue of slavery would get worked out. My anxiety stemmed not only from the potentials in the conflict between blacks and whites in the South, or from the conflict between North and South, but also from the fact that the Southern whites were consciously aware that they were caught in a moral-economic-political maze from which they saw no exit. As you can see, a new science of politics in its most general sense is a science of human behavior. Put another way, if you want to understand human behavior and its variations, you have to start with a number of variables that may appear to be discrete but which you have to assume become a patterned part of a person.

“But I must repeat: I am not interested in the new science as an exercise but as a vehicle for understanding and action. If I was presumptuous in trying to fathom the future—and I know now that I was not always right—it was for two reasons. First, the pace of change in the world had dramatically increased and we needed better ways of grasping what those changes were, what was sustaining or aborting them, what they portended. Second, if that grasp was productive, if it had the ring of truth, if it made us look afresh or differently on the problems before us, we would be better able to deal with the catastrophes that I saw as storm clouds on the distant horizon. As I said in my book: human nature in America is no different than it is elsewhere. The catastrophe I feared was that the American manifestation of that nature would over time become too similar to those of people elsewhere.

"Let me, finally, come to a part of my answer that explains a good deal of what my book contains. It is something that I never said explicitly although it is reflected in numerous ways in my book. I am always comparing this person with that person, this group with that group, this region with that region, this country with that country. In other words, I am set to see and explain differences. And more than that, I am especially intrigued with differences among groups of peoples faced with very similar external conditions. It is like taking advantage of experiments in nature. For example, I point out that the new world was settled by groups from three nations: England, France, and Spain. And when I observed each of these groups in the new world the differences among them were striking. How do you explain, I asked, the differences among them, especially in regard to their different fates? The answer, you will remember, is a complicated one in which religion and political ideology suffused the social atmosphere with remarkably different results."

It makes as much sense to say that De Tocqueville was a political scientist and wrote a political treatise as to say that Freud was a physician who wrote medical treatises. Having mentioned Freud, I venture to say that my presentation has engendered in you this thought: neither Dollard in his two early books or De Tocqueville in his work come directly to grips with the cognitive, affective, motivational variables and processes that are assumed to be universal in human development and variations in which explain individual differences, i.e., variables and processes with which extant psychological theories are preoccupied. Why do I insist that what is both implicit and explicit in Dollard and De Tocqueville must explicitly and formally be integrated into a psychology of human behavior? (That insistence was, of course, central to Dollard's ultimate conceptual purpose, but was not so in the case of De Tocqueville.) When I look at psychological theories from the perspective of Dollard and De Tocqueville I see a continuum starting with the molecular focus (say, of a Freud) shading over to the semi-molar cultural community focus of Dollard to a truly molar focus of De Tocqueville. And I say continuum in contrast to our tendency to see them either as discontinuous or simply different perspectives that are distinct but somehow or other correlated. For all practical purposes psychological theory has been obsessively molecular, discontinuous with these other foci. I venture the opinion that the variables implicit in the theory of De Tocqueville, and certainly the style with which he utilizes them, can be shown to be applicable to the task of explaining individual development and differences. Stating and dealing with that task is what Dollard meant by a unified field view but he got entrapped in the details of the molecular focus.

As citizens and professionals we seek to explain ourselves and our world. I am not being presumptuous or indulging overgeneralization when I say that neither in the role of citizen nor professional do we have the sense that our

explanations are adequate or more important, that they give promise of becoming more adequate. We know, as did De Tocqueville and Henry Adams, that our world is on a course conducive to depressive nightmares and daymares. The people in my age cohort came to maturity with the belief that however unseemly the course of human affairs, there *would* be human affairs. Subsequent generations did not for the most part share that world view.

A story involving my daughter is relevant here. She was six or seven at the time (around 1961). We were at supper. My wife and I were discussing the pros and cons of moving to a new house. At one point Julie piped up and said: "Why don't we move to Ireland?" Why, we asked, should we move to Ireland? July replied: "Our teacher said that when they start to drop atom bombs they will not drop them on Ireland." We laughed, reassured Julie, and then went on with the pros and cons of moving.

But what she said stuck with me. In some vague way I knew that her remark was very significant, its significance going way beyond our little family. It was not until years later in the course of writing a book on career choices, career change, aging, and the sense of the passage of time (Sarason, 1977), that I began to understand how changes in the world had dramatically become absorbed by the younger generations, resulting in an altered world view very different from my own. If as a parent I was not prepared to understand, it was also the case that as a psychologist I was unprepared to understand the indissoluble links between changes in the world at large on the one hand, and individual development and world view on the other hand. Although I was not (and am not) a psychological theoretician, I know enough about the substance of psychological theories to say that they are pitifully inadequate to alert you to those indissoluble links that characterize the real world. I am not, of course, suggesting that a psychological theory should say anything formal about atom bombs, wars (star or otherwise), or any other unpleasantries. But I am suggesting that a psychological theory of human behavior that purports to encompass the variables, processes, and contexts necessary to describe and explain human behavior, its development and vicissitudes, should direct our attention to events and forces that influence and alter world views. It should be a theory that is quintessentially social, but not social in the local-geographical sense, let alone one riveted on the family or the intrapsychic complexities.

However understandable the origins of the social sciences—the boundaries of convenience that had to be erected to give recognition to different perspectives on human behavior—and however productive they have been to our understanding, they have become counterproductive in that those boundaries of convenience are now mammoth barriers to grasping how in the real world human beings become social beings. I said at the outset that psychology, as a profession and science, reacts to change, that its capacity to anticipate signifi-

cant change has been vitually nil. No psychological theorist promulgates his or her theory for the hell of it. They are creations intended to cast in a new light why we are what we are, why we become what we become, and why, if taken seriously, we would and should think and act differently. Theories are intended to make a difference in the realm of human affairs, which is why theorists do not put their creations in the files but publish them instead. And it has almost always been the case that each theorist develops or suggests a technology for the express purpose of demonstrating how human behavior can and should be directed. These molecular theories and their engineering-technological accompaniments have been very mixed blessings. Each gives a glimpse of a truth at the same time that each rather quickly leaves us with the feeling that we have a part of a jigsaw puzzle that we do not know how to complete. We have parts but we have no conception of what the whole may be. And our dissatisfaction, our malaise, our cynical disparagements of our own tower of psychological Babel stem from the fact that we do have a faith that there is a whole, that there is a way of putting the pieces together, and that we are unequal to the task. It is that faith that powered John Dollard's efforts and it is that faith that is implicit in De Tocqueville.

Let me conclude with a few words about an article in the *Psychological Review* of July 1896. The writer makes the following points. First, the dualism between body and soul finds a "distinct echo in the current dualism of stimulus and response." Second, "it [the dualism] assumes sensory stimulus and motor response as distinct psychical existences, while in reality they are always inside a coordination and have their significance purely from the part played in maintaining or reconstituting the coordination." Third, it assumes that the quality of experience "which precedes the 'motor' phase and that which succeeds it are two different states, instead of the last being always the first reconstituted. The result is that the reflex arc idea leaves us with a disjointed psychology." Fourth, "in its failure to see that the arc of which it takes is virtually a circuit, a continual reconstitution, it breaks continuity and leaves us nothing but a series of jerks, the origin of each jerk to be sought outside the process of experience itself, in either an external pressure of 'environment,' or else an unaccountable spontaneous variation from within the 'soul' or the 'organism'":

If one is reading a book, if one is hunting, if one is performing a chemical experiment; in each case [a] noise has a very different psychical value; it is a different experience. In any case, what proceeds the "stimulus" is a whole act, a sensory-motor coordination. What is more to the point, the "stimulus emerges out of this coordination; it is born from it as its matrix; it represents as it were an escape from it. (p. 256)

The writer of that article, John Dewey, cited in Ratner (1965), was reacting

against a concept, the reflex arc, that on a molecular level did violence to the unity of experience, that committed the psychology fallacy: "a state of things characterizing an outcome is regarded as a true description of the events which led up to this outcome." And it was the same psychologist who three years later in the same journal stated similar principles in regard to the molar:

The application of psychology to social institutions is the only scientific way of dealing with their ethical values in their present unequal distribution, their haphazard execution and their thwarted development. It marks just the recognition of this principle of sufficient reason in the large matters of social life. It is the recognition that the existing order is determined neither by fate nor by chance, but is based on law and order, on a system of existing stimuli and modes of reaction, through knowledge of which we can modify the practical outcome. There is no logical alternative save either to recognize and search for the mechanism of the interplay of personalities that controls the existing distributions of values, or to accept as final a fixed hierarchy of persons in which the leaders assert, on no basis save their own supposed superior personality, certain ends and laws which the mass of men passively receive and imitate. The effort to apply psychology to social affairs means that the determination of ethical values lies not in any set or class, however superior, but in the workings of the social whole; that the explanation is found in the complex interactions and interrelations which constitute this whole. (Dewey, cited in Hilgard, 1978, pp. 313-314)

John Dewey, long before John Dollard, saw psychology's mission as the study and description of the "glue" that suffused and held together "the complex interactions and interrelations which constitute the whole."

It was John Dewey who, in the 1899 paper (his presidential address to the American Psychological Association) pointed out the limitations of laboratory research for psychology and said that "unless our laboratory results are to give us artificialities, mere scientific curiosities, they must be subjected to interpretation by gradual approximation to conditions of life." And it was John Dewey, in the spirit of De Tocqueville, who understood that the abstraction we call the social order exists before the birth of the individual and with his or her birth becomes, circuit not arc-wise, part of an evolving psychological whole. For Dewey, as it was for De Tocqueville and Dollard and as it should be for us, democratic ideology could not be outside of American psychological theory but is a part of it, if only because that ideology—regardless of how well, comprehensively and purposefully it is understood—is part of the American theorists' world view of humankind. No less important, and as De Tocqueville insisted, there is too much at stake in this worrisome world to be satisfied with a psychology that by its narrowness and essentially asocial emphasis can at best be accused of being irrelevant and at worst irresponsible.

I can be accused of making the error of characterizing psychology as if it were a person. If I plead guilty to the accusation, my defense is that I could think of no other way of raising the following questions: What are the sources of our current malaise and inadequacies? How does our socialization into this

society, and this and related disciplines sustain these inadequacies? What are the conditions, individual and social, that will alter this situation? Are the criteria by which we judge (and we inevitably judge) the worth of an individual and a society different from those which we apply to a discipline? If we have learned that facts should not be confused with the truth, it is because we know that it is only by understanding the complexity of contexts that we can make sense of facts. We have a surfeit of facts. What we do not have, and most of us in the quiet of our nights know it, is an overarching conception of context into which we can put these facts and, having done so, the truth then stands a chance of emerging.

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