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Modern Psychology and the infinite Consciousness



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Revaluation of the Scientific Psychology

By the vastness of its extent, the enormity of its achievement, - and the manner of its invasion of, and the patterns of the influence it has sought to exert over, general human life and conduct, - the scientific psychology renders requisite and exigent a revaluation of its central conceptions, and a determination of the scope of its inquiries and the limitations of its techniques.

Envious of the independence obtained during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by astronomy, physics and chemistry, and by biology in the eighteenth century, psychology, too, sought and (during the close of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century) succeeded in seeking for a similar status, in the interest of its own development and to the damage of philosophy.

It is with the dawn of the scientific age, the development of the empirical approach to knowledge, the growing respect for factual material, the emergence of the scientific method, the rapid rise of the biological sciences and the more rapid progress made by the German physiologists like Weber, Fechner, Helmholtz and Hering, and the systematic efforts and the consequent achievements of the structuralists Wundt and Titchener, the functionalists Dewey, Angell and Woodworth, the psychoanalysts Freud, Adler, Jung and Horney, the behaviourists Thorndike, Watson, Pavlov, Hull, Spence, Skinner and Tolman, the Gestaltists Wertheimer, Koffka, Koehler and Lewin, that psychology sounded fully its trumpets of triumph as a full-grown independent science and set out vigorously on a dynamic experimental career.

The time, then, is ripe for pausing a little, not merely for understanding sympathetically its aims and aspirations, but for examining critically its procedures and its results and revaluing its central concepts, only to point out such modifications in its moods and its methods, such relaxation of its narrowness, and such expansion of its search for knowledge, as would help psychology serve human progress and welfare in a manner that is in conformity with the eternally true lines of the evolutionary genius and progression resident in, and presiding over, the processes of the mind of mankind.

Any objective and impartial judgement would accord an earnest and enthusiastic appreciation to the founders of the different schools of modern psychology. But, that appreciation would be addressed to the labours involved in their untiring researches, to the unusual zeal and tenacity of purpose they have exhibited in their efforts at extending the boundaries of human knowledge, but not unreservedly to the results of those researches, the intrinsic value of that extension, the fields of study they have departmentally demarcated for themselves, the methods they have employed, the conclusions they have reached, and never at all to the temerity with which they advance their case, assert their 'truths', and disseminate their views.

A double movement and a twofold purpose are implicit in this task - a continued examination of our own position in the light of their findings, and a continued revaluation of their leading conceptions from our standpoint, which will help them see their results in all their implications and in their full significance, pursue their arguments to something like a final unravelment, and perceive a number of fundamental problems of human mind that are precluded from their purview. On account of their commitment to a narrow field of survey and their bias in favour of their subjects and the validity of their techniques, many basic issues of mind are excluded from their study.

It also helps us burnish for humanity the gold of its own eternal, all-dynamic, and all-comprehending Wisdom.

We neither entertain any intention of seducing modern psychology into the field of philosophical speculation, nor maintain with Croce the impossibility of any empirical

psychology. However, we do try to disturb the self-complacency of the scientific psychology and declaim its tacit, or open, denial of any thing which has not yet yielded itself as an experimental fact. Furthermore, we declaim its unscientific readiness to jump to dangerous conclusions on the strength of the poor and mistaken data whose only merit consists in their amenability to experiment and observation under controlled conditions, and encouraged by the results ensuant as a reward for the laboured efforts thereon.

Also, neither wisdom, nor any real scientific spirit devoted to the true advancement of human knowledge for human welfare, can acclaim the wide and unrestrained dissemination by scientific psychology of its own assumptions, postulates, conceptions, as though they were eternally valid and true findings of scientific research.



Can Psychology Ignore Further and More Compelling Data on the Human Behaviour, Mind, Personality, Presented by Other Sciences?

No man is a simple unit, and no science of man can assume or claim to constitute him into a scientific subject of true and adequate study, unless it takes into the field of its investigation and dispassionate and objective inquiry and knowledge, at least the most indispensable elements from the body of knowledge presented by the data painstakingly collected and researched by other sciences.

The human individual is a structure of multiple dimensions. Man is at once a physical embodiment, a mental phenomenon, and a spiritual entity. He has to appease not only the hunger of the body, the thirst of his vital urges, but has to pay an equal, if not greater, attention to the demands of his psychic nature, his moral tendencies and his spiritual aspirations. No secular science can, therefore, confidently affirm that it knows man fully, and this limitation of knowledge on its part limits its utility, meaning, significance, value. This fact enforces on any sound scientific and valuable psychology, the obligation to draw further data from the higher insights into the phenomenon of man embodied not only in the social, mental and secular sciences, but also in the perennial philosophy and spiritual experience of the world's timeless cultures. To liberate psychology from such a necessity, or dependence, would be to destroy the very soul and sustaining vitality of psychology.



Can Psychology be an Adequate Science of the Total Human Individual?

Psychology can neither claim to be, nor call itself, the science of the total human individual. By its very nature, spirit, aim, function, it does not include in the scope of its study, experiment, explanations and guidance dozens of the most fundamental factors implied in human experience and involved in the most complex and subtle operations of the human consciousness - which is, contrary to the contention of modern psychology, independent of the brain-mechanism, though the brain-mechanism is indispensable for its objective, physical and sense functions, expressions and experiences. Only an uncritical, dogmatic, partial, and misleading view, however helpful it be in other directions, can assume, or advocate, the idea that man is nothing more than a psychological organism founded on, and emergent from, or acting through, the physical basis. Inexorable logic renders it impossible for reason to escape the truth that, above all, man is the all-inclusive, yet all-transcending, metaphysical principle without which there can be no physical life, or psychological functions, or social behaviour and experience.

Psychology is a partial science, and therefore has to be humble enough, not only in the interests of true and more adequate knowledge concerning man, but also for purposes of advancing human progress, and be content - until it grows up to be a more mature, broadbased, integral, and therefore more helpful and serviceable system of knowledge; to be a science complementary to such dynamic philosophies of life which have for millennia securely guided human evolution on an individual scale.

The sustaining vitality of psychology lies in its inner relations with the timeless scientific philosophy, and with the general techniques of universal spiritual experience and knowledge.

In daily human experience and life, man encounters realities for which psychology has no true and valid explanation, and meets illnesses of mind which psychiatry does not know and cannot cure, - even as there are thousands of medical cases which the medical experts openly acknowledge as being beyond the ken of their knowledge and means, and then consign the patients to their fate with a label stuck on their coats, 'incurable', 'beyond cure', 'we don't know'; and where they do know it, one expert differs from the other in diagnosis and treatment. It is here again, that psychology is humiliated, and can recover its dignity only by a bold and fresh investigation of the fields of higher knowledge concerning the phenomenon of the human consciousness and behaviour.



**No System of Valid Knowledge Aspiring
to be a Science can Afford to Stand upon
Insecure Foundations in the Inexorable
Demands of Reason and Logic**

And what is Consciousness? Psychology does not know, but to save its own face attempts quite childish, spurious, unscientific, logically unsound, experimentally unacceptable explanations. This central and constitutional weakness of psychology infests its entire structure with glaring flaws. And those who are intellectually gifted and culturally advanced look for data on the nature of the most fundamental functions of Mind and Consciousness outside the field of modern psychology. In its unnatural struggle to be an objective science, psychology distorts itself beyond recognition, limits its aims, purposes, functions, nature, utility. Growing and progressive in one direction, it is atrophied in all other directions. However, the future of psychology is glorious, more glorious than its past. New trends and tendencies will appear, and redeem psychology from its present limitations which are sapping its central strength and vitality.



**In its Attempts to be Scientific like
Physiology or Chemistry, Psychology
takes False Steps and is a Victim of
Mechanistic and Naturalistic Doctrines**

Naturalism is doctrinally quite dogmatic in its denial of all evidence for a universal teleology, for the derivation of the world-process from a transcendent source, and for the dependence of the cosmic manifestation, - in the unity, order, harmony it reveals, - upon an upholding and governing spiritual principle.

With its central affirmation of the adequacy of the idea of matter in motion as accounting for all phenomena and embracing the whole of the reality, naturalism is committed to reduce all things to mechanics. It is obliged not only to stress its concepts

of causal determination and the laws of nature, but also to carry mechanical necessity all through experience, and apply that mechanical necessity even to the most complex workings of nature, of living organisms, of the creative activity of human genius. Naturalism treats everything as purposeless and deterministic, rejects freedom as meaningless, free will as a delusion, ideals as artefacts, moral judgements as conventional, and immures man in the mechanical prison-house of a dreadful fatalism.

Reason compels us to confute the verbal challenge naturalism presents to the cogency of the cosmological, teleological, and moral arguments.

The progressive functions of an uncompromising and vigorous reason maintain:

one, that the universe requires for any valid explanation of the totality of its elusive facts, the acceptance of the reality of a pre-existent Reality within, and outside, its processes;

two, that all Nature is found, on a closer scrutiny, to be spiritual in its constitution, purposive in its essential functions, and evolutionary in its basic trends and tendencies;

three, that human consciousness not only has freedom for its essential nature, but is unique as the substantial basis of all experience and knowledge, and lies wholly outside the categories of scientific, mechanical, and naturalistic interpretation;

four, that the ethical values, activities and restraints rest upon, and are justified by, teleological and axiological grounds, and that by reason of a different order of reality and awareness to which they belong, they can be neither approached, nor explained, from the standpoint of naturalism, mechanism, materialism.

Characterised by a readiness to defend its own dissertation on the whole of the realm of reality as the realm of causality, and connecting all events by the principle of the causal continuity of the temporal antecedent with the temporal consequent, naturalism cannot but entrench itself in a refusal to use any concept of end as a final principle of interpretation, and contend that every little detail of the vital organism and even of the subtlest processes of the psychical phenomena is determined by the cosmical mechanism. Consequently, naturalism crowns its arguments with the inevitable absurdities of,

one, granting no acknowledgement to what is evident to experience,

two, denying in theory what is obvious in fact,

three, subducting and excluding from the ambit of the perception of realities

a) human mind's power of free initiation, of energizing in volition, of controlling the body, of influencing the environment, and,

b) man's direct awareness of the capacity his will owns, as a fundamental fact of his consciousness, of exercising an appreciable control over, or changing the conditions and courses of, phenomena.



The Uniqueness and the Supremacy of the Percipient Individual Consciousness

Naturalistic epistemology entrenches itself in a simple absurdity by restricting all our knowledge to so superficial, extrinsic, and circumscribed a field as the one constituted solely by natural events and the relationships holding between them. It regards consciousness, the percipient individual, as a derivative, secondary, and almost negligible, phenomenon.

As the substantial basis of all awareness, the experiencing subject, the percipient individual, the central consciousness enjoys the supreme ontological status, and is the one presupposition of all knowledge to which all objects appeal for their revelation and reality, in which all that we experience has its source, and by which matter itself is illuminated and made known.

In spite of this invulnerable fact, naturalism reduces the experiencing subject to a status inferior to the experienced object, and resolves mind into matter. Thereby it surrenders itself to mistaken principles and misleading assumptions. As a philosophical theory, it cannot consider any notion of the autonomy of the spirit, the freedom of will, and the attribution to reason of its rights to spontaneous and creative function.



The Status and the Role of Consciousness in the Scheme of Knowledge, Experience and Unfoldment

Not arising from spatio-temporal occasion, but being 'sui generis', itself the factor that lights up in knowledge the temporal succession, Consciousness is seen to hold a primary and supreme importance everywhere in experience. It is the precondition of all knowledge-processes, and plays an effective role in revealing all states of the psycho-physical organism, in directing the course of the will, and in seeking to exert its light over the processes and phenomena of Nature. It is acted upon by ideals which it itself may create, and through ideals and conscious energies acts upon the character of the personality, the mechanism of outer life, - thereby, in that steady developmental sequence of the self, synthesizing the intelligible and the mechanical worlds of Kant, free will and determinism, the internal free initiation and the external constraint, and uniting the conscious and the chemical, from the opposite side of naturalism.

Consisting of a very limited and jarring succession of fantastically superficial assumptions, naturalism limits greatly the levels of its knowledge and is, therefore, depleted in the type of experience vouchsafed to it. It takes to the phenomenon of life, mind, and the values and their unique function and significance, a method invalid. It presents a view of nature and man inconclusive and misleading; and therefore, of necessity and by the paucity of its instruments, and the narrowness of its fields of knowledge, misses the primacy of consciousness for an adequate accounting of conation, cognition, feeling. In consequence it also has no hold on the fact that freedom is the permanent attitude and attribute of the conscious self, which, - though conditioned to some extent by the outer circumstance, - is caused, regulated, and controlled by nothing outside except by the values which it itself may have projected into some of the social institutions and personal codes of conduct.

Conscious of the fine flowering in himself of the high potentialities latent in human consciousness, and inclined, under an irresistible urge, to bring mankind to a knowledge of the possibilities to which it can rise - to carry its life to a fulfilment it can attain, and to lead its activity to a purposiveness, grace, creativity, the man of richest wisdom and experience finds in Consciousness the foundation of all knowledge, the central key to the meaning of things, the 'open sesame' to the riddles of life, the delight of existence.

The consciousness in man has a richness of content altogether extraordinary. From its standpoint particularly, the position of philosophical naturalism founded on the notion of the uniformity of Nature - which is itself, unfortunately for the naturalist, a fruit of mental activity - is weakest in its obscurantistic attempt to explain in terms of its petty equipment of mechanical concepts, the phenomenon of living organisms endowed as they are with capacities for conscious self-direction, for growth, for adjustment, for the exercise of choice, for the protection, preservation, and expression of self, and with such innate tendencies that seek to reach, consciously or unconsciously, some end, some purpose, some goal.

This complex phenomenon is missed as having come about by the accidental groupings of molecules of matter, by the chance assemblage of inorganic elements.

Naturalism accounts for the totality of human mind - distinguished as it is by unique qualities, autonomy, inventiveness, selectiveness, powers for attaining keener sensibility, higher thought, vision, insight, intuition - by laws derived from an understanding of physical and inorganic Nature - when even the organic and vital phenomena display in the restitution of function in animal bodies a standing refutation of the adequacy of mechanical explanations.



Limitations of the Physiological Psychology

Even the physical body reveals such a baffling complexity of structure and function, which cannot be accounted for unless we concede that Consciousness is prior to, resident in, and transcends, matter. Without an adequate understanding of the primacy, the priority, and the true nature of Consciousness, no science can have any secure foundation.

Phenomenal successes and achievements in scientific experimentation and thought have come to disseminate on the human body a knowledge that makes it what it is - a cosmos of wonders, a restless machinery of marvels, reflecting in its complex structures and amazing processes, for the contemplative mind, the unrivalled artistry and unmistakable functions of a divine Intelligence. It constantly invites and provokes the modern temper to fresh experiments, indirect modes of tackling the problems it raises, the phenomena it presents; imperfect essays at understanding it.

Yet incompletely known by science, the muscles of the physical body, too, reveal a fabulous complexity closed to all human scrutiny except to the fundamental intuitive vision, to whose direct modes of knowing things the primary and ultimate grounds of all that is are an open book. The digestive system demonstrates a chemical wizardry whose operative rudimentary intelligence and dynamic power cannot fail to astonish the inquiring individual.

The tender human skin, a beauty-hide, a protective covering, with its blood-vessels that keep up normal temperature, its glands that regulate this temperature, its nerve-endings that give man his tactual experiences, its triple layer, the epidermis, the dermis and the subdermal layer, and its hundred other unique features and functions, arouse amazement. The intricacy of communications the nervous system maintains, cannot but awe even cold reason and puzzle nerve researchers with unanswered questions, left-out issues and unresolved problems.

Even the common miracle of birth handicaps the most painstaking medical research person by leaving in his knowledge large lacunae. The medical science itself is much embarrassed, despite its minute knowledge of the workings of the human reproduction, by its inability to know the intrinsic how of conception. Centred in Truth-experience, the man of spiritual wisdom and keenest perception rolls his eye on the marvel of the body, resolves the marvel into Mind, the Mind into all Nature, and all Nature into the Godhead in which he lives, moves and has his conscious being.



The Materialistic Psychology

Dominant in the Western psychology, the materialistic contention that mind constitutes

but a product of matter takes a standpoint that surrenders it to a logical paralogism, in that it turns its back upon a cognition of the fact that matter, far from affording an explanation of, is itself explained by mind.



The Extent of the Field, the Nature of the Data, and the Objective of the Functions, of Psychology in Behaviourism

Entrenching itself in mechanism, metaphysical materialism, psychological automatism and environmentalism, and resolutely excluding from the field of scientific studies and rational instrumentation every phenomenon excepting the purely physical and the physiological, behaviourism coerces itself into the commitment of adumbrating that nothing mental is fundamental, that will is ineffectual, that reason has no freedom, that deliberation and design are figments, that ends have no reality, and that purposes have no efficacy.

By that very entrenchment, behaviourism is further forced to assert dogmatically that no conscious intelligence superintends performance of the apparently purposeful actions, that thought never influences human behaviour, and that consciousness itself is an unneeded concept.

Thus,

one, by an otiose theoretical demonstration of the dependence of consciousness on the mechanism of the cerebral cortex and the nervous system, by an equation of the incessant mental processes and experiences with sheer excrescences of the cerebral process, inconsequential in their influence upon the bodily behaviour,

two, by an explanation of the mental phenomena on a mechanical basis and in terms of mind-less events,

three, by a justification of the untenable standpoint it is constrained to take up, concerning the explicability of the vitally dynamic human organisms of reflective intelligence, as determined in all their activities, even as motions of matter are determined, and as no more than merely complicated automata,

four, by a rejection of all considerations of assigning to mind any reality, much less any role required, in the interpretation of the distinctive, and insistently psychological nature of man, and

five, by investing psychology itself with the sole function, and the sole aim, of establishing connections between stimulus and response, of tracing the cause for a given kind of behaviour through specifying the stimulus that produced it,

six, by describing all behaviour in terms of a response to stimuli, by setting aside all instincts, feelings and all subjective experiences as figments, and refusing to accept that they constitute reliable data for psychological investigations,

- behaviourism thinks it has rendered psychology scientific.

Behaviour, then, as behaviourism understands it, is established experimentally, demonstrably, scientifically, as the resultant of conditioned responses. In the interests of building up a true psychology, thinkers of great eminence in the fields of mental phenomena need to subject the very vitals of behaviourism to a trenchant scrutiny.



The Limitations of Gestalt Psychology

In any enumeration of those limitations of the Gestalt psychology that are easiest of perception, a special accent would be laid upon its failure to

1. endow mind with independence of sense-stimuli,
2. cover the entire sweep of mental experiences,
3. accept the analytical method in the domain of psychology, and thus rescue the advancement of fresh views from an infestation with arbitrary interpretations and unanalysed conceptions.



Valuable Services of the Gestalt Psychology

No critic would fail to recognize the distinctive service and the substantial contributions the research results of the Gestalt psychologists have rendered and made,

positively,

1. to the psychology of perception,
2. to the scientific interpretation of mind against the background of an idealistic philosophy,
3. to the gaining of, and dealing with, the observations of human social behaviour, and
4. to the guiding of the child-education,

and negatively, by

5. a rejection of the atomistic, or mosaic, psychology, through the stress the Gestalt psychology has laid upon personality as a unity, emotion as an organized whole, experience as a complex, association as a cohesion, life as an integral experience, and by
6. contending against behaviourism through a refusal to accept the stimulus-response psychology and
7. the assertion that perception is an integral movement.

However, it must be said that, apart from the few limitations listed above, Gestalt psychology

- 1) suffers from being mistaken in its attempts at connecting the integral experience of the wholes with the dynamics of the brain and the organism,
- 2) fails to probe into the nature and cause of Gestalten, to explain how fragmentary impressions come to be unified,
- 3) does not furnish firm foundations to its theory of the priority of the whole to its constituents,
- 4) affords no reasons for its position on the subsistence of the physiological structural correlates of mental configurations.

To take his stand upon the principle of apperception, the principle that perceives itself and is perceived by nothing outside of itself, a principle of perception without which there can exist no such type of common human perception that constitutes the whole

