

What Went Wrong with Psychology?

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Myths, Metaphors and Madness

By

Robert Spillane and John Martin

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For
Katherine and Lenore

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PREFACE

This is a book of psychology written by two psychologists. The central topic is scientific psychology. But we find this so unsatisfactory that we range over many related subjects in and between psychology, sociology and anthropology in search of light. More often than not we find seductive beginnings and blank endings.

We are confident that conventional scientific procedures will ensure some progress in the care and understanding of the physical organism. But we argue that these procedures are dismal failures when it comes to person and society. To show why we take this position we have tried, in this book, to demonstrate the important weaknesses contained within the received wisdom of scientific psychology.

Parts I and II set up the dialectic between person and society. The first part consists of viewpoints of which the common theme is that the person is the primary object of scientific interest and the main source of data. The second part consists of a similar series which takes society as an objective entity open to scientific analysis. In this perspective people are seen as malleable and their characteristics as products of socialisation.

The overall object of these chapters is to expose the confusion that arises as a result of the dichotomy between person and society. Some psychologists want a mechanical person who is compatible with the idea of a nervous system operating on simple cause-effect principles. Others conceive of persons moulded and encapsulated by society so that they are scarcely more than robots. Then there are psychologists who conceive of human beings as self-conscious entities capable of monitoring their own behaviour and directing it to selected goals. Some psychologists, probably most, find this view more faithful to natural observation, although it does not accord with the scientifically convenient model of society as mechanical.

Our conclusion is that the person/society dichotomy is false, probably originating in bad philosophy, intellectual imperialism, academic politics and territorial claims.

Part III looks at a hybrid known as Social Psychology. This was originated by scholars who recognised the falsity of the academic specialisations and sought a compromise which would treat the relationships between person and society analytically. The central insight of social psychology is that behaviour depends very largely on how self-conscious persons perceive their environments and especially cause-and-effect patterns therein. The perception of patterns sets up courses of action for people who perceive themselves as causal agents and seek to manipulate the environment for their own purposes.

In defending a purposive psychology a number of submerged philosophical themes surface: action versus behaviour, freedom versus determinism, and so on. If readers feel at times that it is too theoretical for their taste, they might keep in mind Kurt Lewin's quip that there is nothing as practical as a good theory and bear with us while we wrestle with some of the problems generated by attempts to approach psychological questions in a scientific manner. The philosophy has been kept on a tight rein to allow the psychology to speak for itself. We are not seeking to immerse readers in theory, but the enterprise obliges us to examine the logic and scientific efficacy of a number of influential theories and, where appropriate, challenge them.

We have deliberately avoided mentioning a great many psychologists since our intention is not to provide a detailed historical survey or a review of the literature but to discuss those important figures who have contributed to the grand systems of the subject. And so in the interests of readability, if not academic manners, we have largely ignored the secondary literature and foregone the obsessive practice of supporting statements with bracketed references. The authors we discuss are all well-known and can be easily found in textbooks or on the internet. This book can be read as an extended essay which represents an effort to clarify certain ideas about psychology and to suggest a future direction.

Acknowledgements. I am especially grateful to Lenore Grunsell for supporting my effort to publish the work of her late husband and my friend, John Martin. Sadly, John did not live to see the final manuscript and so it fell to me to see it through publication. A labour of love is easily discharged.

The manuscript was accepted by UNSW Press and published in 2005 as *Personality and Performance: Foundations for Managerial Psychology*. As it was never John's intention to write a book for managers, I have

returned to our original manuscript, deleted material on management, and included authors (mainly anthropologists) who were left out of the first edition.

Finally, I owe heartfelt thanks to Katherine Spillane for her patient support and sense of humour which is of inestimable benefit to one who is writing about psychology's *bizarrieries*.

INTRODUCTION

PERSPECTIVES AND PROBLEMS

In daily life we find ourselves proceeding as if the meanings of the terms person and society were universally agreed. We might well regard it as unduly pedantic to demand an explicit definition of either term. Yet exploration of the nature of the person is the aim of psychology and psychiatry, and clarification of the nature of society is the aim of sociology and anthropology. Unless these disciplines are held to be redundant there must be some deficiencies in our knowledge of both entities. In fact, the scientific orientation of these disciplines has the virtue of revealing how great these deficiencies are.

This may be seen by considering the problem of perspective which is generated by these different professional foci. We can analyse person and society as separate but co-existing entities and the set of relationships between them.

The Primacy of the Person. Many psychologists take the person as an object of scientific study; that is, they regard it as having some objective form which it is their task to discover, describe and possibly explain. The assumption that a human being has such a form, however, implies that it has an integrity or autonomous dynamic which makes it independent of other objects and offers a basis from which it might be understood. Then it appears that the forms of society could be construed as simply expressions of the inward nature of the people who comprise it, and the relationships between person and society collapse into a single type: concordance. In brief, to give the person this degree of primacy implies that society is to be explained from a psychological perspective.

Successful pursuit of this strategy requires that mapping of the person proceed in advance of the explanation of social phenomena. For complete success, a full knowledge of the nature of the person is necessary, and if this knowledge is to fulfil the function of explaining social phenomena then it must be independent of what it is desired to explain. Otherwise we fall into tautology. This set of strategic points has provided the impetus for

the grand systems of psychology: those which attempt to fill out the concept of the person as an integral system working on an intrinsic dynamic; that is, having a nature not dependent on anything social. The grandest of these attempts was probably that of Sigmund Freud.

Even without going into the detail of such systems, one is likely to find something vaguely unsatisfactory about the idea that all features of society are directly derivative from the psychological make-up of its members. On reflection this may reveal itself as disquiet about the fact that society too often seems actively to suppress or discourage expressions of desires which we would feel to be intrinsic and natural; too often at least to encourage the belief that society constitutes a full expression of our nature.

This objection becomes an important one for the personality theorist. It compelled Freud, for instance, to acknowledge a conflict between the intrinsic nature of the person and the demands of society. His solution to the problem was to absorb the conflict into his model of the person, so that the war between impulses and social constraints is waged inwardly between the id on the one hand and the superego and ego on the other. Such a move constitutes a shift away from the position that personality is relatively independent of society. It means that the very nature of the person is to be described in terms dictated by the nature of society. It is no longer clear that this aspect of the person is intrinsic to his nature and exists prior to socialisation. Hence it no longer provides an independent explanatory basis for social phenomena in general. Rather, psychologists are forced to shift to a stance in which social conditioning is important in the formation of personality.

It is worthwhile noting that the rejection of the more fundamental aspects of Freud's system by some of his closer collaborators came about because of disagreements surrounding the extent of social influence over the character of personality. The historical trend in scientific thought has been away from the notion of the integral personality, and thus away from the notion that social phenomena can be explained in terms of the prior nature of the person.

The shift, although universal, has always been a reluctant one; understandably so, since the psychological orientation holds out the promise of powerful explanatory tools. The promise, however, may be illusory. We may never be able to specify any *independent* entity called a person.

Such a possibility has rarely deterred those psychologists for whom personality and motivation are central concepts. The predilection for terms such as 'motive' can be found in Shakespeare's *Othello*, where it is referred to as a moving or exciting *cause*. This definition has become the rule in psychology. Here it is assumed that all behaviour is caused, and this leads to its being seen as the outcome of forces that move people. As a result, almost every concept used in scientific psychology has acquired a pushing or pulling component. Hence the topic of 'motivation' that deals in forces under a variety of names (motives, instincts, drives, needs) all of which have force as their major element; and traits, attitudes, sentiments and others which have a forceful component added somewhat summarily.

In such concepts as motive and personality trait, there is an analogy with the concept of force in physics; but there is also a persistent echo of the metaphorical uses to which we put the term 'force' in everyday life as when we say: "I am forced to work". This metaphorical usage merely means that my choice is restricted by my circumstances. The scientific use of the term 'force' in psychology implies that deprivation of status, for instance, causes certain people to seek status in the same way as the force of gravity causes an apple to fall when dropped. The writings of motivational psychologists, including Abraham Maslow and David McClelland, sometimes make this clear, and often do not. It is not unusual to find evidence of writers themselves suffering confusion.

A second point about motives and personality traits in psychology is that they are irredeemably circular. One observes a person doing something, such as a man shouting. One then infers a motive or trait that is compelling him to do just that. The explanation becomes tautological. Efforts to break out of the circle often take the form of an appeal to physiological changes, but while nobody would deny that actions are accompanied by physiological activities, these must also presumably be caused, and so the concept of force is very little aided by appeal to internal events.

Some psychologists have attempted to get around the problem of motive-force by an appeal to the notion of 'need'. In ordinary language, a need is something that is necessary for a specifiable end. We rarely bother to nominate the end, usually leaving it to be understood. Thus we say: "I need food", leaving it to be understood that the alternative is to perish. The full sense is: "I need food if I am to go on living". So it is clear that in ordinary speech having a need is also to have some end in view, whose accomplishment is contingent on the fulfilment of the expressed need.

Thus one cannot have a need for its own sake; needs do not exist *in vacuo* or, for that matter, *in viscera*.

When we talk about needs in this way, there is an understanding that certain needs, such as those for the food and drink which sustain life, are more persistent than others, and we therefore think of food as more necessary than tickets to the football. This hints at an order in necessity, such that one could rank everything that human beings ever need from the things that are absolutely essential to those most easily dispensed with. But this will not do. Things are necessary to the accomplishment of ends strictly in relation to the situation in which people find themselves. Food is essential for the maintenance of life, but in some situations antibiotic drugs may be more vital still, and there is little difficulty in imagining a situation where life or death may hang on something which is at other times quite trivial, like the material out of which a tourniquet is improvised. Consequently, no fixed hierarchy can be applied to necessity independent of the ends in view.

The concept of 'need' has undergone the usual transformation in psychology. The implication that a need implies an end for which something is necessary has been dropped and needs have been invested with the power of motive-force. Thus, McClelland's need-achievement conceives of people as being moved towards goals that characterise success in business. In this usage, the concept is still subject to the same criticisms regarding circularity.

Similarly, Maslow's hierarchy of needs does not hedge on the usual psychological view of a need as a mechanical motive-force internal to individuals, and it is obvious that it is invalid if it aims to be a statement of fact. Ordinary discourse assumes that people select the ends to be achieved and choose what is necessary for their accomplishment according to the circumstances. But what is vital on one occasion may be of no moment on another. Maslow converted this to a fixed hierarchy (which is untenable) and admits needs as mechanical forces. At the top end of Maslow's hierarchy come the notions of self-esteem and self-actualisation. These will be shown later to be the kind of concepts which are out of place in a mechanical model and admissible only in a model which incorporates notions of choices and intentions. Everyday conversation would regard self-esteem and self-actualisation as desirable states to achieve, whereas Maslow's need-system assumes that we are driven towards them after certain subordinate goals are achieved.

Part I makes the fundamental point that the idea of a scientific psychology of personality and motivation faces the challenge of explaining society, and it runs into great difficulties.

The Primacy of Society. The second point of view to consider is that espoused by those scholars, mainly scientifically-orientated sociologists and behaviourists, who have taken society as the primary entity. This is not a difficult conceptual leap because it is reasonably common to think of society as having an existence of its own. Many social institutions, for example, operate in a way which makes it possible to conceive of them as independent of the persons who comprise them. From this beginning it is a short step to regarding society as an orderly system in which all the parts fulfil functions necessary to and concordant with the whole. This point of view lends to society the aspect of being a system with its own integrity.

The principal exponent of this view is Emile Durkheim, who argued that social phenomena constitute a scientific field on their own account. Explanations for social phenomena are therefore to be sought among other social phenomena, or in terms of their interrelated functions for the whole system. This perspective yields the key emphasis to society, for it defines society as the object of scientific study with an intrinsic nature capable of objective specification. By corollary, it reduces persons to the dependent position, implying that they may be explained as a product of social power. This is not an easy position to rebut, for at least two reasons. When one has explained all social activity one has certainly explained all or nearly all behaviour, so what is left to be attributed to the independent nature of the person? And it is extraordinarily difficult to identify any manifest characteristic of human beings (beyond the physical) which is demonstrably not derived from their culture.

Two related approaches to the nature of the person have developed within the social sciences from this 'social mould' perspective. One leads to the study of the process of socialisation in children in search of knowledge about how children are 'moulded' by social agencies to fit society's requirements. The other, which is an extension of this approach, is to view the socialised person as an agglomeration of roles inculcated by society for its own perpetuation: a functionary in a functional system.

What then, are the difficulties for this extreme environmentalist position with its assertion of the functional integrity of social systems and their possible assimilation to an all-enveloping scientific order? How in such a system does disorganisation occur? If we take organised crime as

an example of a maverick institution inappropriate to an orderly social system, it may puzzle us to see how it can be explained as fulfilling a necessary function. Yet Durkheim found that it does fulfil a function in that it stimulates the reaffirmation (by the duly-endorsed representatives of the society) of those rules on which the maintenance of order depends; also by the reassertion of social controls through the institutions of which this is the function. And we might add that it stimulates a search for more effective ways of socialising people to be non-criminals. It functions, then, as a warning device to which society reacts by asserting, and attempting to extend, its control over people.

There is, however, a derivation from this argument since the admission that society's control over persons is incomplete implies that the latter are capable of evading or resisting the process of socialisation. The individual is, therefore, a result of unsuccessful socialisation. Insofar as non-conformity is a persistent phenomenon, there are some grounds for regarding it as the clue to some intrinsic capacity for independence. This clue is worth following up, but not here.

How does the functional account of society explain its adaptation to the unintended consequences of human action? The functional account of society offers a model of a relatively simple mechanical type and while it is possible to conceive of a machine programmed to change itself in response to contingencies foreseen by the programmer, it is *prima facie* puzzling to conceive of a machine capable of adapting to entirely novel circumstances. The temptation is to turn to adaptability (an intrinsic characteristic of the person) as an explanation for social change.

In psychology, the extreme environmentalist position has been adopted by behaviourists, notably B.F. Skinner, who take the organism's environment, past and present, as the cause of the regularities in human behaviour we call 'personality'. This perspective bases itself on the causal connections between stimuli and responses and does not allow discussions about human choices, purposes or intentions. Most observers of human behaviour make inferences about whether action is intentional (winking) or simply the result of physical events (blinking). Behaviourists claim that this distinction should never be made and propose that psychology should cease to be concerned with choices, purposes and intentions and admit nothing but behaviour. Both blinking and winking are responses to (different) stimuli.

Understandably, this approach relies heavily on animal experiments in an attempt to get further and further away from human beings for whom purposes, intentions and choices, derided by behaviourists, are primary data. In the process, behaviourists leave behind human subjects who, very inconsiderately, maintain a delightful variety in the 'responses' they offer to 'stimuli'.

Part of the polemics surrounding the rise of behaviourism implied that not only is choice (if it existed) a bar to the scientific progress of psychology, but it fathers such objectionable notions as personal freedom and responsibility which are anathema to mechanical science. Behaviourists wished to make a clean sweep of such 'superstitious' ideas even if many other ideas had to go at the same time. To allow personal choice is to be only one step from holding people to be aware of the consequences of their activities, and one further step to holding them responsible for them. This seems to be tantamount to allowing choice and knowledge of right and wrong, and leads to the caricature that the whole theoretical perspective requires a homunculus inside the head that observes and directs. This is a mistaken objection. There is no step from claiming that people are aware of the consequences of their actions to claiming that they are responsible for them. The claims are identical although differently expressed.

If behaviour is seen as action, an inference that effects are premeditated by individuals is essential. To claim that acts are performed is to claim that persons premeditate certain effects and are therefore responsible for those effects. It therefore includes the claim that the connection between activity and effect was within the purview of the act. To talk of action is to speak in terms of a theory that persons are choosers; that they behave with intention in the sense that they can foresee effects to which their activity will lead; and that they are responsible for such effects as they can foresee. To hold oneself responsible for an effect is to accept that one foresaw that the activity one engaged in would cause it.

Bridging Person and Society. There is another possibility, however. One might choose to regard the set of relationships between person and society as the objective element in the picture. At first sight this seems unpromising as a scientific strategy, for the very words used to name these relationships are obviously abstract and lack the kind of physical referent we commonly associate with science. Nevertheless, this may not be an insuperable objection, because science often works with constructs (like force) that are highly abstract. In fact, several important thinkers from both

psychological and sociological camps have taken the stand that the key to the puzzle of how to be scientific about person and society lies in regarding these relationships as the primary reality. George Herbert Mead among sociologists and Thomas Szasz among psychiatrists are famous contributors to the discipline of social psychology in which this orientation persists most strongly.

Prior to the emergence of the scientific approaches to person and society, however, this perspective was much employed by philosophers and theologians. For those who believe that there can be no traffic between science and religion this amounts to an almost instant disqualification, so some obligation may fall on those who favour this approach to demonstrate that it is compatible with scientific procedures.

According to this perspective, a relationship once named refers to an irreducible and final element in our conceptual scheme. For example, there appears to be no way in which the relationship between leaders and followers can be analysed in terms of component relationships. Leadership is leadership and that is the end of the matter. Leadership stands for a relationship; it is not the sum of leaders' personalities. Leadership, therefore, requires a leader and a follower as anchor points between which it has its existence. It is true that we may make inferences about the personalities and preferences of individual leaders and their followers from the way the relationship manifests itself, and these inferences can be put forward as an explanation for particular cases of leadership. It is also true that leadership overlaps with other relationships between the parties, such as conformity, obedience, authority. But all of these and innumerable others may be present and leadership absent; and none can be said to be essential for its presence. So a relationship correctly identified can be regarded as irreducible, and this gives it definite status as a scientific starting point.

Psychologists working in the field of group dynamics try to bridge person and society by studying such relational concepts as conformity, obedience and authority in the experimental laboratory. Using these classical experiments as case studies, one can identify the unintended changes in human activities that it is the task of a scientific psychology to study further. By examining single cases of behavioural change, a snapshot of social relationships is produced. Such miniaturised forms of behavioural change are very like parables that are valuable because they keep before our eyes the manner in which we typically act in everyday situations. Consequently, experimentalists see the task of scientific

psychologists as being the identification of the causes of unintended events. It is sufficient to engage one problem at a time, elucidate its causes and restructure one's psychological perspective to attempt prediction of the consequences of manipulating these causes. In this way, experimentalists extend the possibilities of control over events and thereby add to the common stock of effective choice. This is consistent with the general aim of science which is to extend human powers.

Research into group dynamics has been side-tracked, however, by insistence on the form and language of the scientific experiment. The early experiments on groups conducted by Kurt Lewin and his colleagues led to a simplistic reformulation of the problem of the relationships between person and group. In this, it differed from the original action research which emphasised that individuals find meaning in carrying out a comprehensible plan to achieve a desired end. However, in later group research the emphasis was much more towards techniques for manipulating people without their awareness. Much of the academic wing took as its aim the discovery of situations where behaviour could be described in a more deterministic framework than the results of action research would imply and this led back to problematic constructs like 'group pressure'.

The classical experiments of group dynamics and the work of social psychologists have led to the central insight that behaviour depends very largely on how individuals perceive patterns in their environment, monitor their actions and direct them to selected goals. This insight is more faithful to natural observation although it does not accord with the scientific, mechanistic models of person and society.

The foregoing sets the framework of thought we shall use in approaching the subject matter of this book. Freud, Maslow, McClelland, Durkheim, Skinner, Lewin, Mead and Szasz will need to be considered in more detail at a later stage, for here we have stressed only the foci at which their initial systematic attack was directed, and neglected much detail. This was necessary in order to make the fundamental point that the idea of a scientific psychology faces the challenge of explaining society, and a scientific sociology the challenge of explaining the person, and both run into great difficulties. This is a point worth considering before embarking on either.

The Question of Relevance. One objection that readers might raise is that we are being unduly scholarly and abstruse in examining these

rarefied propositions about persons and societies. What relevance, readers may ask, can a discussion of such perspectives have for their already sound working knowledge of what persons and societies are like?

This is a fair question and we shall try to produce evidence that our perspectives are paralleled in their essentials both by creeds which are, or have been, of great influence socially and historically, and by personal biases of great interest from the psychological point of view.

Those ideologies which declare the person to be almost totally subservient to society include ancient Judaism and several modern forms of totalitarianism, including communism, fascism and Nazism. These forms of society may differ in most other respects, but they agree in this key feature. Naturally, the fact that many such groups find it necessary to preach and even to enforce behaviour consistent with the principle that society is paramount in all things draws attention to the weakness of the social mould theory as a scientific platform. On the other hand, there appear to be some societies, such as the traditional Japanese culture, in which the concept of the person as an autonomous psychological system has no currency, while the concept of national identity is very strong indeed. Teachers of psychology, when they attempt to teach personality theory to contemporary Japanese students, report that they find themselves faced with blank incomprehension. It is difficult to see how any conflict between the interests of the person and those of society could find a focus in such a culture, for there would be no conceptual basis from which to argue that persons have rights related to their autonomy. There is, in fact, no basis from which the duties demanded by society can be challenged.

We can turn then to systems which illustrate the opposing view: the notion that persons have a degree of integrity which makes them virtually independent of society, and potentially its architect. Early Christianity was an individualistic creed of this kind, and despite various changes, seems to have retained its capacity to generate an individualistic revolution from time to time. There are also several social philosophies, known as contract theories, in which the existence of the person as an independent entity is assumed. However, the fact that this perspective is the subject of active proselytising and persuasion again highlights the doubtful scientific platform of personality psychologists. Their subject matter is something of which the existence is assumed by religions and philosophies and there is a definite question as to whether it can be accorded any reality beyond that of a social construction.

There is also a third type of culture which places all the emphasis on the relationships which are maintained between people of different categories: these usually being based on kinship. Such cultures concede no conceptual status to the person beyond these relationships, and no conceptual status to the social system as such. The tribal culture of Australian Aborigines is of this kind. Anthropological evidence suggests, for instance, that pre-European Aborigines had no concept of an autonomous personality. The history of culture contact with such peoples would also suggest that they do not originally have what we would call a national identity: a consciousness of belonging to a single and distinctive social and cultural system such as would unite them in resistance to other groups.

The major variation among the most developed ideologies appears to be along the individualistic-totalitarian dimension. Even minor differences of this kind seem to lead to intense conflict, not only on the personal, but also on the political level. The conflict between North and South Koreans appears to be based, in part, on irreconcilable differences about which is paramount, the relative autonomy of the person or the power of the social group.

Such ideological comparisons may not be sufficient finally to demonstrate the relevance of the conceptual scheme we have proposed. In contrast to the Japanese, American readers may feel so convinced that there exists an autonomous dynamic system at the personal level which is independent of the ambient belief system that they will accept no evidence that it is not directly related to their own experience. In this case we can refer them to certain ways of construing personality development which have emerged in conventional psychology.

The question of relevance can also be answered with examples drawn from the construal of psychological experience. Consider, for example, the struggle for identity which marks late adolescence in Western culture. At this point in their development many young people are engaged in a struggle to form an individual personality, to 'find themselves'. This involves taking on styles of behaviour which become typical of that person, and the rejection of relationships (especially with parents) whose demands might interfere with the emerging pattern. This vehement striving after some form of consistent pattern of behaviour clearly presupposes Perspective I: the perspective of the autonomous person. Failure at this point, such as may be due to the task being too fraught with conflict, will result in role diffusion: a failure to achieve a clear basis for adult identity.

It is followed by a developmental crisis which results in either isolation or in the incapacity for intimacy.

If we follow the career of a person who goes through the trauma of establishing this adult identity, and then aspires to enter a relationship requiring intimacy, say marriage, with another person in the same condition, we appreciate the possible conflict at the next level. Some part of the behaviour necessary to maintain the relationship may be incompatible with the hard-won personal independence of one partner or the other. But between two people of good will and trust, some agreement can be negotiated on suitable areas of autonomy and dependence. When other elements enter the picture, however, the difficulties increase. The appearance of children (one cannot negotiate with infants to maintain an autonomous zone for oneself) almost certainly means that the relationships in the nuclear family become so salient for one partner (usually the mother) that she ceases to maintain the limits which guarantee her autonomy, and she gradually comes to view the social world from Perspective III: that which sees personal relationships as the social reality. This particular shift of perspective is much encouraged by many religions and ideologies which define the mother's role as essential to the nuclear family, and the family itself as essential to the society.

Meanwhile mothers' partners have to earn a living and have joined large corporations. Here they find that in order to advance they must take the demands of the organisation very seriously indeed. Their personalities have to be modified to accord with what will best serve the companies, so that they become progressively more like 'organisation types'. For such people the organisation is supreme and their duty to it takes precedence over everything else. Military organisations are especially keen on inculcating the belief in the supremacy of the group, so that if it becomes necessary individuals will sacrifice their lives rather than be derelict in their duty. In the industrial field the effects of this state of being are most evident after retirement when some individuals find themselves at a loss because the institutional supports have been withdrawn and there is no longer any point in the stereotypical role performances associated with it. Such people find themselves without direction. With neither an autonomous personality nor an extensive set of personal relationships to give structure to their world they can be very dependent psychologically, and regard themselves not as fortunate individuals who have gained their freedom from the industrial treadmill but as worn out parts cast on the scrap heap.

It is observable that in families where the parents are middle-aged or older, it is the mother who clings most determinedly to the relationships with the children. It is she who is most likely to be disorientated by the loosening of the ties when children assert their independence. Indeed with the slackening of these relationships, some women go through periods of high anxiety in which they are uncertain of their role and function in the world. Some others, becoming aware that their personal identity has become submerged in the web of relationships which make up the role of wife-and-mother, seek liberation. Both of these reactions to the situation are currently regarded as of some importance in psychology and sociology, and even in politics. When discontent with things as they are is expressed by one woman, the matter can be represented as a psychological one: that is, the problem lies with her; when many women express the same kinds of discontent or disorientation, the matter is regarded as a sociological problem; and if women begin to organise themselves and press for social change, the matter is recognised as a political or ideological problem. It should be added in parenthesis, that these observations are little affected by the proportion of working women who suffer from 'role conflict' because of their inability to satisfy the demands of corporate and domestic environments: it merely adds further problems to their lives.

The conceptual scheme we have chosen as our basis is one we believe to be capable of crossing the disciplinary boundaries between the social sciences. If readers at times find that it is too abstract for their taste, they might keep in mind the hints of applicability to real life situations given above and bear with us while we concern ourselves with some of the problems which are generated by attempts to approach psychosocial questions in a scientific manner.

PART I:
THE PRIMACY OF THE PERSON

CHAPTER ONE

FREUD: A HOME FOR HOMELESS THOUGHTS

We begin with those theorists who have not only assumed the existence of the person as a distinctive type of object but have also attempted to delineate the nature of this object in a way which would allow for a scientific explanation of human behaviour. These are personality theorists, or personologists.

Science means different things to different people. To personologists it means reaching a systematic description of the supposed internal dynamics of the person, much in the manner of the early astronomers who sought to discover the system underlying the movements of the heavenly bodies. Personologists have a more complex task than do astronomers for the latter can observe (at least in principle) the movements in which they are interested. Personologists can observe only behaviour and the context in which it occurs. If they wish to explain this behaviour by an underlying system located wholly within the person, they find themselves obliged to infer some structural machinery whose operations are hidden from view. The movements of this they cannot observe. The reasons why they are forced into this position become clear as we examine some representative theories.

Freud's Theory of Personality. While Freud's intellectual predecessors are Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, Freudian psychology may be said to have had its beginnings when the young Dr Freud became a close professional associate of Joseph Breuer, a fashionable Viennese physician. Breuer had a particular patient known as Fraulein Anna, who exhibited some of the classical symptoms of hysteria. These included physical malfunctions such as disturbances of sight and speech which could not be traced to organic causes, confusion, self-destructive gestures, drug-taking, sexual promiscuity, all of which seemed related to a central attitude in which the patient perceived herself as worthless, helpless and oppressed. Breuer's treatment of Anna extended over a number of years, during

which there developed at least two phenomena which were to become classical features of Freud's psychotherapy.

One of these came to be known as catharsis, the other as transference. Catharsis, the 'talking cure', emerged because it turned out that simply lending a sympathetic ear to Anna's account of her troubles led to a moderation of her symptoms, especially when she recounted experiences of early life which appeared to be associated with them. Breuer encouraged Anna to relive early experiences and to express the strong emotions that they induced in her, even though both the experiences and the emotions appeared to have been forgotten in the meantime. This, too, led to improvement in the presenting symptoms. Transference is the phenomenon in which patients become hopelessly dependent on therapists. In this case, Anna had become dependent on Dr Breuer.

Later Freud worked with Charcot in Paris on cases of mental disorder, of which hysteria was then the most common. Having spent years classifying diseases of the nervous system, Charcot transferred his interests from neurological problems to people with disorders that simulated such conditions. The great French playwright, Molière, had called such people malingerers but Charcot called them hysterics (derived from the Greek word for uterus) because he assumed that they were suffering from an illness. Freud was impressed that Charcot's work restored dignity to hysterical patients who were no longer treated as malingerers. While Charcot acknowledged that malingering is a feature of hysterics, he laid it down that hysterical patients did not know they were malingering. Malingerers consciously imitate illness; hysterics unconsciously imitate illness. It was, therefore, the task of psychiatrists to decide whether patients were consciously or unconsciously imitating illness. How could this be done?

Since there are no criteria by which such a judgement can be made, it is unsurprising that psychiatrists declared that not only was hysteria an illness but so also was malingering. There is no way to tell the difference between a person who is ill and one who pretends to be ill: both are ill! This curious line of thinking effectively denies the ability of people to imitate illness. In other words, those who simulate insanity are insane, which is absurd.

The early Greek philosophers believed that women's hysterical behaviour was caused by a 'wandering womb', disorders in the uterus and, significantly for Freud, sexual frustration. Even though Charcot repudiated