

SELF-MANAGEMENT, A GOAL OF PSYCHOLOGICAL INQUIRY

Presidential Address

H. R. Fossler, University of South Dakota, Vermillion

The enterprise we call science has in the course of a few centuries developed into a multitude of specialties pursued by thousands of practitioners. It is not surprising that one encounters many different notions of what science is, since specialists with different interests emphasize different aspects of it. There must always be, of course, that interest which seeks seminal ideas which lead to great discovery. There is also an interest in the technical elaboration of methodology. These interests are ordinarily complementary, but it has always been a common practice for methodology, once established and respectable, to proliferate for its own sake and to limit the scope of inquiry to such matters as are amenable to its techniques. It becomes sectarian and dogmatic with respect to what shall be accepted as scientific. Psychology has had its share of such technical ritualism together with a deal of loose patter about laws, prediction, and control. The emphasis upon an external view of the person means that control usually refers to the control of others rather than to self-control.

One is frequently asked: "Why should I study psychology?" "What may I expect to find out about?" "Why should one spend time on that?" "What does it have to offer me as a person?" And I am not so much the pedagogue that I do not ask such questions myself.

Accordingly, I invite you to consider with me, for a few minutes, self-management, as a goal for psychological inquiry. Consider the person engaged in the lifelong task of developing himself, seeking for self-understanding, self-discipline, choosing goals, organizing his wants, trying how to learn to make and use distinctions, seeking dependable information that may enable him to do a decent job of it. In proposing self-management as worthy of greater emphasis in inquiry, I am in no way calling upon any one to stop doing what he is doing and to improve his ways. I propose simply the cultivation of a neglected sector of the field which lies clearly within the province of psychology. The self-elevated rigorists may suffer at least a few settlers to occupy the ground.

Permit me now to propose certain theoretical ideas which I consider as contributory to the development of this area.

It is acknowledged that the behavior of persons lies within the field of psychology. Behavior consists of acts. An act is simply a sort of unit of something done and may be differentiated and ordered on different levels of analysis. But behavior should include the full behavior of the person, and its involvements. The internal or covert acts of the person

must be integrated with the overt or externally visible acts. Acts of persons, consequently, occupy the foreground of theoretical interest. Since a presence-field does not differentiate itself into units nor differentiated units relate themselves to each other, sort themselves, nor carry portent upon their faces, it is clear that order is a primary achievement of persons, and ordering acts are, therefore, of particular importance. One must learn to make distinctions and learn how to use them. In other papers I have touched upon differentiation, the symbolic, sign, and stipulative functions, including sorting, as an approach to an analysis of order. As these are developed they provide the background for further inquiry, whether observation be inwardly or outwardly directed.

The person is the source of action. Apart from the reflexes, the person controls the initiation of acts. In all deliberative or voluntary action, the person, in the light of his purposes, decides if and how what are ambiguously called stimuli may, according to his perception or interpretation of them affect his acts, whether they come to him or whether he goes after them. An act if referred to antecedents is called a response. But the overt aspect of a response externally viewed is only part of the response. A response is self-initiated and includes a covert ordering component as well as an overt executive component. It is not necessary to permit the internal acts to vanish in the statistics of individual differences in overt behavior. Common recognizables and common stipulations which provide the basis for common understanding and collaboration are developed through the interaction of persons and things.

Quality is an inseparable aspect of differentiation, since by quality we designate whatever it may be that enables one to distinguish something from something else. Thus, all acts have a qualitative as well as an energetic aspect. By energetic aspect I refer to the amount, rate, and duration of expenditure in action which may vary over a range from quiescence to violence. These aspects are distinguished but inseparable. The field covered by the loose term emotion may be envisaged in a perspective which does not separate what have been called cognition, emotion, and volition.

Since one can direct his notice outwardly or inwardly, the difference in direction is marked by the terms, exterospection, and introspection. One simply takes notice as one needs to, in order to find out about what one is interested in. In order to combat the view that psychology must occupy itself exclusively with elemental analysis of states of consciousness, behaviorists brought introspection under fire because it was claimed to be the unique and indispensable instrument for such analysis. It fell out that introspection, together with the internal acts of the person were incontinently cast out in order to abolish mentalism. It appears rather capricious to issue such an edict of renunciation to protect one from alleged unsound doctrine. Virtuous inquiry hardly demands such impoverishment. Most of the arguments against introspection were more vehement than relevant. One offshoot of the argument which quickly congealed into dogma was the slovenly antithesis subjec-

tive-objective. This pretty pair serve handsomely as praise or damn words, but if one asks for any thing like a precise statement of what is referred to or what difference it makes with respect to inquiry one is more likely to be bludgeoned with quotations from authoritative sources than to receive enlightenment. Introspection was particularly stigmatized as subjective because what was observed was said to be private. Exterospection was glorified because what was observed was said to be public. According to such objectivists science is never simply objective but always rigorously objective and must occupy itself exclusively with what is public. This argument was beautifully designed to miss the point by raising an irrelevant issue. If there is a sense in which objectivity has anything to do with the validation of knowledge claims, it rests upon testing the exemplification of commonly understood stipulations and not upon the location of events with respect to the observer. In this sense objectivity pertains as much to introspection as to exterospection. Without inquiring at this time into how two observers determine that they are looking at the same thing, or find out that looking at the same thing does not give assurance that they perceive it in the same way, one may point out that every observation has a private component which may or may not be made public through common stipulations and validated in common action. In so far as anything is reportable in common stipulations so that the same sort of things may be investigated by different observers it satisfies the conditions of collaborative inquiry. Of course, I cannot observe your internal acts nor feel your feels, but what of it? Neither must I dissect your specimen nor test your reported findings by using your individual experimental setup. It is sufficient if I work on other instances of the same sort. The same individuals are not required. Equivalent instances are sufficient. One may recall the monumental psychological works of Helmholtz and Ebbinghaus which rested largely on introspection. Each did most of his work on only one subject and that subject was himself. An overheated objectivist might envy such superlative achievement carried out in unregenerate defiance of his prohibitions. Self-management requires acquaintance with one's internal doings and introspection is available for their exploration. One may deliberately explore and seek to control only what one catches himself doing.

Since any unit differentiated within the matrix of experience may be further differentiated into sub-units or may be taken as a sub-unit within a more inclusive sort, I use the term level of analysis to designate these hierarchical relations within a sort taken as a base of reference. I use the term order of analysis to distinguish different base sorts which may be used in a unit of discourse. Since any one or more distinguishable qualities, properties, or relations of things or events may be used for purposes of order, one may have many order-level distinctions such as sorts, laws, or postulate sets. The same individual objects, events, or situations may be analyzed in many ways, ordered by different laws according to the purpose. A problem does not differentiate itself. Only trial and consequences can determine if one has chosen distinctions rele-

vant for its formulation. It is clear that no sorting, no ordering can claim any sanction or privilege beyond the satisfaction of purpose. If our ordering acts are not to get us into more trouble than they get us out of, as they so frequently do, they must be inquired into with more care than they have so far received. A recognition of order-level analysis together with the stipulation-exemplification relation provides an approach to many problems of great interest within the general purpose of self-management.

Wherever the behavioristic influence has been felt, the emphasis upon quantification has minimized consideration of the basic qualitative aspect of experience. But since quality can be noticed, enjoyed, disliked, represented, and pursued or avoided, and since the qualitative aspect of experience is as pervasive as differentiation, it cannot be neglected if one is to envisage the whole behavior of the person. The pursuit of qualitative feels for sheer enjoyment or their avoidance on account of dislike make up a large block of human interests although many qualities may be more or less indifferently had or patiently endured. The qualitative factor is basic in anything that pretends to be an account of motivation. Delight in fine workmanship is one of the roots of art. The pursuit of amusement, the joy in fun, adventures in appetite, rests upon the savor of quality. The mastery of motor skills depends upon feel. Many writers, in their condemnation of passion and sensuality give testimony to the importance of quality in self-management. The difficulty with Thorndike's satisfiers and annoyers lay not in the recognition of quality, but in his mythological bond theory, retroactive effect, and a confusion of individual recurrence with sort of recurrence which only mystified the relation of quality to behavior.

It is rather clear that the management and manipulation of others, in which we have all been abundantly instructed, has much greater attraction for more people than self-management. But so long as an interest in the quality of persons survives, interest in self-management may quicken inquiry and, without any sacrifice of technical competence, direct it toward things of abiding human worth.