

SOME NOTES ON THE PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES OF THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF PSYCHOLOGY (1), (2)

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Until the 1960s -and, in part, subsequently as well- the historiography of psychology was characterized by three different, but frequently intertwined ideas:

- 1) Developmental model: History of psychology is viewed as a sequence of ideas and theories.
- 2) Great-men model: the history of psychology is the result of the accomplishments of individual outstanding scientists.
- 3) The cultural ("Zeitgeist") model: The "cultural climate" of the time facilitates or inhibits the formation of psychological theories.

In the last twenty years several changes took place:

First, interest in the history of psychology has been on the increase; second, concern with the history of psychology, at least in the USA, has been institutionalized; and third, the approach to the historiography of psychology has changed. I shall be concerned with the third aspect.

The reorientation of the historiography of science, in general, is deeply influenced by the changes in the two other "metasciences", the philosophy of science and the sociology of science. Toward the end of the 1960s, the discussions, centered around T.S.

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KUHN's influential volume *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), lead to attempts of the integration of the three classical metasciences (see POLANYI, 1968; BROŽEK et al., 1969/70). ZIMAN, 1968, p. 11 put it this way: "It has been put to me that one should in fact distinguish carefully between Science as a body of knowledge, Science as what scientists do and Science as a social institution. This is precisely the sort of distinction that one must not make".

These tendencies toward the integration of the history, the philosophy and the sociology of science, different as their viewpoints may have been, had one thing in common: The emphasis on the social nature of science.

These developments had, of course, an impact on the historiography of psychology. Three specific criticisms were directed at the traditional historiography of psychology:

Idealistic approach, in the sense that the history of psychology was not anchored in the socio-historical reality. The "Great-men" and the "Zeitgeist" model were criticized (see HOLZKAMP, 1973, BUSS, 1975) for relating the development of psychological theories and social processes in an adequate and methodological highly dubious manner.

Presentism: The tendency to treat the current views, approaches and theories as the crowning glory of continuous logical progress toward "truth" (see SAMELSON, 1974; YOUNG, 1966).

Irrelevance: Traditional historiography deals with 'oldfashioned' (veralteten) ideas and does not advance our knowledge (see HOLZKAMP, 1973).

Various efforts have been made to overcome these limitations (GEUTER, 1981). So far no generally accepted, binding standards have emerged. In what follows we are endeavoring to show the problems and encounters in studying the history of psychology, in what a perspective they can be viewed and in what ways their solution may be attempted (3).

First of all, we must abandon a "product-oriented" approach (WAGNER/GRÜNWALD, 1977): historical analysis must be directed not solely to the *results* of scientific work, but must consider these results in relation to the conditions under which they were obtained and the ways in which they were received by the scientific community.

Historical analysis can operate at three, differentiable, but closely related levels:

- 1) *Conceptual*, concerned with models, values, assumptions, questions, approved ways of solving problems, and the tools of the investigator (4).
- 2) *Socio-psychological*, involving the functioning of scientific communities.
- 3) *Institutional*, dealing with the institutional and organizational framework of scientific activity.

In this model particular importance is attached to the intermediary socio-psychological level, concerned with the structures and processes of scientific communities, since it mediates not only between internal and external factors but also between cognitive ("Konzeption") and social (scientific community) factors of internal scientific development. KUHN's publications (1962, 1970) were path-breaking in the latter respect (5). However the kuhnian analysis must be broadened; special emphasis is also to be laid on the relationship of factors internal and external to science (6):

Attitudes, opinions and values that scientists bring with them as members of society and

that are related to their interests and socialization experiences as members of social groups or classes affect their research activities. The institutional framework in which research is carried out constitutes another link between the intra-scientific and the external factors affecting the growth of science; e.g. the priorities set by governmental and private agencies providing research funds determine the limits within which research and recruitment of younger scientific personnel is possible. The net of relationships between these factors is further complicated by the cognitive and social goals of scientific communities, which direct their efforts to modify the given opportunities for research. One of the critical issues is the relative openness or resistance of the internal regulating factors to external influences.

The cognitive components of the intrascientific mechanisms regulating the development of science may be designated as "Konzeption" (4). In contrast to a unifying "paradigm", in psychology several "Konzeptionen" coexist and compete. In common with the meaning of "paradigm", the conflict between "Konzeptionen" can not be solved through (additional) data acquisition since social-psychological and extra-scientific factors play a role as well.

There are more problems: The assumptions and implications of "Konzeptionen" are for the most part implicit. They are not spelled out since they contain a substantial supply of ideas that for a given scientific community at a given time are a common property and are self-understood (selbstverständlich).

In order to get out these implicit characteristic of a "Konzeption" of psychology, it is necessary to direct historical analysis to situations which require a justification of a given point of view, not a routine pursuit of research. Such situations occur, when disciplines (or subdisciplines) are emerging, when research areas are born (or pass into oblivion), and when crises or controversies come to the fore.

In endeavoring to make a "Konzeption" explicit, we can follow two, mutually reinforcing and overlapping modes of analysis; a synchronic analysis compares different "Konzeptionen", their characteristics and their different societal and scientific framework, while the diachronic analysis focuses on the factors affecting the stability and change of "Konzeptionen" over time.

Such a historical analysis will not serve to justify and to glorify the current status of science. It will endeavor to discover the conditions under which new "Konzeptionen" enter into the arena, it will challenge their claims to validity, and it will stress the relative merit of scientific standards that appear absolute, supra-historical and will throw light on them in terms of their genesis and reception.

NOTES

- (1) History of psychology refers to the history of "scientific" psychology.
- (2) I am much indebted to Dr. BROŽEK for his advice concerning this paper.
- (3) For examples of the approach see GRÜNWARD (1980 and 1983).
- (4) The term "Konzeption" embraces models, values, issues, paradigmatic solutions and apparatus.
- (5) Historians of psychology should resolutely resist the temptation to apply uncritically the Kuhnian model to psychology.
- (6) Intra-scientific factors exercise their impact on extra-scientific factors through publication and application of science.

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