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COMPARATIVE PSYCHOLOGY AS A COURSE OF STUDY IN THE UNIVERSITY AND IN OTHER HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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A. E. Davier, in his paper on the influence of biology on the development of modern psychology in America, gave the following picture of the evolution of psychology. Until 1887, psychology in the modern sense of this word hardly existed in America. The study of the soul (mind, *l'esprit*) was presented as the "philosophy of thought" (*philosophie mentale*). The main official representatives of this study were Porter and Cosh, who were active figures in the Reformed Church in the colonies.

In 1887, with Ladd's work on "Elements of Physiological Psychology," a new era began. It is interesting that Ladd also was a figure in the church and a successor of the two men mentioned above. Beginning with his work, physiology of the nervous system became an inevitable preface to any investigation of the soul.

After that, a number of authors followed who eventually began to speak about psychology in the strict sense of this word, about consciousness and so on. Only then were efforts made to make psychology an independent field of knowledge. At last, from the direction of physiology and from that of experimental psychology, a new direction emerges: structural and functional psychology.

At first, all the authors were partisans of introspection. They all believed that the phenomena of thought were different from physical phenomena.

In 1904, a new trend became evident: genetic psychology appeared, that is, the study of the development of thought both in the child and in different races, and at the same time the study of the psychic capabilities of animals set in (Baldwin, Thorndike, Senwings). Psychology became closer and closer to biology. Finally, in the last ten years, the doctrine of behaviorism appeared, which eventually began to aim at completely destroying introspection.

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Thus, as new authors changed one another, the trends in psychology changed from those close to a fetishistic world outlook to an extreme form of behaviorism completely negating psychology as a discipline of an exact science, because an exact science deals only with the phenomena of physics or chemistry since all physiological knowledge is derived from physics and chemistry and nothing more.

The evolution of psychology in Europe took a similar course.

One should not think that the advance of this approach to thought cancelled all preceding approaches. It was not so. It is the dominance of the fetishistic world outlook which was cancelled and defends its positions the more rigorously since its opponents excited by the attacks expose their weak points, permitting the metaphysicists to attack them there.

Therefore, it is now easy to understand what contemporary world literature is, so far as it can be seen in the annals of physiology of the nervous system and of psychology. (*L'Annee Psychologique, L'Annee Biologique,* etc.) These publications demonstrate that in Europe and America there is a complete set of clearly expressed schools of psychology, but there is no psychology as an integrated discipline.

These schools are:

1. The old school of introspection
2. The school of experimental psychology (Wundt)
3. The old zoopsychological school (Büchner and Romanes)
4. The biological school based on evolutionary doctrine (Lamarck and Darwin)
5. The physiological school with its subdivisions (Sechenov, Pavlov, Bekhterev)
6. The morphological school (Kretchmer)
7. The physical-chemical school (Loeb)
8. Behaviorism (Weller)
9. Pedological schools (Preyer),

and a number of schools of secondary and tertiary importance (the ones above being the main schools).

In the USSR there are representatives of all these schools, and, if anything, they treat each other worse than do the different schools abroad covering the whole gamut of attitudes from an indifferent ignoring of each other to open adversarial attacks.

From the point of view of the history of the development of the science, these facts are completely natural: they can be explained by the intensive development of this science, owing to its widely recognized validity and significance. Similar situations are known in other sciences as well. An important discovery that revolutionizes the prevailing world outlook, or a new method of investigation that makes possible a more fruitful approach to the tasks of science, or, at least, new tasks presented to science by life itself, requiring the efforts of many researchers—all this leads to

differentiation, and, with it, to a more or less deep separatism. This separatism results in bias in research, in the distrust of one school by another and in their struggle, which becomes especially violent among their extreme representatives.

All that, I repeat, is quite natural and understandable. But the students who are to take examinations in these mutually exclusive psychologies would not feel any easier knowing the reasons for this struggle. The students are being torn asunder by the representatives of these schools. Their position is the more difficult because the professors cannot help them out of this difficulty. Presenting in their lectures their point of view on a subject, none of them would undertake a criticism of their comrades which would be negative or condemnatory in character. I speak about materialistic, monistic and dualistic world outlooks *in general,* about conscious and subconscious activities as theoretical constructs, etc. which are followed by the doctrines of the school to which the lecturer belongs. Besides, how can one reconcile his own school with the teachings of others, how can one do away with the disputable and the contradictory—this was left for the students to do themselves, according to their abilities. In the majority of cases they cannot do it. As a result, on their examinations they answer to one professor about consciousness according to classical psychology, that it is a harmful prejudice; and to another that in classical psychology consciousness is the central part of the subject. To one professor the students say that to develop a child's sense of fantasy is harmful, almost criminal, while to the other one, that to develop this psychic ability is necessary; to one they say that the subjective method of studying a subject is antiscientific and cannot yield anything for the understanding of psychology; to the other they say that the study of psychology and its understanding is impossible without this method; to one they say that any collective is a mechanical aggregate, and to the other that this point of view leads not to the understanding of the laws of collective (social) psychology, but to the sociology of dolls, as Lenin expressed once, etc.

If I add to this that the training of the students to be critical of the knowledge given them is poor and sometimes even very poor, it becomes quite evident that a way out of this situation is necessary, both for the representatives of the fighting schools of psychology and, to a greater degree, for the students. This way out may be given certainly only by that discipline of psychology whose fundamentals would be accepted equally by all the schools. It is comparative psychology with the evolutionary method as its foundation that can serve as such a discipline. Only comparative psychology can unite the differing and fighting schools. It can tie their theories together, if not completely, then in that part of their conceptualizations in which the principle of evolutionary doctrine (in the biological sense) can find its application. And, this will be the basis upon which connections may be established among the isolated

disciplines that are acting at present as separate sects. Comparative psychology will give to the student body the very criterion that would help them to understand the contradictions in the knowledge they get, on the basis of biology and its indisputable evolutionary teaching.

However, we have had only one chair of comparative psychology, founded in 1906 at the Psychoneurological Institute, and it was systematically persecuted by the Ministry of Education. After the reorganization of the Psychoneurological Institute, this chair was retained; it existed until 1931, when I stopped giving lectures.

At present, as far as I know, comparative psychology does not exist either as an official faculty chair or even as a subject being a part of the curriculum of any higher educational institution. The absence of this subject in the curriculum of pre-revolutionary Russia is understandable, as is the fact that there the teaching of psychology was permitted on a special request of the University board. This permission was granted only on the mandatory condition that the subject would be taught only to those students who had completed their course in a theological seminar. It is understandable why this subject is absent in Western European universities, e.g., in England, France, Austria, Germany, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, and others which have formal chairs of theology (in some of them there are even two, Catholic and Lutheran, theology chairs or even a theological department). A chair of comparative psychology next to theological chairs would have found itself in a very difficult situation because it is to comparative psychology that we owe the fact that humans, once considered unique in their psychic nature, are considered, not from the psychological point of view, as a link in the long evolutionary chain of the psychic abilities of animals with which humans are inseparably connected.

To comparative psychology we owe the fact that the use of fantasy in interpreting the behavior of humans as individuals and social beings was being methodically diminished and replaced by scientific knowledge. And last, to comparative psychology we owe the fact that traditions, customs and the so-called "basics of life" are purified of all that was introduced to them by ignorance.

I think the foregoing elucidates by itself the significance of comparative psychology with respect both to the student body and to the teaching of different psychological disciplines. At the same time, it makes clear why comparative psychology should be an independent chair in higher educational institutions.

Six or seven years ago, however, I would have thought this proposal useless, if not theoretically, then practically. When I happened to become acquainted with the work of the Psychoneurological Institute in Kharkov, the director of the Institute answered as follows, when I asked him, "Why is there no chair of comparative psychology at the Institute, whereas in the Leningrad Psychoneurological Institute a comparative psychology

chair was founded at the very beginning?" He said: "But where can we find a lecturer for this subject? We have looked, but could not find anyone." And when he asked me if I had anybody in mind whom I could recommend, I had to answer that I did not.

At present things have changed for the better, and I can recommend with good confidence, in the capacity of Docent to this chair, Assistant Professor Dr. B. I. Khotin, whom I mentored for his master's examination in comparative psychology who graduated from the Medical Faculty of the University of Tomsk and is now a physician, who for some time, was my Assistant in Comparative Psychology at the Herzen Institute and was in charge of the Laboratory of the Comparative Psychology Chair. Khotin has published a research in comparative psychology entitled . . . and at present he is working in the Section of Comparative Psychology and Comparative Physiology at the Bekhterev Institute for Brain Research, founded on his initiative and in the formation of which he took part personally.

At the same time, I can also recommend G. S. Roginsky who graduated from Leningrad University, Faculty of Natural History, and then graduated from the Herzen Pedagogical Institute; I was his mentor for the master's degree in comparative psychology, and at present he is a scientific worker dealing with (omissions [. . .] and the abrupt end of the manuscript reflect the state in which it was found.)