

# **What is Psychology?**

**By Georges Canguilhem, 1958**

(The original translation was by R. Groome on 9/10/05. It has been edited for publication by B. Singh. Footnotes are still missing but to come. —R.G.)

The psychologist seems to have more trouble with the question What is psychology? than the philosopher has with the question What is philosophy? For the question of sense and essence in philosophy constitutes it more than defines a response. Moreover, for those who would call themselves philosophers, the fact that the question is incessantly reborn, in default of having a satisfactory response, is a cause of humility and not a cause for humiliation. But for psychology, the question of its essence, or more modestly its concept, also puts into question the existence of the psychologist. This is because it is difficult to respond to the question of what the psychologist does, if one is not able to respond exactly to what psychology is. A psychologist can only search in an uncertain efficacy the justification of his or her importance as a specialist, the importance of which, if it would not absolutely displease any psychologist, it would, if given by a philosopher, engender an inferiority complex.

In saying that the efficacy of the psychologist is discussable, one must not understand by this that it is illusory: it only means to say that this efficacy is without a doubt not very well established insofar as there is no proof that it is due to the application of a science. That is to say, the status of psychology is not fixed in such a way that one must take it for more and better than a composite empiricism, literally codified in regards to the goal of teaching it.

In fact, in a lot of works of psychology, the impression can be drawn that there is a mix of philosophy without rigor, ethics without exigency, and medicine without control. Such works are a philosophy without rigor, because psychology is eclectic in the pretext of objectivity. They are an ethics without exigency, because psychology makes an uncritical correspondence between ethnological experiments and the confessor, the educator, the chief, the judge, etc. They are a medicine without control, since in considering the study and treatment of the three most unintelligible and the least curable sorts of illnesses — illnesses of the skin, of the nerves, and of the mental — the last two have always furnished psychology its observations and hypotheses.

Therefore it may seem in demanding, What is psychology? one poses a question that is neither impertinent nor futile.

For a long time the characteristic unity of a concept of science was searched for in the direction of its object. The object would dictate the method utilized for the study of its properties. But this was, in the end, to limit science to the investigation of a fact (donné) in terms of the exploration of a domain. The concept of a science progressively came to rely upon its method rather than its object, when it appeared that any science appropriates its domain by, more or less, carving out its facts (donné). Or more exactly, the expression 'the object of science' received a new sense. The object of science was no longer only the specific domain of problems — of obstacles to resolve — it was also the intention and the aim of the subject of science. That is to say, it is the specific project that constitutes a theoretical conscience as such.

One can respond to the question What is psychology? in making the unity of its domain appear in spite of the multiplicity of its methodological projects. It is this type of response brilliantly given by Prof. Daniel Lagache in 1947, to a question posed, in 1936, by Edouard Claparède<sup>1</sup>. The unity of psychology is sought here in a definition of a general theory of conduct: a synthesis of experimental psychology, of clinical psychology, of psychoanalysis, of social psychology, and of ethnology.

On closer look, however, perhaps one can say this unity is more like a pact of coexistence drawn up between professionals than a logical essence obtained by revelation of constancy in a variety of cases. It is between two tendencies that Lagache searches for solid accord: between the naturalist (experimental psychology) and the humanist (clinical psychology), one has the feeling that the second appears to him to carry more weight. It is what explains, no doubt, the absence of animal psychology in the most contested parts of this review. Certainly, one sees that the clinic is included in experimental psychology — which is for the most part a psychology of animals — but it is only enclosed as material to which the method of experimental psychology is applied. In effect, a psychology cannot be called experimental only with regard to its method and not in reason of its object. In spite of appearances, it is by its object rather than its method that psychology is called clinical, psychoanalytical, social, and ethnological. All these adjectives are indicative of a single and same object of study: Man, talkative or silent, sociable or unsociable. This much said, can one speak rigorously here of a general theory of conduct without resolving the question of knowing if there is a continuity or a rupture between human language and animal language, human society and animal society? It is possible that, on this point, it will not be for the philosopher to decide, but science, in fact several sciences, including psychology. But in order to define itself, psychology can not prejudge what it is called upon to judge. Without which, it is inevitable that in proposing itself as a general theory of conduct, psychology fabricates its own idea of man. It is necessary therefore

to permit the philosopher to ask the psychologist where does this idea come from and if it would not be, in fact, from some philosophy.

We would like to try, because we are not psychologists, to come to terms with this fundamental question by an opposite path. That is to say, we propose to ask whether or not it is the unity of a project that confers the potential unity of the different sorts of disciplines called psychological. But our procedure of investigation demands a certain distance. We can explore the different domains separately and compare them as they are today, by searching for their intersections (taking dozens of years in the case of Prof. Lagache). To investigate whether these projects coincide demands that one distinguish the sense of each one of them, not just when the psychologist is lost in the automatism of execution, but when a project emerges from a situation the psychologist instigates.

To search for a response to the question What is psychology? becomes for us, then, an obligation to sketch a history of psychology considered in its orientations, that is, in relation to the history of philosophy and the sciences. Such a history is necessarily teleological, since it is destined to convey the sense of the question as it is originally supposed in its diverse disciplines, methods, and enterprises – of which the current disparity actually legitimizes this question.

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<sup>1</sup> *L'unité de la psychologie*, P.U.F., Paris, 1949.

## **I - Psychology as Natural Science**

Although psychology signifies the science of the soul, it is remarkable that an independent psychology would be absent, in idea and in fact, from philosophical systems of antiquity, where the psyche, or soul, is taken for a natural being. Studies relative to the soul find themselves divided among metaphysics, logic, and physics. Aristotle's treatise *Of the Soul* is in reality a treatise on general biology and one of his writings dedicated to physics. After Aristotle, and after the tradition of the Schoolmen, philosophy from the beginning of the 17th century still treated the soul as a matter of physics. The object of physics was the natural body, organized as potentially having life. Therefore physics treated the soul as the form of the living body, and not as a substance separated from material. From this point of view, as a study of the organs of knowledge, that is to say, of the exterior senses (the five usual senses) and the interior senses (common sense, fantasy, and memory) physics did not differ from the study of the organs of respiration or digestion. The soul was a natural object of study, a form in the hierarchy of forms, even if its essential function was the knowledge of forms. In its original and universal sense in the theory of nature, the science of the soul is a province of physiology,

Without rupture, it is this antique conception that goes back to an aspect of modern psychology: neuro-physiology, considered for a long time as exclusively psycho-physiology (but today, among other things, as psycho-endocrinology), and psycho-pathology considered as a medical discipline. The two revolutions that permitted the success of modern physiology, Harvey's theory of circulation and Lavoisier's theory of respiration, were preceded by another, just as important: a revolution due to Galien that established, clinically and experimentally, that it is the brain and not the soul that is the organ of sensation, movement, and the seat of the soul. Contrary to the Aristotelian doctrine, and conforming to the anticipations of Alcmaeon, Hippocrates, and Plato,

Galien's revolution was in line with the doctors of the School of Alexandria, Herophile, and Erasistrate. In this tradition Galien founded a veritable uninterrupted filiation of research: an empirical pneumatology enduring for centuries based on a theory of animal spirits that was swept aside and replaced at the end of the 18th century by electro-neurology. Although decidedly pluralistic in his conception of relations between psychic functions and encephalic organs, Gall proceeded directly from Galien. Moreover, Gall, in spite of his extravagances, inclusively dominated all research concerning cerebral localizations during the first sixty years of the 19th century until Broca.

In sum, as psycho-physiology and psycho-pathology, the psychology of today goes back to the 2nd century.

## **II - Psychology as Science of Subjectivity**

The decline of Aristotelian physics in the 17th century marked the end of psychology as parapsychics, that is, the end of a science of the soul as a natural object, and correlatively the birth of psychology as science of subjectivity.

Those truly responsible for the birth of modern psychology, as a science of the thinking subject are the mechanical physicists of the 17th century.



If the reality of the world can no longer be confounded with the content of perception, if reality is obtained and posed by the reduction of illusions of sensible experience, then the qualitative remainder of this experience engages, from the fact that it is possible as a falsification of the real, a responsibility proper to the mind (*esprit*). That is to say, this qualitative remainder engages the subject of experience, insofar as it does not identify itself with the reason of the mathematician and mechanician, instrument of truth and measure of reality. But this responsibility is, to the eyes of the physicist, culpability. Psychology is constituted, therefore, as an enterprise of relieving the mind of guilt. In the face of physics, its project is that of a science explaining why the mind is constrained by nature to err in reason relative to reality. Psychology operates a physics of external sense to render account of the countersense that the mechanical physicist culpabilizes in the exercise of the function of knowledge.

### **A - The Physics of External Sense**

Psychology, as a science of subjectivity, begins therefore as psychophysics for two reasons. Firstly, because it cannot be less than a physics to be taken seriously by the physicists. Secondly, because it must search in a nature, that is in the structure of the human body, for the reason for the existence of the un-real residues of human existence.

But even so, this is not a question of a return to the ancient conception of the science of the soul as a branch of physics. The new physics is a calculus. Psychology tends to imitate it, by searching to determine the quantitative constants of sensation and the relations among the constants.

Descartes and Malebranche here, are on the front lines. In the *Règles pour la direction de l'esprit*

(*XII*), Descartes proposes the reduction of qualitative differences between sensorial givens to a difference of geometric figures. It is a question of sensorial givens insofar as they are, in the proper sense of the term, information to one body by other bodies; what is informed by an external sense, is an internal sense: "fantasy which is nothing other than a real and figured body". In *Règles XIV*, Descartes treats expressly what Kant calls the intensive dimension of sensations (*Critique of Pure Reason, The Transcendental Analytic and the Anticipation of Perception*): the comparisons between lights, sounds, etc., cannot be converted in exact relations by analogy with the extension of a figured body. If one adds that if Descartes is not properly speaking the inventor of the term and concept of the reflex, he nevertheless affirmed the constancy of the relation between excitation and reaction, then one sees that a psychology, understood as a mathematical physics of external sense, begins with him to arrive at Fechner. This happens thanks to the work of physiologists such as Hermann Helmholtz — and against the Kantian reserves, critiqued in their turn by Herbart.

This kind of psychology is enlarged by Wundt to the dimensions of an experimental psychology. These works are supported by the hope that the "facts of conscience" can be made to appear in the laws of an analytic determinism as the same type of universal validity hoped for by mechanics and physics.

Fechner died in 1887, two years before the thesis of Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (1889). Wundt died in 1920, having very well formed some disciples, some of whom are still living. The latter assisted the psychologists of Form in making the first attacks against the analytic physics — at the same time experimental and mathematical — of external sense. This



conforms to the observations of Ehrenfels on the qualities of Form (Ueber Gestaltqualitäten, 1890) : observations themselves apparent in the analysis of Bergson on the perceived totalities as the organic form dominating their supposed parts (Essai, Ch. II).

## **B - Science of Internal Sense**

But the science of subjectivity does not reduce itself to the elaboration of a physics of external sense; it proposes itself and presents itself as the science of the self-consciousness [Soi] or of the science of internal sense. The term Psychology having the sense of a science of the Ego [Moi] (Wolff) dates from the 17th century. Each history of this psychology can be written as that of a counter sense of what was started by Descartes' Meditations, which does not, however, bear the responsibility.

When Descartes, at the beginning of his Meditations III, considers his "interior" in trying to render it more known and familiar to himself, this consideration aims at Thought. The Cartesian interior, conscience of the Ego Cogito, is the direct knowledge (connaissance) of the soul to itself in the sense of pure understanding. The Meditations of Descartes are named Metaphysics because they claim to attain directly the nature and the essence of the 'I think' in the immediate seizing of its existence. The Cartesian mediation is not a personal confidence. The reflection that gives the knowledge (connaissance) of the Ego the rigor and the impersonality of mathematics is not the observation of self [Soi]. This latter scholastic argument was held by the early 18th spiritualists who had no qualms in delegating the Ego Cogito to Socrates in such a way that M. Pierre-Paul Royer-Collard was able to give Napoleon the 1st the assurance that "know thyself", the Cogito, and Introspection furnished their inexpugnable throne and altar.

The Cartesian interior had nothing to do with the Aristotelian internal sense, which conceives objects interiorly and "inside the head," whereas Descartes takes this for an aspect of the body (*Règle XIII*). This is why Descartes states that the soul knows itself directly and more easily than the body. Here is an affirmation in which one too often ignores the intentional explicit polemic, for the Aristotelian the soul does not know itself directly:

"The knowledge of the soul is not direct, but only by reflection. For the soul resembles the eye that sees everything and cannot see itself but by reflection in a mirror...and the soul in the same way sees itself and only knows itself by reflection and the recognition of its effects". [CITATION]

A thesis that raises the indignation of Descartes, when Gassendi takes up the argument again in his objections to the Meditations III, to which he responds: "It is neither the eye which sees itself, nor the mirror, but very well the spirit which alone knows (connait) the mirror, and the eye, and itself".[CITATION]

This decisive reply does not do away with the scholastic argument, as Maine de Biran turns it once again against Descartes in the Memoir on the Decomposition of Thought (*Memoire sur la decomposition de la pensée*). Similarly, Auguste Comte invokes Descartes to counter the possibility of introspection, that is to say, to counter this method of self-knowledge that Pierre-Paul Royer-Collard borrows from Reid to make psychology a scientific propaedeutic of metaphysics based on an experimental path of the traditional theses of spiritual Substantialists. Cournot himself, in his sagacity, does not shy away from taking up the argument again in applying it to the idea that psychological observation concerns more the conduct of the other than the ego of the observer,



that psychology allies itself more to wisdom than science, and that "it is the nature of psychological facts to be translated in aphorisms rather than theorems". [CITATION]

The teaching of Descartes is misrecognized in two ways: firstly, by constituting against him an empirical psychology as a natural history of the ego — from Locke to Ribot, and through Condillac, the French Ideologues and the English Utilitarianists; secondly, by constituting, with him, or so they believed, a rational psychology founded on the intuition of the substantialist Ego.

Today, Kant still guards the glory of having established that if Wolff was able to baptize his newborns 'post-Cartesians' (*Psychologica Empirica*, 1732; *Psychologica Rationalis*, 1734), he was not able to succeed in founding their pretensions. Kant shows that, on one hand, the internal sense of phenomena is only a form of empirical intuition, that it tends to be confused with time; and on the other hand, that the ego, subject of any judgment of apperception, is a function of the organization of experience, of which it would not be possible to have a science since it is the transcendental condition of any science. Kant's *First Metaphysical Principles of the Science of Nature* (1786) contests that psychology would be a science, whether in the image of mathematics, or whether in the image of physics. There is not a mathematical psychology possible in the same sense that there exists a mathematical physics. Even if one applies to the modifications of the internal sense, in virtue of the anticipation of perception relative to intensive magnitudes (the mathematics of the continuum), one will never obtain anything more important than the properties of the straight line. There is not an experimental psychology in the same sense in which chemistry is constituted by the usage of analysis and synthesis. We can neither trust experimenting on ourselves nor on the other. For internal observation alters its object. Yet, to want to suppress oneself in the observation of oneself leads to alienation. Psychology can, then, only be descriptive.

Its veritable place is in an anthropology, as a propaedeutic to a theory of competency and a prudence crowned by a theory of wisdom.

### **C - The Science of Intimate Sense**

If one calls classical the psychology that one intends to refute, it is necessary to say that, in psychology, there are always classics for someone. The Ideologues, inheritors of the Sensualists, can take for classic Scottish psychology, which preaches, as they do, an inductive method in order to better affirm, contrary to them, the substantiality of the mind [l'esprit]. But the atomistic psychology and the analytic psychology of the Sensualists and the Ideologues, before being rejected as classical psychology by the theorists of Gestalt Psychology, were already taken for the romantic psychology of Maine de Biran. For him, psychology becomes the technique of the intimate Journal and the science of intimate sense. The solitude of Descartes was the asceticism of the mathematician. The solitude of Maine de Biran is the laziness of a subprefect. The Cartesian 'I think' founds thought in itself. The Biranian 'I want' founds the conscience for itself, against exteriority. Shut up in his office, Maine de Biran discovered that psychological analysis does not consist in simplifying but in complicating, that the primitive psychic fact is not an element, but already a relation, and that this relation is lived by effort. He arrives at two conclusions unanticipated for a man whose functions were those of authority, that is to say, commandment: firstly, conscience requires the conflict of a power and a resistance; secondly, man is not, as Bonald thought, an intelligence served by organs, but a living organism served by intelligence. It is necessary for the soul to be incarnated, and therefore there is no psychology without a biology.



The observation of self dispenses neither with the recourse to the physiology of voluntary movement, nor with the pathology of affectivity.

The situation of Maine de Biran is unique between two Royer-Collards: the doctrinaire Pierre Paul and the psychiatrist Antoine-Athanase. The psychologist Maine de Biran dialogued with Pierre Paul and he was judged by Antoine-Athanase. We have from Maine de Biran a *Promenade* with M. Royer-Collard in Luxembourg Garden, and we have from Antoine-Athanase Royer-Collard, an *Examination of the Doctrine of Maine de Biran*. If Maine de Biran had not read and discussed Cabanis (Physical and Moral Relations of Man, 1798), if he had not read and discussed Bichat (Research on Life and Death, 1800), the history of pathological psychology would not even have mentioned him.

The second Royer-Collard is, after Pinel and with Esquirol, one of the founders of the French school of Psychiatry. Pinel had pleaded for the idea that the 'insane' [alienés] are at the same time sick like others, neither possessed nor criminals, and different from others, therefore should be cared for separately from others, and separately according to the case of specialized hospital services. Pinel founded mental medicine as an independent discipline from the therapeutic isolation of the insane at Bicetre and Salpêtrière. Royer-Collard imitated Pinel at the Maison Nationale de Charenton, where he became chief of staff in 1805. In the same year, Esquirol defended his thesis of medicine on the *Passions Considered as Causes, Symptoms, and Curative Means of Mental Alienation*. In 1816, Royer-Collard became professor of legal medicine at the Faculty of Medicine of Paris, then in 1821, first titular of the chair of mental medicine. Royer-Collard and Esquirol had students such as Calmeil, who studied the paralysis of the insane, Bayle, who recognized and isolated general paralysis, and Felix Voisin, who created the study of mental retardation of the

child. In 1862 at Salpêtrière, after Pinel, Esquirol, Lelut, Baillarger and Falret, among others, Charcot became chief of a service whose work would be followed by Theodule Ribot, Pierre Janet, Cardinal Mercier, and Sigmund Freud.

We have seen that psychopathology begins positively with Galien; we see it conclude with Freud, the creator of the term psychoanalysis in 1896. Psychopathology has not developed without relations to other psychological disciplines. For more than a century, as a result of the researches of Biran, psychopathology has constrained philosophy to ask itself to which of the two Royer-Collards must it borrow the idea that it has of psychology. Psychopathology is at the same time judge and party to the uninterrupted debate in which metaphysics has bequeathed to psychology its direction, without renouncing its say on the relations between the phisic and the psychic. This relation has for a long time been formulated as somato-psychic before becoming psycho-somatic. This reversal is the same that is effected elsewhere in the signification given to the unconscious. If one identifies psychism with consciousness — being authorized, rightly or wrongly, by Descartes — the unconscious is of a physical order. If one thinks that the psychic can be unconscious, psychology no longer reduces itself to the science of consciousness. The psychic is no longer what is hidden, but what hides itself (what one hides); is no longer only intimate, but also — according to a term taken from Bossuet to the Mystics — abysmal. Psychology is not only the science of intimateness but the science of the depths of the soul.



### **III - Psychology as the Science of Reactions and Behavior**

In proposing to define Man as an organized being served by an intelligence, Maine de Biran marked from the beginning the terrain that would form a new psychology. It seems he had done so much better than Gall, after which, according to Lelut, "Man is no longer an intelligence, but an intention served by organs". But at the same time, he assigned Man limits, since in his *Anthropology*, he situated human life between animal and spiritual life.

Besides determining psychology as a mental and nervous pathology, or as a physics of external sense, or as a science of internal and intimate sense, the 19th century viewed its constitution as a biology of human behavior. For us the reasons for this event seem to be the following. Firstly, for scientific reasons, there is the constitution of biology as a general theory of relations between organisms and environment (milieu), marking the end of the belief in the existence of a separate human kingdom. Secondly, for reasons of technique and economics, there is the development of an industrial system orienting attention toward the industrial character of the human species, marking the end of the belief in the dignity of speculative thought. Lastly, for political reasons, which resolve themselves in the end in the belief in values of social privilege and in the diffusion of egalitarianism. Therein public conscription and instruction become an affair of the state, the re-vindication of equality, in face of military duties and civil functions (to each his work, or his oeuvres, or his merits) is the real foundation, however unperceived, of a phenomenon proper to modern societies: the generalized practice of expertise, in a wider sense, as the determination of competence and the test of simulation.

What characterizes, according to us, this psychology of behavior, in relation to other types of psychological studies, is its constitutional incapacity to seize on and exhibit the clarity of its

foundational project. If, among the foundational projects of certain anterior types of psychology, some can pass for the counter-sense of philosophy, here, on the contrary, since any relation to an anterior philosophy is refused, the question poses itself as to where such a psychological research takes its bearings. In the patronage of biology, that is in accepting to become an objective science of aptitudes, of reaction, and behavior, this psychology and its psychologists totally forget to situate specific comportment in relation to the historical circumstances and the social environment in which they are led to pose their methods or techniques and make their services accepted.

Nietzsche, sketching the psychology of the psychologist of the 19th century, writes: "We, the psychologists of the future..., consider the instrument that wants to know itself as a sign of degeneration. We are the instruments of knowledge (connaissance) and we would like to have all the naïveté and precision of an instrument, therefore we must neither analyze ourselves, nor know ourselves". Astonishing misunderstanding, but how revealing! The psychologist wants to be an instrument without searching to know who or what he is the instrument of.

Nietzsche seemed to have been more inspired, when, at the beginning of the *Genealogy of Morals*, he was focused on the enigma of the 19th century English psychologists, that is to say, the utilitarianists who were preoccupied with the genesis of moral sentiments. He asked himself, therefore, what had pushed them in the direction of cynicism when explaining human conduct by interest, utility, and by the oblivion of fundamental motivations. Here, then, in face of the

conduct of the 19th century psychologists, Nietzsche renounced any cynicism by provision and therefore lost his lucidity.

As a principle of psychology, the idea of utility formulated the recognition of consciousness by human nature as a power of artifice (Hume, Burke) more prosaically than the definition of Man as fabricator of tools (the Encyclopaedists, Adam Smith, and Franklin). But the principle of the biological psychology of behavior does not appear to be disengaged in the same way, in an explicit philosophical recognition of consciousness, no doubt, because it can only be put into action (*mise en oeuvre*) on condition that it remain unformulated. This principle is the definition of Man himself as instrument. From utilitarianism, implying the idea of utility for Man or the idea of Man judged from utility, came instrumentalism, implying the idea of the utility of Man or the idea of man as means of utility. Intelligence was no longer what makes the organs and uses them, but what serves the organs. It is not without impunity that the historical origins of the psychology of reaction must be sought in work inspired by the discovery of the personal equations proper to astronomers using the telescope (Maskelyne 1796). Man was studied first of all as an instrument of a scientific instrument before being an instrument of any instrument.

Research on the laws of adaptation and learning, on the relation of learning and aptitudes, on the detection and the measure of aptitudes, on the conditions of efficiency and production (whether that of individuals or groups) — research inseparable from their selection or orientation of applications — all admit an implicit common postulate: the nature of Man is to be a tool, his vocation is to be put at its place and its task.

No doubt, Nietzsche was correct to say the psychologists wanted to be "naive and precise

instruments" of this study of Man. They endeavor to arrive at an objective knowledge, even if the determinism that they search for in behavior is no longer today the determinism of the Newtonian type, familiar to the first physicians of the 19th century, but rather a statistical determination, progressively resting on the results of a biometry. But what is the sense of this instrumentalism to the second degree? What is it that pushes or inclines psychologists to make themselves, among other men, the instruments of an ambition to treat Man as an instrument?

In other types of psychology, the soul or subject, as natural form or consciousness of interiority, is the principle given to justify the value of a certain idea of Man in relation to the truth of things. But for a psychology where the word soul makes one flee and the word consciousness makes one laugh, the truth of Man is given in the fact that there is no longer an idea of Man, insofar as he would be different from a tool. It is necessary to recognize, then, that in order for there to be an idea of a tool, it is necessary that not every idea be of the rank of a tool. Moreover, to be able to attribute to a tool a certain value, it is necessary that each value would not be that of a tool whose subordinate value consists in procuring another. If therefore the psychologist would not be able to found his project of psychology with the idea of Man, does he believe to legitimize it by his behavior in the utilization of Man? We mean very well by this: by his behavior of utilization, in spite of all possible objections.

One can very well make the remark that, in effect, on one hand, this type of psychologist does not ignore the distinction between theory and application, and on the other hand, that utilization is not a fact of the psychologist, but of the one or of those who demand from him reports or



diagnostics. We will respond that at least, in equating the theoretician of psychology and the professor of psychology, one must recognize that the contemporary psychologist is, most often, a professional practitioner whose "science" is entirely inspired by the research of laws of adaptation to a socio-technological environment (milieu) —not a natural environment — and always confers on its operations of "measure" a signification of appreciation and expertise. In this respect, the behavior of the psychologist of human behavior encloses almost obligatorily a conviction of superiority, the good conscience of a supervisor, and the mentality of a manager of the relations of Man with Man. This is why it is necessary to come to the cynical question: who designates the psychologists as instruments of instrumentalism? To what are those men beholden who are worthy enough to assign instrumental-man his role and his function? Who orients the orientors?

We will not place ourselves, it goes without saying, on the terrain of capacities and techniques. That there would be good or bad psychologists, that is to say, technicians clever by apprenticeship or injurious by stupidity un-sanctioned by the law, is not the question. The question is that a science or a scientific technique does not contain in itself anything that would confer on it its sense. In his *Introduction to Psychology*, Paul Guillaume created a psychology of a man submitted to doing a test. The tested defends himself against such an investigation; he fears that one is exercising an action on him. Guillaume sees in this state of mind an implicit recognition of the efficacy of the test. But one can also view in this the embryo of the psychology of the tester. The defense of the tested is the repugnance to see himself being treated like an insect, by a man in whom he recognizes no authority to say what he is or what he must do. "To treat like an insect"- the phrase is from Stendhal, who borrowed it from Cuvier. And if we treat the psychologist like an insect, if we apply, for example, to the dismal and insipid Kinsey the recommendation of Stendhal?

Otherwise said, the psychology of reaction and behavior, from the 19th to the 20th century, believed to have rendered itself independent in separating itself from any philosophy: that is to say, from speculation that researches an idea of Man by looking beyond biological and sociological facts. But this psychology cannot avoid the recurrence of discovering its results in the behavior of those who execute its theory. Thus, the question What is psychology? becomes, to the extent that one prohibits philosophy from coming up with a response: Where do the psychologists want to come from in doing what they do? In the name of what are they instituted as psychologists?

When Gideon recruits the chief commando of the Israelites to lead the Madianites beyond Jordan (The Bible: Judges, Book VII), he uses a test of two degrees that permits him only to retain first of all ten million men out of twenty million, then three hundred out of ten million. But this test rests on the Eternal, the end of his utilization, and the procedure of selection utilized. To select a selector, it is normally necessary to transcend the guidelines for the procedures of techniques of selection. In the immanence of the scientific psychologist, the question remains: who has, not the competence, but the mission, to be a psychologist?

The psychologist always relies on a de-doubling [dedoublement], but it is no longer that of consciousness, according to the facts and the norms that comport the idea of Man; rather, it is the mass of "subjects" and an elite cadre of specialists investing themselves in their own mission.

With Kant, and with Maine de Biran, psychology is situated in Anthropology, that is to say, in spite of the ambiguity today strongly in fashion with this term, a philosophy. With Kant the general theory



of human cleverness [habileté] rests in relation to a theory of wisdom. Instrumental psychology presents itself, as a general theory of cleverness, outside any relation to wisdom. If we cannot define this psychology by an idea of Man, that is to say, to situate psychology within philosophy, then we do not have the power to prohibit whomever to call himself psychologist and to call psychology what he does. But nobody can any longer prohibit philosophy from continuing to interrogate itself about the misdefined status of psychology, misdefined from the side of sciences as from the side of techniques. Philosophy conducts itself, in act, with its constitutive naïveté, so little resembling foolishness that it does not exclude a provisory cynicism. This movement leads philosophy to return, once again, to the side of the common man [populaire], that is to say, to the side of non-specialists.

It is therefore at the level of the vulgar that philosophy poses to psychology the question: tell me what you intend [tendez] so that I know what you are? But for once the philosopher can also try to orient the psychologist and say: when one exits the Sorbonne by the street Saint Jacques, one can ascend or descend; if one ascends, then one draws near to the Pantheon, which is the conservation of several great men, but if one descends, one surely ends up at the Prefecture of Police.

[Translation in progress by Robert Groome/ Santa Monica 2005]



