

Prague

Someone who began his university studies at the end of the forties has witnessed in psychology a dazzling expansion of its scientific knowledge and of its specialized disciplines. And even more an unexpected break with the past, I mean the emergence of the psychological man, altering the very language and representations everyone uses when describing the features of our inner and outer life.

You can now realize that the present day is for me one of great emotion. The distinction awarded by the ^{two} most famous psychological associations and the prize associating the name of Wundt to that of James are both a very great honour and a very great pleasure. Let us leave aside the question of merit and recompense. For me this prize acquires its full sense, admitting that what it honours is chiefly social psychology, the work achieved by social psychologists.

Hence you recognize and confirm the legitimate place of a science conceived by the founding fathers of psychology so as to study the link between psychic life and social life, understand what characterizes the individual in human society. And you are probably right. In fact nothing is more problematic in our time than this link of psychic life to social life. Nothing perplexes us more than the ill-ease and the upheaval that are expressed on this account in every part of the world. No doubt our present theories are often still tentative and incomplete. But behind them we can catch glimpses of more encompassing and valid ones.

It is only fair to admit that the award distinguishes in this respect the cooperation between European and American social psychologists. I can add that this was the experience of a work made in common, lasting for about twenty years. On the threshold of an epoch which will be that of the human sciences, this experience had already acted with a pragmatism that is expressed in Goethe's verse : "What is fecund, that alone is true".

I shall devote this talk to the pursuit of this ~~cooperation~~ cooperation at a crucial time. And I am all the more incited to do so that we are in Prague, a town in which this cooperation has met with one of its most dangerous periods of tension. One might think that after so many decades of work as a social psychologist on both sides of the Atlantic, I will have no trouble in defining the essential, that is, the nature of this cooperation. Yet it is ~~no~~ ^{not} easy. And why is that? Here we must appeal to an analogy that falls within the province of our science. One cannot help wondering why we take for granted that genuine history is conceptual history, or what is called internal history: a sort of independent and separate development of ideas, theories, such as behaviourism, Gestalt, etc., as well as their diffusion through the fields of research, the criticisms and debates accompanying them, the way they are verified at every epoch.

Here we have not to discuss the legitimacy of a conceptual history. Whatever the answer given, it is impossible to grant a specific value to a theory or paradigm without defining its presence in a science or an autonomous discipline, as people say. Or without defining and classifying those sciences and even the pecking order that establishes the status of their competence in the so-called "learned society", if you consider that they are man-made, conceived by practitioners in a field of knowledge, who fix their criteria of choice, their language and methods, their disciplinary matrix, as Kuhn described them. At a given moment, they are factors of culture. Lewin recognized the distinctive character of what I will call institutional history, that is, the fact that the history of sciences is not a history of today's scientific concepts. We can understand him, since Lewin lived at a time when the classification and delimitations of sciences was of decisive importance to psychology. He even dedicated some fascinating texts to the Wissenschaftslehre so as to answer the question: "Why are there different sciences?" Starting from the observation that the becoming of a science as such is ⁿ either

as, then in days

something depending on contingencies, nor "the mere accumulation of things to be learned", so to speak imagos of the world.

In fact, in recent years we could witness ~~that~~ genetics or cybernetics were deliberately ^{designed} determined. They illustrated what one can safely ^{denigrate} ~~distinguish~~ as the institutional history of any science. Accordingly one should expect that a genuine history of psychology or social psychology should be concerned with the conceptual as well as with the institutional aspect of their development. ~~Their cooperation?~~

There ^{was} is a striking contrast between a European and an American psychologist in the first phase of their ^{cooperation} contacts and exchanges after the Second ^{World} War. In order to understand these obvious differences, you have to remember that European social psychology was mainly a no man's land between psychology and sociology. This means on one hand a social psychology encompassing the subjective and cultural aspects of a psychology centered on sensorial experiences. Wundt's Völkerpsychologie, for instance, was mainly that. On the other hand collective psychology, such as Durkheim's for example was called, touched chiefly on the irrational and collective aspects of belief, myth, memory, primitive thinking, as exemplified in Halbwachs's and Lévy-Bruhl's work.

After all, what the two main sciences, psychology and sociology, tried to achieve in this way was to ^{achieve} ~~demonstrate~~ the status of a sun-like science, lordling it over the other human sciences as Newtonian mechanics did in the physical sciences. But the study of hypnosis in which France was the leading country led to a development of mass psychology, which in our no man's land of social psychology played the same role as psychoanalysis plays toward the science of psychology. Actually mass psychology, together with marxism and psychoanalysis, was among the most popular sciences of its time. The list of psychologists who published on the topic of social suggestion is impressive. It includes Baldwin, Binet, Bechterev, James, Janet, Le Bon, Tarde and scores of others,

whose names are now not so well remembered.

Keeping in mind ~~xxx~~ this tradition with which everyone could have been familiar when a student, we can now add that there did not seem to be specialized laboratories or even university professors. For instance, until the sixties there was only one in France. ^{in the country} ~~At the same time~~ in America psychology and other human sciences were rapidly growing. The practitioners in these fields wished to be considered as scientists. They often labelled themselves "social scientists" and attempted to live up to the standards implied by the label., as they conceived it. They shaped their disciplines accordingly, including social psychology, thanks to Lewin who most explicitly Took the lead in order to strengthen the field of a distinct science.

Just think that the membership of the American Association of Psychology jumped from 2.600 before the war to well over 12.000 by 1960. So you can have an idea of the possible growth of researchers in social psychology over two decades. When the war was over, we discovered the American Gods and books. Some researchers crossed the Atlantic. The Americans in order to do some comparative studies, present their new experimental methods and recruit some disciples. And several hopeful Europeans social psychologist^s went to the United States in order to study with someone, as Tajfel with Bruner, and others for shorter training periods. It would be rash to assess the outcome of these collaborations, exchanges, in the spreading of the conception^s of this new social psychology, in England, France, the Netherlands, for instance. This not only because they were asymmetrical between Americans and Europeans, but also because they had no influence on the practical and academic life of the small number of isolated researchers in Europe.

Trying to establish the new discipline was rendered still more difficult as well in psychology as in sociology by the traditional precarious state of social psychology. The replacement of the genuine tradition could not be gradual if it did not go hand in hand with the provisional acceptance of the

normal epistemology and pecking order in science.

Festinger who has been involved for many years in the diffusion of new concepts in social psychology and comparative studies grasped its shortcomings. He proposed to the Social Science Research Council in New York to create a committee in order to foster transnational research. Let me quote what he wrote about it : "Such a committee in my view would (...) encourage, facilitate and initiate active working interaction and cooperation among the experimental social psychologists in various (...) countries in order to hasten the change from a purely "United States social psychology" to a "social psychology of human beings". And he went on : "I do not think that it will be fruitful to do this simply by trying to get experiments replicated in different countries around the globe (...). I think what is necessary is sufficient training of, interaction with, and opportunities for research for social psychologists in widely diverse places so that within each country there are indigenous research programs developed, sparked by the ideas which the local investigator has and nourished by theoretical interaction with psychologists in ~~other~~ other countries... The international social psychology will gradually come about as a result of having to formulate theories and explanations of diverse data".

Quite unexpectedly, which is not banal, Festinger wonders about what gives ~~one~~ the right or perhaps even the desire to the social psychology of one country, namely American social psychology, to apparently speak for everybody. To adopt what Kant called the "universal voice" with regard to our science. And he particularly wonders why, whereas the Europeans, South-Americans, and so on, should be as fit as the Americans to speak for everybody, only the Americans choose to do so or feel it urgent to do so.

In a book I recently wrote with Professor Markova, ^{we} analyzed what was the outcome of Festinger's proposal to create an international social psychology. Namely it gave rise to the creation of the Transnational Committee on Social Psychology in the frame of the Social Science Research Council. I explained who were its members and how it was organized. Of course

the search for social psychologists outside Europe was disappointing. So it was in Europe that people began to concretize the idea of an international social psychology. From the outset they grasped that it was useless to stress the training of adult faculty. It was better to stress research and innovation so as to give back to our continent its past intellectual life. Briefly we created a European Association, I should say a small closed group dedicated to the advancement of knowledge, fostering interaction among Europeans^s and, indirectly, the diffusion of social psychology.

The whole modern history of social psychology aimed at getting rid of the numerous dependencies so as to acquire its own intellectual dimensions. As I was a member of the Transnational Committee from the very start and as I created a new laboratory of Social Psychology, this allowed me to play a special part in the creation of the European Association of Social Psychology. I mean an association opened only to social psychologists engaged in active research, willing to work in groups dedicated to their own topics, and so on. The association turned out to bring about an acceptance in cooperation, in the establishment of a West-European ~~science~~ scientific "ingroup" to which the members feel that they belong. That invaluable outcome explains perhaps its duration even today. And for lack of a common paradigm, the association declared for its objective "social experimental psychology," which, like every constitutional agreement, was an incompletely theorized one. You can see, at bottom it is still the same dilemma for social psychology : to be or not to be experimental.

The amazing thing is that, once the Western European Association was established, the Transnational Committee for Social Psychology took the initiative to organize, with the help of the National Science Foundation, a very long summer school with American and European contributors. And it succeeded in creating a new generation of researchers and teachers.

The most pregnant impression I keep from those years is that the Transnational Committee on Social Psychology could quickly turn its back to the past and initiate a lively cooperation with and among the Europeans. And it chose association-building as a method of creating an international Social Psychology. Was time measured to us? In fact, as soon as the Western Europe experiment appeared successful, the Committee continued to move on one side toward Latin America, and on the other side toward Eastern Europe. As was to be expected, the North-American members, Lanzetta, Festinger, Kelly were entrusted with the work in Latin America, and the Western Europeans, especially Tajfel, assumed the same task for Eastern Europe.

You must not forget however, that the Transnational Committee on Social Psychology was a division of the Social/Research Council in New York and had to take its policy into account. To make a long ~~story~~^{story} short, at the end of the sixties, everybody believed in the revival of Social Science in Eastern Europe, because the Soviet Russians made opinion polls, and the Academy sent positive signals to Europe and especially to America, their real partner and adversary. Being myself a refugee from Eastern Europe, I felt less enthusiastic, for, as Schopenhauer wrote about ~~xxx~~ university philosophy in a religious world: "If a philosophy denies the basic ideas of Christianity, either it is false, or, however true, it serves to nothing". It is only fair to admit my bias in making this observation about Eastern Europe.

I should acknowledge that many scholars, even in the Social Science Research Council, were convinced that the Soviet regime was opening up to the human sciences. After surveying the perspectives, we created a Euro-American task force, including Riecken, the president of the Social Science Research Council, and obtained a grant from the Ford Foundation to hold several meetings. So we decided to hold a conference in Prague from ~~4th~~^{fourth} to tenth October 1968. Henri Tajfel from Bristol was in charge of the coordination of the conference and the relations between the West-Europeans and the Czechs. Of course we invited about fifty participants from the United States, Western and Eastern Europe, including Soviet Russia of course.

But, as you probably remember, the invention of Czechs and Slovaks to establish "socialism with a human face" was squashed in August 1968 when the armies of the Warsaw Pact invaded the country. Protests and revulsion in the Western World were unanimous. No doubt the ongoing of ~~the~~ student revolution was of paramount importance in those reactions.

So there is no wonder if the question of holding the conference had to be put urgently. Our American colleagues thought that the conference should be held, out of solidarity with our Eastern Europe colleagues. For my part I believed that holding this conference under the auspices of the Academy implied precisely, on the contrary, a legitimation of the invasion and what followed it. Most European colleagues judged rightly that we ought to manifest our moral condemnation, and that the conference could not be a starting point for new relations with Eastern Europe. Opponents to the conference were displeased with ^{the} presence of our American colleagues.

For instance Professor Newton from the Catholic University in Louvain wrote me a long letter saying: "the fact that Henri Riecken has decided to continue can, in my opinion, ~~or~~ tie up only the Social Science Research Council ... I know that all members of our committee agree in saying that our European association must not be headed or inspired by any State Department, our only care being to create an ideal climate for real cooperation between all the members who have been incorporated in the Association".

This was rather a strong language. At the ~~times~~ same time, Tajfel wrote: "On the first day of the conference in Prague, I am scheduled to give one of the opening speeches. If you feel that the Association should withdraw its sponsorship, please let me know immediately by telegram". And he added that his motives of holding the conference were disapproved: "I wish to resign from the Committee of our Association immediately on my return from Prague". At the time I was President of the European Association and proposed, without success, to postpone the conference. It took place in October 1968. The majority

of the Western Europe Committee did not attend, nor did the majority of the invited social psychologists from Eastern Europe. The Prague Conference was of a high scientific quality, but its main goal was not attained, and the tension between Americans and Europeans lasted for a while. We recognized that the heat and the animosities endangered our Transnational Committee, and that we had better try and reestablish our friendship and cooperation. The pleasure of working in common had always provided justification enough for pursuing it.

We had also unanimously admitted that the Prague conference left us with an unfinished task and its ~~Zeitgeist~~ effect, as it was called. It took six years of inquiries, negotiations with international centers, working ~~in~~ in Eastern Europe, converting colleagues in Eastern Europe to the idea of an international social psychology, involving the Soviet Academy and finding the acceptable location for a new meeting. In this way we learned that the scientific world is a complicated place. The unfinished task in Prague, 1968, was fulfilled in Visegrad, Hungary, in 1974. I cherish the memory of my encounter with Leontiev, of the Vygotsky triad.

In the same year, 1974, the Transnational Committee crossed the Atlantic from New York to Paris. Leaving the Social Science Research Council, it became a Committee of the International Social Science Council of Unesco. Our program was discussed at the general meeting and the unanimous vote meant that international social psychology was now recognized as a part of human sciences. This event in itself did not solve all our problems in Eastern Europe, even less in Latin America. ^{where a concrete intellectual association was needed} ~~But the recognition~~ But the cooperation between Americans and Europeans continued, not only in "science building", but also on conceptual topics. It developed simultaneously as an "Invisible College", in several international meetings.

However that may be, all that ~~was~~ belongs to a still unpredictable future of social psychology. I thank you for having been patient enough to listen to me.