

Commentaries

EXPANDING CONCEPTUAL HORIZONS

By virtue of having taken on the most complex phenomenon possible to study, psychology is more underdeveloped than perhaps most of us want to admit publicly. But, apparently, it is developed enough, at least "evolutionarily," to have a sufficient number of viable mutants in its conceptual (and, alas, even bureaucratic) gene pool to produce a president like Donald T. Campbell. Historians someday will say psychology, sooner or later, was bound to have a mutational jolt coming to it. It now has.

Campbell, in turn, probably will have good jolts coming, too, but, when things calm down, at least two of his main points, in my estimation, will have long-term adaptive significance for psychology.¹ As he persuasively argues, modern psychology still has to take much more serious cognizance of the epistemic (if not moral) value of traditional ways of understanding and guiding human behavior. It also has to pay much more attention to what biologists are doing, and why, when they try to give evolutionary accounts of human behavior. Campbell gives interesting and controversial reasons why all this has to be so. One reason basic to his argument is that it just does not make sense for a discipline to cut itself off from the efforts and insights of others who have worked on the same or similar problems. To conclude that religious traditions and precepts and the works of great theologians and ethicists are inferior sources of reliable knowledge about human behavior because they allegedly are based on historically outmoded or neurotic needs is a hasty conclusion, to say the least. One need only read Karl Rahner's *Encyclopedia of Theology* or Shunryu Suzuki's *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* to have this perception corrected. And it makes no sense to dismiss the implications for human behavior of current evolutionary biology because a large number of us do not like the concept of instinct. The concept is not what it used to be, and if psychologists would take time, as Campbell suggests, to read E. O. Wilson's (perhaps too ambitiously entitled) *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* they would discover a lot of impelling reasons why ignoring man's connections with his own past and with other animals is simply no longer scientifically acceptable.

The effect of all this exposure to outside disciplines is not hard to predict. It will take time away from our normally adaptive professional activities. But this will not be without benefits. It will expand our conceptual horizons immensely, a process that, even in the most obdurate of us, can diminish arrogance as well as reduce the probability of habitually rediscovering older discoveries. It also will slow down our publication rate and thereby raise, I hope,

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the quality of our published work. And last, and perhaps best of all, it will make us more cautious and modest when we feel the need to export our limited generalizations to those outside our discipline who need science's objectivity as well as its understanding and guidance.

NOTE

1. Donald T. Campbell, "On the Conflicts between Biological and Social Evolution and between Psychology and Moral Tradition," in this issue.

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SOCIAL EVOLUTION, SCIENCE, AND ETHICS

Science has many important things to say to ethics. That, certainly, is one of the very significant messages conveyed by Donald T. Campbell's presidential address, a landmark statement that deserves to be widely studied.¹

We may hope that this particular message will be taken to heart especially by contributors to the literature that goes under the rubric "science and ethics." Their writings, it seems to me, have been characterized almost preemptively by the assumption—rarely explicit and often, probably, unconscious—that ethics or moral philosophy is purely a matter of taste and as such not accessible to scientific analysis. (The taste involved will be divine or human, depending upon the particular author.) In this too conventional literature, then, ethics is accepted as ready made; the only intellectual problem recognized is to interpret it in a form applicable to the workings of science. The resultant mode of discourse may best be termed "moralizing *at* science."

To this state of affairs Campbell's teaching should help restore some much-needed perspective—by supplying both a partial justification for the ethics-as-a-shelf-item approach and a strong reminder of its one-sided incompleteness. Campbell shows us that ethics is not simply a matter of taste; moralizing behavior has a utilitarian, evolutionary-adaptive function to perform. Its performance is at least partially susceptible to scientific analysis.²

In any event, the facts and processes of nature probably set limits to the permissible content of ethics. Thorough exploration of the connections, no doubt, will turn out to be a long and arduous task for many researchers. Such work appropriately may be termed "basic research into the ethical implications of science." Pending substantial progress in this field, as I read Campbell, we should be somewhat diffident in our criticism of traditional moral philosophy. And, by the same token, its provisional use in discussing the ethical position of science may be considered reasonable.

Taking a broader view, one may hope that we stand at the threshold of a period of major development of themes suggested by Campbell and by the