

Preface

First, a Word to the Teacher

This text (if it is a text and sometimes I wonder) is unlike any other introductory text in psychology. I state this at the outset not as an apology but as an admonition—not as an excuse for adding yet another product to an overflooded market but as a warning that, if you are seeking a conventional text, you will waste precious time by reading any further. For certain mundane reasons, usually attributed to my Scottish blood, I would like this book to become recognized as a text. It certainly can be used as such, for it hits every major topic in psychology, although some admittedly only a glancing blow. For more noble reasons, I would be delighted to overhear that a more standard source was assigned for the body of findings and that this book was prescribed (as a complement rather than a supplement) for the spirit of the search that uncovered those findings. I will

use it as a text myself, although it makes me obsolete, for it constitutes the content of my lectures. Not to assign it, however, would be hypocritical, because it contains what I strongly believe the introductory student should be exposed to.

Some of the symptoms of the textbook writer's syndrome are listed below. The rationale (or rationalization?) whereby *this* textbook writer avoids them is indicated to illustrate, in somewhat whimsical fashion, the manner in which this text differs from more conventional texts.

The Compulsion to Be Comprehensive

As the body of significant findings has increased, the texts have grown thicker. The writer feels obliged to cram as many of them as possible into a book that can be bought, carried, and read by a student of average wealth, strength, and stamina. Since there is not yet, in these early days of our science, a coherent, theoretical framework within which those findings can be housed, the text degenerates into a catalog. A text organized around empirical findings is thus artificially difficult—since there is no structure to contain old findings—and immediately obsolete—since the daily output of new findings not only must be included but must determine the subset of old findings that need be preserved. Today's physicist would probably find the content of a physics text written at the same stage in the development of *his* science difficult to learn and mostly not worth learning. The texts that aim to systematize the findings represent brave but futile attempts to make cosmos out of chaos. Indeed, an orderly presentation of disorderly findings could perhaps, tongue-in-cheekily, be criticized as a distorted picture of our science. This text is organized around the search that unearths the findings rather than the findings themselves. Thus a particular finding appears because it illustrates a point rather than merely because it exists. The story of the search is told logically rather than chronologically, so that the emphasis may be on currents rather than on eddies. Various logical approaches used by man to understand himself are illustrated in turn. Such a presentation is incomplete but not obsolete, since the search continues although the story must end.

The Compulsion to Be Correct

Textbook statements are invariably dressed impeccably in precise terminology and shrouded discreetly in careful qualifications. Such scientific

precision and reticence are commendable in journal articles and advanced texts but may perhaps not be appropriate in introductory texts. They tend to leave the student with some bland impression that, on every theoretical issue, there is much to be said on both sides, and, in every content area, further research is necessary. This text favors "fat rats" over "hypothalamic hyperphagics with lesions in the ventromedial nuclei" and the danger of overstatement over the security of understatement. The emphatic statement in nontechnical language will be better remembered by students. It will do them no harm to have it qualified in advanced courses or—better still—to qualify it themselves by reacting against it. One of the attitudes to be learned by students, too long conditioned by authoritarian teaching, is that science deals not with absolute truth but only with successive approximations to the truth. Half a truth is better than no truth at all.

The Obsession About Being Objective

Textbooks favor the third over the first person and the passive over the active voice. The psychologist-as-researcher must be objective, but not necessarily the psychologist-as-teacher. Personal reference may be of heuristic value. "You are a student of Gardiner, who was a student of Ryan, who was a student of Bentley, who was a student of Titchener, who was a student of Wundt, who founded the first psychological laboratory" conveys a sense of the shortness of the history of our science and the place of the student in that history more effectively than "The first psychological laboratory was founded at Leipzig in 1879 by Wilhelm Wundt." Reference to the personal lives of the major characters in the history of our science also serves a heuristic function. Pavlov's relationship to his wife is not relevant to his findings but is relevant to the capacity of the student to digest those findings.

Then, a Word to the Student

This text is designed to be studied rather than simply to be read. Some heuristic devices have been incorporated to encourage you to go beyond that left-to-right, top-to-bottom, page-x-to-page-x + 1 scanning that usually passes for studying. In place of the traditional table of contents, the hierarchical structure of the book is provided on the back of the front cover, and, in place of the traditional glossary, a classification of the technical

terms printed in boldface used in the book is provided on the front of the back cover. The former shows how the book is organized from top to bottom, and the latter shows how the book is organized from bottom to top. The former chart is described in more detail in the prologue, and the latter chart is described in more detail in the epilogue. The prologue contains a statement of the basis for each distinction within the hierarchy. This section is dull and difficult. Skim it (or perhaps even skip it) on the first reading. It is simply a bird's-eye view of the book that will make more sense after the worm's-eye view that follows. It is recommended, however, that, at the end of each chapter, you review the previous distinctions to see where you are, where you have been, and where you are going. The epilogue contains the before-the-fact rationale (or after-the-fact rationalization, if you prefer) for the set of categories into which the technical terms are organized. The resultant chart bears the same relationship to a thesaurus as a glossary does to a dictionary. Thus it proceeds in the more meaningful direction from idea to word rather than from word to idea. An outline is provided to clarify the structure of each chapter. This, too, is probably more useful during the reading of the chapter, to see where you are, and after the reading of the chapter, to test whether you can return alone to where you have just been. Each chapter is designed to be short enough to be devoured in a single sitting and coherent enough to be digested as a whole. This organization should save the time usually spent counting the number of pages to the end of the chapter and should keep each chapter within the capacity of your behind as well as of your mind. Psychologists have demonstrated that black on yellow is the most readable combination. We should practice what we teach. Therefore the book is printed on yellow paper. Also, I always add comments to my books and am often frustrated by cramped books that do not grant reasonable space to talk back to them. We should teach what we practice. Therefore the book has wide margins so that you can create your own unique copy by recording your reactions as you read. The chaff-to-wheat ratio is higher than in most texts. This book is essentially my introductory lectures in psychology written down. Those lectures are delivered to 700 rambunctious youths late in the afternoon and 700 tired adults late in the evening. It is necessary to swoop to oratory and stoop to pun to keep the former group attentive and the latter group awake. Those hammy elements are preserved, since it is probably no less necessary to keep a reader awake by chaff so that he may benefit from wheat. May you have as much fun reading this book as I had writing