

PSYCHOLOGY IN AMERICA SINCE 1945

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In the summer of 1945 Muzafer Sherif (Muzaffer Şerif) telephoned me from New York to ask whether I would consider taking his position in Ankara while he was in this country. I was flattered that a former student of mine at Harvard, who disagreed with me about almost everything in the field of psychology, should regard me as a suitable person to expound psychology in a manner quite different from his own views. My wife and daughter (our son was in the navy and would not be demobilised for some time) were enthusiastic about the proposal and urged me to consider the invitation seriously. My ignorance of geography was so abysmal that I had to find a map to locate Ankara. The war in Europe was ended, although fighting was still going on in the Far East. Student enrollment in classes was small, so it seemed appropriate enough to leave them in charge of the younger men in the department. I therefore called Muzafer and told him I should be delighted to go to Turkey.

Travel overseas in those days was difficult for civilians, so the whole matter of our departure for Turkey had to be arranged by the Department of State. Passage could not be found for us until the latter part of October on the S. S. Gripsholm, a lovely old boat on which we had a beautiful crossing to Naples, at which point something in the machinery broke down and could not be repaired until parts arrived from Sweden – a matter of some ten days. The captain of an American Naval vessel, at anchor in Naples and due to leave for the Eastern Mediterranean, agreed to take us aboard and drop us off at Port Said whence we took a train to Cairo. The American Embassy in Cairo knew nothing about us and seemed not at all concerned as to how we were to get to Ankara. After several days of urgent begging we were told to go the airport to find out whether the captain of an American military plane – bound for where I have no idea – would make a landing for us in Ankara. The good-natured pilot told us to climb aboard where we sat on the floor, since there were no seats in the plane. In due time we arrived in Ankara where we were met by Nusret Hızır and Behice Boran. How they knew when and where we were to arrive, I had no idea. I made profuse apologies to Nusret Bey for our late arrival, for I had assumed that classes began late in September, as they do in American colleges. “Ah no,” said Nusret, “classes don’t begin until next week!” After a few days in a hotel in Ankara we found a pleasant apartment in Bahçelievler where we lived for two happy years.

My assignment at the Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Faculty, if I remember correctly, was three lectures a week in a large introductory course and a small advance seminar that met once or possibly twice a week. Discussions in the seminar were in English.

If it seemed that anything I said was not properly understood, there was always someone in the class, usually Dr. Feriha Baymur, who could make it clear in Turkish what I had meant. The introductory lectures were always translated, although I suspect some of the students knew English pretty well. A number of translators undertook this ungrateful task with rare devotion and never a complaint - Behice Boran, Hüsni Ciritli and, Saffet Korkut and to them I have always been most grateful.

Sometime during the second year a young man entered my office, and we greeted each other rather formally. I was debating whether to speak to him in German or French, neither of which I spoke very well. To my relief he began to talk in absolutely perfect English. Aydın Sayılı had just returned from several years in the United States where he had earned a Ph. D. under Dr. George Sarton, the famous historian of science at Harvard. Since there was no place at the moment for an historian of science on the faculty, I suggested to Aydın Bey that both of us go to Hasan Ali Yücel to discuss the matter. The Minister of Education said that a place for a man of Dr. Sayılı's qualifications would soon be made, but that in the meantime he might be willing to act as a translator in the introductory course. I was delighted, but it must have been a none too pleasant chore for the present Professor Doctor Sayılı.

A number of visitors in the introductory course told me that Dr. Sayılı's translations were fabulous - perfect in accuracy and also full of meanings and inflections not easy to be carried over into another language. I remember one instance in particular. I had been talking about the distribution of traits of personality in a large population, and that in the absence of accurate knowledge it might be assumed that they formed a sort of bell-shaped curve, and I said facetiously that at one end might be found a few *incorruptible saints* and at the other end a few *incorrigible sinners*. When Dr. Sayılı translated the phrase, I noticed a little titter went over the whole class. After the hour I asked Aydın Bey how he had managed to make the students laugh. "Well," he said, "I thought that in using the words *incorruptible saints* and *incorrigible sinners* you intended to sound a little funny, so I used Persian words which at the time were supposed to be eliminated from pure Turkish, and it was probably those words that seemed to the students a bit out of place and therefore made them giggle." That sort of translation, I thought to myself, would occur only to someone with a keen mind and quick wit.

The introductory course at Ankara in 1945-46 contained the sort of material that was given in almost any introductory course in the United States at that time. The material was often referred to as general psychology; data and conclusions generally accepted about sensation, perception, reflex, instinct, emotion, testing of intelligence, learning and memory, motivation, and a smattering of items about personality and abnormal psychology. Special topics were treated in advanced courses, and a few such topics were taken up in the Ankara seminar.*

* While in Ankara I wrote three articles about American Psychology: *Amerika'da Psikoloji*, Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi, 1946, cilt 4, 389-397, tr. by Rozet Avigdor, *Psychology in America*, *ibid*, Sa. 398-407 *Amerika Ordusunda Zihni Testler* *ibid*, 1946, Sa. 597-618, tr. by Doçent Dr. Aydın Sayılı.

Since 1945 American psychology has changed almost beyond recognition, chiefly by branching out into all kinds of new fields of research, huge increase in enrollment of students seeking higher education, and a corresponding increase in the number of instructors (docents) and professors in the departments of psychology.

In 1890 about six psychologists gathered in the home of G. Stanley Hall at Clark University to discuss the formation of an American Psychological Association. The first formal meeting was held in Philadelphia in 1892, and Hall was elected President. G. T. Ladd was the second president, and in 1894 at Princeton William James was elected president. Every year since those early small sessions annual meetings have been held even during both world wars in various cities, usually in early September just before the opening of college terms. Until about 1930 the meetings were profitable scientific sessions. Discussion and debate were lively, and often important research was reported to eager listeners. All that has now changed.

The American Psychological Association now has more than 30,000 members, most of whom have the Ph. D. or an equivalent - an outrageous number in the opinion of the older generation, like mine, most of whom no longer attend meetings. They are too large, rooms must be reserved in advance in big hotels, several sessions are held simultaneously for a period of a week, so that if members find papers not to their liking in one room, they wander into some other room. Younger members often attend the meetings in the hope of picking up rumors about new jobs, or jobs that sound better than the ones they already have.

Until very recently it was not difficult for a new Ph. D. to find a good academic position somewhere in the United States. Student enrollment in colleges had been growing at an enormous rate since World War II. The nine branches of the University of California now have 99,000 students and 8,000 teachers. The University of Michigan has 38,000 students and 4,500 teachers. Introductory courses in such institutions are very large, and are often divided into several sections. The University of California has 400 psychologists in its various departments; the University of Virginia has 200. Even a small university, like Princeton, has 25 psychologists as compared with the eight who were on the staff when I returned from Turkey.

Students enrolled in introductory courses in psychology are expected to purchase a textbook assigned by the senior professor. Since the number of students in such courses all over the country is obviously very large, book-publishers are eager to find manuscripts that will make a successful text. The most widely used text in the country today is called *Introduction to Psychology* by Clifford T. Morgan of the University of Texas. Not long ago I ran into Morgan at some meeting in Washington. I asked him how his text was selling. "Well," he said, "I'm almost embarrassed to say that my royalties each year so far have been over \$ 100,000." Whew, big business for publisher and author alike!

Not all texts by any means are as successful as the one by Morgan. If the author of a manuscript assures a publisher that the book will be assigned to his large classes and sections, the publisher may accept it, for he knows that the sale of 4,000 or 5,000

copies will make it possible to break even, and he also hopes that the book will be adopted by other colleges and thus make a profit. But none of the texts on the market today has begun to catch up with Morgan.

Only about 50 % of the 30,000 members of the APA go into college teaching. Many find positions in local, state or national government, a large number are hired as personnel consultants in industries all over the country, and by far the largest number are trained to be clinical psychologists.

Clinical psychology occupies an important but at the same time a somewhat controversial place in American universities. After World War II one of the health agencies in the national government was convinced that there were not anywhere near enough psychiatrists in the country to take care of mental cases in veterans hospitals. So a sum of money was included in the national budget for large universities for the purpose of training a sizeable number of Ph. D's in clinical psychology: psychotherapy, abnormal psychology, emotional disturbances of all kinds, and related topics. After the Ph. D. the students spend a year as internes in a mental hospital, and then work with psychiatrists in the diagnosis and treatment of mental cases among war veterans. The top man is always the psychiatrist who has received his M.D. in a medical school, and the clinical psychologist acts more or less as his assistant. This often makes the clinical psychologist feel like a second class citizen, although as a matter of fact clinical psychologists are often better trained than the psychiatrists: four years studying mental disorders in a university, and one year as an interne in a psychiatric ward.

The reason for training clinical psychologists for the Ph. D. in a university rather than in a medical school was that the Ph. D. is regarded in part as a research degree, the degree that is designed to equip the recipient for research and the extension of the boundaries of knowledge, whereas the M.D. degree trains for diagnosis and practice, but not ordinarily for research. So much more is needed to be known about mental disorders that it was hoped that a fairly large number of clinical psychologists would remain in the university environment for the purpose of research. Some of them actually do just that along with their teaching, but most of them work for a few years in a mental hospital, and then leave to set up their own private practice in those states that grant them licenses and where they often do very well financially.

Academic and clinical psychologists do not always regard one another with mutual admiration. The latter often regard the research of academic psychologists as trivial in its emphasis on the simple elements of mind and behavior - sensation and reflex - whereas the clinical practitioners pride themselves on dealing with the total behavior of an individual and the need for helping the individual in times of emotional disturbance or distress. The clinical psychologists at one time wanted to withdraw entirely from the APA in order to form their own society; but after long argument and dispute the wiser members persuaded the others to remain in the parent organization where now they constitute the largest division.

The greatest recent excitement in academic circles, and indeed among many readers in the general public, was the appearance of a book by the famous Harvard psychologist, B. F. Skinner, called *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*. (It would take too much space to explain the meaning of that strange title.) The book was reviewed in the daily press as well as in professional journals. It was widely praised and also frequently damned; and for several weeks it was cited on the Best Seller List of the *New York Times*, a rare event for a scholarly publication. The book was praised partly because of the popularity of a sort of novel that Skinner had written some years before, *Walden Two* (echoes of Thoreau's *Walden*), but chiefly because the well-known Harvard psychologist is generally recognized as the most acute and profound student of animal behavior in the world, and it was therefore thought that his newest book would go far beyond *Walden Two* in showing how to create a Utopian society. It was also damned because many readers felt that knowledge of how to create Utopia cannot be gained by extrapolation from the behavior of animals.

Skinner has found that laboratory animals can be led to do almost anything if they are properly rewarded, usually by food. Skinner's phrase is "if the behavior of the animals is properly reinforced." He has also found that punishment (a shock on the feet when they are running about in search for food) rarely stamps out bad or ineffective behavior. He therefore concludes that punishment is nearly useless, for the bad behavior will still find a way to express itself. Bad behavior is built into the animal (i. e., learned) just as good behavior is, and will come out whenever given a chance. He believes that if children are praised and rewarded (reinforced) for good behavior, there will be little need for punishment. For centuries governments, society, prisons and religion have used punishment, or the threat of punishment, to get rid of bad behavior, but judging by the present state of the world the results have not been very successful. From these premises Skinner builds up an elaborate account of the way to build The Good Society. These brief comments do not do justice to the book, but what Skinner has written is a challenge to those concerned about the mess the world finds itself in today.

College students are especially disturbed about the sad state of the world in general, and their own country in particular. Vietnam, poverty, excessive wealth, racial discrimination, drug addiction, city slums, corruption in government and business, inflation, etc. These matters seem unworthy of a country supposedly dedicated to peace, liberty, respect for the individual and the law, and equal opportunity for all. Enrollment in many colleges is down this year, and a large number of students will probably drop out before graduation. They see no point in pursuing an education that seems irrelevant to their world and their future. Even courses in religion and philosophy, which are more popular now than ever before, seem nevertheless not to fill the need.

Reports have spread about the world giving details of student riots, occupation of buildings, disruption of classes, strikes, and even shootings at Kent State and especially at Jackson State where white policemen fired on black students who were

making a harmless and nonviolent protest against some college ruling. This fall the campuses are quieter, but below the surface unrest still persists.

Students are not alone in their disillusionment. Older people are bewildered and baffled. The young very popular Kennedy brothers were assassinated. Martin Luther King, Jr. later met the same fate. Crime has risen at an alarming rate in the big cities. Something has gone wrong, politics seems to offer little hope for a change for the better, and formal religion, i.e., church attendance, has fallen on slim days. As the late President Eisenhower said in his farewell address, the military-industrial complex controls the destiny of the country.

Many older people feel like following the example of those students who seek abode in Canada, Mexico, Sweden, England or in any country that will offer them a welcome. My wife and I sometimes feel in the same mood. My wife has been active in peace activities for years, but to what avail? If we were younger we might be tempted to go to Turkey, the country of our second love, and live near Ankara, perhaps in Bahçelievler, where we could gaze over the hills of Anatolia and also admire the wonderful monument in honor of the great Atatürk (Four years ago on my way to Tehran I stopped off for two or three days in Ankara to visit former colleagues and to see the magnificent Atatürk tomb which was in the first stages of construction when we were there a quarter of a century ago.) But our ancestors have lived here for generations, so our roots go deep and our children and grandchildren live nearby. So we shall probably stay here until the end of the journey.