

HISTORY OF TURKISH PSYCHOLOGY

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a very great honour for me to be invited to give an address to this most distinguished gathering as the psychologist from Istanbul University, who has been a member of the faculty longest.

Our conference Chairperson Professor Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı, has kindly asked me to talk on the subject of the history of Turkish psychology, which suited me very well indeed, for I have been, by chance, a fortunate observer of this most interesting process. Psychology in Turkey, as everywhere else, has a long past, but a short history. Psychology as a science is still young. After all, Wundt's Laboratory of Experimental Psychology, as we all know, was only founded in Leipzig in 1879. And, last year here in Turkey, at Istanbul University, we celebrated the Seventieth Anniversary of the establishment of the Chair of Psychology. So not quite forty years after Wundt's laboratory was established, the scientific teaching of Psychology and psychological experiments has been included in the curriculum of Istanbul University. For, in 1915 as part of a plan to reform Istanbul University, (then the only University in Turkey,) and bring it into line with other Western Universities, twenty guest professors from Germany were invited to join the staff. They started teaching in newly established chairs at Istanbul University, mostly on the basic scientific subjects, such as botany, organic and inorganic chemistry and physics. However, chairs in scientific human subjects, such as economics, archaeology, early history, comparative

philology and psychology were also fortunately established. Professor Anschütz from the University of Hamburg, was appointed to the newly established Chair of Psychology where he started to teach psychology as an experimental science as was done in Germany at the time (Birand, 1956). He had brought apparatus with him from Germany and started to conduct experiments with his students at the practica. I should like to pause here to remind you that our guest professors from Germany were the citizens of the second Reich that Bismark had succeeded in setting up about forty years before. They had come from the German Empire of Wilhelm the Second, to the Turkey of the Ottoman Empire of Sultan Reşad Mehmet the Fifth. And the First World War had started only a year before. So, neither of these two countries had yet had a chance to proclaim their respective republics, which would have to wait a few years more.

1915 seems to have been a good year for psychology in Turkey. In that year Psychology was also introduced into teacher training institutions, a book on child psychology was published-the first of its kind in Turkey - and the famous Binet - Simon Test of Intelligence was translated into Turkish a year earlier than its American version! (Tan, 1972).

I should like to add here that Istanbul University's first Chair of Sociology was also established in 1915. This was filled by the famous Turkish Scholar Ziya Gökalp, who also founded the Institute of Sociocultural Studies and started the Journal of Sociology (Mag-narella and Türkdöğän, 1976). Ziya Gökalp is, of course, considered the intellectual father of many Turkish reforms that came later.

At the end of the First World War under the occupation of Istanbul by the Allied powers, the German Professors were sent back home. At the same time Turkish Professors and intellectuals, including Ziya Gökalp, were exiled to Malta. The Chair of Psychology was then filled in 1919 by a Turkish Professor, Şekip Tunç who had his training under Claparède at the Institute of Jean Jacques Rousseau. Professor Tunç was not primarily interested in experimentation but he was a scholar and a prolific writer who wrote and translated many books, including those of James and Freud. Through his newspaper articles, psychology became a popular subject in Turkey.

In 1925, in the Faculty of Medicine of Istanbul University, the Center for Anthropological Research in Turkey was established. I mention this Institute here because even though its main research projects included topics of the physical anthropological kind, yet some socio-cultural, folkloric and psychosocial studies were also conducted. As an example of the interesting work being done by the Center, I should like to mention the study on «Suicides in Istanbul» in 1928. (Magnarella and Türkdöğän, 1976). All these instances indicate the variety of origins that Turkish Psychology possesses : this variety is a feature which has persisted to this day.

In 1933 a new attempt was made to reorganize Istanbul University. This attempt, fortunately for the young Turkish Republic, was aided by the immigration of the intellectual élite from Nazi Germany. Places were offered to these immigrants by the Turkish educational authorities in the newly organized Istanbul University; eventually about 103 German professors were offered chairs. They were almost all leading authorities in their subjects and thus the Golden Age of Istanbul University started which lasted for about twelve to fifteen years. Professor Wilhelm Peters, formerly of the University Jena, then a refugee in England, was invited to fill the Chair of Experimental Psychology and resume the Directorship of the newly established Institute of Education in 1936.

The first large-scale psychological laboratory was founded during his tenure and psychology recommenced being taught with experimental demonstrations. The practicum courses enabled the students to become acquainted with experimental methods, form habits of scientific investigation, and develop technical abilities. About 80 experimental studies and half a dozen doctoral theses were completed during his time.

I, personally, had the honour to get to know Professor Peters well. For, like the «The Last of the Mohicans», I was the last of Professor Peters' many assistants, who had included such famous personages as Ayşe Abula of Ankara Radio, Professors Nusret Hızır, Mümtaz Turhan and many others. Our Psychology Department will always remember with gratitude the leadership of Professor Peters.

During this period Ankara University and a chair of Psychology in this new University was also established. Professor Pratt of

Princeton University, and the Turkish Psychologist Muzaffer Sherif, a Ph.D from Columbia, shared the chairs of Philosophy and Psychology in the Institute of Philosophy of Ankara University. Muzaffer Sherif in 1945 left for the United States and became a leading name in social psychology there (Tan, 1972). In 1953, Professor Peters retired from Istanbul University and went back to Germany. His Chair was filled by Professor Mümtaz Turhan, another social psychologist with a Ph.D. from Frankfurt University in Germany, whose second doctoral thesis on «Cultural Changes» under Sir Frederic Bartlett from Cambridge, England, became almost a best-seller in Turkey for several years in the sixties. Thus, psychology as an Academic discipline in Turkey had relatively early and significant beginnings.

In 1953, when Professor Peters returned to Germany, I was lucky to be able to go as a Fulbright exchange scholar to Stanford University, in the United States. In 1958, I had a chance to go to Cambridge, England, upon my election as research-fellow to Newnham College. When I returned home in 1961, I found that Turkey was in the midst of a tremendous historical change, which inevitably affected the academic world.

Turkey, then, had just started its new accelerated rate of formidable growth and change. Along with all aspects of life, there also started an unprecedented expansion of higher education. The concept of higher education for the privileged few gave place to something approaching mass education. New universities one after another were established and in 1971 Boğaziçi University, your host university today on the grounds of the old Robert College campus was set up. And, five years ago, we had another new reorganization of universities. As a consequence of that development there are, at present, twenty eight universities in Turkey. Yet this is far from sufficient, for the number of this year's contestants at the University Entrance Examinations were half a million, and roughly only about one fourth of these youngsters will be able to acquire a place in higher educational institutions in Turkey.

Psychology has also started to have its due share in this tremendous expansion. The number and size of departments of psychology in the universities has increased. Among the new University

entrants about 800 will be studying psychology of some sort. In six of the universities, there are chairs of psychology with fully independent departments. In seven of the remainder, mostly in the Education faculties, departments are, to a greater or lesser degree, independent, and allow the student the subject of psychological counselling as his principal study. In the Faculty of Business-Administration in Istanbul University, there is also a semi-autonomous department of industrial psychology. There is also a growing interest both in the teaching of psychology and in psychological research in the architectural faculties of several universities. There is a lot of variety between different universities, both in terms of the research interests and in terms of student curricula. Thus, psychology in Turkey as a science and academic subject has followed several paths. Many people, psychologists and students of psychology have to find their way through this labyrinth. However, the present trend is towards having somewhat similar content in undergraduate courses.

This may not sound too grand compared with some western standards, but I think every event should be measured on a suitable scale. It should not be forgotten that in many of the neighbouring countries of Turkey, both in the Middle-East or even in the West, in Europe, independent departments of psychology and students majoring in psychology are still non-existent. When seen from this angle, Turkey's achievements along these lines should not be underestimated. Psychological research in Turkey has shown a steady growth in the past twenty years. The number of books and monographs on scientific psychological topics is increasing; membership of scientific associations in Istanbul and Ankara are also increasing along with the demand for counselling services aimed at improving the quality of individual lives.

Professional and academic psychology in Turkey seems to be developing into a truly indigenous field with its own educational emphases, professional concerns and research issues. Every country has problems of its own. Turks today are a youthful people, in the literal sense that the young are more numerous than the old; this brings us to the problem of educating these youngsters, which must be the most important issue for psychologists and educators in Tur-

key. The counselling centers of the local education departments, and the employment of psychologists as guidance personnel in the public school system, are examples of some of the efforts reflecting the regard for the problem of education in Turkey. Though the main efforts of such centers are principally focussed on testing and assessment, even this function is not sufficient to meet the popular demand. Now, mostly in large towns, and perhaps all over Turkey, parents want their youngsters to be tested, assessed and guided by psychologists. The official institutions have great difficulty in meeting this large demand; consequently, lately, private enterprise has also started to walk into the field to fill the void. Of course, this brings us face to face with the problem of having suitable tools for our people to meet the demands of appropriate testing and assessment. The Test and Research Bureau of the Ministry of Education since 1953 has been translating and adapting tests from the West. Nowadays new projects for psychological testing in some psychology and education departments of our universities are being seriously pursued.

Almost all fields of psychology are covered by research projects in Turkey, yet the most active field of research is in social psychology. This is not surprising, for Turkey itself is a laboratory of social processes. The most popular subject, however, among students of psychology is clinical psychology. This, too is not surprising, for Turks are a compassionate people. As far back as the middle fifteenth century, at the time of Sultan Mehmet the Second a mental hospital was established within the academic institutions named after him in Istanbul. There mental disease was considered to be like any other disease and mental patients were treated through kind human interaction, music and gymnastics. Specific kinds of melodies were prescribed for specific types of mental disorder. The psycho-medical research programmes jointly carried out by the different departments of medical faculties and our psychological department of Istanbul University may be considered as an extension of these traditional undertakings. The contributions of psychologists to the neuropsychiatric congresses that are annually held at various locations around Turkey, have grown to the point that they necessitate special sessions for papers by psychologists.

In spite of its tremendous growth in Turkey, and in spite of its popular support, psychology is still an ill-defined and less well-represented discipline amongst policy-makers in Turkey. I am often struck by lack of information and knowledge of even scientists with regard to the fields of investigation and methods of psychology. Psychology is still not listed as a science in the Scientific and Technological Research Institute of Turkey. However, signs of healthy growth and changes for the better is, I believe, a dominant feature of Turkish psychology.

With our growing knowledge of the world of physical matter the gap between our knowledge of the physical environment and our understanding of ourselves is continually widening all over the world. It is the task of psychologists of all countries to show their fellow men that psychology as a mature science has no less social and human utility than medical, physical and other sciences have been proved to possess.

May this congress contribute to our mutual understanding and enrichment in the scientific, professional and social fields.

I hope you will find Istanbul an interesting place and enjoy your stay here.

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