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“Introduction” to Integrative Views of Motivation, Cognition, and Emotion

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Introduction

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One of my formative experiences as a graduate student came during a break in our afternoon-long first-year proseminar. We had been discussing the scope of psychology, or rather, listening to two professors debate the scope of psychology. Both the protagonists were clinical psychologists by training, but one had remained an empirically focused social learning theorist, while the other had pursued the study of Eastern religion, psychoanalysis, and transpersonal psychology. As the class milled about, the social learning empiricist sought some closure on the discussion. “Dick,” he said to his transpersonal colleague, “it seems to me that we disagree because in your view, what I do isn’t psychology, and in my view, what you do isn’t science.”

We tend to think of the preparadigmatic era of science as characterized by instability and ambiguity in the *nature* of explanatory paradigms. As that break revealed, however, we often seem to be as confused about *what* we are attempting to understand as *how* we should understand it.

Today many believe that over the past decade or so psychology has become a paradigmatic science (Baars, 1986). The new paradigm is an understanding of behavior in terms of cognitive representations, “the computational metaphor,” and a view of biological or-

ganisms as heterarchically organized information-processing systems interacting with environmental exigencies. If psychology now has a paradigm, we might expect that the explanatory scope of psychology will be clarified by that paradigm. We might further expect that this clarification will come as new conceptualizations of ideas that have evolved over the hundred or so years of psychology's modern era.

Motivation, emotion, and cognition have all been superordinate ideas in psychology. Motivation refers to the meaning and purpose of behavior. Emotion refers to experiential and psychophysiological phenomena that accompany motivational processes. Cognition refers to organismic activity, not directly observable, which translates motivation and emotion into observable behavior. Psychological theory has traditionally attempted to explain events in one of these domains in terms of events in the other ones. Different theories have postulated different causal directions and relations between the domains. For example, specific motivational processes are hypothesized to give rise to specific emotional, cognitive, and behavioral events. The diversity of theories and lack of consensus about which ones have explanatory superiority are precisely the type of confusion to be expected in a preparadigmatic science. Similarly, lack of consensus about which processes in which domains constitute "psychology" illustrates the effect of a poorly defined explanatory scope. The benefits of a psychological paradigm should include a new, unified, and integrated understanding of the relationships between motivation, cognition, and emotion.

The cognitive revolution in psychology has fostered a particular view of cognition as the passing of information back and forth between perceptual, memory, and motor components of an integrated system. Can this view be systematically extended to phenomena that have traditionally fallen under the rubrics of motivation and emotion? This volume of the Nebraska Symposium on Motivation is a collection of views that address that question. Most generally, the contributions taken together stimulate a hypothesis that the cognitive paradigm has begun to move psychology toward a "unified field theory" of behavior and experience.

The first contribution in this volume, by Herbert Simon, tests the limits of a pure information-processing paradigm. It is a basic tenet of information theory that information exists independent of

the medium by which it is represented. By analyzing the information-processing capabilities of nonbiological systems, or "artificial intelligence," we may perhaps determine what aspects of motivation and emotion require consideration of the biological substrate of cognition and which do not. The second contribution, by Muriel Lezak, raises the same sort of question by focusing on the biological substrate itself and analyzing constraints and determinations that it imposes. The third contribution, by Howard Gardner, considers in tandem the medium and the information it processes and lays a conceptual foundation for making the facts of biological brain science congruent with the richness and diversity of human behavior and experience. The fourth contribution, by John Bargh and Peter Gollwitzer, elaborates on constructs that potentially incorporate key aspects of human functioning, such as social behavior and creativity, into a comprehensive, integrated, and cognitive view of motivation.

The final two contributions take the discussion out of purely theoretical context to address issues in clinical application. Psychopathology and the psychology of adjustment have traditionally provided a conceptual compass to theoretical psychology. We may learn about normal processes by studying the abnormal. This applies to abnormalities in the information-processing substrate, as Lezak's chapter so clearly illustrates, and to problems in the informational processes that are independent of the substrate. The fifth contribution to this volume, by Nancy Cantor and William Fleeson, describes an integrated cognitive theoretical perspective, which is potentially useful for understanding, among other things, the differences between effective and ineffective social functioning. The sixth contribution, by Don Fowles, presents a theoretical framework for understanding a diversity of severe psychopathology in terms compatible with an integrated cognitive, motivational, and emotional understanding of normal behavior.

Posters were invited for presentation at the symposium in Lincoln in October 1992. They represent diverse work on integrative views of motivation, cognition, and emotion. Abstracts of the poster presentations are included at the end of this volume.

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REFERENCE

Baars, B. (1986). *The cognitive revolution in psychology*. New York: Guilford.