GROUP, GROUP-MIND*

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I

During my student years and, soon after, during my teaching years, Social Psychology was a very new discipline, interesting to psychologist and non-psychologist alike and full of general good promise. But it soon became evident that the main text used those days—McDougall's *Introduction to Social Psychology*—contained very little strictly social material in it. Where was a student to turn, therefore, unless it was to Ross's Social Psychology or to Floyd Allport's *Social Psychology*? These early texts were agreeably social in their content, but Ross leaned a little too much on crowd or crowd-like behaviour and Floyd Allport was outspokenly behaviouristic and schoolish. McDougall, however, made up by bringing out his *Group Mind* which was very very social in content, but the theoretical affiliation of which was not so clearly proved or even spelt out. Fashions in science required strict adherence to "objective"methods and "objective"methods meant experiment-al, quantitative, and statistical methods. McDougall's *Group Mind*, therefore, did not make a hit. It proved not half as successful as McDougall's *Introduction.* Over-fondness of empirical and analytical descriptions made McDougall's basic idea—the idea of a group-mind-very difficult and controversial. Our own Chatterji at Lahore tore to pieces this basic idea, saying it was devoid of logical and empirical validity. It was bad philosophy and bad science. It was bad philosophy because it made unimportant the only indubitable reality we know of, viz. the human individual and his mind. It was bad science because it failed to take account of the patent fact that what so often passed for decisions of groups—of legislatures, of cabinets, of commissions, committees or arbitration courts—were really the disguised dicisions of powerful individuals.

F.C. (later Sir Frederic) Bartlett whom I heard expound his social psychology was not so hard on the group-mind. It was a question of appropriate vocabulary. We used to say: If the individual could be said to have a mind when his dispositions display a certain degree of unity and

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* Courtesy Pakistan Psychological Society.

continuity, why not concede a mind to a group with an integrated set of dispositions and a continuity of historical existence? However, even Bartlett receded from the groupmind in his important book *Remembering*. Social *factors* could be demonstrated as factors in the content or style of remembering, but there was no way to demonstrate a group as a unit, a group *qua* group, capable of perceiving, imagining, remembering. Other attempts to instal the group-mind as a little bit of science proved infructuous (Rivers's, for instance). But things began to change with Kurt Lewin's projection of the small group—a group of two or three—as an object of experimental observation. A whol movement got going. Experiments with laboratory groups, with field groups, with action groups, not only installed social psychology as a scientific discipline in its own right, but also promoted faith in the future of experiment in psychological or human science in general. Muzafer Sherif, the Turkish-American psychologist, proved the hero of this movement. However, the tough-minded empiricists in social psychology continued their work and so flooded the research field with their surveys, their questionnaire studies, and so on, that the significance of Muzafer Sherif was more or less completely lost on the younger generation of social psychologists. Muzafer Sherif had demonstrated—and this is precisely what Bartlett wanted to see demonstrated—that small groups could be handled not only for objective shifts of behaviour, but also for subjective states, for shifts of perceiving, judging and thinking, to which one could add imagining and remembering. The idea of the group as a unit and of the group-mind as a social reality did not yet become current coin, and this despite the fact that clinical psychology had lent its support to the group and group-mind through its invention of group therapy sessions, and leaderless group discussions. I had a pretty good shock one evening when a doctoral student of mine at Karachi came to me on one of his weekly visits and said that he was going to give up everything, not knowing what to do instead. He and I had agreed after a lot of thinking to produce a study of the Arab character. Being an Arab and a graduate of al-Azhar and our own M.A. in Psychology, his fitness for undertaking the study could not be doubted. My own interest and faith in the subject could not be suspected. It's all wrong, he said, distressedly. What we were trying to do was all wrong. But why?—asked I. What had happened? There is no such thing as national character, he said, and produced out of his bag a Thinker's Library publication, captioned *The Illusion of Nation-al Character*. I could half see what had happened. His young mind had become

infected by the fashionable analytical criticism of wholes, of complexities, of collectivities as examples of existence and reality. I read the book with him here and there. The argument ran. Every time we try to come in live contact with a "national"group, say the American nation, the French nation, the British nation, and so on, we come upon individuals, upon Americans, Frenchmen, Britishers and so on, but not the American nation, not the French nation, nor the British nation. So what were we going to do? Change mid-stream and find another subject? Or, change our method and fabricate attitude scales and work with samples of Arabs to test on and on their answers build the edifice of Arab national character? No. I persuaded my young friend that we could go on with our plan. Social sciences could build on general observations of immediate interest and experience. We could go on doing this for a long time, before having to look at the *elements* of each experience. But I could see that we touched here on an issue writ large in the history of science. We look at undivided and undissected wholes of experience and then work towards the parts of those experiences. In the process, we generally destroy the characteristic nature of a whole and begin to think the parts with which we are left, not only important, but all-important. The danger involved in it did not become apparent in psychology until the Gestalt school appeared on the scene. The Gestalt school began to teach that the whole has a nature, a character, a reality, a function of its own. The parts are import-ant. Without the parts, there would be no whole. But the parts have to be tailored into a whole before the whole becomes what we know it and value it for. Such a simple matter, psychologists and social scientists have refused to appreciate, suffering much unnecessary loss of progress in consequence.

II

How did this happea? I think it is generally understood to be because of the tremendous progress physical science made in the later years of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twenteeth century. The model of scientific research, of scientific knowledge, began to be set by physics and chemistry. In course of time, chemistry also was left behind. The model was physics, and chemistry itself had to be modelled on physics. The newer disciplines, the biological and the social disciplines, had to follow suit. What hard work did the early experimentalists in psychology do for us ? Weber and Fechner and Wundt and Titchener, and Ebbinghaus and others ? And they

were not physicalists but mentalists and looked carefully for mental elements, the ultimate particles of *mind*, in the style of the physical scientist who looks for the ultimate particles of *matter*. But much of their work was wasted because the more interesting—and shall we also say the more important?—things about mind were to be found as undivided intact wholes. The mind itself was at its best when viewed as a whole. The human organism shows itself at its best when it is allowed to behave as an intact organism. Not only was the work of the first experimentalists in psychology wasted, it also encouraged indirectly a physicalist outlook in psychology. The behaviourists did not half care for the concern for mind which early experimentalists showed in their work. They seized the general frame in which psychological phenomena were being fitted at the time. A row of complex mental states—albeit a new state added to the row now and then—was being reduced to its elements. The behaviourists began to do the same. Only, their elements were muscles and tissues and reflex arcs. The edifice of human behaviour, they thought, had to be built out of these bricks.

Despite the indequacy of their attitude, the general approach, they had laid the foundation of, survived, and survived not only as a method specific to psychology but as a method *par excellence* of all scientific work. However, the behaviourist frame never became the universal frame of psychology. Those who became converted to it began to teach and hope that the unity of science will one day be achieved with physics as the universal model. The elements of history, they began to teach, were to be found in economics, the elements of economics in sociology, the elements of sociology in psychology, the elements of psychology in nerve physiology, of nerve-physiology in chemistry, of chemistry in physics, of physics again in physics. The unity of science was the unity of ultimate particles. What the ultimate particles conglomerated, or better coordinated or collaborated into, stage after stage, they did not bother to know or understand. Not all could be persuaded, however, by this fanta tic programme. Somewhere a big fallacy was involved and one man, a psychologist, Sloane, spotted this fallacy and dared even to name it and write about it.

It was the fallacy of reductionism or reducing a whole to parts, parts to their parts, and then assuming that the whole is the parts aggregated together. Sloane (Psychol. Rev., 1945) listed up examples of reductionism drawn from many fields. Not only that, he identified six different forms of it giving the

subject a sound basis in fact and logical analysis.

"There are many different types of wholes in nature,"Sloane writes, "atoms, the solar system, amoebae cells, a human being, a clan, a nation, etc. Each whole has qualities that are over and above the parts or elements of which it is composed, and the whole must be treated as a unit and cannot be accounted for by a mere recital of the smaller units of which it is composed."

III

Sloane then—however unknown—is to my mind the man to have spotted, named, and described with welcome elaboration the fallacy of reductionism. I do not know of another man who claims to have done this. In a recent series of Gifford Lectures, Professor Longuet-Higgins (*The Nature of Mind*, 1972) discusses what he calls the future of reductionism. He says nothing about who coined the name of this fallacy and what it means. The fact that he takes it for granted suggests the fallacy is well recognized and even physical scientists have to steer clear of it and guard themselves against it. Longuet-Higgins is a Royal Society Professor said to be much concerned these days with the possible physical basis of mind. He takes sides with psychologists who are not ready to reduce mind to anything else.

"Loyalty to one's colleagues apart, I suspect,"he says, "that neuro-physiology alone can never lead to a full understanding of the brain"(p. 22). Again, "If we want the neuro-physiologist to help us to understand how the brain works, we must tell him in non-physiological terms what we mean by the word 'works'"(p. 22). And he has a word to say to the psychologists:

> "Psychologists have tended to play down the significance of subjective evidence and to concentrate on those things that can be measured with clocks, electrodes and chemical tests. But the baby is in danger of being thrown away with the bath water"(p. 23).

I said that Sloane has given a rather full description of the reductionist fallacy. He has identified six different forms of it. All the six are interesting and relevant to my own present theme, the reality of the group and group-mind.

The first is the fallacy of isolation. This fallacy consists in isolating a part

and considering it out of the whole—the total field of forces—to which it belongs. In sociology and history scientific understanding is often vitiated by isolating the, individual and considering him as the only important factor involved. True, a leader often plays an unexceptionable part. Some leaders are almost the most important single causes of their movements. But, remember, nothing can be taken for granted. You have to see what really happens.

The second fallacy is that of mathematical summation. The whole is seldom just the sum of its parts. Nature or society is not a conglomeration of fixed units or individuals. The units or individuals themselves change, grow, maturate.

The fourth fallacy is the fallacy of origins. It assumes that the organism even as it grows and learns is all a matter of what it: was to begin with:

> An individual's nature or for that matter the character of a society is all given at birth.

In actual fact this is seldom true. It is true neither of individuals nor of societies. The fallacy is of great importance, as a considerable lot of thinking on the subject of cultural origins is fatally misdirected by this very fallacy.

The origin of social institutions, of language, of religion, of law and so on. What happens to be first or earliest is assumed to be the whole cause of what comes later.

The fifth is the fallacy of metaphor or analogy. Once a metaphor is admitted it is assumed that it can be applied wholesale. The metaphorical resemblance of society with the individual is valid, but only for certain purposes, on certain points. The fact that the two are strikingly similar on certain points does not mean that they are similar on all points or similar in identical ways. The similarity serves as a pointer. The precise situation to which it points has to be worked out with care. When verbal expression is careful and precise, the points of similarity are picked and named. If even then the similarity is extended and applied wholesale it is not the fault of expression. In the Qur'ān, we have an example in Sūrah Luqmān, verse 29: "Your creation and your resurrection are only similar to the creation and resurrection of an individual soul."

Two points of similarity are specified, viz. creation and resurrection. It is

in these two respects that society and individual are similar. Which is saying a very great deal indeed. The perimeter of the metaphor is defined and laid down beautifully. It would be wrong to extend it beyond its limits.

The sixth fallacy is the fallacy of models. This is to interpret and explain a complex phenomenon or process by a model which is helpful to a point. The misuse of the model consists in treating the model too literally, too seriously. Eddington was able to spot this and to say that many scientists were the slaves of their own models. They worshipped the idols their own hands had fashioned. The glory of twentieth-century science lies in its relative freedom from models (Sloane, pp. 218-19).

IV

Now, if to the question, is the group a reality ? my answer is yes, the question for me to consider is whether I am not being misled by a mere word. If I am, I can be accused of reification. But if I am not. I barely assert the existence of something of which there is as indubitable evidence as of anything else. The superficial existence of groups nobody would doubt. Whether a group has causal reality may be open to doubt. The only way to settle this is by seeing whether when we change the character of a group, the change results or it does not result in a change of output, whether the presence of others in a dark room does or does not make any difference to the perceptions, the judgment, the imagination, the thinking of individuals functioning in their absence. It is because small group research is able to demonstrate these things experimentally, that we can assert we have experimental proof of the reality of groups.

It is in the interest of scientific austerity—respect for scientific method and logical inference—that we need to try and invent experimental demonstrations of commonly observed phenomena. Natural experiments there may be in abundance. If anybody really doubts the existence of social, communal, racial, national groups, he has only to go to the United Nations. He has only to go where the U.N. Assembly is having its sessions or to the visitors' gallery, if there is such a thing, at the U.N. headquarters where the Security Council is in session. Again and again it is individuals who rise and speak. But who does not know it is not individuals but groups—powerful, real, groups, each with a history, a character, a personality—which speaks through its individuals? Can I answer now the question which disturbed the

young Arab student who had planned to write a dissertation on the Arab character? The answer is—you can see the causal influence of groups, why strain at the existence of groups? But we cannot see the group, it may yet be said. What we see is individuals?

This question disturbed the villagers who first saw a moving train pulled by an engine with no horse or ghost hidden in it. This provided the Oxford Gilbert Ryle with a joke against those who would insist on believing in a mind over and above tissues and muscles and nerves. How can there be a mind, a real, existent, mind, if you cannot see it? True, I cannot see it, but I can see its effects. I can see what it does and what it sometimes fails to do. That is evidence enough in science.

I am reminded here of something I heard our Anis Alam quote from Helsenberg, the physicist leader of the Gottingen School of Physicists. This is what Heisenberg had to say on the invisibility of scientific constructs. Talking of the development of Quantum Mechanics, he said:

> "To begin with, I thought the important philosophy in this development was probably the idea of introducing only observable quantities. But when I had to give a talk about quantum mechanics in Berlin in 1926, Einstein listened to the talk and corrected this view. Einstein pointed out to me that it is really dangerous to say that one should only speak about observable quantities. Because every reasonable theory will, besides all things which one can immediately observe, also give the possibility of observing other things more indirectly. For instance, Mach himself had believed that the concept of the atom was only a point of convenience, a point of economy in thinking. He did not believe in the reality of atoms. Nowadays, everybody would say that this is nonsense, that it is quite clear that atom really exists"(*Proceedings of the Pakistan Philosophical Congress*, Session 1973).

When we turn to the human group, the political group, the racial group, the national group, the family group, and so on, we know that it is not the case that we cannot observe it even if we wish to. This is not the case at all. The group is as much visible or apprehensible as the individuals in the group. Only, we must learn to focus our eyes properly. For, focussing makes all the difference. When a psychologist fails to observe the group, he only makes an error in focussing. When a sociologist fails to observe the individuals in the

groups, he also makes an error of focussing. The same can be confirmed by a first few days of observation in a strange country, by a glance at insect societies, or at a colony of ants. We confront first a group, but very soon after the individuals in the group. Ask a herdsman. He knows the herd as well as the individual cows. It is like perceiving the depth effect in such a drawing as the Necker cube or the Schrodinger staircase. We can alter the depth effect-it is now this, now the reverse of it—according as we focus our eyes now one way, now the other.

However, one could still say it is a far cry from the *group* to the *group-mind*. But why? We have already agreed that outspoken visibility is not a requirement of reality or existence. Why strain at the group-mind? I can think of one real difficulty. When we concede a group, do we at the same time concede a group-mind ? No. The group can be a mindless group or a group with a poor, primitive kind of mind, an infantile mind, a sick mind and so on. A group which aspires for an adult, healthy, sensitive grown-up mind, a mind capable of seeing, hearing, thinking, judging, resolving, acting, will have to achieve such a mind. Nature's part is to endow human beings with the potentiality for such achievement. Man's part is to achieve what is possible to achieve. Ever so many groups pass away without achieving the status of a group-personality, a group-mind, or a group-soul. A group-mind then cannot be taken for granted. It cannot be assumed wherever we find a group, even a vociferous group. What then are the requirements, the dimensions of a group-mind ?

The requirements are listed up easily. If both the individual and the group are to be credited with the possession of a mind (true, the group not always), the requirements in each case have to be the same. The group-mind, like the individual-mind, should be capable of and should be occupied with perceiving, imaging, imagining, remembering, thinking backward and forward, also verbalising, choosing, calculatings planning, valuing, aspiring, achieving, amending, associating with other minds, fighting, for-giving, going for what is right and reasonable as such and so on. Other requirements could be added. Nature provides the potential capability. To turn the potential capability into achievement is the group's own business. The question does arise: where does the initiative take place. when the group-mind performs any of its functions? Naturally in some individual-mind or minds. But that does not mean the group *qua* group is nothing. No, it is there all the time. The

individual who initiates or the individuals who initiate are under the magic influence of the group. It reminds me of something very similar, only slightly, different, but relevant. Humean scholars, when they come to discuss Hume's *Dialogues*, raise the question: In which one of his several characters does Hume himself speak? There are answers and answers. I turned once to my friend Professor Sirajuddin for help on this question. I asked him: Does not a similar question exist in Shakespearean studies? In which one of his numerous characters does Shakespeare speak? Or, in which one does he speak more nearly than in any other? Professor Sirajuddin said his own answer was that Shakespeare expresses himself partially in *every one* of his characters, but wholly in *none*. I liked the answer and wish to apply it to the individual-group relationship. I should say that the group expresses itself partially in *every one* of its members, even in the meanest of them all, but wholly in none. I could add that the group, better the group-mind, keeps moving between individual-minds, its many mansions, now this, now that. It probably frequents one mansion or some mansions more than others. But that is about all we can say. The subject is difficult and one naturally fears to elaborate.

There is, however, the question as to the difference between the two, the group-mind and the individual-mind. My answer, and I have more than hinted at it already, is that the group-mind is much more, very much more, a matter of achievement, than the individual mind. Strictly speaking, we cannot take even the individual-mind- for granted. You have only to ask the clinical psychiatrist, especially the child psychiatrist, what sometimes happens. But nature is generous and beneficent. It is ready to correct its own mistakes. Individuals grow into mature minds, and generally healthy minds, capable and efficient minds, provided they are born in reasonably normal, healthy and happy families and homes. We have—largely speaking—only to wait and see the proof of nature's generous, just, and unerring provision, as far as the individual-mind is concerned. When we come to the group-mind, the potentialities—of capability, of achievement and so on—are infinitely larger than in the case of the individual-mind. But these potenialities, for their fructifying, require infinitely greater care and vigilance than does the individual-mind. The reward also is infinitely greater. The fruits of hard work done, of sacrifices voluntarily undertaken, by one or two or three generations, are inherited by generations which come later. I have listed up a

large number of requirements which have to be fulfilled before mind can be called mind. But these can be summarised in one or two sentences. An individual—in the course of his conscious and unconscious behaviour--must show a reasonable degree of unity and continuity, before it can be credited with the attribute of mind. The same is true of the group-mind. To unity and continuity, we may legitimately add responsibility. Of course in case of both.

We are interested in the nature of the national group, the national mind. What is the natural history of the national group? This is the question which intrigues practical men. The answer I seem to like is the answer given by a Russian philosopher who lived before the 1917 revolution, Jacque Novicov (d. 1912). He said that men first gather in a society, then become organised in a state, and from a state advance into a nation. So the natural sequence is society—state--nation. Nationhood is born out of statehood and statehood out of society. This means there are at least three levels of integration and effort involved in the emergence of a national group, a national character, a national personality, a national conscience. In the first stage we have a degree of togetherness. When this togetherness becomes organised by the provision of a bureau—a bureau of information and action—it becomes a state, and when this bureau has shed its beneficent influence and character, it results in the emergence of a nation. Each level of integration rsquires a pact, a plan, a resolution, and an effort. Each Ievel of integration requires participation by all, literally all. It may be all individuals or—as is more often the case--all the smaller co-groups which compose the large group. The group-mind is not worth speaking, until all its parts—individuals and co-groups—have come to identify themselves with it, the meanest as well as the highest among them.

V

In conclusion let me point out that academic discussions seldom go very far without raising practical issues, or without pointing to practical possibilities. The affairs of the world are run more, much more, between groups, than between individuals. Social psychology, therefore, speaking practically, is much more important than individual psychology. But perhaps the division is an artificial division. It is, as I have said, like the division between the two perspectives of depth between which our perception alternates when we view geometrical figures which are capable of yielding depth effects. There are, therefore, two perspectives, and what I really wish to say is: Woe to those who think one perspective less real than the other.

Another thing—and this is the last thing—I wish to say is that the human species seems tailored by nature to fit on to higher and still higher levels of integration. Let us, therefore, try and look *up* to the levels of integration we have still to achieve without looking *down* upon the levels of integration we have already achieved.

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