

Is psychology history? What can R.G. Collingwood do for Psychology today?

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1. The philosophers regarded me as representing an impossible and non-existent branch of science.’ (McDougal, 1930, p. 207, cited in Connelly and Costall, 2000)
2. Every psychologist to whose notice it has been brought has been justly angered by what Collingwood wrote of psychology in his *Essay on Metaphysics* (Donagan, 1962, p. 157, cited in Connelly and Costall, 2000)
3. [W. James’s *Varieties of Religious Experience*] professed to throw light on a certain subject, and threw on it no light whatever. And that because of method used. It was not because the book was a bad example of Psychology, but because it was a good example of psychology, that it left its subject completely unilluminated. ... mind regarded in this way, ceases to be mind at all. (Collingwood, *Autobiography*, p. 93)
4. Psychology under that name has been recognized as a distinct science from the sixteenth century, when the word was used by Melanchthon, Goclenius and others to designate what was in effect a new science.’ (Collingwood, *An Essay on Metaphysics*, p. 106)
5. The sixteenth-century proposal for a new science to be called psychology did not arise from any dissatisfaction with logic and ethics as sciences of thought. It arose from the recognition (characteristic of the sixteenth century) that what we call feeling is not a self-critical activity, and therefore not the possible subject-matter of a criteriological science. (ibid, p. 109)
6. These activities were thus not activities of the ‘mind’, if that word refers to the self-critical activities called thinking. But neither were they activities of the ‘body’. To use a Greek word (for Greeks had already made important contributions to this study of feeling) they were activities of the ‘psyche’, and no better word could have been devised for the study of them than psychology. (ibid, p. 110)
7. Unlike any kind of bodily or physiological functioning, *thought is a self-criticising activity. The body passes no judgement on itself.* Judgement is passed on it by its environment, which continues to support and promote its well-being when it pursues its ends successfully and injures or destroys it when it pursues them otherwise. The mind judges itself, though not always justly. Not content with the simple pursuit of its ends, it also pursues the further end of discovering for itself whether it has pursued them successfully. The sciences of body and mind respectively must take this difference into the account. (ibid, pp. 107-108, my italics)
8. Thus a science of feeling must be ‘empirical’ (i.e. devoted to ascertaining and classifying ‘facts’ or things susceptible of observation), but a science of thought must be ‘normative’, or as I prefer to call it ‘criteriological’ ... In the sixteenth century the name ‘psychology’ was invented to designate an ‘empirical’ science of feeling. In the nineteenth century the idea got about that psychology could not merely supplement the old ‘criteriological’ sciences by providing a valid approach to the study of feeling, but could replace them by providing an up-to-date and ‘scientific’ approach to the study of thought. Owing to this misconception there are now in existence two things called ‘psychology’: a valid and important: ‘empirical’ science of feeling, and a pseudo-science of thought (Collingwood, *Principles of Art*, 1938, 171 ff).
9. All phenomena with which mental sciences deal are, indeed, creations of the social community. Language, for example, is not the accidental discovery of an individual; it is the product of peoples, and, generally speaking, there are as many different languages as there are originally distinct peoples. The same is true of the beginnings of art, of mythology, and of custom. The natural religions, as they were at one time called, such as the religions of Greece, Rome, and the Germanic peoples, are, in truth, folk religions; each of them is the possession of a folk community, not, of course, in all details, but in general outline. (Wundt, 1916, p. 2)

10. ... folk psychology may be regarded as a branch of psychology concerning whose justification and problem there can no longer be dispute. Its problem relates to those mental products which are created by a community of human life and are, therefore, inexplicable in terms merely of individual consciousness, since they presuppose the reciprocal action of many. This will be for us the criterion of that which belongs to the consideration of folk psychology. (Wundt, 1916, p. 2-3)
11. Thus, then, in the analysis of the higher mental processes, folk psychology is an indispensable supplement to the psychology of individual consciousness. Indeed, in the case of some questions the latter already finds itself obliged to fall back on the principles of folk psychology. Nevertheless, it must not be forgotten that just as there can be no folk community apart from individuals who enter into reciprocal relations within it, so also does folk psychology, in turn, presuppose individual psychology, or, as it is usually called, general psychology. (Wundt, 1916, p. 3)
12. Wundt recognised that such an approach was largely limited to the 'outer' phenomena such as sensory processes and simple affective processes. As one moves to more abstract phenomena such as language, he argued that the methodology must shift towards the methods of logicians and historians. (Blumenthal, Introduction, *Language of Gestures*, p. 13)
13. The behaviour of contemporary civilised man is the product not only of biological evolution or childhood development; it is also the product of historical development. In the process of man's historical development, external relations between people, and relations between mankind and nature are not all that has changed and developed. Man himself changed and developed; human nature has changed. (L&V, 1992, p. 41)
14. Vanished periods of history have left documents and remains pertaining to their past, which are helpful, primarily, in reconstructing the external history of human race, while failing to give a remotely objective or complete account of the psychological mechanisms of behaviour. Accordingly, *historical psychology* can draw on a very much smaller body of material." (L&V, 1992, p. 41).
15. Primitive man is motivated more by practical than theoretical considerations, and in his psyche logical thought is subordinate to his instinctive and emotional reactions. (L&V, 1992, p. 43)
16. The historical development of memory begins from the point at which man first shifts from using memory, as a natural force, to dominating it. This dominion, like any dominion over a natural force, simply means that at certain stage of his development man accumulates sufficient experience – in this case psychological experience – and sufficient knowledge of the laws governing operations of memory, and then shifts to the actual use of those laws. This process of accumulation of psychological experience leading to control of behaviour should not be viewed as a process of conscious experience, the deliberate accumulation of knowledge and theoretical research. This experience should be called "naïve psychology" (L&V, 1992, p. 56)
17. The processes of nature can therefore be properly described as sequences of mere events, but those of history cannot. They are not processes of mere events, but processes of actions, which have inner side, consisting of processes of thought. All history is the history of thought' (HNHH, p. 14)
18. The history of thought, and therefore all history, is the re-enactment of past thought in the historian's own mind. (HNHH, p. 15)
19. [historian] is concerned with thoughts alone; with their outward expression in events he is concerned only by the way, in so far as these reveal to him thoughts of which he is in search. (Hnhh, p. 17)
20. the historian not only re-enacts past thought, he re-enacts it in context of his own knowledge and therefore in re-enacting it, criticizes it, forms his own judgement of its value, corrects whatever

errors he can discern in it. ... nothing could be a completer error concerning the history of thought than to suppose that the historian as such merely ascertains 'what so-and-so thought', leaving it to someone else to decide 'whether it was true'. All thinking is critical thinking; the thought which re-enacts past thoughts, therefore, criticizes them in re-enacting them. (HNHH, p. 15)

21. It may be said that historical inquiry reveals to the historian the powers of his own mind. Since all he can know historically is thoughts that he can re-think for himself, the fact of his coming to know them shows him that his mind is able (or by the very effort of studying them has become able) to think in these ways. And conversely, whenever he finds certain historical facts unintelligible, he discovered a limitation of his own mind; he has discovered that there are certain ways in which he is not, or no longer or not yet, able to think. (HNHH, p. 18-19)

22. ... metaphysics is an historical science. ... the business of metaphysics is to find out what absolute presuppositions have actually been made by various persons at various time in doing various pieces of scientific thinking.

23. So far as man's conduct is determined by what may be called his animal nature, his impulses and appetites, it is non-historical; the process of those activities is a natural process. (Hnhh, p. 16)

24. knowing oneself is historical - It is only by historical thinking that I can discover what I thought ten years ago, by re-reading what I then thought, or what I thought five minutes ago, by reflecting on an action that I then did, which surprised me when I realized what I had done. In this sense all knowledge of mind is historical. (Hnhh, p. 19)

25. Hence life, like motion, is a thing that takes time and has no instantaneous existence. Aristotle showed that the same is true of moral qualities: happiness for example, according to him, is a thing that belongs to a man at all only if it belongs to him throughout a lifetime (...) so that an instantaneous view of his mental state could not distinguish whether he was happy or not ... before the arrival of modern physics it had always been supposed that movement is merely an accident that happens to a body (TION, p. 146-7)

26. The problem of human understanding is a twofold one. *Man knows, and he is also conscious that he knows.* We acquire, possess, and make use of our knowledge; but at the same time, we are aware of our activities as knowers. In consequence, human understanding has developed historically in two complementary ways: it has grown, but at the same time it has deepened, so becoming at once more extensive and more reflective. (Stephen Toulmin, *Human Understanding*, 1972, p. 1)

27. ... classifying people works on people, changes them, and can even change their past. The process does not stop there. ... To create new ways of classifying people is also to change how we can think of ourselves, to change our sense of self-worth, even how we remember our past. (Ian Hacking, *The looping effects of human kinds*, 1995, p. 369).

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