

# Human Beings and Barbarians in the States of Europe (\*)

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Among more than one set of human beings and in more than one language, the World of people is divided into two simple categories. On the one hand are «The Human Beings» or «The People» (us) and on the other, all the rest of the potential breeding partners of the species: «The Others», «The Outsiders», «The Strange Ones» (them).

Myth has it that the Ancient Greeks saw all foreigners as being like sheep; they sounded and spoke like sheep. Hence the application of the word «barbarian». (It is perhaps noteworthy that «barbarian» and «barbaric» have departed from their sheep-like philological beginnings to join the most derogatory category to which others can be assigned — a linguistic case of a shifting Out-group drift.) In an early anthropological comment Aristotle noticed some heterogeneity among barbarians. Those to the west of Greece were «physically strong and mentally stupid», which made them ideal for manual labour and slavery more generally. Those to the east of Greece were «clever, ingenious, but very lazy». Fortunately for the inhabitants of the cities around Aristotle, they were geographically placed to combine the characteristics of the west and the east, and perhaps with a string of subsequent possible

social science citations in mind, Aristotle invented the «self-serving bias» by allowing the Greeks to combine the strength and the cleverness, rather than the laziness and stupidity — not a valid syllogism, as he should have spotted.

Around today's world, the binary division holds. Within Standard Average European Languages, we commonly have no name for Ourselves and just one for Them; foreigner, etranger, fremde, estrangeiros, stranieri, inostrannyi, and further east — gaikokjin.

However, as 1992 approaches, European-minded people are trying to shift In-group identities to include a continental level. This gives rise to empirical questions within a political/moral/educational framework. How can we promote a sense of European identity as a «good» in itself and as a mediator of social progress — a means of enhancing virtues rather than vices? For example, on current interpretations one might expect it easiest to achieve a stronger European identity by enhancing distinctiveness and superiority over other continental groupings but is the latter desirable or necessary? How might we achieve the distinctiveness without the down-grading of other continentals? Can we achieve a dual identity as Europeans and members of a State or Nation without the two being in unconstructive conflicts with each other? What constructive myths are we to create that are more sensible and defensible than the fiction

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(\*) An updated version of the paper given orally at the Vth Colloquium «Psychology and Education», ISPA, Lisbon, October 1990.

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of a «nation» — a nation being a collection of people who invent and then conspire to agree on an untrue story about their common origin and are united by a common hatred story about their neighbours (see Bloom, 1990; Hobsbawm, 1990 for a more scholarly analysis)? How can social and developmental psychology contribute to help to ensure that the means adopted to achieve the inevitable changes are consistent with the ends and that what result is better than what came before?

For example, what will European justice be like in 50 years time? The English utilize an adversarial system in which a presumption of prisoner innocence is followed by a dialectical argument between prosecution and defence which is ostensibly intended to enable twelve citizens to decide on the facts of the matter and, with legal guidance from the judge, to bring in a verdict. The inquisitorial French system is an enquiry after truth, with no presumption of innocence and with a prosecution that appears to be symbolically stronger than the defence. There are three judges. The other States of Europe each have their own variant on the contrasting emphasis. Neither now corresponds to a Socratic model of an honest inquiry after truth via a disinterested dialectical process. A coming together of States immediately poses questions about the differential efficiency of the various systems in serving the cause of justice. Social psychology is beginning to accumulate enough results to highlight some of the weakness of the adversarial system as realized in various courts in the United States (O' Barr, 1982; Danet, 1990), with less work so far on the inquisitorial (Adelsward, Aronson, Jonson & Linell, 1987). It is to be hoped that such data will increasingly supplant personal prejudice as a basis for evaluation. But what of the systems themselves? What are their differential strengths and weaknesses and how should we come to transcend the prejudices which will enter into those arguments? Developmental social psychology would be obliged to point to socio-cognitive conflict theory (Doise Mugny, 1984; Gilly, 1988; Perret-Clermont, 1980) as the theoretical framework most likely to promote intellectual development and social progress, a context where opposed perspectives may become reconciled through the invocation of a higher

order principle which exposes the partiality of the original arguments. Piaget cited quarrelling as the activity most likely to provoke the development of higher order moral reasoning; that was in his earliest book on the topic (Piaget, 1932). It was not until the 1970s that experiments began to show its potential for stimulating intellectual development across the whole range of problems where criteria of «rational realism» have and can be applied and are appropriate. What has been investigated mainly with children of primary school age is equally applicable to adults and to all social arrangements, as well as to logical, scientific, ethical, and religious beliefs (and perhaps aesthetic ones too in some measure). The English may come to see the necessity of improving their court procedures by adpting the French model. The French may adopt the English pattern. Both may adopt a European solution which minimizes the disadvantages and maximises the advantages of their own legal systems. What is true for court procedures is true for all social institutions. But as we shall see, the irrationalities and asymmetries of human beings currently demonstrable in studies within the frameworks of Attribution Theory (Hewstone, 1988) and Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), especially when applied to Inter-group relations (Brown, 1988), are likely to be granite-like forces of conservatism; we are unlikely to display any more vision than blocks of rock. But given another century, and we may be exploiting social psychology for social engineering, as we have done with the physical and biological sciences for material and medical advances. As noted, the legal example given is but one of literally thousands of rituals, roles and rules where questioning and evaluation in the light of empirical evidence could lead to progress.

In the meantime we have to ask about the current position, and so far our knowledge is rudimentary. Several recent papers at the 1991 British Psychological Society of the Social Psychology Section Conference showed that pioneering work is underway. In his sample of British higher education students, Cinnirella (1991) is finding that national identity is much stronger than the theoretically superordinate European identity, as one might expect. Huici

and Hopkins (Ros, Cano, Huici, Emler & Hopkins, 1991) reported that their Andalusians did not see that being Andalusian and Spanish were incompatible, but that their Scots were likely to see the British/Scottish choice as exclusive. Lyons and Sotirakopoulou (1991) are showing that British 16-19 year olds emphasise British distinctiveness from selected other EC countries and that this was particularly true for conservative voters, which relates to Cinnirella's finding that Conservative voters expressed lower levels of European identity. From across the Channel, Askevis-Leherpeux (1991) is beginning to chart comparable patterns from a French perspective.

So far, authors of this work are being conceptually careful and circumspect in the inferences they are drawing. However if the past is predictive, the neatness will not remain. The history of the field shows it began with theoretical muddle which has persisted since, with the consequence that over fifty years of work on beliefs about and actions towards members of other groups is still plagued by definitional issues and muddled thinking. With the recent resurrection of «stereotype» we are reminded of these. It is worthwhile rehearsing four kinds of difficulty still with us.

#### 1. FAILURES TO DEFINE TERMS AND USE THEM CONSISTENTLY

The original two articles that served as the point of departure for work on stereotypes reveal several of the confusions (Katz & Braly, 1933, 1935, 1947). The initial core task set was the free assignment of adjectival traits to members of 10 racial and national groups; this was followed by further elucidatory inquiries. In respect of the definition of «stereotype» we read:

«We have learned responses of varying degrees of aversion or acceptance to racial names... we respond to him not as a human being but as a personification of the symbol we have learned to look down upon. Walter Lippmann has called this type of belief a stereotype — by which is meant a fixed impression which conforms very little to the

facts it pretends to represent and results from our defining first and observing second.» (1947, p. 40)

«Rational prejudice is thus a generalized set of stereotypes of a high degree of consistency which includes emotional responses to race names, a belief in typical characteristics associated with race names and an evaluation of such typical traits» (p. 46)

When these statements are inspected in the light of Aristotle's prescription of a good definition they fail, and badly so. In the first paragraph there is a reference to «this belief» although only a «learned response» has been mentioned. There is an immediate combining of emotional(?) reactions and beliefs. How fixed is fixed? What is the evidence that the impression is inconsistent with the facts? In the second paragraph «prejudice» becomes linked to «stereotypes», although the preceding conclusion notes that the sample was antipathetic to both Negroes and Turks, and that the stereotype for Negro was «very clear-cut» while that of the Turk was the vaguest. The adjective «typical» is used several times, but how typical were the traits? Of the 12 most common trait adjectives assigned to the 10 peoples, only 7 of the 120 were put forward by more than 50% of the sample. The «very clear-cut» stereotype of the Negro commands 84% for «superstitions» and 75% for «lazy»; the next trait was used by 38%. In a further analysis, Negroes required 4.6 traits on average to include 50% of the sample. In everyday use, «typical» does *not* mean less than 50%, and «stereotype» implies a profile, not a pair of adjectives or less. Subsequently «stereotype» has certainly been used to imply that any example of an X that is not a Y is evidence against a stereotype and needs to be denied or discounted in some way. «Stereotype» has also paled into a «cognitive structure that contains the perceiver's knowledge, beliefs and expectations about some human group» (Hamilton, 1976).

It will be much easier to proceed cooperatively and constructively when social psychologists have achieved a much better degree of consensus about the definitions of terms such as «stereotype» and «prejudice».

## 2. FAILURES TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN WHAT PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT IMAGES OF OTHERS AND WHAT THEY BELIEVE

As Durkheim (1938) commented these are «collective representations» of groups residing in societies and cultures. There are writings about them in fiction and faction, recordings in pictures, films and videos. There are monuments, and other memorials. There are oral traditions in the stories passed down from generation to generation. All these are potential sources of information available for belief and use. Traditionally it has been assumed that any image is relatively monolithic. What do respondents have in mind when they check typical adjectives for typical Xs? The Russian stereotype? Male, middle-aged, shortish, stocky, wearing a fur hat and an overcoat, looking dour? No one believes that there are Russian women, children, youths, and pensioners. Most people know that there is great cultural diversity around the 15 republics. Many would subscribe to the existence of individual differences. However, if the task set presents a single heading and a set of adjectives, and if cooperativeness is more important than question-asking for the respondents, an image can be called up and used. What relation there is between these answers and the behaviour context is highly problematic.

## 3. FAILURE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN MATTERS OF FACT AND MATTERS OF VALUE

The quotations from Katz and Braly already claim that a stereotype is an «impression which conforms very little to the facts», with an implication there is something odd about people whose judgements are not veridical. Once we ask why they are odd, we are defining the problem as residing in the person rather in the demands of the task in the context in which the data were collected.

Explanations for the oddities have ranged from the more recent «cognitive miserliness» (Fiske & Taylor, 1984) to the earlier psychodynamic accounts of «authoritarianism» (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson & Sanford, 1950). In the latter, with its direct links

to Fascism, there is a very clear moral condemnation of the presumed displaced and projected aggression.

But the facts need to be separated from the values. How do Cambodians feel about the Pol Pot regime or the Kuwaitis about the Iraqis? Is it surprising that the Greeks and Armenians are wary of Turkey? The Jews, the Russians and the Gypsies have memories of Nazi Germany, much as the Chinese have of the massacres in Nanking and elsewhere. When States engage in mass slaughter, one does not need a psychoanalytic explanation of the hostility of the victims towards their killers.

## 4. COMMENTARY ON THE THREE FAILURES

Having cited Aristotle as a prejudiced observer, it is apposite to note that if social psychology had followed his criteria of a good definition of a technical term we should have wasted much less time and we should have made much more progress that we have. Popper (1963) may be correct when he points to the ultimate unimportance of definitions compared with the truth value of propositions, but while definitions are no more than matters of convention and consensus, inconsistent or undefined usage of terms such as «stereotype» is simple bad science. For Aristotle, a good definition of a term in a system was one that specified its relationship to all other terms in that system, especially in so far as similarities to and differences from cognate terms was concerned. Verbal definition is essential (if possible), but needs to be reliably recognized. Operationalization should be maximized and the inevitable fuzzy border lines of the category minimized. Until we begin to take more notice of such elementary desiderata, we shall continue to be trapped in our own webs.

Likewise, while we as human beings may have feelings and value-positions about aspects of our subject matter, these have to be eliminated as far as possible from descriptions and explanations of social behaviour lest they distort our observations. This presentation is underpinned with a value position and treats social and developmental psychology as potential servants of that position, but it is to

be hoped that the interpretation of evidence is based on veridical rather than haloed or horned perceptions.

##### 5. FAILURES TO FACE UP TO COMPLEXITIES AND SIMPLICITIES OF HUMAN CIRCUMSTANCES

An example of stripped-down social psychology in the area of inter-personal hostility to groups was the finding that attitudes to fictitious national groups were similar to real ones among ethnocentric people (Hartley, 1946). A neat demonstration of an etic possibility, but which has to be expanded into emic implications and limitations.

A caricature of work in the area would cite replications and variations of this core study with American university students cooperatively accumulating grades. The explanations would be seen to be driven so hard by the push for abstract simplicity that the work loses touch with both the simplicities and complexities of the real world.

In terms of simplicity the world is replete with inter-individual and inter-group hatreds; many of the latter are powerful enough to give rise to killings on a grand scale. In times of armed combat, it is as simple as traditional western films show: killed or be killed and minimize risks by shooting first and asking questions second.

In terms of complexity it is difficult to know how to present and then contain the issues. The causal vignettes of Attribution Theory would not impress any other academic discipline if translated into sets of questions about history, biology, physics — or even psychology. They are a travesty of any model of causality. Some people may talk or decide to talk in such ways in particular circumstances to achieve certain ends or justify actions, but if any multiple-choice answer is chosen as the truth believed, it could be argued that the respondent is either too cooperative or too simple-minded to be anything but very ill-informed about the issue presented. Taking collective representation of members of other States (groups) as a topic, perhaps the following assertions might be hazarded:

1. Especially for States with which there is a history of contact, there will be a variety of images of the State and of its people.
2. These images will include positive as well as negative features, with the same characteristic occasionally having potential in either direction (savage versus good fighters).
  - 2a) The positive features are necessary during times of alliance,
  - 2b) The negative features are necessary during times of threatened or actual conflict,
  - 2c) Generally there are more negative features than positive ones — mobilizing armed forces is a major political operation and needs strong propaganda.
3. Appropriate images are revived or created as and when necessary.
4. These images will be just as relevant to inter-group relations within States as between States, from scapegoating to football competitions.

Over the last several thousand years libraries have collected materials demonstrating these points. Currently the media, especially through the mouths of politicians echo the same stories. Given this kind of sociological-historical perspective, the happenstance beliefs of citizens which can be elicited at particular points in time are less important than the potential for change if collective action is needed.

Yugoslavia, and the Balkans more generally, are currently displaying inter-group hostilities, some of which are a thousand years old and more. Hunyadi (1990) had longitudinal data on two cohorts of Hungarian youth across the political change-over from their version of communist government, showing unsurprising but dramatic shifts in beliefs about and attitudes towards the USA and Soviet Union among other states. Since the 1812 overtures British representations of Russia and Russians have been required to yoyo according to who was believed to be trying to do what and to whom and where. It is important to document such assertions, and history texts are a readily available source in which to note some of the characteristics of the language used in them.

There already exist enough studies to illustrate two points:

1. The status of these texts as authoritative records of an objective reality.
2. Evaluative biases in their references to social groups.

A third point of clear «errors of fact» could have been taken from the same sources, but for that, government public announcements and records in times of national conflict — part of the materials from which future historians work and newspapers, will be used.

## 6. SECONDARY SCHOOL HISTORY TEXTS

One current growth industry in Eastern Europe must be the re-writing of history texts. When societies switch from being relatively closed to open, or vice versa, history books are burned to celebrate hope or to expunge dangerous ideas. History texts are notoriously inaccurate and biased, so much so that UNESCO (1948, 1963) has twice produced documents listing criteria against which historians should check their texts. Before noting some empirical studies of bias in presentation, two preliminary observations may set the context, each of which renders any misleading information more persuasive than it might otherwise be.

Olson (1980) has referred to and documented the authoritative aura of secondary school texts. Whilst it is true that the name of the author may appear on the cover, the style of the writing has traditionally been impersonal. Words like «I» are very rare, as are verbs of belief, supposition, conjecture and doubt. By convention there are very few clues, if any as to whether or not the statements made in the text are facts, personal opinions or consensually agreed views. The text usually appears to be a true record of what actually happened, and perhaps why events happened as they did. Until the late 1980's it was very uncommon to find hints that statements were inferential and/or probabilistic rather than simple recordings of reality.

To present alternative perspectives and possibilities was not a characteristic of the genre,

and the idea that quite different interpretations were defensible was not mentioned. Perhaps it is a sign of increasing honesty that the most recent Cambridge University Press texts are showing that the same sets of events are differently represented by different States and that this variety can be linked to «why» questions. For example, their volume about the large scale war around the 1940's asks why different countries give it different dates of starting and stopping. «The Second World War» is but one title. «The Great Patriotic War» is another. Starting dates range from 1936 to 1941, with at least one country having good reason for recording the year as 1931. The year of ending is agreed at 1945, but while some books give prominence to May 8th, others refer to August. How long will it be before such presentations become normative and widespread internationally?

By far the most common practice is for a text to report authoritatively presented facts and, as Fitzgerald (1987) notes, this means that any particular cohort of pupils receives one particular set of tablets of historical truth whose authenticity there may never be reason to doubt. Just as «the facts» may not be doubted, so any uniformly biased evaluations of social groupings may be simply assimilated.

## 7. IMAGES OF OTHERS

History books making reference to groups of individuals will create images of those groups both through the characteristics ascribed to their members and through the actions attributed to them. Any social groupings can appear, but one of most common separations in political/military histories is between ethnic or national groupings. In economic or social histories, groupings are more likely to be along the divisions of region, caste or class, gender, occupation and so on. But in both, the simplest binary division is likely to be between an «Us» and a «Them» — an In-group and the Out-group. For histories involving within-State affairs, texts have traditionally adopted the perspective that implicitly justifies the contemporary distribution of power, status, and wealth. For more inter-State perspectives, the

State of origin becomes the In-group. On what evidence are these claims based?

The representations of social groups can be examined to see whether they are descriptive or evaluative, and, if evaluative, what the ratios are of positive, negative and neutral attributions. Social psychology has long made use of *content analysis* as a technique for generating quantitative estimates of qualities of texts (Krippendorf, 1981). Pratt (1972) generated a list of adjectives from 69 Canadian secondary history texts published in the 1950's and 1960's and divided the evaluative ones into positive and negative. This evaluative count multiplied the number of positive adjectives by a 100 and divided this by the sum of positive and negative adjectives. This index yielded a bias score between 0 and 100 with 50 representing balance, but does not reveal what percentage of adjectives are evaluative rather than descriptive. Pratt found three main results. First, the 1960's books did not differ from those of the 1950's. Second, references to English and French Canadians were both greater than 50 and therefore biased positively. Scores for Arabs, Blacks and (Canadian) Indians were less than 50, and hence negative in bias. Third, if the text was in French, references to French Canadians were more positive than if it was in English. The results show In-group favouritism and Out-group denigration. The status of the third result is ambiguous; it is not clear whether the bias was for the author's In-group, the readership or both.

Garcia (1978) conducted a similar analysis of American secondary texts published between 1956 and 1976. In these, references to white Americans were very positive and to Blacks less positive or neutral, yielding an In-group bias, but no Outgroup denigration. References to Amerindians and Spanish-speaking Americans were either very positive or very negative — idealisation or denigration.

Using the same adjective list, Habtai (1981) examined four kinds of British history texts in general use towards the end of the 1970's. As Table 1 shows the first three types of text yield clear discriminations: images of the British are positive and those of the Africans are negative. During the same period however, texts described as African histories were positively biased for

Africans and neutral for the British and other Europeans. Unfortunately, the scoring for the European category was not divided to show whether references to the British remained around 70, and the Belgians, Dutch, French, Germans, and Portuguese were denigrated. The positive bias in the images of Africans could lie in the fact that authors of this kind of text were more pro-African than authors of other kinds of text; that is likely. It is also true however that these texts were sold in English-speaking Africa as well as in Britain — a market numerically over twice the size of the British one.

Authoritative status and bias of reference, are not the end of selectivity. What is seen as important and what is not varies. What is offered as history? The political/military was strongly in the ascendant in British history texts until the 1950's, when more economic and social histories began to appear. This attempt to widen the scope was resisted, even though these still adopted what might be termed the «The Establishment» perspective and — and portrayed the power elite as generally benign and concerned for the people and social justice. Only later did other perspectives begin to appear: first a working class perspective and subsequently female and ethnic minority perspectives.

Without further elaboration at this stage, it is evident that Attribution Theory (Hewstone, 1989) and Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1981) may be considered as primary explanatory frameworks for the discriminations for and against social groups. Although it would not be difficult to cite travesties of truth from history texts, to cover yet another medium, it is easy to extract examples of big lies from newspapers.

## 8. THE MESSAGES OF THE MEDIA

To cite one work and give one example is perhaps sufficient to remind people of the capacities of the press and other media to sacrifice truth-telling to other interests. The problem is not new; Balzac notes the incidence of sensationalism of the press in early 19th century France. Knightley (1975) charts the

TABLE 1

*Indexes of Evaluative Bias in British Secondary School History Texts (from Habtai, 1981)*

TYPE OF TEXT		
<b>Histories of Britain</b>		
	Africans	British
Cootes, R.J. Britain since 1700 (1970)	0	69.71*
Helen, P.J. Modern British History (1971)	30.0	71.4
Knapp, W. A New English History (1969)	22.2	64.3
Robson, W. Twentieth Century Britain (1973)	8.3	76.2
Mean	15.1	70.4
<b>Histories of Britain in the World</b>		
Darvill, P.A. and Stirling, W.R. Britain and the World (1974)	20.0	73.9
Nash, E.N. and Newth, A.M. Britain and the Modern World (1975)	30.0	93.5
Ray, J. Britain and the Modern World (1974)	20.0	87.5
Richardson, P. Britain, Europe and the Modern World (1970)	44.1	62.9
Mean	28.5	79.5
<b>World Histories</b>		
Case, S.L. and Hall, D.J. World History (1975)	36.4	72.9
Cornwell, R.D. World History in the 20th Century (1969)	38.2	85.9
Duffy, M.N. The Twentieth Century (1977)	14.3	92.9
Howarth, T. Twentieth Century History (1979)	28.6	33.3
Moss, P. History Alwe (1972)	0	81.8
Snellgrove, L.E. The Modern World since 1870 (1971)	8.1	61.8
Wood, D. This Modern World (1976)	57.1	81.8
Mean	30.6	71.2
<b>African Histories</b>		
Addison, J. and Martin, P. Africa (1971)	56.0	45.0
Davidson, B. Discovering Africa's Past (1978)	87.4	46.4
Latham, H. Africa-Prehistory to Modern Times (1972)	60.3	50.0
Williams, B. Modern Africa (1970)	51.0	59.5
Mean	63.8	50.2

\* Scores are such that 0 = wholly negative, 50 = neutral/balanced, 100 = wholly positive

history of war correspondents and their reporting from their first appearance in The Crimea War through the American Civil War to Vietnam. Battles that did not take place were given graphic descriptions, others which did were suppressed. The 1914-18 War reporting was

perhaps the most impressive cover-up operation, with the public learning little from the newspaper about the scale of the casualties, the deaths from disease, or the mutinies. The tactics of sending men with rifles «over the top», into impassable mud and barbed wire to be machine-

gunned, literally in their thousands was not reflected in the headlines of the daily press. Vietnam may prove to be a significant watershed. Of Knightley's wars, it is the one whose denouncement appears to have been most affected by honest reporting that defied the censors. The intimacy of the TV coverage of the Gulf War poses questions about the feasibility of open societies mounting operations in which they begin to suffer heavy casualties. In the same war the massive difference between the lowest and highest estimates of Iraqi casualties shows that information can still be suppressed by closed (and open?) societies. Of course what gets into the media is in part or almost what determined by governments and military authorities who are able to control what is officially released for reporting — and more.

Two main messages emerge from an examination of media coverage of armed conflict: the first is that In-group/Out-group differentiation reaches extreme proportions, a differentiation so massive, it might cause one to wonder what function is served by re-demonstrating such effects in laboratories. The second is that In-group losses are minimised and Out-group losses maximised to and beyond the limits of credibility.

There are classic examples of the second where the eventual facts are not disputed. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour on December 7 1941, the British Daily Express carried the headline «Jap Plane-Carrier and 4 U-Boats sunk». (U-Boats was Express-speak for «submarine»). The first official U.S. communique was delayed until December 12 and then reported that «one old battleship and a destroyer had been sunk».

The reality was more devastating: 5 battleships sunk and 3 badly damaged; 3 cruisers and 3 destroyers badly damaged, 200 planes destroyed, 2,344 people killed. The full extent of the damage was never officially communicated. At various times up to 1967, occasional communiques and leaks raised the figures. Even today the official guide book at the memorial omits the data.

Somewhat earlier in Europe, mainly English skies witnessed «The Battle of Britain» with Churchill growling out his «never in the field of human conflict has so much been owed by

so many to so few». The British Air Ministry reported shooting down 2,698 German planes; the final revised figures was 1,733. Without touch a of irony in 1945 the Ministry appeared to be boasting of British honesty when it noted that the British exaggeration was 55%, whereas the Germans overestimated British losses by 224%. More recently, the CNN network in its relayings of Iraq television broadcasts revealed how a steady imminent final victory of Iraqi forces was converted quite simply by Iraqi TV to an honourable peace settlement — on humanitarian grounds.

These facts are consistent with the apparent assumption that national morale (and internal political stability) remains higher if there is minimisation of In-group losses and Out-group victories and maximisation of In-group victories and Out-group losses.

Attribution Theory and Social Identity Theory become rampant in their applicability when questions are posed about the characteristics and behaviour of the participants. If God is invoked, then He is on Our side. If Justice is invoked it is on Our side. The answer to which side started a war is, «Them». If this is impossible to contest, then it is possible to invent or use the idea of a «pre-emptive counterattack» or to argue that They forced Us to open armed hostilities.

If it is asked why They are fighting Us, then there is a high probability that the answer will be because their leaders are insane or evil or both. The media debates personalise and offer a clear choice. If one were to list opponents of the western alliance of the last 50 years, it is difficult to recall an enemy leader who was not so categorised from Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin and Tojo to Sadam Hussein.

The armed forces of the enemy are quickly denounced for: bombing or otherwise attacking civilian targets, especially hospitals and refugee camps; mutilating, torturing and killing prisoners and civilians; raping and killing women; killing children; and looting. Our armed forces do none of these things, and if individual combatants are ever identified as being guilty of such offences, they are quickly defined as being overwhelmed by the stress of their circumstances and discounted as exceptions. The same conduct by Them is treated as normative.

Some social psychologists might suggest that this is a caricature at worse, a stereotype at best. They are wrong. Sadam Hussein and his army were portrayed exactly as this account claims. As with the distortions of winnings and losings, those who are presenting these images of Them and Us must believe that this kind of manipulation functions to improve Our chances of surviving and winning.

A third point documented by Knightley (1975) is that dramatic reporting of war is good for circulation and profits. Most recently its coverage of the Gulf War rocketed CNN into astronomical audience figures and has given it a commanding supremacy as the channel for international news. Their success was not predicated on the same kind of operations as those mounted so frequently by W.R. Hearst. Of Hearst's ventures, the role of this journal in the fomentation of the Spanish-American war the most notorious, and the most notorious episode in that surrounded the reporting of the sinking of the USS Maine.

Relations between Spain and the USA were not entirely positive as the Cubans revolted against Spanish rule, and Hearst had been a belligerent interventionist before the possibly apocryphal exchange of telegrams. He had dispatched Remington to Cuba to send back pictures of the imminent war. In September 1897 Remington cabled Hearst «No trouble here. There will be no war. I wish to return, Remington.» The reply was, «Please remain. You furnish the pictures and I'll furnish the war, W.R. Hearst». The consensus is that Hearst's conduct was by far the most influential single factor leading the USA into the eventual war.

TABLE 2

*Headlines from «The Journal» 1898*

February 17	Battleship Maine Blown Up in Havana Harbour
February 18	Ameriva Swept By War Fever
February 19	Maine Destroyed By Infernal Enemy Device (Mine Torpedo)
February 20	Maine As She Lies Sunk By Spanish Treachery
February 22	Havana Insults Memory of American Dead

After three weeks of a protective «goodwill» visit, the USS Maine blew up in Havana harbour on February 25 1898 with the loss of many lives. The succeeding headlines of Hears't journal are shown in Table 2. Already on February 16, the passive voice of «blown» emphasises agency rather than accident. By February 17, the means are identified and the idea of more than an individual agent is suggested. By February 20, the Spanish are indicated, and on the 21st the denigration is accelerated.

What really happened has never been decided. The official US enquiry invoked the idea of a mine attached by a person or persons unknown, but had no evidence for this supposition. It is highly unlikely that a single device could have activated such devastation. It is highly unlikely that the Spanish would have provoked a conflict they tried desperately to avoid. It is much more likely that the explosion was triggered by an electrical fault or a smoking accident in the ship's magazine. It is virtually certain that Hearst had no warrant for any of this five headlines, but this campaign culminated in the USA declaring war against Spain on April 19, even though the Spanish had by then agreed to all the US demands for Cuba.

In September 1897 the circulation of the Journal was around 700.000. By the end of the war, it was 1.250.000. War can be good for the circulation and the profits.

9. COMMENTARY

Here then we have a host of dilemmas and difficulties for societies running their affairs. They create, sustain and store images of other groups, with a preponderance of negative over positive characteristics available in those images. There may well be several images available to suit subsequent circumstances. Many of the images are left dormant for most of the time but can be brought to life if and when needed. When such images are in difficult-to-destroy artefacts such as literature, they are not even likely to be forgotten. We might be foolhardy enough to re-write or add footnotes to «The Merchant of Venice», but Shylock will be there in the wings waiting to be used in contexts

beyond the theatre (Breakwell, 1991).

We can however change our current and future history books. We could set up societal mechanisms to limit their content, although how defensible restrictions can be devised which do not infringe upon the right to express defensible interpretations is a hedgehog. Physical scientists have the advantage over those studying people that, if the descriptions and explanations they construct are wrong, then the empirical evidence collected will eliminate their accounts from the accumulating wisdom. In so far as physical scientists agree on the rules for evaluating ideas, they have a built-in mechanism for choosing between contesting accounts. The resolution of disputes about human condition has some of the same uncertainty reducing possibilities, but even within human sciences the criteria for the evaluation and survival of ideas have yet to achieve a strong consensus. Beyond the disciplines themselves, their status is not even recognized by most people. In our scientific guise we are a new phenomenon, and we are a threat to irrational, untrue, unfair beliefs and practices. Why is it that individuals in Right-wing governments are more than disposed to see sociologists as Communists, whereas Communist governments are prone to them as running dogs of capitalism? Even though the questions posed by sociologists are focused on descriptions and explanations, their answers very clearly intersect with issues of ideals, ethics and justice. Their questions threaten any authoritarian government. Elsewhere an argument is developed that the differential treatment of sociologists and historians among anti-open society politicians stems from the social implications of the worth of the former and from the implicit or explicit apologist stance of many of the latter (Robinson, forthcoming).

Issues of ethics also arise with the media. The freedom to say or write what you like can be and is help up as a powerful slogan to justify too much. Originally put forward as a right to express dissent in closed societies, it can be used as licence to abuse and lie, as the Hearst example shows. Thucydides (400 BC) notes the essence of rhetorical abuse in his «History of the Peloponnesian War». Balzac sniped at the press for its abuse of individuals and groups throughout this «Human Comedy». Today there

is a continuous running battle in England and Wales. Newspapers are able to print stories about individuals or run campaigns against groups or states with but minimal risk of indictment or consequents. On November 1 1991, The Sun published three pages of abuse about the French under the headline, «Up Yours Delors!». Any individual citizen declaiming similar assertions in London's Trafalgar Square could be treated as breaking the law, especially if the target group were switched from the French to British Afro-Carabiiicans. Are legislators incapable of drafting laws that can discriminate between rights to disagree and abusive lies? Is the executive incapable or unwilling to enforce such laws?

The prospective research agenda for social psychology arising from such issues appears to be academically limitless not just in terms of explaining social facts as they are, but also in generating predictions of conditions under which disputes about both truth and justice might be resolved nationally and realistically. Alas, Piaget (1932) has already offered a doleful comment at the end of his classic on the development of moral reasoning. By adolescence, marble players are playing on the basis of universally agreed but negotiable rules. The rules themselves operate with a cooperative framework whose spirit requires that individuals who are squatting on superfluous treasure re-distribute unneeded surplus to those who would have to cease to play because they have no marbles left. He notes that this morality only emerges as marbles themselves cease to be a valued commodity. The implication is that we succeed in being moral and sensible only in situations that are becoming unimportant. Perhaps this is an empirical generalization of some validity, but we have discovered enough now about «learned helplessness» and «self-fulfilling prophecies» to know we do not have to be just victims of circumstance.

Not all our current descriptions and explanations of human behaviour are destined to last. They do not necessarily «travel well» through space (see Smith 1991). In the case of attributions, data from studies are over-interpreted, frequently; statistically significant self-serving biases or fundamental attribution errors are not equivalent to universal

generalization. Some individuals do not display In-group bias. Some display *Out-group bias*. Some are *even-handed*. Our accounts of behaviour should reflect these distributions rather than commit the fundamental error itself! Too many write-ups of experiments maximise comments on the preferred points of the results and consign the rest to a dustbin of error variance. But where is the error? Is it in the unreliability of measurement or is it in the weaknesses of explanations? Eventually we should be aiming to explain the full distribution of the qualities and quantities observed, and not just show that a particular effect can occur. (We already know about so many of these effects, not from common sense, but because they have been observed and recorded, some from the earliest writings of the species.)

Equally serious is the assumption that what can be found in a particular sub-culture in one kind of society will be found in other sub-cultures of that society. University students are a very small social group in any society. They are not drawn at random from the constituent sub-cultures. Their age distribution is narrow. They are relatively clever and well-informed, while their role status accords them peculiar freedoms from responsibilities. Freud's ideas are frequently dismissed now because his sampling was restricted to mainly middle-class Jewish Viennese women at the turn of the century. What is particularly unfortunate for social psychologists is that they are ex-members of their most common experimental group and may not even be aware of the variety of life-styles in their own society; until they widen their experience they will lack alternative perspectives. A white rat's account of the behaviour of mice may well not be generalizable to squirrels and hamsters. The chances that it will account for the behaviour of monkeys and monotremes are remote.

Smith's (op. cit.) analysis begins to systematize cross-cultural variations for just a few of the «classical» experiments. (Interesting that no one has pursued a similar exercise across the sub-cultures in a society?) Within the Attribution/Social Identity Theory focus here, we can simply note that not all the history texts referred to show either In-group favouritism or Out-group denigration. In a Japanese sample

«ability» and «task difficulty» became a single factor (Omura et al., 1990). In that work and in an early study of Japanese students academic failure was attributed to lack of effort; success was attributed to external factors (Chandler et al., 1981). In our own investigations of self-esteem in 13-14 year old pupils we found strong cross-cultural differences in self-esteem in the descending order: French, English, Japanese. Being a low academic achiever was associated with somewhat lower scores among the French and Japanese, but dramatically low self-esteem scores in the English. The cultural context had to be used to account for this pattern (Robinson, 1989). This is presumably the future: when appropriate social psychological explanations will have to be contingently linked to cultural variables.

Finally perhaps many current results will not travel well through time.

In terms of the theme here adopted *neither* attributional biases *nor* Out-group denigration are necessary components of human behaviour. What our theories currently aim to achieve is explanations for deviations from what is defensible *rational* and *realistic*. When judgments correspond to what is seen as a veridical perception or interpretation of reality, social psychology has no reason to offer explanations. When arguments are logically consistent, social psychology does not ask questions or offer explanations.

It follows then that once we educate or otherwise encourage people to be rational and realistic, we shall have to consign explanations of «attributional errors» or «In-group favouritism» to the history of social psychology, perhaps to serve as warnings of future possibilities. The data of today may disappear from future studies. (Which theories are temporary and which timeless is beyond the current brief.)

In the immediate future, within the European community, leaders and members of each state may be obliged to confront and resolve alternative perspectives on their societal institutions, which may in turn encourage within-state inquiries into the rationality and justification of their unequal internal distributions of resources, opportunities, and life chances. Other world states are facing

similar confrontations as they fragment into smaller units, mainly upon ethnic lines. The down-side risks are frightening, and it is unfortunate that the political changes have arisen somewhat prematurely for social psychology, in that we have not yet earned sufficient credibility to serve in a prominent and constructive advisory role in the affairs of state that are now to be faced.

At least we are in a position to offer some plausible accounts of what happens when people fail to be rational realists. We are also in a position to set down criteria which should enable disputing parties to differentiate between better and worse solutions to social problems. We can describe the differences those problems and those which are matters of differences for which evaluation is not an order. If ever all of us are operating according to these principles, we will no longer need to discriminate «the barbarians» from ourselves.

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