

EXPERIENCE AND METHOD

An Inquiry into the Concept of Experiential Research

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# Research Report

## EXPERIENCE AND METHOD

### The Two Leading Questions of Psychological Research

There is a crucial dilemma in the logic of method for the experimental psychologist. He wants to take an empirical view of man: that is, he wants to explain, human behaviour on the basis of experimental findings, but in order to do empirical research he must already have an a priori theory of human behaviour of a very general kind. It is a presupposition of doing research of any kind that you have already committed yourself to some very general model of explanation with respect to the subjects or objects of your research. And it is a presupposition of the experimental psychologist's work that man is a certain kind of being with respect to the determinants of his behaviour. The researcher assumes in advance the kind of explanation of which he thinks human behaviour is susceptible.

Most experimental psychologists would say that absolute determinism is the general model of explanation presupposed by experimental research; that however difficult it is to achieve in practice, in principle human behaviour is to be regarded as part of a deterministic order. Human behaviour can in principle be fully subsumed under causal laws such that once these laws are unearthed by research then behaviour can be unqualifiedly predicted and controlled. In other words, it is a presupposition of the application of scientific method to human beings that they be regarded as having behavioural outputs which are the exclusive effects of prior antecedent conditions in the natural order (Skinner, 1953)\*

This assumption of absolute human determinism is mistaken, I believe, because the presuppositional analysis is misplaced. It results from asking the wrong question first, which obscures a more radical question and one that is logically prior. The wrong question to ask first is, "What kind of explanation of the behaviour of my subjects am I committed to if I apply the experimental method to it?". The prior and more radical question is, "What kind of explanation of my own research behaviour am I committed to when I apply the experimental method to my subjects?". The fact that this question is not given priority in psychology is because it is less obviously relevant in the physical sciences - and it is in the physical sciences that experimental psychology finds its pedigree and its methodological inspiration. But when the investigator is the same kind of being as the subjects of his investigation, then this reflexive question becomes of paramount importance.

The question, "What assumptions must I make to explain my own research behaviour?", is logically prior to the question, "What assumptions must I make to explain my subjects' behaviour?", since in the experimental situation my subjects' behaviour is a function of procedures which I initiate and set up. And it is absurd to exempt the explanation of my subjects' behaviour from presuppositions which I consider it necessary to hold about my own research behaviour. I cannot as a rational being choose to see them in a way which I cannot choose to see myself in experimenting with their behaviour.

### Research Behaviour and Absolute Determinism

The fundamental problem for the experimentalist is therefore this: can he meaningfully adopt absolute determinism as an explanatory model for his own research behaviour? Does it make sense to say that in principle research behaviour is precisely predictable and can be fully subsumed under causal laws? I think not. It is surely part of what we mean by the term 'research behaviour' that it is behaviour that is in particular detail unpredictable. We engage in it precisely because we cannot know in advance what particular form it will take. It is behaviour which in the nature of the case constitutes creative advance, surmounting and transcending the predictable. It depends on the generation of new ideas, new insights, fresh hypotheses and innovative theoretical formulations. And the notion that you could predict specifically the occurrence of the expression of new ideas on the basis of observations of what is already known is incomprehensible, for the ideas would not

in any intelligible sense be new. There is no precise methodology for generating new ideas; new ideas are not the logical product of empirical observation, rather they arise unpredictably to direct it into ever more fruitful channels.

Again research behaviour cannot meaningfully be said to be controllable in principle. Supposing you say it is fully under the control of antecedent conditions, then this is something you are never entitled to assert about your own research behaviour. It is not possible for the researcher to research fully the antecedent conditions of his own behaviour; and this in principle, not merely in practice. For while he is tracking down antecedent conditions of current behaviour, he is producing still more behaviour that falls outside their purview. If he is recording the conditions under which he is recording, then he is not recording the conditions under which he is recording. He can never research experimentally his own research behaviour, since it necessarily transcends any enquiry into itself.

The researcher is in no better position if he supposes that other persons can research fully the antecedent conditions of his research behaviour. Other persons cannot research these conditions fully, for what they are researching is not just the subject's research behaviour, but his research behaviour under research by themselves, so that the antecedent conditions of their research behaviour is also relevant. In other words, they cannot record all the conditions under which he is recording, since some of these conditions include the conditions under which they are recording the conditions under which he is recording. But they cannot look at these, as we have seen, so further researchers will have to be brought in, and we are then launched on an endless pursuit of ever-retreating variables.

To research the antecedent conditions of research behaviour, whether your own or someone else's, always leaves you, as a necessary condition of making the enquiry, with a transcendent piece of research behaviour which you have not accounted for. This paradox is resolved when it is seen that research behaviour, as intelligent activity, is in part self-generated and self-explanatory, and is not the exclusive outcome of causal factors.

I conclude therefore that no meaningful operational definition can be given of the notion that research behaviour is fully controlled by antecedent conditions since in the nature of the case, that is, in principle, the full antecedent conditions of research behaviour are logically impossible to attain. And the situation is similar if we consider the view that research behaviour is in principle controllable by other persons, for if we are to avoid an infinite chain of controlling persons, we must hold that someone whose research behaviour is not controlled by others is controlling someone else's research behaviour. In general, the notion of controllable behaviour presupposes the notion of research behaviour that is not controlled.

#### Self-direction and Relative Determinism

Research behaviour, therefore, is original creative activity which cannot in principle be contained within an explanatory model of absolute determinism; it is not the sort of event that could be predicted as the exclusive outcome of its antecedent conditions. What explanatory model can be adopted for such behaviour? I suggest that central to any such model is the notion of intelligent agency, or to put it in another form, the notion of a self-directing person. To give a full and sufficient explanation of research behaviour, some reference must be made to the notion of intelligent agency or self-direction where this concept cannot be explained in terms of anything else, reduced without remainder to some other concept, or be considered as having an empirical reference identical with that of some quite different concept.

To say that the researcher is an intelligent agent is to say that his behaviour is not fully subsumable under the causal laws of the natural order, but is the expression of self-directed activity within that order. There are therefore two fundamental statements here: (1) There is a causal order in nature; (2) There are creative acts of self-directing agents occurring within nature. But if the second statement cannot be included within, or reduced to, the first, how can they be reconciled and made consis-

tent while retaining their relative independence? One answer is provided by the thesis of relative determinism (Hartshorne, 1962), which may be set forth in the following propositions.

(1) Every event has a cause or antecedent conditions.

(2) But it is not the case that antecedent conditions absolutely determine their outcome, and unqualifiedly restrict the outcome to one wholly definite sort of event. Thus not every event is fully and absolutely determined by its causes. A cause is therefore not a set of conditions from which only one outcome is possible, and from which in principle the outcome is wholly predictable.

(3) Rather, antecedent conditions delimit and determine a range of possible outcomes, but they do not absolutely determine any one of these possible outcomes. Thus my behaviour certainly has causes or antecedent conditions in the natural order, but these causes do not absolutely determine my behaviour; rather, they determine a limited range of possible behaviours, and I as self-directing agent decide which of these possible behaviours shall become actual.

(4) The width of the range of possible outcomes determined by antecedent conditions is a function, one may suggest, of the position of the individual in the hierarchy of chemical and biological types of entity from the atom to man. The hierarchy ascends from narrow to wider ranges of possible outcomes; it is thus a hierarchy of degrees of freedom in possible responses to given antecedent conditions. The human person - if he is not psychologically damaged or defective - has a significant degree of freedom, since he can bring intelligent and rational principles to bear upon the direction of his activity within nature. Nature, one might say, becomes spontaneously and uniquely self-directing within the individual human intelligence. Freedom for man is intelligent self-direction, the exercise of the inner nature within the limits prescribed by outer nature. The process of the world has a constant or conservative element. It also has an innovative element - an actualisation of possibilities whose appearance heralds what is new, and this actualisation seems to occur supremely in the original intelligent activity of human beings.

Thus to say that the psychological researcher is a self-directing person is to say that his behaviour is guided and structured, within his determined degree of freedom, by his grasp of certain principles. There are three broad types of relevant principle here, (1) There are technical or methodological principles concerned with hypothesis, experimental design, execution and analysis. (2) There are principles of scientific truth-telling: being objective, impartial and honest in the handling of the experimental data. (3) There are principles of respect for persons and their rights: that is, avoiding coercing or mistreating or otherwise abusing experimental subjects.

Reference to these principles is a significant and irreducible part of the explanation of the experimental psychologist's behaviour; they tell us the way in which he structures his behaviour, the mode of his self-direction, the style of his intelligent agency, or if you like, the manner in which he exercises his freedom. What is irreducible is his decision, his commitment to certain procedures in the light of certain principles.

(5) All human behaviour is not exclusively a causal product of antecedent conditions. But human behaviour can vary with respect to the extent to which it is constrained by causal factors. The severely brain-damaged person has little or no room for intelligent self-direction. Sometimes it is argued that since intelligent activity vanishes if the brain is damaged, therefore intelligent activity is exclusively a causal product of the processes of an integral brain. This is a fallacious argument analogous to saying that since a broken bulb causes the light to go out, therefore a whole bulb is a sufficient cause of the light which it emits. If one reality needs another for its adequate expression, it does not follow that the latter is a sufficient cause, of the former.

Some human behaviour is more, some human behaviour is less, constrained by causal factors. Where intelligent self-direction breaks down completely it is appropriate to have a causal hypothesis which states the sufficient antecedent conditions of the

breakdown. But much human behaviour is a product of an interaction between antecedent conditions and an intelligent selective and adaptive response to them: the antecedent conditions cause a response, but they do not necessarily cause the response. The physiological state underlying hunger causes a food-eating response, but it does not determine precisely when I eat or what I eat, for I determine these matters.

The determining conditions of the world constrain a self-directing person in four different ways: along a before-after dimension and along an objective-subjective dimension. If we regard these two dimensions as orthogonal, then in the centre of their crossing is his intelligent agency. The world constrains him by arousing him to action by both inner and outer stimuli: thus before he acts it relatively determines his possible responses - by inner needs and outer circumstances, both of which he did not originate. As an intelligent agent he chooses a particular response; but after he has chosen, his behaviour, however idiosyncratic, is constrained within the typical or general limits of its kind. Objectively, he is relatively determined by the physical features of the world and by the activities of other human beings; subjectively, he is relatively determined by the needs and desires of various kinds which he cannot disown or disavow. But between the stimulus and the response he can choose, between the claims of inner need and outer circumstance he can adjudicate. Hence his capacity for transforming himself may be profound.

How human beings relate to each other is relatively determined by their inner needs and by their outer physical circumstances; but social relations cannot be reduced without remainder to causal relations. For within the limits set by causal factors, members of a society make a tacit choice to relate to each other in accordance with certain norms or conventions (Mowrer, 1968; Pratt & Tooley, 1966). Prevailing social norms give evidence of tacit intelligent activity among persons in relation. Such activity is made fully explicit in self-directed and autonomous commitment to an exploration of varied norms of interpersonal relations. Thus for any piece of social behaviour there may be three distinct yet interrelated levels of explanation, none of which are necessarily mutually exclusive. There is a causal explanation in terms of relative determining conditions of inner needs and environmental factors; there is a conventional explanation in terms of tacit commitment to prevailing social norms; and there is autonomous explanation in terms of a fully explicit self-directed commitment to certain social purposes and principles. Research behaviour is a special case of social behaviour to which the level of autonomous explanation, inter alia, applies.

The relations between the three levels of explanation may be stated in terms of necessary, but not in terms of sufficient, conditions. Thus relative determining antecedents (inner needs and outer circumstances) provide necessary but not sufficient conditions for the emergence of conventional behaviour; and relative determining causes and conventional behaviour together provide necessary but not sufficient conditions for the emergence of autonomous and fully self-directed behaviour.

#### Self-direction as the Rationale of all Psychological Research

The basic explanatory model for research behaviour is that of intelligent self-direction - commitment to purposes in the light of principles - combined with relative determinism. The next question is as follows: "Given that I am committed to such a model to explain my own research behaviour, what explanatory model is relevant to my subjects' behaviour, and what method of enquiry is it appropriate to apply to it?". I cannot without gross inconsistency apply to my subjects a model that is logically at odds with the one I apply to myself. I cannot responsibly argue that they are in principle to be seen as fully under the control of antecedent conditions within a scheme of absolute determinism, while it is a necessary condition of my researching them that I view myself as a self-directing intelligence within a scheme of relative determinism. I must also surely see them in principle as self-directing and intelligent agents, whose behaviour is only relatively determined by antecedent conditions.

This model provides a powerful unifying rationale for the whole spectrum of psychological research. It provides an interdependent polarity of concepts, both of which illuminate each other without being reducible to each other: the concept of self-direction and the concept of relative determining conditions. If we approach psycho-

logical enquiry from the standpoint of relative determining conditions, we can ask two fundamental general questions, (1) What range of possible "behaviours, what span of options, do the determining conditions of the world - in both human nature and outer nature - leave open for human self-direction? This is a basic qualitative question. It asks for a comprehensive categorisation of the experiences and behaviours which it is possible for human beings to have, given the way the world is. It asks, in short, for a natural history of human experience. If this question is not asked, and if it is not answered systematically, then psychological enquiry can become unduly narrow, and restricted in the range of behaviours which it examines (Zener, 1958). It is particularly important to include in the survey atypical behaviours, such as fire-walking and ectosomatic experiences, since these raise important questions about the span of options open to human beings.

(2) If a person elects a possible behaviour, chooses an option, what limits do the determining conditions of the world impose upon his consequent behaviour? If I choose to learn, perceive, associate, memorise, selectively attend, recall, relate to other persons in one or more unnumberable different ways, what form does the structure of the world impose on my behaviour, what are the constraints on behaviour within which I must operate in order to achieve my goals? A great deal of experimental and other research within individual and social psychology falls within the purview of this question. In the great body of psychological research that has been done and is being done, it is not really a question of finding out how antecedent variables absolutely determine the behaviour under investigation, but of finding out how, if one chooses to engage in a certain behaviour, the typical or general form of that behaviour is a function of its antecedent variables. But the variables only relatively determine the behaviour since its occurrence is crucially a function of the agent choosing to act in that mode. The factor of intelligent choice in the explanation is important since it alerts us to a more positive formulation of the question in the following manner:

"What knowledge of my organism and of the causal mesh of its physical, psychological and social relations with the world must I have in order to exercise my liberty in this or that direction most intelligently and creatively?"

If we approach psychological enquiry from the standpoint of intelligent agency and self-direction, again there appear to be two fundamental questions to be asked, (1.) How does the capacity for human self-direction become constrained, blocked, inhibited, suppressed, deviated or distorted? A wide range of disciplines converge on this question: dynamic psychology rooted in the work of the therapist and the clinician; aspects of educational and developmental psychology; aspects of social psychology and sociology. Theory can be built up on a wide range of methods, including testing, observation, interview, person-to-person therapy, counselling and teaching. Theory is most powerful here when it accepts the presupposition that human beings are potentially self-directing, and then asks how it is that sometimes they become the victims of obsessions, fixations and systematic stereotypic distortions of behaviour. If this type of question can be answered it raises the further practical question of how the person whose self-directive capacity is chronically constrained can be liberated or facilitated to liberate himself. This leads over into the wider issues of the second fundamental question which is discussed below. Before proceeding to this question, there is an important type of experiment done in social psychology which has a bearing on the problem of the constraints on human self-direction. I will call the method involved the perversion method.

There is a classic instance of the perversion method I would like to cite since it has been regarded (e.g. Rogers, 1969) as an experiment giving evidence of absolute human determinism, of the unfreedom of man, of his being totally controlled by factors outside himself. I shall argue, however, that it simply indicates that human self-direction is a fragile growth very much dependent on trust and faith in other persons. The experiment is reported by Dr. Richard Crutchfield of Berkeley in 1955\*

Five subjects are screened from each other in individual booths facing a wall on which certain items for judgment are projected. Each booth is fitted with four lights to indicate what judgments the other four are giving, and a switch for the occupant to give his own judgment. The subjects are told that their booths will be given a dif-

ferent letter, A, B, C, D or E. In fact every booth is given the letter E, but each subject only sees the letter E in his own booth: he supposes that the other booths have been given the other letters. There is no communication between subject and experimenter. The experimenter in fact controls all the lights in the booths, and makes it appear to each occupant that the other four answers to each item on the wall are at variance with the obviously correct answer. Most occupants yield to the apparent group pressure and conform their answer to the wrong but apparently consensus answer. (items are of the form: which figure is larger, X or Y?)

This experiment does not show that the model of absolute determinism is applicable to human behaviour. What the experiment above all shows is that capacity for intelligent self-direction withers and fades when a person is isolated and systematically deceived and manipulated. The subject, as a necessary condition of the effectiveness of the experiment, is encouraged to take the experimenter's intentions on trust and in good faith. However, he is deceived on three counts: the lettering of the booths, the purpose of the lights, and the control of the lights. All communication is totally manipulative and one way from experimenter to individual subject. The experiment simply reveals in a harmless way four classic ingredients for disabling and breaking down self-directive capacity: the ingredients are isolation, manipulation, deception, and the abuse of trust.

I wish now to return to the second major question which it is relevant to ask when we approach psychological enquiry from the standpoint of human self-direction. (2) How can the human potential for self-direction be actualised? How can self-directive capacity be released, unfolded and developed? Up to a point one can seek to answer this question in terms of external agencies. One can look at the way in which physical and social factors (such as housing, food, equipment, educational methods, social structures and the attitudes and behaviour of other persons) appear to facilitate the development of self-directive skills and competence. This especially so when looking at the upbringing and education of human beings throughout childhood: how should we relate to children at school and at home, what kind of environment should we provide for them, to facilitate the maximal emergence of self-directive power as they grow older? But beyond a certain point, the question, "How can self-directive capacity be developed?", must necessarily be answered primarily in terms of the agent himself. In the last analysis no-one else can take responsibility for developing my self-directive capacity. The most others can do - although this is a very great deal - is to provide the conditions under which I awaken to my potential, and then to work with me to provide the conditions under which we can in liberty develop our potential. Actualising potential for self-direction is in the last analysis the creative task of the self in question - in relation with other selves engaged in a similar task.

Developing self-directive capacity means, in Maslow's phrase, self-actualisation: the agent unfolding and exercising, in the light of certain principles, the varied capacities and powers of his nature, within the relative determining conditions of the world, and, as far as possible, in relation with others similarly engaged. Supposing we now ask the question, "How, from the standpoint of the agent, can self-directing capacity be developed?". There appear to be basically two ways of setting about trying to provide an answer. The first is the survey method. We can set up some broad criteria for picking out self-directing and self-actualising people. We can then examine the policies and strategies they adopt and the general effects of their life-style upon themselves and other persons; we may then be able to formulate some general principles about the cultivation of self-directive capacity, as instanced by these people. To some extent this is the method that Maslow has followed (Maslow, 1954; Maslow, 1962). What is involved here is a natural history of the life-policies and life-styles of persons concerned to live creative, developing and self-determining lives within the causal conditions of the world. Such a natural history is extremely valuable in keeping open a wide perspective on possibilities for human self-development, especially if the identifying criteria for samples of self-directing persons are kept very broad.

There are two possible limitations to this method. Firstly, the limits of your own awareness may be reflected in your choice of identifying criteria for those whom you



regard as self-directing. Secondly, if you want to "be systematic about methods for developing self-direction, then you want to propose and to try out certain methods under certain conditions. But if you exempt yourself from the trials, then you are in the morally dubious position of expecting other persons to try out your ideas on self-development for you. And if other persons are trying out your ideas to which they are not themselves internally committed, then they are "being other-directed and not self-directed - so the exercise is self-defeating.

### The Experiential Method

This therefore leads me to consider the second basic way of trying to answer the question, "How, from the standpoint of the agent, can self-directing capacity be developed?". This is the experiential method. This I regard as the central and crucial method for systematically exploring how human potential for self-direction can be actualised. In the experiential method, the agent himself engages systematically in a self-directed exploration of his own experience and behaviour and attends fully to the experience and behaviour of other agents who are similarly engaged in interaction with him.. This means that the agent explicitly adopts and tries out in his own behaviour, both intrapsychically and interpersonally, new or unfamiliar norms, principles and procedures. The presence of other people enables the agent to take advantage of a fundamental assumption of the method: that self-directing persons develop most readily as a function of fully reciprocal relations with other self-directing persons. This is a reasonable assumption, since a person who has grasped the rationale of being self-determining and who appreciates the conditions required for it, including the relevant attitudes and behaviours of others, is more likely to be able and willing to provide those conditions for other persons. It may be that sometimes the experiential method will be applied in solitude, when certain aspects of human potential are being explored; but post eventum exchanges with others who have engaged in similar explorations would still appear to be indispensable.

I will sketch out some of the basic elements for a model of the experiential method. I shall argue later that the experimental method as traditionally employed in the psychology laboratory is in one sense a complementary method, and in another sense can be seen as a special limited and restricted case of the experiential method. I will cast the model in terms of a dyadic relation between facilitator and agent; more complex relations (as in the use of group interaction methods) can be regarded as an elaboration of the dyadic relation.

(1) There is a dyadic and co-equal relation between facilitator and agent. These roles are reversible between the two persons involved; or each person may combine them at the same time. One may facilitate and be present for the self-experiment of the other. They may then reverse these roles. Or each may combine both roles in a fully reciprocal relation in which each is both exploratory agent and facilitator for the other. There is no experimenter requesting or prescribing the behaviour of a subject: rather the agent is both experimenter and subject combined, systematically exploring his experience with the facilitation of another person in interaction with him.

(2) Both facilitator and agent, therefore, engage in systematic and exploratory self-direction in relationship with each other. The exploration may emphasise one of two primary areas, the intrapsychic and the interpersonal. These areas are not mutually exclusive, but always to a greater or lesser degree mutually involved in each other. Nevertheless it is possible to be concerned more with intrapsychic change and development: the re-evaluation of past experiences, the unfolding of potential needs, capacities and insights. Or it is possible to explore the ongoing dyadic relation itself and its potential. In the former case the agent is the protagonist with the aid and support of the facilitator. In the latter case, each person combines both roles: he is both agent, and also facilitator for the other.

(3) The functions of each with respect to the other are: (i) to provide a climate; of acceptance, support and experimentation; (ii) to take facilitating initiatives where relevant; (iii) to give positive and negative feedback; (iv) to share similar experience to aid clarification and evaluation.

(4) To say the exploration of human potential for self-direction is systematic is to say that the conjoint exploration is extra-conventional: that is, it is not conducted in an ad hoc manner as part of some other social occasion. Rather it is pursued at a special time and place "by pre-arrangement, and in accordance with explicit procedures, norms, and theories, explicitly shared and understood. Hence it is appropriate to talk of the laboratory method for exploring human potential.

(5) The experiential method has certain norms or guiding principles, the adoption of which by facilitator and agent are a precondition of its effectiveness. , These norms allow experiential discovery in relation with another. They are all closely inter-dependent.

(i) Risk-taking; "being willing to take an intrapsychic risk in moving from familiar experience and "behaviour to unfamiliar experience and "behaviour; and being willing to take a social risk that such a move will be accepted by the other.

(ii) Trust: being willing to trust intrapsychic holistic tendencies, or total organism impulses and responses; being willing to trust the other to be supportive and accepting; and being willing to trust the other to be self-directing.

(iii) Openness: being open to the emergence of new feelings, ideas and action-tendencies both in oneself and in the other; openness to the new, innovative and unpredictable in the ongoing intrapsychic and interpersonal process.

(iv) Self-disclosure: being willing to disclose oneself to the other, to reveal and express the emergent feelings, ideas and action-tendencies that are a function of the process of interaction.

(v) Honesty: being honest about what is going on intrapsychically and interpersonally.

(vi) Objectivity and impartiality: being willing to regard the views and claims of each person, including oneself, without arbitrary partiality in favour of anyone; doing justice to the situation without irrelevant bias.

(vii) Acceptance: being willing to accept oneself without internal disparagement and to accept and support the other in his explorations.

(viii) Control: being willing to control one's own behaviour, where relevant, in the interests of facilitating the self-discovery of the other.

(ix) Responsibility: being willing to take full responsibility for one's behaviour and reactions, and to accord the other equivalent responsible status.

These norms express in different ways a faith in the creativity of human interaction, in the capacity of human beings in relation to actualise their potential.

(6) The experiential method presupposes some minimal theory interrelating the following concepts in terms of structural, dynamic and developmental principles, and in terms of social interaction.

(i) The primal self: hypothesised potential capacities.

(ii) The acquired self: the present personality as a function of socialisation and acculturation, together with its subsequent autonomous development.

(iii) The directing self: the ability to transform the acquired self and to actualise the primal self.

(iv) The transformed self: the personality as re-created by systematic self-direction.

The theory will also typically state some technique or method for changing the relations between the first three in the direction of the fourth. Facilitator and agent, therefore, must clearly agree on and assimilate the type of theory in terms of which they intend to work. There are currently a variety of theories in terms of which the experiential method may be applied. They include: the theory of re-evaluation counselling (Jackins, 1965; Scheff, 1971); the theory of transactional analysis (Berne, 1961); the theory of bio-energetic analysis (Lowen, 1970). Each of these theories includes techniques for its experiential exploration.

(7) The theory makes "both a prediction of what is possible within the limits of the relative determining conditions of inner and outer factors, and also a recommendation that such a possibility be actualised by the agent. It therefore contains an evaluative and prescriptive element: it picks out possibilities that are worthy of actualisation. Thus the experiential method is both a method of research into human potential, and, since it actualises preferred potential, a method of personality growth and development.

(8) The theory can be assessed in terms of three interdependent criteria.

(i) It can be assessed intellectually in terms of its internal coherence, its empirical plausibility and the apparent feasibility of its practical methods.

(ii) It can be assessed evaluatively or axiologically, in terms of the desirability .. of the possibilities for human personality which it picks out as worthy to be actualised.

(iii) It can be assessed experientially, as detailed below.

The intellectual and the evaluative criteria, where relevantly applied, are a protection against unwise experiential commitment; but where irrelevantly applied, they can be a defense against fruitful experiential learning and personality change. Where interdependently applied, the three criteria may all throw light on each other. Experiential assessment is normally crucial, since the full significance of some of the basic concepts and principles of the theory may only be grasped experientially, by living through \* them.

(9) The theory attains a measure of intersubjective validity to the extent that it is experientially validated; that is, to the extent that facilitator and agent, and any others involved, agree that they have experienced change in the direction indicated, as a function of the techniques and methods recommended, and in a manner that follows from the structural, dynamic and other principles of the theory. Such consensual validation may only be partial and tentative, since further exploration through the use of the experiential method may lead to an amendment or enlargement of the original theory: theory and method may progressively modify and clarify each other. Such validation requires that those involved be in the relevant experience but not totally of it. On the one hand they need to commit themselves to the norms of risk-taking, trust, openness and self-disclosure; on the other hand they need to be objective, impartial and honest in their awareness of and account of all relevant aspects of the experiential situation. Experiential investigators, therefore, require a subtle combination of commitment and discrimination.

Different theories susceptible of experiential investigation need not necessarily be mutually exclusive in the sense that only one can be valid. They may both be valid: each may exemplify a different area of human potential, with a greater or lesser degree of overlap. Such a theory is only invalidated if it claims to be all-inclusive. Where two or more experientially validated but different and unrelated theories are upheld by different groups or by the same person at different times, then they may refer to areas of experience that stand in relative dissociation from each other. On the other hand, there may be a case for seeking to interrelate the theories and to subject the integrated theory to experiential test.

The experiential test, put as a question, has roughly the following form: "Does the self-directive procedure adopted by myself and the other agents, with full understanding of it and internal commitment to it, have the effects on the experience and behaviour of myself and the others as stated and accounted for in the theory?". If systematic and sympathetic application of the procedure does not have the stated effects then the theory is invalid for the agents in question. If it is agreed that such application does have relevant effects, but these are not exactly as stated or not exactly as accounted for by the theory, then the theory is partially validated but requires further modification and refinement. If the applied procedure does have effects as stated and accounted for in the theory, then the theory attains consensual validation for the agents concerned: what is crucial in attaining such consensual

validation is the quality of critical awareness and discrimination in categorising and evaluating the experiential effects and referring them back to the original theory. Prior knowledge of the theory may produce subsequent selective identification: the agent may not categorise or take adequate account of significant experience and behaviour which occurs but which falls outside the concepts of the theory. This is where feedback from, and sharing experience with, others is valuable.

A higher-order kind of experiential test is cross-reference testing. The experiential investigator may explore different theories in the field in order to judge what light they throw on each other from the standpoint of their internal coherence, their empirical accuracy, their practical efficacy and the value or desirability of their experienced results; and in order also to build up, modify and refine existing theoretical models in the direction of new ones. There are, however, natural constraints upon what any one investigator can achieve in this way: systematic experiential investigation involves a serious personal commitment over some period of time.

(10) There is no substitute for experiential investigation of a theory concerned with possibilities for actualising human potential. But the traditional research methods of the social sciences may be used to complement the experiential method. One may thus look from the 'outside' at what the experiential investigator is examining from the 'inside'. External measures may be taken of experienced change and of the conditions under which it arises. The effects of the experiential investigations of different types of theory by different groups may be objectively compared, and appropriate conclusions drawn. But you cannot experiment manipulatively from the 'outside' with the experiential method: that is, you cannot effectively get different groups to try out different self-actualising techniques to which you are in no way committed and of which you have no personal experience. This is because you cannot facilitate a group's entry into a technique if you have not got an experiential grasp of its leading concepts; and if your subjects sense that you are manipulating them, they will have low internal commitment to the technique and will therefore not be in any proper sense engaging in a self-actualisation process. Hence you will not be studying what you purport to be. The choice is between experiential investigation and external non-manipulative observation of this and its effects. There are two further points to make, (1) Any persistent and exclusive insistence on the external approach may reasonably be regarded as a defence against systematic commitment to personality change and development. (2) where there is radical disagreement between the 'outside' and the 'inside' findings, and those involved appear to be intelligent and responsible people, the best solution is for the two parties to change roles, in order to effect an experiential resolution of their differences. Thus if the 'insider' experiences the 'outsider's' perspective, and vice versa, each party may be in a better position to accept a modification of what from their original standpoint they judged to be relevant variables.

(11) The experiential method, though it involves a systematic exploration of personal and interpersonal experience and behaviour, also involves sensitivity, empathy, timing and an imaginative and creative response to the ongoing process within each person and between all those concerned. The theory may indicate the kind of potential that can be actualised and an appropriate method for doing so. But how to use a technique, when to use it, and how effective it is - these things can be very much a function of a sensitive and imaginative grasp of the total situation as it is developing. Though systematic, the exploration is also flexible and adaptable, accommodating new, unpredictable and creative responses of both agent and facilitator. The technique provides a flexible structure for the emergence of creative process. The rare, newly emergent, behaviourally significant event is a sign of the success of the technique, not simply the predictable and statistically significant event.

(12) The general form of the experiential method may be stated as follows: "If in the light of theory A, an agent in state B initiates a procedure C, in relation D with another agent in state E, then he will tend to discover effects P in his own experience and behaviour and/or in the experience and behaviour of the other, where these effects are accounted for in terms of theory A." The theory can predict the tendency for effects P to occur, where these effects are broadly categorised by the

theory; but the precise timing, form and content of the occurrence of F is unpredictable, is a matter of creative process.

### The Experiential Method and the Experimental Method

The general form of the experiential method given immediately above is also applicable to the experimental method, except of course that there are significant differences in the way in which the variables in the formula are to be interpreted in each case. I will first of all translate the formula in terms of an example drawn from each method, and then consider how each of the variables is interpreted in terms of each of the two methods.

For a translation in terms of the experiential method I will draw an example from the theory and practice of re-evaluation counselling. "In the light of the theory of re-evaluation counselling, if a person whose attention is balanced between distressful material from the past and the present supportive situation adopts a positive direction (self-validating spoken phrase) in a co-counselling relation with another person who is giving him free attention, then he will tend to release emotional discharge of the distressful material, as accounted for by the psychodynamics of the theory."

For a translation in terms of the experimental method, I will draw an example from psychophysics. "In the light of psychophysical theory, if an experimenter in a state of detached analytical observation adopts the method of limits in a relation of systematically measuring the difference threshold for pitch of a subject who is passive except for giving verbal responses to indicate his awareness of changes of pitch, then the subject will tend to give responses which show that the stimulus must be increased by a constant fraction of its value to be just noticeably different to him, as accounted for by Weber's law." Incidentally, one may note in passing that Weber's law is typical of the relative determinism of nature. It is a rough statistical generalisation that holds only in the mid-ranges of most senses. You can predict the approximate mean of any large number of measures of just noticeable difference in a sensory threshold, but you cannot predict the extent to which any particular measure will vary from this mean.

Returning now to the more abstract, generic formula, I will try to show the different interpretations given to its variables by the experiential method (EeM) and the experimental method (EmM) respectively.

#### "If in the light of theory A..."

EeM The theory tends to be a total personality theory of the structure, dynamics and development of the self. As applied it is concerned qualitatively with the effects on the experience and behaviour of both facilitator and agent of their adoption and acting out of certain policies, strategies or techniques.

EmM The theory tends to be a piecemeal theory dealing with some aspect of some branch of behaviour such as perception, learning, attention, memory, group process, etc. As applied, it is concerned quantitatively with functional relations between variables with respect to the experimental subjects<sup>1</sup> behaviour only.

#### "... an agent in state B..."

EeM The agent here may be either facilitator or agent in a dyadic experiential relationship, or he may be either person combining both roles. The whole person of the agent is involved: he is both cognitively and affectively responsive and active, and overtly so. Cognitively, the agent is primarily concerned with insight and imaginative, empathic awareness, secondarily with intellectual analysis, measurement, planning and control.

EmM The agent is the experimenter, who is overtly active and responsive only in the cognitive mode, primarily in terms of intellectual analysis, measurement, planning and control. His emotions are covert and formally excluded from his overt behaviour.

"...initiates a procedure C..."

EeM The procedure is one in which the agent represents or exemplifies the theory overtly in and through himself, through his total "behaviour as a person in relation with his facilitator. Both have explicit knowledge of the theory and the rationale of the procedure\*. The procedure is a policy, strategy or technique which the agent adopts necessarily with internal commitment and self-determination.

EmM The procedure is one in which the experimenter represents the theory covertly through his instructions to his subjects. Only the experimenter has explicit knowledge of the theory and of the rationale of the procedure: the subject is kept theoretically and tactically naive. The experimental procedure is one which the subject adopts at the "behest of the experimenter without necessarily having any internal commitment to it.

"...in relation D..."

EeM The relation between agent and facilitator is an I-Thou or person-to-person relation of mutuality and meeting. The relation has a dynamic structure with two-way interaction: there are explicit procedures and techniques "but they are flexible, adaptable and modifiable by imaginative initiatives at each end of the relation. The shared or common norms of the relation are those of risk-taking, trust, openness, self-disclosure, honesty, objectivity and impartiality, acceptance, control and responsibility.

EmM The relation between experimenter and subject tends to be an I-it relation, in the sense that the subject is regarded for experimental purposes as a bundle of intervening variables. The relation has a static structure with one-way action: the experimenter manages, controls or manipulates the subject's behaviour in accordance with the more or less rigorous constraints of a prior experimental design. The norms of the relation are equivalent to those of manager and managed in a benevolent but closed bureaucratic hierarchy: the norms of risk-taking, openness and self-disclosure are absent; the norms of trust, honesty and acceptance receive a very limited, formal interpretation.

"...with another agent in state E..."

EeM As with the first agent so with his partner: the whole person is involved as self-directing in exploration of the theory and its derived procedures, the rationale of which is known and understood as a condition of involvement. His responses benefit his own exploration as well as the first agent's exploration.

EmM The second agent is the experimental subject, who is self-directing only within stringent limits set by the experimenter: in other words, his behaviour is very largely other-directed, since he need have no internal commitment to the procedural instructions which he carries out. He is theory-blind: he can only guess at the theory and rationale of method in many experiments. His responses benefit only the experimenter's fulfilment of research interests. The subject may take away little or nothing that is of relevance to his needs and interests.

"...then he will tend to discover effects F..."

EeM Theory-relevant effects are on both agents in the direction of personality change including cognitive and emotional or attitudinal change. The significant effects are experiential and behavioural qualities.

EmM Theory-relevant effects are only on the experimenter and only in the direction of cognitive change (he has confirmed, falsified or modified his hypothesis). The significant effects are quantitative: functional relations between variables.

If the two versions of each phrase above are compared and contrasted, it can be seen that in one sense the two methods complement each other, since in certain respects each method emphasises what the other does not. In other respects, however, it is evident that the experimental method is a restricted and limiting case of the experiential method, in the sense that the interpretation of variables for the former involves a considerable reduction and contraction of the interpretation of the variables for the latter.

### Advantages of the Experimental Method

(1) It enables a precise theoretical account to "be given of piecemeal areas of experience and behaviour - such as sensation, perception, attention, social conformity, and so on - in terms of functional relations between variables and statistically significant behaviour events. It thus reveals the typical, general or average form of different specific types of experience and behaviour as a function of their respective relative determining conditions; whereas the occurrence, timing and content of such experience and behaviour is often a function of the choice of an intelligent agent or self-directing person. The experimental method is of great importance in showing how the causal mesh of the world constrains certain chosen behaviours within certain formal limits.

(2) It therefore facilitates the development of applied psychology or psychological technology in a wide variety of quite specific fields from programmed learning to dial-watching. Which is another way of saying that its findings can be applied to facilitate and make more effective the chosen behaviours of self-directing persons.

(3) It requires a creative intellect working in terms of a cool and disengaged logical rigour, and so cultivates in the experimenter a kind of intellectual development in which causal discrimination is maximised. In other words, the experimenter develops a sharp analytic scrutiny of relevant determining conditions. To pursue the method is to actualise one aspect of human potential: the cognitive skills of critical, sceptical causal enquiry.

### Disadvantages of the Experimental Method

(1) It cannot generate or accommodate a theory of persons in a life-relevant form. It can only offer theories relevant to the control and manipulation of one person's or group's behaviour by another. But a life-relevant personality theory is one that offers techniques, policies and strategies of self-directed behaviour, both intrapsychic and interpersonal, that can be extrapolated to or incorporated within an ongoing daily life-style. The experimental method cannot generate an effective theory of persons because it depends too much on management, control and manipulation, too little on real meeting - between experimenter and subject. Persons, it has been said, are what we meet; and a life-relevant theory of persons can only be rooted in a shared experience of meeting, which is systematic yet developing out of a free internal commitment.

(2) Its findings, therefore, have low applicability to the existential realities of intrapsychic growth and interpersonal living. The most complete model of human behaviour based on experimental work is probably the conditioned response model. But the practice of deliberately altering or confirming another person's responses through selective reinforcement involves controlling the other; and controlling another is incompatible with relating to another. Conditioning theory is useless in person-to-person meeting except for the manipulative or emotionally blind. It may, however, be relevant in helping the chronically afflicted at certain stages.

(3) The method is bedevilled by its own internal restrictions the more it moves along the continuum from ego-peripheral, external forms of behaviour to egos-centred and internal attitudes, interests, values and frames of reference. The essence of the problem is that the experimenter gets himself into a methodological double-bind with his subjects. He wants them to be theoretically naive and unprejudiced so that he may obtain objectively valid results. He therefore keeps himself theoretically and emotionally closed: he does not reveal the rationale of his experiment, and behaves toward his subjects as a purely formal organiser of the experimental proceedings. But he cannot, of course, prevent his subjects from guessing, divining, inferring, supposing what the purpose and point of the experiment is; nor can he entirely prevent them from adapting, distorting, modifying or amending their behaviour accordingly. And since he behaves like a paternalist or benevolent autocrat - expecting that the good subject will allow himself to be controlled yet never informed - there arises the social desirability variable: the compliant subjects who seek to please the experimenter, to confirm what they suppose to be his hypothesis, or to produce some desired image of themselves in his mind. Conversely there may arise the resentful subject, who responds cynically or

carelessly, or who may seek in his responses subtly to subvert what he imagines the point of the experiment to be.

In one sense, therefore, the experimenter, by the norms of closure which he sustains, gets the findings he deserves. For if he deliberately excludes the self-directing activity of his subjects from a shared grasp of the theoretical and practical rationale of the experiment, then this activity will still be evident, but in a manner that distorts results in accordance with a rationale guessed at or inferred from minimal cues, and in accordance with emotional responses, compliant or resentful, to his methodological autocracy. The experimenter's dilemma is as follows: if he does not treat his subjects as fully intelligent and self-directing agents - if he does not relate openly to them both theoretically and personally, they may persist in exercising their agency in a way which in the nature of the case he cannot control so long as he insists on being a detached and secretive manager of the situation, and in a way that subverts his claims to be producing objectively valid results. If on the other hand he does relate openly to them as intelligent agents, then he is not engaging in the experimental method as such.

One way of resolving the dilemma is to use the experiential method, to relate openly and on a fully reciprocal basis as self-directing subject to self-directing subject, according to a procedure which permits a theory to be substantiated, to a greater or lesser degree, by experiential canons of intersubjective validity. There is an obvious ambiguity of meaning attached to the term 'subject'<sup>1</sup> which is relevant to the differences between the experimental and the experiential methods. There is the subject who is subject to the will of a king, ruler, or despot; and there is the subject who has subjectivity, who is the author of his acts and the conscious individual centre of experiences. If you try to manipulate your subjects, treat them as subjects in the first sense and sustain an I-it relationship with them, then the excluded subjectivity, the Thou, tends to persist in revealing itself through intellectually and emotionally distorted responses (Jourard, 1967)-

(4) The experimental method cannot accommodate the statistically unpredictable but behaviourally significant event - that is, the novel and creative event.

(5) Nor can it accommodate the light thrown on human experience and behaviour by the use of metaphoric capacity as evidenced in the humanities and the arts.

(6) Finally, excess emphasis on the method could lead among its adherents to an underdevelopment of emotional and interpersonal competence as against a certain kind of intellectual competence. The method can be used defensively: the whole person and his potentialities can hide behind a misplaced insistence on experimental rigour and absolute determinism in areas where they are clearly inappropriate.

#### Advantages of the Experiential Method

(1) It can give rise to an overview theory of human behaviour, a comprehensive personality theory including structure and dynamics, since its empirical basis is a systematic exploration of shared experience in a relation of mutuality and person-to-person meeting. It necessarily involves concepts in dynamic psychology which are life-relevant since, as we have seen, it is both a research method and a method of personal and interpersonal development. The type of theory involved has been analysed in some detail in the section above called The Experiential Method.

(2) Its practical findings can be expressed in terms of various policies, techniques and strategies for a self-directing person to adopt to actualise his potential, to transform the acquired self and realise the primal self. Though developed in laboratory sessions, these findings have relevance to the intrapsychic and interpersonal aspects of a wide variety of different spheres of daily living.

(3) Although it has obvious affinities with therapy, the experiential method is better understood in terms of an education model rather than a therapy model. In the widest sense of the term 'education' it is an adult education method concerned with actual-



ising cognitive potential, "both insight and intellect, in alliance with affective potential, (in the narrower sense, the educational method is clearly distinct from the experiential method.) A therapy relation, where there is a true meeting or participating experience (Buhler, 1967) between therapist and client, may give rise to much valuable personality theory of an adequate and life relevant kind. But the therapy relation as such is still inadequate from the standpoint of the experiential method. It can be too unsystematic, too unilateral in its weight and emphasis - lacking in complete theoretical, affective and practical reciprocity and sharing. The notion of the client or patient implies an inadequate person for whom special provisions have to be made in the relation, and this introduces a considerable restriction upon the extent to which systematic and comprehensive techniques and strategies can be employed. In particular, a therapy relation tends to lack theoretical exchanges, in which both persons seek to clarify and evaluate the theory in terms of which they are working.

(4) If thoroughly pursued it is a method that tends to cultivate in both facilitator and agent emotional and interpersonal competence, competence of insight, and intellectual competence.

#### Disadvantages of the Experiential Method

(1) The basic concepts of the related theory tend to be phenomenological: their full significance can only be grasped experientially, by 'living through'. Hence they cannot be taught by verbal exposition only: they require what might be termed experiential ostensive definition. "He that doeth the will shall know of the doctrine." You have to become something new and different in order adequately to know something new and different. Systematic change of thought is a function of systematic change of being. This leads to the central and problematic dilemma of the method: you cannot fully accept and grasp the theory until you have made an experiential commitment to its practical implications; but once you make such a commitment, which is a commitment of the whole person, then you have major interests vested in not being too critical of the theory.

This has long been one of the problems of the therapy relation in general and psychotherapy training in particular: the relation becomes an initiation into the mysteries, a collusive indoctrination, with discriminating evaluation of theory abandoned in favour of plumbing the depths. Hence we have what could be called the immersion method: a person disappears, so to speak, within a body of theory, practice and experience, and it may be some time before he surfaces to question the presuppositions of his total immersion. In religious practice, of course, total psychological immersion has often been explicitly required (occasionally symbolised by total physical immersion), and the resultant alienation and intolerance of attitude between creeds and sects has been remarkable.

It may be that the immersion method is to some degree a necessary part of the experiential method in this sense: you may have to live through the implications of a theory until you become experientially aware of its limitations; that is, until you experience the need to explore wider domains of being than it acknowledges. Hence the experiential method can allow for long-term growth processes, or experiential evaluation over time. Nevertheless, there is clearly a powerful case for critical discrimination of theory before making an experiential commitment to exploring it; and also for sustaining critical awareness and intellectual evaluation throughout the commitment. Indeed, what marks off the experiential method, among many other things, from traditional therapy and religious practice, - is the inclusion of a shared and sustained critical awareness.

(2) There is a closely related problem, that of consensus collusion. All those who are initiated, who have explored a theory experientially, may sustain a tacit norm to the effect that certain areas of experience, ranges of human potentiality, behavioural possibilities, shall be overlooked so that the adequacy of the theory is not called experientially in question. Consensus collusion to suppress or ignore factors that challenge the theory subscribed to, can be found among analysts of various kinds and their analysands, among certain cultists and religious devotees. But it also assails

those who subscribe to the virtues of the experimental method, whether in the human or physical sciences: the refusal to acknowledge or examine unusual and atypical kinds of experience and behaviour that cannot readily be explained in terms of the basic limiting conceptions of the prevailing scientific world view. It is a problem, therefore, that is not peculiar to the experiential method.

In following the experiential method it is obviously impossible to explore all human potentiality at once. There must necessarily be some limitation and restriction. But it is wise to remain sensitive to possibilities that lie beyond those currently being explored.

(3) It cannot, in its immediate practice, readily accommodate quantification and measurement. There is a discontinuity between the aims of measuring and the aims of relating: to measure requires analytic detachment, to relate requires creative commitment. The intrusion of systematic measurement into the relation between facilitator and agent would subvert the quality of their relating by shifting the emphasis from fully experiential exploration to a more restricted intellectual investigation. Experientially, the shift is from an I-Thou toward an I-it mode of relating. Probably the best way round this problem is to record an experiential session, and then analyse the recording at leisure post eventum. The felt incompatibility between precise quantification and interpersonal commitment could lead, quite erroneously, to the view that quantification is irrelevant even when applied to the experiential method post eventum or by outside resources.

(4) For these various reasons, excess emphasis on the experiential method could lead among its adherents to a development of emotional and interpersonal competence at the expense of critical discrimination, intellectual rigour and competence. Commitment to personal growth, to interpersonal relations and their attendant affect and insight, could become a systematic defense against intellectual effort and clarification.

#### The Scale of Methods

The experiential method and the experimental method stand at opposite and extreme ends of a scale or spectrum of research methods. At one end, the experiential method involves a two-way, person-to-person, systematic but creative interaction between facilitator and agent. At the other end, the experimental method involves a manipulative and quantified observation of subject by experimenter. At the centre point of the scale is pure, non-interactive, non-manipulative observation.

Between the experiential method and the centre point occur the educational method and the therapy method. Both these may be regarded as reduced versions of the experiential method: reduced, because they are in many instances not fully reciprocal and theoretically open relationships - as when relating to a child or a distressed patient. But all good education and therapy, it may reasonably be argued, involves active unilateral experiential research on the part of the educator or therapist while he is in relation with his pupil or client. It can also be argued that the more effective they are in their respective tasks, the more they will adopt the full range of norms of the experiential method.

Between the mid-point of the scale - pure observation - and the experimental method occur the interview and the test. Both these approach the experimental method in the sense that they contain the subject's responses within the researcher's predetermined framework and are unilaterally manipulative from researcher to subject.

All these methods have a place in the repertoire of psychological enquiry. And it is a matter of further enquiry how they may be usefully brought into direct or indirect interaction with each other.

#### Intervention Theory and Method

The experiential method has an important social extension in process consultancy or organisational development work, where there is client-centred participative interaction - using an action-research model - between client-organisation and intervention-

ist in the direction of organisational change. Intervention method (Argyris, 1970) requires a theoretical framework of its own, but a discussion of this lies outside the scope of this paper.

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