

FORUM

Under Two Flags: A Case Study of Dual Personality

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Psychology's search for a clear identity has had a variety of organisational effects in universities and places where it is studied. At least at Sydney it has led to a department seemingly teetering between the Faculties of Arts and Science and possibly with divided loyalties. As I hold my old department in great affection, in this particular case I hope lack of clear identity is more likely to have produced the hysterical conversion symptoms of dual personality, a relatively benign result, than the far more disabling and serious split between emotion and intellect known as schizophrenia. A case study of the life of Psychology in two faculties may suggest some principle or practice with therapeutic effect and more general application, especially within the Faculty of Arts. The Departments of Geography and Mathematics are technically in the same position as Psychology but their inmates had best tell their own stories; to an outsider, identity seems to be something of a problem in Geography but certainly not in Mathematics.

A little belatedly on a world scale, the first course at Sydney on scientific psychology emerged in about 1915, in the Department of Philosophy under the more general heading of 'Mental Philosophy'. Since Philosophy was deeply entrenched in Arts, that was to be the primary location of Psychology for 65 years. Despite its considerable development within Philosophy, Psychology was not seen to warrant a separate department until 1929, then overtly joining the trend as one of the last of the sciences to leave the parent. Even so, it remained in Arts.

Partial recognition of psychology as a science came in 1961, when the full range of courses and degrees was made available to Science students, as offered by the Faculty of Science. Before then some courses could be taken in Science but not an honours degree, let alone a Ph.D. As well as following the Zeitgeist, the move was welcomed in making relevant topics like computer science, mathematics, mathematical statistics, and physiology more accessible to psychology majors if they were now

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members of the Faculty of Science. The ten courses I took for an honours degree in Psychology in the Faculty of Arts comprised four in Psychology, three in Zoology, two in Mathematics, and one in English (plus one term in Physics; Zoology I began in second term to accommodate medical students). Evening lectures in Psychology, Mathematics, and English made my combination possible but it would nevertheless be unavailable to an Arts student today because of the web of pre-and co-requisites that has grown up around Zoology. The only price a Science student pays is the likely need to attend at least some evening lectures in Psychology.

The full academic admission of Psychology to Science probably promoted the search for psychology's identity and hence the split personality. According to one viewpoint, the near neighbours of psychology in the map of the sciences are physiology and sociology, which leads to the quandary about whether psychology is a biological or a social science (Science vs Arts). Early in my time as Head of Department I was pressured to help Psychology into a School of Social Sciences along with Anthropology, Economics, and Social Work. Shortly before retiring I did my best to have Psychology placed in Biological Sciences after devolution. Meanwhile the Vice Chancellor was claiming now and then that we should be in the Faculty of Medicine; he said it was a joke but it still gave me nightmares (incipient schizophrenia?) My own preference was for psychology as a science, without any label, but the real world could not cope with such naivety.

After years of discussion and some votes in the Department, in 1980 the significance of psychology's mode of operation as a science was explicitly recognised in the transfer of the 'faculty of primary location' from Arts to Science. The implications of this move were purely administrative and had no effect on the right of all students in both faculties to take all courses and all but one degree in Psychology. The exception persists to this day in that the professional Master of Psychology degree, the culmination of successful training in clinical psychology, is supervised by a Board of Studies reporting to the Faculty of Arts. A Science graduate wishing to take the degree has to enrol in Arts. The Faculty of Science was asked to complete the transfer of Psychology in this respect but the reply was that it did not offer professional Master's degrees. When attention was drawn to the by-laws for the Master of Pharmacy degree there was no reply. Since Science had been wise enough to accept most of Psychology as its own, it seemed uncharitable to prolong the agony at the time, although the anomaly could surely be attended to now. Dual personality often needs tidying at the edges. In any case, the administrative transfer made good sense at the grass roots level.

Requests for equipment funds, laboratory space, and technical staff, for example, no longer stood out like repulsive extravagance in Arts but rather paled to normality or even modesty in Science.

When Psychology gained full academic recognition in Science in 1961 it was still administratively located in Arts. Even so, the Faculty of Science deemed it appropriate for all members of the Department eligible for faculty membership to be admitted to Science as well and nobody objected to this blatant symptom of dual personality. With the 1980 administrative transfer and its mirror image of the preceding arrangement, however, prominent members of the Faculty of Arts took exception to full membership for Psychology, arguing that there should only be token admission now because Arts was no longer Psychology's faculty of primary location. It seems to me that Science got it right in the first place. Even though the overwhelming majority of Psychology students were in Arts, the most basic consideration of justice to the smaller number of Science students would only be held and perceived if most Psychology staff were privy to Faculty proceedings, albeit only through Faculty minutes. (After all, there have been years when Psychology had more Science honours students than Physics). If justice to students is to prevail, then continued full membership of Arts has been thoroughly warranted since 1980. But no, enquiries have been made, reports called for, questions asked in Faculty of Arts meetings, and demands made of the Head of the Department to justify the full double membership. It has been said that Faculty members in Geography, Mathematics, and Psychology only attend Faculty meetings when something important is at stake for them personally, otherwise taking no interest in Faculty affairs. While appreciating the psychology that makes people sometimes go to meetings, I can assure the critic of my experience that many members of staff go out of their way to understand how their Faculties operate, at least for the sake of their students, and that they succeed in this without necessarily attending all meetings.

As well as questions of principle there were practical symptoms of dual personality that led to a search for therapy at times, the two main ones being teaching hours and the presence or absence of an honours school. After Psychology courses became available as Science courses, it was deemed necessary to increase their weekly hours to those specified by the Faculty of Science, viz., 6, 8, and 12 for first, second, and third year courses respectively. The Faculty of Arts did not stipulate any times but they were usually shorter than those for Science, presumably because hours spent in the library are too hard to specify whereas those required in the laboratory are simply stated. As if to reassert the primacy of

principles, however, the question next arose as to whether Psychology students in Arts should now do the same hours as those in Science, leading to the enunciation of the rule that, since Arts-type and Science-type psychologies did not exist as separate entities (no split personality?) and since Science and not Arts hours were specified, Science hours it would be for all. The slack was taken up with both class hours (more reading?) and laboratory attendance. As a matter of fact, the original aim was to teach the current course content better with the extra time, not add to it. After a few years two related factors caused a partial reduction in specified hours: staff shortages and the burden of evening as well as day lectures in Psychology. In line with the identity crisis, it could also have been said that Psychology required more library work than most other Science subjects.

A second practical problem to be faced was the presence of an Honours School in Arts but not in Science. Arts had a long tradition of formal admission of the best students to an Honours School at the beginning of the second undergraduate year to give a stream separate from Pass degree candidates until the end of an extra fourth year of study and the award of the B.A. (Honours) degree; Science simply added a fourth, specialist year for selected B.Sc. (Honours) candidates. This difference in itself would have led to no difficulty if it were not for the further Arts concept of extra work in the candidate's honours subject in the second and third years, compensated for by requiring only seven courses to have been completed by admission to Fourth Year compared to nine for the three-year Pass graduates as well as Science honours prospects at the end of their third year. So once again a way had to be found of making a dual personality at least seem to be compatible with a single identity for Psychology. It really boiled down to another form of the hours problem: could Arts but not Science students be required to attend for extra hours in their second and third years? As it turned out, the second problem was solved along with the first one, in requiring Arts students to do Science hours.

By this stage the reader may like to check the score. Pass candidates in Psychology in Arts were asked to attend classes for more hours than their predecessors and contemporaries in other departments. Probably due to poor communication between these students, the move brought no protest. There were complaints about excessive class work (essays, laboratory reports, etc.), which were investigated and reductions were made where warranted. The increase gave them the same hours as Science students, justified if the psychology taught was to be the same in the two faculties. But honours Arts candidates always had done more hours and had no cause for protest, albeit unsuspected, and there was no increase for any Science

students in their second and third years. So the uncomplaining 'losers' were the Pass students of Psychology in Arts, who had to attend for more hours simply to come into line with Science students. Imagine the complaints, however, if some students in a group with a common goal (undergraduate major in Psychology) were receiving more tuition than others. Yet who could complain about being taught more of such an interesting subject anyway?

There was still one aspect of the problem of serving under two flags to be dealt with. When Arts students in general were streamed into the Honours School, the extra classes they attended in their small elite groups were cared for by staff members thought to be of better quality than Tutors, i.e., Lecturers 'and above'. This tradition was maintained in Psychology when Arts and Science students were treated as equals; in general, only Pass tutorial groups were taken by Tutors while some honours groups even gloried in Professors. It should be noted that, in keeping with the policy of equal treatment, the better students in Science were also streamed into 'Distinction' classes, a step with ample informal precedent in the Faculty of Science, where they joined their contemporary Arts honours students.

Despite all the care taken to observe the niceties, prominent members of the Faculty of Arts (who will not be identified any more than 'prominent Sydney racing identities' are) again took exception, claiming that the requirements of the Arts By-laws or Senate Resolutions relating to candidates in the Honours School were not being met. The main provocation for this objection seemed to come from the fact that, when a Pass student showed clear merit in Second or Third Year (instead of the usual First Year) and was admitted to the Honours School in Psychology in Third or Fourth Year respectively, there was no extra honours work to be made up in the latter year. The fact of course was that, since Pass and Honours students had done the same work, hopefully with different styles and levels of expertise, there simply was no extra to be made up. The feeling on my part, at least, was that doing better work is more a sign of excellence than doing more work. The point fell on some deaf ears. In the extreme case a Sub-Dean was delegated the task of recording hours of attendance as evidence. Even though the Department of Psychology was nonetheless never formally charged, let alone found guilty, almost every year a Sub-Dean or Graduate Assistant had to be educated in its strange ways and memoranda drawn up for annual showing to save that trouble. The memoranda never seemed to survive very long.

More examples of the traps and anomalies of life in two faculties abound but three cases should suffice for now. In about 1977, students of

Social Work felt that the regular Psychology II course they were required to take (following Psychology I) was not well enough suited to their overall objective. Their argument seemed sound and discussions between the two Departments led to the proposal of a special Psychology II course for Social Work students only. Resources did not allow the construction of an entirely new course, however, so sections of the existing Psychology II and III courses were put together for the purpose so as to involve no extra teaching hours in the Department of Psychology. As formally required, the course was approved by the Board of Studies in Social Work and the Academic Board. It was such a success that it was later made available more widely as Psychology IIB, a terminating course for students needing a broad general knowledge of psychology for various purposes rather than the depth essential for a major or honours in the subject. The character of the course was such that approval of it was sought from and given by the Faculty of Arts, to make it more widely available. The embarrassment was profound, however, when gentle chiding from the Faculty of Science reminded us that they should have approved it too. Shades of the identity crisis: is psychology a social or a biological science?

A second example is somewhat akin to the anomaly of the Master of Psychology degree. Arts graduates with a major in Psychology can enrol as M.A. (Pass) candidates to complete a fourth year of full-time study or its equivalent. While some doubt the status of this degree, claiming for example that it demeans M.A. (Hons.), it is like a union ticket for professional psychologists outside the strictly clinical area, for it allows them to qualify for Associate Membership of the Australian Psychological Society as required by the majority of employers. With registration of professional psychologists looming closer at last, the need will be even greater. Since the concept of a Master's degree at the Pass level is unknown in Faculties of Science, on the other hand, Science graduates seeking the important qualification again have to enrol in Arts to get it, possibly swallowing their pride in their own faculty in the process. Attempts to solve the problem in Arts by replacing the M.A. (Pass) with a Diploma have failed and the establishment in Science of a comparable Diploma has not been attempted.

What lessons, if any, can be drawn from this ramble through the hysterical symptoms evident in the dual faculty life of the 'discipline' of psychology? For the sanity of readers who knew it all along, it must first be noted that problems generated by the presence or absence of an Honours School appear to have been solved by Arts recently coming into line with Science. As an outsider now I must rely on second-hand evidence but I understand that this move is seen as being forced by the introduction of the

semester system. Fortunate though the outcome may be, it seems a pity that the change was not seen as due to the myriad of rational considerations that always lay behind it.

Otherwise the symptoms I have recounted owe their root cause to the identity crisis of psychology and no blame can be attributed to either host faculty, Arts or Science. It is even worse than biological vs. social science, for cases can also be made for psychology as a science without any categorization or, indeed, as one of the humanities (especially in the form of humanistic psychology). Where, then, should a large university place a lost soul so as to give at least the appearance of a meaningful arrangement? In psychology's case, for one, no clear answer has been found. Harvard University split the subject between a Department of Psychology (with the traditional experimental or 'core' topics) and a Department of Social Relations; a few years ago they were reunited. I understand that the University of Sussex has a Department of Social Psychology and a Department of Experimental Psychology, on opposite sides of the campus. Monash University confines the Department of Psychology to 'core' topics and leaves social psychology, for example, to its Department of Education. Sydney, by the way, has Educational Psychology in Education and did at one time have Educational Counselling in Psychology. And so it goes on. In broader terms I once dreamed of a combined Faculty of Arts and Science (or General Studies before that term lost status); but it would not only cause feelings of revulsion but also be unwieldy. Since Education became a faculty I can also imagine a Faculty of Psychology, doubtless suffering the flaw of being too 'wieldy'. I wish my dreams were more productive (or would I then be schizophrenic?)