

Retrospective Feature Review

Ernest R. Hilgard:
A Life in PsychologyJohn F. Kihlstrom
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This month we celebrate the 90th birthday of one of our most distinguished colleagues: Ernest R. Hilgard was born on July 25, 1904. From his earliest studies on classical conditioning to his more recent explorations of hypnosis, Jack Hilgard has made a large number of important contributions to the research literature. But perhaps his greatest impact has come from his books, in which he has shown a flair for exposition and synthesis that is unmatched among his colleagues. Many, perhaps most, readers of this journal cut their teeth on Hilgard's best-selling *Introduction to Psychology* (first edition, 1953), while his *Theories of Learning* (first edition, 1948) created a basic course in our discipline and defined a publishing genre. More recently, Hilgard's *Divided Consciousness: Multiple Controls in Human Thought and Action* (first edition, 1977) contributed greatly to the current revival of interest in unconscious mental life, while *Psychology in America: A Historical Survey* (1987) has served as both a chronicle of our discipline and a graduate-level introductory textbook. This month, *Psychological Science* offers a celebration of Jack Hilgard's life and work, in the form of a retrospective review of these and other books.

For all of his professional life, Jack Hilgard has emphasized the unity of psychology: He has been concerned with the application of learning theory to instruction, and with what laboratory researchers could learn from the clinic. He has been pluralistic with respect to method: His program of hypnosis research, which spanned more than two decades, combined rigorous experimental control, psychometric precision, and sensitive interviewing. And he has resisted the forces of separatism within psychology, and indeed within all of the behavioral sciences. In the mid-1940s, he chaired the committees that forged an al-

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A Psychologist for All Seasons

Four years ago (May 1990), a symposium in *PS* marked the centenary of the publication of William James's *Principles of Psychology*, a work that, like no other, embraced the entire emerging field of psychological science and stamped a lasting imprint on its development down to the present. That development has been so luxuriant that today one finds it hard to imagine that any one mind could span our discipline's vastly expanded domain. Most of us who have been players in the developments of the last half century are acquainted firsthand with only limited specialties. That we nonetheless have some picture of the range and variety of the advances in our discipline is due in an important way to the work of one individual—Ernest R. Hilgard—who stands out as possibly the last truly general psychologist. One emerging field after another has been structured for us by the timely appearance of the newest of Hilgard's books—always authoritative, yet always “user-friendly” to the nonspecialist.

In this *PS* feature, the “Hilgard bookshelf” is retrospectively reviewed by a team of eminent psychological scientists, many of whom, like myself, acknowledge not only intellectual debts but also the enduring value of personal interactions with the individual we salute in these pages.

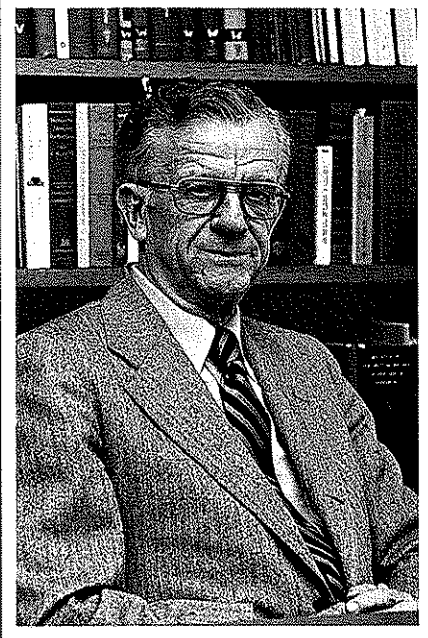
As the review unfolds, look for the following dates of special significance:

1940 *Conditioning and Learning*
1948 *Theories of Learning*
1952 *Experimental Approaches to Psychoanalysis*
1953 *Introduction to Psychology*
1965 *Hypnotic Susceptibility*
1970 *Personality and Hypnosis*
1977 *Divided Consciousness*
1987 *Psychology in America*

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liance between the American Psychological Association (APA) and the American Association of Applied Psychology, and created the divisional structure within APA in hopes of ensuring that all the interests within scientific and professional psychology would be fairly represented.

In his work, Hilgard seems to nurture the hope that psychology will one day



Ernest Ropiequet Hilgard

achieve the kind of coherent, comprehensive, and elegant theoretical structure that we perceive in other sciences, such as physics, chemistry, and biology. At the same time, he realizes that the diversity of subject matter in psychology may prevent us from ever achieving this ideal. After all, psychologists study everything from synaptic transmission to group decision making, and basic psychological knowledge is applied to everything from individual psychotherapy to organizational behavior. Sometimes, in fact, Hilgard seems to question the ideal itself: He has often argued that the leading edge of every specialization within psychology is interdisciplinary in nature. Either several investigators approach a common problem from different disciplinary perspectives, or a single theorist borrows concepts, methods, theories, and findings from another discipline. We see this eclectic tendency today in such successful fields as neuroscience, cognitive science, and organizational behavior. Far from being a unified science, psychology seems to be a big tent, a stew rather than a melting pot, a gorgeous mosaic.

By the evidence of his own career as researcher, theorist, and historian, Hilgard seems to feel that this is all to the good: Psychology, only a century old, is too young to be finished; perhaps it will

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never be finished. When one reads his books, one senses the presence of an open mind, willing to learn from anyone trying to understand human experience, thought, and action—an attitude that, for example, led him to seek dialogue with Freudian psychoanalysts (it did not hurt that his late wife and collaborator, Josephine Rohrs Hilgard, was a psychiatrist with analytic training). Throughout his work, Hilgard conveys a feeling of wonder at the universe within the human mind: Isn't that interesting? How do we do that? He celebrates the human capacity for intelligent adaptation to the environment, and for creative restructuring of the world around us. He distrusts systems and schools of psychology, and other tightly organized theoretical programs that are never surprised by empirical facts and explain everything with certainty. He is more interested in discovering scientific laws than in enforcing them.

As a graduate student, Hilgard's earliest inspirations were William James and William McDougall—two of our

greatest generalists and synthesizers, and two of our best writers. Intellectually, he embraces the functionalism of James, John Dewey, and James Rowland Angell (who was president of Yale when Hilgard was there): He is interested in the adaptive value of mind, the relation between mind and body, and the relation between mind and context. Hilgard also shares James's view that consciousness is the central fact for psychology: An interest in unconscious mental life runs from his early experiments on blindsight and conversion hysteria to the work on hypnosis; in a very real sense, all his life Hilgard has been heading toward the neodissociation theory of divided consciousness. McDougall's purposivism also shows itself in Hilgard's lifelong study of motivation in the voluntary control of classical conditioning, level of aspiration, the relations between voluntary and coerced behavior, and the hypnotic experience of involuntariness.

As much as anything else, however, Hilgard acquired from James and McDougall a predilection—and a real tal-

ent—for "psychologizing," making psychological observations and speculations that went beyond rigorously established empirical facts, in order to set an agenda for future work. This psychologizing is the distinguishing feature of all Hilgard books, and the source of some of our greatest pleasures in reading them. Those who have had this pleasure before might wish to partake of it again. Those who have not could begin with any of the books mentioned here.

Happy birthday, Jack, from all of your friends and colleagues, and many happy returns of the day.

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