

Placing Copenhagen Psychology on the map

– A sketch of its history and present state

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The roots

Denmark lies at a crossroads between North and South and East and West, and this position has shaped the Danish intellectual landscape. Ideas follow trade routes, and the Danish marketplace has been a meeting place for all the major intellectual trends in philosophy and science. To prevent it turning into a battlefield too, there has always been an interest in possible compromises or the striking of deals; and when the major "isms" proved uncompromising, a readiness to shift the focus to the more subjective stance of the individual. And there has always been a keen eye for the pragmatic.

Pluralism, synthesis, pragmatism, and a penchant for the subjective have been recurrent themes in the development of Danish psychology from the very beginning. Johann Nicolai Tetens, professor at Kiel and later Copenhagen, is a case in point. He tried to reconcile rationalism and empiricism and has won a name in the annals for originating in 1777 the tripartite division of psychological phenomena into conative, cognitive and affective that Immanuel Kant adopted as basis for his three Critiques.¹ Kant, however, did not care for Tetens' experimental investigations of perception, claiming in principle that the inner sense could not be subjected to quantification and empirical procedure. Due to the influence of Kant, Tetens' new method therefore did not catch on, and the introduction of experiment in psychological inquiry had to await the work of the German physiologists almost a century later (Helmholtz, Fechner, Wundt). Tetens' emphasis on subjective feeling and imagination did catch on, however. It strongly influenced the thinking of Fichte and Schelling and was instrumental in the growth of idealism², that sees the whole world as a psychological subject.

Turning consciousness into a world-system rather than a personal matter, as was the case in Hegelianism, was met with strong protest by Søren Kierkegaard in the 1840's. Working with phenomenological narratives and simultaneously attacking Hegel and what he saw as the complacency of Copenhagen society, university and church, Kierkegaard made psychological observations and reflections on personal life of unsurpassed acuity. Today he is ranked among the first existentialists and has had a tremendous worldwide impact on existential and hermeneutical psychology.

Kierkegaard's international fame is of a later date. He was first translated into English in 1930 and 1940, but his influence has always pervaded the Danish intellectual scene. Even the physicist Niels Bohr acknowledges inspiration from Kierkegaard. In formulating his principle of complementarity, that in effect says that a description of reality has to rely on two different descriptions (the electron as particle or wave) which complement each other and as such are irreducible to each other, he states a general principle which, as shown below, is also characteristic of Danish psychology.

Bohr was introduced to Kierkegaard by the philosopher Harald Høffding, who played an important role in the founding of scientific psychology at the University of Copenhagen. Professor Høffding had a keen interest in and a great knowledge of international psychology. His courses and his textbook in psychology, translated into English in 1891,³ set the standard for generations of Danish students. Like Tetens, Høffding's aim was to reconcile empiricism and rationalism. Strongly influenced by Hume and J.S. Mill, he was a proponent of the empirical psychology, but he also insisted, Kantian-wise, upon the mind's own synthesising powers and rejected the element psychology of his time.

The laboratory in Copenhagen

On the recommendations of Høffding, Alfred Lehmann, a young engineer, was enabled to study at Wilhelm Wundt's newly-established psychophysical laboratory in Leipzig. Upon his return, and under the patronage of Høffding, Lehmann in 1886 established a similar laboratory at the University of Copenhagen, which is therefore one of the first in the world.

Formulated by Tetens in 1777, and rediscovered by Fechner in 1850, psychophysics is a method of measuring experiential change indirectly by

correlating it with measurable changes in physical conditions. Demanding descriptive acumen and technical ingenuity, psychophysical investigation proved to be the right element for the philosophic engineer; but Lehmann, being of a practical bent, thought that psychology should do more. It should be of service to the society outside the laboratory. His own work on issues of work psychology and educational psychology, and his patronage of applied research, were instrumental in the very early start of applied psychology in Denmark.

When Lehmann died in 1921, he was followed by Edgar Rubin, a student of Høffding. If the founder shared the optimistic Jules Verne ethos of the early days of psychology, his successor was a product of the fraught psychological dilemmas of the 1920's. By now the major schools of psychology had been formulated and were clashing; and it seemed that the whole coherence of psychology hung in a thread. Physics, once the secure base of psychology, could no longer be counted on, having itself been entangled in unprecedented epistemological conundrums. Now physicists like Niels Bohr leaned on psychological topics in his epistemology, to the annoyance of his cousin Rubin, who decided that psychology should be left to itself until it had a clear description of its subject matter. In 1924 on his suggestion, the laboratory officially changed its name from the Psychophysical to the Psychological Laboratory.

For Rubin the subject matter of psychology was subjective experience, in particular perceptual experience. In this he was firm within the classical tradition. Neither did he doubt that subjective experience should be studied empirically. His concern was the true rendering of this experience in description. If these descriptions were not true, the data of psychology would be flawed, and so would theories built upon such material. Under his directorship the labors of the laboratory were therefore committed to the precise analysis and description of phenomenal perceptual experience under fixed experimental conditions. Until the methodology of phenomenal description was mastered, theorizing was out.

Rubin's stance had been formed while he studied under G.E. Müller in Göttingen. His investigation of figure and ground⁴, carried out in Göttingen, proves how much there is to be gained from careful and precise description, and has won deserved international acclaim. During his reign a number of such studies were performed by himself and his students. In Denmark we talk about the Copenhagen School of Phenomenology, but although Rubin was acquainted with Edmund Husserl in Göttingen, this school should not be mistaken for a branch of Continental phenomenology.

Even if it shares the willingness to analyze conscious experience in every aspect, it does not share the ontological pretensions of Husserl. Similarly, the recognition of the gestalt qualities of conscious experience does not really make Danish phenomenology a brand of Gestalt psychology, since it does not share the quest for theoretical explanation of Wertheimer, Köhler, and Lewin. It is only considered to be a refinement of method, and in this it has a certain likeness to neo-positivism.

After Rubin's death in 1951 the reins were taken over by his two students and collaborators Edgar Tranekjær Rasmussen and Franz From. Both were professed phenomenologists in the Copenhagen tradition; but they had also felt cramped by Rubin's meticulous dictates and soon expanded the narrow scheme that had unnecessarily isolated Danish psychology from the contemporary issues in international psychology.

Disregarding Rubin's warnings that complex psychological phenomena could not yet be subjected to rigorous investigation, professor From published a major phenomenological analysis of the attribution of intentions to other people.⁵ With this work and a series of popular essays From built a strong platform for personality psychology of the humanistic and phenomenological kind.

Against Rubin's warning that theorizing was premature, Tranekjær Rasmussen published two theoretical treatises on the foundational basis of psychology, one investigating the possibility of a scientific dynamic psychology, the other analyzing the ontology and epistemology of consciousness. In the latter attempt, Tranekjær Rasmussen was drawn to the philosophy of George Berkeley⁶, which later led alienated students to a hostile identification of the Copenhagen School of Phenomenology with subjective idealism. In retrospect, however, it seems, that it was really a different message from Berkeley that the Copenhagen School taught the coming generation, and taught it well: namely, never to accept the world experienced as anything but real. The world delivered by common sense, with its abundance of forms, is the real world, and it must be investigated in its coherence and richness. This sets Danish psychology apart from main traditions of psychology that look for hidden causes behind the veil of appearances. It never accepted reductionism.

While keeping to the tenets of the phenomenological tradition, From and Tranekjær Rasmussen opened the way for theoretical discussion, even pluralism, and renewed the interest in applied psychology, which had not been a major concern under Rubin. As Tocqueville observed long ago, and as everybody knows from today's world, reform is likely to spawn

revolution. In 1968 the old system was literally toppled by rebellious students, and this ushered in the present era of Copenhagen psychology. The breaking up of the old paradigm played its part in these events, but this should not be overestimated. After all, similar events took place at the same time throughout most of the Western world. In retrospect the clashes were about educational systems that were having trouble adapting to social change. Since the present era in Danish psychology is the product of these changes, this story also needs to be sketched.

The social demands on psychology

Lehmann's willingness to accept public assignments notwithstanding, for many years the efforts of the laboratory were devoted to basic research of minor practical import. Only a negligible number of people were trained, and mainly for purposes of internal recruitment. Not until 1918 was it possible to obtain a degree in psychology (Magister of psychology). By the 1940's, however, applied psychology had come to be in demand from society. In 1944 the laboratory was given the assignment of educating schoolteachers in psychology, and this led to the introduction of a general university degree in applied psychology (Candidate of psychology), which was fully implemented in 1960. The main aim of the laboratory from now on was to be the training of psychologists for public service.

Shifts in purpose and outlook are never easy to accommodate, but the magnitude of the change confronted the laboratory with staggering problems. In 25 short years – from the early 1940's to the late 1960's – the student body increased from less than 50 to more than 1000. What Rubin had felt as a strain, his successors felt as a bomb. The system was not geared to a yearly intake of several hundred students, and in the end simply caved in. This happened in 1968, when students of psychology, inspired by student unrest in other Western capitals, started a rebellion at the University of Copenhagen that led to a general university reform, in effect moving the decisive influence from full professors to associate professors, assistant professors and students. The modern era of Danish university psychology is the product of these changes, and even though the university reform of 1968 was changed in 1993, with authoritative responsibility again replacing shared responsibility, the present position of Copenhagen psychology should be understood against this background.

The era from 1968 to 1993 can be divided into two parts. The first decade was marked by an explosive growth in student intake, from a yearly intake in 1968 of approximately 200 to a yearly intake of approximately 450 ten years later, accompanied by the necessary increase of the staff to cope with the accelerating teaching load. Many graduate students were recruited as teachers to meet the demand, which was further accentuated by the fact that in 1968 a number of teachers and students from the laboratory led an exodus to the University of Aarhus where they founded the second Danish institute of psychology.

In the late 70's the growth was stemmed by governmental regulation, and the yearly intake was reduced to approximately 100 for a long period. Today it has risen to approximately 150 in Copenhagen and slightly fewer in Aarhus, but it is still strictly regulated. More than a thousand applicants are turned down each year. The restrictions have been motivated by the wish to keep down public expenditure, thus leading to budget cuts on higher education; but it has also been motivated by fear of growing unemployment among psychologists. Whereas the explosive 70's coincided with an economic boom, the austere 80's were marked by a long-drawn economic recession, with unemployment figures on a scale unprecedented in Denmark.

Even though psychologists have felt their share of the unemployment scourge, it is a notable fact that the employment of psychologists in Denmark since the war has more than doubled with every decade. From not much more than a handful in 1947, the number of psychologists in employment rose to approximately 500 in 1970, approximately 1200 in 1980, and approximately 3500 in 1990, and the labor market is still growing. This places Denmark among the nations in the world that, relative to its population, has the largest market for psychology.

The development of fields

The market profile has naturally changed over the years. The reason that the laboratory was forced to take up applied psychology in 1944 was new legislation calling for extended use of educational psychologists in the public school system. This sector was for many years the primary user of applied psychology, and grew to the extent that the education of psychologists for this purpose was moved in 1964 to The Royal Danish School of Educational Studies.

The next market to develop was clinical psychology, which was mainly in demand from the public hospital system. Slowly but steadily this market has increased fivefold from the 60's till today. This field has played a very important role in the development of applied psychology in Denmark, not so much by quantitative measure, since the sector absorbs no more than 10 percent of the country's employed psychologists, as by its public image and professionalism. As a field of research and practice it was developed at a university clinic independent of and in some opposition to the Psychological Laboratory, whose leading heads held the psychoanalytical emphasis of the clinic in disdain. In 1968, however, the clinic was amalgated with the Psychological Laboratory as the Institute for Clinical Psychology under the professorship of Lise Østergaard. Despite some rivalry in the past, today the two institutes have a common purpose and are deeply integrated. Practical work performed with patients in a day clinic now offers students training in therapeutic methods, and these skills are in great demand not least because of a new and growing market for psychologists in private practice. Private practice has been underdeveloped in Denmark, but newly introduced official authorization of psychologists and patient eligibility for economic support through the public health service have got it moving. Since the late 80's these activities have increased fivefold.

With the addition in the 70's of a market for industrial psychology, the three classical disciplines of applied psychology were well represented in Denmark. The real growth areas of applied psychology, however, are to be found outside the public schools, in the clinic and the manufacturing plant. This has been the great educational challenge to Danish university psychology, since the new areas are ill defined as to the problems they have to solve as well as the methods they have to apply. In these areas the psychologists have to define the problems and devise the methods themselves, and prove their competence in competition with practitioners from other occupations. The reason that the Danish market for psychology has grown in the face of economic recession and rising unemployment is that Danish psychologists have proven suitable to this task.

The major new area is social work, primarily in request from municipal authorities and involving very complex and variegated problems. Today this area is by far the largest of the Danish markets for applied psychology, which is perhaps a reflection of the social problems of the recession. While 50 were occupied in this field in 1974, today the number is approaching 700.

A new, small but expanding market is health psychology, which demands that the psychologist can combine knowledge from all the classical psychological disciplines to arrive at new solutions. Another area requiring the psychologist to be a Jack of all trades, able to define problems and invent methods, is organizational psychology. It has a classical tradition, but in modern use requires great multidisciplinary competence and flexible inventiveness. This market is now expanding to an extent that makes it hard for departments of psychology to supply candidates in sufficient numbers.

Summing up, one could say that whereas the first demands on Danish psychology were to develop the traditional and well-defined fields of applied psychology, the new expansion is directed towards uses of psychology that are essential in modern society but largely undefined. The first wave of applied psychologists had to be accomplished problem-solvers; the new wave has to be problem-finders first. This offers the greatest challenge to present day researchers, teachers and students.

The objective and subjective basis for the expansion

Why is it that psychology has been so well received in Denmark and is used so extensively? There are interconnected objective and subjective reasons. Denmark has for several generations been committed to the welfare state model, supported by Social Democratic and bourgeois governments alike. This means that Denmark has a high level of public service, which – as already noted – has come to include psychological services of diverse kinds. The public service has provided applied psychology with a secure base from which it could subsequently expand into the private markets of therapy, counselling, consulting work and so on.

The objective possibilities of the welfare state go hand in hand with the more subjective psychological characteristics of Danish society which have proved conducive to the utilization of psychology. Modern Denmark is founded upon an earlier rural society of free farmers and small landowners who transformed traditional village teamwork into the co-operative movement, with shared ownership of dairies, slaughterhouses and factories for agricultural produce, that made Denmark's fortune as an agricultural exporting country. The industrialization of Denmark followed in the wake of this development, leading to small and medium-sized firms adept in niche production rather than large industries. In accord with this develop-

ment, the standards of the old artisan culture were kept high, and entrepreneurs and owners were often the same. Recruited mainly from the peasantry, workers brought with them the cooperative mentality of the country. One of the consequences was that Danish workers were soon organized in Social Democratic trade unions, and to this day Denmark has probably the highest percentage of organized employees of any country in the world.

Through this development from village community to modern society a certain communal mentality has been sustained, favoring homogeneity and equality within the group, individual rights within the bounds of the common interest, social responsibility, dialogue and consensus. Everybody was to count as equal, and people overextending themselves were met with suspicion and rebuff. The ideal, in the words of the national poet and educator N.F.S. Grundtvig, coeval with Kierkegaard, was a nation "where few had too much, and fewer too little." It has been Denmark's good fortune that this Janus-faced egalitarian ideal concentrated on raising the lower end of the population towards the aspired mean, first through an immense effort of general education, championed by Grundtvig, later through social reforms propelled by the labor movement that secured the social and economic basis for the ideal. One result was the welfare state, another the democratic tradition that is deeply integrated in the Danish national character. If the first constitutes the objective basis for the expansion of psychology in Denmark, the latter constitutes the subjective basis.

Psychology requires dialogue

Despite a century of hard and ingenious work throughout the world, the subject matter of psychology has so far successfully resisted scientific attempts at objective explanation. The psychologist is still confronted with persons' sporting intentions, ideas and feelings that defy translation into causal mechanisms. The causal mechanisms discovered always seem to be just conditions for psychological functioning, and always stop short of the essential subjectivity. The human subject refuses to lie down and become a thing-like object for science to predict and control, it insists on standing up and remaining a subject.

Theoretical psychology is much chagrined by this persistence, and a standing debate has been whether one should succumb and talk to the

subject in its favored language or adhere to the natural science vocabulary that we have come to identify as scientific.

Applied psychology is faced with the same conundrum, but has much less choice. To be successful, it must address people on, and in, their own terms. That is, applied psychologists must address people as subjects, equal to themselves. Dialogue, following the essential rules of reciprocity and equality, is the necessary prerequisite. The success of applied psychology therefore hinges on the success of dialogue, and this is determined not only by the competence of the psychologist but equally by the competence of the dialogue partner. The competence of the client thus becomes a decisive factor in psychological work.

Two things are here essential. The client must not view the psychologist as an expert like the mechanic or surgeon to whom you can bring your broken part for mending, but as a dialogue partner, hopefully more knowledgeable, but still an equal. The shared responsibilities of dialogue must be recognized. Secondly, in order for the cooperative effort to rise to the complexities of the problem in hand, the client must bring to the dialogue a certain level of education. People well versed in psychological thinking can make much better use of psychological services.

Both of these criteria are amply met in Denmark. Danes are well prepared for engaging in dialogue with psychologists due to the egalitarian mentality narrated above. The high and homogeneous standard of education of the population in general, including a marked attraction to psychology, makes it possible for this dialogue to take place on a progressive level. In short, it is in no little degree the competence of the Danish population that has made the successful expansion of applied psychology possible.

A plurality of views

The egalitarian mentality, with its Grundtvigian ethos that high and low should have an equal saying, accentuated by the upsurge of socialist ideology that seized students in the late 60's, played an important role in the 1968 rebellion. The university reforms that followed were designed to accommodate these ideals. At the psychological laboratory the professorial rule was toppled; but not only were high and low now to have an equal say, diverse conceptions of psychology were also to have equal representation. Within a few years the self-imposed restrictions of the Copenhagen

school of phenomenology were shattered and all the major traditions and schools of psychology were introduced. Psychoanalysis, through the institute of clinical psychology; social psychology in the American style as well as in the critical German style; diverse brands of personality psychology; cognitive psychology and comparative psychology were all being introduced. It attests to the versatility of this development that even behaviorism, quite foreign to the Danish tradition and outlook, came to have a platform for a few years through the efforts of Melvin Lyon, an American Skinnerian.

Having been lost, the comforts of the reign of a single tradition now became evident. The introduction of the complete palette of psychology was also the introduction of the mind-twisting incoherence of modern psychology, where theories and methodologies talk in mutually incompatible tongues. Faced with the Babel of psychology, Copenhagen had to shoulder the legendary crisis of psychology.

Theoretical crisis added to institutional upheaval; and Copenhagen in the seventies found itself in a situation reminiscent of the classical school wars where everybody tried to take on the responsibility of order, but according to their own particular language and conception. To this was added the struggle between Marxists and non-Marxists. The pains of civil war further added to the plight since the strife took place within a single institution and between people with a common background. Precisely this background, however, made continued conflict impossible, and casualties and scars notwithstanding, the final outcome proved rather productive.

The lid neither could, nor should be put back on Pandora's box. The plurality of fields and views had come to stay. Theoretical unity remains an ultimate scientific goal, of course, but it was learnt that such unity cannot be gained by conquest, and the recognition grew that every voice has something to tell and should not be drowned. Psychology is rich, and the plurality of fields and theories is in itself an asset. Today the institute is proud of the range of psychological inquiry it sponsors, spanning from experimental investigation of visual attention⁷ to anthropological field work in Polynesia⁸, from the epistemological questions regarding language and psyche⁹, to educational development in Russia¹⁰.

With the recognition of diversity as a resource follows the problem of how this diversity is to be handled. How valued, but different, perhaps even incompatible, views are to be harmonized becomes not only a vital task for teaching, but also for research. In response to this, theoretical and meta-theoretical problems dealing with the foundational issues of psych-

ology and the philosophy of science came to take high priority not only in Copenhagen but in Aarhus as well¹¹. This, of course, was a return to the quest of Tetens and Høffding for theoretical alignment and synthesis, the imponderable and eternal question still being how the world of the subject can be brought into harmony with the world of natural science and the world of social science.

Theory and practice

The sudden priority of theoretical work on unsettled basic issues further changed the direction of Copenhagen psychology. The Copenhagen School of Phenomenology had established a state of what Kuhn calls normal science, that is the empirical collection of data to support and test the framework of an unquestioned paradigm. From lack of unquestioned paradigms the experimental tradition of this school consequently receded. The former profile – high in experimental work, low in theoretical work – was reversed, and this shift in emphasis distinguishes the profile of Copenhagen psychology from those usually encountered in international psychology.

This did not, however, mean an abandonment of the scientific commitment to investigate reality. The interest in theoretical psychology coincided, as already noted, with a substantial interest in the social demands placed upon the science of psychology. The interests merged, and during the 80's a novel combination of theoretical psychology and applied psychology was being forged. The continuing development of this combination of theoretical development and practical application of the theory we consider the distinctive mark and defining characteristic of contemporary psychology at the University of Copenhagen. It was arrived at via the vagaries of local history, but we believe it harbors principles of much broader importance, namely principles dealing with the relation between theory and data and between theory and practice that is relevant in nearly all scientific contexts.

Practice as empirical starting point

In the philosophy of science three primary parts of a scientific discipline are distinguished: (i) The theory, which is the total number of hypotheses and scientific concepts; (ii) The scientific data that the theory specifies as

valid in testing the theoretical hypotheses; (iii) Practice, which is the application of the theory in diverse contexts, clinical, pedagogical, and so on.

At a first glance this partition seems the natural sequence of scientific progress: first hypotheses, then observations, and finally useful application. Often this proves too simple, however. The elements of science are intertwined in complex ways, and it was in response to this that Copenhagen psychology engaged in the combination that bypassed traditional experimental investigation. We think this deserves a little elaboration.

Since Karl Popper criticized positivism it has been generally accepted that scientific theories are not definable as simply a set of hypotheses. They also serve to select the sort of empirical evidence that is acceptable as data for the theory. Theory exists before data and hypotheses cannot be generated from data in the absence of a theory. Scientific theories define which data are relevant for the scientific description and, in a broader context, which methods are to be used to obtain reliable data from the part of reality that concerns the theory. To make the point rather crudely, psychoanalysis would never rely on experiments with rats, and behaviorism would never accept that symbolic interpretations of dreams have any scientific value.

Philosophical phenomenology and hermeneutics have always emphasized that sciences studying human beings as subjects must of necessity integrate a reflective element in their theories, since the subject studied is of the same nature as the describing scientist. If you make this philosophical point of departure absolute, however, you seem to be left with rather few scientific methods: introspection, interpretation, and qualitative interviews. It therefore becomes important to widen the range of scientific methods without excluding the possibility of integrating the reflective element in psychology. Let us try to look at the development in Copenhagen from this angle.

As described above, there is a difference between philosophical phenomenology and phenomenology as it was developed at the Psychological Laboratory. In its early scientific form, the object of psychology was reduced to an extent that was reminiscent of classical positivism, but even in Rubin's psychology the primary empirical method was the description of human experience. By Franz From this was extended to the intersubjectivity implicit in the "experience of other people's behavior", and by professors Martin Johansen and I.K. Moustgaard further extended to human emotions and human communication.¹²

In the 70's and 80's psychology at the University of Copenhagen displaced in a general way its empirical focus from the pure description of conscious experience to an extended concept of practice. We think this is very important. The extension goes in two directions. First, there is a displacement from the description of conscious experience alone to a combination of experience and action (experience of action). Second, there is a focusing of the elements that influence and determine conscious experience and action, since neither the conscious experience nor the action is created in a vacuum. The elements are historical in nature – social structure, institutions, socializing agents, language as a collective system and so on. The common historical paradigm was developed in different directions: in the biological evolution of the psychic and the social, the life-history perspective of the unconscious, the historical compass of the intersubjective relations. The crucial point in this displacement is that in one and the same theoretical turn it facilitates the attempt to conceive the subject's experience of her own action and the action of others, and simultaneously, in the scientific description of this, to explain why the experience is what it is, how it is determined and formed, and what is necessary to change the experience.

The central focus in most scientific programs is exactly this interchange between the subject's description of her own conscious experience and the description of the constitutive preconditions for this experience, thus avoiding the reduction of the subject's consciousness to a mere product of these conditions. The subject's own conscious reflection is defined as a parameter able to take in, and in many cases influence, the constitutive preconditions, or by the reflection itself abolish their determination.

Instead of basing psychological inquiry on a local autonomous consciousness, the conscious experience is placed in a larger setting. It is not the consciousness itself that is in focus and the conscious experience that is the empirical starting point. The empirical starting point is the interaction, the interplay and reciprocal actions between subjects. And this, of course, places the center of basic research squarely within the province of applied psychology; it is here that subjects meet, act and reciprocate. Rather than being accidental, the union of basic theoretical work and applied psychology adopted in Copenhagen is close to the very heart of psychological inquiry.

The heritage

In retrospect, psychology in Copenhagen never really veered far from the tradition. Although transformed, psychological phenomenology is still very much alive in Danish psychology. This is seen most directly in the context of personality psychology, where the tradition from Franz From is further developed,¹³ and in the work of the Institute of Clinical Psychology, where, with inspiration from Kierkegaard, phenomenology is developed in the direction of existentialism. It is telling that the Institute follows the schools within psychoanalysis inspired by R. Schafer, P. Ricoeur and A. Lorenzer, which upgrade hermeneutics, rather than American schools of ego-psychology.

But also work falling outside the bounds of phenomenology proper stays within the heritage: this is clearly demonstrated by the shared commitment to an understanding of psychology that places the subject in the center and resists the reduction of subjectivity. Even within the fields most related to natural science, non-reductionism is adhered to. Danish neuropsychology under professor Rolf Willanger, for instance, has a tradition for developing the functionalistic and non-reductionistic point of view in relation to the question of cerebral localization¹⁴. And the Danish psychologists, who work within the tenets of the biological theory of evolution and ethology, likewise refuse to reduce the subject and its conscious experience. On the contrary, it is a key point among the biologically inspired psychologists that the property of mind is a unique and irreducible trait of animal life.

This issue

For the first issue of the yearbook three papers based on recent doctoral dissertations have been chosen. They cover the three scientific continents that psychology has to span, namely the continent of biological science, the continent of social science and the continent of humanistic science. The tectonics of these continents has traditionally caused havoc in psychology and left this science in incompatible pieces. The cry that psychology can never be a coherent science has been heard often enough. We believe, however, that the three papers disprove this sad verdict. Despite the diverse fields they cultivate, they stay on common ground. The tenets they all hold in common are precisely those that we have emphasized as particular for psychology in Copenhagen: psychology as the science of the

subject, and the recognition of the irreducibility of subjective experience. We further believe that these tenets are the backbone of the true science of psychology. The papers, as well as the development of psychology in Copenhagen, proves in our mind that if this is understood, psychology needs not be sundered by diversity, but enriched.

Notes

1. L.S. Hearnshaw: *The shaping of modern psychology*, London, 1987: Routledge, p. 97.
2. Ibid. p. 103.
3. H. Høffding: *Outlines of Psychology*, London 1891.
4. E. Rubin: *Synsoplevede figurer*. København 1914. (German translation: *Visuell wahrgenommene Figuren*, 1921).
5. Franz From: *The perception of other people*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1971.
6. E.T. Rasmussen: Berkeley and modern psychology, *Brit. J. Phil. Sci.*, 1953, 4, 2-12.
7. Claus Bundesen: A theory of visual attention. *Psychological review*, vol 97, p. 523 547, 1990.
8. Rolf Kusche: *Vengeance is their reply. Blood feuds and homicides on Bellona Islands*, Vol I-II. København: Dansk psykologisk forlag, 1988.
9. Nini Prætorius: *Subject and object. An essay on the epistemological foundation for a theory of perception*. København: Dansk psykologisk forlag, 1978.
10. Sven Mørch: Youth reproduced and investigated. Activity perspective. In: J. Ehrnroot and L. Siurala (eds.): *Construction of Youth*, p. 118-131. Helsinki, 1991.
11. See for instance Niels Engelsted, Mariane Hedegaard, Benny Karpatshof and Aksel Mortensen (eds.): *The Societal Subject*. Århus: Aarhus University Press, 1993, and Niels Engelsted, Lars Hem and Jens Mammen: *Essays in General Psychology*. Århus: Aarhus University Press, 1989.
12. I.K. Moustgaard: *Psychological Observation and Description*. Bergen: Sigma Forlag, 1990.
13. Compare the article by Erik Schultz in *The Societal Subject* op.cit.
14. Rolf Willanger: *Intellectual impairment in diffuse cerebral lesions*. København: Munksgaard 1970.