

Preface

Kurt Danziger is still around as I write but he is now 92 years old and has retired from academic work. When I asked him if he wanted to write a preface to this new Spanish translation of his book, *Naming the Mind* (1997), he said he would like me to do it instead.

I am well-placed to write the preface. I was a PhD student with Danziger in the 1990s when he was writing the book. I saw it transformed from its earliest stages in the conference presentations that he gave through to its final draft. More than that, along with Danziger's other graduate students, I did some of the research for the book. I looked at the history of the concept of "emotion," while others looked at the history of concepts such as "personality," "intelligence" and "variable". Needless to say, I took great interest in the book when it was published and I have used it as a textbook in my courses. It was discussed in a collection of essays on Danziger's work that I co-edited (Brock, 2004) and in two interviews that I conducted with him for publication (Brock, 1995; 2006). I have also written a more general introduction to the history of psychological objects (Brock, 2015).

The background to the book is explained in Chapter 1. Although it is now common to refer to "indigenous psychology" in places like Asia and Africa (e.g. Padalia, 2017), it might be more appropriate to use the term, *indigenized* psychology. Discourse about what it is to be human has been a feature of most societies throughout recorded history but the specific form of discourse that is usually described as "modern" or "scientific" psychology has its origins in Europe in the 18th century and it was exported from there to the rest of the world. It was picked up by the Americans and the Japanese at an early stage but it was not exported to other parts of the world on a large scale until after the Second World War (Staeuble, 2004). This can be seen from the composition of the International Union of Psychological Science (IUPsyS), which is a union of national organizations of psychologists. It now has 88 members all over the world but it was founded in 1951 with just 11 charter members, 9 of them in Western Europe plus the United States and Japan (Rosenzweig et al., 2000).

Although he was not aware of it at the time, Danziger was involved in this transfer of knowledge. He was hired by the Indonesian government to spend two years as a visiting professor at Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta in the late 1950s. His mandate was to train some local students who would then go on to form the nucleus of a psychology department. This he did and his reminiscences show how alien and exotic this Western discipline was to some of the locals at the time. Danziger (2009) refers in his autobiography to a five-hour debate that took place in the university senate over whether quantitative methods were acceptable in dissertations. They were deemed to be acceptable but the fact that they were controversial says a great deal.

The background to the controversy is that there were "modernizers" who eagerly embraced Western methods and ideas, and "traditionalists," often from an aristocratic background, who resisted them. One of the latter was a colleague who was teaching what was to all extents and purposes a local form of psychology. It was called "ilmu jiwa," which roughly means "science of the soul" and it was based on Hindu philosophy and some of its modifications in Java. Intrigued by this situation, Danziger suggested that they conduct joint seminars in which the Western and local views of psychology could be compared. Motivation was one of the topics that he suggested. His colleague replied that it would not be possible because motivation was not a topic as far as he was concerned. It grouped together heterogeneous phenomena that had little in common. Perhaps motivation was a bad choice. Danziger went

through all the major categories of Western psychology – personality, intelligence, attitudes etc. – and got the same result. His colleague could suggest alternative categories but these were just as alien to Danziger as the categories of Western psychology had been to him. Needless to say, the joint seminars did not take place.

There is a temptation to regard the categories of Western psychology as universal because of the limited social circles in which we move. If we grow in an English-speaking environment, we learn that people have emotions and motives and they differ in their personalities and their intelligence. Everyone around us understands and uses these terms and we have no reason to doubt their universality. It is only through encounters with other language-communities and other cultures that we become aware that they are not universal. This has been one of the traditional roles of anthropology over the years. We have learned, for example, that our sexual mores are not universal and that the problems that we usually associate with adolescence are not inevitable. The same effect can be achieved by going back to remote periods of history when people had different worldviews. Indeed, we often have to go back in history to learn about these different worldviews because of the spread of the English language and its associated worldview around the world (Watters, 2010) and the corresponding disappearance of other languages and worldviews (Seabrook, 2004). Danziger mentioned that when he went back to Gadjah Mada University on two visits in the 1980s, ilmu djiwa was no longer being taught (Brock, 1995).

Just as there is a temptation to regard the categories of Western psychology as universal, there is a temptation to regard them as natural. This is the view that is associated with Plato that universals succeed in “carving nature at its joints” (Campbell, O’Rourke & Slater, 2011). Danziger (1997) and others refer to it as “naïve naturalism”. It leads to the ethnocentric view that Western psychology has a set of categories that correspond to the divisions of nature and other languages and cultures by implication do not. It also leads to the implausible view that we have reached the end of history as far as these categories are concerned. We can offer empirical evidence in support of their existence but other languages and cultures can offer empirical evidence in support of their own. Before we can carry out research on “motivation,” “intelligence,” attitudes” etc., we need to have some understanding of what they entail. They are similar to Kuhnian paradigms in that they exist prior to the research. They help us to formulate the questions that we ask and provide a framework for interpreting the results.

Danziger has lived and worked on five different continents and his encounters with people from different languages and cultures have no doubt played a role in him having what C. Wright Mills called, “the sociological imagination” (Mills, 1959). Some of his most significant work prior to his move into the history of psychology was on the sociology of knowledge (e.g. Danziger, 1963) and there is a degree of continuity between this work and his later work on the history of psychology (Danziger, 1979; see also Louw, 2004). One aspect of *Naming the Mind* that should not be overlooked is its emphasis on social practices. This was the topic of Danziger’s earlier book, *Constructing the Subject* (1990) in which he examined what psychologists have traditionally called their “methods” and showed them to be social practices that have changed over time. The move away from single-subject research to statistical aggregates is a case in point. There is a similar emphasis on social practices in *Naming the Mind*. Thus the category, “intelligence” emerged in conjunction with educational selection, “motivation” was involved in attempts to make industrial workers more productive, and “attitude” was associated with consumer marketing and research. The point is important because it shows that *Naming the Mind* is not just concerned with concepts and categories.

They are intimately bound up with social practices and serve to legitimate these practices. This might explain why Danziger prefers to use the more neutral term, “psychological objects” (e.g. Danziger, 1993). These can be simply defined as the objects of psychological research.

Although Danziger’s interest in this topic goes back a long way, the book is part of a broader literature on the history of psychological objects (Brock, 2015). It includes, for example, work on the history of “inhibition” (Smith, 1992), the history of “emotion” (Dixon, 2003), and Danziger’s own later work on the history of “memory” (Danziger, 2008). The psychological objects that are discussed in *Naming the Mind* have a relatively short history; often surprisingly so. Memory, or something like it, has been around since the Ancient Greeks and so Danziger decided to examine it separately in a different book. The longevity of the term did not prevent him from linking it to social practices in a similar way. Its longevity can be explained in terms of the longevity of the social practices with which it is associated. There is other related work on the history of psychiatric objects, such as multiple personality or dissociative identity disorder (Hacking, 1995) and post-traumatic stress disorder (Young, 1997). However, most of this work has been written by historians, philosophers and social scientists who have not always had psychology at the forefront of their thoughts. Danziger’s background as a psychologist has led to his work being more relevant to psychology.

Wherein lies this relevance? When I asked Danziger this question in an interview that I conducted with him when he was writing the book in 1994, he replied somewhat cryptically that he thought that the questions that psychologists had been asking were not good questions. This kind of historical study, he suggested, could lead them to question their questions and ask better questions (Brock, 1995). I was puzzled by this remark at the time but I had a better sense of what he was referring to when I read the book. Danziger is out to liberate us from the tyranny of the dominant worldview. Language is a human creation that serves human ends. As feminists and other campaigners have pointed out, we do not have to understand the world in the terms that our language prescribes. For example, instead of viewing “intelligence” as something that exists inside people’s heads, we can view it as a social judgement (Danziger, 1997). This would lead to questions about the kind of people who are qualified to make these judgements, the factors that influence their judgments, and their consequences for the people concerned. If psychologists were to take the conclusions of *Naming the Mind* seriously, it would lead to a different kind of discipline from the one that we currently have. The book is just as relevant today as it was when it was published in 1997.

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