

MÜNSTERBERG'S NIGHTMARE: PSYCHOLOGY AND HISTORY IN *FIN-DE-SIÈCLE* GERMANY AND AMERICA

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This article demonstrates that Hugo Münsterberg's presidential address "Psychology and History," delivered to the American Psychological Association in 1898, should be understood in the German context of the 1890s. It constituted a response to a central feature of *fin-de-siècle* culture in Europe, the revolt against positivism. To be more precise, Münsterberg reacted against a new intellectual trend that was arising in Germany in the middle 1890s: the call for a historically oriented social psychology put forward by Wilhelm Dilthey—who was explicitly attacking Münsterberg's physiological conception of psychology—and new cultural historians like Karl Lamprecht and others who seemed to be putting Dilthey's program into practice. © 2003 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

At the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association held in New York in December 1898, Hugo Münsterberg devoted his presidential address to a somewhat exceptional theme. In his lengthy lecture, the young, 35-year-old Harvard psychologist discussed what he considered to be one of "the general problems of our science," the proper relations between psychology and history (Münsterberg, 1899a, p. 2).

In recent years, Münsterberg's address on "Psychology and History" has again attracted the attention of some psychologists. It was one of nine articles selected to be reprinted in a special issue of the *Psychological Review* to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the journal in 1994.¹ Not only was Münsterberg's address reprinted, it was also accompanied by two lengthy present-day commentaries (McGuire, 1994; Schönplflug, 1994). The editors of the commemorative issue apparently considered Münsterberg's address, though little-known, a "*Psychological Review* classic," meeting the two criteria for selection in this issue: [1] "fun to read today and [2 a text] about which something interesting can be said from today's vantage point" (Kintsch & Cacioppo, 1994, p. 197).

I seriously doubt how much *fun* the ordinary 1994 readers of the *Psychological Review* may have derived from Münsterberg's "pretty fearful" English [William James, quoted by Hale (1980, p. 86)] and sometimes abstruse argument; all the more so, as even Münsterberg himself called the text "unamusing" and professed: "I do not want to entertain [. . .] I want to fight" (Münsterberg, 1899b, p. x). However, the second criterion—presenting a topical subject from today's point of view—surely seems to apply to his text.

1. Münsterberg, 1899a; reprinted in Münsterberg, (1899b, pp. 179–228), omitting the introductory remarks; and again, partially, in *Psychological Review* 101 (1994, pp. 230–236). The original text can be found on the Internet as well: <http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Munster/history.htm>. Münsterberg's speech was not included in Hilgard's 1978 volume of APA presidential addresses.

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In the last few decades, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, the relations between psychology and history have received ample attention. “Psychohistory” and the so-called “history of mentalities” acquired a measure of popularity among historians. Some of the world’s most distinguished historians, like Peter Gay, Theodore Zeldin, and Alain Corbin became famous for their psychological approaches. At the same time, psychologists made several attempts to conceive a more historically oriented psychology. To illustrate this point, it should be sufficient to mention the names of Kenneth and Mary Gergen (1984), Gerd Jüttemann (1986) in Germany, and Harry Peeters (1978) in the Netherlands—all of whom made such attempts.² One could also point to recent reissues of older psychological texts proposing a historically oriented psychology, for instance, by the Russian psychologists Vygotskij (1978, 1993) and Lurija (1986) and their French colleague Ignace Meyerson (1987, 1995). From this perspective, the 1994 reprint of Münsterberg’s APA address on psychology and history surely was topical. In fact, one of the 1994 comments on Münsterberg’s address was written by Yale psychologist William McGuire who himself since the 1970s has presented his pleas for historical cross-era comparisons in psychology (McGuire, 1976, 1994).

In this article I argue that it is not only from today’s vantage point that Münsterberg’s address presents an interesting case. It also raises questions concerning the relation between psychology and history at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Acknowledging that the theme of psychology and history constituted a topical subject at the end of the twentieth century, what can we say about its topicality in 1900?

A GERMAN PSYCHOLOGIST IN NEW YORK

A few words should suffice to introduce Münsterberg, who is well known as one of the founding fathers of applied psychology.³ Born in 1863 in the Prussian city of Danzig, a brilliant son of well-established Jewish parents, Münsterberg embarked on a psychological career as a student of Wilhelm Wundt at the University of Leipzig. He earned a Ph.D. as well as an M.D. and in 1887 became a private lecturer and subsequently assistant professor (*Extraordinarius*) at the University of Freiburg, where he established his own experimental psychological laboratory. His rapidly growing reputation was that of a fervent experimentalist and strict physiological determinist who was criticizing his teacher Wundt for crediting the mind with creative powers of its own. In 1892, the famous Harvard psychologist William James, whom he had met several years earlier at the first International Congress of Physiological Psychology in Paris, invited him to come to Harvard as professor of psychology and director of the Harvard Psychological Laboratory, the first American psychological laboratory, which was in need of new scientific input. Twenty-nine-year-old Münsterberg accepted James’s offer. Except for a few longer sojourns in Germany, he remained professor of psychology at Harvard until his death in 1916, at the age of 53.

Münsterberg quickly became one of the leading experimental psychologists in the United States. He was one of the 31 charter members who called the first Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association in December 1892 and was elected the Association’s president in 1898. It was in this capacity that he gave his address on “Psychology and History.” In the last 10 years of his life, Münsterberg became one of the leading spokespersons and

2. For a useful bibliography of historically oriented psychological research see Peeters, Gielis, and Caspers (1988), listing more than 5500 titles.

3. See on Münsterberg’s life and works, Hale (1980) as well as the biography written by his daughter (Münsterberg, 1922); a list of publications by and on Münsterberg is published in Münsterberg (1990, pp. 83–95).

defenders of applied psychology in America's Progressive Era. He published a whole range of books in which he staunchly defended the usefulness of applying psychological knowledge and testing in court, industry, teaching, advertising, therapy and vocational guidance. These books, and several more popular writings on American culture and the Americans, made Münsterberg well known as an intellectual in the United States, before he ended as a widely despised and even suspect public figure because of his persistent public defense of the German cause after the outbreak of the First World War.

As Matthew Hale's 1980 biography shows, Münsterberg had a keen interest in new intellectual developments, topical subjects, and public issues. He was not afraid to take a polemical stance, and he enjoyed participating in public debates and discussions. This inclination to take part in new and possibly controversial intellectual developments certainly contributed to his early participation in the rapidly spreading enthusiasm for applied psychology at the beginning of the twentieth century, and this same inclination also seems to have contributed to Münsterberg's choice of psychology and history as the theme of his APA address. For, as the famous German sociologist Max Horkheimer testified when he treated the same subject several decades later, the topic had by that time become a much debated issue in the human sciences (Horkheimer, 1932, p. 125). In this period, apart from Münsterberg himself, psychologists such as Wilhelm Wundt, Guido Villa, Eduard Spranger, and Willy Hellpach; philosophers such as Wilhelm Dilthey, Georg Simmel, Wilhelm Windelband, Heinrich Rickert, and Erich Rothacker; and historians such as Karl Lamprecht, Kurt Breysig, A.-D. Xénopol, and Harry Elmer Barnes devoted substantial attention (and sometimes a whole publication) to the subject. What then was the topical relevance of Münsterberg's APA address? Why did this experimental psychologist, in a meeting of professional psychologists, discuss the proper relation between psychology and history? In what way did this relation constitute one of "the general problems of our science," as he told his New York audience?

PSYCHOLOGY AND HISTORY: SEPARATE REALITIES

Let us first turn to the central line of his argument. It may come as a disappointment, as it did to Münsterberg's 1994 commentator William McGuire, that far from lecturing about the benefits of closer relations between psychology and history, Münsterberg suggested keeping the two disciplines strictly apart. Münsterberg in fact proposed to *limit* the object domain of psychology and warned against boundary transgressions into the field of history and vice versa. The later champion of applied psychology at this point in his intellectual development flatly refused to apply psychology to history and tried hard to convince his fellow psychologists of the importance of this refusal. The bulk of his 30-page lecture consisted of an elaboration of a classification of the sciences in which history and psychology were set wide apart in radically different categories. According to Münsterberg, this was *not* because, as some had said, history dealt with single facts only, whereas psychology dealt with "general facts." According to Münsterberg, *all* sciences (in the general sense of *Wissenschaften*) were defined by an interest in "general facts" and in the interconnectedness of single facts. Isolated facts were, in his opinion, the subject of art—not science. According to Münsterberg, the fundamental difference between history and psychology was not in the first place of a methodological but of an ontological nature: both disciplines differed essentially in their material, in their subject matter. Starting from what he later claimed to be a Fichtean point of view, Münsterberg held that the whole of reality we experience can be divided into the *act* of wanting and *the things* we want: subjective *acts* of will and *objects* of will. Both could again be divided into two groups called by Münsterberg "individual!" and "over-individual" (collec-

Table 1
Münsterberg's Dualistic Classification of the Sciences

| Reality | Acts of Will | Objects of Will |
|-----------------|--|---|
| Individual | Individual acts of will or subjects → <i>History</i> | Individual objects: psychophysical phenomena → <i>Psychology</i> |
| Over-individual | Over-individual will acts: duties, rules → <i>Normative sciences</i> (ethics, logic, aesthetics) | Over-individual objects: physical phenomena → <i>Physics</i> |

tive, general). This dualist classification resulted in four “factors of reality” and consequently in a fourfold division of scientific studies (see Table 1).

According to this scheme, psychology and history had, in Münsterberg’s words, “absolutely different material; the one can never deal with the substance of the other, and thus they are separated by a chasm” (Münsterberg, 1899a, p. 17). History dealt with subjective attitudes and acts of will, and was in this sense a “subjectifying science.” Psychology, however, was an “objectifying science,” concerned with *objects* only.⁴ Münsterberg explained this surprising statement in the following way: whenever psychology studies acts of will or subjective attitudes, “the psychophysical organism must be substituted for the real subject and thus the will [will] be considered as a process in the world of objects” (Münsterberg, 1899a, p. 19). In this way, psychology, according to Münsterberg, transformed acts of will into functions of psychophysical objects. It sought to analyze these psychophysical phenomena into elements and determine the necessary, causal relation between them. The historian, however, understood and appreciated individual acts of will as free acts of agreement or disagreement with the acts of will of others.

Psychology and history were therefore radically different. Take, for instance, the fact that Socrates refused to escape from his death cell (Münsterberg, 1899a, pp. 25–26). According to Münsterberg a historian would say that Socrates stayed in prison out of his own free will: he decided to obey the laws of Athens unto death. A psychologist, however, would maintain that Socrates stayed in prison “because his knee muscles were contracted in a sitting position and not working to effect his escape.” These muscle processes took place because certain “psychophysical ideas, emotions and volitions, all composed of elementary sensations, occurred in his brain,” and they again were the effect of “all the causes which sense stimulations and dispositions, associations and inhibitions, physiological and climactic influences produced in that organism” called Socrates.

According to Münsterberg both explanations were equally true—both sciences were transformations of reality to create truth, as he called it. Münsterberg did not say how the historian’s professional belief in a free will and the psychologist’s in a causally determined unfree action can be equally true at the same time. His opinion seems to have been that these beliefs are *as-if* propositions.⁵ Psychology looks upon man *as if* causally determined, whereas history looks upon the individual *as if* free. The different basic orientations of both disciplines were, according to Münsterberg, connected to their different functions; psychologists, he maintained, want to *predict* and manage the future, whereas historians just want to *appreciate*

4. The expressions “objectifying” and “subjectifying sciences” (“objektvierenden” and “subjektivierenden Wissenschaften”) are taken from Münsterberg (1900, p.109), where the same classification of the sciences is defended. Compare also Hale (1980, p. 78).

5. According to Münsterberg’s daughter, one of his correspondents during his early years in Freiburg was Hans Vaihinger who became famous for his *Philosophie des Als-ob* (1911) [see Münsterberg (1922, p. 27)].

and understand all acts of will that influence an individual's life (Münsterberg, 1899a, pp. 18–21).

Münsterberg's conclusion from all this was clear enough: "Psychology and history cannot help each other and cannot interfere with each other as long as they consistently stick to their own aims." (Münsterberg, 1899a, p. 27).

GERMAN NEO-KANTIANISM AND AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGISM

Why did Münsterberg propose this strict separation of psychology and history? The answers to this question suggested in previous research on Münsterberg and his APA address do not seem completely convincing.

First, as Matthew Hale (1980, ch. 6) and Wolfgang Schönplug (1994, pp. 238–239) have pointed out, Münsterberg was influenced by the so-called South-Baden or Southwest German Neo-Kantian School that focused on the epistemology of the cultural sciences. In his address, Münsterberg himself actually stated that the separation of history and psychology was "the demand of some of the best students of logic" and, without mentioning any names, he referred more than once to the "recent development of epistemological discussion, especially in Germany." (Münsterberg, 1899a, pp. 5, 7, 10). It is not difficult to guess to whom Münsterberg was referring here. Münsterberg was a close friend of Heinrich Rickert who, along with Wilhelm Windelband, was one of the leading representatives of neo-Kantian philosophy in Germany. Münsterberg (1900, p. 33) later credited Windelband as the first scholar to have insisted on the separation of psychology and history. Windelband had presented this view in his famous Strasbourg lecture on "History and Science" [Geschichte und Naturwissenschaft] (1894). To him, psychology was a nomothetic science (concerned with general laws) like the natural sciences. History, however, belonged to the fundamentally different idiographic studies (concerned with singular facts only) (Windelband, 1924, pp. 143–144). Rickert had defended a similar position in 1896 and again in 1898, only months before Münsterberg's own address, in a lecture entitled Cultural Studies and Science [Kulturwissenschaft und Naturwissenschaft] [Rickert (1926, pp. 60–71); see also Rickert (1896–1902)]. Undoubtedly, it was to these studies that Münsterberg referred, when talking about the "recent development of epistemological discussion, especially in Germany." He repeatedly mentioned them when dealing with similar questions in a work published two years after his APA address (Münsterberg, 1900, pp. 33, 37, 39, 43–44, 110, 138).

Although one must acknowledge these specific neo-Kantian influences on Münsterberg, they alone raise more questions than they answer. Most importantly, they do not answer the question why Münsterberg considered the separation of psychology and history a topic relevant to *psychologists*. Windelband and Rickert were idealist philosophers who were worried about the recent development and growing status of psychology as a science. They believed that psychology as a natural science threatened philosophy's idealist presuppositions, and their classifications of the sciences solved the problem by cutting away this rapidly developing psychological parasite from the body of philosophy. Indeed, thirteen years later both Windelband and Rickert would be among the leading spokespersons of the German philosophers who launched the public protest against the occupation of philosophical university chairs by experimental psychologists in 1913 (Rath, 1994, pp. 254–279, esp. 256). Even if they acknowledged the legitimacy of a scientific psychology, they were definitely not enthusiastic about it. They favored a "historical" point of view, a point of view that (in their opinion) gave a prominent role to the unique, creative powers and the conscious ethical motives of individuals. However, Münsterberg, as a proponent of the new scientific psychology, was in

an entirely different position than the neo-Kantian philosophers. Why then did he take up Windelband's and Rickert's program?

Münsterberg's biographer Matthew Hale has suggested that apart from neo-Kantian influences, a *second* element has to be considered, the *American* context of his ideas on psychology and life (Hale, 1980, ch. 6). According to Hale, Münsterberg wanted to teach his pragmatic American audience a German philosophical lesson. To this end, he published in 1898 and 1899 a whole series of essays, of which his APA address was one. These essays were particularly meant to fight "psychologism": the reduction of the phenomena of life to the laws of a mechanistic psychology, especially popular among nonprofessionals. According to Hale, psychologism was a "pervasive *American* habit" and Münsterberg's 1898 and 1899 essays were thus meant as "a corrective to a *particularly American fallacy*," of rushing to psychology for all answers to life (Hale, 1980, pp. 72–73; emphasis added).

Hale's emphasis on the American context certainly helps our understanding of Münsterberg's series of 1898 and 1899 essays as a whole. However, one may ask whether this is also the case for the essay on psychology and history—a question to which Hale devoted no specific attention. Admittedly, professional historians in America have proven to be much more inclined to use psychological theories—especially Freudian psychoanalysis—than their colleagues elsewhere. In 1913, just three years after Freud's first psychohistorical publication (Freud, 1910), Preserved Smith, a distinguished American historian of the Reformation, published a psychoanalytical study of Luther in the *American Journal of Psychology* (Smith, 1913). After World War I, Harry Elmer Barnes, a major spokesperson of the so-called New History, wrote a series of articles on the profitable relations of history and psychology. These culminated in 1925 in his book *Psychology and History* in which he especially recommended psychoanalysis to historians (Barnes, 1919, 1921, 1924, 1925). In 1940, the American Historical Association published a volume on the *Cultural Approach to History* in which two articles appeared dealing with the interrelations of psychology and history, including one by a psychoanalyst (Alexander, 1940; Ware, 1940; Watson, 1940). Finally, in 1958 William Langer, the president of the American Historical Association, proclaimed the study of psychoanalysis to be "the next assignment" for historians (Langer, 1958). This early and lasting American enthusiasm for Freudian psychohistory was not matched by anything like it among historians in Europe, but it began more than a decade *after* Münsterberg's APA address. Was there in America, then, a tendency toward historical psychologism against which his address might have been directed *before* Freudian psychohistory became popular? For the moment, I will let this question rest and turn to an aspect of Münsterberg's address that previous commentators apparently have failed to notice.

MÜNSTERBERG'S NIGHTMARE

Especially in the beginning of his presidential address, Münsterberg conveyed a strong sense of emergency and expressed serious concern about the future of experimental psychology. His essay on "Psychology and History" was in this respect exceptional in his series of 1898 and 1899 essays. In the other essays he presented experimental psychology not as *endangered* but as a *danger* in the hands of nonprofessionals (Münsterberg, 1899b, pp. 19, 101, 146, 148). One of them was entitled "The Danger *from* Experimental Psychology" [Münsterberg (1898), emphasis added]. Here, Münsterberg vented his anxieties about the "ideal life of our time" that he feared "triumphant psychology" would "crush under its feet" (Münsterberg, 1899b, p. 169). His concerns in *Psychology and History*, however, were quite

different. In his APA address, Münsterberg warned psychologists against an imminent take-over by history. According to him the “undermining of psychology with the tools of history” was “in eager progress.” Psychology was in danger of becoming “subordinated to the historical view of man,” and this would inevitably result in “the ruin of *real* psychology.” If nothing would be done against it, there would be “no hope for psychology.” “Psychology and history must never come together again.” “[I]t is the only way for psychology to escape its ruin through the interference of a historically thinking idealism” (Münsterberg, 1899a, pp. 3–6).

This was what I would like to call “Münsterberg’s Nightmare”: his vision of history reducing his own profession to ruins in the all too near future. Münsterberg associated the historical attack on psychology with the growing discontent in *fin-de-siècle* European culture with a rational, scientific, and naturalistic conception of man that later historians have called “the revolt against positivism” (Hughes, 1977, ch. 2). Münsterberg presented this shift in public opinion to his American audience, like this:

[T]he pendulum of civilization begins to swing in the other direction. The mere decomposition of the world has not satisfied the deep demand for an inner understanding of the world; the discovery of causal laws has not stilled the thirst for emotional values, and there has come a chill with the feeling that all the technical improvement which surrounds us is a luxury which does not make life either better or worthier the struggle. The idealistic impulses have come to a new life everywhere in art and science and politics and society and religion; the historical and philosophical thinking has revived and rushes to the foreground. (Münsterberg, 1899a, p. 3)

Münsterberg was not explicit about who constituted the “historical” threat to psychology. He mentioned neither names nor titles that might prove that he was not being hypochondriacal in his fear of history. Who then were “our opponents”—meaning the opponents of “*real* psychology”—as Münsterberg called them in his address? Which scholars did he have in mind?

To answer these questions we should first return to the European, especially the German context. In fact, I would like to suggest that Münsterberg’s thoughts on psychology and history were born during a stay in Germany from 1895 to 1897, the years directly preceding his APA presidency. During this period, Münsterberg again became an assistant professor in Freiburg before returning definitively to Harvard. This “Black Forest Interlude”—as Münsterberg’s daughter has called these years in her biography of her father (Münsterberg, 1922, ch. 5)—seems to have been a transitional phase for Münsterberg. The psychologist modified his aggressive materialism of the 1880s and gradually became “more and more idealist,” to use his own words [quoted in Hale (1980, p. 52)]. It was during this period that the neo-Kantian influence became a dominant feature in his thinking, apparently imprinted on his mind in many intense discussions with his friend and Freiburg colleague Heinrich Rickert (Hale, 1980, pp. 72–73; cf. Münsterberg, 1922, p. 52).

Although Münsterberg became inclined to a more idealist view of life during his Black Forest Interlude, he did *not* change his strictly physiological conception of psychology [see Hale (1980, p. 52)]. He only rejected “psychologism,” the idea of applying such a psychology to the ideals and practices of real life. Münsterberg’s explicit efforts to reconcile “ethical idealism with the physiological psychology of our days” (Münsterberg, 1899b, p. viii) in effect resulted in his dualist classification of the sciences I have sketched before, in which the subjectifying and idealist perspective of history and the normative sciences was *separated* from the objectifying perspective of psychology and physics. Whereas for Rickert the dualist classification of the sciences served to remove psychology from idealist philosophy, for Mün-

sterberg the reverse was no less important; his dualist conception of the sciences not only created room for his newly strengthened idealist view of life, but also served to keep subjectifying studies (especially history) away from psychology.

To understand Münsterberg's concerns about this, it is crucial to realize that his Black Forest Interlude coincided with important developments in German intellectual life. The years between 1895 and 1897 were tumultuous years for relevant parts of the academic community in Germany. In these years, the relation between the two disciplines of history and psychology became a hotly debated topic in Germany—among psychologists and philosophers as well as historians.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL OPPONENTS OF “REAL” PSYCHOLOGY

On the psychological side, there are some good reasons to ask whether Münsterberg was thinking of his one-time teacher, Wilhelm Wundt, as one of the opponents of real, experimental psychology. Already in his *Habilitationsschrift* (1888), Münsterberg had criticized Wundt for being too voluntaristic and subjectivist in his psychological analysis of the will (Münsterberg, 1990). Furthermore, from the 1880s onward, if not earlier, Wundt had stated that psychology was *the* fundamental science for all *Geisteswissenschaften* including history, a conception of psychology with which Münsterberg certainly disagreed after his Black Forest Interlude [e.g. Wundt (1895, p. 302); Münsterberg (1900, pp. 17–19)]. Third, from the late 1880s onward, Wundt kept returning to the older idea of a *Völkerpsychologie*—a subject to which he devoted most of his attention, and many heavy volumes, after 1900. In his most popular work on psychology, *Grundriss der Psychologie*, and in the revised second edition of his encyclopedia of the sciences, both published during Münsterberg's stay in Germany, Wundt again explained some of his ideas on *Völkerpsychologie* [Wundt, (1895, 1897); mentioned by Münsterberg (1900)]. In these publications, Wundt defined *Völkerpsychologie* as the psychological analysis of the collective intellectual or mental products of human groups, notably language, myths, and customs. Fundamental to this analysis was what Wundt called the “historical-psychological method,” a procedure that would make it possible to “find certain [historical] changes and developments, from which general laws for the [historical] development of ideas [*Vorstellungen*], emotions, and directions of the will may be deduced” (Wundt, 1895, p. 239). Concerned with “the development of mental [*geistige*] communities,” Wundt's *Völkerpsychologie* constituted a “psychological history of the development of humanity,” as he would call it later (Wundt, 1897, pp. 347–362; Wundt, 1913). Wundt's ideas on *Völkerpsychologie* clearly presented a thorough mix-up of Münsterberg's categories of the sciences, and we may safely assume that for this reason alone, he did not like it.

However, did Wundt's ideas also constitute a *threat* to Münsterberg's real psychology? The answer must be only indirectly. Clearly, Wundt's conception of psychology left room for nonexperimental approaches, and at least one historian, Karl Lamprecht, felt stimulated by Wundt's work to propose a thorough historical perspective on psychology (see next section). However, Lamprecht's proposals were not quite in accordance with Wundt's own opinions. In the first place, Wundt did not challenge the principles of experimental psychology, for which he himself had become famous, as such. Second, although Wundt defended the application of psychology to history and considered history to be some sort of applied psychology (Wundt, 1895, p. 383), he was very clear and determined about the essential differences between the two disciplines (Oelze, 1991). Wundt believed that historical phenomena always had a singular character and, as such, did not belong to the domain of psychology. In his view, psychologists were only interested in general phenomena. For this reason, Wundt

limited his *Völkerpsychologie* to the study of the *prehistorical* stages of human development that he believed had been dominated by groups and collective phenomena. From the time history emerged with the art of writing, culture evolved, and individuals started to dominate groups; historical developments consequently became too complex for psychologists to study. In this way, Wundt drew his own line of demarcation between psychology and history. In his opinion, there could be only oneway traffic across this line: historians needed psychologists for a deeper understanding of history, but psychologists did not need history. Accordingly, Wundt did not hold the view that psychology, not even *Völkerpsychologie*, should be dominated by a historical approach. This line of demarcation distinguished Wundt's conception of *Völkerpsychologie* from the original 1860 concept by Moritz Lazarus and Hajim Steinthal in which a closer and more reciprocal relationship between history and psychology was proposed [Lazarus & Steinthal (1860); cf. Steinthal (1864)]. Münsterberg certainly disagreed with Wundt's defence of psychologism, but it constituted a danger *from* psychology rather than a danger *for* psychology.

More threatening to Münsterberg's real psychology were proposals for an alternative approach in psychology formulated by the distinguished Berlin philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey. Dilthey, a one-time student and close friend of Moritz Lazarus, had spent many years working on a thorough *geisteswissenschaftlich* alternative to the Lazarian idea of *Völkerpsychologie*. It was only at the end of the 1890s that he made the "hermeneutic turn" for which he became famous and altogether abandoned the idea of a psychological foundation of social and historical studies. Dilthey's last and most elaborate proposals for an alternative psychology were two lengthy treatises, published by the Prussian Academy of the Sciences in 1895 and 1896 (Dilthey, 1961a,b). In these treatises Dilthey attacked the new scientific psychology as well as neo-Kantian classifications of the sciences in which psychology was classified as a natural science. In 1883, Dilthey had presented his own dualist classification of the sciences in which he had classified psychology as a fundamental part of the *Geisteswissenschaften*. Dilthey now defended this position by attacking the new scientific psychology. Most importantly, Dilthey criticized the new psychology for being reductionistic; it tended to reduce the complicated psychological life of individuals to the simple mechanical interaction of a few preconceived elements. Instead, Dilthey proposed a different sort of psychology that would do justice to the full richness of the human soul. In the first place, psychology would have to consider emotions, feelings, and passions as well as the cognitive mental functions on which the experimental psychologists concentrated. Second, psychology should not only pay attention to psychological processes but also to psychological contents (e.g., *what* people think, not only *how*), and it should analyze the relationship between contents and processes. Finally, psychology should not treat individuals as isolated atoms, the one similar to the other. The new scientific psychology too easily assumed that psychological phenomena were physiologically determined and to be found in all individuals. Individuals should not be isolated from their social, cultural, and historical contexts—contexts that produced the individual. According to Dilthey all but the most basic psychological phenomena were in fact a product of history. Therefore, he proposed that psychologists should take a thorough historical point of view and should start to collect, describe, analyze, and compare psychological information from different historical periods, cultures, and social settings. This descriptive, analytical, and comparative psychology would have to concentrate on the social, cultural, and historical differentiation of individuals. This was only possible if psychologists examined the historical products of men: languages, myths, literature, and their social, political, and economical activities. "What a task, to build a bridge between psychology as it was until now and the historical point of view"! exclaimed Dilthey at the end of one his treatises. Earlier on, he had

written the famous words: “What man is like, cannot be learned through introspection, nor through psychological experiments, but through history” (Dilthey, 1961a, pp. 237, 180).

This was definitely a proposal to subordinate psychology to history, and it met instantly with a fierce reaction from experimental and physiological psychologists, as Hermann Ebbinghaus published in October 1895 a devastating review of Dilthey’s ideas (Ebbinghaus, 1895). My suggestion is that also Münsterberg—who cannot possibly have missed this discussion during his stay in Germany—wrote his APA address on psychology and history in part as a reply to Dilthey. In any case, we have an indication that he knew these texts when he wrote his APA speech because only two years later, in his *Grundzüge der Psychologie*, he cited both of Dilthey’s treatises as well as Ebbinghaus’s review (Münsterberg, 1900, p. 43).

Münsterberg had more reasons than other psychologists to refute Dilthey; he was the only modern psychologist directly quoted and attacked by Dilthey as an outstanding example of a reductionist psychologist.⁶ To be more precise, Dilthey criticized and quoted Münsterberg’s *Ueber die Aufgaben und Methoden der Psychologie* (1891). In this early work, Münsterberg had not yet formulated the *restricted* view on the domain of psychology he would be defending in 1898 [see, e.g., Münsterberg (1891, pp. 106–107, 204–208)]. Instead, he had explicitly defended the idea of applying psychology to history. In fact, he had maintained that using psychology was obligatory for the historian: “history is one of many expedients to supply psychology with its material, but psychology is the only expedient that can supply the material of history with causal links” (Münsterberg, 1891, p. 199).

After his idealist shift, Münsterberg no longer could account for this statement. It is significant that during his Black Forest Interlude he started to feel that his *Ueber die Aufgaben und Methoden der Psychologie*, which was criticized by Dilthey, no longer represented his views in an adequate way [see Hale (1980, p. 52)]. Next to Rickert’s influence, Dilthey’s criticism may well have been among the reasons why he changed his opinion. In his *Grundzüge der Psychologie* (1900), in which Münsterberg discussed Dilthey’s views explicitly for the first time, he actually agreed with Dilthey that the new scientific psychology was of no use to history and other *Geisteswissenschaften*. Münsterberg’s conclusion from this was not, however, that a different sort of psychology had to be conceived or that psychology had to become a historically oriented science, as Dilthey had suggested, but that psychology had to be separated from history and the other “subjectifying” sciences (Münsterberg, 1900, pp. 27–33).

THE HISTORICAL OPPONENTS OF “REAL” PSYCHOLOGY

The controversy on historical versus physiological psychology initiated by Dilthey was not the only disturbing intellectual event during Münsterberg’s Black Forest Interlude. Münsterberg had all the more reason to be anxious about the future of psychology as Dilthey’s call for a historically oriented psychology seemed to materialize in the historical profession. In 1896, a fierce controversy known as the Lamprecht debate started to divide German historians. At issue were the proper domain and methods of history. The Leipzig historian Karl

6. See Dilthey (1961a, pp. 165–166). As far as I know, this connection has been overlooked so far. In a note, Dilthey referred to Münsterberg’s *Über Aufgaben und Methoden der Psychologie* (Leipzig 1891) as a very clear example of the scientific, physiological psychology he criticizes. In the same paragraph then follows a quotation without any reference to the author or publication, which is in fact a passage taken from the book by Münsterberg (p. 127) just mentioned.

Lamprecht (1856–1915), who was at the center of this debate, was the most important proponent and theoretist of a new cultural history in Germany in the 1890s. He was preceded by historians such as Eberhard Gothein and Georg Steinhausen and followed by others such as Kurt Breysig and Walter Goetz.⁷ Influenced by Dilthey (among others), who was a teacher of Gothein and Breysig and whose ideas all new cultural historians of the 1890s to some extent appreciated, these historians considered cultural history to be a form of “historical” or “social psychology.”

These historians were not the first to defend a form of cultural history in nineteenth-century Germany. Since the Enlightenment, cultural history had been a long-standing alternative to political, especially diplomatic or dynastic, history (Hartmann, 1971). From the start, cultural history was generally, though not necessarily, connected with opposition against elitist, aristocratic views of history and a defence of middle-class (often also liberal) values and themes (Schleier, 1997a,b). Until the 1890s, however, its proponents were often nonprofessional historians or scholars outside of the academic community. Only around 1848 did it get something of a foothold in the German universities. Influenced by a strengthening nationalism, it was then inspired by Hegelian or romantic theories of *Volkstum* in which the unique and transcendental spirit or idea of a *Volk* was thought somehow to transpire into all its historical products and achievements. In the 1890s, however, when cultural history again became influential at the universities, a different conception became dominant. Stimulated by a concern about the rapid industrialization and the concomitant cultural and social changes within the young *Kaiserreich*, the new cultural historians returned to the Enlightenment conception of cultural history as a history of changing mental capabilities of humans. In the same way as Enlightened philosophers and historians had been concerned with the ways in which the universal character of humankind was differentiated into distinctive “national characters” by the forces of history and the environment, the new cultural historians of the 1890s studied history and society to understand the development of the different national cultures and the mental differences within these national cultures. “Culture” was defined, analyzed, studied, and understood sociopsychologically: it was the sum total of the collective mental characteristics of human groups, brought about by a common history, common ways of living and livelihoods, and methods of organization and communication. Lamprecht defined “culture” as the “general psychological disposition” of a certain period that itself had to be considered as a product of human socialization (*Vergesellschaftung*) [Lamprecht (1896/97, pp. 127, 99); cf. Lamprecht (1900, p. 26)]. Accordingly, cultural history (and history in general) was conceived by him as “the comparative history of the social-psychological [*sozialpsychischen*] factors of development,” “the study of the total social-psychological development,” or again as “in the first place a social-psychological science” (Lamprecht, 1896/97, p. 145; Lamprecht, 1905, p. 1).

Historische Psychologie, *Sozialpsychologie*, or *Gesellschaftsseelekunde* were the words repeatedly used by the new cultural historians to designate their new subject and approach. As in Dilthey’s proposals there is an indirect connection here with the older concept of *Völkerpsychologie*; in using the term *Sozialpsychologie*, the new cultural historians were probably following the historian Ernst Bernheim who had been both Steinhausen’s and Lamprecht’s teacher and who was the writer of the well known *Lehrbuch der historischen Methode* (first edition 1889, sixth edition 1908). From the 1880s onward, Bernheim had insisted on

7. The only study that deals with all these historians is in German [Haas (1994, see esp. ch. B.3: Sozialpsychologische Kulturgeschichte, pp. 390–419)]. In English, one may consult the excellent biography of Lamprecht by Chickering (1993) that also contains relevant information on the other cultural historians.

the fruitfulness of Lazarus's and Steinthal's *völkerpsychological* perspective for historians, especially because it was essential for historians to acknowledge the "difference of the times" also in the "psychological disposition" of people in the past and avoid anachronisms in this psychological respect (Bernheim, 1889, p. 454). However, he objected to the word *Völkerpsychologie* and proposed instead *Sozialpsychologie* as a broader term. After all, the nation was only *one* of the forms of human socialization.

The new cultural historians agreed with Germany's foremost historical methodologist in this respect. According to them, historians should study the historical development of the "inner man." Therefore, one of them eventually published an extensive history of the soul (Breysig, 1931), another a short history of the change of emotional life since the Middle Ages (Steinhausen, 1895a); others studied the development of individuality over the course of history [e.g., Lamprecht (1920)], and all studied the history of collective mentalities. According to these cultural historians, historians should not just show "how it actually was" ("wie es eigentlich gewesen," in Ranke's famous phrase) but how *people* actually were in the past ["wie die Menschen eigentlich gewesen," Steinhausen (1895b, p. 195)]. Historians should not concentrate on great personalities and famous deeds, but instead they should study the development of *forms* of personality and *ways* of behaving (Breysig, 1908, p. 8). Instead of restricting their attention to the conscious acts of will of some outstanding individuals, the new cultural historians proposed to study the vast domain of habitual behavior, typical for groups of people in specific contexts (Lamprecht, 1896, p. 56). Such a cultural history, in effect a historically oriented social psychology, would be able to integrate social, economic, and political history and would therefore no longer be restricted to the traditional historical domain of politics.

These proposals met with strong resistance from traditionally oriented political historians in Germany. They associated the new cultural history with materialism, collectivism, and democracy and considered it to be a threat to the values of idealism, individualism, and elitist politics. Presumably for similar reasons, Münsterberg, feeling "more and more idealist" in these years, sided with the opponents of the new cultural history, just like his friend Rickert had. That he actually knew about the Lamprecht debate is apparent from the list of references in his *Grundzüge*, where texts of Lamprecht and some of his supporters and opponents are mentioned (Münsterberg, 1900, pp. 137–138). In "Psychology and History" and in other texts during the years 1898–1900, Münsterberg explicitly repudiated the idea that "historians should better become psychologists" and history "a vast department of social psychology" (Münsterberg, 1899a, pp. 27, 25). "[A] causally explaining social psychology is not history," he maintained (Münsterberg, 1899b, p. 10). In such a social-psychological approach to history "the single individual and the single event disappear from sight" and "the extraordinary man becomes the extreme case of the average crowd" (Münsterberg, 1899b, p. 10). This was not what Münsterberg expected from history. According to his idealist conception, the single individual and the extraordinary man as well as free acts of will were essential elements in history. The world of history, he said, is "the world of the will; only where there is will, there is history" (Münsterberg, 1900, p. 115). According to Münsterberg, history not only dealt exclusively with *individual* acts of will but it was in fact even more restricted, concentrating on those acts of will that "determined"—as he said—"the multitude, those will acts which were imitated and acknowledged by the unimportant subjects. [. . .] Any individual's historical place is then characterized by his will attitudes towards the leaders" (Münsterberg, 1899a, pp. 22–23). History then dealt predominantly with the acts of will of Great Men, among whom Münsterberg mentioned Luther, Goethe, and of course Bismarck. "Are 'heroism' and 'hero-worship' empty words?" he asked rhetorically (Münsterberg, 1899b, p. 16). "The aim

of the real historian [. . .] is not to copy the natural laws of physics and social psychology, but to work out the more and more general inner relations of mankind, by following up the will influences of great men" (Münsterberg, 1899b, p. 26).

Evidently, the new cultural history constituted a threat to Münsterberg's idea of history that was in fact a corollary of his newly strengthened idealist position. Hardly less important, it also constituted a threat to his idea of psychology. Although some of the new cultural historians used (socio-)psychological theories and concepts in their research (e.g., by Erb, Beard, Wundt, Lipps, and Simmel, and later Kretschmer) and sometimes even called history nothing but "applied" or "derived" psychology [e.g., Lamprecht (1905, p. 16); Gothein (1911, p. 247)], eventually they all were convinced, as Münsterberg feared, that history not psychology was the more fundamental of the two disciplines.⁸ As Lamprecht stated in 1900: "psychology is apparently part of a [historical] development and therefore part of the historical science. [. . .] [T]he historical discipline (in its most general sense—the study of the psychological changes of human communities) [is] in the *Geisteswissenschaften* the leading discipline [*führende Wissenschaft*]" (Lamprecht, 1900, pp. 14–15). The reason for this was clear. Studying the *changes* in the collective psychological characteristics of people in the past and concentrating on the "psychological distance" (Lamprecht) between historical periods and communities, the new cultural historians feared that the application of the static or timeless scientific psychology of their days would inevitably lead to anachronistic misinterpretations. To avoid this, psychology would have to become "variable." It needed a "concept of time as a function [*zeitlicher Funktionsbegriff*]"—and only history would be able to supply such an "evolutionist" perspective (Lamprecht, 1905, pp. 19–20). The same point was expressed more poetically by Eberhard Gothein, Dilthey's closest disciple from among the new cultural historians: "Psychological characteristics of individuals as well as of groups," he wrote, "appear in ever new formations, and they not only determine historical life, but are themselves determined by it. *Psyche, that tender thing with its pair of wings, is itself the most changeable in the course of time*" [Gothein (1911, p. 247), emphasis added].

REACTIONS

Just like Dilthey, the new cultural historians presented ideas that subordinated psychology to the historical view of people. The reactions to these proposals were on the whole not very reassuring for Münsterberg. For one thing, the new cultural history, especially Lamprecht's *Deutsche Geschichte*, was popular among teachers and the general reading public in Germany. However, academics also valued his ideas. In 1897, the later Leipzig professor of pedagogy, Paul Barth, even declared, "Lamprecht's point of view is so much powered by truth, that his opponents are barely able to defend themselves and views close to his inevitably arise" (1897, p. 216). Just like Dilthey and the new cultural historians, Barth demanded the formation of a "*historical psychology* [. . .] that would establish the psychological changes brought about by history" (1897, p. 10). Admittedly, many, perhaps most, German historians did *not* agree with Lamprecht, but even some of those professional historians who did not *fully* agree with him, like Otto Hintze, still stressed the importance of the social-psychological perspective in history (Hintze, 1982, pp. 320–321).

8. From this point of view, it was only logical that Lamprecht raised his voice against the 1913 declaration of German philosophers who protested against the occupation of philosophical chairs by psychologists. Lamprecht feared that this protest might lead to psychology becoming more and more separated from *Geisteswissenschaften*—a prospect he considered to be "a danger" for history [Lamprecht (1913a); cf. Rath (1994, pp. 266–270)].

After he had returned to America, Münsterberg must have found it unsettling that the enthusiasm for the new, socio-psychological cultural history was also spreading in the United States. Even if there was at this point still no *widespread* tendency toward psychologism among American historians, its very beginnings nonetheless seem to lie here, at this moment. In the same year at the end of which Münsterberg held his APA speech, an enthusiastic article on Lamprecht's ideas appeared in the *American Historical Review*, written by the historian Earle Dow and ominously titled "Features of the New History" (Dow, 1897/1898). Dow not only paid much attention to Lamprecht's ideas on the "social-psychic factors," but he also explicitly argued for a new psychology that could form the basis of historical science and all *Geisteswissenschaften*; it would no longer consider the individual as the main subject of research but concentrate instead on "social-psychic studies" (Dow, 1897/1898, p. 447). Dow's article introduced the expression that would become the name for the reform movement in American historiography: the "New History." This movement owed much of its inspiration to Lamprecht (Schorn-Schütte, 1984, pp. 289–309).⁹ J. H. Robinson, the New History's most prominent representative, repeatedly declared it to be "a new task for the historian" to "write a history of the inner man" and recommended to this end the study of social and animal psychology (Robinson, 1912, p. 107; quoted in Schorn-Schütte, 1984, p. 292). A later proponent of the New History, Harry Elmer Barnes, praised Lamprecht's "conception of history as a socio-psychic process" as "fundamentally right" and "one of the most fruitful lines of historical investigation for years to come" before he eventually focused on Freudian psychoanalysis as one of history's most important new allies (Barnes, 1925, pp. 170, 202). Dow's article was therefore one of the first signs that American historians were inclined to the kind of historical psychologism that Münsterberg detested and feared. Paradoxically, in 1904 it was Münsterberg who gave Lamprecht the opportunity to present his ideas on psychology and history personally in America by including him in a group of prominent German scholars who were invited to the United States on the occasion of the Universal Exhibition in St. Louis (Chickering, 1993, p. 346).

As the growing popularity of the New History in North America indicates, Münsterberg's APA speech on psychology and history did not do much to stop the trend he feared. The net result of Münsterberg's speech in America as well as in Germany seems to have been nil—or worse. Although most reviews of *Psychology and Life*, the volume in which his APA speech was reproduced, emphasized the prominence of the author as a psychologist, they were on the whole not very flattering. Neither *The Psychological Review* (1900, pp. 81–87), *Mind* (1899, pp. 540–543; 1900, pp. 205–217), the *Zeitschrift für Psychologie und Physiologie der Sinnesorgane* (1900, pp. 110–116), nor the *Vierteljahrsschrift für wissenschaftliche Philosophie* (1900, pp. 1–22) agreed with Münsterberg's main argument. All of these reviews specifically attacked Münsterberg's classification of the sciences that was at the center of his APA address and questioned his rigidly mechanistic view of the mind. The historical perspective was most clearly expressed in another review of Münsterberg's speech, significantly published in the newly founded German *Zeitschrift für Kulturgeschichte*. The reviewer, who was explicitly sympathetic with Lamprecht's ideas, put the central question most precisely: "but have not also those objects [i.e., those "objects" Münsterberg thought of as the subject matter of psychology] been different at different times and are they not in this respect subordinated [*unterstellt*] to the historical point of view?" (Lory, 1900, p. 291). Münsterberg's (1900) *Grundzüge* in which he defended the same opinions hardly received better treatment.

9. Luise Schorn-Schütte (1984, p. 291n12) also suggested—without elaborating on it—that Münsterberg's (1898) APA address possibly constituted a reaction to Lamprecht's ideas.

William Stern, a young German psychologist who shortly afterward would be defending his own version of applied and “personalist” psychology, formulated one of the sharpest criticisms. In his review, Stern (1902, p. 263) concluded that Münsterberg had so strongly emphasized the limits of a mechanistic psychology that he ended up struggling in vain to keep upright the construction he himself had skilfully undermined. It would have been only logical for Münsterberg, Stern wrote, to denounce mechanistic psychology altogether: presented as it was by Münsterberg as “an unnatural answer to an unnatural question,” it was left “without reason of existence.” However, Münsterberg recoiled from this logical conclusion, Stern suggested, out of fear of committing “scientific suicide”: he still lived in the house he himself was pulling down.

After 1900 the academic interest in Dilthey's and Lamprecht's ideas only seems to have grown. I have already mentioned the positive reception of Lamprecht by American New Historians. In Germany, Lamprecht's ideas seem to have been most influential *outside* the historical profession. Several psychologically oriented art historians, the most famous of whom was Aby Warburg, were influenced by his ideas [see Brush (1993)]. Many German economists of the so-called Historical School—most notably Gustav Schmoller—were interested in psychology and appreciated the views of both Dilthey and the new cultural historians. The economist Franz Eulenburg (1867–1943) credited Lamprecht in 1907 with “a lasting and remarkable achievement for the young science of social psychology” in effect “to have positively shown the historically changeable behaviour of the soul in the concrete life of peoples” (Eulenburg, 1907, p. 336).

There were also proper psychologists who were influenced by Lamprecht and Dilthey. The psychologist Chr. Pflaum published in 1906 a treatise on the ways psychological life “is determined by the historical and present socialisation of individuals” in which Lamprecht was mentioned as one of the more fruitful recent researchers on the subject (Pflaum, 1906, pp. III, 12–14). More prominent were Willy Hellpach (1877–1955), Erich Rothacker (1888–1965), and Eduard Spranger (1882–1963), all of whom would become well-known German psychologists during the Interwar period. The psychologist Willy Hellpach, the first director of the first institute for social psychology in Germany, had been a student of both Wundt and Lamprecht (Lück, 1988; Stallmeister & Lück, 1991). From 1902 onward he praised Lamprecht's psychological conception of history and took over some of his concepts and ideas in his own publications on social and cultural psychology [e.g., Hellpach (1902b); Hellpach (1902a, pp. 470–479, 495); Hellpach (1927)]. Another young philosopher and psychologist, Erich Rothacker—who would acquire a reputation as a psychologist by his book *Die Schichten der Persönlichkeit [The Layers of Personality]* (1938)—was already at an early age influenced by Breysig and Hermann Schneider, scholars close to Lamprecht,¹⁰ before he eventually turned to Dilthey. In 1909 he published an article on the possibilities of *Völkerpsychologie* in which works by Lamprecht, Breysig, and Schneider were mentioned as excellent examples of the historical perspective in *Völkerpsychologie* [Rothacker (1909, p. 391); cf. Rothacker (1912a,b)]. Finally, Eduard Spranger, who by his book *Lebensformen (Forms of Life)*, 1914 and many later editions) established himself as one of the leading proponents

10. Hermann Schneider (1874–1953) would (in 1914 or earlier) become *Extraordinarius* for philosophy at Lamprecht's Institute for Cultural and Universal History in Leipzig. In 1905 he published a study (possibly his Ph.D. dissertation) on causal thinking in the Middle Ages in a series edited by Lamprecht. He was an occasional guest at Rothacker's parental home (Perpeet, 1968, p. 9). His *Habilitationsschrift* on ancient Egyptian culture (1907) was reviewed by Rothacker when he was still at the Gymnasium and was later considered by him as another “Musterbeispiel einer [...] seelischen Entwicklungsgeschichte” [outstanding example of a psychological developmental history] (Rothacker, 1909, p. 391).

of the “geisteswissenschaftliche Psychologie” in the Interwar period, was influenced by Dilthey and Lamprecht in his own 1905 proposals for a “psychologisch-historische Typenbildung” (Spranger, 1905). Later he maintained that this sort of “historical psychology,” concentrating on “historical types of man” (*historische Menschentypen*), was to be one of the main subjects of a “geisteswissenschaftliche Psychologie.” Elaborating on this he again mentioned the two most important proponents of this idea in *fin-de-siècle* Germany:

Nobody understands history, who has not convinced himself of *the enormous changeability of the psychological type of man*. The German historian Karl Lamprecht has had the important idea to write history in this sense as psychological history. In his time there was still no suitable psychology available to do this, except for the simultaneous brilliant analyses by Wilhelm Dilthey on *Geistesgeschichte*. [Spranger (1974, p. 57); see also Spranger (1965, pp. 349–350); emphasis added]

CONCLUSION

The German context of the 1890s provides us with the relevant background to understand Münsterberg’s address on psychology and history. His ideas on this subject were positively influenced by neo-Kantian classifications of the sciences and motivated by a *fear* of a new intellectual trend in Germany in the middle 1890s: the call for a historically oriented social psychology put forward by Dilthey, Lamprecht, and other new cultural historians. Next to Dilthey’s criticism directed at his own work, the positive reception of Lamprecht’s ideas in the *American Historical Review* in 1898 may have provided Münsterberg with the direct motive to warn his American colleagues against history. Münsterberg’s APA address constituted an idiosyncratic reaction to the *fin-de-siècle* “revolt against positivism” and the call for a stronger idealism that he himself embraced. He defended experimental psychology against idealist or historicist criticisms, but at the same time endorsed the argument for a more idealist view of life in general. He was, at least at this moment, a “man of two souls” — as William Stern remarked in his critical review. As such he was a typical representative of the general transition from naturalism to various forms and degrees of idealism that was taking place among European intellectuals at the time (Hughes, 1977; Stern, 1902, 262–263).

What happened to Münsterberg’s “nightmare”? Was “real psychology” in the twentieth century ruined “through the interference of a historically thinking idealism,” as he feared in 1898?

Münsterberg’s real, experimental, and mechanistic psychology never disappeared from the psychological domain. The fact that his address was again considered to be relevant to psychologists in the 1990s can be taken as a sign of the continuing interest in a strictly limited conception of psychology. Wolfgang Schönplflug even interpreted Münsterberg’s 1898 proposals as a “false start” for cognitive psychology that in the 1990s again seemed to be gaining “considerable strength” (Schönplflug, 1994, p. 241).

In another way, however, Münsterberg’s nightmare *did* become true. As I have suggested already, from the start there were scholars in America and Germany who agreed with Dilthey’s and Lamprecht’s ideas on psychology and history, and the support for their ideas certainly contributed to the fact that from the Interwar period onward Münsterberg’s real psychology increasingly would have to *share* the psychological domain with other, nonexperimental and nonphysiological approaches. Most surprisingly, Münsterberg himself contributed to this development. In his 1914 textbook on general and applied psychology, Münsterberg, in apparent contradiction to his 1898 convictions, stated that *next* to causally explaining psychology another psychology was needed, “purposive psychology,” dealing with the purpose or mean-

ing of acts: "One treats man as an object, the other as a subject" (Münsterberg, 1916, p. 295). Furthermore, next to individual psychology Münsterberg now paid a lot of attention to social psychology (from an objectifying as well as from a subjectifying perspective). Still moving further away from his 1898 point of view, Münsterberg now extensively defended the view that purposive but also causal psychology could and should be applied to history. To this end, he distinguished between "psychohistorical science" and "psychotechnical historical studies," both of which were essential to historians. The latter concentrated on a psychological analysis of the trustworthiness of the historian's sources and main characters; the first gave a prominent role to a new, trendy psychological device of the time, the "psychogram":

The historian's psychogram of his hero ought to show how far the mental traits of his ancestors and especially of his parents, the common mental feature of his racial group, the influences of climate, his bodily traits and his health, his experience, his acquaintances, his reading, his education, his traveling, his economic circumstances probably shaped his mental structure. The social atmosphere in which he lived, the temperament, the character, the intelligence, the rhythm of activity, the type of attention, of memory, of imagery, the mental habits and abilities ought to be analyzed as far as the available material allows. [. . .] The historian must know the mental traits of a people, or a race, or of a local community in order to explain the political or social or religious or cultural reactions. (Münsterberg, 1916, p. 358–359)

In sum, Münsterberg, returning to his original 1891 point of view, now held that historians should be considered as "unscientific as long as they disregard the results of scholarly individual and social psychology. The historian needs his psychology as the physicist needs his mathematics" (Münsterberg, 1916, p. 356).

As is clear from this statement, Münsterberg did in fact *not* change his mind on the scientific priority of psychology to history and in no way mitigated his rejection of the subordination of psychology to history. Many psychologists in the twentieth century, however, would also take this last step toward the ideas of Dilthey and Lamprecht. It is remarkable that in many of the alternative approaches that successively influenced the discourse on psychology in the twentieth century, the conception of a historically oriented psychology was embraced by one or more of its representatives: not only in the *verstehende* or *geisteswissenschaftliche* psychology but also in the social psychology promoted by scholars influenced by Durkheim and Mannheim (e.g., Blondel and Elias), in the phenomenological psychology of the 1950s and 1960s (e.g., J. H. van den Berg), and of course in the several variants of marxist psychology, from the Russian school of Vygotskij to the so-called "critical psychology" of the 1970s.¹¹ In a way, all of these different approaches were concerned with the "conditioning effect" on individuals by their (historical) surroundings — paradoxally, not unlike the central concern of what became their common scientific antipole, behaviorist psychology. Seen from this perspective, the new interest in the intersection of history and psychology from the 1890s onward, was an important episode in the spread of an Enlightenment idea, which found an ever-increasing number of adherents in the nineteenth century and would come to dominate in the twentieth century, the belief in the malleability of humans.¹²

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11. On all of these proposals one may consult Jüttemann (1988).

12. On the history of this idea see Passmore (1965), Mandelbaum (1974, esp. Part III, pp. 141–269), and Jahoda (1992).

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