

# Chapter 11

## Subjectivity in Psychology: A Systematic or a Historical Challenge?

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### 11.1 Introduction

In theology there is apparently a clear distinction between a historical approach and a systematic approach. This distinction formed the background for the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard's interest in psychology from an existential point of view. He points out in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* that "historical truths [...] are accidental as such," and therefore there is an "incommensurability between a historical truth and an eternal decision" (Kierkegaard, 2009a, p.83). Thus history is first of all about changes, about coming into being and disappearing, which implies that history may contradict our immediate understanding of the truth, which is rather associated with stability. Hence psychology has embedded in it the same conflict as actual life, which brings it close to history. And the contradiction to which Kierkegaard refers creates the existential dilemma: we on the one hand experience changes in our real lives, but on the other hand, we strive for stability in our understanding of our lives.

This is at the same time the dilemma of subjectivity vs. objectivity in psychology, and this dilemma has followed psychology from the very beginning. Kierkegaard was not the only one in the early history of modern psychology to point out the dilemma. Although it has not been too much focused on in recent decades, it still represents a challenge if psychology is to include a science of subjectivity. However, since the World War II, psychology has primarily been treated as a systematic science, and the historical aspects have been only marginally dealt with. All the same, questions about the role of history in psychology have been raised once in a while in the last 150 years. When G. Stanley Hall held a lecture on "The New Psychology"

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at The John Hopkins University in 1885, he encouraged the inclusion of history of psychology as a part of the new psychology program (Hall, 1885). This perspective has been revitalized recently in social and cultural psychology (Gergen, 1973; Valsiner, 2012). Immediately before the World War II, the role of history in psychology as a science was also discussed by some scholars. One of the contributors to the discussion was the now almost forgotten Austrian-American psychologist and philosopher, Gustav Bergmann (1906–1987). In an article from 1940, he tried to combine a historical approach and a systematic approach to psychology based on his logical positivistic heritage from Vienna. However Bergmann was not the only one to focus on the role of history at that time. As he states in the article, the historical interest was principally in Europe, where there was the deepest resistance to logical positivism and not least to “logical behaviorism.” Yet not only the behaviorists but also Kurt Lewin and Karl Bühler must be regarded as important contributors to the discussion about defining psychology as a strict predictive science, by respectively mathematizing the dynamic forces in life and pointing to a crisis in psychology.

In the light of this background, the distinction between a historical and a systematic approach in psychology leads to an ambiguity that may create uncertainty in different ways. One is related to a chronological presentation of the development of psychology as a science. The technical terms in psychology might be regarded as historically constituted, which means that the content of them changes due to the historical epoch. In this case, psychology might be regarded as a systematic science, though both its terms and appearances can be investigated from a historical perspective. However a chronological presentation might also presuppose that the technical terms applied in psychology are understood as systematic terms, which means that the content of the technical terms has definite and stable meanings. This implies that the historical development is about the replacement of old-fashioned terms that are strongly dependent on a certain historical stage, and the historical approach is restricted to contextual factors and concerns neither psychology itself nor the scientific terms used. A third perspective emphasizes the dynamic forces in human beings as well, which make psychology akin to the science of history in the sense that both refer to irreversible development in individuals and their context alike.

The best example of the latter is created on the occasions when psychology has been defined as the science of subjectivity, which was common at a certain historical stage (Rosenkranz, 1837/1863). This is also the background for Kierkegaard, who highly recommended Rosenkranz’ book (Kierkegaard, 1980, p. 147ff). Thus Kierkegaard also defined psychology as the science of subjectivity, which is first of all characterized by individual instability and unpredictability. This understanding of psychology is very much followed up by Kurt Danziger, who emphasizes that experimental psychology was originally about subjective experiences and sensation (Danziger, 1990). This perspective requires a sort of historical approach to the psychological object, its context, and the scientific terms used. This does not necessarily deny systematic approaches, but they are regarded as belonging to other sciences.

According to Danziger, the aspect of subjectivity was included in experimental psychology from its origin. However, this changed gradually and during the inter-war period quite radically. This is why Gustav Bergmann’s paper from 1940 becomes so interesting from a historical perspective. It summarizes first of all the

scientific perspective on psychology in the vein of logical positivism. He was not the only one to do this, as it was also undertaken by Paul Lazarsfeld, whose background was the Vienna School in philosophy, and he was much more influential on the American way of understanding social science. He had, however, been an assistant to Charlotte Bühler, a good friend of both her and her husband, Karl Bühler, during their whole life. Moreover, he collaborated with both Herta Herzog and Theodor W. Adorno. The most interesting aspect of Lazarsfeld in this context, though, is that he started out as a psychologist in his first period as a refugee in the United States, but after the World War II, he turned to sociology. He even acquired the reputation of having been one of the most influential scholars in American sociology in the twentieth century. One of the reasons for this was that he became the founder and the director of Columbia University's Bureau of Applied Social Science. It is interesting to find out how this could happen.

In this paper, subjectivity can therefore be regarded as an independent factor in the historical development of psychology, and the aim is to see if subjectivity actually had an effect on the understanding of psychology. I will start with Gustav Bergmann's understanding of the distinction between historical vs. systematic approaches, primarily because it is an open question if he follows up the distinction between the two or just redefines the historical approach as a systematic one. Then I will bring in the manner in which psychology is to be understood as the science of subjectivity according to Kierkegaard, who went the opposite way and made an insurmountable distinction between the two approaches. According to Danziger's understanding of Wundt and experimental psychology, subjectivity was then retained as a factor in psychology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Danziger, 1990). Yet psychology ended up with a diagnosis of "crisis" in the twenties. Paul Lazarsfeld concluded in the late fifties that psychology was on its way out of this crisis (Lazarsfeld, 1959). The fundamental question in this paper, therefore, is how to explore the distinction between a historical approach and a systematic approach in order to see if the distinction is meaningful. Answering this requires the pursuit of pertinent aspects of the role of subjectivity in the history of psychology. A further question then emerges: whether Lazarsfeld, and psychology generally, had to follow the turn to sociology to solve the crisis or whether subjectivity still represented a factor in his understanding of psychology and, by implication, a factor in psychology in general.

## 11.2 The Conception of Historical Laws

One important part of the logical positivist perspective is the search for laws. This is first of all a consequence of the "logical" in the compounded label. All inferences in classical logic are stable and lawlike. This may indeed stand in contradiction to the historical, in the sense that the historical comprises changes, whereas inferences in classical logic do not. Another positivist premise is that laws should ideally find mathematical expression. This is the background for measuring. The equation that

expresses the pattern for the actual entity needs values that can be put into it. Thus, if the historical approach is just a question about including change, Bergmann advocates a stand which says that the historical approach is just a question about measuring change with a time difference expressed by the variable  $t$ . “The determination of the values of variables at earlier time points, e.g., by asking a human subject, is still essentially historical procedure, and if these values actually occur in the describing equations, the law is a historical law” (Bergmann, 1940, p. 214). This is the procedure we find in most longitudinal research in psychology introduced by means of a pretest and a posttest.

Although history is highly associated with change, the latter cannot just be reduced to a time distance between two abstract and empty points. These points have to be filled with a lot of variables. This is why, for example, Kurt Lewin defined behavior in terms of the following equation:  $B = f(P, E)$ , in which  $P$  stands for “the psychological person, and  $E$  the psychological environment” (Bergmann, 1940, p. 213). In other words, we are facing an equation that comprises an abundance of undefined variables related to the individual, and these have to be compared with a similar abundance of variables related to the environment. Moreover, the behavior is not a direct consequence of all these variables, but a function of them, which means that the behavior is related to the individual and the individual’s environment, but the relationship is unspecified. On this basis Bergmann presents a compounded “integrodifferential equation of the type investigated by Volterra” (Bergmann, 1940, p. 215), which has the potentiality to embrace all the required variables related to the individual and the environment. In other words, the problem is not to mathematize historical reality and by this give the historical approach a lawlike form, but rather to define all relevant variables, operationalize them, and measure them.

It is hard to know how to understand Lewin’s equation. It could be understood as if it subverts all attempts to mathematize the understanding of human behavior. However, it is an open question whether this was his intention. What is obvious, though, is that his contemporaries, among whom Bergmann counts as an eloquent example, understood his equation as an attempt to mathematize human behavior. Bergman actually turns the historical aspects into pure systematic terms by adopting Lewin’s equation, which he redefines as a kind of extended differential equation. The fundamental question is whether this is possible, that is, whether the historical approach is to be defined by means of pure systematic terms like Bergmann’s. If it is, there will in principle be no distinction between historical and systematic approaches, because they will apply the same type of technical terms and therefore in principle follow the same procedure. Yet, even according to Bergmann, this is not the only way to look at the relationship between systematic and historical approaches. He refers to the vitalistic ideas of Bergson, and “the fundamental role of ‘understanding’” (Bergmann, 1940, p. 210) stressed by Dilthey as something he rejects as standing in opposition to the logical positivistic philosophy. So the next step in this investigation is to pursue these perspectives to see if a historical understanding may escape and contradict a systematic approach.

### 11.3 Psychology as the Science of Subjectivity

According to Wilhelm Dilthey, understanding is a matter of interpretation and hermeneutics (Dilthey, 1977). His contribution to psychology promoted a type of descriptive psychology that merged history and psychology. He was also a spokesman for a clear distinction between humanities and natural sciences, and according to him, psychology did not only belong to but also laid the foundation primarily for the humanities. Although he is famous for associating natural sciences with explanations and humanities with descriptions, this is not the most important part of his contribution, as his terminology developed and changed in these matters (Makkreel, 1977). To pinpoint the distinction was rather to emphasize two different ways of understanding the world: from outside and from inside. Dilthey followed up the *verum factum* principle formulated 150 years earlier by Giambattista Vico, which says that only the creator is able to acquire a complete understanding of the world. As long as human beings are the creators of their own history, this history is also what they are able to understand from inside. This type of understanding is a kind of complete understanding where all the parts are put together in a comprehensive idea. This type of understanding requires firsthand experience from inside. “We explain by purely intellectual processes but we understand through the concurrence of all the powers of the psyche” (Dilthey, 1977, p. 54). Understanding, therefore, can be divided into different types or levels related to forms of expression. One “consists of concepts, judgments and the larger thought-structures that constitutes our *systematic knowledge*” (Makkreel, 1977, p. 14; italics added). The second is a practical expression in terms of actions, whereas the third is “often assumed to arise from emotive or imaginative experience” (Makkreel, 1977, p. 14). In other words, a systematic approach is regarded as a reduced understanding in the sense that it does not include emotive and imaginative processes. This is why Dilthey underlines the aspect of the lived experience (*Erlebnis*) as a premise for acquiring an understanding of life. “Since lived experience is unfathomable and no thought can penetrate behind it, since cognition itself only arises in connection with it, and since the consciousness of lived experience is deepened in that experience, this task is accordingly unending” (Dilthey, 1977, p. 142). This forms the basis for the hermeneutic circle, which emphasizes that understanding is a process oneself goes through, and Dilthey contrasts this with just guesses in terms of delineated hypothetical statements. The latter mirrors an approach to the phenomena in the world from outside, whereas an understanding is provided by the lived experiences of life, in terms conformable with the injunction to “know thyself,” that “belonged to the depths of subjectivity” (Dilthey, 1977, p. 107). Thus, according to Dilthey, the historical approach is characterized by subjective experiences of the world from the inside, whereas the systematic approach presupposes a reified world that provides distant conceptions of it.

## 11.4 Subjectivity and Interest

Dilthey makes the transition to Kierkegaard quite easy. Although Dilthey primarily emphasizes individuality and its relationship to a kind of objective spirit, the basis is that understanding “first arises by interest” (Dilthey, 1977, p. 125). In Kierkegaard’s understanding the term “interest” forms one of the key characteristics of psychology. It is also on this term’s basis that Kierkegaard makes a fundamental distinction between subjectivity and objectivity, which is demonstrated through one of the core sentences presented in *Repetition* from 1843: “Repetition is the *interest* of metaphysics, and also the interest upon which metaphysics becomes stranded” (Kierkegaard, 2009b, p. 19; original italics). The same sentence is repeated in *The Concept of Anxiety* published the year after, and it forms one of the main arguments for how anxiety is to be understood (Kierkegaard, 1980, p. 18), specifically that it is a result of the inner conflict in life between subjective experiences and objective thinking. Interest therefore belongs to the subjective sphere, whereas metaphysics has to be regarded as the most obvious example of objective science. On this basis, Kierkegaard fully agreed with Kant that empirical psychology—which was a part of metaphysics in late medieval times and the early Renaissance and was explicitly formulated by Christian Wolff in the eighteenth century—“therefore, must be entirely banished from metaphysics” (Kant, 1781/1922, p. 680). The reason for this is the same for, namely, both Kant and Kierkegaard that psychology is about subjective experiences, whereas metaphysics is about objective scientific knowledge. The difference between Kant and Kierkegaard, however, is that Kant acted as if psychology could be avoided, whereas Kierkegaard demonstrated how it permeates every aspect of life. This is exactly what the quotation from Kierkegaard above expresses: even the objectivity of metaphysics is embedded by subjective interest, namely, the interest of stability.

Does this mean that we cannot talk about objectivity at all? No: according to Kierkegaard we can definitely talk about objectivity, but that kind of talk will have nothing to do with actual lived life. Logic is the best example, which is something that may guide our thinking, and we can talk in logical terms, but logic stands in opposition to and even contradicts actual life and consequently also psychology. The German idealists after Kant, of whom, according to Kierkegaard, Hegel is the outstanding example, do not take this into account. They mix objectivity with subjectivity, which not only makes psychology superfluous (Klempe, 2014) but also logic inconsistent. This is the result when Hegel transforms a negation into movement in his dialectic: “If anyone would take the trouble to collect and put together all the strange pixies and goblins who like busy clerks bring about movement in Hegelian logic [...], a later age would perhaps be surprised to see that what are regarded as discarded witticisms once played an important role in logic, not as incidental explanations and ingenious remarks but as masters of movement, which made Hegel’s logic something of a miracle and gave logical thought feet to move on, without anyone’s being able to observe them” (Kierkegaard, 1980, p. 12). This is also why Husserl focused so much on avoiding psychologism in his *Logical*

*Investigations* (Husserl, 1900/1970). He wanted to retain a clear distinction between subjectivity and objectivity even in a phenomenological approach to logic, apparently inspired by Kierkegaard on this, as he encouraged people to read him (Hanson, 2010), though he did not refer very much to him in his own writings. Husserl also distanced himself from Heidegger, who according to him did not retain the same distinction between subjectivity and objectivity (Gordon, 2010). Thus, in line with both Kierkegaard and Husserl, the historical aspects in terms of change and movement stand in stark contrast to the logical and systematic thinking provided by metaphysics, logic, and mathematics.

## 11.5 Kant's Heritage and Psychology

Psychology constituted an important premise for Kant's philosophy, but he treated it differently in the examinations he made. The different alternatives are not only in the three critiques but also in his last publication, *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* (Anthropology from a Pragmatic Standpoint) from 1798. The latter must be regarded as the answer to his own inquiry in the first critique, when he said that empirical psychology is "a stranger only, who has been received for a long time and whom one allows to stay a little longer, until he can take up his own abode in a complete system of anthropology, the pendant to empirical doctrine of nature" (Kant, 1781/1922, p. 680). By these words he declared a clear and fundamental distinction between anthropological knowledge and knowledge about nature. Kant seems to refuse "psychology" as a term and replaces it with "anthropology" just to emphasize that knowledge about the human being is not comparable with knowledge about nature, and the latter can be based on the criteria for pure science, whereas the former cannot (Sturm, 2001). After Kant, the ideal of pure science seems to have dominated or represented a kind of regulative idea also for psychological research, and Gustav Bergmann can be regarded as an example of this.

Without doubt Kant also had a great influence on psychology in the nineteenth century. The first case was probably his successor in Königsberg; Johann Friedrich Herbart. There is a lot of confusion around the understanding of his position, but there should be no doubts about his continuance of Kant's transcendental project, which means to search for those universal factors that seem to guide our understanding of the world. There are in three ways Herbart follows up Kant's project. One is by accepting the psychological term "apperception" as the basis for discovering transcendental truths; the second is by letting mathematization form the criterion for pureness; and the third is by searching for a priori synthetic truths. Yet Herbart brought all these three aspects some steps further in the sense that he made apperception an explanatory term for the process of learning in general. The ideal of mathematization became not only an expression for purity in science but also a kind of illustrative proof for the apperceiving process in learning. Additionally, Herbart also expanded a priori forms of knowledge of space and time to include the musical

ear, i.e., that the ear can discriminate between different musical intervals with immediate exactness (Herbart, 1851; Moro, 2006).

The heritage from Kant also included the third critique, *The Critique of Judgment* (Kant, 1790/2002). This was also a part of his transcendental project, and the difference between the first and the third critique was among other things related to the role of feelings. The investigation of pure reason was about “excluding the feeling of pleasure and displeasure” (Kant, 1790/2000, p. 55), whereas in the investigation of judgments, the purpose was rather to find out to what extent the feeling of pleasure or displeasure could be included in a transcendental project. This distinction was directly related to the faculty psychology of the eighteenth century, and Kant followed up Johann Tetens, who had sketched three different faculties: cognition, feeling, and desire (Zammito, 1992). The first is related to understanding and lawfulness, and the second to judgments and purposiveness. “Thus **nature** grounds its **lawfulness** on *a priori* **principles** of the **understanding** as a **faculty of cognition**; **art** is guided *a priori* in its **purposiveness** in accordance with the **power of judgment** in relation to the **feeling of pleasure and displeasure**” (Kant, 1790/2002, p. 45: bolds and italics in original). Desire is related to morality and therefore primarily treated in the second critique. Although Kant had “banished” psychology from pure science in the first critique, it was definitely a guiding factor in the continuation of his transcendental project.

The main challenge for German psychology in the nineteenth century, therefore, was to clarify the disposition of the different aspects of psychology and define to what extent they are to be regarded as a part of the investigated object or the approach itself. In other words, how is it possible to follow up Kant’s ideal of a pure science or an objective approach to the understanding of a subjective phenomenon? It is partly right, as some scholars have pointed out, that there is a connection between English empiricism and some elements of German idealism (Leary, 1980; Woodward, 2015). However, there are also some important differences. Although Herbart focused on associations, he conceptualized them differently from Hume. According to Herbart, they explain some cognitive processes but do not represent any final answer to epistemological questions. To find the precarious balance between psychology as a science of subjectivity and the scientific ideal of purity is something that characterizes experimental psychology during the whole nineteenth century. Gustav Fechner, for example, made the important distinction between a bottom-up vs. a top-down perspective (*von Oben* vs. *von Unten*), which presupposes a balance between them (Fechner, 1871/1978). His correction of Weber’s linear understanding of felt weight is crucial when it comes to the understanding of the relationship between psychology as a science of subjectivity and physics as an objective science. When he found the logarithmic equation visualized through a rising curve that flattens out, as a replacement for the linear rising line, he demonstrated at the same time the difference between the psychological impression of changes in the sensory stimulus and the physical understanding of the same changes. “Fechner thought that by using a subject’s report of just noticeable difference one could map subjective sensation against the objectively measured sensory stimulus” (Smith, 2013, p. 83). As Smith points out, Fechner made an irreconcilable distinction between the physical measurable entities and the psychological self-reported experiences.



Wilhelm Wundt's research may also count as an illuminating example of how deeply psychology was embedded in the conflict between subjectivity and objectivity. Although there might be reasons to assume that Wundt's purpose was to establish a scientific psychology based on the ideals of a pure science, he did not exactly end up with that. The elementaristic approach points in the direction of detecting causality between the elements, as does the approach aiming to identify psychological laws (Wundt, 1902). Moreover, the fact that he possessed a chair in "inductive philosophy" before he got the chair in the theory of science in Leipzig in 1875 indicates what kind of focus universities had on empirical science in Germany, namely, a focus on empirical research combined with the idea of purity. His contemporaries blamed Wundt for being both spiritualistic and materialistic, but he rejected both perspectives (Klempe, 2008). He stood in a sort of undefined "in-between" position, which is also true when it comes to the use of self-observation. As Danziger has pointed out, self-observation was the dominant method in the psychological laboratory in Leipzig in the last two decades of the nineteenth century (Danziger, 1990). This is not only to be regarded as an approach for "constructing the subject" but also an indication of how subjectivity is integrated in the scientific method. Allegedly, this was applied as "a technique for producing a social consensus about 'the facts'" (Danziger, 1990, p. 27), but it emphasizes even more the integrated role of subjectivity in achieving scientific knowledge in experimental psychology.

One of the most interesting scholars to contribute to German psychology in the nineteenth century was Hermann Lotze. As is pointed out in a recently published biography, his impact on contemporary intellectual discussion was tremendous (Woodward, 2015). One original thought he contributed was to base his metaphysics on morality. This is a crucial turn, as it combines actual behavior with values, both of which interrupt completely the normal understanding of metaphysics. Kierkegaard called ethics a mixture of the ideal and the actual, and in his investigation of the ethical stage, he ends up with quite humorous descriptions, quite simply because of the irreconcilable gap he believed existed between the ideal and the actual, which, fundamentally, should be impossible to combine (Kierkegaard, 1988; Klempe, 2014). Ethics had never been a part of metaphysics, and if anyone had tried to make it a part, Kant would have refused it for the same reasons he refused empirical psychology when he worked on his first critique. Nevertheless, it was exactly the basis and the criteria for ethical reasoning that formed the subject of his second critique. And according to the historian of philosophy John H. Zammito, the purposiveness in nature Kant is discussing in the second part of the third critique represents "the ethical turn in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*" (Zammito, 1992, p. 263).

Ethics and morality, therefore, was pointed out to be a factor in scientific approaches. Ethics deals with values, and this opened up the way to regard scientific activities as embedded with values. This became the core not only of Dilthey's understanding of hermeneutics but also of his understanding of psychology. In his discussion of individual development, he highlights purposiveness and values as the key terms, in addition to structural nexus, psychic articulation, and creative processes: "If we imagine these factors at work, development is produced" Dilthey,

1977, p. 98). Windelband's understanding of psychology also highlights values (Windelband, 1873). Ethics therefore had a strong relationship to psychology. This was a link that Lotze emphasized, but he also included another "in-between" field representing both the ideal and the actual, and this is aesthetics. Kant had reserved the term to a certain approach he applied in the first critique, and Kierkegaard had defined the aesthetical stage as the enjoyment of actual life, but the term had also acquired a broader definition, which embraced aspects of feelings, the beautiful, morality, and the human conditions for acquiring knowledge. In line with this, Lotze entitled the seventh volume of *Geschichte der Wissenschaften in Deutschland* (History of Sciences in Germany) *Geschichte der Aesthetik in Deutschland* (History of Aesthetics in Germany) (Lotze, 1868). Lotze followed up Kant, not only the first critique but also the two other critiques, which revealed the ambiguity Kant actually had when it came to the ideal of a pure science. The second part of the third critique opened up purposiveness in nature, which probably only Lotze tried to follow up (Kant, 1790/2002). Lotze developed it further by regarding the mechanical interactions in the world as a theoretical perspective, which points towards a finality that makes the interactions meaningful. "But that the world cannot be without end or purpose is a moral conviction" (Copleston, 1965, p. 153), and this leads to the conclusion that "the beginning of metaphysics lies not in itself, but in ethics" (Woodward, 2015, p. 119). This is the basis for Lotze's teleological metaphysics, which takes its starting point in psychology and reaches psychology as its end point.

Kant's heritage in psychology, therefore, is not just related to his first critique. When all his writings are taken into account, the heritage represents a much more nuanced picture. The heritage includes also his last discussion of anthropology, though based on lectures given over many years, and not least the documentation we have of the lectures he gave on metaphysics (Kant, 2001). These last, from the 1780s—immediately after the publication of the first critique, tell us that psychology still occupied a lot of space in his philosophical ponderings. In light of the broad heritage from Kant, we see that posterity picked up different aspects in developing a fuller understanding of a scientific psychology that balances subjectivity and objectivity. When it comes to Kant's influence on the history of psychology, we may rather talk about a history of reception in the wake of Kant, and this history demonstrates that different aspects of Kant's understanding of psychology have been focused on in attempts to construct theories in psychology.

## 11.6 Subjectivity and the Twentieth Century's Crisis in Psychology

The crisis in psychology in the twenties, and especially Carl Bühler's publications in 1926 and 1927, has received a lot of attention. He was not alone, and therefore the crisis has, as many have pointed out, more extensive roots. Husserl even expanded the crisis to concern not only psychology but also the Western

understanding of science (Husserl, 1970). However, Uljana Feest is completely right when she underlines the fact that Husserl's understanding of the crisis in Western sciences is highly related to psychology (Feest, 2012). Albeit Husserl tried to avoid psychologism in his phenomenology, the phenomenology is based on the assumption that subjectivity is a necessary part of human understanding in general. Thus, in opposition to the objective sciences, which he accuses of having caused the crisis in science, phenomenology includes the subjective factor, not necessarily in the object, but as a factor embedded in the researcher herself or himself. This is the project he completes in *Logical Investigations* (Husserl, 1900/1970), which demonstrates that logic is a science which is objective and cannot be understood in psychological terms. This distinction is parallel to Kant's and Kierkegaard's division between metaphysics and psychology. Yet Husserl is more in line with the latter's emphasis on subjectivity as a factor in the researcher's life, i.e., on the fact that in practice even philosophy/metaphysics reveals the author's psychology.

It is possible to trace several footprints from Kierkegaard in Husserl's book about the crisis in European sciences, like when he criticizes philosophers for turning metaphysics into philosophical systems (Husserl, 1970, Sect. 4), so that philosophy "became a problem for itself, at first, understandably, in the form of the [problem of the] possibility of a metaphysics" (Husserl, 1970, p.11; original bracketing in the English translation). Turning metaphysics into systems is directed by the same interest Kierkegaard talks about, and this combination of metaphysics and interest mixes up "problems of fact and of reason, problems of temporality and eternity" (Husserl, 1970, p. 9). It is first of all positivism Husserl attacks and blames for elevating empirical and applied research to a "systematic philosophy [...] constructed as a serious *philosophia perennis*" (Husserl, 1970, p. 10), that is, a stable and resistant philosophy. His criticism also affects others who do not retain a clear distinction between subjectivity and objectivity, like Heidegger (Gordon, 2010). Retaining this distinction is crucial for preserving *humanity* in the sciences. This is why "the crisis of philosophy implies the crisis of all modern sciences [...because this is a] crisis of European humanity itself in respect to the total meaningfulness of its cultural life, its total '*Existenz*'" (Husserl, 1970, p. 12; italics in original). The challenge for all sciences, logic, for example, is, therefore, to include the aspect of subjectivity in scientific practices that deal with objectivity. According to Husserl the answer to this challenge is the transcendental phenomenology, in which "transcendental" refers to universal and objective entities, whereas "phenomenology" refers to the intentionally guided subjectivity that actively perceives (*noesis*) the phenomena (*noema*).

In the same vein, on the one hand Husserl is highly influenced by psychology, but on the other hand he tries to delineate and to delimit it. Thus psychology must be regarded as a precursor to phenomenology. Yet the problem with psychology since the eighteenth century is that it has not been able to account for the role of subjectivity and the enigmatic challenge it represents in science, both when it comes to the psychological object, which is subjectivity, and in relation to the approaches developed. All modern sciences are embedded with what Husserl calls "world-enigmas," a phrase which refers to the mysterious connection between the mind and the world, and consequently

they all “lead back to the *enigma of subjectivity* and are thus inseparably bound to the *enigma of psychological subject matter and method*” (Husserl, 1970, p. 5; italics in original). To investigate and find out about this mystery is “the deeper meaning of our project in these lectures” (Husserl, 1970), he says in the introduction to the book on the crisis in European sciences. Psychology, therefore, is not superfluous, but it has rather failed in completing its mission. “Because of its objectivism psychology is completely unable to obtain as its subject matter the soul in its own essential sense, which is, after all, the ego that acts and suffers” (Husserl, 1970, p. 296), he stated in a lecture he gave in Vienna in 1935. Because of this, the “development of an actual method for grasping the fundamental essence of the spirit in its intentionalities, and for constructing from there an analysis of the spirit that is consistent *in infinitum*, led to transcendental phenomenology” (Husserl, 1970, p. 298; italics in original). Thus the challenge for the modern sciences is to include and balance objectivity and subjectivity in a way that defines and localizes them properly in scientific activities.

This was also very much the background for allegedly the most cited spokesman for the crisis in psychology, namely, Karl Bühler. But he was not alone, and at the very beginning of his article from 1926, he asserts that we can even “in the daily newspapers read that a crisis in psychology has appeared” (Bühler, 1926, p. 455; see also Sturm & Mülberger, 2012 for an overview). Yet as some scholars have pointed at, the crisis he refers to is not restricted to psychology but reflects “certain philosophical preconditions of psychology” (Sturm, 2012, p. 464). According to Sturm, they can be summarized in three apparently irreconcilable scientific programs psychology is supposed to embrace: subjective experiences, observable behavior, and cultural artifacts as “products of the objective mind,” i.e., *geisteswissenschaftliche Psychologie* (Sturm, 2012, p. 464). However, the resolution of the crisis is “that one can and should combine the three aspects of subjective experience, meaningful behaviour, and the formations of the objective mind” (Sturm, 2012, p. 464), or in Bühler’s terms: “Die Lösung der Krise wird also ein Synthesis sein müssen” (“The resolution of the crisis must conclusively be a synthesis,” Bühler, 1926, p. 486). This understanding is similar to Husserl’s in the sense that the challenge is to let the aspect of subjectivity be a demonstrable factor in psychology without renouncing what is generally acceptable. According to Husserl, the answer to this is transcendental phenomenology, whereas for Bühler it was rather a focus on language and communication.

## 11.7 American Postwar Psychology as the Resolution of the Crisis?

The conflict between subjectivity and objectivity in psychology as a science was not solved during the nineteenth century’s theorizing, and this led to the diagnosis of ideological crisis Karl Bühler, and a lot of other scholars gave psychology in the European interwar period. One path to pursue in investigating attempts to solve the crisis is to look at Paul Lazarsfeld and his scientific development. There are several

reasons for this. First of all he was a refugee from Vienna like Karl Bühler, and they were close friends during their whole lives. He was even closer to Karl Bühler's wife, Charlotte Bühler, for whom he had been an assistant, and he graduated under her supervision in psychology in Vienna before they all fled the country in the thirties. Moreover, he was also a mathematician and had a close connection with the Vienna circle of logical positivism when he was young. Hence Lazarsfeld had much in common with Gustav Bergmann, and he participated in an American network for developing mathematical psychology more or less during his whole life, although he was not too active in this network. This indirect connection between Karl Bühler and the Vienna circle is not a big surprise, as Karl Popper graduated under Karl Bühler in Vienna in the late twenties (Sturm, 2012). Popper is also an example of the diverse outcome of the discussions in the theory of science that took place in the German-speaking world in the first part of the twentieth century. However, the most interesting aspect in relation to Paul Lazarsfeld is the fact that he came to the United States in the thirties as a psychologist but, at the end of the forties, redefined his scientific identity and rather preferred to call himself a sociologist. "Although he was trained in mathematics, Lazarsfeld thought of himself as a psychologist; only in midlife did he identify himself as a sociologist" (Sills, 1987, p. 251).

There are good reasons for having a closer look at why this happened. Even in the late fifties, Lazarsfeld admitted that his intellectual activity had been very much influenced by the Böhlers after he had worked with both of them at the Psychological Institute in Vienna at the end of the twenties and the beginning of the thirties. In a published speech given at Karl Bühler's eightieth anniversary in 1959, Lazarsfeld indicated that their research activities had been different. His applied social psychology was more peripheral to Karl Bühler's core interest. Nevertheless, he "experienced that he applied the Bühlerian [*Böhlerschen*] ideas in a new field," and he added "I have always highlighted this connection in my American publications" (Lazarsfeld, 1959, p. 69; translation from German by the present author). These ideas were clearly related to Bühler's analysis of and answer to the crisis in psychology by uniting behaviorism, introspection, and *geisteswissenschaftliche Psychologie*. According to Lazarsfeld, the last of these is first of all a German understanding of psychology, and he meant that it is taken care of by anthropology, which investigates artifacts to get a picture of cultures' and nations' most salient traits. Lazarsfeld's own contribution influenced by Karl Bühler is his attempt at uniting behavioral aspects with attitudes and decision-making by investigating the effects of mass media. Lazarsfeld's point, though, is that Bühler's impact on American psychology is demonstrable in four areas: "the convergence of introspection and behaviorism; the quantification of complex psychological observations; the structural analysis of human action; the emphasis on mutual interaction" (Lazarsfeld, 1959, p. 76).

Although Lazarsfeld had become a well-known sociologist in 1959, the speech referred to displays the fact that he cared for psychology and especially social psychology. His coauthor of many publications, Elihu Katz, has pointed out that Lazarsfeld's close colleague at the department of sociology at Columbia University, Robert Merton, "was more responsible for the sociology and Lazarsfeld for the social psychology" (Katz, 2001, p. 274). Thus it is appropriate to ask if his turn to

sociology was based just on pragmatic reasons—that a chair in sociology had higher prestige than a chair in social psychology, or similar trivial reasons. This question stands unanswered. Yet, all the same, the speech indicates that the understanding of psychology actually did change when German psychology was transferred to the American continent. This is also one of the main conclusions in Christian Fleck’s analysis of the move of social sciences from Europe to America in the interwar period (Fleck, 2011). One of the changes was that the aspect of *geisteswissenschaftlicher Psychologie*, which is almost impossible to translate into English, was more or less left out. However Lazarsfeld insisted that, in a sense, this aspect was preserved. So, according to the speech he gave for Karl Bühler in 1959, there are reasons to believe that Lazarsfeld thought that the direction his social psychology represented did follow up Bühler’s resolution of the crisis in psychology. Lazarsfeld does not discuss the aspect of subjectivity directly, but it is implicitly present in his research program called *the empirical study of action* (Boudon, 2011, p. xi; italics in original). This formulation is derived directly from Bühler’s *Handlungstheorie*, which could be translated with “pragmatics” as it is first of all about understanding the use of language in terms of speech acts. Lazarsfeld brings in the aspect of history by saying that an act is a historical conception because it cannot be thought of without reference to the aspect of time (Lazarsfeld, 1959, p. 72). Despite the fact that Lazarsfeld was a spokesman for the mathematization of social science, he was very concerned about mixing up statistics with methodology. The former is to be regarded as a technique, whereas the latter requires the ability to master “The Art of Asking Why” (Lazarsfeld, 1935/1970, p. 293). In line with this, a quantitative approach does not exclude a qualitative one, quite simply because the latter detects those variables between which the former identifies an interaction or correlation.

## 11.8 Conclusions

This chapter has pursued the question of subjectivity in psychology during the last 250 years. It seems to have been included in most of the theories in psychology that have appeared in this period. This is perhaps a surprising finding, and particularly surprising is the fact that this line is not completely cut off—even in the American postwar period, there was some concern for subjectivity as the premise for an apparently objective social science in the research practice of at least Paul Lazarsfeld. He is, of course, just one case, but one case is sufficient for concluding that this combination of subjectivity and objectivity actually exists as a phenomenon in American postwar psychology. The initial suggestion, that Lazarsfeld ended up as a sociologist because his ideal of objectivity forced him to do so, is definitely weakened. During his whole career he made a quite clear distinction between a sociological perspective and a psychological perspective in his research, where the former focuses on organization of institutions as objects in society and the latter focuses on subjective agency in individuals and also when individuals appear in groups.

On the other hand, it is impossible to deny the fact Danziger demonstrates, which is the decrease of the role of the subject in psychological research in the twentieth century. There is a demonstrable reduction in the use of individual subjects in psychological research after the twenties and a preference for aggregated data (Danziger, 1990), which Lazarsfeld's research also contributed to. This brings in the core question in this paper: is it meaningful to make a clear distinction between a historical approach and a systematic approach? Even if we take Dilthey's stand, this distinction is hard to defend. A descriptive approach is not necessarily less systematic than an explanatory approach. That is one thing; and the other is that to get a full understanding of something is according to him unobtainable, which means that our understanding can never be at the same level as life itself. There has to be a kind of reduction, which implies that even the most genuine effort in trying to understand a human act ends up with a kind of stereotype, which is both static and schematic. This brings us back to Kierkegaard and the existential dilemma we have between our general and more or less objective thoughts and our actual subjective lives. To take this dilemma seriously, we have (1) to make a clear distinction between subjectivity and objectivity (2) and to not exclude either in psychological research.

One of the most important outcomes of this investigation is probably recognition of the role reception history seems to have in constructing theories in psychology. It is not primarily Kant's understanding of psychology that triggered the nineteenth century's understanding of psychology, but rather the way he was received and understood by posterity. This made for diversity in theories, even where they all tried to balance the aspects of subjectivity and objectivity, while emphasizing them differently. The reception history of Lazarsfeld seems also to be quite crucial: his contribution to quantitative sociology is usually highlighted, whereas his own life and late writings demonstrate that he wanted to include the aspects of both subjectivity and history in the research. He did not propose this in the same way as Bergman, in terms of reducing the historical approach to a systematic approach, but by proposing to let qualitative research in terms of storytelling represent a specific basis for more general knowledge. This gives us two final points: (1) theory constructing is inseparable from reception history, (2) and a deeper understanding of historical stakeholders is necessary to correct reception history.

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