

## Historizing Epistemology in Psychology

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**Abstract** The conflict between the psychometric methodological framework and the particularities of human experiences reported in psychotherapeutic context led Michael Schwarz to raise the question whether psychology is based on a methodological error. I take this conflict as a heuristic tool for the reconstruction of the early history of psychology, which bears witness to similar epistemological conflicts, though the dominant historiography of psychology has largely forgotten alternative conceptions and their valuable insights into complexities of psychic phenomena. In order to work against the historical amnesia in psychology I suggest to look at cultural-historical contexts which decisively shaped epistemological choices in psychology. Instead of keeping epistemology and history of psychology separate, which nurtures individualism and naturalism in psychology, I argue for historizing epistemology and for historical psychology. From such a historically reflected perspective psychology in contemporary world can be approached more critically.

**Keywords** Epistemology · History · Natural science · Historical amnesia · Wundt · Dilthey · Windelband · Ebbinghaus · Watson

Traditional epistemology assumed in modern natural sciences is atomistic, individualistic and therefore necessarily ahistorical. It conceives of the epistemic situation as consisting of autonomous, isolated individual epistemic subject approaching an object of knowledge which exists independently of the subject and whose properties are independent of subject's beliefs, linguistic practice, cultural background and historical context. This epistemological position, described as realism, is closely linked with a belief in progress of knowledge.

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These attributes of traditional natural science epistemology made it suitable to be transferred and even willingly accepted by other sciences, i.e. social and human sciences.

However, to this internalist explanation of the transfer of epistemological model it is necessary to add modern historical, social, political and cultural context which have provided scientific knowledge with a superior—or even monopolistic status comparing to other forms and ways of knowledge production. Within that context realism, objectivity and expected progress were valuable incentives. Additionally, in our modern time the external context of technical inventions and improvements in physical world, but also in human body and social organization has become a context of confirmation of validity of scientific knowledge. However it is important to bear in mind that at the same time that context begins to generate new needs, demands and imposing new evaluation criteria for science, transforming eventually its technical use and success into the primary, sometimes even the only, criterion of validation of scientific knowledge.

Thus, the figure of a supposedly autonomous individual epistemic subject has as its counterpart an isolated (technical) context as the sphere of validation of produced knowledge. But in the twentieth century the supposed autonomy of the epistemic subject has been questioned from many perspectives. The «linguistic turn» has brought insights that consciousness is necessarily transcended already by language and its formative role in constructing world views and structuring subject's perception and thinking.

Following the contextualization of a supposed autonomous epistemic subject, the (technical) context of use and usefulness of scientific knowledge can be—and should be also contextualized. The first step in this transgression would be not to take the validity of technical context of usefulness of knowledge for granted but rather to confront it with other contexts and different approaches. A transgression would be if it is populated with voices of those who were subjected to be objects of knowledge production oriented (only) toward technical usefulness.

Such transgressions were created by Michael Schwarz in his research (on a large sample of patients, with a set of psychometric scales, but supplemented with interviews and therapeutic sessions as sources of different knowledge ) and reflected in his analysis of «discrepancy between psychometric measures and psychotherapeutic interviews» or «significant mismatch between the statistical premises of the *measuring apparatus*' *'questionnaire*' and the judgment forming processes of the *measuring apparatus* *'man*'» (Schwarz 2009: 187) Given the status the psychometric methodology in psychology as warranting objective, reliable and valid knowledge of human mental states, it is clear that Schwarz' questioning of the validity of knowledge produced within the framework of psychometric methodology has serious implications for psychology as science. Schwarz allowed himself a reflection on the taken for granted assumptions of test theory—this was his first transgression. The second one which brought patients back to scale scores obtained on them and which gave the patients their own voice has opened new vistas for Schwarz—and psychology. The title of his article «Is psychology based on a methodological error?», though modestly formulated in methodological terms, implies that psychology as science is at stake. In other words, the question is whether a new, different science of psychology is needed.

Having this question in mind and inspired by transgressions in Schwarz I would like to recall some examples of transgressions in the history psychology. The fact that they were possible and existed (at least for a while) has proved that the dominant psychological discourses built on the model of natural science, driven by method and obliged to quantitative imperative, committed to control as knowledge interest, inclined to withdrew from the complexities of intentionality, meaning, culture, society and history, have never been the whole story of psychology. If a part is not any more taken for granted in its function of representing the whole, it is important to shed lights on processes through which some parts were repressed, discredited or excluded and some other credited with representative function. It should be stressed that psychological historiographic memory is accompanied by large areas of historical amnesia.

### Historizing Epistemology

In order to approach historical amnesia in psychology—amnesia of some insights, positions, value orientations and especially of their socio-historical embeddedness, which were participants in discourses at a certain historical time but remained excluded from the main course of the further developments—it is first necessary to historically contextualize knowledge and scientific knowledge production. A historical understanding of knowledge, i.e. historizing epistemology is thus a preparatory step in approaching historical amnesia in psychology.

Taking a radical historical standpoint in approaching epistemology would first require a historical contextualization of *Erkenntnis*<sup>1</sup> (knowledge) as a specific form of shaping relation of human beings to physical, social and subjective world. Such a broad anthropological framework of *Erkenntnis* is developed by Habermas in his seminal book *Erkenntnis und Interesse*. Habermas (1968) has reconstructed conditions of the possibility of *Erkenntnis*. They are not transcendental in Kantian sense as they belong to the historical processes of constitution of human species, but they have the same function of making the *Erkenntnis* possible at all. In this sense a technical, instrumental interest for control of nature has shaped a relation of human being to natural world. It is within such a relation that a specific form of the *Erkenntnis* of nature is produced. With that broad historically built framework in mind we can understand that the technical criterion of validation of scientific knowledge is a logical consequence of the constitutive relation between natural science knowledge and instrumental, technical interest.

However, that relation is not reflected in the prevailing epistemologies of natural sciences. Instead the knowledge production is described and understood as a pure intellectual activity of an individual epistemic subject striving for objective knowledge of an independently existing reality of objects.

From this perspective, history serves as a linear temporal coordinate on which the gradual approaching of the independent existing features of reality are recorded. The

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<sup>1</sup> I would join Jaan Valsiner in suggesting using foreign terms in cases where they cannot be translated into English without losing important semantic aspects. In this case I use *Erkenntnis*, which is usually but inadequately translated as 'knowledge'.

internalist account of knowledge production, which explains changes in science by referring to the intellectual domain only, has its counterpart in a model of linear history. The individual epistemic subject of epistemology has its counterpart in a model of great individual actors in history. Traditional historiography describes events from the perspective of few important and powerful individual (mostly political) actors (kings, queens, rulers, army commanders). It was with the French school of «Annales» (Bloch, Febvre) in the first decades of the twentieth century that historiography «discovered» other participants and other forms of life in history (social life, privat life).

For an attempt to historize epistemology it is important to draw attention to these striking parallels between traditional epistemology and traditional historiography. Thus, I would argue that there is a kind of homology between the traditional models of epistemic and the historic subject. This homology is constructed as a kind of analogy to the homology Kurt Danziger pointed at referring to associationist accounts of physical, mental and social world.

What classical associationism accomplished was the establishment of a metaphorical homology among three levels of discourse, dealing respectively with the structure of society, the structure of the physical world, and the structure of the human mind. It was not just a technical psychological theory but implied an entire cosmology (Danziger 1994: 347).

In my view, there are good reasons to add historical world as a new homologous domain with the similar associationist structure as the three domains in Danziger's view. In the historiographic context the role of elements can assume individual actors (few in number, usually described as isolated from others). In the case of intellectual history, elements could be also themes or ideas. The homology can be extended to associationist principle of interrelations. The only difference is that historiography constructs larger diachronic relations—linear succession of great achievements of individual actors or linear progress of knowledge.

There is another important principle which reinforces the homology among the four domains—namely, naturalism. Though Danziger focused on three levels of discourses, he identified

a long tradition of naturalism in the historiography of psychology [...] In both naturalism and objectivism there is an assumption that psychological events have fixed natural forms, which a few lucky philosophers and an army of systematic investigators have found and labelled. Thus, to each label there corresponds a fixed natural form. Almost inevitably, it turns out that such fixed natural forms correspond to the objects posited by the theories in which the psychologist-historian believes. Where it is not simply secondhand repetition, naturalistic history tends to [...] suggest that the terms of current discourse have been determined by nature and not by art (Danziger 1994: 334–335).

Needless to say, as naturalism and historicism are opposites, naturalistic accounts are by definition ahistorical or even antihistorical. Naturalism ascribes to the domain of nature what is actually a product of human activity—at both individual and historical level.

Relying on these insights into historical embeddedness of knowledge and epistemological models I now turn to the historical amnesia in psychology.

### Against the Historical Amnesia in Psychology

For the sake of historical epistemic justice and for the sake of epistemic benefits it would be important to work against the historical amnesia of psychology. In this way, the quest for a new, different science of psychology might be provided with a history that is even richer than the marked mainstream history of psychology.

In order to argue against the historical amnesia in psychology I will refer to few examples from the beginnings of psychology as science (Dilthey, Windelband, Ebbinghaus, Wundt, Watson). These examples are chosen as they represent different epistemological positions of psychology. They also differ with regard to the ascribed status they have in the history of psychology—from father, master status to a missing link. By drawing attention to all of them and especially by analyzing them in a broader cultural-historical context, I would like to shed light to some repressed meanings of psychological epistemological choices.

The outcomes could be a contribution to the historized epistemology of psychology and by the same token to a program of historical psychology. Contrary to the long and strong tradition which has separated epistemology and history, or to express it with a critical attitude, which has deprived epistemology of history, I argue for an approach which defends the necessity of historizing epistemology. That would foster selfreflexivity of epistemology and rise the awareness of historicity as an indispensable feature of all activities and products of human kind. Both are urgently needed in psychology.

This would be then the standpoint from which to raise the question of the possibilities and limits of psychology in the contemporary globalized world.

The famous statement by Hermann Ebbinghaus (1908) at the beginning of the twentieth century that psychology has a long past, but only a very short history is not only a statement about the pre-history and history of psychology. It implies an understanding of (psychological) science and knowledge according to the model of progressive “positive course”. By “positive course” I want to refer also to the meaning of “positive” introduced by Auguste Comte in his *Cours de philosophie positive*, published in six volumes between 1830 and 1842. In Comte’s (1975) historical reconstruction, the positive state has completed the development of human mind and human history by overcoming the previous theological and metaphysical ones. More specifically, the positive philosophy regarded all phenomena as subjected to invariable natural laws and its task was to discover these natural laws. Assuming such positivist commitments Comte classified all sciences according to the degree of rising complexity and specificity, placing sociology as the final science at the end of line and giving it new name “sociology” instead of “social physics”.

Though there was no place for psychological knowledge of subjectivity in Comte’s positivist system, psychology nevertheless adopted the positivist framework in which positive was identified with the scientific, and scientific with the discovery of natural laws. Paradoxically, psychology adopted for the most part of its history the framework which deprived it of specificity of its phenomena (subjectivity,

intentionality, meaningfulness). This paradox itself could be a sufficient reason to reflect more closely on it and especially on the context of such a paradoxical “choice”.

### Dilthey and the Founding Myth of Psychology

The mentioned paradox (it could be called psychological positivist paradox) has its counterpart in the second one: history of psychology has forgotten or largely repressed exactly that conception which was founded on the assumptions that the inner immediate experience that is directly given to the subject is the proper subject-matter of psychology. Even more—that conception claimed that such psychology has a foundational role for all other social and human sciences. Wilhelm Dilthey argued for such a conception of psychology and its foundational role for other *Geisteswissenschaften*, but he is almost never mentioned in histories of psychology. How can we understand that strange amnesia?

Dilthey's (1894/1974) program of *geistwissenschaftliche*, descriptive psychology was first presented in two lectures in Berlin in 1894 and then published—fifteen years after Wundt's two rooms at the University of Leipzig where he put some instruments for experimental research have been recognized as the birthplace of psychology as an empirical science. The year of 1879 and Wundt's laboratory in Leipzig were discursively focused and advanced to a kind of psychology's founding myth.

The birth of psychology as science is usually understood as its emancipation, separation (secession) from philosophy. As described by Wilhelm Windelband in 1876 in his inaugural speech as professor of “inductive philosophy” in Zurich (where Wundt also had a chair in inductive philosophy before he moved to Leipzig): “Psychology, as one of the youngest daughters remained the longest time in the common house [of philosophy—G. J. ...] and since almost a century it struggles for its independence” (Windelband 1876: 7). Actually, separation was the main motive in two domains: separation of psychology from philosophy and separation of Wundt's individual physiological from other simultaneously existing psychological conceptions. The founding myth of independent psychology excluded even Wundt's own complementary conception of psychology—*Völkerpsychologie* (see Greenwood 2003; Diriwächter 2004).

Though Dilthey chronologically belonged to the times of short history of psychology the dominant historiography of psychology has not granted a position for Dilthey's descriptive psychology within the “short” history of psychology. Within the model of linear progress of science (and general progress) deviations from the main stream are usually ignored or in the best case disqualified as they are measured by criteria of the mainstream. Dilthey's project of descriptive psychology did not belong to the model of psychology inaugurated in Wundt's laboratory. As Wundt's physiological psychology was acknowledged in its function of founding psychology as an independent science, it is clear that its social status decisively shaped the reception of alternative conceptions—in this case the reception of Dilthey's descriptive, hermeneutic, *verstehende Psychologie*. This is just one example that the simple model of linear progress of science is a construction based on selection from a variety of options. Selected options are remembered, non-selected are forgotten.

What is even more striking in case of Dilthey is that he himself was occupied with the question of “the philosophical foundations of the human sciences with the highest degree of certitude”, as he stated in the first sentence of the Preface to *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften* (Dilthey 1883/1988). Dilthey shared the *Zeitgeist* that “the time for of a metaphysical foundation for the human sciences is completely past” (Dilthey 1988: 74). At the same time he shared “the claim of the human sciences [*Geisteswissenschaften*—G. J] to determine themselves their methods according to their object” (Dilthey 1894/1974: 143).

To solve the difficult task, “to lay a foundation for the study of society and history”, as said in the subtitle of his *Introduction to the Human Sciences*, Dilthey referred to inner experience. i.e. to the domain in which psychology constructs its subject-matter. “All science is a science of experience, but all experience has its original constitution and its validity in the conditions of our consciousness [...] we lay hold of reality as it is only through facts of consciousness given in our inner experience” (Dilthey 1988: 72).

In the further step Dilthey turned to psychology as “the first and most basic special science of the mind” (Dilthey 1988: 95). At this point Dilthey introduced the distinction between the explanatory hypothetical psychology and the descriptive psychology and ascribed the descriptive psychology its founding role. “Psychology can solve the problem of such a fundamental science only to the extent that it stays within the boundaries of a descriptive science” (Dilthey 1988: 95).

The object of descriptive psychology as a *Geisteswissenschaft* was immediate lived experience (*Erlebnis*) given as a structural system (*seelischer Zusammenhang*) which cannot be reconstructed from isolated elements connected by hypotheses. *Erlebnis* is a distinct form of experience in which there is no distinction between the experiencing subject and the experienced. Our epistemic attitude to *Erlebnis* is understanding. “*Die Natur erklären wir, das Seelenleben verstehen wir*”/We explain the nature, we understand the psychic life (Dilthey 1974: 144).

Making this distinction and arguing for descriptive psychology Dilthey took a position which was not in accordance with the already socially privileged option. This might be a reason for his missing in the dominant historiography of psychology.

### Dilthey-Ebbinghaus Controversy

This interpretation can be supported by another example of conflicting positions, in which Dilthey again turned out to be on the weaker side—this is the famous Dilthey-Ebbinghaus controversy, whose outcomes have had long lasting—and still lasting consequences for psychology.

The controversy between Dilthey and Ebbinghaus is indeed a paradigmatic example. To Dilthey’s “*Ideen über eine beschreibende und zergliedernde Psychologie*”, i.e. descriptive and analytical psychology, Ebbinghaus replied with “*Über erklärende und beschreibende Psychologie*”, published in October 1895 in the *Zeitschrift für Psychologie*. While Dilthey’s title refers only to descriptive psychology using two synonymous attributes of it, Ebbinghaus put the explanatory psychology at the first place in the title of his reply. His critique was directed against Dilthey’s critique of explanatory psychology and against his concept of descriptive psychology based on immediately given structural system of psychic life.



Dilthey's starting point was not only inner experience, but its distinctive feature of wholeness.

The next stage in his analysis of consciousness must therefore be to examine the relations which obtain between the elements within a single *Erlebnis*, and also between different *Erlebnisse* in the whole process of life. These relations, taken all together, constitute what he calls the 'structural system of mind' or 'of life' (*psychischer Strukturzusammenhang, Strukturzusammenhang des Lebens*'), and the account which he gives of this structural system is both distinctive and fundamental in his philosophy (Hodges 1952: 41).

In his critical reply to Dilthey's plea for a descriptive psychology whose starting point is immediate lived experience given as a structural unity Ebbinghaus (1896) denied that structural system of mind is experienced: "that unique structural system of experiences is never given in the inner perception, it is found out, concluded backwards, constructed" (in Rodi 1987: 152). Thus, Dilthey's claim that we immediately experience unity of the psychic wholeness is in Ebbinghaus' view a hypothetical construction. With the hypothetical status of the wholeness of inner experience, Dilthey's descriptive psychology loses its foundation. This was Ebbinghaus' conclusion about Dilthey's psychological ideas. Dilthey's attempt to clarify his position did not change the outcome of the controversy. Though Ebbinghaus did not deal with the consequences for Dilthey's project of laying down foundations for human sciences, it is clear that with the hypothetical status of the wholeness of the inner experience the certitude of foundations which Dilthey promised arguing for descriptive psychology as the fundamental science cannot be attained.

Thus, it seemed that the status of structural system of mind was at the core of that controversy. In Rodi's interpretation the outcome of the controversy had substantially shaped the further development of experimental psychology—and ironically enough, Dilthey had its share in the 'antistructuralist' attitude of experimental psychology. In Rodi's view, in consequence of Ebbinghaus' rejection of Dilthey's starting point that structural unity of mind is immediately experienced, the issue of unity, wholeness of psychic life was not an issue for experimental psychology. Additionally, "the concentration on the methodological special problem of 'description vs. explanation', to which Dilthey contributed, has brought about that experimental psychology did not feel responsible for the issue how to integrate individual phenomena into the whole system of psychic structure" (Rodi 1987: 152–153).

Frithjof Rodi suggests that controversy was much due to personal contingencies, in spite of Ebbinghaus' confession in a letter to Dilthey: "*res hic, non homines inter se certant*" (in Brauns 1987: 155). Rodi also diminishes the importance of the methodological problem of 'description vs. explanation'.

In my view, Rodi's interpretation of the methodological aspect of the controversy completely ignored the hermeneutic issue in that problem. Understanding is a different epistemic modality comparing to explanation. Thus the point of difference between Dilthey and Ebbinghaus, in my view, is not only, as Rodi claimed, the status of structural system of mind—given, as Dilthey claimed, or concluded, as Ebbinghaus insisted. The core issue is that we have to understand the structural



system of mind—as expressed in the famous Dilthey’s statement: “We explain the nature, we understand the psychic life” (Dilthey 1974: 144).

Can we, following Rodi, hypothetically assume that Ebbinghaus would have been ready to accept that hermeneutic feature of psychic life? In order to approach this problem it is necessary to take into account Ebbinghaus’ general psychological position, especially as it is conceptualized in his most known work on memory. In that research Ebbinghaus (1885) introduced many changes in the experimental work with profound implications for psychology as science. Danziger (1987) distinguished several methodological contributions in Ebbinghaus’ research: interest in product (achievement) and not in the subject’s activity, interest in the quantity and not the quality of that product, specially constructed material of series of nonsense syllables, measurement of that product against an objective criterion. “What gives coherence to this research programme is the systematic exploration of certain manipulable conditions whose variation always affects the achieved performance that provides the research with its focal interest. It was this organization which was to become the norm in psychological research during the 20th century” (Danziger 1987: 221).

The procedure of investigating memory which focused on the external, quantitative, measurable had its homology in Ebbinghaus’ understanding of the memory.

The basic conception of memory as a kind of energy which is created by work is reflected in Ebbinghaus’ methodology. Just as the stimulus material consists of a series of equivalent elements which allows a measuring of performance achieved, so the subject’s activity, understood as work, is sub-divided into equivalent portions, known as repetition or trials, whose number gives a measure of the work expended (Danziger 1987: 221).

Thus, Dilthey-Ebbinghaus epistemological controversy is a much deeper controversy embedded in broader paradigms. The outcome of controversy stands for the further development of psychology—toward *Naturwissenschaft* and away not only from *Geisteswissenschaft* but to a great extent away from phenomena as experienced from the perspective of the first person in its natural cultural and social setting.

The past of psychology contains plurality of qualities, complexities, meanings, stories. The history of psychology has focused mainly on quantities, elements, causes, fragments. The scientific history of psychology started as a narrow selection from a “democratically” distributed field of phenomena and a wide and fast translation of qualities and complexities into quantities and simple units.

### The Forgotten Qualities

One of the consequences of the Dilthey-Ebbinghaus controversy put forward by Frithjof Rodi (1987) is especially important as it can help understand fragmentation as a striking feature of psychological knowledge. Wholeness of subjective experience has been lost in psychology. In one word, from the very beginnings of experimental psychology the issue of wholeness has not been seen as belonging to its domain. As experimental psychology has stood as the (best) sign for psychology in general, its choices and procedures which have focused on elements, fragments,

and measurable quantities have become prevailing features of psychological knowledge production.

Fragmentation has been very early seen as a symptom of crisis of psychology—since Dilthey, but explicitly formulated in “crisis discourses” which started 1899 with Rudolf Willy’s *Die Krisis in der Psychologie*, and reached a peak in late twenties—with Hans Driesch, *The Crisis in Psychology*, 1925, in German *Grundprobleme der Psychologie: Ihre Krisis in der Gegenwart*, 1926, Karl Bühler’s *Die Krise der Psychologie* (1927) and Lev Vygotsky’s *Historical meaning of the crisis in psychology: a methodological investigation*, (written 1926/1927 but published in Russian only in 1982). All the crisis diagnoses refer to fragmentation and missing meaning in psychological knowledge. But those warnings did not change the mainstream. Almost hundred years later, the same pressing question is posed: “why the ever-widening research enterprise in psychology has largely failed to produce general knowledge” (Valsiner 2009: 1).

There are surely different sources of fragmentation in psychology, but the quantitative imperative (Michell 2003) which psychology shares with other modern sciences is certainly one of the strongest. Quantification is much more than just a translation of qualities into quantitative data. Quantification implies a specific moral and political philosophy required by modern societies, as convincingly shown by Theodore Porter (1995) in his study *Trust in numbers: Pursuit of Objectivity in Science and Public Life*. According to him, quantification has been applied as a general strategy in building superior cultures of objectivity, in contrast to the dominance of insecure and unpredictable subjective criteria. It is assumed that quantification as a way of knowing endorses objectivity. But objectivity itself is not just an issue of cognition, it bears a heavy moral meaning as it prescribes the way how to perceive and how to deal not only with nature but also with human fellows. And Porter reverses the arrow of explanation of quantification from society to nature: “When we begin to comprehend the overwhelming appeal of quantification in business, government, and social research, we will also have learned something new about its role in physical chemistry and ecology” (Porter 1995: viii).

The appeal of quantitative language derives from its promise of taming the subjective, personal, local, in favor of objective, impersonal, universal as superior values. The quantitative language is suited to deal in an impersonal way and on a universal scale with human capabilities, needs, activities, relations as well as with natural phenomena. In return, quantification allows dealing with great number of items in a uniform way—“quantification is a technology of distance...reliance on numbers and quantitative manipulation minimizes the need for intimate knowledge and personal trust. Quantification is well suited for communication that goes beyond the boundaries of locality and community” (Porter 1995: IX).

Porter’s account of quantification not only goes beyond the scientific use of quantification, it also goes beyond the manifest quantification and looks for its meaning in motivational processes. To the question of ‘why’ Porter offers a psychoanalytically informed interpretation: “the drive to supplant personal judgment by quantitative rules reflects weakness and vulnerability. I interpret it as a response to conditions of distrust attending the absence of a secure and autonomous community...referential statistics became standard in medicine and psychology as a

response to internal disciplinary weakness and external regulatory pressures” (Porter 1995: XI).

Metaphorically, the outcome for psychology, to which many different actors and processes contributed, could be described as: *Naturwissenschaft* has overcome *Geisteswissenschaft* or *Historische Wissenschaft*. Dilthey argued for historicism, Ebbinghaus advocated naturalism. The fact that psychology was more ready to adopt naturalism and repress and forget historicism and philosophy of life was not an outcome that could be understood in intellectual or epistemological terms only. It was supported by constitutive interests of knowledge directed toward control of achievements by manipulable means, but even stronger by social demands for control of mass production as well as bureaucratic control of achievements of individuals—in factories, in schools, hospitals, prisons etc.

*Naturwissenschaft* has written the master story of psychology, it has written the dominant history of psychology characterized by methodolatry and quantitative imperative. But this master story which evolved from the founding myth of psychology has an opposite in its father figure—Wundt himself, namely in his *Völkerpsychologie*. Few decades after the founding act, the psychology which was then born became a target of radical critique which deprived it of scientific status—at both subject-matter and methodological level. Watson’s behaviorism claimed to set a new, proper beginning of psychology as a science.

### Wundt and Watson

Psychology has kept on its ancient roots in its name to the present, but it expelled the signified by the sign ‘psyche’, namely “the soul”. The soul from previous long past which started in animism, continued in ancient Greek philosophy and passed to the Middle Ages and remained an issue in spite of modern secularization, was first replaced by mostly cognitive conscious processes in the Wundt’s (1874) physiological individual psychology. The subject-matter shifted to the meeting point of the mental and physiological. In methodological sense Wundt also combined two traditions—the old one of inner perception and the newcomer experiment. “Psychological introspection goes hand in hand with the methods of experimental physiology” (in Danziger 1990: 206). The social setting of research situation preserved the features of personal relation and reciprocity (Danziger 1990). Though at the times of Wundt’s physiological psychology other conceptions of psychology were “available” (in medicine, art, for example—see, for example, Jaeger and Staeuble 1978) it was Wundt’s physiological (individual) psychology which was socially recognized as that one which gave birth to scientific psychology.

By this group speech act, with a leading figure of Wundt (see Kusch 1999), started development of psychology as a science. Among the plurality of possible speech and performative acts spoken and performed at that very time, even at the same place (Germany), just one was generative social act for institutionalization of psychology. As any other social acts that one was also contextualized in academic and socio-cultural-political setting. However, the most important processes that constituted the context of institutionalization of psychology started centuries before the year of 1879. Secularization, individualization, rationalization are features of

modern project which entered many structures and institutions of modern society—science being one of them.

In this context the case with Wundt's *Völkerpsychologie* is very telling in many senses. It was meant as “a necessary extension of the individualistic approach” (Diriwächter 2004: 96).

The simple psychological experiences were to be studied experimentally, while the products of the higher processes (which could be seen as having properties of ‘objects of nature’) preceded the folk-psychological analysis. With Wundt, *Völkerpsychologie* was to fill the voids of the limited applicable experimental analyses by examining under a historico-genetic approach complex mental functions determining both the social dimensions of the mind and the psychic processes (Diriwächter 2004: 96).

As Wundt preserved consciousness in the subject-matter of physiological psychology this allowed him to relate it to other, more complex forms of consciousness as experienced and objectified in language, myth, customs. Of course, these forms of “soul” were also politically and ideologically marked in life worlds of the second half of 19th century in Wundt's Germany. As demonstrated by Kusch (1999), Wundt's prioritizing the (national) collective over individuals was reproduced in higher positioning of *Völkerpsychologie* comparing to individual (physiological) psychology. “Wundt's opposition to thought psychology was partly an opposition to the individualism of the Würzburgers' introspective methodology, partly a defense of collectivism. This collectivism insisted on the ontological priority of the *Volksseele* with respect to the individual, on the ethical priority of cultural works with respect to human happiness, and on the political priority of the state with respect to the citizen” (Kusch 1999: 193)

But it was Wundt's laboratory that was so attractive to many scholars worldwide. Even more, their reception of only Wundt's physiological psychology and the peculiarities of that reception have shaped the further development of psychology.

Most of Wundt's American students who returned to create laboratories and psychology programs in the United States and Canada rejected the theoretical details of Wundt's own ‘voluntaristic’ individual psychology of creative ‘apperceptive’ processes [...] and almost completely ignored *Völkerpsychologie* (Greenwood 2003: 45).

The prevailing historiography of psychology has not only reversed the relation between the collective, cultural and individual psychology, compared to Wundt's view on that relation, but has to a great extent forgotten and repressed Wundt's cultural psychology. This “individualistic assimilation” of beginnings of psychology as a kind of historical imprinting served as a disciplinary assimilation schema for further developments of psychology. The dehistoricized and individualized version of psychology is easier to relocate to natural sciences. And as shown by Toomela (2007) that orientation toward psychology—which equated subject-matter of psychology with any other natural processes and advocated a “third person” observational epistemic perspective and quantitative operationalization of data—has become the dominant stream in psychology

Just few decades after Wundt's foundational act, the starting version of scientific psychology—which was in reality more complex than the picture the prevailing historiographies recorded, and additionally enriched by Wundt's (1900–1920) cultural psychology (*Völkerpsychologie*)—was resolved at both levels—the subject-matter and methodology. Consciousness became unscientific subject-matter on the methodological grounds put forward by behaviorism (Watson 1913). But methodological requirements were actually defined in ontological terms: objectivity of knowledge was related to the external nature of the subject-matter, i.e. behavior. Introspection was rejected and denied as a source of knowledge on the side of research subjects, even when they were not animals.

Following the objectivist assumptions, introspection was ignored also on the side of researcher. The fact that the researcher role of observer presupposes his/her introspective report (on what he/she has seen) was not an issue for behaviorists. Introspective psychology was ascribed to the unscientific past and the start of scientific history shifted to the first decade of the 20th century and moved to the USA. Another important shift was that the Wundtian dismissal of applied psychology became reversed into preferred applied psychology.

Psychology as an *Erfahrungswissenschaft* was replaced by psychology as a branch of natural science (Watson 1913). With this change in the subject-matter—from consciousness to behavior—there was no place left at the level of subject-matter that could be a source of reflexivity. The expulsion of reflexivity on the side of subject-matter has been repeated in construction of (behaviorist) researcher as a subjectless observer.

While the conscious processes as preserved subject-matter even of physiological psychology still allowed Wundt to conceptualize another kind of psychology *Völkerpsychologie*, desubjectivization of psychology on both subject-matter and methodological level transformed psychology into branch of natural science. Wundt kept on his understanding of physiological psychology as a psychology also in the fifth edition of his *Grundzüge der Physiologischen Psychologie* (1902), whose first edition appeared 1874, i.e. even before the establishment of the research laboratory in Leipzig, and from which Wundt's student Edward Titchener made an English translation in 1904. Wundt is very clear: “Physiological psychology is, therefore, first of all *psychology*. It has in view the same principal object upon which all other forms of psychological exposition are directed: *the investigation of conscious processes in the modes of connexion peculiar to them*. It is not a province of physiology” (Wundt 1904: 2).

Behaviorist program was more radical in all direction—no consciousness processes, no introspection, no “dividing line between man and brute”. Nevertheless, Watson claimed it was a psychology.

Psychology as the behaviorist views it is a purely objective experimental branch of natural science. Its theoretical goal is the prediction and control of behavior. Introspection forms no essential part of its methods, nor is the scientific value of its data dependent upon the readiness with which they lend themselves to interpretation in terms of consciousness. The behaviorist, in his efforts to get a unitary scheme of animal response, recognizes no dividing line between man and brute. The behavior of man, with all of its refinement and

complexity, forms only a part of the behaviorist's total scheme of investigation (Watson 1913: 158).

The metatheoretical naturalization of psychology was then one of the sources which generated ahistorical and individualistic thinking in psychology. In my view, this is also one of the powerful mechanisms producing fragmentation of psychological knowledge which eventually led to psychology without psychic individuals as intentional meaning-making subjects.

### Lost Individuals

Individual has been lost in many ways in psychology—atomism, associationism, naturalism as theoretical and methodological strategies cannot conceive of individual as an intentional, meaning-making subject. In the mainstream psychology there is no room for personal and multivalent meanings, no room for dynamic patterns, no room for historical change in meanings and structures. “Psychology [...] has gradually moved away from the study of basic human issues, and of phenomena of personal experiencing” (Valsiner 2006: 608)

There is a specific, very influential theoretical and research tradition which has been dealing with individuals—without reaching them: psychology of inter-individual differences. Indeed, psychology invested the most rigor in measurement of inter-individual differences. Instead of deepening insight into concrete individuals (Valsiner 2009), psychology favored looking at as many as possible individuals. Looking for degrees of common traits or factors underlying the differences among individuals, psychology substituted concrete individuals for mass of individuals. It still could pretend dealing with individuals—nurturing remnants of humanistic expectations—while dealing with the de-individualized subjects.

I would claim that this orientation could be understood as a kind of revised, but still a behaviorist methodology. Answering questionnaires honestly presupposes some form of introspection, but the processes of introspection themselves are not investigated, just the products, understood as ready-made data. Researchers translate individual's data in quantitative codes, compare and analyze them by statistical techniques and derive conclusions in terms of probability valid for population.

Within psychometric methodologies which govern research on inter-individual differences there is no room for individuals to be recognized and treated as individuals. They give their answers in standardized questionnaires, researchers take the answers without asking their subjects how they come to the answers, let alone what they mean and meant to them. Researchers are the owner of data, though the phenomena represented by constructed data are ascribed to the subjects. Knowledge constructed in this way seems to be a peculiar form of expropriation and the main labor force (who reported on subjective states and judgments) is alienated from the knowledge product. Within the framework of psychometric methodology the researchers can come back to their subjects only for the sake of ensuring the reliability of their instruments.

Thus, the psychometric methodology sees and treats individual subjects in a very restrictive (and repressive) way, ignoring and making invisible the most important aspects of individual's experience (the peculiarity and personal meaning of it



wholeness). Therefore, it cannot be said that psychological knowledge produced under the banner of psychometric methodology is knowledge of individuals. Contrary to theories of interactive, intersubjective origin of subjectivity—for example, symbolic interactionism of Georg Herbert Mead (1934) or cultural-historical theory of Vygotsky, psychology of inter-individual differences cannot grasp the processes of individual's subjectivity formation.

In this context it is worthwhile to remember that besides the knowledge oriented toward people in general, there is a legitimated quest to know persons in particular. Two knowledge strategies follow different epistemological goals, but as Wilhelm Windelband announced in the same year (1894) when Dilthey argued for wholeness of the inner experience as the starting point for a new, descriptive psychology: “the struggle between them for determinate influence on the overall human perspective on the world and on life must flare up and has flared up” (Windelband 1998: 16). Windelband argued on logical grounds that both are necessary—sciences seeking law and those approaching unique events, or as formulated in his famous distinction “nomothetic” vs. idiographic” knowledge.

But just as, logically, the conclusion requires those two premises, so also does the event require two kinds of causes: on the one side the timeless necessity, in which the eternal essence of things is expressed; on the other side the particular conditions which surface at a particular moment in time [...] Only the two together cause and explain the event, but neither of the two is the consequence of the other [...] (Windelband 1998: 20).

In Windelband's view, “these two moments of human knowledge cannot be traced back to a common source” (Windelband 1998: 20), thus both are needed in human thought. From his logical justification for a necessity of knowledge of particularities of individuals it follows that psychometric methodology applied in research on inter-individual differences cannot grasp individuals.

This was exactly the situation Schwarz has faced, describing it as a “conflict between psychometric methodology and the particularities of human introspection” (Schwarz 2009: 186). From Windelband's perspective it would have been predictable that knowledge produced within the psychometric methodological framework would not be sufficient to understand particular individuals. But in Windelband's view there should be no conflict between “two moments of knowledge”. However, Schwarz has faced a conflict which led him to raise the question “Is psychology based on a methodological error?” How can we understand such an outcome?

Actually, the problem appeared when the borders of the psychometric methodology were crossed. If Schwarz had remained within the procedure of psychometric measurement, he would not have faced the problem. The belief that such methodology is adequate relies on underlying methodological assumptions, i.e. on loyalty to methods advanced to a remarkably “methodolatry” ((Danziger 1990). But as any other methodology, psychometric methodology is much more than just a conception of methods.

Methodology—contrary to currently accepted views that consider it a ‘toolbox’ of ready-to-use and consensually ‘certified’ methods—is a process of meaning



construction that entails all aspects of scientific inquiry. It is a cycle—or helix — that entails viewing underlying assumptions and the theoretical implications that grow out of them, while in parallel examining the immediately available aspects of the phenomena [...] (Valsiner 2003: 187/188).

In a condensed, reduced form methodology contains (more or less explicitly) a world view, an anthropology, ethics and politics. They are tacit beliefs necessary for methodology to work, but they are not subject-matter of analysis within that framework. If and only if the underlying beliefs and values are accepted, the methodology works. Only when subjects are put in the same or similar controlled setting the results will be reliable. Decentration from that framework is a necessary condition for both the researcher and his/her subjects to build new knowledge. When Schwarz started looking at psychometric data from another perspective, they lost their certitude. Even more, this new situation led Schwarz to ask whether the core assumptions of the psychometric methodology were false.

The conflict that occurred in Schwarz' research was resolved in favor of sovereign human experience. But this conflict mirrors the conflicts inherent in psychology since its scientific beginnings, as I tried to show. These historical conflicts were resolved in favor of options which privileged loyalty to method, and to those atomistic, quantitative methods on which promising psychometric methodology is built. Loyalty to individuals has disappeared from the mainstream psychological agenda.

## Psychology in the Globalized World

What could be learnt from the historical vicissitudes of psychological knowledge? Production of knowledge is not a pure epistemic activity—as any other kind of production it is substantially dependent on social relations on micro, meso and macro level.

In the same way as human being could be understood only within the human historical world, psychology as a kind of collective social epistemic subject is not and cannot be isolated from the socio-cultural world which offers general anthropological views, social classifications, cultural markings, ideological preferences and blind spots, normative regulations, criteria of the rational and the irrational, normal and abnormal, healthy and sick, clean and dirty, valuable and non-valuable etc.

This can explain changelings in the subject-matter of psychology, in the chosen or imposed methodology, or generally differences between German Wundt's introspective psychology and American Watson's behaviorist psychology. It can explain the dominance of Anglo-American version of psychology and Americanization of psychology worldwide. This would not have been possible without the Americanization of general culture.

The same applies to a diagnosis of the status of psychology in the globalized world. Or to take a hard case: there is no wonder that social psychology was used in the World War II or in Guantanamo today. There were—mostly post hoc, as far as I know—critical analyses or critical actions, but they could not change the main

stream. Main stream is the locus of control mechanism which should secure the other main streams. Main stream is also a locus of a remote control—to take a simple example, psychologists worldwide have to follow the APA Publication Manuals as the research policy of more and more countries makes their academic position dependent on publishing in journals which prescribe APA Editorial Style. Needless to say, APA instructions are not neutral, technical recipes—they transmit particular world view, human being view, science and research understanding (cf. Bibace et al. 2009).

Valsiner (2009) envisaged a very promising perspective for psychology:

Psychology in the 21st century is on its way to new international synthesis that has no single-country dominance of ideas and where cultural heritages of European, Asian, and American (south, Central, North) kinds intermingle in the making of a new look at psychology. That new science restores the centrality of human experiencing into its core, treats the phenomena as these develop over time, honoring their single-case nature, and restores the qualitative—structural-functional—abstractions to the objectivity-making process in the science (Valsiner 2009: 16).

I would like to share this optimistic view, but from my periphery perspective the world and consequently also psychology in it look very differently. Positioning in a periphery today means to live in a hybrid of pre-modernity, modernity and postmodernity. As a result, there is an accumulation of negative aspects of all three generative structures. While the critiques of the first two are well known, the newer deserves a closer look, especially as there is a strong tendency to overestimate promising potentials of postmodernity (cf. Gergen 2001).

Postmodernity has drawn our attention to words and texts. It has provided us with proliferating discourses of differences. By rhetorical dissolving structures into networks postmodernity believed to open spaces, but in this way it has left many generative structures “unattended”. I would join Terry Eagleton in his warnings

a lot of postmodernism is politically oppositional but economically complicit. [...] Postmodernism is radical in so far as it challenges a system which still needs absolute values, metaphysical foundations and self-identical subjects—against these it mobilizes multiplicity, non-identity, transgression, anti-foundationalism, cultural relativism. The result, at its best, is a resourceful subversion of the dominant value system, at least at the level of theory (...) But postmodernism usually fails to recognize that what goes at the level of ideology does not always go at the level of the market (Eagleton 1996: 132).

If we take into account that what is called in a politically correct language “reform” is actually adjustment of more and more spheres of life (health, education, research and development) to market, then there is no much room left for development of new generative structures in which new forms of idiosyncratic human experiences could be fostered and socially recognized as valuable. Colonization of life world by market requires more and more standardization procedure, which themselves impose rigid regimes of thinking, feeling, evaluation, even interaction.

Psychology and psychologists are more and more involved in these procedures, which are kind of soft technologies for mass regulation.

What is new in that outcome is just the content. The process of social genesis of psychology remains as long as there is a social human world. It is not only that we can know only what we have made—*verum et factum convertuntur*—but we make it as we understand it.

In that sense psychology can have its role in making a different human world. Thus, in my understanding Valsiner's diagnosis "psychology is" is not so much a description of "the state of the art" (so far), but "the state of the ought", or moral responsibility of psychology in arguing and acting for different modalities of knowledge, for knowledge interests beyond control, for different criteria of evaluation—and first of all for psychology able and obliged to respect human experience as constitutive of human world.

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