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Does the history of psychology have a subject?

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It appears to be a simple enough task: to review a book with the title, *History of Psychology*. The book is a textbook for the huge psychology student audience in North America, a setting (unlike Britain) where the history of psychology is a common part of the curriculum. The publication of the book extends a list of well-established texts with similar titles.¹ But quite what do these books think they are histories of, and how do they conceive the subject of their history? What do the authors' decisions about their texts reflect of the history of psychology as a discipline or as a body of knowledge? What is it these texts, and those more academic studies which they utilize, assume they are talking about? And can we reasonably accept these assumptions once we have made them clear?

These questions release a swarm of troubling issues. But trouble is threatening anyway as historians ferret more persistently, and with a much greater sense of the problematical nature of the enterprise, into the foundations of the human sciences. The existing literature satisfactorily resolves few of the issues. It is therefore appropriate for this paper to have a tentative character; it hopes merely to bring the history of psychology and the theory of history into more fruitful dialogue. It may help to bring the history of psychology into contact with debates long under way in other contexts. I argue two related points: that, in fact, most accounts of the history of psychology accept highly questionable notions of their subject; and, more theoretically, that cogent arguments for a subject corresponding to the disciplinary domain known as 'the history of psychology' appear to be lacking. The first point is descriptive: it discusses the conventions and limitations of 'doing' the history of psychology.² The second point is philosophical and, as such, cannot be developed here in a rigorous way; but

for present purposes, we need only enquire what sort of point it is and what it implies for writing history.

In arguing about 'the subject' of the history of psychology, this could involve reference to: (1) the history of psychology as an area of study (or perhaps discipline); (2) the objects that this history studies (i.e. its subject-matter); (3) the subject that does the writing (i.e. the authorial self). As the use of the one word suggests, the three relevant meanings of 'the subject' are interrelated. The prime focus in this paper is on meaning (2) but, as the nebulous and elusive nature of the history of psychology's subject-matter becomes clear, so the existence of something corresponding to meaning (1) will be questioned. No doubt these conclusions have implications for meaning (3), but that will be left for others to consider.

HISTORY OF PSYCHOLOGY AND PRESENT-CENTRED HISTORY

It is convenient to begin with a criticism that has become a cliché about textbook history of psychology. Texts assume a direct line from the past toward the present, awarding praise for contributions to progress; in this way they contribute to the normative framework of psychological communities.³ History texts embody, and hence transmit to students, values important to psychologists' sense of worth and identity. In portraying modern psychology as the inevitable or 'natural' outcome of the application of scientific procedures to psychological topics, they give modern psychology its authority. The student experiences what it is like to inherit a uniquely objective and hence instrumentally effective endeavour. This is a familiar analysis for the history of science generally. The dangers of this are also now well known and need not be rehearsed at length. The danger to psychology is that selective history privileges one body of knowledge and practice as 'truth', reducing the imagination's power to conceptualize alternative truths. There is thus a parallel between linear history and a positivist account of knowledge: both exclude any other frame of meaning which might be a vantage point from which to criticize what the psychologist or positivist accepts as knowledge.⁴ The danger to history is that the perspective of modern psychology distorts and simplifies what have been far from inevitable events and circumstances. Further, this perspective presupposes a continuous subject, whereas questions about the identity and continuity of the subject should be integral to history's practice. This last point is the substance of what follows.

Textbook histories of psychology describe continuity between powerful symbols of scientific advance and modern psychology. Thus, to cite a rather crude but certainly revealing example, a well-known collection of readings in the history of psychology begins with an extract from Galileo, where Galileo

describes what is later known as a distinction between the primary and secondary qualities. Modern psychology 'begins' with Galileo; there is little comment on the place of Galileo's really rather brief remarks within his work as a whole or early seventeenth-century debates about qualities (Watson, 1979: 3–4).⁵ Nor is there any comment on the argument made famous by E. A. Burt (1932: 73–80, 300–24) and A. N. Whitehead (1953: 65–70) in the 1920s, that the primary/secondary quality distinction was a disaster for the later development of psychology.⁶ From this point of view, ironically enough for the textbook reading, Galileo's distinction served mathematical mechanics at the expense of even the possibility of coherent psychological understanding. Hence, if Galileo does foreshadow modern psychology, perhaps he is a condition of its impossibility rather than of its foundation! If we start to ask serious questions about the intellectual origins of modern psychology in Galileo (and the argument applies equally to Descartes or Newton), we are plunged straightway into murky problems of philosophical psychology rather than bathed in the clear light of scientific advance.⁷ If we investigate the modern difficulty of posing philosophical-psychological questions in terms other than those bequeathed by Descartes, we are struck by the extremely ambivalent value of the seventeenth-century contribution to what was to become 'psychological' understanding.

Much of the general criticism so far is familiar from historians' critical references to 'presentist' methods. However, this label requires elaboration for the purposes of the present discussion, since, in a certain sense, I will be defending 'presentism'. The term, in George Stocking's early formulation, criticized writing history on the assumption that the present provided the appropriate perspective from which to organize historical materials (Stocking, 1965: 212). For example, it would be presentist to understand La Mettrie's 'man machine' as a staging post on the way to modern conceptions of humans as computers. Used critically, the term has without doubt played an important part in freeing historians of science from subservience to scientific communities and in importing into their work the standards of academic history. To continue the example, the historian would wish to take into account La Mettrie's career as a physician, the political purposes of his polemic, and the special way he conceived of organized and active matter, rather than taking for granted the position of his work in an unfolding materialist argument.⁸ The historian's form of understanding therefore uses such categories as context, audience, and authorial intention, and the attempt to clarify what is meant by these categories has generated its own historiographic literature.⁹ The result is also that there is now a body of 'professional' history of psychology (as for the human sciences generally), identifying itself with academic history rather than scientific psychology.¹⁰

All this is well and good. Nevertheless, there is a danger of substituting the unreflective conventions of one academic community, the historians, for

another, the psychologists. The substitution of historical for presentist *methods* cannot in itself answer questions about what is the proper subject of any piece of historical research.¹¹ Historians at home in the Anglo-American empirical tradition possess sophisticated skills for assessing historical evidence and argument, but they rarely examine their conventions about what subjects these methods are held to reveal. While it is beside the purpose to go into the culture and sociology of historians, the unexamined nature of these conventions becomes critical when, as at present, we pose a question about whether or not a subject does have the unproblematical identity that empiricist methods presume. There seems to be little within the conventions of professional history that will help us decide the parameters of the history of psychology. The adoption of historical methods (however necessary as methods) will not suffice.

This point gains urgency when brought into relation to current debates about the human sciences generally, debates often prompted by the work of Michel Foucault. Foucault and many of his commentators are explicitly concerned with the present, a present understood to consist of relations among bodies of knowledge and forms of power, traced into their institutional, occupational, and personal enactments. They argue that these relations, rather than any pre-existent reality (or 'nature'), historically constitute the subject-matter of the human sciences, that is, the human subject itself. Foucault's *oeuvre* is diverse, it has markedly different emphases at different times, and it is open to different readings. But it has always promoted 'present-centred' history in the sense that it constructs a past in order to expose the conditions making possible our present, a present which otherwise appears as a given or 'natural' reality. Thus Foucault refers to his purposes (in part) as 'archaeology' and 'genealogy', which he characterizes in the following two glosses on 'truth': "Truth" is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements . . . [and] "Truth" is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extended it."¹² He abjures the term 'history' in order to distance himself from a practice (in the history of ideas) which records the progressive uncovering of truth about a trans-historical subject (the most notable example of which is 'the self'). He makes the negative consequences for the history of the human sciences very clear: they have no 'history', but what the present understands to be human science knowledge becomes possible with the constitution of its subjects in specific conditions. His studies of biology, delinquency, or sexuality explore these 'conditions of possibility'. He does not presuppose a past independent from the present and, when he constructs a past, it is a past whose *différence* contributes to revealing the contingent (not 'natural') subjects of present human science knowledge.¹³ Though Foucault has in practice elaborated genealogies of only certain areas

of current psychology, the implications for the history of psychology, if accepted, are dramatic.¹⁴ It becomes pressing to decide how historians of psychology should construe what they study.

A separate Marxian tradition also develops a sensitivity to the historical dimension as a resource for attacking the 'natural' authority of the human sciences.¹⁵ In either tradition, we should keep separate two possible types of claim: that history has value as part of a strategy about the present (a political claim); and that we cannot make meaningful statements about 'history' except in relation to the present (an epistemological claim). Both claims, however, suggest that the criticism of presentism is a far from simple matter, since what may appear as straightforwardly 'historical' statements may, if only indirectly, be statements about the present. I think we must consider seriously both the political and the epistemological claims. But, *pace* some commentators, this is not to denigrate academic history as antiquarianism; the claims would hardly be worth making if history-writing was not a highly rigorous and comprehensible way of representing something to ourselves.

Foucault's work and like-minded approaches to materials which, by another convention, appear historical, therefore indicate the possibility of an extremely thoughtful presentism. This is not the presentism of the history of psychology that traces the unfolding of objective knowledge into present truths; rather, it describes practices that constitute the present subjects about which truth claims are made.

It is necessary also to clarify a further logical sense in which history-writing must be presentist. Even on the most empiricist view, historical activity is selective: the historian takes one thing rather than another to be worth studying. This selection indeed often explains disputed conclusions, since there may be disagreement about what are the relevant sources. A cogent piece of historical research must therefore include (if only potentially) an argument as to why it has this particular subject and not some other. Such an argument must include a reference to the historian's purposes (which, from different points of view, are both social and personal, though they normally exist as occupational goals). It doesn't matter for the logic of the argument whether these purposes are trivial ('nobody has looked at these primary sources'), idiosyncratic ('it's fun'), or profound ('to find the true causes of the First World War'). The point is that the present – represented by collective professional conventions in some combination with personal predilections – has a structuring role in what the historian writes. It is therefore only a little more openness or social self-consciousness that puts the vantage point of the present back into the *explicit* narrative of history. In practice, the extent to which historians encourage such explicitness will itself be an important political issue for those involved, since the rhetoric of professional objectivity and authority so much depends on claims to stand outside such a perspectival role. A claim to describe the past independently of the present is a claim for the

historian's autonomous authority. Conversely, a claim that particular values in the present lead to a certain choice of historical subject is, by implication, to debate those values. This essay tries to accept the implication of this converse position and, in this sense, is therefore 'presentist' and 'political'.¹⁶ The historian always has a purpose, he or she always narrates a plot.

It is as well to be careful here. A too casual reference to historians 'evaluating' the past or having 'political' purposes ignores the social world in which historians live and work. This world is almost entirely academic, and within it historians form a large, long-established, and professional body. Central to their academic professionalism is a commitment to historical veracity; criticism can be sharp of those who anachronistically judge the past or distort evidence to suit a particular political outlook.¹⁷ An individual historian's purposes are mediated by these professional standards. The point being made above is therefore that 'the past' – 'the historical subject' – is not known (how could it be?) except through the practices of the profession and, further, that these practices have themselves been socially constituted. In particular, I am drawing attention to the existence of academic traditions in deciding the subjects that historians study. And I am being 'political' in the sense of advocating a degree of self-consciousness about one's purposes, since it is a minimal condition for doing anything differently.

At the risk of simplification, it is now possible to distinguish three kinds of history relevant to psychology. With the empiricist view (associated with some professional historians), the subject defines itself, so to speak, since the past exists in such history as an autonomous presence; only methodological problems stand in the way of knowledge. With history written as a reconstruction of objective tendencies (a view associated with professional psychologists), the subject is that reasoning and experience through which scientific knowledge approaches truth. With history written as an evaluation of the present, the historian constitutes the subject in the activity of doing the history. (I will return to this last point in conclusion.)

THE SOCIAL CONSTITUTION OF HISTORY OF PSYCHOLOGY'S SUBJECT

It is time to return to history of psychology texts and to the difficulties they face in rendering a rational account of their subject. The difficulties are as apparent for the classic histories of G. S. Brett (1912–21) and Edwin G. Boring (1950) as for textbook histories, though the latter's need to simplify and condense exposes the difficulties more sharply. These histories have taken it for granted that the subject of psychology is universal, that is, that there has always been a real subject, potentially accessible to scientific knowing and gradually becoming accessible to great thinkers. Historians of course

understand that different cultures and civilizations describe this subject in a multitude of different ways, but they assume that there is an underlying identity in what this description is about. By following such thoughts, historians of psychology tend to reproduce an account of general Western intellectual history. Beyond this, and calling the Western focus into question, it is sometimes assumed that all peoples at all times have had some means of representing in symbols or language categories of human action (and, indeed, possession of a 'psychology' in this sense might be thought definitionally true of what it is to be human). Thus H. F. Ellenberger's *The Discovery of the Unconscious* begins with a refreshing account of shamanism and other non-Western psychological arts (Ellenberger, 1970: 3–52). But textbook histories (and Brett at great length) link modern psychology only with the wisdom of the ancients, beginning with pre-Socratic philosophy and working through Aristotelian cosmology, Christian theology, and Renaissance humanism, into the modern period.

Such history-writing assumes and at the same time embellishes a conception of psychology as a discipline with a continuous and profound tradition of describing what it really is to be human. These histories do not confront two deep puzzles in their enterprise. Encouraged by their purpose of being general and comprehensive, they follow a particular convention about what to include and what to exclude, and they assume a continuity of subject across different ages. Both puzzles are facets of the more general question, the identity of the subject of such writing, but I will treat them serially for the purposes of argument.

Histories of psychology often begin with 'the philosophical antecedents of psychology' or even with 'pre-Socratic speculation'. But how do these histories decide what to include? How much ancient or medieval thought belongs in a history of psychology? It is clear in fact that the writers possess no rational criteria of inclusion or exclusion. In the English-speaking world, where undergraduates are almost totally ignorant of the history of ideas or philosophy, an inclusive history of psychology becomes an important part of a general education. These histories may therefore have a valuable social function, but recognizing this function is no answer to the demand for a rational account of what ancient or medieval psychology might be. In practice, the writers of these texts do adopt criteria of inclusion or exclusion, as indeed they must, but their criteria are either opportunistic or reflect narrow social conventions. These texts include, on the whole, what others in the same genre include. Thus they include accounts of Aristotle's *De memoria*; by contrast, it is uncommon, to say the least, to discuss the Athenian concept of the slave.¹⁸ One can understand the convention behind this easily enough, given the place of experimental studies of memory in modern psychology (and the absence of slavery), but it is not obvious that it is rational or historical to treat one and not the other as a proper subject for the

history of psychology. Nor is it defensible, in writing history, to excise Aristotle's account of memory from the corpus of his writings on human activity in order to effect a direct comparison with modern theories.

A different example will make the same point. There is an argument that modern psychology becomes possible as a subject once the principle of the continuity (or uniformity) of nature brought human beings into relation with natural processes and hence brought human beings under the scope of scientific explanation. Darwin's work confirmed this step with the seal of empirical authority.¹⁹ But of course many stages in the naturalization of human action occurred earlier, particularly within the Lockean, Enlightenment, and utilitarian traditions that subsumed the formation of the mind's content and the production of conduct under natural law.²⁰ It is thus not surprising that writers in the human sciences should describe such Enlightenment figures as Adam Smith or David Hume as contributing to epistemology, social psychology, or economics. These, however, are our modern occupations; Smith and Hume characterized their projects with such labels as 'moral philosophy', 'civic morality', or 'the wealth of nations'. Hume, in describing human sociability, or Smith, in describing the moral sentiments, intended to illuminate the conditions for disinterested political judgement, economic wealth, moral propriety, and individual virtue (Phillipson, 1979, 1983). The question we might then ask is, does all this belong to the history of psychology or not? To put the question this way, however, is hardly profitable. If we answer 'yes', then the history of psychology must become the whole of intellectual history. If we answer 'no', then there is no history of psychology as such in the Enlightenment. It is clear that there is something incoherent about looking for 'the history of psychology' in the first place.

This incoherence lies with the assumption of the subject. Why should it be thought that there is a subject for the history of psychology? A psychologist might think the answer is painfully obvious! Since psychology is now a discipline, with subject-matter and an institutional and occupational identity, there must be a history of how this came about. From this point of view, psychology is a subject for history in the sense that psychology is (or is becoming) a differentiated body of knowledge and an occupational area. But what this view amounts to is the claim that psychology has a *social* presence since the generation of Wundt or James, which provides the historian with the parameters of a subject. Modern psychology provides historians with a social definition of what they should be studying. If this is so, then it surely follows that the subject of the history of psychology is a product of particular social events.

A quite different argument points towards the same conclusion. It is notorious that 'psychology' is not a unified body of knowledge with a common core of mutually consistent concepts; indeed, it is a highly contentious philosophical question whether it could ever achieve a unified

theory. Put another way, there are substantial difficulties in deciding whether psychology (as opposed to its history) has – or even could have – a subject. Leaving the theoretical issue to one side, it is not possible to escape the observation that, in fact, modern psychology is markedly divided over subject-matter. It is therefore not surprising that some of the most interesting work in the history of the twentieth-century human sciences addresses a diversity of national and cultural styles and movements.²¹ As a result, however, we cannot look to a definition of what the subject of psychology is, to provide us with a characterization of the subject of psychology's history. Nor can we dismiss this as simply a temporary state of affairs, unless, that is, we believe that psychology is about to unify around a subject – and this is something that current philosophical arguments, as well as leading psychologists, dispute in the strongest terms.²²

We return, then, to a conception of what psychology is that derives from what we know of psychology as a social activity. Without doubt this does provide the history of *modern* psychology with *subjects* (but not *a* subject). It is no coincidence that a new 'professional' history of psychology is at work precisely in that area where psychology is a defined subject, that is, where psychology is or is becoming a discipline. The social existence of the discipline gives historians grounds for choosing a particular subject-matter, and the choice escapes anachronism and a-historical judgements and therefore satisfies historians' professional standards. What psychology and its history is, is clear in these histories: it is the activity of the practitioners with the social label 'psychologist'. Thus the works of Mitchell Ash on *Gestalt* and American psychology, John O'Donnell on behaviourism, and Ulfried Geuter on the German psychology profession, and the biographies of Cyril Burt by L. S. Hearnshaw, James McKeen Cattell by Michael Sokal, or G. S. Hall by Dorothy Ross, are significant contributions to the history of discipline formation, integrating the history of psychology with studies of discipline formation in the history of science and human sciences generally.²³

These historians, I suggest, tacitly accept social definitions of their subjects, and they write about a period when these subjects appear to acquire a reasonably unambiguous existence. Problems of inclusion or exclusion still remain; for example, whether and in what sense the history of psychoanalysis or of education should be part of the history of twentieth-century psychology.²⁴ It therefore still seems preferable, even in the modern period, to think of *histories* rather than the history of psychology. This is taken in more radical directions by research which seeks to show that what psychologists study, as well as what they do, is a social construct. Following Foucault's claim that the human sciences create knowledge around institutionalized practices of rendering individual differences visible, Nikolas Rose demonstrates how British industrial, educational, and medical activity made possible the subject of a new kind of knowledge, the differential measurement of individuals. 'A

psychological science of the individual emerged through this act of differentiation and quantification' (Rose, 1985: 5). At a finer level of analysis, Kurt Danziger suggests that the academic psychological experiment brought into existence its own subject, the psychology of people in laboratories undergoing tests (Danziger, 1986).²⁵ Such work begins to analyse subjects as constituted by specific historical processes rather than as 'natural' entities. As Rose and Danziger imply, *what* is being constituted cannot be taken for granted, and this 'what' cannot be the 'natural' starting-point for deciding what the history of psychology is about.

The history of modern psychology in Germany, in Russia, or in Great Britain shows that *one* discipline did not form in *one* set of historical circumstances. 'Psychology' is the generic sign of a cluster of competing would-be disciplines. Psychology has had (and continues to have) a protean character, differing with specific, local circumstances. We cannot refer with any precision to 'the birth' of the discipline. What originated with Wundt in the 1870s at Leipzig was not the same as what went on in the new North American psychology departments of the 1880s.²⁶ In Britain, James Ward's or G. F. Stout's conceptual analyses were remote from Charles Spearman's quantification of psychological factors.²⁷ This is not just trivially to recognize diversity; on the contrary, it implies that even history centred on disciplines must take its own subject as having a problematical existence. Only in clearly circumscribed local circumstances is it possible to refer unreflectively to the history of psychology's subject.

If we describe the subject of the history of psychology in social terms, the history of psychology is the history of a group of related bodies of knowledge and activities developing during the second half of the nineteenth century. There can be no history 'of psychology' in earlier periods. To assume that there can be, is to assume that 'psychology' comes into existence before the events which are its conditions of possibility (to borrow Foucault's terminology). A vague sense of this is perhaps conveyed by the oft-repeated remark (originally made by Hermann Ebbinghaus) that 'psychology has a long past, but only a short history'.²⁸ Repetition of the remark, however, suggests more a sleight of words than a serious reflection on the problem. Quite what 'the past' is, as opposed to 'the history', remains conveniently obscure.

THE PRE-MODERN HISTORY OF PSYCHOLOGY?

In what sense, then, can we talk about 'the history of psychology' before 1850, since there is a substantial body of serious historical work that certainly does so? A response to this brings to a head the vexed historiographic question of the continuity and discontinuity of historical subjects. I suggest that historians of psychology may legitimately search in earlier periods in order to

trace traditions of thought, the social background of individuals or institutions, cultural values, or economic and political circumstances, that become part of a *later* psychology. But then this is historical research in the earlier period for the purpose, and about a subject, defined by the *later* psychology. What is taken to be a subject in the earlier period is a set of characteristics linked together by their existence as attributes of a subject, in a social sense, at a later period. There are no autonomous, contemporaneous, earlier criteria for circumscribing the subject of the history.

This might appear to leave the historian in an extremely uncomfortable position. She or he cannot presume that the subject (or interest) that leads to the historical research in the first place corresponds to the subject of the sources to be used in the research. Nevertheless, the problem is perfectly general, and we might therefore expect historians to have worked out practices which deal with it on a daily basis (even if not in theoretical terms).²⁹ Indeed, rules of thumb which legislate against anachronism, encourage immersion in the context, and disapprove of a judgemental attitude, mediate in practice between past and present. Any historical writing (like translation) must balance the possibility of alien meaning in the historical subject against the known meaning of the present interest. Such writing (among other things) tries to balance the picking-out of a historical subject as having value in relation to the present (a condition of meaning for a present audience), with precision about the detailed context (the condition of meaning in the past) in which what is picked out once existed. History-writing must therefore live by keeping two dangers at bay: describing a historical subject with a clarity for a present audience that distorts the conditions of the subject's existence ('reification'); and, the opposite problem, describing the historical context in so much detail that no clear focus or indeed subject remains for a present audience.

An interest in tracing the roots of late-nineteenth-century psychological knowledge and activity is relatively unproblematical for the recent past. It is clearly meaningful to describe a tradition of post-Kantian writing to provide a context for the research intentions of Fechner or Wundt in the 1850s and 1860s (Leary, 1978, 1980a). Similarly, in order to understand Alexander Bain's or Herbert Spencer's associationism, we turn (following a continuity which Bain and Spencer themselves perceived) to a utilitarian tradition going back to David Hartley (Smith, 1973; Young, 1970: 94–102, 172–86; Young, 1973). Or, to take a different kind of example, if British psychology at the beginning of the twentieth century gives voice to practices of differentiation developing piecemeal in schools, prisons, or asylums, then we need histories of those institutions as part of the history of psychology.³⁰ None of this is controversial. But problems rapidly become apparent once the search for origins goes a little further back, beyond the patterns of ideas, institutions, or socioeconomic circumstances that are the direct conditions of the later

subject. What, for example, is the relationship between Wolff and Wundt, between Locke and Bain, or between the voluntary hospitals of the mid-eighteenth century and differential psychology? In addressing these questions we cannot escape a substantial philosophical debate about historical continuity and discontinuity. But it is necessary here only to tease out some points of direct relevance for historians.

The practice of detailed historical research seems inevitably to produce narratives describing historical continuity: at a certain sharpness of focus any event will appear part of a linked sequence. Many Anglo-American historians would further conceive of a history as specifically concerned with causal continuity over time. Historians of ideas or of philosophy also inherit assumptions that link thought to continuity in reason and experience. It was therefore provocative for the historians of science, Gaston Bachelard and T. S. Kuhn, to suggest the existence of real breaks in the history of knowledge. However different their views, Bachelard and Kuhn were both responding to episodes in the history of science (notably the 'revolution' in early-twentieth-century physics) when there appeared to be a radical displacement of concepts.³¹ Historians and philosophers of science have subsequently had to reconsider whether and in what sense there have been 'ruptures' or 'revolutions' in knowledge. In his earlier books, Foucault appears to develop the concept of 'epistemic breaks' into a central theme of the human and medical sciences. He refers scathingly to unreflective continuity in histories of ideas, preferring instead to emphasize the local, discontinuous character of discursive practices. If this approach were accepted, then it would appear that the conditions of possibility for psychology must be local. In particular, it must be concluded that the differentiation of the individual self as a visible, measurable 'object' which could be known as physical objects are known, occurs only in the modern period. Nevertheless, Foucault's later work suggests that discontinuity is not a necessary feature of his historiography.³² He is happy for research to determine continuity and discontinuity; what he vehemently rejects is the presumption of the continuous subject.

What, then, is implied by debates about continuity versus discontinuity for the history of psychology? We can approach an answer by first discussing a topic considered earlier, the history of associationism. Having traced it back from Bain to Hartley, we have to note that even to distinguish Hartley as 'the founder' of systematic associationism is tendentious, since, for Hartley himself, associationism was an element of Christian eschatology remote from psychology as a subject as it existed in late-nineteenth-century Britain (Marsh, 1959; Verhave, 1973).³³ How untenable then is the convention, following Howard C. Warren's pioneer history, which traces associationist ideas back from Hartley to Hobbes and ultimately to Aristotle (Warren, 1921). We can safely judge that the attribution of 'the association of ideas' to these earlier writers tells us little about the writers but a lot about the person

doing the attribution. Nevertheless, the difficulty remains that Hartley, Hobbes, or Aristotle wrote in ways that it would appear to be perverse not to recognize as 'psychological', and if we take other pre-1850 writers, such as Christian Wolff or J. F. Herbart, they themselves said that they were writing on something called '*Psychologie*'. It is clear that somehow we have to strike a balance between finding psychology everywhere and finding it nowhere.

'To think about this balance in an intelligible way requires a reversal in the way empiricist historians see the question. The question is not about discovering where an objective, independently existing change-over to psychological knowledge occurs. Rather, the question is about how we as historians represent the past to ourselves and, in so doing, draw distinctions (such as that between psychological and non-psychological knowledge) that make the past intelligible. The activity of representing the past to the present always embodies interests. Such interests vary greatly: the psychologist looking to embellish psychology with ancient wisdom differs from the political radical looking to expose the contingent circumstances that have laid down power along current disciplinary lines. I think we can also recognize a 'historical' interest, properly so-called, which attempts to represent to ourselves subjects as they have existed for others in past cultures. (This is not to say that this interest ever exists in a pure form.) Someone may approach a topic (such as Aristotle on memory) because it has the *appearance* of being psychological to a certain way of thought and a certain interest. What he or she cannot assume, however, is that it *is* 'psychological' in some trans-historical and universal sense, or that what it is to be 'psychological' is not itself at issue, or that someone else may not represent the topic differently.

We can summarize the point: we cannot assume the subject before doing the research; and doing the research constitutes the subject. Emphatically, however, this does not mean that 'anything goes'. The possibility of more than one valid account of a historical subject does not imply that there are no invalid accounts! Criteria of coherence, intelligibility, and comprehensiveness apply to the constitution of a historical past, in the light of acknowledged interests, just as they have applied to its 'discovery'.³⁴ To develop an example: when J. F. Herbart claimed to ground '*Psychologie als Wissenschaft*', he had definite notions of the lineaments of his subject, and it is a basic historical task to provide a coherent, intelligible, and comprehensive description of these notions.³⁵ To make meaningful for ourselves what he claimed psychology was is also part of the project of the historical research. It follows that the relationship of his subject to our subject 'psychology' must always remain questionable, but we have standards by which to judge whether any particular account of Herbart is coherent as an account, inclusive of the possibly relevant conditions in which he wrote, and responds meaningfully to our historical interest. A wealth of research now supports the view that these standards are best served in practice by eschewing modern divisions in knowledge and

experience. Herbart, to continue the example, modelled his conception of psychological dynamics simultaneously on the force relations of physical mechanics and the interrelation of powers within the Prussian state. 'Historical' standards require us to represent this in any account of his psychology. As I hope the discussion shows, practice and theory together do not support any notion of a trans-historical subject such as 'psychology'. Nevertheless, historians obviously do describe historical subjects in different times and places, at least at a certain level of generality, as having common elements. How valid this is, is a matter for judgement in any particular case and in relation to the stated purposes. In my view, to continue the earlier example, it is still an open question how to describe Herbart's relations to programmes of experimental psychological research in the 1860s or 1870s.

To address this further, it is necessary to qualify the discussion so far, which, for the purposes of argument, has drawn a line somewhere after 1850, suggesting that the history of psychology does have a subject thereafter to the extent that psychology becomes a discipline or occupation. However, it has already been implied that some elements of what make it possible to refer to the subject 'psychology' in this way are present before this date and other elements are absent after it. It may thus be reasonable to describe a subject for the history of psychology before this date (and I will note two possibilities). What appears unreasonable is the idea of a 'rupture' and the sudden emergence of the conditions of possibility for the subject of the history of psychology – either after 1850 or at any earlier time. We cannot talk intelligibly, as historians, about any one moment as witnessing these conditions. Which moment would it be and for which elements of that non-unitary subject that exists for us as psychology? Claims to describe such a moment, we may observe, are in fact claims to give dominance to particular elements of a subject of psychology. It therefore seems that ways of talking historically must, to some degree, incorporate a language of continuity (and, I would argue, even texts which perhaps want to avoid it do not succeed).

This is only to reiterate that there is no one discipline of psychology with one point of origin. The tendency in this paper is to splinter a response to the desire to reveal 'an origin'. In partial contrast to this, however, I will point out two significant alternative conceptions of psychology's origin.³⁶

The first grows out of the interpretation of the seventeenth-century scientific revolution as a reconstruction of metaphysics. In adopting a new language appropriate for quantifying physical causes, the seventeenth-century mechanical philosophers also adopted a new language for describing what appears as a psychological subject. According to this view, 'psychology', subsequently, exists as a subject bounded by problems to do with how it is possible for a mind to have knowledge and how this mind could be said to

interact with physical things. What we may call 'modern' or 'scientific' psychology, on this view, comes into existence in terms defined by these philosophical problems. With reason, then, Descartes is judged to be the first of the moderns and the decisive influence on what is to become psychology.³⁷ A corollary and support for this view comes from a forceful rejection of the existence of a continuous subject of the history of psychology from ancient to modern. If the very categories for conceptualizing knowledge underwent wholesale change in the seventeenth century, then there can be no guarantee that historians of psychology address the same subject before and after. Richard Rorty indeed argues that the category of 'the mental' is itself a seventeenth-century construction – a condition of 'the mechanization of the world picture'.³⁸ The category of 'the mental' (and perhaps also, somewhat contemporaneously, that of 'the self') subsequently renders the subject 'psychology' possible.³⁹

The second alternative comes from the quite different Marxian tradition which (if one can be allowed this generality for present purposes) traces the conditions of possibility for a subject of knowledge to conditions of the labour process.⁴⁰ From this point of view, one would expect to find the subject of the history of psychology by locating the forms of economic and social organization which create the possibility of psychological knowledge. An approach conceptualizing history as a dialectical process might suggest that such a subject is an entirely novel consequence of intellectual mediations between capital and labour. We might postulate that particular capitalist social relations (associated with alienation or market exchange, for example) bring into existence a type of subjective existence about which psychology, as a scientific discipline, seeks objective knowledge. Developing this, it could therefore become a matter for historical research to determine which forms of social and economic organization are the conditions of the particular subject of knowledge known as psychology. Thus Siegfried Jaeger and Irmgard Staeuble (1978) seek to describe the construction of psychology as a subject in relation to the individualizing but regulating conceptions of citizenship in the German states in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁴¹ Alternatively, it might be postulated that the interests of new classes lead to the development of new disciplines; thus some historians writing about the late nineteenth century seek to account for the institutionalization and professionalization of social science by reference to a shift of economic power away from old élites and the consequent interest of a highly educated section of the middle class, with intellectual rather than financial capital, in the status of expertise (Mackenzie, 1979).⁴² It is worth noting that such approaches pay attention to the *specific* conditions in which expertise acquires power, and this, I think, makes it difficult to conceive how, even in Marxian terms, a subject for psychology might come into existence as a large-scale unity at a

particular moment of time. Marxian approaches also make a substantial contribution to undermining the presupposition of the history of psychology having a trans-historical subject.

CONCLUSION

The general contention is, I hope, clear: *the* history of psychology should be abandoned. It does not seem possible to conceptualize a continuous and unitary subject to set the tasks of such a history. This is *not* a claim against doing history, but an argument that the construal of what history is about is in principle open-ended. There is no Archimedean point (such as a trans-historical subject) outside doing 'the history of psychology' from which to derive criteria of a subject.

This difficulty is in fact a general one, shared in particular by historians of science who have had to puzzle about how they should describe periods before their topic becomes recognizably distinct. Modern physical science disciplines, the physics of electricity or biochemistry for example, become specialisms at a particular time, though elements of what is now 'the physics of electricity' or 'biochemistry' obviously have some form of historical presence long before (Heilbron, 1979: 9–19; Kohler, 1982: 1–8). In this context, ideas about the emergence of disciplines and the specialization of knowledge have utility in suggesting ways of organizing the description of disparate elements that later exist together as a subject. The ideas enhance historical analysis by suggesting reasoned, but – I would emphasize – still retrospective, criteria of inclusion and exclusion for dealing with the earlier period. Used sensitively, these criteria can be balanced with the oft-repeated injunction not to impose discipline boundaries retrospectively. Historians of science are also familiar with questions of continuity and discontinuity in knowledge, though they rarely pose continuity versus discontinuity as a theoretical issue. Like other historians, they tend to describe continuity in practice – and this appears intrinsic to their methods. But recognizing that a tendency towards describing continuity inheres in one's methods is quite different from conceding the kind of trans-historical subject presupposed in history of psychology textbooks.

In the background of my argument is the claim that writing history is necessarily for a purpose and that this purpose has as a consequence the constitution of the subject in one way rather than another. This is not the relatively weak claim that the historian (or historical community) 'selects' one subject as opposed to another – an empirical position which still assumes the autonomous position of its subjects. It is closer to a neo-Kantian historiography that gives weight to the categories of thought in structuring the historically knowable.⁴³ But it differs from that tradition too in as far as it is sceptical of the possibility of rendering an account of those categories of

thought independently of a historically and socially specific desire. In this sense it occupies a 'perspectivist' stance.⁴⁴ As developed for the limited – and non-philosophical – ambitions of this paper, this sceptical historiography makes clear that the purposes of the textbook history of psychology tradition derive firmly from occupational values, namely those associated with the disciplinary standing, social authority, and cultural prominence of modern psychology (or some variety thereof). For such purposes, it may make sense to discuss Aristotle on memory as a contribution to a continuous tradition. Alternatively, and there is a certain piquancy in juxtaposing it with the previous purpose, it may also make sense to describe discontinuity at the moment when experimental techniques replaced so-called 'armchair psychology' in the late nineteenth century.⁴⁵ But, as the contrasting colouring of the historical process in these two examples illustrates, the enterprise is intellectually opportunistic. Coming to a similar conclusion about a specific case, John O'Donnell (1979) shows how E. G. Boring wrote his classic *A History of Experimental Psychology* (1929) to provide historical authority for the standing of psychology as an academic, rather than applied, discipline.⁴⁶

It is self-evident that the disciplines of history do not have the same purposes as the disciplines of psychology, and of course the former, like the latter, may be preoccupied by sustaining their position in the academic and wider community. Nevertheless, there are several aspects of what historians do that should bear on the way psychologists think about their history, and especially on the question, 'Does the history of psychology have a subject?' I will indicate what I have in mind by picturing history-writing again as a balance between two tendencies, this time between an emphasis on particularism and continuity on one side and generalization and the drawing of distinctions on the other.

History-writing pursues fidelity to the historical record; when successful, it satisfies both correspondence criteria and covers the widest range of information within a coherent framework.⁴⁷ This is where historians gain their reputation for detail; in this side of their work everything appears connected to everything else, and the identification of discontinuity appears a methodological improbability. Historians themselves give little attention to the problem of historical knowledge: they treat questions about correspondence criteria as problems of method – how to ensure evidential accuracy. They direct their methods towards what J. H. Hexter (1971: 55) well describes as 'the reality rule' – 'we might say that historians are concerned and committed to offer the best and most likely account of the past that can be sustained by the relevant extrinsic evidence'.⁴⁸ Conventions of training and professional scholarship guide their judgement about the value of any particular historical account. Nevertheless, scholarly conventions are not the same as a theory of history (though they may imply such a theory), and the existence of a convention about historical reality does not provide a rational justification for

what historians do. This becomes especially apparent when sceptics criticize the identity of a subject that the historian has chosen to study. It is unlikely someone would question the subject of the Spanish Armada (though a historian of the *Annales* persuasion might do so, viewing it as a mere epiphenomenon of quite different underlying processes).⁴⁹ But of course in the present essay it is precisely the 'reality' of the subject – psychology – that is at issue.

Turning to the other side of the balance, historians seek also to write intelligibly and, in doing this, they must both satisfy coherence criteria and consciously address an audience. It is also striking that successful historical writing gives the reader a sense of grasping the past or experiencing it in some living way. We can interpret this in terms of the historian making meaningful for the reader the meanings that actions or events had for others. Once we acknowledge such measures of successful historical practice, however, we cannot then avoid philosophical questions concerning the relation between alternative representations of meaning, such as here between past and present. The examination of such questions, hermeneutics, has long preoccupied linguists, social anthropologists, and literary theorists, as well as historians.

Developing one small part of what is at issue, we can suggest that narrative is (or should be) a means to translate a particular dimension of what is 'other' into a dimension of what is 'self'. Alternatively, put in sociological terms, narrative is our collective representation of a collective representation which is not our own. We can therefore suggest further that successful historical narrative satisfies both realms of meaning – other and self, past and present. Such writing portrays the subject as it was a meaningful activity in the past and the subject as it is meaningful to the activity of reading and comprehension in the present. Textbook history of psychology sacrifices the former for the latter by projecting back the present subject. Conversely, it would be an unintelligible piece of history-writing that described a past in a language and with purposes that the reader could not comprehend. It is a tautology to note that any subject, if it is to be intelligible to us, must speak our language. Hence we need every advantage of historical rhetoric and style to extend our language so that it can convey to us meanings articulated at other times. Finally, therefore, we can suggest that historians construct the historical subject out of the tension between present purposes and what, it must be assumed, may have been quite another subject. What they cannot do is presuppose that the subject pre-exists the historian's activity and purposes.

If abstract discussions such as the above sound remote from what historians actually do, it is because 'doing' proceeds according to professional conventions. In order to look in any detail at how our purposes actually construct accounts of the past, we must understand how occupational training and values inculcate habits of research and expression in historical work. This is as much the case for general history as for the history of psychology, but the

difference is that the former has built up a wealth of experience, and a diversity of views, about the portrayal of subjects in ways which do not presume identity or continuity with present subjects.

It is intended that this account of 'doing' history should be compatible with the earlier defence of a certain version of presentism. Much of this earlier discussion was linked to Foucault's work. Obviously, if one takes literally Foucault's denigration of 'history' then there is not much worth saying about 'doing history'. But it seems to me that his actual practice of 'archaeology' and 'genealogy' provides extremely suggestive new ways for mediating between the past as 'other' and the present in the human sciences. His denigration of history is a denigration of those narratives about the past (and he had in mind such stories as are told in textbook history of psychology) written as if there were an autonomous subject. As I have tried to suggest, however, successful and intelligible history-writing takes into account our interests and comprehension – we cannot do without 'the rhetoric of history' – and should avoid Foucault's strictures.⁵⁰ However, this conception of history as including reference to the present as a condition of intelligibility and value is not the same as a conception of 'present-centred' history (which many attribute to Foucault) where the present alone sets the agenda to be investigated.⁵¹

This essay has sought to bring out into the open the incoherence of textbook history of psychology and some of the theoretical reasons for that incoherence. It touches on two central issues, the relation of writing about the past to the present, and the lack of reason to assume a unitary and continuous subject. To be sure, these issues hardly exhaust the theoretical problems suggested by the essay's initial question. In particular, I have felt for ways to leave to one side philosophical matters, since this paper is programmatic for history and not philosophy. As its positive conclusion, it points towards a general history in which representation of 'the psychological' is bound up with distinctive, local characteristics of time and place, not with the authority of modern 'psychology' communities.⁵² And it points towards open engagement with the present purposes for which we negotiate the status and identity of a subject in the historical past.

NOTES

I would like to thank several patient audiences whose interest in 1986 greatly helped me clarify the issues in this paper: the history of science discussion group at the University of Lancaster, England; the research seminar (led by Irmgard Staeuble) at the Psychologisch Institut, Freie Universität, Berlin; the Vth annual meeting of Cheiron: the European Society for the History of the Behavioural and Social Sciences, Varna; and the International Conference for the History of the Human Sciences,

Durham, England. Thanks are also due to Dorothy Barber, Karl Figlio, Vernon Pratt, Nikolas Rose, and Lucy Shuttleworth. Aspects of this work would not have been possible without support from the Royal Society (History of Science) and British Academy (Overseas Conference Grant).

- 1 Hothersall (1984); Leahey (1980); Murray (1983); Robinson (1976); Watson (1978). There are many earlier texts with similar titles, and one recent British text: Hearnshaw (1987), though this has much more reflective purposes.
- 2 For the notion of 'doing' history see Hexter (1971: 135–56). Hexter's underlying theme is that one understands more about the nature of 'good' historical knowledge from observing what historians do than from theorizing about such knowledge.
- 3 A critical line was set by Young (1966). Psychologists have begun to take the criticisms on board; see the brilliant, concise statement in Danziger (1984). Danziger gives a social treatment to the word 'critical' used methodologically in Woodward (1980).
- 4 Compare the psychologist K. J. Gergen (1982: 107–15) and the social philosopher D. Held discussing Horkheimer (1980: 172).
- 5 cf. Herrnstein and Boring (1965: 2–7, 326–9). Galileo made his remarks in *Il Saggiatore* (1623), translated in Drake (1957: 273–8), under the title of 'The assayer'. cf. Clavelin (1968: 436–47); for a background discussion of qualities, Hutchinson (1982).
- 6 Some problems for conceiving of a human science not founded in seventeenth-century metaphysics are discussed in Taylor (1985); for implications for ethics, MacIntyre (1981: 35–83).
- 7 For a valuable recent discussion: Straker (1985). For the crucial question of Locke's relation to the 'new science': Mandelbaum (1964: 15–30); Rogers (1979). Burt's and Whitehead's assessment of Descartes requires modification at least in relation to the seventeenth century; see Brown (1985).
- 8 The example is suggested by Gunderson's thoughtful paper (1985). La Mettrie is placed in the materialist tradition in Lange (1925, vol. 2: 49–91); for the biographical context, Vartanian (1960).
- 9 cf. Dunn (1968); Skinner (1969); and for the 'literary turn' in historiographic argument: LaCapra (1980); White (1978).
- 10 e.g. Ash (1980a); Buss (1979); Decker (1977); Samelson (1981, 1985); Smith (1981); Woodward and Ash (1982).
- 11 For a comparable argument concerning the impotence of method to found a body of knowledge, see Mackenzie (1977). For the extreme demands of attempting to avoid presentism entirely, see the sophisticated narrative in Rudwick (1985).
- 12 Quoted and discussed in Davidson (1986: 221). On genealogy, see Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982: 104–25).
- 13 A point expressed very clearly by Poster (1986: 208–13).
- 14 See Foucault (1977, 1981). Rose (1985) develops an important genealogy for British differential psychology. For Foucault's relations to psychoanalysis, see Forrester (1980a).
- 15 e.g. Haraway (1978); Young (1971), and 'The historiographic and ideological contexts of the nineteenth-century debate on man's place in nature', in Young

- (1985: 164–247). Of course, writers of all political persuasions use ‘history’ for their purposes; the underlying point is developed further below.
- 16 This view, I think, implies ‘perspectivism’, meaning that the historian’s perspective (and place in the power nexus) is a necessary feature of the construction of knowledge. It is a philosophical matter to decide whether a writer’s perspective can be integrated (perhaps following Heidegger or Gadamer) with universal conditions of knowing. This is the view strongly rejected by Foucault, following Nietzsche; see especially Nietzsche, ‘The free spirit’, in Nietzsche (1966: 35–6). For an illuminating discussion of Nietzsche’s perspectivism, see Nehamas (1986). Habermas attempts to construct an objective theory of purposes as ‘knowledge constituting interests’; see Held (1980: 296–329). There are other attempts to construct objective theories of emancipatory interests.
 - 17 The sociology of knowledge of history appears to be nearly non-existent. For a sharp characterization of the profession’s core values, see Hexter, ‘The historian and his society: a sociological inquiry – perhaps’, in Hexter (1971: 77–106).
 - 18 Aristotle’s account of memory, ‘De memoria et reminiscencia’, is part of *De parva naturalia*. The version quoted in the textbooks is from Aristotle, ed. W. D. Ross (1931: 449b–53b); for a modern and superior translation, see Sorabji (1972). For exegesis of Aristotle’s ‘psychological’ texts, see Barnes, Schofield, and Sorabji (1979). On Greek slavery: Dover (1974: 282–8); de Ste Croix (1981: 133–47).
 - 19 cf. Dewey (1965); Young, ‘The role of psychology in the nineteenth-century evolutionary debate’ (1985: 56–78).
 - 20 Baker (1975); Bryson (1945); Burrow (1966: chs 1 and 2); Gay (1973: chs 4 and 7); Mandelbaum (1971: 63–76, 147–62); Passmore (1965).
 - 21 e.g. Ash and Geuter (1985); Brožek (1984); Hearnshaw (1964); Kozulin (1984). Current diversity was the starting-point for George Canguilhem’s polemical lecture of 1958, ‘Qu’est-ce la psychologie?’, translated in Canguilhem (1980). Two recent collections review twentieth-century divergences: Buxton (1985); Koch and Leary (1985).
 - 22 cf. Koch (1981), building on his six-volume synthetic attempt (1959–63). See also Gergen (1982).
 - 23 Ash (1980b, 1982, 1983); Geuter (1983, 1985); Hearnshaw (1979); O’Donnell (1986); Ross (1972); Sokal (1981, 1984). For the history of scientific disciplines, see also Lemaine *et al.* (1976), and Ross (1979).
 - 24 For example, historians may need to accommodate studies as divergent in both historiography and content as Forrester (1980b) and Sutherland (1984).
 - 25 Compare the parallel argument for the social construction of particular disease subjects: Figlio (1978, 1982).
 - 26 See note 23; Danziger (1979, 1980). For an overview of Wundt: A. L. Blumenthal, ‘Wilhelm Wundt: psychology as the propaedeutic science’, in Buxton (1985: 19–50); Smith (1982).
 - 27 For Spearman, see Norton (1979). On Ward and Stout: Daston (1978); Hearnshaw (1964: 136–43); Turner (1974: 201–45; on Ward).
 - 28 This is the translation given by Boring as the opening sentence of the preface to his classic history (first published in 1929) (1950: ix; but see also 392). Ebbinghaus used the phrase in his *Abriss der Psychologie* (1908). For the historiography of the phrase, see Geuter (1983: 201–3), which shows that Ebbinghaus, *pace* Boring,

- meant the phrase to deny anything of value to psychology before the late nineteenth century.
- 29 This is indeed the problem of historical knowledge. As partial excuse for putting this to one side, we may observe that 'the great debate over the nature of historical knowledge has now gone on so long without significant issue that it threatens to become a matter more of ethnographic than of philosophical interest' (White, 1986: 109). As Hayden White continues, this perhaps accounts 'for the most recent turn in historical theory, from an analysis of the epistemological status of historical knowledge to a consideration of the rhetoric of historical discourse'. cf. White (1984). The present essay is another reflection of that 'recent turn'.
 - 30 e.g. Busfield (1986); Foucault (1977); Ignatieff (1978); Rose (1985); Scull (1979).
 - 31 For Bachelard, see Tiles (1984); Kuhn (1970).
 - 32 See: Hoy, 'Introduction', to Hoy (1986: 1–25 (7, 20)); Davidson (1986: 223–4); Sheridan (1980: 90–4).
 - 33 The heuristic value of the history of associationism is also developed by Danziger, forthcoming.
 - 34 For coherence as opposed to correspondence criteria of knowledge, see Bloor (1976: 33–9). cf. Hesse (1974: 37–40, 51–61).
 - 35 Herbart (1890–2; first published in 1824–5). For an extended discussion of Herbart, we have to go to a historian of education, Dunkel (1970). On the pedagogical context, see Jaeger and Staeuble (1978: 180–202); on the quantitative ideal, Leary (1980b); on Herbart and psychiatry, Verwey (1984).
 - 36 A third possibility – problem-centred or thematic history – raises, I think, all the difficulties of the subject which this paper as a whole addresses. cf. MacLeod (1975); Pongratz (1967). My scepticism is shared by Danziger, forthcoming. Karl Popper, however, characterizes 'problem situations' as objectively existing issues for epistemology: Popper (1972: 106–12).
 - 37 This is an implication of the Burt-Whitehead thesis discussed earlier (notes 6 and 7). For recent consideration of Descartes' approach to the mind: Hooker (1978: 171–233); Wilson (1978: 177–220); (1980).
 - 38 The phrase is from Dijksterhuis (1969). For conceptual innovation: Matson (1966); Rorty (1980: 45–61). For a related debate about continuity and discontinuity in the scientific revolution (concerning vision): Straker (1976).
 - 39 These arguments require considerable elaboration and are merely noted here. cf. Straker (1985); Tomaselli (1984).
 - 40 I cannot enter into the problem of interpreting the Hegelian strand in Marx's writings and hence the Marxian debates about the historicization of the subject. For an accessible treatment of Marx's theory of the human subject under capitalism: Ollman (1976).
 - 41 For the context of this work, see Geuter (1983: 211–15). Following Foucault rather than Marx, Rose also identifies the period about 1800 as crucial to the emergence of the psychological subject: Rose (1985: 12–13).
 - 42 On the class position of liberal intellectuals, see Schwendinger and Schwendinger (1974: 141–58). For an argument in comparable terms, see Haskell (1977).
 - 43 cf. Iggers (1968); Ringer (1969: 90–102). For an overview of the subsequent implications of these issues in historical practice, see Iggers (1985: 80–122).

- 44 The point here is only to clarify what 'the historian of psychology' can legitimately *do*, not to solve philosophical questions. Lurking behind my claims are general problems of epistemological relativism and reflexivity. Debates on relativism have been prompted in the British setting by the sociology of scientific knowledge and social anthropology: Barnes (1977); Bloor (1976); Hollis and Lukes (1982); Wilson (1970). For a succinct claim that empirical statements can never constitute sufficient grounds for accepting a particular statement as true, see Hesse (1980). Relativistic implications for the human sciences are drawn out in Gergen (1982: 60–5). If my approach to the history of psychology, which abandons an 'objective' subject while stressing criteria of historical evidence, appears paradoxical, the paradox is not mine alone; for a clear introduction to questions of reflexivity, see Lawson (1985).
- 45 These two examples reveal an emphasis on continuity of subject and an emphasis on discontinuity of method. This is of significance to the representation of modern psychology as a science.
- 46 The subsequent career of Boring's text in the psychological community is discussed in Kelly (1981); cf. Ash (1983: 148–55).
- 47 This last criterion is intended to cover the historian's concern with context: the wider the contemporary frame of reference, the better the assessment of the significance of the particular. (There is a parallel with translation: the greater the familiarity with the contemporary language, the more reliable the translation of a particular word.)
- 48 Following Hexter, I am not here concerned with epistemological questions but with what historians do. The sociologist of knowledge would obviously accept the existence of the reality rule but would claim that it, like correspondence rules generally, is socially constituted. For a denunciation of historical practice which acts as if correspondence were a sufficient criterion of truth, see Stedman Jones (1972).
- 49 cf. Braudel (1972–3, vol. 1: 20–1); for the context, see Iggers (1983: 56–79).
- 50 Again, Hexter's phrase: 'The rhetoric of history' (1971: 15–76).
- 51 I think there is plenty of evidence for Foucault's fascination with history (though he certainly wished to side-step epistemological questions about whether we have knowledge of a 'real' past). Consider, for example, the detail in Foucault (1973). cf. Cousins and Hussain (1984: 3–6, 80–97); Hoy, 'Introduction' (1986: 1–25).
- 52 This suggests that 'the history of psychology' may have to consider whether 'the history of the psychological' – namely, the subjective and individual level of experience – should not become part of its subject. It would then, for example, have to make space for the history of '*mentalité*'; cf. Iggers (1985: 187–95). This is perhaps a mirror image of the call in social psychology that it should become history: Gergen (1973). Graham Richards, in a provocative paper, takes up a question very similar to that asked here, arguing that the history of psychology has special problems because we must choose between a restrictive history of the discipline or a universal history of everything. He derives this choice from 'the inherent ambiguity of the term psychology as subject-matter and discipline label [which] points to a genuine ambiguity in the status of Psychological work as both study of the subject-matter and data in its own right': Richards (1987: 211).

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