

I Psychology and society: an overview

Jeroen Jansz

It is generally considered that psychology was born as an independent discipline in 1879. In that year Wilhelm Wundt founded the first psychological laboratory in the world, at the University of Leipzig, Germany. Attempts to apply psychology to practical problems soon followed. As early as the 1890s, psychologists in various countries became involved in different social issues. In Germany, the psychologist Herman Ebbinghaus undertook studies regarding the question of fatigue among school children, and the psychiatrist Kraepelin put psychological instruments to use in examining psychiatric patients. And in Vienna, Sigmund Freud started a small private practice for patients with psychological problems, which would prepare the ground for psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. In the United States, Lightner Witmer opened a “psychological clinic” for diagnosis and treatment of children with educational problems.

What started out as isolated local initiatives soon became a veritable movement. By the 1910s, practical psychology was well underway, and in the early 1920s it already overshadowed academic psychology, especially in the United States. As a contemporary observer put it in 1924: “There is now not only psychology in the academic or college sense, but also a Psychology of Business, a Psychology of Education, a Psychology of Salesmanship, a Psychology of Religion. . . . In all our great cities there are already, or soon will be, signs that read ‘Psychologist – Open Day and Night’.”¹

Why did practical psychology strike root so rapidly? Before turning to the various fields of psychological practice in the chapters to follow, in this chapter we will try to put the general early success of the discipline into perspective. In the Introduction, we presented two general socio-historical trends, which we consider to have been crucial for the success of psychology: individualization and social management. “Individualization” covers a number of changes in people’s “life-world,” in particular the shift from group to individual, the interest in individual differences, and a focus on the inner world of feelings. “Social management” refers to the concerted efforts to monitor and control the behavior of individuals and groups. Taking these phenomena as our leads, we will begin with a review of early processes of individualization, starting around 1400 (section 1). In subsequent sections, we will focus on what is generally known as “the long nineteenth century”: the period starting with

the industrial and political revolutions of the late eighteenth century, and ending with the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. Section 2 provides a general sketch of the period, with emphasis on the major social transformations which set this period off from earlier times. Section 3 discusses the transformation of the life-world from the perspective of individualization. Section 4 concentrates on the rise of practices of social management. In section 5, we turn to our subject proper: the inception of psychology as a practical field of expertise. Finally, in section 6 we will briefly discuss some general trends in the twentieth century, which set the stage for more recent developments in psychology, to be examined in greater detail in the chapters to follow.

1 Early western individuality (c. 1400–1800)

It is impossible to pin down a moment, or even a period, in which the western focus on the individual originated. Some historians point to philosophy in Greek antiquity, or focus on the emergence of private property around 1250. Here, we will follow common practice among historians and take the Renaissance at around 1400 as our starting point.²

Historical changes with respect to the concept of the individual have always been connected with economic, political, and legal developments. Mobility, for example, was an important factor. In the rural village, individual identities were tied up with jobs and positions held in the community and family. When people had to flee from their birth ground, or decided to move to town, they generally lost their traditional anchors.³ Another relevant macro-development was the legal domain. For instance, when serfage ended it was easier for farmers to follow their own life course. For centuries, mobility, the law, and other macro-factors had a rather diverse and local impact on the population. Therefore we postpone our discussion of economy, politics, and law to the next section which is devoted to the nineteenth century. This section concentrates on the ideas about individuality that emerged early in history.

1.1 Early manifestations (c. 1400–1600)

The social and cultural developments of around 1400, generally labeled briefly as “the Renaissance,” occurred first in Italian city-states such as Florence, and a little later in the cities of north-western Europe. The general tendency in these “urban” areas in this period was a gradual shift toward the individual among the societal elites. A self-conscious view of man emerged, that pictured the individual as less dependent on, for example, tradition and the church. Farmers and others in the Third Estate had probably less room for individuality, but they were not entirely excluded. The individual person as a point of reference was already presupposed in the practices of Christian faith and in legal systems based on Roman Law which affected the general population.⁴ The growing emphasis on individuality manifested itself in diverse domains such as art, Protestantism, and Humanism, and was also discernible in ordinary life.

Art and literature. From the Renaissance onward, the scale in which individuality was expressed in artefacts was far larger than in the preceding ages. Paintings and sculptures bore the hallmark of the artist, which was exemplified by the addition of the artist's signature. The works they made were now seen as their personal product, expressing the artist's unique capacities. Many wealthy citizens had their portraits painted. Their individuality was thus represented on canvas, in the individual style of the painter. The new genre of the self-portrait crowned the sense of individuality (see figure 1). In writing, individual life histories were documented, with for example the publication of biographies of Dante and Petrarch. Collections of biographical essays concerned specific classes of people; Giovio, for example, described the lives of princes and generals (1514), and Vasari (1550) and Van Mander (1604) published the life histories of famous painters. Politicians, famous artists, and others from wealthy strata, including some women, published autobiographies, and so did many craftsmen, soldiers, and clerks. The goldsmith Cellini underlined the aims of the autobiographies when he wrote in the 1570s:

No matter what sort he is, everyone who has to his credit what are or really seem great achievements, ought to write the story of his own life in his own hand.⁵

In other words, successful individuals ought to publish accounts of their own lives in order to provide a model for their readers.

Protestantism. The criticism of Roman Catholic theology voiced by Luther and Calvin in the early sixteenth century also contributed to an individualized concept of man. The individual's exclusive relation to God in matters of faith was central to the Protestant Reformation. Believers were urged to read the Holy Bible themselves, which contrasted sharply with common religious practice. Sins must be confessed in the private isolation of prayer, and Protestants thus became their own judge in determining the gravity of their transgressions. They could not rely on a priest who would give them penance after confession. This religious individualism prompted the examination of one's conscience in order to determine whether one had been virtuous and had refrained from committing sin. Many diaries written by devout Protestants bear witness to the inner loneliness that resulted from this doubt-ridden self-exploration.⁶

Humanism. The "free will" was the cornerstone of many Humanist writings in the sixteenth century. Erasmus, for example, criticized the Catholic clergy for keeping people ignorant. Although he did not join the Reformation, he urged believers to choose their own course of faith. Montaigne expressed a humanist spirit in his emphasis on the autonomous authority of man. The human psyche held a central position in his *Essays* (1580), in particular his own psyche: "I am myself the substance of my book. . . ."⁷ The Humanism of the men of letters in the sixteenth century had a golden future, especially in its secular version, the Enlightenment, that came to dominate later centuries.

Ordinary life. In ordinary habits, individuality appeared in the guise of "privacy," for example among the educated and wealthy classes where people started to eat from



Figure 1 Self-portrait of Katharina Van Hemessen (1548). An example of early artistic expression of individuality, showing that this was not confined to men. Source: Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel, Kunstmuseum. Photo: Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel, Martin Bühler.

their own plate, rather than from a common dish, and sat down on chairs rather than on benches. The emergence of privacy coincided with that of etiquette. It was, for example, considered impolite to offer a guest an apple of which a part had already been eaten.⁸

We can conclude that an individualist concept of man emerged in the western world in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It should be kept in mind, however, that these early forms of individualism were quite different from the perspective on the individual that came to dominate western culture in the twentieth century. As the historian Lyons has put it: “individuality was based on respect for talent, or property and legal rights, but invariably stopped short of an interest in the drama of an *idiosyncratic inner life*.”⁹ Instead of connecting individuality with reflection, contemplation, or the inner world of feelings, it was rather identified with one’s effect on the community.

1.2 *The rational individual (c. 1600–1700)*

In the seventeenth century, individualism received a forceful new impetus from philosophy, most notably the work of the Frenchman René Descartes and the British philosopher John Locke. Descartes’ contribution was epitomized in his famous dictum “*cogito ergo sum*” – “I think, and can therefore conclude that I am” (1637). With this statement, he asserted that the source of knowledge rested within the mind (*ratio*) of the individual.¹⁰ This implied a self-sufficient, and competent I, capable of initiating and conducting well-reasoned thought. Through introspection the individual was able to gain knowledge and control over his own mind, and consequently over the external world, including his own body. The emphasis on the powers of the *ratio*, or *cogito*, echoed earlier humanist writings, but it was Descartes’ account that contributed to a new western standard for defining individuality. If people had to answer who they were, they would now seek that answer in their own, rational minds.

Locke added another element to individualism, by conceptualizing the mind as a *tabula rasa*, that is, a blank slate. In the life course, Locke argued, this slate would be filled by the accumulation of learning experiences. This meant that “individuality” was permanently in the (re)making: new experiences led to new inscriptions on the “slate” of mind. On the one hand, this social construction of mind came with feelings of insecurity, because traditional identities waned, and citizens could no longer rely on having an immortal soul as a determinant of who they were. On the other hand, (re)construction contributed to individual freedom. The rational powers of “mind” enabled individuals to reflect on what they had experienced, and who they were as persons.¹¹

The seventeenth-century philosophical notions about rationality and individuality were formulated in a general climate of “disenchantment.” Galileo’s conflict with the Church in 1633, and Newton’s publication of a radical, mechanistic world view (1687) underlined the fact that, as explanations of nature, magic and religion were beginning to lose ground in favor of science.¹²

1.3 *Enlightenment and Romanticism (c. 1700–1800)*

In contemporary terminology we could characterize the eighteenth century as the era in which philosophy and science were popularized on an unprecedented scale. In philosophy, the secular way of thinking about the human individual reached its provisional completion in the Enlightenment. A secular intelligentsia of scientists and philosophers was now large enough and powerful enough to challenge the clergy, and promote widely its scientific and mechanistic account of nature.¹³

Faith in the powers of reason was voiced in a type of publication that became very popular in this century: the encyclopedia. In England, Chambers published his *Cyclopaedia* in 1728, but real fame for the genre came a little later with the French *Encyclopédie* (1751–1765) edited by Diderot in collaboration with D’Alembert. The *Encyclopédie*, and other examples such as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Edinburgh, 1768–1771), offered the educated public a systematic survey of practical knowledge and thus were important instruments in convincing the readership of the capacities of the rational mind.

The emphasis on rationality was countered by a diversity of tendencies that can be subsumed in retrospect under the banner of Romanticism. In eighteenth-century France, for example, in cultivated circles the necessity of *sensibilité* was stressed, partly in reaction to the alienating aspects of rationality. People were urged to express their feelings, and be sympathetic to each other.¹⁴ The French philosopher and pedagogue Rousseau appealed to this cult of sensibility with his vivid accounts of his own feelings and those of his protagonists. He deliberately propagated the notion of the nobility and depth of the lives of “uncivilized” individuals, such as savages and little children. French Romanticism temporarily lost its hold as a result of the Revolution in 1789, which favored rationality over emotionality. However, it resurfaced around 1800, both in France and elsewhere.

The eighteenth-century interest in individuality was also expressed in the considerable popularity of *physiognomy*, the science and art of inferring capacities and character from the outward appearance of individuals. In the late 1770s, the Swiss clergyman Lavater published his four volumes of *Physiognomische Fragmente*, which attained a wide readership. His books were illustrated with engravings of famous contemporaries whose faces provided ideal models of a particular character. The practical nature of physiognomy contributed to a general awareness about individual differences, and the way in which inner feelings could be read from facial display.¹⁵

1.4 *Conclusion*

In western culture, the societal and cultural focus gradually began to shift from the collective to the individual from the late fourteenth century onward. This happened first in the powerful elites, and then spread to wider educated and cultivated circles. Common practices of religious self-exploration and rational self-reflection in Humanism and seventeenth-century philosophy were important for the creation of notions of individuality. Romanticism added an important dimension: a growing part

of the population now linked their individuality to an inner domain of feelings, and came to experience their interior as having *depth*. Thus, the stage was set for the further rise of individualism in the centuries to come.¹⁶

2 Toward “modern” society (c. 1775–1920)

In the nineteenth century, individualizing tendencies that had previously emerged were further intensified. “Traditional” society with its emphasis on the family and the village was gradually replaced by a “modern” society that emphasized the individual rather than the collective. In this section we will document this transition by discussing the rapid, if not revolutionary, transformations in demography, industry, and politics, and also in religion, philosophy, and the sciences.

Demography. Agricultural reform in the eighteenth century resulted in a decrease in crop failures, and an increase in produce. A larger number of people could be fed properly, so fewer people died of hunger and disease. There was a steady growth in population, and in the nineteenth century this was further assisted by better hygiene and the prevention of contagious diseases. Between 1750 and 1900, the European population increased from about 140 to 420 million souls. Population growth was most clearly discernible in the cities. In England, for example, in 1800 there were 106 cities with more than 5000 inhabitants; by the end of the century, there were 622. The social mobility toward the cities is illustrated by the fact that by 1850 half of the British population lived in cities. Germany reached this degree of urbanization at around 1900, and France only in 1930. Urbanization in the United States was characterized by the contrast between giant metropolises of more than a million citizens, on the east coast (New York) and in the midwest (Chicago), and a thinly populated, vast countryside.

From the middle of the eighteenth century, most of the people who migrated to the city did so in order to find work in trade, commerce, or industry. People from different backgrounds lived together in overcrowded dwellings because they could not afford anything else. Many were uprooted, because the ties with their original community were cut. The conditions in the slums at the urban periphery contrasted sharply with the inner city districts (see figure 2). The center of the city was the domain of the middle classes, or *bourgeoisie*. Many had their roots in civic urban life, because their families had been part of the urban elite of administrators and professionals. The lower middle classes, for example shopkeepers, had smaller financial resources, but most of them were able to cope successfully with the demands of daily life.¹⁷

Industry. The industrial mode of production grew steadily in the nineteenth century. In the first decades, Great Britain kept the leading position it had attained in the eighteenth century through its pioneering role in the mechanization of production and the use of steam-power. Cotton and iron were the most important new industrial products. In the later decades, British industries lost their leading position to German and North American manufacturers, especially in new fields such as the chemical industry. As a result of industrial expansion, wealth increased between the



Figure 2 London, c. 1870, an engraving by Gustave Doré, showing monumental buildings side by side with humble lodgings. Industrialization and urbanization changed both the physical and the social landscape. Source: G. Doré and B. Jerrold (1872), *London: a pilgrimage* (London).

early 1800s and 1914. At the same time, social inequality also became greater, especially in the United States where the wealth of a Carnegie or a Vanderbilt was beyond all comparison with the meager wage of a laborer. At all layers of society, people had to cope with the insecurities of nineteenth-century capitalism. Economic “booms” coexisted with crises. The mid-century prosperity ended abruptly with the *krach* of 1873. The effects of the following economic downturn were felt across the whole world, thus underlining the new status of capitalism as a global enterprise. Trade between the western powers and their colonies had boomed from about 1850 onward, but it remained very unbalanced. In almost all cases, it was one-way traffic,

with colonies supplying raw materials such as mineral oil and rubber at low prices to western industries.

Politics. The emerging middle class manifested itself as an important political agent in the nineteenth century. It continued the program of the civil political revolutions in the United States of America (1776) and France (1789). There, the traditional power of the aristocracy and clergy had been broken, to the benefit of the middle class. Bourgeois politics in the nineteenth century was generally characterized by liberal individualism. It held that the nation's inhabitants enjoyed their political rights and duties as individuals, rather than as groups or corporations. Middle-class citizens agitated against the class voting system, because they aspired to a political position that would match their economic power. Their claims for the vote were successful in the long run. Political participation did not mean, however, that the middle classes had enough power to control the state. In many European states, the largely conservative aristocracy held a strong base in parliament well into the twentieth century.

Secularization and scientification. Perhaps less visible, but at least as important as the changes discussed above, were transformations within the ideational realm. Religion gradually lost its place as the principal frame of reference, in favor of a secularized and scientific world-view. In everyday life, religious institutions remained important agents, and political authorities continued to refer to religious values and to the church as the bearer of moral authority. However, the position of religion and church as the ultimate authority was no longer self-evident. In former times, even the work of philosophical and scientific dissenters such as Newton and Descartes had been imbued with a religious spirit. In contrast, the nineteenth century saw the emergence of wholly secularized systems of thought, which augmented the spirit of the Enlightenment; religious elements were minimalized or even explicitly shunned.

One of the earliest expressions of systematic secular and scientific thought was *positivism*, developed in the 1830s by the French philosopher Auguste Comte. According to Comte, the religious world-view reflected a primitive state of social evolution, which was to be superseded by scientific analysis, not only in the realm of the natural sciences, but also with respect to social phenomena. This resulted in his proclamation of a science of society or *sociologie*, which would replace both religion and political philosophy and provide the basis for political stability. In Comte's own words: "In political philosophy from now on there can be no order or agreement possible, except by subjecting social phenomena, like all other phenomena, to invariable natural laws that will limit in each epoch . . . the extent and character of political action."¹⁸

Comte's ideas rapidly lost influence when he elaborated them into a kind of secular religion, with a church-like hierarchical power structure of its own. However, the general idea of a scientific analysis of social life quickly took root. It found its most forceful expression in a theory which was developed in the 1850s by the English philosopher Herbert Spencer. The starting point for Spencer's philosophy was social conflict, which he considered a prerequisite for progress. He argued that social living was hampered by scarcity. Therefore, people had to struggle for resources, and came into conflict with each other. In this struggle for life, only those individuals would survive who were well adjusted to their environment.

Spencer's account received a forceful impetus from the publication of Darwin's theory of evolution (1859), which apparently corroborated his analysis. As *social darwinism*, it became the favored ideology of the upper strata of society, who understood "survival of the fittest" as a moral principle, which legitimized both social order in general and their own privileged social position. Moreover, it served as an important argument against social reform, which stood in the way of progress because it was at odds with the driving force of progress, "survival of the fittest."¹⁹

If social darwinism provided a scientific legitimation of the existing social order, social protest also came to be based on a scientific footing, with the work of the philosopher Karl Marx. Fulminating against morally inspired proposals for social reform ("utopian socialism"), in *Das Kapital* (1867) Marx elaborated a scientific theory of society which aimed to demonstrate both the transitional nature of capitalism and the inevitability of its eventual supplanting by a new social order. As *scientific socialism* this theory would develop into a powerful source of inspiration for the labor movement and others advocating social change.

3 Individualization (c. 1800–1900)

The social transformations of the nineteenth century gradually brought the individual citizen to the fore in, for example, politics and production, but also in science and education. Middle-class citizens in particular focused increasingly on their individual being, rather than on the groups to which they belonged. From now on, public discourse about one's societal position emphasized individual accomplishments and personal characteristics. Group membership and birth status largely lost the determining power they had held in traditional society. Generally speaking, individualism opened up possibilities for those who had been constrained by the traditional frames of church and community. On the other hand, it also contributed to feelings of insecurity, in particular in people who felt uprooted and alienated in the course of the rapid social changes.

In the middle classes, the private world of the family became a refuge from public life. The sense of *privacy* acquired prestige, and thus the middle-class "home" was screened from interference from outside. The family was seen as a "haven in a heartless world" where intimate feelings could be expressed freely. In the public world of work and business, intimate expressions were avoided because they were understood as a sign of weakness.²⁰ The separation of public and private spheres was connected with a rather strict division of labor between the sexes. Men went out to work and the private world of reproduction was the domain of women. It was generally considered improper for a lady to work. Her children were taken care of by a wet-nurse, and the household tasks were done by domestic servants if the family could afford it.

3.1 Mapping individual differences

The societal changes of the nineteenth century and the concomitant ideologies of liberalism and social darwinism emphasized the relative success of individuals. In all

social layers it was hard to ignore the fact that some individuals were better competitors than others. When the winner's demographic and economic background could not account for his success, a different explanation was needed, focusing on mental characteristics. The growing fascination with mental differences was exemplified by the tremendous popularity of phrenology: the science of inferring mental characteristics from the shape of the skull. Phrenology was developed around 1800 by the Viennese neuroanatomist Gall. He was able to convince large audiences across Europe of the scientific benefits of phrenology. However, it was in the United States that phrenology had a sweeping breakthrough, and in the second half of the century it became big business. This was largely the result of initiatives by the Fowler family (see figure 3), who opened consulting firms, published popular accounts, and sold china busts of the skull with the sites of the faculties marked on them. Despite the fact that the credibility of phrenology sank under the weight of neurological counter-evidence, it continued for a long time to enjoy the confidence of large sections of the public. The New York Institute of Phrenology, for example, remained in business until 1912.²¹

In Europe, French *craniométrie* gained a reputation in the 1860s. Broca claimed in 1861 that the volume of the brain predicted the magnitude of the individual's intellectual capacities. He theorized that eminent men had large brains, and that the small brains of women and "savages" accounted for their intellectual inferiority. Craniometry was discussed extensively in the press which undoubtedly contributed to its popularity. The public imagination was however really seized when Lombroso's *L'uomo delinquente* (*Delinquent man*, 1876) became accessible across Europe and the United States. Although Lombroso discussed in detail the social and psychological causes of delinquency, his theory of the born criminal and the physiognomic indications of criminality were remembered better.²²

There were of course many other ways in which nineteenth-century individuals sought to determine their own unique qualities. The tendency to identify with the pursuit of individual, material well-being was particularly strong in the United States. Practical guides like, for example, *Dollars and sense, or how to get on* (1890), and *The keys to success* (1898) instructed the public on how to reach the top. These success manuals attracted a large readership, in particular among the lower middle class. Obviously, they believed in the liberal ideology of success, although their economic position was generally far from fortunate.²³

The interest in individuality also manifested itself at quite a different level. Feelings were increasingly seen as the foremost source of individuality. As a direct sequel to the Romantic reaction against the rationalism of the Enlightenment in the late eighteenth century, the focus on feelings found a powerful expression in nineteenth-century Romantic art. For example, Coleridge, Shelley, and Wordsworth articulated unprecedented sensibilities in their poetry. Outside poetry and art, a large segment of the public was increasingly preoccupied with the inner world of feelings. Many assumed that feelings originated in a "deep interior" that lay beneath a thin layer of conscious reason. Rationality came under suspicion. Some held that it was nothing but an artificial mask that tried to cover what really mattered "inside": emotions as the source of an authentic self. Many were engaged in sensitive self-scrutiny, for example by writing diaries, autobiographies, and poetry.²⁴

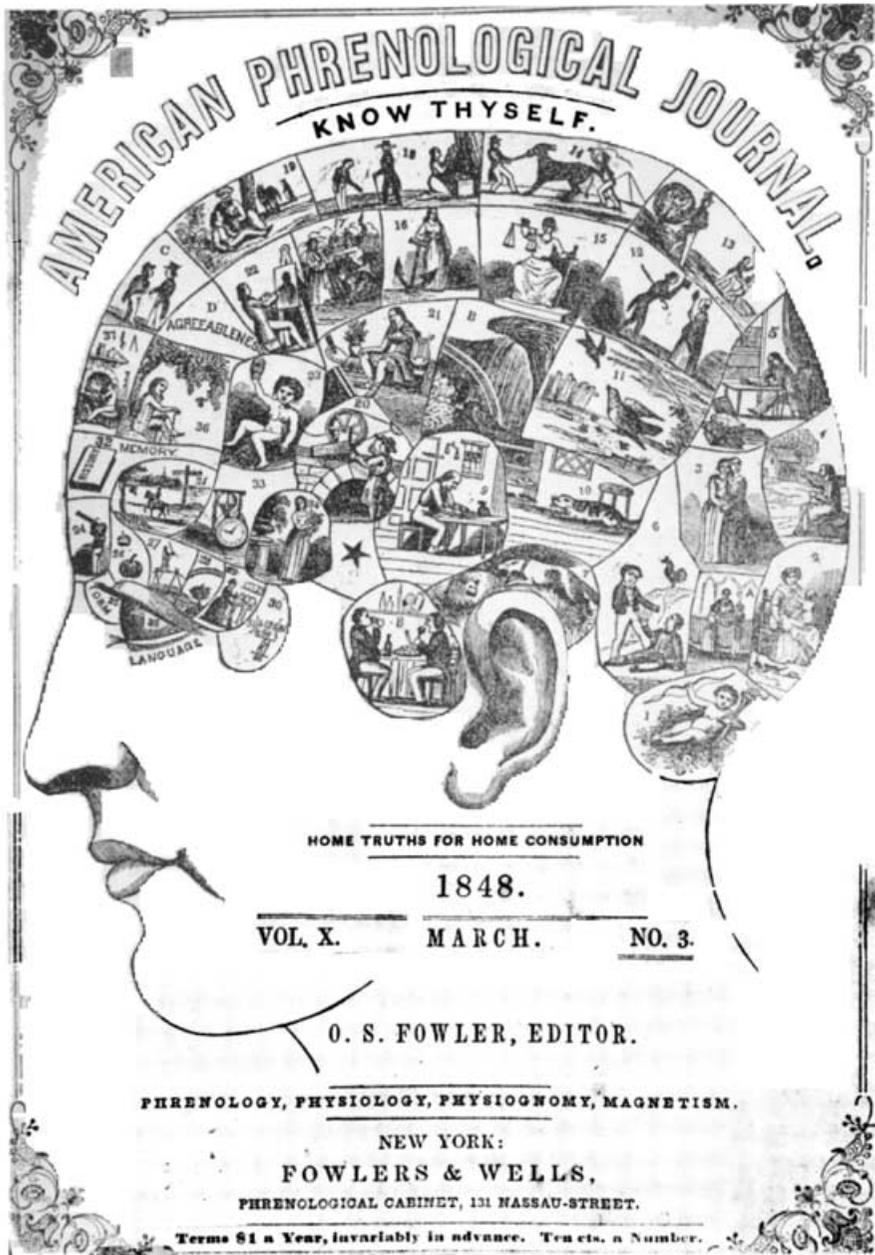


Figure 3 *Know thyself: home truths for home consumption.* Frontispiece of a phrenological journal (1848), illustrating the location of the 37 “organs of the mind.” Source: Psychology Pictures.

3.2 *Conclusion*

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, individualistic values were embraced widely in society. People were keen to assess their individuality, and understood their personal emotions as a defining characteristic of their “selves.” The popularity of individualism could not, however, hide its problematic nature. “The individual” was in fact a rather strictly circumscribed kind of person. The first feature of the individual was a middle-class background. Members of the lower strata were approached as a different category of persons, and their way of life was generally viewed with suspicion. The second feature of the nineteenth-century individual was masculine gender. This was particularly noticeable with respect to the rationality that was attributed to individuals. Men were assumed to be rational and women emotional, if not irrational. This stereotype was further supported by the sexual division of labor in middle-class families, and had consequences beyond the private domain: female emotionality was an important argument for withholding the vote from women and for denying them admission to university.²⁵ Finally, “the individual” had a white skin, and the differences of non-white peoples were readily translated into a judgment of inferiority. The colonial rulers proudly expressed confidence in their own race. In Great Britain, for example, at the end of the century it was applauded that some 6000 British officials successfully governed about 300 million people on the Indian subcontinent.²⁶

The obvious differences between individuals from the white, male middle class and people from other backgrounds prompted an interest in those “others” at home (women and workers) and abroad (colonial subjects). The questions about the others’ nature were often coupled with anxieties about what they were up to. The demonstrations and strikes of the labor movement, as well as the marches of the feminists, provoked fear among the middle-class elite. It stimulated the development of new forms of social management as a means to regulate, if not control, the behavior of the uncomprehended other(s).

4 *Social management (c. 1800–1900)*

“Modern” society in the nineteenth century not only generated new forms and conceptions of individuality. It also witnessed a dramatic expansion of attempts to monitor and control the populace or, as we earlier defined it, of social management. Next to individualization, this was a second major development which would prove to be crucial as a breeding ground for the social sciences in general, and psychology in particular.

In the Introduction, we presented social management as all planned and systematic attempts to influence and control human behavior. As we observed, this is by no means a typically “modern” phenomenon: no society can exist without some form of organization and some form of control, however rudimentary, over the behavior of its members. This certainly holds for early western society, with its relatively elaborate systems of, for instance, justice, religion, and politics. However, the nineteenth century witnessed both a marked increase in social management practices, and a gradual shift in underlying motives, organization, and methods employed.

First, we will briefly review some major manifestations of nineteenth-century social management. After that, we will discuss some characteristic changes that took place, in motives, organization, and method.

4.1 Practices

In the course of the nineteenth century, the scope of social management increased dramatically. Changing economic and social conditions began to demand an ever greater degree of social organization and regulation, varying from urban planning to institutionalized forms of health care, education, and care and guidance for all those not meeting the requirements of “modern life.” Sometimes, these initiatives were primarily inspired by humane motives, sometimes by concerns about social stability or even by downright fear of social unrest and revolution.

Many of the practices that evolved will be discussed in detail in subsequent chapters. Here, we will confine ourselves to a short discussion of some of the major manifestations.

Education. The traditional situation of the schools changed rather drastically in the nineteenth century. In the previous centuries, schooling had been the prerogative of the clergy. In the seventeenth century, local elites appeared on the scene, particularly in the towns: influential citizens organized a basic kind of schooling for an expanding number of pupils. In the nineteenth century, two changes stand out: the Church lost influence to secular authorities, and a national curriculum came to replace the patchwork of local programs. All children were taught reading, writing, and arithmetic. Often, the ambitions of the curriculum went beyond these basics. History and geography lessons, for example, were meant to instruct pupils in national values. General primary education was profitable for industry. Technical changes required literate workers who could read the directions for using machines, and comprehend the complexities of the production process. In addition, schooling was seen often as an instrument to regulate the social order, especially where neglected children were assumed to be potential criminals (see chapter 2). By the end of the century, most countries had passed laws on compulsory education. Now, all children were legally obliged to attend school.²⁷

Poor relief. For centuries, Christian charity had inspired the clergy and wealthy believers to take care of the poor, disabled, and ill. From the sixteenth century onwards, poor relief was expanded. Town councils and societies of citizens established communal almshouses as a kind of institutional support. From the late eighteenth century, groups of “enlightened” middle-class individuals engaged in philanthropic support. They were convinced that a large part of the working class suffered from serious social handicaps and would not be able to gain a solid position in society. As the century progressed, relief was increasingly combined with attempts to “educate” and “civilize.” Support was individualized which meant that a poor individual or family was first scrutinized in order to determine whether they were decent enough to receive help and whether they would be able to support

themselves in the future. The examples of philanthropic societies in Britain and the Netherlands showed that the poor had to comply with the norms of the philanthropists. In the 1890s, for example, the British Charity Organization Society deliberately expressed a bourgeois “evangelism” in order to transform the habits of the working class.²⁸

Exclusion. With social organization becoming more complex, the room for deviance gradually shrank. In earlier days, the number of people considered “deviant” was limited. Many were cared for by the community, and only if they were considered dangerous were they locked away, mostly in prisons. Only a few cities had a custodial institution for socially deviant people, in particular for the mentally disturbed. Bedlam in London and the Bicêtre in Paris were notorious examples of such lunatic asylums. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, the number of asylums rose sharply, on both sides of the Atlantic. These new institutions were in most cases the result of private initiatives, although the state attained a prominent pioneering role in Germany. The psychiatric asylums were overcrowded in the course of the century. Actual psychiatric treatment was not very successful: many people were confined to mental hospitals, few were released.²⁹

Institutionalized care of children also intensified in the nineteenth century. Institutions for children were not a new phenomenon, of course: examples of orphanages dated back as far as the late middle ages. However, from the 1830s onward custodial care was expanded and came to include new classes of dependent children, such as, for example, the handicapped, and the disturbed, but also “street children,” and young delinquents. The focus on delinquents was partly due to new regulations, which resulted in separate treatment for juveniles: rather than being sent to prison, these young offenders had to be re-educated. Finally, the increasing standardization of education generated its own kinds of deviants: those children who for one reason or another could not meet the requirements of the regular curriculum.

Hygienism. Christian reform and philanthropy were forerunners of a wide range of activities that came to be known as “hygienism.” The cholera epidemics which spread after the 1830s confronted everyone with the consequences of the urban concentration of people (see figure 4). In medical circles, a debate unfolded about the cause of epidemics. The “contagionists” held that diseases were passed on from individual to individual, the defenders of the “miasma theory” argued, by contrast, that the emanations from excrement, dirt, and filthy water were the primary cause. Both positions were translated into practical proposals. Contagionists published a steady stream of brochures in which the public were persuaded to change their ordinary habits, for example, to wash their clothes regularly, and clean their hands and bodies with water and soap. Miasma theorists embraced the proposal of the British reformer Chadwick to build fresh water supplies and sewer systems in the overcrowded cities. From the end of the 1840s, miasma theory was put into practice. Local authorities started expensive infrastructural operations to supply cities with the basic sanitary services of running water, and sewage and rubbish disposal.³⁰ The so-called hygienic “offensive” successfully addressed the population at large, thus reaching a wider range of people than philanthropic efforts. The hygienists directed their advice both to their fellow



Figure 4 *A court for King Cholera*. Engraving by John Leech (c. 1855–60), reflecting the growing influence of “hygienistic” ideas about the link between sanitation and disease. Source: J. Leech (1864), *Later pencillings from Punch*.

citizens in the middle classes and to the masses in the lower social strata. Contagious diseases, it was argued, were very democratic: they were not hindered at all by the invisible border between social classes.

Social security. The new forms of social management were generally products of private initiative and local authorities. National governments generally confined their role to the establishment of a juridical frame for the regulation of behavior. In the later decades of the century, legislative activity intensified. In a climate of revolts and political agitation, legislation was initiated that aimed to protect citizens against the exploitations of capitalism. Child protection legislation, for example, was passed in most countries. In addition, many governments followed the example of the German *Reich* that had installed national social insurance in the 1880s. On the eve of the First World War, almost all European countries had provided national and compulsory insurance against illness, accidents, and old age. Child labor was forbidden, and children were legally obliged to attend school for about six years. The American situation was different. For decades to come, the US government consistently adhered to the liberal idea of the state as a “night-watchman,” and so federal social legislation was postponed. American society was generally more reluctant to accept an active role for the government. In due course, however, many of the European examples were followed, especially in the industrialized midwest and east coast.

Eugenics. Launched in 1883 by the English scholar Francis Galton, eugenics took biological endowment as the key to improving society. Galton derived the word “eugenics” from a Greek root meaning “good in birth.” Inspired by darwinism, Galton held that both mental and physical characteristics were to a great extent – if not exclusively – inherited. From this viewpoint, he proposed the design of selective programs of marriage and reproduction, analogous to the breeding of, for example, racehorses. After 1900, this idea would find a wide audience, especially in England and the United States. British eugenicists generally confined themselves to so-called “positive eugenics” which aimed at more prolific breeding among those of excellent stock. American eugenicists propagated in addition “negative eugenics,” that is, preventing the procreation of what they considered to be “unfit” individuals. They supported the establishment of sterilization laws that aimed at, in the words of the Iowa law (1913), “the prevention of the procreation of criminals, rapists, idiots, feeble-minded, imbeciles, lunatics, drunkards, drug fiends, epileptics, syphilitics, moral and sexual perverts, and diseased and degenerate persons.”³¹ Eugenicists also campaigned for immigration restriction. They argued that intermarriages of “superior” Nordic individuals with “inferior” ones from the Mediterranean and eastern parts of Europe would seriously damage the quality of the “American race.”³²

4.2 *New characteristics*

The extension of social management practices was not just “more of the same.” It went hand in hand with some major changes with respect to its nature. These can be summarized under three headings: governmentalization, individualization, and scientification.

Governmentalization. Philanthropists, hygienists, eugenicists, and other social reformers were largely responsible for the increase in social management during the nineteenth century. In the second part of the century, the private initiatives of “enlightened” citizens were often backed by the state, as we have seen for example in the case of education, social legislation, and eugenic laws. In the last decades, private forms of social management were gradually incorporated into national government initiatives. From that time, social management became an instrument in national politics. Some attempts at behavior regulation were aimed at the population at large, as was the case, for example, in education, health care, and urban planning. Other attempts, such as social work, were directed toward specific groups. In western Europe, the state would finally outstrip private initiatives of social management, thus laying the foundation for what would become known as the “welfare state.”

Individualization. As the century progressed, schemes of social management became increasingly individualized. The changing modes of poor relief are a case in point: material help was increasingly combined with detailed scrutiny of the lifestyle of those in need, and attempts to “civilize” and “re-educate.” A similar trend was visible in other domains. With respect to psychiatric patients and delinquent or pre-delinquent children, mere exclusion was increasingly replaced by ideals and practices of “treatment” or

“re-education,” entailing detailed scrutiny of individual “cases.” And within education, detailed recording of individual pupils’ achievements became standard practice.

Science. The links between social management and (social) science also gradually intensified. As we have seen, in the 1840s, with his “sociologic,” Comte pioneered a science devoted explicitly to societal issues. Demography was another example of a new science concerned with social issues: statistics about, for example, birth rate, marriage and occupations were crucial for a rational analysis of society. By the end of the century, various domains of social management could rely on a specific scientific contribution. Education, for example, could benefit from pedagogy, regulation of disturbed behavior from psychiatry, and the tracing of deviant behavior could benefit from criminology. At the turn of the century, the expansion of social management became an important factor in the further development of interventionist sciences, psychology included.

American “Progressivism” was an important example of the articulate translation of scientific ideas into proposals for social reform. The philosophy of pragmatism was the major source of inspiration for the Progressives. William James and John Dewey developed this truly American philosophy in the last decade of the century. They shunned philosophical debate about the nature of truth and knowledge, and claimed quite bluntly that ordinary practice was the final criterion: “true is what works.” A “Progressive Movement” emerged that based its practices of social management on pragmatist ideas. The Progressives propagated, for example, school reform, and they also established “settlement houses” in the slums in an attempt to ameliorate living conditions. When Theodore Roosevelt became president in 1901 the Progressive program was turned into official politics. The Progressive Era ended on the eve of the First World War.

4.3 Conclusion

In the course of the nineteenth century, the new and reconstructed forms of social management were targeted eventually at the entire population. Rather than brute imposition of social order or religiously inspired charity, social management became infused with notions of rational, scientific social planning. From now on, every individual, irrespective of his or her position, could in principle be advised, observed, registered, and compared with other individuals. This expansion did not, however, change the power structure behind social management. Often, dependent citizens from the lower strata were subjected to the directives of middle-class professionals. When the social distance between the professionals and their “subjects” was large, subjects had to comply with the norms of social management. The societal elite, by contrast, received advice rather than directives.

5 Psychology (c. 1880–1910)

Academic psychology was developed and institutionalized in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The systematic reflection on individuals and their consciousness,

however, had a far longer history in western thought. All kinds of “psychologies” had been developed in the preceding centuries. Often, psychological notions were part of philosophy, inside and outside the universities. The eighteenth-century *Encyclopédie*, for example, had an entry “Psychologie” in which it was defined as the part of philosophy that teaches all we can know about the human soul.³³ In the nineteenth century a number of monographs and textbooks appeared with “psychology” in the title. Herbart, for example, proposed in his influential *Psychologie als Wissenschaft* (“Psychology as Science,” 1824–5) a formal system of “mental dynamics” with the inclusion of perception, thinking, feeling, and volition. Spencer’s *The principles of psychology* (1855) also reached a large audience. He took issue with the notion of the *tabula rasa*, by emphasizing hereditary determination. Both books (and many others) addressed “psychological” topics a couple of decades before psychology had taken root as an academic discipline at the universities.

Around 1850, the study of mental processes became an issue within Dutch and German physiology. Donders, Helmholtz, and Fechner initiated laboratory research on the topic, and in his experimental papers of 1850–52, Helmholtz demonstrated that it took time for an impulse to travel through a nerve. For him and his fellow physiologists, this meant that mental processes could be measured quantitatively. A decade later, Fechner coined “psychophysics” as a branch of science dedicated to the study of the relation between physical and mental phenomena. The future of psychological research seemed to be linked to the discipline of physiology, until Wilhelm Wundt appeared on the scene.

5.1 *A new discipline*

In 1879 Wilhelm Wundt established in Leipzig the first psychological laboratory of the world. In the positivist climate of the nineteenth century, a laboratory conferred the status of a genuine science to an academic discipline. Consequently, Wundt came to be seen as the “founding father” of academic psychology (see figure 5).³⁴

Wundt’s establishment of a psychological laboratory was not an impulsive act. In his *Grundzüge der physiologischen Psychologie* (“Foundations of physiological psychology”) of 1873–4 he already had made a case for psychology as an independent science. Psychology should be dedicated to the *empirical* study of mind, or rather *Bewußtsein* (consciousness), and should therefore distance itself from both philosophy (which was not empirical) and physiology (which did not center on consciousness). Wundt’s scientific program and his laboratory attracted students and scholars from Germany and abroad. Many researchers followed his example and opened research facilities at home. In 1890 there were fifteen psychological laboratories, in 1900 about sixty. Most were based in Germany and the United States. Laboratories were also opened in, for example, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Russia, and even Japan.

A number of other initiatives contributed to psychology’s status as a truly academic discipline, including the founding of scientific journals about psychology. In Germany *Philosophische Studien* (“Philosophical Studies”), founded by Wundt in 1881, first appeared, and the *Zeitschrift für Psychologie und Physiologie der*

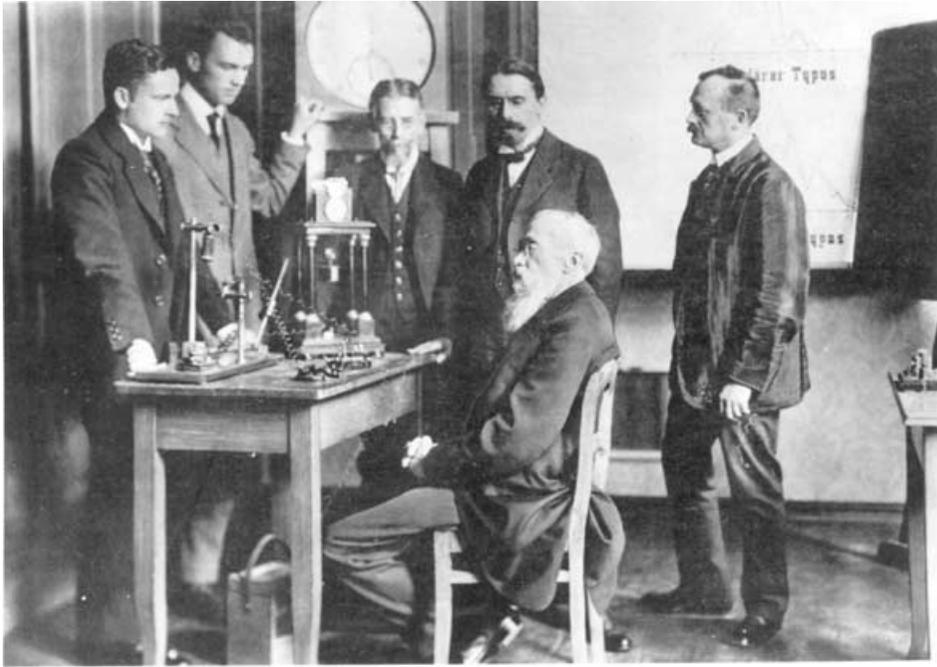


Figure 5 The first psychological laboratory: Wilhelm Wundt (*sitting*), surrounded by some of his students. Source: Psychology Pictures/Archives of Dutch Psychology.

Sinnesorganen (“Journal for the Psychology and Physiology of the Sense Organs”) in 1890. Across the Atlantic, the *American Journal of Psychology* (in 1887), and the *Psychological Review* (founded in 1894) were published. The new field expanded its institutional base by means of scientific societies such as the American Psychological Association, which was established in 1892, and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Psychologie (Society for Psychology), founded in 1904.³⁵ Scientific congresses also testified to the foundation and expansion of psychology. The first international congress for psychophysiology in 1889 attracted about thirty participants; ten years later the first international congress of psychology hosted about 500 delegates, mainly from Germany, the United States, and France. A final indication of the establishment of psychology was the publication of introductory textbooks such as Külpe’s *Grundriss der Psychologie* (“Principles of psychology”) in 1893, and James’ *Principles of psychology* in 1890.

From its inception, psychology was characterized by theoretical diversity and argument between opposing views. The self-acclaimed “psychologists” of the nineteenth century came from very different backgrounds. Some had been trained as natural scientists, and embraced a positivist, quantitative philosophy of science. Others felt inspired by German phenomenology and defended an interpretative approach. Positivist ideals were clearly discernible in Wundt’s experimental program. Empirical research in the laboratory would unfold the universal laws of mental functioning, on which general theories of the human mind could be built. However, the structural

focus of Wundtian psychology soon ran into discord with the functional approach of American psychologists. Functionalism was an important step toward the behaviorism that came to dominate American psychology from the 1920s onwards.

Outside the universities, the Viennese *nervenarzt* (neurologist) Sigmund Freud developed one of the most influential psychologies ever: psychoanalysis. Like Wundt, Freud aimed at the discovery of the universal laws of the psyche, but his trajectory was radically different from the one followed in academic psychology. From about 1890, Freud combined therapeutic work in his private practice with the construction of theory. This enabled him to use interpretative analyses of the material provided by his patients, for example when they talked about their dreams, in the development of his psychoanalytic theory.³⁶ With regard to theory, Freud also followed a course of his own, countering the Wundtian emphasis on consciousness with a concern with unconscious processes.

5.2 *Practical psychology*

According to its founder, Wilhelm Wundt, psychology was first and foremost an academic, theoretical enterprise. Many of his colleagues were of a different opinion. The idea of the study of the human mind neatly fitted with both the growing prominence of individuality and the attempts to systematize practices of social intervention. From the early 1890s onwards, the new discipline was brought to bear on an almost limitless variety of social domains and problems: education and child-rearing (Stanley Hall, 1891), sex differences (Havelock Ellis, 1892), politics (Le Bon, 1895), witness testimony (Cattell, 1895), psychiatric diagnosis (Kraepelin, 1896), anthropology (Rivers, 1898), religion (James, 1902), and even economics (Tarde, 1904). Within years, “psychology” became a household word among the intellectual elites, as well as professionals working in various domains of social management. In 1903, the first journal was published which was exclusively dedicated to “applied psychology.” This was *Psychologie der Aussage* (“Psychology of Testimony”), renamed *Zeitschrift für angewandte Psychologie* (“Journal of Applied Psychology”) three years later. In another three years, the Dutch psychologist Heymans would confidently express his belief in a future “century of psychology”: if nineteenth-century science had brought technological advance and prosperity, so psychology would prove to be the key to what mattered most, that is, happiness and peace of mind.³⁷

Apart from referring to “psychology” or “the new psychology,” all these attempts originally had little in common. Although Wundt’s ground-breaking work was frequently mentioned, few of the attempts at “application” actually made use of his theoretical concepts or empirical results. Even more than academic psychology itself, the practical manifestations represented a wide range of methods and theoretical concepts. To a great extent, this reflected the widely varying background of its main advocates: some were trained as psychologists, but the majority of them primarily identified with other disciplines, such as sociology, criminology, psychiatry, and pedagogy. Late nineteenth-century practical psychology was a thoroughly interdisciplinary affair, with its advocates and practitioners sharing little more than the conviction that the study of the human mind held the key to many of society’s problems.

5.3 Psychology as a profession

If early practical psychology was predominantly an interdisciplinary affair, as early as the mid-1890s the contours had begun to emerge of the more clearly defined expertise of the professional psychologist. The starting point of this development is generally located to 1896, when the American psychologist Lightner Witmer started a psychological clinic for the diagnosis and treatment of children with learning difficulties. However, it was only after 1900 that the new profession began to take shape. An important impetus was the development of a specialized form of expertise, which distinguished the new profession from other disciplines – psychological testing.

Whereas academic psychology concentrated on the human mind in general, psychological testing emanated from attempts to map out individual differences. Originally the domain of physiognomists and phrenologists, this theme had in the 1870s and 1880s received a new impetus from the work of the British *homo universalis*, Francis Galton, whom we have previously encountered as the founding father of eugenics (see section 4). Just as in eugenics, Galton's interest in individual differences stemmed from his fascination with Darwin's theory of evolution. Galton reasoned that if evolution proceeded by variation and selection, then it was of the utmost importance to develop the means by which to measure human variability. In 1884 this resulted in the establishment of the Anthropometric Laboratory, at the International Health Exhibition in London, which later transferred to the South Kensington Museum in London where it was to remain for six years (see figure 6). Unlike phrenologists and physiognomists, Galton was interested in human functions, rather than bodily appearance. For his laboratory, he devised equipment for monitoring no fewer than 17 different physical and mental capacities, including breathing power, strength of pull and squeeze, quickness of blow, hearing, seeing, and colour sense.³⁸

Galton's work received wide attention, among both the lay public and psychologists. In all, more than 9000 persons subjected themselves to examination at the laboratory. Inspired by this success, the American psychologist McKeen Cattell in 1890 proposed to elaborate upon Galton's work, concentrating on mental capacities. This resulted in a more limited series of ten measurements, as well as the introduction of a concept which would become the hallmark of professional psychology: *mental* or *psychological testing*.

Though attracting wide interest, Cattell's efforts were not very successful at first. Of the various tests he and others devised, virtually none proved to be of much practical value. The same held for attempts to transform psychological apparatus developed in the Wundtian tradition of research on human consciousness into instruments for measuring individual differences. Nevertheless, many psychologists remained convinced that the notion of individual differences and their measurement held the key to the successful application of psychology. In 1905, this finally resulted in the invention of an instrument, which would become a symbol of psychological expertise for decades to come: the intelligence test, devised by the French psychologist Alfred Binet and his co-worker Theodore Simon.

Originally devised for the rather restricted purpose of screening children suspected of feeble-mindedness, the test quickly found its way into other areas of practice.



Figure 6 Francis Galton's Anthropometric Laboratory at the International Health Exhibition, London, 1884. Source: Psychology Pictures/Archives of Dutch Psychology.

Together with other types of tests developed in subsequent years, it provided the basis for the evolution of a distinct professional identity for practicing psychologists, as experts in diagnosis and mental measurement. This provided the basis for them to gain access to a wide variety of societal practices (see figure 7).

5.4 *Conclusion*

In the later decades of the nineteenth century, psychology took root in the fertile ground of western, individualistic society. The new science of the individual was in keeping with earlier attempts to theorize about and measure individuality, for example phrenology, but its contribution was more diverse. The earliest decades of psychology show its development, from its very inception, as a *practical science*. The close links between theorizing and practical intervention were highlighted by the work of Galton and Binet. Psychoanalysis was another instance of cross-fertilization between theory and practice. Freud's work held a special position, however, because it was developed outside a university context. The non-academic nature of its base did not impair its influence: psychoanalysis became one of the most famous psychological theories.



Figure 7 A psychologist administering an intelligence test, the Netherlands, *c.* 1930s. As the hallmark of professional expertise, psychological tests laid the foundation for the entrance of psychologists into a wide range of professional domains. Source: Psychology Pictures/Archives of Dutch Psychology.

As we saw, psychology owed much initial success to representatives of other disciplines, who quickly embraced the new science as a useful contribution to their work. It was only in the early twentieth century that psychologists managed to carve out a professional niche of their own, in psychological testing. Together with psychoanalysis, this constituted the basis of much of the expansion of psychology expansion in the decades preceding the Second World War.

6 “Psychological society” (*c.* 1920–present)

The twentieth century saw an unprecedented expansion of psychology in western countries, as well as a massive increase in social management. The closing section of this chapter sketches the emergence of a “psychological society” as the product of the interaction between individualization, social management, and the expansion of psychology.³⁹ Discussion here will be confined to some general trends, as background for the more detailed analyses in subsequent chapters.

6.1 *Individualization*

In the course of the twentieth century, there was an intensification of all the earlier tendencies toward individualization. Across different layers of society, the balance between the “individual” and the “collective” shifted radically toward the individual. In addition, individual differences were brought to the fore, with the measurement of individual characteristics and accomplishments becoming an integral part of societal organization. Finally, the inner world of feelings became a key aspect of social life, in the private as well as in the public domain.⁴⁰ The primacy of individualism, however, was not unchallenged. Throughout the century, the central position of the individual was contested by collectivist ideas and practices. In the first half of the century, these included communism and national socialism. After 1945 there was the appeal of various kinds of nationalism, although they never undermined the individualistic nature of western society.⁴¹

The prominence of individualism coincided with a gradual expansion of the middle class. The sharp distinctions between the various social classes blurred and individual social mobility increased, often as a result of better education. Secularization also contributed to individual mobility: in all layers of society people left the churches, and felt less constrained by religious dogma. After the Second World War, wealth increased for many. In due course, this enabled laborers to accumulate capital, for example, by purchasing private housing. In the same period, decolonialization intensified international mobility. The availability of radio, telephone, and television enabled worldwide communication, turning the world into a “global village.”

Postwar social mobility inevitably led to a focus on individual differences: some people were successful, others were not. In the middle class, individual accomplishment was often expressed in a material way. Houses, automobiles, vacations, and numerous consumer goods bespoke individual wealth. In the Americas of the 1950s, this middle-class consumerism was attacked by the “beat generation,” who broke with middle-class comfort and traditional family life. The “beats” voiced a rebellious mentality that was felt in wider circles on both sides of the Atlantic. The rebellion gained force in the course of the 1950s, when people increasingly started to question traditional authority in politics, as well as in family life.

The political protest movements of blacks, feminists, and students stressed individual “freedom” as an inalienable right, and challenged the authority of the white, male elite. This contributed to a gradual eradication of the barriers between the sexes and peoples of different ethnicity, albeit formally, given that in everyday life both women and non-whites still experience discrimination and unequal access to many of society’s resources.

Instead of accepting the directives of superiors, the assertive citizens of the 1950s and 1960s engaged themselves in a negotiation with those in charge. This was reflected in the private domain, where the “youth culture” of the late 1950s fueled rebellion against parental authority. As some sociologists have observed: at all levels, “command” gave way to “negotiation” as the principle governing relationships between people.⁴² In general, this liberated citizens from many traditional constraints, and opened new options for action. But it also generated doubt. The directives of

religious and political authorities lost their cohesive power, and there were no solid anchors to replace them.

The cultural focus on the individual assumed a different quality in the 1970s. During this “me decade”, emancipation was defined less and less in political terms, as people trusted that they would find the sources of liberation inside themselves. Many “turned inward” in the most literal sense when they started meditation or took psychedelic drugs. Some heralded this cultural shift as a new step toward the liberation of the individual; others considered it to be narcissism. Whatever the evaluation, the self-focus implied an increased emphasis on personal, emotional life as the ultimate reference point, rather than on wealth and social status.⁴³ In due course, the cultural “inward turn” weakened the distinction between the private and public domain. It became common to express personal feelings in public contexts, such as, for example, human interest journalism, and television talk shows.

6.2 Social management

Increasing individualization went hand in hand with a further expansion of arrangements and institutions for social management. Especially after the Second World War, social management practices received a strong impetus from the new concept of the “welfare state.” In north-western Europe, this concept was almost universally adopted in the 1950s and 1960s. In the United States, it met with fierce opposition from conservatives who lauded the free market. Nevertheless, even there welfare provision gradually expanded, especially as part of the “unconditional war on poverty” of the Johnson administration.

The introduction of the welfare state implied an enlarged responsibility of the state and its government for the well-being of its citizens. Next to material safeguards (full employment, social insurance), health care and education, this increasingly encompassed mental well-being also. This found its clearest expression in the concept of “mental health,” which quickly gained currency after the Second World War in both the United States and Europe.

Apart from the shift from private initiative to state interventionism, social management changed in other respects as well. With divisions between various social strata gradually becoming less important, corresponding divides within social management also disappeared. Many of the practices originally targeted at the lower classes expanded to encompass all citizens, irrespective of social background.

This “democratization” of social management corresponded with a gradual shift in its primary goals. Although humanitarian motives had not been totally absent from nineteenth-century social interventionism, its primary focus had been on control and discipline, guided by motives of social order rather than individual well-being. With the advent of the concept of the welfare state, emphasis shifted. “Care,” rather than “control” became the dominant theme; rather than being forced upon people in the interests of social order, programs of social management were advocated as services offered to them, for the sake of their own well-being.

Partly, this shift in emphasis was rhetorical, as the motives of social order, control, and discipline did not disappear, although the promotion of individual well-being

was emphasized. This is exemplified in education. On the one hand, schooling was promoted as a social right and an instrument for individual welfare, rather than as a means of social control. On the other hand, both its compulsory nature and numerous regulations regarding the curriculum reflected the persistence of many of the social functions which originally had inspired it, such as the transfer of socially relevant values.

The professionalization of social management practices which had begun in the nineteenth century continued to accelerate in the twentieth century, resulting in a tremendous expansion of the “helping professions.” This was combined with a subtle but significant change in the relationship between professionals and their clientele.

On the one hand, the change from “control” to “care,” and the general democratization of society resulted in a more “horizontal” relationship: the authority of doctors, social workers, teachers and the like was no longer self-evident, and clients claimed a say in what was going on. On the other hand, prospective clients learned to attune to the helping arrangements offered, a process which is termed “proto-professionalization.”⁴⁴ Increasingly, they linked their problems to the various professional approaches, and took over many of their core concepts, from “health” to “school readiness,” and from “mental well-being” to “maladaptive behavior.”

In the consulting room, these changes were reflected in a gradual change in the techniques employed, as rather than unidirectionally imposing expert knowledge, professionals tended to redefine helping processes as a joint endeavor of expert and client. Earlier authoritarian forms of interventionism and behavior regulation were superseded by humanistic techniques of counseling and advice, characterized by cooperation between professionals and clients.

6.3 *Psychology*

As early as the mid-1920s, an American social critic observed that his country had experienced “an outbreak of psychology.”⁴⁵ However, it was only after the Second World War that the discipline would really gain momentum, not only in the United States but also in Europe. From the 1950s onward, academic psychology ranked among the bigger scientific disciplines, with an appeal to students and researchers alike which has continued to grow until this very day. The development of practical psychology is even more impressive: if professional psychology had succeeded in acquiring its own niche alongside academic psychology before the war, in the postwar period it became increasingly dominant, at least quantitatively.

Partly, the expansion of practical psychology reflected processes of individualization and developments in social management. Aptitude testing, for instance, became increasingly important in schools and occupational life, due to increased social mobility and emphasis on individual merit. In the emotional realm, psychoanalysis captured the hearts and minds of both professionals and the public at large, offering new means of self-reflection and a new interpretative framework for understanding a wide range of social phenomena. From the late 1950s onward, it was joined in this area by a host of new clinically based theories, varying from humanistic psychology to transactional analysis and rational-emotive therapy, which both reflected and rein-

forced the “turning inward” of the late 1960s and 1970s. This was reflected in a tremendous expansion of mental health provision, which after the war became the main professional domain of psychologists.

Apart from riding the waves of individualization and the expanding activities of social management, psychologists also managed to extend the boundaries of their own professional expertise in relation to other groups of experts. Most significant in this respect was their entry into the field of psychotherapy. Primarily due to a lack of qualified medical doctors, this field opened up to psychologists during the Second World War. Postwar psychology further strengthened its position by developing new techniques of therapy and treatment. Similar developments took place in other fields, such as work and education, where psychologists managed to acquire new roles within, for instance, organizational consultancy and curriculum development.

But if the profession became more prominent, it was by no means the only agent of the growing influence of psychology on society. Perhaps as important was the gradual adoption of psychological methods and more generally, a psychologized perspective, by other professionals. Almost without exception, psychology was introduced as part of the training in the “helping” professions. In particular, the basic technique of “counseling,” developed in the early 1950s by psychologist Carl Rogers, became a widely used tool among professionals of various disciplines. Focusing on the articulation of clients’ needs and encouraging a supportive and advisory, rather than directing, role of professionals, it fitted perfectly with the change from an authoritarian, disciplinary style of intervention to more subtle ways of influencing behavior.

Finally, psychology also gained a prominent position in the public imagination. Movie directors such as Hitchcock and Bertolucci, as well as numerous literary authors, expressed a profound fascination with psychoanalysis in their works. In addition, the media offered an easy access to psychological analysis. In 1957, for example, the influential magazine *Life* featured a series of articles on “The age of psychology.” An important step in popularization was taken in 1967 when the American periodical *Psychology Today* was first published. Many prominent psychologists used this forum to inform the general public about their research. Its success led to the publication of similar magazines in Europe. In American and European bookshops, the shelves gradually filled with pop psychology. Television further enhanced the public visibility of psychology. In the United States, Joyce Brothers hosted her own psychology show from the mid-1950s onward. Her impact was captured in the words of a contemporary observer who noted, “She not only brings the lessons of psychology, for better or worse, she *is* psychology to millions of Americans.”⁴⁶

This is not to say that everybody was happy with the way in which psychology developed. In the United States, for example, black psychologists attacked the discipline for its white, or Caucasian, biases. This finally led to the foundation of the Association of Black Psychologists in 1968. In a similar vein, feminists took issue with psychology’s male bias. Naomi Weisstein argued in 1968 that psychology had nothing to say about what women were really like, what they needed, and what they wanted, because psychology simply *did not know*. Her line of argument was taken on board by American and European women who developed a feminist psychology under the banner of “women’s studies.”⁴⁷ In Europe, many inside and outside the student

movement embraced Klaus Holzkamp's Marxist psychology as an emancipatory tool. A critical psychology could contribute to political emancipation, they argued, by its detailed analysis of the subjective conditions of existence under capitalism.⁴⁸

Although critical of "mainstream psychology," black psychologists, feminists, and critical psychologists did not oppose the wide proliferation of psychology in western culture. On the contrary, as their initiatives suggest, they too considered psychology to be a potential ally in their political struggle. This psychologization of politics became most apparent within feminism. The feminist slogan "the personal is political" aptly expressed the idea that humanist emancipation was concerned with both the public and the private domain.

7 Conclusion

In this chapter we have sketched the psychologization of western culture against the background of a growing historical emphasis on the individual. The historical relation between psychologization and individualization has always been dialectic. On the one hand, a psychological perspective was the outcome of individualization: when the emphasis shifted from the collective to the individual, an interest in individuality emerged, which provided a fertile ground for knowledge about individual minds and behavior. On the other hand, "psychology" contributed to individualistic ideas and practices in western society. From its earliest days, the practical science of psychology provided both authorities and citizens with instruments to pin down individuality, and in particular, individual differences.

In the twentieth century, psychology gained a prominent position within social management. Professional regulation of behavior as such was far older than the science of psychology, but twentieth-century psychologists succeeded in convincing their clients and colleagues of the value of their contribution. From that time, all kinds of professionals used psychological terminologies, theories, and tests to guide, advise, and help their clients.

After 1945, the psychologization of society reached new heights as a result of the radical psychologization of social management, the prominence of psychology in the public imagination, and an unprecedented popularization. At the cultural level, the general focus shifted from social adjustment to the possibilities for personal growth. Now, managing one's individuality became a matter of personal interest. Individuals would scrutinize their inner world in order to understand how they could develop their own hidden potentials. For many, pop psychology and therapeutic practices such as counseling and therapy contributed to this quest for "self-realization."⁴⁹ The dialectic between the availability of psychology and the public's interest gradually turned most western nations into "psychological societies."

PRINCIPAL SOURCES AND FURTHER READING

For a general account of western social history in the nineteenth century, see E. J. Hobsbawm's multi-volume work *The age of revolution, 1789–1848* (New York: Vintage Books, 1962/1996), *The age of capital, 1848–1875* (New York: Vintage

Books, 1975/1996), and *The age of empire, 1875–1914* (New York: Vintage Books, 1987/1989). For (social) historical facts about the United States, see: G. B. Tindall and D. E. Shi (2000), *America. A narrative history* (New York: Norton), and D. J. Monti Jr (1999), *The American city: a social and cultural history* (Malden, MA: Blackwell). For Europe, we profited from the classical text by P. N. Stearns (1975), *European society in upheaval. Social history since 1750* (New York: Macmillan), and P. N. Stearns, ed., (2001), *Encyclopaedia of European social history from 1350 to 2000* (Detroit: Scribner).

Among the sources for the sketch of the historical process of individualization were: N. Elias (1987), *Die Gesellschaft der Individuen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp); J. Jansz (1991), *Person, self, and moral demands. Individualism contested by collectivism* (Leiden: DSWO Press); C. Taylor (1989), *Sources of the self: the making of modern identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). R. Smith (1997), *The Fontana history of the human sciences* (London: HarperCollins) presents in a very accessible way detailed knowledge about the position of philosophy and the human sciences in the process of individualization. Three titles covered individualization with a focus on changing mentalities: R. Porter, ed. (1997), *Rewriting the self. Histories from the Renaissance to the present* (London: Routledge); R. Sennett (1977), *The fall of public man* (New York: Vintage Books); and W. McClay (1994), *The masterless. Society and self in modern America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press).

The notion of social management and the description of its historical development owes much to M. Foucault (1970), *The order of things. An archaeology of the human sciences* (London: Tavistock); N. Elias (1978/1982), *The civilizing process. Sociogenetic and psychogenic investigations, vols. I and II* (Oxford: Blackwell); N. Rose (1996), *Inventing our selves. Psychology, power, and personhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); and A. de Swaan (1988), *In the care of the state. Health care, education and welfare in Europe and the USA in the modern era* (Cambridge: Polity Press).

A good textbook on the history of academic psychology, including some reference to psychological practices and their impact on society is T. H. Leahey (1991), *A history of modern psychology* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall). Other useful sources on academic psychology include: S. Koch and D. E. Leary, eds., (1985), *A century of psychology as a science* (New York: McGraw-Hill); and the special issue of the *American Psychologist*, vol. 47(2) (1992) about the history of American psychology (guest editor, L. T. Benjamin Jr). H. F. Ellenberger (1970), *The discovery of the unconscious: the history and evolution of dynamic psychiatry* (New York: Basic Books) details the historical context for the emergence of dynamic psychologies in the nineteenth century, in particular psychoanalysis.

For the interaction between society and culture on the one hand, and psychology on the other see: J. C. Burnham (1987), *How superstition won and science lost* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press); K. Danziger (1990), *Constructing the subject. Historical origins of psychological research* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); and N. Rose (1990) *Governing the soul. The shaping of the private self* (London: Routledge). With respect to the professionalization of psychology, see D. S. Napoli (1982), *Architects of adjustment: the history of the psychological profession in the United States* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat). Particularly valuable sources with respect to

the post-Second World War era in the United States are: J. H. Capshew (1999), *Psychologists on the march. Science, practice and professional identity in America, 1923–1969* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); and E. Herman (1995), *The romance of American psychology* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

NOTES

- 1 As quoted in Napoli, *Architects of adjustment*, p. 42.
- 2 P. Burke (1998), *The European Renaissance: centres and peripheries* (Oxford: Blackwell); Porter, *Rewriting the self*.
- 3 This complex shift has often been phrased as a change in historical ideal types, from *Gemeinschaft* (community) to *Gesellschaft* (society). See F. Tönnies (1969/1887), *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundbegriffe der reinen Soziologie* [Community and Society. Fundamental Concepts of Pure Sociology] (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft).
- 4 Elias, *Die Gesellschaft der Individuen*, p. 138; Smith, *Fontana history of the human sciences*, p. 143.
- 5 P. Rietbergen (1998), *Europe: a cultural history*. (London: Routledge), p. 189.
- 6 L. Dumont (1985) "A modified view of our origins: the Christian beginnings of modern individualism," in M. Carrithers, S. Collins, and S. Lukes, (eds.), *The category of the person: anthropology, philosophy, history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 93–122; S. Lukes (1973), *Individualism* (Oxford: Blackwell), p. 94. For diaries see P. Burke (1997) "Representations of the self from Petrarch to Descartes," in Porter, *Rewriting the self*, pp. 17–29. For autobiography see K. J. Weintraub (1978), *The value of the individual: self and circumstance in autobiography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
- 7 As quoted in Smith, *Fontana history of the human sciences*, p. 146.
- 8 P. Burke (1987), *The Renaissance* (Basingstoke: Macmillan), p. 81.
- 9 J. O. Lyons (1978), *The invention of the self* (New York: Feffer and Simmons), p. 70.
- 10 Lukes, *Individualism*, p. 107.
- 11 K. Danziger (1997), *Naming the mind. How psychology found its language* (London: Sage), pp. 46–7; Taylor, *Sources of the self*, p. 171.
- 12 "Disenchantment" is a translation of Max Weber's concept *Entzauberung*. M. F. Cohen (1995), *The scientific revolution: a historiographical inquiry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
- 13 R. Porter (1990), *The Enlightenment* (London: Macmillan); Rietbergen, *Europe*, p. 311.
- 14 Rietbergen, *Europe: a cultural history*, ch. 12; B. Russell (1979/1946), *History of western philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin), p. 651.
- 15 Smith, *Fontana history of the human sciences*, pp. 211–13.
- 16 R. F. Baumeister (1997), The self and society: changes, problems, and opportunities, in R. D. Ashmore, and L. Jussim (eds.), *Self and identity: fundamental issues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 191–218. Taylor, *Sources of the self*, pp. 389–90.
- 17 See P. Gay (1995), *The naked heart. The bourgeois experience, vol. 4* (New York: Norton), p. 7.
- 18 Smith, *Fontana history of the human sciences*, p. 430.
- 19 The label "social darwinism" suggests that Spencer translated darwinian principles to society. Historically, this is not accurate: Spencer developed his evolutionary account of society in the 1850s, that is, a couple of years before Darwin published his *Origin of species* (1859). In addition, Darwin did not have much to do with the competitive ideology that bore his name (Smith, *Fontana history of the human sciences*, p. 467).

- 20 Gay, *The naked heart*, p. 171.
- 21 J. D. Davies (1955), *Phrenology: fad and science. A 19th century American crusade* (New Haven: Yale University Press); J. M. O'Donnell (1985), *The origins of behaviorism: American psychology, 1870–1920* (New York: New York University Press), p. 77. E. G. Boring (1950), *A history of experimental psychology* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall), p. 57.
- 22 S. J. Gould (1984), *The mismeasure of man* (London: Pelican Books), p. 82. For Lombroso see: J. van Ginneken (1992), *Crowds, psychology, and politics, 1871–1899* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 62.
- 23 J. Hilkey (1997), *Character is capital: success manuals and manhood in gilded age America* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press).
- 24 Gay, *The naked heart*. K. J. Gergen (1991), *The saturated self* (New York: Basic Books), p. 20. Weintraub, *The value of the individual*.
- 25 R. Rosenberg (1982), *Beyond separate spheres. Intellectual roots of modern feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press), and S. Shields (1975), Functionalism, Darwinism, and the psychology of women: A study in social myth, *American Psychologist*, 30, 739–754.
- 26 Hobsbawm, *The age of empire*, p. 81.
- 27 For early primary education in the seventeenth century, see De Swaan, *In the care*, ch. 1.
- 28 For the “modern” approach, see K. Woodroffe (1962), *From charity to social work*. (London: Routledge). For the evangelism of the C.O.S. see J. Weeks (1981), *Sex, politics, and society* (London: Longman), p. 75. In the USA, *The National Conference of Charities and Corrections* was founded in 1874. Its name illustrated, again, the combination of support and scrutiny.
- 29 E. Shorter (1997), *A history of psychiatry. From the era of the asylum to the age of Prozac* (New York: John Wiley), ch. 2.
- 30 L. Benevolo (1993), *The European city* (Oxford: Blackwell), pp. 166–9. A. Corbin (1982), *Le Miasme et la jonquille: l'odorat et l'imaginaire social, 18^e–19^e siècle* (Paris: Aubier). De Swaan, *In the care*, ch. 4.
- 31 H. H. Laughlin in 1922, as quoted in L. J. Kamin (1974), *The science and politics of IQ* (Harmondsworth: Penguin), p. 27.
- 32 D. J. Kevles (1985), *In the name of eugenics* (New York: Knopf); for positive and negative eugenics, see p. 85.
- 33 Smith, *Fontana history of the human sciences*, 238. L. J. Pongratz (1967/1984), *Problemggeschichte der Psychologie* (München: Francke Verlag) describes in detail the early uses of “psychology” and related terms. He recorded the first use of “psychologia” in the work of the German professor Goelenius in 1590.
- 34 As Smith, *Fontana history of the human sciences*, pointed out in detail (ch. 14), the origin myth of psychology was created by Boring in *A history of experimental psychology*. Origin myths focus on one specific event and tend to neglect the complex interplay of societal and cultural factors.
- 35 Capshew, *Psychologists on the march*, p. 16.
- 36 The development of psychoanalysis is placed in a wider context in Ellenberger, *Discovery*. Another classical source is P. Rieff (1961), *Freud: the mind of the moralist* (New York: Anchor Books).
- 37 G. Heymans (1909), *De toekomstige eeuw der psychologie* [The future century of psychology]. (Groningen: Wolters).
- 38 Boring, *A history of experimental psychology*, p. 487.
- 39 Sigmund Koch, the senior editor of *A century of psychology as a science*, aptly christened the twentieth century as “the psychological century” (p. 32).
- 40 R. N. Bellah et al. (1986), *Habits of the heart. Individualism and commitment in American life* (New York: Harper and Row), p. 334.

- 41 Individualism was always contested by collectivism. Therefore it is far too simple to rewrite political history as a triumph of individualistic liberalism as was done by F. Fukuyama (1989), *The end of history*, *The National Interest*, 16, 3–13.
- 42 A. de Swaan (1990), The politics of agoraphobia, in A. de Swaan, *The management of normality. Critical essays in health and welfare* (London: Routledge), pp. 139–68.
- 43 The term “me decade” was coined by Tom Wolfe. The bestseller by C. Lasch (1979), *The culture of narcissism* (New York: Norton) was particularly critical of emotionalization. For the alleged authenticity of feelings see A. H. Fischer and J. Jansz (1995), Reconciling emotions with western personhood. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 25, 59–81; C. Lutz (1996), Cultural politics by other means: gender and politics in some American psychologies of emotion, in C. F. Graumann and K. J. Gergen (eds), (1996), *Historical dimensions of psychological discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 125–45.
- 44 A. de Swaan (1990), From troubles to problems, in Swaan, *The management of normality* (London: Routledge), pp. 99–108.
- 45 As quoted in Burnham, *How superstition won and science lost*, p. 95.
- 46 The popularization of psychology is covered in detail in Burnham, *How superstition won and science lost*, ch. 3; Capshew, *Psychologists on the march*, discusses Brothers’ career (pp. 247–9; quote on p. 248). The observer is quoted in Herman, *The romance of American psychology*, p. 304.
- 47 R. V. Guthrie (1976), *Even the rat was white. A historical view of psychology* (New York: Harper and Row); N. Weisstein (1968), *Kinder, Kirche, Küche as scientific law: psychology constructs the female* (Boston: New England Free Press).
- 48 R. Abma, and J. Jansz (2000). Radical psychology institutionalized: a history of the journal *Psychologie & Maatschappij* (Psychology & Society). *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 36, 1–14; T. Teo (1998). Klaus Holzkamp and the rise and decline of German critical psychology. *History of Psychology*, 1, 235–253.
- 49 Nikolas Rose summarized the effects of psychologization as “the birth of a new type of person.” N. Rose (1997), *Assembling the modern self*, in Porter, *Rewriting the self*, pp. 224–49, in particular pp. 233–4.