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PSYCHOLOGY IN OXFORD—1898–1949

PART I

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"As regards psychology itself, I obstinately continue to be optimistic . . . . . I carry this optimism very far. I anticipate that at no distant date, perhaps before the end of the century, even the University of Oxford may begin to take an interest in the human mind, and may set her hallmark upon psychology by giving it a recognized place among her studies."

Wm. McDougall. *Outline of Abnormal Psychology*, (Preface), 1926.

IN 1946 the University of Oxford passed decrees whereby a Final Honours School in Psychology, Philosophy and Physiology was established, and a Chair of Psychology created. The subject thus acquired full status—just fifty-four years in advance of McDougall's somewhat waspish prognostication. During the summer of 1949 the first batch of Honours Students took their Schools, and the occasion seems to encourage, before it is too late, an effort to retrace some of the threads which stretch back from it. As a small example of the interaction of persistent trends and contingent circumstances, the story perhaps possesses an interest extending beyond mere parochial antiquarianism.

Psychological discussion in Oxford is, presumably, coeval with the University itself, and we should by no means forget the profound influence (whether for good or ill) exercised by John Locke (Student of Christ Church, 1652–1684)[1] upon forms of psychological thinking in this and other countries. But those upon whom Locke's mantle most immediately and heavily fell, so far as psychology was concerned, were not Oxford men. During the two centuries that followed, Oxford felt little of the growing preoccupation with the possibility of a mental science in its own right which prevailed especially in Scotland, France and Germany. F. H. Bradley (1846–1924) to be sure, in work nominally of metaphysical character, betrays a taste and talent for psychological analysis which later and more avowedly professional writers have sometimes lacked. But prevailing interests throughout the greater part of the nineteenth century were Hegelian, and some of the more specific problems of the human mind escaped scrutiny. Effectively the history of Psychology proper begins in Oxford in 1898. Before we speak of the foundation of the Wilde Readership and all that flowed from it, however, local pride compels due notice of a somewhat abrupt astronomical appearance which, though it left Oxford cold, heralded the addition of a fresh luminary within the western galaxy.

[1] But he left Oxford to join Lord Shaftesbury's household in 1667.

Edward Bradford Titchener (Brasenose, 1885–1889) was, as Professor Boring somewhat grimly remarks, an Englishman who represented the German psychological tradition in America. He appeared, with sufficiently conventional English academic trappings, in 1885 as a scholar of Brasenose. A First in Greats seems (the times were liberal) to have proved the immediate gateway to a research studentship in biology. A visit to Leipzig was undertaken, from which, comet-like, he returned to Oxford in 1892. For a brief period he was occupied in teaching biology as an extension lecturer. But, alas, he was off once more within the year, drawn by another centre of attraction. And like some other comets, he never returned. This was not, however, the end of his connection with Oxford. In 1905 the Great Textbook was completed, and in 1906 it was submitted to Oxford for the D.Sc. degree. A sanguine American biographer reports that " it immediately placed Psychology on an experimental basis in Oxford and elsewhere ". One may certainly surmise that the appearance of the infant science with its horrid nudities thus swaddled in erudition brought aid and comfort to McDougall in his struggle. But McDougall had already been a year in office, and to him must chiefly belong the credit for such an experimental basis as he was able to install.

In 1898 there occurred one of those events which seem designed to tease the causal student of history. Dr. Henry Wilde was an electrical engineer of some eminence, a native of Manchester. Born in 1833, and unhampered by the lack of a University education, he determined on completing his apprenticeship to set up as a manufacturer of " electro-magnetic machines " and, as a side-line, to act as an installer of lightning conductors. His researches into the former, and into their applications especially in the field of electro-chemistry, led to honorary doctorates and a Fellowship of the Royal Society. His activities generally would also seem to have proved lucrative. (Certainly the installation of lightning conductors in the Manchester of the 1860s and '70s can hardly have failed to be profitable.) In the later part of his life he took to benefaction, chiefly in the academic field, and in 1898 he offered to the University of Oxford the capital necessary to endow a Wilde Readership in Mental Philosophy. The Reader was to concern himself primarily with encouraging the study of the subject among junior members of the University. The Founder's own eminence in experimental science affords little clue to the basis of his specific provision that the Reader should treat his subject in a non-experimental way. McDougall (who refers, perhaps somewhat incompletely, to his fellow-Mancunian as the " elderly manufacturer ") tells us that Wilde had a predilection for the writings of John Locke, and suggests that this explains a limitation which later was to embarrass McDougall himself. It may, perhaps, also explain a further interesting provision in the Reader's terms of reference :

> " The Reader shall from time to time lecture on the illusions and delusions which are incident to the human mind. He shall also lecture, as far as may be practicable, on the psychology of the lower races of mankind, as illustrated by the various fetish objects in the Anthropological Museum of the University and in other Museums."

At least one holder of the Lectureship, Dr. William Brown, in fact met

this provision, so far as the lectures were concerned. Whether these were illustrated with fetish objects is unknown to the present writer. The provision has never been rescinded.[1]

G. F. Stout, formerly fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, was appointed the first Reader in 1898, and few could have been better equipped to confer on the post a broadly based yet progressive tendency. Not only was he closely acquainted with English and Scottish Empiricism, but he had not hesitated to plunge into the German Ocean. An acute consciousness of the problems raised—if not very clearly solved—by Kant lies behind every page of his *Analytic Psychology* (1896). This concern with the basic structure of experience largely contributes to a sophistication which some may have found satisfying by comparison with the more homely bricks-without-mortar style of the empiricist descendants of David Hartley. Stout had survived a Herbartian phase, and had squeezed the Austrian School, especially Brentano, to good purpose. At Cambridge he had stood in close relation to James Ward—himself, perhaps, too rarefied and intellectually unapproachable to exercise an outside influence in keeping with his quality and originality. Though no experimentalist, Stout followed with enlightened interest the growing activity of experimental psychology, and had just completed two years at Aberdeen as Anderson Lecturer in Comparative Psychology.

Stout was fortunate, too, in coming to Oxford at a time when a group of younger philosophers had banded together to hasten the dispersal of the local brand of Hegelianism, which many felt had more than had its day. Into this group, of which F. C. S. Schiller, Marett, and Boyce Gibson were active members, Stout, whose philosophical tendencies were at that time leaning towards a Cambridge Realism, easily stepped. The reaction to the older school involved an informal anti-intellectualism which, in practice, encouraged recognition of a psychological aspect in the approach to logic, metaphysics and ethics. The Absolute, if not yet due for total liquidation, was to be subjected to the acid test of psychological immediacy.[2]

Stout remained but five years before leaving for the Chair of Logic at St. Andrews. If his impact upon Oxford was less spectacular than that of his successor, we may suppose that he did much to gain acceptance for the new subject. His, perhaps, was the initiative which placed Psychology upon the list of elective special subjects in the Final Honour School of *Literae Humaniores*—an arrangement which encouraged the interest of Cyril Burt, William Brown, and J. C. Flugel a few years later.[3]

[1] Oxford's debt to Henry Wilde extends beyond the Readership. At the same time he endowed the John Locke Scholarship in Mental Philosophy for " . . . the promotion of the study of Mental Philosophy among the junior members of the University of Oxford ". In 1908 he founded the Wilde Lectureship in Natural and Comparative Religion, and on his death in 1919 he bequeathed the residue of his estate to the University.

[2] For William James' part in this campaign, see his Hibbert Lectures delivered in Manchester College in 1908, and published as *A Pluralistic Universe*.

[3] It seems, however, to have been less effective as an outlet for psychological interests in later years. The choice of psychology still (1950) remains open to candidates—a fact which startled one prominent member of the *Lit. Hum.* faculty when he was told of it.

Next McDougall came. If the stage was not at that moment completely set, the opportunity was certainly worthy of the man. Physical space for psychology it is true has always been insufficient at Oxford (as elsewhere), and McDougall was to find himself cramped for spiritual quarters too. It cannot be denied, however, that he came with almost every personal advantage—perhaps, indeed, with a few too many. Natural Science at Manchester and Cambridge had led to a fellowship at St. John's College, and he proceeded to a medical qualification. Two years on the Torres Straits expedition had not only brought him into intimate working contact with A. C. Haddon, Charles Myers and W. H. R. Rivers, but had afforded experience of psychological work in conditions whose novelty and difficulty few students at that time had had the good fortune to suffer. On his return to Cambridge he attended Sidgwick's and Ward's lectures, and then went to Göttingen for a year where, in G. E. Müller's laboratory, he started the investigations of colour vision which he was to continue in Oxford. After four years in Sully's department in University College, London, during which time he gained further experience of research and teaching in experimental psychology, he was appointed Wilde Reader in 1903.

Even were the writer qualified to do so, this would be no appropriate place in which to assess McDougall's qualities in a personal sense. But he himself leaves no doubt that from start to finish his characteristics and capabilities were to some extent at variance with the demands of the Oxford situation. He came to Oxford with a wealth of ideas for the development of psychological teaching and research. The combination of subjects in which he was interested might nowadays be thought very apt in a prospective head of a department. But, as McDougall was acutely aware, it met with little approval or understanding in the Oxford of 1903. His interest in general theoretical psychology, which formed the basis of his qualification as Wilde Reader, was intense and far-reaching. But he felt he had no place, as had had Stout, in established *milieux* of philosophical discussion. For a number of years he was not a member of any college, and in any case he was—as he said—not a philosopher *pur sang*. His concern with abnormal mental phenomena, and especially with hypnosis, might well be considered to be in keeping with the terms of the Readership. But it met with but limited local positive response, and with considerable and widespread disapproval. Perhaps he was less than tactful as to the manner in which he early invited attention to the subject of hypnotism. Not only did he devote some of his lectures to it, but proceeded, *coram publico*, to demonstrate the phenomena. There were many in Oxford to whom the topic was disquieting and the phenomena unsavoury. Nor did the interest aroused among the younger generation lessen the distrust of the older. It must not be supposed, however, that every man's hand was against McDougall. As Sir Cyril Burt writes: "Soon after his arrival in Oxford, he had a small but vigorous group of admirers, not only among senior undergraduates but among various members of the staff. Marett was loud in his praises on all occasions, and a large number of philosophical tutors sent their students to McDougall. Keatinge almost made him an object of hero worship. Gotch and the physiologists were extremely friendly."

For the rest, McDougall was an avowed and energetic experimentalist. He considered his continued pursuit of experimental psychology, outside working hours, to be quite compatible with the terms of his readership. But as to this Dr. Henry Wilde disagreed, and took active, though unsuccessful, steps to have him dislodged, by which, McDougall says, "I was annoyed." So far as the University was concerned, these activities placed him, once again uncertainly, among the scientists. He was, as he remarks, neither fish, flesh nor fowl. But, in his scientific guise, he received some practical support from established authority. Francis Gotch, then Professor of Physiology, made available at first one room, and later several, for McDougall's use in the Physiological Laboratory, and this arrangement continued when Sherrington—whom McDougall passionately appreciated and admired—succeeded Gotch in 1911.

So, in 1903, began what was in fact to be a bright and fruitful, though limited, period. When it virtually came to an end in 1914 it may be that Oxford was as far as ever, if not further, from "setting her hallmark upon psychology by giving it a recognized place in her studies". But judged by the part it played in initiating lines of work, and in producing people, the success of McDougall's little department must be rated high indeed. Good fortune in the people it attracted went far to offset circumstantial difficulty.

The first of McDougall's pupils was William Brown, the scope of whose undergraduate studies could scarcely be bettered as a preparation for psychology. He followed Mathematics and Physiology with "Greats" in which he took the special paper in Psychology (with Ebbinghaus's *Grundzüge der Psychologie* and Lotze's *Medizinische Psychologie* as textbooks). In 1906 he won the John Locke Scholarship, and soon after turned his versatility to further account by combining the teaching of Psychology at King's College, London, with a medical training, and with research in statistical psychology under Karl Pearson. Dr. Brown, among his many distinctions, can claim to have been the first student of psychology proper at Oxford. His first original contributions, though made after he had left, owed much in their inception to McDougall's influence.

Cyril Burt followed the next year, also taking Psychology in "Greats", and succeeding Brown as John Locke Scholar. "As McDougall's only pupil," writes Sir Cyril, "I attended every Thursday afternoon in the laboratory a kind of tutorial class followed by an hour's experimental work. The first hour consisted in working through James' *Principles* chapter by chapter . . . When we had worked through James, we turned to Ebbinghaus, which we read in the original German." The experimental hour, it seems, was equally illuminating, for McDougall used his pupil as a trial subject for his experiments, which at this time were concerned with colour vision, and would expound his theories and techniques as the work proceeded. Later there was much trying out of various devices which might serve as a basis for mental tests, a subject in which McDougall was at that time becoming interested. After taking his degree, Burt spent a year at Würzburg before returning to Oxford where he embarked on the experimental development of intelligence tests. This work he continued until he left for Liverpool in 1909.

Third in a remarkable succession came J. C. Flugel, who also took

advantage of the Psychology paper in " Greats " and in his turn (1908) won the Locke Scholarship. He also paid a visit to Würzburg and carried out research in McDougall's department on visual contrast effects and mental testing before leaving for University College, London, in 1909.

To complete this group there was May Smith, at that time Senior Tutor and Lecturer in Psychology at Cherwell Hall, who entered vigorously into the activities of the Department of Psycho-physics. And yet another figure of interest, whose appearances were occasional—for he had not as yet fully exchanged the officer's sword for the statistician's pen—was Charles Spearman. He would at times reside in a cottage in the neighbourhood of Oxford and consort with the department. His admiration for McDougall, we are told, was profound.

The atmosphere in which these and others worked must have been a stimulating and enthusiastic one. McDougall's corner of the Physiological Laboratory acquired a brass plate on which the words " Department of Psycho-physics " re-affirmed the marriage arranged by Fechner half a century before. If this union was regarded by the University of Oxford as unnatural, the resolution of those who worked within may perhaps have been the more strengthened. McDougall was fertile in experimental imagination and, it would seem, very encouraging to the enthusiast at close quarters. Work proceeded steadily, interrupted on occasion by the appearance of Professor Gotch, who would want his ears retested on the Galton Whistle. It was an abiding source of grievance to Gotch that the upper limit of his hearing was inferior to that of the more youthful laboratory assistant, and he would return again and again to the unequal contest, each time fortified by the reflection that the result on the previous occasion might have been due to an incipient cold, or some similar contingency. Each time he would retire defeated muttering: "That d . . . . d boy has the ears of a rabbit."

There is a legend, still current, that McDougall, among other experimental ventures, investigated levitation with the aid of an outsize pair of scales, in one pan of which the subject was placed. Among its other merits, this story can probably claim to be apocryphal. McDougall himself, indeed, took it with a grain of salt, and was wont to remark upon the inconvenience of having a namesake (Robert McDougall) who did perform such experiments.

In the main, however, McDougall himself pursued, and guided his students along, three lines of research. The first, colour vision, was a continuation of his earlier work. As early as 1901 he had developed a theory of colour vision which, as Sir John Parsons remarks, is part of a general theory of psycho-physical processes owing much to Sherrington's views. The investigations subsequently carried out at Oxford cover such questions as contrast and rivalry, the effect of duration of the stimulus on intensity of sensation, and the development of colour sense in the infant. His contributions had close relevance to the great controversies arising out of the work of Helmholtz and Hering, and many of his observations, especially those upon the conditions of rivalry, are still worthy of fresh attention. A second line of McDougall's interest that was to prove exceptionally fertile in the long run was the development of mental tests,

and perhaps he has scarcely received the credit that is his due in this connection. At about this time he was one of the secretaries of the Anthropometric Committee of the British Association,[1] and his imagination rapidly conceived the idea of a " mental survey " based upon tests. He was acquainted with the work of Meumann and Ebbinghaus in this field. That of Binet, which he considered lacking in statistical and experimental accuracy, was introduced to him by M. W. Keatinge, the Reader in Education, another active frequenter of the Department of Psycho-physics. And, apart from a vigorous and catholic pursuit of possible test techniques, McDougall made a considerable contribution, curiously enough, in emphasizing the importance of statistical treatment. In 1903 the use of correlational methods was being adumbrated by Karl Pearson, who in that year read a paper on this subject to the Oxford Philosophical Society. McDougall had been independently thinking of a statistical approach, but was hampered by a sense of his own mathematical inadequacy. This difficulty must have been considerably ameliorated by the arrival of Burt, and Keatinge was active in encouragement of a scheme to carry out a mental survey in the local schools. This pioneer work was done by Burt with Flugel's assistance and published after their return from Würzburg. At about the same time Brown was making a more specialized study of mathematical ability at St. Paul's School. These two pieces of work, though not the earliest instances of mental testing in England,[2] were the immediate forerunners of many notable developments, both in the construction and conduct of tests, and in the development of statistical theory specially appropriate to psychology.

The third major interest of the Oxford Department at this time was the study of fluctuation and oscillation in perception and in performance. This grew out of the experimental attack upon problems of attention, but in course of time became extended in a number of specific directions. Fluctuation at the perceptual level, such as spontaneous reversal of apparent direction of rotation of windmill vanes, could be related to the phenomena of binocular rivalry which had already occupied McDougall's attention and were a source of much interest to Sherrington himself. Study of change and oscillation in skilled performance of the type required by McDougall's dotting-machine, invented during this period, was the forerunner of a large quantity of work in this country upon a number of problems whose interest is very far indeed from being exhausted. But in addition to their intrinsic importance, these investigations suggested the means of attacking the problems of fatigue, and of the action of drugs upon the higher functions of the nervous system. These suggestions McDougall and his associates, especially Professor Flugel and Dr. May Smith, were not slow to take advantage of. Much of the foundation for investigations later sponsored by the Liquor Control Board and the Industrial Fatigue Research Board during the First World War, and carried

[1] Sir Cyril Burt interestingly notes that at this time McDougall was a strong anti-Lamarckian.

[2] Sir Cyril Burt tells me that probably the first attempts in this direction were those of Miss Sophie Bryant, and of C. H. Lake, who each independently published their first results around 1886. Both were more or less directly inspired by Galton.

out by Dr. May Smith, was firmly laid in the Oxford Laboratory. The dotting-machine, which at the time of its invention implied a notable advance in the conception of fatigue, is still in use to-day. For some purposes it is difficult to think of any device of equal simplicity and greater appropriateness.

But the time was not yet ripe for Psychology to be installed in Oxford upon a regular and expanding basis, and these early pioneers had perforce to seek other places in which to work. Dr. Brown left Oxford to become Assistant Master at St. Paul's School in 1905, although he continued his psychological work, and in 1908 was appointed Lecturer in Psychology at King's College, London, in place of Charles Myers. Sir Cyril Burt became Lecturer in Psychology at Liverpool in 1909, and in the same year Dr. Flugel took up a similar post as assistant to Spearman at University College, London. So the young department played a worthy part in the development of psychology in the country at large, but at crippling expense to itself. Dr. May Smith alone held an assured post in Oxford, and she continued her psychological work until the outbreak of war drew her into the field of what we should now call industrial psychology. McDougall, who was elected a Fellow of Corpus Christi in 1912, worked on, but the Department does not seem again to have attracted talent and enthusiasm comparable with those of its early members. The war brought heavy demands on space in Oxford, and Psycho-physics was forced to take down its brass plate in favour of the Royal Flying Corps. McDougall himself not long after took up psychiatric work with the Forces. On his return in 1919, expanding teaching demands in the Physiological Department made it impossible for the old rooms to be made available again. For a time psychological experiment in Oxford came to an end.

PART II

Outside the Department of Psycho-physics, McDougall was active throughout the whole period 1903–14 in his capacity of Wilde Reader. He lectured upon a variety of topics, and these lectures took place in the Schools. They were attended by a considerable variety of people. One of the subjects upon which he discoursed has already been mentioned. He gave a regular course on General Psychology which consisted in a version of his *Physiological Psychology*, expanded, Professor Burt writes, " rather along the lines of Ebbinghaus." In addition, for some years, he alternated two more special courses, one on Social Psychology, which consisted in delivering the manuscript of the " Introduction " (which at about that time he was wont to sit writing in the University Union and in his garden on Boar's Hill), and the other on Mental Development. This latter dealt chiefly with Child Psychology, and contained a number of original observations made on his own children.[1]

[1] McDougall's literary output during this period was remarkable. *Physiological Psychology* appeared in 1905, *An Introduction to Social Psychology* in 1908, *Body and Mind* in 1911, *Psychology : the Study of Behaviour* (Home University Library) and (with C. Hose) *The Pagan Tribes of Borneo* (2 Vols.) in 1912. In addition he contributed over forty papers and articles to various journals between 1903 and 1914.

McDougall's presence and delivery were impressive. Indeed it has been suggested by at least one of his regular hearers that, for the female moiety of his audience, the interest of the subject-matter was notably reinforced by the view afforded of his fine head and countenance. This view, it seems, was best seen in profile, and it is said that McDougall (perhaps by an ingenious use of the blackboard) contrived to show himself not unresponsive to his hearers' taste. The end of the lecture was a moment when he could be approached personally and one student who thus presented himself and his psychological interests received an invitation to visit the laboratory there and then. But, walking up the High with McDougall, he enquired with respectful curiosity what he might expect to see there. " You may expect to see something in the nature of research," was the stony reply. Perhaps this was not so crushing in intention as it must have seemed in fact, but the would-be disciple hurriedly reminded himself of another appointment. Happily Professor Flugel's interest in psychology was already established on a sturdy basis, and survived this mortifying episode.

So in 1919 McDougall went, leaving, as it must have seemed at the time, little beyond a record of work done and of workers encouraged. Of tangible traces of the once-active little Department of Psycho-physics there exist to-day only a set of volumes, strongly bound and some of them now rarities, presented by Professor Flugel in the early days to form the nucleus of a departmental library. These, faithfully preserved by some unknown guardian through the dark ages of the 'twenties, now have an honoured place on the Institute's shelves.[1] It is tempting, but idle, to speculate about what might have happened had McDougall been a rather different person, and Oxford a slightly different place—had the First World War not occurred—or had rooms still been available in the Physiological Laboratory in 1919. Harvard had an established Chair and a Laboratory to offer, and before long it became apparent that Oxford was not the only University, nor England the only country, in which McDougall could exhibit controversial epicentricity.

Two years later—in 1921—Dr. William Brown returned to Oxford as Wilde Reader. He had acquired considerable psychiatric experience in company with Rivers, Myers, and others during the war, and had taken up the career of a London consultant. He continued throughout his tenure of the Readership to draw fresh psychological material from this source. His statistical interests, too, which in 1911 had borne fruit in the shape of the *Essentials of Mental Measurement*, remained very much alive. For example, each summer term he gave a course of lectures on " Mathematical Methods in Psychology ". It was, thus, upon these two foundations that Dr. Brown maintained a psychological tradition in Oxford through a period when the University was unreceptive, and accommodation for experimental work was out of the question.

In one direction, however, Dr. Brown was able to foster a general interest in psychology which was in fact never wholly absent, especially among the younger members of the University. Soon after his arrival he

[1] Dr. R. S. Creed tells me that a few of McDougall's colour wheels still survive and are in use in the Physiological Laboratory.

founded the Oxford University Psychological Society and this encouraged discussion of psychological problems through a period when other opportunities were scanty. It continues to flourish to-day, and many people of eminence and of distinction have addressed it on many different topics.[1] Among occasional foreign visitors who Dr. Brown arranged should give public lectures in Oxford were Emile Coué, Alfred Adler and Morton Prince. Another interesting, and, according to all accounts, highly successful, occasion was the VIIth International Congress of Psychology, which was held in Oxford in 1923. Dr. Brown played an active part in its organization as General Secretary and Vice-President.

If Dr. Brown's experimental interests were forced into hibernation through a long period of wintry atmosphere, they were by no means extinct. In 1929 he proposed to the University the establishment of a small laboratory, and the proposal proved viable enough for an estimate of cost to be arrived at. The figure was £10,000. A number of difficulties arose, however, among them that the University did not consider it in keeping with the terms of his Readership for Dr. Brown to hold the Directorship of the laboratory. The proposal was deferred.

In 1935, however, good fortune allowed the question to be re-opened, this time upon a more concrete basis. A generous lady, Mrs. Hugh Watts,[2] came forward with an offer, through Dr. Brown, of £10,000 which was gratefully accepted by the University. The latter was by now also willing to waive the provision regarding Dr. Brown's tenure of the Directorship. The Institute of Experimental Psychology was constituted by Decree on May 19th 1936, and in May 1936, Dr. William Stephenson was appointed Assistant Director, and St. Giles School at 34 Banbury Road was inspected and approved as suitable accommodation. It was laid down by the Committee of Management that the activites of the Institute would be confined to graduate teaching and research.

To the fulfilment of these purposes on the small scale intended the building was admirably suited. One large room had unfortunately to be left in the possession of the Engineering Department, but the rest was beautifully converted into a large practical laboratory with small dark room attached, a small but well-equipped lecture room, an office and a large research room. Another small room allowed a simple workshop to be set up. A grant from the Rockefeller Foundation provided for the purchase of basic apparatus. To-day the Institute, in which all the psychological teaching for the final Honours School is carried out, and which must in addition accommodate six members of the staff and some ten research students and a rapidly growing library, occupies the same premises, enlarged by a hut containing eight small rooms completed in 1947. There

[1] The Minute Book for the pre-war period is, unfortunately, no longer available, but the following are remembered by Dr. Brown to have addressed the Society, and the list may serve to illustrate the catholicity of interest which the Society served: Sir Percy Nunn, F. C. S. Schiller, M. W. Keatinge, R. R. Marett, Alfred Adler, Graham Wallas, F. Aveling, C. Spearman, E. D. Adrian, F. C. Bartlett, Ernest Jones, J. C. Flugel, Millais Culpin, R. H. Thouless, C. S. Myers, H. W. van Loon, L. P. Jacks, H. Crichton-Miller, A. W. P. Wolters, T. W. Mitchell, J. A. Hadfield, Sir Oliver Lodge, B. Malinowski, W. E. le Gros Clark and H. H. Price.

[2] Now Mrs. L. S. Creasy.

exists also a small research room ingeniously conjured by Dr. Stephenson out of an isolated little building, which in earlier days subserved a quite different and more fundamental purpose. The authorities are sympathetic about over-crowding, and perhaps in the not too distant future the Institute may be housed in a way adequate to present, and probable future, needs.

It was not, however, only within the Institute itself that active psychological work was in progress during the years 1935–1940. At about this time Dr. S. Zuckerman, then University Demonstrator in Anatomy, built up a small group of enthusiast biologists who effectively engaged themselves in problems of animal behaviour, especially in the primates. And Professor (now Sir Hugh) Cairns, impressed with the importance of investigating the psychological aspects of disorders associated with intracranial tumours and head injuries, arranged that Kurt Koffka should carry out work along these lines in the Nuffield Department of Surgery during 1939–40. This work the present writer had the privilege of sharing and of continuing until January 1941.

By the academic year of 1937–8 the experimental work of the new Institute was in full swing. Dr. Brown and Dr. Stephenson carried out at this time an investigation of the effect of progressive muscular relaxation upon the knee-jerk reflex, and this was the first piece of experimental work to be completed in the Institute. Some eight research students had been enrolled, and, chiefly under the direction of Dr. Stephenson, were engaged upon investigations of such varied subjects as poetry-writing in children, experimental æsthetics, spatial ability, the effect of emotion upon the knee-jerk, and the role of emotion in intellectual retardation. In addition, Dr. Stephenson was engaged upon the construction and use of intelligence tests. Towards the end of 1939, partly with a view to ensuring adequate standards of basic training in psychology for those who wished to carry out research and obtain higher degrees, it was proposed that a Diploma be instituted. This was finally established in 1941, and required a year's course in general and experimental psychology, with practical work, together with a special paper which could be chosen out of five subjects, such as Child Psychology, or Industrial Psychology. In this way the Institute first undertook formal teaching obligations and the experience gained proved valuable when the Honours School was established.

But wartime calls upon Dr. Stephenson's time steadily increased and eventually his work for the Air Ministry had to be placed upon a full-time basis. Teaching work ceased at the Institute at the end of the Trinity Term 1942, and by this time most of the research students had left. In the same term, Dr. Stephenson's great services to psychology in Oxford were appropriately recognized by his appointment to a Readership in Experimental Psychology.

With the most laudable prudence, the Committee for Psychology continued its discussions of future plans, and proposals for an Honours School were first raised at a meeting held on March 8th, 1943. By November 1944, the war situation appeared favourable enough to consider plans for the re-opening of the Institute.

Dr. Brown resigned the Directorship of the Institute in 1945. Dr. (at that time Brigadier) Stephenson was appointed in Dr. Brown's place.

Mr. O. L. Zangwill was appointed Assistant Director, and with the indispensable assistance of Dr. J. Leycester King the Institute was able to make an early post-war start with teaching and research in October 1945. Eleven students were enrolled for the Diploma course and a handful of research students started work. At the same time, both in and out of the Committee for Psychology, active discussions were going on about the form in which Psychology should attain full status in the University. Much care was devoted to this question and a large number of alternative possibilities were considered. The proposals eventually framed called for the establishment of a Final Honour School of Psychology, Philosophy and Physiology, a candidate being required to take Psychology together with one of the other subjects. The course was designed to last two years, and entrants were either to have taken another Final Honour School, or to have passed the Preliminary Examination in appropriate subjects. A Chair of Psychology was to be created. In the meantime two Lectureships were established, and to these posts Mr. B. Babington Smith and the present writer were appointed in 1946. In all these plans and arrangements many people from a number of different faculties took part. Sir David Ross played a leading part in co-ordinating the various sources of support for the subject. Among others chiefly concerned were Professors L. Grensted, H. H. Price, and E. G. T. Liddell, Dr. R. S. Creed and Dr. (now Professor) S. Zuckermann. Dr. Stephenson took a leading part in formulating proposals and in elucidating the material requirements implied by the various possibilities.

Opinion in the University at large, however, was still keenly divided as to whether the time had yet come to set this particular kind of hallmark upon Psychology. Many who were far from lacking interest in, and appreciation of, the subject doubted its existing suitability to provide the raw material for an Oxford Honours School. Psychology has not been the first subject—nor probably will it be the last—to evoke such doubts. A lively series of debates in Congregation finally ended, however, in the passing of the necessary decrees, and on February 25th, 1947, a Board of Studies, replacing the Committee for Psychology, was formed to implement them. In June 1947, Dr. George Humphrey, himself an Oxford man, then Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Department of Psychology at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, and Dominions Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, was elected the first holder of the Chair of Psychology, and entered upon his tenure in October 1947. Dr. Stephenson left Oxford in March 1948, on his appointment to a Professorship at the University of Chicago.

Dr. Brown resigned the Wilde Readership in 1946. He had held it for twenty-five years, and during this time had lectured upon a great variety of psychological topics. Much of the material of these lectures reached an audience far wider than Oxford, for it was published in a series of volumes too well known to need detailed reference. Mr. B. Farrell was elected in his place. Within the framework of the Honours School teaching the Readership—founded, it will be remembered, to encourage the study of Mental Philosophy among junior members of the University

—has come to occupy a more specific and no less responsible and appropriate place. Candidates for Honours in Psychology and Philosophy (though not those in Psychology and Physiology) must take a paper entitled "Philosophy of Mind" and are thus afforded the opportunity for trying to bridge whatever gap they may find to exist between their two main subjects. The duties of the Wilde Reader thus comprise not only the examination of psychological problems within a broader philosophical context but also the detailed criticism of contemporary psychological theories on their own ground.

The Diploma in Psychology was abolished in the summer of 1948. It had fulfilled admirably a number of purposes, and there is still no lack of indication that a demand for such a course exists. But resources both in staff and in laboratory space are limited and once the Honours School had started there were none to spare for the Diploma. Limitations had, indeed, to be imposed on the number of students admitted to the Honours course. At present a maximum of sixteen can be taken in each year. The appointment of Mr. B. M. Foss as Junior Lecturer in October 1948, has somewhat eased the situation, and possible developments in the teaching of Social Psychology are under active consideration.

Undergraduate teaching, however, by no means exhausts the functions of the Institute. A small but flourishing graduate school exists. Apart from the staff, some eight research students are at work upon a considerable variety of problems.

Here this account must close, for the fluorescence of the specious present discourages and impedes closer scrutiny. The vicissitudes of psychological study in Oxford have been many, some unhappy, some perhaps not unprofitable, some bordering on the ludicrous. But, considered as it yet must be in terms of opportunity rather than achievement, the present status of the subject leaves little to be desired, as surely the first pioneers would themselves recognize. In curious manner the predilections and intentions of G. F. Stout and William McDougall have fulfilled themselves. Even those of Dr. Henry Wilde, whose benefactions fertilized a larger and more varied crop than he perhaps foresaw, are not unworthily nor uneasily interwoven with the rest. There is a deep and persistent interest in psychological theory, supported by much good-tempered acrimony. Nightly the Institute windows glow with midnight electricity burnt to illuminate, if not problems, at least the experimental apparatus calculated to elucidate them. Rats, it is true, are forbidden access to the premises by the City Council,[1] but work proceeds with their assistance elsewhere, through the kindness of another department. The prospects for Comparative Psychology at Oxford have been also very notably improved by the recent appointment of Dr. N. Tinbergen as Lecturer in Animal Behaviour in the Department of Zoology. The encouragement of medical colleagues has placed at our disposal rich opportunities for the pursuit of psycho-pathological research with a neurological orientation. Social Psychology, a late starter, may be expected to make thriving growth before very long. Even if the possibility of Psychology be among the "delusions which are incident to the human mind" it may at least be

[1] At the time of writing there is much talk of installing a formicarium.

hoped that Oxford will play her part in making it an attractive and not unprofitable one.

I must offer my grateful thanks to Sir Cyril Burt, Dr. William Brown, Professor J. C. Flugel and Dr. May Smith, each of whom most kindly went to considerable trouble to provide the material on which this account is principally based and to comment upon the first draft. The reader will certainly share my regret that it was not written by one, or indeed, by all of them. I must also thank Professor G. Humphrey and Mr. O. L. Zangwill for their valuable criticisms and suggestions.

There is little in the way of published material that throws light on the subject of this paper. Dr. Brown has summarized the course of events up to the foundation of the Institute in *Psychology at Oxford*, *B.M.J.*, 1936. May 30th, p. 1121. There is an obituary of Dr. Henry Wilde in *Nature*, 1919, **103**, 129. Obituary notices of G. F. Stout lack any detailed reference to his Oxford period. Titchener's life is adequately outlined by Boring *Amer. J. Psychol.*, 1927, **38**, 489–506. McDougall's autobiographical sketch in *Psychology in Autobiography*, Ed. Murchison 1930, Vol. I., is crammed with revelation as to his attitudes towards Oxford—and other things. The *Royal Society Obituary*, 1940, Vol. 3, No. 8, pp. 39–62, by Major Greenwood and May Smith, contains appreciative detail. Some report of the discussions in Congregation relating to the establishment of the Chair and Honours School is to be found in various numbers of the *Oxford Magazine* for the academic year 1946–7. Finally, for the relation of more recent psychological methods and formulations to their traditional philosophical and scientific setting, as seen from an Oxford viewpoint, the interested reader may turn to Professor Humphrey's Inaugural Lecture *On Psychology To-day.*, O.U.P. 1949.