Textbook intellectual “history” of science has traditionally been written as a story of innovation, conflict, and relative survival. In stories of this sort, the vast majority of ideas (concepts, theories, methods) are portrayed as having been born, living for a period, and proceeding inevitably to eventual demise through revision or replacement by newer ideas deemed to be more sophisticated and/or more adequate. Amidst this flux, a very few, special ideas somehow manage to evade the common fate, surviving into the modern era, far beyond the years of their creation. The works in which these rare ideas first appear come to be known as “classics” and their authors dubbed “major contributors.”

Within psychology the paradigm for this linear, incremental, survivalist approach to history, echoed more or less by E. G. Boring (1929) in his famous History of Experimental Psychology and the many textbook writers who have followed him, was established by Théodule Ribot (1879). In his La Psychologie allemande contemporaine, translated into English in 1886, Ribot traced the rise of the “new experimental psychology” from Immanuel Kant through Johann Friedrich Herbart and Gustav Theodor Fechner to Wilhelm Wundt.
Kant (1786), according to Ribot, “ventured to predict ‘that psychology could never be raised to the rank of an exact natural science’” (Ribot, 1886, p. 43) because mathematics is inapplicable to internal phenomena varying in only a single dimension, time, and because internal phenomena are inaccessible to experiment. Herbart (1824/1825) then responded to the first of Kant’s criticisms, arguing that ideas vary not only in time but in quality and intensity and applying mathematics to this analysis. And Fechner (1860) responded to the second by demonstrating that mental events can be systematically manipulated as a function of variation in physical events and measured via the just noticeable difference. Finally, Wundt brought the “new” psychology to fruition by providing its first self-reflective discussion of scientific methodology in the *Beiträge zur Theorie der Sinneswahrnehmung* (1862), its first experimental handbook, the *Grundzüge der physiologischen Psychologie* (1873/1874) and, in 1879, its first experimental laboratory.

In later histories, building on Ribot but focusing largely on developments in the United States, the received story takes much the same birth, revision, replacement, survival form. Edward Bradford Titchener’s (1896) “structuralist” analysis of consciousness via systematic experimental introspection is portrayed as representing the Wundtian approach in America. “Functionalism” from William James (1890) and John Dewey (1896) through James Rowland Angell (1907) is typically construed as prospering in opposition to structuralism and as culminating, when taken to its logical extreme, in the “behaviorist revolution” of John B. Watson (1913). Rejecting both consciousness and introspection, Watsonian behaviorism is said to have swept away the last remnants of the Titchenerian opposition, only to fall victim itself, in its oversimplifications, to the more sophisticated neobehaviorisms of Edward Tolman (1938), B. F. Skinner (1938), and Clark Hull (1943) and to a certain extent to the criticisms of gestalt psychology (e.g., Koffka, 1935). Finally, neobehaviorism is portrayed as having then itself been overthrown and gestalt psychology largely co-opted in the “cognitive revolution” of the late 1950s and early 1960s—a revolution that is presumed to have established the parameters of the field as it currently exists (Gardner, 1985).

This sort of rational reconstruction makes a good story. It is relatively easy to understand and remember; and it serves as an intellectual scaffold on which to hang the many names, concepts, and dates that threaten to overwhelm the beginning student. Unfortunately, it is also little more than a caricature that does considerable violence to the complexities of history. Although like all caricatures, it contains a kernel of “truth,” some of the more interesting historical work in psychology of the past thirty years has