Experimental vs. Educational Psychology: Wilhelm Wundt’s Letters to Ernst Meumann* **

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Summary. Wilhelm Wundt founded his own journal, *Philosophische Studien*, only two years after the establishment of his famous Institute for Experimental Psychology at Leipzig University in 1879. During the following two decades the journal played a significant role in the development of experimental psychology as an autonomous science. The *Archiv für die gesamte Psychologie*, which was founded in 1903 by a group of Wundt’s former students under the leadership of Ernst Meumann, was to serve a similar function in the institutionalization of educational psychology in Germany. The present study makes extensive use of previously unpublished letters, which Wundt wrote to Meumann between 1902 and 1905, in the description and analysis of the origin, objectives, and editorial practices of the *Archive*. Wundt’s eventual dissociation from this journal and the foundation of the rival *Psychologische Studien* in 1905 will be discussed. Finally, theoretical disagreements between Wundt and Meumann about the nature and importance of educational and other fields of applied psychology will be presented.

Introduction

Two early psychological journals – Wundt’s *Philosophische Studien* (*Philosophical Studies, 1881*) and Meumann’s *Archiv für die gesamte Psychologie* (*Archive for the...*)

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** Meumann’s term ‘Experimentelle Pädagogik’ has no direct equivalent in modern English usage. However, a close examination of the content of the *Archiv für die gesamte Psychologie* and of Meumann’s other educational writings suggests that his work would be classified as research in educational psychology. The modern term ‘educational psychology’ has therefore been used in lieu of Meumann’s terms ‘Pädagogik’ and ‘experimentelle Pädagogik’

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Entire Field of Psychology, 1905) – have played a seminal role in the institutionalization of modern psychology as an independent science. The Archive was initially conceived as a brainstorm by a group of Wundt's senior students during the festivities associated with Wundt's seventieth birthday on August 16, 1902, almost forty years after the publication of his first program for the new psychology (Graumann, 1979; Wundt, 1862, 1863). Under the leadership of Ernst Meumann (1862-1915), many of the scholars involved in these discussions seem to have believed that the new journal would become the long-expected forum for the integration of the distinctive experimental psychology of the Leipzig Institute with other experimental approaches and with the beginnings of applied psychology in education and related fields. Unfortunately, although the first issue of the new periodical was published in 1903, no reconciliation between opposing factions was to take place at that time, owing to the sharply diverging views of Wundt and Meumann concerning the nature of psychology.

In this context, it will help to remember that interest in all types of educational matters, and in particular in the application of psychological principles and procedures to educational problems, was quite prominent around the turn of the nineteenth century (Blaettner 1951). Such concern was strongly reflected in the choice of articles, which the editors of the Archive – with the exception, of course, of Wundt himself – accepted for publication. Meumann, who was a respected authority in experimental as well as in educational psychology, quite obviously used his position as chief editor to inform his experimental colleagues of pertinent developments in educational psychology and the field of educational experimentation in the pages of the new publication. From our modern vantage point it is not difficult to see, as Engelhardt has suggested in his recent essay (1978), how the Archive for the Entire Field of Psychology played a role in the institutionalization of educational psychology analogous to that of Philosophical Studies for general-experimental psychology.

A Declaration of War

Philosophical Studies. Following a suggestion of his student, the psychiatrist Emil Kraepelin (1856-1926), Wundt began preparations for his own psychological journal shortly after establishing the world's first psychological institute at Leipzig University (Bringmann 1979b). The inaugural issue of the Philosophical Studies was published in October of 1881. It contained a long theoretical article by Wundt on psychological methods and a summary of the first dissertation to emerge from his laboratory (Friedrich 1881). The journal appeared on a rather 'informal' basis whenever sufficient material had been collected (Bringmann 1978).

It was the explicit purpose of the new publication to print research that had been carried out in Wundt's Institute. Wundt (1882) had no intention whatsoever of opening the pages of the Studies to everyone.

They do not wish...to provide a speaker's platform from which the representatives of all possible and impossible philosophical viewpoints could raise their voices to their heart's content. Rather, [they] wish to leave this task to [those] philosophical and psychological periodicals among which the present [journal] does not want to be included (p 615)

On the more positive side, Wundt expected the Philosophical Studies to: