
CHAPTER 9

KANT AND HERBART:

CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHICAL PSYCHOLOGY

As one approaches the present day, it becomes less necessary and more impracticable to say anything about the general scientific and cultural heritage of the years in question. With the increased complexity, the sheer amount of relevant knowledge, and the increase in the number of those making contributions to psychology, the background for the great psychologists has to be presented in increasingly narrow perspective. The pace has now quickened with various more or less simultaneous developments taking place that cannot be discussed together because they belong in different patterns of intellectual development.

The previous chapter carried British associationism through the work of Alexander Bain whose principal works first appeared in 1855 and 1859. In order to discuss continental philosophical psychology, which is to culminate in the work of Kant and Herbart, a return is now made to 1732, the date of publication of Wolff's Empirical Psychology.

WOLFF AND FACULTY PSYCHOLOGY

Implicitly or explicitly, a doctrine of faculties had often been met in earlier views of psychology. The soul was conceived as carrying on its functions, such as knowing, remembering, feeling, and willing, by making use of corresponding faculties. The first important proponent of eighteenth-century German faculty psychology was Christian von Wolff (1679-1754), Professor at Halle. To place him in temporal perspective, his principal psychological works appeared after those of Berkeley
but before those of Hartley. However, he was most influenced by Leibniz, not by the British empiricists. His view is representative of the several versions of faculty psychology prevailing on the continent in the period from the middle of the eighteenth century through most of the nineteenth century. In no sense is he to be numbered among the greatest of psychologists. However, his influence upon Kant makes him deserve a brief statement.

Wolff's Empirical Psychology made its appearance in 1732, followed two years later by his Rational Psychology. He saw the tasks of these two psychologies as interrelated. Rational psychology deduced from metaphysical conceptions the soul's activities, the actual existence of which was then to be demonstrated by empirical psychology. Following similar thinking on the part of Leibniz, Wolff held that rational psychology gave clear and distinct ideas, while empirical psychology yielded only obscure, confused ideas of things. Rational psychology depended upon reason; empirical psychology upon sensation. At one extreme were the confused idea of sensation, and, proceeding through several steps of degrees of clarity, at the other extreme were the clear ideas of reason. In short, mental activities consisted of degrees of reason or degrees of clarity of ideas.

The central theme of his faculty psychology was that, while the soul is unitary and lacks parts, it has different powers and faculties. According to Wolff, faculties are "potencies of action" which are expressed in powers. The major dual classification of groups of faculties are knowing on the one hand and feeling and desire on the other. Knowing is further subdivided into perception, memory, understanding, and reason. To take memory as an example, if asked why something is remembered, Wolff would reply that it is because one has a faculty of memory. Unfortunately to ascribe a mental activity to a faculty served to explain it, making further analysis unnecessary. It was not apparent then, as it was to become later, that the doctrine of faculties was self-defeating and circular.

Wolff's distinction between empirical and rational psychology, although misplaced in emphasis, was prophetic of changes to come. His distinction clarified the existence of two psychologies, even though Wolff derogated empirical psychology and defined it so as to make it dependent upon rational psychology. As the influence of Locke and the other British associationists began to be felt in succeeding generations, the relative emphases of the two psychologies began to shift in favor of empirical psychology.

KANT AND TRANSCENDENTAL MENTAL ACTIVITY

http://educ.southern.edu/tour/who/pioneers/kant.html
Before dealing with the mind, the more general problem of
Kant's view of mathematics and science must be mentioned.
Kant was very much concerned with scientific problems. The
profound impression science had made upon him is strikingly
demonstrated by Kant's emphasis upon space and time and
causality. To him, mathematics is the source of scientific
knowledge.\textsuperscript{16} This follows because much of mathematics
represents a priori, absolute, non-empirical judgments, requiring
no further proof. He advanced the aphorism that an empirical
inquiry is as scientific as it contains mathematics.\textsuperscript{17} Science, to
Kant, is exact, quantitative, and mathematical.

Kant dealt specifically with the problem of the mind.\textsuperscript{18} The
great rationalists, Descartes, Leibniz, and Spinoza, although
differing among themselves, had sought to know mind through
mind. Kant attacked what he considered to be their fallacious
belief that mind is a substance. Without attempting to state his
argument, suffice it to say he demonstrated to his satisfaction
that mind is unsubstancial. Rejection of mind as substance, i.e.,
as occupying space, had direct implications for psychology as a
science. It followed that mental processes can not be measured,
since they have only the dimension of time, not space.\textsuperscript{19} If it
has but the one dimension of time, psychology as an
experimental science is impossible, because there is no other
variable with which to relate temporal events.

Rejection of mind as substance did not mean that Kant rejected
the concept of the mind. Rather, he lifted it to the pinnacle of
his system, since he held mind to be the means whereby the
categories and concepts are known. The mind, without being
spatial, orders perceptual phenomena through the innate
principles of time and space and supplies us with the categories
which make it possible to understand experience, to make
incoming sensations meaningful. In a manner reminiscent of
Plato, the mind is an active agency which composed the raw
material of the world into an order of conceptualized
phenomena. Kant was, however, no idealist since the mind does
not create the world; there are "things in themselves" with
independent existence.

"Apperception" was Kant's term for the process of assimilating
and interpreting new experiences by which the mind gave them
meaning. There was unity in every act of perception. In
recognizing an object we can find the bits and hatches that are
the elements of the associationists, for example, the hearing
elements and the seeing elements of the coach of Berkeley; but
these elements are meaningfully organized a priori, not through
association: The mind has acted to form a unitary experience, to
create an object within a meaningful context. There is an active
mind which organized the experience with the help of space and

time and the Kantian categories. Kant viewed mind as active apperception. For example, apperception was emphasized as a process by which new experiences were taken hold of and brought into relation with other elements in the mind. This was not passive impression, but rather an active grasping.

"Things in themselves," the causes of things, are unknowable. Locke and Hume are right, Kant agreed, in saying that knowledge comes from sensory perception; but this is perception not of things as they really are, but only as they appear to us (phenomena). Thus, Kant was fostering a phenomenal view. We perceive phenomena, not as they are, but the way our mind makes us see them. The mind selects, according to the structures arising from the categories, from the welter of impinging sensations and imposes upon them the unity inherent in the principles.

It is not surprising that faculty psychology which was simultaneously rationalistic, relatively free from appeal to empiricism, and tending to lend itself easily to the support of religious views, proved congenial to Kant. The categories, from this perspective, are powers of the mind. Kant classified mental faculties into cognitive (knowing), feeling, and desire and the subdivision of the cognitive faculty into understanding, judgment, and reason. 20 He also wrote a book on his version of psychology, Anthropology in its Practical Aspects, a popular but relatively unimportant treatise. It had three parts roughly comparable to the more or less similar divisions of his three Critiques (Pure Reason, Judgment and Practical Reason) which also helped to lend his support to the three-fold classification of mental powers.

Kantian thinking and writing occurred before the emergence of psychology as an experimental science. The immediate effect of his philosophical pronouncements about mind and the impossibility of experiment was to block advance in the move of psychology toward becoming an experimental science. In larger perspective and as a more delayed influence, he helped to create a desire to make psychology both experimental and mathematical. Such was his prestige that never again could it be forgotten that science was mathematical. Kant is even sometimes "blamed" for helping to create psychology's love for mathematics.21 It has been said that some psychologists, even in our own day, become too enamored of mathematics leading to a state of affairs where if a problem was quantifiable, no matter how trivial, it was scientific, while an important problem able would be disdained.22

Kant also helped to keep subjectivism alive in that he stressed the importance of mental phenomena, as such, in a day when
they could be believed to be reducible to physiological processes. He helped to direct psychology toward phenomenalism in holding that events are appearances. Moreover, his view that his ultimate principles lie outside the context of experience made Kant the great champion of nativism in that human beings have innate "given" ways of knowing that are true but not dependent upon experience. This stress on unity of organization with its nativistic base was to have its later effects upon Gestalt psychology.