

By Jean Macfarlane
(see Spald p 50)

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Rec'd 14/9/62 from Mr. T.

PRELIMINARY NOTES ON THE
HISTORY OF THE PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
1896 - 1951

Courtesy of the Wellcome Collection (Bridgman Archive), London

(These notes were written on the occasion of Warner Brown's seventieth birthday, February 9, 1952 and included in "An Anthology of Appreciation" presented to him by his friends and colleagues) 1882-1956

The Psychological Laboratory of the University of California, with George Malcolm Stratton as its Director, began functioning in August 1896 as a part of the Philosophy Department. The impetus to the establishment of the Laboratory and the plans for it came from Professor George Holmes Howison, Mills Professor of Philosophy, then Chairman of the Philosophy Department. Professor Howison had secured an arrangement in 1894 through the University President, Martin Kellogg, that permitted Mr. Stratton, who had secured his A.B. from the institution in 1888 and later a fellowship, and his M.A. from Yale in 1890 and was then an instructor in Philosophy, teaching logic, the history of philosophy, and a course in psychology, to go to Leipzig for a period of two years for training under Wundt in laboratory methods.

Mr. Stratton drew his instructor's salary (\$1500 per year) while he, with his bride, Alice Eleanore Miller, spent the summer of 1894 at Harvard's first summer school with Professor Munsterberg and the subsequent two years at Leipzig with Professor Wundt. He returned in 1896 not only with an M.A. and a Ph.D. but with \$3000 worth of brass instruments done up in lead foil and cotton batting, bought with monies the University sent him to spend as he saw fit for equipment for the new laboratory. And, incredible as it sounds in this era of red tape, this was done without the supervision of a purchasing department and without nine copies of requisitions per instrument!

Thus in 1896 the Psychological Laboratory was set up in the carpeted Philosophy Building, with Dr. Stratton, Director and Assistant Professor of Philosophy, wearing his immaculate white laboratory jacket, presiding over it. Thus it was that the tradition of the philosopher, the scholar, the laboratory scientist and the gentleman was begun and grew slowly, steadily, quietly, and substantially. It was a tradition of open-mindedness, of dedication to the painstaking pursuit of knowledge and of dedication to the development of students with high values for truth and with the scientific training to expand the borders of truth. It was a tradition strong enough, we hope, to withstand the almost cataclysmic expansion of techniques, applications, students, faculty, and the competing material seductions of the present era.

During the early years when student and faculty worked daily in close collaboration in the laboratory, research articles even from undergraduate as well as graduate students began to appear in scientific journals.

Among the early students in the laboratory were: Knight Dunlap, Thomas V. Moore, and Warner Brown. Knight Dunlap, Ph.B. 1899, M.A. 1900 at California, obtained his Ph.D. in 1903 from Harvard, and returned to California as an instructor from 1904 to 1906, going then to Johns Hopkins to join Professor Stratton who had left California for a Professorship in Experimental Psychology at Johns Hopkins (1904-1908). It was the policy in these early days to have promising students, after their graduation, go on to other and more prominent

universities for their doctorates. Dr. Dunlap remained at Hopkins for 29 years, joining the faculty of U.C.L.A. in 1935, where he remained until retirement in 1946.

Thomas V. Moore, obtained his Ph.D. from Leipzig in 1905, and was also a student here from 1906 to 1909, publishing experimental articles and monographs from research done in the laboratory. He then went to the faculty of the Catholic University of America where he remained until retirement.

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Warner Brown, obtained his A.B. in 1904 and his M.A. in 1906 at California, in the year that the big earthquake shook not only San Francisco but this campus. He then went to Columbia where he obtained his doctorate in 1908 and, with the enthusiastic approval of Professor Woodworth, returned to California that year as an instructor when Professor Stratton also returned permanently to this University. Warner Brown taught experimental and contemporary theory from those early years. Since 1935 he has carried the heavy load of the large elementary course, in line with the University policy that the best liberal education of the undergraduate is fostered by having each new subject introduced by its most mature and distinguished faculty member. His monograph on the Judgment of Difference with Special Reference to the Doctrine of Threshold was Number One of Volume I of the Psychological Series of the University of California Press in September 1910. In fact, five of the twelve publications in Volumes I and II were by him (Arthur I Gates, M.A. California, 1915, and Thomas V. Moore also appear in these two volumes with their first publications). Perhaps Dr. Brown's most distinctive contributions to the laboratory and the department have been his generous interest in students and his talents as a relentless critic of the research of both students and staff. He became the symbol of tough minded standards, a force which made all of us do a better job than any of us had intended. A former student of his summarizes his impact by the following statement: "Even now some twenty years after leaving his direct surveillance, whenever I have an article ready for the press, I pretend I'm Warner Brown and read it through once more and always find myself blue penciling it drastically and muttering to myself 'Tighten it up'." Warner Brown devoted many years as chairman of the department, serving selflessly, responsibly, and without fanfare so that the rest of the staff didn't realize there were any time consuming and worrisome administrative problems and were free to pursue their own interests and thoughtlessly and selfishly took advantage of his generous responsibility.

From 1908 to 1915, that part of the Philosophy Department which taught psychology was Professors Stratton and Brown. Next to be added to the faculty in 1915 was Olga Louise Bridgman; A.B. 1908, M.D. 1910, University of Michigan; who had come to this University to obtain her Ph.D. in 1915, the first Ph.D. in Psychology granted by the Philosophy Department. She chose California in preference to other institutions because the graduate catalogue stated that students were expected to work on problems of their own interest with the direct help of instructors in the laboratory and because research problem-solving was stressed in the catalogue rather than a set of rules which characterized the announcements of other graduate schools. (Dr. Bridgman, don't look at the present day announcement. Please!) Dr. Bridgman has from the beginning had half time appointments in the Medical School and on the Berkeley campus, first in the Philosophy Department and later in the Psychology Department. Before coming here she had served (1910-1912) as an intern at the State School for Girls, Geneva, Illinois, and had been assistant physician at the Lincoln State Colony, Lincoln,

Illinois. She instituted the clinical training program in the department here which gave to students the simultaneous opportunities for both academic work and clinical experience in the University Hospital and clinics, Juvenile Courts and schools.

Next to join the faculty was Edward ~~Chance~~ Tolman in 1918; B.S. 1911, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; M.A. 1912, Ph.D. 1915, Harvard; Instructor at Northwestern 1915-1918. With him began the theoretical era mediated by the white rat. The dignified Philosophy Building took on strange new activities and strange new smells. The philosopher parents became uneasy about their growing embryo, conceived with proud hopes, and decided in 1923 that it had come to term. The parent body not only expelled it, but left it the family home with its smell-saturated velvet drapes and carpets and moved into clean, fresh quarters. Thus in 1922 was the baby born, christened the Psychology Department, firmly stood on its own feet, and left to its own aberrant devices. The department began thus with a faculty of three and one-half with Professor Stratton as its first chairman. It listed some 15 undergraduate course offerings and had one graduate seminar which all faculty and graduate students attended. This small faculty and students had in this short history some ninety research publications to their credit.

In the twenty-nine year history of the department proper much has happened. In the first thirteen years, 1922 to 1935 when Professor Stratton retired, four permanent members were added to the department faculty: Jean Macfarlane in 1925, Ph.D. 1922, California, half time, the other half in Pediatrics, then later at the Institute of Child Welfare; Harold E. Jones in 1927, Ph.D. 1923, Columbia, part time, the rest as Director of Research at the Institute of Child Welfare; C. W. Brown in 1929, Ph.D. 1929, Chicago; Robert C. Tryon in 1930, Ph.D. 1928, California. This meant a net gain of two full positions, since two were half-time appointments and there was one retirement. This new faculty also meant extensions in clinical instruction, and the beginning of undergraduate and graduate instruction in child development, physiological and differential. In those twelve years, twenty-six doctorates were granted with the highest specialization of research interests in animal, experimental, and child development, in that order. The economic depression occurred too in this period and teaching positions were few, with the result that many of the doctorates of that depression era went into fields other than those of their specialized interest.

In the next ten years, 1936 to 1945, two and one-half faculty members were added: Egon Brunswik in 1937; Ph.D. 1927 in Vienna--who extended the instruction in history and systems and in experimental; Edwin Giselli, Ph.D. 1936, California, who introduced industrial; and Nevitt Sanford, Ph.D. 1934, Harvard, half time, who expanded the offering in personality and who was later co-director, 1944-1947, of the Institute of Public Opinion. This brought the total to eight full time positions and eleven persons. (It is interesting to note that with eleven faculty this was the decade when the Ph.D. applicant was subjected to eleven field examinations.) During this decade, thirty-one doctorates were granted, twenty-one during the first half (1936-1940) and ten during the second war year half, when student numbers were reduced and when half of the faculty was away in war work of various kinds. A shift of dissertation interest occurred before the war began, child development and clinical psychology leading the fields and physiological and differential dissertations appearing, and during the war years clinical leading and the first industrial dissertation appearing.

The next six years (1946-1951) coming at the end of the war altered the pattern of steady growth that had characterized the past history of the department. An unprecedented invasion of students began, brought about by deferred university work, G.I. benefits, and the expansion, nation-wide, of a growing interest in psychology and a demand for trained psychologists. Not only was there over a 300% increase in undergraduates, but a 600% increase in psychology graduate students swarmed into a department with neither adequate space nor enough faculty to handle them and before we had presence of mind, permission from the administration for curtailment, and machinery for selection procedures. The picture was further complicated by government subsidies to students with specialization in the clinical psychology field, designed to implement the National Mental Health Act of 1947 with its legal demands to secure more adequately trained personnel to meet the mental health needs of the nation, and by the Veterans Administration's overwhelming load of neuro-psychiatric war casualties in its clinics and hospitals for which personnel in adequate numbers and training were unavailable.

During this last six years the faculty, paid for directly from university funds, has more than tripled, and supplementary appointments have been made with grants from the United States Public Health Service, mediators of the National Mental Health Act. The faculty has jumped from eight permanent positions in 1945 to twenty-six in 1951, and from eleven to twenty-nine persons, plus four on non-university funds. Three of our faculty were temporarily lost through the Oath and one resigned. Of our present permanent faculty, seven obtained their doctorates from California, six from Harvard, three each from Columbia and Ohio State, two from Iowa, and one each from Stanford, Minnesota, and Western Reserve. In these same six years sixty doctorates have been granted, one more than in the previous thirty years. No wonder we began looking suspiciously at ourselves to see if we were becoming a diploma mill. We found that we had doubled our doctorates in the 1946-1950 period over our last normal pre-war 1936-1940 period, had tripled our faculty and had to learn to know each other's folk ways, spouses, 46 new faculty children, and had had to overflow into temporary housing; had changed chairmen three times, had sweated through a staff-wide democratic governing process with its short time inefficiencies but, we hope, long time gains. The areas of specialized interest in this last six years have shown concern with clinical, personality, and social problems, the emergent period in the department for the latter two fields. The Institute of Personality Opinion, 1944-1947, and the Institute of Personality Research, 1949, have contributed to and been an outlet for these specialized interests. No wonder, then, that the department has been confused even as have been other psychology departments, especially those in large state institutions where the maximum load has fallen in the period of very rapid expansion of psychology throughout the nation. In a troubled world public demand for the services of teaching, research, and applied activities in the field could not be met even in small part without initial strain and confusion. To discharge our proportional part of responsibility to public need and to maintain the values of our old tradition is the main problem with which in the 1950s the department wrestles, some half century after the laboratory with its fine precision instruments was established as a part of the Philosophy Department at this University.