William Stephenson and the Post World War II Bifurcation of British Psychology

James M.M. Good
University of Durham

Introduction

On an occasion such as this it is, I believe, appropriate to experience mixed emotions. I am very honoured by the invitation of the *William Stephenson Research Center* to deliver this address, and deeply touched to come here from Durham, England, the source of William Stephenson's long quest, to address so many of those who were close to him as family, friends, colleagues, or students. I am, of course, more than a little apprehensive.

I bring you warm greetings from the University of Durham and from the North of England that was so much loved by William Stephenson and which, as in the case of his first mentor Godfrey Thomson, no doubt fashioned him in turn. Your invitation has enabled me to deepen my knowledge of Stephenson's work, and to come to a fuller understanding of its origins and significance. It also has enabled me to indulge in a little participant observation of the *International Society for the Scientific Study of Subjectivity* at work and play — the latter, of course, an essential part of human communication (Stephenson 1967). Preliminary data from today's sessions lead me to conclude that the Society is thriving. But I also have formed the view that it has not yet implemented the structure of the academic day advocated by Stephenson in *Quiddity College*: "mornings for learning, afternoons for autonomous sport, and evenings for peer group social concerns" (Stephenson 1970/1980, with

---

Keynote Address delivered on the occasion of the 15th Annual Conference of the International Society for the Scientific Study of Subjectivity, William Stephenson Research Center, School of Journalism, University of Missouri-Columbia, 1 October 1999. I should like to thank Steve Brown for putting me, as so many others, on the right track about the world of Q. Thanks are also due to Dave Rhodes whose enthusiasm for Q methodology ensured that the Durham meeting came to fruition. I am indebted to Rob Logan and the William Stephenson Research Center for making it possible for me to give this address. And a special thanks to those who made the journey to Durham and London in the winter of 1997, thus re-establishing links between Durham and Columbia that I hope will continue to flourish.

Author's address: Director, Centre for the History of the Human Sciences, Department of Psychology, University of Durham, South Road, Durham DH1 3LE, j.m.m.Good@Durham.ac.uk.

Operant Subjectivity, 2000 (April), 23(3): 116-130.

acknowledgements to Comenius) — a place for everything of value; and everything in its rightful place.[1]

Unlike many of my distinguished predecessors, I address you tonight not as a student or colleague of William Stephenson's, nor even a regular practitioner of Q methodology but as a social psychologist and historian of the human sciences who has been drawn to the work of William Stephenson, initially more by accident than design. Nonetheless, in what follows I hope that my profound admiration for and indebtedness to his work will become clear, as will a more partisan interest in the Scottish roots of some of his ideas.[2]

For the philosopher of history R.G. Collingwood, history is a matter of the fathoming of the questions posed by historical subjects and of the answers they generated. History is also a matter of biography (as Ralph Waldo Emerson observed), but it is not, of course, just biography. Nowadays many historians acknowledge that history writing involves something more complex than just the discovery of historical truths or their social construction (Good in press). A dialectical process is involved that brings about changes in both the historical object and the narrator. And one of the joys of historical research is that it allows one to enter the lives of those one studies, to share their aspirations, successes, and disappointments. And in the case of William Stephenson there are riches indeed to be explored, great successes, and many disappointments.

My theme this evening concerns William Stephenson and the bifurcation of British psychology. My aim is to attempt to clarify Stephenson's place in the institutional history of British psychology by identifying some of the influences on his work and outlining his principal concerns. I shall be dealing principally with the period spanning his arrival at University College, London in 1926 to 1948 when he departed for the United States. I shall also take note of the decline of the Galtonian tradition and the commensurate growth and ascendance of experimental psychology in Britain.

There is currently no adequate history of British Psychology to assist the curious reader.[3] Nor is there any detailed biographical study of William

---

[1] "Culture forms in play, not in work, and...for self-designing and socializing about twice as much of the day is needed as can justifiably be taken up by learning in the formal sense." (Stephenson 1970/1980, 20)

[2] Stephenson frequently acknowledges the influence of Scottish Enlightenment thought on the development of his ideas about subjectivity (e.g., Stephenson, 1970/1980, 1991). In the Ulysses and Finnegan's Wake (1991) paper (Part Two), while displaying his Celtic roots and affinity with James Joyce, Stephenson acknowledges Glasgow as the font of his education as a psychologist with Charles Spearman (mediated through Spearman from Francis Hutcheson and the Scottish Enlightenment).

[3] Hearnshaw's *A Short History of British Psychology* is indispensable but ends in 1940 (Hearnshaw 1964). There are several more general histories, but these are lacking in relevant detail (Flugel 1933; O'Neill 1968; Thomson 1968).

Stephenson, although there are several valuable biographical sketches or appreciations.[4] In what follows I have drawn upon a number of biographical sources, interpolating from time to time some observations of William Stephenson's, where appropriate.[5]

In an early chapter of the unpublished *Quiddity College*, Stephenson observes that his musings in that volume, like so much else in his work, began at Durham, London, and Oxford, and it is with these locations that we shall principally be concerned.

Northern Roots

As has been well documented, at Durham Stephenson studied Physics, not Psychology.[6] Born in 1902 in Chopwell (near Blaydon), County Durham, England, Stephenson began his studies at Armstrong College, Newcastle, in 1920, having been a pupil teacher the previous year (being too young to attend university). He obtained his Master's degree in 1923, and his Ph.D. in 1927. In those days, Armstrong College was part of the University of Durham. In 1937 the Newcastle-based College of Medicine and Armstrong College merged to form a unified Newcastle Division of Durham University — Kings College. Following further postwar expansion in both divisions, a separate University of Newcastle was established in 1963.

While at Durham, Stephenson also completed a Diploma in the Theory and Practice of Teaching (1924). This brought him into contact with one of the pioneers of factor analysis — Godfrey Thomson — who had become Professor of Education at Durham in 1920, moving to Edinburgh in 1925 where he was Principal of Moray House.

In his Obituary Notice for Thomson, written for *the British Journal of Psychology* in 1955, Stephenson notes:

> ... I knew him in some sort of personal way for over thirty years, and heard about him before that when I was a boy. As Professor Thomson he was my first mentor, and I was perhaps the first of his students of Newcastle days to pursue some of his interests. There are other bonds connecting us... the young Godfrey went to Rutherford College in Newcastle, and then studied mathematics and physics at Armstrong College. (Stephenson 1955, 245)

Stephenson, like Thomson, was a Northumberland man. It is of some significance for an understanding of their views about the importance of mental testing that they were both scholarship boys, a point to which I shall return later. And as probably was the case with the arousal of Stephenson's interest in psychology, Thomson tells us in his autobiography (Thomson 1952)

---

[4] Barchak (1991); Sanders (1974); and Zangwill, Kohlberg, and Brenner (1972), for example.

[5] In Stephenson (1970/1980; 1990; 1992).

[6] E.g., Brown (1991); Logan (1991).

that he owed some of his interest in the subject to a chance meeting with Charles Myers[7] in Cambridge in 1911.

At that time Thomson was teaching elementary educational psychology to teachers and felt a need to have a more secure grasp of the subject. This he obtained in Cambridge, working his way through the experiments in Myers' textbook in the psychological laboratory located in the tiny house in Mill Lane while "[Myers worked] upstairs on gramophone records of native music from the Torres Straits expedition" (Thomson 1952, 281). It was on that visit that Thomson also first set eyes on William Brown's *The Essentials of Mental Measurement* (1911), to later editions of which he was to contribute substantially (Brown and Thomson 1925). Thomson also notes an invitation from Karl Pearson to consider the possibility of taking up a post at the Galton Laboratory, University College London (Thomson 1952, 284).

It is evident that Stephenson had a profound admiration for Thomson. In his contribution to the collection of essays offered to Stephenson on his retirement, Cyril Burt notes that Stephenson arrived in London with a letter of introduction from Thomson (Burt 1972).

While it is clearly the case that Stephenson was excited about the possibility of exploring the significance of quantum theory for psychology, there is at least one other possible influence on Stephenson at this time that might have led him to abandon physics in favor of psychology. Stephenson notes in a 1979 paper that the first psychologist he ever met (circa 1925) was Kurt Koffka who had been passing through Durham on his way to Smith College in Massachusetts (Stephenson 1979b).[8]

Charles Spearman, Sir Cyril Burt, and the London School

In 1926 Stephenson left Durham for University College London (UCL) where he studied with Charles Spearman who had been appointed Reader in Psychology in 1907, and Grote Professor of Mind and Logic in 1911 (the title was changed to Chair of Psychology in 1928). At the time of Stephenson's arrival in London, Spearman was at the height of his powers and influence, presiding over the "London School" of psychology. Hearnshaw sees the London School as part of the revolt:

> ... against the artificiality and narrowness of the psychology of the early Wundtian laboratories... an attempt to bring psychology face to face with the problems of mind as met with in daily life, while retaining a scientifically tough methodology, quantitative rather than qualitative, analytical rather than wholistic. Its basic orientation was Galtonian. (Hearnshaw 1964, 196)

[7] A central figure in English psychology who gave up his Cambridge post to establish the National Institute for Industrial Psychology in 1921.

[8] Stephenson and Koffka were also to meet again later in 1939-40 at Corpus Christi College in Oxford where Koffka was on sabbatical leave (Stephenson, 1979a).

There was a focus on the measurement of human abilities and personality, employing psychometric and factor analytic methods.[9] In the 1930s and 1940s, the UCL department was to occupy a central position in UK psychology, rivaled only by Cambridge and Edinburgh. As we shall see later, that status was to change rapidly with the postwar expansion of British psychology. Spearman retired in 1931 and was succeeded by Cyril Burt in 1932.[10]

At UCL, Stephenson's main debt, initially at least, was to Spearman, though not entirely for the reasons that one might suppose (Stephenson 1977). Stephenson's Ph.D. was on "Mental Tests and their Relation to the Central Factor" (Stephenson 1929), part of which was written up in a 1931 paper on tetrad differences for verbal subtests (Stephenson 1931). According to Stephenson, the most important thing he learned from Spearman was not the principles of eduction (noesis and anoesis), but scientific logic. Stephenson traces the roots of some of his most central ideas about Q methodology (especially the operant nature of Q sorting) and subjectivity to Spearman (Stephenson 1977).

It is also clear that Stephenson derived some of his ideas about the importance of character from Spearman's work on feeling and striving (on orexis — w — after Aveling); everyday conceptions of different types of intelligence — such as profound, quick, common, original — were viewed as combinations of one and the same "g" with differences in character.

As Spearman's last research assistant (his "backroom boy") and brilliant protégé, Stephenson was during the 1930s a frequent figure in debates about psychometrics and factor analysis. These exchanges were to culminate in a major disagreement with Cyril Burt about factor analysis to which I shall return (Burt and Stephenson 1939; Burt 1940). Stephenson counts some years (1926-29) studying Education in London with Sir T.P. Nunn (Percy Nunn) "as the most formative of my academic life" (Stephenson 1970-80, 5).[11]

Stephenson also acknowledges the influence on his ideas about subjectivity of the Scottish common sense school of philosophy — especially the work of Thomas Reid and William Hamilton — an influence that was mediated through his mentor Charles Spearman in his two volume book *Psychology Down the Ages* (Spearman 1937). Stephenson records his excitement on being given by Spearman's widow in 1945 a wooden filing cabinet containing a few of his special papers "... in the bottom drawer were two well used books,

---

[9] For some of Spearman's principal publications see Spearman (1923; 1927; 1937).

[10] As Burt had put it in his farewell address, "From the days of Sully and McDougall the department had stood for something unique in the history of British psychology — the study of the individual" (quoted in Hearnshaw 1979, 129). For an early account of the work of the London School, see Thomas (1935).

[11] "There, in educational theory, if anywhere, lay my real academic interests" (Stephenson 1992, 50).

volumes I and II of Sir William Hamilton's Lectures on Metaphysic" (Stephenson 1970/1980, 91).

Stephenson was also a research assistant and colleague of Cyril Burt and describes himself as knowing him well between 1926 and 1948. Burt is generous in his acknowledgement of the work of Stephenson, first in *The Factors of the Mind* (1940), then in Burt (1972). But it is also clear that Stephenson had some misgivings about Burt as a successor to Spearman. In his comments on Burt, Stephenson contrasts him with Spearman, emphasizing the "revolutionary" nature of Spearman's work — "Copernican" in its significance for psychology. "Genuine scientific laws were being considered, and mathematical structures were rapidly developing to keep pace with these endeavours" (1979a, 113). Stephenson goes on to note that:

> Some of us were sorry in this context, when Burt was appointed to succeed Spearman on the latter's retirement, feeling it was a "letdown." The rivalries were strong. Spearman was "theoretical" and "scientific" in a pure sense; Burt was "practical" and "applied." ... At the Spearman lab we were concerned with a scientific construct "g" and not with the pragmatics of IQ.... Burt was for us a maker of psychological tests. Spearman was proposing profound psychological theory. (Stephenson 1979b, 114)

Elsewhere he notes that "[t]here were no differences between us about factor analysis; only about what to measure and why" (Stephenson 1981, 123).[12]

In his biography of Cyril Burt, Leslie Hearnshaw notes that with the death of Spearman in 1945, Burt and Godfrey Thomson were left as the standard-bearers of factor analysis in Great Britain (Hearnshaw 1979, 167). Regrettably, there is no mention of the contributions to factor analysis of William Stephenson. Nonetheless, in a sense Hearnshaw is correct in so far as he is referring to factor analysis as practiced by Spearman and Burt.

From his 1935 *Nature* letter (Stephenson 1935) until the end of a very long life, Stephenson championed the use of factor analysis in correlating persons and not tests. Stephenson (1953) freely acknowledged that he was not the first person to use factor analysis in this way — Burt had done so in 1915 (Burt 1915) and Thomson later (Thomson 1935). Burt and Stephenson eventually agreed to differ, having first set out their differences in a jointly written paper in 1939 (Burt and Stephenson 1939). Burt chose to return to this theme in the paper he contributed to a Festschrift volume for Stephenson, the proofs of which he corrected shortly before his death in 1971 (Burt 1972).

Oxford, William Brown, and a War Interlude

At Oxford, provision for the teaching of psychology had been available from 1898 when the Wilde Readership in Mental Philosophy was founded, but it

[12] Elsewhere he is more generous to Cyril Burt: "Burt is peer with a Galton in England, and a lonely C.S. Pierce in America — not merely for what these men achieved, but for their promise of what is still to come..." (Stephenson 1973).

took almost 50 years before there was a chair in experimental psychology (Morrell 1997). The Oxford Laboratory was set up in 1936 as a result of a gift of £10,000 (initially anonymously) to the then Wilde Reader, William Brown, from one of his patients (Mrs. Helen Watts).

Stephenson moved to Oxford in 1936 where he became Assistant Director of the Institute of Experimental Psychology.[13] Brown's enthusiasm for experimental psychology (for which he had long campaigned) rapidly waned, allowing his other interests to flourish. Stephenson was left "to administer the Institute in [difficult] financial circumstances ... and to look after all the research students" (Morrell 1997, 91).[14]

During his time at the Institute, Stephenson also extended his interest in mental testing by developing tests for Oxford County Council and for other educational committees. This reflected a life-long concern for human improvement. As he wrote later, "I was imbued with a sense of the worth of Education for mankind" (1970/1980, 5). This sense of his deep concern with the value of education was very clearly revealed in his book *Testing School Children* (Stephenson 1949), the completion of which had been delayed by the War. The subtitle of the 1949 book — *An Essay in Educational and Social Psychology* — is, I believe, highly significant for an understanding of Stephenson's approach to psychology. In the opening chapter of this book, Stephenson confesses that:

> ...it has been my hobby to be interested in mental testing, and in the psychological study of our social institutions, the former reaching into the analysis of human personality, and the latter into the methods whereby man becomes the social creature he is. In the selection of young children for schooling, these two hobbies and interests happily meet, for what can be done by mental testing is limited by the social setting in which these children are placed, and on the other hand the schools, homes, colleges that socialise these children are little more than cages if they are filled with frustrated children and insecure pupils. What I have to offer are reflections from both standpoints. (Stephenson 1949, 11-12)

Stephenson had been invited by Longman's to write a book on mental testing but chose instead to write a critique of the 1944 Educational Act (1979, p. 116). In this book Stephenson:

> ...took issue with the assumption that psychological testing supported the separation of 11-plus children into Grammar, Technical and Comprehensive Secondary channels ... the tests did not warrant this (contrary to Burt's

---

13 At a salary of £300 per annum, increased to £500 two years later (Morrell 1997).

14 William Brown was also medically qualified. In addition to his Oxford commitments, he pursued a lucrative career as a psychotherapist in London. Brown's psychotherapeutic interests were eventually to become dominant at the expense of his interest in experimental psychology (Morrell 1997).

> opinion); moreover, other considerations suggested that the sooner the American high school framework could be instituted in Britain, the better for its public educational system. The problem was to give a sense of self-respect to children, dull and bright alike, and only a common high school could achieve this. (Stephenson 1979b, 116)

> It was sad ... that an Act which promised "secondary education" for all, merely served to save the Public Schools from imminent bankruptcy ... at the expense of the growth of education in Britain." (p. 116)[15]

Stephenson's admiration for the American educational scene is also abundantly clear:

> ... [it] is incomparably more truly democratic, more tolerant, more in keeping with the psychological facts, more adequately social than ours; and I hold that if what America has achieved owes anything to psychologists, then the sooner we have more of them in England the better. (Stephenson 1949, 11)

The 1949 book also stresses the importance of character development, intelligence, and expressiveness (p. 98) — clearly reflecting the legacy of Spearman and Thomson discussed above.

War service interrupted his career and thus the development and dissemination of his ideas about Q methodology. He served from 1939-1943 as a consultant to the Central Trade Test Board, Royal Air Force, and from 1943-1947 as Consultant Psychologist to the British Army (War Office), rising to the rank of Brigadier-General. He was appointed Reader in Experimental Psychology at Oxford in 1942 and succeeded William Brown as Director of the Institute of Experimental Psychology in 1945.

It is clear that Stephenson played a central role in the pre-World War II development of the Oxford Department and in establishing the Honours School in Psychology, Philosophy, and Physiology (PPP) at Oxford. In his Festschrift tribute, Oliver Zangwill recollects, "The 1946-47 post-graduate Diploma course in Psychology was by all considerations exceptional. Although no doubt each of us contributed his share, the inspiration throughout was William Stephenson himself" (Zangwill, Kohlberg, and Brenner 1972, x). Zangwill also notes, "Stephenson more than anyone else was responsible for the establishment of the Honours School. [He] had much to do with the initial programme of instruction not least with the structure of the examination papers, which indeed have remained largely unchanged ever since" (p. x; Morrell 1997).

Stephenson recounts some of the problems in instituting the Honours School in PPP at Oxford. Members of the Science Faculty were on his side but

---

[15] In the British educational context, of course, "public" means "private" i.e. fee-paying schools that are not part of the state sector.

there was opposition from literary and philosophical Dons, formidably so in the person of Professor Gilbert Ryle, the Professor of Philosophy who spoke at length against the proposal on the grounds that "the teaching of psychology was well-enough represented at Cambridge; and besides, it would be likely to induce an unwanted introspectionism and introversion amongst undergraduates" (Stephenson 1970/1980, 28-29). Stephenson takes pleasure in pointing out that:

> the Vice-Chancellor at the time was Stallybrass of Brasenose, who followed Ryle with a brilliant barrister's imitation of Ryle's slight stammer and a spirited defence of the proposal — "I am not a psychologist," he stammered, "nor am I a physiologist, nor a philosopher, nor a phrenologist. But if I had a modicum of knowledge of any of these disciplines I am sure that I could discern an enormous bump of obstinacy on the forehead of Professor Gilbert Ryle." (p. 29)

The psychologists and their supporters won the day, if only by a narrow margin.

In 1947 George Humphrey (a philosopher with strong psychological interests) was elected first holder of the Oxford Chair after two years of acrimonious debate about whether to create it (Morrell 1997). A disappointed Stephenson departed with his family to take up a post as a Visiting Professor in the Department of Psychology, University of Chicago in 1948.[16] He was never to hold another academic appointment in Britain.

Not long after his arrival in the United States, Stephenson further reflected on some of the characteristics of the early pre-war British and American scenes (Stephenson 1948):

> There is a vast enthusiasm for psychology here, and a jostling delight and novelty in the subject, that is totally lacking in the Isles. I need scarcely say that psychology is already part of your culture whereas nothing of the kind has even begun to happen in Britain.... your teaching in psychology is in many ways more comprehensive than we in Britain can ever hope to make it; not only do you teach more, but you have more to teach. (p. 548)

> In the Isles, Stephenson continues, [there is a] more scholarly attachment to our subject. The great names of Hobbes, Locke, Hume, Berkeley, Hartley, the Mills and Bain, and subsequently Galton, Pearson, Stout, and Spearman still matter in England; ... whatever the reason, psychology hasn't really broken with philosophy in Britain. But it is this that gives the Isles something of their archaic, but richly flavored quality in matters psychological. (p. 548)[17]

---

[16] As Morrell observes: "...Stephenson, who had taken a leading part in planning the degree and had run the Institute for a decade, mollified his chagrin by migrating to the USA for a chair at the University of Chicago and subsequent prominence at the University of Missouri" (Morrell 1997, 92).

[17] "The Scots," Stephenson observes, "...are much more coherent and more generous about psychology than we are in England.... but it is to Professor Thomson at Edinburgh, perhaps, that most that is scholarly, generous and thorough, colours the contemporary Scottish scene" (p. 548).

The Demise of the London School and the Ascendancy of Experimental Psychology

Burt reached retirement age in 1948 but the process of finding a successor was difficult and protracted. His successor Roger Russell — an American experimental psychologist from the University of Pittsburgh who had already accepted an invitation from the Institute of Psychiatry (Maudsley Hospital) to set up an animal laboratory — took up his post in 1950 (Hearnshaw 1979). Burt clearly was unhappy about this development and was to comment later:

> The American professor who followed me at University College was one of those who hold that the proper study of man is rats, and most of the work in the field of individual human psychology passed to the Institute of Education. (Cited in Hearnshaw 1979, 153.)

Hearnshaw, among others, has attested to the difficulties Burt had in relinquishing his position of power and influence at UCL after his retirement, observing that Burt's links with UCL ended in the bitterness of defeat, his efforts to preserve the Galtonian tradition having failed (Hearnshaw 1979).

An important post war institutional development concerns the formation of a new group of experimental psychologists — the Experimental Psychology Group (EPG).[18] The beginnings of the EPG "were at once modest and formal" (Mollon 1996, 3).[19] The minutes record that "Zangwill opened the meeting by saying that as a result of discussions he had had during the past few years with a number of the younger experimental psychologists in [the] country, he had come to feel that there existed the need for a new body which would cater *for those actually engaged in psychological research*" (quoted in Mollon 1996, 3, my emphasis). Zangwill later remarked, "At the same time, there can be no doubt that the formation of the Group owed something to misgivings felt by a number of us about certain tendencies current in British Psychology at the time" (Zangwill 1967, 368). Nonetheless, formally at least, there was no antagonism between the BPS and the EPG.

The inaugural meeting took place in October 1946. Ralph Pickford (University of Glasgow) was the first President and Oliver Zangwill (Oxford), the first Secretary. Six of the initial group were from Cambridge and three from Oxford. Thus the group did have "the light blue tinge" that was famously to be referred to by Hans Eysenck when he resigned from the EPG in 1952. Esyenck notes that there clearly was hostility between the experimental psychologists represented by Bartlett and the Cambridge researchers, and the correlational psychologists of the London School represented by Burt and University College. As Eysenck observes:

---

[18] The name was changed to the Experimental Psychology Society (EPS) in 1959.

[19] Just five persons were present at the preliminary meeting on June 20, 1946, in Frederic Bartlett's rooms in St. John's College, Cambridge (Mollon 1996).

> The position was really quite ridiculous. I had several postgraduate students from Cambridge who told me they had one hour of statistics during their undergraduate time, and in London we only had one hour dealing with all of conditioning and learning theory! I was determined that the only course to follow was to combine these two aspects of psychology, very much in the way that Cronbach later on suggested in his APA Presidential Address. (Eysenck 1996, 18)

The relevance of Cronbach's (1957) "two disciplines of psychology" (one experimental, the other correlational) to the UK context is a theme later to be elaborated on by Eysenck in his autobiography (Eysenck 1990). Eysenck's wish for the integration of these two aspects was to be partially fulfilled in the work represented in the 1976 volume on *The Nature of Intelligence* edited by Resnick which successfully brought together research on individual differences and experimental techniques (Resnick 1976). However, in the UK context at least, the "correlational" research tradition was to begin a process of decline after Stephenson's departure. Mental testing was to remain but not really as part of a lively field of differential psychology.

Concluding Remarks

With the departure of Stephenson in 1948, psychology in the United Kingdom lost not only one of the last members of the London School, but also one of its most radical thinkers who might have helped resist the growth and domination of an experimental psychology of a peculiarly narrow kind which followed the filling of the Oxford and London chairs with experimental psychologists. Stephenson went on to demonstrate how it was possible to develop a rigorous experimental approach to subjectivity based on abductive logic and focused on the study of single cases (Stephenson 1953), an approach that can be seen as exemplifying a synthesis of Cronbach's "two disciplines of psychology."

Stephenson might also have helped to weaken the grip of the individualism of British psychology. The potential of his work to redirect the course of psychological investigation into the nature of subjectivity and shared meaning was not realized. Stephenson had to wait nearly 40 years before a conference was to be held in Britain with Q methodology as a central focus, hosted in Reading in 1989 by Wendy and Rex Stainton Rogers.[20]

The events outlined above are, however, as much consequence as cause. It is necessary to take account of a number of other factors. These include skepticism about the statistical and factorial foundations of psychometrics — especially among Cambridge psychologists (Zangwill 1950; Heim 1954), the acceptance of a much more narrow view of experimentation (Winston 1990) together with an associated "cult of empiricism" (Toulmin and Leary 1985), and a pull towards neuropsychology (Mollon 1996).

---

[20] "Subjectivity, Representation, and Communication: A Workshop in Q methodology and the Interpretational Disciplines," University of Reading, April 4-6, 1989.

Stephenson's writing in some respects reflects two central features of modernity — the desire to put the study of "mind" on a sound epistemological footing, and a utopian quest for amelioration.[21] In other respects there are post-modern tendencies — to free the study of subjectivity from both Cartesian and 19th century deterministic preoccupations. Reflecting on his beginnings as an educational psychologist in the Foreword to *Quiddity College*, Stephenson recalls his methodological differences with his youthful colleague Cyril Burt. "Burt," Stephenson writes, "remained throughout his life fixed upon a 19th century paradigm; I felt that, instead, mine was a thrust into the 21st century, with relativity and quantum theory as its guidelines" (1970/1980, 3).

In the final lines of *Quantum Theory of Advertising* Stephenson comments on the often-controversial nature of his work as follows:

> Unhappily, much of what is proposed in these chapters may be so dubbed [i.e. as controversial] because subjectivity remains *infra dignitatem* in the halls of scientific institutions. My theories will haunt these halls, for due process in due course. (Stephenson 1986, 110)

In my view, Stephenson's attempt to establish a scientific approach to the study of human subjectivity builds on the pioneering work of William James (1912), Arthur Bentley (1935), John Dewey (1929), and Jacob Kantor (1933; 1959) to develop an anti-Cartesian approach to human experience that seeks to avoid such dualisms as body/mind, subjective/objective, and fact/value. Stephenson can thus be seen as part of an intellectual tradition in the human sciences that seeks to emphasize the mutuality of person and environment (Pronko and Herman 1982; Still and Good 1992; 1998). Stephenson's work is also congruent with the attempts by Reed (1996) and Lasch (1995) to revive a Deweyan concern with ordinary, everyday experience.

The recent revival of interest in meaning that has arisen in the human sciences under the influence of the "turn to discourse" (Harré 1992a) and the "second cognitive revolution" (Bruner 1991; Harré 1992b) together with the attempts to develop a non-Cartesian account of experience referred to above, may help to ensure that with the advent of the 21st century, ghostly manifestations of Stephenson's ideas about subjectivity may no longer haunt our premises, intellectual or otherwise.[22]

---

[21] The core of *Quiddity College* is an Englishman's discovery of Thomas Jefferson as a mentor for a future moral science.

[22] See Brown (1997) for an assessment of the future prospects of Q methodology.

References

Barchak, L. 1991. A biographical sketch of William Stephenson. *Mass Communication Review* 18(1/2): 28-31.

Bentley, A.F. 1935. *Behavior knowledge fact*. Bloomington, IN: Principia Press.

Brown, S.R. 1991. Obituary: William Stephenson. *Am. Psychologist* 46: 244.

———. 1997. The history and principles of Q methodology in psychology and the social sciences. Paper read at the conference *A celebration of the life and work of William Stephenson (1902-1989)*, December 12-14 at the University of Durham, Durham, U.K.

Brown, W. 1911. *The essentials of mental measurement*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Brown, W. and Thomson, G.H. 1925. *The essentials of mental measurement*. 3rd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Bruner, J. 1991. *Acts of meaning*. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press.

Burt, C. 1915. General and specific factors underlying the emotions. *British Association Annual Report* 84: 694-6.

———. 1940. *The factors of the mind: An introduction to factor-analysis in psychology*. London: Univ. of London Press.

———. 1972. The reciprocity principle. In *Science, psychology, and communication: Essays honoring William Stephenson*, pp. 39-56. Ed. S.R. Brown and D.J. Brenner. New York: Teachers College Press.

Burt, C. and Stephenson, W. 1939. Alternative views on correlations between persons. *Psychometrika* 4 : 269-81.

Cronbach, L. 1957. The two disciplines of scientific psychology. *Am. Psychologist* 12: 671-84.

Dewey, J. 1929. *The quest for certainty: A study of the relation of knowledge and action*. New York: Putnam.

Eysenck, H.J. 1990. *Rebel with a cause: The autobiography of Hans Eysenck*. London: W.H. Allen.

———. 1996. ...such a light blue tinge. In *The Experimental Psychology Society, 1946-1996*. Ed. J.D. Mollon. Cambridge: Experimental Psychology Society.

Flugel, J.C. 1933. *A hundred years of psychology, 1833-1933*. London: Duckworth.

Good, J.M.M. In press. Disciplining social psychology: A case study of boundary relations in the history of the human sciences. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*.

Harré, R. 1992a. The discursive creation of human psychology. *Symbolic Interaction* 15: 515-27.

———. 1992b. The second cognitive revolution. *Am. Behavioral Scientist* 36: 5-7.

Heim, A. 1954. *The appraisal of intelligence*. London: Methuen.

Hearnshaw, L.S. 1964. *A short history of British psychology, 1840-1940*. London: Methuen.

———. L.S. 1979. *Cyril Burt, psychologist*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

James, W. [1912] 1984. *Essays in radical empiricism*. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press.

Kantor, J.R. 1933. *A survey of the science of psychology*. Bloomington, IN: Principia Press.

———. 1959. *Interbehavioral psychology: A sample of scientific construction*. Granville, OH: Principia Press.

Lasch, C. 1995. *The revolt of the elites*. New York: Norton.

Logan, R.A. 1991. Complementarity, self and mass communication: The contributions of William Stephenson, 1902-1989. *Mass Communication Review* 18: 27-39.

Mollon, J.D. 1996. *The Experimental Psychology Society, 1946-1996*. Cambridge: Experimental Psychology Society.

Morrell, J. 1997. *Science at Oxford, 1914-1939: Transforming an arts university*. Oxford: Clarendon.

O'Neil, W.M. 1968. *The beginnings of modern psychology*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, UK: Penguin.

Pronko, N.H. and Herman, D.T. 1982. From Dewey's reflex arc concept to transactionalism and beyond. *Behaviorism* 10: 229-54.

Reed, E.S. 1996. *The necessity of experience*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press.

Resnick, L.B., ed. 1976. *The nature of intelligence*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Sanders, K.P. 1974. William Stephenson: *The study of* (his) *behavior. Mass Communication Review* 2: 9-16.

Spearman, C. 1923. *The nature of "intelligence" and the principles of cognition*. London: Macmillan.

———. 1927. *Abilities of man*. London: Macmillan.

———. 1937. *Psychology down the ages*. London: Macmillan.

Stainton Rogers, R. 1995. Q-Methodology. In *Rethinking methods in psychology*. Ed. J. Smith, R. Harré, and L. van Langenhove. London: Sage.

Stephenson, W. 1929. Mental tests and their relation to the central factor. Ph.D. diss., Univ. of London.

———. 1931. Tetrad differences for verbal sub-tests. *Journal of Educational Psychology* 12: 255-67.

———. 1935. Technique of factor analysis. *Nature* 136 : 297.

———. 1948. Comment. Contemporary American and British psychological scenes. *Am. Psychologist* 3: 547-50.

———. 1949. *Testing school children: An essay in educational and social psychology*. London: Longmans, Green.

———. 1953. *The study of behavior: Q-technique and its methodology*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.

———. 1955. Obituary notice: Sir Godfrey Thomson 1881-1955. *British Journal of Psychology* 46: 245-7.

———. 1967. *The play theory of mass communication*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.

———. 1970/1980. Quiddity College: Thomas Jefferson's legacy. Unpublished Manuscript.

———. 1973. Letter to Leslie S. Hearnshaw, dated 29 September 1973. Cited in Stephenson 1983.

———. 1977. Factors as operant subjectivity. *Operant Subjectivity* 1: 3-16.

———. 1978. Concourse theory of communication. *Communication* 3: 21-40.

———. 1979a. Observations on Sir Cyril Burt and "the Burt affair." *Operant Subjectivity,* 2: 110-23.

———. 1979b. The communicability and operantcy of self. *Operant Subjectivity* 3: 2-14.

———. 1981. Cyril Burt, Quantum theory, and Q: Historical note. *Operant Subjectivity* 4: 120-34.

———. 1983. Cyril Burt and the special place examination. *Association of Educational Psychologists Journal* 6: 46-53.

———. 1986. *Quantum theory of advertising.* Columbia: Univ. of Missouri School of Journalism.

———. 1990. My self in 1980: A study of culture. *Operant Subjectivity* 14: 1-19.

———. 1991. *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*: A Q-methodological look at profundity (Part II: *Finnegan's Wake*). *Operant Subjectivity* 14: 133-152.

———. 1992. Self in everyday life. *Operant Subjectivity* 15: 29-55.

Still, A.W. and Good, J.M.M. 1992. Mutualism in the human sciences: Toward the implementation of a theory. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 22: 105-28.

———. 1998. The ontology of mutualism. *Ecological Psychology* 10: 39-63.

Thomas, F.C. 1935. *Ability and knowledge: The standpoint of the London school.* London: Macmillan.

Thomson, G.H. 1935. On complete families of correlation coefficients, and their tendency to zero tetrad-differences: Including a statement of the sampling theory of abilities. *British Journal of Psychology (General Section)* 26: 63-92.

———. 1939. *The factorial analysis of human ability.* London: Univ. of London Press.

———. 1952. Godfrey Thomson. In *A History of Psychology in Autobiography.* Vol. 4 (pp. 279-294).Ed. E.G. Boring, H. Werner, R.M. Yerkes, and H.S. Langfeld. New York: Russell & Russell.

———. 1969. *The education of an Englishman.* Edinburgh: Moray House.

Thomson, R. 1968. *The Pelican history of psychology.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Toulmin, S. and Leary, D.E. 1985. The cult of empiricism in psychology and beyond. In *A century of psychology as science.* Ed. D.E. Leary and S. Koch New York: McGraw-Hill.

Winston, A.S. 1990. Robert Sessions Woodworth and the "Columbia Bible": How the psychological experiment was redefined. *Am. Journal of Psychology* 103: 391-401.

Zangwill, O.L. 1950. *An introduction to modern psychology.* London: Methuen.

———. 1967. The Experimental Psychology Group, 1946-1958. *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology* 19: 368-70.

Zangwill, O.L., Kohlberg, L. and Brenner, D.J. 1972. Introduction: William Stephenson. In *Science, psychology, and communication: Essays honoring William Stephenson* (pp. ix-xxv). Ed. S.R. Brown and D.J. Brenner. New York: Teachers College Press.