

The Critique of Psychology

From Kant to Postcolonial Theory

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On the Historiography of the Critique of Psychology

Why has a systematic history of the critique of psychology never been written? If one follows the distinction between *traditional* and *critical* histories of psychology, the reasons will be very different.¹ Traditional historians have no interest in focusing on the deficits of psychology because their attention belongs to the successes of the discipline. Critical or new histories have not attended to the history of the critique of psychology because of a skepticism towards intellectual history, which does not require working in archives, because it would make theoretical competence as important as historical knowledge, and because it would make critical histories of psychology themselves part of the history of the critique of psychology. It is necessary to clarify this terminology before these arguments can be reflected upon.

Traditional historians of psychology have focused on *contributors* to the discipline and their innovations in theory, methodology, and research. Persons, individuals, or *great men* have been studied as significant in shaping the outlook of the field. From such a perspective these individuals can be labeled accurately as great psychologists (R. I. Watson & R. B. Evans, 1991) or *pioneers* of psychology (Fancher, 1996). Other historians have elucidated the

Zeitgeist of the discipline, focusing on the intellectual, cultural, and sometimes technological context of a time in which a pioneer of psychology lived and in which he² developed new theories, methods, and practices (see Boring, 1950). Another traditional perspective has discussed the history of psychology in terms of *ideas* or *problems*. D. N. Robinson (1976) tracked patterns of change in ideas in his intellectual history of nonacademic and academic psychology, and Pongratz (1984) analyzed the development of psychology as a progression of ideas, answers, and solutions to problems that have been raised in the discipline.

Traditional historians³ have reflected on how to accomplish a history of psychology. Boring (1950) distinguished between *personalistic* and *naturalistic* theories of history, a distinction also endorsed by R. I. Watson and R. B. Evans (1991).⁴ Accordingly, a personalistic theory of history focuses on the great researcher individual and his or her agency in discovering psychological processes. Within such a perspective, psychoanalysis moved forward because Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), the eminent discoverer of psychoanalysis, had significant insights into unconscious processes, while at the same time he had the skills to promote his discoveries to groups of supporters and to a wider culture. The naturalistic theory of history attends to various contexts, including the *Zeitgeist*. Within such a perspective, psychoanalysis was inevitable in turn-of-the-century Vienna. Pongratz (1984), who borrowed his historiographical reflections from Dessoir (1902), identified a *chronological* history that would recount important events in the history of psychology or divide psychology's history into periods.⁵ A *biographical* history focuses on the life and works of the masterminds of the discipline and their disciples whereas a *problem-oriented* history looks at the development of and suggests solutions to basic problems in psychology.

Concerning critical histories there is no agreed upon denotation as to what *critical* means in historiography. In its generic meaning, it would suggest a perspective that does not identify itself with the field but looks from a historical and theoretical distance at the development of psychology.⁶ There exist various overlapping critical traditions inspired and motivated by Karl Marx (1818–1883), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), Thomas S. Kuhn (1922–1996), or Michel Foucault (1926–1984) that may include postmodern or social-constructionist perspectives, feminist historiography that may or may not be sympathetic to any of the other mentioned perspectives, and a postcolonial historiography which is still at its beginning in psychology (see Shouksmith, 1996). There also exists considerable intellectual hostility among these traditions. Marxist historians of psychology are considered traditional, specifically when Marxist-based analyses are considered variations of the *Zeitgeist* theory of history (see

R. I. Watson & R. B. Evans, 1991), and postmodern thinkers consider Marxist analyses as strong candidates for modern (i.e., traditional) types of theory (see Lyotard, 1979/1984).

Marxist historians of psychology⁷ begin more or less with Marx's and Engels' (1932/1964) argument that the ideas of the ruling class are the ruling ideas, or more precisely, that the dominant ideas are the expression of the ruling material relations. The human sciences are not independent entities but the outcome of real material production processes. Applied to the study of mental life this would imply that psychology must be studied in the context of the development of productive forces and class relations. Psychology could be understood as a superstructure emerging from the economic structure of society. Jaeger and Staebble (1978) executed an exemplary historical study on the linkage and determination of modern psychology within the sociohistorical process and on understanding psychology as part of the political-economic context. Other Marxist historians analyzed psychology, and especially American psychology, as part of bourgeois reactionary ideology (Jaroschewski, 1974/1975). In the self-understanding of Marxist critical historians, their analyses do not provide traditional but critical histories in the same spirit as Marx's critique of political economy.

One strain among several within feminist theory has embraced the Marxist idea that dominating ideas result from the dominating group, but have replaced class with gender (see Chapter 7). Indeed, in all traditional histories of psychology one notices an astonishing neglect of women. Consequently, it was suggested to look at the exclusion of women in historical discourses and to emphasize the repressed voices of women in shaping the discipline. A precise expression of this perspective can be found in Furumoto's (1989) writings and her promotion of the *new history* of psychology derived from discourses in historiography. Traditional history—which focused on great ideas, great men, great discoveries, great insights, and great dates while portraying researchers as neutral and objective and defending truth over error—was contrasted with the new history that challenged traditional history, embraced subjectivity and understood scientific change as a shift in worldviews (see below for Kuhn). According to Furumoto, the new history attended to contexts and neglected voices, was characterized as *historicist* rather than *presentist*⁸ and relied methodologically on primary sources and archival material. The line of research and argumentation in this new history of psychology that paid attention to the disregard of women (e.g., Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987) has been so compelling that textbooks have begun to include the contributions of Christine Ladd-Franklin (1847–1930) and Mary Whiton Calkins (1863–1930) in accounts of the history of the discipline (e.g., Benjafield, 1996; Goodwin, 1999), while at the same time

providing insight into the systematic processes of exclusion of women from academic psychology.

Postcolonial history, using methodologies that vary from traditional (focus on persons) to radical deconstructive analyses, has suggested various ideas for understanding the problem of ethnocentrism in European or American frameworks in psychology. For example, Guthrie (1998) discussed racism in the history of psychology and listed in this history significant African American contributors to the field including their academic biographies. I suggest that one should distinguish here between historians who focus on processes of ethnocentrism and racism within the history of European or American psychology and studies that focus on the exclusion of non-Euro-American perspectives. Included in the former context are parts of Choroover's (1979) reconstructions of genocide as well as Gould (1996), who told the history of how "people of color" were constructed as inferior and how American pioneers of psychology participated and contributed to racist theories and practices in the public and in academia. Gould's analyses were criticized by historians of psychology for historical mistakes (see Fancher, 1987) and Gould was labeled a *revisionist* historian of psychology (see Harris, 1997) because of his perspective. However, Gould provided an innovative point of view that has been taken up in more recent historically sound writings such as those by Richards (1997) who attempted to reconstruct the systematic interconnectedness of important streams of psychology with "race" research.⁹

A perspective that focuses on the exclusion or neglect of particular groups or perspectives must cope with a specific constellation of problems: Although I agree with the attempt to expose neglected contributions to the history of psychology by African American psychologists (and by women psychologists for that matter) to contemporary mainstream Western psychology, I also acknowledge the fact that mainstream psychology has been shaped mainly by male and Euro-American pioneers of psychology. Taking such an assessment as the starting point does not diminish the contributions of various groups to psychology, but allows one to reconstruct wide parts of Western psychology as constituting an indigenous psychology of male Euro-Americans, which may have limited relevance for people from other ethnic backgrounds and origins and for women.

Such an approach opens the door to a different history of psychology and allows psychologists, whether practitioners or researchers, to focus on a postcolonial development of their field. However, the degree of *indigenouness* cannot be established a priori but must be shown in concrete analyses. For instance, Paranjpe (1998) provided¹⁰ not only an excellent history and comparison of Western and Indian psychology, and

showed surprisingly many commonalities but also significant differences between the two traditions. Holdstock (2000) demonstrates that Euro-American psychology could learn from other indigenous psychologies such as African psychology, while Howitt and Owusu-Bempah (1994) promoted the development of an antiracist psychology. Indeed, postcolonial histories have provided insight into the exclusions of people of color, in terms of hiding the indigenous dimension of Euro-American psychology, in terms of racism, and in terms of the fact that many pioneers of psychology have been involved in racist judgments and actions. Interestingly, textbooks are more open to acknowledging non-European psychological frameworks such as Taoism or Confucianism and contributions of African American psychologists, such as Francis Cecil Sumner (1895–1954) and Kenneth B. Clark (1914–2005) to the discipline (see Goodwin, 1999; Benjafield, 1996) than they are to speaking about racism of some important pioneers of psychology, such as Paul Broca (1824–1880), Francis Galton (1822–1911), Granville Stanley Hall (1844–1924), or Lewis Terman (1877–1956).

Significant changes to the understanding and rethinking of philosophies of science and their understanding of knowledge, truth, and progress were inaugurated by Kuhn's (1962) studies on theory development in the natural sciences, more specifically, in physics. Kuhn demonstrated that scientists do not follow the principles proposed by either logical positivism or critical rationalism and identified nonrational moments in the dynamics of the sciences. He suggested, as is well known, that scientific research was defined by *paradigms*¹¹ that consisted of theories, classic experiments, and trusted methods. These paradigms determine the experiments that scientists perform and the types of problems they consider relevant. A paradigm shift changes the basic concepts and methodologies and leads to a qualitatively different worldview that is incommensurate with the old one. Kuhn even included psychological explanations for the acceptance of paradigms when he suggested that students accept these paradigms because of the authority of their teachers and textbooks and not because of their evidence. He argued that the issues that were studied could easily be solved under the prevailing paradigm whereas difficult ones that could not be solved were not even addressed. He compared scientific education to a nonrational orthodox practice and shifted the focus of academic reflection and study to the context of discovery and to the sociohistorical dimension of science.

In terms of historical development, Kuhn identified *noncumulative developments* in the natural sciences and thus, challenged the traditional idea of scientific progress as a cumulative acquisition of knowledge based on experimental rationality. A consequence of his approach would be that

historians should look differently at various periods of science development. Normal periods should be studied in terms of cumulative knowledge acquisition within the accepted prevailing paradigm, puzzle solving, the elaboration of theories, the improvement of measurement, and the application of the paradigm to solve certain problems. During scientific revolutions, in contrast, historians should look at the various sociological, political, and psychological mechanisms that lead opponents to question the existing paradigm and proponents to defend their worldview. They should look at traditional puzzle solving but also at power, rhetoric, and even the age of the scientists.

Kuhn's analyses have been difficult to apply to psychology because he doubted whether the social sciences have achieved the status of a paradigm, and most historians would agree that the inflation of various theories, the coexistence of many incompatible research programs, and the reality of fads tend to characterize psychology as a preparadigmatic science (Teo, 1993; for a systematic literature overview of Kuhn's role in psychology, see Driver-Linn, 2003). Palermo (1971), who applied Kuhn's reflections to psychology, was historically unpersuasive because he put the history of psychology into a schema without doing justice to the complexity of psychological development. More important is Kuhn's idea that the history of psychology should not necessarily be seen as cumulative or continuous, as a story of progress, but as a story of diversification, a narrative in which social factors play probably a larger role than purely academic or scientific ones. There is clear evidence that Wilhelm Wundt's (1832–1920) introspectionism, behaviorism, and cognitive psychology used different "languages" (conceptual networks). Interestingly, there has been recent historical interest in Ludwik Fleck's (1896–1961) ideas on *thought collectives* and *thought styles* which have had an intellectual influence on Kuhn's writings, and which Kuhn (1962) acknowledged in his preface. Benetka (2002) explicitly adopts a *Fleckian* perspective in his historical reconstruction of 19th century psychology by giving priority to the concept of thought style over paradigm. Indeed, philosophers such as Hacking (2002) are well aware of the significance of this concept for the sociology of knowledge.

I. H. Fichte (1860) made use of the notion of a *critical history of psychology* to title his first book in his *Anthropology*. In this book he rejected spiritualism's suggested solution to the mind–body problem because he thought it would be incapable of laying the foundation for an objective study of humans (see p. 170). He rejected materialism because he thought it would not be able to explain the essence of consciousness and ideas. Fichte used his critical history in order to reject the theories of Benedictus Spinoza (1632–1677), Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), Georg Wilhelm Friedrich

Hegel (1770–1831), Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776–1841), and Rudolph Hermann Lotze (1817–1881). He applied a critical history of psychology in order to reconstruct the theoretical dead-ends of previous systems of psychology, to identify the conditions for a new and better psychology, and to promote his own system, for example, his particular interactionist solution to the mind–body problem. While Fichte applied a critical history of psychology, he did not really reflect on its theoretical or even metatheoretical status.

The *concept* of a critical history goes back to Nietzsche (1874/1988) who discriminated among a monumental, antiquarian, and a critical history in his essay on the use and abuse of history for life. Adapted for psychology, a critical history of psychology would suggest a move away from the powerful makers of psychology, from the great men of psychology, and from conserving and celebrating the past, to a perspective that breaks with history, interrogates the discipline's roots, and exposes issues that have been repressed or neglected. From a postcolonial perspective, which I would mark as the latest critique of psychology, an antiantiquarian critical history of psychology would suggest not to collect impressive insights, arguments, or studies, but rather to record the racist verbal and *actual* behaviors of pioneers of psychology. History, in this sense, would become a collection of all the vicious statements and practices of the great men of psychology or would account for the epistemologically inadequate and ethically outrageous publications in the history of psychology.

Such a history would allow for a deconstruction of great men of psychology by demystifying them as cognitive masterminds and contrasting their rational scientific contributions with their biased contributions. Such a history would reveal that a great theoretician or experimenter could be great in one area but trivial, illogical, unreflective, and irresponsible in another one.¹² I suggest that Nietzsche (1874/1988) specifically invited what have been labeled revisionist or presentist histories, which retroactively apply concepts such as sexism and racism to the works of pioneers of psychology. Nietzsche provoked such a focus because he emphasized the pragmatic dimension in his understanding of history, he rejected the idea that one should be lectured for the sake of being lectured, without being stimulated or invigorated for action, and he aligned a critical history with people who resist. In that sense a history of racism in psychology is not just a moral but also an activating force for current concerns (for a different interpretation of Nietzsche, see Greer, 1997).

Nietzsche's program, prone to important philosophical problems (see Habermas, 1985/1987), had a large influence on Foucault. What Kuhn accomplished for the natural sciences, Foucault did for the human sciences (see Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982). Foucault did not reconstruct the

development of truth but what was *considered* true at a given point of time in the human sciences. He developed two historical disciplines that targeted complementary topics: Foucault's (1969/1972) *archaeology* focused on the reconstruction of discourses surrounding knowledge (the will to knowledge) whereas his *genealogy* (Foucault, 1975/1977) traced the history of power (the will to power) and provided interesting analyses of the development of power. He showed in his political history of the production of truth that power was not exercised by a single individual or by a group of individuals but rather that power is a network in which everyone was caught and involved. For instance, the abolishment of torture was not due to the enlightened progress of the prison system but the emergence of a new type of power that introduced disciplines. Instead of continuity in history, Foucault emphasized (as Kuhn did) discontinuity, and instead of a clear, linear, progressive stream of ideas he identified a multiplicity of developmental lines that may or may not cross and interact. According to the young Foucault, humans were not centers of action, knowledge, and speech but were driven by the unconscious structures of language (see Chapter 8).

Due to their conceptual complexity, Foucauldian analyses are rare in psychology. I have reconstructed techniques of problematization in psychology and the human sciences in the context of the construction of "mixed race," but these analyses took only one aspect of Foucault and did not really follow the whole methodological and conceptual arsenal developed by him (Teo, 2004). The idea of problematization follows the notion that in the history of the human sciences and also in psychology certain groups of people are made into problems (see Chapter 9). In order to render groups of people into problems one can use conceptual or empirical tools. Testing hypotheses on the inferiority of "mixed race" subjects is an empirical tool of problematization, regardless of the results.

Foucault-inspired analyses, relevant to the history and theory of psychology, came mostly from outside the discipline. The sociologist N. Rose (1996a), influenced by Foucault and by Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995), applied the idea that the human being is a historical and cultural artifact to a reconstruction of the genealogy of subjectification. He analyzed the role of the *psy disciplines* (psychology, psychiatry, psychoanalysis, psychotherapy) in the process of subjectification and unification of the self and investigated the practices and techniques in which persons were understood and acted upon. The history of psychology was linked to the identification of the role that the *psy disciplines* played in the genealogy of that regime. He was also interested in the projects and movements that challenge the idea of identity (feminist, labor, and antiracist movements) because identity was not understood as a source for emancipation¹³ but

an obstacle. Rose saw traditional histories of psychology as narratives that supplied continuity, progress, and unity, whereas critical histories should include economic, professional, political, cultural, and patriarchal factors.

For N. Rose (1996b), a critical history of psychology was different from recurrent histories and critiques. Recurrent histories are disciplinary histories that recognize the present as the necessary result of the past and provide identity for a field and shape the future. When history is written as a critique, studies challenge the present in order to provide a different future. Rose criticized, based on Foucault's writings, such critiques as negative, reductive, and producing only *guilty verdicts*, and contrasted them with his concept of a critical history.¹⁴ For Rose, a critical history should use studies of the past to reflect the present, *think against the present*, and question taken-for-granted experiences by examining the conditions that produced those experiences. A critical history should include analyses of power, not as negative as in traditional theories of power, but as positive in the meaning of looking at the power effects that constitute subjectivity. For Rose, critical histories should disturb what seems firm, identify contingencies rather than necessities, and look at discontinuities rather than continuities. They should look at the relationship among subjectivity, truth, and power and understand that psychology has changed society. However, as I have argued earlier, Rose did not fathom that critical histories of psychology could be reconstructed as part of the history of the critique of psychology.

The philosopher Hacking (1995) applied a Foucault-type archaeology of knowledge to the concept of multiple personality. He analyzed the social construction of multiple personality in North America which included diagnostic inflation, the role and change of diagnostic manuals in the construction of an illness, the discourses surrounding the causes and treatments of this illness, the idea that early sexual trauma was the source, and the pro and contra constructions that accompanied such a notion, including the false memory discourses. Hacking was not interested in the truth about this illness but he aimed at reconstructing how multiple personality became and was made into an object of knowledge, the ideas that surrounded the problem, and how it changed life and science. He also considered the illness paradigmatic for a memory concept and for a microcosm of the reflection on memory.

Kusch (1999), a historian and philosopher of science, was more influenced by the sociology of scientific knowledge than by Foucault, and understood psychological knowledge as a social institution. He suggested that scientific theories have the same ontological status as marriage, money, or monarchy. Just as money exists because there is a consensus that money should exist, theories exist because groups of people agree that there should be theories about the psyche. The conceptualization of

psychological knowledge as an institution allows the historian to trace the relationship of this institution to other institutions and their struggles in society. It also permits the relating of individuals to institutions, and the understanding of why certain individuals wanted to build, destroy, change, or preserve a particular social institution (a particular psychological theory). For example, the historian could identify actions in the struggle over scientific psychological theories and possibly reconstruct motives such as improvement of one's standing within the profession when it came to the preference for a particular theory. Based on his methodology, Kusch was able to provide an important and interesting analysis of early 20th century German psychological knowledge. He also compared scientific and folk theories of psychology, with the latter indicating slow change and no interest in stabilizing the former (whereas the opposite is true for scientific theories).

However, psychologists were more eager to embrace the epistemological idea that knowledge was a social construction (in psychology, see Gergen, 1985), an idea that emerged partially from various streams of post-modernism and from modifications of the sociology of knowledge (see Berger & Luckmann, 1966), than to adopt a Foucauldian methodology. Some of the most important historical studies have been presented by the psychologist Danziger (1990) who began his reconstructions with the idea that psychological knowledge, which includes textbooks, tables, figures, practices in laboratories, and so on, were socially constructed. Individual research psychologists did not act in an intellectual or institutional vacuum but psychological aspects such as loyalty, power, and conflict related them to each other. The consensus of the scientific community was less a matter of rationality¹⁵ than a social issue that had been excluded and not examined in traditional histories of psychology. The social dimension could not only be identified in the interpretation of data but more importantly in the production of knowledge (context of discovery). For Danziger, the history of psychology became the study of the development of investigative practices, which includes the history of the relationship between experimenter and participants, norms of practices, centers of interest, the relations of the research community to the wider society, and so on. Parallel to showing the historical and cultural consensual change of the relationship between experimenter and research subject (Danziger, 1990), he also demonstrated the change of basic psychological categories, making them of a social, not a *natural kind* (Danziger, 1997a, borrowing from Hacking, 1992). Danziger, most clearly, represents the prototype of the new historian of psychology. His writings show a preference for historicism over presentism, discontinuity over continuity, externalism over internalism, and reflection and critique over celebration.

Yet, a metacritique of the new historiography shows that the presentation of *presentism* and *historicism* as two basic and independent perspectives is misleading (see Teo & Goertzen, 2004). We suggest that it would be more appropriate to distinguish a naïve *presentism*, in which past performances are described and evaluated in terms of contemporary standards, from a *presentist historicism*, and *historicist presentism*. In *presentist historicism*, realizing that it is impossible to completely eradicate current horizons from research or because questions and interests emerge from the present, researchers are aware of the fact that historical studies are motivated by contemporary interests, but at the same time they intend to do justice to historical contexts. In *historicist presentism* researchers use historical material in order to elucidate current topics. Such methodological differences turn significant when one deals with issues such as "race." A similar argument applies to the continuity and discontinuity distinction, where traditional historians have focused on continuity and new historians on discontinuity. In my view, there is evidence for both positions and it seems to be more a question of emphasis. Indeed, Danziger (2003) emphasizes more recently this point in a short article when he calls historicism and discontinuity *prejudices* of the new history.

In order to do justice to the continuity/discontinuity issue, Richards (1996) provided the distinction between *psychology* (lower-case "p"), by which he meant a topic that had been studied prior to the institutionalization of psychology as a discipline, and *Psychology* (upper-case "P"), by which he referred to the discipline as it was established and developed from the mid-19th century onward. For Richards, a critical history of psychology had certain service functions such as elucidating the present by providing information as to how something developed, establishing a *long-term memory* so that psychologists do not repeat previous theories and practices, and supplying information regarding changes that occurred over time. But more importantly, a critical history should reflect on the moral dimension of psychology because psychologists are not outside observers but participate in communities and cultures and what they do and say has consequences for other persons. A critical history should also focus on changes in psychological concepts because psychological language is a psychological phenomenon. Because Richards did not believe that there was an independent psychological reality prior to language, phenomena did not exist before the introduction of the concepts that described these phenomena. He suggested that nobody had an Oedipus complex before Freud, nobody was conditioned before Ivan Pavlov (1849–1936) and John B. Watson (1878–1956), and nobody had a high IQ before the development of the IQ concept. New concepts produce new realities.

R. Smith (1997) held a similar position when he argued that it would be “unacceptable” (p. 27) to project the modern academic discipline of psychology back to the past, and consequently saw psychology only as a recent phenomenon, more specifically of the 20th century, within the history of the human sciences. He suggested that the past must be understood in its own terms (historicism) and contrasted this position with most disciplinary textbooks on the history of psychology. Epistemologically, he was less interested in what *was* the truth in the human sciences than in the processes that led to what were considered truths. His history of the human sciences includes philosophy, psychology, legal theory, history, physiology, political economy, philology, anthropology, sociology, biology, and other disciplines that reflect on what it means to be human.

A sociologically driven history was presented by Ward (2002) who provides explanations of why psychology was successful in 20th century America in terms of guiding North American life. Ward argues that the lack of unification, which is the topic of many theoretical psychologists, has been a source of success and allowed psychology to form alliances with organizations and groups throughout the United States. Psychologists exported psychological knowledge to education, schools, industry, health, prisons, parents, and so on. He also emphasizes the importance of having large and powerful allies that help to reinforce networks of knowledge rather than improve knowledge itself. Another well-known factor in psychology’s historical success was its alliance with the natural sciences, which was, according to Ward, a political decision. At the same time psychology had to exclude charlatans in order to draw new borders for the emerging discipline. Psychology is also seen as a commercial product that requires marketing, advertising, the fabrication of demand, services, and the selling of products, for example, in the domain of sexuality, with the result that parenthood, parents, and children were *psychologized*. Another factor in psychology’s success was psychology’s transportability in material form, by which Ward means that psychology produced machines and measures that required expertise. Following a *Durkheimian* stream of thought, Ward suggests that psychology’s laboratories, machines, and measures form part of a ritual that maintains psychology’s collective identity.

From an *epistemological* point of view, critical historians are confronted with two levels of the concept of truth. The first level refers to psychological research where it makes a difference for historians of psychology whether they understand psychology as a progressive accumulation of knowledge, its theories corresponding to natural and social objects and events, or whether they conceptualize knowledge as a matter of social construction and truth as a matter of consensus. The second level

refers to psychological historiography and the concepts of knowledge and truth in historical scholarship. I would argue that many critical historians have to live a double life when they consider knowledge and truth in psychological research as a social construction but present historical research as a matter of correspondence of historical objects and events with historical descriptions and explanations. Admitting that historical methodology might also be a matter of social construction, even prone to fads in historiography, or a case for another consensus, would imply that critical histories are part of a history of the critique of psychology. Isolating and identifying specific issues within a complex network of developments and focusing on these issues involves a process of consensus—including a critical consensus. Yet, most current critical historians adhere to a consensus theory of truth or social construction theory of truth when looking at research in psychology from a historical point of view,¹⁶ or when challenging traditional historiography, but they are realists when it comes to critical historiography (or their own historiography).

Harris (1997) criticized celebratory histories, in which the present was seen as the progressive outcome of the past, when he identified the description of J. B. Watson's and Rayner's (1920) *Little Albert* experiment as a behaviorist myth because the original study contradicted the experiment's description in textbooks. He rejected traditional histories of psychology, which cleansed the political context from the history of psychology, but at the same time he denounced what he identified as critical revisionist histories of psychology such as provided by Leon Kamin (born 1924) and Stephen J. Gould (1941–2002) (mentioned above as an example of a postcolonial history).¹⁷ I have no concern with his critique of traditional and other critical histories. Yet, a new problem emerges when a reader or a student is confronted with two opposing histories: They must either evaluate the original studies themselves or trust a priori that new historians produce more accurate histories. From the perspective of this book, however, critical historiography has no privileged epistemological status; rather it becomes part of the history of the critique of psychology.

Historians of psychology must choose between writing a general or a specific history of psychology. A *general history* of psychology entails the reconstruction of what are considered the most important general developments in the discipline. In practice, such general histories have focused on the history of mainstream psychology, the development of traditional psychology, or the academically most widely accepted psychology. *Specific histories* of psychology concentrate on particular details of the discipline which may be considered more or less relevant to shaping the field, such as a history of psychology at the University of Leipzig, a history of

German psychology between 1933 and 1945, a history of psychoanalysis, a psychohistory of J. B. Watson, a history of developmental psychology, a history of Indian psychology, and so on. Given recent arguments in historiography, metatheory, and philosophical epistemology (see Teo & Febraro, 2003), one could argue that a general history of psychology in its very meaning is not possible, and that all histories are specific. Accordingly, a history of psychology that exclusively reports and summarizes the history of Western psychology is not doing justice to the idea of a general history and historians of psychology who have presumed that they have written such a general history of psychology are mistaken. However, it is possible to write a general history of dominant Western psychology—with an emphasis on German, British, French, and American traditions—that is, a history of the sources and trajectories of academic mainstream psychology, whereas a general history of psychology that reports theories of the psyche as they have been developed all over the world would never be sufficiently complete.

Critical historians are not interested in a history of the critique of psychology because it would make their critical historical reconstructions part of this history. Critical historians are also not focused on the reconstruction of general psychology. Yet, the proposed project of a history of the critique of psychology aims at a general history because some of the most important critiques of mainstream psychology should be included. The term *mainstream* has, of course, different meanings at different times. The mainstream of early 19th century was different from that of early 20th century psychology, which was very different from that of current psychology. A history of the critique of psychology is also a *specific* history because it provides arguments of marginalized positions with regard to the mainstream. It does not address conflicts within marginalized positions, for example, how Holzkamp's Marxist psychology was criticized by another form of critical psychology (see Busch, Engelhardt, Geuter, Mattes, & Schulte, 1979) or how one brand of feminist theory criticized another (Benhabib, Butler, Cornell, & Fraser, 1995). There is also a preference for critiques that attempted, based on their criticism, to develop a new psychology. It holds that critiques in this book should target grand portions of the mainstream and not just particular issues within the mainstream (e.g., I will not discuss whether path analysis constitutes causality in a natural-scientific sense).

This history will mention influential critiques such as J. B. Watson's critique of Wundt's psychology and Noam Chomsky's (born 1928) critique of behaviorism, but only in a cursory fashion, because the natural-scientific critiques of psychology of other natural-scientific oriented approaches are well documented in textbooks (e.g., Leahey, 2001). For the

20th century, I am more interested in comprehensive critiques, emanating from marginalized positions that provide significant challenges to the mainstream. In accordance with the idea of a history and theory of the critique of psychology this study will include critiques that have been historically and theoretically important. Based on such a framework there will be no overview of the critique of psychoanalysis which plays a central role in the self-understanding of current academic psychology but which should be, because of the scope of the material, the focus of a different book project.

This history and theory of the critique of psychology is in a sense traditional because it looks at intellectual development, at the history of ideas, as proposed by men and women in their published writings. There will be no systematic inclusion of the cultural *Zeitgeist*, the social context, the political, economic, and military background when reflecting on ideas and arguments of criticism, all of which were important in shaping the discipline. This decision is based on the notion that arguments have changed and will change realities. This reconstruction is not critical in understanding theories as institutions, looking at investigative practices, or accomplishing an archeology of knowledge, but it is critical in allowing significant voices of marginalized positions to be heard (for instance, postcolonial voices) and in promoting an understanding of these arguments. It is critical in pointing out that the presentist idea that the critique of psychology is a phenomenon of current psychology is historically misleading. This book is about looking critically at the history of psychology, studying the historical critiques of psychology, and understanding critical histories themselves as part of a historical process.

This history includes Kuhnian ideas that emphasized the role of persuasion and rhetoric as dynamic forces in the context of scientific revolutions (and science development), because it focuses on the role of rational argument and rhetoric in the history of psychology. Arguments and proof were key features in the development of a discipline (Lyotard 1979/1984), but in contrast to some postmodern thinkers, I do not understand arguments and proof as irrational but as rational within the context of a given community. Despite a current consensus against the role of argumentation in scientific development (see Ward, 2002, p. 31), I emphasize the power of arguments. Rhetoric is important in the course of disciplinary development, but this history of the critique of psychology will understand many arguments not just as a political form of persuasion (although I will point out rhetorical strategies in some critiques). I suggest that arguments are more important than previously suggested, and often more important in shaping the discipline than empirical proof (this does not say anything about other factors, such as politics and economics, that play a

role in shaping a discipline). In line with Foucault, this history and theory of psychology is interested in the development of discourses regarding the critiques of the subject matter, methodology, and the ethical-political dimension of psychology, which I consider recurring themes of critique in the history of psychology (see Chapter 2). This represents a form of discourse analysis.

Although I think that arguments can be powerful in discourses and in institutions, this history does not need to endorse a correspondence theory of truth in terms of what psychological programs address. It is much more productive, given the historical nature of this book, to look at what was considered true at a given point of time, at the “paradigms,” or better, at different language games of representative mainstream research programs and their critics, and at the consensus of a given community in terms of its worldviews. If truth in psychology is a matter of consensus, then it is necessary to look at the argumentative structures that psychologists have produced as well as to examine consensus-challenging discourses. Rather than studying empirical evidence and the results of experiments that never played the leading role for theory development in psychology, it is vital to reconstruct views on the subject matter, methodology, and ethical-political dimension of psychology, and on the different interpretations of problems, based on these epistemological, ontological, and ethical differences. In providing a reconstruction of these discourses I attempt to be truthful and accurate.

I will begin with Kant’s critique of rational and empirical psychology because he had a huge impact on the development of German psychology in the 19th century. The 19th century is considered crucial in the transformation of psychology from a philosophical to a natural-scientific enterprise, and is characterized as a period during which psychology separated from philosophy (see Green, Shore, & Teo, 2001). It is shown how arguments, located within metatheories, were used to challenge the status quo. Then I will present the critiques of major perspectives of psychology: the critique of natural-scientific psychology concerning philosophical psychology; the critique stemming from human-scientific psychology regarding natural-scientific psychology; and critiques from relevance-motivated programs (Marxism, feminism, postmodernism, and postcolonial theory) regarding mainstream psychology.

Let me note one final thought on the relationship between theory and history (see also Hacking, 2002). Theory and history in this reconstruction complement each other and a history and theory of the critique of psychology is, by its very definition, and based on the fact that historical and theoretical problems are intertwined, an intellectual amalgamation of these two disciplines. Theory contributes to answering current historical

problems and history allows for a more adequate understanding of theoretical issues. You can understand (following a hermeneutic principle) the past better than it has understood itself. Given the multitude of critiques in the history of psychology, I have reduced the focus of this reconstruction to perspectives of psychology that have contributed significant arguments in the last 250 years and focused on three *themata* that accompany psychology: the subject matter, methodology, and ethical-political dimension of psychology, sometimes also discussed as the relevance of psychology. In some sense, this history and theory of psychology can also be labeled a thematic analysis (see Holton, 1973) of recurring themata and their critiques in the history of psychology by major perspectives of psychology. Of course, the critique of psychology itself is a recurring theme but also a recurring practice. The justification for selecting certain perspectives and themata of psychology is part of metatheory, discussed in the next chapter.¹⁸