

**Hendrik Verwoerd  
and the Leipzig School of Psychology in 1926**

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In his groundbreaking book *The Rise of Afrikanerdom*, the sociologist Dunbar Moodie claims that a number of young Afrikaner intellectuals, and Hendrik Verwoerd in particular, were imbued with “neo-Fichtean” nationalism while at university in Germany in the 1920s. Moodie traces German radical cultural nationalism back to the teachings of the philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte, especially to his *Reden an die Deutsche Nation* (*Addresses to the German nation*), delivered during the wars against Napoleon.<sup>1</sup> Although never actually substantiated by Moodie, this claim has been treated as an established fact ever since.<sup>2</sup>

However, my research has shown that there is no evidence of this and until such time as new documentary evidence is found, Moodie’s claim will remain nothing more than a plausible-sounding theory. Moreover, even if traces of such influence were to be found, they would only confirm that Verwoerd was a nationalist from his school days, long before his arrival in Germany.<sup>3</sup> It is not self-evident that he would have been exposed to radical nationalism during his stay in Germany. The Weimar Republic was in a phase of political stabilisation in 1926 and not on the verge of collapse, as alleged by Alex Hepple, nor was the Nazi dictatorship foreseeable.<sup>4</sup> It is necessary to take a close look at where, when and with whom Verwoerd studied in Germany. The University of Witwatersrand psychiatrist, Alban Burke, has gone so far as to name certain racist academics and eugenics specialists that Verwoerd allegedly met and communicated with during his stay in Germany but provides no evidence for this.<sup>5</sup> My own research in the archives has produced nothing to corroborate Burke’s allegations – on the contrary. In this article, I argue that Verwoerd’s interests lay not in making contact with Nazis or protagonists of racial theories but elsewhere.

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1. Moodie presumably draws on Eli Kedourie, who identified Fichte as the main intellectual source of modern radical (or integral) nationalism. See E. Kedourie, *Nationalism* (Hutchinson, London, 1961) p 34 and following pages (hereafter ff).
2. T.D. Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, Apartheid and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (University of California Press, Berkeley and London, 1975), pp 154ff.
3. G.D. Scholtz, *Dr Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd 1901–1966* (Perskor, Johannesburg, 1974), vol. 1., pp 13ff.
4. A. Hepple, *Verwoerd* (Pelican, Harmondsworth, 1967), p 21.
5. A. Burke, “Mental Health Care During Apartheid in South Africa: An Illustration of How ‘Science’ can be Abused”, in I. Gozaydin and J.L. Madeira (eds), *Evil, Law and the State: Issues in State Power and Violence* (Inter-Disciplinary Press, Oxford, 2006), pp 117–133.

In investigating Moodie's allegations regarding the formative influence of German intellectuals on Afrikaner nationalism, it makes sense to concentrate on Verwoerd's time in Leipzig because the Psychological Institute there is the most likely site of the alleged political influence from German scholars. It was the Leipzig psychologists who exhibited rightist political leanings, unlike their colleagues in Berlin and Hamburg, none of whom were drawn by radical nationalism.

Most overviews of the history of psychology in South Africa mention that Hendrik Verwoerd was a lecturer in psychology before entering politics. Besides the occasional comment however, no research on this period has been undertaken so far.<sup>6</sup> What we know is that Verwoerd studied psychology and philosophy at Stellenbosch and wrote a Master's thesis in each of these subjects in 1922. From 1923 he was a lecturer in psychology at Stellenbosch. He wrote his PhD thesis, entitled "Die Afstomping van Gemoedsaandoeninge" (The Blunting of the Emotions) based on laboratory experiments. He received his doctorate *cum laude* from Stellenbosch University in 1924 and was awarded a £150 Croll & Gray scholarship to study abroad. He spent three semesters in Germany (1926–27) and three months in the USA.<sup>7</sup> His stay in the US was cut short following his appointment to the chair of Applied Psychology and Psychotechnics at his alma mater, Stellenbosch, from January 1928.<sup>8</sup>

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6. Short notes can be found in J. Louw, "This is thy Work: A Contextual History of Applied Psychology and Labour in South Africa", PhD thesis, University of Amsterdam, 1984, p 84; D. Foster, "'Race' and Racism in South African Psychology", *South African Journal of Psychology*, 21, 1991, pp 203–210, especially p 205; and from the same author, "Critical Psychology: A Historical Overview", in C. van Ommen and D. Painter (eds), *Interiors: A History of Psychology in South Africa* (Unisa Press, Pretoria, 2008), pp 92–122, especially p 99. Little information on Verwoerd is provided by J.F. Pfaffe, "Die Geschichte der an Hochschulen institutionalisierten Psychologie in Südafrika", *Geschichte der Psychologie*, No. 11, 4, 2, 1987, pp 66–77, especially p 67. The widely quoted article by R.B. Miller, "Science and Society in the Early Career of H.F. Verwoerd", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 19, 4, 1993, pp 634–661, on the young Verwoerd, is misleading in many respects. It has proved particularly problematic because it has been used by many authors as a reference work despite Miller's very selective and superficial perusal of the Verwoerd papers. Her allegation that Verwoerd became a nationalist out of sheer opportunism in about 1937 is not just implausible but incorrect according to the evidence. Scholtz's biography of Verwoerd in particular provides clear evidence that Verwoerd was already a nationalist when he was a teenager. Yet Miller completely disregards all Scholtz's evidence on Verwoerd's nationalism. Although Scholtz's biography is rather hagiographic, it is nevertheless valuable because he had access to the Verwoerd family archive and therefore to information other writers do not provide. See Scholtz, *Verwoerd*, vol. 1, chapters 1–3. See also C. Marx, "Hendrik Verwoerd's Long March to Apartheid: Nationalism and Racism in South Africa", in M. Berg and S. Wendt (eds), *Racism in the Modern World: Historical Perspectives on Cultural Transfer and Adaptation* (Berghahn, New York and Oxford, 2011), pp 281–302.
  7. Verwoerd's Croll Scholarship began in January 1926 and was valid until the end of his stay overseas in January 1928. See Stellenbosch University Archives (hereafter SUA), Senate notes, p 377.
  8. SUA, Senate notes, meeting of 5 December 1927, p 165; SUA, Personal file, H.F. Verwoerd, letter from Registrar to Verwoerd, 6 December 1927, telling him about

The main purpose of Verwoerd's stay in Germany was to become acquainted with the latest research trends in international psychology. He chose Germany and the USA because of their reputation for psychology at the time, but his specific interests in the field were manifested in his choice of universities.<sup>9</sup> Verwoerd spent one semester each at the psychological institutes of universities in Leipzig (20 April to 26 July 1926), Hamburg (23 October 1926 to 18 February 1927), and Berlin (28 April to 8 August 1927).<sup>10</sup> Their emphasis on applied psychology, his main interest, made these universities particularly attractive for him.<sup>11</sup>

Drawing on academic notes and papers in the Verwoerd collection as well as a number of archival and published sources, I shall investigate the possible influence of the German psychologists on Verwoerd's thinking. Here it is important to differentiate between the scholarly influences and the overtly ideological or political ones, including "neo-Fichtean nationalism". The ideological implications of these influences will be dealt with at the end of this article. I shall begin with the Leipzig school and its main representatives. Using the available sources to trace possible influences of the Leipzig psychologists on Verwoerd, I will attempt to reconstruct Verwoerd's sojourn there. Three fields of psychology are deemed relevant for the purposes of my research, namely characterology, developmental

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his appointment as from 25 February 1928. On Verwoerd's career at Stellenbosch see also, H.B. Thom et al. (eds), *Stellenbosch 1866–1966: Honderd Jaar Hoër Onderwys* (Nasionale Boekhandel, Cape Town, 1966), p 519.

9. Possibly his decision was prefigured by the fact that Verwoerd spent his first years as a pupil at a German Lutheran school in Wynberg. German was actually his first language for a couple of years and he spoke it fluently. See University of the Free State, Institute for Contemporary History (hereafter INCH), Len Verwoerd Collection, PV 72/3, untitled article (beginning with "Ons kom nou in Wynberg ..."), p 6.
10. I am grateful to Prof. Wilhelm Verwoerd, who provided me (via e-mail from 25 March 2012) with the dates, names of lecturers and content of the courses Verwoerd attended while he was in Germany.
11. Verwoerd was not the only South African who studied at the Psychological Institute in Leipzig. Nicholas du Preez from Nigel was there at the same time and they attended at least one course together. Obviously they knew each other from Stellenbosch University and Du Preez arrived only about a week after Verwoerd in Leipzig. See INCH, Len Verwoerd Collection, PV 72/3, untitled manuscript (beginning with "Ons staan in Drosdystraat ..."), p 17. After Verwoerd had left, a certain J. Meiring also studied there. His dissertation "Über die psychischen Einflüsse und Bildungswerte von Leibesübungen" was externally supervised by Klemm and later submitted at the University of Heidelberg. See F. Krueger, "Otto Klemm und das Psychologische Institut der Universität Leipzig", *Zeitschrift für angewandte Psychologie und Charakterkunde*, 56, 1939, p 44. Wilfried Schmidt-Durban's name suggests that he was perhaps a South African of German origin. See W. Schmidt-Durban, "Experimentelle Untersuchungen zur Typologie der Wahrnehmung", *Neue Psychologische Studien*, 15, 2, München 1939, pp 8–85. A valuable overview of applied psychology (*Psychotechnik*) in Germany after the First World War can be found in U. Geuter, *Die Professionalisierung der deutschen Psychologie im Nationalsozialismus*, (Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, 1988), pp 88ff.

psychology and ethnopsychology (Völkerpsychologie). The focus will fall exclusively on the last two.<sup>12</sup>

### The Leipzig Institute and holistic psychology

The Leipzig Institute for Experimental Psychology was founded in 1879 by Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920). The first psychological research institute in the world, it was funded by Wundt himself during the early years. Wundt was a protagonist of positivist methodology in psychological research, a field that was closely connected to associationist psychology.<sup>13</sup> He believed that sensations were the basic units of psychological measurement and thus not further divisible. The associations were combinations of sensations in an approach that was rooted in the tradition of David Hume's epistemology.<sup>14</sup> Wundt's sensations were structurally similar, rather like "psychic atoms". From them perception, experience and reactions were constituted as "psychic formations" (*psychische Gebilde*), to use Wundt's terminology. These psychic formations were made up of the same basic units, differing from each other only in the complexity of their structure and the number and combination of the sensations and associations. It was therefore theoretically possible to identify the "psychic formations" of a higher order by the inductive measurement of psychic elements. Like his 19th century predecessors, Wundt saw perception and reaction as two different processes. The reaction time, that is, the time between perception and reaction, was the focus of much research in early experimental psychology. Psychology was considered to be a science, but the closeness to philosophy in Wundt's work, especially his ethnopsychology, is typical of the early days of German psychology.

Wundt's ideas had a considerable impact on the beginnings of the new science not only in Germany but also in the United States, for many of his students and assistants came from North America and later became influential in their own right. They left their mark both on the development of behaviourism as well as on various areas of applied psychology, even

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12. The topic of characterology can only be treated adequately by dealing with Verwoerd's stay in Germany as a whole as well as with his readings during the years afterwards; this must be reserved for another article. I have translated *Völkerpsychologie* as ethnopsychology since I regard the term "folk psychology" (which is more usually used) as misleading.
  13. On Wundt's psychology see M. Galliker, M. Klein and S. Rykart, *Meilensteine der Psychologie. Die Geschichte der Psychologie nach Personen, Werk und Wirkung* (Kröner, Stuttgart, 2007), pp 196ff. Wundt's negative attitude towards applied psychology is discussed in W. Meischner, "Wilhelm Wundt", in H.E. Lück and R. Miller (eds), *Illustrierte Geschichte der Psychologie* (Beltz, Weinheim and Basel, 2005), pp 35–40.
  14. D. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, vol. 1 (J.M. Dent and E.P. Dutton, London and New York, 1939), pp 19ff. On associationist psychology generally, see H. Rohracher, *Einführung in die Psychologie*, 13th edition, (Psychologie Verlags Union, München and Weinheim, 1988), pp 282ff.

though Wundt himself dismissed the new field for its inadequately developed theory and methodology.<sup>15</sup>

Wundt was succeeded as director of the Institute for Experimental Psychology by Felix Krueger (1874–1948), one of his many former students, in 1917. Interestingly, Wundt recommended Krueger for the position although Krueger had rejected Wundt's approach to psychology by this time.<sup>16</sup>

In the 1920s, the institute occupied 34 rooms in the university's main building as well as a smaller office in the city, huge for the time. Krueger had four regular assistants, each of whom was responsible for his own department: Professor Otto Klemm was responsible for applied psychology and experimental pedagogics; Professor August Kirschmann for measurement methods and psychology of perception; Professor Friedrich Sander for psychology of the higher functions; and Privatdozent Hans Volkelt for developmental psychology, including child psychology.<sup>17</sup>

Like many German psychologists of his time, Krueger had a strong affinity for philosophy. This was nothing unusual since psychology was widely regarded as an auxiliary science to philosophy and was usually integrated into the philosophy department. The aim of cognitive psychology was to explore the empirically verifiable foundations of philosophical epistemology. It would take decades for psychology to emancipate itself from philosophy, a process that was reflected in the slow pace of establishing separate chairs and institutes. A heated debate around the methodology in the humanities made it particularly difficult for the new discipline to find a niche somewhere between the natural sciences and the humanities. This was because their differences were magnified at a time when the humanities were seeking their own autonomy. Heavily influenced by historicism, they saw themselves as "ideographic" human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) as opposed to the "nomothetic" natural sciences.<sup>18</sup> Under Krueger, the Leipzig psychologists positioned themselves unequivocally on the side of the humanities, as did most psychologists.

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15. Very instructive is R.R. Hoffman and K.A. Deffenbacher, "A Brief History of Applied Cognitive Psychology", *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 6, 1992, pp 1–48, especially pp 1–18. On applied psychology see F. Dorsch, *Geschichte und Probleme der angewandten Psychologie* (Hans Huber, Bern and Stuttgart, 1963), pp 36ff. and p 44.

16. University Archives Leipzig (hereafter UAL), Phil. Fak., Microfilm 1272, No. 664, Personal File: Felix Krueger, Documents 25 and 28.

17. UAL, Psychological Institute, Brochure, "Psychologisches Institut und Staatl. Forschungsinstitut für Psychologie bei der Universität Leipzig". See also W. Thiermann, "Zur Geschichte des Leipziger Psychologischen Institutes, 1875–1945", PhD thesis, Karl-Marx-Universität, Leipzig, 1981, p 86; and U. Geuter, *Daten zur Geschichte der deutschen Psychologie, vol. 1: Psychologische Institute, Fachgesellschaften, Fachzeitschriften und Serien, Biographien, Emigranten 1879–1945* (Verlag für Psychologie, Göttingen and Zürich 1986), pp 62ff.

18. W. Dilthey, *Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften*, (Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, 1981), pp 101ff; G.G. Iggers, *Deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft*, (DTV, München, 1971), pp 175ff.

Nonetheless, they realised that psychology was unique among the humanities in its search for scientific laws at a time when all other disciplines were strongly influenced by historicism.

During the 1920s, psychologists from a variety of backgrounds attempted to move beyond Wundt's positivism and his psychology of elements. These included former students such as Oswald Külpe in Würzburg; however, the most important contribution was made by a group of young psychologists, then at Frankfurt University. Max Wertheimer, probably the most gifted of the German psychologists of the time, was the founder of gestalt psychology. With his colleagues Wolfgang Köhler and Kurt Koffka, he developed gestalt theory, making it the most important German contribution to the discipline in the first half of the 20th century.<sup>19</sup> Köhler, as head of department, and Wertheimer had been together as researchers at the University of Berlin in the 1920s, which is why the gestalt psychologists were also known as the Berlin School. Younger psychologists from Berlin went their own way, however. These included Kurt Lewin, who further developed gestalt psychology to establish his own "field theory".<sup>20</sup>

The gestalt psychologists rejected Wundt's approach to developmental psychology with its basic elements. Their research on the perception of optical and acoustical phenomena convinced them that these phenomena were perceived as patterns (*gestalten*). This explained why patterns of sound are perceived as motifs or melodies and not as single, isolated tones, so that the basic pattern is immediately recognisable even when these sounds occur as variants or are transposed to a different pitch. Kurt Koffka called these patterns "structures".<sup>21</sup> Gestalt psychologists

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19. V. Sarris, *Max Wertheimer in Frankfurt. Beginn und Aufbaukrise der Gestaltpsychologie*, (Pabst, Lengerich and Berlin, 1995). In the context of his ideal of a "stream of thought" William James interestingly developed a similar description of perception phenomena to the gestalt psychologists, because he also rejected associationist psychology. See W. James, *Principles of Psychology*, vol. 1 (Dover Publications, New York, 1950), pp 277ff.
  20. Lewin together with Hans Rupp was working in the field of applied psychology at the University of Berlin during the time of Verwoerd's stay there. See H.E. Lück, *Kurt Lewin. Eine Einführung in sein Werk* (Beltz, Weinheim and Basel, 1996), p 15 and on Lewin's field theory pp 60ff.
  21. K. Koffka, *Die Grundlagen der psychischen Entwicklung: Eine Einführung in die Kinderpsychologie* (A.W. Zickfeldt, Osterwieck, 1921), p 94. On Koffka's developmental psychology see M.G. Ash, *Gestalt Psychology in German Culture, 1890–1967: Holism and the Quest for Objectivity* (Cambridge UP, Cambridge, 1998), pp 247–256. On the holistic approach of gestalt psychology see also W. Schönplüg, "Ganzheit und Einheit als Prinzipien der modernen Psychologie", *Psychologie und Geschichte*, 9, 3/4, 2001, pp 105–116. On acoustics see the article by E.M. von Hornbostel, "Psychologie der Gehörserscheinungen", in E.M. von Hornbostel, *Tonart und Ethos: Aufsätze* (Reclam, Leipzig, 1986), pp 315–368. Hornbostel was a musicologist belonging to the Berlin school of gestalt psychology. On gestalt psychology in general see the theoretical work by Kurt Koffka, which he published after his emigration to the United States, *Principles of Gestalt Psychology* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1935) as well as the historical reflections by W. Köhler, "Gestalt Psychology", in D.L. Krantz (ed.), *Schools of Psychology: A Symposium* (Appleton-Century-Crofts, New York, 1969),

approached the problem of perception at a higher level than Wundt, claiming that its comprehensive nature could not be tackled convincingly with the limited tools of associationist psychology. The patterns (*gestalten*) now replaced Wundt's psychic elements as the basic units of perceptual and cognitive psychology. Furthermore, the gestalt psychologists denied that there was a clear distinction between sensations and the resulting motor reactions, or between the processes in the vegetative and motor nervous systems. This was the starting point for the fundamental difference between cognitive psychology and behaviourism.<sup>22</sup>

Krueger responded to gestalt theory of the Berlin type with his own brand of "holistic psychology" (*Ganzheitspsychologie*). Instead of patterns (*gestalten*), he named "complex qualities" (*Komplexqualitäten*) as the primary perceptual phenomena. These diffuse, quasi-multidimensional perceptions comprised thought processes as well as emotions. However, children were unable to differentiate these complex qualities. Human maturation manifested itself as complex qualities became more structured through experience and reason. This meant that holistic psychology was oriented more towards development and evolution than gestalt psychology. Although Krueger vied with the gestalt psychologists to prove that his own version was the original approach, he was heavily influenced by gestalt theory. Thus his holistic approach can at least partly be explained by his efforts to outdo his rivals in the new discipline. He conceded that gestalt psychology was a step in the right direction but maintained that a conclusive psychological and philosophical explanation of the psyche could only be provided by the Leipzig school.<sup>23</sup>

The focus on the emotions was crucial to the profile of the Leipzig school and was the most important task of psychology from Krueger's perspective. Verwoerd, however, took a completely different view in his doctoral thesis. He treated the emotions as phenomena which could be isolated and evoked, rendering them measurable and open to manipulation. This is very far from Krueger's concept of the complex quality and the "holistic experience", which emphasised the diffuse and unfathomable nature of emotions.<sup>24</sup> From Krueger's perspective the emotions formed a

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pp 69–85. See also H.-G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2010) p 96.

22. See also D. Hartmann, *Naturwissenschaftliche Theorien: Wissenschaftstheoretische Grundlagen am Beispiel der Psychologie* (BI Wissenschaftsverlag, Mannheim, Leipzig and Zürich, 1993), pp 2ff. and 34ff.
23. See the condescending remarks by Krueger on the Berlin gestalt psychologists in F. Krueger, "Zur Einführung: Über psychische Ganzheit", in F. Krueger (ed.), *Komplexqualitäten, Gestalten und Gefühle* (Beck, München, 1926), pp 5–121, especially pp 92 and 93 (note 1) as well as p 103. See also F. Krueger, *Lehre von dem Ganzen: Seele, Gemeinschaft und das Göttliche* (Hans Huber, Bern, 1948), p 35. This rivalry was obviously one-sided, since the gestalt psychologist apparently didn't regard Krueger as a serious threat.
24. H.F. Verwoerd, "Die Afstomping van Gemoedsaandoeninge", PhD thesis, Stellenbosch University, 1924, chapter 1; Krueger, *Zur Einführung: Über psychische Ganzheit*, pp 118ff. F. Krueger, "Erlebniszanzheit und seelische Struktur", in E. Heuss (ed.), *Felix Krueger, Zur Philosophie und Psychologie der*

tight cluster of complex qualities in which rational thoughts manifest themselves, but these were so dependent on their emotional environment that it was almost impossible to investigate the complex empirically. Albert Wellek, a student of Krueger's in the 1930s, explained that feelings lost their intensity when under observation, making it impossible to analyse them.<sup>25</sup> Verwoerd's own position was rather different, because he states in his thesis that the declining intensity of emotions is measurable and that emotions are open to analysis. He probably didn't know about Krueger's approach before he came to Leipzig since he did not quote any of Krueger's publications in his doctoral thesis.

The philosopher Ernst Cassirer, a friend and colleague of the Hamburg psychologist William Stern, explains the problematic nature of an approach like Krueger's as follows: "Emotion can combine each with everything; thus it cannot provide a convincing explanation that certain contents combine with each other to form certain units."<sup>26</sup> The fundamental problem in his rationale is obvious from an analysis of Krueger's numerous theoretical writings. Holistic psychology contented itself with the explanation that experiences centred around emotions, but as highly complex phenomena, these emotions were not accessible to analysis. Accordingly, it was only possible for psychologists to isolate phenomena such as thought within a "complex quality" at the expense of its very complexity. In Krueger's opinion, the decontextualisation would distort the experience to such an extent that an adequate interpretation would be rendered impossible. The upshot was that holistic psychology drifted into methodological paralysis and amorphism. It lost the ability to be fruitful for empirical research and degenerated into an empty formula<sup>27</sup> that could be filled by ideological creeds instead. Krueger's rejection of Wundt's mechanistic psychological elementalism led to a blanket rejection of empiricism as a "Western" approach. Krueger maintained that empiricism dismembered "organic" relationships. He saw empiricism and positivism as English and French intellectual traditions that were foreign to holistic German thinking, which was directed towards organic entities. Krueger also took this position when criticising Kantian epistemology for giving centre stage to reason in the enlightenment tradition.<sup>28</sup>

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*Ganzheit: Schriften aus den Jahren 1918–1940* (Springer, Berlin and Heidelberg, 1953), pp 147–150.

25. A. Wellek, "Die Genetische Ganzheitspsychologie der Leipziger Schule und ihre Verzweigungen. Rückblick und Ausblick", in A. Wellek (ed.), *Die Genetische Ganzheitspsychologie* (Beck, München, 1954), pp 1–67, especially p 6.
26. E. Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, vol. 1 (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt 1994), p 268. Translated from the original German.
27. This becomes clear particularly in F. Krueger, *Das Wesen der Gefühle. Entwurf einer systematischen Theorie* (Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft, Leipzig, 1929), pp 20 and. 25ff. See also Thiermann, "Zur Geschichte des Leipziger Psychologischen Institutes", p 153.
28. U. Geuter, "Die Zerstörung wissenschaftlicher Vernunft: Felix Krueger und die Leipziger Schule der Ganzheitspsychologie", *Psychologie Heute*, April 1980, pp 35–43, especially pp 37f. Krueger attempted to relativise Kant's rationalist and enlightenment stance in order to claim him for a German nationalist tradition. See



The holistic psychology of the Leipzig school followed a very different methodological and theoretical trajectory from gestalt theory as represented by Wertheimer, Köhler and Koffka, who were committed to a rationalist and analytical approach. It was therefore not simply a more radical variant of gestalt theory but was underpinned by a different psychological epistemology altogether.

Krueger's holistic psychology concealed an ideological enmity towards enlightenment rationality which he equated with "Western" thought. Thus his distancing from Wundt's psychology of elements was only partially a reflection of a scientific approach. Rather, it reflected his own fundamental rejection of empiricism and induction as signifiers of an enlightened, rational understanding of science.<sup>29</sup> Krueger emphasised the relative nature of reason by embedding it in an emotional environment and embracing a philosophy of life that was inspired by irrationalism. His personal bearing and his attempt to find a "synthesis" in the notion of the "whole" (*Ganzheit*) epitomise the qualities referred to in Fritz Ringer's *The Decline of the German Mandarins*, namely, the status-conscious, socially conservative and authoritarian German "ordinarii" or tenured professors:<sup>30</sup>

One wonders whether the work of certain German psychologists of this period was anything more than an ideological reaction against a loosely constructed conception of positivist fallacies. It is the exclusively programmatic aspect of much that was written which leads to this impression.<sup>31</sup>

Krueger's theoretical conceptualisation of holistic psychology encouraged the absorption of both *volkish* ideologies and nationalist ones. Holistic psychology was closely interwoven with an ideological and political

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Krueger, "Das Problem der Ganzheit", in E. Heuss (ed.), *Felix Krueger, Zur Philosophie und Psychologie der Ganzheit*, pp 151–176, especially pp 164ff.

29. F. Krueger, "Die Tiefendimension und die Gegensätzlichkeit des Gefühlslebens", in F. Krueger, *Über das Gefühl, Zwei Aufsätze* (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt, 1967), pp 6f. See also Adolf-Würth-Zentrum für Geschichte der Psychologie at Würzburg University (hereafter AWZGP), Volkelt Papers, Box 18: Ganzheitspsychologie, Notizen und Aufzeichnungen, Von der Assoziations- zur Ganzheitspsychologie.
30. The word "ordinarius" for a head of department is derived from the official naming of "ordentlicher Professor", which refers to the salary as well as the status of the incumbent. Although formally comparable to a head of department in the anglophone world, the status and high self-esteem of this class of professors was much more elevated.
31. F.K. Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890–1933* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1969), p 382 with reference to Krueger; on wholeness as a key concept of the conservatives see pp 392ff. See also M. Vorweg, *Wilhelm Wundt, Erbe und Gegenwart. Festveranstaltung der Karl-Marx-Universität anlässlich des 100jährigen Jubiläums des von Wilhelm Wundt gegründeten Institutes für experimentelle Psychologie an der Universität Leipzig*, 31 October 1979 (Karl-Marx-Universität, Leipzig, 1979), pp 15–30; on Krueger, p 25. On Krueger's holistic psychology see also A. Harrington, *Re-enchanted Science: Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1996), p 123ff.

undercurrent that operated in the context of wholes and transcended the psychology of the individual through the community perceived as a *volk*: “Although working in different fields, our efforts aimed at an understanding of community life, especially that of the *volk*.”<sup>32</sup> It comes as no surprise therefore, that both Krueger himself and some of his assistants, such as Volkelt and Dürckheim, were involved in right wing politics as early as the 1920s: “The Psychological Institute was regarded as a ‘*völkische Zelle*’ (*volkish cell*).”<sup>33</sup> It was the logic of holistic psychology’s internal dynamics that led Krueger to wave goodbye to empirical research after 1917. Henceforth he devoted his energies to presenting his ideas in a very general philosophical framework that had less and less to do with practical psychological research.<sup>34</sup> In keeping with this view, Krueger dropped the word “experimental” from the name of Wundt’s institute, renaming it the Psychological Institute in 1925.<sup>35</sup>

After his appointment, Krueger converted psychologists at the institute like Otto Klemm and Hans Volkelt to his own position, and in the following decades he managed to draw a number of psychologists to Leipzig for training at what became known as the Leipzig School. The Leipzig psychologists explicitly identified themselves as a school and were recognised as such by the academic fraternity. It appears that there was considerable pressure within the institute to conform to the basic tenets of holistic psychology, or at least to pretend to do so.

It was Hans Volkelt (1886–1964) more than any other who succeeded in making holistic psychology applicable for empirical research. The son of the well known German philosopher, Johannes Volkelt (1848–1930), he had studied with Wundt, later becoming an assistant to Krueger and one of the main protagonists of his holistic approach. Notwithstanding this influence, Volkelt specialised in child and developmental psychology, making a name for himself as one of the leading innovative scholars in this field.<sup>36</sup>

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32. Krueger, “Otto Klemm und das Psychologische Institut”, pp 12, 81 ff; F. Krueger, *Bund, Volk, Reich* (Junker & Dünnhaupt, Berlin, 1933). And with aggressive polemics against the enlightenment tradition and especially against Alfred Adler, see F. Krueger, “Sinn und Geist der deutschen Familie”, *Die deutsche Sängerschaft*, 37, 1, 1932, pp 1–15, especially p 2; and from the same author, “Protest gegen Versailles: Ansprache zur Protest-Kundgebung der Leipziger Studentenschaft am 28. Juni 1932 im Kyffhäuserhaus”, *Die Leipziger Studentenschaft*, 4, 16, 1932; and F. Krueger, “Rückblick auf die 10. Tagung der Deutschen Philosophischen Gesellschaft”, in F. Krueger (ed.), *Philosophie der Gemeinschaft* (Junker & Dünnhaupt, Berlin, 1929), pp 143–168.
  33. See the presentation of their activities in Krueger, “Otto Klemm und das Psychologische Institut”, pp 30ff and quotation on p 37; see also p 74.
  34. See for example F. Sander, “Friedrich Sander”, in L. Pongratz, W. Traxel, E. Wehner (eds), *Psychologie in Selbstdarstellungen*, vol. 1 (Hans Huber, Bern and Stuttgart, 1972), pp 309–333, especially p 319.
  35. UAL, Philosophical Faculty, No. B1/14:37, vol. 1 (Microfilm 1205) Psychological Institute, 1911, 1925, 1931–1941, Dept. of Popular Education (Ministerium f. Volksbildung) (v. Seydewitz), Dresden to Direktor of Psych. Institute, 10 July 1925.
  36. See W. Hansen, *Die Entwicklung des kindlichen Weltbildes* (Kösel, München, 1960), pp 81ff. See also Volkelt’s notes in AWZGP, Volkelt Papers, Box 26, Kinderpsychologie.

Volkelt's writings on child psychology and development are remarkable for the clarity of their analysis and are written in an accessible style for those not versed in the theory of holistic psychology. As soon as he writes about the latter, however, his language shifts to the rather muddled and complicated style characteristic of Krueger's philosophical writings.<sup>37</sup>

Verwoerd's most important contact and instructor, after Volkelt, was Otto Klemm (1884–1939). Klemm was head of the applied psychology department, Verwoerd's main area of interest. He became the first professor of applied psychology in Germany in 1923. Dissertations and research results were published in *Neue Psychologische Forschungen* (new psychological research), a book series edited by Krueger. Klemm's department focused primarily on the psychology of physical activity. "There are studies of working procedures, fatigue, aptitude tests and related psycho-technical testing. The methods are tested and applied to carefully chosen cases."<sup>38</sup> Klemm's department collaborated with industry as well as employment centres in testing applicants for specific jobs so that his research contributed to optimising workplace conditions. Peter Behrens identifies four main areas of Klemm's research, namely: "human work, equipment, and control design; human performance and mental functioning; forensic psychology; and mental ability testing and vocational guidance."<sup>39</sup>

Klemm only accepted Krueger's holistic paradigm after some hesitation and began rather late to use its peculiar terminology,<sup>40</sup> which suggests that he may have toed the line due to internal pressure from his colleagues at the institute. We therefore cannot exclude the possibility that he disagreed with the work of the institute and its ideological stance under Krueger's directorship. Klemm's family had contacts to liberal intellectual circles that were suspicious of the thinking associated with the ideas of the *volk* and National Socialism. His brother Wilhelm was the manager of the Kröner publishing house in Leipzig for almost 30 years – and they published the recently rediscovered early writings of Karl Marx as late as 1932. Cosmopolitan and open-minded, Klemm himself indulged in a somewhat bohemian and bourgeois lifestyle, behaviour that was out of place at the Leipzig Institute.<sup>41</sup> Why he committed suicide in 1939 has never been

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37. See H. Volkelt, "Grundbegriffe der Ganzheitspsychologie", in F. Sander and H. Volkelt, *Ganzheitspsychologie: Grundlagen, Ergebnisse, Anwendungen. Gesammelte Abhandlungen* (Beck, München, 1962), pp 31–65.

38. UAL, Psychological Institute Brochure: "Psychologisches Institut und Staatl. Forschungsinstitut für Psychologie bei der Universität Leipzig", p 6. Translated from the original German.

39. P. Behrens, "Applied Psychology at Leipzig University in the Inter-War Period: The Work of Otto Klemm", Unpublished paper presented at the 20th annual conference of the European Society for the History of the Human Sciences, Amsterdam, 2001, p 6. I wish to thank Prof. Behrens who was so kind as to send me a copy of his paper. On Klemm's applied psychology see also E. Loosch, *Otto Klemm (1884–1939) und das Psychologische Institut in Leipzig* (Lit, Berlin, 2008), pp 74–81.

40. Loosch, *Otto Klemm*, p 20 and 101ff.

41. This resulted in a rather negative evaluation by the SS. Reprinted in Thiermann, "Zur Geschichte des Leipziger Psychologischen Institutes", pp 117f.

disclosed, but several authors do not exclude political reasons as a possibility, in addition to his disappointment at not being made director of the institute on Krueger's retirement. After Klemm's death, Krueger wrote a book about his role in the institute, and his attempt to claim Klemm for his own worldview may be a further sign that Klemm was not happy with the developments there.<sup>42</sup> Be that as it may, the fact that such different personalities as Volkelt and Klemm worked at the same institute highlights the importance of providing evidence for allegations that Verwoerd was influenced by the local brand of nationalism during his stay in Germany.

One member of the institute not yet mentioned was Karlfried Graf Dürckheim-Montmartin, the son of an impoverished aristocratic family, who had taken part in the violent suppression of the short-lived Munich Soviet Republic in 1919. Dürckheim-Montmartin studied psychology and moved to Leipzig after completing his doctorate in Kiel. He worked as a voluntary assistant at the university from 1925 and was given a regular contract at Krueger's institute two years later.<sup>43</sup> Although Verwoerd did not attend any of the count's courses, they obviously knew each other. A few years later both of them participated in the 1934 congress of the New Education Fellowship in South Africa, organised by Ernest Malherbe.<sup>44</sup> Dürckheim remained a protagonist of a mystical, volkish *Weltanschauung* even after the war.<sup>45</sup> There is no evidence that Dürckheim had an influence on Verwoerd's

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42. Krueger, "Otto Klemm und das Psychologische Institut".

43. UAL, Psychological Institute, Verband der Freunde und Förderer des Psych. Instituts, Report on the year 1925/26. Dürckheim attended the same course by Volkelt which Verwoerd also attended. See Notes in AWZGP, Volkelt Papers, Box 31, Notebook 59, Colloquium 1926. See also Thiermann, "Zur Geschichte des Leipziger Psychologischen Institutes", p 97; and the correspondence between Hans Freyer, at the time still in Kiel, and Krueger. Freyer recommended Dürckheim for a post as assistant and Krueger noted after reading Dürckheim's dissertation: "There are talents to be found here which unfortunately are still rare among experimental psychologists", but without going into more detail. Nevertheless, his remarks reveal his own growing distance towards experimental psychology: UAL, Krueger Papers (hereafter NA Krueger), 12, Freyer to Krueger, 12 February 1925; Krueger to Freyer, 28 February 1925.

44. Unfortunately the family Dürckheim-Montmartin has refused access to the count's papers. Electronic letter by Dr Paul Warmbrunn, Landesarchiv Rheinland-Pfalz in Speyer, 20 July 2011. For this reason I was unable to check the diary of his journey to South Africa in which he would have recorded every meeting. A meeting with Verwoerd could therefore not be verified but it is plausible. Dürckheim published three contributions on Nazi pedagogics in the congress proceedings. Verwoerd, at this time already working as a sociologist, is mentioned with a contribution to the discussions on poor whitism: E.G. Malherbe, *Educational Adaptations in a Changing Society* (Juta, Cape Town and Johannesburg, 1937), p 357. On Dürckheim's other activities for the Nazi regime during his stay in South Africa, see A. Hagemann, *Südafrika und das "Dritte Reich": Rassenpolitische Affinität und machtpolitische Rivalität* (Campus, Frankfurt and New York, 1989), pp 83ff. On the congress of the New Education Fellowship, see S. Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge: Science, Sensibility and White South Africa 1820–2000* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2006), pp 228ff.

45. See for instance his contribution on "Gemeinschaft" (community) in O. Klemm (ed.), *Wege zur Ganzheitspsychologie* (Beck, München, 1954), pp 185–214, in which he defines the individual exclusively through his membership in a community

research and study interests, but the possibility of political influence cannot be excluded.

In 1926 Volkelt became assistant professor. He and Graf Dürckheim-Montmartin were the earliest and most outspoken adherents of National Socialism at the Leipzig School. Volkelt became a member of the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP), the National Socialist German Workers' Party, as early as 1932, one year before Hitler came to power, clear evidence that he joined the party out of conviction rather than opportunism.<sup>46</sup> Under Krueger, the Leipzig Institute adapted very quickly to the new regime and some of its members publicly acclaimed the National Socialist assumption of power.<sup>47</sup> Krueger himself had been an exponent of the radically nationalist and volk-orientated rightwing for many years already.<sup>48</sup> In 1935 he became rector of the university,<sup>49</sup> but was forced to resign by the Nazis after referring in a public speech to Heinrich Hertz as a "noble Jew".<sup>50</sup> He left the university some years later, taking early

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which is completely in accordance with integral nationalism. Dürckheim later worked in the Foreign Office under Ribbentrop, and after the Second World War he began a second career as an esoteric guru. Together with his future wife, Maria Hippus, herself previously an assistant at the Leipzig Institute, he founded a centre for "transpersonal psychology" in Todtmoos in the Black Forest. See G. Wehr, *Karlfried Graf Dürckheim. Ein Leben im Zeichen der Wandlung* (Kösel, München, 1988), especially pp 128ff. Wehr does not deny Dürckheim's Nazi sympathies but tends to play them down and he sees no connection between his political convictions and his "transpersonal psychology". Hippus' first husband Rudolf worked first as a psychologist at the Leipzig institute and was later involved in racist psychological research in occupied Poznan (Poland). On this see M.G. Ash, "Psychologie", in F.-R. Hausmann (ed.), *Die Rolle der Geisteswissenschaften im Dritten Reich 1933–1945* (Oldenbourg, München, 2002), pp 229–264, especially pp 258ff.

46. Despite his eager involvement with National Socialism, Volkelt's application to become Krueger's successor was not considered, despite Volkelt's protests and intrigues. See Thiermann, "Zur Geschichte des Leipziger Psychologischen Institutes", pp 118ff.
47. Friedrich Sander would be a typical case, but he will not be treated here, because Verwoerd had nothing to do with him. See Thiermann, "Zur Geschichte des Leipziger Psychologischen Institutes", pp 136f. Another typical case would be Albert Wellek, who was at the institute from the late 1920s onwards and created a legend after the war about the institute's distance from the NS regime. In his autobiography he took great pains to circumvent his own sympathies with right wing positions. Wellek was the most prominent psychologist to fight for a continuation of the Leipzig approach of holistic psychology after the Second World War when he became a professor in Mainz and a highly influential figure in psychological organisations: see A. Wellek, "Albert Wellek", in L. Pongratz, W. Traxel, E. Wehner (eds), *Psychologie in Selbstdarstellungen*, vol. 1 (Hans Huber, Bern and Stuttgart, 1972), pp 357–388, especially pp 363ff.
48. Geuter, *Zerstörung wissenschaftlicher Vernunft*, pp 41f. On Krueger's activities as a philosopher see C. Tilitzki, *Die deutsche Universitätsphilosophie in der Weimarer Republik und im Dritten Reich* (Akademie, Berlin, 2002), pp 523ff and a portrait of Krueger on pp 527ff.
49. Thiermann, "Zur Geschichte des Leipziger Psychologischen Institutes", pp 108ff.
50. This episode was used to rehabilitate Krueger after the war. Yet, after his resignation as rector of the university his Marburg colleague, Erich Jaensch, a well known anti-semite, defended him by emphasising Krueger's antisemitic

retirement, officially for health reasons. Nevertheless, he cannot be counted among the victims of the Nazi regime because he used the opportunity to fill the vacant positions in the psychological associations with his own adherents when Jewish colleagues like William Stern were expelled from their universities in 1933. In stark contrast to Wolfgang Köhler in Berlin, Krueger never uttered a word of regret or solidarity with the psychologists who lost their university positions or were forced into exile.<sup>51</sup> However, Krueger's opportunism and sycophantic attempts to curry favour with the Nazi regime were not the main reasons for the eclipse of the Leipzig brand of holistic psychology after the Second World War.<sup>52</sup> The main factor was its sterility as an academic discipline.

## Verwoerd in Leipzig

In the summer of 1926, Verwoerd registered as a student and signed up for a range of courses at the Psychological Institute. Tuition was provided by one or more lecturers and attended by undergraduates and graduates alike. The programme offered between six and nine specialised courses on various areas of psychology; for graduates there was also a practical of at least four hours per week. Verwoerd was fortunate to be able to attend a course in applied psychology as this was usually only offered in the summer, the winter course being devoted to general psychology. The

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convictions, which is more than strange in this context. See Thiermann, "Zur Geschichte des Leipziger Psychologischen Institutes", pp 139ff. After he was given emeritus status against his will, he was defended by his former student Rudert: "Krueger's life's work has, like that of few others, been constructive in the national socialist sense. Indeed, he was one of the few professors who embraced anti-Semitism before 1933." See UAL, Personal file Felix Krueger, Document 110d, Psychological Institute, deputy director Rudert to his colleague Lenk, 21 June 1944, translated from the original German. Note the way in which Krueger, even after his resignation, proclaimed his conviction for the regime's racism in his announcement of the 15th Congress of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Psychologie: UAL, NA Krueger, 17, pp 8ff. Kongress-Korrespondenz, No. 26, 27 June 1936.

51. Ash, "Psychologie", pp 239ff. Ash is even more outspoken and emphasises the anticipating obedience of the Leipzig psychologists in his article "Geschichte eines Kongresses als Geschichte einer Disziplin", *Psychologische Rundschau*, 55, 3, 2004, pp 107–117, especially p 111; Geuter, *Die Professionalisierung der deutschen Psychologie*, pp 102ff; on Köhler, see S. Jaeger, "Zur Widerständigkeit der Hochschullehrer zu Beginn der nationalsozialistischen Herrschaft", *Psychologie und Geschichte*, 4, 3/4, 1993, pp 219–228, especially pp 221f.
52. Besides the rearguard fighting by A. Wellek, *Die Wiederherstellung der Seelenwissenschaft im Lebenswerk Felix Krügers* (Meiner, Hamburg, 1950) there was only one attempt to rehabilitate the Leipzig holistic psychology at a later point in time and this was made by Ernst Plaum, professor of psychology at the University of Eichstätt, "Historische Anmerkungen zum Problem eines holistischen Eklektizismus in der Psychologie", *Geschichte der Psychologie*, 16, 6, 1989, pp 34–38; "Grundlegende Aspekte holistischer Psychologien der Zwischenkriegszeit in Deutschland", *Psychologie und Geschichte*, 5, 1/2, 1993, pp 31–39; "Zur 'Unwissenschaftlichkeit' Felix Kruegers", *Psychologie und Geschichte*, 7, 1, 1995, p. 3–28; and "'Gestalt' und 'Ganzheit': politisch gefährliche Begriffe?", *Psychologie und Geschichte*, 7, 3, 1996, pp 210–216. See also the rejoinder by W. Prinz, "Ausgerechnet Krueger? Kommentar zu Ernst Plaum: Zur 'Unwissenschaftlichkeit' Felix Kruegers", *Psychologie und Geschichte*, 8, 3/4, 2000, pp 410–412.

students were divided into three or four smaller groups, and all five lecturers were involved in the practical sessions.<sup>53</sup> Students were required to record the proceedings and these records were filed in the archives. Few of these survived the air raids on the institute during the Second World War, however, so it is fortunate that a notebook about a course in experimental child psychology that Verwoerd attended was saved by Volkelt.

Verwoerd's timetable includes the names of researchers, scholars and a few academics who were not lecturers at the institute. "Competent lecturers in medicine, ethnology or comparative religion are usually engaged to hold courses on pathopsychological topics or ethno, social and cultural psychology etc."<sup>54</sup> He attended two courses by Prof. Richard Pfeifer (1877–1957) who held doctorates in medicine and psychology. As a psychiatrist, Pfeifer offered a course entitled "The Psychic Pathology of Children and Youths" (*Die Psychopathologie des Kindes und des Jugendlichen*) as well as a course on "Psychological Therapy and Hypnosis" (*Psychologische Therapie und Hypnose*). Verwoerd also attended "Fundamentals of Criminal Psychology" (*Grundzüge der Kriminalpsychologie*) conducted by Franz Exner (1881–1947), a law professor; and lectures given by August Döllken, a professor of medicine, on the same topic, a subject that would continue to occupy him after his return to South Africa. Since his undergraduate years, Verwoerd's primary interest had been the so-called "poor white problem" in South Africa,<sup>55</sup> and this remained the focus of his academic and early political activities from 1919 until 1949. The courses Verwoerd attended during his stay in Germany, such as "Child and Adolescent Psychology", "Juvenile Delinquency" and "Characterology", all related to his interest in poor whiteness. Other courses he attended were conducted by senior lecturers in the Psychological Institute, in his case Krueger, Volkelt and Klemm.

In one of the few articles published by Verwoerd in an academic journal, he expressly thanked Krueger and Klemm for the opportunity to access the Leipzig Institute for his research.<sup>56</sup> Verwoerd was an official member of the institute during his semester in Leipzig, which was nothing special for the South African visitor with a PhD degree, however,<sup>57</sup> as this

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53. UAL, Psych. Inst. Brochure, "Psychologisches Institut und Staatl. Forschungsinstitut für Psychologie bei der Universität Leipzig", pp 3f.
  54. UAL, Psych. Inst. Brochure, "Psychologisches Institut und Staatl. Forschungsinstitut für Psychologie bei der Universität Leipzig", p 4; and a few pages further (p 6): "Only a person who has already worked scientifically in the fields of psychology and its auxiliary disciplines will be accepted as a member. It is necessary to present himself to the director, attend the first meeting in the semester and make personal contact with the lecturer in charge as well as those persons conducting independent research." Translated from the original German.
  55. H.F. Verwoerd, "Die Veragterdes in Ons Midde", *Stellenbosch Universiteitsblad*, 21, 4, 1920, pp 123–125. Miller has neglected this continuity in Verwoerd's biography in her article, Miller, "Science and Society", p 653.
  56. H.F. Verwoerd, "The Distribution of 'Attention' and its Testing", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 12, 5, 1928, pp 495–510, footnote 1.
  57. Interestingly, Verwoerd never mentioned having a doctorate when he registered, possibly because he might have had problems in being accepted to some of the courses had he done so.

was routine for post-graduate students. The latter took part in the weekly colloquium, where they discussed current research and questions on the concept of holistic psychology.<sup>58</sup> As outlined in a brochure on the institute, "Members who have already worked on their own as psychologists are allowed to attend the colloquium. Here fundamental questions of psychology are debated in the context of comparative humanities and philosophical approaches."<sup>59</sup>

There is no information whatsoever on Verwoerd's stay in Leipzig, apart from his academic involvement,<sup>60</sup> so that Moodie's claim can only be treated in relation to Verwoerd's studies. If Moodie were right, holistic philosophy with its openness for nationalist and volkish concepts would have appealed to someone like Verwoerd. However, there is no mention of holistic psychology in Verwoerd's personal papers, even though he attended Krueger's "Introduction to Philosophy" lecture (*Einführung in die Philosophie*), suggesting that he was neither convinced by nor interested in the theoretical approach to holistic psychology. A scholar like Verwoerd, who was keenly interested in the applied side of psychology, presumably had little time for the teachings of Krueger detached from empiricism as they were. It is therefore possible that he attended Krueger's courses more out of courtesy towards his host than genuine interest.<sup>61</sup> Unfortunately there are no notes to provide details of Klemm's courses, but the fact that Verwoerd attended them is a clear indication that he was primarily interested in widening his knowledge of applied psychology.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, traceable influences on Verwoerd by the Leipzig psychologists can be found in the genuinely psychological areas and less in their ideological commitments. Verwoerd's notes made for his own lectures and courses in Stellenbosch contain impressions of research pertaining to child psychology and ethnopsychology, but there is no mention of holistic theory.

Of the courses Verwoerd attended, two of Volkelt's are of special interest. Volkelt conducted them fortnightly, alternating "New Research in Experimental Child and Adolescent Psychology" (*Fortschritte der experimentellen Psychologie des Kindes und des Jugendlichen*) with "Early

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58. Thiermann, "Zur Geschichte des Leipziger Psychologischen Institutes", pp 87f. The Institute had 193 members (i.e. students) in 1927, (see p 92). Apart from the list of participants, Verwoerd's name is never mentioned. Obviously he did not participate actively in the discussions. See also AWZGP, Volkelt Papers, Box 33, Notebook 22, *Fortschritte in der experimentellen Psychologie der Kinder*, Sommersemester 1926.

59. UAL, Psych. Inst., Brochure Psychologisches Institut und Staatl. Forschungsinstitut für Psychologie bei der Universität Leipzig", p. 4. Translated from the original German.

60. Betsie Schombee, whom he married during his stay in Hamburg, related her memories of their time in Germany, but she only arrived after he had left Leipzig. See A. Boshoff, *Betsie Verwoerd, die Vrou* (Afrikanervolkswag, Pretoria, 1993), pp 25ff.

61. It is indeed remarkable that Verwoerd attended Köhler's lectures in Berlin although they didn't touch on his basic interest in applied psychology.

62. INCH, Len Verwoerd Collection, PV 72/3, untitled manuscript beginning: "Ons staan in Drosdystraat...", p 18: "In Leipzig het hy gewerk saam met Clem (sic)."



Forms of Religion among Children and Primitive Peoples". The second course expanded on topics that had only been dealt with cursorily in the first one. Child psychology and ethnopsychology were clearly closely related fields of research for Volkelt so that it makes sense to take a closer look at them: the Leipzig psychologists had developed their own profile and probably influenced their South African visitor through their teaching. The fact that Verwoerd followed similar reasoning in his Stellenbosch lectures underpins this view.

### **Child psychology**

One of the maxims of child psychology is not to judge children with the consciousness of an adult. This approach was first postulated in Germany by the Hamburg psychologist William Stern, under whom Verwoerd studied for one semester after leaving Leipzig. In his groundbreaking book *Psychologie der frühen Kindheit (The Psychology of Early Childhood)* published in 1911, Stern identified various stages of development during early childhood. He was adamant that children's perceptions should not be judged as deficient because they were different from those of mature adults.<sup>63</sup> Instead, he argued that perception and learning developed differently in children from how often imagined by adults, making it imperative for psychology to pay attention to the cognitive processes that were typical of children. Volkelt's own empirical research supported Stern's hypothesis, and he used it as a foundation for his research despite taking issue with some of the details. Fortunately, the notes from Volkelt's 1926 child psychology course have been preserved to provide some insight into the proceedings. These notes report on a project on children's drawings presented by Lotte Hoffmann, a research assistant. In the experiment the children were asked to draw a three-dimensional cylinder. Then they were shown their own drawings together with others, including one drawn by an adult with the cylinder in the correct perspective.

Following a widespread assumption among psychologists at the time, it was predicted that the children would concede that the adult drawing was better than their own. This did not happen, however. Instead, the children insisted that their drawings were the best. Hoffmann concluded that the children had not attempted to draw the cylinder as close to reality as possible, unlike adults. It appeared that the children's drawings were an expression of the child's perception of his or her environment. Hoffmann repudiated the normative expectations of adults around what was "correct" or "incorrect" as insufficient categories. The child's way of perceiving the world now became the focus of psychological research.<sup>64</sup> Although

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63. W. Stern, *Psychologie der frühen Kindheit bis zum sechsten Lebensjahre* (Quelle & Meyer, Leipzig, 1928), pp 31ff.

64. AWZGP, Volkelt Papers, Box 33, Notebook 22, Fortschritte in der experimentellen Psychologie der Kinder, Sommersemester 1926. See also Volkelt's research report which reflected on the research projects presented in this course as well as his own research at the time: Hans Volkelt, "Fortschritte der experimentellen Kinderpsychologie", Separate printout from the *Bericht über den IX. Kongress für experimentelle Psychologie in München* (Gustav Fischer, Jena, 1926).

Verwoerd did not use this case study, its conclusions were included in his lectures on developmental psychology at Stellenbosch two years later.<sup>65</sup>

Holistic psychology offered Volkelt the opportunity to develop his own methodological approach and move beyond Wundt's elementalist psychology. He emphasised his holistic approach in the child psychology course, insisting that it was the wrong approach to assume an increase in the number of elements perceived during the child's growth. According to his interpretation an initial, rather diffuse holistic quality (*Komplexqualität*) became increasingly differentiated as the child developed. In this way, Volkelt reconciled his empirical research with Krueger's concept of holistic psychology.

Volkelt's inaugural lecture at the University of Leipzig was held on 26 June 1926, when Verwoerd was still around. In it, Volkelt highlighted puberty and adolescence as distinct phases in the human life cycle, underlining their immense importance for orientation in later life. He used the child psychology paradigm, whereby the different stages of development were not to be judged by adult norms. The development of the child was to be researched in a non-teleological way; that is, researchers were not to project backwards from the perspective of the "mature" adult. Instead, it was essential to be open to the very different forms of perception, reaction and learning that were fundamentally distinct from those of adults.

Behind Volkelt's conclusions on his research into youth and adolescence, there was also an ideological motive, however. As an adherent of the rightwing youth movement, he wanted to underpin the movement's historical justification by means of psychology.<sup>66</sup> This relativisation of developmental trajectories was of particular interest to Verwoerd because it opened new approaches for the intended rehabilitation of South African poor whites. Thus, in one of his Stellenbosch lecture manuscripts on the psychology of character and personality from 1929, he devoted an entire chapter to Alfred Adler's individual psychology.<sup>67</sup> In it he criticised Adler for taking the view that there was a continuous development in the life of the individual while paying scant attention to phases of re-orientation and disorientation, such as puberty. In the same lecture, Verwoerd singled out puberty as a time of re-orientation, a kind of extraterritorial field that could not be judged with the instruments applied to

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65. INCH, H.F. Verwoerd Collection, PV 93/1/33/3, Lecture manuscripts inter alia on "the psychic development of the child and youth", on "the psychic personality of the child" and "notes on puberty". He nevertheless recommended Stern's book and Koffka's book on child psychology as core reading for his students.

66. AWZGP, Volkelt Papers, Box 10, Inaugural lecture, different versions with intensive handwritten corrections. The topic of puberty and adolescence was not a speciality of German psychology, See G.S. Hall, *Adolescence*, vol. 1 (D. Appleton & Co., New York, 1905), chapter 5, pp 325–410.

67. A. Adler, "Die Individualpsychologie, ihre Voraussetzungen und Ergebnisse", in A. Adler, *Praxis und Theorie der Individualpsychologie* (Fischer, Frankfurt, 1974), pp 19–32. See also INCH, PV 93/1/33/3, H.F. Verwoerd, Lecture manuscript "Oorsake vir Individuele Verskille in Kinderpersoonlikheid".

other phases in the life cycle. This stance had an important impact on his views on juvenile delinquency, a topic that would occupy him throughout his years as professor of Sociology (1932–1936).<sup>68</sup>

Gender differences also found an echo in Verwoerd's teaching. A Mr Busemann, one of Volkelt's research assistants, underlined their importance in a presentation on language.<sup>69</sup> All this helps to explain why Verwoerd submitted proposals to deal with the "poor white problem" in a highly individualised manner, applying different solutions to different cases, and why he rejected more general approaches as insufficient and ineffective.<sup>70</sup>

### ***Ethnopsychology***

The relativisation of universal criteria of analysis was not restricted to the developmental psychology of the individual but also played an important role in adapting cultural relativism to ethnopsychology.<sup>71</sup> In Wundt's time the young disciplines of ethnology and psychology were very close, sharing a strong positivist outlook in their methodology and theory. The impact of historicism and cultural evolutionist stage theories in the humanities was considerable in the nineteenth century. Both theories observed a gradient between different civilisations and placed them in an evolutionary sequence. Thereby the so-called primitive societies appeared as the living remnants of former stages in the development of humanity as a whole. This made it possible to view the development of mankind as a synchronic panorama of cultural evolution in the present world. Nineteenth-century scholars subscribed to a number of stage theories, usually choosing technical developments as their principle criteria, especially when these were based on archaeological data. Thus technical and economic developments underpinned the very different theories of the likes of Tylor, Spencer, Fraser, Morgan, Marx, Engels, Wundt and Durkheim.

The differences between these theories were the product of various combinations of economic and technical criteria linked to kinship, social structures, religion and political power. These stage theories had a considerable impact on the newly emergent science of ethnology.<sup>72</sup> They postulated a hierarchy of cultures according to the state of development, with Europe predictably on top. Ethnopsychology did not differ from the stage theories in accepting the cultural stages, but it introduced additional approaches and explanations. Wundt distinguished between the stages of

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68. Stellenbosch University, J.S. Gericke Library, Manuscripts Section, Verwoerd Collection 231/2 (3), Lecture manuscript, "Socio-psicologie van Misdaad".

69. AWZGP, Volkelt Papers, Box 33, Notebook 22, Fortschritte in der experimentellen Psychologie der Kinder, Sommersemester 1926.

70. Compare Miller, "Science and Society", p 645. Miller's conclusions are based on incorrect assumptions and are therefore misleading.

71. See AWZGP, Volkelt Papers, Box 6, Notes "Was ist Kulturpsychologie?" Volkelt noted that one has to distance oneself from one's own aesthetic norms when confronted with non-European art.

72. G.W. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (Macmillan, New York and London, 1987), chapters 5 and 6.

the “primitive peoples” (totemism) and the “age of gods and heroes”.<sup>73</sup> Similar to other theories of the time, Wundt’s ethnopsychology judged these societies according to European cultural values, juxtaposing all as “primitive” compared to the “advanced” Europeans. Massive European ethnocentrism was the hallmark of all stage theories, identifying the lower stages through their deficits.

The fact that Wundt was convinced that the “higher” psychic processes could not be researched experimentally, rendered his ethnopsychology less positivistic and experimental than his psychological research.<sup>74</sup> Thus he proceeded like a typical armchair ethnologist, gathering empirical material for his theories from second or third hand knowledge, with no thought given to the subjective perception of the explorers, missionaries and field researches who were the source of his material. Instead, he took their observations at face value, building entire theoretical edifices on very shaky foundations.

Psychologists had to rely on material from ethnographic field workers, however, because Richard Thurnwald, who co-operated with William Stern, was the only German ethnographic field worker in the early twentieth century who was interested in psychological research methods.<sup>75</sup> Whereas Wundt was usually reluctant to draw unsubstantiated conclusions in psychology, he lacked this restraint when it came to ethnopsychology. He

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73. Clearly, Wundt in his stage theory was largely obliged to the “scienza nuova” by Giambattista Vico. Significantly Otto Klemm, who was Wundt’s student, wrote his doctoral thesis on Vico as an ethnopsychologist: see Loosch, “Otto Klemm”, p 71. Significantly, Wundt added totemism to Vico’s cultural stages. Totemism was a fashionable ethnological concept in the late nineteenth century and played a central role in Emile Durkheim’s sociology of religion, too. On the historical context see C. Lévi-Strauss, *Le Totémisme aujourd’hui* (Presses Univ. de France, Paris, 1962).
74. M. Vorweg, “Experimentelle Psychologie in Leipzig”, in H.E. Lück, R. Miller, W. Rehtien (eds), *Geschichte der Psychologie. Ein Handbuch in Schlüsselbegriffen* (Urban & Schwarzenberg, München, 1984), pp 63–68, especially p 66f.
75. W. Stern and O. Lipmann (eds), *Vorschläge zur psychologischen Untersuchung primitiver Menschen, vol. 5, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für angewandte Psychologie und psychologische Sammelforschung* (J.A. Barth, Leipzig, 1912). Verwoerd studied with both authors, Stern in Hamburg and Lipmann in Berlin. See G. Bühring, *William Stern oder Streben nach Einheit* (Peter Lang, Frankfurt 1996), p 121. R. Thurnwald, *Ethno-psychologische Studien an Südseevölkern auf dem Bismarck-Archipel und den Salomo-Inseln* (J.A. Barth, Leipzig, 1913). See also P. Probst, “Angewandte Ethnopsychologie während der Epoche des Deutschen Kolonialismus”, *Psychologie und Geschichte*, 3, 3/4, 1992, pp 67–80. The close connection between Wundt’s ethnopsychological method and Adolf Bastian’s ethnology has been neglected, although similarities in their inductive approaches are obvious: A. Bastian, *Der Mensch in der Geschichte. Zur Begründung einer psychologischen Weltanschauung*, 3 vols (Wigand, Leipzig 1860). On Bastian’s concept of the “basic and ethnic ideas” (Elementar- und Völkergedanken) see C. Marx, “Völker ohne Schrift und Geschichte”. *Zur historischen Erfassung des vorkolonialen Schwarzafrika in der deutschen Forschung des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts* (Steiner, Stuttgart, 1988), pp 215ff; and H.G. Penny, *Objects of Culture. Ethnology and Ethnographic Museums in Imperial Germany* (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill and London, 2002) pp 18ff.

placed his trust in ethnopsychology when seeking the genesis of the human psyche, because:

the child of a cultured people is surrounded by influences that cannot be distinguished from what develops spontaneously within the child's consciousness. Ethnopsychology, on the other hand, leads us on the path of a true psychogenesis by showing us the different stages of intellectual development which can still be seen in mankind today.<sup>76</sup>

For ethnologists the "primitive" was the "original through the genealogy of the peoples", but ethnopsychology searched for a universal intellectual development, arguing that it was possible for peoples who emerged in a later period to be more primitive than historically older peoples.<sup>77</sup>

Wundt was convinced that the belief in magic resulted from a reaction of the affect to "awe and terror": "Causality as we understand it doesn't exist for primitive man."<sup>78</sup> When maintaining that primitive peoples should not be judged by the norms of a "later" culture, but according to their own inner logic, he drew an analogy to child psychology.<sup>79</sup> On the other hand, Wundt took pains to reject the racist conclusion that the "primitives'" low level of culture had anything to do with a lack of intelligence.<sup>80</sup>

Wundt's successor, Krueger, went so far as to regard ethnopsychology as a part of developmental psychology, ranking character attributes according to cultural evolutionary stages.<sup>81</sup> The importance of ethnopsychology is easily overlooked as the Leipzig school published very little on the topic; nevertheless, it played an important role in their teaching. Volkelt maintained that Krueger gave credence to the concept of holistic psychology "firstly through his experimental psychological work on acoustics (1904) and not least through his lectures and courses on the psychology of primitive cultures at Wundt's school".<sup>82</sup> This was possible because Wundt's

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76. W. Wundt, *Elemente der Völkerpsychologie: Grundlinien einer psychologischen Entwicklungsgeschichte der Menschheit* (Alfred Kröner, Leipzig, 1913), p 4. Translated from the original German.

77. Wundt, *Elemente der Völkerpsychologie*, p 6. Translated from the original German.

78. Wundt, *Elemente der Völkerpsychologie*, p 92f. Translated from the original German.

79. Wundt himself moved ethnopsychology methodologically close to child psychology in "Die Philosophie des primitiven Menschen", in W. Wundt, *Reden und Aufsätze* (Kröner, Leipzig, 1914), pp 119–162, especially pp 145ff.

80. Wundt, *Elemente der Völkerpsychologie*, pp 109ff.

81. Thiermann, "Zur Geschichte des Leipziger Psychologischen Institutes", p 87; and Wellek, *Die Wiederherstellung der Seelenwissenschaft*, pp 18f. On Krueger's combination of the psychology of the child and ethnopsychology, see also M. Schubeius, *Und das psychologische Laboratorium muss der Ausgangspunkt pädagogischer Arbeiten werden! Zur Institutionalisierungsgeschichte der Psychologie von 1890–1933* (Peter Lang, Frankfurt, 1990), p 249.

82. H. Volkelt, "Von den Anfängen der 'Ganzheitspsychologie'", in F. Sander, H. Volkelt, *Ganzheitspsychologie: Grundlagen - Ergebnisse - Anwendungen, Gesammelte Abhandlungen* (Beck, München, 1962), pp 1–14, especially p 3, footnote 1; see also p 7, "that the main trajectories of development in fields, though far distant from each other, are nevertheless congruent, for instance with children and primitive peoples." Quotations are translated from the original German.

ideas on the evolution of civilisation could easily be reconciled with the tenets of holistic developmental psychology.<sup>83</sup> These taught that a child gradually learns to differentiate, separating the elements and recognising the structures behind them. "Psychic as well as cultural development moves steadily from primitive wholeness towards less primitive, or more differentiated wholeness."<sup>84</sup> Differentiation becomes the main criterion for development and, by analogy, is also applicable to ethnic groups. According to Wundt, primitive cultures are characterised by minimal differentiation not only in their economies, technologies and so on, but also psychologically in their patterns of perception. The "primitives" were like children, an assumption that was widespread amongst colonialists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.<sup>85</sup>

Under the overarching concept of developmental psychology, Krueger brought together such very different fields as ethnopsychology, child psychology and animal psychology. Wundt's ethnopsychology therefore had a much longer and stronger impact on his successors than did his elemental psychologist. Significantly, not only the right-leaning psychologists in Leipzig, but almost all early twentieth-century psychologists, irrespective of their political predilections, drew these parallels between "primitive peoples" (*Naturvölker*) and children.<sup>86</sup> However, their conceptual differences should not be neglected. Wertheimer, for example, did not draw on ethnocentrism in his study of the way "primitive peoples" use numbers to calculate. He concluded that calculating with abstract numbers was the exception, even in Europe, the usual case being "numbering", a practice close to everyday experience.<sup>87</sup>

Like Krueger, Volkelt engaged with Wundt's ethnopsychology again and again over the years.<sup>88</sup> Wundt's efforts found entry into his numerous

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83. See particularly F. Krueger, *Über Entwicklungspsychologie: Ihre sachliche und geschichtliche Notwendigkeit* (Wilhelm Engelmann, Leipzig, 1915), pp 104, 167ff and critically towards Wundt, pp 200ff.

84. Krueger, "Zur Einführung: Über psychische Ganzheit", p 75; translated from the original German.

85. That this kind of thought is not a thing of the past can still be seen in more recent comparisons of "primitive" peoples to children, for example C.R. Hallpike, *The Foundations of Primitive Thought* (Clarendon, Oxford, 1979).

86. W. Stern, *Die Differentielle Psychologie in ihren methodischen Grundlagen* (Hans Huber, Bern, 1994) pp 104ff. See also Koffka, *Die Grundlagen der psychischen Entwicklung*, pp 31 and 250ff.

87. M. Wertheimer, "Über das Denken der Naturvölker", in M. Wertheimer, *Drei Abhandlungen zur Gestalttheorie* (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt, 1967), pp 106–163, especially p 137, where he distances himself from the distinction between higher and lower cultures. The questions addressed to ethnographical fieldworkers show that his approach was of a very different quality to the one followed by the Leipzig psychologists; see pp 151ff.

88. UAL, NA, Krueger, 8, Magical Factors in the first development of human labour (1913), an English text, which demonstrates the direct connection to Wundt's theses, as well as 3, Collection of notes on the topic "taboo". In Krueger's personal file there is a note on 30 June 1909: "Since his return from America he added well attended lectures on the psychology of primitive peoples to his other teaching." See UAL, Faculty of Philosophy, Personal file 664, Felix Krueger, Document 18,

university courses on ethnopsychology. One of these, "Early Forms of Religion among Children and Primitive Peoples" (*Frühformen der Religion bei Kindern und Naturvölkern*), was attended by Verwoerd.<sup>89</sup> At this time Volkelt noted that "the experimental method for the small child should not be led by special hypotheses but rather from the general, even ethnopsychologically founded theory of primitive consciousness".<sup>90</sup> As early as 1925 the institute described its emphasis as follows:

That field of research which Wundt named 'ethnopsychological' is now better integrated into research and teaching. Almost all the topics are investigated from the perspective of genetic comparison. In the sub-department of developmental psychology, child and youth psychology now predominates although Wundt himself did not expressly use it that way. Experimental methodologies and those peculiar to the humanities support each other to develop a theory of primitive consciousness and intellectual development.<sup>91</sup>

Volkelt was even more unequivocal about the relationship in his own contribution, in which he emphasised the importance of genetic connections:

They lead through the individual life from the psychology of the embryo to that of old age, from the lowest "primary-primitive" tribes ... to the highest cultured peoples, from the plant through the world of animals to humanity. Surprisingly, the main trajectories of development reveal congruence even in fields far distant from each other, like those of children and primitive peoples or animals and children.<sup>92</sup>

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Microfilm 1272. In connection with his employment in 1917 it was noted in document 28: "After returning to Leipzig, he continued with his work at the Psychological Institute while simultaneously teaching an ethno-psychological course at Lamprecht's Institute for Cultural and Universal History"; and document 36: "Krueger is decisively of the opinion that all cultural research is approaching a turning point and that it must become involved with the methods and problems of 'development psychology' more than hitherto." Quotations are translated from the original German. See also AWZGP, Volkelt Papers, Box 8, *Völkerpsychologie* and Box 14, *Psychologie IV*, Four lectures on Ethnopsychology; and a lecture manuscript from 1921/22: Introduction to Ethnopsychology. There are also various notes on Ethnopsychology from different years. Volkelt refers to the same ethnologists and examples such as Wundt himself. Box 21: *Übungen Kunst und Völkerpsychologie* and boxes 23 and 24 on Ethnopsychology respectively are on the art and religion of the primitives. Box 29, Notebook 6, has lectures on Wundt's Ethnopsychology (clearly the notes from Volkelt's years as a student). See also his publication H. Volkelt, *Die Völkerpsychologie in Wundts Entwicklungsgang* (Keyser, Erfurt, 1922).

89. Unfortunately there are no notes from this course in the Volkelt Papers.
90. Volkelt, "Fortschritte der experimentellen Kinderpsychologie", p 13 and pp 48ff. Translated from the original German.
91. UAL, Psych. Inst., Brochure, "Psychologisches Institut und Staatl. Forschungsinstitut für Psychologie bei der Universität Leipzig", p 5. Translated from the original German.
92. H. Volkelt, "Über die Forschungsrichtung des Psychologischen Instituts der Universität Leipzig. Zu seiner Fünfzigjahrfeier am 21. November 1925", in A. Hoffmann (ed.), *Literarische Berichte aus dem Gebiete der Philosophie*, vol. 6 (Kurt Stenger, Erfurt, 1925), pp 14–20, especially p 18. Translated from the original German.

The approach of a developmental psychology expert like Volkelt is of particular interest because he compared stages in the cognitive development of children to those of whole civilisations. From the viewpoint of child psychology, the fact that children's drawings were interpreted as an expression of the child's perception rather than a copy of a given object was considered to be progress. Volkelt argued in favour of proceeding in the same way with "primitive peoples", whose thinking on magic could not be properly understood by applying European standards: "Submission to single traits, but not to that which is the essence of things according to *our* notions!" His explanation of primitive religion shows how he linked developmental psychology to ethnopsychology. Like Wundt, Volkelt was convinced that magical ideas were not the result of logical thought but rather a reaction of the affect to phenomena such as illness and death.<sup>93</sup> Consequently, magical thinking was primarily an expression of inner feelings. This sounds similar to the interpretation of the children's drawings by Lotte Hoffmann in Volkelt's course. The role of the affect was decisive because the "primitive" was unable to understand certain natural phenomena through the laws of causality. Volkelt referred to this as a "gap" in understanding and noted elsewhere:

The fact that such gaps exist is not due to some minor development of a single intellectual function such as thinking. Rather it is the entire primitiveness, the state of the respective stage of development ... So we observe the gap although the faculties of thinking should allow the gap to be bridged ... but where the structure of consciousness, i.e. the combinations and the sequence of psychic events prevent it: therefore general lack of structure [*allgemeine Ungeformtheit*].<sup>94</sup>

Elsewhere in his notes he draws on magical thinking and causality:

Not magical causality – but no causality at all. An animal moves towards an object with an inimical intention, because it means to perceive an enemy ... As soon as it comes closer, it realises that the object is a piece of food and not an enemy. Therefore it immediately starts to devour the food ... There is no change of object. Enemy – food – comes just one after the other ... This sequence at the same place is not at all a problem to the animal, because it doesn't have the experience that would show that such a sequence actually doesn't take place ... Now there is "a" – then "b" and at the same place. And "a" is different from "b" – experience of difference! – Yet where "b" comes from, although there used to be "a", is not questioned ... The affectation is a retarding moment in development, which means the extension of logical categories over the whole range of objects ... The lack of shape of the

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93. AWZGP, Volkelt Papers, Box 17, Art and Ethnopsychology, III, 1, Phenomenology of primitive naturalness and phenomenology of the gap; Various notes and papers (not paginated). On another page in the same collection of notes he writes: "A factor necessary for thought on individual-causal happening, this factor can itself be a causal happening. But this lacking factor in earlier stages is certainly not part of consciousness. In consciousness there is only the feeling that something is lacking." See also Box 23, with numerous notes on the "gap" and forms of perception with the primitives, which is very different from "ours". Translated from the original German.
94. AWZGP, Volkelt Papers, Box 17, Psychology of art and Ethnopsychology, unpaginated, single paper sheets. Translated from the original German.



objective event and the affectation connected to the novelty, to the strangeness of this event work hand in hand und intensify each other ... But soon the magical which in the beginning only enveloped the event becomes characteristic of the experience – both characteristics: the change and the magical combine. Out of this emerges the idea of change through magic – an idea, which to my mind already implies causality.<sup>95</sup>

Volkelt's subtle shift here from animal psychology to ethnopsychology is significant. He moves from the transformation of an enemy into food towards an explanation of magical thinking, which has to bridge the "gap" as surrogate causality.

Racist versions of stage theories are closely related to cultural theories, but they radicalise cultural theories by explaining the differences between the advances of societies in terms of biological differences. The assumption that certain existing societies represent older developmental stages is explained by the assertion that they have been unable to catch up with European civilisation. Racist theories are sceptical of the perfectibility of the "others", taking the low stage of their cultural development as evidence of their limited abilities. In a peculiar circularity, these abilities are used to explain why the "others" are less developed; and this in turn is used as proof of their deficiency.

Ethnopsychology was open to racist explanations that were popular in white settler colonies like South Africa from the end of the nineteenth century onwards. These explanations viewed Africans and other "primitive" peoples as culturally retarded and therefore incapable of catching up with Europeans. The reason given was that Africans were stuck within a certain phase of development that could be observed in the psyche of individuals who had not reached "adult" maturity. This racist assumption conceded that African children developed similarly to Europeans until puberty, at which point a divergence occurred. European children received the decisive impulse for their intellectual development during this phase, while Africans became so overwhelmed by their sexual drives that they would never overcome the puberty stage. Dudley Kidd, author of a racist book on the psychology of African children, drew the following conclusions from this theory of arrested development in 1906:

When puberty is drawing to a close, a degenerative process seems to set in, and the previous efflorescence of the faculties leads to no adequate fruitage in later life. ... Our main aim in the education of backward races should be to draw out, discipline, and strengthen the various faculties ... of the children so

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95. AWZGP, Volkelt Papers, Box 23, Notes on magic and causality. Translated from the original German. At about the same time Ernst Cassirer came to rather different and philosophically more substantial and consistent conclusions about mythical thinking and causality, see his *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, vol. 2: *Das mythische Denken*, (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt, 1994), pp 43ff.

that, when the age of puberty arrives, these faculties may be able to resist the degenerative and blighting tendencies that must soon arise.<sup>96</sup>

Similarities with the Freudian concept of sublimation are obvious and certainly no coincidence. Europeans manage to sublimate their sexual drives and are able to redirect the energy towards intellectual development and cultural progress. Africans, by contrast, are unable to do so and remain eternal children. For “primitive peoples”, puberty is a stage which is never overcome. It does not result in a new direction but in loss of orientation. This assumption was used to legitimise paternalism, segregation and corporal punishment.

As far as we know from his papers, Volkelt did not pursue this racist variant but adhered closely to the theory of civilisational development stages, which he tried to explain through the tenets of developmental psychology. In Verwoerd’s case too, it is not clear whether he ever explicitly linked civilisational differences with popular racist theories. Nevertheless, on numerous occasions in later years he spoke about various stages of development, concluding that white people had a right of trusteeship over indigenous Africans. He maintained that Africans had migrated into South Africa at about the same time as the first Europeans had arrived, but they had used their opportunities much less efficiently and were unable to catalyse cumulative civilisational growth.<sup>97</sup> It seems quite reasonable to assume that these explanations drew on ethnopsychological theses that he was exposed to while in Leipzig. Many years later he answered L.J. du Plessis’s criticism of his apartheid policy, by saying that the “pace of development is not so much determined by external factors but rather by psychological susceptibility in various stages.”<sup>98</sup>

The racist component in the sense of denying an African ability to develop owing to biological factors is not clearly discernible. Nevertheless, Verwoerd must have been familiar with popular “theories” that blamed the libido for the inability of African civilisations to develop, but he was cautious enough to never refer to them in public.

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96. D. Kidd, *Savage Childhood: A Study of Kaffir Children* (Black, London, 1906), pp viiif. Volkelt apparently knew Kidd’s book. On the “theory” of arrested development and with reference to Kidd, see S. Dubow, *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995), pp 197ff. See also C. Marx, “Folter und Rassismus. Südafrika während der Apartheid”, in P. Burschel, G. Distelrath and S. Lembke (eds), *Das Quälen des Körpers. Eine historische Anthropologie der Folter* (Böhlau, Köln and Wien, 2000), pp 257–279, especially pp 274ff.

97. For instance, in his speech before the South Africa Club in London on 3. March 1961 after South Africa had left the Commonwealth, see A.N. Pelzer (ed.), *Verwoerd aan die Woord* (Afrikaanse Pers, Johannesburg, 1963) p 474f.

98. Quoted in Scholtz, *Verwoerd*, vol.1, p 299. Translated from the original Afrikaans.

## Conclusion

To draw some tentative conclusions: If there is a traceable influence of the Leipzig psychologists on Verwoerd's thinking, it has to be sought in the specific field of ethnopsychology and not in the general concept of holistic psychology. For, while a closer investigation of ethnopsychology could provide insights into Verwoerd's racism and his understanding of apartheid as "separate development", this can only provide a partial explanation. The problem was that apartheid could not be legitimised by models of civilisational stages since these do not deny the perfectibility of "primitive" peoples. Instead, they explain the retardation of these peoples as the result of external circumstances such as climate, isolation and economic marginality. Naked racism would have been the variant that denied the developmental capacities of Africans, but this position was apparently not adapted by most apartheid intellectuals. There was little interest in biological racial theories and, although those who advocated them were influential, like Geoff Cronjé and Geoffrey Eloff, their biological arguments did not find broad resonance among Afrikaner intellectuals in the 1940s.

The legitimisation of apartheid comes from a different corner, namely that of cultural relativism. Although this was not connected to stage models and was in logical contradiction to them, apartheid used these contradictory concepts all the same.<sup>99</sup> Cultural relativism was propagated by apartheid ethnologists like W.W.M. Eiselen and P.J. Coertze as well as Verwoerd himself. According to this concept, the "Bantu" are not simply less developed than Europeans; rather, their culture differs fundamentally from European culture and is incompatible with it. The logical conclusion is that the mixing of cultures would be as fatal for indigenous Africans as it would be for whites; the only possible solution is total separation in the form of apartheid.

The available sources offer no clue as to whether Verwoerd was exposed to theories of cultural relativism during his stay in Germany. Neither is there any evidence of contagion by neo-Fichtean ideologies which could help to explain Verwoerd's nationalism. All we have are partial intellectual influences from psychology which might have found their way into the policy of apartheid.

## Abstract

This article looks into the stay of Hendrik Verwoerd in Leipzig, Germany, in 1926. Allegations of an ideological influence by German nationalism on Verwoerd have often been repeated in the historical literature, but were never substantiated by evidence from the archives. The Psychological Institute at the University of Leipzig, where Verwoerd studied, was politically the most conservative and nationalist among the three universities which

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99. According to Norval, it was a basic characteristic of apartheid to operate with "indeterminable" logic: A.J. Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse* (Verso, London and New York, 1996), p 172.

the young scholar from Stellenbosch visited – the others were Hamburg and Berlin. Nevertheless, no ideological influence on Verwoerd could be found in the available evidence from archives in South Africa and Germany, but certainly the scientific influence of German psychology on Verwoerd the academic cannot be denied. Verwoerd's main objective in going to Germany was to become acquainted with the latest trends in international psychology. He studied with the Leipzig psychologists Felix Krueger, Hans Volkelt, an expert on child psychology, and Otto Klemm, a specialist in applied psychology. His interest focused mainly on developmental psychology, characterology and ethnic psychology (Völkerpsychologie), which can be traced to the lasting influence of Wilhelm Wundt, the founding father of modern psychology in Germany. Whereas Verwoerd's interest in different fields of psychology stemmed from his long lasting involvement with the "poor white problem" in South Africa, Völkerpsychologie could possibly have exerted a scientific influence on his later perceptions of racial and cultural differences that fed into apartheid.

**Key words:** Hendrik Verwoerd; Afrikaner nationalism; apartheid; racism; history of psychology.

### Opsomming

Hierdie artikel handel oor die verblyf van Hendrik Verwoerd, in 1926, in Leipzig, Duitsland. Bewerings van 'n ideologiese invloed van Duitse Nasionalisme op Verwoerd kom herhaaldelik voor in die historiese literatuur maar dit is nog nooit onderskraag deur argivale bewyse nie. Die Psigologiese Instituut aan die Universiteit van Leipzig, waar Verwoerd gestudeer het, was polities die mees konserwatiefste, die ander twee was Hamburg en Berlyn, wat hy besoek het. Desnieteenstaande kon geen ideologiese invloed op Verwoerd gevind word in die argiewe in Suid-Afrika en Duitsland nie maar die wetenskaplike impak van die Duitse psigologie op hom kan nie ontken word nie. Die belangrikste rede waarom Verwoerd Duitsland besoek het was vir blootstelling aan die mees resente tendense in die internasionale psigologie. In Leipzig het hy onder die psigoloog Felix Krueger, die kinder psigoloog, Hans Volkelt en 'n spesialis in toegepaste psigologie, Otto Klemm, gestudeer. Sy belangstelling was in die algemeen gefokus op ontwikkelings psigologie, karakterologie en etniese psigologie (Völkerpsychologie) wat teruggevoer kan word na die bepalende invloed van Wilhelm Wundt, die vader van moderne psigologie in Duitsland. Waar Verwoerd se belangstelling in die verskillende vertakkinge van die psigologie gespruit het uit sy lang betrokkenheid by die "armblanke vraagstuk" in Suid-Afrika kon die Völkerpsychologie dalk 'n wetenskaplike invloed uitgeoefen het op sy latere persepsies aangaande ras en kultuur verskille wat op hul beurt weer apartheid beïnvloed het.

**Sleutelwoorde:** Hendrik Verwoerd; Afrikaner nasionalisme; apartheid; rassisme geskiedenis van psigologie.