

Chapter 2

Mental Philosophy and Psychology: The Curriculum at Rutgers College in the 19th Century

Queen's College, as Rutgers was originally called, was among the handful of colleges in colonial America in which conceptions of mind were a part of the content of courses in philosophy, ethics, and theology. These conceptions relied, in turn, on a variety of competing philosophical schools of 18th century Europe. Of these, Scottish moral philosophy exerted the greatest influence on 18th and early 19th century conceptions of mind in America.

Thomas Reid (1710-1796), Scottish academician and Presbyterian clergyman, was the father of Scottish moral philosophy. He described his moral philosophy as a "mental science" conceptualized within the framework of devout Christian tenets. The appeal of his philosophy in early America was two-fold.

First, Thomas Reid admired the accomplishments of his contemporaries in the natural sciences and envisioned the realm of the mind as also amenable to a scientific approach. His ideas for a mental science struck a chord in America, where the value of science was recognized early on. The sciences, particularly the natural sciences, developed a secure place in the American college curriculum in the 19th century.

Second, and perhaps more important, was Reid's integration of his mental science with Christianity. The following widely-quoted example from Reid's writings reflects how he blended "realism" and "common-sense," as he characterized his philosophy, with religion:

The Supreme Being intended that we should have such knowledge of the material objects that surround us, as is necessary in order to our supplying the wants of nature, and avoiding the dangers to which we are constantly exposed; and he has admirably fitted our powers of perception to this reality... The information of the senses is as perfect, and gives as full conviction to the most ignorant as to the most learned. (Reid, 1785, ch.5)

Reid's essentially nativist views of the source of our knowledge, as reflected in this quote, is in contrast with the mental philosophy of his English contemporaries — the empiricists, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. Indeed, Reid was explicitly opposed to the empiricists' *tabula rasa*, as well as

to their associationism, which the empiricists proposed as an important mechanism of mind that linked ideas to one another. Reid proposed instead a unified mind possessed of inherent faculties and powers such as sensing, perceiving, reasoning, remembering, and so on.

Scottish moral philosophy was introduced to America during and after the American Revolution by John Witherspoon (1722-1794), then president of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University). Reid's crusade against English empiricism, which he thought could subvert religious faith, was also on Witherspoon's agenda as he sought to nullify the influence of the English empiricists, particularly among scholars in the colonies of the northeast.

Scottish philosophy spread from Witherspoon's College of New Jersey to other colleges in post-colonial America. Most of the colleges founded both before and in the early decades after the revolution were established and supported by one of the several Protestant denominations (Tewksbury, 1932/1969). The clergy exerted a strong influence on their offerings in philosophy of mind, and the writings of Reid, and his most immediate Scottish disciple, Dugald Stewart (1753-1828) were most congenial to them.

Moral philosophy took on a more eclectic cast in America in the 19th century as Reid's and Stewart's writings were gradually augmented, or supplanted, by the advent of the textbook. The publication in 1827 of *Elements of Intellectual Philosophy* by Thomas Upham (1799-1872), a clergyman who taught philosophy at Bowdoin College, marked the beginning of an era of American textbooks in philosophy of mind.

In 1832, Upham discarded the rubric "intellectual philosophy" as too narrow and revised his text with a new title, *Elements of Mental Philosophy*. His text and those of other textbook writers that followed in later years were an explicit attempt to provide the undergraduate with a simplified and systematic account of mental philosophy. These American texts were a mix of Scottish, English, and German philosophy, with Scottish philosophy occupying a dominant position.

The textbook era in mental philosophy was to last for the rest of the 19th century. But ideas about mental functioning were changing and while the courses through much of the 19th century were taught under the rubric of mental philosophy, the title of an occasional text referred to the book's content as "psychology" rather than "mental philosophy." The Rutgers

curriculum in mental philosophy in the 19th century made use of a number of these texts, and we will say more about them and their content later in this chapter, as we note their presence in the Rutgers curriculum.

Rutgers College: Founding and early history

Rutgers holds a distinguished place in the history of American colleges. It is eighth oldest American college, and one of the nine colleges founded during the colonial period to educate young men. The colonial-period colleges are Harvard (1636), William and Mary (1693), Yale (1701), College of Philadelphia (1740) later University of Pennsylvania, College of New Jersey (1746) later Princeton, King's College (1754) later Columbia, College of Rhode Island (1764) later Brown, Queen's College (1766) later Rutgers, and Dartmouth (1769).

The founding of Queen's College was due to the support of a faction of the Dutch Reformed Church in America. However, while the vast majority of denominational colleges of this period enjoyed large constituencies in America (Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Congregational, Episcopal), and as a result adequate financial support, Queen's College continued to rely primarily on the much more limited constituency and resources of the Dutch Reformed Church.

After the founding of Queen's College there followed a protracted period of conflict between the Church and the College's Board of Trustees and of unreliable financial support from the Church. At one very low point in the financial condition of Queen's, Henry Rutgers, a prominent and wealthy layman of the Dutch Church, came to the rescue of the college, and the board honored him with the name change from Queen's College to Rutgers College in 1825.



Queen's College academic building (current photo) completed in early 1800's.
(Photo courtesy of the Rutgers University Archives.)

The subsequent relationship between the college and the state of New Jersey, as Rutgers sought to become a public institution of higher learning, was also a troubled one for many years, "strikingly similar", as McCormick (1966, pg. 81) noted, to that between the church and the college. The slow development of Rutgers as a major university, relative to that of the other distinguished colleges of its vintage, and the lag in public higher education in New Jersey, can be found in this long history of limited financial support from the State.

There was also a lag in development of the Rutgers College curriculum in the first half of the 19th century. Students were treated to a rather static fare of courses, often taught by theology professors from the Theological Seminary, which also shared physical facilities with the college until 1864.

McCormick's (1966) overall characterization of Rutgers and its intellectual goals, from its founding in 1766 to well into the middle of the 19th century, is useful in understanding why the Rutgers curriculum remained rather static for its first 75+ years. He described the college as

a struggling, church-related institution, serving a small constituency and preparing a limited number of students for the older learned professions by means of a curriculum that rested heavily on the classics and that sought to develop discipline, inculcate piety, and inspire reverence for traditional values. (pg. 81)

McCormick went on to characterize the gradual transformation of Rutgers in the latter half of the 19th century.

In the years ahead, the long-stifled demands that the American college should broaden its function, enlarge its constituency, strengthen its intellectual qualities, and place itself more directly at the service of society could no longer be ignored, and as Rutgers moved conservatively to heed these demands, the institution was to be transformed. (pg. 81)

The curriculum published in the college's catalog for the academic year, 1860-61, shows some evidence of this transformation. The simple listing of a set of courses/topics for each of the four years, which had been the format in earlier catalogs, was now replaced with an organization based on broad academic categories. Mental philosophy remained in a miscellaneous category. The Course of Instruction for the Junior Year, the undergraduate year in which mental philosophy was usually taught, was organized as follows in the 1860-61 catalog:

GREEK.-Sophocles, Lyric Poets, Greek Composition and Greek Literature.

LATIN.-Plautus, Terence, Horace, (Satires,), Juvenal, Latin Composition and Roman History.

MATHEMATICS.-Analytical Geometry, and Differential and Integral Calculus.

NATURAL SCIENCE.-Chemistry and Mineralogy.

-Rhetoric, Kame's Elements of Criticism, Upham's Mental Philosophy, Wayland's Moral Science, Composition and Declamation. (pp. 15-16)

Upham's text for Mental Philosophy was first cited in the 1853 catalog. Catalogs for previous years (the catalog for 1830 is the first available in the Rutgers University Library Archives) listed "philosophy of mind," later "mental philosophy," as a course topic for the Junior Year, but did not list a

text for this or most other courses. So, we do not know how early in the century Upham's text was adopted at Rutgers and to what extent the primary writings of the Scots were used before the publication of the Upham text. There is evidence that at least one Queen's College professor made use of Witherspoon's writings in his lectures on moral philosophy (McCormick, 1966).

Upham's *Elements of Mental Philosophy*, with editions from 1832 to 1886 gained wide acceptance in American colleges and universities. His text was an eclectic mix of ideas about the human mind gleaned from European and American authors. The dominant influence was Scottish philosophy. Following the writings of the Scots, Upham identified three distinct "departments" or functions of mind. He wrote, "MAN has the INTELLECT, by which he perceives; the SENSIBILITIES, by which he feels; and also the WILL, by which he acts." (Upham, 1861). Under the intellect we find sensation, perception, conception, abstraction, attention, as well as the mental functions of consciousness, memory, reasoning, and imagination; under the sensibilities are the "natural" emotions and desires and the "moral" emotions (feelings of approval and disapproval) and "moral" feelings (obligation); under will Upham devoted separate chapters to "laws of the will", "freedom of the will", and "power of the will."

Interestingly, Upham's text also introduced psychopathology to students — a topic untouched either by Reid, his followers in Scotland, or by Reid's empiricist contemporaries in England. In Upham's text there are two chapters on "Disordered Intellectual Action" with "Insanity" as the sub-heading of one of the chapters. He also published a separate book on psychopathology, *Outlines of Imperfect and Disordered Mental Action* in 1840 — generally acknowledged to be the first abnormal text in America.

The popularity of Upham's *Elements* in 19th century American colleges stems in part from the fact that it was compatible with the Christian values of the denominational colleges, and as such it was also compatible with the devout mission of Rutgers College.

Professor Doolittle, Rutgers first professor of mental philosophy

In 1864, with a much-enhanced endowment of its own as a result of intensive fund raising, the college sought to separate itself from any direct governance by Church authorities. In response, the Church relinquished its claim on the Queen's building and campus, which it had been sharing with the college (for a reimbursement from the college endowment, which it then used

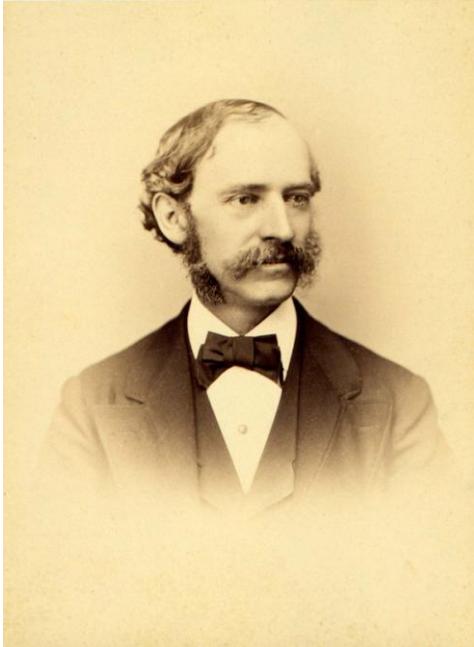
to construct its own facilities for the Theological Seminary in New Brunswick). The church agreed to the takeover by the college of the building and campus, but with the proviso that the College president and three-fourths of the members of the Board of Trustees be members of the Dutch Reformed Church. Teaching in the college by seminary professors also came to an end. Both the college and seminary faculties seemed pleased by the separation of the two institutions, allowing each to develop in its own way (McCormick, 1966).

Another source of endowment presented itself to the college when the U.S. Congress allotted certain public lands to each state, which the state could then sell off to endow a college designated by the state legislature as the state's "land-grant college." The purpose of the endowment was to encourage the teaching of courses related to "agriculture and the mechanical arts" at the designated college. The New Jersey Legislature (with much lobbying by Rutgers College) awarded the endowment to Rutgers College in 1864, which now brought the college for the first time into a relationship with the state of New Jersey. The land-grant designation spurred the development of a Scientific School as a specialized curriculum of Rutgers College — a curriculum that included courses in chemistry, agriculture, mechanics, and engineering. The curriculum of the Scientific School and other changes in the curriculum at Rutgers echoed a reorientation in higher education in America after the Civil War.

Colleges and universities stressed not only the natural sciences but also courses of vocational and practical use to its students and to American society. Still, Rutgers was more conservative than the leading American colleges and universities because, while it added a Scientific School, it was still strongly committed to delivering a classical education, and still retained a strong religious orientation. Bible Class each Sabbath Morning remained a requirement of all Rutgers students until the 1890's.

The modernization of the Rutgers classical curriculum was reflected in the content of the course offerings in mental philosophy with the appointment of Theodore S. Doolittle (1836-1893) as Collegiate Church Professor of Rhetoric, Logic, and Mental Philosophy. Doolittle had graduated from Rutgers College in 1859, with highest honors, and then attended the Theological Seminary for three more years. He later received a D.D. from Wesleyan University and an L.L.D. from Union College. Doolittle was appointed professor at Rutgers in 1864, coincident with the significant changes in the college described above, that is, the enhanced endowment of the college, its separation from the Dutch Church, and its designation as a

the Land-Grant College of New Jersey.



Theodore S. Doolittle was the first to teach a year-long course in mental philosophy at Rutgers in 1864 following his appointment as Professor. He continued to teach this course for almost 30 years, introducing some of the changing conceptions in mental philosophy as reflected in the textbooks of the period. (Photo courtesy of the Rutgers University Archives.)

Doolittle was a scholar of wide-ranging interests, including architecture, fine arts, and elocution. He was also a prolific writer, particularly on religious topics. During his tenure at Rutgers, Doolittle served as vice president (1890-1893) and as acting president (1890-1891).

Doolittle was a member of the clergy, as were most of the other faculty members of this period. Many served as pastor of one of the local churches. But, as McCormick (1966, pg. 83) noted, "unlike many of their predecessors their primary and lasting commitment was to the academic sphere."

Doolittle introduced Rutgers students to the more current ideas in mental philosophy, ever more eclectic as the century wore on. The texts he chose for Mental Philosophy are Hickok's *Empirical Psychology* and Hamilton's *Metaphysics*. The listing of these texts in the 1864-65 Rutgers College catalog gives us a window into the likely content of Doolittle's course in mental philosophy.

First, the Hickok text: Laurens P. Hickok (1789-1888) was Professor of Mental and Moral Philosophy at Union College, and later its president. Hickok's

version of empirical psychology differs from that of the future generation of empirical psychologists. For Hickok, empirical psychology is the study of subjective experience using introspection. He also published a separate 700-page tome on theoretical psychology, which he considered an indispensable background to an empirical psychology. To make sure that students using his *Empirical Psychology* were exposed to the fundamentals of his theoretical psychology he summarized his theoretical psychology in his *Empirical Psychology*. Hickok's distinction between a theoretical (or rational) and an empirical psychology can be traced to German philosophy. Still, the composition of his theoretical psychology is parallel to that of its counterparts in Scottish mental philosophy, but with a bit of originality of its own. The titles of his books represent a shift in rubric from mental philosophy to psychology, and at least one historian considered Hickok "as the first major American psychologist" (Harms, 1972), albeit a largely forgotten one.

Second, Hamilton's *Metaphysics*: Sir William Hamilton (1788-1856) was the culminating figure in Scottish mental science. Despite his use of the term *Metaphysics* in the book's title, he described his work as "psychology." In it, he introduced a considerable amount of eclecticism in Scottish philosophy by blending Scottish with English and German thinking, e.g., Kant, Herbart. It was also clear to Hamilton that he could not dismiss the empiricist conception of association as an important mechanism of mind, as Reid had done. While not accepting the empiricist formulation as such, he proposed the "law of redintegration" in its place. The law states essentially that thoughts suggest each other when they were previously part of the same total cognition. (Interestingly, this law had a currency until quite recently in introductory psychology texts.) So, as mental science in Scotland took on a decidedly eclectic tone, so did the teaching of mental philosophy in America.

The following comment, which appeared in the 1864-65 Rutgers College catalog, also gives us a window into Doolittle's more modern and less dogmatic approach to the topic.

Mental Philosophy.-Hickok's *Empirical Psychology* and Hamilton's *Metaphysics*, arranged by Bowen, are the guide books in this department. But neither is implicitly followed. The aim is rather to arouse the student, by a diligent comparison of different authors, to investigate the open questions of Philosophy independently, and thus to train him to a comprehensive and cautious deliberation as well in adopting the conclusions of others as in forming and advancing his own. As opportunity offers, lectures upon important topics are interspersed through the course. (pg. 24)

In this catalog the Junior Year curriculum now also lists Mental Philosophy as one of nine major subjects, the others being Latin, Greek, Mathematics, Chemistry, Rhetoric, Modern Languages (German), Biblical Recitations, and Elocution.

In the 1868-69 catalog, under "TEXTBOOKS AND BOOKS OF REFERENCE" (pg. 28), and identifiable as relevant to mental philosophy are works by the Scottish philosophers (Hamilton, Stewart, Reid), a contemporary English empiricist (Mill), and American eclectics (McCosh, Hickok, Upham). The wide-ranging content of courses mental philosophy at Rutgers is quite apparent from these references.

Several new American texts on mental philosophy were published in the latter part of the 19th century, and most found their way at various times into the mental philosophy curriculum at Rutgers. In the 1870-71 catalog, Mental Philosophy is listed for the first time for the Sophomore Year, with Haven's *Mental Philosophy* as the text. The Haven text reflects the increasing eclecticism of the Scottish school. Within four years, the Haven text was replaced with Porter's *The Human Intellect*. Noah Porter (1811-92) was professor and sometime president at Yale. His text is listed both for the Sophomore and Junior Years offerings in Mental Philosophy. For the Junior Year Hamilton's *Metaphysics* is also listed. Accompanying the listing of these texts in the catalog are the following brief remarks:

Mental Philosophy.-Porter's Elements of Intellectual Philosophy and Hamilton's *Metaphysics*, are guide books in this department. But neither is implicitly followed. As opportunity offers, lectures upon important topics are interspersed through the course. (pg.22)

Catalogs from 1877 to 1896 show little change in the content of mental philosophy offerings. Porter's text remained the main text for courses in mental philosophy, supplemented by a variety of readings in the "Distinctive Schools of Ancient and Modern Philosophy." In a way, Porter's text, often characterized as the "encyclopaedia of pre-experimental psychology" marks the end of an era in American psychology. As the 19th century came to an end, battle lines were being drawn between a mental science still suffused with spiritualism and theism (Porter's text) and the emerging scientific materialism of experimental/physiological psychology.

A note on the role of mental philosophy in the Rutgers College curriculum: Alongside the older classical curriculum, the curriculum of the Scientific School assumed increasing prominence in the catalogs of this

period, attracting as it did more and more students. With this development, mental philosophy served different roles in the two curricula. In the Scientific School, it became a "prescribed" study in the first two semesters of the Junior Year; in the classical curriculum, it became one of nine electives, two of which were to be pursued throughout the Junior and Senior Years. (The elective system was relatively new in the college curriculum.)

Professors Cooper and Schenk

When Doolittle died in 1893, Jacob Cooper (1830-1904) vacated his professorship in Greek Language and Literature, which he had occupied since his arrival at Rutgers in 1866, to become the Collegiate Church Professor of Logic and Mental Philosophy. Cooper received his PhD from the University of Berlin in 1854. There is no archival information on the academic discipline in which he specialized. Somewhat informative about his interests in religion and in Greek is the topic of his dissertation, "The Eleusinian Mysteries", which dealt with famous secret religious rites in ancient Greece. He then pursued theological training at Edinburgh, where he came into contact with a number of luminaries, including Sir William Hamilton. Cooper was an exceptionally learned man — "encyclopaedic knowledge which his wide reading and retentive memory had given him" (Rutgers Faculty eulogy for Cooper, February 1904) — and apparently had no difficulty teaching mental philosophy, or almost any course in the college.



Jacob Cooper, in 1893, succeeded Doolittle in teaching mental philosophy at Rutgers. He chose texts for this course that bridged mental philosophy and the new psychology that was emerging in America at the turn of the century. (Photo courtesy of the Rutgers University Archives.)

A couple of new texts make their appearance in the course catalogs during Cooper's tenure as Professor of Logic and Mental Philosophy. One is Hill's *The Elements of Psychology*, which made a brief appearance in the 1897-98 catalog as a text for the mental philosophy course. Hill's text is interesting in that it was truly a bridge between a philosophically based psychology and the new psychology that was emerging in America at the turn of the century. The framework for the Hill text is Scottish mental philosophy but the book also describes the experimental work in Germany on the physiology of the nervous system as well as other experimental research in physiological psychology that would be among the bulwarks of the new psychology. The second is Ladd's *Outlines of Descriptive Psychology*. George T. Ladd (1842-1921) also embodied a mix of the mental philosophy of the 19th century and the experimental psychology of the 20th century. He was trained as a theologian (D.D., 1879, Andover Theological Seminary), and then spent 10 years in the ministry before switching to a career in psychology. As a psychologist at Yale, he helped start the psychology laboratory there.

When Cooper died in 1904, the Reverend Doctor Schenck, Professor of Practical Theology in the New Brunswick Theological Seminary stepped in for a year to take charge of the Department of Philosophy and Logic. Professor Schenck subdivided the first term of the Junior Year into "Psychology" and "Metaphysics" with William James's *Psychology, Briefer Course* as the text for Psychology.

This is the first time the James text appeared in the Rutgers College catalog. While its use reflects a shift toward the psychology as an empirical natural science — the new psychology, the rest of the curriculum in mental philosophy relied exclusively on philosophy texts. It is likely that the philosophy texts were the more compatible with Professor Schenck's approach to mental philosophy. Still, it was apparently Professor Schenck's choice that the topic for a prize, awarded to a student each year for the best essay on a particular topic (the topic changed every year) in mental philosophy, was "Examination upon Ladd's *Outlines of Physiological Psychology*" (Rutgers College 1904-05 catalog). Schenck's choice of Ladd's book, like his choice of the James text, reflects the first presence of the new psychology at Rutgers.

Concluding remarks

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, most of the colleges founded during the colonial period continued to expand during the 19th century while

Rutgers was still struggling for the financial support required to grow apace with these other institutions. Nevertheless, it is clear that Doolittle, Cooper, and Schenk presented Rutgers students with the changing ideas about mind, and as such paralleled the offerings in mental philosophy and psychology available at other colleges in America.

Still, at Rutgers as well as at other American colleges and universities, students continued to be imbued with a reverence for God, and religious doctrine continued to exercise an influence on mental philosophy even as it transformed itself into "psychology". Indeed, 19th century academic psychology in America is typically either ignored by historians of psychology as a philosophy topic taught by clergymen or, if covered, briefly summarized as psychology's "prescientific" period in America. While mental philosophy's "method" is discursive rather than experimental/empirical and the presentation of ideas is suffused with acknowledgements to God for creating this wondrous creature (humans), the topics elaborated in mental philosophy are quite modern — senses, intellect, emotions, will, and psychopathology. The role of 19th century mental philosophy in the shaping of a science of psychology is succinctly summarized by Heidbreder (1933) in her *Seven Psychologies*. She wrote:

Thomas Reid, professor of philosophy at Edinburgh ..., was the founder of the [Scottish] school. He grounded his position on "instinct" and "common sense." The senses, he declared, make us immediately aware of an external world and they arouse in us an "invincible belief" in the existence of external objects....The attitude of the common-sense school not only turned attention to the world of empirical fact, but legitimized that direction of attention. In doing so, it adopted the position that is essentially the one science shares with common sense — that of taking for granted, as a starting point, the world as it appears to naive perception. The common-sense philosophy also took up the case for revealed religion. It was, indeed, one of the aims of the Scottish school to protest against those implications of Hume's skepticism which might undermine religious faith. To assert that faith and belief are legitimate and the necessary attitudes toward the external world was to take a step toward justifying those attitudes toward religion. Religion for the Scottish school meant Calvinism, and since the Scottish school a little later joined forces with British associationism, an alliance was formed of special interest to American psychology. For a psychology that blended harmoniously with Calvinism was peculiarly adapted to the needs of the first American colleges. It was, in fact, this psychology — British associationism tinged with Scottish common sense — which was generally taught in the early, devout days of American education, when psychology was included in the college curriculum as mental philosophy, when philosophy was, as a rule, taught by the president of the college, and when the president was extremely likely to have been trained for the Christian ministry in one of the Calvinistic denominations. It was this kind of psychology which was in possession of the field when James and Titchener introduced their respective innovations. (pp.52-53)

In the next chapter we take up the impact of these and other innovations on the development of psychology's curriculum at Rutgers. Suffice to say here, Rutgers like most colleges and universities shed its psychology offerings of religious content and embraced the new psychology that emerged in early 20th century America.

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