

# History of Psychology

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## **Johns Hopkins's first professorship in philosophy: A critical pivot point in the history of American psychology**

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The first professorship in philosophy at Johns Hopkins University was contested in the early 1880s by two of the most prominent and influential scholars in America: Charles Sanders Peirce and George Sylvester Morris. A third figure also vied for the position, although he was much less well known at the time: Granville Stanley Hall. Through a series of unexpected circumstances, Hall ultimately won the professorship and then used it to leverage an extraordinary career that included his opening the first American research laboratory in psychology, establishing the *American Journal of Psychology*, becoming president of Clark University, founding the American Psychological Association, and profoundly affecting the character of developmental psychology in America.

Johns Hopkins University (JHU) was unlike any other school in America when it opened in 1876. It was nondenominational, it demanded that its faculty be productive researchers, its primary intellectual focus was science, and its major pedagogical priority was graduate education. It is often said that it followed the German model of the university at a time when most American colleges emphasized inculcating denominational dogmatics in the sons of America's gentry. In fact, however, the president of the new university, Daniel Coit Gilman, studied a wide variety of European models and claimed that he had decided not to follow any one of them but to integrate the best of what he found in Europe with American traditions (Hawkins, 1960).

In the history of psychology, Johns Hopkins is known chiefly for having been the place where Granville Stanley Hall founded, in 1883, the first American research laboratory dedicated to experimental psychology (William James's earlier demonstration laboratory at Harvard notwithstanding) and where he launched the *American Journal of Psychology* (*AJP*)

in 1887 before abruptly departing in 1888 to take up the presidency of the newly founded Clark University. In these matters, it is obvious that the Johns Hopkins philosophy professorship was a crucial pivot point in the history of American psychology. In this article, however, I want to address the other side of Johns Hopkins's pivotal status: What would have happened if Hall had not won the professorship in philosophy? The circuitous route by which Hall came to the position, the people who are likely to have won it if Hall had not, and the impact that this turn of events might have had on the subsequent history of American psychology are all interesting questions in their own rights, and worthy of some historical consideration.

This seems clear once the caliber of people who were in competition with Hall for the chair is recognized: the brilliant but erratic American polymath Charles Sanders Peirce and the then-prominent idealist philosopher (and mentor to John Dewey) George Sylvester Morris. Although the story of the competition between these three has been mooted in books and articles focused primarily on one or another of these three characters (e.g., Brent, 1998; Fisch & Cope, 1952; Pauly, 1986; Ross, 1972; Wenley, 1917<sup>1</sup>) or on the university as a whole (e.g., Hawkins, 1960),<sup>2</sup> rarely has the focus been on the struggle itself and on the various dynamics, both inside and outside the university, that were then operating on all three men.

In the present article I present a month-by-month account of the intense struggle to claim what was probably the most sought-after philosophical position in the country and how the contingencies of personal strengths and weaknesses, as well as institutional anxieties, had as much to do with the ultimate outcome—and thus with the future development of American psychology—as any scientific or other intellectual considerations that were at play.

### **Baltimore, Johns Hopkins, and the troublesome philosophy position**

Baltimore was perhaps an unlikely place for the grand experiment in American higher education that Johns Hopkins represented. A provincial city, technically Northern but “spiritually” Southern, it had originally been the home of a mostly British, German, and French population, with a large Catholic community. The aftermath of the Civil War had brought many African Americans escaping the unfriendly Southern states, along with a large number of eastern and southern European immigrants. By 1880, the city numbered about 400,000 and had evolved into a major seaport, manufacturing center, and the eastern base of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. These industries generated the “small group of wealthy men of deeply Southern loyalties and of narrow and largely Methodist and Presbyterian convictions” (Brent, 1998, p. 127) that provided the funds needed to bring

JHU into existence. President Gilman had recruited eminent and promising professors from far and wide, and the school's research emphasis succeeded brilliantly and rapidly: In just 4 years, its faculty published more than all other American scholars combined over the previous generation (Brent, 1998, p. 127).

One area proved to be particularly problematic for Gilman, however. When the school opened in 1876, he still had yet to select a professor of philosophy. The person not only had to be eminent but also had to suit Johns Hopkins's commitment to original research. And just as important as these criteria, the person chosen had to be religiously "safe," that is, not draw the unfavorable attention of Baltimore's religious communities, particularly JHU's conservative protestant patrons. Gilman approached the problem carefully.

One of the first people recommended for a position in logic—by William James, among others—was Charles Sanders Peirce (Fisch & Cope, 1952, p. 280). Peirce was the son of the Harvard professor of astronomy and mathematics, Benjamin Peirce. The elder Peirce was probably America's only internationally significant mathematician at the time, and had taught his son well. Still in his 30s, the younger Peirce had become an eminent astronomer and physicist in his own right, also having publishing several notable works on philosophical topics, especially logic. Despite his obvious intellect, however, Peirce's personality did not endear him to many people. Late in high school, he even described himself as being "vain, snobbish, incivil, reckless, lazy, and ill-tempered" (cited in Menand, 2001, p. 159). Many others were inclined to agree, but Peirce's sheer genius made him an ongoing figure of academic interest, if deep ambivalence.

In 1867, the two Peirces were called on to prove in a court of law, using probability theory quite advanced for the time, that a set of signatures crucial to an important inheritance case were traced copies of each other rather than distinct originals. But for some calculation errors, perhaps understandable given the more than 25,000 comparisons they made (Menand, 2001, p. 170), their analysis is fairly compelling to this day. In the 1860s, however, it was incomprehensible to most observers—including, apparently, the judge—and the case was settled on legal technicalities.

In the early 1870s, Peirce formed a Metaphysical Club with the "Cambridge Socrates," Chauncey Wright (Fisch, 1964; Madden, 1963; Menand, 2001). With young William James, Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., and others, the Metaphysical Club was a hotbed of empiricist, positivist, and evolutionist thought at a time when such things were not treated with much respect in the halls of Harvard. The club was also the crucible for the formation of American pragmatism, developed mainly by Peirce, who first published on the topic (though not by name) in the late 1870s (Peirce, 1877a, 1878a). At about the same time Peirce (1877b) published what may

have been the first American contribution to experimental psychology (Cadwallader, 1974), an investigation into the nature of color vision, and the major astronomical work of his career, *Photometric Researches* (Peirce, 1878b). James soon earned himself a position in physiology at Harvard, but college president Charles Eliot could not abide Peirce's personality and soon forbade him to set foot on the campus. Nevertheless, Peirce did reasonably well during the lifetime of his father, who protected and promoted him, holding a position with the U.S. Coast Survey from 1859 to 1891. After his father's death in September 1880, however, Charles had to look after himself, and in this he did not do well. In any case, Gilman decided to decline the recommendation of Peirce when it was first made to him in 1875.

His recommendation for Peirce having failed, in 1877 William James, then only a lecturer in physiology at Harvard, wrote to Gilman inquiring about a more secure position in philosophy for himself (Fisch & Cope, 1952, p. 281). Gilman did not offer enough to entice James to leave his beloved Cambridge but began a tentative dance that would engage the two men for the next several years.

Another person who wrote Gilman about the possibility of an appointment in philosophy early in 1877 was Granville Stanley Hall. Hall would not complete his Ph.D. at Harvard, under the supervision of William James, until the next year. Before coming to Harvard, Hall had studied theology at Union Seminary, taken an educational tour of Germany (during which he focused on the teachings of the post-Hegelian philosopher Adolf Trendelenburg in Berlin), and taught literature at Antioch College in Ohio. His discovery of Wundt's physiological psychology (and his unhappiness with Antioch) had led him to attempt to travel back to Germany for study, but he had only gotten as far as Cambridge, Massachusetts, before his money ran out and he was waylaid by the offer of some English courses to teach while earning a Ph.D. at Harvard.

An older, not very accomplished graduate student was not what Gilman had in mind for the Johns Hopkins philosophy chair, however, so Hall's application was declined. Instead, in December 1877, Gilman offered a single course in the history of philosophy to George Sylvester Morris, which Morris accepted and then delivered in January 1878. Morris had held a chair in modern languages and literature at the University of Michigan since 1870. Before that he had studied at Union Seminary and traveled to Germany to study with Trendelenburg. Indeed, the somewhat younger Hall had met and admired Morris at Union and seems to have gone on his own German study tour partly in an attempt to emulate his older fellow student. It was widely known in university circles that Morris wanted a philosophical position, although he was blocked from that at Michigan by an older and beloved—though not very philosophically sophisticated—minister

who had taken up the philosophy chair just a year before Morris arrived (Wenley, 1917, p. 127). Still, he persevered, publishing a translation of Ueberweg's *History of Philosophy* (Ueberweg, 1871–1873). Though better established in philosophy than Hall (or even William James at the time), Morris fit uncomfortably into the Johns Hopkins ethos. First, he was ambivalent about the importance of natural science. Second, although he was devoutly religious, the approach to Christianity he had learned from his German idealist training made him not as safe as Gilman needed (Sokal, 1981, p. 48). Despite all of this, Morris's course was successful enough that he was invited to return the next January to give a second series of lectures, this one on ethics.

The month after Morris's first course, February 1878, saw William James give a course at Johns Hopkins as well, on "The Senses and the Brain and Their Relation to Thought" (James, 1878/1988). These were the lectures in which James first outlined his famous argument that the acceptance of Darwin's theory of natural selection did not compel one to abandon the idea of a higher human nature (Richards, 1987, p. 431). Indeed, he argued that consciousness, far from being the mere epiphenomenon that T. H. Huxley (1874) declared it to be, could not have evolved at all unless it held some concrete benefit for human beings (James, 1879). In James's view, the benefit of consciousness was that it allowed an organism with a nervous system so complicated that it verged on being unstable to "load the dice," as he put it, in favor of certain "interests." Consciousness, as he put it, "is a fighter for ends." This series of lectures, repeated by James in Boston that autumn, was so successful that the next January (1879) Gilman offered James a lectureship in philosophy at Johns Hopkins. James refused the offer but used it to leverage the president of Harvard, Charles William Eliot, to promote him to assistant professor and to assure him that he was in line for the senior philosophical chair. Seeing how things were beginning to fall out at Johns Hopkins, perhaps, Peirce wrote to Gilman in March 1878, offering to teach logic (Fisch & Cope, 1952, p. 282). Gilman initially offered him a half-lectureship but later withdrew it after Peirce tangled with JHU's highly valued but testy mathematics professor, James Joseph Sylvester (Brent, 1998, pp. 121–122).

Meanwhile, Hall had been busy in 1878 honing his scholarly credentials. In March he presented an empirical study of color perception to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (Hall, 1878a). In June he defended his dissertation on the muscular perception of space and soon thereafter left for Germany, where he began an intensive study of physiology (with DuBois-Reymond and Helmholtz in Berlin and with Carl Ludwig in Leipzig) and, to a lesser degree, psychology with Wundt (Ross, 1972, pp. 79–86).<sup>3</sup> In October 1878, a condensation of Hall's dissertation was published in the journal *Mind* (Hall, 1878b), the first American piece to

appear in the rising British periodical. January 1879 saw the publication in *Mind* of both James's "Are We Automata?" and Hall's "Philosophy in the United States." Hall probably expected his article to establish his philosophical reputation, but it was so damning of the American scene that it probably nixed whatever chance he had ever had of winning a position at Harvard (Ross, 1972, p. 105).

### **A department without a professor**

It was not until 1879 that the structure of philosophy's future at JHU really began to take shape. As mentioned, January saw Morris's ethics course and James's refusal of a lectureship. In February Gilman offered Morris a 3-year contract for a half-lectureship in the history of philosophy and ethics; Morris would teach at JHU in the fall terms and continue at Michigan in the spring terms (Wenley, 1917, p. 140). With that, James canceled the second set of lectures he was to deliver at JHU. In June, Gilman engaged Peirce for a half-lectureship in logic. Unlike in Morris's agreement, however, Peirce would spread his courses out over the whole school year rather than concentrating them in a single term. Still, it was understood that Peirce's full-time work with the Coast Survey would continue and, indeed, take precedence over the lectureship. Peirce's first significant act upon receiving the position was to form a Metaphysical Club at JHU at which both students and faculty would present and discuss their work (Behrens, 2005). For Gilman, the club was an extension of a set of similar disciplinary associations at JHU.<sup>4</sup> For Peirce, however, the Metaphysical Club represented the rebirth of the Cambridge Metaphysical Club, which had been one of the most intellectually fruitful experiences of his life. The club's first meeting was held in October 1879. The load seems to have been too much for Peirce, however, who wrote to Gilman in December that his physician "considered the state of my brain rather alarming. Not that he particularly feared regular insanity, but he did fear something of that sort" (cited in Brent, 1998, p. 131).

Meanwhile, in June 1879 Morris, thinking that he had the inside track on what would become a permanent position in philosophy, raised the pressure on the Michigan administration<sup>5</sup> by resigning his chair in languages, although he agreed to stay on for one additional year to accommodate the needs of his replacement, a former student of his (Wenley, 1917, p. 140).

By the start of 1880, Hall was beginning to despair of ever attaining an American university position. Although he had written to James of a "shadow of a chance" (cited in Ross, 1972, p. 105n) of a position at Cornell, nothing had come of it. Coming to the end of his European study tour, he wrote Gilman again in February, and again Gilman refused him (Ross, 1972, p. 104). In July, James wrote Gilman on Hall's behalf,

strenuously urging that "he is a more learned man than I can ever hope to become" and "he is much too good for any but a first rate university" (cited in Ross, 1972, p. 104). Apparently not persuaded by James's truly astonishing appeal, Gilman refused Hall yet again. Hall was now back in the United States. The only work he could get was at his alma mater, tiny Williams College in western Massachusetts. Toward the end of his time in Europe, however, Hall had developed a new interest, one that would serve him well: the scientific study of child education or, as it was coming to be known in professional circles, pedagogy. The topic, then still almost unheard of in the United States,<sup>6</sup> was becoming popular especially in German and Italy, and Hall made it a point to see lectures by the leaders of the new field.

In fall 1880, President Eliot of Harvard invited Hall to give two series of lectures, one on the history of philosophy and one on pedagogy. The latter was held across the river in Boston proper, rather than in Cambridge, in order to encourage more public school teachers to attend. By all reports, Hall's lectures on pedagogy, given between February and April 1881, were wildly successful. He was immediately appointed to the National Council of Education, an elite committee of the National Education Association (NEA) that was to adjudicate among the various conflicting educational theories then on offer (Ross, 1972, pp. 118, 129). Hall himself, who just weeks before had wondered whether he would ever amount to anything academically, was suddenly thrust into the forefront of a new educational reform movement in America. Even before the lecture series had run its course, Gilman had heard of its popularity and asked Hall to give lecture series at JHU. Hall agreed, and a series of lectures on psychology was prepared for presentation in Baltimore in January 1882. In the meantime, another of Hall's articles appeared in *Mind* (Hall, 1881a) as well as his first book, *Aspects of German Culture* (Hall 1881b) and the first of a series of articles on pedagogy in the *Princeton Review* (Hall, 1882b). Although Gilman could not attend Hall's JHU lectures himself, the report from one of his faculty members was encouraging enough that in March 1882 Gilman was induced to offer him a 3-year half-lectureship (spring terms, opposite Morris) in psychology and pedagogics in the department of philosophy. As if to reassure Gilman that he had not made a mistake, Hall formally launched his child study movement at an NEA speech that spring, published an empirical study of optical illusions in August (Bowditch & Hall, 1882), and published the second of his *Princeton Review* articles on pedagogy that November (Hall, 1882a).

Gilman, who had opened JHU in 1876 with no instructor in philosophy, now had an embarrassment of riches: Morris in history and ethics, Peirce in logic, and Hall in psychology and pedagogics. Although the three lecturers seemed to be getting along well, each had reason to believe that he

alone was on his way toward a professorship. One apparently obvious option—appointing more than one professor in the area—seems not to have appealed to Gilman. This may have been because of the fluctuating state of JHU's finances, which were heavily invested in the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, a sometimes lucrative but often unstable business (Hawkins, 1960, pp. 131–134).

Time was not on Gilman's side, however. In December 1880 (not long after the death in September of Peirce's father), Peirce announced that he would be forced to leave JHU on account of some travel required by his work with the Coast Survey. At that time he sold nearly 300 books from his personal collection to the school, saying that "upon leaving the university I shall bid adieu to the study of Logic and Philosophy (except experimental psychology)" (cited in Fisch & Cope, 1952, p. 292). By March 1881, a large salary increase had coaxed Peirce back (Brent, 1998, p. 133), but it was clear that he was on the hunt for higher-paying work than he was getting from his combined JHU and Coast Survey positions. Morris was hunting for more as well. In June 1881, Michigan played the best hand it could muster at the time, offering him a half-professorship in ethics, the history of philosophy, and logic that was tailored not to interfere with his JHU duties (Wenley, 1917, p. 141). If Gilman wanted Morris to stay, he was going to have to fight for him.

September 1882 saw the arrival of some exceptional graduate students: James McKeen Cattell, who had won a fellowship, and John Dewey, who had impressed Morris with an article published in the largely Hegelian *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. They joined physiologist Henry Herbert Donaldson, who had come in 1881 and was starting work with Hall on tactile perception, and logician (and later color vision theorist) Christine Ladd-Franklin, who had arrived in 1878. All were contributors to the Metaphysical Club (Fisch & Cope, 1952, pp. 371–374), and all went on to significant careers in their own rights. However, Cattell was stripped of his fellowship the following May and, furious at Hall's duplicitous behavior in the matter (Sokal, 1981, p. 78), stormed out of the department and went on to complete his Ph.D. in Leipzig under the supervision of Wilhelm Wundt.<sup>7</sup>

### **A professor is appointed**

The year 1883 saw the publication of *Studies in Logic by Members of the Johns Hopkins University* (Peirce, 1883). The book contained a number of significant original contributions to the field authored by Peirce and his students over the previous 2 years (Brent, 1998, p. 128). Prominent English logician John Venn, reviewing the book in the British journal *Mind*, was so impressed that he wrote that it "seems to me to contain a greater quantity of novel and suggestive matter than any other recent works on the same or allied subject which has happened to come under



my notice" (Venn, 1883, p. 594). Later that year, Peirce began a series of studies with Joseph Jastrow that aimed to demonstrate a critical flaw in the view of perception that underlay Fechner's psychophysical law. They were published in *Memoirs of the National Academy of Sciences* the next year (Peirce & Jastrow, 1884).

Hall, determined that control of psychology at Johns Hopkins would be his, opened an experimental psychology laboratory, the first such American facility dedicated to original research, in a private house adjacent to JHU (Ross, 1972, p. 154). The first publication of research conducted in the laboratory was authored by Hall and the JHU director of the gymnasium, Edward Mussey Hartwell,<sup>8</sup> and published in *Mind* in January of the next year (Hall & Hartwell, 1884). In addition, in May, Hall (1883) published what was probably the most significant piece of research in his early career, "The Contents of Children's Minds." The study consisted chiefly in the results of Hall's attempt to closely question children on the state of their knowledge, or as Hall himself later put it, he conducted a "study of children's ignorance" (cited in Ross, 1972, p. 126). It was Hall's first attempt to put into practice what he had called for the year before in launching the child study movement.

It is difficult to know whether Hall's or Peirce's experimental psychological research project was started first. Cattell reported that Hall's laboratory opened in February 1883 (in Sokal, 1981, p. 64). However, Jastrow (1930) said that his experimental work with Peirce, which was carried out in Jastrow's own rooms starting in December 1883, began before any research by Hall or his students at JHU. The apparent discrepancy probably results from the fact that none of the work that took place in Hall's lab during 1883 actually consisted in original, publishable research. The first publication by any of Hall's students of work in the new lab did not appear until more than 2 years after the lab had opened (Donaldson, 1885).

Meanwhile, Morris was finally offered the full professorship in philosophy at Michigan that he had long sought in April 1883 (Wenley, 1917, p. 146). He completed his JHU courses for 1884 and put in his last appearance at a January 1885 meeting of the Metaphysical Club. In July 1885 he called his protégé, John Dewey, to an instructorship at Michigan.

Gilman was now left with a choice between Peirce and Hall. Peirce was by far the more accomplished of the two (though also slightly older), but Hall was not without his own accomplishments and was clearly on the rise. With his status in the new field of pedagogy, Hall probably had a certain cachet that Peirce lacked. Hall had also shown himself to be more attuned and more willing to accommodate himself to the demands of public opinion. In the terminology of university presidents of the day, he was the safer candidate. By contrast, Peirce was erratic and had gotten into

disputes with various colleagues. He was positively disliked by some. The last straw came in December 1883 when a member of the university Board of Trustees delivered to Gilman “certain facts which had been brought to his knowledge quite derogatory to the standing of Mr. Peirce as a member of an academic staff” that had been gleaned from a conversation with an unnamed third party (cited from a draft of an 1884 report by Gilman in Fisch & Cope, 1952, p. 309).

The details of the “derogatory” facts, long something of a mystery in Peirce circles, came to light only a century after the fact with the discovery of a letter from Simon Newcomb, then director of the Nautical Almanac Office of the U.S. Naval Observatory, to his wife on December 30, 1883:

I have been somewhat exercised at being the unintended means of making known some of the points of C. Peirce’s marital history at Baltimore. When last going to N. Y. I went from Balt. to Phil. in the same seat with Dr. Thomas, a J. H. U. Trustee, and supposing they all knew more or less of the affair got talking of it, and let several cats out of the bag. What I gave as reports, Dr. Th., I suspect, told Gilman as facts, and troubled the latter greatly, as it seems Mrs. P(2) had begun to cultivate Mrs. G’s acquaintance. The supposition is, that the marriage last summer made no change in the relations of the parties. Mr. Hilgard assures me that it is all true, they having occupied the same apartments in N. Y. some years ago. It is sad to think of the weaknesses which may accompany genius. (cited in Houser, 1986, pp. lxiv–lxv)

The Dr. Thomas mentioned was James Carey Thomas, a Baltimore physician, Quaker leader, and powerful JHU trustee, who was a particular stickler for religious orthodoxy. He is reported to have once “interviewed and cross-examined” prominent British philosopher James Ward with an eye to possibly offering him the JHU philosophy position. At the end of the discussion Thomas openly pronounced Ward “not orthodox enough,” adding as if by way of explanation that “at Baltimore, we are church-going people” (cited in Hawkins, 1960, p. 189, n. 9).

Such a man certainly was not going to abide Peirce’s casual approach to what he regarded as the sacred institution of marriage, and it is surprising that Newcomb would have expected Thomas to have known about the technically extramarital affair<sup>9</sup> and not to have reacted immediately. Indeed, Newcomb’s account may have been slightly disingenuous. Newcomb had been a student at Harvard of Peirce’s father, Benjamin, but bore a lifelong dislike of the son, whom he regarded as a spoiled brat. Apparently Newcomb’s wife, Mary Hassler Newcomb, was keen to know, and spread, the worst about Peirce as well (Houser, 1986, p. lxv; Auspitz, 1983).

In any case, a powerful trustee of the university was outraged and the threat of public scandal and embarrassment to the university was imminent, so Gilman had to act. In order not to draw attention to the case, however,

he had to hide his actual motives. In January 1884, Gilman and the trustees ordered that all lecturers be given 1-year contracts only. They then declined to renew Peirce's contract when it expired in April 1884. Peirce was told that the problem was his teaching, and he attempted to remedy the situation, asking to address the trustees. His request was denied, but he was granted \$1,000 severance to compensate him for the final portion of the 2-year lease he had taken on his Baltimore house just months before on the advice of Gilman himself (when it appeared to both men that he would be offered a permanent position). Although Peirce stayed close to the university community until 1885, he was never again employed by Johns Hopkins.

Indeed, it was the last post he ever held at any university. He was briefly considered by University of Chicago in the early 1890s, but the idea was abandoned when Harvard philosopher George Herbert Palmer explicitly warned Chicago president William Harper Rainey away from him, despite William James's strong recommendation. In 1887, with money he had inherited upon the death of his mother, Peirce purchased a house in rural Pennsylvania, where he and his wife lived out their lives in increasing poverty. In 1890 the Coast Survey, for which he had then worked for 30 years, refused to publish a report he had written on the gravimetric observations he had made at numerous places in the United States. He resigned his position over the matter (Cadwallader, 1974, p. 292) and was left with no regular income. He earned some money from writing for journals, and occasionally his friends, most notably William James, arranged for him a series of lectures, for which they solicited private donations. He died in 1914, destitute and with great masses of his work unpublished.

The outcome for Hall was quite different. In January 1884 his makeshift laboratory was moved to rooms in the university proper. In April he was formally offered the coveted professorship in philosophy. In October he delivered his inaugural lecture, "The New Psychology," which was soon published in the *Andover Review* (Hall, 1885). In 1884 he was invited to become a vice president of the newly founded American Society for Psychological Research (ASPR). Using this position to solicit financial backing from a wealthy spiritualist on the ASPR Council, Robert Pearsall Smith, Hall launched the *American Journal of Psychology* in October 1887. Just months later, he was being courted for the presidency of the new Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, which he accepted in the spring of 1888 and where he remained for the rest of his career. Although his administrative career had rocky patches, to be sure (e.g., Clark never lived up to its promise of being a research-oriented school like JHU, and Hall lost two thirds of his Clark faculty to the University of Chicago and other institutions in 1892), from this platform he was able to found the American Psychological Association (APA) and the journal *Pedagogical Seminary*

and was in a position to bring both Freud and Jung to their first (and for Freud, only) lecture engagements in America. His book on adolescence (Hall, 1904) was highly influential, and despite many disputes with various psychologist colleagues, Hall was elected president of the APA for a second time just before his death in 1924.

### **Some implications and speculations for the future of psychology**

How much of an effect did these goings-on at Johns Hopkins have on the development of psychology in America more generally? We can only guess, but my guess is that the effect was profound. The main reason for this opinion has to do with the number of ultimately important people involved. Let us go through them one by one, beginning with the person who actually won the competition for the professorship in philosophy at JHU, G. Stanley Hall.

Although Hall founded a laboratory of sorts in January 1883, it was a makeshift affair off campus, and it is unlikely that it would be celebrated as America's first experimental psychology research laboratory<sup>10</sup> if it had not been succeeded by Hall's on-campus laboratory the next year (any more than, say, Cattell's short-lived small Cambridge laboratory of 1886 is regarded as the first British experimental psychology laboratory). Hall and his students published some of their early experimental work in the British journal *Mind* (see Green, 2005), but soon there was nearly enough research emanating from the laboratory to fill a journal all by itself. The problem was money: Hall did not have the funds to launch such a project on his own. Fortunately, his newfound prominence as a professor at Johns Hopkins led to his being invited to serve on a variety of boards and commissions, not least of which was the fledgling ASPR, of which Hall became a vice president in 1884. Hall was by no means the sole "sober academic" to become involved in governance of the early ASPR. The president was Simon Newcomb. Other vice presidents were George S. Fullerton of the University of Pennsylvania and Edward C. Pickering, Henry P. Bowditch, and Charles S. Minot of Harvard. In addition, the ASPR Council included William James and James M. Peirce (Charles's brother and a Harvard professor). Hall's work with the ASPR led him to meet Robert Pearsall Smith, a well-known spiritualist and leader of the "Holiness" movement (Smith, 1879). Hall persuaded Smith to contribute \$500 to launch what would become the *AJP* (there has been much speculation as to the degree to which Hall misled Smith into believing that the journal would publish research on psychic phenomena, a key priority of the early ASPR). The *AJP* was launched in November 1887, but without Smith's contribution it seems highly unlikely that Hall could have brought it off.

Each of Hall's successes built on the ones before. Having in a few short years used a professorship to found a laboratory and then used the labora-

tory to found a journal, Hall was asked to become president of the newly founded Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts. Hall was led to believe that Clark would be founded on roughly the same priorities of research and graduate education that JHU had been, and he attracted a number of top faculty prospects to Clark on the basis of that promise, but it did not work out that way, as described in detail by Hall's biographer (Ross, 1972). Just before the faculty rebellion that lost Hall some two thirds of his professors to the University of Chicago and other schools, however, he used all his accumulated status to launch and hold the first meetings of the APA in 1892.

First and foremost a self-promoter, Hall was determined that everyone acknowledge his supremacy over American psychology. In an 1895 editorial in *AJP* (intended primarily to steal thunder from the *Psychological Review*, just launched by Cattell and Baldwin), Hall proclaimed that founding *AJP* was "was one of the boldest and most sagacious as well as one of the most successful and beneficent steps ever taken" (Hall, 1895, p. 3). Sidelining Smith's critical donation to the *AJP*—not to mention Alexander Bain's *Mind* (founded in 1876), Wundt's *Philosophische Studien* (founded in 1883), and Ebbinghaus's *Zeitschrift für Psychologie und Physiologie der Sinnesorgane* (founded in 1890)—Hall went on to declare that "there was almost no outside aid, and for years practically no competition in any land or language" (Hall, 1895, p. 3). Furthermore, Hall claimed that the psychology laboratories at Harvard, Yale, Philadelphia (University of Pennsylvania), Columbia, and Toronto has been founded under his influence (Hall, 1895, p. 4). Outraged at his reckless audacity, the founders of those laboratories—James, Ladd, Baldwin, and Cattell (1895)—issued a joint repudiation of Hall in *Science*.

Still, Hall was not done. He had already founded a second journal, *Pedagogical Seminary* (later the *Journal of Genetic Psychology*), in 1891. He went on to write influential books on adolescence (Hall, 1904) and senescence (Hall, 1922), bringing both terms into popular usage. Calling on his position of authority at Clark, he also successfully persuaded Sigmund Freud to make his only voyage to America and, in 1909, present a series of lectures that were published in *AJP* as "The Origin and Development of Psychoanalysis" (Freud, 1910).

The point of this brief review of the highlights of Hall's career is simply this: Had Hall not first won the professorship at Johns Hopkins, every one of these historical achievements would fall into serious question. Without the JHU professorship, there would have been no lab and no vice presidency of the ASPR. Without those, there would have been no *AJP*. Without all of those achievements, no presidency of Clark, no founding of APA, and no invitation to Freud. Not that those things (approximately) would not have been likely to happen at about the same times, although

in other places and by other hands, but the history of the discipline as we know it would have been profoundly different.

Might Hall have won a professorship somewhere else and achieved all these things still? As every historian knows, counterfactuals are a tricky business, and contingency plays a critical role in the way things actually play out. Hall might well have earned a professorship elsewhere, but if it had been in the West (where many JHU students, such as Dewey, Jastrow, and Donaldson, obtained their first positions) he may well have been too far from the Eastern power structures to successfully lobby the wealthy, launch journals and scholarly societies, and attract the notice of those searching for a new university president.

Eastern positions from which he might have been likely to attain roughly the same heights were scarce.<sup>11</sup> Harvard was still alienated by his 1879 article on the state of American philosophy. Cattell's appointment at Penn came of family connections into which Hall was unlikely to have broken. Hall claimed to have had discussions with Cornell, both before and after he started at JHU, but in 1891 Cornell hired Frank Angell (nephew of University of Michigan president James Burris Angell) and then Edward Bradford Titchener in 1892 (on the personal recommendation of Frank Angell). If Hall had been hired at Cornell instead, it is possible that he would have been able to accomplish most of the things he did at JHU and Clark, though each a few years later, minimizing the impact on this portion of the history of American psychology. On the other hand, such a turn of events would mean that Titchener would not have been hired by Cornell—quite possibly not by any American school<sup>12</sup>—and that would constitute a dramatic change in the history of American psychology in its own right. For instance, what would have become of the mid-1890s debates with James Mark Baldwin and James Rowland Angell that led to the distinction between structuralism and functionalism, which became the primary faultline in American psychology in the early 20th century? In short, much of the history we know hangs on Hall's having won the JHU professorship at that particular juncture.

What of Morris? As noted earlier, it seems unlikely that he would have been selected for the professorship by Gilman for philosophical and perhaps also religious reasons. In addition, Morris seems to have been intent on returning to Michigan, and Michigan seems to have been determined to retrieve Morris. Just for the sake of interest, however, it is worth speculating about the likely ramifications of his having stayed at JHU. First, not only he, but also his protégé Dewey, would not have gone to Michigan. It seems likely that Dewey would have been hired to assist Morris at JHU, as he was at Michigan. So would Dewey have gone to Minnesota (as he did) when the philosophy professorship opened there in 1888—or would that have been too remote for a man who had been educated and was now

(hypothetically) employed on the busy Eastern seaboard? Even if Dewey had gone to Minnesota, there is no reason to believe that Morris would have died in March 1889, at the age of 48 (as he did in Michigan of some random infectious disease). So rather than inheriting his mentor's chair, Dewey would have had to strike out on his own. Without the Michigan professorship, it seems highly unlikely that he would have won the Chicago professorship in 1894.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, Chicago president William Rainey Harper hired Dewey only when negotiations with several more senior figures fell through. Without Dewey in Chicago to hire his former Michigan student, James Rowland Angell (son of the Michigan president), there is no reason to believe that the Chicago school of functionalism would ever have come into existence—a major impact on the history of American psychology indeed!

Next, let us turn to Peirce. The first question must be whether he would have destroyed his career anyway with his unconventional and sometimes unpleasant behavior even if he had won the professorship. One cannot say. He had already suffered more than one mental "breakdown" and apparently was using drugs and alcohol to ease his "nervous" symptoms. It may well be that there was nowhere for Peirce to go but down. On the other hand, JHU, like many other universities, was willing to tolerate a fair bit of idiosyncratic behavior, especially on the part of its most illustrious and productive professors. For instance, British mathematics professor James Joseph Sylvester was notoriously difficult and had become involved in more than his share of personal tangles (including one with Peirce), but he never seems to have been in danger of losing his position at JHU on this account. There is no doubt that Peirce was a rising star, not only in the United States but in Europe also.

For psychology, the key question is whether Peirce would have continued the research he had started with Jastrow. There seems little doubt that he would have. Recall especially his 1880 comment to Gilman that "upon leaving the university I shall bid adieu to the study of Logic and Philosophy (except experimental psychology)" (cited in Fisch & Cope, 1952, p. 292). Indeed, Peirce had published research on color vision before coming to JHU, and despite losing the JHU professorship, he presented at least three other papers on color vision afterward, without university support (Peirce, 1886, 1889, 1902).<sup>14</sup> It can be no accident that one of the students closest to Peirce during his tenure at JHU, Christine Ladd-Franklin, later made major contributions to the theory of color vision as well. However, it seems doubtful that Peirce would have established an official psychology laboratory or journal, as Hall did. Such administrative functions completely eluded his interests. These achievements probably would have fallen to others. On the other hand, Peirce's connections with natural science were so extensive that experimental psychology may have found itself more fully

integrated with the American scientific community than it did. Peirce's broad identification with science would have meshed well with Cattell's efforts in roughly the same direction in the following decade (viz., when Cattell purchased the journal *Science* and became highly influential in the AAAS). What is more, Peirce's strongly mathematical approach to the subject, as evinced in his 1884 article with Jastrow, would have added a scientific strand almost completely missing from the early American form of the discipline. Still, it is certain that psychology would not have become Peirce's sole, or even primary, sphere of operation. His accomplishments in astronomy, gravimetry, and especially logic would have always remained close to his heart. Peirce was not one to respect disciplinary boundaries, and his tremendous intellect and education enabled him to be highly productive in several areas at one time.

Another likely significant outcome of Peirce's having won the JHU professorship would have been that the philosophical approach known as pragmatism would have become known to the world through Peirce's own words rather than through the more "tender-minded" reinterpretation of William James nearly two decades later. Much has been made of the degree to which the two versions differed and even whether James was too generous in attributing pragmatism's invention to Peirce (see Perry, 1935). However, this confusion arises from the fact that Peirce did not publish much on the topic during his lifetime. As his voluminous unpublished papers have begun to see the light of day over the past few decades, it has become clear that Peirce's pragmatism was early, was well developed, and was distinct from James's in several important ways. Indeed, it appears that Peirce's 1903 Harvard lecture series on the topic was aimed directly at undermining James soft "psychologistic" rendering of pragmatism (Turrisi, 1997). This is important not only to the history of philosophy but also to the history of psychology, because the functionalist school that arose in the mid-1890s was in some ways closely akin to philosophical pragmatism. Although it is true that it was Dewey's form of pragmatism (rather than Peirce's or James's) to which functionalism most closely hewed, Dewey's pragmatism might have turned out differently had he been able to draw on a competing public version coming directly from Peirce rather than James's (still incipient) form alone. Also, it would have been interesting to hear Peirce's opinion of Chicago functionalism, had he been in a position to give it and in a position to be heard.

Finally, a word about Johns Hopkins itself. The school virtually drops out of the history of psychology for the 15 years between Hall's departure and James Mark Baldwin's arrival in 1903. The reason for this is elementary: Psychological research was nonexistent at JHU during this crucial phase of American psychology's development. During this same time a



number of schools (e.g., Cornell, Chicago, Yale, Princeton, Columbia) established psychological laboratories and came into their own. However, none surpassed the prestige accorded Harvard in psychology during this time. With the presence of William James, an early laboratory (even if intended for demonstration), and then the arrival of Hugo Münsterberg in the early 1890s to expand and professionalize the laboratory, Harvard seemed to stand at the head of American psychology. Had the person who advanced psychology at JHU—whether Hall or Peirce—not left so soon after having gotten things off to so auspicious a start, JHU may well have maintained its lead over Harvard in matters psychological into the 1890s and perhaps beyond, making the shape of American psychology quite different from what it turned out to be.

This is all speculation of a counterfactual kind that rankles the sensibilities of some historians. I agree that, in the main, grand counterfactual speculation of the what-if-the-South-had-won-the-Civil-War? sort is not likely to be very productive. In a case such as the one presented here, however, where the critical counterfactual change is tightly constrained, the actual outcome seems to have been quite contingent (in some ways quite unlikely), the range of alternative options is well defined, and the impacts (at least in the short term) of the alternatives on the actual outcome so significant and apparent, it seems worth the risk of irking some historians in order to briefly explore how American psychology might have unfolded differently had the intense competition for this one position at this one school at this one moment turned out differently. The first John Hopkins philosophy professorship seems to have truly been a crucial pivot point on which turned significant aspects of the development of American psychology.

## Notes

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1. There is a more recent biography of George Sylvester Morris by Jones (1948). Although it is often cited, it is devoted primarily to a reinterpretation of Morris's philosophical position, and by its author's own admission it "leans heavily upon Wenley's overview for its general overview of the more intimate events in Morris' life" (p. 2). More importantly, it provides little insight into the events surrounding the competition for the philosophy position at Johns Hopkins that chiefly occupy us here.

2. I would not want to exclude from this list Behrens's (2005) article on the rise and fall of the Johns Hopkins Metaphysical Club, the focus of which is this small but important organization within the larger institution, with which all three of these figures were involved. Still, it does not place the emphasis quite where I wish it to be in the present article.

3. Although Hall's time with Wundt has been celebrated by many historians of psychology as an important turning point in the American form of the discipline, Hall was not much impressed by Wundt. In a December 1878 letter to James, Hall described Wundt "as a man who has done more speculation and less valuable observing than any man I know who has had his career. His experiments, which I attend[,] I think utterly unreliable and defective in method" (cited in Ross, 1972, p. 85).

4. According to Behrens (2005, p. 333), the others were in science, philology, history and political science, and biology.

5. An interesting side note here is that the president of Michigan in 1879 was James Burris Angell, father of the future leader of the functionalist movement in psychology, James Rowland Angell. Completing the circle, James Rowland Angell was a student of John Dewey at Michigan, who, in turn, was a student of G. S. Morris at JHU.

6. Ross (1972, p. 113) reported that the skeptical president of Harvard, Charles Eliot, "was hardly able to pronounce the word *pedagogy* without evident distaste" upon introducing Hall's lectures on the topic.

7. Although furious at the time (Sokal, 1981), Cattell later admitted that "this award, for a thesis on Lotze . . . [was] made by a professor of Latin, who knew even less about philosophy than I did, or the fellowship would have been given to John Dewey" (Cattell, 1928, p. 547).

8. Hartwell was a leading advocate of physical education in the United States (Park, 1987).

9. Peirce had been separated from his first wife, Harriet Melusina (Zina) Fay, for many years but chose not to embarrass his family with a formal divorce until he became deeply involved with the somewhat mysterious woman who became his second wife, Juliette Annette Froissy/Pourtalai. *Froissy* is the name she gave on her marriage certificate, but she also used the family name *Pourtalai*, which she claimed to be her first husband's name. No historian has been able to establish her real identity (Brent, 1998, p. 141; Walther, 1989).

10. Without wanting to enter into a long and mostly fruitless debate on the matter, for the purposes of this discussion I do not regard James's 1875 demonstration laboratory as the first American *research* laboratory.

11. See Garvey (1929) for a list of early American psychology laboratories. I have excluded consideration of Indiana because William Bryan was already ensconced there when he founded the laboratory and the McLean Asylum because Hall was not a psychiatrist.

12. As is well known, Titchener's ideal job was an Oxford professorship. Even after he had arrived at Cornell, he inquired about positions at Toronto and McGill (in Montréal) so that he could return to "British soil," as he once put it (Ferguson, 1982, p. 37; Myers, 1982).

13. Dewey was recommended to Chicago president William Rainey Harper by James Hayden Tufts, who had first been hired by Dewey at Michigan but had then gone on to a better position at Chicago. Without the Michigan connection between Tufts and Dewey, Harper might well have been unaware of Dewey altogether.

14. I gratefully acknowledge the article of Cadwallader (1974) for bringing these obscure references to my attention.

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