**Ludwig Reinhold Geissler (1879 -1932)**

Roger K. Thomas

The University of Georgia



Ludwig Reinhold Geissler, circa 1917

**Family History and Pre-Doctoral Education**

Ludwig Reinhold Geissler was born in Leipzig, Germany, September 22, 1879, and he died in Lynchburg, Virginia, December 15, 1932. His father, Frederick Wilhelm Geissler (1836-1915) was a physician and a member of the Bach Choir in St. Thomas Kirkein in Leipzig. L. R. Geissler’s mother, Friederika Emma Dietzman (1844-1881), died during or soon after the birth of one of Geissler’s siblings. When he was a doctoral student at Cornell University, L. R. Geissler met and married Sarah Marie Steele of Ontario, Canada. They had two children, Feliz Dietzmann Geissler and Virginia Geissler. Later in her life, Virginia Geissler Noel established a scholarship at Randolph-Macon Woman's College, now Randolph College, in memory of her parents. Except for L. R. Geissler’s birth and death dates, information in this paragraph was provided by Barbara Noel Dowds and Ruth Marie Noel, daughters of Virginia Geissler Noel (Dowds, 2007, July 9; Dowds, 2007, December 3).1

Birth and death dates were obtained from Geissler’s obituary in *The American Journal of Psychology* (Dallenbach, 1933) which, however, included the errors that Geissler “…came to this country as a youth with his parents, who settled in Texas….[and] there…received his early training and education.” (p. 365). Geissler did not go to Texas as a youth, he came 17 days before his 23rd birthday (Geissler, 1921), and his parents never came to the United States. He joined his brother and sister who were already in Texas (Dowds, 2007, July 9). Furthermore, after having attended “the public schools of Leipzig, Saxony” and “graduating from the 8th grade” (Geissler, 1921), he was graduated from the “King of Saxony's Teachers Seminar at Loebau” in March, 1900 (Certificate, 1901). He also received a “State Teacher’s Certificate and a permit to enter the University of Leipzig.” Geissler (1921) also reported that while he was teaching in Althen, near Leipzig, he attended some of Wilhelm Wundt’s lectures in 1901 as a *Hospitant* (guest listener). Wundt is widely acknowledged to be a founder of psychology as an independent scholarly discipline.

Geissler arrived in Galveston Texas on September 5, 1902, and enrolled at the University of Texas in September, 1903. He received advanced credits based on his studies at the King of Saxony’s Teachers Seminar and was graduated from the University of Texas, June 14, 1905, with a “Lit.B.” degree and a “Permanent State Teacher’s Certificate” (Geissler,1921). From 1902 to1905, he earned a living by teaching German and music.

**Graduate Education and Early Career Highlights: 1905-1912**

Geissler entered Cornell University with a scholarship in October, 1905, and he served as a graduate assistant in experimental psychology under Professor E. B. Titchener. Titchener had earned his Ph.D. in psychology under Wilhelm Wundt’s supervision, and Geissler earned a Ph.D. degree (June 17, 1909) under Titchener’s supervision, with minor studies in experimental education and philosophy (Geissler, 1921). Geissler’s dissertation, *The Measurement of Attention*, was published in *The* *American Journal of Psychology* (Geissler, 1909). “The Ludwig R. Geissler Papers” in the Archives of the Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library of The University of Georgia includes 14 original or copies of letters between Titchener and Geissler spanning 1909-1925 which show a mostly cordial and continued professional relationship. However, evidence of Titchener’s disapproval of Geissler’s interest in applied psychology and Geissler’s disapproval of research in structural psychology is evident in the letters.

After completing the doctoral degree, Geissler remained at Cornell from 1909 to1911 as an Instructor (Geissler, 1921). Regarding publications, the Cornell years (1905-1911) were highly productive ones for Geissler (1921). Among his publications was the four-part bibliography of William Wundt’s publications coauthored by Titchener and Geissler. He also noted:

At the same time I assisted Professor G. M. Whipple in the collection and

standardization of many new psychological tests, which he incorporated in his

*Manual of Mental and Physical Tests*. (Geissler, 1921; italics added)

Whipple’s manual (1910) appears to have been the first of its kind in America (Winch, 1911), and Whipple acknowledged Geissler’s assistance (p. 356). Geissler was responsible primarily for Test 24 (“Range of visual attention”) and Test 30 (”Simultaneous disparate activities”).

From 1911 to 1912, Geissler was a “Research Psychologist” for the National Electric Lamp Association (Cleveland, Ohio), a branch of the General Electric Company (Geissler, 1921).

Here, I was engaged in the study of the influence of illumination upon mental

efficiency, and esp. such mental activity as involved reading and close detail work.

(Geissler, 1921)2.

Two publications (Geissler, 1913; Geissler & Cobb, 1913) resulted from his research at National Electric Lamp, and this experience appears to have marked the beginning of applied research and industrial and organizational consultation that became an integral part of Geissler’s academic and professional career.

**Other Academic and Professional Career Highlights**

**The University of Georgia: 1912-1916**

In September, 1912, Geissler accepted the position of Associate Professor of Psychology and Education, at the University of Georgia (UGA). In the 1912 annual report for the Peabody School of Education at UGA, Dean Thomas Woofter reported that Geissler had been hired at a salary of $1,800.00 and that Geissler would “…make our new psychology laboratory the best in the South.” (Woofter, 1912)

The significance of Woofter’s mentioning the Psychology laboratory was that the new building, George Peabody Hall built to house the new Peabody School of Education included extensive space for psychological research. The first floor included rooms for the study of (a) Vision, (b) Attention and Memory, (c) Taste, Smell, and the Kinetic senses, and (d) Audition, and there was a workshop for constructing and maintaining laboratory equipment (*Bulletin*, 1913, September; p. 22). Geissler contributed to the design of these rooms, and he had complete responsibility for acquiring the research equipment for which ample funds had been provided (Geissler, 1921; Woofter, 1912, April 15).

Geissler’s research at UGA reflected basic experimental interest representative of research done in Titchener’s laboratory (Geissler, 1915, 1917a) as well as his newly emerging interests in applied psychology. Regarding the latter, Geissler noted:

I conducted some psychological tests in the field of advertising and window

display, with the aid of advanced students and interested merchants of the

City of Athens, GA….(Geissler, 1921)2

That research continued when he moved to Clark University and was published as Geissler (1917b).

During the academic year, Geissler was listed as teaching Elementary Psychology, Educational Psychology, Principles of Psychology, Experimental Psychology, Systematic Psychology, and Applied Psychology (*Bulletin*, 1913, September). During summer school, he taught Child Psychology (*Bulletin*, 1916, March) to students preparing to be school teachers. Before Geissler went to UGA, the child psychology summer course was taught by Celestia S. Parrish, a charter member of the Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology (SSPP). Like Geissler, Parrish had been Titchener’s student, earning a bachelor’s degree (Ph.B.) in 1896. Parrish and Geissler were members of the SSPP, and at separate times both served as faculty members at Randolph-Macon Woman’s College.

Although Parrish’s primary affiliation was with the State Normal School, a preparatory school for future school teachers, also in Athens, GA, she may have had a hand in Geissler’s accepting a position at UGA. Geissler’s immediate successor at UGA, Austin S. Edwards (president of SSPP in 1927; see biographical chapter by Thomas in this volume) had also been Titchener’s Ph.D. student. Thus, Geissler may have had a hand in Edwards’ accepting a faculty position at UGA. In any case, Parrish, Geissler, and Edwards comprised a succession of Titchener’s students at UGA who had a major influence on the development of psychology there.

Geissler’s proudest and most significant achievement, being principal founder and co-editor with G. Stanley Hall and James W. Baird of *The Journal of Applied Psychology* (*JAP*), began while he was at the University of Georgia. Although general history of psychology textbooks have to date recognized only Hall for founding the *JAP*, Geissler (1921) in unpublished autobiographical notes referred to himself in one instance as having “founded” the *JAP* with the “aid of” Hall and Baird and in another instance as having “established” the *JAP* with the “aid of” Hall and Baird. Geissler also variously referred to himself as being the “Managing Editor” or as having the “Chief editorship.” It has recently been substantiated that Geissler did not misrepresent his role in founding the JAP or in its early editing (Thomas, 2009).

In 1916, Geissler took a position at Clark College and University in Wooster, MA, which is where the first issue of *JAP* was published (March, 1917) and where its ownership resided. In 1920, financial problems at Clark College and University were associated with the resignations of Presidents E. C. Sanford (College) and G. Stanley Hall (University) as well as a reduction in the number of faculty members. Under the circumstances, Geissler began to apply for positions elsewhere including the opportunity for a position that had arisen at Randolph-Macon Woman’s College (R-MWC) in Lynchburg, VA. In correspondence with Professor E. B. Crooks at R-MWC, Geissler (1920, July 16) asked, “ . . . would the position at Randolph-Macon offer the opportunity for continuing my editorship of the *Journal of Applied Psychology*?”

Corroborating both Geissler’s role in developing the *JAP* and his perceived ability to take the *JAP* with him when he left Clark University, Hall (1920, April 13), in a letter of reference written on Geissler’s behalf, wrote, “It is quite possible that wherever he goes he will take the Journal of Applied Psychology with him, of which he has been practical editor, although I am the figure-head editor. He began with nothing and has made it pay already. ” Considering the ambiguity of Hall’s describing himself as “the figure-head editor” it should be noted that Geissler and Baird were also listed in the journal as editors.

However, Geissler’s and Hall’s co-editorships ended with Volume 4 (1921); the other founding co-editor, Baird, died in 1919 (Anonymous, 1919). In subsequent correspondence (Geissler, 1923, May 25; Geissler, 1924, November 28), it is evident that Wallace Atwood, Hall’s successor as president of Clark University, wrested the journal from Geissler and placed it in the hands of James P. Porter (Thomas, 2009). Porter, who relocated to Ohio University in 1922, took the *JAP* with him. Porter continued to be closely involved with the *JAP*, including having sole ownership, until 1943 (Thomas, 2009).

**Clark College and University: 1916-1920**

In September 1916, Geissler accepted a position at Clark College and University in Worcester, MA, as Head of the Department of Philosophy and Education in the College and as Lecturer of Experimental and Applied Psychology in the University (Geissler, 1921). He also mentioned teaching:

. . . lecture and laboratory courses in mental testing, intelligence, trade, employment,

army and educational tests, demonstrating the methods of conducting them, of

compiling the data statistically, and of evaluating and interpreting the results from

various points of view. (Geissler, 1921)

Additionally, during the Clark years, Geissler taught advanced undergraduate and graduate courses in mental testing during summers at the University of Illinois (1917), Ohio State University (1918) and Indiana University (1920) (Geissler, 1920 March 25). Geissler was also a non-residential Lecturer at Wellesley College from September 1917 to June 1919.

During the Clark years, Geissler’s consulting work increased significantly. In conjunction with teaching the courses listed in the quotation above, he reported:

This was supplemented by practical applications to cases of the Juvenile Court

and to employees of various industrial concerns in the city of Worcester,

Mass. (Geissler, 1921)2

He spent two months during the summer of 1919 making a detailed study of personnel management practices in cotton mills and print works in Fall River, MA.

**Randolph-Macon Woman’s College (R-MWC): 1920-1932**

Geissler relocated to R-MWC in 1920. The following lengthy excerpt from a letter Geissler wrote to the R-MWC’s President, D. R. Anderson, is interesting and useful, because it shows that Geissler’s religious affiliation was a consideration in his employment. Geissler also listed several honors and memberships that he received or held.

In reply to your letter of July 24th permit me to repeat to you what I have

already written to Professor Crooks concerning my Church relationship. I have

been baptized and confirmed in the Lutheran Church, of which I am still a member.

But as this Denomination is not represented in many places in this country, I

have usually attended Mrs. Geissler’s church, which is Presbyterian and very

similar in creed and ritual to the Lutheran Church. Since coming to Worcester

we both have been attending the Piedmont Congregational Church, partly because

it was nearer for my little boy to go to Sunday School, and partly because the

minister, the Rev. Dr. Bradley, and his wife are Georgians. I expect to transfer my

Church membership as soon as I am permanently located.

Perhaps I might add a few words about academic and other honors conferred

upon me. I have been elected to the Honorary Scientific Society of Sigma Xi in 1908,

to the Honorary Academic Society of Phi Beta Kappa in 1910, and to an Honorary

Fellowship in the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1911.

In 1909 I became a Member of the American Psychological Association and in 1912

of the Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology, of which latter organization

I was Secretary-Treasurer from 1914 to 1916. My name is listed in American Men

of Science”, 2nd edition, 1910, page 175. During the War I was a Member of the

National Research Council, working in the Psychological Committee on Problems

of Vision, 1917—1919. (Geissler, 1920, July 26)

Geissler was fifth in a succession of faculty members at R-MWC who had been strongly influenced by E. B. Titchener (Rowe & Murray, 1979). Celestia Parrish had earned a Ph.B. with Titchener (1896) primarily to learn enough to develop experimental psychology at R-MWC. In conjunction with that she established the first teaching-research laboratory in experimental psychology in the southeastern USA. Parrish was succeeded by Wilmont B. Lane who after earning his Ph.D. with Joseph Jastrow served as a teaching fellow under Titchener. Next in line at R-MWC was one of William James’s students, E. B. Crooks, who nevertheless continued using Titchener’s textbooks and laboratory instruction as Lane had done. Like James, Crooks eschewed research, and he was likely greatly relieved when Cora L. Friedline, fresh from earning her Ph.D. with Titchener in 1918, was hired at R-MWC (Smith, 1989). Two years later, Geissler was hired at R-MWC. Friedline out-lived Geissler and remained at R-MWC until her retirement in June, 1961.

**Geissler’s ranks and titles.** By the fall term of 1920, Geissler had settled into his new position as Associate Professor of Philosophy and Education at R-MWC; (*Bulletin*, 1921, January-March which included the 1920-1921 *Catalog*). The *Bulletin* (1923, January-March which included the 1922-1923 *Catalog*) showed that he was Acting Head of the department, and The *Bulletin* (1924, January-March which included the 1923-1924 *Catalog*) showed that he had attained the rank of Professor. A letter by Geissler (1923, March 20) to J. E. Creighton, one of his former mentors at Cornell, indicated that Geissler was Head of the Department of Philosophy, Psychology, and Education at R-MWC.

**Wellesley College tries to hire Geissler in 1921**. In a letter to Mary W. Calkins, who was trying to recruit Geissler for a position as Wellesley, Geissler, (1921, April 10) wrote that plans were in the works at R-MWC to form two departments, to put him in charge of one of them, and to award him the rank of full professor. After receiving an offer from Wellesley, Geissler (1921, May 4) informed Calkins of his decision to decline the offer noting that R-MWC had made a better counteroffer. Geissler also expressed his regret about the missed opportunity to work with her. Mary W. Calkins was the most important and influential woman psychologist and philosopher in her time; for example, she was elected president of the American Psychological Association in 1905 and of the American Philosophical Association in 1918 (Furumoto, 1979).

**Geissler’s Teaching at R-MWC.** Initially, the teaching load at R-MWC was heavy for Geissler. Among Geissler’s papers was a “Schedule of Recitations” for 1921-1922 (available in The Geissler Papers) which might be compared to a published schedule of classes today and which apparently listed all courses taught at R-MWC that term. The schedule indicated that Geissler had 18 recitations per week, including one on Saturday morning. Geissler also discussed his heavy teaching load in a letter that he wrote to Professor G. A. Rucknick at Wellesley College (Geissler, 1922, April 10).

During the following school year and in another letter to Rucknick, Geissler (1922, October 7) reported that the teaching arrangements had improved and that he had been “ . . . able to shift the educational and philosophical classes to other shoulders and am giving only psychological courses.” He also noted that he expected to put his own laboratory manual into final shape and have it : . . . printed or multigraph it myself.” Related to the latter and in response to an inquiry, Geissler (1926, October 7) wrote that he had produced 25 leaflets, each devoted to a different laboratory experiment that he offered for sale at ten cents a leaflet or $1.50 for the set. He noted that the apparatus needed for the experiments could be purchased for about two to three hundred dollars and that some could be partly made from wood, cardboard, paper, etc.

**Public service lectures**. Geissler also taught extensively by giving public service lectures. Three particularly interesting examples will be described here. At an R-MWC alumnae meeting, Geissler spoke on “Recent Progress in Psychology -- Here and Elsewhere” (Geissler, 1928, April 17). After reviewing briefly the first 50 years of psychology, he addressed in turn, the fields of General Psychology, Child and Educational Psychology, “Behaviorism” (the only field he placed in quotation marks), Abnormal Psychology, Social Psychology, and Applied Psychology. Geissler did not mention the generally acknowledged founder of behaviorism, John B. Watson (SSPP President in 1915), but he regarded behaviorism to be an “an outgrowth of Animal Psychology.” Interestingly, Geissler referred to Bekhterev’s influence and did not mention Pavlov who is much better known in this regard in contemporary psychology (see also Thomas, 2000). Geissler also mentioned Wolfgang Koehler’s and Robert Yerkes’s research on the animal mind which Geissler believed would pose difficulties for the tenets of behaviorism.

Another paper written apparently for a public service address was titled “The Youngest Theory in Psychology and Its Possible Significance for Education” (Geissler, 1926, August 28). The “youngest theory” was Gestalt theory. The paper included the following example of Geissler’s generational wit and trans-generational wisdom.

Having thus challenged, in true flapper fashion, the authority of her elders, our

young Gestalt-theory has gone one step further and manifested another symptom

of its youth, by attempting to explain in its own terms practically the whole realm

of mental life; (p. 6).

A final example of Geissler’s public service speaking was reported in an article that appeared in the newspaper for the Virginia Episcopal School, (“Dr. Geissler” 1931, February 5) concerning a speech that he gave to the school’s science club, Scientia. After identifying Dr.Geissler, the headline on page 1 included, “Throws Entire Audience into Semi-Hypnotic Trance at Conclusion of the Talk.” The lengthy article (continued on pages 3 and 4) gave a good account of the contents of his talk and of Geissler’s demeanor, namely, “ . . . conversational in his attitude, eliciting absolute interest . . . yet all the time displaying the easy dignity which young gentlemen admire.” (p. 1). Regarding the hypnotic trance, the article reported, “Fortunately, we were brought back to applaud a most appreciated talker . . .” (p. 4) It was reported also that Geissler finished by “ . . . answering many of those psychological snag questions always present in the curious layman’s mind.” (p. 4)

**Research and consulting**. Geissler (1921) compiled a list of his 23 publications that ended in 1919. No subsequent list of Geissler’s publications has been found except that listed in Murchison (1929) which was intentionally abbreviated. Only six additional publications by Geissler have been located plus “Three Experimental Studies in Psychology” performed, apparently, by his students at R-MWC and bound together as “Conducted and Edited by Professor L. R. Geissler, Ph.D.” (1922). No information has been found regarding possible publications for the years 1920 and 1923-1926. In addition to these three studies, of the other six known publications after 1919, one appears to have been a general, article published in 1921 (see Murchison, 1929), four were in the *Industrial Psychology Monthly* (Geissler, 1927a, 1927b, 1928a, 1928b), and one was his SSPP presidential address (Geissler, 1929) which will be discussed later.

If research had decreased after the move to R-MWC, it might have been due to Geissler’s increased teaching as well as his significantly increased involvement with clinical and consulting activities. In 1923, he became a “State Mental Examiner” in Virginia (Murchison, 1929), and in 1924 he became a Psychological Examiner for the State Colony of Epileptics and Feeble-minded (Geissler, 1924, October 7; Murchison, 1929). In 1927, he was appointed to the “Active Staff” of the Lynchburg Hospital (Geissler, 1927, December 11). In addition to these consulting appointments, in 1923, Geissler became a Charter Member of the Virginia Academy of Science (Miller, 1923, June 5).

**L. R. Geissler and the Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology (SSPP)**

Geissler was elected to membership at the eighth annual meeting of the SSPP (April 1913) which was held at Johns Hopkins University. He also presented a paper titled “A New Test for General Intelligence” (Ruediger, 1913). According to Geissler’s abstract, the test was based on word associations. With all the words from one list in view, the examinee was shown a single word at a time from a second list. Several factors were scored such as the number of words correctly paired, the fitness of the pair, the number of correct reasons, etc. which when totaled served as a measure of the individual’s general intelligence. According to Geissler, an advantage of the test was its wide range of applicability.

At the ninth annual meeting held in Atlanta, GA, Geissler was elected to a two-year term as a member of SSPP’s Council. There is no evidence in the proceedings that he presented a paper (Ruediger, 1914). The tenth annual meeting of SSPP was held in Philadelphia in conjunction with the meetings of the American Psychological Association and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). Geissler was elected Secretary-Treasurer of SSPP for a three-year term. There was no evidence in the proceedings that he gave a presentation (Ruediger, 1915).

The eleventh annual meeting of SSPP was also held in conjunction with the annual meeting of AAAS (Columbus, OH, 1915), and Geissler’s duties as Secretary-Treasurer of SSPP included publishing the proceedings (Geissler, 1916). An interesting item of business before the SSPP that year was a proposal to change the society’s name to “The Southern Society for Philosophy, Psychology, and Education” in order to attract members and research investigators from the educational fields. To change the name required a constitutional amendment, and passage of an amendment required that it be considered at two consecutive meetings. Hence, a decision would come the following year. Geissler also presented a paper titled “The Consciousness of Self in Recent Psychological Literature;” its abstract is in the proceedings (Geissler, 1916). Geissler discussed Zichen’s concept of self as compared to those of noted scholars such as Mary Calkins, Knight Dunlap, E. B. Titchener, and others. Geissler noted the controversies that affected the discussion of the subject, and concluded by suggesting that “ . . . detailed study of the ontogenetic development of consciousness from earliest infancy promises to cast considerable light on this important problem and should antecede further controversial discussion” (Geissler, 1916, p. 104).

By the twelfth annual meeting of SSPP (1917), Geissler had moved from the University of Georgia to Clark University, and he published the proceedings that year as the “Retiring Secretary” (Geissler, 1917d). The meeting was held at Randolph-Macon Woman’s College (R-MWC) in Lynchburg, VA, and part of the activities provided by the Chamber of Commerce for SSPP’s members included an automobile tour “through the city and its beautiful surroundings” (p. 145 Geissler likely did not anticipate that he would become a member of R-MWC’s faculty less than four years later, but it seems likely that this visit to the college and the tour of the city contributed favorably to his decision to move there in 1920. The proposal from the preceding year to amend the SSPP constitution to add “Education” to the society’s name was defeated, but a second amendment, also proposed the preceding year, to extend the “scope of the society” to include “Experimental Education” passed. Geissler presented a paper at the 1917 meeting titled “The Nature of Mental Functions.” This paper is not easily summarized, but an informative abstract is in the proceedings (Geissler, 1917d, p. 147-148)

Owing to World War I as it would be known later, SSPP did not meet in 1918 nor, apparently, were proceedings published for the SSPP meetings for the years 1919-1922. Geissler’s name did not appear in the proceedings for 1923-1925, but he did participate at the 1926 meeting as a discussant in a “Symposium on the First Course in Psychology” (Highsmith, 1926). In 1927, at the 22nd meeting of SSPP which was held in Athens, GA, Geissler was elected for the second time to be a member of the Council (Highsmith, 1927). It may be recalled that he had been elected for a two-year term on the Council at the 9th annual meeting in 1914. There was no indication that he presented a paper at the 22nd meeting (Highsmith, 1927; Peterson, 1927).

L. R. Geissler was elected to serve as president of SSPP for the 23rd annual meeting of SSPP (1928). As president, he presided at the 1929 Council meeting and annual business meeting and presented the presidential address. He did not present a paper at the 1928 meeting (Highsmith, 1928; Peterson, 1928).

Regarding Geissler’s presidential address at the 24th annual meeting (1929), SSPP’s minutes which had been published for 18 of the first 25 meetings in *The Psychological Bulletin* were not published there that year. However, Joseph Peterson (president of SSPP in 1922), often published his summary of the SSPP meetings in *The American Journal of Psychology*, as he did in 1929 (Peterson, 1929). Peterson’s summary of the meeting included approximately 1.25 pages devoted to Geissler’s address (pp. 509-511). About half of Peterson’s account summarized the address. “The Objectives of Objective Psychology,” and about half consisted of Peterson’s criticisms. At the risk of over-simplifying, Geissler had sought ways to reconcile behaviorist and introspectionist approaches to psychology and, in doing so, had noted some logical fallacies associated with the behaviorist approach. Peterson defended the behaviorist approach strongly noting, perhaps most pointedly, that “ . . . most of them would not follow the author in his apparent dualism” (Peterson, 1929, p. 510).

Fortunately, to supplement Peterson’s restricted view, Geissler’s complete presidential address was published in *Psychological Review* (Geissler, 1929). Geissler took a refreshing approach to the address, quipping early on that:

…since I could not have my own way of abolishing the custom of presidential

Addresses. .[and]…as I know so little about the nature of objectives in human

action I decided this would be a good reason for talking about it glibly, hoping

that in doing so I might find out what is meant by the term. (p. 353)

Geissler observed that use of the term “objective” was new in psychology, and he mentioned Dashiell’s (1928) recent book, *Fundamentals of objective psychology*. Geissler (1929) noted that the term “objective” originated in military language (p. 354) and was later “taken over into general literary style” (p. 355). He then traced a history of what will be characterized here as an evolution of thought leading to the use of “objective” in the sciences including its then recent introduction into psychological science. Geissler’s history began with Aristotle and included such thinkers as Descartes and Francis Bacon before reaching its then “modern” representation in Karl Pearson’s (1911) *Grammar of science*.

Geissler examined what “objective” meant in the contemporary sciences of physics, geology, and biology and noted Woodruff’s (1913) contention that biology provided a “ . . . connecting link between the natural sciences and the mental sciences” (Geissler, 1929, p. 360). That led Geissler to examine what is or should be the unique role and responsibility of psychological science and how to come to grips with the inclusion of “mental activity.” Noting problems associated with the issue of measurement, he considered and rejected the possibility

“ . . . for psychology to split into two new sciences, one of which would confine itself to the behavioristic facts of human nature and the other to the conscious phases of it.” (p. 363)

Geissler discussed the issue of how to retain the study of mental activity in psychology, and he rejected efforts such as Watson’s (1919) to equate thought with, for example, sub-vocal speech. In a related vein, Geissler’s discussion of the concept of “feeling hungry” bears striking similarity to Skinner’s (1990) discussion of the same; compare Geissler (p. 366) to Skinner (p. 1209).

Geissler (1929) continued:

Enough has been said to show that there are certain aspects of human nature in

which the interrelations of behavior and consciousness are so intimate and

so essential to the facts involved that an artificial separation of the two distorts

the facts and leads to one-sided interpretations or abstractions. We must therefore

conclude that psychology should not split . . . nor limit itself exclusively to either

consciousness or behavior, *because both are mere abstractions from the concrete*

*events to be studied.* (p. 367; emphasis added)

A few pages later, he wrote,

My contention . . . is that introspection must always be an essential part of

our study of human nature, because without it we lose sight of the concrete

objects of our investigations and handle only abstractions. (p. 370).

By page 374, he asks and answers the question “ . . . what is objective psychology?” by providing a definition of psychology and discussion of that definition, which is best left to the reader to pursue in the original. However, in closing, he returned to the vexing question of measurement, and he is well worth quoting here.

. . . measurement should never be an aim in itself, as some seem to wish to do, but

only as a means to an end, whenever it helps to greater accuracy of observation and

clearer statement of results . . . Measurement may become harmful . . . if it is pursued

for its own sake and thereby lead to a misconstruction of concrete facts in terms of

abstract mathematical units and relationships. The force of a fruitful idea such as

Einstein’s theory, can never be calculated in terms of ergs, and yet may accomplish

more than the largest engines that can be constructed. The greatest physicists…

recognize this fact; why should psychologists apologize for dealing with such

immeasurables? (p. 374)

In conclusion, Geissler’s SSPP presidential address provided a useful historical examination of the mind-body relation issue that has been with psychology through its long past as may be traced through such early thinkers as Democritus, Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and others on down through the ages, and the contemporary relevance of Geissler’s presidential address is as good as any contemporary consideration of the tension regarding the mind-body relation as, for example, between cognitive psychology and behavioral neuroscience (e.g., Uttal, 2001).

Geissler’s name did not appear in the published accounts of the SSPP meetings for 1930-1932 (Boynton, 1931; Lanier, 1932; Peterson, 1930, 1931, 1932), and he died in his home at 3:20 A.M. on December 15, 1932 (“Dr. L. R. Geissler Dies Early Today,” 1932). The article further reported, “He had been in ill health [heart disease; see Dowds, 2007, July 9] for some time and was given a leave of absence from his work at the college in 1931-32, his resignation taking effect at the beginning of the current session.”

Footnotes

1. The author is grateful to L. R. Geissler’s granddaughters, Barbara Noel Dowds and Ruth Marie Noel, for providing an invaluable collection of primary materials associated with Geissler’s life and career. These materials and others collected by the author and bearing on Geissler’s life and career have been deposited in the Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library of The University of Georgia where they will be available for future scholars. A “Finding Aid” associated with “The Ludwig R. Geissler Papers” is at the following website address: <http://www.libs.uga.edu/hargrett/archives/uga07-032.html>

2. Geissler wrote autobiographical notes in longhand and later typed them, although the latter often showed word changes, etc. There are inconsistencies in both sets of notes that confound any *post hoc* attempt to number the pages. However, both sets are relatively brief, only a few pages each. Thus, any quotation here should be relatively easy to locate despite the absence of page numbers as a guide.

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