



A History of Modern Experimental Psychology: From James and Wundt to Cognitive Science (MIT Press)

By George Mandler

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A History of Modern Experimental Psychology: From James and Wundt to Cognitive Science (MIT Press) By George Mandler

Modern psychology began with the adoption of experimental methods at the end of the nineteenth century: Wilhelm Wundt established the first formal laboratory in 1879; universities created independent chairs in psychology shortly thereafter; and William James published the landmark work *Principles of Psychology* in 1890. In *A History of Modern Experimental Psychology*, George Mandler traces the evolution of modern experimental and theoretical psychology from these beginnings to the "cognitive revolution" of the late twentieth century. Throughout, he emphasizes the social and cultural context, showing how different theoretical developments reflect the characteristics and values of the society in which they occurred. Thus, Gestalt psychology can be seen to mirror the changes in visual and intellectual culture at the turn of the century, behaviorism to embody the parochial and puritanical concerns of early twentieth-century America, and contemporary cognitive psychology as a product of the postwar revolution in information and communication.

After discussing the meaning and history of the concept of mind, Mandler treats the history of the psychology of thought and memory from the late nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth, exploring, among other topics, the discovery of the unconscious, the destruction of psychology in Germany in the 1930s, and the relocation of the field's "center of gravity" to the United States. He then examines a more neglected part of the history of psychology -- the emergence of a new and robust cognitive psychology under the umbrella of cognitive science.

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- Rank: #2122416 in Books
- Published on: 2011-01-21
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x .56" w x 5.38" l, .68 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 310 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

A brilliant and superbly crafted work that places the history of psychology within the social and political culture in which it occurred. It brings that history up to the emergence of cognitive science in the late 20th century and explores the American and European contexts of the 'cognitive revolution.' This book is essential for anyone interested in the fields of psychology, cognitive science, or neuroscience.

(Richard C. Atkinson, President Emeritus, University of California)

George Mandler's very welcome book provides a fascinating and highly accessible account of the historical background to modern cognitive psychology. His European background, strong interest in political and cultural contexts, and extensive contributions to the growth and maturation of cognitive psychology over the last fifty years make him uniquely qualified to write this book, which is both highly informative and an excellent read.

(Fergus Craik, Rotman Research Institute, Toronto)

In the end Mandler's book stands as an outline of the past, not a history. Its value rests with perspective that comes from someone who has been thinking, researching, and writing about topics central to cognitive psychology for over 40 years. He has been a witness to change, someone who has even participated in them, so his insights are valuable and directive.

(*Canadian Psychology*)

Mandler's chronicle of psychology's long and arduous march to understand the human mind, from the nineteenth-century philosopher-psychologists to the problems that engage present-day cognitive scientists, is as valuable for what it highlights and elaborates as for what it omits. Mandler is no mere historian; he is a major contributor to contemporary cognitive psychology, blessed with a European sensitivity to the role of the past in defining the present. Surveying the hard and unyielding terrain our intellectual ancestors tried mightily to conquer, he brings a deep appreciation for their efforts and a sympathetic understanding of the snares and cul-de-sacs that impeded their progress. As a result, this book is easy to read and full of insights that few, if any, historians of this enterprise that has preoccupied psychology from its beginning could impart.

(Ellen Berscheid, Regents' Professor of Psychology, University of Minnesota)

Mandler's history conveys a heightened historical sophistication.... As a participant in the beginnings of cognitive psychology, Mandler offers some unique perspectives.... His text is an informative source for both history and perspective.

(*The Journal of General Psychology*)

Mandler's volume is a *tour de force*.... This is no dry recounting of facts and dates. It goes from the meaning and history of the concept of mind, through the psychology of thought and memory.... Any clinician who takes the time to absorb this volume's offerings will be amply rewarded.

(The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease)

The book is best in the central chapters on the early Wurzburg school and on the systematic dismantling of what was still one of the world's great communities of psychological researchers by the Nazis in the 1930's.... An interesting read that brings controversial historical ideas forward for further discussion and debate.

(Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences)

This is a splendid book by an author who has himself made an outstanding contribution to cognitive psychology.... The book is much more readable than most texts of its kind, moving smoothly between past and present so as to bring out underlying continuities.... In sum, the story of how a central strand of thinking about mind progressed from early speculations to the cutting edge of cognitive science is told in masterly fashion.

(Metapsychology)

About the Author

George Mandler is Distinguished Professor of Psychology at the University of California, San Diego, and Visiting Professor at University College London. He is the author of *Mind and Emotion*, *Mind and Body: Psychology of Emotion and Stress*, *Human Nature Explored*, *Interesting Times: An Encounter with the Twentieth Century*, and other books.

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