

By Edward A. Pace

(1869-1937)

(IN MEMORY OF WILHELM WUNDT)

Official Professor

Student

It was in the autumn of 1889, that I entered the University of Leipzig and became acquainted with Professor Wundt. My knowledge of German was meagre; and I had serious misgivings as to my first interview with the Herr Geheimrath. He reassured me at once, however, by saying that though he spoke no English, he understood it and would be glad to have me use my own language.

On learning that I had been a student in Rome, he remarked: "Why then, you are familiar with the philosophy of St. Thomas"; and in the course of the conversation he showed that he was thoroughly informed in regard to the neo-Scholastic movement inaugurated by Pope Leo XIII.

At this meeting also, noticing that I had a copy of the Verzeichniss der Vorlesungen, he suggested that the list of courses was attractive and that, like other students, I would probably be tempted to register for a large number of subjects. "Do not attempt too much," he said; "this the best advice I can give you."

Wundt impressed me as a man who earnestly sought for the truth. With a wide range of knowledge he combined an accuracy, even a severity, of thought, the result of his scientific training. While he adopted the latest methods of research and in one field at least did the work of a pioneer, he appreciated the achievements of the past and gave full credit to his contemporaries who so often took a different point of view.

His lecture hall, with sittings for some three hundred students, was always well filled. It was a cosmopolitan audience which reminded me, in some respects, of the Urban

College in Rome. Punctuality was one of the professor's virtues and it had the desired effect upon his auditors. Whatever the subject--and he covered the whole ground of the philosophical and psychological sciences--his hearers were sure of an interesting lecture. It was delivered with earnestness and fluency. Wundt always laid ~~himself~~ upon the rostrum a notebook; and then forgot that it was there. Some of the students knew that his vision was defective; and for that reason they formed a higher estimate of the man's energy and erudition.

The psychological laboratory, in that day, was primitive enough. It occupied a half dozen rooms in the old building which has since disappeared. There was no great show of apparatus; but such as it was, it was nearly all in daily use. Additions to it were, for the most part, of Wundt's own devising. Of the men who worked there, at least two-thirds were Americans. Some have become leaders in psychology and have made known the principles and methods of the Leipzig school to students in various universities of our country.

Usually, the Professor met the research students in the laboratory after his lecture. Those were moments of free-and-easy intercourse. They gave an opportunity to get advice concerning problems under investigation, to discuss new publications or to secure an expression regarding the statements which came from various quarters with reference to the findings of the Leipzig laboratory.

For the acrimonious, Wundt had little use. He could take part in a discussion quite vigorously; but he preferred to conduct it on a high level. If, in his lectures, he adverted

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to those who differed from him, there was no trace of narrowness in his criticism. On the contrary, I recall that he deprecated the temper of an ardent writer who, in coming to the defense of the Leipzig Institute, had been rather severe upon the author of the attack.

There was a certain intensity about Professor Wundt, due no doubt to the fact that he saw continually wider and wider horizons opening before him. It seemed at one time as though his absorption in speculative problems had drawn him too far from scientific interests. Probably he thought that the "System der Philosophie" was the necessary culmination of his scientific labors. In point of fact, his enthusiasm for psychology had not cooled, as is evident from his later publications.

Wundt
Wundt's habits were of the simpler sort. There was no ostentation about him. I think that he was gratified to have students from all parts of the world coming to his lectures, and still more to see his disciples filling chairs both in Germany and beyond its borders. But his success did not make him less approachable. He went on his accustomed way, patient and laborious, and always ready to help others out of the fulness of his own knowledge.

To see him, half an hour before his lecture, passing along the Promenade, no one would have suspected that he was among the foremost thinkers of his day. Few, even of the students, recognized him. He was not followed by a 'Shadow of Providence'; and yet, as he went along, one thought, quite naturally, of a street in Königsberg.

NOTES

Reprinted from The Psychological Review, Vol. 28, No. 3, (May, 1921) pp. 159-162. Pace's article was one of seventeen written in memory and honor of Prof. Wundt by former students, all of which were published together. The other contributors were G. Stanley Hall, J. McKeen Cattell, E. B. Titchener, Frank Angell, Howard C. Warren, James R. Angell, George M. Stratton, G. T. W. Patrick, Charles H. Judd, Wilbur M. Urban, G. A. Tawney, Edward M. Weyer, Walter Dill Scott, Bird T. Baldwin, George F. Arps, and Rudolph Pintner. As the articles were arranged according to the dates at which the authors studied under Prof. Wundt, Pace's contribution followed those of Prof. Hall and Prof. Cattell.