Preface

On March 27, 1938, the German-born philosopher and psychologist William Stern died in Durham, North Carolina, one month before he would have celebrated his 67th birthday. In a letter of condolence sent to Stern's daughter, Eva, a friend of the family who had often been a guest of the Sterns in Hamburg wrote that 'your pappy will sit right next to God in heaven, because he was the kindest person I ever knew' (Michaelis-Stern, 1991, p. 140)."[1]

Who was Eva Michaelis-Stern's 'pappy,' that good man, William Stern? What did he accomplish during his lifetime, and why should anyone be interested in him or his work today? These are the questions that inspired this book.

William Stern was born in Berlin to Jewish parents on April 29, 1871. In 1935, he finally reconciled himself to the necessity of fleeing Nazi Germany. He accepted the offer of a faculty position in the U.S.A., at Duke University, a position he held until his death just three years later. For obvious reasons, no appreciation of Stern would be published in Germany at the time. In the U.S., however, Harvard University professor Gordon W. Allport (1897-1967), commemorated Stern as follows:

"William Stern was both a pioneer and a systematizer in psychology. … He will be remembered … for his sure-footed explorations in differential psychology, forensic psychology, psychotechnics, child psychology, and intelligence testing. But he will be remembered likewise and, I think, with increasing renown for his theoretical system of personalistic psychology wherein he ordered his manifold research, and which, in turn, he incorporated within his comprehensive philosophic doctrine of Critical Personalism. … It troubled him relatively little that his formulations ran counter to the trend of the times, particularly in American thought. … [H]e believed so intensely in the liberating powers of personalistic thought that he had faith in its ultimate acceptability to others. Thinking [personalistically], Stern became a monumental defender of an unpopular cause. [But] the personalistic way of thought will yet have its day, and its day will be long and bright. (Allport, 1938, pp. 770 and 773)

In the 70-plus years that have passed since these words were written, neither Stern's faith in personalistic thought nor Allport's confident prediction of Stern's increasing renown has been repaid. On the contrary: the *Weltanschauung*, or worldview, that Stern called critical personalism has never attracted widespread

[1] "Dein Päp wird im Himmel direkt neben dem lieben Gott sitzen, denn er war der gütigste Mensch, den ich je gekannt habe."

interest within mainstream scientific psychology. Moreover, the occasional public bows to Stern as the founding father of 'differential psychology' only mythologize his view of the discipline, selectively presenting only certain aspects of his overall conception of the field and completely ignoring the historical fact of his mounting dismay – expressed in numerous works published during the last 20 years of his life – over the direction in which the field was moving (cf. Lamiell, 2006). The repeated (if often only fleeting) references in history of psychology textbooks to Stern's contributions in the domain of IQ testing have further contributed to this mythologizing in that they typically offer no indication of the fact that Stern eventually sought to distance himself from that work. Beyond this, one finds very little indication in the contemporary literature of any familiarity with or interest in Stern's many other significant empirical and theoretical contributions to psychology. This is especially true in the United States and other English-speaking countries, but it has, to an appreciable extent, also been true in Stern's native Germany (Deutsch, 1991).

In consideration of all of this, I was nearly as surprised as I was pleased to receive, some years ago, an invitation to spend a semester as Ernst Cassirer Visiting Professor at the University of Hamburg, where my duties would include holding a series of public lectures on Stern's life and works for the broader university community and interested lay public. From a strictly historical perspective, the rationale for this invitation was clear enough. Stern had, after all, played a significant role in the founding of the University of Hamburg in 1919, and he and Cassirer (1874-1945) were faculty colleagues there from the university's first days until the rise of the Third Reich.[2] Still, knowledge of and interest in Stern among contemporary philosophers and psychologists is not widespread – even, as I would learn, in Hamburg[3] – and it was for this reason that the aforementioned invitation surprised me.

[2] In 1940, Cassirer would publish a German-language appreciation of Stern in *Acta Psychologica* (Cassirer, 1940), and this appreciation was re-printed 10 years later in the second edition of Stern's last major work, *Allgemeine Psychologie auf personalistischer Grundlage (General Psychology from the Personalistic Standpoint;* Stern, 1950).

[3] In addition to the public lectures I gave during my semester as a visiting professor in Hamburg, I also taught a seminar in the Institute for Psychology. At the seminar's first meeting, I asked the students, who numbered about 20, if they had ever heard of William Stern. None had, despite Stern's prominence at their university during the first 14 years of its existence, and despite the fact that there is a meeting room named after Stern in the campus building that currently houses the Institute for Psychology at that university.

Universität Hamburg

Vorlesungen im Rahmen der
ERNST-CASSIRER-GASTPROFESSUR 2004
Prof. James T. Lamiell
(Professor der Psychologie an der Georgetown University, Washington, D. C.)
zum Thema

William Stern (1871–1938): Sein Leben und seine Werke

7.4. Einleitung: Wer war William Stern? Sein Leben im Überblick
14.4. Ein Leben als Wissenschaftler nimmt seinen Lauf (1871-1897)
21.4. Die Breslauer Jahre (1897-1916), Teil I: Die Begründung der differentiellen Psychologie
28.4. Die Breslauer Jahre, Teil II: Einführung in den kritischen Personalismus
5.5. Die Breslauer Jahre, Teil III: Beiträge zur Entwicklungspsychologie
12.5. Die Hamburger Jahre, Teil I: Aufbau des psychologischen Laboratoriums
19.5. Die Hamburger Jahre, Teil II: Fortsetzung des kritischen Personalismus
26.5. Zur Rezeption von Sterns Werk zu seiner Zeit
9.6. Über Sterns Beziehung zu Amerika und zur amerikanischen Psychologie
16.6. Auseinandersetzungen um den kritischen Personalismus, Teil I: Widrige Entwicklungen innerhalb der differentiellen Psychologie
23.6. Auseinandersetzungen um den kritischen Personalismus, Teil II: Stern als Kritiker der differentiellen Psychologie
30.6. Das letzte große Werk: *Allgemeine Psychologie auf personalistischer Grundlage* (1935)
7.7. Eine Zukunft des kritischen Personalismus im 21. Jahrhundert?

Die Vorlesungen finden jeweils mittwochs von 18–20 Uhr in Hörsaal Phil D, Von-Melle-Park 6 („Philosophenturm"), statt.

Figure 1: Public lectures given by the author as Ernst Cassirer Guest Professor, University of Hamburg, Summer Semester, 2004

In writing this book, I have drawn extensively on my "Hamburg Lectures" (see Figure 1).[4] In the chapters that follow, material from those lectures is presented in English translation, revised in some places and supplemented in others by material that I was unable to incorporate into the original texts. The book is replete with quotations from Stern's works, a strategy I have adopted in hopes of bringing readers as close as possible to Stern's original writings. In most cases where I have quoted, in translation, passages from Stern's professional publications (as opposed to his personal correspondence), I have included the original German text in footnotes. This practice should prove beneficial for readers who are more comfortable with German than with English, and it also allows readers conversant in both languages to judge for themselves the fidelity of my translations.[5] My goal in writing this book has been to provide a relatively concise and widely readable introduction to Stern's life and his works, in hopes of broadening familiarity with and appreciation for Stern's many and varied contributions to psychology.

Before proceeding further, a few words are perhaps in order on the question of how it came to pass that, as a psychologist of U.S. citizenship, the present author was invited to lecture on William Stern's life and works to an audience comprised mostly of professors, students, and interested lay persons in and around the University of Hamburg.

In 1984, I traveled to what was then West Germany for the purpose of participating in the Second European Conference on Personality, held in Bielefeld. After my presentation there, I was asked by a certain Professor Dr. Lothar Laux of the University of Bamberg (with whom I would come to develop both a collegial relationship and personal friendship) if I had ever heard of William Stern. I immediately responded that I knew of him as one who had played a historically significant role in IQ-testing, but that I really did not know anything beyond that. Laux patiently explained to me that Stern had made many other important contributions to psychology, and that I would probably find his works very worthwhile reading. After Stern's name surfaced in subsequent conversations with several other European scholars, I determined to follow up on Laux's initial suggestion to familiarize myself more extensively with Stern's works, and in one way or another I have been occupied with that project ever since. As indicated above, familiarity with Stern's works is not, at present, very widespread, and the

[4] Thirteen lectures were originally planned. Due to unforeseen circumstances, however, only 11 lectures were actually delivered. For administrative reasons, each of the first three lectures planned for May had to be delayed one week, and the lectures planned for May 26 and June 9 had to be condensed into a single lecture, given on June 9. For medical reasons, the last lecture in the series, planned for July 7, had to be cancelled altogether.

[5] All translations of German texts into English are my own unless otherwise indicated.

fact of this matter is probably largely responsible for my having been offered the opportunity to lecture on Stern in Hamburg.

Over the course of my studies, I have learned a great deal not only *about* Stern but also *from* Stern, and this learning process, which continues to this day, has given me hope that perhaps Allport's forecast, 70 years ago, of a "long and bright day" for Stern's views might eventually be realized after all. For it is at least arguable that much of Stern's thinking would be of great theoretical and practical utility within the context of scientific psychology's contemporary concerns and endeavors. In any case, those views deserve the serious critical consideration within the intellectual community that they have yet to receive, and it seems unlikely that this will happen unless a sufficiently broad introduction to Stern's works, only few of which have ever been translated into English, has become accessible. As a matter of historical fact, Stern truly was a great deal more than "the IQ-guy" in scientific psychology, and through the present work I hope to provide readers with some appreciation for just how much more than that he was.

James T. Lamiell
Georgetown, August, 2009

Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge several individuals who contributed in especially important ways to the completion of this work. A deep and abiding debt of gratitude is owed Professor Lothar Laux of the University of Bamberg for pointing me to William Stern's works some 25 years ago. In turn, I am grateful to Professor Werner Deutsch of the University of Braunschweig for nominating me for the Ernst Cassirer Guest Professorship at the University of Hamburg, and to Professor Dorothea Frede of the Philosophical Seminar in Hamburg for facilitating my selection for that Professorship. I thank Professor Frede also for making her office in the "Philosophenturm" on the university campus available to me so that I could work effectively while in Hamburg. Ms. Gabriele Jansohn, administrative assistant in the Philosophical Seminar, went well above and beyond the call of duty in making my day-to-day life at the University of Hamburg far more comfortable than it otherwise would have been. Last but by no means least, I am enormously grateful to Eckart Krause. In his capacity as Director of the Library for the History of the University of Hamburg, he provided enthusiastic encouragement, deft professional guidance, and warm collegial support for the work that has culminated in this volume.

James T. Lamiell

Berlin Beginnings: 1871-1897

Chapter One
The Roots of a Scholarly Life

Louis William is the name given by Sigismund Stern (1837-1890) and his wife Rosa Stern Stern (1839-1896)[1] to their only child. The boy did not like the name 'Louis,' however, and he avoided using it. In some of his earlier professional publications, authorship was attributed to 'L. William Stern,' but after 1906 that practice was discontinued, and the subject of our investigation is thus known to posterity as simply as William Stern (see Fig. 1.1).[2]

The Sterns were a family of modest means. Sigismund Stern owned a business specializing in design sketches for wallpaper. Though the business supported the family, it provided little by way of extras, and at times there were pressing financial concerns. As a schoolboy, young William had to earn his spending money by tutoring other pupils, and, at that, he sometimes had to make do with second-hand books (Bühring, 1996).

In one of his writings, Stern described his father as "a rather mellow personality, more of an artist than a businessman, and possessed of a lively humor that he expressed in verses and drawing (Stern, 1929a, p. 7)." In the same work, William Stern described his mother as "an elegant, kind, and clever woman, the daughter of a highly respected scholar, school principal, and religious reformer (Stern, 1929a, p. 7) (see Fig. 1.2)."

Although the Sterns belonged to a reformist congregation within the Jewish community of Berlin, "the family had for generations regarded itself first and foremost as German rather than as Jewish (Stern, 1929a, p. 8)." Small wonder, then, that William Stern would move into and through most of his adult life in the conviction that his German-ness was a much more important aspect of his identity than was his Jewish-ness.

The most significant role model in William Stern's life was not his father but instead his maternal grandfather, also named Sigismund Stern, even though he died in 1867, four years before William's birth. Of his mother's father William Stern (1929a) wrote: "The figure of this grandfather was a model and a foundation, a symbol to which one looked up with respect, all the more so because in

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[1] The maiden name of William Stern's mother was also Stern. Indeed, William Stern's parents were cousins.

[2] Unfortunately, Stern was identified erroneously in the title of one contemporary article as William L. Stern (Kreppner, 1992).

the following generation [i.e., that of William Stern's parents] there was no one who reached comparable heights." (Stern, 1929a, p. 7)

William Stern's revered grandfather was born on July 2, 1812. After completing his schoolwork at a Berlin *Gymnasium*, Sigismund Stern matriculated at the *Berliner-Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität,* today the Humboldt University of Berlin, where he studied philosophy and philology. He completed his post-doctoral work at the *Martin-Luther-Universität* in Halle in 1834 with a thesis titled "Foundations of the Philosophy of Language." Subsequently, his interests turned to pedagogy, and in 1835 he assumed the leadership of a high school for boys in Berlin.

In the only biography of William Stern that has been published to date, Gerald Bühring (1996) noted that a lecture given by grandfather Sigismund during the winter of 1844-45, was particularly important for the Jewish community in Berlin because it resulted in the establishment of the Jewish Reformist Congregation, a group that in its religious practices departed in some ways from the orthodox Jewish traditions. Gradually, Sigismund Stern's renown spread, and in 1855 the Jewish congregation in Frankfurt am Main appointed him Director of the *Philanthropic Realschule.* There, too, he initiated many activities, "addressing himself regularly, both in writings and in speeches, to questions of pedagogy, religion, and national history." (Bühring, 1996, pp. 11-12). He abolished corporal punishment in the schools and, more generally, grounded his view of pedagogy

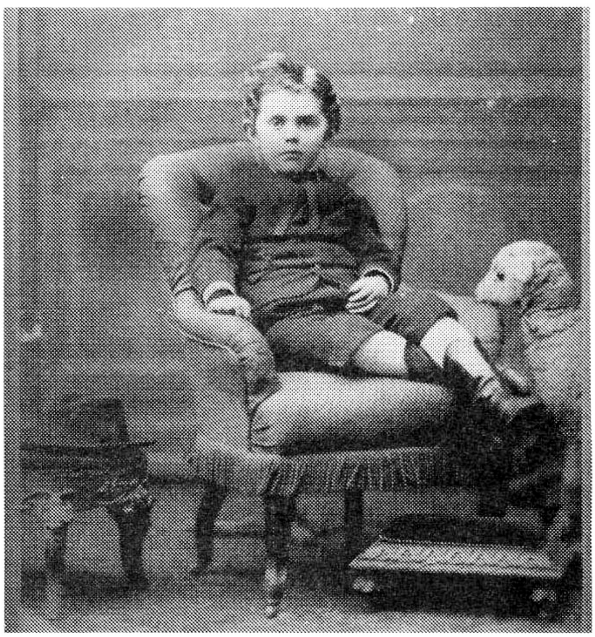

Figure 1.1: William Stern at Age 5 (1876)

5. William Stern und seine Eltern zum Bar-Mizwa am 25.4.1886

Figure 1.2: William Stern (1812-1867) with parents on Bar Mitzva, April 25, 1886

2. Der jüdische Reformer und Pädagoge Sigismund Stern (1812-1867)

Figure 1.3: Sigismund Stern (1812-1867), William Stern's Maternal Grandfather

in considerations of child psychology. In these ways, Sigismund Stern attained a level of prominence reached by very few Jews of his time. He became influential beyond the boundaries of family and his fellow Jews, and "rose to an honored place in German society (Bühring, 1996, p. 11)."

In this light, it is understandable that William Stern regarded his grandfather with such awe. As a 14 year-old, young William wrote in his diary:

"Oh, what a great man he must have been! To follow in his footsteps is my greatest goal, so I, too, will study philology (Stern, as quoted in Bühring, 1996, p. 18)."

Acting on this resolve, Stern would matriculate at the Friedrich-Wilhelm-Universität in Berlin in 1888, with the intention of studying philology and philosophy. Before discussing his years as a university student, however, a bit more must be said about Stern as a somewhat younger person.

William Stern As Adolescent

Particularly revealing of Stern as an adolescent is a book originally published in 1925 under the title *Anfänge der Reifezeit: Ein Knabentagebuch in psychologischer Bearbeitung (Coming of Age: A Psychological Analysis of a Boy's Diary)*.[3] The insights provided by this work derive in no small part from the fact that its 54 year-old author, on the one hand, and the young person whose diary entries from ages 12 to 15 (1883-1886) are discussed therein, on the other hand, were one and the same William Stern (see Fig. 1.4).

Physically, William Stern was a rather slight individual who showed little interest in athletic pursuits. There are occasional references to hiking, bicycling, and ice-skating outings, but soccer, for example, is not mentioned a single time, and one searches in vain for evidence that he had any interest whatsoever in any competitive sport, either as a player or even merely as a spectator.

Nor was William Stern at all inclined toward playing card games, smoking, drinking, or any of the other social/recreational activities that were common among his adolescent peers. He was slow to reach puberty, and perhaps for this reason he seems to have been rather awkward and uncomfortable in many of his interactions with young ladies. Commenting on all of this from his perspective at age 54, William Stern recalled his youthful self, to whom he referred in the book as "A," as follows:

"As a community, A's cohort of classmates was of little importance to him. To be sure, he participated in some group activities such as class trips, ice skating parties, special celebrations, etc., but he was not tied closely to the larger group. For one thing, he was too young to share the interests of his classmates, most of

[3] A second, essentially unrevised edition of this book was published in 1929, and it is this later edition from which the passages quoted in the present work have been taken.

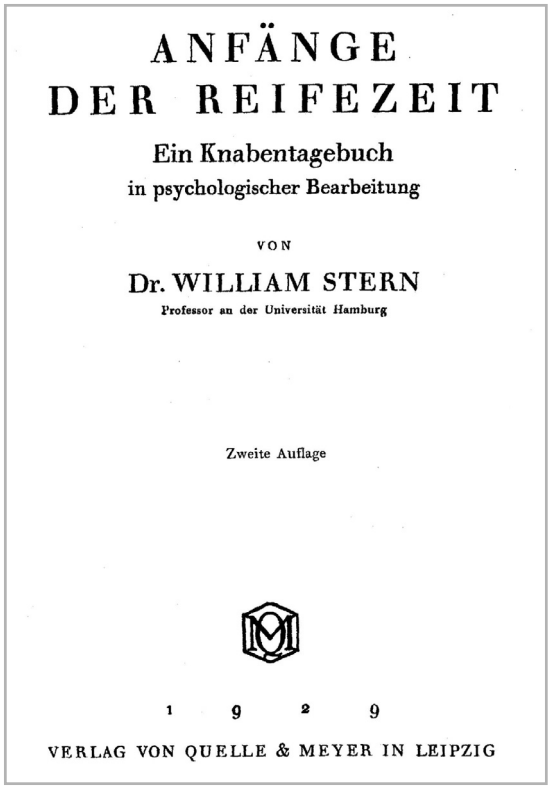
ANFÄNGE
DER REIFEZEIT
Ein Knabentagebuch
in psychologischer Bearbeitung
VON
Dr. WILLIAM STERN
Professor an der Universität Hamburg
Zweite Auflage
1 9 2 9
VERLAG VON QUELLE & MEYER IN LEIPZIG

Figure 1.4: Title Page of *Coming of Age: A Psychological Analysis of a Boy's Diary* (first edition 1925)

whom reached puberty before he did. He was often looked upon as naïve, or as the model boy *(Musterknabe)*, or as a 'wimp' *(Duckmäuser)*. Then, too, neither his intellectual sophistication nor his conceitedness made him especially well-liked (Stern, 1929a, p. 59)."[4]

The diaries examined in *Coming of Age* contain many entries reflecting Stern's struggles with egotistical ambition and arrogance – his own as well as that of others.

[4] "Die Schulklasse als Gemeinschaft hatte für A. keine große Bedeutung. Er nahm wohl an Gemeinschaftsveranstaltungen, wie Schulausflügen, Schlittschuhpartien, Festen, usw. teil, war aber nicht durch engere Bande an das Ganze gebunden. Er war wohl zum Teil zu jung, um die Interessen der in der Pubertät meist viel weiter vorgeschrittenen Mitschüler teilen zu können. Er wurde von ihnen als Ahnungsloser oder Musterknabe oder Duckmäuser angesehen, ... während andererseits seine geistige Frühreife und Anmaßlichkeit ihn auch nicht gerade beliebt machten." (Stern, 1929a, S. 59)

Illustrative of this are two diary entries made within an eight-day period in October of 1884, when William Stern was about 13 and one-half years of age.
The first of these two entries was dated October 18: "I met up with friends to talk further about forming a book club. I was elected, provisionally, as president (Stern, 1929a, p. 22)." The entry made eight days later, on October 26, 1884, reads: "First meeting of the book club. Participants included [here several names]. U elected president. We proceeded to read." So, William's tenure as president of the book club lasted barely one week, and apart from "U elected president," he commented no further on this matter until eight months later. Then, in June of 1885, he added the following remarks:
"Earlier, I entirely forgot to write that over the entire winter I participated in a book club that I myself had founded and whose provisional president I was. But so as not to appear egotistical, I emphatically drew attention to U's qualifications, and he was elected. Actually, that is good. I have not regretted it (Stern, 1929a, p. 23)."
Forty years later, the middle-aged psychologist added the following:
"In A's mind, a strange struggle was playing out between a naïve egotism, i.e., the desire to retain the power of being president of the club which he had founded and of which he was the intellectual leader, and the deliberate effort not to appear self-centered. Hence he recommended his friend with a somewhat disingenuous enthusiasm. He glosses this over with the remark: 'Actually, that is good. I have not regretted it,' but it seems that he did not take unmitigated pleasure in the success of his endorsement [of U]. Apparently, he did not so easily overcome his regret over his excessive selflessness." (Stern, 1929a, p. 23)[5]
Another example of young William Stern's struggles along these lines is given in the entry of June 19, 1885. It concerns the relationship between him and two peers with whom, at that particular time, William was not on the best of terms. "I still find it horrible to see O and E speaking with each other. I remember when O once told me that E couldn't stand me. I confess that my pride was hurt at the time, but I'm over it now (Stern, 1929a, p. 64)." At age 54, Stern added the comment: "This ardent emphasis on having overcome the hurt to his pride is a clear sign that the young man was still struggling with it (Stern, 1929a, p. 64)."

[5] "[I]n A.s Seele spielte sich ein seltsamer Kampf ab zwischen naivem Egoismus, nämlich dem Machtstreben, 'Präsident' zu bleiben (er hatte ja das Kränzchen gegründet und war auch der eigentliche geistige Anreger des Kreises), und dem schon sehr reflektierten Wunsch, nicht egoistisch zu erscheinen, weshalb er mit einem nicht ganz aufrichtigen Eifer den Freund empfahl ... In den beschönigenden Schlußsätzen: 'Das ist im Grunde ganz gut. Ich habe es nicht bereut' klingt allerdings deutlich durch, daß ihm der schließliche Erfolg seiner Empfehlung nicht ungemischte Freude bereitet hat. Er scheint das Bedauern über seine allzu große Selbstlosigkeit nicht ganz leicht überwunden zu haben." (Stern, 1929a, S. 23)