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The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chairperson, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty.

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PIECING TOGETHER THE PUZZLE OF THE PAST: A BIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH PROJECT ON “DOING HISTORY” THE FRED MORROW FLING WAY

by

KERRI NAPOLEON

Under the Direction of Chara Haeussler Bohan, PhD

ABSTRACT

Change all but defines the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in American history. In the midst of these tumultuous times, America experienced a revolution of reform meant to develop and enhance all areas of life from politics to society, which led historians to call this time period the Progressive Era. However, the progress of the nation was not always the winning ideology. At times, the backlash against progressive ideas restrained innovators and caused them to disappear into the mires of history.

One reformer who experienced this backlash was Fred Morrow Fling. Although he was an internationally-known historian, he remained a rather invisible history education reformer because his ideas were overshadowed by the enormous human events of his lifetime, including the work of other reformers and his unexpected death in 1934. As a trained scientific historian, Fling was a pioneer of historical method and the application of what became known as “source method” in the classroom and he espoused a radical approach to critical education that sought to embed a scientific approach into the teaching of history that has clear parallels with best teaching

practices today. Thus, using traditional historical research methods and archival records from both Bowdoin College and the University of Nebraska, the author presents in this dissertation a biographical portrait of Fling's life. Through the analysis of these historical documents and the evidence of his life recorded in publications and the public press, this portrait will serve to uncover both how Fred Morrow Fling's conception of history education influenced his practice as a history professor and researcher and how Fred Morrow Fling's philosophy of education formed and developed over his lifetime. Specifically, this author will consider: how can the philosophy of history education created by Fred Morrow Fling inform our current history education practices today? By investigating Fling's life, researchers will finally be able to acknowledge Fling's myriad contributions to history education, which are vital to composing a fuller picture of the history of social studies education.

INDEX WORDS: Fred Morrow Fling, Source Method, History Education, Social Studies Education, Philosophy of Education, Historical Method, Scientific History, Progressive Era Education

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Fred Morrow Fling Way

by

Kerri Napoleon

A Dissertation

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Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Teaching and Learning with a concentration in Social Studies Education

in

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in the

College of Education
Georgia State University

Atlanta, GA
2016

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AHA	American Historical Association
NEA	National Education Association
<i>Outline</i>	<i>The Outline of Historical Method</i> , by Fling
<i>Writing</i>	<i>The Writing of History</i> , by Fling
CRSE	NEA Committee on the Reorganization of Secondary Education
NHTA	Nebraska History Teachers' Association

1 INTRODUCTION

Momentous change occurred in 1884 for the field of history. In that year, the American Historical Association (AHA) was born. The precursor to this organization, the American Social Science Association, helped the infant AHA to spread its “Call for a Convention” and its members helped determine the independent status of the AHA.¹ At its first business meeting, Justin Winsor, the newly appointed Chairman of the Association, expressed the organization’s task as “to organize a new society and fill a new field.”² He also explained the need for the organization and the area from which its members would come,

We are drawn together because we believe there is a new spirit of research abroad, - a spirit which emulates the laboratory work of the naturalists, using that word in its broadest sense. This spirit requires for its sustenance mutual recognition and suggestion among its devotees. We can deduce encouragement and experience stimulation by this sort of personal contact...the future of this new work is in the young men of the historical instinct, - largely in the rising instructors of our colleges...³

Responding to this call for a new field and a new respect for history, many professors, historians, and laypersons flocked to teachers colleges, research institutions, and the subsequent meetings of this new association to express their views of the future.

One such professor was Fred Morrow Fling, a young, eager, and progressive reformer, who began his educational career in the context of this plea for change. Fling was only twenty-four when the AHA held its first public session on September 9th, 1884. In this session, Cornell University President Andrew Dickinson White delivered an address, “On Studies in General History and the History of Civilization,” which appeared as the second item in the AHA’s First Se-

¹ J. Lloyd Eaton, et al., “Call for a Convention by the Preliminary Committee,” *American Historical Association: Archives*, 1884, <http://historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/archives>.

² Justin Winsor, “Opening Remarks at the Preliminary Business Meeting of the AHA,” *American Historical Association: Archives*, 1884, <http://historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/archives/first-meeting-of-the-american-historical-association/preliminary-business-meeting>.

³ Ibid.

ries, published in 1884. In this address, White commented on the concurrent rise of “scientific” studies in the field of history.⁴ By the founding of the AHA, the desire to defend historical and other social science studies as equal to those in the natural science fields occupied the attention of theoreticians both inside and outside the discipline. As White explained, these “scientific” trends in history would finally usher in the respect and reputation that historical research deserved. Moreover, he credited the work of historians under the German laboratory model, which he proudly believed would become the future standard procedure in the field of history.⁵ It is no surprise, then, that Fling and other budding historians of his day chose studies abroad in Germany to complement their own education in the field of history and began infusing scientific processes into their study of historical topics and their pedagogy as history instructors.

In 1890, upon the completion of his PhD in history at the age of thirty, Fred Morrow Fling returned to the United States. The following year, Fling took his first position as a professor at the University of Nebraska and the AHA celebrated its seventh year in operation. Immediately upon his acceptance of this position, Fling began his work as a pioneer of historical research method and the application of what would become known as “source method” in the classroom. Fundamentally, proponents of “source method” in this time period expected that primary source documents and artifacts be used as materials to teach history to students in both the secondary and primary levels. In modern times, these methods are commonplace. However, in the early years of the Progressive Era, justifying the use of sources in the classroom was a requirement for educators hoping for source-based education reform in the field of history. Prominent scholars, such as Mary Sheldon Barnes, argued that because sources were the main materi-

⁴ Andrew Dickinson White, “On Studies in General History and the History of Civilization,” *American Historical Association: Archives*, 1884, <http://historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/archives/first-meeting-of-the-american-historical-association/first-public-session>.

⁵ Ibid.

als with which historians worked to produce historical narratives, these same materials should form a basis of the resources at a teacher's disposal for historical instruction in the history classroom. In fact, "[h]istory, for Barnes, was not about the acquisition of facts, rather it was the development of what she called 'historical sense,' the ability to analyze data, make generalizations from historical evidence, and grasp history's sweep."⁶ However, other thinkers of the Progressive Era, such as Thomas Jesse Jones and Arthur Dunn, claimed that uninformed and untrained novices were not adequately nor naturally equipped to grapple with the difficulties of interpreting historical sources on their own as the source method required them to do. In addition, "[a] standard, contemporary (and continuing) objection to the source method was that it took way too much classroom time."⁷ While these ideological battles raged between scholars and activists in the professional world of the AHA and teacher's associations, other reformers, such as Fling, were left to their own devices to create and employ effective teaching methods on the ground level in secondary and post-secondary classrooms.

The ideas and philosophies that Fling developed in order to accomplish this task provide valuable insight into the specific techniques through which source method was implemented during this time period of educational change. Although gaining state-wide recognition during his tenure in Nebraska and a nation-wide nickname for source method as "the Nebraska Method," Fling himself has remained relatively unknown in the history of social studies education.⁸ How-

⁶ Thomas Kevin B Cherry, "Online Cultural Heritage Materials and the Teaching of History in the Schools: A Concept Analysis of State Archives and Collaborative Digitization Program Web Resources," PhD, diss. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2010), 49.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁸ First use in William. G. Langworthy Taylor, "A Life of Historical Research," *Nebraska Alumnus*, (1932): 4; however, many researchers have cited this term since that time, including Robert Knoll, *Prairie University: A History of the University of Nebraska* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 64; Ken Osborne, "Fred Morrow Fling and the Source-Method of Teaching History," *Theory & Research in Social Education* 31 (2003): 469; Chara Haeussler Bohan, "Early Vanguard of Progressive Education: The Committee of Ten, the Committee of Sev-

ever, his unique approach to source method as the critical analysis of materials selected, gathered, and interpreted by students themselves in the pursuit of a systematically teacher- or student-created historical investigation differs significantly from the popular use of source material as simply supplemental examples alongside historical study. As leading educational reformers like John Dewey argued for student-centered learning that revolved around inquiry within the learner, Fling was merging this idea with the source method to provide genuine scientific research opportunities to both secondary and post-secondary history students. Therefore, he transcended the approach undertaken by proponents of either source method or student-centered learning singularly and provided a unique pedagogy for history education that allowed the student to experience both source method and scientific history inquiry in the history classroom.

Although active as an educator for forty-three years, Fling's practices and ideas did not garner wide recognition nor praise. Instead, his lack of popularity ranged from ignorance of his methods to formal public criticism. As a result, many of his ideas remain unknown to educators today. One such explanation for this apparent invisibility is an unexpected backlash Fling received from, of all places, the AHA. In his first publication in 1897, Fling claimed that "[o]ur age is scientific above all things, and this spirit has permeated, one by one, all branches of instruction" and that the source method of history had attained a "permanent basis" in the fields of both history and education.⁹ However, just two years later, the AHA published *The Study of History in Schools: A Report to the American Historical Association by the Committee of Seven*, which frankly stated,

en, and Social Education," *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, 19, no. 1 (2003): 86; Cherry, "Online Cultural Heritage," 51; and James A Chisholm, Jr. "Unheralded Historian: Mary Sheldon Barnes and Primary Source Material in History Books," PhD, diss., (Atlanta, Georgia: Georgia State University, 2013), 50.

⁹ Fred Morrow Fling & Howard W. Caldwell, *Studies in European and American History with an Introduction to the Source Study Method in History* (Lincoln, NE: J. H. Miller, 1897), v.

We believe in the proper use of sources for proper pupils, with proper guarantees that there shall also be secured a clear outline view of the whole subject studied; but *we find ourselves unable to approve a method of teaching, sometimes called the "source method,"* in which pupils have in their hands little more than a series of extracts, for the most part brief, and not very closely related.¹⁰

Although not directly naming Fling nor explicitly lodging this criticism at him, it is clear that this Committee of Seven report provided a stark counterargument to the method Fling was concurrently promoting.

The use and prominence of source method in the field of history education that caught the attention of the AHA and its Committee of Seven was due to the work of Fling and his contemporaries, such as George Elliot Howard, Mary Sheldon Barnes, and Lucy Maynard Salmon, whose work Fling believed he was extending and enhancing in his own educational philosophy. These other reformers became famous for their work by heading committees, studying and working in normal schools, teaching in educational institutions, leading organizations, such as the AHA, and publishing widely-read works on both history and education. Having studied in Germany and perfected the "laboratory method" that the AHA had repeatedly applauded, Fling reasonably assumed that he was working alongside these reformers and within the expectations that the AHA had placed upon its members. Unfortunately for Fling, his pedagogy was far from categorically accepted and he received heavy criticism from historians, educators, and other actors invested in educational progress. As a result, as early as the first years of his career, Fling experienced a self-doubt that crept into his future philosophical writings in subtle, yet significant, ways. For the rest of his career and life, Fling would fight to defend his methods, ideas, and in-

¹⁰ American Historical Association, *The Study of History in Schools: Report to the American Historical Association by the Committee of Seven* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1899), 481, emphasis added.

structional techniques against the onslaught – and backlash – of Progressive educational reforms that evolved throughout his lifetime.

Overall, in the few short decades between the end of Reconstruction in the South in the wake of the Civil War to American entrance into the Great War, America experienced prosperity, imperialism, nationalism, and growth as a world power. In the midst of these tumultuous times, America also experienced a profound insecurity in the relationship between this change and its dangers. In the 1890s, author Mark Twain appropriately dubbed this period the “Gilded Age,” a name that has endured into modern times. The tensions between change and tradition, growth and restraint, and boom and bust dominated national politics, economics, and society as well as the lives of everyday citizens. In this context, the work of reformers who rose above the challenges of the times gained the period recognition as “the Progressive Era.” However, the progress of the nation was not always the winning ideology and, as the story of Fred Morrow Fling demonstrates, the backlash against progressive ideas often restrained innovators and caused these hopeful crusaders to disappear into the mires of history.

Fling’s philosophy and practices are examples of such reforms that experienced this Progressive Era backlash but his methods and philosophy of education bear an uncanny resemblance to the pedagogies and recommended best practices of today’s classrooms. In the vast area of history education, Fling’s ideas are currently being resurrected through emphasis on literacy education, Common Core standards of analysis and interpretation, and critical source evaluation through secondary educational standards. The connections between these practices of today and these Progressive Era beginnings in Fling’s work have never been made clear nor distinct. Fling may have experienced harsh suppression in his day and may remain invisible in the annals of historical fame, but the foundation he created for the use of source method in the classroom is sub-

stantial. Hence, the work of Fred Morrow Fling deserves a second look by researchers who want a fuller picture of the development and prominence of source method in the history of social studies education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study is to chronicle the life of Fred Morrow Fling and to uncover and analyze his specific philosophy of education and the contributions that he made to the field of history education. Fred Morrow Fling lived a long and productive life. He added to the field of education as a reformer, a professor, a writer, a researcher, a progressive, and a pioneer. Although his works have survived, Fling's legacy has been often overshadowed by the work of other reformers, especially his contemporary pragmatists, such as William James, Charles Pierce, and John Dewey, whose ideas took center stage during the years of the Progressive Era and the decades of educational reform that followed. Thus, the intention of this research is to examine the educational philosophy that Fred Morrow Fling envisioned and to unearth the pedagogical suggestions and opportunities this philosophy provides for the field of history education within the broader field of social studies education. Though unknown to most, Fred Morrow Fling emphasized and developed in his day many of the history education attributes that educators value today, such as critique, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. So, it is only right to acknowledge the development of these ideas in one of their sources of origin: Fling's life.

Fred Morrow Fling's life is no easy subject to investigate. He lived from 1860 to 1934, a seventy-four year life span in which the world around him was reinvented. Not only did the Progressive Era change many domestic qualities of American life, including primarily the field of education, but also America's involvement in World War One, its isolation in the era of the

1920s, the devastation of the stock market crash in 1929, and the beginning of the Great Depression in the early 1930s all created upheavals during Fling's lifetime. Meanwhile, Fling fought to make a name for himself and his work in a field that was dominated by an elite and exclusive group of educational reformers, of which Fling sought to be a part. In addition, although he was a prolific professional writer, Fling was a significantly private person, which resulted in only a small archive of private letters and writings from which to gain insight into his personal life. Thus, creating a picture of Fling's life from the sources that do remain in the context of his era is immediately difficult. As Craig Kridel notes, "methodological issues encompass all aspects of biographical inquiry, but discussions in recent decades have often been concerned with documentation and interpretation."¹¹ This difficulty is especially relevant to the biographical research of Fling's life: not only are the sources limited, but viewing the world through the eyes of a person living during Fling's lifetime is extremely difficult from today's perspective.

On the positive side, Fling published forty-two different writings, including seven major books and five peer-reviewed articles, and references to his life and works appear in the writings and records of both his contemporaries and researchers today. So, as Kridel also comments, "in spite of all the problems, biographers continue to write their biographies, and even with the overwhelming complexity of methodological issues, they continue to find ways to portray lives."¹² Thus, the purpose of this study is not only to credit the foundation that Fling created for the field of history education, but also to bring to life a reformer who, even in death, still has much important advice to give.

¹¹ Craig Kridel, *Writing Educational Biography* (New York, NY: Garland Publishing, 1998), 75.

¹² *Ibid.*

The story of Fling's life and the connections that it has to today are both enlightening and engaging. As Barbara Finkelstein states, “[b]iography is to history what a telescope is to the stars[:] it reveals the invisible, extracts detail from myriad points of light, uncovers sources of illumination, and helps us disaggregate and reconstruct large heavenly pictures.”¹³ Her point is that biography provides a method through which we can see and understand the past. The depth that life stories bring to the field of historical research is undeniable. Specifically, as Finkelstein explains, “[t]hrough the lens of biography, historians have constructed creative windows through which one can glimpse several otherwise undiscoverable realities.”¹⁴ In the field of education, these discoveries are important because they provide bridges between current and past practices through the real-life stories of the founders of American education. Biography as a field of research helps historians and social scientists remember that, although the past often feels like the tumult of forces outside of the control of human lives, it is in reality a *human* past made up of *human* beings that create and enhance *human* change. In fact, as Ralph Waldo Emerson remarked, “there is properly no history; only biography.”¹⁵ Thus, biography is yet another tool that researchers have to uncover valuable information regarding the past.

In the field of education, the role that individuals play in promoting agendas, reforms, and recommendations is irrefutable. Moreover, past individuals have created the foundation for change for present activists. So, the study of historical educational biography has indeed “situate[d] historical storytelling at the margins of social possibility where social change originates,

¹³ Barbara Finkelstein, “Revealing Human Agency: The Uses of Biography in the Study of Educational History,” in *Writing Educational Biography*, ed. Craig Kridel, Craig (New York, NY: Garland Publishing, 1998), 46.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁵ Ralph Waldo Emerson, as quoted in Stephen Oates, *Biography as History*, (Waco, TX: Markham Press Fund, 1991), 16.

constraint and choice merge, large and small social structures intersect, cultural norms converge, and the relative force of political, economic, social and cultural circumstance becomes clear.”¹⁶ Frank Vandiver reinforces this point by asking, “[h]ow could biography be anything but an agent of humanism?”¹⁷ This point is, lastly, made even clearer by Barbara Tuchman, who applauds the assistance that biography affords to the historian by allowing people human glimpses of an otherwise disassociated past. As she states, “[a]s a prism of history, biography attracts and holds the reader’s interest in the larger subject. People are interested in other people, in the fortunes of the individual.”¹⁸

In short, biography helps historians remember the role of human agency in history in order to convey a compelling story of a life that has the potential to reach a wider audience than just those interested in historical study proper. Stephen Oates, another leading biographical researcher of today, states simply, “all good biographies give history a human dimension.”¹⁹ Thus, the purpose of this research study of Fred Morrow Fling’s life is to show precisely this role that human agency has in the development of history.

Theoretical Perspective

Biography is regarded as a burgeoning field in research.²⁰ Biography is also beginning to fill an important role in specifically educational research by providing a glimpse into the lived experiences of other educators who battle both historical and contemporary issues in their own

¹⁶ Finkelstein, “Revealing Human Agency,” 47.

¹⁷ Frank E. Vandiver, “Biography as an Agent of Humanism,” in *The Biographer's Gift: Life Histories and Humanism*, ed. John F. Veninga (College Station: Published for the Texas Committee for the Humanities by Texas A&M University Press, 1983), 3.

¹⁸ Barbara Tuchman, “Biography as a Prism of History,” in *Biography as High Adventure*, ed. Stephen B. Oates (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986), 94.

¹⁹ Stephen B. Oates, *Biography as History*, (Waco: Markham Press Fund, 1991), 8.

²⁰ Kridel, *Writing Educational Biography*, 2.

ways. As Kridel explains, “the study of biography is slowly emerging as a significant development in the field of educational research.”²¹ This development is not surprising considering the unique benefits afforded by this type of research. As Oates, explains,

There are good reasons for biography’s appeal. For one thing, it demonstrates that the individual does count – which is reassuring to people in our complex, technical age, who often feel caught up in vast impersonal forces beyond their control. For another, people are turning to biography for what they used to get in the Victorian novel: a panoramic view of an age, and a life that has a beginning, middle, and an end. That biography is about a real life makes it all the more reassuring.²²

Kridel loosely defines educational biography as the “telling [of] the life of another whose career falls within the field of education.”²³ However, he also cautions that all biography is actually multidisciplinary in nature. In order to fully capture the life of the research subject, a biographer, educational or otherwise, must “draw from all disciplines” and encompass the complexity of the reality that the research subject experienced.²⁴ Vandiver states that “[g]ood biographies deal with the ways people faced living – tell how they met problems, how they coped with big and little crises, how they loved, competed, did the things we all do daily.”²⁵ In this way, biographers connect with their audiences because “these studies touch familiar chords in readers.”²⁶

What then is biography? According to John Garraty, “biography, to begin with a very simple definition, is the record of a life.”²⁷ Accordingly, “it is thus a branch of history” because, like historical research, biography collects seemingly disparate parts of a whole and weaves them

²¹ Kridel, *Writing Educational Biography*, 3.

²² Oates, *Biography as History*, 5.

²³ Kridel, *Writing Educational Biography*, 8.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Vandiver, “Biography as an Agent of Humanism,” 16.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

²⁷ James Garraty, *Nature of Biography*, (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1957), 3.

together into a comprehensive account of both history and life.²⁸ Leon Edel extends Garraty's conclusion by explaining:

The writing of lives is a department of history and is closely related to the discoveries of history. It can claim the same skills. No lives are led outside history or society; they take place in human time. No biography is complete unless it reveals the individual within history, within an ethos and a social complex.²⁹

As Edel further notes, “[i]n saying this, we remember Donne: ‘no [one] is an island unto himself.’”³⁰ Thus, it is safe to say that biography is the historical study of a person's life, including the experiences, contexts, and events that shaped that person's life and that created the social environment in which that person lived.

Methodologically, biography borrows heavily from historical research, especially when the subject of a biography is deceased. Although Judith Preissle-Goetz and Margaret LeCompte acknowledge that life history writing generally entails interviews and observations, which can obviously only be undertaken with a living subject, Vandiver offers that biography specifically focuses on “someone who is no longer alive.”³¹ Although biography may rightly study either living or dead subjects, a historical biography can often be more powerful than a living biography due to its ability to connect seemingly disparate stories across the expanse of time. In other words,

We can live with another human being in another age; we can identify with his or her journey through the vicissitudes of life. We see how somebody in another age negotiated what we all face: the trials of adolescence, puberty, early adulthood, maturity, and decline. We feel the subject's struggles and failures, triumphs and glories, as though they were our own.³²

²⁸ Ibid., 3.

²⁹ Leon Edel, *Writing Lives: Principia Biographica* (New York: Norton, 1984), 14.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Vandiver, “Biography as an Agent of Humanism,” 16; Judith Preissle-Goetz and Margret D. LeCompte, “Qualitative Research in Social Studies Education,” in James P. Shaver, ed., *Handbook of Research on Social Studies Teaching and Learning*, (New York: MacMillan, 1999): 64-82.

³² Oates, *Biography as History*, 7.

Thus, historical biography augments the present day experiences of life and allows people to connect with individuals throughout time. As Kridel explains, this quality of biography may in fact be its greatest strength in modern times because of the continually fragmented and fractured nature of postmodern society and biography's ability to remind us of the human connections that transcend both time and these modern fissures.³³

This point is also repeatedly supported by Maxine Greene, whose many works focus on the importance of inclusion for marginalized populations in the telling of history.³⁴ In her work, *The Dialectic of Freedom*, she further emphasizes the importance of drawing together a diverse array of authentic stories to weave a more accurate fabric of the world and society. As she states, although we may “find as well a gathering uncertainty with regard to the relation between pluralism and freedom, pluralism and community, pluralism and a free society,” we can also bring these disparate perspectives together to work towards freedom as a community.³⁵ In the end, we need to acknowledge that “[t]here are always strangers, people with their own cultural memories, with voices aching to be heard.”³⁶ These perspectives have the power to encourage actual individual freedom in society through their combination and cooperation, which is only possible if researchers allow these voices a presence in the writing and researching of history. Kridel himself acknowledges the importance of Greene's work by partly dedicating his 1998 compilation,

³³ Craig Kridel, “Biographical Meanderings: Reflections and Reminiscences on *Writing Educational Biography*,” *Vitae Scholasticae* 25 (Sept 2008): 8.

³⁴ See specifically Maxine Greene, *The Dialectic of Freedom* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1988) for a main treatise on her philosophical ideas; Maxine Green, *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., 2000) for a collection of essays regarding developments in social education in a multicultural society; and, for a laudatory collection of accounts from various researchers and theoreticians who credit Greene for her influence upon them, see William Ayers and Janet L. Miller, *A Light in Dark Times: Maxine Greene and the Unfinished Conversation* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1998).

³⁵ Greene, *Dialectic*, 105.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 87.

Writing Educational Biography, to her ideas for the “importance of the humanities for educational research and scholarship.”³⁷

William Pinar and Anne Pautz further support the coalescing nature of biographical research by explaining that the “biographical voice” in research has the power to reverberate like a chorus. As they state, “[t]he resonance between biography and autobiography can spur an articulation of lives that contest social norms and provide narratives that help teachers and students redefine their educational experiences on their own terms and in their own voices.”³⁸ Their point is that this “biographical voice” allows populations that have been traditionally silenced to speak their mind and contribute to the continually growing conversation of educational theory, curriculum, and research. In their words, “the concept of voice allow[s] curricularists to speak their silence, and in so doing, resist patriarchal structures.”³⁹ This voice is important to the enrichment of diverse postmodern societies.

The field of biography itself is complex and diverse. Kridel admits that “building a comprehensive, all-inclusive definition of biography seems fruitless and futile, especially once placed in juxtaposition with the various areas of life-history writing, life-writing, biography, psychobiography, narratology, or narrative lives.”⁴⁰ However, in his 1998 publication meant to guide biographers in a clearer direction, Kridel references Oates’ original tripartite conception of biographical research as the starting point for defining biography.⁴¹ According to Oates, the three primary approaches to biographical research are scholarly chronicle, critical study, and nar-

³⁷ Kridel, *Writing Educational Biography*, dedication page.

³⁸ William F. Pinar and Anne E. Pautz, “Construction Scars: Autobiographical Voice in Biography,” in *Writing Educational Biography*, ed. Craig Kridel (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc, 1998), 72.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁴⁰ Kridel, *Writing Educational Biography*, 7.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

rative biography.⁴² Briefly these categories identify chronological accounts (scholarly chronicle), evaluative approaches to life history writing (critical study), and comprehensive portraits of a subject's life combined with a critical analysis of the historic time period in which he lived (narrative biography).

By 2008, Kridel reconceived and expanded this list by identifying five "large realms" in the area of biographical research that each entails its own method, concept, and perspective.⁴³ These five areas are scholarly chronicle, intellectual biography, life history writing, memoir biography, and narrative biography. Whereas the first three are limited portraits of a subject's life, which focus on the cause and effect events of a person's life, the philosophical and psychological mindset of a subject, and the chronological development of a historic figure, respectively, the last two are more comprehensive. A memoir biography captures the total experience of a person's life through the combination of autobiography and research. A narrative biography encompasses all elements of scholarly chronicle, intellectual biography, and life history writing in addition to an in depth contextual analysis of the historical events surrounding the subject's life.

Although inundated with facts and evidence, this narrative style of biography allows the researcher to express the emotional, psychological, and personal development of the research subject through a literary style akin to character development. This connection between the research subject and the researcher's portrayal helps pay respect to the character of the research subject. As Blanche Cook explains, "I find the most compelling biographies are those, written with passion and intensity, that seek to redress the wrongs, reconstitute the spirit and restore the

⁴² Oates, *Biography as History*, 6.

⁴³ Kridel, "Biographical Meanderings," 8.

subject.”⁴⁴ Here, an empathetic connection to the research subject can enhance the intensity with which the biographer writes. Kridel supports this point by explaining that narrative biography is not “burdened by a definitive interpretation of the subject that must be accepted by all.”⁴⁵ Instead, as he claims, “[f]acts do exist and some interpretations are more thoughtful than others, but the biographer, while consciously aware of his or her personal emotions and reactions to the subject, recognizes that the telling of the story is primarily defined by the subject in relation to readers.”⁴⁶ In other words, narrative biography allows researchers to capture the reality of the subject through meticulous attention to fact and detail in records, but also to convey that story with the richness and depth of a storyteller who engages and excites the reader.

A correlative word of caution on this front does appear in Kridel’s work. In his words, “I have found that many biographers are so enraptured with their subjects that they...focus on historical detail and minutiae” in their writing.⁴⁷ His point is that too much emphasis on minute details in the life of the research subject blurs the objectivity and comprehensiveness of the historical element of biographical research. André Maurois also counters Cook’s argument in his article, “Biography as a Work of Art.”⁴⁸ To him, in order for a biographer to connect with the life of his subject, he must purposefully and formally detach himself from any emotional or moral connection to that subject. In his words, “at the moment at which we ourselves display emotion, we are incapable of observation.”⁴⁹ His point is that, “[o]ur emotions are too strong and leave no

⁴⁴ Blanche W. Cook, “The Issue of Subject: A Critical Connection,” in *Writing Educational Biography*, ed. Craig Kridel (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc, 1998), 80.

⁴⁵ Kridel, *Writing Educational Biography*, 9.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Kridel, “Biographical Meanderings,” 7.

⁴⁸ André Maurois, “Biography as a Work of Art,” in *Biography as High Adventure*, ed. Stephen B. Oates (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1986) 3-19.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

faculty of aesthetic criticism at our disposal” and, because of this shortfall in our interpretive aptitudes, we are unable to objectively see the life of the subject under study.⁵⁰

Accordingly, researchers should distance themselves both emotionally and morally from the plight of their subject and focus solely on recounting the events of that life, not of intervening as a defender or savior of the subject’s reputation. The purpose of biography is, thus, exposition, not judgment. This distance is clearly the opposite of the connectivity that Oates repeatedly stresses in his works. In his view, “[t]he prose of the biographer must radiate a sense of intimacy and familiarity, quite as though the author himself has lived the life and walked the ground.”⁵¹ In consideration of these differing viewpoints, narrative biographers must create a sensible balance between empathy and apathy in relation to their research subject. In order to accomplish this task, Kridel makes the point that although biographers may be tempted by the literary intrigue of a life story, they should remember to approach their subjects *as research*.

In this vein, psychologist Simon Baron-Cohen’s work with cognitive and affective empathy provides valuable insight. In his research, Baron-Cohen focuses on the neuroscience behind empathy. In the book, *Understanding Other Minds: Perspectives from Social Cognitive Neuroscience*, he and his colleagues explain that the neurological mechanisms that allow people to experience imaginative empathy actually function in two different realms: cognitive empathy and affective empathy.⁵² Whereas affective empathy involves sympathy and the expression of the appropriate emotional response to the situation or plight of another person, cognitive empathy

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Stephen B. Oates, “Biography as High Adventure,” in *Biography as High Adventure*, ed. Stephen B. Oates (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1986), 129; also cited in Kridel, “Biographical Meanderings,” 7.

⁵² Simon Baron-Cohen, Helen Tager-Flusberg, and Micheal V. Lombardo, eds., *Understanding Other Minds: Perspectives from Social Cognitive Neuroscience* (Oxford, UK: University of Oxford Press, 2013), vi-vii.

entails recognizing the psychological experience as another person perceives it without necessarily invoking an emotional response. As these researchers explain, neurologically, “the two components of empathy are both independent and yet interact.”⁵³

In a recent TedTalk provided by “Tedx Houses of Parliament” in London, UK, Baron-Cohen presented further research regarding the interrelated nature of cognitive and affective empathy and a human being’s inability to separate these two neurological aptitudes. In this talk, Baron-Cohen explained that, in normally-developed, fully-functioning human brains, the neurological structure of the brain system, and what he identified as “mirror neurons of imagination,” necessitate that our instinctual faculties connect us to both the psychological and emotional experience of others through our empathy whether we enter that connection with intention or not.⁵⁴ In this sense, by simply imagining the life, experience, or psychology of a research subject, a biographer is almost biologically mandated to engage his or her affective empathy with the subject of research, even if the biographer tries to remove personal emotion from the equation. As such, researchers may be physically incapable of rendering research that is entirely devoid of emotional connection to, or at least emotional understanding of, their research subject. Baron-Cohen’s research is relevant to the debate between researchers like Cook, Kridel, Oates, and Maurois because it provides neuroscientific support for the importance of finding a middle ground between cognitive and affective empathy and, relatedly, the two polarized sides of this debate.

The differences over the constitution of biography as a research area and the methodological procedures of proper biography occupy a great expanse of the literature on biography writ-

⁵³ Ibid., vi.

⁵⁴ Simon Baron-Cohen, “The Erosion of Empathy,” *TedxHousesofParliament* (London, UK, September 12, 2012), available: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXcU8x_xK18

ing. Relatedly, several other leading scholars also contribute to this contemporary debate of biography's value and role in educational research. First, Corine E. Glesne connects biography to the methodologies employed by ethnographers. As she explains, "[b]iographers and ethnographers make decisions about breadth and depth – the numerical questions of how many, how long, how many times."⁵⁵ Glesne also recognizes that the paradigmatic line between ethnography and biography is often imprecise. Although ethnographers and biographers differ in several crucial respects, such as confidentiality of subject, type of data collected, purpose of research conclusions, and breadth of subject studied, they are still alike in many significant approaches to their research. In fact, ethnographers and biographers are fundamentally similar because they both target people as their subjects. As Glesne explains, both ethnographers and biographers must "systematically manage their data,...select which pieces, which chunks to use and which to file as rich refusals for future consultation, [and]...interpret, make sense of, give form to data."⁵⁶ Moreover, although formally an ethnographer, Glesne admits that she has adopted an "increasingly biographical orientation" as she realized the relevance of these methods to her work.⁵⁷ Glesne's contributions to the description of ethnography as biographic in nature helps to expand the modern understanding of biography's role in educational research. And, as she explains from personal experience,

As an ethnographer, my perspective is enriched when I use a biographic eye. I am persuaded of the importance of researching deeply into the lives of a few. Rather than a yearbook of snapshots, I would like a few fine portraits situated in socio-cultural landscapes. The biographic perspective reassures my movement with other ethnographers towards intimate, long-term research relationships...⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Corine E. Glesne, "Ethnography with a Biographic Eye," in *Writing Educational Biography*, ed. Craig Kridel (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc, 2008), 33.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 36.

In this way, biography has extensive research potential. Its use in combination with other fields of educational research provide enlightening opportunities for authentic studies.

Second, Janet Miller also contributes to the description and identity of biography as a field of research. Similar to the theoretical insights provided by Pinar and Pautz, Miller writes extensively about the significance of voice in biographical research. In her chapter, “Biography, Education and Questions of the Private Voice,” she builds upon the conception of biography as “delicate” that Stephen Oates offered in his work, *Biography as History*.⁵⁹ In her view, because of biography’s “delicate” nature, it has been both applauded and criticized in educational research and it now finds itself in a precarious place as both useful and vague in terms of relevance, purpose, and method. To overcome these issues, Miller offers that biographers must persevere through the difficulties of biographical research and “confront often contradictory, fragmented and incomplete interpretations that point to what is unknowable about and within any individual.”⁶⁰ Moreover, she both acknowledges and cautions that “a self can be only partially and incompletely represented and never fully known.”⁶¹ Her point is that, in their efforts to present the life story of a research subject that they uncover through sources, records, and materials, biographers must accept the natural limitations of private voice and the inherent multivalence of essential self that is nearly impossible to communicate to others. Resultantly, biographers should recognize that the complicated nature of self precludes the existence of only one singular interpretation of an individual. This view of both essential self and voice admits to the complexity of

⁵⁹ Janet L. Miller, “Biography, Education and Questions of the Private Voice,” in *Writing Educational Biography*, ed. Craig Kridel (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc, 2008), 225.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 233.

real lives lived, which further serves to characterize biography as a complicated research methodology that combines historical, psychological, and narrative research methods.

These descriptions of biography all provide a vivid picture of the nature of biography as a research methodology and the purpose for which biographical research should be conducted. As Miller points out,

At a time when so much teacher education and educational research focuses on standards and on teaching as a set of delivery systems, biography as an educational practice generates material and processes that we educators can use to dislodge unitary notions both of our selves and our voices and of prescriptive systems of teaching and learning.⁶²

Again, this view informs budding biographers about the importance of plurality both in biography and postmodern society and strengthens the claim that biography can be the essential method for overcoming this disjointed nature of the world.

This biography of Fred Morrow Fling employs the methods of educational biography described by these myriad researchers and specialists. Moreover, as Miller mentions, this biography helps to “dislodge” the unspoken bias in the field of history education that there is only one accurate picture of the past. Instead, as the philosophy of Fred Morrow Fling described herein explains, “history” is itself interpretable and the study of history can enable students to be their own critical analysts of the past, which, in turn, can provide students a more enriching educational experience than a prescriptive “delivery system” style of teaching. As Fling stated repeatedly, even though many are colloquially taught that it does, “history does not repeat itself and no two things are alike.”⁶³ Thus, through Fling’s story, educators receive a fuller picture of

⁶² Ibid., 234.

⁶³ Fred Morrow Fling, “World-History and Historical Consciousness,” Introduction to A History of Civilization, Manuscript, n.d., Fred Morrow Fling Collection, Box 10, Folder 8, Archives and Special Collections, Uni-

both the history of social studies educational developments and pedagogy and an insightful portrait of successful teaching methods for the field of history education.

Limitations and Methods of Biographical Research

The task set before a proper biographer is both enormous and difficult. Like the field of historical research in general, biographical research faces many potential difficulties regarding objectivity, sources, and evidence. These pitfalls are outlined by Peter Novick in his seminal work, *That Noble Dream*, which chronicles the development of the field of history while focusing on specific revolutionary time periods for the field. As he explains, although historians strive for objectivity in their work – a pursuit followed by historians from the dawn of the discipline – objectivity may be a “cruelly” elusive dream that continually escapes a researcher’s grasp.⁶⁴ Therefore, biographical research as historical research must concern itself with perspective and interpretation. No one can possibly capture the full life lived by another with complete disassociated objectivity, as the research by Baron-Cohen makes clear. In fact, even an attempt to see the world through another’s eyes assumes that lives are interchangeable and that an outsider could capture the unique lived reality of another person. However, as Oates explains, “biography must honor fact. Yet, it must also honor character and personality.”⁶⁵ Thus, more accurately than seeing the world through another person’s perspective, the task of a biographer is to uncover the life lived by the research subject as he lived it. Again, according to Oates, “[biography] puts arms and legs on a name; it thrusts a face and a personality into the vortex of events;

versity of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE, (hereafter cited as Fling, “World-History and Historical Consciousness”), 8; and Marie Hermanek Cripe, Lecture Notes, October 6, 1926 - May 18, 1927, Fred Morrow Fling Collection, Box 14, Folder 5, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE (hereafter cited as Cripe, Lecture Notes).

⁶⁴ Peter Novick, *That Noble Noble Dream* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 132.

⁶⁵ Oates, *Biography as History*, 7.

it transforms history from a world of lifeless data and impersonal force into a landscape filled with living people.”⁶⁶ Therefore, biography has a clear responsibility to persevere through the hardships of seeking objectivity and must ensure neutrality and understanding towards the research subject by recognizing both the historical elements as well as the unique realities of any research project.

Although narrative biography has substantial potential in research, it also has several other shortcomings that researchers should reasonably address. Just like historical research, perhaps the biggest difficulty faced by biographers is the interpretation of past sources. Historical sources are inherently difficult for researchers to access, both physically and psychologically. As Cook explains, “the fight over access to documents is just the beginning.”⁶⁷ Apart from finding relevant sources, or a sufficient quantity of sources to form a full biography, researchers must also acknowledge that historical sources were created in a different time period from the present time. Because of this intrinsic historical factor, interpreting the intention and meaning behind an author’s words is sometimes difficult. In fact, as Novick claims, a researcher’s ability to be objective in reading historical sources does not exist.⁶⁸ Instead, unintentional biases, ulterior motivations, or inextricable presentism may naturally infuse themselves into historical studies. And so, although researchers of the past may strive for conclusions that do not possess their own judgments and interpretive biases, they are unfortunately – and irreparably – bound by the perspective of the age in which they live.

A related difficulty in biographical research is the role of personal archives in the finding of sources. In historical research, sources from archives generally form the basis for data collec-

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Cook, “The Issue of Subject,” 85.

⁶⁸ See Novick, *That Noble Noble Dream*.

tion. And, although some may agree with Leon Edel who lamented, “I do not disparage archives. I simply groan when I see them,” no historian will doubt the necessity of archival research.⁶⁹ But, Edel may bemoan archives because he recognizes a very real conundrum in them: “[w]ho is to say what should be kept and what shouldn’t?”⁷⁰ His point is clear: archival research operates on the assumption that valuable and sufficient resources exist from which to create a historical narrative. However, facing this assumption *as* an assumption makes it even more obvious that historical research is complicated and perhaps self-defeating. Not only are archives selective receptacles of source information, but also they are contemporaneously maintained by archivists who bring their own interpretive organization to the collections. So, archives may ephemerally appear as warehouses of historic information, but they are in fact only another type of snapshot of the past, complete with their own methods for selecting, retrieving, and sustaining historical data.

Moreover, historical researchers have *de facto* access only to public documents and domains of information. As Philo Hutcheson explains, there is an added complication when a researcher seeks to investigate information found within private collections and archives.⁷¹ Namely, who holds the rights to such archives? If personal archives are held at public institutions and open to public access, then this question seems somewhat banal. However, when investigating the personal lived experience of past individuals, there may exist a level of “privacy” that bars a well-intentioned researcher from accessing private documents. Issues of copyright and other legal reproduction regulations confound the work of many researchers. So, as Hutcheson con-

⁶⁹ Edel, “The Figure,” 23.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Philo Hutcheson, “Fair Use Issues in Archival and Biographical Research,” in *Writing Educational Biography*, ed. Craig Kridel (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998), 139 – 145; also acknowledged by Susan Grigg, “Archival Practice and the Foundations of Historical Method,” *The Journal of American History* 78 (1991): 228-239.

cludes, “[w]e must attend to the consequences of copyright and fair use, privacy, and literary property rights issues while respecting the rights and wishes of those who produced the works we wish to reproduce and while honoring the rights and wishes of those in the role of guardian.”⁷² Because biographers seek to unearth private documents and archives not regularly publicized for general consumption, these issues of archival access and rights to privacy may complicate the work of a narrative biographer in a way not regularly faced by historians.

For this research project regarding Fling, two valuable archives exist to aid in the investigation. The first archive is maintained at Bowdoin College Library in Brunswick, Maine, where Fling studied for his bachelor’s degree in history. This archive houses several public documents, such as newspaper clippings and a wedding announcement, as well as private correspondences and materials, such as letters and transcripts from Fling’s time at Bowdoin. This archive also holds an “Alumni Record” completed by Fling’s widow, Helene Dresser Fling, after his death to update the university on several key elements of Fling’s career and life, such as permanent address, research interests, tenure, and cause of death. This archive proved invaluable to uncovering many otherwise unrecorded details of Fling’s life.

The second archive of both private and public documents, notes, and records from Fling’s life exists in fourteen archive boxes at the University of Nebraska’s Library in Lincoln, Nebraska. This massive archive collection, along with other general collections from the university that coincided with Fling’s tenure at the institution that totaled thirty-three archive boxes, account for the majority of the research material used in this project. This archive was compiled in cooperation between the university and Fling’s widow after Fling’s death. The archive houses documents both from Fling’s tenure at Nebraska and his home collection of research materials and

⁷² Ibid., 145.

notes that were donated by Helene. In the first place, the archive includes lecture notes from students, lecture preparatory notes from Fling, research notes and drafts, private and public correspondences between Fling both within and outside of the university, and private and public documents regarding Fling's notoriety during the war years and the events that occurred on campus at that time. Regarding private home documents, the archive includes photographs, letters, manuscripts, and other miscellaneous notes that Fling produced at home in his private life. This archive has been of paramount importance to recreating the story of Fling's life through both his public and private voice.

Both of these archives have provided unlimited access to these materials to the researcher. Although Bowdoin's archive is digitized and available electronically, the University of Nebraska's archive is comprised mostly of the physical source material in its original form with only a few digitized items. Thus, accessing the complete archive did require travel expenses and a large commitment of time spent in Lincoln, Nebraska. However, the plethora of information uncovered through these collected materials proved the value of overcoming these research hurdles. Thus, through the methods of archival research and physically inspecting and analyzing both digitized and original source material, this research both confronted and addressed source material limitations to produce the biography of Fling.

The third difficulty of biographical research is a biographer's ability to connect with the lived experience of the subject under study. Similar to issues of insider-outsider perspective in ethnography, failure to connect with the subject or the subject's time period may prevent a biographer from really seeing the life of the subject under investigation. This difficulty is emphasized by Cook in her discussion of connection between researcher and subject. As Cook explains, choosing a research subject may in fact be a matter of autobiography: knowingly or not,

researchers gravitate towards biographical research subjects with which they feel some sense of kinship. This understanding and connection between researcher and subject may be the crucial link that provides biographers with greater insight into the subject's life. As Cook describes in her own research, "[m]y identification with the views and style of [my subject] became key to my ongoing work. Personal involvement is central for me."⁷³ Her point is that the most passionate biographies are the product of committed and connected biographers who understand and embody the beliefs and attitudes of their subjects. Thus, she advises that young biographers choose research subjects with which they connect on a personal level and attend to the empathy and bond they feel with their subject, whether social, political, or intellectual. In this way, the biographer can uncover the "essence of the subject's life as deeply as possible."⁷⁴

However, many researchers also warn budding biographers not to become too close to their subjects. Although many biographers do agree that "[w]riting biography is an intensely personal experience," they also caution that distance between researcher and subject is necessary to ensure historical and factual accuracy.⁷⁵ Alternatively, and perhaps unknowingly, biographers may commit the fallacy of "re-story" by infusing their own viewpoints and opinions into someone else's tale if they choose a subject with which they feel a strong personal connection.⁷⁶ Indeed, maintaining a removed and objective perspective when studying any research subject is difficult. After all, Pinar and Pautz claim that "[o]ne can often hear the autobiographical voice in biographical narratives."⁷⁷ This voice may radiate through selection, interpretation, perspective,

⁷³ Cook, "The Issue of Subject," 81

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁷⁵ Lynda A. Smith, "The Biographer's Relationship with Her Subject," in *Writing Educational Biographer*, ed. Craig Kridel (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998), 199.

⁷⁶ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (Washington, D.C.: Sage Publishing, 2013), 56.

⁷⁷ Pinar and Pautz, "Construction Scars," 69.

or even “an intuitive process which draws as much from the writer as the subject.”⁷⁸ However, for a narrative biographer, this job may be even more difficult: by trying to “bring back to life” the story of an individual, a biographer’s responsibility to uphold the integrity of that life is oftentimes stricter than researchers seeking to encounter generalizable theories.⁷⁹ Narrative biographers are not trying to generalize their findings; they are specifically trying to prove that the lived individuality of the subject they are studying is worth researching. Because of this specificity, the pressure to overemphasize the life of the research subject may subtly influence researchers to exaggerate their findings or conclusions. To avoid this trap, researchers must both choose a research subject with which they feel a connection, but also maintain an objective and critical eye towards the evidence they encounter in order to depict only the subject’s story with integrity and fidelity to fact.

Although the differences between researcher and subject in this biography of Fling are obvious, the perseverance, determination, and intensity with which Fling approached both history and education do strike familiar chords with the researcher. Moreover, although the Progressive Era and the present are separated by a century in time, the parallels between the revolutionary social, ideological, and philosophical changes that occurred then and the constant upheavals of modern times are distinct. Thus, in this biographical portrait of Fling, both Cook’s and other researchers’ suggestions are taken into consideration.

The distance between researcher and subject is especially important when the biographer seeks to uncover the psychology or philosophy of the subject under study. One’s educational outlook guides the way he or she approaches best practices, pedagogy, and research. Education-

⁷⁸ Ibid., 69-70.

⁷⁹ Oates, *Biography as History*, 15.

al philosophy helps us ask questions such as: why do we teach what we teach? Why do we do what we do? How should education be constructed and conveyed to generations of students? These questions have plagued educators and researchers since the beginning of education in the world, but were never more present than during the Progressive Era when Fred Morrow Fling lived, wrote, researched, and taught.

Unearthing a subject's mindset and philosophy is perhaps the most challenging part of writing a biography. For research subjects who published their own writings, researchers can unearth the philosophical thoughts of their subjects that are infused within these works. As an educational leader, Fling was a prolific writer. In this way, his books, articles, manuscripts, and notes serve as manuals that elucidate the specific tenets of his educational outlook. However, just like with any historical research that is based on source material, there are many considerable limitations, such as interpretive difficulties, perspective bias, and lack of firsthand contextual understanding of the shared mindsets of the time period. As researcher Lynda A. Smith warns, "[o]verfascination is far from the only problem that can surface in a personal association with one's subject."⁸⁰ Instead, navigating the fine line between empathetic view of subject and objective methodology of biographer can be a complicated task when the researcher seeks to uncover the inner mindset of a subject's way of thinking. Smith provides advice on this task by reminding researchers that they can achieve accuracy in biography only "by tempering love with logic, by mitigating fascination with reason, and by balancing subjectivity with objectivity."⁸¹ So, even while studying the mindset and life of an individual, biographers are responsible for clearly grounding their conclusions in fact.

⁸⁰ Smith, "The Biographer's Relationship," 197.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 200.

These challenges presented by narrative biography should not be restrictions that keep researchers from undertaking these projects. Instead, they should be viewed as possible limitations that merit recognition from the researcher. In this way, the researcher can constantly guard against these tendencies. As Kridel reminds his readers, though narrative biography is a complicated craft, its findings are of paramount importance in order to connect the disparate fields of education through the “universality” of human experience.⁸²

Thus, even in the face of these differences in theory and difficulties in method, biography has become and should continue to be a prominent field within educational research. Moreover, the work of Craig Kridel, with the foundation of the works of Stephen Oates and other leading biographical researchers, has attained a position of dominance. The works of Kridel and these other scholars greatly inform the methods and structure of this research study. The life of Fred Morrow Fling is filled with the richness of a story that is both uplifted and challenged by the plot events of the world that surrounded it. Hidden within this life story is a magnificent educational philosophy that can inform the history classroom of today. As Cook and Miller would say, Fling’s voice is aching to be heard. Fling’s educational philosophy is both a product and a driving force of the Progressive Era. Although he was not alone in his emphasis on source method in the history classroom, nor in his faith that students really could be the agents of their own education, he was unique in his implementation of these philosophical ideas in the classroom.

Guiding Research Questions

This research project investigates the life and works of Fred Morrow Fling. As a pioneer in historical research, history education, and educational philosophy, researchers can learn a lot

⁸² Kridel, *Writing Educational Biography*, 10-11.

from this detailed investigation. A prolific writer, a committed professor, and a thorough researcher, Fling is an admirable and accomplished figure. Thus, the significance of this biographical study on Fred Morrow Fling is manifold. Fling's life provides valuable advice to educational reformers today who have to also overcome critics and resistance. Moreover, his educational philosophy, although developed over one hundred years ago, provides insight into techniques, pedagogies, and strategies that educators can apply to the history classroom. This study will help inform and guide current educational practices in the field by providing another rich educational philosophy for history and by showing a specific way in which that philosophy can appear in action in the history classroom. Fling's contributions have been regularly unnoticed by researchers, just as they were by his contemporaries. To correct this oversight, this research study will follow these guiding research questions:

1. How did Fred Morrow Fling's conception of historical methods influence his practice as a history professor and researcher?
2. How did Fred Morrow Fling's philosophies of history and history education form and develop over his lifetime?
3. How might Fred Morrow Fling's philosophies of history and history education inform our current history education practices today?

The investigation of these questions will require and foster the pursuit of additional research sub-questions. As these caveats develop, this research will evolve and investigate these areas of inquiry as well. These research questions form the foundation of this study because the author places direct emphasis on Fling's educational philosophy throughout the analysis of his life. Fling's biography is enlightening and informative and his educational philosophy, though overlooked in his time, is extremely relevant to educational progress today.

2 FLING'S EARLY YEARS, EDUCATION, AND CAREER

Introduction

Fred Morrow Fling lived from 1860 to 1934. In this span of time, Fling was a lecturer, researcher, writer, activist, war historian, and teacher consultant known both nationally and internationally. During his life, he travelled abroad for both school, research, and work, published his works on method and the French Revolution, and defended his conceptions of history, historical method, and history education. When Fling died in 1934, his legacy as a reformer, history educator, and educational leader mostly died with him.

This seventy-four year life spanned arguably the most tumultuous time in both American and educational history. Born during the Civil War, Fling would live to see two more wars, the rise of big business in America, the development of Progressive Era reform and rebirth of society, the stock market crash, and massive American educational change and progress. Simply living through these decades is difficult to imagine. However, Fling both lived and thrived in this context by publishing seven books, five major articles, and twenty-eight reviews, offering teacher aid through creation of and consultation in a teachers' association, and lecturing both in his professorship and as a guest in lecture series events in Nebraska and throughout the country. In each of these endeavors, the influence of Fling's historical and philosophical context upon his thoughts and efforts is immense. Working within an era for formative development in education and the field of history itself, Fling established his own ideas and practices for history instruction. Unfortunately for Fling, the establishment of his own ideas was not as well-known or endearing as the work of his professional contemporaries. Oftentimes, his ideological battles with these counterparts alienated Fling from his colleagues, a side effect that would prove to have a lasting impact on his legacy in the field of education.

The Beginning of a Life-long Search

Fred Morrow Fling was born in Portland, Maine on November 4th, 1860.⁸³ Little information is known about his early life and schooling; however, his collegiate career began in 1879 when he enrolled in Bowdoin College in the nearby coastal city of Brunswick. Fling was an excellent student, receiving high marks in all of his classes, which focused primarily on a general combination of humanities classes, with an emphasis on history.⁸⁴ He earned his bachelor's degree in history in 1883 and spent the next five years trying to save money to pursue further studies. During this time, he taught various subjects, including mathematics, history, and Greek, at the local Biddeford High School. This position gave him a first chance to define himself as a teacher. As Fling would later mention to a student at Nebraska during the middle of his career, his pedagogical techniques at Biddeford were based on the traditional style of lecture, recitation, memorization, and recall that were common of history teachers in the 1880s.⁸⁵ In fact, by his own account, he taught "quite effectively," even though he often believed that these methods paled in comparison to the hands-on and practical way he taught mathematics.⁸⁶ During the summers, he also worked part time as an editor for a daily newspaper in Old Orchard Beach, Maine.⁸⁷ These early experiences are partly responsible for pushing Fling in the direction of historical research and precise writing.

At the time that Fling began this career in secondary education, great changes in curriculum and pedagogy in history education were already long underway. According to Ronald Ev-

⁸³ Robert Carlson, "Professor Fred Fling: His Career and Conflicts at Nebraska University." *Nebraska History* 62 (1981): 482.

⁸⁴ Transcript: Fred Morrow Fling, 1879-1883, Fred Morrow Fling Papers, Bowdoin University Library, Brunswick, ME.

⁸⁵ Cripe, Lecture Notes.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Lincoln Star Staff, "Dr. Fred Fling, Noted Historian of Nebraska University, is Dead," *Lincoln Star*, 3

ans, “[f]rom the 18th century to the 1890s, history in schools typically meant studying the myths and legends of ancient Greece and Rome, heroes of the American Revolution, the discovery of the New World, and ‘other stories designed to inspire patriotism and moral certitude.’”⁸⁸ Many other researchers, including Kevin Vinson and E. Wayne Ross, agree that the history curriculum followed the expectations of the dominant socio-cultural white majority and, as such, focused primarily on military and political history.⁸⁹ Patricia Graham also acknowledges these curricular trends through the experience of her father, an immigrant in American public education during the Progressive Era. As his story shows, the “assimilationist” goals of early Progressive Era education dictated that events and “heroes” of prominent White cultural history dominated public curricula.⁹⁰

However, beginning in the 1880s, the desire for a different approach to historical learning surfaced. The acceptance of Enlightenment ideas in American philosophical thought in the late nineteenth century created a need for the reform of history curriculum and instruction to embrace a more inclusive, democratic, and responsive view of society’s changing cultural composition. Other general emphases of this Enlightenment and the Progressive Era that followed it included responses to massive immigration, commitments to intellectualism, developments of modernization, and desires to create an enlightened, patriotic American citizen.⁹¹ Oftentimes, these accents found their way into curriculum and teaching in public education. These pressures also influenced the work of education innovators and leaders working in this context to create democratic

⁸⁸ Ronald W. Evans, *Social Studies Wars: What Should we Teach the Children?* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2004), 5.

⁸⁹ Kevin D. Vinson and E. Wayne Ross, “In Search of the Social Studies Curriculum: Standardization, Diversity, and a Conflict of Appearances,” in William B. Stanley, ed. *Critical Issues in Social Studies Research for the 21st Century* (Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing, 2001), 42.

⁹⁰ Patricia Graham, *Schooling America: How the Public Schools Meet the Nationals Changing Needs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 28.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

and “progressive” education reforms.⁹² As Fling was one such beginning professional, it is no surprise that he also felt the need to discover better, more authentic teaching methods than these traditionalist attitudes provided, especially after his firsthand experience with teaching at Biddeford High School. So, in 1888 at the age of twenty-eight, he enrolled in the University of Leipzig in Germany, in pursuit of a better approach to history.

In this time period, many in academia began looking towards the models afforded by German laboratory schools for the intellectual development of a “scientific” history. Under this model, historians began to establish history as a professional field of scientific pursuit alongside the more respected disciplines of the natural sciences to which those in search of objectivity often looked instead. As a student of these new methods, Fling quickly involved himself in the concurrent debate regarding the nature and proper method of historical inquiry, even during these early years of his own understanding of this new approach to historical study. Although this debate does not have a specific philosophical name, modern historians such as Peter Novick identify it as the “search for objectivity.”⁹³ At its root, this debate encompassed the justification of historical inquiry in a controlled and objective manner, a pursuit that many adherents to the “age of science” felt was inherently deficient.⁹⁴ Because theoreticians were entranced by the seemingly concrete conclusions created by scientific experiments, fields of the “softer sciences” were often ridiculed as lacking, subjective, or inferior. However, defenders of historical inquiry responded to these criticisms by arguing for the objectivity of history and creating justifications for

⁹² Such as William T. Harris, Francis W. Parker, Charles W. Elliot, and later John Dewey and Ella Flagg Young as explained by Wayne J. Urban and Jennings L. Wagoner, Jr., *American Education: A History* (New York: Routledge, 2009); and female education leaders such as Mary Sheldon Barnes, Lucy Maynard Salmon, and Lucy Sprague Mitchell as explained by various researchers in Margaret Smith Crocco and O. L. Davis, Jr., ed. *Bending the Future to their Will*, (New York, NY: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999).

⁹³ Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 21-46.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 169.

the “scientific” nature of historical methods. In this context, Fling equally felt it was necessary to defend the methods of historians. So, he quickly joined in the debate as another proponent of “scientific” history, a point that is recognized in Novick’s survey of this time period.⁹⁵

In Fling’s view, historical methodology is purely scientific but it does not create “truth” in the same sense of the word as scientific truth, which generally garnered the gold seal of “objectivity” in the professional disciplines during the Progressive Era. To Fling, “absolute historical truth is beyond our reach.”⁹⁶ This contention is based on the acknowledgement that assumption plays a critical role in the work of a proper historian in a way that it may confound the work of a scientist. In other words, Fling confronts the role of “assumptions,” which would translate into the modern “judgment,” in the work of history to distinguish it from natural sciences and to claim that the *type* of objectivity that history preserves is also different from that of the natural sciences.⁹⁷ Fling is really arguing that the knowledge gained by historical study has a different epistemic character than that derived from experimental methods. To Fling, the method employed by any investigator, be it a historian, scientist, or sociologist, determines the nature of the conclusions drawn in the various disciplines. This methodological difference, however, does not undermine the particular and unique objectivity of any discipline, history included. Thus, Fling still maintained that

The refusal to concede to history a place among the sciences may have had some weight a hundred years ago, but it has none to-day. “Knowledge is science in the degree in which it can be subjected to method and law and so rendered comprehensible and certain. Under this test history must surely be assigned the rank of a science, though confessedly inexact and as yet but partially wrought out.” But what science is absolutely exact or completely wrought out? All are in a state of flux, and are more or less inexact and incomplete. History is one of the late com-

⁹⁵ Ibid., 38.

⁹⁶ Fling and Caldwell, *Studies*, 13.

⁹⁷ Fred Morrow Fling, “Historical Synthesis.” *The American Historical Review* 9 (1903): 11-12.

ers. Its greater incompleteness and inexactness as a science is due to its complexity...⁹⁸

By this conception, Fling differs from his European progenitors of objectivity, such as Leopold von Ranke, who defended the objectivity of history as identical to that of science.⁹⁹ As Novick explains, the German philosophers of the late nineteenth century had a significant impact on American schools of thought, especially in the debate of “scienticity” that consumed the attention of many Progressive Era thinkers.¹⁰⁰ Oliver Pollak reinforces this point by explaining that “[t]he study of history entered a professional and scientific period in Germany...in 1859.”¹⁰¹ These developments only strengthened during the time frame of Fling’s doctoral work at the University of Leipzig in the 1880s and 90s. In the United States, this debate then also became a focal point of progressivism in the field of history. Promoters of these pursuits often found themselves defending their methods against the attacks from researchers outside their field who claimed their work was somehow less worthy than the work of scientists and other truly “objective” researchers. But, as Pollak expresses, “[s]cience and facts gave this generation of historians a sense of certitude.”¹⁰² Thus, like many of his contemporaries within this context, Fling also spent considerable energy defending his historical method as a scientific pursuit.

Unlike scientists, historians cannot directly observe natural phenomena that can be replicated, manipulated, and recorded, nor can they remove themselves as a primary part of the historical study as scientists can in their experiments. Instead, historians must observe the record of an event, not the event itself, a practice that Fling called an “indirect observation” to stress its

⁹⁸ Fling and Caldwell, *Studies*, 12, original quote uncredited.

⁹⁹ Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 21-46.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Oliver B. Pollak, “Fred Morrow Fling, a One Hundred-Year Retrospective on Historical Methodology,” *Nebraska History* 80 (1999): 166.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

difference from natural science.¹⁰³ Moreover, historians must use their personal judgment to draw historical conclusions. Historical records contain their own faults of misrepresentation, incompleteness, or plain absence. As Fling explains, “[t]he historical fact is what actually did happen in all its fullness and truthfulness; the record of the fact is the belief of certain persons as to what happened.”¹⁰⁴ Moreover, he stresses, “[i]t is self-evident that the fact and the record of the fact may be quite different things.”¹⁰⁵ As Fling warns,

This is the material with which the historian works. He observes it directly, it is true, but what he observes is not the event, not the object, but the record of an observation made upon that object. And what an observation it often is! Made, perhaps, by an incompetent person, who, at the time, had no intention of recording it, it is onesided and incomplete, and written down so long after the event that what little value it originally had has been materially impaired.¹⁰⁶

Thus, the historian must play a crucial role in determining the truth of any record and is therefore personally involved in his research pursuits, unlike the scientist who enjoys a degree of separation from the concrete and controlled elements of his experiments.

This difference between historians and scientists partially accounts for the resultant disparity in the type of knowledge gained from the two disciplines: whereas scientific experiments produce disassociated, constructed elements of scientific theory, historical investigations produce complex, narrative reconstructions of historical fact. To Fling the objectivity in either area, however, is never in question. By adhering to a method, both historians and scientists produce their own relative types of objective conclusions. In fact, to Fling, the task facing a historian is in many ways more complicated and risky than that presented to a scientist. Regarding the

¹⁰³ Fling, *Outline of Historical Method* (Lincoln, NE: J. H. Miller, 1899), 10.

¹⁰⁴ Fling and Caldwell, *Studies*, 13.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Fling, *Outline*, 9. Note: original spellings and diction have been retained, even when they do not conform to modern conventions and with acknowledgement that spelling, grammar, or syntax errors may appear in direct original quotations without specific notation in text.

sources, historians are presented with difficulties that threaten to undermine the objectivity of their project, such as interpretive difficulties, presentism, and bias, whereas scientists are able to control these subjective elements in their experiments to help ensure success. In other words, from solely the remnants of the past, historians must piece together a seemingly disjointed and incomplete puzzle of events, opinions, and renditions in order to create a coherent, defensible narrative, which is a much more difficult task than conducting a pre-arranged and controlled experiment. In Fling's words, "[w]hat actually happened is called objective history; what is believed to have happened is called subjective history. The aim of the scientific historian is to make the last approximate as closely as possible to the first."¹⁰⁷ He recognizes, then, that the material with which historians work differs in both nature and quality to that of the scientist. However, he never wavers from the belief that the method itself is scientific and that the subsequent conclusions are objective.

Fling undertook his studies in Germany at an opportune philosophical time considering that this intellectual debate raged throughout Europe and America at the same time that Fling was trying to envision the proper scientific quality of historical research. The "laboratory work" that appeared throughout German colleges and universities in the later nineteenth century had a large impact on the adoption of these scientific methods in historical research. In fact, having realized the ineffectiveness of high school history teaching during his time at Biddeford High School, Fling went to Europe specifically looking for this type of alternative.¹⁰⁸ Since his arrival

¹⁰⁷ Fling and Caldwell, *Studies*, 14.

¹⁰⁸ Stated in Cripe, Lecture Notes.

coincided with the “height of the German laboratory method” for historical study, Fling quickly became an eager student of this new approach.¹⁰⁹

This method was propagated by various theoreticians but perhaps the most well-known to and praised by Fling was Ernst Bernheim. Fling credits Bernheim with the creation of scientific theories on history throughout his works and even dedicates his last work, *The Writing of History*, to him as the “Dean of living writers on historical method.”¹¹⁰ In fact, researcher Thomas Cherry claims that “[r]eading Ernst Bernheim’s handbook on historical methodology, *Lehrbuch der historischen Methode*, published in 1889, sealed [Fling’s] commitment” to source method for history.¹¹¹ In Fling’s own words,

There was need of a work that should gather up these partial results [of treatises on method], combine them, and attempt to present them in a systematic and detailed manner. Such a work was published by Bernheim in 1889. The title is "Lehrbuch der historischen Methode." It contains six hundred pages and describes in detail all the steps in the construction of an historical narrative. The book marks an epoch. For the first time a real text-book on method had been produced.¹¹²

Invigorated with this new scientific alternative to the study of history, Fling embarked on his career of extending these German laboratory ideas to his own American classroom. Moreover, he also strove to write his own “text-book on method,” which he finished and published in 1899, just ten years after this milestone penned by Bernheim. Fling’s book, *Outline of Historical Method*, was the most concise description of his version of scientific history that Fling would ever complete.

¹⁰⁹ Cherry, “Online Cultural Heritage,” 55-56; this point is also reinforced by Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 20-21, which identifies the “height” of German scientific methods of history to be the 1860s.

¹¹⁰ Fred Morrow Fling, *The Writing of History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1920), dedication. First appearance of Bernheim’s contributions and Fling’s debt to them is in Fling and Caldwell, *Studies*, 11; more detailed reference appears in Fling, *Outline*, 17; and references to Bernheim are prevalent throughout many of his other published works as well as existent student notes from Fling Morrow Fling Collection, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

¹¹¹ Cherry, “Online Cultural Heritage,” 55.

¹¹² Fling, *Outline*, 17.

As much as Fling completed his studies abroad at an opportune philosophical time, he also did so at a favorable historic time under the famous German historian, Professor Wilhelm Maurenbrecher.¹¹³ With the upcoming celebration in France to commemorate the centennial of its 1790s Revolutionary Era, historians across Central Europe were finding new excitement in studies of French history. Fling found himself equally enthused by the French Revolution and learned of the revolutionary, Honoré Gabriel Riqueti, comte de Mirabeau, to whom he would devote both his doctoral and later historical research efforts. Fling sought to chronicle the life of Mirabeau from his youth until his death during the French Revolution. For the purposes of his dissertation, Fling focused on Mirabeau's contributions to and controversial role in the French Revolution itself. However, as a research endeavor, Fling's fascination with this unique individual never waned.¹¹⁴ As the research materials and drafts that Fling left behind upon his death regarding Mirabeau show, this huge biographical undertaking consumed the majority of Fling's research attention, especially in these early years of his career.¹¹⁵ Fling estimated that this project would comprise a three- or four-volume biography, which he sorted, outlined, and wrote in his research notes. Then, in 1908, he published the first portion of this biography as *Mirabeau and the French Revolution Volume I: The Youth of Mirabeau*. During his lifetime, although he labored at compiling and drafting work towards this project, Fling only managed to publish this one completed volume and left the subsequent three volumes written but unpublished.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Carlson, "Professor Fred Fling," 481; corroborated by Lincoln Star Staff. "Dr. Fred Fling, Noted Historian of Nebraska University, is Dead," *Lincoln Star*, 3.

¹¹⁴ Taylor, "A Life," 4.

¹¹⁵ Out of the 17 boxes that comprise the Fling Papers archive at the University of Nebraska, 9 boxes contain at least some research materials regarding Mirabeau. More significantly, Boxes 6-9 and two folders of Box 10 contain detailed written, but mostly unpublished, drafts of Mirabeau's biography.

¹¹⁶ Fred Morrow Fling, Mirabeau Manuscripts, Boxes 3-10, Fred Morrow Fling Collection, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE; also cited in Carlson, "Professor Fred Fling," 482 (hereafter cited as Fling, Mirabeau MSS).

In order to gather information for his research on Mirabeau, not only did Fling become the leading American scholar on French Revolutionary history, but he amassed a collection of books and source material that “was regarded by historians [as] the best private collection in the world.”¹¹⁷ In fact, Fling’s later student, Robert Carlson, had firsthand experience of Fling’s library when he was asked to reside in Fling’s home while Fling, his wife, and son travelled to Europe in 1933.¹¹⁸ As he remarked, it was breathtaking to see “the shelves of books that lined the four walls of a library the professor had built onto the back of his home,” many of which were “stacked two books deep.”¹¹⁹ To accumulate these materials, Fling committed to avid travels and spent time abroad in Austria, England, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Spain, and Switzerland in each available summer or sabbatical from the college.¹²⁰ Although these research travels generally occurred during summers and short times of leave from the University, at one point, Fling spent eighteen uninterrupted months abroad.

Fling’s studies at the University of Leipzig would not conclude until 1890 upon the completion of his Ph.D. in history with an emphasis on French history. However, in addition to this degree, Fling also gained what Carlson called “a perspective on history and an interest in other subjects to which he was to devote a lifetime of research and study.”¹²¹ Understandably, his time spent abroad also resulted in Fling developing his amateur understanding of German into a linguistic fluency. This language would not be the last he learned in his lifetime. He would also

¹¹⁷ Carlson, “Professor Fred Fling,” 484; also see Appendix B; also stated in Lincoln Star Staff, “Dr. Fred Fling,” 2.

¹¹⁸ See Appendix C.

¹¹⁹ Carlson, “Professor Fred Fling,” 481.

¹²⁰ Evidenced by requests for leaves of absence throughout various Board of Regents Reports, Board of Regents Collection, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE; also confirmed by Lincoln Star Staff, “Dr. Fred Fling,” 2.

¹²¹ Carlson, “Professor Fred Fling,” 482.

master French and Italian and gain a workable reading understanding of Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, Russian, and Norwegian.¹²²

During his doctoral work, Fling collaborated with other American students, James E. LeRossignol, William G. Langworthy Taylor, and Herbert J. Davenport, who had also chosen to study in Germany. In fact, two years before Fling's death, Taylor published a brief but detailed account of Fling's time at both the University of Leipzig and the University of Nebraska to reminisce and catalogue their lifelong friendship.¹²³ Observations from this article provide a firsthand account of the intensity with which Fling approached his studies in Germany and the passion that his doctoral work seemed to incite in him.¹²⁴ However, Carlson, Fling's former student, acknowledges that Taylor's article was published at the university while Fling was concurrently a professor at the institution and so Taylor may have refrained from tackling controversial issues or elements of Fling's past. Regardless, both Taylor's and Carlson's accounts of interactions with Fling speak to the fact that his studies in Germany were a starting point for the fervor he felt towards historical studies because they introduced him to scientific history under the German model. Moreover, both accounts acknowledge that Fling's friendships while abroad were comforting reminders of American cultural customs and kinship. In many ways, this "American Club" kept him focused and devoted to his work for the two short years it would take to complete his prestigious Ph.D.¹²⁵ In addition, two out of three of Fling's other American classmates in Germany would later become his colleagues at the University of Nebraska for at least part of their professional tenure in university teaching. Clearly, the bonds formed in Ger-

¹²² Ibid., 481; corroborated by Lincoln Star Staff. "Dr. Fred Fling," 2.

¹²³ Taylor, "A Life," 4-6

¹²⁴ Ibid., 4-5.

¹²⁵ Quote from Carlson, "Professor Fred Fling," 484, who dubs this group the "American Club" but evidence is also present regarding their camaraderie in Taylor, "A Life," 5; also see Appendix A.

many between these students provided the starting point for their lifelong professional relationships.

While Fling was studying abroad in Germany, significant historical and philosophical developments were taking place in America as well. Perhaps the most significant event for the field of history was the establishment of the American Historical Association, which occurred in 1884. As Novick explains, the creation of professional organizations like the AHA created cohesion amongst otherwise disjointed actors within the field of history. However, it also put a lot of pressure on historians as they transitioned from hobbyists to professionals. As Novick states, “[t]he professionalization of history meant a change in the status of the historian from privileged, avocational, or entrepreneurial independence to that of salaried employee of a bureaucratic organization.”¹²⁶ With this salary came the pressure to uphold objectivity and impartiality, but it also meant that “[h]istorical professionalization...provided the underpinning of authority which the norm of objectivity sought.”¹²⁷

As organized professionals, historians were now the authority on the past and, as such, found themselves under the scrutiny of judges from all disciplines, many of which adhered to classical scientific views on the nature of objectivity. The establishment of this professional pressure coincided with Fling’s consolidation of his beliefs regarding the importance of scientific precision within the field of history. Moreover, the atmosphere of this new professional expectation in the United States reinforced the dominance that the German laboratory methods held in the field and resulted in the desire for educational reform to propagate exactly these new ideas to the broader American educational system. The establishment of the AHA was one step in the

¹²⁶ Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 63.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

direction of this reform. The return of several American experts, like Fling, from studies abroad to this new world of the professional historian was another coinciding factor in the proliferation of “scientific” history in American schools.

To most Progressive Era and early “professional” historians, it was their training in scientific history that helped them overcome any possible susceptibility to the subjective in their work.¹²⁸ Although Novick ultimately claims that the professionalization of history did not ensure its objectivity, but simply its authority in historical study, he does explain that, “[a] related way in which professionalization served to consolidate the norm of objectivity was through its concentration on technique.”¹²⁹ Exactly as Fling was arguing, it was necessary to determine, understand, and adhere to a specific scientific *process* of historical inquiry. To Fling, it was this embedment of a historic *method* in the field and study of history that ensured its objective conclusions.

The importance of educational reform, and specifically history education reform, during this time period was due partly to the work of Fling’s contemporaries and partly to the work of educational leaders who had come before him. These predecessors were responsible for creating the intellectual backdrop in which Fling worked. Moreover, their influence upon the time period was consumed by generations of students who, although not naming the origin of their beliefs, adopted many of the educational reforms that they had posited. Perhaps the most important intellectual in this vein was Johann Pestalozzi whose works set the foundation for many educational practices throughout the nineteenth century. The Pestalozzian school of thought had an influence on many Progressive Era educators, including Mary Sheldon Barnes, whose textbooks for

¹²⁸ Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 47-60.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 52.

educational reform were based on Pestalozzian principles.¹³⁰ According to Frances Monteverde, Pestalozzi “stressed the cultivation of observation, reason, and precise speech,” which translated into a very pragmatic approach to education and individual learning.¹³¹ Moreover, according to James Chisholm, Pestalozzi “developed an educational philosophy and pedagogy placing children at the center of the learning process.”¹³² Although these ideas sound similar to those later developed by other pragmatists, such as Dewey, Pestalozzi was actually one of the pioneers in their development. Born in 1746 and dead in 1827, Pestalozzi preceded these other Progressive Era pragmatists by a century.¹³³ Moreover, his ideas created a foundation of intellectual thought that transformed the practices of normal schools that became popular at the time that Fling experienced his early education. Thus, although Fling never credits Pestalozzian principles as formative towards his own thinking, his upbringing in an era when Pestalozzi’s ideas were prevalent in schools in the northeast where Fling was raised likely resulted in his subliminal acceptance of these methods. So, taking from this foundation the necessity of process and the importance of precision, as well as student-centered learning, Fling built upon this invisible theoretical framework when describing his own methodological approach to history and history education.

During the 1870s and 80s, the subsequent work of Mary Sheldon Barnes, who was also influenced by Pestalozzian ideas and with whom Fling did have direct contact and influence, is also important to understanding Fling’s historical education reforms. Though a woman working in a field dominated by men, Barnes was an influential actor in the source method movement that occurred in history education during the early Progressive Era. Having enjoyed a progressive

¹³⁰ Frances E Monteverde, “Considering the Source: Mary Sheldon Barnes,” in Margaret Crocco and O. L. Davis, Jr., ed., *Bending the Future to their Will* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999).

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹³² Chisholm, “Unheralded Historian,” 45.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

education herself as the daughter of Edward A. Sheldon, a “pioneer in teacher education,” Barnes became a leading advocate of Pestalozzian ideas of education.¹³⁴ Barnes translated these ideas into textbooks that brought Enlightenment Era teaching techniques to life.¹³⁵ In her career, Barnes published three modern textbooks for history education: *Studies in General History* in 1884, *Studies in American History* in 1891, and *Studies in Historical Method* in 1896, just two years before her death. Although these textbooks did not garner wide national support nor implementation, their creation and embodiment of Progressive educational strategies and ideas evidence that curriculum designers in the late nineteenth century responded to the changing demands of their historical context. Importantly, also, Barnes was a strong advocate of the “source method” that was beginning to gain public attention in the early Progressive Era. To her, the source method was the historical correlative to Pestalozzi’s “object lessons” that he used in education.¹³⁶ Through sources, students could learn history directly from the records of the events as they existed, instead of solely through the narrative histories provided by teachers. Barnes applied this belief as the basis for the creation of the textbooks and sourcebooks she published.

Significantly, even without national recognition, these books still caught the attention of Fling, who also believed it was necessary to provide educators with appropriate resources for history education. Fling was responding to the work of educators like Barnes because he worried about the quality of the education that generic textbooks provided to students. In fact, in 1897 Fling stated, “[t]he narrative school history – Myers, Barnes, or Swinton – can never take the place of the book of sources, nor can the book of sources take the place of the narrative. *The pu-*

¹³⁴ Monteverde, “Considering,” 19.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Chisholm, “Unheralded Historian,” 46.

pils should use both. If they can have but one, it should be the book of sources."¹³⁷ Not surprisingly, Fling was more encouraged by the development of sourcebooks that could be used alongside textbooks to provide authentic materials to students. Along this line, Fling applauded Barnes for developing sourcebooks. In his first publication, he stated,

I wish to urge teachers of history to procure "Studies in Historical Methods" by Mary Sheldon Barnes. This book, issued by D. C. Heath & Co., 1896, is the most important contribution that has been made in recent years to method. It is full of suggestions that may be carried out in all our schools.¹³⁸

So, though still maintaining that dependence on textbooks was undesirable, he acknowledged that the work of innovators like Barnes in developing *sourcebooks* to supplement classroom study was helpful. For this reason, Fling published his own student source books, *A Sourcebook of Greek History* in 1907 and *Source Problems on the French Revolution* in 1913. Although the similarities between these works show the influence Barnes had on Fling, the fact that he created his own sourcebooks instead of adopting and applying Barnes' books to his own practice shows that he still sought to improve upon these educational reform beginnings. So, just like his desire to create his own textbook on method modeled after the seminal work of Ernst Bernheim, Fling also published his own classroom sourcebooks for use in history education. In addition to these texts, Fling also published an article, "One Use of Sources in the Teaching of History" in *Historical Outlook*, to accompany his source texts and explain the role that source method should play in the teaching of history.¹³⁹

Fling also had a personal connection to Barnes that became apparent in communications saved in the Nebraska archive from Fling's time as a professor at the university. In 1896, Barnes

¹³⁷ Fling and Caldwell, *Studies*, xx, emphasis in original.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 309.

¹³⁹ Fred Morrow Fling, "One Use of Sources in the Teaching of History." *Historical Outlook* 1, no. 1 (1909), reprinted in *The Social Studies* 85, no. 5 (1994): 206 – 210.

wrote an extensive letter to Fling that outlined her ideas for the creation of a journal of reviews for the teaching of history, which she titled “Historical Teacher’s Quarterly.”¹⁴⁰ Although she acknowledged that other journals for the teaching of history in colleges existed, she was concerned over the lack of materials specifically designed for secondary educators. As she states to Fling, she enlists his help and insight in creating this new journal because he is “so much in sympathy with teachers of history in the secondary schools as to know very well that a teacher even in one of our better high schools needs something more general.”¹⁴¹ Moreover, Barnes also openly acknowledges Fling’s already-budding reputation for rigorous method by noting that the added benefit of the journal will be to provide students with “an inner grasp of method such as they can gain in no other way.”¹⁴² This appeal to Fling’s devotion to method and its propagation in secondary schools was likely effective in convincing him to pursue the creation of Barnes’ journal. Unfortunately, Barnes’ death in 1898 caused a delay to the project and Fling reached out to her prior classmate, Lucy Maynard Salmon, to attempt to see the idea through to fruition.

Salmon was, at the time, visiting normal schools in Paris. However, she responded to Fling in two separate letters in 1899.¹⁴³ Though ultimately declining to participate in the creation of the journal, she did offer interesting conversation regarding methods and her hopes for “changes in the organization of the work in history” in American education.¹⁴⁴ Although this letter does not show that Salmon and Fling had a close personal connection, they clearly did have a professional and ideological bond regarding the concurrent developments in history education.

¹⁴⁰ Mary Sheldon Barnes to Fred Morrow Fling, Nov 13, 1896, Fred Morrow Fling Collection, Box 11, Folder 7, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁴³ Lucy Maynard Salmon to Fred Morrow Fling, ca. 1898. Fred Morrow Fling Collection, Box 11, Folder 7, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

This letter is further evidence of the invisible ties that ideas in educational reform provided for those working in the field of history in the early Progressive Era. Even after the death of their common link, Mary Sheldon Barnes, Salmon and Fling engaged in a professional discourse regarding reforms. Moreover, even without the help of Barnes or Salmon, Fling was eventually fundamental in the creation of the *History Teacher's Magazine* in 1909, which later became *Historical Outlook*. This magazine provided to readers much of the material that Barnes had mentioned in her letter to Fling.

The ideas that Fling gained from pioneers like Barnes and Bernheim in addition to the intellectual atmosphere created by educational reformers such as Pestalozzi no doubt laid the foundation for Fling's own works that he published later in his career. In these early years, both in Germany and in America, the networking of professional communications in which Fling engaged demonstrates the interconnectedness between the leaders of the Progressive Era schools and reforms. Although it is difficult to imagine from the perspective of today, the world of higher education in the 1890s was relatively small and close-knit. These formal connections through correspondences and publications show just how connected these diverse leaders were, even when they were separated geographically.

The Early Years of Fling's Career: the 1890s

In just the first decade of his career, Fling developed and published all of the major works regarding his theories on history, historical method, and source method in historical study.

However, he would not complete his explanatory texts regarding his philosophy of history until his final major work, *The Writing of History*, which he published in 1920. During this extent of time, while Fling was consolidating his philosophical beliefs and spreading his ideas to both his students and admirers, he was also working within emergent philosophical contexts that would

prove influential to his own thinking. Though clearly not alone in his suggestion that the use of primary sources should accompany the study of history in education, he was unique in precisely what he thought students learned from these sources. Namely, the value of sources for historical study lay not in their elucidation of facts or information, but in the *process* by which students should read and analyze them and the *skill* of criticism they developed in so doing. This historical process, then, was the output of historical teaching. The students were trained as historians to select, analyze, and interpret a vast array of sources, and to develop historical syntheses that resulted in reconstructions of historical knowledge.¹⁴⁵ So, to argue for any legitimate type of history education reform, Fling believed it was first necessary to argue for this revision of the historical method, which he would publish in 1899.

In 1891, Fling accepted a position as a professor of European History at the University of Nebraska. Unbeknownst to Fling at the time, he actually replaced George Elliot Howard, another source method advocate at this institution who had been the first history professor at the University of Nebraska.¹⁴⁶ Howard had accepted a position at the newly-formed Stanford University, which opened his position at Nebraska to Fling. When he arrived at Stanford, he subsequently worked alongside source method proponents Earl and Mary Sheldon Barnes during their coinciding tenure at that institution.¹⁴⁷ Howard had been a promoter of source method throughout his professorship at Nebraska, which had begun in 1879. When he left that institution for Stanford, he took his ideas with him and “merged” them with more New England style normal school methods he learned from working with the Barneses.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Evident in both Fred Morrow Fling, *Greek and Roman Civilization: With an Introduction to the Source Study Method* (Lincoln, NE: J. H. Miller, 1899); and Fling, “The Study,” 459-462.

¹⁴⁶ Knoll, *Prairie University*, 17

¹⁴⁷ Chisholm, “Unheralded Historian,” 150-151.

¹⁴⁸ Cherry, “Online Cultural Heritage,” 52.

Not only did Howard continue to develop his practice of source method, but also he “maintained ties” with Nebraska, which resulted in him returning to a position as professor within the Department of “Political Science and Sociology” in 1901.¹⁴⁹ Fling was already familiar with the Barnes’ version of source method even in 1891, since they were both nationally known for their work in educational reform, even though the existent formal communications between Fling and Barnes are dated from 1896.¹⁵⁰ However, later he became familiar with Howard’s techniques as well.¹⁵¹ In his search for continually better teaching methods, Fling also developed his own philosophy towards history education and source method instead of just replicating the ideas of his contemporaries. Although many educational reformers were acknowledging the value of limited uses of sources in a history classroom, Fling began to advocate for a further role for these materials: the student’s own critical analysis of them. These ideas were still in their infancy for Fling during the late nineteenth century. But, as his later students readily admit, the students’ critical study of sources eventually formed a pillar of his history classes.¹⁵²

When Fling arrived at Nebraska in 1891, he continued the laboratory method style that he had learned in Germany and for which Howard had laid the foundation at Nebraska. However, an interesting item that appeared in the Board of Regents Report for September of 1891, the month in which Fling began his career, specifically related to the new organization of professorships within the Department of History. Although Fling was hired for the position of Associate Professor of European History, he was also made the Chair of the History Department, which

¹⁴⁹ Board of Regents Report, Jan 1901, Board of Regents Collection, Box 14, Folder 119, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

¹⁵⁰ Chisholm, “Unheralded Historian,” 196-197.

¹⁵¹ Cherry, “Online Cultural Heritage,” 53.

¹⁵² M. Waggener, Rewritten Lecture Notes, October 1919-May 1920. Fred Morrow Fling Collection, Box 14, Folder 9. Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE (hereafter cited as Waggener, Rewritten Lecture Notes); Margaret Sparks Smitty, Lecture Notes, 1925-1926, Fred Morrow Fling Collection, Box 14, Folder 10, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE (hereafter cited as Smitty, Lecture Notes); and Cripe, Lecture Notes.

Howard had vacated upon his resignation. However, Professor Howard W. Caldwell, with whom Fling would later co-author a major work, who was then a Professor of History at the university was subsequently subjected to a position that was subordinate to Fling in technical rank. Because Fling was “a younger man than Mr. Caldwell,” the Board felt it was necessary to reorganize the entire history department to separate Caldwell’s role from any type of hierarchical connection to Fling’s position.¹⁵³ As the Chancellor explained in his Report for the Board of Regents,

I would suggest that the board create a separate chair of American History and Civics, and make Professor Caldwell Associate Professor of the same.

This action is warranted, in my judgment, by the fact that Prof. Caldwell must otherwise act as associate with, or assistant to, Associate Professor Fling, himself a younger man than Mr. Caldwell, and occupying very different relations to Prof. Caldwell and to the University, than those sustained by Prof. Howard.

The chair itself is one of great importance, and of growing importance, and practically already exists by a division of the work in History agreed upon by Prof. Howard and Prof. Caldwell, and carried by the latter for several years.¹⁵⁴

This restructuring allowed Caldwell to earn the title of Department Chair himself in the new “Department of American History and Civics” and allowed for the creation of separate departments of European and American Histories. In 1897, six years after becoming colleagues amid such circumstances, Fling and Caldwell would co-author and publish what served as Fling’s first major publication, *Studies in European and American History with an Introduction to the Source Study Method in History*.

According to his students, Fling was a brilliant lecturer who actively dramatized his lessons to bring history to life. Moreover, though he was strict and maintained a high expectation for his students, many of them were fascinated by his personality and found that “Fling’s lectures

¹⁵³ Board of Regents Report, August 18, 1891. Board of Regents Collection, Box 9, Folder 78, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

more than compensated for extensive outside class study.”¹⁵⁵ The existent notes from his students evidence the meticulous detail he put into his lectures, but they also show clear indication that he augmented his historical information with personal and philosophical asides. As Carlson notes specifically, “I found the historical facts presented in outline form, but equally important...were philosophic and spiritual observations presented by the professor from his own wide cultural knowledge.”¹⁵⁶

This opinion is supported by a fictional explanation of a professor from which Willa Cather’s protagonist in *One of Ours* took a history class at the University of Nebraska in the late 1890s. Cather was herself a student of Fling’s at the university in 1894 and 1895, where she studied European history with a specific focus on French history.¹⁵⁷ In *One of Ours*, the hero, Claude Wheeler, attends a lecture from the head of the history department at the University of Nebraska and vows to study under him. Later, the narrator explains that,

The course Claude selected was one upon which a student could put as much time as he chose. It was based upon the reading of historical sources, and the Professor was notoriously greedy for full notebooks. Claude’s were of the fullest. He worked early and late at the University Library, often got his supper in town and went back to read until closing hour. For the first time he was studying a subject which seemed to him vital, which had to do with events and ideas, instead of with lexicons and grammars.¹⁵⁸

Having also studied under Fling in these early years of his career, Cather was likely influenced by Fling’s zeal and rigor in infusing source method into the classroom. As Carlson acknowledges, “[t]he professor [Cather] so vividly depicts could easily have been Dr. Fred Morrow

¹⁵⁵ Carlson, “Professor Fred Fling,” 481. In this article, Carlson conducted several personal unpublished interviews with his classmates who also studied under Fling. He quotes both his memories of Professor Fling and those of his classmates. Clear evidence also exists in Cripe, Lecture Notes.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Janet Sharistianian, “Claude Wheeler’s Three Joans in *One of Ours*,” *Cather Studies: A Writer’s World* 8, 2010, http://cather.unl.edu/cs008_sharistianian.html#js-a2

¹⁵⁸ Willa Cather, *One of Ours* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1922), 19.

Fling.”¹⁵⁹ This point is reinforced by modern biographer of Cather, Janet Sharistianian, who explains that it is “undoubtedly correct in presuming that Claude’s unnamed professor is based upon Fling.”¹⁶⁰ In fact, Sharistianian extends this point by arguing that Cather’s enthusiasm and love for France was likely generated by Fling himself during her time as Fling’s student. Taking these views as evidence of Fling’s influence on Cather, it is possible that her hero’s description of his history professor is equally evidence of Cather’s opinion of Fling. As the narrator explains further in *One of Ours*,

The class was very large, and the Professor spoke without notes, - he talked rapidly, as if he were addressing his equals, with none of the coaxing persuasiveness to which Temple students were accustomed. His lectures were condensed like a legal brief, but there was a kind of dry fervour in his voice, and when he occasionally interrupted his exposition with purely personal comment, it seemed valuable and important.

Claude usually came out from these lectures with the feeling that the world was full of stimulating things, and that one was fortunate to be alive and to be able to find out about them.¹⁶¹

Considering that Cather attended Fling’s lectures during just the early years of his time at the university, these descriptions provide a vivid image of who Fling may have been as a lecturer when he embarked on his long and ardent career in history. Even though the novel, *One of Ours*, is itself a fictional source, it is likely that Cather’s great admiration for Fling when she attended his lectures resurfaced in this dramatic and laudatory description from her book. Moreover, from the remnants of Fling’s lecture notes maintained in the Nebraska archive, it is clear that his lectures may very well have been “condensed like a legal brief.” In fact, the outlines he created for his lectures were bulleted lists of notes that likely were supplemented by additional explanation

¹⁵⁹ Carlson, “Professor Fred Fling,” 482.

¹⁶⁰ Sharistianian, “Claude Wheeler’s,” n.p.

¹⁶¹ Cather, *One of Ours*, 19-20.

when delivered as lecture in class.¹⁶² Although he never scripted his lectures in full, these outlines would have needed elaboration in order to fill a regularly-timed lecture course. As other students noted in their own notes, these outlines were oftentimes filled with personal narrative as much as historical information.¹⁶³

Thus, at least some of Fling's early students show great esteem for his methods and personality in the classroom. He devoted a great deal of preparatory time to these lectures as well, which is clear from the extensive course notes he created. However, he also spent time developing his personal life. On July 26, 1893, after two years of teaching, Fling married Helene A. Dresser in Minneapolis, Minnesota.¹⁶⁴ They would remain married for the rest of his life. Helene was a partner in many of his research ventures, including co-authoring his second sourcebook, *Source Problems on the French Revolution* in 1913. Helene also accompanied Fling to Europe on many of his personal research projects. News of Fling's marriage also reached his colleagues who communicated their congratulations through correspondences that Fling kept.¹⁶⁵ Interestingly, even these congratulatory letters also included political and professional commentary regarding world events, which shows that Fling and those in his time period were interested in events beyond their localities and personal lives.¹⁶⁶

A year into the Flings' new marriage, Fling applied to travel as a visiting researcher to the University of Geneva in Switzerland. Within this university, the *Faculté des Lettres* was a famous research institution that focused on many academic areas, including General History, in

¹⁶² Fred Morrow Fling, Lesson Plans and Notes. Fred Morrow Fling Collection, Box 12, Folder 6, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE (hereafter cited as Fling, Lesson Plans).

¹⁶³ Waggener, Rewritten Lecture notes; Cripe, Lecture Notes; and Smitty, Lecture Notes.

¹⁶⁴ Wedding Announcement, Fred Morrow Fling Papers, Bowdoin University Library, Brunswick, ME.

¹⁶⁵ Moses Coit Tyler to Fred Morrow Fling, May 11, 1890, Fred Morrow Fling Collection, Box 11, Folder 7, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. In this letter, Tyler replies to Fling's comments regarding the annexation of Hawaii.

which Fling was interested for the purposes of further research on the French Revolution. In order for Fling to travel to the research facility, the French Ambassador to the United States, Jules Patenotre, wrote a “Letter of Introduction” to Professor Lavoise of the Faculté des Lettres commending Fling’s writing abilities and applauding him for his work in history education.¹⁶⁷ It is unclear how Fling and Patenotre knew each other; however, according to press coverage of Patenotre’s wedding in the *Chicago Tribune*, he was “famous” because he was the first foreign ambassador in America to marry an American woman.¹⁶⁸ The marriage took place in Philadelphia in 1894, two months before Fling’s recommendation letter was written. Perhaps Patenotre’s popularity, Fling’s determined attitude, or the sheer fact of the smallness of the world in the 1890s and the connection between Fling’s research interests and Patenotre’s heritage and position occasioned a reason for the two to interact. Whatever the cause, this letter shows that as early as 1894, in the beginning years of his career at Nebraska, Fling still actively sought research opportunities regarding his true love: French history.

Patenotre was not the only highly reputable person who would provide a letter of recommendation or introduction for Fling. Especially in the 1890s, when Fling’s research interests were still developing and he spent great lengths of time abroad, Fling enlisted the aid of many officials to gain access to archives in international destinations. These letters ranged in formality from letters in panned ink, such as one from H. Moore Stephens of Cornell University in 1897, to formal U.S. Department of the Interior letterhead with wax seal, such as one from Education

¹⁶⁷ Jules Patenotre, Recommendation Letter for F. M. Fling, June 12, 1894, Fred Morrow Fling Collection, Box 1, Folder 1, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

¹⁶⁸ Chicago Tribune, “Wed to a Diplomat: Miss Elverson of Philadelphia Married to M. Patenotre,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 28, 1894, 7.

Commissioner, William T. Harris, in 1900.¹⁶⁹ Perhaps the most recognizable name to provide a letter of access to Fling was Secretary of State John Hay who wrote to the diplomatic and consular offices of the United States in France to acknowledge Fling's research intentions in Paris in 1900.¹⁷⁰ Clearly, having connections to people of such stature was very useful for Fling, who travelled yearly in the early decades of his career to continue his pursuit of French Revolutionary history.

For his whole life, Fling would juggle his attention between his own research projects and exposition of his theories on history and history education. These mental devotions began as soon as his teaching career at the University of Nebraska did. Not only did he continue to engage in research projects of his own, but he also sought to provide a thorough education to his students. As a professor, he labored to convey to his students the importance of "historical consciousness," a philosophical idea that he was only beginning to refine in his early years at Nebraska. In his lectures, he explained the concept of "historical consciousness" to be the essential ideological understanding of man's place in time, both historically and presently.¹⁷¹ To Fling, historical consciousness was the power behind understanding history.

Moreover, the fact that early students like Cather showed signs of Fling's influence later in their lives leads researchers like Sharstian to conclude that Fling must have emphasized an artistically dynamic perspective of history. In her opinion, considering Cather's love for international history and culture and especially French ways of life, Fling must have emphasized these

¹⁶⁹ H. Moore Stephens to Fred Morrow Fling, Mar 21, 1897, Fred Morrow Fling Collection, Box 11, Folder 7, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE; and William T. Harris, Letter of Recommendation for Fred Morrow Fling, Mar 30, 1897, Fred Morrow Fling Collection, Box 11, Folder 7, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

¹⁷⁰ John Hay, Letter of Recommendation, Mar 16, 1900, Fred Morrow Fling Collection, Box 11, Folder 7, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

¹⁷¹ Waggener, Rewritten Lecture Notes; Cripe, Lecture Notes; Smitty, Lecture Notes; and Carlson, "Professor Fred Fling," 485.

elements in his own teaching during Cather's classes to "have struck a responsive chord in Cather as student."¹⁷² Though Cather's opinion may be the only existent viewpoint from an 1890's student of Fling, this estimation of Fling as a mindful and vibrant purveyor of history is reinforced by his later students in the 1920s.¹⁷³ Thus, just like the refinement of his philosophical views towards historical consciousness, these personal traits of "the stress he placed on the social and cultural aspects of history" continued to evolve throughout his career.¹⁷⁴

Fling's "hands on" and vibrant approach to the study of history has clear links to Fling's pragmatist counterparts that were consolidating and broadcasting their beliefs alongside him. Like Pestalozzian ideas, although Fling never names the pragmatist philosophers as influential to his thinking, the parallels between his philosophy and theirs is noticeable. Moreover, as Louis Menand argues in *The Metaphysical Club*, these pragmatist philosophers created the ideological atmosphere that operated as an invisible, yet unavoidable, intellectual backdrop to the Progressive Era. In many ways, these philosophers' ideas left a lasting impression on intellectual America and created a sort of "intellectual society" with its own set of ingrained beliefs, including the emphasis on student-centered learning, social efficiency, and critical inquiry.¹⁷⁵ So, although Fling never credits the pragmatists as the progenitors of his own belief system, his ideas developed within the context that they created and his own philosophy shares many similarities with their educational ideas.

Pragmatism can generally be thought of as the philosophical tradition of practical living. In other words, pragmatists, like William James, C. S. Pierce, or John Dewey, saw the practical

¹⁷² Sharistianian, "Claude Wheeler's," n.p.

¹⁷³ Cripe, Lecture Notes; also shown in Carlson, "Professor Fred Fling," 485.

¹⁷⁴ Carlson, "Professor Fred Fling," 485.

¹⁷⁵ Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club: A Story of Ideas in America*, (Union Square West, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Girrouz, 2001), xii.

importance of knowledge and living as the foremost purpose of philosophy, and ultimately, education. Thus, to these philosophers, learning was successful in its relation to how practically applicable it would be to solving real world problems.

John Dewey, arguably the most well-known of the pragmatist school, especially for educational purposes, took many of these ideas further in his major work, *The Quest for Certainty*. As he explained in this book, the connection between the knower and his environment was essential in order for that knower to learn. By this “situatedness,” Dewey envisioned that learning took place when a subject encountered an authentic problem or dilemma that raised genuine inquiry in the subject.¹⁷⁶ After this encounter, the knower proceeded to engage with that environment in order to seek a solution to the given problem and overcome the problem by either adapting to the environment or interacting with that environment in a way that molds it to the needs of that learner. In the pursuit of this solution, the knower will inevitably uncover further problems and the path of inquiry will continue through genuine interest. So, as Dewey envisioned,

The problem of knowledge is the problem of discovery of methods for carrying on this enterprise of redirection. It is a problem never ended, always in process; one problematic situation is resolved and another takes its place. The constant gain is not in approximation to universal solution but in betterment of methods and enrichment of objects experienced.¹⁷⁷

Relatedly, then, the purpose of education was precisely the development of abilities and thoughtfulness that would allow a student to continually search for questions and answers throughout life on his own. As Fling explained frequently, it was exactly this emphasis on methods and skill development that was lacking in the current field of history education that he sought to correct. However, Fling would not have considered secondary students capable of pursuing scientific his-

¹⁷⁶ John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty* (New York: Minton, Balch, & Company, 1929), repeatedly.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 296.

tory solely on their own. Instead, he repeatedly stressed the need for appropriately trained teachers to act as guides alongside this student inquiry.¹⁷⁸ Thus, though there are similarities between Dewey's ideas of skill development and Fling's vision of source method, there are also significant differences between their overall views towards education.

Moreover, this particular work of Dewey was published after all of the major works published by Fling but his philosophy and educational ideas in general were widely known during the early years of Fling's career. In fact, Dewey's first major work on education, *The School and Society*, was published in 1899, just two years after Fling's first major co-authored work. In this book, Dewey argues that schools should be microcosms of society and authentic problems relevant to the present life of the student, and solutions to overcome those problems, should form the basis of the school curriculum. As he explained, society was concurrently undergoing significant changes and "evolution."¹⁷⁹ In the face of this evolution, Dewey saw the need for schools to evolve as well. Instead of providing the traditional and passive form of education in which the student serves as a recipient of information (sometimes called the "transmission model"), Dewey thought that student action in education should be more purposive.¹⁸⁰ As he states, "[n]o number of object-lessons, got up as object-lessons for the sake of giving information, can afford even the shadow of a substitute for acquaintance with the plants and animals of the farm and garden acquired through actual living among them and caring for them."¹⁸¹ This example of authentic learning provides an analogy for Dewey's main educational philosophy as a whole. Although he recognized that schools also provided some beneficial skills, such as discipline and structure,

¹⁷⁸ Fling, *Outline*, 5.

¹⁷⁹ John Dewey, *The School and Society* (New York: McClure, Phillips & Company, 1899), 6.

¹⁸⁰ As explained by Wayne J. Urban and Jennings L. Wagoner, Jr. *American Education: A History*, New York, NY: McGraw Hill, Inc, 2004, many early pre-progressive theoreticians delivered materials through the "transmission model." This observation was true in history education especially.

¹⁸¹ Dewey, *The School and Society*, 8, emphasis in original.

Dewey believed that a restructuring of the traditional teacher-student relationship was necessary in order for students to become agents of their own learning and inquiry in an organic, authentic way.

These ideas meant that Dewey placed faith in the child's ability to engineer his own education along the line of student-driven inquiry and, for this reason, Dewey placed much greater emphasis and faith in organically developed student inquiry than Fling. Instead, Fling insisted that teachers should play a more important role in directing student learning, especially at the secondary level. Although Fling did believe that students were the main actors in their educational success and his source method did require that the sources be placed "in the hands of the pupils" at all times, he also maintained that teacher training was essential to preparing teachers for their role in classrooms as guides alongside this student research.¹⁸² Moreover, while Dewey was propagating ideas of student agency in education in general, Fling was consolidating his beliefs specifically for history education within the concurrent scientific history developments for which he advocated at the college level. For this reason mainly, Fling focused on a reformation of historical method first, before campaigning for his ideas regarding education. In the early years of his career, he made it clear that these two subjects – history and education – were very closely linked. Mainly, he thought that teachers needed proper training in historic method, which could only come from proper studies within the field of history, before they could become competent teachers in history classrooms. Once teachers learned and honed their own historical skills, it was their task to convey these skills to their students by example in the classroom, much like a chemistry teacher may lead a chemistry class through an experiment. In this way, Fling does differ from Dewey: he did not follow Dewey's line of student-driven inquiry to its fullest.

¹⁸² Fling, "One Use," 208.

Instead, he maintained that a teacher was necessary to the proper “guidance” of a child’s learning.¹⁸³

In line with the context of his time period, Fling’s ideas of empowering the student to engage with historical sources does have connections to pragmatist philosophy even though he did not adopt this philosophy in its entirety. Moreover, although Fling never specifically mentions the work of Dewey as a foundation for his own way of thinking, it is apparent that the contextual environment of pragmatism, of which Dewey was a pioneer, had a significant influence on Fling’s philosophical beliefs. Menand reinforces this point by emphasizing that the intellectual work of this “metaphysical club” had a profound effect on many thinkers who lived during the Progressive Era. His argument is that the often invisible pervasiveness of these “personal and social situations” in which these ideas were found created an intellectual environment in which many of the pragmatist beliefs became subliminally accepted by society.¹⁸⁴ By operating within this intellectual atmosphere, Fling was likely also influenced by the work of the pragmatist thinkers, even if formal acknowledgement of that school of thought remains absent from his work. In many ways, these thinkers were too prominent in the field of philosophy and education to ignore. So, even without formal recognition, the tenets of pragmatist beliefs likely directed the way in which Fling phrased or presented his own beliefs in the field of education. In this vein, the most apparent connection between Fling and the pragmatists is seen through the language Fling employed to describe both his views on historical research and history education. Like Dewey, Fling often notes that “student inquiry” and “passion” from “within the pupil” should form the basis of historical study.¹⁸⁵ However, for this reason, Fling was devoted to

¹⁸³ Fling and Caldwell, *Studies*, 208.

¹⁸⁴ Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, xii.

¹⁸⁵ Fling, *Sourcebook*; and Fling and Fling, *Source Problems*.

equipping *teachers* with a thorough understanding of method so that they could convey those practices of historical inquiry to the students themselves, unlike Dewey who emphasized a more purposive role for students in engineering their own learning. Although there are differences between these two philosophies, the endemic terminology within the time period has clear similarity to many works within the pragmatist school.

In fact, in 1916, in response to the general development of historical events in American society, Dewey published *Democracy and Education*, a book that also explained large portions of his pragmatist philosophy.¹⁸⁶ In this book, Dewey spoke more directly of the role that teachers should play in the school. As he explained, teachers should impart critical thinking skills to their students for the purposes of authentic inquiry so that the aims of education can be achieved. These aims are: “[d]evelopment according to nature, social efficiency, and culture or personal mental enrichment,” each of which implies that the purpose of education requires cultivation of qualities within the student.¹⁸⁷ Moreover, one of Dewey’s main points in this book was to argue that traditional education maintained too rigid a view of students as individuals, whereas the demands of modern society required them to be educated as important – and inextricable – parts of a community. Although this community emphasis was more often associated with the tenets of progressivism than pragmatism, it did form a main pillar of Dewey’s philosophy.

Importantly, Dewey viewed education as an essential part of lifelong development. In his view, “since growth is the characteristic of life, education is all one with growing; it has no end beyond itself.”¹⁸⁸ His point is that the importance of education was found in its relevance to the current needs of the student. Relatedly, the goal of education was the empowerment of the stu-

¹⁸⁶ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922).

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 144.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

dent to become his own lifelong learner. Through his emphasis on placing sources directly in the hands of students, Fling clearly agreed with Dewey on the importance of student autonomy and empowerment, although he did still see a need for teachers to direct the path of education.

In addition to pragmatist sympathies, the philosophical influence of progressivism can also be seen in these early years of Fling's career. Loosely, progressivism can be thought of as the philosophical tradition that sought reform and progress in all areas of American life. Philosophically, progressivism was a turn away from traditional, conservative modes of thought and elitism in society and politics and towards a more democratic, issues-centered outlook. The Progressive Era saw reforms that stretched from political representation to worker's rights to societal improvement around the idea of community and cooperation. In the field of education, many of these Progressive Era reforms were turning over the reins of learning to the students themselves and seeking pedagogies that put students at the center of their learning. Not only is the pragmatist tradition evident in many of these Progressive Era changes, but these two schools of thought also collide in Fling's works. Fling adhered to pragmatic ways of learning and inquiry, especially in his view of the way in which students should engage with historical study. Moreover, he openly embraced progressive reform for the fields of both history as a science and history education as a discipline. The influence of these two significant contextual traditions are present throughout Fling's works.

Alongside this philosophical context, Fling merged the procedures and techniques he learned from his historical studies in Germany with the emergent social and educational ideas of his pragmatist and progressive counterparts. By the end of his career, the result was a comprehensive model of history education that emphasized process and method, but relied on empowering students to be their own critical discerners of historical truth. In order to translate these ideo-

logical developments into action, Fling created a method for historical investigation, which he termed his “scientific historical method,” a repertoire of teaching and professional materials, and a pedagogy for disseminating these ideas to students. In his own classroom, he both employed and amended these procedures throughout his career. As a teacher-leader, he produced teacher resource books, articles, and examples to guide secondary educators in the quest for successful teaching methods. Although these devotions lasted his entire lifetime, the majority of his published work regarding these philosophies appeared in the first ten years of his career and created the foundation for his rigorous pedagogy of history education.

3 THE 1890s AND THE CREATION OF FLING'S HISTORICAL METHOD

Introduction

Fling's early career was marked by a vigor he felt from his education abroad and an eagerness he maintained to transmit these methods to his students and the secondary school teachers of Nebraska. As soon as he returned to the states and accepted the position as professor at the University of Nebraska, he began developing his source method procedures and practicing these techniques in his own classroom. Other reformers also continued their work, which garnered the notice and involvement of leading national organizations of both history and education. Those chosen to represent educators on committees for educational reform were often leading educators from Normal School backgrounds and Teachers Colleges. Although Fling was a member of the AHA, he was never chosen to appear as a member of a committee on education.

Fling's work in his own state, however, resulted in the creation of "the Nebraska Method," or the source method as it appeared in Fling's works and practices. This method, which required that "students learned history directly from collections of sources that had been selected and manipulated to suit their age and maturity," became the staple of Fling's own pedagogy and the basis for the creation of his sourcebooks.¹⁸⁹ Moreover, he strove to provide teacher education for the use of this method and served as a guide in Nebraska for the development of trained teachers in the field of scientific history.

Enter the Committees and the Rise of "Social Studies"

At the beginning of Fling's career, one of the first contextual battles in which he found himself engaged involved the AHA and other prominent history educators. As soon as he began propagating his ideas about and arguments for the use of source method in history education,

¹⁸⁹ Cherry, "Online Cultural Heritage," 54.

several highly publicized committee reports began circulating the country purporting differing educational reform ideas. Notably, the first organized committees of national importance designed to address the disjointed nature of the history curriculum in schools were the National Education Association's Committee of Ten (1893) and the American Historical Association's Committee of Seven (1896). Both committees created reports, in 1894 and 1899, respectively, intended to provide "a definition for a modern approach to history."¹⁹⁰ The Report of the Committee of Ten, or Madison Report, called for a standardized approach to historical study and historical teaching methods as well as an enlargement of subject matter that fell under the historical study umbrella beyond just political or military history as had been common before the 1890s. However, this Committee of Ten was meant to more broadly deal with reformation in secondary education as a whole, not just history.¹⁹¹ The breadth of this Committee's task meant that it addressed history education reform but lacked the depth and attention that a committee specifically targeting history could have done.

So, the next group from the AHA, the Committee of Seven, focused more particularly on history education. This Committee diverged from "a refined version of the traditional history" created by the Committee of Ten, and offered a curriculum design meant "to prepare students to meet the entrance requirements of college."¹⁹² The influence of female history education leaders is also present in the work of this Committee of Seven by its inclusion of Lucy Maynard Salmon. Salmon's view of the study of history as "the dual purpose of enhancing reasoning skills and

¹⁹⁰ Quoted text from Evans, *Social Studies Wars*, 9; National Education Association, "Report to the Committee of Ten on Secondary School Studies," 1894 in Andrew Milson, et al, ed., *American Educational Thought: Essays from 1640-1940* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc, 2010), 269 – 320; American Historical Association, *The Study of History in Schools: Report to the American Historical Association by the Committee of Seven* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1899).

¹⁹¹ Bohan, "Early Vanguard," 73 – 94.

¹⁹² Evans, *Social Studies Wars*, 11.

providing direct information” clearly aligned with the recommendations of the Committee of Seven towards history.¹⁹³ Moreover, her efforts on the Committee of Seven from 1896-1899 directly preceded her communications with Fling from 1899 that were saved in his archive in Nebraska. Though these communications do not specifically refer to her time or involvement with the committee, they do show evidence of her continued devotion to the reorganization and rejuvenation of history curricula in public schools, which she communicated to and discussed with Fling.¹⁹⁴

Fling also had communication during this time with another member of the Committee, Albert Bushnell Hart in 1897. In this communication, Fling discussed the committee’s recommendations for education and for the use of source method with Hart. Although the original letter to Hart does not remain, the topic of conversation between the two men is discernible in Hart’s reply. Having met Fling in Cleveland earlier that year, Hart admits that since that time he had “thought much about the questions of method and of means of disseminating them which [Fling] brought up.”¹⁹⁵ Later in the letter he also states, “I insist very much that your practice in Nebraska and the general system advocated by the Committee of Seven could be taught with time. The difference is not sources – it is a question of accent rather than quantity.”¹⁹⁶ This statement aligns with a common criticism of source method from the time period: namely, that source method required too much classroom time to be effectively completed.¹⁹⁷ Because Fling’s conception of the source method required lengthy and intensive study, this criticism was

¹⁹³ Chara Haeussler Bohan, “Lucy Maynard Salmon: Progressive Historian, Teacher, and Democrat,” in *Bending the Future to their Will*, eds. Margaret Smith Crocco and O. L. Davis, Jr. (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004), 60.

¹⁹⁴ Lucy Maynard Salmon to Fred Morrow Fling, ca. 1898. Fred Morrow Fling Collection, Box 11, Folder 7, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

¹⁹⁵ Albert Bushnell Hart to Fred Morrow Fling, Jan 4, 1897, Fred Morrow Fling Collection, Box 11, Folder 7, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ Cherry, “Online Cultural Heritage, 47.

especially relevant to his model. In this letter Hart was explaining that teachers did not have a problem with using sources in class, just that they were very careful in *how* they used them so as to avoid an overwhelming time commitment. However, Hart also states that “I think I am stronger in advocacy of ‘source-methods’ than some of my colleagues.”¹⁹⁸

Apart from these individual opinions, in the Committee of Seven’s report, the authors ultimately criticized source method and could not assign their official endorsement to the practice. They also explained that “the student who is taught to consider political subjects in school, who is led to look at matters historically, has some mental equipment for a comprehension of the political and social problems that will confront him in everyday life.”¹⁹⁹ In many ways, this point aligns with Fling’s vision of historical consciousness that he tried to convey to his students. In his “History and the Teaching of History” course outline, he devoted individual lessons specifically to this type of historical mindfulness. In his words,

The great human needs, the need of seeing the past life of the race as a complex, changing whole, and the need of acquainting [*sic*] each new generation with this vision of the past, gave rise to historical writing and historical teaching. Consciousness of the past life of man as a complex whole, a whole of which the present age is the outcome and the latest act, is historical consciousness, and it is for the purpose of awakening historical consciousness in ever widening circles of humanity, of finally producing a world-historical consciousness, that history is written and taught.²⁰⁰

Fling’s point is simple: “society has always believed, and with reason, that a study of the past would furnish guidance for the future.”²⁰¹ So, like the Committee of Seven who claimed that a study of the past encouraged critical thinking of the present, Fling was also trying to ex-

¹⁹⁸ Albert Bushnell Hart to Fred Morrow Fling, Jan 4, 1897.

¹⁹⁹ AHA, *The Study of History in Schools*, 481.

²⁰⁰ Fred Morrow Fling, History and the Teaching of History Course Outline, Fred Morrow Fling Collection, Box 14, Folder 7, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE (hereafter cited as Fling, Course Outline), 1.

²⁰¹ Fling, “World-History and Historical Consciousness,” 1.

plain that a study of history had a significant and imperative impact on the present state of mind of society, including its teachers and pupils. As Fling explained repeatedly throughout his notes and unpublished and published works, “the indispensable condition of social progress and the writing and teaching of history are social necessity.”²⁰² For this reason, and as he continued to refine this early vision on the nature and importance of historical consciousness, Fling sought to publish a book titled “A World Civilization,” which he described as an attempt “to trace the expansion of the civilized life of man, from its primitive beginnings in the valley of the Nile and in the region of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, through six thousand years of good and bad fortune, to its culmination, at the beginning of the twentieth century, in a vast, complex, world-society.”²⁰³

Unfortunately, by the time of his death, the only completed portion of the book was the introduction and a few beginning chapters on man’s ancient history. However, by undertaking such a massive historical task, and like the Committee of Seven who emphasized the intellectual benefit of understanding historical study, Fling infused his lessons and practice with what he considered to be a historically conscious mind. Thus, he continually stressed the importance of a historically-trained mind for understanding and enhancing present-day society and its pitfalls. Similarly, according to the Committee of Seven, this combination between historical knowledge and critical thinking was meant to form the basis of curriculum and instruction for a new Progressive Era history. Although the Committee of Seven may have disagreed with Fling’s view regarding source method, he was not in conflict with their overall ideology of education. How-

²⁰² Ibid., 7

²⁰³ Ibid., 8.

ever, the procedure through which he thought this propensity for critical analysis was developed in students, the source method, did differ significantly from the views of the committee.

Both the Committee of Ten and the Committee of Seven represent a desire to standardize and organize the curriculum provided to students of history, including recent immigrants and women. This desire is both a product of the contextual pressures of modernization in the late nineteenth century and a contributing factor to the development of the Progressive Era that followed. In fact, researcher and historian Chara Haeussler Bohan posits that “the work of the [Committees] ought to be viewed as an early part of a larger progressive movement that helped to gradually transform the schools.”²⁰⁴ Importantly for Fling and other source method advocates of the time, the Committee of Seven also acknowledged that “[t]he use of sources in secondary work is now a matter of so much importance that it seems to demand special and distinct treatment.”²⁰⁵ This “special and distinct treatment” led the committee to denounce such practices and to agree only to the “proper use” of sources in history education.²⁰⁶ So, even though in his letter to Fling, Hart offered that “I do wish we could come to some kind of understanding with you so as to present a united front,” the committee as a whole ultimately could not accept the extent of source method in pedagogy that Fling suggested.²⁰⁷

This disagreement was in direct conflict with Fling’s practices in which he repeatedly emphasized that “the pupil must work on sources.”²⁰⁸ In the outline for his main history seminar course, “History and the Teaching of History,” Fling does introduce the Committee of Ten’s findings regarding history education but does not acknowledge the changes to history education

²⁰⁴ Bohan, “Early Vanguard,” 15.

²⁰⁵ AHA, *The Study of History in Schools*, 481.

²⁰⁶ Ibid; see page 5 of this dissertation for full quotation.

²⁰⁷ Albert Bushnell Hart to Fred M. Fling, Jan 4, 1897.

²⁰⁸ Fling, Course Outline, 1.

wrought by the Committee of Seven's opinions in 1899. This omission may have been honest lack of revision to the course structure, since he had been teaching from the same outline since 1894, and, in 1899, Fling did publish a scathing article review of the Committee of Seven's findings and was therefore well aware of them. However, this omission could also have been Fling's subtle way of condemning the Committee's findings by not including their conclusions in his seminar course.

In addition to history education, the Committee of Seven was also widely heralded as a foundational part of social studies education, a broader field of public education in which history held a primary position. In the recent book *Critical Issues in Social Studies Research for the 21st Century*, William B. Stanley compiles the work of many researchers who note that the terminological origin of "social studies" itself and debates over its definition were significant topics in educational reform during the Progressive Era.²⁰⁹ Moreover, although the formalization of "social studies" as a curricular area during Fling's lifetime did not persuade him to adopt such terms, its presence in the educational literature of the age shows the complicated development of the field from before even the Committee of Seven's Report in 1899. Specifically, the aforementioned Committee of Ten also addressed the disjointed nature of secondary education in terms of "social education" in its report in 1896 while maintaining the prominence of history in the field.²¹⁰ As Jack Nelson explains, some use of the concept of social studies also appeared in British educational literature as early as 1884, the same year that the AHA was founded.²¹¹ However, like many American educators also came to believe, these early definitions of "social

²⁰⁹ See both Jack L. Nelson, "Defining Social Studies," in *Critical Issues in Social Studies Research for the 21st Century*, ed. William B. Stanley (Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing, 2001), 15 – 38; and Vinson and Ross, "In Search of the Social Studies Curriculum," 39 – 71.

²¹⁰ NEA, "Report to the Committee of Ten," 269 – 320.

²¹¹ Nelson, "Defining Social Studies," 18.

studies” only provided a loosely-conceived idea of a “field as part of a social science/social problems movement intended to be useful in dealing with social problems,” not necessarily as a full curricular area equivalent to mathematics, natural science, or history.²¹² As Nelson also states, many explained “the purpose of social studies to be good citizenship within the school’s mission of social efficiency,” a purpose that clearly could have been accomplished without a separate subject of “social studies.”

In 1916, the NEA’s work under the Commission for the Reorganization of Secondary Schools (CRSE) and precisely, the Committee on Social Studies, published a report that firmly established the use of the term “social studies” within the field of American education.²¹³ The explicit task for this committee was to properly define the broad field of “social studies” as a separate curricular area in schools. During this large time span from 1899 to 1916, educators often struggled to identify the characteristics of this new discipline of “social studies” in which they worked, even though the professional literature on the subject was vague and diverse. Moreover, the specific tenets of the curriculum for such a program were also elusive, which allowed the well-defined history to remain the pillar of most social studies instruction.²¹⁴ So, because of these broad and ill-refined parameters, “social studies” remained an ambiguous and unclear conceptual subject to Fling and, as history continued to be preeminent within that field, Fling likewise continued to devote his attentions to history.²¹⁵

As this theoretical debate progressed, educators like Fling often pulled away from the semantical conflict – not realizing its ontological importance for an entirely new field – and de-

²¹² Ibid., 18; also evident in Urban and Wagoner, *American Education*.

²¹³ National Education Association, “Report of the Commission of the Reorganization of Secondary Education,” in *American Education Thought: Essays from 1640-1940*, eds. Andrew Milson, et al (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc, 2010), 499.

²¹⁴ Vinson and Ross, “In Search of the Social Studies Curriculum,” 40.

²¹⁵ Urban and Wagoner, *American Education*, 16.

voted their attention to refining the already-established field of history. In Fling's view, he focused on perfecting history and history education while allowing these professional committees to define "a general education to prepare citizens for participation in democratic society."²¹⁶ The work of these early committees would be augmented by the work of reformers throughout the late 1890s and early 1900s, such as John Dewey, Mary Sheldon Barnes, Thomas Jesse Jones, Arthur Dunn, and Lucy Maynard Salmon, to name a few. By the time of the 1916 Report officially recognizing "social studies" as a field, Fling had already spent over twenty years at the University of Nebraska as a historian, professor, and educational leader who worked in the well-defined and professionalized field of history. As Nelson explains, even if educators on the ground level maintained their devotion to the more prominent field of history, defining "social studies" as a subject for study in public education became a major endeavor in the early Progressive Era for AHA authorities, the NEA, and independent educators who sought to defend this field alongside its well-known counterparts of mathematics, science, and literature.²¹⁷

Patricia Graham assesses the time period similarly. In her view, the field of social studies went through a significant identity crisis during the Progressive Era and its implementation in schools was resultantly uneven. To Graham, this variability was due to the simultaneous goals of "assimilationist" agendas in public education for the nation's immigrant population.²¹⁸ Fling, himself a consultant and teacher guide in secondary education, no doubt was surrounded by this debate, but never found himself caught up in it because his attention focused more on the perfecting of historical method, history education, and historical consciousness than on the nuances of terminological differences in public education. To him, these issues were in the realm of the

²¹⁶ Nelson "Defining Social Studies," 18.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

²¹⁸ Graham, *Schooling America*, 39.

“professional educationists” – a term he did not intend endearingly – and were not proper concerns of educators and pupils who were truly committed to the excellence of historical study.²¹⁹

Moreover, his devotion to history even in the face of the development of a concurrent “social studies” curriculum is not necessarily peculiar for his time period. The fact that the first formal American use of the term “social studies” as a field of educational study instead of just a loose field for educational debate did not appear until the 1916 publication of the Committee on Social Studies shows that the consolidation of this area was itself a latecomer in the Progressive Era. So, even though conceptual existence of “social studies” appeared before 1916, this term’s appearance late into the developments of the Progressive Era, and of Fling’s life, can partly explain the reason why so many educators like Fling continued to devote their attention and efforts to history education singularly, instead of social studies education broadly. Nonetheless, the works of important Progressive Era social studies committees, the Committee of Ten, the Committee of Seven, and the later Committee on Social Studies of the CRSE, did set the foundation of change and growth for the field of both social studies and history education.

In his courses, Fling made no mention of these terminological changes that ran parallel to the committees’ conclusions on history education and, instead, maintained his allegiance to “history education” and not “social studies education.” By 1907, when Fling published his first sourcebook designed specifically for use with history teaching, Fling had still only mentioned the field of social studies once, even though he was technically titled as a professor within the “School of Social Sciences” at Nebraska.²²⁰ In fact, by the end of his career, he had spent twenty-nine years as a faculty member of the “School of Social Sciences,” which the university had

²¹⁹ Osborne, *Fred Morrow Fling*, 497.

²²⁰ Report Concerning the Establishment of a School of Social Sciences, Apr 11, 1905, Board of Regents Collection, Box 17, Folder 140, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

named in 1905 to house history and various other disciplines of social science.²²¹ Interestingly, during Fling's tenure, the University of Nebraska had undergone many waves of departmental and structural change. As mentioned, the first such alteration with which Fling was involved was the creation of the American History and Civics Department alongside that of European History, to which his colleague Caldwell had been appointed chair. In 1903, courses in law and political sciences were split from the Department of History with the creation of "the Department of American History and Jurisprudence."²²² Each of these departments operated within the structure of the College of Arts and Sciences, which had been created in the early years of the institution in order to formalize it into a "university."²²³ Then, as stated, the "School of Social Sciences" in which history was positioned was created in 1905 within this college.

In 1906, Fling was an implicit party to another restructuring that resulted in the creation of the "Department of Political Science and Sociology." This department was offered as a suggestion by Professor W. G. Langworthy Taylor, longtime friend and colleague of Fling, and supported by esteemed Professor George Elliot Howard, who had returned to the Department of American History and Civics in 1901.²²⁴ By 1906, both professors acknowledged that the need for a separation between social and political studies and American history existed. Thus, by reason that "the new grouping would be in the direction of proper differentiation and essential unification," they suggested that a new "Department of Political Science and Sociology" be separated from the renamed "Department of American History."²²⁵ In the Chancellor's acceptance of the

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Howard W. Caldwell to the Chancellor Andrews, ca. 1903, Board of Regents Collection, Box 16, Folder 132, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

²²³ Knoll, *Prairie University*, 17.

²²⁴ George Elliot Howard to Chancellor Andrews, Feb 8, 1906, Board of Regents Collection. Box 17, Folder 144, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

²²⁵ Ibid.

changes, he notes that the courses within “institutional history” of the Department of American History and Civics will be discontinued and replaced with a newly created course and department, “Political Science and Sociology,” and that Howard will be made “head of the department so named.”²²⁶

Changes like these to the departmental titles at the University of Nebraska show the influence of leading educational committees and reformers and their debates regarding proper educational language. These changes and the work of the various committees were simultaneously a response to and a product of their historical contexts, as was their reception in the general American educational system. However, Fling’s ideas and concepts within his own works often diverged too far and too quickly from the context in which he worked. As Progressive educators carefully crafted evolving educational ideas, Fling posited more drastically divergent ideas such as empowering students to “interpret” sources for themselves, which the Committee of Seven specifically argued against. In fact, this “interpretation” debate appeared in many areas of Fling’s philosophy because he openly embraced this term, among others such as “imagination,” in his arguments for the objectivity of his historical method. According to Novick, in Fling’s time, many historians denied the presence of “interpretation” of fact and shied away from using such words as “imagination” in order to defend the true, objective nature of historical research.²²⁷ However, Fling did not retreat from the use of such vocabulary. Instead, he embraced these terms and established their definitions for use in his particular historical method.

This disregard for the patience of the Progressive Era is exactly what alienated Fling from his contemporaries. Whereas many other progressives were willing to gradually improve the

²²⁶ E. Benjamin Andrews, University Bulletin from the Chancellor, May 9, 1902, E. Benjamin Andrews, Speeches, Box 1, Folder 1, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

²²⁷ Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 47-60.

field of education within the broader context of the Progressive Era as a whole, Fling was much less willing to tolerate the slowness of this progressive approach. These confines or parameters of his historical context were often amplified by the concomitant developments in national and international philosophical thought. As Menand makes clear, the generations of thinkers that preceded, overlapped, and outlived Fling were significantly pre-occupied with science, proof, and reason. These strict epistemological concepts created an ideological world that revolved around numbers, mathematics, evidence, and scientific investigation. The rigidity of investigations undertaken with scientific precision permeated the intellectual atmosphere of the time period and created a reliance on methods of experimental and scientific study. Those who profited greatly from this context were those who learned to work within it, such as scientists and mathematicians who relied on the impartial support of hard-proven facts to back up their theories on racial difference, evolution, social hierarchy and harmony, and ultimately, education.²²⁸ However, those who were often suppressed or ignored were those philosophers who were either debunked as pseudo-scientists, or those who insisted that scientific methods were not the only way to unearth knowledge.

Unfortunately, Fling fell into this latter category. Not only did he argue and strive for a reformation of historical method, but also he repeatedly pled for the elevation of historical method to the level of scientific method, a feat that was only possible if those two methods were indeed distinct. Many researchers and activists of the Progressive Era argued over whether historical method and the study of history were simply the scientific method subsumed within the study of history or whether historical method was itself distinct from, and thus different in nature from,

²²⁸ Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*; evidenced by the organization of the chapters in the book in addition to his discussion of ideological trends throughout the time period.

scientific inquiry. In the former case, theoreticians argued that “historical method” was simply the name given to the scientific method when its elements of evidence and investigation involved pieces of the past, such as documents, pictures, eye-witness statements, and the like.²²⁹ However, in the latter case, researchers argued that the historical method was epistemologically different from the scientific method, and thus, the outcomes of its method, such as historical narratives, were also epistemologically different.²³⁰ Significantly, in the first case, scientists could agree with historians in some methodological instances without forsaking their allegiance to the supremacy of science; whereas, in the second case, scientists who admitted that there were multiple ways to unearth knowledge and, resultantly, multiple sources of knowledge, also implicitly accepted that scientific proof was somehow not singularly responsible for the conclusions and information that society acknowledged as true.

In an age where scientific study and logic were ideological tenets that fostered natural scientists an elite sense of objectivity and respect, agreeing that historical study could somehow be separate from science but still viewed as equally “objective” or “true” was taboo. However, this “separate but equal” argument is precisely what Fling was purporting by defining and teaching his own historical method. Fling sought to defend history as a “scientific” pursuit but he emphasized that it was a *different* science.²³¹ Moreover, seeing that the arguments of many of his contemporaries failed to appease the scientific community, Fling began changing the terminology of the debate itself. Instead of continuing to measure historical study by the methods of science, Fling sought to explain and define the methods of history to separate it from and elevate it to the concurrent objective pursuits of science. Evidence of Fling’s commitment to this distinc-

²²⁹ Fling, *Outline*, xx; Fling, “Historical Synthesis,” 11; reinforced by a general overview of the time period available in Novick, *That Noble Dream* 21-46; and Urban and Wagoner, *American Education*.

²³⁰ Fling, “Historical Synthesis,” 13.

²³¹ Overall conclusion of Fling, “Historical Synthesis.”

tion appears as early as Fling's first major publication in which he includes a chapter specifically devoted to "Historical Methods" and dedicates considerable length to not only a defense of historical method, but to an exposé regarding its nature and importance.

That work, *Studies in European and American History*, was co-authored with Fling's American History counterpart at the university, Howard W. Caldwell. The book was in fact the reprinting of many articles that Fling and Caldwell had published in the *North-Western Journal of Education* in 1896-1897 compiled in book form. According to the co-authors the point of publishing the book was in response to great demand. As they explained,

The following pages are reprinted from the North-Western Journal of Education (now North-Western Monthly) for 1896-1897. During this year, the source study method was introduced into Nebraska and these papers were prepared in the midst of university work to enable the teachers of the state to see what the method means and how it may be applied. They answered their purpose and evidently aided in placing the new work on a permanent basis...numerous requests received during the summer both from old readers of the Journal and new readers of the Monthly, have induced us to reprint them in book form.²³²

Later, in Chapter I of the book, Fling and Caldwell even insert their views on the ideological debate regarding the nature of historical method. As they explain, "[t]he pedagogy of the last half of the nineteenth century differs both in matter and in method from that of the first half...[b]ut the new matter was not more important than the new method."²³³ Further,

The change in matter has consisted in a revolt against the claims of the classics to a monopoly of all knowledge and all discipline...The old method, or lack of method, presided at the birth of the new studies, but the text-book recitation was at first supplemented by experiments performed before the class, and at last by experiments performed by the class, and the change was complete.²³⁴

Although Fling and Caldwell begin by explaining how this new method appeared in science classrooms, they ultimately claim that this method has "universal application and might be as

²³² Fling and Caldwell, *Studies*, Preface.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 9.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

readily employed in teaching other subjects.”²³⁵ Of course, the subject in which they seek to explain this application is history. However, Fling and Caldwell do not see this relevance of scientific method to history classrooms as a complete adoption of the scientific method intact. Instead, they acknowledge that there has been a “touch of scientific influence” in history and that historians’ own “historical method” has now “in the last generation...[been] sufficiently developed to make it possible for the great teachers of history.”²³⁶

To aid in the dissemination of historical method for use in the classroom, Fling and Caldwell were also heavily involved in “The Association of Nebraska Teachers of History,” an organization they helped found in 1896 that later adopted the name Nebraska History Teachers’ Association (NHTA). As Fling and Caldwell explain,

Every teacher should be a member of this association. Membership costs nothing and is simply an evidence of interest in the work and proof of the willingness to co-operate in making it a success. There is a secretary for each district and under-secretaries will be appointed for the counties. The work of these secretaries will be to solicit membership, distribute matter on methods, and to gather information that may be helpful in teaching history.²³⁷

These efforts at reaching out to secondary education in the state were induced by Fling’s belief that “the time has come for energetic and systematic work in the grades below the college.”²³⁸ To increase teachers’ knowledge of historical method, Fling and Caldwell supplemented their original *North-Western Journal of Education* articles with a chapter intended “to give a short sketch of the ‘History of the Teaching of History,’ to deal in a general way with ‘Historical

²³⁵ Ibid., 10.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid., 11.

²³⁸ Ibid., 10.

Methods,' and then to indicate, month by month, in the treatment of American and European history how these methods may be applied in studying and teaching history."²³⁹

In accomplishing this purpose, Fling and Caldwell begin by defining history. To them, history is complex and no simple definition of the discipline will suffice. However, they start by citing Bernheim's definition of history from his *Lehrbuch der historischen Methode*: "history is the science of the evolution of man in his activity as a social being."²⁴⁰ Later, they refine this definition by breaking it down into its component parts and arguing that each element of the definition is true. Namely, that "history is a science, that is, a body of systematized knowledge;" "history is the 'science of the evolution of man;'" and "history has to do with *all* the activities of man as a social being."²⁴¹ Their first argument is the most interesting and shows the greatest influence of the ideological contextual debate regarding the place of history among the sciences. As they state, "all sciences are not equally exact, and that if the term 'natural' be used to exclude man, then there are sciences that are not natural sciences."²⁴² In other words, the co-authors are specifically admitting that "science" is not a uniform term that applies to all disciplines that are purportedly pursued with objectivity. Instead, there are many sciences and, specifically, "there are sciences that are not natural sciences." To the authors, one of those non-natural-science disciplines that is "not equally exact" to its counterpart in experimental sciences is history.

This book generally and these arguments specifically were the culmination of many years of diligent work advertising history as a science alike but not akin to the natural sciences to which Fling was committed during the early years of his career. Published in 1897, this book did not appear until Fling had already been teaching at Nebraska for six years. However, the ideas

²³⁹ Ibid., 11.

²⁴⁰ As cited in Fling and Caldwell, *Studies*, 11.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 11-12, emphasis in original.

²⁴² Ibid., 11.

presented in this significant first chapter on method did not originate in 1897. Instead, they are the product of the laboratory method he learned in Germany during his graduate work, his experiences as an early professor at the university, and his publications in university periodicals, teachers' journals, and the *North-Western Journal of Education* in previous years. Thus, this book represents the impact of Fling's first decade as a professional historian and educator. Although these ideas would continue to evolve and grow throughout his lifetime, this book serves as a model for his patterns of thought and pedagogy throughout the 1890s and the beginning of his career.

In February of 1898, human events began taking center stage for Fling as the battleship *USS Maine* exploded in the Havana Harbor. In the midst of the public outcry for war in the wake of this tragedy, the University community saw a glimpse of Fling's undying belief in America's obligation to assist in times of war. As he explained in an address to a group of University students, he felt strongly that the United States "was called upon in the name of humanity to interfere."²⁴³ His eagerness for America to become involved in this small conflict that would later become known as the Spanish-American War was only a hint at the enormous degree to which he would become enthralled in the developments of World War I, the event with which he was the most publicly notorious in his life. The only other international event that had occupied his attention at these early points in his career was the proposed annexation of Hawaii, which concluded in 1898 also. Fling was engaged in the debate as early as 1893, which is evidenced in a letter from Moses Coit Tyler, professor of American History at Cornell University at the time. In the letter, Tyler stated, "I did not reply to your letter about some popular polemic against the pro-

²⁴³ Fred Morrow Fling as cited in Robert Manley, *Centennial History of the University of Nebraska: Volume I, "Frontier University, 1869-1919"* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1969), 253.

ject for annexing Hawaii...I quite agree with you that annexation would be a step in the wrong direction.”²⁴⁴ Thus, Fling’s attention often focused on international events as they concerned domestic developments.

In 1899, Fling began publishing his own major works on scientific history. In the same year that the Committee of Seven published its report summarily dismissing source method as a viable practice for classrooms, Fling published his first book specifically devoted to describing and defending his theories of historical study, both for research and education. This book, *Outline of Historical Method*, would prove to be Fling’s most comprehensive work on historical method. In that same year, Fling also published *Greek and Roman Civilization: With an Introduction to the Source Study Method*. Similar to his co-authored work with Caldwell, this book began with an introductory chapter that explained the importance of historical study and enriched historical methods and then provided source study examples and suggestions in its remaining pages. The *Outline of Historical Method*, on the other hand, was a comprehensive manual of step-by-step instructions for employing Fling’s historical method in research and instruction. These two books were his first and most important independent major works on his theories of scientific history.

As modern researcher Oliver Pollak explains, Fling’s commitment to teaching this new historical method rested on his desire for “better qualified teachers” in high schools.²⁴⁵ In Fling’s view, the only way for teachers to provide a better education to their students was for those teachers themselves to be better trained as historians. In Fling’s view,

Very few teachers feel competent to teach mathematics, or Latin, or German, or even the sciences, unless they have studied these subjects for many years. But in

²⁴⁴ Moses C. Tyler to Fred M. Fling, Mar 25, 1893.

²⁴⁵ Fling and Caldwell, *Studies*, 208; also cited in Pollak, “Fred Morrow Fling,” 166.

history the thought has been that any one could *read* history for a little time and then be competent *to teach* it. This is an absurdity.²⁴⁶

Pollak posits that “[*Outline*] was written at the height of university influence on the high school history curriculum, and at a time when professional historians wanted to separate themselves from literature and philosophy.”²⁴⁷ Novick reinforces this point by acknowledging that early professionalization of history meant that historians sought to distinguish themselves from mere laypersons with a creative interest in storytelling. In his view, “[t]he professional historians of the late nineteenth century, in pursuit of the authority of science, consistently distanced themselves from, and disparaged, ‘history as literature,’ ‘history as art’.”²⁴⁸ Moreover, it was Fling’s lamentation that anyone could be charged with teaching history at the high school level, which he himself had done before his studies in Germany, because he felt this practice perpetuated the disrespect and lack of precision in historical study that these new professionals were trying to eradicate. As Cherry acknowledges, before his German encounters with laboratory method, even “Fling taught math through problem solving and history through the traditional method of textbook, lecture, and memorization.”²⁴⁹ However, after his reformation in Germany, Fling disparaged the work of traditionalist teachers and advocated for the extension of source method into even the secondary school classroom. As he expresses, “no one would expect Latin or Greek to be taught by other than a trained and qualified teacher.”²⁵⁰ So, in his opinion, the same qualifications should apply to history teachers as well. Thus, Fling wrote *Outline of Historical Method* to provide a comprehensive manual on the essential qualities of history and historical instruction

²⁴⁶ Ibid., emphasis in original.

²⁴⁷ Pollak, “Fred Morrow Fling,” 166.

²⁴⁸ Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 40.

²⁴⁹ Cherry, “Online Cultural Heritage,” 55.

²⁵⁰ Fling and Caldwell, *Studies* 208; also cited in Pollak, “Fred Morrow Fling,” 166.

for teachers in Nebraska, just like Bernheim had written *Lehrbuch der historischen Methode* for historians.

However, as Pollak acknowledges, even though the *Outline of Historical Method* was “ostensibly addressed to high school teachers,” its “rigorous, perhaps uncongenial, and forbidding tone seemed to ignore the psychology of teaching and probably limited its impact as a seriously read and applied high school history teacher’s aid [*sic*].”²⁵¹ In this instance, Fling’s own attention to detail in his research and pride in his precision actually prevented these materials from being accessible on a larger scale at the secondary school level. In fact, Osborne reinforces this point by acknowledging that Fling’s meticulous nature and fastidiousness in writing accounted for the paucity of reception of many of his materials throughout the state, even though he specifically “believed that source work would make teachers’ work more intellectually rewarding.”²⁵² Fling argued that this sense of accomplishment was the greatest incentive for teachers to use his materials and hone their historical skills. As he stated later in 1907 regarding his first sourcebook written for teachers to use in their instruction, “[a] book like this, if properly used, should give the teacher of history an inspiration and an uplift similar to that drawn by the teacher of science from work in the laboratory. He is learning himself, and he is trying to teach his pupils how to attain to historical truth.”²⁵³ Thus, *Outline of Historical Method* was intended as a teacher resource that could prepare and empower teachers to provide the most rigorous historical education available to their students through the use of a scientific historical method.

²⁵¹ Pollak, “Fred Morrow Fling,” 168.

²⁵² Osborne, “Fred Morrow Fling,” 484.

²⁵³ Fling, *Sourcebook*, vii.

Fling's Historical Method in the *Outline*

To Fling the historian's work was rigorous and analogous, though not identical, to the work of his natural science counterparts. However, Fling acknowledged that many researchers still belittled the work of historians because they claimed it was riddled with inherent weaknesses, such as subjectivity and bias. Moreover, the sources of history themselves were often incomplete or insufficient for drawing objective conclusions. For historians, the only way to overcome these inherent defects in historical records is to view them critically and skeptically, taking nothing ostensibly as fact, but only forming a consensus out of the information after careful analysis. Clearly, these tasks are exceptionally difficult and, as Fling would claim, more difficult than the work set before the natural scientist.

In fact, Jared Diamond, in his article "Soft Sciences are Often Harder than Hard Sciences," argues along exactly this same line. As Diamond explains, "all scientists, from mathematicians to social scientists, have to solve the task of operationalizing their intuitive concepts" but the hard sciences can rely on measurement and quantity, which are often straightforward and formulaic.²⁵⁴ However, "the task of operationalizing is inevitably more difficult and less exact in the soft sciences, because there are so many uncontrolled variables" and operationalization of concepts with which social scientists work is very uncertain.²⁵⁵ In many ways, Fling was arguing this exact difficulty for history by explaining that the methods of historians, though objective, were not experimental in exactly the same way as the natural sciences. To him, historical method was a much greater undertaking than scientists themselves pursued because there were no exact measurements of the past on which historians could rely. Instead, historians had to imagine

²⁵⁴ Jared Diamond, "Soft Sciences are Often Harder than Hard Sciences," *Discover* (1989), 39.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

not only the connections between the facts they uncovered, the reality of the context and events being described by the sources, and the reliability of their sources and investigative methods, but also they had to invent the entire parameters by which their historical research undertaking was designed. Although qualitative and quantitative researchers of today can easily recognize this debate, Fling was in a lot of ways prescient in arguing for the nature and quality of historical research.

Moreover, because this historical understanding was not necessarily innate in all people with historical interest, it was the purpose of history education to follow and propagate a reliable technique for analyzing source material in order to gain historical insight and to teach students how to approach sources critically through this method. Fling was showing that, just like it would be impossible for a layperson to gather scientific materials and conduct an experiment without formal training, so it should be just as impossible for an untrained eye to review source material and make sensible conclusions about the past without formal *historical* training. Thus, partly to add to the defense of the practice of history as a science, and partly due to personal passion in transforming an outdated discipline, Fling created his own reformed historical method, guides to follow that method, and a defense to solidify its use.

This procedure starts with the sources and proceeds in a step-by-step process of critique, evaluation, and synthesis, which Fling painstakingly delineated in his *Outline of Historical Method*. In the final stage, the historian develops a synthesis of his arranged facts in order to convey those facts to others in the form of a final, written history. Importantly, throughout this process, the role of the historian is simply to “communicate to others the results of his re-

search.”²⁵⁶ To Fling, the historian maintains his objective and scientific nature by simply retelling the past as it happened instead of interpreting or amending that past. To Fling there is no element of subjectivity within this pursuit because the historian does not allow personal motivation, sway, or allegiance to mold his presentation of the facts. Moreover, these “facts” are simply *a priori* past elements that exist beyond the construction of the historian, which he has already uncovered through careful analysis and evaluation. So, the retelling of these facts neither alters nor affects them. Instead, these facts are pieces of information to be discovered, which the historical method serves to bring to light through careful and thorough analysis.

Many of Fling’s contemporaries and modern historians like Novick show how this depiction of “objective” truth has its own set of snares. Perspective, interpretation, beliefs, exclusion bias, and even personal attitudes all affect a historian’s ability to provide a genuinely “objective” account of the past, if such an account is even possible, which many contemporary historians doubt.²⁵⁷ However, for Fling’s purposes, arguing for the “truth” that this pursuit uncovered and the “facts” that the historian includes in his narrative were never the main foci of Fling’s philosophy. To Fling, historic facts were self-evidentially true and objective; their nature did not need a defense. In his view, if a student or historian employed the source method correctly, then what he uncovered *was* fact; it did not need to be defended as such. The only way a student could uncover untruths would be to apply the source method incorrectly, which was not a fault of the ontological quality of historic fact but of the student and the teacher. Thus, the prevention of this error was exactly why students needed well-trained teachers who were themselves skilled at historical method. For this reason, Fling did not feel the need to defend history as objective; he

²⁵⁶ Fling, *Outline*, 113.

²⁵⁷ The overall conclusion in Novick’s *That Noble Dream* is that objectivity in historical research is impossible.

rarely even entertained the idea that objectivity in history was questionable. To him, this characteristic was a basic truism that made history intrinsically scientific. Instead, Fling's arguments focus on defending the *use* of historic method with students in history classrooms. Through this method, he believed that students could become more proficient scientific historians, just like his professional companions that were legitimating the field itself. As he explains, for both historians and students, history was to be "no longer a simple teller of stories; the muse has set herself a sterner task."²⁵⁸

This "sterner task" was the new process that historians were to employ to produce historical narratives, which students could also learn through instruction in this method. Fling strove to achieve this higher level of historical inquiry in his own research on the French Revolution, which he published in 1903, 1905, and 1908. Alternately throughout his work, Fling calls this task or set of tasks "historical method," "historical criticism," "inquiry," or simply "history." This method required a specific set of analytical skills and a devotion to seeking the truth, a practice that Fling titled "historical criticism."²⁵⁹ These skills, however, were not innate to all students nor historians but Fling assured his readers that people could learn them. He related these abilities to an understanding of psychology. As Fling explains,

The student of history must have at least a working knowledge of psychology. Much good history, it might be said, was written before such a science as psychology existed. True, but it was written by men who through introspection knew much about the workings of their own minds, and through experience much about the workings of their fellows' minds. They applied this to their work, sometimes consciously, more often unconsciously. To-day, in addition to his own introspective study and his experience, the student of history has at his disposal scientific treatises upon the operations of the human mind, and is taught to apply this knowledge consciously in his work.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁸ Fling and Caldwell, *Studies*, 12.

²⁵⁹ Terminology found and consistent in all of Fling's major works, including student notes.

²⁶⁰ Fling, *Outline*, 12.

Historians today would call this process intuition or reflection when applied to considering one's own mindset and empathy or imagination when applied to considering the mindset of others. Basically, Fling is claiming that historians need to be thoughtful, reflective, critical, and most importantly, skeptical, in their approach to historic sources or materials. The reason for this skepticism is clear: all historians must employ the same historical method and that method relies on the remnants of the past, which historians critically assess for their overall value to the investigation.²⁶¹

The first step in this process is the selection of appropriate sources. When studying the past, historians may find that very few sources or a plethora of sources exist for a particular event. In either case, the historical method begins when the historian gathers these sources together in order to create a comprehensive collection of observations. Although this task may seem daunting, cumbersome, or even banal, Fling reminds the historian that it is essential to the discipline of history:

The historical method, whose aim it is to keep as close as possible to the perceptible reality...renders its concepts definite by producing a clear image of the person or event that it is treating. It often uses for this purpose more material than appears to be logically necessary.²⁶²

In other words, in this initial stage of the historical method, the historian should not limit the sources that he collects. Instead, he should gather all relevant material to be as thorough as possible.

The next stage of the historical method is the criticism of the collected sources. This stage employs several sub-steps, divided into "external" and "internal" criticisms.²⁶³ These two criticisms differ in that the external criticisms employ various analytical tools to determine the

²⁶¹ Ibid., 13.

²⁶² Fling, "Historical Synthesis," 17-18.

²⁶³ Fling, *Outline*, 36-48.

sources' potential reliability and usefulness, whereas the internal criticisms employ the tools of psychology that help the historian determine the interpretation and synthesis of the historical facts. So, this stage is "external" and "internal" in relation to the historian, not to the sources. Moreover, as Fling explains, the historian is likely to quickly realize that "his work can not go on without the use of one or more auxiliary sciences," such as psychology, but regularly also "*palaeography*, or the science of writing...*diplomats*, or the study of documents, and perhaps several others."²⁶⁴

Ultimately, the historian's goal in this stage is to select only the sources that are the most dependable, useful, and genuine for studying the object under inspection and, from those sources, only the pieces of information that are the most accurate, reliable, and valid. Each of these tasks obviously requires the judgment of the historian, which Novick and other historical objectivity pessimists posit as the reason for the lack of objectivity in these historical pursuits.²⁶⁵ However, Fling contends that these decisions, when augmented by the tools of psychology and historical mindfulness, are precisely the honed skills of a trained historian that preempt the possibility of subjective determinations from being employed during the research. To him, the "judgements" of a qualified historian are *de facto* objective specifically because of his training, expertise, and experience in using the method to form conclusions.

In other words, through the use of historical methods, historians become different thinkers who are uniquely able to see past subjective influences and garner only the truth from histori-

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 23-24.

²⁶⁵ See Novick, *That Noble Dream*. As he explains, historians of Fling's time period repeatedly defended their tactics as "objective," failing to see the obvious distinction between personal judgment in historical research and unbiased presentation of historical fact. Instead, historians of the Progressive Era often believed that the concurrent professionalization of history, which made them entitled to respect as authorities of historical inquiry, ensured their consistency in output, and thus, their objectivity. In other words, the fact that historians were finally "professionals" was enough to guarantee the objectivity of their word.

cal research as long as they continue to employ the historical method correctly. Of course, Novick would still consider this sentiment to be part of the overall contextual arrogance of early professionals who believed they were elite as compared to laypersons and thus somehow removed from the possibility of bias or error.²⁶⁶ In his view, these early historians believed they were the ultimate objective authorities on historical knowledge. In Fling's description of the beginning stages of his method and the abilities of historians who are properly trained, Novick's description does seem accurate. However, as a product of his time period, Fling would not have been wary about these views. Instead, they were endemic to professionals of his era. Moreover, even modern researchers like Reynolds identify the existence of a researcher's "sixth sense," which, though difficult to define, was an essential tool in the historian's craft.²⁶⁷

Fling does provide one warning regarding the beginning stages of the historical method. Because historical study is such a massive undertaking, Fling recommends that students of history design a research study around a "specialization."²⁶⁸ By specialization, Fling means a focused approach to study that concentrates on a specific element, era, or event of the past instead of a large expanse of time. As he explains, "[s]pecial study and comprehensive views of history are not irreconcilable things."²⁶⁹ So, he is not suggesting that researchers should have only a narrow focus and forego the investigation of holistic understandings of time periods or historical eras. Instead, his point is that historical study is the discipline of the *entire* expanse of human history or, as he states, "the evolution of man in society."²⁷⁰ As such, this undertaking simply cannot be completed by one historian during one study. Instead, it must be the collaborative work of *all*

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 146-151.

²⁶⁷ Reynolds, "Finding Facts," 179.

²⁶⁸ Fling, *Outline*, 24.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 25.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 24.

historians whose collective work serves to chronicle the holistic picture while each one's individual work specializes in an exact area in order to treat each area with the most precision and objectivity as possible.²⁷¹ Only by undertaking history in this way can each historian ensure that his conclusions are accurate and that his narratives may add to the overall body of shared knowledge regarding the past. As Fling explains,

We are just coming to a realization of the magnitude of the task to be accomplished in correctly tracing this evolution [of man in society], and of the only way in which it may be accomplished. The uninitiated are accustomed to sneer at the specialist in history who confines himself to a limited field and works it thoroughly. But, it is the sneer of ignorance. Such specialization in the natural sciences is taken as a matter of course. We must learn that the same reasons make specialization imperative in historical sciences. Without specialization, we can not advance.²⁷²

In this quote, Novick's sense of elitism is also palpable. First, by calling the detractors of this view "ignorant," Fling is again distancing the professional historian from the layperson or the critic who may disagree with this refined vision of historical study. And, second, by relying on a comparison to the field of the natural sciences, Fling not only shows his constant battle for recognition as an equal counterpart to the scientist but also relies on a scientist's more commonly accepted reputation as support for his argument. In both of these instances, Novick's point is supported as a review of the time period: not only is Fling reinforcing the elitism of scientists by referencing their already-held position of respect, but also he is again trying to distance the "specialist in history" (read: professional historian) from the amateur. In this passage, Fling's own sense of elitism is evident.

²⁷¹ This is Fling's view and argument in the 1890s when you published *Outline*. However, as stated previously, Fling will eventually change his view and decide to chronicle the entire expanse of human history on his own, even though he never finishes this project. Thus, by 1920, his views regarding specialization, at least for his own study of the past, seem to have changed from this specialized view to a comprehensive, yet still scientific and detailed, one.

²⁷² Fling, *Outline*, 24-25.

Nevertheless, the warning and defense he provides does have merit for an understanding of the study of history. As historians today may readily agree, comprehensive surveys of history are often the least rigorous and the most superficial narratives in the field of historical study. Although they do serve an important function, such as history that is consumed by the masses or summarized views of large expanses of time, they often lack the depth for which academic historians strive in their own work. Sipress and Voelker reinforce this point by explaining that “[o]ver the past several decades, history instructors have faced what one scholar has called ‘a steady enlarging of what historians have included as history,’ a phenomenon that has pushed our textbooks and courses to ‘the breaking point’.”²⁷³ Moreover, they posit that the desire for methods of “coverage” in these large survey courses in history have resulted in a scarcity of depth.²⁷⁴ Their point is precisely Fling’s argument from more than one hundred years prior. Namely, in order to include more material in a history survey course, a teacher must sacrifice depth and pedagogy. So, to avoid this sacrifice, historians should specialize in a particular area in order to treat it with the level of precision it deserves. Today, it is quite commonplace for historians to specialize in differentiated eras, regions, or themes of history within their broader fields to overcome this lack of historical depth.

Fling’s point seems to be a view of this direction that historical study would follow in the eighty years after his death. As he states,

²⁷³ Joel M. Sipress and David J. Voelker, “The End of the History Survey Course: The Rise and Fall of the Coverage Model,” *The Journal of American History* 97 (2011): 1050; original quoted text from Thomas Mendenhall, “The Introductory College Course in Civilization,” in Eric Russell Lacy, ed., *Readings on Historical Method*, (New York: MSS Educational Publishing Company, Inc, 1944), 82. Though the original quote is from 1944, even the authors make special note of this time discrepancy in text. Their point is that this age-old lamentation – voiced as early as 1944 – still has special significance in education today and the fact that decades have passed and little has been done to correct this deficiency only makes it that much more disheartening.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 1051.

Every scientific investigator will not only know first hand the results obtained in his own part of the field, but he will know second hand the results obtained in other parts of the field. Specialization can be dangerous only when the specialist fails to keep in touch with the greater whole of which his work is only a part.²⁷⁵

Thus, Fling is not suggesting that historians remove themselves from the “bigger picture” of history as a whole and focus solely on finite and disjointed parts of the past. Moreover, he is well aware of the importance of a contextual understanding of a comprehensive history in order to study any event or topic with precision. As he states later in the *Outline*, “[t]he historian of today realizes that it is not only necessary to consider each event as a link in a chain of events—if he would understand the particular event—but that he must also possess a knowledge of the physical, psychical, and social conditions that form the environment of the events.”²⁷⁶ Thus, context is just as important as the specialization of the topic under scrutiny. His point is simply that historical study is best completed when the depth of the study outweighs its breadth. In this first stage of the historical method when sources are compiled, this emphasis on a specialized area of history can seem like a blessing in that it does decrease the extent of sources that must be collected. Moreover, by maintaining a narrower focus, Fling contends that it is possible to gather *all* necessary and relevant sources. Once the sources are gathered, the researcher is ready to begin the formal tasks within the criticism stage for each of the sources.

First, the historian must perform the various external criticisms of a source in order to determine its validity. These external criticisms include “genuineness” of the source, “localization” of the source, and “analysis” of the source.²⁷⁷ To determine the genuineness of a source, the historian must determine “if it is what it pretends to be.”²⁷⁸ The potential pitfalls are its likelihood

²⁷⁵ Fling, *Outline*, 25.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 100.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

²⁷⁸ Fling, *Greek and Roman Civilization*, vii.

of being a forgery or the likelihood that the historian perceives the source to be more meaningful than it actually is. Although the first shortcoming is a problem of the source itself, the second problem is the fault of the historian. As Fling warns, “criticism is often a thankless task” because the historian will likely discard many of the sources he spent his time and effort to collect.²⁷⁹ This difficulty may tempt the historian, either consciously or subconsciously, to stretch the sources to glean from them information that they do not provide or to use a source in a way that distorts its original intention. Thus, the historian must be on guard not only for forgeries, but also for self-deception.

Second, the historian must determine the “localization” of the source.²⁸⁰ By localization, Fling means the origins of the source, including “*when* the source originated, *where* it originated, and *who* the author was.”²⁸¹ However, these are not simple questions with simple answers. Instead, each analytical step itself produces greater investigation of its own. To illustrate, Fling provides an example of the localization of a source from Herodotus on the battle of Salamis:

Suppose, for example, we have a description of the battle of Salamis; what do we want to know about that account in order to determine its value? First of all, who wrote it? Herodotus. Who was Herodotus? A Greek. Was he living at the time? Probably. Was he present at the battle? Probably not. Why not? The battle took place in 480 B.C. and Herodotus was born in 485 B.C. That would make him about five years old at the time. It is evident, then, that Herodotus, although he lived at the time, could not have been present at the battle and must have obtained his information from others and many years later. He is not, then, a source, but was obliged to write his account from the sources, as a man born in 1860 might write the history of our Civil War.²⁸²

As this example shows, the historian must remain critical at all stages of the localization of a source.

²⁷⁹ Fling, *Outline*, 27.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 36-48.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 36, emphasis in original.

²⁸² Fling, *Greek and Roman Civilization*, vii-viii. Coincidentally, Fling is one such man born in 1860 and never undertook to write a history of the Civil War.

In determining the source's origins, the ultimate goal of the historian is to focus on the reliability of the author of the source. This reliability entails two essential elements of the author's credibility. First, the historian must determine the author's *ability* to tell the truth, which is a factor of his relation to the event, his knowledge of it, and his level of education that would make his observation accurate. Second, the historian must determine the author's *willingness* to tell the truth, which relates to his political socialization, motivation for writing the source, and potential bias or pressure that would cause him to distort the account. As Fling explains,

The determination of the authorship of a source is of greatest importance. Not that we may simply know the name of the author, do we seek this information, but that we may know what kind of a person he is and what his position in society is. Only in this way can we determine what his testimony is worth.²⁸³

Only after this careful localization occurs can the historian consider the use of a given source in his investigation. To Fling, if the source survives this scrutiny and the historian deems it useful, then this process helps ensure the scientific objectivity of the research and synthesis.

The last step in the external criticism of a source is the formal "analysis" of the source.²⁸⁴ To a modern historian, this terminology could be misleading. This stage does not include a formal analysis of the *information* provided in the source, a procedure that Fling would call "interpretation."²⁸⁵ Instead, to Fling, this stage is simply the reading of the source, preferably in its original form, to gain a basic understanding of the source's topic. Modern historians would likely be more comfortable with the term "investigation" instead of analysis for this stage of the procedure, since the historian completes his analysis in reference to the source itself, not to the information contained within the source as the word "analysis" commonly implies. Moreover, this stage may involve restoring the source if it has in some way been marred through the passage of

²⁸³ Fling, *Outline*, 44.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 49-61.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 62.

time, a task that modern historians would associate with historic preservation more than historical analysis. However, as many current historians would agree, Fling explains that “the need of text analysis is self-evident.”²⁸⁶ The main work of a historian is grappling with the original texts and deciphering the information that they contain. At the most basic level, “[n]ot all parts of [a witness’s] record are equally valuable and the first-hand evidence can be separated from the derived only by analysis.”²⁸⁷

Like the localization of the source, this stage also involves two focal points. First, the historian must analyze each individual source separately. Second, he must analyze the sources in combination with others to gather all similar sources together. This step in analysis is analogous to the eventual writing of the synthesis in which fragmented pieces of history connect to one another in a coherent narrative of assembled fact. However, at this stage, the historian simply reads and describes the sources and physically groups the sources together based on their topics; he does not search within those sources for complimentary or contradictory information. In the historian’s final synthesis stage, he will focus on the facts and information *within* those sources to fully analyze the content of those sources and create a consensus of historical knowledge.

The next stage within the criticism phase of Fling’s historical method is internal criticism. In these criticisms, the historian finally begins the long and treacherous process of investigating the information found *within* the sources and compiling a coherent sense of historical fact from the records. Fling considers these procedures to be internal criticisms because they rely on decisions and judgments made by the historian himself. Although historians have been implicitly making value judgments throughout the historical method, in this stage of internal criticism, the

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 49.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

historian relies solely on what he personally determines and creates. Thus, the act of internal criticism relies on the psychology and intuition of the historian and forces him to reveal unique information that is drawn *from* the sources based on historical judgments about them.

Fling devoted great effort to defending specifically this portion of his historical method throughout his works. Due to the apparently subjective nature of this stage, it is understandable that his efforts were directed in this way. In fact, his numerous defenses of this stage imply his awareness of the tenuousness with which he expected his critics to receive it. Moreover, the emphasis he placed on defending his internal criticisms as scientific show his recognition of the need to defend this point above most others. Similar to a child who tries too hard to convince his mother of a lie, these defenses often read as though Fling himself may have felt uneasy with the solidity of internal criticism's objectivity within the historical method. Nonetheless, he urges that through proper method, the historian can ensure success and fidelity to objectivity.

The first step of internal criticism is the "interpretation" of the sources.²⁸⁸ Significantly, Fling's own understanding of his stage of interpretation seemed to grow and evolve throughout his works on historical method. In his first major work of 1899, *Greek and Roman Civilization*, Fling calls this interpretation simply the "arrangement of the facts"²⁸⁹ but, later that year, he gives it a more precise description: "the mission of Interpretation is to discover the thoughts that the writer expressed in the text...[and] to understand the testimony of the source in its significance for the connection of the facts."²⁹⁰ Thus, interpretation appears to be the historian's inquiry into the author's comprehension of the information that a source provides in order to determine the "general estimate of the value of the work" and how that work augments or extends

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 62-74.

²⁸⁹ Fling, *Greek and Roman Civilization*, xv.

²⁹⁰ Fling, *Outline*, 62-63.

the presentation of historical fact.²⁹¹ This act is done by reading and interpreting the source and arranging the source's information in relation to information provided in other sources. Through repetition with all sources under investigation, the historian then begins to form a clearer picture of the historical fact underlying the historical records.

Interpretation is one of Fling's most difficult stages in the historical method both in terms of how it is to be performed and precisely how it is meant to ensure objectivity when the only means of investigation is the historian. Moreover, interpretation seems to be involved in every stage of source collection and analysis, not simply a separate stage that the historian performs at only one specific point in the process. Fling himself acknowledges this potential difficulty and explains,

Yet, on the other hand, why not introduce Interpretation earlier...and make it a part of External Criticism? To test the genuineness of a source, to localize it, to analyze it, we are obliged to interpret it, to get at the thoughts that the writer wished to express, and that is interpretation. The work of interpretation may begin at the very outset of the work of the historian.²⁹²

However, Fling does not falter on his conclusion that interpretation deserves a separate stage of the historical method. Instead, later in the same book, he defends his positioning by remarking,

After taking everything into consideration, it has seemed wisest to me to make a compromise and treat the following topics under Internal Criticism: (1) Determination of the Value of the Source; (2) Interpretation of the Source; and (3) Establishment of the Facts.²⁹³

Thus, Fling situates interpretation clearly in the realm of internal criticism as a separate step in the process. Moreover, in his formal explanations of interpretation, he combines it with the task of "valuation," which he claims is the product of interpretation and is, therefore, a necessary and

²⁹¹ Ibid., 64.

²⁹² Ibid., 63-64.

²⁹³ Ibid., 64.

connected step within interpretation itself. His organization of *Outline* reinforces this connection by combining both “interpretation” and “valuation” into one chapter.

The next step of internal criticism is “establishment” of the facts.²⁹⁴ This stage appears straightforward: determining from the sources what piece of evidence or information constitutes “fact” and what piece of evidence or information can be discarded as “unreliable.”²⁹⁵ This stage is yet another area in which historical study differs philosophically from the natural sciences. Whereas the goal of scientific inquiry is the establishment of laws to which the observed “unique reality” only relates through example, the historian focuses primarily on this reality and builds the historical “story” based only on those *a priori* facts themselves.²⁹⁶ In other words, the scientific method works perfectly for the facts of science because science focuses on the generalization and only uses specific examples to test and solidify those generalizations. As Fling states, “[science] depends also upon the assumption that what is found to be true for a part of the reality is true for the whole of reality, in other words, that the concepts of natural science are universally valid.”²⁹⁷ Thus, by this inductive reasoning design, science “loses its specificity” in the process because its goal is the universally extractable theories and laws of nature.²⁹⁸

However, history is concerned primarily with specificity (i.e. the historic reality as it occurred) and cannot afford to lose it in the face of broad generalizations. In fact, as Fling explains, generalizations have no place in history and would not be regarded as valid conclusions like they are in science because “[t]he reality is unique...[n]othing repeats itself and no two

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 75-86.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 75.

²⁹⁶ Fling, “Historical Synthesis,” 12.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 11.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 17-18.

things are alike.”²⁹⁹ As he also makes clear, “[h]uman beings, moreover, are not like chemical atoms; the same external causes, acting on different human aggregates produce unlike effects. To one people, a sea would be a barrier; to another, it is the threshold to a new world.”³⁰⁰

So, unlike science, history is not concerned with finding the means by which historical facts relate, but with presenting each unique historic fact as it appears through research. Fling is confident in this type of science because he believes that history “can present something of the uniqueness of the reality and at the same time retain something of its perceptibility.”³⁰¹ In other words, historical research does allow historians to uncover facts of the past in all their individuality and distinctiveness. In turn, the historian *arranges* those historic facts, which exist outside of the historian’s discovery of them, to form a full picture of the historic story. This inherent factual quality of history is itself contentious. According to Novick, “[t]ruth was ‘the opinion which [was] fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate.’”³⁰² Moreover, this “truth” was discernible simply by “following the social process which produced it.”³⁰³ In other words, knowledge taken to be “truth” in Fling’s time period did not *de facto* live up to this standard just by being purported as such. Instead, the professionalized atmosphere of the new discipline of history reinforced that those who created history were in fact presenting it factually, whether they were or not.

However, by Fling’s conception, objective historical truth is incontrovertible and exists independently of those who research it. So, it was not historians’ authority that made them accu-

²⁹⁹ Fling, *Outline*, 13; also apparent in Marie Hermanek Cripe, Wednesday Lecture Notes, October 1926 - May 1927, Fred Morrow Fling Collection, Box 14, Folder 2, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE (hereafter cited as Cripe, Wednesday Lecture Notes).

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 102.

³⁰¹ Fling, “Historical Synthesis,” 13.

³⁰² Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 52; secondary citation taken from the time period.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

rate, it was the method they followed that ensured their veracity. In Fling's view, if the historian has faithfully adhered to the historical method and has reached the final stages of establishment and arrangement of facts, the historian's relationship to these historical facts is not and cannot be a matter of subjectivity. Instead, and most importantly for Fling's philosophy, *a priori* facts do exist in history, these facts are determinable by historians, and historians simply establish and arrange these facts in their final historical narratives. The narrative is inherently factual because it is made up of facts and does not sacrifice nor distort those facts. The narrative is simply the product of a method that is designed to ensure precision and accuracy. If the historian follows the method correctly, then his conclusions are simply an arrangement and presentation of facts that exist beyond and outside of himself.

This quality of the narrative is precisely the reason that Fling's historical science differs from the conclusions produced by the natural sciences. Fling would not argue that historical truths and facts are identical in nature to the "truths" produced by science. He would say precisely that historic fact *does not* maintain this definition. Moreover, he would not see this characteristic as a shortfall. Instead, he explains that the definition of "fact" that applies to historical pursuits differs from that definition as applied to science. Namely, historical facts exist to be discovered, whereas scientific facts must be created and proven. Fling contends that historians do not occupy themselves with tests and theories to prove explanations of unseen phenomena. Historians focus on actual real-world events that exist solely in the perceivable, albeit past, world. So, if anything, the "truths" that historians unearth are *more* accurate in Fling's conception than are those of the natural sciences because historians describe events that did actually occur instead of contrived events that scientists manipulate in a laboratory. Fling was not trying to

prove that historical fact was identical to scientific fact. Instead, he was trying to prove exactly that they are different.

Moreover, to Fling, objectivity did not exist only in relation to the existence of “facts” in any discipline. Instead, practitioners in any field achieved objectivity through the procedure that they employed, not solely the “facts” that they concluded during that process. So, Fling would criticize *scientists* themselves for misunderstanding the objective nature of history, and thus the measures by which its objectivity should be judged, by their attempt to conflate scientific “fact” with that of historic “fact.” To Fling, these constructs are two very different epistemological ideas, but both science and history can still achieve objectivity in their procedures for uncovering these facts. In other words, science and history do not employ the same techniques, nor do they create the same outputs, but they do achieve the same objectivity in method. By this explanation, Fling is again contending that *method* ensures objectivity, not product. For this reason, Fling does not occupy himself with a defense of historic “truth” as objective in an epistemological sense. In his view, this defense would be superfluous. Historical facts simply *are* true because of the nature of history and the concurrent positivistic approaches to knowledge characteristic of the Progressive Era.

In many ways, the stage devoted to establishing these historic facts is the embodiment of the unique “method of the historical sciences” that Fling defends.³⁰⁴ A correlative sub-step of this stage also exists: “[h]aving established the individual facts, the next step is to arrange them.”³⁰⁵ Fling suggests many options for arrangement, such as time, place, topic, or a combination of these categories. Historians today would more clearly recognize Fling’s suggestions as

³⁰⁴ Fling, “Historical Synthesis,” 8.

³⁰⁵ Fling, *Greek and Roman Civilization*, xv.

chronological arrangement and thematic arrangement, though Fling himself does not employ these terms.

The Final Stage: The Historical Synthesis

After the historian establishes and arranges the facts, he is ready to transition into the final stage of Fling's historical method: the "synthetic operations" stage.³⁰⁶ In this stage, the historian develops a synthesis of his arranged facts in order to convey those facts to others. In other words, the historian produces his final, written history. In some respects, and as Fling's contemporaries would agree, once the historian completes the first two stages of the historic method, the "scientific" stages of the process seem complete. However, because Fling maintains that it is the *process* itself that ensures the objectivity of history, he will also contend that the remaining procedures employed during this final stage remain of utmost importance to the integrity of the initial historical pursuit. So, another of Fling's main diversions from his contemporaries is the contention that the scientific work of the historian still exists in this final stage. To Fling, the tendency to omit this scientific quality is precisely what confounds the practice of history and makes it liable to attacks from outside the field:

While there is a general agreement as to what the work of criticism is and how this work can best be accomplished, the field of historical synthesis is largely unexplored territory. Historians do not agree as to the end, nor the means to reaching that end. Under these conditions, it is no cause for wonder that men, laying no claim to historical training, write so-called historical narratives, and that these narratives find acceptance on account of their literary, but not on account of their scientific, qualities.³⁰⁷

In other words, Fling is arguing that laypersons and amateur historians may write compelling narratives that serve a literary purpose of storytelling, but that garner criticism because of

³⁰⁶ Fling, *Outline*, 87-99.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 87.

their lack of objectivity. In his historical context, the works of these literary proletarians had brought harm to the reputations of actual “objective” historians because they added substance to the arguments of critics who dismissed the products that all historians created. As Novick remarks, professionalization of history gave historians credence to their division between history and literature in a time period when they sought to identify themselves as scientists in an objective sense, instead of artists in a literary sense.³⁰⁸ Here again, Fling is practicing the elitism of his era by trying to explain the difference between trained, professional historians and those who show just a languid interest in historical events without the skill or training necessary to correctly research those events. In his view, he was seeking to ensure that history be “rescued from dilettanteism.”³⁰⁹ Moreover, he acknowledged that many other disciplines that influenced the work of historians were also on the threshold of evolution from hobbies to professional pursuits:

But the sciences dealing with these conditions [of historical context] are in a formative state and can furnish only scanty assis'ance [*sic*]. Anthropogeography, anthropology, ethnology, individual and social psychology, and sociology will transform historical work when they themselves have reached a more advanced stage of development. Under the influence of these sciences, synthetic historical work will, in the future, become scientific...³¹⁰

To aid in this refinement of historical synthesis as scientific, Fling offered that the final stage of historic method is paramount to the integrity of the method as a whole in order to distinguish it from literature.

In order to successfully assemble a scientific synthesis, the historian must always relate to, and garner support from, the sources that he gathered. As Novick also acknowledges,

Fred Morrow Fling wrote that “if sufficient evidence exists to enable the investigator to establish the facts and combine them into series, if he will gaze long

³⁰⁸ Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 40.

³⁰⁹ Fling, *Outline*, 100.

³¹⁰ *Ibid*; though likely intending “assistance” in this case, the actual notation in Fling’s work is “assis’ance.”

and attentively at his series, if he will but press them for their larger significance and causal connection, he will not fail to get his reward.”³¹¹

In Fling’s view, this “reward” was the historian’s purely objective, successful historical narrative that he wrote from a synthesis of the historical information that he gathered. Moreover, although this quoted text comes from a book that Fling would not publish until 1920, the point he is making appears also in his earlier works. Namely, historians can compile completed historical syntheses of facts from the sources they have at their disposal. As he explains in the *Outline*, this task is an artistic balance between precision and completeness:

However limited the topic of investigation, not all the results of that investigation can possibly be presented in all their fullness of detail. An historian who attempted to communicate all the facts that he had found concerning the life of Napoleon would never find readers. It is a practical question. Obligated to choose between “being complete and unknowable or of being knowable and incomplete,” historical synthesis naturally decided in favor of the latter.³¹²

Moreover, Fling acknowledged that the choices that historians must make when compiling their synthetic histories required a significant amount of skill in both historical reasoning and “condensation” of the historical information. As he explains,

If not all the results of the investigation can be communicated, it follows that there must be condensation and this condensation must be performed in such a manner that the narrative will, as far as possible, correspond to the reality as it appeared to the investigator... To condense, to omit unimportant details, to retain the right proportions in the condensed material, is a thing calling for an infinite amount of skill.³¹³

In order to generate this condensation of information, the historian must force himself to justify every claim and to take every possible precaution from infusing the synthesis with his own biases or predispositions. In other words, he must always relate back to evidentiary support from the sources.

³¹¹ Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 38; original cited text from Fling, *The Writing of History*, 149.

³¹² Fling, *Outline*, 114; original quotation uncredited.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 114-115.

Fling does not ignore that the communication of historical information to readers in the form of historical synthesis and, eventually, historical narrative must inevitably involve some use of the imagination in piecing together the parts of history that otherwise seem disjointed. However, he would consider this task to be an element of prose, not pursuit, even though he is very careful to distinguish the work of a historian from that of a literary artist. As he explains,

The work of imagining and grouping the facts calls the fancy into play. It is the scientific fancy with which we have to do and not the poetic fancy.

The poet is free to create the material with which he works; the historian has his material given him and is limited by it, while he is free to combine it under the subjective categories of his mind. The uncontrolled imagination is a dangerous thing in history, and leads to false conceptions and combinations.³¹⁴

To avoid any falsification of historic fact, the historian must employ his own judgment in determining the value of sources in relation to others if those sources disagree and must employ multiple stages of criticism in order to glean only facts from those sources. Once these facts are compiled, only then may a historian use what Fling has called “the subjective categories of his mind” in order to convey his collected facts in narrative form.

In order to accomplish these judgements within their writing, historians must employ what Fling dubbed “constructive reasoning.”³¹⁵ Constructive reasoning was a historian’s only tool for bridging the gaps within the collected information that appeared once all sources were analyzed. However, although this terminology implies that the historian must proceed by a more active “construction” of the past, it is a necessary step in any historical study because “[c]riticism supplies us with isolated facts, but isolated facts do not constitute history.”³¹⁶ Instead, in order to compile a readable historical synthesis, the historian must fill in the gaps of the historical material using his judgement. As Fling explained,

³¹⁴ Ibid., 90.

³¹⁵ Ibid., 113.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 89.

The picture formed by grouping the facts would be much less complete, if we had only the material that criticism furnished us. In this material, there are many gaps. These gaps become noticeable during the work of grouping the facts, and the historian endeavors to meet this difficulty by constructive reasoning.³¹⁷

Importantly, the historian's judgment is always based on the evidence provided by the sources and is, therefore, not a matter of subjectivity even with the use of constructive reasoning. Instead, in Fling's own words, "it is necessary to determine what each fact means (interpretation) and what they all mean when taken together (combination)" and this process involves constructive reasoning.³¹⁸

The role of constructive reasoning in Fling's historical method is controversial. Fundamentally, "constructive reasoning" implies the use of imagination or estimation, which are two suspiciously unscientific activities. Here, it would appear as though Fling allows an element of the subjective into his scientific history. In fact, Fling even states, "[i]f the evidence on either side is equally reliable, there is, as a rule, but one thing to be done: the historian must suspend judgment and announce that he can reach no definite results."³¹⁹ In this instance, because the historian could not establish incontrovertible historical fact, Fling suggests that he should admit defeat in his historical study rather than construct an educated valuation of conflicting information. So, it is important to keep in mind that when Fling refers to "constructive reasoning" and "judgment" he does not mean for them to be used in relation to completing the *information* provided by the sources. To him, if there is no clear picture of the one, true historical fact, then the historian is powerless to complete a narrative. Instead, historians must always rely on and relate back to the sources and the evidence from the sources that support their historic conclu-

³¹⁷ Ibid., 97.

³¹⁸ Fling, *Greek and Roman Civilization*, xv.

³¹⁹ Fling, *Outline*, 86.

sions. In this way, “constructive reasoning” is simply used to make sense of those facts to others, not to create nor fill in those facts where they may be missing or conflicting.

Fling argues for the use of constructive reasoning to formulate a narrative and for its nature as part of the objective pursuit of historical research. In establishing the facts related to the past, Fling noted that the historian bears the burden of proof and must support all findings with historical evidence of those facts. In this sense, “constructive reasoning” is not “applied imagination” or a “closer relationship between history and the newly established social sciences” as his contemporary, and modern, critics have alleged.³²⁰ Instead, Fling contends that the use of a “scientific imagination” is only necessary for understanding the historic facts “as the witness saw them.”³²¹ As he explains, it is the task of the historian to use internal imagining, not creative imagination, in order to visualize the facts as a witness has described them. Of course, as Fling noted, “[t]o picture to ourselves facts that we have not seen described in such unscientific language is a disheartening task, and yet this is what the historian must undertake to do.”³²² Thus, Fling is not using the term “imagination” in the sense of a creative production; instead, he intends it in its most basic deontological sense as a mental envisioning of the events and experiences recorded by a historical witness and present in the historical record. By experiencing this visualization, the historian can then accurately convey the underlying historical facts to others in his narrative. Thus, to Fling, imagination is only relevant to the *conveying* of facts to others, not to the creation of them.

The historian, then, “combines his unique, complex individuals into ever larger and more complex wholes, rendering them definite by retaining as far as possible their perceptible charac-

³²⁰ Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 90.

³²¹ Fling, *Outline*, 90.

³²² *Ibid.*, 91.

teristics, and tracing the causal connection.”³²³ Again, the historian’s “scientific imagination” and “constructive reasoning” do not alter the facts; they simply connect them in a narrative that others may read and understand. Thus, historical synthesis requires constructive reasoning as it applies to the *way* in which the historical synthesis should be written: it does not generate the facts of history, it just employs the combination of literary style, syntax, grammar, and diction to convey those *a priori* facts to others.

In his earlier works, Fling calls his final stage of synthesis simply “reconstruction” but seems to prefer the terms “exposition” and “synthesis” later in his writings.³²⁴ This change is subtle but important. The concept of “exposition” or “synthesis” used in his later writings reinforces the scientific nature of historical method. A historian who “exposes” the facts has not created them; he has simply found them, arranged them, made sense of them, and shown them. In addition, a historian who “synthesizes” the facts does not invent them; he just combines them with other facts that relate or supplement the historical narrative as a whole. However, the facts themselves in either conception are external to the historian and his role is simply to present them coherently.

In the term “reconstruction,” on the other hand, the implication is palpable that the historian plays a more active role in the building of the past. Instead of just presenting the past that is already constructed, this terminology implies that the historian is changing that past through *re*-construction. This terminological change evidences the evolution of Fling’s philosophy: as he became increasingly devoted to defending history as a scientific study, he also became increas-

³²³ Fling, “Historical Synthesis,” 18.

³²⁴ First appearance in Fling and Caldwell, *Studies*, 21; later reexamined in Fling, “Historical Synthesis,” 1-22 and then repeated consistently in subsequent publications.

ingly careful in his delivery. These changes in diction show the maturation of Fling's philosophy as he solidified its tenets over time.

Semantics aside, the structural significance of the final stage of historical synthesis, and of Fling's greater historical method as a whole, remained consistent throughout Fling's works. This consistency shows Fling's commitment to the elevation of history and his historic method to the ranks of the natural sciences, which consistently gained more respect during his time. For Fling, this commitment did not end with simply the exposition of his methodology but expanded into all areas of historical study, including the classroom. Fling's commitment to the defense of constructive reasoning specifically, and his entire historic method generally, demonstrates the ardor he felt towards his reformation of the philosophy of historical research and study. Fling is repeatedly intent on convincing others that history deserves a rank among the sciences as a rigorous, intellectual, and valuable pursuit, though he was clear that the quality and nature of this scientific pursuit differed fundamentally from the natural sciences. His reason for making this distinction is clear. By showing that the objectivity and scientificity of history followed a different method with a different set of rules than the natural sciences, he was implying that the measures by which this objectivity was graded should also be amended.

To Fling, if historians were continually ridiculed for their lack of specifically natural science style objectivity, then perhaps it was because the natural scientists did not understand the unique objectivity of history and, rather, the scientists were liable for the fault. This argument is significant for the time period and serves again to distinguish Fling from many of his contemporaries whose line of defense for history constantly fell short because of its adherence to scientific objectivity as the only viable method for inquiry. By redefining the *method* itself, Fling actually progressed a step further by realigning objectivity to this method. In other words, instead of

force-fitting historical inquiry into a rigid and insufficient scientific formula, Fling sought to create an entirely new formula with its own set of standards for objectivity. Thus, history, by this new method, did not *fail* to be objective as scientists claimed. Instead, it offered a different *type* of objectivity as an alternative to seeing the truth behind the world.

Other Pursuits of Fling's Early Career

Like the *Outline of Historical Method*, Fling's next book *Greek and Roman Civilization*, employed a similar style of precision and meticulousness in study and wording but maintained a different focus than his exposé on method. However, it did include an introduction that summarized Fling's source study method similarly to the first chapter of his and Caldwell's *Studies in European and American History*. This introduction differed slightly in that it also provided a reference list of books on methods for teachers to consult. As Fling prefaced the list,

The following works contain about everything that exists on method in the English language. They have to do more with the question of how to study history than how to teach it, but I have tried to show that the teacher must know how to study history before she can teach it. These are books that every teacher of history, who is not a teacher simply for a year and a day, should possess. They should form the beginning of a professional library. Study them, meditate upon them, and apply their teachings. Go to them again and again, until you have mastered them and are ready for something better.³²⁵

Importantly, Fling included his own work, *Outline of Historical Method*, in the suggested list.

He also cited Mary Sheldon Barnes in addition to Johann Droysen, C. Victor Langlois, and Charles Seignobos, all German historians of the time period and all of which he had also referenced in the *Outline*.³²⁶ The rest of the book was then devoted to various eras in the development of Greek and Roman Civilization and culture. The chapters include Fling's own narrative

³²⁵ Fling, *Greek and Roman Civilization*, xxvii.

³²⁶ Fling, *Outline*, found repeatedly throughout.

summaries of the time period in addition to primary source excerpts that Fling deemed relevant to the appropriate topic under investigation, such as “Spartan Life” or “The Roman Constitution.” At the end of each section, Fling also provided review questions that teachers could use to engage their students with the materials and the time period.

In addition to his books, Fling also authored an article in 1899 in *The North-Western Monthly*, titled “The Study of History in Schools” to argue for his conception of source method in the classroom. In this article, he derided the Committee of Seven for its recent report and for what he saw as their apparent short-sightedness with regard to source method for education. Moreover, he defended his scientific approach to history education against the attacks lodged by the Committee, clearly intending his title to allude to their Report from earlier that year. He states,

The Committee placed too many restrictions upon the use of sources to suit me. “The proper use of sources for proper pupils with proper guarantees” in which the Committee believes, might suggest that a source is a dangerous thing for an average pupil to come into contact with.³²⁷

Although this article is brief, its brevity is actually its greatest strength. This article is the most concise public conversation with his critics that Fling ever undertakes. Moreover, he commends the work of the Committee for its “description of what is” and as “a natural forerunner of improvement.”³²⁸ However, his implication is clear: as a “forerunner” to progress, he does not view this Committee’s Report as progress itself. Instead, not only does he defend the source method as a practice for history education, but he acknowledges the Committee’s lack of faith in source method practices as the main reason for their lack of development in schools. To remove this barrier to source method’s propagation, Fling provides a stark counterargument to

³²⁷ Fling, “The Study,” 461, original cited text from AHA, *The Study of History in Schools*, 481.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 460.

acknowledge that source method is actually quite important and noteworthy, even though “the committee devotes to methods but twenty-seven out of one hundred and thirty-seven pages of its recommendations.”³²⁹ In the end, he concludes that the Committee’s Report, though a significant and time-consuming endeavor, was too short-sighted to view the full value of applying source method to historical study in classrooms. So, overall, Fling’s discussion of the Report is negative and critical. In a very real sense, although this article is one of his earlier and briefest writings, it represents the beginning of his unique philosophy of education.

For the next several years, Fling then turned his attention back to his historical research interests, abandoning for the meantime the debate regarding source method in classrooms, though no doubt still employing precisely these methods in his own continued practice as a professor. His research endeavors resulted in his next publication, an article for the *American Historical Review* titled “The Youth of Mirabeau” in 1903. The refocusing shown in this article provides evidence that Fling’s attention often vacillated between an exploration of his theories on scientific history and his own historical research interests. This short work was an introduction to his biographical study of Mirabeau. Fling would later develop this research foundation in his only published volume of the complete biography, which he did not complete until 1908.

Throughout these early years of Fling’s career, while he was still seeking to make a name for himself as an American researcher of French history, he also began to hone his practices as a lecturer and educational mentor. His publishing in the first decade of his career evidences the excitement he felt for these early foci of his profession. Moreover, the near equal attention he paid to research and education portends the divided nature of his future works. Although a historian by formal training, he was an educational leader by choice and ultimately believed that the

³²⁹ Ibid.

true elevation of history as a discipline could only come from the refinement of students of history. Thus, he would later realize that the training of these students of history – and the very future of history itself – depended on perfecting history education both in his own classroom and in secondary schools.

In 1897, Fling commented that “there is a demand for the discussion of other and, it is believed, better methods than have been followed in the past.”³³⁰ Then, in 1903, Fling published another article, this time in the *American Historical Review*, titled “Historical Synthesis” in which he states that a “new life was breathed into the controversy” of the correct methodology of historical inquiry and its place among that of the “natural sciences.”³³¹ This demand had not evaded the notice of other historians in Fling’s time either. In fact, in this article, Fling defends his conception of “scientific history” by providing first a survey of its development since the mid-nineteenth century. In this description, Fling focuses on the works of many European historians, such as Bernheim, von Ranke, and Droysen, as well as clarifies the role, purpose, structure, and value that he sees in history as a scientific study. According to Novick also, these European historians are widely-regarded as the founders of the scientific and objective approach to professional history that became popular in the early Progressive Era.³³²

In his article, Fling provides a detailed description of historic and current practices in the field of history in order to justify his belief that concurrent criticisms of the lack of “natural science method” – themselves just the modern iteration of criticisms lodged since the time of Thomas Buckle (1870s) and even August Comte (1850s) – were unfounded.³³³ In response to these attacks on historical method, such as that historical method was not “science” but somehow

³³⁰ Fling and Caldwell, *Studies*, v.

³³¹ Fling, “Historical Synthesis,” 4.

³³² Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 49-50.

³³³ Fling, “Historical Synthesis,” 6.

“inferior” and its products were not “truths” but useless stories, Fling concludes that historical study has in fact attained the rigor and precision of scientific study but that it differs fundamentally in purpose and method. This method was precisely what Fling labored to define and propagate for 124 pages in *Outline of Historical Method* just four years before this article was published. Although it is imaginable that this repetition of arguments that Fling had already published may have beleaguered him, Fling’s tone in this 1903 article differs greatly from his 1899 article in *The North-Western Monthly*. Instead of deriding the viewpoints of his critics, Fling adopts a professional approach to defending history through a detailed explication of its historical foundations, practices, and merits. This attitude change is only the first example of Fling’s battle with expressing or restraining his emotions in his work; it would not be his last.

Arguments like those found in Fling’s 1903 article and his earlier 1899 book were common among historians in the early 1900s because history itself was still seeking legitimacy. Fling’s devotion is a testament to the demands of his age. The new American Historical Association was only nineteen years old by the time of these writings and scientific history itself had by no means solidified a permanent position among the subjects of educational study, especially in schools. This short time lapse between the creation of the AHA, the publication of major works regarding history as a discipline, and the foundation of Fling’s historical defenses is not a coincidence; it is a product of his era. Fling’s dedication to a defense of history as objective and deserving of respect and recognition is understandable given the newness of the universal adoption of the scientific pursuit of history, the application of the discipline of history to schools, and the establishment of historical societies and organizations for professionalization. In this context, Fling defended not only his conception of historical method, but also his right to be ranked equally among his professional peers. However, Fling’s specific defenses are more than just a

prosaic announcement that history or historians deserve respect. Fling's defensive behavior is also a product of his own evolution and eventual consolidation of beliefs and a contributing factor to the complicated legacy he left behind.

4 THE FORMATIVE YEARS, 1903 - 1913

Introduction

Fling's purpose in espousing his method was to educate teachers on proper historical procedures. Fling strongly believed that teachers could only create successful history classrooms if they were first trained as historians themselves. Then, teachers could give students knowledgeable instruction in investigating, analyzing, criticizing, and synthesizing historical information from the sources instead of simply contrived historical content from a textbook. These ideal performance and cognitive tasks play a prominent role in efforts to develop "meaningful education" today.³³⁴ Although Fling himself taught through lecture in many of his courses, his use of authentic research projects in addition to these lectures provided a procedure for student engagement that helped develop these lauded educational tasks of higher order thinking skills. Moreover, his source method projects encouraged students to be their own historical investigators instead of taking information for granted. The significance of this point is that Fling was arguing for this student empowerment at precisely the same time that the AHA seemed to be arguing that a source was "a dangerous thing for an average pupil to come into contact with."³³⁵ He was also working within the context of other progressive education reformers while each was trying to make a name for himself on a national scale.³³⁶ In the end, his efforts would find significant support in the early years of their creation, especially within his state, but would not last.

Fling's early works dealt primarily with a description of his process of historical method and the communication of that process to others in order to elevate the discipline of history. However, embedded within these works, typically as chapters of introduction, and forming the

³³⁴ Evans, *Social Studies Wars*, 178.

³³⁵ Fling, "The Study," 461.

³³⁶ Urban and Wagoner, 217-226; they site specifically reformers such as John Dewey and Ella Flagg Young who were equally involved with educational reform on a large scale.

pillar of his later works, Fling targeted the field of education generally, and students specifically, in a review of history education. For Fling, the only acceptable approach to improving history itself was to target the education that students received so that historians and students together could reform the discipline internally. Relatedly, many of his later works show Fling's commitment to improving not only the perception of the work of historians, but also the *practice* of history. In order to achieve this enhancement, Fling targeted the schools and specifically history education. Fling stated that the key to realizing this goal rested squarely on the shoulders of better trained teachers. As he explained,

We shall have better history teaching when we have better trained teachers; and we shall have the trained teachers when the teachers themselves, and those who employ them, realize that history can be taught only by those who have been prepared for the work.³³⁷

It was paramount to Fling's educational design that he advocate and defend the correct practice of historians so that this knowledge and process could be forwarded as training for education personnel. Moreover, he completed this work in a time period when colleges and secondary schools were closely connected and when teachers often looked to their professional counterparts at universities for guidance. So, while educators wanted Fling's help, he readily supplied it.

Bridging the Gap between Method and Education

In 1904, Fling embarked on a lecture series to engage budding teachers in the reformation of historical method that he was trying to accomplish. As Taylor later recognized, “[i]nspired by the central thought of the critical study of historical sources in the schools, he lectured to gatherings of teachers on the importance of the work and how to carry it on.”³³⁸ Fling also first became

³³⁷ Fling, *Outline*, 5.

³³⁸ Taylor, “A Life of Historical Research,” 4.

involved with the United States Armed Forces in this same year. As part of his campaign to spread the source method to instructors throughout the country, he “was called in to advise in the reorganization of historical work...[for] the graduate school of the army at Fort Leavenworth.”³³⁹ Clearly, these opportunities to orate the benefits and methods of his new vision for history and history education provided excellent public opportunities for Fling to advocate on behalf of source method practice. As Taylor concludes, it is actually from these events at Leavenworth, that people began using the phrase “the Nebraska method” in reference to source method in history education.³⁴⁰

In 1905, Fling’s attention to research culminated with the publication of an article for *The American Historical Review*, titled “Some Recent Work on the French Revolution.”³⁴¹ Then, Fling attended the annual meeting of the AHA held in Baltimore. Although he likely attended many meetings of the AHA, there is particular evidence of Fling’s attendance of this meeting in the University of Nebraska Archive. Penned in December of 1905, Fling wrote a letter to Chancellor Andrews of the university requesting compensation for future travel expenses that would be incurred when he attended “the meeting of the American Historical Association.”³⁴² He thought that his request for transportation compensation was legitimate as he was “the only man from the university...and the trip [was] an expensive one,” which he estimated to be around “\$38.00.”³⁴³

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Fred Morrow Fling, “Some Recent Work on the French Revolution,” *The American Historical Review* 10, no. 4 (1905): 887 – 894.

³⁴² Fred Morrow Fling to Chancellor, Dec 16, 1905, Board of Regents Collection, Box 17, Folder 143, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

³⁴³ Ibid.

In 1906, Fling was again involved in some minor restructuring of the European and American History departments due to the transfer of his colleague Dr. Guernsey Jones from the former to the latter. According to communications between Fling and Chancellor Andrews in the spring of 1906, Jones left the European History Department and his replacement(s) would have to cover the course loads he left behind.³⁴⁴ However, a difficulty arose when Fling considered the financial resources at the department's disposal, which would be needed to compensate someone of Jones' stature. To offset some of the difficulty, Fling recommended "the advancement of Miss Pfeiffer [who was already in the department] to the rank of adjunct professor with the salary of \$1200," which was \$300 less than Jones's previous salary.³⁴⁵ This transition would also leave Miss Pfeiffer's previous salary of \$950 unallocated, to which Fling said, "I would transfer \$50 to the readers' fund, making it \$250, and use the remaining \$900 for three fellowships of \$300 each."³⁴⁶ His hope in making this suggestion was to avoid any type of reallocation of funds that "cut down the appropriations of this department" in the wake of Jones' transfer.³⁴⁷

Interestingly, a letter dated March 12th, 1906, which would precede this April statement to the Chancellor, makes reference to Fling's "suggestion...of giving Miss Pfeiffer \$1200 after the transfer of Dr. Jones."³⁴⁸ Conceivably, Fling's statement from April was the formal submission of a statement that was conducted verbally prior to this March letter. In this way, the seemingly out-of-order chronology of his references makes sense.

³⁴⁴ Fred Morrow Fling to Chancellor E. B. Andrews, Mar 12, 1906. Board of Regents Collection, Box 18, Folder 145, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

³⁴⁵ Fred Morrow Fling to Chancellor E. B. Andrews, Apr 9, 1906, Board of Regents Collection, Box 18, Folder 145, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE, 1.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁴⁸ Fred Morrow Fling to Chancellor E. B. Andrews, Mar 12, 1906.

Another motivation for formal statement of Fling's request is also evidenced by his opinion of "Stemberg" who was an apparent applicant to fill Jones' position. In the March letter, Fling states, "I am very favorably impressed by Stemberg's letter. He hardly would want to come here next year for \$1000 and that is all that could be offered him if my suggestion is followed of giving Miss Pfeiffer \$1200 after the transfer of Dr. Jones."³⁴⁹ Fling continues by stating, "[y]ou will remember my suggestion of using the \$950, now paid to Miss Pfeifer, for three fellowships of \$300 each in European history. I do not suggest this as a permanent arrangement, but one that might be used with some good results temporarily."³⁵⁰ By putting his requests in writing in this form in March, Fling had now shown evidence of his suggestions that were otherwise unrecorded before this date. It is understandable that Chancellor Andrews, upon receipt of this letter now saw the necessity of having Fling commit his entire forecast of suggestions to paper to formally submit his plans for the future of the European History department. Thus, Fling followed precisely these directions by formally summarizing his views and ideas in his letter to the Chancellor the following month. Although there remains no existent faculty catalogue for the 1906-1907 school year, the report from 1911, which is the next available chronological salary schedule, shows that Jones did successfully transfer to the department of American History for a salary of \$1500.³⁵¹ Moreover, also shown in this 1911 report, the only two faculty members of the European History department remained Fling (at a salary of \$2500) and Pfeiffer (at a salary of \$1300) with the support of two fellowship positions at a sum total of \$950 between the two. Based on the other evident salaries across departments in this 1911 salary schedule, Fling was well-paid for his position. Most professorships earned a range of salaries from \$1300-

³⁴⁹ Chancellor E. B. Andrews to Fred Morrow Fling, Mar 12, 1906.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁵¹ Salary Report, 1911, Board of Regents Collection, Box 20, Folder 171, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

\$2000.³⁵² At \$2500, Fling was at the top of the salary scale for professorships, a condition that was likely due to his position as long-serving Department Chair as well as professor.

In the beginning of 1907, Fling was working towards two major projects: a compilation of source material to supplement his pedagogical suggestions in the classroom and a finished volume of his research on Mirabeau. The first of these projects would come to fruition later in 1907 when Fling published his first compiled sourcebook titled *A Sourcebook of Greek History*. In addition to this sourcebook, Fling also worked alongside many high school educators for professional development. To aid with these endeavors, he helped found the Nebraska History Teachers Association (NHTA) in the same year, which was the descendent of his and Caldwell's original Association of Nebraska Teachers of History organization with which he had been involved since its founding in 1896.³⁵³

In his *Sourcebook of Greek History*, Fling commented on his devotion to explaining the historic method before explaining its role in education because he felt strongly that “[t]he teacher should have a good knowledge of what the historical method is; a knowledge derived both from practical experience in research work and from a good text on method.”³⁵⁴ Thus, he believed it was essential that a teacher familiarize herself with historical method, undertake the practices of a historian, and receive training in historical process before she could successfully implement these procedures in the classroom. Fling believed that the purpose of education was not only the creation of knowledge in a student, but the development of an appreciation for the process by which historians create knowledge. In fact, Fling stated, “[i]f an important part of education is to

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Carlson, “Professor Fred Fling,” 486.

³⁵⁴ Fling, *Sourcebook*, v.

learn how results are obtained and not simply to know what the results are, then historical method should have a place in the teaching of history.”³⁵⁵

To begin a teacher’s training on using the historic method in the classroom, Fling emphasized the difference between textbooks and sourcebooks. Specifically,

The book of sources is not a narrative like the ordinary school history. It does not read smoothly. “It seems to be disconnected,” as one puzzled teacher put it. She was right. It is disconnected, and it is the duty of the pupil under the guidance of the teacher to connect it.³⁵⁶

Although this early opinion, penned in 1899, provides teachers with few specifics on what this “guidance” may entail, Fling’s later sourcebooks, *A Sourcebook of Greek History* and *Source Problems on the French Revolution* provide greater direction by connecting essential questions of analysis to the given source material. Moreover, these later works show the evolution of Fling’s attitude toward history education and the classroom practices of teachers. In 1899, Fling was discouraged by observing teachers who claimed to employ the source method in class, but failed to do so appropriately. To Fling, an appropriate use of these sources was to put them directly in the hands of students and guide them in their investigations. In the classroom, however, he often witnessed teachers simply using sourcebooks like textbooks, which deflated their utility. So, by 1907, he was actively engaged in the construction of teacher resources to help these instructors overcome their ignorance and employ source method correctly. Instead of leaving teachers to sort through the chaos of these historic materials alone, Fling equipped them with ideas and pedagogical recommendations that would help lead them to success.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., vii.

³⁵⁶ Fling *Greek and Roman Civilization*, xx.

Fling is not unique among his contemporaries in suggesting the use of sources in history education; however, according to Fling, these other practices fell short of Fling's proposed methodology.³⁵⁷ By Fling's own admission,

By the majority of teachers, these sources will probably be used as "illustrative material" and to introduce the pupil to Greek literature and art. While I am very much in favor of these uses, I wish to make a strong plea in favor of a further use, to my mind one of the most important uses to which the sources can be put; I mean the critical study of them.³⁵⁸

Fling wished to surpass the use of sources as supplemental examples and to employ historical criticism of sources as part of classroom practice. Significantly, it is within this desire to use sources in classrooms as something beyond simply supplemental resources that Fling met the harshest criticisms from other theoreticians of the Progressive Era. Moreover, it is also in this greater role that Fling envisioned for sources that organizations and leading associations like the Committee of Seven found their greatest conflict with Fling's methods. As Fling explained as early as 1899,

If the question "Shall sources be used?" may be regarded as settled in the affirmative, the further question "How shall sources be used?" is still a matter of controversy. The common practice is to use them as collateral reading or as "illustrative material." In regard to the benefits derived from this use of source material, there is no difference of opinion. It is only when the possibility of doing something more than simply substitute sources for secondary narratives in the assignment of collateral reading, the possibility of doing something with sources that cannot be done with secondary narratives is pointed out, – it is only then that the trouble begins.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁷ Most notably, Fling builds upon the foundation of source method created by both Mary Sheldon Barnes and George Elliot Howard, as previously explained.

³⁵⁸ Fling, *Sourcebook*, v.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, iii.

This “something more” for which Fling thought sources could be used was that they could serve as the basis for individual, student-driven inquiry that resulted in authentic historical research and the rendering of historical narratives by students.³⁶⁰

To Fling, through proper education in the historical method, even students were capable of completing this type of rigorous historical pursuit. However, and unfortunately for Fling, his contemporaries posited that students with little training, background, or experience in historical study could not be expected to make sense of historical sources, determine validity, assess reliability of information, and create historical narratives that held any merit. In fact, even the Committee of Seven’s reasoning behind distrusting the work of students in source study is obvious: as Fling himself admitted, “[i]t would appear, then, that historical investigation is neither easy nor simple.”³⁶¹ In other words, to the Committee, these tasks were simply too difficult for students to be expected to accomplish themselves. As Osborne agrees,

Although he did not himself seem to realize it, Fling’s source method created a problem for scientific historians. They believed that history was a difficult science that could be learned only through rigorous and specialized training. The implication of Fling’s source method was that even young children could, in their own way, become scientific historians. It is perhaps not surprising that most historians found this unpalatable.³⁶²

In an attempt to assuage some of these criticisms, Fling did not fully abandon the use of textbooks in teaching history, mostly because they provided a generalized starting point for historical inquiry, nor did he disagree with the need for a teacher as guide. As stated, he generally advised teachers to use a source book *in addition* to a textbook when use of a textbook was necessary and to help students to complete their source investigations.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., v.

³⁶¹ Fling, *Outline*, 24.

³⁶² Osborne, “Fred Morrow Fling,” 494-495.

Interestingly, in reference to textbooks, his advice appears differently in the introduction to his 1897 work, *Studies in European and American History*, than it does in his 1899 work, *Greek and Roman Civilization*. By 1899, Fling adds an important disclaimer to his suggestion: “[i]f they can have but one, it should be the book of sources, supplemented by a condensed statement of connecting facts.”³⁶³ This addition may have been Fling’s way of rebutting the opinions of the Committee of Seven, which published its report in the same year as his second book. Because the Committee of Seven firmly rejected the sole use of sources and argued instead that “it is not to be expected that inexperienced and immature minds can form correct notions without some systematic survey of the field,” Fling’s additional disclaimer may have been both his acknowledgment of the Committee’s misgivings and his subtle argument against their findings.³⁶⁴

However, by 1907, Fling is even more confident in his views towards the use of sources and he leaves no room for doubt regarding the importance of source study method in education. As he stated,

During the past fifteen years the question of the use of sources in the teaching of history in secondary schools has occupied somewhat constantly the attention of history teachers and has given rise to a considerable controversial literature. The discussion has evidently passed through a first stage, and one thing, at least, seems to be settled: it is the opinion of the best trained teachers of history the country over that historical sources should be used in the secondary schools. That the publishers of text-books believe that there is a demand for this kind of material and that the demand is likely to increase is demonstrated by the number of source books issued in the last few years. Another proof of the change that has come over the teaching of history is found in the recent historical narratives intended for secondary schools and in revised editions of old texts. In all of these books, a prominent place is given to references to the sources.³⁶⁵

³⁶³ Fling, *Greek and Roman*, xx, emphasis in original.

³⁶⁴ AHA, *The Study of History in Schools*, 481.

³⁶⁵ Fling, *Sourcebook*, v.

The educational debates of the Progressive Era were, at times, polarizing and careful maneuvering of argument and counterargument was essential to the propagation of divergent beliefs. So, it is not surprising that Fling tried to diplomatically and professionally infuse his arguments subtlety into his major works in his early writing. However, by 1907, this more daring approach to the debate leaves little room for contention. In Fling's view, the debate over source method is complete. The next stage is to empower teachers to employ that method effectively.

In many of his works, Fling begins a discussion of history education by first addressing the apparent failure of that practice in the recent past. He recognizes the role of his contemporaries and their contributions to history education but generally views both as lacking. The most well-known of these contemporary writers is likely Mary Sheldon Barnes, herself the author of the only two sourcebooks that Fling cites: *Studies in General History* and *Studies in American History*. However, Fling also maligns the use of these sourcebooks as it appears in schools because teachers seem to misunderstand their application. As Fling laments, “[t]he failure was due, I believe, to the fact that the attempt was made to *read* it like the ordinary narrative and not to *study* it as a collection of historical sources.”³⁶⁶ Thus, in 1907 and 1913, Fling creates introductory chapters in his own sourcebooks to explain how teachers should effectively use those sources. Specifically, he states, “I do not advocate the substitution of source study for the study of secondary narratives, nor do I believe that all sources should be studied intensively; but I do believe that the critical study of the sources should be made the very foundation-stone of historical instruction.”³⁶⁷ He further explains that this “critical study” entails analyzing the relation of

³⁶⁶ Fling, Fred Morrow, “The Study of History in Schools,” *The North-Western Monthly* 10 (1899): 459, emphasis in original.

³⁶⁷ Fling, *Sourcebook*, v.

the sources to the events, the author to the source, and the source to the facts; or, in other words, Fling's historical method applied to classroom study.

Fling's view of history education was more than just a partnership between a narrative history and a supporting debut by the sources. This apparent supplementary material idea did appear in the work of many of his contemporaries, though. One such contemporary and early social studies teacher who did support the use of sources in education and her own classroom was Lucy Maynard Salmon. Ironically, Salmon's participation on the Committee of Seven implies support of the condemnation of source method found in the Committee's Report. However, the report was in fact the result of compromises in the wake of debates between committee members and, in her own practices, Salmon was well known as an advocate of the use of sources in social studies education. This point is made clear by Bohan when she notes that "[Salmon] promoted a balanced approach to teaching secondary school history that included textbooks, source documents, lectures, and independent research."³⁶⁸ Moreover she was often remembered as a teacher who "especially encouraged students' use of source documents in the classroom."³⁶⁹ However, though heavily influenced by the more progressive and democratic educational ideas of her day, she was still clear that "the appropriate application of scientific methods to the study of history could be useful but should not be overemphasized," which partly explains her implicit agreement with the Committee of Seven's conclusions.³⁷⁰ Nonetheless, Salmon also influenced Fling's thinking in another noteworthy way. She "favored instructional methods that encouraged independent thinking and judgement."³⁷¹ In many ways, Fling connected these ideas

³⁶⁸ Bohan, "Lucy Maynard Salmon," 48.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 48.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 60.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 48.

by arguing that source method *was* the procedure for developing specifically these critical faculties.

Cherry also acknowledges the role of sources as supplemental materials by recognizing that sources, such as maps and primary documents, had been offered as illustrative materials in classrooms by even the Committee of Ten, whose recommendations appeared in 1896.³⁷² However, these early advocates for the use of supplemental source materials fell short of Fling's vision of source method. Fling's view is somewhat stricter in terms of the role that sources play in the construction of classroom activity. In his construal, the method itself – the process of historical inquiry and investigation – was the goal of history education. Within his own practice, it is clear from the remaining student notes that he made his students undertake precisely this type of investigative project. As Marie Hermanek Cripe makes clear, Fling stressed that students must always refer to the sources and that the “criticism of sources” should form the basis of historical investigation.³⁷³ Waggener's notes support this view by repeatedly highlighting the word “criticism” in reference to evidence.³⁷⁴

In between these history education efforts in 1908, Fling finally completed his volume on the life of the French revolutionary Mirabeau, which he titled *Mirabeau and the French Revolution Volume I: The Youth of Mirabeau*. This historic work gained Fling recognition as both a historian and devoted practitioner of his scientific history in research. In 1909, the French journal, the *Revue D'histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, published a favorable review of Fling's book, authored by Ph. Sagnac. In this review, Sagnac wasted little space before claiming, “[c]’est un vrai plaisir que de lire ce livre, très clair, très documenté, d'une probité intellectuelle

³⁷² Cherry, “Online Cultural Heritage,” 73-74.

³⁷³ Cripe, Lecture Notes.

³⁷⁴ Waggener, Rewritten Lecture Notes.

parfait.”³⁷⁵ The following year, the *American Historical Review* published its own flattering review by Ralph C. H. Catterall. Also commending Fling for his work and devotion to detail, Catterall stated, “[t]his book is the work of an historian whose standard of scholarship is of the highest and whose critical methods are thoroughly scientific.”³⁷⁶ Thus, as early as 1909, Fling’s reputation as a scientific historian gained both national and international notice.

Although this work was partially titled “Volume I,” it was the only volume Fling published. He had envisioned that his complete biography of Mirabeau would comprise four volumes. However, by the time of his death, the other three volumes remained unpublished, though drafts of the works remain in the collection of his papers in the University of Nebraska’s archive. Through the meticulous editing and revisions present in these remnants, it is clear that his work on these other volumes never attained to the level of precision and perfection he sought. Thus, he did not pursue their publication because they remained incomplete in his view, even though he amassed a collective total of over 900 pages of written work towards their production.³⁷⁷

After this opus, Fling’s attention again reverted to history education. His efforts in secondary education were meant to propagate his historical method to educators so that they may “introduce the source method of history teaching.”³⁷⁸ Moreover, Fling worked to explain the importance of historical truth. In his own practice as a professor, he used his courses to practice educational activities that sought to empower students to find their own historical truth. For example,

³⁷⁵ Ph. Sagnac, “Mirabeau and the French Revolution. Vol. Ier: The Youth of Mirabeau by Fred Morrow Fling.” *Revue D’histoire Moderne et Contemporaine (1899-1914)* 13, no. 1 (1909): 89. Translation: “It is a true pleasure to read this book, very clear, very informative, and of perfect intellectual integrity.”

³⁷⁶ Ralph C. H. Catterall, “Mirabeau and the French Revolution, Review of the book *Mirabeau and the French Revolution* by F. M. Fling.” *The American Historical Review* 15, no. 2 (1910): 371.

³⁷⁷ Fling, Mirabeau MSS.

³⁷⁸ Fling, *Sourcebook*, vii.

A unique demonstration of how to establish historical truth was made in Fling's European History course, where one hour a week for two semesters was devoted to the writing of a paper based upon a collection of sources dealing with one day of the French Revolution. Since some of the source material was false, the student's problem was to separate the factual from the fraudulent evidence through critical analysis. This involved making a careful investigation of the agreement, character, and reliability of witnesses. It was a difficult course. One participant said it bordered on graduate work and was not for the indolent student.³⁷⁹

With these ideas and experiences within his own classroom, Fling began developing resources and guides for teachers to use in their own practice as well. With these materials, teachers could bring this unique historic method into action. However, Fling believed that, in order for teachers to be successful in this endeavor, they needed not only a thorough understanding of history and the historical method, but also a description of the role of both sources and instructors in education.

The Role of Sources and Instructors

In 1909, to make these ideas clear and available to secondary educators, Fling published an article for *Historical Outlook* titled "One Use of Sources in the Teaching of History." In this article, Fling explains "the critical study of sources as evidence," which he claims serves "the purpose of training the pupil in the methods of historical proof."³⁸⁰ Although only written at the bequest of teachers who desired greater direction in applying Fling's theories to classroom practice, this article would prove to be Fling's most direct and concise description of his pedagogy ever to appear in his published repertoire. In it, he equated the role of the history teacher to that of the historian. Moreover, he acknowledged that,

³⁷⁹ Carlson, "Professor Fred Fling," 486; this "one hour a week" was also explained in Cripe, Wednesday Lecture Notes, which were precisely a collection of notes from this once-a-week classes on method and historical investigation.

³⁸⁰ Fling, "One Use," 206.

The natural science method consists of a direct study of the facts, and, as it is not concerned with the unique as unique, it may create situations and conditions, thus securing abundant data for generalization. For the historian this is impossible. He studies not the fact, as the natural scientist studies plants, animals, and chemicals in the laboratory; he has only the record of the fact, the fact itself having gone never to return.³⁸¹

Later in the article, Fling explained both the role that the sourcebook played in classroom instruction and the role that the teacher must fill in order for history education to be successful. Specifically, he suggested regular exercises for “intensive critical work” and he reminded the reader that “the sources should, of course, be in the hands of the pupils and the attention of the class should never be allowed to stray from the evidence in the text.”³⁸²

This article also evidences the degree to which Fling differed from his contemporaries. To Fling, the burden of ability lies with the teacher who must familiarize himself with the historical method and prepare his lessons based on his own thorough analysis of the sources. In other words, with a working understanding of the historical method, teachers can pre-screen sources and sort them into collections that help provide students with opportunities for investigation within the confines of a system. Just like in his own teaching with one day of the French Revolution, other teachers would be able to compile source combinations, both valid and forged, to allow the students to critically investigate historical fact in a structured simulation of historical method. However, the teachers would need knowledge of both the actual picture of historical events and of source analysis in order to make this project available to students. Moreover, the teacher as guide could ensure that the student was engaging with the source material for critical analysis but was ultimately conducting a fruitful investigation with a discernible outcome. In this way, Fling’s source method activity differs greatly from the fully student-driven authentic

³⁸¹ Ibid., 208.

³⁸² Ibid., 209.

inquiry envisioned by Dewey. Whereas Dewey would expect primarily student investigation generated by interest within the student to create the path of inquiry, Fling suggested that a contrived simulation of historical investigation would be sufficient to demonstrate the critical work of a historian in the classroom. Although this activity is only a staged implementation of historic method, it still demonstrates the *process* that historians employ when they investigate historical fact. Conveying the inner workings of this process to students was exactly what Fling believed was the purpose of history education.

In addition, Fling expected that all students could be capable of learning and eventually employing scientific history, even to the extent of their own authentic and organically investigated research, as long as the teacher was qualified to teach history in precisely that way.³⁸³ In order to tackle these teacher qualifications and help teachers develop a successful practice, Fling also provided valuable advice for pedagogical techniques in his 1909 article. Fling gave specific recommendations, such as “two exercises a week” or “the teacher may cut loose from the text and supply graded problems.”³⁸⁴ The article concluded with an example lesson on the Battle of Salamis and a reference to source excerpts provided in Fling’s other work, *A Sourcebook of Greek History*.

Overall in this article, Fling is donning the role of educational consultant by extending suggestions of pedagogical practices. In Fling’s own practice as a professor at the University of Nebraska, he designed his courses precisely in line with this model, making the students responsible for source study, notebook compilation, and syntheses. As Fling demonstrated, his methodology required that “teacher and pupil are to do on a small scale what a historian does upon a

³⁸³ It is clear from Cripe, Lecture Notes and Smitty, Lecture Notes that Fling’s assigned historical research project entailed precisely this type of source-driven historical analysis.

³⁸⁴ Fling, “One Use,” 209.

large scale – reconstruct the past.”³⁸⁵ However, Fling did not believe that this practice nor product was outside the reach of the secondary school student. Instead, Fling argued that “[i]f he does what he can do intelligently and keeps doing it, the boy who has not gained some insight into the meaning of critical historical work before the year is out will be stupid indeed.”³⁸⁶ Although this comment sounds condescending, in context it is somewhat sarcastic and still evidences the fact that Fling saw the purpose of education as uncovering this *meaning of critical historical work*, not necessarily of garnering historical knowledge. Moreover, even if the student struggled to uncover historical fact, he still underwent and experienced the procedure for investigating sources and the action of analyzing information, which were the intended learning outcomes of the activity. This skill-driven education differs in many ways from today’s often content-driven focus in public education.³⁸⁷

Although Fling may have matured in his attitude towards teachers and his patience with their adoption of the source method, he consistently had no such tolerance for students. In fact, claiming that his high student marks in class showed nothing more than his quality as a teacher, Fling believed he was in fact demonstrating that the teacher was the final testament to student achievement in the historic method.³⁸⁸ So, to Fling, if the student had endured the successful implementation of this historic method activity designed by a historically trained teacher and still had failed to develop an understanding of historical criticism, the fault likely lay with the student, not the teacher.

³⁸⁵ Fling, *Greek and Roman*, xx.

³⁸⁶ Fling, *Sourcebook*, v.

³⁸⁷ See Urban and Wagoner, *American Education*, 391-393 for a discussion of the effects of standards-driven curriculum in the era of high-stakes testing. Overall, they conclude that standardization of the curriculum has presented difficulties for engendering critical thinking in students; see also Evans, *Social Studies Wars*, 175-178 who equally contends that “[c]reation of a technology of standards and high-stakes testing threatens to freeze out alternative visions and create a one-dimensional curriculum supporting social control” (177).

³⁸⁸ Carlson, “Professor Fred Fling,” 488.

The last main principle of Fling's history education pedagogy was his animosity towards recitation of facts. As Fling explained to teachers, students should not be asked to rote learn and memorize historical "fact" from narratives.³⁸⁹ When approached from Fling's point of view, this hostility has a clear foundation. Fling denied that textbooks *must* contain historical "facts" at all, even though they generally garnered the reputation of objective historical truth simply because they were called textbooks. To Fling, these texts were simply *other* historian's narratives that they had "worked up" from the sources, but there was rarely, if ever, an inclusion of that historian's methods. So, just as there was no guarantee that students would be able to create an accurate narrative without proper guidance, there was no guarantee that these narratives had been "worked up" correctly either. In this way, Fling was hesitant to claim that textbooks were a *de facto* appropriate guide to education.

Moreover, because the value of history education lay in the *process* behind historical inquiry, Fling believed that final product textbooks did little to enhance the procedural experience of history education. In Fling's philosophy, students must learn to approach critically any information they encounter, whether that information is found in a historical source or a historian's narrative. So, even if teachers instructed students to use textbooks, their use should be limited to a critical analysis similar to any other source. In this way, teachers train students to find the facts, defend their reasoning, and criticize faulty information that is unsound, unfounded, or untrue, regardless of the origin (primary or secondary) of the source in which a student finds that information. To Fling, this technique is precisely the critical role that historical consciousness plays in the lives of students and the future of the nation: "[f]or if there is any one thing that we need more than another in our political life, it is men who are capable of determining what are

³⁸⁹ Fling, *Sourcebook*; and Fling and Fling, *Source Problems*.

facts and of telling what those facts mean.”³⁹⁰ Undoubtedly, Fling thought that the development of these men began with historical criticism in history education, even though he himself often taught through lecture and did not seem to realize this pedagogy as an inconsistency in his philosophy of education.

Fling’s delight in his ability to attend to explanation rather than defense is evident throughout his source books and his 1909 article. In each of these publications, his tone is professional, his wording instructional, and his elucidation comprehensive. For this reason, it seems evident that Fling preferred writing this type of material rather than the constantly irritating defensive prose he published in response to the attacks of his critics. After completing this work, Fling had now thoroughly described his ideas regarding the role of history in schools, the role of sources in classrooms, the role of education in creating new historians, and, most importantly, the role of teachers in history education.

These works of history education in the early 1900s provided a refuge from the emotional defenses in Fling’s earlier articles. However, there is no rest for the weary and Fling soon found himself providing yet another defensive article in 1912. This article appeared in *The Yale Review* as a review of James Harvey Robinson’s *The New History*, which Robinson had published earlier that same year. In this article, Fling once again defends the methods employed by historians in the face of criticisms against them. In fact, he even seems offended by Robinson and his cohorts and did not hesitate to ridicule them by saying,

Professor Robinson evidently belongs to the school of Buckle and Lamprecht, who hold that there is only one logical way of organizing reality, namely, that of the natural sciences, and that the historian who has not yet learned to employ that method is quite as much a *retarde* as an astrologer or alchemist in

³⁹⁰ Fling, *Greek and Roman*, xviii.

the twentieth century and, consequently, a proper butt for every scientist who knows what is what.³⁹¹

In response to these viewpoints, Fling asserts that the job of current historians is actually “quite as important as the business of the natural scientist” and “that it calls for quite as much intelligence and is being done quite well.”³⁹² These arguments, criticisms, and defenses seemed to be leaguer Fling, which is evidenced by his reversion to an unprofessional and belittling tone and diction.

Fling as a Man and Professor

By many accounts, Fling was a difficult man.³⁹³ As his former students explain, the students’ opinions of Fling ranged from admiration to fear. In his article, “Professor Fred Fling: His Career and Conflicts at Nebraska University,” Carlson provides a long list of students who either avoided Fling’s classes or derided their interactions with him. In his words, “I sometimes met people who expressed fear of Dr. Fling, characterizing him as uncompromising and unapproachable.”³⁹⁴ In fact, even though Carlson himself has a laudatory opinion of Fling, he admits, “there was no doubt about the forceful personality of Dr. Fling, who became impatient with what did not meet his standards of perfection.”³⁹⁵ This point is reinforced by Osborne who acknowledges, “[Fling’s] reputation as a hard taskmaster who did not suffer fools gladly scared off less academically inclined students.”³⁹⁶ In the Nebraska magazine, *The Cornhusker*, in 1912, Fling was de-

³⁹¹ Fred Morrow Fling, “Review of J. H. Robinson, *The New History*,” *Yale Review* 11 (1912): 166, emphasis in original.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, 167.

³⁹³ Knoll, *Prairie University*, 67; Knoll describes many accounts of Fling’s personality that characterize him as abrasive and harsh.

³⁹⁴ Carlson, “Professor Fred Fling,” 481; many descriptions available through personal unpublished interviews that Carlson conducted with his former classmates both during their time as Fling’s students and after Fling’s death.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁶ Osborne, “Fred Morrow Fling,” 487.

scribed as admirable, but reserved: “[a]ll of his students admire Dr. Fling’s ability, and would unite in his praise if it were not that his sometimes harsh and sarcastic manner antagonizes them.”³⁹⁷

These standards for perfection applied to more than just his students. In his own work, his attention to detail was unparalleled. For this reason, he was widely-regarded as a leading historian throughout Nebraska, which resulted in many students purposefully choosing to attend the university in order to study under him. Unfortunately, even those students sometimes found his personality to be too unforgiving and punitive. A later colleague of Fling acknowledged that a student who specifically came to the university because of Fling’s reputation and with the intent to study history under him decided to change his major to philosophy when he met Fling and likened him to “the perfect autocrat who would not be disputed.”³⁹⁸

These opinions, and many more like them, paint a vivid picture of Fling as a man. His books and articles speak to the qualities of his research and writing. However, these first-hand encounters and accounts of Fling as a person add value and depth to the understanding of the life he lived. He was a private person, but also “called on” many of his students to attend dinner parties at his home.³⁹⁹ In addition, the liveliness he infused into history was highly applauded and well-known, even if his demeanor in his private life led many students to regard him as “a loner” and the “henniest” man imaginable.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁷ Anonymous, “Dr. Fling,” *Cornhusker*, Faculty Section, 1912, n.p.

³⁹⁸ Statement from Professor Charles Patterson, retired Nebraska University philosophy professor, via unpublished telephone interview, October, 1980 with Robert Carlson as cited in Carlson, “Professor Fred Fling,” 487.

³⁹⁹ Carlson mentions two such encounters in his article: Carlson, “Professor Fred Fling.”

⁴⁰⁰ Mari Sandoz, as cited in Helen Stauffer, “Mari Sandoz and the University,” *Prairie Schooner* (1981): 256; although this term does not appear regularly in twenty-first century vernacular, Osborne suggests that a reasonable modern translation would be “fussiest” (“Fred Morrow Fling,” 96). From the myriad descriptions of Fling as a person and lecturer, I contend that this term is better understood as describing Fling as a methodical perfectionist who did not tolerate those who failed to reach his standards and did not shy away from confrontation or blunt review of others.

In the end, as one of his later students explains, “[a]s with many other students, I found Professor Fling had a way of making his receptive scholars feel [history] was the most vital subject they could study.”⁴⁰¹ From another view, this point is also evidenced by Willa Cather’s hero, Claude Wheeler, who walked away from his history lectures feeling invigorated and fulfilled.⁴⁰² Moreover, Fling was constantly searching for additional ways to devote time to research and writing. His students often saw him reading around campus or buried in a book at lunch. As another former student, Mary Hermanek Cripe, felt it necessary to record in her lecture notes, Fling admitted that “even the time lost in a suit purchase was eliminated by phoning his measurements to his clothier when old suits showed wear.”⁴⁰³ In many ways, Fling demonstrated a complete commitment to his craft.

Although these traits were obvious even in the beginning years of his professorship at the university, they would not solidify his reputation until later in his career. In fact, the majority of his national notoriety came from his later time in the press during conflicts over World War I amongst University of Nebraska faculty, instead of his work as a history educator. However, in 1912, Fling was still focused on and known for his defenses of both historians and history education. So, his review of Robinson’s *The New History* gained him further recognition as an advocate for the scientific nature of history. Moreover, it signaled the completion of what would prove to be his final defense of his practices.

After this publication, Fling again diverted his attention to honing his own practice as a professor and celebrating the accomplishments in his personal life. Namely, on June 23, 1912, he and his wife Helene celebrated the birth of their son, Wentworth D. Fling. Wentworth would

⁴⁰¹ Carlson, “Professor Fred Fling,” 485.

⁴⁰² Cather, *One of Ours*, 17.

⁴⁰³ Cripe, Lecture Notes.

become known amongst Fling's colleagues in 1916, when he appeared in a community play in Lincoln and received mention in the Alumni Edition of *The Nebraska Journal*. As it described, "Professor Fling's little son, Wentworth, will be charming in the part of the little lame boy" in the upcoming play "The Piper."⁴⁰⁴ Wentworth would remain an only child and would live an exceptionally long life. He made a career as an actor and lived most of his life in Port Washington, New York. He died on August 30, 2010 at the age of 98.⁴⁰⁵ Thus, the year 1912 was momentous for Fling in his personal life as he celebrated the birth of what would remain his only child.

In 1913, Fling published his second sourcebook, which included a repeated explanation of pedagogical suggestions and an analytical review of the sources akin to those provided in his 1907 book. This new book, *Source Problems on the French Revolution*, also provided acknowledgement of the contributions of Fling's wife, who was his co-author. Fling had also acknowledged the assistance his wife provided in his previous sourcebook by stating, "[i]n the compilation of this volume, I am under great obligations to my wife, Helene Dresser Fling, who undertook the entire burden of preparing the extracts for the press and of making the index."⁴⁰⁶ However, he did not officially acknowledge her as a co-author until this second sourcebook in 1913.

His two sourcebooks, from 1907 and 1913, were tools for the scientific study of history in the classroom. As Pollak explains, "Fling's advocacy of the 'source study method' resulted in his publication of several student source books."⁴⁰⁷ Obviously, his desire to help teachers prepare for better history teaching necessitated the publication of actual materials for the classroom.

⁴⁰⁴ University of Nebraska Alumni Association, "The University Players," *The Nebraska Journal: Alumni Edition* (October 1917): 6.

⁴⁰⁵ Anton Community Newspapers. "Obituary of Wentworth D. Fling," *Anton Community Newspapers*, Mineola, NY, 30 August 2010, <http://www.antonnews.com/portwashingtonnews/obits-archive/10312-obituary-wentworth-d-fling.html>.

⁴⁰⁶ Fling, *Sourcebook*, dedication page.

⁴⁰⁷ Pollak, "Fred Morrow Fling," 168.

In many ways, he was building from the foundation of Mary Sheldon Barnes but transcending it by introducing his own materials and procedures. Just like in his development of specifically his own theories and the creation of his own manual for historical method, these sourcebooks show that Fling sought to distinguish himself from his contemporaries by developing his own materials instead of just adopting the works of others. Thus, even though these materials did not gain significant national recognition nor acceptance during Fling's lifetime, they still demonstrate the degree to which Fling was a pioneer of his own unique philosophy of history education.

Fling was committed to reforming the methods of both history and history education from within by providing materials for the professional development of teachers. Fling designed the first book for secondary school students and the second for students at the college level. Although these books sought to bring to life the methodology that Fling preached, historian Ken Osborne notes, "the sourcebooks...did not explicitly embody his method, but they certainly reflected its basic principles."⁴⁰⁸ Rightly, the sourcebooks themselves did not embody his "method" because they were simply tools for teacher use in order to implement the source method in the classroom; they were not the living process itself. These works signify Fling's attempts at helping the novice teacher and, by extension, the novice historian to implement a pedagogical procedure that reasonably took a lifetime to develop and understand without such aid. Thus, the sourcebooks represent Fling's attempt to support teachers as they introduced the source method into classroom practice.

As a historian and professor, Fling saw firsthand the importance of developing not just historical knowledge but a recognition of the process of history itself. His goals, of defending the place of history among the other disciplines and of providing materials to encourage its

⁴⁰⁸ Osborne, "Fred Morrow Fling," 488.

growth, led to the creation of these materials for classroom use. In fact, as Lingelbach noticed in 1914 in his review of Fling's *Source Problems on the French Revolution*, "Professor Fling's long and earnest advocacy of laboratory work in history renders it eminently fitting that he should be the author of this volume."⁴⁰⁹ However, the creation of these materials did not ensure successful reception. Instead, Lingelbach's review was generally negative, complaining that the book was "too conscientious" and, due to this fact, resulted in "stiffness or even obscurity."⁴¹⁰ Lingelbach also contended that the book did not diverge from past materials and the questions it contained were no more difficult than those found in any other sourcebook of the time. In the end, Lingelbach remarked that the source collection was useful not in its combination or translation, but in its potential to "develop a more critical habit of mind and acquaint the student with the rudiments at least of the scientific method as applied to history."⁴¹¹

Ironically, this criticism would not have offended Fling. In fact, he contended that this critical habit was precisely his goal. This critique itself, then, shows how ignorant Fling's contemporaries were of the tenants of his educational philosophy. Lingelbach criticized the sourcebook as a book, not as a tool in the development of historical criticism, as Fling intended it. This disconnect is analogous to the chasm between Fling and his contemporaries: he was trying to reform the method of history itself, rebuild it into a scientific practice, and revolutionize teaching practices to propagate this science to future generations. These nuances remained invisible to his critics, just as they have nearly eighty years after his death.

⁴⁰⁹ William E. Lingelbach, "Source Problems on the French Revolution," Review of Source Problems and the French Revolution by Fred Morrow Fling and Helene Dresser Fling. *The American Historical Review* 19 (1914): 619.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Ibid., 620.

During this second decade of his career, Fling also became more involved in the workings of the university both within the department of European History and the larger College of Arts and Sciences that housed it. In 1911, Fling was Chairmen of the Special Senate Committee on Advisers and Registration for this college.⁴¹² This role empowered him to influence the course sequences and offerings within various departments and gave him oversight of the required courses and hours students needed to graduate with various degrees. This committee was also responsible for setting registration dates and the start and end dates for classwork within the semesters of the upcoming school year. From this program, it is clear that Fling was supportive of degree programs that offered a variety of elective courses to students regardless of major. Moreover, students of the College of Arts and Sciences had a standard “Freshman Program” of Rhetoric and Drill (or Physical Training), Language, Science, and History across all majors housed within the college.⁴¹³

In addition to this Special Committee, the assortment of the university faculty into standing Senate Committees was also common practice throughout Fling’s tenure at Nebraska. Though the only remaining record of Fling’s participation on a Special Senate Committee is the Course Program from 1911, there are consistent records of the composition of the Standing Committees in the Board of Regents Reports from 1912 to 1928. According to historians of the University, this “Senate” structure for the faculty was standard practice since the University’s foundation in 1869.⁴¹⁴ Moreover, there is remaining evidence in the Board of Regents Collection dating back to 1899 of Fling’s participation as a Committee member on the Senate Committee devoted to the publication of the student research chronical, “University Studies.” The “Studies”

⁴¹² Board of Regents Report, May 1911, Board of Regents Collection, Box 20, Folder 172, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

⁴¹³ College of Arts and Sciences, Course Program, June 1911.

⁴¹⁴ Knoll, *Prairie University*, 32.

began with its first publication in July, 1888 under the tutelage of L. A. Sherman.⁴¹⁵ By the 1899 Report of the Committee of Publication, Fling is listed as a member, though it is unclear in which year he joined the Committee. By the 1928 roster of Standing Committee composition, Fling is still listed as a member of this committee.⁴¹⁶

The second decade of Fling's career was devoted to his development of Nebraska teachers as practicing historians, the publication of teacher resources in both book and article form, and his refinement of his own career as professor and faculty member of the University. In these capacities, Fling had served as practitioner, guide, and pioneer for twenty-two years by the time that he published his second sourcebook. This tenure of commitment to the restructuring of history as a discipline of study as well as the improvement of teaching methods at both the secondary and collegiate level, especially within this formative time period for both, demonstrate the passion Fling felt for the development of historical practices beyond his own work and classroom.

⁴¹⁵ Report of the Committee of Publication Submitted by Chairman L. A. Sherman, Nov 12, 1890, Board of Regents Collection, Box 14, Folder 110, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

⁴¹⁶ Standing Committees, Roster, Oct 1928, Board of Regents Collection, Box 27, Folder 239, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

5 THE TRANSFORMATIVE YEARS, 1914 - 1920

Introduction

After the publication of his second sourcebook in 1913, the impact of Fling's constant battle to dignify the process and methodology to which he devoted his life caused him some personal stress and fatigue. This cause and effect is evidenced by the resultant hiatus in the publication of original works from 1913 until 1919. Instead, during this time period, he focused on reviewing major works of historical inquiry and historical method and on advocating for America's involvement in World War I. Moreover, from 1891 to 1914, Fling was rarely settled. Instead, "the *Lincoln City Directory* lists him as having moved seven times in ten years."⁴¹⁷ However, in 1914, he finally moved into the house in which he would reside for the rest of his life: 1530 South 22nd Street in Lincoln, Nebraska.⁴¹⁸ Perhaps this move was intended to provide stability for his family, or to house his increasingly growing library. Whatever the cause of this final move, the effect was a permanence in residency, which allowed him to devote his entire attention to his work and writing.

Unfortunately, though Fling managed to find a degree of stability in his home life, the social atmosphere of the university, the state, and country were changing as the nations of the world drew closer to war in the early years of the 1910s. American neutrality and later involvement in the Great War had a significant and lasting impact on Fling and his works. Not only would the war provide him with unique and new opportunities for research as an official war historian, but the disruption in society caused by the debate over American involvement caused him a great deal of personal and professional stress within the faculty of the university. As Carlson

⁴¹⁷ Carlson, "Professor Fred Fling," 489.

⁴¹⁸ Helene Dresser Fling, Bowdoin College Biographical Record of Fred Morrow Fling, Fred Morrow Fling Papers, Bowdoin University Library, Brunswick, ME.

explains, “Fling’s dominant trait was, I think, a curiosity that equaled a cat’s. He wished to know about everything going on in the world, and when possible he offered a solution. Sometimes this created problems of his own making.”⁴¹⁹ This trait would demonstrate itself in his fervor for involvement with the Allied Cause in World War I and the resultant difficulties this political position caused for his professorship at the University of Nebraska.

A New Approach to Defending History: The Historical Review

Over the course of his publishing career, Fling wrote twenty-eight reviews. Fluent in both French and English, many of Fling’s reviews fixated on critiquing major works of historical research that focused on the French Revolution or the development of French history. However, during this Great War period in which Fling suspended the publication of his own major works, he also redirected his attention in reviews and, resultantly, in 1916 and 1917 Fling published what would serve as his only additional reviews of topics other than historical research. His only other review of a book on method instead of historical research had appeared with his review of Robinson’s *The New History* in 1912. However, before and after this date, with the exception of his reviews in 1916 and 1917, no other review of a work on method or theory appeared in his repertoire. In addition, these reviews were far from flattering.

In 1916, Fling wrote a scathing review of a pamphlet series written by Hervey M. Bowman whose work discussed the “correct” historical method and criticized the “scientific” elements of historical study as lacking.⁴²⁰ To Bowman, historians of the time period were failing to achieve a scientific precision in their historical study and, similar to Fling, he sought to provide them with tools and resources to assuage their failures. Unfortunately to Fling, Bowman’s solu-

⁴¹⁹ Carlson, “Professor Fred Fling,” 489.

⁴²⁰ Fling, “Origin and Treatment,” 133.

tion was to abandon the desire for scientificity and, instead, to admit that “[t]o the question here under test, ‘is history a science?’, the answer, under the prevailing method, according to the adherents of that method, is that it is not.”⁴²¹ In the face of such blatantly antithetical opinions, Fling was both callous and harsh. He identified the pamphlets as “[c]learly a direct declaration of war on the orthodox method of historical science.”⁴²² Moreover, he belittled Bowman’s rendition of what he referred to as the “orthodox” method and concluded that Bowman’s entire treatment of it was “a mass of misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the method.”⁴²³ Not surprisingly, Fling blamed Bowman for these misunderstandings, even though, in the same review, he recognized that “history is the great exception among the sciences. It has no fundamental correct process or processes.”⁴²⁴ Obviously, Fling’s career was devoted to rectifying this absence of process for history as a profession. However, he gave no leniency to Bowman who also found himself operating in this uncertain and formative time period for historical study.

Considering that this article was published nearly twenty years after Fling’s major works on historical method, it is understandable that the need to defend this method once again was irritating. To Fling, his lifetime was devoted to establishing the proper method of history, defending that method, and identifying that it was a teacher’s job to propagate that method to students. If, in 1916, he was again engaged in the same decades-old debate, it is reasonable to imagine that he doubted the success of the reception of his history education recommendations, or of historical method.

He followed this review with another critical review in 1917 of Frederick J. Teggart’s book *Prolegomena to History: The Relation of History to Literature, Philosophy, and Science*.

⁴²¹ Hervey M. Bowman as cited in Fling, “Origin and Treatment,” 133.

⁴²² Fling, “Origin and Treatment,” 133.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, 134-35

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, 134.

In this review, Fling concluded that “Professor Teggart’s argument against the present methods of the historian rests, it seems to me, upon a number of false assumptions.”⁴²⁵ However, he also used this review to express again the purpose of historical work *as opposed to* that of the natural sciences. As Fling explained, “[t]he historian wishes to do something quite different; he wishes to construct a synthesis displaying the unique evolution of man in his activities as a social being.”⁴²⁶ Again, Fling is arguing that attacks against historical method are misplaced because they are spoken in the language of scientists and are grading history on the methods of science, neither of which should apply to this distinctly different field.

These two reviews taken together account for only about 7% of Fling’s total reviewing repertoire. However, the fact that these two occur in consecutive years out of an overall twenty-five year span of review publishing and that they occur at the same time that Fling had suspended his own publishing endeavors is no coincidence. Instead, it is clear that his attempt to distance himself from the tiring debates of his early career were never fully successful. Although his major published works may seem to show an abandonment of his defense of history as an objective scientific subject in pursuit of works regarding history education, these two reviews show that these two areas were very closely connected in Fling’s mind. In fact, devoting time to creating history education resources and explanations of pedagogy and to arguing for the scientific qualities of historical research were Fling’s twin pillars in defending history as a subject. He believed that the promulgation of historic method started in the schools. To him, the field of history would not have successful historians without trained history teachers. Thus, even though

⁴²⁵ Fred Morrow Fling, “Prolegomena to History,” Review of *Prolegomena to History: The Relation of History to Literature, Philosophy, and Science* by Frederick J. Teggart,” *The American Historical Review* 22 (1917): 617.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, 618.

he may have taken a break from his own publications, he never truly abandoned his commitment to a defense of history or history education.

The Belligerent Years: 1914 - 1919

Fling's difficult personality on campus periodically garnered him the reprimand of its officials. In fact, during the war era, his passion often translated into fanaticism and resulted in mild political embarrassment for the university. The first instance of this professional difficulty for Fling was a public press issue that resultantly involved Fling, the Board of Regents, and the Chancellor of the university in an incident of politically biased public statements. In a speech at a Nebraska convocation on September 29th, 1914, Fling stated, "Germany is on the wrong side of the issue," and urged students to support the war effort and likewise condemn Germany.⁴²⁷ Furthermore, it was reported,

Declaring that individual neutrality is impossible, and that it would be undesirable if it was possible, and condemning imperialistic and militaristic Germany in no mild terms, Dr. Fred M. Fling, head professor of the department of European history, dropped a bomb into the peaceful, dreamy university atmosphere this morning. Dr. Fling spoke straight from the shoulder, declared that he adhered to facts and not sentiment, let the condemnation fall where it must...The facts point, reasoned Dr. Fling, that the war is the result of Germany backing up Austria in her projects to dictate to what she deemed vassal state, Servia, and to Russia's determination that the nationality of European states should be preserved.⁴²⁸

Although from today's perspective, this account of the causes of World War One appears satisfactorily considered, at the time, the case for placing blame was not as clear cut. Moreover, in a national atmosphere that formally and officially purported neutrality, these remarks were considered by many to be dangerously biased.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁷ Knoll, *Prairie University*, 64.

⁴²⁸ "Blames Germany for European War: Dr. Fling Caustic in Criticism of Kaiser's Military System; Thinks America Should Take Sides in Mighty Conflict," *Lincoln Tribune*, September 29th, 1914.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*

As would appear an unlucky alignment of fates, this speech was attended by several important members of the community, including Lincoln businessman John G. Maher, who felt it was necessary to write to the public press in Lincoln ridiculing and deriding Fling's blatant violation of Wilson's neutrality proclamation. Seeing that these inflammatory opinions had the potential to bring negative press to the university, an official letter was written to the press in response. Although the authorship of the letter was unclaimed at the time, Robert Knoll supposes that it was penned by Chancellor Samuel Avery of the university who was speaking on behalf of the entire Board of Regents.⁴³⁰ It stated,

The University of Nebraska, as all other universities in the country, is greatly indebted to German models and to German ideas...The Regents believe that German academic freedom should be permitted to flourish in America and that American citizens of German descent will join them in being the last to wish to curtail it, even though at times it may be exercised in a way contrary to their personal wishes and out of harmony with the convictions of friends of the University whose good-will the Regents are most anxious to retain.⁴³¹

This response is not unexpected considering the embedded roles that German academic models held at the university level throughout the country at the time. In fact, as Knoll notes, Avery himself and many other faculty, including Fling, had graduate degrees from German universities.⁴³²

However, the issue between Maher and the University of Nebraska did not end with this simple response in the press. Instead, the Chancellor also delivered a formal statement "in regard to the action of the Board in connection with the letter of Mr. Maher."⁴³³ In this statement, Chancellor Avery defends the actions of the Board in response to the outcry against Fling made

⁴³⁰ Knoll, *Prairie University*, 64.

⁴³¹ Anonymous, "Letter to the Editor," *Lincoln Tribune*, October 1, 1914, as cited in Knoll, *Prairie University*, 64.

⁴³² Knoll, *Prairie University*, 64.

⁴³³ Statement of Samuel Avery in regard to the Board and Mr. Maher, 1914, Board of Regents Collection, Box 21, Folder 183, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

by Maher. The implication of this defense is that Maher again spoke out about the inadequacy of the Board's response, which prompted the Chancellor's need to defend their actions. According to the Chancellor,

All members of the Board expressed themselves personally as strongly in favor of the President's attitude. They felt especially that internal peace and good-will among all the citizens of the State, without regard to previous antecedents or nationality should be maintained. The Regents further expressed...that any action on their part which might seem to curtail academic freedom would not aid in maintaining peace and good-will in the University and in the State. Hence, their official action was limited...⁴³⁴

Clearly, there was some contention with this "limited" response by the Board. Conceivably, since Maher's original public condemnation was focused on Fling and no direct action was taken by the Board against him, Maher's subsequent disapproval of the Board's actions likely centered on this lack of official censure. As this statement explains, any official silencing of Fling had the potential to "curtail academic freedom" in the university. In other words, the Board was reluctant to tell Fling that he could not make statements regarding his opinion of the war or of neutrality because this type of censoring would amount to limiting his professional capacity for academic freedom in his classroom.

Resultantly, the Board's limited response to Fling's speech and lack of direct condemnation of his actions early on in the development of the war debate, as Carlson states, "did not end his crusade against pacifists and those who believed that 'Germany should be given her day in court.'"⁴³⁵ In fact, in Fling's later official war statement, he offers no rebuttal nor remorse for

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ Carlson, "Professor Fred Fling," 490; original citation Manley, *Centennial History*, 213. Manley explains that the campus speech given by Professor Paul Grummann was reported in the newspapers and stated that he told students to suspend their judgments of German actions "until Germany has had her day in court and is able to furnish her own court reporter" (Manley, *Centennial History*, 213).

the statements that he made regarding the aforementioned quotes from Professor Grumman at the time. As he states,

Dr. Alexander correctly reported my conversation with Prf. Grumman a year ago last Spring. Until it was called to mind by Dr. Alexander's testimony it had quite passed out of my mind. Had I recalled it there was no possible motive for not speaking of it. There was nothing to suggest it to my mind. In fact the questions were put to me in such a form that even had I recalled this conversation I might have considered it irrelevant.⁴³⁶

Thus, even in hindsight, Fling was not discouraged from supplying his opinions regarding the statements of others and his judgements of them.

Interestingly, Fling's opinion and outspoken behavior was not unique to the University of Nebraska. In fact, as Timothy Reese Cain shows, "numerous faculty members at...institutions across the nation found themselves victims of hysteria and anti-German extremism during World War I."⁴³⁷ Although Cain focuses on these wartime developments at the University of Michigan, he also explains that "[a]cross the country, faculty members with ties to Germany were subject to investigation and dismissal. These allegations, investigations, and purges were especially prevalent in the Midwest, including tumult at Hebrew Union, Marietta, and Oberlin Colleges; Ohio State and Indiana Universities; and the Universities of Akron, Cincinnati, Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Toledo, and Wisconsin, in addition to Michigan."⁴³⁸ So, in these early years of the 1910s, it was not uncommon for academic professionals to take sides on the war debate and publicly speak their minds regarding their political opinions. Fortunately for Fling, his ini-

⁴³⁶ Fred M. Fling, "Official War Statement," 1918, Board of Regents Collection, Box 23, Folder 201, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE (hereafter cited as Fling, "Official War Statement"), 3.

⁴³⁷ Timothy Reese Cain, "'Silence and Cowardice' at the University of Michigan: World War I and the Pursuit of Un-American Faculty," *History of Education Quarterly* 51 (33): 2011, 296.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*, 298.

tial war statements were not rebuked by the Board of Regents either. Instead, they supported his right to express himself in relation to his academic freedom as a professor.

Unfortunately, support of this sense of “academic freedom” was not always the winning ideology on campuses across the nation during the war. Instead, Carol S. Gruber reinforces Cain’s point regarding the prevalence of inter-faculty accusations at colleges and universities in the war era.⁴³⁹ Gruber further outlines the degree to which the First World War resulted in the limitation of academic freedom within most college campuses and the difficulty that historians have with uncovering the full degree of this stifling. As she explains, “[i]t is unwarrantable to measure the state of academic freedom on American campuses during the war simply by known cases of individuals who were fired from their jobs. Surely, where opinion is being stifled, even by indirect means, academic freedom cannot be said to exist.”⁴⁴⁰ Her point is that the formal dismissal of faculty members from campus positions during the war, which did later happen at the University of Nebraska, was not the only means for restricting the academic liberty of faculty members; instead, the widespread fear of being identified as “disloyal” was enough to create an atmosphere of suspicion and paranoia that itself served to oppress public political opinions. Both before and during the war, Fling contributed to the creation of exactly this oppressive atmosphere within the University of Nebraska as he continued to speak publicly regarding his opinions of the war and as he later lodged accusations against his colleagues for their “unpatriotic” behavior.

In 1917, Fling again appeared speaking publicly about the war effort. As was later reported in the *Daily Nebraskan* on March 27, 1917, Fling addressed a public audience at the uni-

⁴³⁹ Carol S. Gruber, *Mars and Minerva: World War I and the Uses of the Higher Learning in America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975).

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 174.

versity and admitted, “I’m no fire-eater, but there are some things worse than war. The young man who gives his life for some great heroic thing, to humanity, to help the realization of some of the great spiritual things, has lived a long life though he dies at 21.”⁴⁴¹ Then, by October of the same year, Fling had publicly delivered his opinions of the war through a “series of lectures on the ‘Significance of the War’” that he gave “to the soldiers at Fort Deming, New Mexico.”⁴⁴² Unfortunately for Fling, even by 1917, the opinion of other faculty members at the university differed from Fling’s fervor for war. As Knoll explains, concurrently “[a] committee of faculty members expressed their support for President Wilson’s ‘strong foreign policy.’”⁴⁴³ Additionally, “the very next day a second group telegraphed Washington, with quixotic courage, urging ‘all honorable means of preventing American aggressive participation in the present European conflict.’”⁴⁴⁴ As Cain points out, it was also possible in this time period for people, like Fling, to come under investigation for their overly militaristic opinions as well, especially during official neutrality. As he states, “[a]s the country remained officially neutral, it was not only the seemingly pro-German professors who were under scrutiny... Concerned citizens and alumni complained about instructors, most often about their public speech that was interpreted as either pro-German or overly militaristic.”⁴⁴⁵ In this case, Fling was at the other extreme: his speeches did not show support for neutrality. In this case, Fling’s anti-neutral rhetoric was in conflict with the

⁴⁴¹ Anonymous, “War Debate,” *Daily Nebraskan*, March 27, 1917; also cited in Sharistianian, “Claude Wheeler’s,” n.p.

⁴⁴² University of Nebraska Alumni Association, “Faculty in Service of Our Country,” *The Nebraska Journal: Alumni Edition* (October 1917): 9.

⁴⁴³ Knoll, *Prairie University*, 65.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁵ Cain, “Silence and Cowardice,” 303.

coinciding opinions of his colleagues who “refrain[ed] from any speech that did not link neutrality to patriotism.”⁴⁴⁶

Some faculty members did support Fling’s views and, after Congress’s official declaration of war with Germany on April 6th, 1917, an unexpected witch-hunt for unpatriotic activity swept the campus.⁴⁴⁷ Fling was active in this cause, as was his colleague Clark E. Persinger, who also became famous for his accusations against pacifist faculty members. In a letter to the public press, Persinger acknowledged that “a majority of the faculty continued to oppose the war.”⁴⁴⁸ However, the university’s public face showed nothing but support for the war declaration. In fact, “[o]n 24 April the university held a great parade down O Street and a convocation at the city auditorium, and by 3 May more than 500 students had withdrawn from classes to enlist in the armed forces.”⁴⁴⁹

These instances of support, however, did not dissuade professors like Persinger or Fling from continuing their search for disloyalty, which could now more easily be identified as those who did not support the war or who sympathized with Germany. Especially after America entered the war and expanded its Declaration of War to include Austria-Hungary in December of 1917, Fling’s passion for American support amounted to multiple accusations he lodged against persons within the university.⁴⁵⁰ Cain concludes that this redirection of what it meant to be “unpatriotic” was characteristic of other campuses after the official declaration of war also. As he explains, “[d]uring the war...leaders began enforcing a particular form of patriotism by investi-

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., 304.

⁴⁴⁷ “Senate Resolution: WWI and Germany,” *Annals of Congress*, Washington, D.C., Apr 6, 1917. From Library of Congress, *U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates*, available: http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/image/SJRes1_WWI_Germany.htm

⁴⁴⁸ Clark E. Persinger, “Letter to the Editor” *Lincoln Daily Star*, 12 April 1917.

⁴⁴⁹ Knoll, *Prairie University*, 65.

⁴⁵⁰ “Senate Resolution: WWI and Austria-Hungary,” *Annals of Congress*, Washington, D.C., Apr 6, 1917. From Library of Congress, *U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates*, available: http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/image/HJRes169_WWI_Austria-Hungary.htm

gating and removing numerous employees for their alleged support of Germany.”⁴⁵¹ Thus, as was present at other universities during the time period as well, support appeared for professors like Fling whose accusations of “disloyalty” had always centered on sympathies for Germany or anti-war propaganda.

Although these developments were not unique to Nebraska, across the country other developments that continued to support the academic freedom and security of professors also appeared in the midst of World War I. Notably, the creation of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) in 1915 was an effort towards protecting the academic freedom of faculty members on college campuses before, during, and after the war. As Cain makes clear, the AAUP was intended to ensure that “professors retained all of the rights of other citizens and enjoyed freedom of speech outside their classrooms.”⁴⁵² Through membership in this national organization, professors held a shared security in protecting their civil liberties against the attacks lodged by professors like Fling. However, this organizations did not always protect professionals from criticism or accusations; instead, “the tenuous position of the new organization, a values clash, the organization being caught up in the war hysteria, and a larger exchange of civil liberties for professional status” also resulted in the war-time paranoia against disloyalty even in the wake of the founding of the AAUP.⁴⁵³

On the other side of the issue, national developments that stifled civil liberties in their own way during and after the war were also prevalent during this time period. Most notably, Wilson’s creation of the Committee on Public Information (CPI) served as a “federal propaganda

⁴⁵¹ Cain, “Silence and Cowardice,” 315.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, 321.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, 322; see also Sheila Slaughter, “The Danger Zone: Academic Freedom and Civil Liberties,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 448 (March 1980): 46–61.

effort” that “aimed at demonizing Germany and German culture.”⁴⁵⁴ Novick also reinforces this point by explaining that historians of the time period were influenced by the developments of war in their own assessments of the past and the subsequent narratives of history they created were written through the lens of “patriotic” versus “unpatriotic” terminology.⁴⁵⁵ In this way, professors who sought to eliminate “unpatriotic” sympathies from their university campuses, like Fling and Persinger did at Nebraska, found national support for the rightness of the accusations they lodged.

In Nebraska, the Governor during the war, Keith Neville, also aided individuals like Fling by creating the Nebraska Council of Defense to “monitor the actions and speech of persons suspected of disloyalty.”⁴⁵⁶ The Council of Defense became the main organization for identifying unpatriotic activities at the university and even asked the Board of Regents to “deal with what they perceived as widespread disloyalty on campus.”⁴⁵⁷ In 1918, as Fling and other civilians continually reported names to this Council, its members finally requested some professors be brought before a public hearing held at the Law College in June. Although the Council had lodged these accusations, they relegated the authority for prosecution to the members of the Board of Regents, who reluctantly agreed. Press coverage of the ten days’ worth of hearings was generally critical of them but overall supportive of the Council’s purpose in deterring unpatriotic behavior in the state.⁴⁵⁸ In the end, public coverage of the chaos on campus and the Board’s hearings against the accused ensured that national attention was drawn to the continuing disagreements amongst the faculty at the university.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., 319.

⁴⁵⁵ Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 111-132.

⁴⁵⁶ Carlson, “Professor Fred Fling,” 490; also cited in Knoll, *Prairie University*, 65.

⁴⁵⁷ Knoll, *Prairie University*, 65.

⁴⁵⁸ *Nebraska State Journal*, June 2-11, 1918; also covered in Manley, *Centennial History*, 213-225.

Fling along with Persinger were key accusers of the twelve faculty members that had to defend themselves before the Council, even though Fling was not present for the hearings. At the time, Fling was already in Washington, D.C. serving as a research historian for the war department. In fact, Chancellor Avery was not present during this time either because he was also in Washington, D.C. serving “as a major in chemical warfare.”⁴⁵⁹ Left behind on campus to pick up Fling’s work during the hearings, however, was Minnie Throop England, who had appointed herself unofficial spokesperson for the true patriot cause. In Avery’s place was Acting Chancellor W. G. Hastings, who sat at the head of the Board for all of its hearings against the accused. Unfortunately for Fling and England, much of the evidence against the professors they indicted was discredited and only two out of the twelve instructors under scrutiny lost their jobs over the issue, in addition to Persinger himself who the Board claimed had “destroyed his usefulness to the University.”⁴⁶⁰ However, the *Nebraska State Journal* out of Lincoln later claimed that the “premature deaths” of two other faculty members were tied to their need to defend themselves against the onslaught of accusations lodged by crusaders like England and Fling.⁴⁶¹

These developments did not bode well for Fling and his passion now appeared as fanaticism to many around him. In fact, as Carlson recalls, “[t]wo groups were now angry with Fling:” both the Board of Regents who “felt he had threatened the usefulness of the university as a public institution by spreading ‘unfounded suspicions against innocent faculty members’” and the State Council of Defense who “blamed its failure to gain dismissals of all the professors on

⁴⁵⁹ Knoll, *Prairie University*, 66

⁴⁶⁰ William G. Hastings, acting Chancellor of University of Nebraska, Report on Public Hearings, June 18, 1918, Board of Regents Collection, Box 23, Folder 200, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

⁴⁶¹ *Nebraska State Journal*, 6 September 1918, as cited in Carlson, “Professor Fred Fling,” 490.

Fling's unfulfilled promise to furnish crucial evidence at the hearings."⁴⁶² However, there was yet another group who offered their support of both Fling and his "character and patriotism."⁴⁶³ The Club of Lincoln, which included LeRossignol, W. G. Langworthy Taylor, and W. G. Hastings, the Acting Chancellor, offered a Resolution to the Board of Regents of the university in which the signatories "unhesitatingly express[ed] our entire confidence in and respect for Prof. Fling."⁴⁶⁴ As they explained, "we have, at all times, encouraged the freest discussion of current topics, and our members have invariably spoken their minds unreservedly; especially has this been true on all topics connected with the World War now raging."⁴⁶⁵ Thus, although he had garnered the ire of multiple authority groups in Nebraska, he still did have the confidence and support of some of his colleagues.

The reason Fling was not present to provide his "crucial evidence" is that he had "been granted a leave of absence in May, 1918, when he was commissioned a major in the historical branch of the army."⁴⁶⁶ Because the hearings took place that following June, Fling was already in Washington, D.C. at the time the public hearings were held. Moreover, in his Official War Statement after the hearings, Fling also made clear that the existence of this "evidence" against his colleagues in the first place had been the result of a significant misunderstanding between himself and Vice-Chairmen Coupland of the State Council of Defense. As he explained, he was called on by the Vice-Chairmen before he had left for Washington, D.C. and unknowingly "in-

⁴⁶² Carlson, "Professor Fred Fling," 490-491.

⁴⁶³ Resolution of the Club of Lincoln, Nebraska, adopted July 6, 1918, Board of Regents Collection, Box 23, Folder 201, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁶ University of Nebraska Alumni Association, "Faculty Notes Section," *The University Journal: Alumni Edition*, (October 1919): 8.

terrogated” regarding his “opinions” of unpatriotic behavior amongst the faculty.⁴⁶⁷ As he stated, amid a conversation he had with the Vice-Chairmen, a stenographer had erroneously misreported vast swaths of his point of view and “after that, but not in my presence nor by my consent, this sheet was headed ‘Testimony of Prof Fling’ and was presented as proof that I claimed to have first hand knowledge of disloyalty on the part of members of the faculty.”⁴⁶⁸ However, he later explained that this “testimony” was not recorded in its entirety and, importantly, his objection to the whole affair in the first place had been omitted.

Fling’s role in the entire anti-German wartime witch-hunt on campus is controversial. In the first place, he was publicly known for his “fire-eating” rhetoric and his willingness to share his opinions of support for the war, even during the nation’s official years of neutrality. Moreover, he publicly denounced the role of Germany in the war in speeches he gave across campus. And last, although he was often overly militaristic himself, it was clear that his definition of “patriotism” corresponded to support for the war, especially once Congress declared war and in the wake of his time as the official “war historian” for the American Armed Forces. However, Fling’s official war statement is overall a well-crafted diversion of blame for his role in this entire affair. Although he claims to have been “misrepresented,” the fact that he was so outspoken about the war makes it likely that his postwar defense was an attempt at backpedaling against the impact that his prewar statements had on his reputation. Moreover, the hysteria that swept the campus, for which Fling was at least partially responsible, was undeniable.⁴⁶⁹

Moreover, in this statement he also defends his absence from the trials, which in the long run may have contributed to the Board’s decision not to remove Fling from the university. As he

⁴⁶⁷ Fling, “Official War Statement,” 4.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴⁶⁹ Knoll, *Prairie University*, 65.

stated, “I did not leave Lincoln to avoid testifying at the trial. I should have been very glad to remain, but I felt it my duty to go to Washington.”⁴⁷⁰ Then, the turmoil in Nebraska continued to develop in his absence. Both the Board of Regents and the Nebraska Council of Defense did want Fling to back up his accusations with evidence, or to “terminate [his] relationship with the University” but, conveniently, he was not present to appear on his own behalf.⁴⁷¹ Moreover, this criticism against Fling – that he was not properly evidencing his suspicions – was probably personally insulting more so than it was professionally alarming. As Samuel Avery later said of Fling in a personal letter to R. L. Slagle, President of the University of South Dakota, “while Professor Fling minutely studies evidence relating to the French Revolution, he speaks of his colleagues and associates often as the result of very erroneous impressions without applying to them the principles of evidence that he teaches in his classes.”⁴⁷²

In fact, when news of the continued reproach of the Board of Regents and the Council of Defense finally reached Fling in Washington, D.C., he was “astonished and mystified.”⁴⁷³ To him, these were “harsh words about an internationally known historical scholar whose specialty was in analyzing the reliability of sources.”⁴⁷⁴ Later, the Board of Regents requested that Acting Chancellor Hastings issue a formal reprimand to Fling for his role in the entire disloyalty trial affair, which he did through written correspondence on June 20, 1918. In this letter, Hastings was equally as harsh in his condemnation of Fling’s actions, even though he had previously supported him as a member of the Club of Lincoln. He stated,

⁴⁷⁰ Fling, “Official War Statement,” 7.

⁴⁷¹ William G. Hastings, acting Chancellor of University of Nebraska to Fred Fling, June 3, 1918, Board of Regents Collection, Box 23, Folder 201, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE; see also Knoll, *Prairie University*, 66.

⁴⁷² Samuel Avery to R. L. Slagle, President of the University of South Dakota, June 1, 1925, Samuel Avery Correspondences, Box 1, Folder 5, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

⁴⁷³ Fred Morrow Fling to Acting Chancellor W. G. Hastings, June 24, 1918, Board of Regents Collection, Box 23, Folder 201, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

⁴⁷⁴ Carlson, “Professor Fred Fling,” 491.

It is also disclosed in the investigation that the public and the prosecution have been misled by activities arising from dissension and personal difference among members of the University staff. It appears that the University has been criticized and has suffered in its standing throughout the state by reason of charges arising from such factional differences and by the spreading of unfounded suspicions against the present attitude of members of the staff who are zealously doing their full duty at the present time. The Board cannot hold blameless persons who have contributed to this state of affairs. It is impelled especially in this connection to name Dr. F. M. Fling and Mrs. Minnie T. England as apparently in a considerable degree responsible for these conditions...⁴⁷⁵

So, although only two out of the twelve professors named were removed for reasons of disloyalty or damage to the university, both Fling and England found themselves under fire for other reasons. As one university historian later wrote, “Mrs. England and Professor Fling had contributed greatly to the breakdown of faculty morale by spreading suspicions about their colleagues.”⁴⁷⁶ Moreover, even though the Board of Regents threatened to remove England and Fling from their positions at the university, they were also given the chance to “explain their actions” before the Board.⁴⁷⁷ Fortunately, the issue ultimately dissipated when Fling defended that he had not promised any such evidence, but that he was only “report[ing] rumors and opinions.”⁴⁷⁸ However, as Cain points out, “[r]umors and allegations also proved destructive at institutions across the nation, even when not true.”⁴⁷⁹ So, even though by August of 1918, the Board and the State Council had concluded that Fling had not intentionally deceived them nor knowingly accused innocent persons of disloyalty, the damage from his witch-hunt was already inflicted on both his reputation and campus morale. When the Board concluded that Fling’s actions “had

⁴⁷⁵ William G. Hastings, acting Chancellor of University of Nebraska to Fred Fling, June 20, 1918, Board of Regents Collection, Box 23, Folder 201, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

⁴⁷⁶ Manley, *Centennial History*, 224.

⁴⁷⁷ Hastings, Letter, June 20, 1918; also cited in Manley, *Centennial History*, 224.

⁴⁷⁸ Fred Fling to Acting Chancellor W. G. Hastings, June 24, 1918. Board of Regents Collection, Box 23, Folder 201, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

⁴⁷⁹ Cain, “Silence and Cowardice,” 326.

been done erroneously” and he was “absolved of intentional wrongdoing,” he was still notorious for his role in the creation of this wartime hysteria in the first place.⁴⁸⁰

Professors were not the only persons subject to accusations of disloyalty during the war years at the university. The atmosphere of the state and country as a whole was dominated by fear of unpatriotic behavior and what these actions would mean for the outcome of the war. In fact, Fling himself testified in the case of a student in his department who was accused of disloyalty. In his official war statement, he acknowledged that,

Fellow students of the graduate student [Miss Wupper] charged her before the Council of Defense, with extremely disloyal language. Her case was laid before Chancellor Avery by the Council of Defense, and as she was a graduate student and reader in my department the Chancellor brought the matter to my attention.⁴⁸¹

He then detailed the events of the hearing for which he was present, which found the graduate student guilty of unpatriotic behavior but issued no punishment after her admission of guilt was accepted as genuine by those present at the hearing. As Fling noted, “[t]he girls all wept and we were all much affected.”⁴⁸² Perhaps this commotion in his personal and professional life can also account for his apparent cessation in research and publishing: the period from 1913 to 1919 that corresponds with America’s involvement in the war, is also the longest extent of time that passed between major publications in Fling’s collection.

The publication lapse from 1913 to 1919, however, was not a complete abandonment of research. Instead, in the wake of the war, he argued that “to be relevant, [history] must encompass as much as possible the entire experience of mankind” and began a massive historical research project, which he titled both *A World Civilization* and *A History of Civilization* in his re-

⁴⁸⁰ Board of Regents to Fred Fling, June 24, 1918, Board of Regents Collection, Box 23, Folder 201, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE; also cited in Knoll, *Prairie University*, 66.

⁴⁸¹ Fling, “Official War Statement,” 1.

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*, 2.

search notes.⁴⁸³ In the remaining formal draft of the portions of the project that he completed, Fling titled the work *A History of Civilization: From its Primitive and Isolated Beginnings to the Formation of a World-Society, 3500 B.C. – 1920 A.D.* Clearly, this project was enormous: Fling meant to chronicle the development of mankind and “to express his concept of a world-society based on justice and reason” over an expanse of more than 5000 years.⁴⁸⁴ Unfortunately, like his three volumes on Mirabeau, Fling devoted twenty years to this research project, but it was never published and, in fact, remained unfinished at the time of his death.⁴⁸⁵ From the remnants of the writing that remain in the archive at the university, there is evidence that Fling completed a six-page preface, a sixteen-page introduction titled “World-History and Historical Consciousness,” a thirty-three-page introductory chapter of ancient history, over two hundred subsequent related pages of writing, and an extensive outline of the entire project that detailed the eight total books he envisioned would comprise the completed work.⁴⁸⁶

Moreover, the similarities between this outline and the course outline he used for his “History and Teaching of History” course are apparent. Both outlines divide the treatment of history into significant chronological epochs, both connect the themes of historical development to Fling’s overall ideas of “historical consciousness,” and both conclude with an acknowledge-

⁴⁸³ Fred Morrow Fling, World Civilization Manuscript, Fred Morrow Fling Collection, Box 10, Folders 5-9, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE (hereafter cited as Fling, World Civilization MS).

⁴⁸⁴ Fred Morrow Fling, “Introduction” to a World Civilization, Fred Morrow Fling Collection, Box 10, Folder 8, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE; also cited in Carlson, “Professor Fred Fling,” 485.

⁴⁸⁵ Fred Morrow Fling, Unfinished Manuscript, Fred Morrow Fling Collection, Box 10, Folder 9, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

⁴⁸⁶ Fling, World Civilization MS.

ment of the “world-society” to which he believed the development of mankind had now ascended.⁴⁸⁷ As Fling explains in the preface to the book,

[T]he study of world-history becomes an imperative necessity; it cannot be neglected with impunity. The history of our relations with other nations has ceased to be the history of “foreign affairs.” The affairs of the whole world have become so inextricably interwoven, the solution of every important problem within the life of a people is dependent upon the condition of the entire world of which it forms a part, that for the people of a democracy to be ignorant of world-conditions and of their historical origins may lead to world-disaster.⁴⁸⁸

As evidenced in this statement, Fling’s experience during the war years had a profound effect upon him. Although he never directly explains the reason for this mental shift, his adoption of a world-view towards the development of human history, instead of a national versus “foreign” approach demonstrates that his conception of international relations was altered. However, the only event that could have had this profound of a change on his way of thinking and the only event in which he was involved during this time period was the World War. In this way, his devotion to “world affairs” and the acknowledgement that the development of world civilization was now “so inextricably interwoven” shows that Fling had been psychologically changed by the events he witnessed and experiences he lived during World War One. Although Fling never completed this project, the outline that Fling completed for this research endeavor shows evidence of meticulous organization and planning for the venture and his new focus of a world-wide approach to history dominated his lectures in the postwar years.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁷ History of Civilization Outline, n.d., Fred Morrow Fling Collection, Box 10, Folder 8, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE (hereafter cited as Fling, History of Civilization Outline).

⁴⁸⁸ Fred Morrow Fling, “Preface” to World Civilization Manuscript, Fred Morrow Fling Collection, Box 10, Folder 5, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE (hereafter cited as Fling, “Preface”), 6.

⁴⁸⁹ Evident in Cripe, Lecture Notes; and Waggener, Rewritten Lecture Notes.

Moreover, the breadth of this research project was also related to Fling's philosophical ideas regarding "historical consciousness" that he emphasized in his later works after the war.⁴⁹⁰ As he explained, having historical consciousness meant grasping the importance of one's place in the entire extent of historical development, not just accepting "presentism" or a "bias for the present."⁴⁹¹ In a lecture, Fling further explained that the importance of this historical positioning was unparalleled to understanding man's future: "man is forced at all times to rest upon his entire past to bring his weight to bear upon the future."⁴⁹² Attempting to chronicle the entire development of world civilization would certainly have added depth to this placement of man in the timeline of his own development. However, the scale of this undertaking also makes it no surprise that this project was never completed. As he stated in the preface to the book,

Historical consciousness is the memory of the race, created by historical research and aroused anew in each generation by historical teaching. Without such a memory, without historical study and historical teaching productive of historical consciousness, without a realization through study, of how society has become what it is, and of what its problems are, problems resulting from this complex, unique development called history, society would disintegrate into the chaos from which it sprang.⁴⁹³

As he later emphasized and warned, "*If humanity is to benefit by its past experiences...it must see that past as a whole.*"⁴⁹⁴ Thus, Fling's motivation for providing this vast survey of history, although he had previously argued for historical specialization, was to equip students of history and current men of society with a view of the totality of their past in order to influence their decisions of the present.

⁴⁹⁰ Fling, *History of Civilization Outline*.

⁴⁹¹ Fling, *Writing*, 121.

⁴⁹² Cripe, *Lecture Notes*.

⁴⁹³ Fling, *History of Civilization* "Preface," 1.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 6, emphasis in original.

As Osborne emphasizes, “[t]he First World War brought other priorities and also caused Fling some personal aggravation.”⁴⁹⁵ One of these other priorities for Fling was the opportunity to serve as an official war historian under Woodrow Wilson, which Fling would later rate as “an extra-ordinary experience [he would] never forget.”⁴⁹⁶ In fact, as stated, the reason he was in Washington, D.C. during his controversy with the Board of Regents was specifically because the War Department was considering him for a new position in order “to compile source material for writing the official account of World War I.”⁴⁹⁷ Because of his involvement with lectures at Fort Deming in 1917, and his earlier work at Fort Leavenworth in 1904, he appeared on the U.S. government’s radar as an excellent candidate for such a position. In fact, as Taylor acknowledges, “it was his work at Leavenworth that led to Fling’s appointment to the Historical Branch of the General Staff.”⁴⁹⁸ Thus, his previous involvement with the armed forces - and his popularity that came from these opportunities - provided further openings for Fling’s later career.

As Lieutenant Colonel C. W. Weeks described in a letter to Fling, “the historical branch of the general staff felt the need for a research historian.”⁴⁹⁹ With Fling’s status as a tedious and precise scientific historian and his well-known fervor and support for the war, this job opportunity was perfectly suited to him. So, delighted at the opportunity and flattered by the degree to which his reputation as an exceptional researcher had proceeded him, Fling spent the entire summer of 1918 working in Washington, D.C. towards this task.

⁴⁹⁵ Osborne, “Fred Morrow Fling,” 491.

⁴⁹⁶ Fred Morrow Fling to Chancellor Samuel Avery, April 21, 1919, Samuel Avery Correspondences, Box 3, Folder 14, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

⁴⁹⁷ Carlson, “Professor Fred Fling,” 492; also corroborated by Osborne, “Fred Morrow Fling,” 491.

⁴⁹⁸ Taylor, “A Life of Historical Research,” 4.

⁴⁹⁹ Lieutenant Colonel C. W. Weeks to Fred Fling, March 7, 1918, Fred Morrow Fling Collection Box 16, Folder 10, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

An even greater opportunity appeared in December of 1918 when, astonishingly, “the War Department placed him in the center of historical development [and] sent him to Paris to gather material on the American Commission to Negotiate Peace.”⁵⁰⁰ Fling’s fluency in French likely helped gain him this appointment to the Paris Peace Conference that occurred at the close of the war. In fact, as the Alumni Association acknowledged in an Alumni Edition of the *University Journal*,

Maj. F. M. Fling, on leave of absence from the department of European History, is a member of the peace party at Versailles. He went as chief of the diplomatic section representing the historical branch of the general staff. He is attached to the staff of General Bliss in Paris, where it is his duty to collect material on the conference and on the diplomatic relations between America and the European countries in the years 1914 to 1918.⁵⁰¹

In a later edition of this *Journal*, the Alumni Association again mentioned Fling’s appointment by recognizing that “Dr. Fling went abroad as the official representative of the historical section, and was in Paris from the time of the arrival of the presidential party until the close of the negotiations with Germany.”⁵⁰² As these credits show, the university took great pride in Fling as a war historian, even though the Board of Regents’ previous derision of him made him appear to be at odds with the administration of the institution and the executive council of the state.

Not surprisingly, Fling’s role as the “official” war historian within the American War Department likely influenced the way he experienced the unfolding of events in Washington, D.C. and later Paris in the after war period. As Novick also explains, the conclusions of historians from the time period were often bolstered by their sense of pride and patriotism that were

⁵⁰⁰ Carlson, “Professor Fred Fling,” 492.

⁵⁰¹ University of Nebraska Alumni Association, “Dr. Fling at Versailles,” *The University Journal: Alumni Edition*, (January 1919): 9.

⁵⁰² University of Nebraska Alumni Association, “Faculty Notes Section,” *The University Journal: Alumni Edition*, (October 1919): 8.

fostered during and after the war.⁵⁰³ For this reason, many historians' products were written with a decidedly pro-American bias. Although Fling never completed his official war history, true to his spirit as an organized and precise historical planner, he outlined "a diplomatic history of the war in three volumes: one, How we got into the war; two, The period of international relations up to the armistice; three, The peace conference."⁵⁰⁴ Although these works would also remain unpublished at the time of his death, his vision for the volumes does evidence the American-centric lens through which he viewed these events. However, Fling did not consider this bias as potentially harmful to his rendering of an objective history of the time period nor did he realize that his role as the official War Historian for the Armed Forces portended the type of propagandized history he was likely expected to create. Instead, as Novick claims, Fling maintained the unchallenged views of his time period that placed these developments in American history in a consistently positive light.

Fling's time spent as a war historian and the travels it required Fling to undertake also amounted to the longest consecutive period of time he would spend away from the university during his entire career. He first arrived in Washington, D.C. in the spring of 1918 and did not resume his position at the university until September of 1919.⁵⁰⁵ When he returned to Washington, D.C. from Paris in the early summer of 1919, Fling spent many hours attending speeches of both the President and Senate officials. During this time, he communicated through personal letters to several members of faculty and staff at the University of Nebraska, including Chancellor Avery who had already returned to the university from his own work in Washington, D.C. In these correspondences he made it clear that he was not only thrilled to have been a part of these

⁵⁰³ Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 111-130.

⁵⁰⁴ UNAA, "Faculty Notes Section," 8.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

historic events, but also excited that the President was advocating a League of Nations that resembled some of his own ideas on a “world state whose laws were based upon justice and equality.”⁵⁰⁶ Although America did not join the League of Nations and Wilson’s own efforts at advocating for the Versailles Treaty failed to gain significant American support, Fling’s shift in focus to a world-view of history corresponds to the concurrent development of the League of Nations with which he was familiar through his work in Paris. It is likely that this conception of a League of Nations was the turning point that convinced Fling of the validity of his own concept of a “world-society” to which he felt the development of man had finally ascended. The fact that this terminology and focus do not appear in his works before the war and, instead, are prevalent topics in both his classes and writings after the war evidences that it was in fact his experiences during the war that influenced the development of these ideas.

What these specific experiences or turning points were remains invisible in the record, although Fling contends that this culmination of civilized development and historians’ recognition that the time had come to acknowledge this world-society was due to the events of World War One. As he explained,

Up to the present time, agreement has been lacking, touching the nature and significance of world-history. It has been denied, even, that any world history exists; how, then, can such a unity be described? A history of civilization of China, or of India, or of the European peoples would be possible, but what have they in common?...

The World-War changed all that. Like a flash of lightening on a dark night it illuminated the historical landscape and revealed the existence of a world-society.⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁶ Fred Morrow Fling to Samuel Avery, July 16, 1919, Fred Morrow Fling Collection, Box 3, Folder 14, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE; also expressed in Carlson, “Professor Fred Fling,” 493.

⁵⁰⁷ Fling, “World-History and Historical Consciousness,” 7.

Thus, taking the culminating events of the World War as evidence of this final, formal, world society, Fling ventured to chronicle this world development.

The war thus imaginably influenced Fling's worldview in many ways: it changed his focus in historical research to that of the war itself, it provided opportunities for his diplomatic travel to Europe, and it redirected his view towards world history and the study of a comprehensive vision of historical development. To him, chronicling this development of mankind would be the consummate contribution to society's historical consciousness by providing a holistic view of man's place in his total development as a social being.

The Reappearance of Social Studies: The 1916 Report

During this war era, important changes in curricula for the field of social studies and history at the secondary level continued to develop during Fling's absence from Nebraska. Significantly, the NEA again commissioned a committee to investigate the current state of affairs in secondary education. Building upon the work of the foundational committees of the 1890s, this new committee, the Committee on the Reorganization of Secondary Education (CRSE), and specifically the Committee on Social Studies within it, took a bold step by identifying "social studies" as a curricular area.⁵⁰⁸ Moreover, though seeking to establish "social studies" as a department of secondary schools, it was exactly this committee that helped to give a more firm definition to history education *within* social studies as well.

Though the origin of curriculum standardization for history already appeared with the Committee of Ten and Committee of Seven, the authors of the 1916 Report formalized and popularized the changing approaches to history education that had appeared during the beginning

⁵⁰⁸ NEA, "Report of the CRSE," 499 – 509

decades of the Progressive Era. The authors of this report, notably Thomas Jesse Jones, “proposed a new synthesis of social studies subjects and suggested a pattern of courses” that diverged from previous iterations of curriculum design.⁵⁰⁹ The nationally-acclaimed work of John Dewey and David Snedden greatly influenced the authors of this 1916 report in that Progressive, student-centered and socially aware education (Dewey) and “functional” areas of study (Snedden) became the focal points of their recommendations for the future of the discipline.⁵¹⁰ The Report created a broader conception of social studies education, including a Problems of Democracy course, and advocated textbook use (supplemented when appropriate by authentic source material) in history education.⁵¹¹

The Report of the Social Studies Committee was a clear response to the changing historical context of the time period and to Progressive Era tenets of social thinking. It “advocated a shift to ‘the immediate needs of social growth’” (immigration); it “made a strong case for a focus on ‘present interests and needs of the pupil’” (Enlightenment); and it “made clear that its authors were interested in development of both the individual and the group” (progressivism).⁵¹² In fact, as the Report itself stated, “[s]econdary education should be determined by the needs of the society to be served.”⁵¹³ However, Evans claims that the report was progressive to only some extent: “[o]n the whole the report was a compromise, a moderate and progressive approach to social education aimed at creating cooperative citizens.”⁵¹⁴

⁵⁰⁹ Evans, *Social Studies Wars*, 21.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 22-23.

⁵¹¹ NEA, “Report of the CRSE,” 499 – 509.

⁵¹² Evans, *Social Studies Wars*, 24, original primary citations from the CRSE Report.

⁵¹³ NEA, “Report of the CRSE,” 500.

⁵¹⁴ Evans, *Social Studies Wars*, 44.

Thomas Fallace argues that the 1916 Report was “elitist, conservative, and racist.”⁵¹⁵ As he explains, the 1916 Report and many Progressive Era educational reforms like it were suffused in the social and racial assumptions of the times, including a “linear historicist view” of the psychological development of racial groups.⁵¹⁶ To Fallace, the “progress” that was possible under the umbrella of such views was itself limited. In other words, the recommendations forwarded by the authors of the 1916 report were the product of Progressive Era influences working within a context of traditional assumptions regarding society, culture, and student capability. They represented a desire for progressive change in an era where a drastic and sudden shift away from current practices would have jeopardized the reception of new ideas. Thus, the leaders of the CRSE and, specifically, the Committee on Social Studies, worked carefully to change the curriculum within the confines of the endemic social, political, and racial views of the time period. Indeed, the Committee’s work was at once both an affirmation of traditionalism and conservative uniformity as Fallace implies and a Progressive Era response to the need for change and adaptation as Evans argues.

Directly following the publication of the 1916 Report, America was engulfed in World War One. Evans suggests that this captivating worldwide event resulted in a general silence in critical analysis of the Committee’s findings, citing that “[t]he editors [of *Historical Outlook*] published a summary of the 1916 report in the journal in early 1917, then published no reference to or commentary on the report until 1920.”⁵¹⁷ Thus, like the same disruption Fling experienced in his own work, the reception of this crucial document of educational reform was delayed due to

⁵¹⁵ Thomas D. Fallace, “The Racial and Cultural Assumptions of the Early Social Studies Educators, 1901-1922,” in Christine Woyshner and Chara Haeussler Bohan, ed. *Histories of Social Studies and Race: 1865-2000*, (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 41.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁵¹⁷ Evans, *Social Studies Wars*, 29.

the tumultuous upheavals caused by the human events of the time period. Resultantly, the social studies curriculum remained vague and inconsistently implemented throughout the country even though this document was intended to amend this problem.⁵¹⁸

Even though the voice of formal publications was quiet, the day-to-day work of reformers, educators, and secondary instructors continued. This fact was especially impactful in Nebraska. In Fling's absence, the NHTA took seriously the developments on social studies education in the wake of the 1916 CRSE Report and used these changes as the basis of curriculum design for Nebraska. Resultantly, The NHTA pulled the social studies curriculum away from its pillar of history and into this new age of social science. By the year of Fling's return, many of these changes had become common practices in the secondary schools of the state based on the recommendations of a committee assigned by the NHTA, who published its report in 1918 in *The Nebraska Teacher* journal. In part, the Association's committee report stated,

We believe our legitimate field is the field of the social sciences, of which history is one. We feel that history teachers must become willing to broaden out, must teach less pure scientific narrative and more of history in its social aspects. This committee is of the opinion that history should be studied in the elementary and secondary schools mostly for its utility, – its bearing on the social sciences – rather than for the production of expert historians. We are willing to leave that to the universities.⁵¹⁹

Although not naming Fling personally, the traits for which Fling was known and his previous involvement with this association for the efforts of professional development in scientific history point to the conclusion that this statement was directed at him. In fact, Osborne agrees and calls the report an “implicit criticism of Fling.”⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁸ Graham, *Schooling America*, 39-40.

⁵¹⁹ “Report of Committee Adopted by the Nebraska History Teachers’ Association at Omaha,” *The Nebraska Teacher* 20 (1918): 208.

⁵²⁰ Osborne, “Fred Morrow Fling,” 496.

However, due in part to the inconsistency in implementation from the multitude of grassroots efforts at educational progress and professional teacher development, this new “social studies” curriculum remained elusive. The NHTA would no longer find help from Fling, though, because he focused on the pedagogies and techniques of history instruction. As Evans explains, even with this new appearance of “social studies,” enrollment remained fairly steady in history classes with only slight increases in the auxiliary “Problems of Democracy” and other social studies classes throughout the 1920s.⁵²¹ Moreover, at the start of the 1920s, “[h]istory remained dominant.”⁵²²

Fling’s Return to the University after the War

At the end of the war years and upon his return to Nebraska in September of 1919, Fling now found himself juggling many tasks and roles. Formally, he was the official chronicler of the war for the War Department and was expected to produce his written narrative in a timely manner, although he never did. Additionally, he remained the Head of the Department of European History, with a full teaching load. And, lastly, his new commitment to surveying the entire expanse of human historical development occupied his time as a researcher. All of these hats fit him well but they resulted in his abandonment of history education reforms, an area from which he had been physically removed during his time in the War Department in 1917 and psychologically removed since his engagements with loyalty and neutrality issues on campus in 1914.

This hiatus from involvement resulted in Fling’s ignorance of the many educational and curricular changes that had taken place in Nebraska over the past five years. Moreover, although he had made headway with teachers’ professional development before the war, the reorganiza-

⁵²¹ Evans, *Social Studies Wars*, 42.

⁵²² *Ibid.*, 41.

tion within the curriculum of Nebraska starkly betrayed Fling's earlier efforts. Because Fling's attention had been consumed by the war, he did not notice many of the developments and redirections adopted by the NHTA when they occurred. Instead, he only became aware of them after several years of their implementation. Thus, by the time he learned of the adopted changes, it was almost too late for his influence to affect their direction. Instead, and as Osborne admits was endemic to historians of the 1920s, Fling chose to abandon educational reform on a large scale and reverted to the refinement of his own practices without greater hope for the dissemination of these practices beyond his own classroom.⁵²³ Unfortunately, this defeat meant that Fling's many passionate writings of his early career now became superfluous as teachers accepted the recommendations of the new "social studies" curriculum and turned away from scientific history as Fling had propagated it. As Osborne notes, "[b]y the 1920s, if not sooner, the source method had run out of gas."⁵²⁴

In Nebraska as was common in many states of America in the 1920s, history education reform became the playground of theorists driven by pragmatism, progress, and administrative centralization.⁵²⁵ As Osborne states,

Fling's belief in the intellectual power of education lost out to the social efficiency views of Thomas Jesse Jones, Arthur Dunn, and other proponents of a functionalist social studies. His faith in history similarly lost out to the ideas of those such as William Heard Kilpatrick and Harold Rugg, who in the 1920s steered social studies in a politically reformist, issues-centered direction, based not on history but on the full range of social sciences.⁵²⁶

⁵²³ Osborne, "Fred Morrow Fling," 497.

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

⁵²⁵ See Urban and Wagoner, *American Education* for a discussion of the failure of "pedagogical progressives" in place of the success of "administrative progressives" who transformed schools into structured businesses (200-226).

⁵²⁶ Osborne, "Fred Morrow Fling," 496-497.

Moreover, as the Senate continued to debate America's commitment to the League of Nations and as the NHTA Committee condemned the efforts of a reformed history to which Fling had devoted the first three decades of his career, Fling was now betrayed on two fronts: by his political state and by his NHTA. Thus, it is not surprising in response to these developments that Fling devoted his attention to world history and abandoned his efforts at continued educational reform.

As is evidenced from the review of the archives in Nebraska, greater searches of remaining newspapers and sources from around the country, and as Osborne confirms, “[t]here is no record of Fling’s making any comment on these developments;” instead, this lack of comment shows evidence that Fling had “moved on to other interests.”⁵²⁷ These other interests were his war history project and his excitement over compiling over 5000 years of human history.⁵²⁸ Thus, as Osborne equally acknowledges, “[a]s with other historians of his generation, by the 1920s Fling had in effect lost interest in the schools that had increasingly become the preserve of professional educationists.”⁵²⁹

Although he continued his personal and professional efforts at historical development, Fling’s fervor and passion for educational reform did seem to dissipate in the tone and temper of his later writings. In fact, the only mention of history education he ever made after the Great War was in an article in 1919. This article was in fact his last published journal article, “The Use of Sources in History Teaching During the Last Decade (1909-1919)” in *Historical Outlook*. Overall, though a review of educational developments and the state of source method in teach-

⁵²⁷ Ibid., 497.

⁵²⁸ Evident from research notes and manuscript remnants towards his project on “A World Civilization within the Fred Morrow Fling Collection, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

⁵²⁹ Osborne, “Fred Morrow Fling,” 497.

ing, the diction of the article was dry and cold. In this article, Fling was not providing teacher resources nor a defense of source method. Instead, he seemed to abandon his previous commitment to advocating, refining, and defending history education practices and to refocus his attention on a historical review of the acceptance of the source method in education. As he concludes in this article, although sources were sometimes used in history education classrooms, they still had not attained the position of primacy that Fling had envisioned.⁵³⁰ With the publication of this article in 1919, Fling had “written his last word on the subject.”⁵³¹

Meanwhile, in his professorship, Fling continued to assign historical research projects, interject his lectures with personal asides, and demand a high level of performance from his students and colleagues throughout the remainder of his tenure at the university. An interesting description of Fling in this immediate post-war period comes from his colleague, John D. Hicks who came to the University of Nebraska in 1924 and who would later serve as a Department Head in American History and the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. In fact, Hicks was able to accept a position at the university because of the resignation of Howard Caldwell, long-time colleague of Fling, whose vacant position he filled.⁵³² In his autobiography, *My Life with History*, Hicks recalled his expectations of and later experiences with Fling. As he stated, “I had been warned about Fred Morrow Fling, well known for his work on the French Revolution and for his personal inflexibility. ‘So you’re going out to Nebraska to have your Fling!’ quipped one

⁵³⁰ Fred Morrow Fling, “The Use of Sources in History Teaching during the Last Decade (1909-1919),” *Historical Outlook* 10 (1919): 507 – 508.

⁵³¹ Osborne, “Fred Morrow Fling,” 497.

⁵³² Board of Regents Report, 1924, Board of Regents Collection, Box 26, Folder 223, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

of my friends, in commenting on my new appointment.”⁵³³ Later, Hicks provided a lengthy anecdote about attending a dinner at Fling’s home. As he recalled,

[Fling] took me into his library, showed me his books (a truly remarkable collection), then sat me down at a table opposite him, and began to quiz me. He was past master at the art – my oral Ph.D. examination at Wisconsin was as nothing in comparison. After an hour or more he seemed satisfied, and we rejoined the ladies in the living room. My relations from that time on were never unfriendly, if often difficult.⁵³⁴

This description of Fling again reinforces the popular reputation he held on campus as a driven, stern, perfectionist who expected those around him equally to maintain high standards of excellence.

⁵³³ John D. Hicks, *My Life with History* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1968), 132.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*, 133.

6 FLING'S LAST MAJOR WORK AND HIS PHILOSOPHIES OF HISTORY

Introduction

Having thus returned to the university and redirected his attentions away from history education and back to historical research, Fling worked towards the completion of his biography on Mirabeau, his commissioned war history, and his last major work on method. This last book, *The Writing of History*, emphasized the procedures behind the last step in the historic method: the final compiled narrative. Moreover, this book shows a refinement of Fling's philosophical beliefs regarding historical consciousness and the importance of historical study. An idea that he coined in his lectures even in the 1890s, Fling's concept of historical consciousness had evolved through thirty years of Fling's own experience as a researcher, professor, and historian. His commitment to the role that this historical mindset played for students of history only increased over this expanse of time, especially in the wake of his experiences during World War One. Thus, Fling's exposé of this vital philosophical underpinning of his holistic history belief system formed the backbone of the last decades of his career.

Fling's Last Major Work: *The Writing of History*

The only major publication to follow his 1919 journal article would be Fling's last work, *The Writing of History*, published in 1920. Interestingly, in her lecture notes in 1926, Mary Hermanek Cripe recorded this unexplained comment from an October lecture: "historical method based on Bernheim & 2 French profs. Wrote book before war – printed afterward."⁵³⁵ Since the only book that Fling printed in this after war period was *The Writing of History*, Cripe must have been referring to this work. Thus, again, there exists evidence of the disruption caused by the

⁵³⁵ Cripe, Wednesday Lecture Notes.

war. Although Fling may have finished the book before the war years, he did not publish it until this later time in 1920.

This book explained the work of historians by focusing primarily on the finished historical output of research, known to Fling as the historical narrative. Importantly, Fling expressed that the book “[was] not a revised edition of [his] *Outline of Historical Method*.”⁵³⁶ Instead, he offered this additional volume to readers as, in his words, “an ‘introduction’ to historical method.”⁵³⁷ On the surface, Fling’s choice to write an introduction to his method more than twenty years after penning the full detailed account of it in the *Outline* seems peculiar. However, considering the recent perceived perfidy from the teachers’ association within Nebraska, this move has a contextual motivation. Instead of continuing to reference the *Outline*, which had twenty years to become a foundation of historical teaching and had failed to do so, the *Writing of History* provides a more direct option for understanding and employing the methodology that Fling thought historians should use. It accomplished this task by providing real-time examples of each stage of the method as well as suggestions for the reader to apply to his own research in order to give as best as possible a glimpse of the method in action.

However, *Writing* was not intended as a resource specifically for teachers or for history education, as his *Outline* was directly conceived to be. Instead, as Fling explained, the book is meant for “college students who are beginning their studies in historical research, for teachers of history who have had no critical historical training, and for students of history who are hoping to find in private study some compensation for opportunities not enjoyed in college.”⁵³⁸ This explanation differs significantly from that found in the *Outline*. As an alternative to urging teach-

⁵³⁶ Fling, *Writing*, 7.

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*

ers to commit time to studying method, or to defending the reason that teachers need such training, or to providing additional resources or direction for teachers' further pursuits past "the simple reading of the text" as he does in *Outline*, in *Writing*, Fling is casually acknowledging a purpose to which the book may be put instead of the intention under which it was written.⁵³⁹

Specifically, his espoused purpose in providing this final work was that readers may use the book alongside their own research to understand the process in practical action. As he explained, "[o]nly by such an experience can one fully understand what critical historical study means and how difficult and exacting the work of the scientific historian is."⁵⁴⁰ In this sense, *Writing* can be interpreted as a workbook that readers may use in conjunction with their own research to make sure they are following a purely scientific historical method as they progress from source collection and analysis to synthesis and final narrative. His purpose was no longer to empower teachers to become better instructors in their history classrooms through emphasis on training. Instead, it was to communicate to a wide audience and to all those interested in historical study precisely what it is that a historian does and precisely how he must do it to ensure scientific historical success. This difference can be seen most literally in the titles of the two books: whereas *Outline* provides a resource manual in reference form, *Writing* provides a more action-driven companion to the research process.

In many ways, what this book omits tells more than what it includes as does Fling's attitude in his writing towards this condition. Within this volume, Fling specifically stated that "this volume does not deal with the teaching of history."⁵⁴¹ However, he admitted this circumstance

⁵³⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., 8.

only within the context of a greater acknowledgement of why his book may be useful for teachers who chose to read it. As he stated,

A teacher who has not read at least an elementary text on historical method and completed a piece of careful scholarly research, lacks one of the most important parts of the equipment of a well-prepared teacher of history. However much historical information such a teacher may have accumulated, he lacks a scientific standard that would enable him to separate the true from the false, to deal scientifically with contradictory statements in secondary works and to protect himself and his pupils against unsound and superficial historical narratives.⁵⁴²

This recognition of the book's use fits within Fling's larger lamentation over the attitude of teachers towards their professional development. According to Fling,

It seems extraordinary that it should be necessary to insist upon the importance of what should be selfevident [*sic*], but the really extraordinary thing about the pedagogical situation is that a large majority of the teachers of history in secondary schools neither possess an elementary knowledge of historical method nor consider such knowledge a necessary part of their equipment as teachers.⁵⁴³

By choosing the term "extraordinary" in this passage in reference to the attitude of teachers, Fling shows the extent to which he is amazed by educational developments. Moreover, the use of this language speaks to the dejectedness Fling feels towards his efforts over teacher development that have clearly not taken root even in his own state. Although he tried for two decades to convince teachers that their own training in method was essential to their success as history instructors, in this book, Fling is no longer insistent. Instead, he is elegiac as he recognized that his efforts had ultimately created little revolution in teacher training.

Furthermore, the difference between this criticism and that found in his *Outline* is striking. In this text, Fling blames the teachers for their lack of interest in learning the scientific method of history; whereas, in *Outline*, Fling had blamed "those" and "they" who put teachers in

⁵⁴² Ibid.

⁵⁴³ Ibid.

these positions where they resultantly were ill-trained to succeed. As he stated in *Outline*, “[i]t is not an uncommon thing for a college graduate, who has devoted all his time to Greek and Latin, or to science, to have a class in history assigned to him. . . . While, on the other hand, no good high school principal would assign a class in Greek to a man who had not been trained for that work.”⁵⁴⁴ Visibly, this criticism was intended for a principal or other unnamed actor who was responsible for establishing these assignments, not the teacher who had been passively “assigned to” such a role. Thus, Fling was implicitly commenting that lack of training for teachers was the fault of those who dispensed positions to teachers, not the fault of the teachers themselves.

As the teachers in Nebraska remained receptive to Fling’s ideas and requested his aid, it was likely comfortable for Fling to continue placing blame in this way while he worked towards professional development opportunities that helped teachers overcome it. Throughout Fling’s early works, this direction of attack is consistent. He regularly names “officials” or an unnamed “one” or “they,” instead of directly faulting the teachers as he does in *Writing*. However, in the wake of the curricular changes in Nebraska pioneered by the NHTA, Fling could no longer naively pass blame onto a third party. In fact, the NHTA’s specific words from their report evidence Fling’s accuracy in his criticism. As stated, the committee acknowledged that historical study was only valuable within its larger scope of usefulness “rather than for the production of expert historians.”⁵⁴⁵ Fling probably read these words as an admission by the secondary school teachers of their intention specifically *not* to teach scientific historical study and, thus, as a refusal to continue receiving such training. Unfortunately for Fling, this type of teaching at the

⁵⁴⁴ Fling, *Outline*, 5.

⁵⁴⁵ “Report of Committee Adopted by the Nebraska History Teachers’ Association at Omaha,” *The Nebraska Teacher* 20 (1918): 208.

secondary level and type of teacher training were precisely what he had spent his career advocating and were the reasons that he wrote *Outline* for secondary educators in the first place.

Again, this redirection of blame is evidence of the impact that the developments within the NHTA in Nebraska must have had on him. This sense of betrayal infiltrated Fling's otherwise supportive attitude towards teachers who struggled in their history classrooms. After these changes within the curriculum, Fling stopped making excuses for educators who were not prepared to teach scientific history. Instead, he placed the blame squarely on their shoulders. Throughout the remainder of *Writing*, past these initial paragraphs of grief, Fling diverged from a discussion of education and focused solely on the procedures employed by a scientific historian. He left only this question for educators to ponder: "Why should an acquaintance with the theory and practice of historical method not be required of every high school teacher of history?"⁵⁴⁶ The adjustment from direct statements of argument and defense to this rhetorical positing of the importance of training in method evidences Fling's defeated attitude in the face of educational changes that were beyond his control. Reasonably, Fling stated that he is "convinced that there will be little improvement in the situation" of history education because he had spent two decades trying to infuse secondary schools with source method and secondary educators with training in scientific history only to see both of these practices disbanded by the report of the NHTA.⁵⁴⁷ The impact of this development conceivably finalized Fling's sense of futility towards improving source method education through teacher training.

Thus, the *Writing of History* is not a teacher's aide like his earlier works, even though he did offer a recommendation that "[t]he historical study proper should run through the four under-

⁵⁴⁶ Fling, *Writing*, 9.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

graduate years,” a recommendation that aligned to the way history was taught at Nebraska at the college level.⁵⁴⁸ Instead, *Writing* was a manual on method intended for as wide an audience as was interested in historical pursuits. In the nearly one hundred and eighty pages that follow the introduction, Fling did not mention education, classroom source method, or any of his previous arguments regarding the proper study of history in schools. Moreover, he did not supplement his methodology with asides about the classroom or suggestions for pedagogy. Instead, he consistently focused on the exactness of the historical method to show the extent of precision that scientific historians employ. In order to accomplish his discussion, Fling focused on research examples from the French Revolution, the topic with which he was most personally familiar but a topic that he also explained as “important and interesting enough to justify such a course.”⁵⁴⁹ He then detailed the process of historical study, with examples in source analysis and method, as he did in his early career writings from the 1890s. In this way, Fling had come full circle and reinforced some of his early defenses of history as a scientific study that were endemic to the writings at the beginning of his career. This final book embodies Fling’s own turn away from education and his return to scientific historical investigation.

The Writing of History serves yet another purpose for Fling and demonstrates another emphasis of his career in the 1920s. Namely, Fling details his philosophy of history generally and of “historical consciousness” specifically. To begin his discussion of these philosophical ideas, Fling explains the connection between history and sociology. As he states, “*history deals with past social facts*, but it is important to note that *all past social facts are not necessarily historical facts*. The terms historical and social are not synonymous.”⁵⁵⁰ His point is to distinguish

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., 31; reinforced by College of Arts and Sciences, Course Program, June 1911.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., 9.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., 16, emphasis in original.

the characteristics of historical study from those of sociology. As he had explained in previous writings, historical study was concerned with the study of man “as a social being” and thus sought to uncover the social facts underlying the development of mankind. For this reason, Fling recognized that some researchers conflated historical study with just a study of the social past. However, to Fling, history was not only concerned with uncovering past social facts in the sense of social trends or themes. Instead, historians were concerned with these holistic views and understandings while simultaneously preoccupied with preserving the *unique* elements of each social fact as it evidenced the individuality of those who lived in the past. In this sense then, “our attention is directed toward the *uniqueness*, the *individuality* of past social facts, when they interest because of their importance for the *unique evolution of man in his activities as a social being*.”⁵⁵¹ Fling supported this point in his classes by explaining that “[m]ethods used in research depends [*sic*] on what you are trying to do – ‘pry up boulder with a needle?’ No – apply the right means.”⁵⁵²

In other words, historians are looking for the holistic picture of social facts together that form the narrative of the past – a synthesized view of a time period or event that constitutes what happened in the past and what bearing on the present these events may have – while at the same time desiring to uphold the individuality experienced by past human beings. As Fling had explained in *Outline*, “[t]he fact is the goal of his efforts, not the starting point, as in the work of the natural scientist.”⁵⁵³ In order to accomplish this investigation, historians must use methods that differ from those generally executed by natural scientists. If, on the other hand, a researcher is interested in themes, generalizations, laws of behavior, or “what past social facts have in

⁵⁵¹ Ibid., 16.

⁵⁵² Cripe, Wednesday Lecture Notes

⁵⁵³ Fling, *Outline*, 10.

common,” which are all outcomes that can be afforded by natural science methods, then Fling would contend that they are not studying history proper.⁵⁵⁴ As one of his students of this time period recorded from class, “[u]se N.S. [natural science] method, you get N.S. results. If [studying] such a thing as history, as a restoration of man’s social past as a changing complex whole, why use N.S. methods?”⁵⁵⁵ Instead of employing methods appropriate to historical study, sociologists would “employ another logical method, the method of the natural sciences” and “[t]he result of [their] work is sociology, not history.”⁵⁵⁶

To Fling, sociologists use the same methods as natural scientists even though their target experimental data are past social facts; whereas, historians interact with past social facts in their research for a different purpose. Namely, historians are not concerned with the summarized generalization of social facts nor of how those individual pieces shed light on inductively generalizable laws. Instead, their attentions are directed towards using social facts distinctively to synthesize a record of the past through the individuality and uniqueness of the subjects under study. As Fling explained,

*Sociology cannot, then, be the science of history; it is the natural science of society. Both the historian and the sociologist deal with past social facts, but not always with the same past social facts, nor in selecting and grouping the facts do they employ the same methods. Their methods are logically different, because their ends are different.*⁵⁵⁷

He emphasized this point in class by saying, “you cannot have a law in history as in science because you do not have repetition – complex, unique, ever changing whole” and by stressing that

⁵⁵⁴ Fling, *Writing*, 16.

⁵⁵⁵ Cripe, Wednesday Lecture Notes.

⁵⁵⁶ Fling, *Writing*, 17.

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 17, emphasis in original.

students must “[n]ot only know about past history but [the] method of reconstructing past evidence.”⁵⁵⁸

These differences in logic and method between sociology and history are akin to their differences in output. While Fling saw sociology as merging together the social facts of the past, he recognized history as the tool that distinguished one social fact from another. As he explained, sociology, and by extension the natural sciences, sought to blur the differences between objects and facts as much as possible to distill an overarching theory or generalization that could be re-applied to all examples of like categorical similarity. For example, whereas we use the word “color” to categorize the visual appearance of all objects (as scientists would do to generalize), we use the words “orange,” or “blue,” or “green,” to distinguish between the unique qualities of objects (as historians would do with the focus of their research). Fling explained this difference between science and history to reinforce points about these disciplines that he had been making and refining since the 1890s. Namely,

*The entire reality may, in a word, be studied and organized from the point of view of the general, of repetition, of law, as we say, nature....The more comprehensive the generalization, the less of quality it contains, until the climax is reached in a law of motion applied to units from which quality has been completely eliminated... All reality can, on the other hand, be organized from the point of view of difference, of individuality, or uniqueness, in other words, from the historical point of view...its concepts we term proper nouns...terms calling attention not to what an object has in common with others, but to what differentiates it from other objects...*⁵⁵⁹

Fling’s point is simple: although science has been the dominant worldview for understanding reality since the dawn of the Scientific Revolution, history can also provide insight to understanding reality that does not distill out from individuality the commonality of occurrence that

⁵⁵⁸ Cripe, Wednesday Lecture Notes.

⁵⁵⁹ Fling, *Writing*, 19, emphasis in original.

makes uniqueness disappear. Instead, using history as a method for maintaining the integrity of the individual social fact, while at the same time uncovering valuable information about the lived reality of the past, can empower researchers to view the world as a synthesized whole without losing the importance of individuality.

These arguments demonstrate a significant kinship with Charles Darwin's theories of selection and chance adaptation that were also prevalent during Fling's lifetime. Almost sixty years prior to Fling's book, Darwin had also engaged scientists in a worldview debate between recognizing the uniformity and generalizability of observable reality and celebrating the individuality and uniqueness of its constituent parts. Darwin's most famous work on the topic, *On the Origin of Species*, was published in 1859, before Fling was even born, but his ideas had firmly taken root by the 1920s.⁵⁶⁰ In fact, many scientists who considered themselves "evolutionists," with or without using that term, actually aligned to the beliefs of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck whose ideas were published in his seminal work, *Philosophie Zoologique* in 1809.⁵⁶¹ This book offered the school of thought identified as "naturalism," not evolution, a worldview to which Darwin himself acknowledged his own allegiance and to which Fling made terminological reference in both his books and lectures.⁵⁶²

Evolutionary terminology began to appear more regularly with the later work of Herbert Spencer, who applied similar ideas of progressive development to theories of mind and behavior. As Menand acknowledges, Spencer's book, *Principles of Psychology*, published in 1855, had significantly more followers than Darwin's later work. However, it also created less controversy

⁵⁶⁰ Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, 120.

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁵⁶² Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, Or, the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (London, UK: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1859), 1; Fling refers to the "work of the naturalists" in Fling, *Outline*, 83; reference is also present in comparison between the "scientific faculties and those of the naturalist" in both Cripe, Wednesday Lecture Notes and Waggener, Rewritten Lecture Notes.

because it did not traverse the territory of the natural scientists. Darwin's book, on the other hand, made scientific claims about the way the world was constructed and the way it operated that dislodged the organizational schema envisioned by many scientists of the day, in much the same way that Fling was attempting to do with his views of scientific history.

Darwin's arguments contradicted a world based on order, similarity, and generalization and usurped it with a world based on chance, blind selection, and uncontrollable natural forces. Although many later interpreted Darwin's theories to support and align with concurrent scientific views of the world, his original meanings actually pointed to a cosmological conception that was starkly different from that envisioned by the pure natural scientists of his day. As Menand explains, "Darwin thought that variations do not arise because organisms need them (which is essentially what Lamarck had argued). He thought that variations occur by chance, and that chance determines their adaptive utility."⁵⁶³ The impact of this view was profound: "Darwin's fundamental insight as a biologist was that among groups of sexually reproducing organisms, the variations are much more important than the similarities."⁵⁶⁴ In Darwin's own conception, once variety appeared in descendent lines, "the most divergent of their variations will generally be preserved during the next thousand generations."⁵⁶⁵ Similar to what Fling said regarding historical study, what this theory meant was that "[a] way of thinking that regards individual differences as inessential departures from a general type [e.g. scientific method] is therefore *not well suited* for dealing with the natural world."⁵⁶⁶

Although the debates regarding these ideas reached their height during the late nineteenth century when Fling was only just beginning his studies abroad, they had stabilized somewhat by

⁵⁶³ Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, 122.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁵⁶⁵ Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, 118.

⁵⁶⁶ Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, 123, emphasis added.

the 1920s when Fling was refining his ideas regarding historical consciousness and the development of civilized man. Moreover, preserving this sense of individuality was important to the people of the Progressive Era for reasons other than just evolutionary theory. In this time period, people constantly found themselves engulfed in generalized waves of social change and sought reform in virtually all areas of American life. According to Urban and Wagoner, “[r]eform in this era was not limited to economics, politics, and social welfare. From journalism to religion to science to education, reform was a major theme during this time period.”⁵⁶⁷ Reforms in education produced the modern school system that educators recognize today but were often motivated by desires to restrict and centralize education for the masses. These centralizing forces often resulted in curricula that equally sought to consolidate divergent cultural views and practices into the structure of the American ideal. In order to accomplish these changes, many educational goals were modified to reflect the streamlining of “good citizenship” and “social harmony” through the social sciences.⁵⁶⁸ As Evans states, “at least part of the impetus for social studies reform during the era came from a desire to Americanize the masses, spurred by fear of foreign ideologies and cultures and fear of competition for limited resources.”⁵⁶⁹

Ironically, the fear of limited resources also has parallels with Darwin’s and other evolutionists’ theories of survival that had become endemic belief structures of the time period. Darwin repeatedly acknowledged the theories of Malthus who warned of the limited viable space for subsequent generations of growing populations in a world of limited resources and a zero-sum sense of property ownership. Darwin uses this “Malthusian Curse” of outgrowing one’s limited

⁵⁶⁷ Urban and Wagoner, *American Education*, 197.

⁵⁶⁸ Evans, *Social Studies Wars*, 17.

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

area and resources as support for his theory of natural selection and competitive survival by explaining,

Hence, as more individuals are produced than can possibly survive, there must in every case be a struggle for existence, either one individual with another of the same species, or with the individuals of distinct species, or with the physical conditions of life. It is the doctrine of Malthus applied with manifold force to the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms.⁵⁷⁰

In this sense, then, individuality in the midst of homogenized cultural ideals like the “Americanization” of the masses may produce one’s very survival, let alone progress, in an otherwise harsh and competitive society. In this way, individuality and variation became not just a quality of genetic selection in broad scientific theories, but also had important implications for people’s roles in society.

Herbert Spencer, like Darwin, had also implied that those who survived under these harsh natural conditions of existence did so only through their differentiated abilities or level of development. However, Spencer applied these rules to society by “conceptualiz[ing] society as a ‘social organism’ that evolved from a simpler state to a more complex one, according to the universal law of evolution.”⁵⁷¹ After all, Spencer is actually the theoretician who coined the term “survival of the fittest” in his book *Principles of Biology*, published in 1866, even though Darwin is often credited as the originator of that phrase.⁵⁷² This language thus equated progress with survival, a theoretical underpinning that resulted in the adoption and proliferation of positivist

⁵⁷⁰ Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, 63.

⁵⁷¹ Boundless, “Spencer and Social Darwinism,” *Boundless Sociology*, Boundless, 21 July 2015. Retrieved 21 Nov 2015 from <https://www.boundless.com/sociology/textbooks/boundless-sociology-textbook/sociology-1/the-history-of-sociology-23/spencer-and-social-darwinism-149-3119/>

⁵⁷² First use in Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Biology, Vol. I*, (New York, NY: D. Appleton and Company, 1866), 444; but more frequent and recurrent use of the term in combination with Darwin’s “natural selection” appears throughout Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Biology, Vol. II*, (New York, NY: D. Appleton and Company, 1886).

beliefs in the early twentieth century. These ideological frameworks amounted to an acceptance that,

Such of them, however, as happen, by variations of mode of growth, to get at all above the rest, are more likely to flourish and leave offspring than the rest. That is to say, natural selection will favour...individuals with structures that lift them above the rest, are the fittest for the conditions; and by the continual survival of the fittest, such structures must become established.⁵⁷³

These “structures” amounted to the social conditions of American life in which people navigated their daily existences. Correspondingly, the implication in these assumed ideologies of the times was clear: to continue to progress, to grow amidst the system but also above it, and to flourish within the waves of change meant survival and those who did not survive were somehow deficient.

Also by this logic, the current “structure” of society had a solid evolutionary foundation as being the outcome of generations of this social sense of evolution and survival. Thus, those who could not achieve survival within this system were the ones at fault, not the system. In many ways, this ideological hegemony gave support to educational reformers who sought to “Americanize” the masses. Resultantly, many of these evolutionary ideas were touted in relation to societal conformity and in the language of educators who sought to convince reformers to adopt their curricular changes in place of others. These agendas resulted in “administrative centralization” of schools and curricula as well as the “pedagogical progress” in response to the “immediate needs” of society that characterized the development of educational changes throughout the 1920s.⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷³ Spencer, *Principles of Biology, Vol II*, 53.

⁵⁷⁴ Urban and Wagoner, *American Education*, 200.

Fling was another ready consumer of the idea that “[o]ur attention is redirected to the individual” and he regularly argued for the importance of individuals in a society that was constantly finding ways to group people together for the purposes of political, social, and racial amalgamation.⁵⁷⁵ Early modernization put many pressures on American society to “integrate” diverse populations and to “merge” cultural differences into a melting pot of conformity.⁵⁷⁶ This assimilation was partly accomplished through education, which is evidenced by the mainstreaming educational goals outlined by early modern educational practitioners. As Crocco and Davis state, social studies during this time was “a field emphasizing, as all the disciplines did, monocultural and masculinist modes masquerading as universal ways of thinking, being, and acting.”⁵⁷⁷ Moreover, as progress and positivism began to dominate all areas of life, reformers also sought to accomplish social and cultural conformity along a moderate timeline. Just like evolutionary theories showed the results of slow and eventual selection of fitness, social reformers began acknowledging the importance of gradualism in the adoption of American cultural ideas. As Urban and Wagoner explain,

The shift from the goal of immediate assimilation to one of gradualism was based on several assumptions that were emerging among educational elites during the progressive era. One was the conviction held by some that [others]...were simply incapable of rapid assimilation. ...Following the lead of scholars who were putting increasing stock in evolutionary theories of development...crossing the boundary between barbarism and civilization would take time, if indeed it could ever occur completely.⁵⁷⁸

Parallel to these early modernists who emphasized political citizenship and the acculturation of traditional practices into American ideals, early social studies educators of the Progress-

⁵⁷⁵ Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, 123.

⁵⁷⁶ Graham, *Schooling America*, 30.

⁵⁷⁷ Margaret Smith Crocco, “Introduction,” in Margaret Smith Crocco and O. L. Davis, Jr., eds., *Bending the Future to their Will* (New York, NY: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999), 8.

⁵⁷⁸ Urban and Wagoner, *American Education*, 214.

sive Era sought to group together the social sciences into a combined curriculum of disciplines in place of separate fields. Conceivably, this integrationist quality of social studies education struck the familiar chord of evolutionist debate and subconsciously affected Fling as a theoretician. As “social studies” began to take the place of individual disciplines, Fling witnessed another area in which this adoption of generalized terminology and the merger of diverse disciplines of study was resulting in a blended category of “social studies” that lost the specificity of the individual areas of study within it, such as history. Though not literally stated, the parallels between this merger of history and other disciplines into a broad-spectrum field of “social studies” and the logical procedures of sociology outlined by Fling that undertake to create the same melding in man’s view of the past are undeniable. Thus, another possible motivation for defending history’s ability to see the unique and individual within this predominant scientific worldview was Fling’s dissatisfaction over the loss of historical study in the face of the adoption of social studies curricula.

In reference to method, Fling’s point is that “[n]atural science cannot, then, give us an exhaustive knowledge of reality; a knowledge of history, of reality organized from the point of view of the unique, is equally essential.”⁵⁷⁹ As Menand explains, the result of Darwin’s theories was similar: “we need another way of making generalizations. We are no longer interested in the conformity of an individual to an ideal type; we are now interested in the relation of an individual to the other individuals with which it interacts.”⁵⁸⁰ By Darwin’s own explanation, it was precisely “individual variation” that created the genomic anomalies that become blueprints for the progeny of any pair.⁵⁸¹ As he explained,

⁵⁷⁹ Fling, *Writing*, 20.

⁵⁸⁰ Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, 123.

⁵⁸¹ Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, 61-62.

Whatever the cause may be of each slight difference in the offspring from their parents...it is steady accumulation, through natural selection, of such differences, when beneficial to the individual, that gives rise to all the more important modifications of structure, by which the innumerable beings on the face of this earth are enabled to struggle with each other, and the best adapted to survive.⁵⁸²

This structure of reality implies that individual difference is naturally valued over conformity because it is precisely these adaptive differences that resultantly exist in those members of a species' group that survive.

Importantly, Darwin emphasized that it is *nature* that selects the traits that survive, not man. For this reason, Darwin's theories sent shockwaves through the worldviews of many scientists at the time, not because of his views on the evolutionary structure of genes, but because "the world Darwin described is characterized by chance, change and difference" and this lack of control or intelligent selection was alarming to those who believed in a structured, discernible, and uniform world.⁵⁸³ This idea of man's lack of control over even the survival of his own race, or at least the traits that race would embody, left a significant legacy behind for the development of American intellectual thought in the twentieth century. One easy way to overcome the insecurity created by removing man's sense of control was the acknowledgement of the rightness of positivistic patterns of thought. Thus, by 1920, positivism provided a structured understanding of the way nature worked that offset the helplessness created by Darwin's theories of natural chance. Taken together with Spencer's understanding of social survival, these two philosophical ideas provided the foundation of Fling's understanding of reality and progress in a time period when

⁵⁸² Ibid., 170.

⁵⁸³ Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, 121. In fact, Menand specifically acknowledges in this same passage that "[m]any scientists by 1859 were evolutionists – that is, they believed that species had not been created once and for all, but had changed over time" (120-121). So, it was not Darwin's concept of evolution that scientists read as radical; it was that "the species – including human beings – were created by, and evolve according to, processes that are entirely natural, chance-generated, and blind" (121).

educationists insisted on conformity and scientists insisted on abstract generalization. It is no surprise, then, that Fling found contention with both.

Because Fling's understanding of history was tied to his beliefs about the way people are able to know reality, it is also no surprise that Fling was insistent that the study of history was crucial to comprehending the world. This recognition of the complex nature of reality and man's place in it was the foundation of Fling's "historical consciousness." As he had made clear to his students in his lectures, "historical consciousness" was a mindset that one developed regarding the history of man, man's place in history, and the development or evolution of man over time.⁵⁸⁴ In other words, historical consciousness was the thoughtful recognition of how the developmental path of man had evolved and how the current place of man fit within that development. As he makes clearer in *Writing*, "[i]ndividual experience develops the consciousness of the individual; the study of the past of humanity develops the historical consciousness of the race."⁵⁸⁵ So, historical consciousness can be understood as a type of shared knowledge that helps one understand the complex whole of history beyond a narrow view of the present or the individual. Instead, historical consciousness, and the development and refinement of it in society, provided a tool that equipped its owners with a deeper consideration and appreciation for the full progression of human advancement over time as a species and society.

Although Fling never completed his work of chronicling the entire expanse of human development over time, he did explicitly connect this project with his views of historical consciousness. Thus, it is fitting that one of the only completed portions of that project was in fact the introduction to the book, specifically titled "World-History and Historical Consciousness."

⁵⁸⁴ Cripe Lecture Notes.

⁵⁸⁵ Fling, *Writing*, 21

This introduction provides a fifteen-page edited draft of Fling's concise views towards historical consciousness, historians, and historical study. In it, he told readers that

*History, as world-history, aims to present a vision of man's past life in society as a complex, unique, ever-changing whole, a whole that never repeats itself. It does not report all past social facts nor does it present the results of its investigations as a mass of heterogeneous facts arranged in chronological order, without interpretation, without [sic] causal connection, and without significance. A world-history must possess unity and it is the task of the historian to discover and display that unity.*⁵⁸⁶

Again, Fling stressed the fact that there were no universal laws of history and, although common in colloquial language, history did not in fact repeat itself. Instead, history should be viewed as “the continually unfolding drama of humanity.”⁵⁸⁷

Fling made constant reference to the similarity between historical consciousness and memory, knowledge, and experience of others throughout his works. As he explains in *Writing*, “[e]ffective action by an individual, as a member of society, depends not solely upon a knowledge of the life of his own time, but likewise upon that of the preceding ages out of which his own age has developed.”⁵⁸⁸ Relatedly, in “Historical Synthesis,” Fling had acknowledged that historical study was the only viable means for grasping knowledge that was outside of one's own present experience.⁵⁸⁹ To Fling, this ability gave credence to history as supremely important to the development of society and justified it as a scientific study. As he explained, “[a]s long as men seek for knowledge of the unique evolution of their social past, just so long will the historical method be justifiable and the historical synthesis, the synthesis of Thucydides, of Po-

⁵⁸⁶ Fling, “World-History and Historical Consciousness,” 2.

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 3

⁵⁸⁸ Fling, *Writing*, 21.

⁵⁸⁹ Fling, “Historical Synthesis,” 11.

lybius, of Tacitus, of Gibbon, and of Ranke, will be scientific, although it will never be the synthesis of the natural sciences.”⁵⁹⁰

Moreover, Fling firmly demonstrated his belief that “[t]he memory of the individual is the memory of a single life, recorded, for the most part, mechanically, as the individual lives...historical consciousness, on the other hand, rests upon the restoration of man’s social past by the historian from the remains of the past.”⁵⁹¹ Like Spencer and Darwin, Fling did intend that the course of human development over time represented a progression as man transitioned from primitive to civilized and that this progress required at least a moderate exposure to and training in historical study. To him, “[i]t is necessary then, that history should be both written and taught.”⁵⁹² As he explained,

In truth, it always has been taught. When the half-savage man recited to his child the deeds of his ancestors, history was being recorded and historical consciousness was being developed. The distance that separates the age in which we live from those remote days may be shown as clearly by the number of individuals devoting their lives to historical research and by the amount of time given in the schools to historical study as by the complicated social machinery which differentiates the civilization of today from primitive society.⁵⁹³

Additionally, in his “World-History and Historical Consciousness,” he emphasized that “[h]istorical consciousness, then, is the indispensable condition of social progress and the writing and teaching of history are social necessities.”⁵⁹⁴ He related this idea back to the importance he placed on the individual. As he explained, “[t]radition is the power of conservation, individuality the power of progress.”⁵⁹⁵ Later in the same work he added, “[o]n the other hand, too great individuality, unaccompanied by the integration of the results of personal activity in a social

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid., 22.

⁵⁹¹ Fling, “World-History and Historical Consciousness,” 4.

⁵⁹² Fling, *Writing*, 22.

⁵⁹³ Ibid., 22.

⁵⁹⁴ Fling, “World-History and Historical Consciousness,” 11.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid., 12.

form that gives unity to the life of the period, may be destructive of the social organizations as a whole.”⁵⁹⁶ These two points taken together again reinforce Fling’s view that history was a balance between the celebration of uniqueness and individuality and the recognition of the synthesis of the comprehensive whole.

Fling often cited the works of evolutionary theorists in his lectures. It is also clear from his treatment of them in this context that he supported their views. For example, during a lecture on the Scientific Revolution, Fling makes a connection to past scientific works of the seventeenth century and the study of evolution in his own time by saying,

Thus, when all conception of life came to rest on man as a center, there arose vigorous opposition from the church, as now there is against evolution. *Mind* and *spirit* have come out of the evolution movement, never before were these qualities so considered as when they were used as arguments against the idea that man descended from monkey, physically...⁵⁹⁷

Later, when he offers his insight into the raging debate regarding the acceptance of evolutionary theory in society, he does not hide his derision of those that disagree with the validity of evolutionary thought. As he stated in class in response to the South’s public outcry against evolutionary theory and the teaching of evolution,

This shows how far behind the North the South is in intellectual views. The South, for one thing, says that if one accept the idea that man descended from monkey, then it is all up with religion. However, that is not altogether true. One might as well fight the idea that man was not on earth at first because the earth was covered with water. That man was molded from the earth and woman from man’s rib is another idea of the same class – crude and primitive thoughts. Some here in the North can hardly conceive that in the South they are legislating against evolution being taught in the schools.⁵⁹⁸

Thus, Fling’s acceptance of many evolutionary theories as they appeared in society likely had an influence on his own philosophical development.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid., 13.

⁵⁹⁷ Cripe Lecture Notes, emphasis in original.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid.

Historical Consciousness and the Development of Mankind

Similarly, educational practices of the Progressive Era began to mimic these positions as social education, geography, political science, and even history were taught with a progressively positivist perspective. As Fallace explains, like the early committees of education reform, theoreticians and the majority of Americans had an evolutionary “historicist” view of progress that differentiated not only between levels of development for society, but levels of achievement within and across racial groups.⁵⁹⁹ These belief systems were infused into mainstream educational standards in a way that subliminally distinguished between the “civilized” men of the white races and the “savages” of the minorities.⁶⁰⁰ For this reason, disparities between racial minorities and the dominant white culture of America were subsumed into educational courses that explained these differences away as “stages” within a larger developmental pattern.⁶⁰¹

Mainstream education emphasized to minorities “American attitudes about imperialism” and the “natural” hierarchy of relations between developed White races and “savages.”⁶⁰² In many ways, this curricular emphasis had hegemonic effects on minorities within society and resulted in their complicit acceptance of these cultural norms, just like many others in society had accepted the evolutionary theories of social progress espoused in the late nineteenth century. Moreover, education itself was used as another tool to convince minorities of the importance of succeeding within this exclusionary social standard. In fact, as Fallace explains, education was generally considered “as a means of improving the cultural deficiencies of racial groups” and of

⁵⁹⁹ Fallace, “Racial and Cultural Assumptions,” 38.

⁶⁰⁰ Mindy Spearman, “Race in Elementary Geography Textbooks: Examples from South Carolina,” in Christine Woyshner and Chara Haeussler Bohan, ed., *Histories of Social Studies and Race: 1865 – 2000* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012): 118.

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 115-131.

⁶⁰² *Ibid.*, 131.

transforming them into contributing members of society, even if this stance was “a moderate position.”⁶⁰³

Spearman reinforces this point by providing the example of racial studies in geography textbooks in the South during this same era and explaining “the power of textbooks to convey discourses that might help shape reality.”⁶⁰⁴ In her work, Spearman demonstrates the racial hierarchy taught to students that made them complicit in the acceptance of racial standards. As she notes, minorities were expected to understand and accept that the dominant white races were simply “developmentally superior” and the submissive “lesser” races had not attained to a stage of development equal to that of their white counterparts.⁶⁰⁵

Although Fling did not explicitly reference nor address the role of racial studies in education, he did similarly relate to the concept of developmental pathways for human society. Moreover, by omitting any reference to a divergent opinion of racial inclusion, Fling likely accepted the dominant viewpoints of others from his time period who felt there was an evolutionarily different level of achievement between the races, since this mode of thinking was common in the early twentieth century. However, Fling’s understanding of the evolution of society did not relate to just racial, or even industrial, factors. Instead, Fling equated the level of society’s historical consciousness with its current level of development and acknowledged that some societies, and portions of society, had attained a higher development than others. As he stated, “the leading peoples of the world [are] those displaying the most highly developed historical consciousness.”⁶⁰⁶ Remarkably, he notes that these societies also happen to “possess the largest numbers of historians, have the greatest output of historical work and devote the largest amount of time to

⁶⁰³ Fallace, “Racial and Cultural Assumptions,” 38.

⁶⁰⁴ Spearman, “Race in Elementary Geography Textbooks,” 131.

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁶⁰⁶ Fling, *Writing*, 22.

the teaching of history in schools.”⁶⁰⁷ Similar to Plato’s idea that the only justifiable leaders of society are “philosopher-kings,” thus supporting the supremacy of the author’s own discipline, so too Fling draws the conclusion that it is only the proliferation of historians and historical consciousness that is capable of demonstrating the level of a society’s development.⁶⁰⁸ Fling reinforced this point in his draft of “A World Civilization” by stating, “one of the most distinctive characteristics of an advanced civilization is the amount of time devoted to the writing and teaching of history, in other words, to the creation of historical consciousness.”⁶⁰⁹

One telling aside that he does offer regarding race appears in this same draft and reinforces that Fling adopted many of the racial views of his time period in regards to the historical development of other races and their emphasis, or lack thereof, of historical study. As he explained, because he linked society’s development to its level of historical study, he judged those societies that did not study history intensely as less developed. In reference to “the savage on the plains of North America,” he explained,

Note the vast difference between the savage on the plains of North America, before the discovery of that continent by Europeans, without historical records, without writers and teachers of history, with the most elementary historical consciousness, and with the civilized man dwelling in the same region today, with his vast libraries of historical works, his archives and museums in which are stored up the records of the past, with his thousands of historians and teachers of history, and an historical consciousness that enables him to bind together in one continuous experience the Egyptian empire of six thousand years ago and the League of Nations of today!⁶¹⁰

This explanation demonstrates that Fling adopted many of the racial, colonizing views of dominant white society during the Progressive Era. Moreover, though he had previously acknowledged that primitive man’s telling of tales and traditions amounted to history, his cultural arro-

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁸ Idea that forms the main conclusion of Plato’s main treatise on political society, the *Republic*.

⁶⁰⁹ Fling, “World-History and Historical Consciousness,” 4.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid.

gance precluded him from recognizing these same practices in the culture of the Native Americans. As Fallace explains, “[m]any scholars of the late nineteenth century subscribed to the view that African Americans and American Indians represented earlier, more primitive forms of living that had been abandoned by more civilized societies.”⁶¹¹ Moreover, Fling’s language in this passage was characteristic of his works: in course notes, lectures, drafts, and published writings, Fling frequently referred to “savages,” “barbarians,” and the “uncivilized” groups and societies of the world.

Fling especially demonstrated these assumed racial truisms of his time and the benefit of colonization of the world in his draft of “A World Civilization.” In the “Introduction” to the work, he confidently stated that his chronicling of the extensive development of the human race was really a record of “[t]he expansion of European civilization around the globe.”⁶¹² He followed this growth of specifically European peoples through six “stages” of world development. In each of these stages, he detailed the movements of the European peoples and acknowledged the extent of civilization that they brought with them as they expanded across the continents. As Fling noted,

In the sixth and last period, extending from 1789 to the present time, European civilization passed east across Asia to the Pacific, around Africa to Asia, penetrated Africa and divided it, making it a dependency of Europe. Meanwhile, European immigrants had filled North America from the Atlantic to the Pacific, forming a world-republic of a hundred millions of people [*sic*]. And when Americans, descendants [*sic*] of European immigrants, had pushed west across the Pacific – occupying the Hawaiian and Philippine Islands on the way – and touched hands in China with Europeans who had come overland from the West, the circle was complete, the century-long expansion had reached its end.⁶¹³

⁶¹¹ Fallace, “Racial and Cultural Assumptions,” 39.

⁶¹² Fling, “World-History and Historical Consciousness,” 6.

⁶¹³ *Ibid.*, 10.

In this passage, Fling is clearly assuming the superiority of the European and American races to all those peoples who came under their colonization during this last “epoch” of world history. Although these views are ripe with racial prejudice and seething with dispassionate accounts of the subjugation of an entire globe of indigenous people to the colonizing efforts of Europe, these views were not uncommon in Fling’s day. In fact, many of these beliefs were so engrained for people living in the time period that their analysis was never considered. According to Fallace, these beliefs again related to the works of the evolutionists, which Fling admired. As he stated, “[d]rawing upon the work of Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer, most scholars insisted that all the societies of the world could be placed upon a single continuum of racial development that led from savagery to barbarianism to civilization.”⁶¹⁴ Fling equally demonstrated support of this progressive view of societal and racial development by repeatedly referring to the historical development of man as “his evolution.” This terminology evidences Fling’s kinship with the supporters of evolutionary theory and also reinforces his point that,

*It has not been realized that the epochs in the world’s history were but so many stages in the formation of a world-society; that at the beginning of the series, six thousand years ago, were many isolated, barbarous groups of peoples, scattered over the earth’s surface, while in our day, a world-society exists, composed of some fifty odd states, organized as a League of Nations.”*⁶¹⁵

This passage provides evidence that Fling viewed his society as having attained this highest level of social and world development in his day.

Fling’s Source Method Project in the Classroom

Fling’s explanations of and arguments for historical consciousness did not only appear in his unpublished world history research project. Instead, remaining notes from students in Fling’s

⁶¹⁴ Fallace, “Racial and Cultural Assumptions,” 39.

⁶¹⁵ Fling, “World-History and Historical Consciousness,” 7a, emphasis in original.

classes in various years of the 1920s also indicate the prominence of this philosophy in Fling's lectures. As Marie Hermanek Cripe demonstrated in her notes, which were the lengthiest and most comprehensive remaining notes in his archive, Fling often inserted asides and comments regarding historical consciousness during his otherwise chronological accounts of history. Moreover, it is clear from the underlining and boldening of the words "historical consciousness," "consciousness," and "memory" throughout the over 480 pages of Cripe's notes that she found it necessary to identify with prominence specifically these terms. A likely motivation for this accent in her notes is the stress that Fling used while presenting the information in his lecture.

In the existent notes from another student of the time period, Miss Waggener, evidence of the gravity with which Fling dealt with the concepts of "historical method," "historical consciousness," and "natural science" also appears. Moreover, Waggener also recorded notes from a speech given by Fling during morning convocation on November 11th, 1919, no doubt given on that chosen date in recognition of the armistice of World War One that had occurred one year prior. In these notes, Waggener recorded Fling's acknowledgement of the nation's debate over whether or not to join the League of Nations, which at that time was still being discussed in the Senate. As Waggener recorded, Fling stated that "there was no more practical question in the world."⁶¹⁶ Fling felt that America should join the League of Nations because he viewed this organization as the manifestation of his vision of a "world society" based on "justice" for which he had previously argued during his time as a war historian.

Waggener's other class notes differ slightly from Cripe's in that they only cover the Wednesday courses that Fling led. By a comparison of Cripe's and Waggener's notes, it is clear that Fling conducted his classes in the 1920s, and reasonably at other times during his career, by

⁶¹⁶ Waggener, Rewritten Lecture Notes.

focusing on historical content on Mondays and Fridays, and by reserving Wednesday classes for a discussion of method.⁶¹⁷ Wednesday course notes also appear in the remaining course notes from Cripe, as do Mondays and Fridays. However, the only class notes maintained by Waggener were those from these Wednesday lectures on method. The reason for this difference may never be known; however, it is valid to acknowledge that the Wednesday lectures generated more material that Fling uniquely produced. Whereas the material conveyed on Mondays and Fridays was reasonably accessible in many sources, such as narrative histories of the given time periods, the methodological procedures that Fling explained in the Wednesday class days came directly from his mind as a scientific historian. Although many were reinforced by both his *Outline* and *Writing*, these ideas were overall less accessible outside of class. So, although Cripe's lecture notes are much more comprehensive, Waggener's choice to preserve only her summaries of these Wednesday classes on method is still telling.

In her notes, Waggener explained Fling's concept of "historical consciousness" similarly to Cripe as a "state of mind about history."⁶¹⁸ Waggener also detailed the project of compiling a historical narrative that students were expected to complete by the end of the year. The procedure for this research project was described in the beginning of the course and the later course dates were reserved for practical application of the historical method in reference to the students' gathered sources. As Fling explained in class, "[t]he value of this Wednesday work depends on the way you first take hold of it."⁶¹⁹ Moreover, he expressed that "[o]ne of [the] fundamental things is training in organizing material."⁶²⁰ These points and recommendations imply the prevalence of source method and student-produced research in his classroom, which Fling had tried to

⁶¹⁷ This point is also supported by Carlson, "Professor Fred Fling," 486.

⁶¹⁸ Waggener, *Rewritten Lecture Notes*.

⁶¹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶²⁰ *Ibid.*

foster at the secondary level as well. In addition, they expose the level of responsibility placed on the student in Fling's classes. In order to succeed on this type of project, the student must organize, compile, and analyze material all while self-assessing for accuracy. Thus, even though these methods could not be replicated in the secondary schools, Fling did not abandon them in his own teaching.

Cripe's notes equally detailed the meticulous process of completing the research project assigned by Fling as well as the acknowledgement in the margins, "seems like a difficult senior assignment" that Cripe added later when she donated her notes to the archive.⁶²¹ In addition, another student from the 1925-1926 schoolyear equally itemized the stages of the course's research project by outlining the steps required to analyze each gathered source. These notes, from Margaret Sparks Smitty, show Fling's historical method in action through headings such as "Genuineness," "Character of the Source," "Localization," "Independence of the Source," and "Summary with Conclusion."⁶²² These headings were supplemented by material specific to the assigned sources. In the case of both Cripe and Smitty, the sources related to the "Oath of the Tennis Court" during the French Revolution. In total, twelve sources were analyzed for their validity and accuracy in historical truth by the end of the project. The final paper, the student historical narrative, was "collected to be read by Fling."⁶²³

Thus, Fling continued the work of his earlier career by maintaining his allegiance to source method in his own classroom even though he had met difficulty in fostering the development of that pedagogy in his state. Ironically, by this time, many had begun referring to source method as the "Nebraska Method" in recognition of Fling's efforts and the national celebrity that

⁶²¹ Cripe, Wednesday Lecture Notes.

⁶²² Smitty, Lecture Notes.

⁶²³ Cripe, Wednesday Lecture Notes

he had gained as its advocate. Even so, Fling's real commitment to this strategy in the 1920s was limited to the walls of his lecture hall. Nonetheless, his strategies as a professor were not diminished by source method's lack of followers.

7 PERFECTING HISTORY TO THE BITTERSWEET END, 1921 - 1934

Introduction

Though his formal publications ended with his last work in 1920, Fling's work as a historian, professor, and lecturer did not cease. Instead, he travelled abroad with his wife to develop his biography of Mirabeau in the 1920s, a work that he would never publish. In order to accomplish these travels, Fling had to request leaves of absence from the university. In the 1920s, these requests appear in the Board of Regents records repeatedly.⁶²⁴ Interestingly, in 1920, the Board moved to consider that "all employees having administrative duties as on a twelve months basis both for salary and service with the usual customary short vacation, and that those engaged primarily in teaching and research be considered as on the school year basis."⁶²⁵ This change meant that, since Fling was the Department Head of European History, he was now expected to be present on campus as needed during the summer months, which were the usual times during which he travelled for his research. Moreover, as many experienced at this time, leaves of absences would still be granted, but on the condition that they be "leaves of absence without pay," an amendment that had only rarely appeared in Board of Regents approvals before 1920.⁶²⁶ Nonetheless, Fling was still approved for travels in Board of Regents Reports from 1922-1929, which perhaps implies the value he placed on these travels above the financial impact the loss of his summer salary would entail.

By the end of his tenure at Nebraska, Fling had spent forty-three years as a professor, historian, and lecturer. His foci were historical method, historical fact, and philosophy of history

⁶²⁴ Board of Regents Reports, various. Board of Regents Collection, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

⁶²⁵ Board of Regents Report, 1920, Board of Regents Collection, Box 24, Folder 211, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

⁶²⁶ Ibid.

that he transmitted both through his own works and within his practices in the classroom. In the end, Fling left a lasting impression on his students, which is evidenced both by the detailed recorded notes they left behind and by many posthumous accounts of their interactions with him that remain in unpublished and published sources.

The Founding of the National Council for the Social Studies

During this time, the last major landmark development for social studies education in Fling's lifetime appeared. In 1921, the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) was founded, which created a formal organization that dealt with this new curricular area. Officially, the NCSS was founded in an attempt "to bring some order to the field and to promote the vision of social studies created by the NEA Committee on Social Studies."⁶²⁷ As Graham comments from her father's experience, social studies classrooms in the time period were often "merged with English" or otherwise conflated with other subject areas.⁶²⁸ So, the work of the NCSS sought to develop a "consensus definition of the field aimed at a broad, practical orientation to social studies."⁶²⁹ In many way, this effort was a continuation of the Progressive Era work initiated by the organization's predecessors who based their work on nineteenth century ideas of social progress, activism, and history education. However, the NCSS went one step further in giving credence to the views of those who wanted social education to formally and finally take the place of a medley of disjointed disciplines in public education. As Urban and Wagoner explain, the end result of these reforms, for social studies but also for education in general, was that "[p]ublic education emerged from the progressive era more influenced by the organizational reforms of centralization and curricular differentiation than by the pedagogical alterations of

⁶²⁷ Evans, *Social Studies Wars*, 36.

⁶²⁸ Graham, *Schooling America*, 65.

⁶²⁹ Evans, *Social Studies Wars*, 36.

[pragmatist reformers].”⁶³⁰ The NCSS was one such organizational reform that led to the centralization of social studies.

Historians of social studies education often agree that the social and historical contexts surrounding the work of social studies education leaders have impacted curriculum developments in the field throughout time.⁶³¹ This quality of context is perhaps truest of the changes in social studies curricular approaches during the late nineteenth century to the creation of the NCSS in 1921. As Evans contends, NCSS’s desire for the creation of a consensus definition for social studies “was an understandable response to the turmoil created by social studies insurgents in the 1916 report and by the response of critics.”⁶³² Moreover, the efforts of reformers in the Progressive Era in general attempted to redefine society based on a new social landscape of immigration, modernization, and progress. These foundations of reform helped propel educational reforms forward as well. As Evans explains, “[t]he new approach to social studies, and the birth of NCSS, would not have occurred without progressive education.”⁶³³ Thus, in many ways, the creation of this council owed its very existence to the concomitant atmosphere of change.

It is also not shocking that some educational reformers, Fling included, remained loyal to the development of history as both a field of research and education even after the creation of the NCSS, since history consistently remained the discipline that was clearest to define within these debates over social studies. However, merely ignoring these curricular developments did not

⁶³⁰ Urban and Wagoner, *American Education*, 226.

⁶³¹ See Barbara Slater Stern, ed, *The New Social Studies: People, Projects, and Perspectives* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc, 2010) for several critical discussions about the impact of social and political atmosphere on the development of curricular changes in the social studies; see also Evans, *Social Studies Wars*, as his main argument is that social studies curricular changes were a wave of responses to the needs of the various time periods in which they developed.

⁶³² Evans, *Social Studies Wars*, 36.

⁶³³ *Ibid.*, 37.

result in their disappearance. Instead, “[b]y the late 1920s NCSS was well established, with more than 1,600 members, and was growing in both membership and influence.”⁶³⁴

Although created as an organization responsible for the continuation of “social studies” education, the NCSS still reinforced history’s status as primary within that field. In fact, even the NCSS acknowledged that, “history has been the dominant subject studied in the social studies.”⁶³⁵ As Nelson explains, “[f]rom this perspective, social studies owe[d] its beginning and academic substance to history and history properly continue[d] its dominant influence on social studies.”⁶³⁶ Significantly, the reason for this supremacy of history is traceable even to the findings of the 1916 CRSE Report, which “became the dominant curricular pattern for most of the 20th century.”⁶³⁷ The main efforts of the 1916 Report were to replace traditionalist views of history with curricular approaches that were more responsive to the needs of the time. However, the result was that “[h]istory, the time honored core of the social studies curriculum, was still the dominant subject.”⁶³⁸

Even so, these social studies developments were much more readily received than Fling’s efforts at source method dissemination. For one, both the 1916 CRSE Report and the work of NCSS that reinforced it were effective because “[their] emphasis on the broader goals of citizenship education and social efficiency fit the current trends.”⁶³⁹ And second, “[t]he economic and social policy undergirding the report and the educational projections it embodied ultimately supported social control and the maintenance and continued development of mainstream liberal,

⁶³⁴ Ibid.

⁶³⁵ Vinson and Ross, “In Search of the Social Studies Curriculum,” 41.

⁶³⁶ Nelson, “Defining Social Studies,” 18.

⁶³⁷ Evans, *Social Studies Wars*, 43.

⁶³⁸ Ibid.

⁶³⁹ Ibid.

democratic capitalist institutions.”⁶⁴⁰ In other words, the rise of a big business focus in the late nineteenth century and the desire by its leaders for a society and economy that continued to support their profitability mandated that only educational reforms that aligned with these goals would be accepted, or supported, by those in positions of economic or political power. These people, generally “the White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, middle-class male of Western European descent,” lived in a time period when their control was rarely challenged, which made the 1916 CRSE Report and the NCSS’s efforts to enforce it that much more appealing because they buttressed this cultural sovereignty.⁶⁴¹ As Evans explains, “[t]he courses that made up the curriculum in 1916 were predominantly the story of the glory of Western civilization and its latest triumph, the growth of the American nation.”⁶⁴² Thus, it was easily accepted by those in power who wanted to circulate these ideas.

Moreover, although there remained debate throughout the 1920s regarding social studies in public education, by the end of the 1920s, there was no significant change to either the dominance of history within social studies or the methods of delivery employed by teachers. Thus,

Although pedagogical progressives made significant headway in experimental and laboratory schools and had a substantial influence over many teacher training institutions, they had little success in dislodging the traditional, teacher-dominated, subject-centered curriculum that characterized most public and many private school classrooms.⁶⁴³

As Osborne notes, this lack of success was due in part to the group of “professional educationists” that dominated the field of secondary education and accelerated the earlier work of educational reformers throughout the 1920s and 30s.⁶⁴⁴ This new group of activists focused more on

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid., 44.

⁶⁴¹ Urban and Wagoner, *American Education*, 226

⁶⁴² Evans, *Social Studies Wars*, 44.

⁶⁴³ Urban and Wagoner, *American Education*, 226.

⁶⁴⁴ Osborne, “Fred Morrow Fling,” 497.

the centralization and standardization of public education and the continuation of cultural assimilation models that became necessary as more immigrants flooded in from continually more diverse locations rather than progressive pedagogical techniques, such as source method or student-centered learning. As Urban and Wagoner state, “[t]o put it more succinctly, the pedagogical progressives lost out to the administrative progressives.”⁶⁴⁵

These administrators preferred curricular changes that were easy to adopt and enforce. Time-consuming strategies such as source method and progressive pedagogies such as student-centered learning were simply too cumbersome to expect that principles and administrators could adopt them with ease. In 1918, the NEA Report, the *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*, supported the views of these administrators and created the modern comprehensive high school structure that streamlined curriculum and allowed greater administrative control. To these leaders, “social efficiency was the rationale... [they] used to revamp and broaden the high school curriculum, just as they used business efficiency and the corporate model to justify their changes in school governance and administration.”⁶⁴⁶ Thus, by the end of the 1920s, the secondary school system that Fling had targeted in many of his educational reform efforts had finally and firmly distanced itself from the professional efforts of those working within the discipline of history at the college level. Meanwhile, as reforms continued to expand the wedge between college and secondary educators, those professionals allowed these groups to take over curricular changes and implicitly contributed to the lack of reception for strategies like source method. As Osborne notes, “[source method’s] defenders tacitly admitted defeat.”⁶⁴⁷ Fling was one such ad-

⁶⁴⁵ Urban and Wagoner, *American Education*, 226.

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 235.

⁶⁴⁷ Osborne, “Fred Morrow Fling,” 497.

vocate that committed his attention to historical study and research and accepted that the schools must maneuver the maze of curricular changes on their own.

For the remainder of Fling's career in the 1920s, Fling ignored the secondary education developments that stemmed from the growth of the NCSS or its partnership with his own beloved AHA. Instead, he committed his time to the continued development of historical precision within his own works and the improvement of both historical method and historical consciousness in his students. Part of that practice involved his exercise of student-driven historical method projects. As he explained to his students when he introduced the project in class, the "[o]nly way to learn what it is is [*sic*] to use it. So, we want you to do a little piece of work in historical method which will give you a knowledge not to be found elsewhere."⁶⁴⁸

Fling would remain on the faculty of the University of Nebraska until his death in 1934. In fact, Fling was the first from his "American Club" of the University of Leipzig to leave the university. W.G. Langworthy Taylor, who was added to the faculty in the same year as Fling, remained at the university past Fling's death. As previously noted, as one of his last contributions, Taylor wrote an article chronicling his long friendship with Fling just a year before Fling's death for the *Nebraska Alumnus*. James E. LeRossignol had joined the faculty of the University in 1908 upon the departure of Alvin S. Johnson and after a lengthy letter of recommendation on his behalf was offered by Taylor. In the letter, Taylor wrote,

[Professor LeRossignol] received the Doctor's degree at Leipzig University in 1892 or thereabouts. Since then he has been a professor at Ohio State University, Athens, Ohio and at Denver University...I do not believe a better man could be secured as a successor of Professor Johnson. Professor LeRossignol is not only an experienced and successful teacher, but a writer and lecturer of great industry and effectiveness.⁶⁴⁹

⁶⁴⁸ Waggener, Rewritten Lecture Notes.

⁶⁴⁹ W. G. Langworthy Taylor to the Chancellor and Regents, Dec. 2, 1907, Board of Regents Collection, Box 18, Folder 153, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

LeRossignol was hired the following fall and would later be appointed to the position of Dean of the newly created College of Business Administration in 1919.⁶⁵⁰ He did not retire from this position until 1941. The last member of the American Club, Herbert Davenport, was the only person not to acquire a position at the University of Nebraska. Instead, he devoted most of his professional career to neighboring University of Missouri and, later, Cornell University.

Although not members of the American Club from the University of Leipzig, many other famous historians and professors taught at Nebraska for a time during Fling's tenure. One such professor and later Dean was John D. Hicks, who had personal interaction with Fling and both arrived and departed during Fling's time at Nebraska. Hicks had joined the history faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences in 1923, and by 1929 was appointed as its Dean. He only served in this position for three years and, in 1932, accepted a position at the University of Wisconsin.⁶⁵¹

Perhaps the most widely-known of Fling's colleagues at Nebraska was actually the man he replaced in 1891, George Elliot Howard. Moreover, the foundation that Howard created at Nebraska set the stage for Fling to develop the procedures of his source method without causing controversy with the administration. In 1879, when Howard accepted a professorship in European history, he "imported the new European 'scientific' history to Nebraska."⁶⁵² In addition, in an era when history itself was still a new subject in the curriculum of higher education, Howard was responsible for the creation of other techniques that became standard practice in the department. As Knoll explains, "[l]ecturing was itself a new thing...the students delighted in hearing a schol-

⁶⁵⁰ R. MacLaran Sawyer, *Centennial History of the University of Nebraska: II. The Modern University, 1920-1969* (Lincoln, NE: Centennial Press, 1973), 137.

⁶⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁶⁵² Knoll, *Prairie University*, 17.

ar gather information from various sources in order to draw independent conclusions;” “Howard required [students] to write ‘library papers,’ that is, reports of original investigations on set topics;” and “[w]ithin a few years he established the University’s first seminar.”⁶⁵³ All of these techniques also appealed to Fling when he took over Howard’s position in 1891 and he both continued and enhanced these practices in his own courses.

Howard’s departure and Fling’s arrival both coincided with another administrative change in the university: the appointment of a new Chancellor, James Hulme Canfield. Canfield, who was also supportive of new educational techniques in higher education, came to the university at a time when “[h]igh expectancy was in the air.”⁶⁵⁴ And, according to a caption from the *Nebraska Alumnus*, it was Fling’s “acquaintanceship” with Moses Coit Tyler that resulted in “his engagement by Chancellor Canfield for the University of Nebraska” position that Howard left vacant.⁶⁵⁵ Although Howard left in 1891, he returned to the university just ten years later, this time under another new Chancellor, E. Benjamin Andrews, who had accepted the position in 1900. Before him, George E. MacLean had served as Chancellor from 1895-1899. In total, Fling would live to see the appointment of five Chancellors during his tenure at Nebraska: Canfield, MacLean, Andrews, Samuel Avery (1909-1927), and Edgar A. Burnett (1927-1938).

The 1930s and Thoughts at Fling’s Death

At the start of the 1930s, the University like many parts of the country experienced difficulties due to economic depression. Although the economy of the state had rebounded from its financial hardships of the early twenties and had ended the decade with “farm income higher than any year since the end of the World War,” the new national depression of the 1930s pre-

⁶⁵³ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid., 18.

⁶⁵⁵ Oscar D. Norling, *Nebraska Alumnus*, December 1932, cover page insert.

sented renewed challenges.⁶⁵⁶ As Sawyer acknowledges, “Nebraska felt the impact of this economic catastrophe. It was to face a rapid decline in farm commodity prices, reaching the lowest point in the state’s history in December 1932.”⁶⁵⁷ In 1927, Samuel Avery left his position as Chancellor due to poor health, one year before his scheduled resignation was to take effect, after serving the university in that capacity for eighteen years. He had actually announced his intentions to resign in 1928 in a letter penned to the Board of Regents in 1925 but only stepped down a year early due to his failing health.⁶⁵⁸ He had been the longest standing chancellor in the history of the university. Moreover, it was under his guidance and leadership that the university had navigated and survived its controversy of the war years and its spending crises in the 1920s. As he stated in his letter of resignation, “I shall have occupied the Chancellor’s office for approximately twenty years. Only a few presidents of state universities have held offices for as long a period.”⁶⁵⁹ In 1927, Avery stepped down and the new Chancellor, E. A. Burnett took his place. Burnett would be the last Chancellor under which Fling worked and according to historians of the university was “a man of authority; one did not cross him easily.”⁶⁶⁰ Fortunately for Fling, most of Burnett’s administrative concerns focused on economic development and control of student life on campus and resultantly left the history department well enough on its own.

One sweeping change initiated by Burnett that affected all faculty were salary cuts that became, at first, alarming signals of the impact of depression and, by decade’s end, lasting expectations throughout the university. To standardize the procedure, “[o]n April 15th, 1932, the

⁶⁵⁶ Sawyer, *Centennial History*, 51.

⁶⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁶⁵⁸ Samuel Avery, Letter of Resignation, ca. 1927. Board of Regents Collection, Box 28, Folder 242, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

⁶⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁰ Knoll, *Prairie University*, 81.

Board of Regents cut all salaries of \$1000 or more per year by 10 percent.”⁶⁶¹ Although this decision was the result of a hearing attended by many faculty, Fling did not offer his input. Instead, a new celebrity in the history department, Charles Henry Oldfather, who was Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the time, represented the department of history to which he had previously been a part. Oldfather had come to the University of Nebraska in 1925 “at a salary of \$4,000.”⁶⁶² According to the Board of Regents Report that covered the offering of his position, Oldfather was “regarded as a very brilliant man,” had “a pleasing personality,” and was “one of the strong men of Wabash College of Liberal Arts.”⁶⁶³ Effective in 1929, only four short years later, Oldfather was promoted to the position of “Chairman of the Department of History” in the place of John D. Hicks, who took a position as Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.⁶⁶⁴ Oldfather would again follow in Hicks’ footsteps just another three years after this appointment and become the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences in 1932 until his retirement in 1951.⁶⁶⁵ After his myriad contributions and longstanding tenure at the university, it is fitting that “[o]n October 17th, 1969, Oldfather Hall was dedicated in honor of Oldfather’s commitment to the University” for use by the College of Arts and Sciences.⁶⁶⁶

In 1929, Fling was granted another leave of absence, this time “with full salary.”⁶⁶⁷ Even though the Board had earlier made it clear that requests for leave may result in approval “without salary,” they reasoned in this instance that his request came with “[n]o extra cost to the universi-

⁶⁶¹ Sawyer, *Centennial History*, 55.

⁶⁶² Board of Regents Report, Jan 28, 1926, Board of Regents Collection, Box 27, Folder 235, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

⁶⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁴ Board of Regents Report, 1929, Board of Regents Collection, Box 28, Folder 251, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

⁶⁶⁵ Scarlet. “From the Archives: C.H. Oldfather and Oldfather Hall,” *Scarlet*. 25 February 2010, accessed 22 November 2015 from <http://scarlet.unl.edu/?p=7085>.

⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁷ Board of Regents Report, Mar 21, 1929, Board of Regents Collection, Box 28, Folder 250, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

ty” and that he had “served the University for 28 years,” which was erroneous, since Fling had in fact held his position for *thirty-eight* years by that time.⁶⁶⁸ Then, in the early 1930s, Fling wrote a preface for an international version of his *The Writing of History*, which had recently been translated into Chinese and would be published in 1933. The translator, Dr. Herman Chen-en Liu, was actually visiting Lincoln at the time the book became publically available and “called on” Fling on November 21, 1933.⁶⁶⁹

Fling only contributed two paragraphs as a preface to the book, but in these few words, he actually managed to say a great deal. First, he was thankful to see the translation provided to students because he “ha[d] long believed that a training in historical method – both in the theory and in the practice of it – should form a part of the cultural training not only of students and teachers of history, but also of all students of our high schools and colleges.”⁶⁷⁰ Again, Fling was positing that the value of historical study transcended just the gathering of historical knowledge. Instead, historical study should cultivate a more precise and critical thinking about fact and “the truth of the past” and man’s place in it.⁶⁷¹ Second, he offered a passing criticism of history teachers by acknowledging that “[i]t is an exception when a teacher of history is acquainted with the method by means of which the truth of the past as history is ascertained; he is quite incapable of distinguishing between the book that rests on thorough, scientific research and a popular, untrustworthy text.”⁶⁷² And last, he again revisited his concept of historical consciousness. As he stated, “the development of an historical consciousness, a consciousness of

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁹ Chinese Translation of *The Writing of History*, Fred Morrow Fling Collection, Box 12, Folder 2, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

⁶⁷⁰ Fred Morrow Fling, “Preface” to Chinese Translation, Fred Morrow Fling Collection, Box 12, Folder 3, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

⁶⁷¹ Ibid.

⁶⁷² Ibid.

man's entire social past as history, is imperative for every highly civilized people. This historical consciousness must be created anew in each generation."⁶⁷³ Thus, even in these two short paragraphs, Fling mentioned the importance of method, the paucity of teacher training in method, and historical consciousness. As the most concise preface Fling ever wrote, this short piece speaks volumes about the ideas that Fling considered most important and that still remained in the forefront of his thought in the early 1930s.

In 1930, Burnett sweepingly acknowledged in a speech to the Alumni on Charter Day,

Where once a faculty of four professors with a few student janitors cared for the needs of the student body (in 1871), we have grown to a great business organization with 375 professors and instructors of various grades employed in teaching activities. When we include the service class, there are 918 persons employed in various capacities in the operations of the University. There are now 10 colleges, with three schools of college grade and two of sub-collegiate grade, with vast research facilities and with extension organizations seeking to carry education to the very frontiers of civilization.⁶⁷⁴

As part of this enormous growth, and witnessing most of it over his near forty-year tenure at the university, Fling saw equal amounts of growth in his own department. Whereas he and Caldwell were the only history professors in 1891 when he accepted his position, by 1930, he was accustomed to having colleagues that ranged from American History to Ancient History to European History. Even so, "[d]uring the Twenties, [the College of] Arts and Sciences saw a steady decline in enrollment. In 1920 more than half the students attending the university were in that college, but by the end of the decade hardly more than a fourth were generalists."⁶⁷⁵ This condition was partly due to the changing waves of interest from enrolling students but, just as influentially,

⁶⁷³ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁴ E. A. Burnett, Address to the Alumni, Charter Day, 1930, Chancellor Burnette Speeches, Box 1, Folder 4, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

⁶⁷⁵ Knoll, *Prairie University*, 72.

was also due to the continual splintering experienced by the College during Fling's time. Not only had the College of Business Administration split from Arts and Sciences in 1919, but then, in 1921, the Teachers College also gained autonomy separate from Arts and Sciences under which it had traditionally been housed. The decision to create a separate Teachers College was in line with national developments in schools of education throughout the country and was the result of years of work by "educationists" who "had made a political issue of what the generalists defined as a fundamental academic matter."⁶⁷⁶ Nonetheless, the Teachers College was established and its eight departments and more than thirty faculty pulled even more students from the numbers enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences.

In 1933, Fling appeared as a lecturer in Omaha, Nebraska at the invitation of the Omaha Teachers' Forum. As the *Central High Register* announced, this lecture series lasted six weeks, with a different lecture provided for the public every Wednesday afternoon. The principal of Omaha Central High School, who was an admirer of Fling's work as the "official historian during the World War," applauded the lecture series.⁶⁷⁷ The topics of these lectures ranged from world history to contemporary history and showed the new attention that Fling gave to historical study rather than pedagogical technique. Although he may have abandoned his commitment to a reform of teacher education, pedagogy, and source method in the secondary classroom, Fling never deserted the discipline of history. Later in 1933, Fling attended the Seventh International Congress of Historical Sciences, convened in Warsaw, Poland, and wrote a positive review of the conference and its hosts.⁶⁷⁸ At this conference, he was able to take time to conduct further

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid., 73.

⁶⁷⁷ Central High Register, "Fling to Offer World History Lecture Series: Talks to be Given on Each Wednesday Afternoon; Admission \$1," *Central High Register*, February 24, 1933, 1.

⁶⁷⁸ Fred Morrow Fling, "Seventh International Congress of Historical Sciences Warsaw, August 21-28, 1933," *The American Historical Review* 39(2) (1934): 269-283.

research on the current “Poland-German crisis” and was asked to present a lecture on his 1903 paper, “Historical Synthesis.”⁶⁷⁹

Fling was interested in the developments of international issues in Europe in the 1930s. Pursuant to these curiosities, he had traveled to Warsaw, Paris, and Berlin at various times from 1931 to 1933. Partly, these travels were meant to aid in the completion of his commissioned war history, which was still pending more than a decade after the close of the war. On the other hand, this refocusing in research attentions abroad was also due to the completion of his last manuscript on Mirabeau, which occurred in 1930 after a final trip on the matter to Madrid, Spain.⁶⁸⁰ Although he never published these final volumes, nor his war history, his lifelong interest in foreign affairs provided him all the necessary motivation to continue involvement in European travels in the last years of his life.

Apart from his specific publications, lectures, and travels, Fling also played a role as a founder of *History Teacher's Magazine*, which later became *Historical Outlook*, in 1909. Fling was also a member of the American Historical Association throughout his life, garnering him mention in several of the AHA's Annual Reports from 1905 through 1927.⁶⁸¹ Because of his interest and respected research on the French Revolution, Fling was also one of the only American members of La Societe de la Revolution Francaise.⁶⁸² After undergoing a “major operation”

⁶⁷⁹ Lincoln Star Staff, “Dr. Fred Fling,” 4.

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁸¹ Charles H. Haskins, “Report of the Conference on the First Year of the College Work in History,” in *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1905*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1906, 147 – 174; and AHA, *The Study of History*; and American Historical Association, “The Meeting of the American Historical Association at Baltimore,” *American Historical Review* 11 (1911): 491 – 514; and American Historical Association, *Annual report of the American Historical Association for the year 1912*, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1912; and American Historical Association, “The Meeting of the American Historical Association at Rochester,” *American Historical Review* 33 (1927): 429 – 445.

⁶⁸² Carlson, “Professor Fred Fling,” 486.

on May 18th, Fling was hospitalized for recovery.⁶⁸³ However, on the morning of June 8th, 1934, “pneumonia developed...and Dr. Fling sank rapidly.”⁶⁸⁴ He died that evening at 7:05pm.

Fling’s obituary in the *Lincoln Star* reported on several interesting parts of his life. First, Fling was described as an “intimate friend of President Wilson,” and “chief of the diplomatic history section” during World War One.⁶⁸⁵ By this accolade’s placement as the first comment on Fling’s life, it is clear that many in Nebraska were not only familiar with these efforts, but also remembered this time period (1917-1919) as his most impressive years.

Second, the authors highlighted that he was “one of the founders of historical method of research and writing, known as the ‘Nebraska Method,’ a method now widely known and used over the world.”⁶⁸⁶ By 1934, this term in reference to Fling and his methods was used regularly by those who knew him but had only formally appeared in print on rare occasions in the writings of his colleagues.⁶⁸⁷ However, its appearance in Fling’s obituary served to cement it as a description even though, ironically, Robert Carlson, who was the only of Fling’s former students to also be an author of a short biography of him, never used the term “Nebraska Method” to describe Fling’s scientific history.⁶⁸⁸

Third, the short biography provided by the obituary was also very telling. This review of Fling’s life mentions very little of its beginnings other than that “he was educated in the Portland schools,” that “[his] ultimate purpose was to study law but he was unable to spend enough time

⁶⁸³ Lincoln Star Staff. “Dr. Fred Fling,” 3

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid., 4.

⁶⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁷ The only remaining evidence of this term’s written use before its posthumous adoption in secondary sources is in Taylor, “A Life,” 4. All other existent references to this term appear in research conducted by those who have studied the time period or Fling, such as Knoll, *Prairie University*, 64; Osborne, “Fred Morrow Fling,” 469; Bohan, “Early Vanguard,” 86; Cherry, “Online Cultural Heritage,” 47-51; and Chisholm, “Unheralded Historian,” 50. However, there is implication of it in course notes and personal communications of the time period.

⁶⁸⁸ Carlson, “Professor Fred Fling.”

in school,” that “he taught for five years...at Bideford [*sic*] high school,” and that he “edited a daily paper at Old Orchard Beach in the summers.”⁶⁸⁹ Then, the remainder of the article, which amounted to two newspaper columns out of three total, described Fling’s experience at Nebraska. In the end, it was cited that “[h]e shared with Dr. E. H. Barbour, of the geology department, the honor of being the oldest teacher in point of service on the campus.”⁶⁹⁰

Last, Fling’s obituary made several important comments about his demeanor and reputation with students. The authors began by expressing that Fling was “a stern and gruff man;” however, they also noted that “nevertheless, he had many friends and his history courses were popular with upperclass and graduate students.”⁶⁹¹ Considering that the work conducted in Fling’s courses was strenuous and demanding, it is not surprising that those who were more interested in intensive historical study, such as upperclassmen and graduate students, were more interested in taking Fling’s classes. Additionally, the authors commented that Fling “demand[ed] that all his student [*sic*] take voluminous notes and rewrite them for him in expanded form.”⁶⁹² This requirement helped explain the expansive and detailed record of Ms. Cripe’s notes in the Nebraska archive.⁶⁹³ As evidenced by her notes and the care she took in rewriting them, Cripe exhibited the refined abilities that Fling admired in his students. The authors noted in conclusion that Fling had a “philosophical bent of mind” that “led him to emphasize in many of his lectures and in some of his writings the establishment of a world state.”⁶⁹⁴ Although this description is accurate, Fling’s philosophical mind was evidenced by more than just his discussion of a world

⁶⁸⁹ Lincoln Star Staff. “Dr. Fred Fling,” 4. The correct spelling of the city and school is “Biddeford.”

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶⁹² Lincoln Star Staff. “Dr. Fred Fling,” 5.

⁶⁹³ Cripe, Lecture Notes and Cripe, Wednesday Lecture Notes. In total, Cripe’s original, rewritten, and project outline notes comprise six total archive folders (1-6) out of Box 14 of the Fred Morrow Fling Collection, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

⁶⁹⁴ Lincoln Star Staff. “Dr. Fred Fling,” 5.

state. If nothing else, Fling's rich philosophical outlook on the world propelled him forward in his studies of history in general, which resulted in his development of ideas such as historical method and historical consciousness. These qualities that the writers of his obituary indicate are powerful in demonstrating who Fling was as a person, educational leader, and professor. The depths of these qualities uncovered through intensive study of his life only serve as even greater evidence of the significance of a philosophic mind to the art of history.

As influenced by his time period, the tumultuous events of history, and the pressure of both his admirers and critics, Fling's life speaks to the tensions experienced within the field of education and the broader field of American life during the early twentieth century. These events and distractions never fully conquered the revolutionary and progressive spirit that Fling embodied in his works and practice. Instead, especially from the years 1897 to 1912, Fling's contributions were consummate. His unique approach to history education created and set a solid foundation for the use of scientific history in history classrooms, even though these methods failed to garner widespread support or implementation.

After 1919, Fred Morrow Fling abandoned his dreams of education reform on a national scale. He commended the efforts of Nebraska teachers, and no doubt appreciated that the source method had taken hold in his state, even if its tenure there had been short-lived. In fact, many recent historians have again started calling the source method practice the "Nebraska method" to recognize Fling's contribution.⁶⁹⁵ However, the developments of the world during the era of the Great War seemed to alter Fling irreparably. After his work with Woodrow Wilson as a military historian, and his return to his own research pursuits on the French Revolution, Fling's interest in education faded. As Osborne has contended, this change in Fling's outlook is due partly to the

⁶⁹⁵ Bohan, "Early Vanguard," 86; Osborne, "Fred Morrow Fling," 481.

takeover of the schools by “professional educationists” with which Fling had become increasingly disenchanted.⁶⁹⁶ However, this development is also due to the backlash of the Great War and the Red Scare that created a severe introversion of American life.

This isolation in world affairs not only undermined Fling’s argument for the necessity of viewing history through the concept of a “world society,” but it also resulted in a profound fear of challenging assumed truths or speaking “unpatriotically” in public.⁶⁹⁷ As Cain explains, “[t]he nationalism of the war years intensified and definitions of anti-American expanded amid the First Red Scare.”⁶⁹⁸ In society, this paranoia of seeming “anti-American” resulted in curricula that reinforced the dominance and progress of Western civilization and, especially, the American nation. Moreover, it created an atmosphere of dominance regarding stories about the past that placed America developmentally at the top of the world scale. Fling reinforced this view of history through his discussions of man’s development in a “world-society” that happened to overlap specifically with the rise of Western civilization and its people.⁶⁹⁹ However, Fling’s earlier arguments for discerning historical “truth” and earlier criticisms of historians who hastily concluded past events instead of investigating them with scrutiny both implied that a more open-minded and critical approach to historical study was needed. In Fling’s time period, though, historical criticism and the questioning of accounts of the past did not extend to conclusions that reinforced American patriotism. Instead, these concepts were off limits because their analysis would be considered “unpatriotic.” Although the war ended in 1919, this hysteria and suppression of speech did not. As Cain explains,

⁶⁹⁶ Osborne, “Fred Morrow Fling,” 497.

⁶⁹⁷ Cain, “Silence and Cowardice,” 297.

⁶⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹⁹ Fling, “World-History and Historical Consciousness,” 10.

The war presented enduring challenges to the academic freedom of pacifists, socialists, and other faculty members whose political views were considered undesirable. In short, the attacks on faculty members deemed un-American provided the template for later assaults on leftist faculty members and engendered consequences that extended well beyond the end of the war.⁷⁰⁰

So, though apparently hypocritical to his earlier emphasis on historical criticism and like many historians of his day, Fling did not question his conclusion that the “progress of civilized nations” was demonstrated by “the century-long expansion” of the European peoples and their settlement of “the entire globe.”⁷⁰¹ Instead, he accepted this account of the past as the historical “truth” that was uncovered through scientific study of the past.

Although Fling did expect for students to uncover historical “truth” on their own, he had a preconceived notion of exactly what this “truth” was. Namely, he maintained the views of his time period that the “truth” was the story of the past that reinforced and supported the continual supremacy of Western Civilization and its subjugation of “less civilized” populations. In many ways, these determinations are in conflict: on the one hand, discerning historical “truth” should lead a researcher to view historical events with an open mind and to pursue various perspectives and evidence of historical events before drawing a conclusion; on the other hand, a Euro- and American-centric view of the past restricts a historian’s ability to be objective and filters his or her conclusions through the lens of his or her own bias. In this way, Fling’s philosophy and his actions seem to be fatally contradicting.

However, as a product of his time period, these two points were not in conflict in Fling’s own views towards historical study. Instead, his ability to discern the “truth” and the fact that the “truth” he found happened to show man’s progress as the development of Western civilized

⁷⁰⁰ Cain, “Silence and Cowardice,” 329.

⁷⁰¹ Fling, “World-History and Historical Consciousness,” 10.

nations were not self-fulfilling or circular activities as we see them today. Instead, the “truth” Fling found was exactly the support and proof available to him that proved his conclusions about development. Whereas today, as Novick points out, we would see this assessment of the past as simply the historians’ subjective opinions of development, historians of Fling’s time period, who were thoroughly steeped in the “authority” of a “scientific” history, did not view their conclusions this way.⁷⁰² Thus, trapped within this cycle of reinforcing cultural supremacy, the observable tensions between Fling’s philosophy of historical criticism and his conclusions regarding the “correct” answers of the historical events of the past was, in many ways, an unspoken hypocrisy that plagued his time period.⁷⁰³

In the end, this tension did not erase the impact nor influence that Fling had on either the study of history or his own students. Even if the concomitant atmosphere of cultural and evolutionary beliefs precluded Fling from practicing the objective historical analysis he envisioned, even though he argued that he was accomplishing exactly this goal, his contributions to his field and to education are still commendable. Perhaps Robert Carlson puts it best:

His legacy to his university, which he served until the time of his death, and to international scholarship came in a variety of forms. One was his writing, to which he devoted years of meticulous study and research. On a pupil-to-professor plane he had trained numerous students, including the author, to make better use of their critical faculties; he also instilled in them a curiosity about both contemporary and past historical events. Many fellow classmates, including Marie Cripe and Harry Simon, long afterward agreed with me that Professor Fling's philosophic and humanistic lectures were the most rewarding of any they remembered at the university. They found that he had given learning an added value and history a new meaning.⁷⁰⁴

As an advocate of educational reform, this posthumous adulation provided by his former students is important to remembering the type of educational mentor Fling was. Thus, though he never

⁷⁰² Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 121

⁷⁰³ *Ibid.*, 120-131.

⁷⁰⁴ Carlson, “Professor Fred Fling,” 494.

analyzed the hypocrisy of his own work in the context of an era that sought objectivity without achieving it, Fling's legacy as a historian, educator, and leader is admirable.

Both the historical and philosophical contexts of Fling's life were boisterous: never before in American history had such a vast amount of change occurred in both areas in such a short span of time. However, unlike the heroes and heroines of this era who have been lauded throughout time as revolutionary reformers, Fling has failed to achieve fame for his efforts at philosophical and educational change. Nevertheless, these developments were still revolutionary for their time and, in many ways, challenged the historical and philosophical contexts more than they bent to their will. For this reason, his contributions are timeless and provide valuable insight not only into the history of source method, but also into best practices for the cultivation of critical thinking, which are relevant today.

Conclusions on Fling's Life and Legacy

Fling's life can be broken down roughly into four stages: his pursuit of a graduate education, his early work and publications, the war and its aftermath, and the defeat of source method. Although the lines between these periods are often blurred, each one was spurred on by its own set of causes and each ended with a significant change or effect in Fling's life that resulted in a different course of action. Within each phase of his life, not only were his focal points different, but also his perspective and intentions changed. In his early years, he was a budding historical scientist driven by the need for reformation in an infant field at a time when natural science modes of logic and methods of gaining knowledge were dominant forces both within Fling's life and within the broader American environment in which he lived. By the end of his life, this passion for educational change waned and he became devoted to his own classroom in a way that mirrored the global isolation of American foreign policy to which he had been so committed dur-

ing the war years. In the end, he chose to remain a historian and professor, though he did not ascend the career ladder as many of his colleagues around him did. Instead, he anchored himself to his practice and lived out his remaining days both doing and advocating what he loved: history.

As Cripe transcribes from Fling's lecture regarding his first teaching assignment,

He knew very little of history as a graduate teacher – no chairs of history then...Began to teach history with very little idea of what the matter was – had training in math & languages & taught some math. Worked out in geometry an effective thing, mental training. History – cram date into heads quite effectively – kings and dates of reigns know & demanded students to know these facts and dates...chem. lab. installed in U. S., science up to now only in texts. That was a new kind of training. How about history? That one only memory work or else read it over in class v then say it in own words but that again a part of memory...

Went to Germany to study, research work, source work. While hunting around for methods of historical writing, found something new in German library. Prof. Bernheim was author – hard working. Looked for specific methods. Came to Neb. gave lectures on historical method based on sources and criticism of sources.⁷⁰⁵

This passage, though lengthy and written in abbreviated notes form, provides evidence of the motivation behind the first phase of Fling's life. It also evidences the fact that, when Fling discovered Bernheim, everything for him changed.

Because Fling grew up in an era when “the general method of instruction in schools was formal recitation of question and answer,” he embarked on his first teaching assignment with these strategies in mind.⁷⁰⁶ However, having also witnessed the laboratory method installed in the chemistry classroom and having grappled for something new in history, he specifically went searching for methods when he departed America for his studies in Europe. Serendipitously, he discovered Bernheim's book on method and became a ready follower of his style, suggestions,

⁷⁰⁵ Cripe, Wednesday Lecture Notes, grammar, syntax, and abbreviations taken directly from original.

⁷⁰⁶ Evans, *Social Studies Wars*, 5.

and scientific history. As he stated, he specifically brought these methods back with him to Nebraska where he then perfected his own delivery, use, and development of them.

This early training and thirst for better ways of overcoming the paucity of methods in historical study also led Fling into the next phase of his life: his early work and major publications. This stage of development itself has two parts. Fling was a committed generator of materials and manuals on historical method as well as a significant guide in the enhancement of teacher preparation and training. His materials themselves ranged from books that detailed the source method of historians that could be applied to the history classroom to those that were specifically designed as teacher aides for professional development and pedagogy. In the twenty-three-year span from the date of his first publication to his last, Fling published seven major books and five peer-reviewed articles, in addition to twenty-three book reviews and dozens of minor publications within the college's *University Studies* and *Nebraska Alumnus*. This repertoire is enormous. However, it ends fourteen years before his death.

This second phase of Fling's life was dominated by two points of focus: methods and Mirabeau. Regarding methods, Fling wrote *The Outline of Historical Method* and *The Writing of History* specifically to discuss his ideology of scientific history and to provide materials for others to develop his techniques. In addition, he wrote *Studies in European and American History with an Introduction to the Source Study Method in History* with Caldwell, *Greek and Roman Civilization: With an Introduction to the Source Study Method* and *A Sourcebook of Greek History* alone, and *Source Problems on the French Revolution* with his wife Helene as materials to be used in classrooms to support the source method with students. These six major works constitute 86% of the books he published in total. His only other book, *Mirabeau and the French Revolution Volume I: The Youth of Mirabeau*, dealt with his other focal point, Mirabeau.

The difference in publishing output between his works on method and his work on Mirabeau is telling. This devotion to scientific history, its proliferation for students and teachers, and professional development to train teachers in history education surpassed his formal writing commitment to Mirabeau. However, chronologically, Fling only spent the years from 1897 to 1920 on his works regarding scientific history; whereas he spent the years from 1888 to 1930, a forty-two year span, on his topics of historical study, which centered on the life of Mirabeau. Taken this way, it is clear that his mental devotions were often split and his commitment to work as a historian was not as simply surpassed by his work as an educator as it may appear on the surface.

Moreover, during the expanse of his tenure at Nebraska and as evidenced by the remaining notes and drafts in the Nebraska Archive, Fling also committed great amounts of time to historical research that did not result in publication. Not only did he envision that his work on Mirabeau would eventually total four volumes, but also he foretold that his study of “A World Civilization” would amount to a massive eight-volume work. Had these eleven subsequent publications come to fruition, they would have tipped the scale for his production in historical study and relegated his works on method to subordinate status. However, like his publications with the war department that were also never completed, his inability to see these tasks through to their end may also indicate the greater commitment he gave to his projects on method than on historical research. In either case, it is clear that his attentions often vacillated between detailing historical method and education strategies for its application to the classroom and researching historical time periods, development, and people.

The third phase of Fling’s life was his stage of both notoriety and reprimand in response to and due in part to his involvement in world events. Although Fling’s excitement over interna-

tional affairs did not begin with the eruption of war in Europe, as evidenced by his comments on both the annexation of Hawaii and the Spanish-American War, this landmark event did create the most personal and professional uproar in Fling's life. By this time, Fling had been involved with the military only as a guest lecturer. However, the war years would bring formal participation in the War Department as a commissioned Major and a war historian. These opportunities allowed Fling to travel with the official war party from the United States to the Paris Peace Conference. Moreover, they resulted in his presence in Washington, D.C. both during and after America's involvement in the war. Relatedly, they also led to Fling's longest extent of departure from his teaching and his most notorious public recognition in the press.

As Fling explained in reference to man's lack of acknowledgement of a world civilization in years prior to the twentieth century, "[t]he World-War changed all that."⁷⁰⁷ However, this comment actually applies to many parts of Fling's life. First, the war changed Fling's terminology. Before the war years, Fling wrote about the development of human history, historical consciousness, and historical study. However, after the war, he regularly described this condition of development as a "world-society." In fact, in his publications before the war, this phrase appears once (including *the Writing of History*, which he claimed to have written before the war).⁷⁰⁸ However, in just the sixteen-page introduction to his unpublished book on A World Civilization, the phrase "world-society" appears eighteen times, including in the opening sentence.⁷⁰⁹ Moreover, Fling uses terms such as "world-history," "world-unity," "world-institutions," and "world-civilization" constantly throughout this introduction, whereas these terms appear almost nowhere in his previous writings. Fling himself acknowledges that this change is due to the war by the

⁷⁰⁷ Fling, "World-History and Historical Consciousness," 7.

⁷⁰⁸ Fling, "Historical Synthesis," 15; although, he states it as "world society," not as "world-society." So, he may even have intended these concepts as different in nature.

⁷⁰⁹ Fling, "World-History and Historical Consciousness," 1-16.

context of the aforementioned quote. As he states, “[t]he World War changed all that. Like a flash of lightening on a dark night it illuminated the historical landscape and revealed the existence of a world-society...”⁷¹⁰ Fling also referred to this “world-society” in his classes, as is evident in the remaining lecture notes from all of Cripe, Waggener, and Smitty.

Second, the war changed Fling’s direction and intention. Whereas before the war, Fling had worked alongside teachers in his state for their professional development in historic method and provided manuals of method and source suggestions for class, after the war, Fling abandoned both of these efforts. This change was not directly caused by the war itself, but the events that took place during the war era while Fling’s attentions were elsewhere. During his absence, the NHTA adopted the changes to social studies curricula recommended by the 1916 CRSE Report. Upon his return, Fling published a review of source method in education that concluded the paucity of source method practices. Then, the Teachers College of the University separated itself formally from the College of Arts and Sciences in order to model the developments of teachers colleges around the country. To Fling, all of these events amounted to the defeat of historical source method in education and the rise of “educationists” that took over the direction of progressive era pedagogical changes in schools.⁷¹¹ In response to these occurrences, Fling adopted a new direction: a focus on his own teaching and historical research pursuits. Moreover, past 1920, he rarely even mentioned the plight of teachers without blaming them for their own lack of skill, expertise, or desire to improve.

Third, the war changed Fling’s public level of productivity. From 1921 to 1934, Fling published one three-page article as a review of an International Conference he attended and three

⁷¹⁰ Ibid.,” 7.

⁷¹¹ Term used by both Osborne, “Fred Morrow Fling,” 497; and Knoll, *Prairie University*, 73.

book reviews, two of which were in French and all of which concerned historical studies of the French Revolution. Having penned twenty-eight reviews in his career, these three amounted to only 11% of his total. Although he did publish several short articles of historical research in the *University Studies* within the University of Nebraska, these internal documents were not created for general public consumption. Moreover, as enrollment in the College of Arts and Sciences continued to decline throughout the 1920s, Fling managed only a moderate course load of students during this time.

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, the war changed Fling's spirit. Before the war, his temper and tone in his published works was vigorous and his excitement over both historical method and historical research was palpable. His work as a professor was also lively, as evidenced by the frequency with which he attended meetings of the University Senate and with which he offered public speeches and comments.⁷¹² However, it was precisely these public interactions and speeches that garnered him the reputation as part of the "Anti-German Witch Hunt" of the war years.⁷¹³ After the war, he was more reluctant to offer his public opinions and record of his participation in campus speeches or hearings is nonexistent. Even in the 1930s when the depression caused budget cuts and salary decreases and many faculty members were outspoken about their strife, the record of Fling's contribution to the turmoil is silent.

Although he lost his public voice for matters of controversy in the university, state, or country, Fling did not lose his passion for historical study or the work of his students. Instead, these focal points became his sole pillars of instruction in the post-war years. He maintained a high level of rigor in his classes and committed himself to the development of both historical ex-

⁷¹² Senate Rolls, 1890-1928, Board of Regents Collection, Archives and Special Collections, University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, NE.

⁷¹³ Knoll, *Prairie University*, 64.

pertise and historical consciousness in those who took his classes. This audience was much smaller than the public he had engaged before the war, but it was no less important to him nor less valued by him as an instructor.

The last stage of Fling's life, which also overlaps with the effects of the war years, is defined by a severe introversion. Not only did he accept the defeat of source method as it had been denied by both national committees of education and the committee of the NHTA, but also he suspended his publications and non-commissioned public appearances for the remainder of his career. Ironically, although he abandoned his earlier efforts at history education reform, he remained an educator for the rest of his life and continued these practices in his own classroom. Unlike those around him at the university with which he had worked for many years, he was never promoted beyond the level of "Professor," which may have been of personal design due to his well-evidenced affinity for teaching, which was implied by the Board of Regents for their division between those with "administrative" duties and those with a focus on "teaching and research."⁷¹⁴ Having seen these areas distinguished at the administrative level, Fling may have chosen to be on a different track than those around him. Alternatively, this positioning could also have been due to a lack of professional ambition or a sense of defeat from his reprimands of the war years or simply the fact that Chancellor Burnette was a "harsher man to cross" than Samuel Avery.⁷¹⁵ Regardless the reason, Fling seemed to plateau in his career and continued at the same level until his death in 1934. Although he did not formally advance in his career, neither did he retire, which does show his commitment to the advancement of higher education in the field of history through personal effort and vigilance.

⁷¹⁴ Board of Regents Report, 1920.

⁷¹⁵ Knoll, *Prairie University*, 82.

Fling also maintained his personal contacts with significant movers in both history, education, and his own university throughout his lifetime. Although it is easy to overlook the importance of these connections, it is necessary also to remember the size of the world during Fling's life. Although census data from 1890 when Fling began his career is no longer available,⁷¹⁶ according to the Census Bureau, the approximate population of the United States was 82,947,714 at that time.⁷¹⁷ In 1930, the population of the nation was 122,775,046.⁷¹⁸ Whereas, today in 2016, the population of the United States is over 330 million. Thus, comparatively, the world in which Fling lived was much smaller and connections between people, though slow and conducted through difficult means of communication, were closer. Evidenced by Fling's collection of personal letters that his wife and son later donated to the archive, these connections with other leading intellectuals of the day, such as Moses C. Tyler, Mary Sheldon Barnes, Lucy Maynard Salmon, Albert Bushnell Hart, and George B. Adams, to name just a few, were important to Fling. Moreover, they demonstrate the level of correspondence between Fling and the leaders of significant institutions, such as Cornell, Yale, and Stanford. These communications evidence the development of conversations between Fling and the pioneers who led to educational reform on a larger scale. Although Fling is not remembered on the same level as these other reformers, in his day, he was seen as one of them. Unfortunately, as source method itself

⁷¹⁶ It was mostly destroyed in a fire in 1921. In fact, the Census Bureau published an article written by Kellee Blake in 1996 titled "First in the Path of the Firemen: The Fate of the 1890 Population Census," specifically to explain why these crucial records no longer exist. Moreover, as the article explains, there actually was no permanent Census Bureau until 1902 and even after that census data is far from comprehensive of any time period.

⁷¹⁷ Vincent P. Barabba, Director, Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970, Part 1* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce, 1975), 9.

⁷¹⁸ *Ibid.*

lost out to more popular developments of “pedagogical progressivism,” so did those who advocated these practices.⁷¹⁹

Overall, the 1920s and 30s were harder on everyone than earlier decades of the twentieth century. And, as source method lost its appeal to the masses, so were the advocates of the method relegated to the margins of history. However, there is currently renewed interest in these lesser-known actors of educational reform as researchers desire to form a fuller picture of past educational time periods. Fling himself has become the subject of such investigations in recent years. Robert Carlson, a former student of Fling, offers the first attempt at a comprehensive biography in his article, “Professor Fred Fling,” published in *Nebraska* in 1981. Then, in 1999, Oliver Pollak adds to this material by analyzing Fling’s *Outline* in his article, “Fred Morrow Fling, a One Hundred-Year Retrospective on Historical Methodology,” also published in *Nebraska*.

The first publication to appear nationally was Ken Osborne’s article for *Theory and Research in Social Education* in 2003, which provides the only existent comprehensive biography of Fling to date.⁷²⁰ However, like many histories of source method personnel, the biography ends with the dismissal of source method instead of continuing in detail for the remainder of Fling’s life. Additionally, Novick adds Fling’s name to a long list of theoreticians of the Progressive Era, thus raising his status somewhat closer to the level of his contemporaries.⁷²¹ Bohan also implicitly recognizes the contribution made by Fling by recognizing that the source method was at times called “the Nebraska Method.”⁷²² Lastly, Fling has appeared at least in mention in

⁷¹⁹ Urban and Wagoner, *American Education*, 199.

⁷²⁰ Osborne, “Fred Morrow Fling.”

⁷²¹ Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 149.

⁷²² Bohan, “Early Vanguard,” 86.

doctoral work as well.⁷²³ However, these minimal mentions of Fling's contributions fall far short of a comprehensive discussion of Fling's life and legacy.

Thus, the recognition Fling deserves for the energy he gave to the source method movement has been far from realized. He did not shy away from disseminating source method, defending its use, nor creating source method materials even in the face of blatant criticisms from educational actors as highly renowned as the AHA, the NEA, and their various committees. In the end, Fling seemed to accept that he operated in a different realm than the professional educationists that appeared during his time. Although he engaged in various published debates with them, he ultimately relinquished the world of educational reform to them. In the beginning of his career, he actively confronted the views of educational reformers, positing that his training as a historian uniquely qualified him as a history educator. However, as Normal Schools, Teachers Colleges, and education degrees gradually severed the connection between educational pedagogy and the content areas, Fling accepted the separation and devoted his efforts to the content instead of the classroom. This division occurred within his own university with the founding of the Teachers College in 1921. In this same year, the NCSS was founded, securing the recognition and embedment of this new curricular area in place of just history. These developments, coupled with the adoption of similar curricular changes by the NHTA, ensured that Fling's resignation from the world of educational reform was complete as he chose to abandon the battles he had fought earlier in his career.

Exploring what happened to source method advocates, like Fling, after source method's demise is significant to filling in the complete picture of educational development in the Progressive Era. This portrait of Fling is one step in that direction. Although Fling's popularity and ce-

⁷²³ Chisholm, "Unheralded Historian;" Cherry, "Online Cultural Heritage."

lebrity during his lifetime were never realized, researchers' tendencies to overlook his contributions to the areas of history education, source method education, and scientific history should cease. Not only was Fling a significant actor on the stage of educational change during his generation, but also his legacy is a testament to the tumultuous and often overwhelming forces of societal and professional development that swept America during his seventy-four year life. His emphasis on criticism of sources provides further support of the value of development of critical thinking skills in students, which educational leaders today continually stress. As Levstik and Tyson acknowledge, one of social studies' goals of today is "developing citizens who can draw on history and the social sciences to inform decision-making."⁷²⁴ This point is supported by VanSledright, Kelly, and Meuwissen who acknowledge that "historical thinking [is] a subject of considerable interest among history education researchers."⁷²⁵ Fling's constant emphasis on "historical consciousness" implies that he would likely sustain this view. To him, it was not just in the procuring of historical information that students found value in history; instead, it was from the cultivation of a mental mindfulness towards man's development as a social species that students' true rewards came.

Just like in Fling's time, educators today highlight the importance of empowering students to determine conclusions on their own, support arguments with evidence, and ultimately to determine fact from fiction, especially in the studying of history. As VanSledright, et al. explain, "[a]cts of historical thinking and reasoning are historicized cultural practices that, at present an-

⁷²⁴ Linda S. Levstik and Cynthia A. Tyson, "Introduction," in Linda S. Levstik and Cynthia A. Tyson, ed., *Handbook of Research in Social Studies Education* (New York: Routledge, 2008): 2.

⁷²⁵ Bruce VanSledright, Timothy Kelly, and Kevin Meuwissen, "Oh, the Trouble We've Seen: Researching Historical Thinking and Understanding," in Keith C. Barton, ed., *Research Methods in Social Studies Education: Contemporary Issues and Perspectives* (Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing, 2006), 212.

way, are designed principally to lead to deeper, richer ways of understanding the past.”⁷²⁶ Fling would no doubt agree with this conception of historical thinking. His emphasis on “historical consciousness” was precisely for the purpose of cultivating this “deeper understanding,” which was meant to be fostered in teachers as well as students. As education degrees today formally separate educators from experts within the content areas, Fling’s arguments regarding proper teacher training may shed light on ways in which history teachers could be more successful. Namely, with deeper content knowledge, including historical training in method, teachers have the possibility of enhancing their delivery of historical topics.

However, Fling’s most important agreement with researchers today comes from a further point that VanSledright, et al., make. Namely,

Such [deeper] understandings [of the past] are often (but not exclusively) displayed in books and narrative accounts that we call histories. These histories might be described colloquially as bricks in the wall of historical knowledge...But what counts as understanding, and, more importantly, what counts as understanding that is vetted in book form and becomes what we call historical knowledge? These questions effectively ask about the warrants for constituting such knowledge. And asking about warrants implicates the cultural practice of how participant communities that wish to investigate the past make decisions concerning what gets to count.⁷²⁷

The traces of Novick’s assessment of historical study over time are present in this passage as he would agree that it is ultimately the perspective and social context of the historian that determines “what gets to count” as truth more so than the intrinsic objectivity of history.⁷²⁸ Relatedly, the similarities between this passage and Fling’s views are also telling, even though his own bi-

⁷²⁶ Ibid., 214.

⁷²⁷ Ibid.

⁷²⁸ Novick, *That Noble Dream*, overall conclusion. The most telling explanation he gives in Fling’s time period relates to the emergent arguments of the “historical relativists” in the 1920s (164-166). As he states, “[t]he principal argument of the historical relativists...was that so far as they could see, historical interpretations always had been, and for various technical reasons always would be, ‘relative’ to the historian’s time, place, values, and purposes. They never maintained that historians had a choice in the matter” (166).

ases pervaded his work and “what got to count,” for him and many historians of his day, remained the stories that uplifted the tale of American patriotism, nationalism, and achievement.

Nonetheless, like this quote implies regarding historical thinking today, a major emphasis of Fling’s way of teaching, as well as his philosophy of history, was to thoroughly support conclusions regarding what constitutes historical knowledge. Fling would agree that studying the past effectively also mandated an exploration of the “warrants for constituting such knowledge,” although he would call these “methods.” His emphasis on method was the only tenet of his philosophy, practice, and writing that lasted from the beginning of his career to the end. As his enthusiasm for education reform waxed and waned and as his research topics evolved from Mira-beau, to the war, to all of human history, the one constant that remained in the midst of all these fluctuations was his emphasis on historical method. The fact that he could not translate the importance of method from the realm of professional history to the domain of source method did nothing to diminish its importance in his overall philosophy of history.

In the end, though education has progressed for nearly one hundred years after Fling’s efforts, educational leaders, designers, and activists can still learn a great deal from the story of his life and the educational philosophy that he envisioned. Fling’s methods of source analysis, skill development, and historical criticism not only demonstrate the timeless nature of these educational objectives, but also provide valuable techniques for building enriching and engaging classroom activities.

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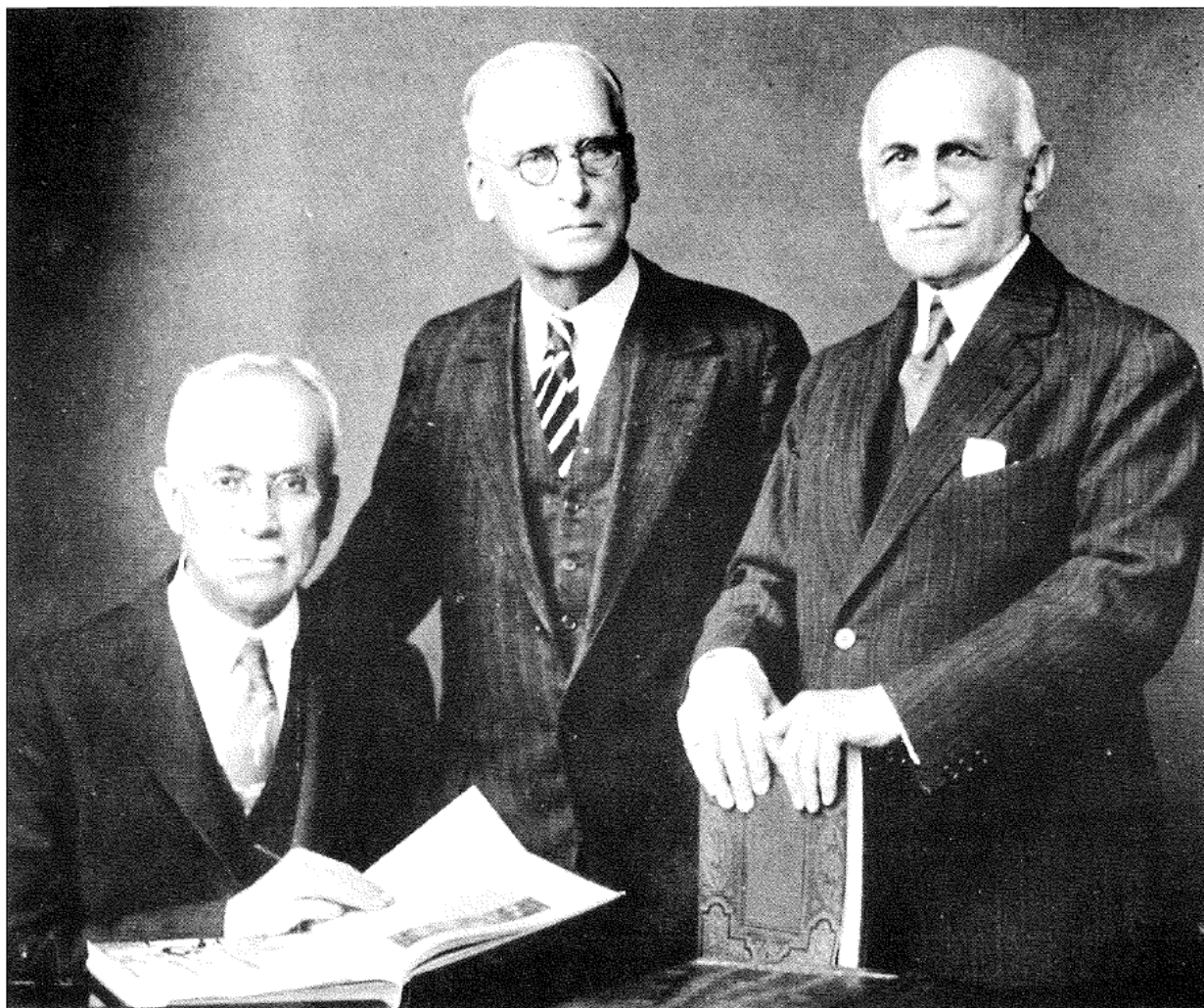
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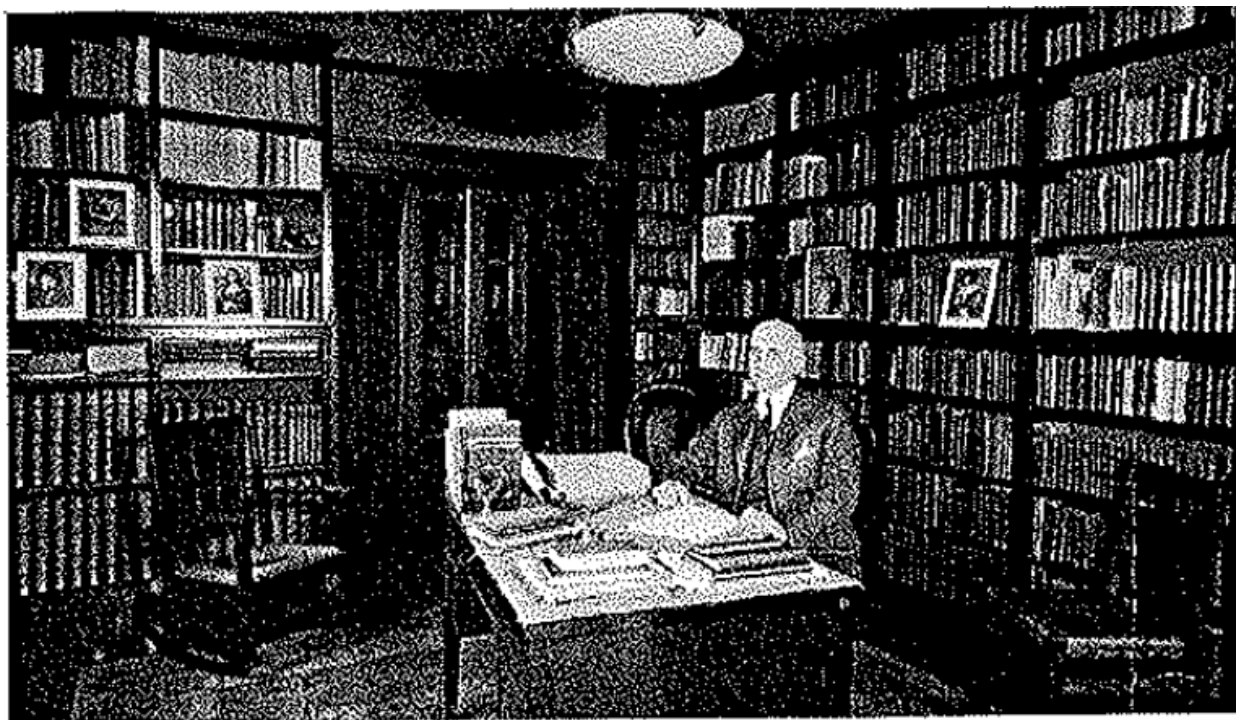
APPENDICES

Appendix A



Three University of Nebraska professors were fellow students at the University of Leipzig in the late 1880s: J. E. LeRossignol (left), W. G. Langworthy Taylor, and Fred Morrow Fling (right).
Nebraska Alumnus, December 1932

From: William. G. Langworthy Taylor, "A Life of Historical Research," *Nebraska Alumnus* (December 1932): 4.

Appendix B

Fling in his private Library, 1932.

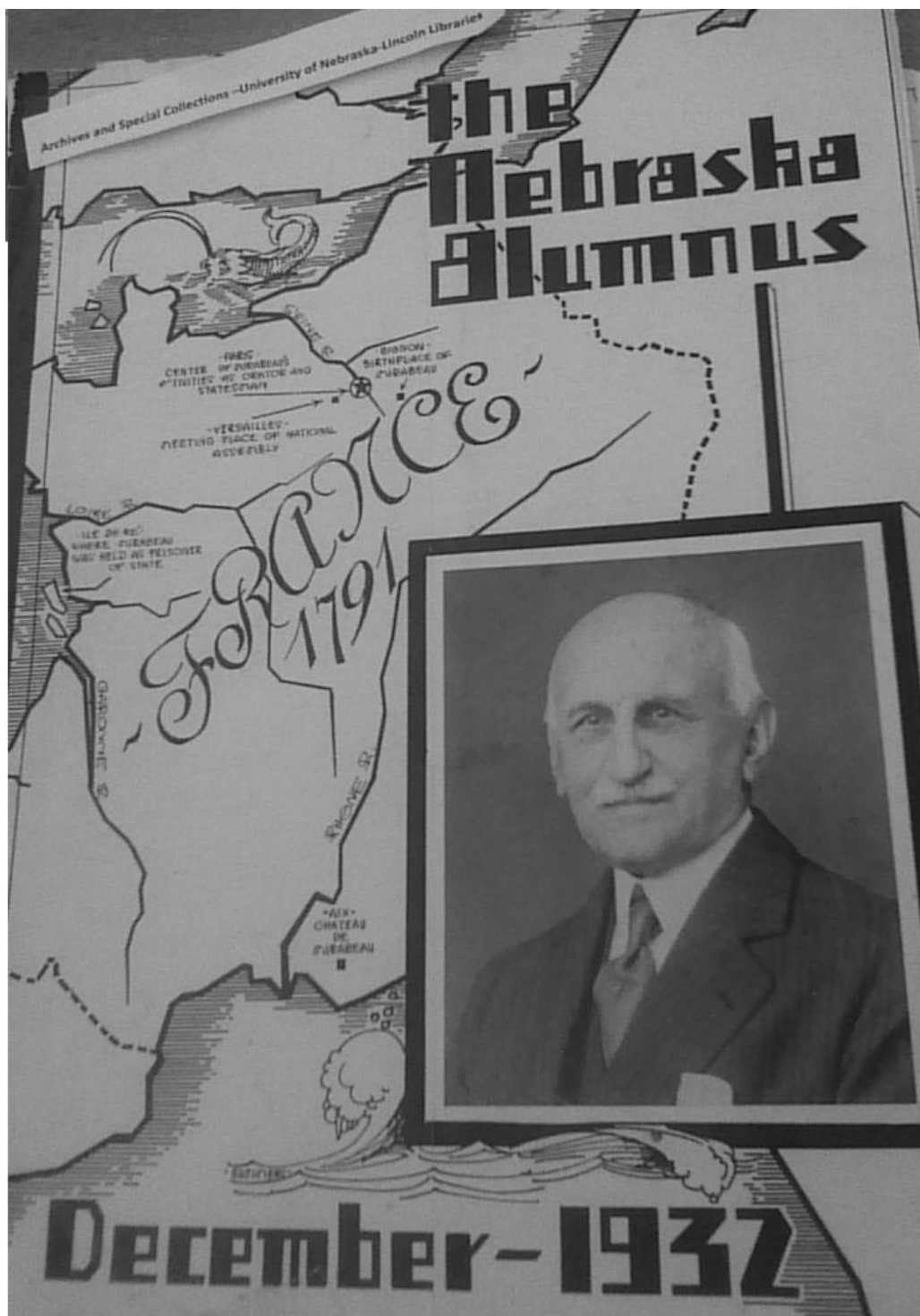
From: William. G. Langworthy Taylor, "A Life of Historical Research," *Nebraska Alumnus* (December 1932): 4.

Appendix C

Author Robert E. Carlson, 1933, in NU Professor Fred M. Fling's study, 1530 South 22nd, Lincoln.

From Robert Carlson, "Professor Fred Fling: His Career and Conflicts at Nebraska University," *Nebraska History* 62 (1981): 483.

Appendix D



Cover of *Nebraska Alumnus* (1932), picturing Fling in correspondence to Taylor's article about him published within. From Archives and Special Collections, Lincoln, Nebraska.