The Catalyzing Mind
Annals of Theoretical Psychology

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The Annals of Theoretical Psychology is devoted to understanding theoretical developments and advances in psychological theory. This series is designed to further the dialogue on theoretical issues in the field of psychology and to unify the discipline through a theoretical synthesis of ideas on key issues of debate. Core themes of the Annals vary from one volume to another, moving beyond a focus on one particular aspect or approach to theory. Each book consists of invited and submitted papers and commentaries that explore a facet of innovative theory in psychology. Of particular interest is moving the discussion and exploration of theory into application for use in research, practice and teaching, taking into account the globalized nature of contemporary psychology.

The enduring objective of the Annals of Theoretical Psychology is the exploration of key concepts that require further inquiry, dialogue, and theoretical integration within psychology and related fields.

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The Catalyzing Mind

Beyond Models of Causality
As professors and researchers of psychology, we are often asked, “What is Psychology?” We generally reply, “Psychology is the scientific study of behavior and mental processes.” This answer, very proper and direct, speaks to their inquiry, but it leaves room for discussion and debate. By definition, the scientific study, analysis, and understanding of human behavior explains its essential components, but it does not completely address the epistemology of the discipline—a point upon which few seem to agree. As argued by Smedslund (1991), psychology is becoming more and more “pseudoempirical,” and therefore, we believe that a theoretical focus needs to be re-introduced into the discussion of modern psychology.

The desire and necessity of reintroducing theory in psychology is not a new one, as one can see from the prior editions of *Annals of Theoretical Psychology*. From Joseph Royce’s initial work putting together Volume 1 of this series in 1984 to the most recent edition by van Geert, Mos, and Baker in 1995, a thoughtful and thorough exploration of the role of theory in psychology has taken place. Certainly, we regret the delay as the discipline has not stood still in the almost 20 years since that last volume. It is in this light that we enthusiastically reintroduce the *Annals of Theoretical Psychology* as an annual publication that will address the need for greater dialog across psychological perspectives, sub-disciplines, theorists, and methodologies. It is our intent that by driving reasoned dialog and constructive debate related to important topics in psychology, we will stimulate further inquiry of central, overlooked, or complex psychological principles.

Our goal in reviving the *Annals of Theoretical Psychology* is to expand and explore ontological, epistemological, and methodological debates (among others) and attempt to provide a forum for discussing what psychology is what is the focus of its study, and how one can study its phenomena. Furthermore, the revival of this series attempts to focus on constructing, from the aforementioned debates, exactly how to proceed with the development of theory and its applications. Despite various “crises in psychology” (Teo, 2005), to date the role of theory in psychology has not risen to the forefront in any appreciable manner.

The need for an annual publication on theoretical psychology at this time is significant. As an example, in the United States, psychology is a core science that has only grown in importance since its acceptance as an academic discipline. One need
only look to the daily news to see that many of the issues of today focus on the human dimension and the human condition. However, despite its growth as a core science, it has become fractured and highly specialized (an old problem identified by Vygotsky, as summarized by Hyman, 2012). The result is that each sub-discipline develops its own language and approach where the concepts can no longer operate to explain the entirety of the human experience, even though they seek to explain similar behavioral or mental processes.

In order to begin from common ground, the Oxford English dictionary defines theory as, “a supposition or a system of ideas intended to explain something, especially one based on general principles independent of the thing to be explained:—a set of principles on which the practice of an activity is based: a theory of education | [mass noun]: music theory.—an idea used to account for a situation or justify a course of action: my theory would be that the place has been seriously mismanaged.— (Mathematics) a collection of propositions to illustrate the principles of a subject” (Oxford University Press, 2010). From this set of definitions the role of theory in its application to psychology can be clearly seen.

It is in this light that we re-launch the Annals of Theoretical Psychology. Theoretical psychology, as we see it, is not limited to basic or applied science. Theoretical psychology is about the supposition or system of ideas that helps spark debate and move our discipline forward in a unified fashion. Additionally, through this debate, a more meaningful understanding will develop. More directly, theoretical psychology is about identifying problems or shortages in our shared understanding of the human experience and exploring how these gaps are addressed through science and the state of the art.

For example, arguably the most famous psychologist (or infamous depending on one’s perspective) in history is Sigmund Freud. His theories have been simultaneously contentious (e.g., Grünbaum, 1986) and useful for some as the roots of his theory are still employed by thousands of psychoanalytic therapists around the world. However, why do his theories work for some and not for others? Can we understand the basic science, application, and theoretical underpinnings so that development and growth can occur relative to this theory?

Likewise, incomplete representations of psychological phenomena and “principles” are not limited to the realm of personality theorists. Despite vast amounts of research, we still cannot completely explain basic yet abstract concepts such as memory, human agency, free will, leadership, confidence, love, or consciousness, let alone more challenging topics like promoting change, developing meaning, or structures and ways of knowing, just to name a few.

Numerous reasons may account for our general inability to examine key psychological principles in a complete manner. As noted by Stam (2004), functionalism and other more convenient demands may play a role. Likewise, various critiques of psychology highlight that the methods of scientific inquiry have become the focus of psychology rather than a direct examination of underlying theories and relevant data (Teo 2005; Bakan 1996). Ultimately, the “what” of psychology is lost in “how” it is investigated. These reasons generally prohibit meaningful dialog, but the Annals of
Theoretical Psychology will provide a forum for meaningful dialog across various disciplines.

The Annals of Theoretical Psychology will move the dialog forward by bringing together disparate communities and perspectives of psychologists. For example, representatives from cultural psychology, cognition, neuroscience, social psychology, theology, and various other disciplines will be invited to consider numerous topics within this series. Decidedly, these writings and debates will represent clear “works in progress.” The dialog and created environment will attempt to address historical challenges inherent in the science of psychological inquiry. This will help counteract the “science wars” highlighted by Driver-Linn (2003) related to scientific progress in her analysis of Thomas Kuhn. In short, through this series, we are not so bold to believe that the Annals will predict or create scientific revolutions. Instead, we hope to present a “pebble on the pile” that will gradually shift psychological research and discourse toward a normative dialog that actively considers theory, research, and application.

We believe that this first volume in 19 years picks up the debate where it was left off and begins to look at psychology through many lenses, in order to see the landscape and future of psychology through many focal points. Additionally, we believe that the dialog beginning in this volume will start to advance the discipline, science, and thought for future decades to come. Perhaps in those decades, the future of psychology and theory will lead our discipline toward a multidisciplinary approach. It is hoped that the future volumes will speak to that future.

Craig Gruber, Hroar Klempe
Matthew Clark, Jaan Valsiner

References

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