

Testing the Limits of Henriques' Proposal:
Wittgensteinian Lessons and Hermeneutic Dialogue

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Abstract

This article has a twofold purpose. First, it tests the limits of Henriques' "overarching conceptions" approach to defining psychology by comparing and contrasting his conceptions to two burgeoning movements within psychology: qualitative research and spiritual therapy strategies. These movements were selected because they represent many other fragments of a fragmented psychology that could fall outside Henriques' disciplinary matrix. This comparison reveals how the broader discipline of psychology resists propositional definitions, such as Henriques' proposal. As the later work of Wittgenstein (1958) reveals, one cannot unite the various language games of a discipline's discourse communities through common overarching features. The second purpose of this article is to outline another approach to unification and definition – hermeneutic dialogue. Unlike an overarching framework, hermeneutic dialogue does not require "joint points." In fact, it assumes that the richness and vitality of a discipline can be drained away by such "unifying" principles. Instead, hermeneutic dialogue is a way of relating and unifying while preserving the integrity and identity of even incommensurable factions within a discipline.

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Henriques should be congratulated. With his provocative proposal for defining psychology (Henriques, in press), he has brought to the fore some of the more befuddling conceptual issues of the discipline. As Henriques (2003; in press) observes and I have noted elsewhere (Slife, 2004; Slife & Williams, 1995; Slife & Williams, 1997), psychologists have too often proceeded as if there were no befuddling conceptual issues. Many seem to believe (or hope) that the application of a rigorous method will save them from having to address these philosophical issues. However, as Henriques recognizes, the application of a rigorous method is itself bound up in the epistemological issues that he is attempting to address. Psychologists cannot avoid resolving their conceptual problems if they intend to remain a viable discipline.

In this light, Henriques' contribution is particularly welcome. He not only seeks to resolve issues that are internal to the discipline, but he also seeks to situate psychology in the wider context of other disciplines. He does so through a comprehensive set of ideas that he hopes will subsume and unify the discipline. In fact, he shows fairly convincingly that his concepts "readily lend themselves to phenomena currently under scientific investigation" as well as "many other areas to which the analysis can be extended" (p. 177, Henriques, 2003). Indeed, he demonstrates his subsumptive prowess by connecting the work of two dramatically different thinkers – Sigmund Freud and B. F. Skinner. Such a connection is impressive and evidences the promise of his unifying framework.

What Henriques does not address are the problems with this particular approach to definition. That is, formulating a highly subsuming, “overarching conception” (Henriques, in press, p. 2) is itself one of many ways to unify and define a discipline. Henriques’ approach is not dissimilar from the personality theory tradition where the standard has always been “the more subsuming the better” (cf. Rychlak, 1981). However, the personality theory tradition has also taught us an important lesson with this approach to definition and unification: there is no idea or set of ideas that is compatible with all disciplinary ideas, especially in a pluralistic discipline such as psychology. Even ideas considered “universal” are incompatible with contrary universals. Some ideas will inevitably fall outside the overarching framework that Henriques articulates. Psychologists who have ideas that fall within his theoretical boundaries will feel unified and defined, but those who have ideas outside these boundaries will feel marginalized or rejected for no other reason than definitional fiat.

The purpose of this article, then, is twofold. First, this article “tests the limits” of Henriques’ ideas by comparing and contrasting them to two burgeoning movements within psychology: qualitative research and spiritual therapy strategies. I selected these movements because they represent many other fragments of a fragmented psychology that *could* fall outside Henriques’ disciplinary matrix. As we will see, these two movements entail philosophies of science, including epistemologies and ontologies, that seem incompatible with Henriques’ ideas, exposing perhaps the main weakness of his overarching-framework approach to unification and definition.

The second purpose of this article is to outline another approach to unification and definition – hermeneutic dialogue. Unlike an overarching framework, hermeneutic

dialogue does not require “joint points” (Henriques, in press, p. 3). In fact, it assumes that the richness and vitality of a discipline can be drained away by such “unifying” principles. Instead, as we shall see, hermeneutic dialogue seeks to relate and unify while preserving the integrity and identity of even incommensurable factions within a discipline.

Testing the Limits

As someone who has long been intrigued with the fragmentation and unification of psychology (Slife, 1993; 2000; Yanchar & Slife, 1997a; 1997b; 2000), I have followed with great interest the movements of qualitative research and spiritual interventions. My interest stems, in part, from the radically dissimilar worldviews they evidence, especially in comparison to those of mainstream psychologists. This is not to say that mainstream psychologists typically view these movements as radically dissimilar worldviews. Indeed, for many reasons, including a lack of philosophical sophistication, many psychologists assume these movements are little more than procedural in nature – merely add-ons to the traditional scientific understanding of psychology. Qualitative methods are thought to be merely loose, non-numerical procedures (e.g., focus groups), and spiritual interventions are considered to be merely an expansion of therapy strategies into less traditional domains. No deeply philosophical chasms are thought to be crossed, and no dramatically different worldviews are considered to be broached.

The problem is that nothing could be further from the truth. Both of these intellectual movements are grounded, historically and philosophically, in ideas that have traditionally fallen outside the mainstream of scientific psychology, especially as understood in relation to the natural sciences. Do they also fall outside Henriques’

overarching proposal for defining psychology? To answer this question, allow me first to briefly sketch some of the main assumptions of each movement and compare them to Henriques' assumptions. Then, I will attempt to draw some general lessons from this sketch and use them to outline an alternative framework for psychological unity.

Assumptions of Qualitative Methods

It is important to note at the outset that this short section cannot possibly attempt to represent all qualitative researchers. However, there is surprising unanimity on fundamental assumptions that Henriques appears to exclude, especially among the more popular approaches, such as phenomenological (Giorgi, 1985), hermeneutic (Packer, 1985), and grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Consequently, I will use the term “many qualitative researchers” when I refer to the most widely used assumptions. Virtually any qualitative methods text describes these assumptions, and many such texts compare them to traditional scientific assumptions (e.g., Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). In their proposal for methodological pluralism, Slife and Gantt (1999) describe five contrasting philosophical assumptions involving subject matter, epistemology, and ontology.

Perhaps the best way to compare them in this short space is to examine how Henriques and qualitative researchers differ on their subject matter. Unlike Henriques (in press), who makes clear that his focus is “animal behavior” (p. 4), many qualitative researchers consider their subject matter to be meaning (or lived experience) (cf. Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). At first glance, this difference may appear to be merely one of location rather than philosophy. In other words, one may be tempted to conclude that Henriques is more interested in the objective realm of causal laws and behaviors, whereas

qualitative researchers are more interested in the subjective realm of meanings and experiences. However, this distinction of location is superficial at best. It belies the underlying philosophical reasons for this difference.

To get to these philosophical reasons, it may be instructive to point to three features or characteristics of meaning, as understood by many qualitative researchers – context, agency, and nonobservability. To his credit, Henriques anticipates the first of these features. The first feature is that meaning simply cannot mean without a particular context. The context of a word or gesture is a necessary condition for its meaning. A kiss can mean affection or death. A wave of a hand can mean the beginning of a greeting, religious absolution, or child abuse – all depending upon the context. As mentioned, Henriques (in press) anticipates the need for context and discusses extensively the import of culture and “meta-level social systems” (p. 9).

Agency. Still, he seems to exclude altogether the conception of agency – the second requirement or feature of meaning. Agency is the notion that a person (or other animal) “could have done otherwise,” i.e., the person has possibilities and choices. Agency for the qualitative researcher allows for personal responsibility. When a boulder rolls down a mountain, we do not hold it agentially responsible for hitting a hiker because it could not have “behaved” otherwise than it did. We assume that it was governed by natural forces that ultimately reduce to the necessity and determinism of causal laws – part of the subject matter of psychology, according to Henriques. As he put it, “The first problem of psychology . . . is the delineation of the general laws of animal behavior” (Henriques, in press, p. 2).

Indeed, a key element of Henriques' (in press) ToK system is that each of the four dimensions of the ToK has a "joint point" that provides the "causal explanatory framework" for its emergence (p. 3). Given the importance of such a framework across all the disciplines of science, Henriques cannot mean causation in any agentic (e.g., final causal) sense (cf. Rychlak, 1988). Otherwise, boulders, physical particles, and biological cells would "behave for the sake of" their freely formulated goals and choices (Rychlak, 1981, p. 5).

The problem is that many qualitative researchers assume that humans do have such goals and choices. This assumption is made, in part, because meaning requires possibility. A computer that is programmed to say "I love you" cannot *mean* "I love you" because it cannot say otherwise. It lacks agency. It is a product of causal laws and thus is determined to "say" whatever it says. Similar to many cognitive psychologists, Henriques (in press) has no problem considering the human mind as a flesh and blood "neurocomputational control center" (p. 7). Although such a center allows for "great flexibility," it does not allow for the free will of a qualitative researcher. Nor does a "reciprocal cycle of determination" (p. 8) allow for agency in this sense. Just as in the reference provided to Bandura (1989), there is no reason to believe that this flexibility and reciprocity are any different from two computers interacting with one another on line (see Rychlak, 1988; Slife, 1993).

This is not to say that computational or reciprocal conceptions are necessarily wrong. It is only to say that they do not subsume the agentic assumption of most qualitative researchers. This assumption is not an add-on; it cannot be added to a conventional causal law account of human nature because it postulates an incompatibilist,

uncaused action – a free will that initiates and is not merely a relay for previous causes (Richardson & Bishop, 2002; Slife & Fisher, 2000). Needless to say, such a conception, if it were true, would obviate Henriques' postulated "causal explanatory framework" for psychology. Indeed, an agentic conception smacks of the "vitalistic life force" that Skinner and Henriques had hoped was no longer necessary (Henriques, in press, p. 5).

Nonobservability. As a third feature of meaning, it is important to recognize that most qualitative researchers do not endorse the narrow empiricism of traditional science. Classically, the philosophy of empiricism has meant that the source of all knowledge was sensory experience only, leading to the current notion that observables (the sense of vision) are the only things scientifically measurable. Henriques (in press) clearly endorses this notion because he focuses continually and exclusively on "behavior" and argues (along with Skinner) that we should "give up our notion of unobservable, mentalistic forces" (p. 5). In fact, he claims that "animal *behavior* is the proper subject matter of the formal science of psychology" (emphasis added, p. 4). Interestingly, he discusses extensively the "animal" portion of the phrase "animal behavior" but never seems to see the "behavior" portion as even problematic.¹

Many qualitative researchers, however, do. Because meaning is their main subject matter, they cannot endorse methods – at least as their only methods – that require observables and sensory experiences exclusively. Meanings simply do not fall on one's retina. They are, instead, the unseeable (but not unexperienced) relations among the things that may fall on the retina. The meaning of a sentence, for example, is not found in the individual, graphically depicted words on a page, but in the unseen, yet experienced relations among the words (and other sentences). The meaning of a marriage

is not found in the individual biologies of the spouses; it is found in the experienced, but unobservable relationship between the spouses.

Many psychologists might wish to note that such meanings can be operationalized into observable behaviors. How meaningful, they might ask, would meanings be without some behavioral component? Here, it is important to recognize that one can agree with this question without endorsing operationalization. That is, the qualitative researcher can affirm the importance of behavior without assuming that meanings are best studied through them. For example, one could study the meaning of love by operationalizing it in terms of behavioral hugs and kisses. However, there are two problems with this study. First, just because one studies the manifestations of love does not mean one is studying love. At the risk of stating the obvious, manifestations are not the thing being manifested. What one learns about hugs and kisses is not necessarily the same as what one could learn about love.

The second problem is that hugs and kisses may not be manifestations of love at all. The peculiar nature of operationalizations is that the researcher specifies them without necessarily any rationale or evidence. In fact, most operationalizations are merely literature customs – ways that researchers have operationalized things in the past. Still, many operationalizations seem unproblematic. In our hypothetical study of love, for example, the rationale for connecting hugs and kisses with love would seem straightforward. Yet even here, love can be manifested without hugs and kisses, and hugs and kisses can be manifested without love. The bottom line for many qualitative researchers is that meanings, such as love, are not *best* studied through methods that depend upon sensory experiences exclusively. Qualitative methods are considered

necessary that are underlain with completely divergent epistemological assumptions (Slife & Gantt, 1999).

My own conclusion, then, is that the overarching conception of Henriques does not subsume the subject and methods of many qualitative researchers, at least as they conceive of their subject and method. One could argue that they conceive of their subject and method incorrectly, and this could, of course, be true. Still, it is surely the tail wagging the dog to attempt to settle such arguments through the wave of a definitional hand. The fact remains that Henriques' relegation of psychology to "causal explanatory frameworks" and "animal behavior" excludes the primary concerns and conceptions of many psychological researchers.

Assumptions of Spiritual Therapy Interventions

Does Henriques' conception exclude important concerns for those postulating spiritual therapy interventions? Again, this question must be answered affirmatively. One can see this exclusion perhaps most clearly in leading researchers of spiritual interventions (e.g., Collins, 1977; Richards & Bergin, 1997; 2003; Shafranske, 1996). Perhaps the most explicit about their assumptions is Richards and Bergin (1997; 2003) who have one of the more articulated and developed programs of spiritual intervention. These researchers make painstakingly clear that they view the dominant *naturalistic* assumptions of mainstream psychology as incompatible with their *theistic* spiritual interventions. Is Henriques' proposal – in his attempt to characterize the mainstream – dependent on naturalistic assumptions and thus incompatible with this fragment of a fragmentary psychology? Consider first the general notions of naturalism and theism and then one specific assumption from each notion.

Naturalism. Naturalistic explanations typically have two main characteristics: godlessness and lawfulness. First, they are considered to explain phenomena without requiring any reference to an active god (Richards & Bergin, 1997; 2003; Slife, Mitchell, & Whoolery, 2003; Smith, 2001). If this is true, then such godless explanations are contrary to theistic explanations where god is not only creator but also currently and actively involved in all aspects and events of the world. The second characteristic of naturalistic explanations concerns the typical explanation provided in the place of a god – natural laws. This notion does not contradict a creator god who fashioned the natural laws of the universe and then stepped back from subsequent actions. Isaac Newton and many other eminent scientists are noted for this belief. However, this belief is deism, not theism, because it postulates a currently passive (or nonexistent) god.

Henriques' proposal, as subsuming as it obviously is, does not include these concerns of a theistic spiritualist. First, god is nowhere mentioned in his conception of psychology. Few would be surprised at this absence because psychology is considered a secular and not a sacred discipline. Excluding god as an explanatory factor is considered "appropriate." Still, when considering definitions of psychology – and by implication possibly defining *out* the concerns and conceptions of theistic psychologists – these psychologists have a right to ask *why* the exclusion of god in explanation is appropriate. If this exclusion is merely customary in the academy, theistic psychologists have a right to press their query: why is this exclusion customary? As Marsden (1997) and others (Gunton, 1992; Smith, 2000) have argued, there is very little intellectual justification for this exclusion.

Many mainstream psychologists might assume that an exclusion of god is necessary to maintain psychology's scientific status. They might contend that god-filled explanations are not observable and thus not measurable in principle. However, to make this contention is to assume that one particular philosophical conception of what is knowable – the epistemology of empiricism – is the only conception allowable in science. Why make this assumption? There is no empirical reason for focusing exclusively on this epistemology. Empiricism, like most philosophies, is scientifically unvalidated and presumably replaceable by another (reasonable) epistemology and thus method. Indeed, the notion that only the observable is eligible for scientific study is itself unobservable. How is this notion known? There must be other “ways of knowing” than empiricism, because nonscientific disciplines, such as the humanities, are considered to advance knowledge. As we saw with many qualitative researchers (in the section above), experience and even “scientific measurement” do not have to be understood as limited to observables.

Many naturalistically oriented psychologists might argue that godless explanations are preferred because they are less biased or less theological, and thus more objective and egalitarian (Marsden, 1997). Because no theological bias is explicitly stated with naturalism, the religious can supposedly “add on” or “overlay” whatever god they prefer. Unfortunately, there are at least two problems with this notion, according to many theistic psychologists. First, this notion assumes that god is merely an add-on to the natural world, a theological assumption incompatible with theism. Second, assuming that god is not necessary or actively involved in psychological events is to assume that god is passive or non-existent. In either case, naturalism and secularism is conceptually

undergirded with theological commitments (or biases). Just because these commitments are not typically explicated (or examined) does not mean they are absent. If this is true, then naturalism is neither objective in this sense nor nontheological, helping us to understand why theistic researchers and therapists, such as Richards and Bergin (1997; 2003) consider it incompatible.

Hedonism. This general incompatibility also means that many more specific assumptions within theism and naturalism are incompatible. As mentioned, Richards and Bergin (2003) provide a list of these. However, to illustrate this incompatibility here let us consider one naturalistic assumption that has special relevance for Henriques' conception of joint points in general and Behavior Investment Theory in particular – the assumption of hedonism. As Democritus noted long ago, the ethos of naturalism is the ethos of hedonism – the notion that all things of nature ultimately seek pleasure and avoid pain. This notion is consistent with Henriques relating of the disciplines of science, because all plants seek nutrients and all animals avoid suffering, *if* they are to survive. In fact, evolutionary explanations such as natural selection are typically viewed as depending on hedonism to help maximize survival.

It is not coincidental, in this light, that Henriques' proposal depends heavily on natural selection metaphors, not only in the natural sciences but also in the social sciences (Henriques, 2003, p. 156, 160). He sees such explanations as the pivotal “joint points” between matter and life (physics and biology) and life and mind (biological and psychology). Even the “human self-awareness system,” according to Henriques, “exhibits a design indicative of natural selection . . .” (p. 172). Moreover, both Freud and Skinner – the theorists in psychology he most draws his inspiration from – operate on the

“pleasure-pain” principle (p. 165). Using Westen’s (1998) work as illustrative, Henriques observes that the “two broad affective-motivational systems of pleasure-approach and pain-avoid can be readily conceptualized as behavioral guidance systems” (p. 165).

If this is true, then Henriques’ definition of psychology would have two overlapping implications for human nature – utilitarianism and egoism. First, utilitarian values would be the rule, because the outcome or consequence of our actions would supposedly be the pivotal issue. As Henriques (2003) notes in regard to justification, “information about the self varies in the degree to which it is beneficial to be shared” (p. 171). People might help other people (with information or behavioral aid), but they would do so *ultimately* because of the benefits they accrue to themselves.

Similarly, egoism is not only an emphasis on the self but a worldview in which only the self really matters – other people are the means and the self is the end. Although egoism is often equated with narcissism, a more common variant of egoism is the familiar claim that individual happiness and personal well being are the ultimate ends in life (Diener, 1996). As Henriques notes with other words, these two aspects of hedonism – positive outcome and egoism – are combined in virtually all our economic and cognitive models, from utility maximization to rational choice theory (Gantt, 2000), where acting in one’s self-interest is not only right but also rational.

On the other hand, we have many *supernatural* conceptual systems² that reject such models. Many theistic psychologists, for example, consider *other*-interest rather than *self*-interest as the ideal (and the more rational) – altruism rather than hedonism. In fact, many would claim that conventional notions of love and service are impossible in a

naturalistic system (cf. Slife, 2004). People we love need to be treated as ends in themselves rather than as means to our own selfish ends. Relationships of giving and serving are what constitute the good life from this supernaturalist perspective, not relationships of reciprocal use of the other.

The point is that Henriques' proposal contains an implicit ethic that excludes other ethics. In the same way that his overall intellectual framework excludes other intellectual issues, such as agency and meaning (as defined by qualitative researchers), his implicit theological and ethical system excludes other theological and ethical systems. I am aware that Henriques does not intend to make theological or ethical commitments with his definition of psychology. Still, as the theologian Nancey Murphy (in press) demonstrates, all conceptual systems are implicitly "theology-laden" (Lecture 3, p. 25). In other words, Henriques' lack of intention does not mean his definition lacks these commitments. As evidenced here, a thoughtful comparison to alternative theologies and ethics readily reveals these implicit commitments.

Lessons from Limits

What lessons do the different worldviews of many qualitative and theistic researchers teach us? Specifically, what lessons about Henriques' proposal does this "testing of limits" provide? I see two related lessons, one Wittgensteinian and the other hermeneutic.

The Wittgensteinian Lesson

To oversimplify the lesson from Ludwig Wittgenstein's (1958) later work, one cannot reduce all the varied ideas of a discipline, such as psychology, to a single set of commonalities or features. The various communities within a pluralistic discipline

partake of different “language games,” and each language game must be understood in its own terms (Wittgenstein, 1958, p. 31). From this perspective, qualitative research and theistic therapies are instances of language games that do not participate in the language game of Henriques’ definition of psychology. They have assumptions and presuppositions that are incompatible with Henriques’ assumptions and presuppositions. Even if I have misrepresented these assumptions in some manner (for surely Henriques will debate my representation), the Wittgensteinian lesson is the same: *any* approach that attempts to establish the features common to every language game, such as Henriques’ “overarching” approach, will fail.

Another way to put this is that all definitional propositions include and exclude more than they should. Any definition of a “car,” for example, will *include* more than we would consider a car in practical language-use. If we defined a car as something with four wheels and a working engine, many vacuum cleaners, tractors, and even boats on their trailers would qualify. Of course, depending on the definition of “wheels” and “engines,” a picture of a car might also be included. Likewise, definitional propositions *exclude* many things that would normally be included, such as many junked cars (presumably without all their wheels or a working engine). Some readers may assume that another definition would fair better in defining or uniting all the practical instances of cars, but trial definitions will reveal what Wittgenstein demonstrated many years ago: all propositional definitions will include and exclude more than they should.

Similarly, overarching definitions, such as Henriques’ approach to defining psychology, include and exclude more than they should. Henriques struggles quite openly in his article with the inclusivity of his definition. For example, if “animal

behavior is the proper subject matter of the formal science of psychology” (Henriques, in press, p. 4), as he contends, then what do we do with the countless biologists who study various aspects of animal behavior, with all the varying practical and professional meanings of “animal behavior”? Although Henriques deals with this issue valiantly, there is no question that the problem of over-inclusivity is formidable. Similarly, the problems of exclusivity are exemplified in my description of the many psychologists who will find their main concerns and conceptions excluded from Henriques’ “language game.”

If this is true, then an obvious question is raised: How can pluralistic disciplines, such as psychology, be defined and united? Henriques (in press) claims that unity not only happens in other disciplines but also happens “crisply” (pp. 3 – 4). Although this claim is debatable, the Wittgensteinian solution is to consider members of a group (e.g., persons, words, ideas, events) to be best understood and united through “family resemblances” (Wittgenstein, 1958, p. 32, section 67). Family resemblances are not features across all members or language games of the group. They are like any family – “a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing” (Wittgenstein, 1958, p. 32, section 66). Sally’s children are not recognizable as a family because they all share an identical set of characteristics – roman noses, full lips, and red hair – but because some children have roman noses and full lips, and others have full lips and red hair, and still others have red hair and roman noses. The point is, according to Wittgenstein (1958), “the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through it whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres” (p. 32, section 67).

What does this approach mean for the unity of a discipline? First, it implies that we cease our attempts to conceptually legislate, through definitional propositions, the common “thread” of a discipline. As I have attempted to show with Henriques’ subsuming framework for the discipline, important aspects of psychology are disenfranchised for no other reason than they “just don’t fit.” Who has the right to decide what does and does not fit? Even if the mainstream of psychology somehow retained this right, would such an approach stifle meaningful forays of research into outlawed and undefined territory?

A second implication of this Wittgensteinian lesson is that disciplines can and perhaps *have* to exist as loose congeries of related language games or discourse communities *without* definitional propositions to unite them. As with any diverse family, these discourse communities may not have any one feature in which they all look or think alike, but this does not prevent them from enjoying a “complicated network” of relationships. Indeed, many philosophers of science believe that such communities can be completely incompatible, perhaps incommensurable (cf. Slife, 2000), and still enjoy “family” relationships that allow them to converse, compare, and learn from one another (e.g., Bernstein, 1983; Feyerabend, 1975; Kuhn, 1970).

Even Wittgenstein assumed that someone from the language game of one discourse community could come to understand the language game of another discourse community. In other words, no discourse community is *necessarily* isolated from other discourse communities, regardless of their conceptual incompatibility. They can and do relate to one another, even if this way of relating is not the same – a common “thread” – across all discourse communities. Granted, some sensitivity is required because many

words will not mean the same thing. Meanings will have to be discerned from their practical usage, and new language games will be needed to reveal the relation between the language games of the particular discourse communities involved. Still, there is nothing that precludes meaningful communication among even incompatible discourse communities, such as theistic and naturalistic researchers.

Hermeneutic Dialogue

Of course, the mere possibility of communication does not imply that meaningful communication will occur. Here, hermeneuticists such as Bakhtin (1981), Gadamer (1995), Guignon (1983; 1998), Habermas (1973), and Taylor (1989) have described how such a dialogue can ensue and remain productive. Admittedly, hermeneutic dialogue has never been used formally to unite the fragments of any field, let alone the specific field of psychology, so much will need to be worked out. Space limitations also prohibit any more than a broad outline of the hermeneutic approach here. Still, permit me at least to point in the general direction of where I see hermeneuticists capitalizing on the lessons of Wittgenstein.

In fact, the key for the hermeneuticist is complementary to the later Wittgenstein: no individual, discourse community, or language game is truly self-contained. As Charles Taylor (1985) put it, “we are aware of the world through a ‘we’ before we are through an ‘I’” (p. 40). Individuals and ideas, in this sense, are radically social creatures. Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) describes our very voices as “half-ours and half-someone else’s” (p. 385). The metaphor of an individual’s voice is especially apt because there is a strong sense in which humans and ideas are always and already engaged in dialogue, whether

verbal or nonverbal. For Hans-Georg Gadamer (1995), individuals and ideas are ongoing dialogues.

This constant relationship and continuing dialogue has at least five implications for unifying psychology.³ First, unification may be unnecessary, at least in the conventional sense of blending or merging. The various factions of psychology are always and already highly related; our job in this dialogical sense is to recognize their relationships and act on them appropriately. For example, the schools of behaviorism and humanism are frequently viewed as theoretically incompatible in the discipline (e.g., Rychlak, 1981), yet no historian would deny the importance of one school for the other. In fact, humanism and behaviorism have long been characterized as historical reactions to (or “in dialogue” with) each other (Leahey, 1992), in which case each school of thought has constituted the other. The hermeneuticist claims that all the current discourse communities of psychology have a similar shared being, a similar mutual constitutiveness.

Still, as a second implication, this mutual constitutiveness does not make these discourse communities identical. On the contrary, as I have attempted to show in this article, many discourse communities are deeply and perhaps even incommensurably different from one another (cf. Slife, 2000). Again, the analogy to individual voices within a Wittgensteinian “family” is helpful because an analogous incommensurability is often recognized among individual people, particularly with different cultures and languages. However, we do not assume that such differences prevent us from relating to or even learning from one another. In fact, these differences often provide unique opportunities to relate and learn that individuals with similar backgrounds and

philosophies do not provide. In this sense, preserving these differences is crucial to the viability and richness of a community or discipline. Deciding who is “in” or “out” based on some narrow definition of who is “scientific” is to diminish the necessary diversity and avenues for growth of a discipline.

As a third implication of hermeneutics, there are no neutral or universal criteria for conducting or evaluating the dialogue between different discourse communities. Many psychologists have assumed that the logic of the traditional scientific method (or Henriques’ justification logic) would serve as this neutral ground and thus unifying force. Although the content of psychology might vary, the essential process or method of psychology is thought to be neutral or universal across all the discipline’s discourse communities. However, part of the purpose of my explication of many qualitative methods is that many psychological researchers do not believe in the neutrality or universality of traditional scientific methods. Moreover, all logical systems and methods, including Henriques’ (in press) system of justification, are language games of one sort or another (Wittgenstein, 1958), with none unbiased or value-free and thus capable of transcending the various discourse communities of psychologists.

Indeed, as a fourth implication, it is the bias or language game itself that has value for the discipline. Qualitative researchers, for example, should value the findings of quantitative researchers, not because they are the neutral or value-free descriptors of some objective psychological world, but because they stem from the time-honored and value-laden language game of naturalism. In other words, it is the *language game*, rather than the *lack* of a language game, that is valuable. Knowing the naturalistic assumptions that underlie this “game” also helps the qualitative researcher to know *how* to value these

findings, including the limits of such findings. Of course, the quantitative researcher should value the perspective and “findings” of qualitative researchers as well. The point is that engaging in such a conversation will dialogically unite the participants as well as enrich and advance them.

As a final implication, the unavoidability of language games may raise the specter of relativism for some readers. How do we gauge disciplinary advancement and judge disciplinary meaningfulness when each faction within psychology has its own criteria for advancement and meaningfulness? This question is obviously a complex one for any discipline and is considered in a number of hermeneutic resources (Gadamer, 1995; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999; Taylor, 1985; Yanchar & Slife, 2000). Still, one should not answer this question by forcing definitional conformity and pretending no incompatible factions exist. One should, instead, recognize the pluralism of these criteria in the discipline and facilitate continuing dialogue among its many factions. This dialogical pluralism would not have to imply the “anything goes” of relativism, which would ultimately mean the *lack* of a community or discipline. Rather, such a pluralism would mean, among other alternatives (e.g., Widdershoven, 1992), the criss-crossing criteria and unity of Wittgenstein’s family resemblances.

Conclusion

Many psychologists may desire a firmer foundation than family resemblances afford – one that is “crisp,” to quote Henriques (in press, pp. 3 – 4). However, if Wittgenstein and other linguists are correct at all, then any claim to such a crisp foundation is a false and deceptive claim, leading potentially to many abuses. My guess is that the desire for such a foundation will depend greatly on whether the particular

psychologist is inside or outside the crisp boundaries provided by this “foundation” and whether the definition in question allows for the psychologist to be considered “scientific” by the jury evaluating his or her grant or publication.

If the histories of physics and the philosophy of science have taught us nothing else, they have taught us that disciplinary elasticity is critical (Bernstein, 1983; Curd & Cover, 1998; DeBerry, 1993; Feyerabend, 1975; Kuhn, 1970; Slife, 1993; Toulmin, 1972). No one could have predicted the many strange places where physics has gone in the last century. Likewise, no one can predict where qualitative methods and theistic therapies, as examples described here, will take us in the century to come. Some may claim that theistic therapy and qualitative research are not “science,” but this claim merely begs the question of what science, particularly social science, truly is. Again, Wittgensteinian lessons are relevant: science itself should not be defined through common “overarching” features, because this approach will arbitrarily exclude all sorts of potentially meaningful language games, as the history of physics has demonstrated.

In this sense, the disciplinary boundaries that Henriques advocates raise important issues of arbitrariness. Why exclude these particular discourse communities and not others? If the answer, again, is that science has been traditionally defined in this exclusionary manner, then the lessons of physics have not been learned. Physicists were led by the truth, not by crisp disciplinary definitions. Although ruling out problematic disciplinary fragments may make the task of unifying a discipline easier, it does not truly unite or necessarily aid the discipline as a whole. To unite and aid the whole discipline of psychology, we should consider the resources of hermeneutics. A hermeneutic unity may be less crisp, but it preserves discourse communities for the rich and sometimes

incompatible resources they are. It also encourages relationships that allow such communities to advance one another and form a community of communities – the purpose of any scholarly discipline.

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¹ I want to acknowledge that Henriques (in press) explicitly includes “covert mental behavior” with animal behavior, just as Skinner before him. Still, it is not clear whether this inclusion is a “nonobservable,” and thus an exception to his emphasis on observables, or another problem for his definition of psychology. If covert mental behavior is not observable, then scientific measurement, at least as Henriques’ defines it, is problematic. If it is observable, then my analysis here remains relevant.

² I do not mean supernatural in the sense of Borg’s (1997) “supernatural theism” because this form of theism postulates a God that is “out there” and even completely passive following the world’s creation. As it is used here, supernatural involves the ongoing activity of God in the world – closer to what Borg calls “panentheism.”

³ At this point, I drop the notion of “defining psychology” because its meaning is typically so wrapped up in the conventional understanding of propositions and common features.