

THE SCIENCE AND MYTHOLOGY OF PSYCHOLOGY:
WHAT POPPER CAN CONTRIBUTE TO PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE

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Psychology attempts to explain phenomena. These phenomena include: perception, learning, development, social interactions, decision-making, psychotherapy, and many, many other sub fields. The great diversity in this field may also be psychology's greatest weakness. Many academic psychologists utilize standard inductivist accounts to substantiate theories. If the prediction is true, the theory is corroborated, if the prediction is false, the theory needs alteration or rejection. It is clear that this view of science as it relates to psychology is incomplete (Born, 1949). If, as Gergen (2002) writes, psychology is losing vitality, it may be because academic psychologists are lost doing "small" science while they are examining immense and constantly changing phenomena.

Many psychologists are doing important scientific research that is without practical use. This humdrum work, while perfectly reasonable, does little to pull many specialties of psychology out of the theoretical vacuum it presently finds itself in. We hear very loud and very eloquent defenders of the importance of "scientific rigor" in psychology, but these defenders may be strangling the lifeblood from a discipline that is part story-telling, part aesthetics, part mythmaking, and part science.

Joseph Campbell, Thorsten Veblen, Anton Chekhov, and many other theorists have important contributions to make in the areas of Clinical Psychology and Social Psychology. Philosophers like Popper, Lakatos, and Kuhn have made important contributions in the philosophy of science that psychologists need to consider *before* conducting research.

In this paper I will advocate grand theorizing by psychologists to help invigorate a field that is inching along doing "normal" science. While, these grand theories will inevitably be unclear, incomplete, or inaccurate in some respects about nature (Schram 1979), they may jumpstart areas of psychological investigation that appear hamstrung by the rigors of scientific methodology.

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