The Practice of Theoretical Psychology[1]

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As soon as I was elected to this office, I started thinking about the Presidential Address. Visions of all sorts of important theoretical issues came immediately to my mind. Many of you know that I have written extensively on a number of issues that might be interesting to address today: time and temporality (e.g., Slife, 1993; Slife, 1995; Slife, 2000), disciplinary fragmentation (e.g., Slife, in press; Slife & Yanchar, in press; Yanchar & Slife, 1997), methodological pluralism (e.g., Slife, 1998; Slife & Gantt, 1999), spirituality and religion (e.g., Slife, 1999a; Slife, 1999b; Slife, Hope, & Nebeker, 1999), eclecticism (e.g., Slife, 1987; Slife & Reber, in press), and so many others. I wanted to do what many other presidents of this Division have done so well -- push the conceptual envelope of theoretical psychology.

Alas, however, I cannot. I feel compelled, instead, to address the practical issues of our specialty. Some of you may not have known that we had practical issues. About the closest we get to practicality is deciding the size of the vegetable tray at our division social. Moreover, some of you may not have known that you had a specialty about which to have practical issues. Well, I am here to report to you, as President of this Division, that we do on both counts. We have a delineable specialty, or a subdiscipline of psychology, and we have important, if not vital, practical and professional issues that are currently given short shrift, if not ignored entirely. My address today, then, is intended to address this burgeoning specialty and to outline these relatively unacknowledged practical issues.

<u>Signs of Theoretical Life</u>

Perhaps the first order of business is to take up the matter of our specialty. I would assert, at the outset, that most of the people in this division are theoretical psychologists, whether or not you acknowledge this professional identity. Some of you may recall that Richard Williams and I wrote an <u>American Psychologist</u> piece in which we attempted to formalize this specialty (Slife & Williams, 1997). In this article, we not only defined and conceptualized what a theoretical psychologist <u>is</u>, but we also defined and conceptualized what a theoretical psychologist <u>does</u>.

I was especially intrigued by the responses to this article (American Psychologist, 1998). First, there were nine published comments on this article, seven of which were extremely positive about our proposal. Most of these agreed that such a formalized specialty was long overdue, citing all manner of disciplinary problems that this specialty could attempt to resolve. Many also believed that our proposal was too modest, and that psychologists should consider not only endorsing our proposal but also expanding it.

We also received considerable correspondence about the article. Again, the response was overwhelmingly positive. Several people told me that our article helped them to justify the theoretical things they did in their departments, as well as the funds they needed to do them. Others wrote to tell me that they had never really known they were theoretical psychologists until our description. They had just assumed that they were the odd ducks in their departments, thinking about the historical and contemporary ideas of the discipline.

One psychologist wrote that his 13-year-old son had announced to him, just a few weeks before our article appeared, that he was going to be a theoretical psychologist when

he grew up. His psychologist father was surprised to hear this, but he wrote to me that he did not take his son's announcement too seriously at the time. Still, he read our article with particular interest a few weeks later, noting at least the synchronicity of the two events. When he mentioned to his son that he had read our article, he was astonished to learn from him the basic outline of what we had written. As his son reportedly summed it up, "Psychologists need a lot of help with their theories."

Of course, not all the comments and correspondence were positive or supportive. I will address the substance of some of these later. One experience of my own, however, should illustrate some of the obstacles that this fledgling subdiscipline will have to overcome. I had been asked to debate another psychologist at the convention of the Utah Counselors Association (my position published as Slife & Gantt, 1999). After the debate, two interns from a noted East coast university made their way to the rostrum where I had just finished debating. The first words out of one of their mouths were, "Slife is an obscene word at my university."

With my puzzled expression, these two fellows went on to explain that our article had long been passed around the department as a model for what was wrong with psychology. In the process, "Slife" had become an epithet for that which is wrong-headed or just plain dumb. The two fellows admitted that when they saw my name on the keynote address (the debate) they were curious as to what this ogre would be like. They were armed and ready, given their professors' elaborate refutations, to dispute everything that I might have to say. However, they confessed that not only did I not seem to be the ogre they had envisioned -- presumably with fangs and horns -- but also they found themselves agreeing completely with my position in the debate.

This successful conclusion to my experience should not detract from the problems it illustrates. If you agree with me that a theoretical specialty is an idea whose time has come, then you need to know what we are up against. Some consider such a specialty anathema; any emphasis on theory is a Comtean sign that our discipline is primitive and stagnant. Others, however, reflect a state of mind that I think is even worse – apathy about the issue: "Do whatever you want," they seem to say, "because you are completely outside the mainstream, and thus irrelevant." This apathetic crowd makes the more actively aggressive crowd look good. At least, the active aggressors are attempting to grapple with the arguments we bring to bear.

I should note, however, before we get too negative, that we are getting formal recognition of sorts. For example, if you check out the new Encyclopedia of Psychology, you will see that it contains "Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology" as one of the many specialties of psychology. Fortunately, another theoretical psychologist (Ron Miller) was involved in organizing this mammoth and monumental work, and so he asked me to contribute a brief article on our specialty.

This encyclopedia is also evidence of another sort: an amazing number of people whom I would consider theoretical psychologists contributed to this volume. I have not actually done the math, but I would be willing to wager a sizable sum that if we tallied the number of us who contributed to this edition, and divided it by the number of people in our specialty, we would easily outdistance any other specialty's ratio by fourfold. Why? Why would an unknown specialty be the most widely used resource when formulating a compendium of psychology? The answer is easy: psychology is not and never has been about data points, information bits, or even third party payment – at least as its primary

thrust. Psychology is about ideas. And "who ya' goin' to call" when you wish to examine and formalize these ideas – conceptual error "busters" – which are many of the people in this division.

What Do Theoretical Psychologists Do?

This should bring you up to date on the responses and developments concerning our attempt to get psychology to recognize this subdiscipline. Let us look now at what this discipline is, and then we will look at what the practice of this discipline could be like. Actually, theoretical psychologists have two main purposes: The first is to formulate, and help others formulate, the theories that ultimately get tested empirically – whether through quantitative research or qualitative research. The second is to examine, and help others examine, the nonempirical issues that currently facilitate or stymie the work of psychologists.

At first glance, the initial purpose might seem to be what we would hope all psychologists would do – carefully formulating ideas. However, one of the special purposes of a theoretical psychologist is helping other psychologists to do this task well. Of course, we would also formulate our own ideas. I do consider this to be one of our primary tasks, but I believe that we are all familiar with this task through our tradition of personality theorists. I would like to concentrate the first portion of my remarks on our helping others to formulate their ideas.

I have certainly heard enough complaints from many of you about the sorry state of theorizing in psychology. All sorts of vital issues are overlooked in psychology as our theories and philosophies are formed, from free will/determinism, to mind/body, to the philosophy of science. Well, I am asserting that it is part of our profession to improve this

sorry state. Indeed, one could say that part of this sorry state is our responsibility, because we have not improved it. I will say more about the responsibility issue later. For now, know that theoretical psychologists are not unlike statistical consultants; they bring an expertise to bear in aiding others to do their own work, in our case their own theorizing. In this sense, the specialty of theoretical psychology is not intended to supplant the theorizing and thinking of others, but rather is intended, in part, to facilitate others to do this thinking and theorizing properly and productively.

We all know of many instances in which our colleagues attempt to reinvent the wheel or plunge into a line of thinking that has been thoroughly discredited, either historically or philosophically. If our colleagues value what we do, and see us as collaborators rather than merely evaluators, they will consult us. They will ask for our knowledge of history, our knowledge of the philosophical assumptions that underlie their ideas, and our knowledge of the literatures in which the ideas have been extended and elaborated. In short, we will be asked to facilitate their thinking and add to it in various helpful ways.

For example, I describe in our reply to the American Psychologist comments my own experiences in being invited into Allen Bergin's research team (Slife & Williams, 1998). Allen Bergin is perhaps best known for his pioneering efforts in spirituality and psychotherapy (e.g., Richards & Bergin, 1997). Needless to say, the integration of spirituality into psychology is fraught with all sorts of theoretical issues. Bergin knew of my theoretical work and graciously invited me to assist with his research team to see if we could jointly tackle some of the more difficult conceptual problems. Now, mind you, I

knew almost nothing about this area of research and, honestly, had not thought much about these problems.

However, when I entered Bergin's team and saw the issues at play, I was surprised at how readily I could make a contribution. My knowledge of philosophy, history, and my analytical skills were invaluable in addressing a number of problems. In fact, Bergin said that I had "clarified some of the main unresolved issues" in his research (Slife & Williams, 1998, p. 72). Part of my contribution resulted in an article that deals directly with spirituality and psychological science in the Journal of Humanistic Psychology (Slife, Hope, & Nebeker, 1999).

If this type of consultation is one of the purposes of our profession, then we need to develop strategies for the delivery of these services. We need to learn how to serve others in this capacity, because I doubt that this service is natural to us or that our fellow psychologists will automatically seek it. If your experience is like mine, any assistance offered is met with suspicion: "What do you, the so-called theoretical psychologist, have to offer me? You are just going to criticize my ideas."

Of course, I think that these suspicions are perfectly justified. Our expertise is little known, even among us, and our reputation within the mainstream is more like that of annoying gadfly than substantive collaboration. This reputation is another thing that we must address. If we intend to serve others, then we must make this intention known and sincerely mean it. I will discuss more specific recommendations for this portion of our practice later. Suffice it to say, at this juncture, that improving the thinking and theorizing of others, so that better research can result, is part of our disciplinary obligation.

This obligation is not, however, our only, or perhaps even our main task as theoretical psychologists. We are also vitally concerned with the nonempirical aspects of psychology. As most of you already know, psychology rests on a number of assumptions and judgments that empirical tests alone have not decided and cannot decide. For instance, the coherence of our discipline (or lack thereof) has many nonempirical issues of this nature. Do we have incommensurable discourse communities destined never to talk to one another and fragment into departments of neuroscience, cognitive science, or professional schools of one sort or another (Slife, in press)? Or, do we have one community of the whole that is united in some joint project in the service of humanity (Kristensen, Slife, & Yanchar, in press)? If the latter, what are the ethics of this project? What assumptions aid or detract from this project?

This is not to say that empirical questions and empirical evidence do not play some role in these questions. I would assume that no theorist would ever, even if this were possible, refuse to examine his or her experience and the experience of others, however this experience was gathered. Still, this empirical role can never be definitive in what I am calling nonempirical issues, because empirical evidence would always rest on assumptions that were not derived empirically and moral decisions that were not induced scientifically (Kristensen, Slife, & Yanchar, in press).

Such assumptions and decisions have formed the vital background of our discipline for many years. We have just come through a phase of our disciplinary development in which the mainstream assumed that this background was sufficient, and the only real issues remaining were empirical issues, issues that a mechanical application of scientific method would readily answer. I am here to report to you, as your President, that this

phase is in its death throes. I do not mean to imply that psychology is leaving its empirical roots. However, the sufficiency of empiricism for addressing <u>all</u> disciplinary issues is increasingly being questioned. Issues are arising that cannot be discussed without serious philosophical and theoretical soul-searching (e.g., Slife & Williams, 1995). The rise of qualitative methods is evidence of this; the proliferation of theoretical journals is another indicator.

Indeed, the death throes of this phase have become so evident that a retrenchment is currently underway. A rear guard action is occurring in which psychologists who sense their inadequacy with many disciplinary issues are aligning themselves even more closely with science and materialism. This accounts, in part, for the increasing popularity of biological and neuroscience conceptions, including the issues of prescription privileges. However, I believe this retrenchment will, in the end, only serve to highlight the nonempirical problems that our discipline desperately needs to face. Some meeting of the minds will eventually be required, and some tough decisions about nonempirical issues will ultimately be necessary. This is where the minds assembled in this division will be of vital importance. Please forgive my hubris, but I believe that we are an incredible untapped resource in this regard. We have so much to offer not only psychology but also the larger academic and public communities.

What is keeping us under wraps, I believe, is a lack of praxis, a lack of professional ethos. The mainstream discipline has been so anti-intellectual, shunning our philosophical parentage, for so long that we have no ethos for our intellectuals. We toil in our own theoretical laundries, like the Lilliputians of Gulliver's Travels – eking out a living by taking in each other's wash. We eke out an intellectual living listening to one another and

reading one another's work, but never really influencing the discipline at large. Could we develop an ethos that would allow us to emerge from these "laundering" tasks? Could we attempt to share what we know with a discipline that basically does not care, or rather, does not know that it should care?

The Missing Element

In developing this praxis, we should not commit the error of many psychologists and approach the issue as if it were completely new. History, and particularly the history of ideas, has much to teach us, as usual. Permit me now to turn to it as we think together about the practice of theoretical psychology. Let us begin with some helpful distinctions from Aristotle, by way of Professor Robinson (1989) and other scholars (Bernstein, 1983; Cooper, 1975; Gadamer, 1975; Graham, 1987; Rorty, 1980). I acknowledge at the outset that my purpose is not to do an exegesis of Aristotle, but instead to use some of his distinctions to help illuminate our present situation.

My main claim is that the scientists have stolen theory and theorizing. Although helping scientists is clearly part of our first purpose, as I mentioned, defining theorizing solely in scientistic terms has hampered the fulfillment of our second purpose. Aristotle (1990) is helpful because he distinguished between three "intellectual virtues," as he put it – techne, episteme, and phronesis. Techne has to do with technical know-how, episteme with scientific know-how, and phronesis with ethical know-how.[2] Although science and theory are commonly thought to require episteme and techne, Aristotle held that all these virtues are necessary for the pursuit of understanding and truth (aletheia)[3] (cf. Bernstein, 1983). Each virtue is a necessary complement to the fulfillment of the others.[4]

The problem today, as I see it, is that one of these intellectual virtues has been omitted from this complementary synergy. Episteme and techne currently rule science and theorizing. Episteme is the disinterested discernment of scientific principles, whereas techne is the application of these principles to produce technology. Aristotle assumed that the ethical use of this knowledge and application would be guided by moral virtue and the practical wisdom of phronesis.[5] Recall that facilitating this disciplinary wisdom is part of our second purpose. However, with the virtual omission of phronesis, science has been flying relatively blindly. More importantly for us here, theorists are not viewed as having either the disciplinary warrant or the capability of giving psychology its sight. Theorists are supposed to formulate principles for empirical test – episteme – while practitioners are supposed to apply these principles for technological advancement – techne. Phronesis is lost -- or, at best, only occurs informally.

This loss of practical wisdom is all the more evident when we examine the practical realms of psychology, such as psychotherapy and education. Surely phronesis in the ancient sense is relevant to these fields; surely the master's supervision of the apprentice involves practical and ethical wisdom. I am happy to report that it does, though I am unhappy to report that it often does so in spite of the theories and training that we provide. Most types of formal training embody some combination of techne and episteme, where the ideal is a scientistic medical model – mechanically matching up the principles of diagnosis with the techniques of treatment.

My claim is that the truly practical and ethical are lost in such a system. Indeed, only the system itself is present; only a blind methodologism is present, where the exclusive focus of the discipline is on the means for producing principles and technology,

and the ends are relatively forgotten. As several philosophers of social science have noted, psychology is obsessed with methods (Bernstein, 1983; Danziger, 1990; cf. Slife, Hope, & Nebeker, 1999). The most prominent of these, of course, is the scientific method, where every important question is an empirical question or it is not considered (Slife, 1998). However, method also dominates our applied fields. Psychotherapists are so enamored with techniques that many clinical programs are completely baffled by therapeutic orientations that do not use them (e.g., existential approaches, Yalom, 1980). Likewise, many consider education to be a repository of teaching strategies and programs to promote and facilitate learning. Method is so important that these applied fields have become almost synonymous with methods. That is, this is what therapists and educators supposedly do – apply some scientifically formulated method to the problem at hand.

Several scholars have argued that reason itself has met a similar fate (Arendt, 1958; Bernstein, 1983; Gadamer, 1975; Habermas, 1971; Rorty, 1979; Wolen, 1972). They contend that reason has come to mean a set of unambiguous principles for determining the most effective means of application (cf. Bernstein, 1983). Without phronesis – the practical and ethical side of reasoning – our logic has become sterile and lifeless. This sterility is particularly relevant to us here, because reason is frequently considered the main instrument of theorizing. If this is true, then theorizing – much like therapy and education – has become a set of episteme principles for producing techne. Without phronesis, theorizing becomes a handmaiden to scientific method, and no theorist ever acquires the warrant for examining the purposes and methods of science.

As Sheldon Wolen (1972) has noted, this methodologism "avoids fundamental criticism and fundamental commitment" (p. 28). In other words, such methodologism not

only marginalizes critical thinkers, such as ourselves, but also neglects disciplinary moral discernment. The rational and the empirical become recipes to be followed rather than flexible structures to be modified and even jettisoned, depending on the practical context and moral exigencies at play. I submit to you that such rampant methodologism makes the actualization of our second purpose almost impossible. Realistically, we have only been rehearsing our second purpose to each other – eking out a living by taking in each other's wash.

Adding the Missing Element

I remind you, however, that this is a psychology without a necessary piece of the Aristotelian puzzle. What would the inclusion of phronesis mean, particularly to theoretical psychology? Phronesis is a form of reasoning and knowledge that involves a distinctive mediation between the universal and the particular.[6] This mediation is not accomplished by an appeal to technical rules or method (at least method in the scientistic sense).[7] This mediation is accomplished by considering the moral necessities of the particular situation – what Aristotle calls the "variable" – in the light of the moral requirements of human universals – what Aristotle call the "invariable" (Aristotle, 1990, p. 387).

Importantly, phronesis cannot be correctly rendered, according to Aristotle, without considering the universals and particulars of the polis.[8] As Robinson (1989) notes, the polis is the relation between the person and the collective that exists before any conception of the individual. In other words, the social nature of the person is primary. As a natural phenomenon, the polis contains many constitutional principles that should be considered in the practice of wisdom. Indeed, a variant of phronesis is part of this set of

principles – synesis. Synesis requires a kind of solidarity with the polis. (This is why, I believe, Aristotle considers friendship so important to his ethics.) A person with true understanding does not know and judge as one who stands apart, unaffected by the other. Rather, the person is united by a specific social bond, and can thus think and undergo the particular situation <u>with</u> the other.

How is this bond with the polis effected? This is where many of you in this division, such as Frank Richardson and Blaine Fowers, have asserted the importance of dialogue (e.g., Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999). Dialogue, as I mean it, is a process by which two or more people understand one another sufficiently to effect this social synergy and community. Because any true understanding among members of the polis requires phronesis – along with episteme and techne – I would proffer dialogue as a model for how the four factors of my discussion – phronesis, episteme, techne, and the polis – are properly integrated (cf. Bernstein, 1983).

If this is true, a prime indicator of a discipline that excludes phronesis is the dominance of monologue. Empirical "reports" are perhaps the best exemplar of this type of communication, or lack of communication. I say "lack of communication" because the term "communication" implies a communion that is missing from our journals and formal organs of communication. Even the term "report" implies a one-way street in which interaction is supposedly unnecessary; one is just reporting on what happened, as though the understanding of the person being reported to does not require questions and answers, and dialogue.

Our conventions are also prime examples of the monologue engendered by the exclusion of phronesis. My own monologue (in presenting this paper) is evidence of this.

It is common for many of us to present our papers and never really get anyone's sense of understanding. We sometimes emphasize symposia to effect some unity or polis in our presentations. Even here, however, symposiums are usually serial monologues. People stand up and sit down in a series, with little obvious connection to one another, and little obvious connection to other symposia. This is part of the reason that Frank Richardson (this year's program chair) and I encouraged more dialogue and connection making in this year's APA convention (2000) – to draw our attention to the polis.

Implications for Theoretical Psychology

Let us assume for the moment that Aristotle, or rather my reading of Aristotle, is correct. That is, we need more than episteme and techne to have a discipline that understands and accesses the truth. We also need phronesis and the polis to effect that understanding and gain that access. What would the inclusion of these two elements mean for the practice of theoretical psychology? Foremost, perhaps, is the freedom it would mean, without the confinement of a narrowly defined discipline. Theoretical psychologists would not be restricted to the formulation of principles (episteme), one step in the process of an already decided method. Theoretical psychologists would be able to examine the methods themselves, the emphasis on methods, as well as the ends that those methods and the discipline serve.

But allow me to move from these generalities to implications that are more specific. Although our new additions – phronesis and the polis – must work in tandem, permit me to review these implications by examining each separately.

Phronesis. The inclusion of phronesis points to the acceptance of psychology as a moral discipline, as Rich Williams and Dan Robinson have noted so persuasively (e.g.,

Robinson, 1992; Williams & Gantt, 1998). That is, moral issues would be not only welcomed but also viewed as inherent in everything that psychologists do. For example, one of the crucial questions of phronesis, as Aristotle saw it, is also crucial to any therapist: What is the complete ethical rectitude of one's life? Science also cannot escape its moral grounding, as the father of the atomic bomb, Robert Oppenheimer (1954), has so often reminded us. Even Oppenheimer, however, discusses moral values as if they were added onto the methods of science, as if an APA code of ethics would suffice. If, however, phronesis is a necessary condition of any pursuit of truth, then moral issues are inherent in the methods themselves, whether the methods of research or the methods of practice (cf. Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999; Slife, Hope, & Nebeker, 1999).

The inclusion of phronesis would also raise our awareness of the contextual particulars of psychology. Like many scientists, psychologists have assumed that episteme, or scientific laws and principles, are the main, if not sole, sources of knowledge. Phronesis, however, spotlights the concrete and practical as another equally important source of knowledge. As Don Polkinghorne and Lisa Hoshmand have made so clear in their work (e.g., Hoshmand & Polkinghorne, 1992), our unmethdologized practices are a relatively untapped resource for what is helpful and effective. I mentioned earlier how fortunate I believe we are that many therapists and educators practice in spite of their training. This curious phenomenon raises important questions concerning phronesis: Why is our training in episteme and techne inadequate, and how do therapists and educators use their informal phronesis to mediate the abstract universals of their training with the concrete particulars of their practice?

Finally, I believe the acceptance of phronesis into the discipline of psychology would help us to rediscover the lost art of conversation. Although I believe that most of the real communication (and even education) of the discipline occurs through some variant of dialogue, this form of interaction and synergy has little status, particularly in comparison to the monologue of journals and presentations. How often do academics who are right next door to one another truly engage in conversation? Phronesis would help us to see that we are not solely about information distribution or even persuasion – the goals of academic monologue. We are also about engagement and what Martin Buber (1965) calls the I-thou of knowledge.

Consider my own experiences at four different religious universities, with my own religious affiliation matching none of the sponsoring denominations – including Catholic, two types of Baptist, and Mormon. I have learned that there are basically two types of religious persons concerning religious dialogue: those who attempt to include you in their monologue, and those who engage you in a true dialogue. The two types are easy to distinguish. The first is not really open to learning anything new, particularly from you. For this type of person, any indication that they were willing to learn from you, and thus be engaged in a truly transforming dialogue, would be a sign of weakness, or at least a sign that they did not have the truth in the first place. The second type of person – the one that engages in true dialogue – finds a way of being a "true believer" without precluding the possibility of learning something – even about religion – from the nonbeliever.

In other words, a true conversation is not merely two people talking together; two monologues can still occur with two people talking. A true dialogue requires a crucial element of humility and openness to the other that allows for the possibility of

transformation.[9] This means that we have to suspend our monological persuasion and/or entertainment mode and switch on our dialogical interested-and-receptive mode. This humility and this mode will not be easy, especially when we, as theorists, are in dialogue with mainstream psychologists. With our expertise, we are tempted to become monological "true believers" who have the correct answer without listening to the mainstream psychologist. However, this would effectively isolate us from the polis, making meaningful engagement with and influence of the discipline impossible. In fact, it is only when we truly engage the polis, through this lost art of conversation, that the most significant implications of phronesis are realized.

Polis. Let us highlight a few of these implications by discussing the dialogue we should be having with our local colleagues. For most of us, this means our departments. I alluded earlier to our role as consultants. In this role, we engage others in a dialogue about the ideas they are pursuing, whether empirical or professional, and we do it in a way that allows us to learn and listen as well as teach and instruct. Unfortunately, most theoretical types have reputations for monological critique only. We need to teach ourselves to engage others in ways that allow our humility and openness to show, so that a true dialogue can eventuate. Again, this humility and openness does not have to mean that we are without conceptual or moral grounding. I am merely asking us to find the Aristotelian golden mean between having all the answers and having none of the answers. This "mean" is where true dialogue can occur.

As we move from the local to the wider polis, I would assert that our small community of theoretical psychologists is relatively isolated from the larger discipline. We have a lot to offer the larger discipline, as I have said, but we are relatively ignored. I

have heard many of you lament the sorry state of theorizing in the discipline; so have I.
But whose fault is this? How concerted have our efforts been to influence the discipline –
politically and intellectually? I would ask you to consider that we have no one to blame
but ourselves. Indeed, if we take no responsibility, we do nothing.

Consider formally assuming the mantel – as an individual or as a division – of
"protector of theorizing." Again, this mantel does not include dictating the theorizing, or
even formulating the rules for theorizing. Such theory dictation and rule formulation is
contrary to phronesis and the influence of the polis anyway. I would only ask that we seek
the positions in our professional organizations that allow us to influence how
psychologists do their theorizing. Scott Churchill has done a marvelous one-man job of
lobbying the science directorate in this regard. However, I wonder how influential we
might have been with all our shoulders put to the APA mill wheel. I know we do not have
a recipe for protecting theories. However, we do have skills that would help the wider
discipline to think better, understand issues more critically, and consider the broader
historical and philosophical issues at play.

Moving again to an even wider conception of the polis, I would ask you to
consider the public at large. From my standpoint, this constituency could be the most
neglected of all, and perhaps the part of the polis with the most to offer us. I would first
assert that we have a moral obligation to the public, though I am not sure how to
articulate this obligation. Again, I believe that Aristotle has much to offer us in this
regard. His conception of eudaimonia, where we live in correspondence to the truth
(Bernstein, 1983, p. 47) makes considerable sense to me. However, I know many of you
well enough to guess that you are already thinking about the theoretical challenges

presented by such a concept and such an obligation. Surely, in articulating this moral obligation, as well as fulfilling it, our theoretical and philosophical expertise will be invaluable to the discipline.

And speaking of expertise, what has happened to the public intellectual in our culture? With a few notable exceptions, this species of public servant has become extinct, replaced instead by the expert. The expert, unfortunately, has become the distributor of episteme or techne, without the tempering of phronesis. The public intellectual, on the other hand, is a skilled and humble implementer of phronesis, armed with the norms and invariables of the polis as well as the lessons of numerous dialogues and countless particulars. I honestly believe that there are several people in this division who could function in this capacity. All they need is an active community of theoretical psychologists to nurture, support, and provide them with some visibility.

At this point, allow me to add only one final piece to my proposal for our practice. This too involves our obligation to the wider public, and may be one of the more difficult aspects of this obligation for the theoretical psychologist – I would advocate we write to that public. Another part of our monological approach to conducting psychology is our esoteric and abstruse prose. If the articles we write are any indication, we conceive of our readers as other theoreticians – fellow "launderers." This means that we use comfortable jargon and include so many qualifications that only the most specialized in the field can ever hope to truly understand our main points. Indeed, I question whether even these specialists truly understand. I think we have deluded ourselves into thinking that these specialists understand us better than they really do. Such delusions, I submit, are only part of the wages of monological sin.

What I propose instead is that we intentionally write to broader audiences, even lay audiences. In fact, I challenge you this very day to put a tenth of your writing time – a tithe of sorts – toward lay and even popular sources. This may be the toughest of all our challenges to meet, because most of us have not schooled ourselves in how to write to this broader readership. Moreover, there is a deep comfort in jargon and abstruse concepts. Could it be that this is part of the reason for our continuing investment in monologue? It provides us the comfort of <u>not</u> being truly understood, so that we do not have to have something of real consequence to say. We need to confront this possibility in our future discussions. In the meantime, I would ask that you consider saying something of consequence to a wider audience. Consider participating, <u>as a theoretical psychologist</u>, in the political and social discourses of your community.

<u>Conclusion</u>

Permit me to conclude by providing you with an exemplar for the practice of theoretical psychology. I will not embarrass anyone in Division 24, though I believe there are numerous exemplars in this division of the noble qualities of good theoretical praxis. Instead, I would ask you to consider someone outside of theoretical psychology per se, in fact outside of the discipline of psychology entirely. His name is Muhammad Yunus, and he was, at the time, a professor of economics at Chittagong University in Bangladesh. By his own admission (Yunus, 1999), Professor Yunus knew that he was good at the theoretical abstractions of his discipline. However, he also found it impossible to ignore the poverty of the real world surrounding his university.

Consequently, Professor Yunus did the unthinkable for a theoretically oriented economist: he crossed the theory/practice chasm to have dialogues with the people

surrounding his university. As he got to know them, he found himself questioning the unquestioned assumptions of his discipline. Economics, according to Yunus, reifies people into two basic categories: those who are creative, the entrepreneur, and those who are not, the labor. One of the many consequences of this "innocent piece of abstraction," as Yunus (1999) puts it (p. 151), is that only the entrepreneurial are credit worthy, with banking institutions enforcing this abstraction like it is a natural law. The problem is that credit is the economic version of opportunity and possibility. Yunus realized that this innocent abstraction held an incredible power – the power to decide who possessed these opportunities and who did not.

The only difficulty was that his knowledge of the people – or should I say the "polis" – belied this abstraction. He saw in them ambition, self-sacrifice, and most of all creativity, so he began his own economic theorizing with a different assumption: <u>all</u> humans are creative beings, and thus in economic terms "entrepreneurs." He made a list of the monetary needs of 42 people, amounting to the staggering total of $27, and loaned them this amount from his pocket. Not only did this meager sum result in many happy people, but it also led to many worthwhile, entrepreneurial projects. Moreover, <u>every penny of the loans was paid back</u>. Yunus approached the bank with this fascinating information, but the concrete could not displace the abstract; Yunus was asked for more empirical data, and so he returned to the bank repeatedly, with similar results from over one hundred Bangladesh villages. Yet, the bankers would not shake their mindset.

Yunus (1999) realized that the banks were creating "financial apartheid" (p. 153), so he stopped trying to change the minds of the bankers. He instead founded a bank of his own, known today as the Grameen Bank. This bank currently lends money to over two

million borrowers in over 39,000 Bangladesh villages. To date, more than 2.4 billion

dollars have been loaned, and the repayment rate has exceeded 97 percent, a percentage

unheard of with the "rich" like you and me. Make no mistake: Professor Yunus is a

capitalist. However, he questions whether the greed or self-interest is the only fuel for this

economic system, as commonly thought. He sees the association of capitalism and greed

as a self-fulfilling prophecy, because those who are inspired by social consciousness are

told to avoid business. He believes that social goals can replace greed as a motivational

force in capitalism, and so he has created not only a revolutionary bank but also a

revolutionary economic philosophy.

Professor Yunus's deeds do not exemplify everything I have suggested today. His

deeds do show the problems of restricting ourselves solely to episteme and techne, the

significance of dialogue and the polis, and the ineffectiveness of empirical demonstration

alone. However, the chief reason that I described his amazing theoretical deeds is that

there can be amazing theoretical deeds. We are not relegated to trading ideas at

conventions. Please do not misunderstand: I do not wish to discount our activities here;

they are important. Indeed, it is because of their importance that we need a praxis in

which to perform and communicate these ideas. As Professor Yunus (1999) testifies so

eloquently, theory has a tremendous power that institutions and societies frequently extend

in all sorts of unacknowledged ways to shape people's minds and lives – even to the point

of making them poor. Let us, as theoretical psychologists, realize this power and assume,

finally, the responsibility that it brings.

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[1] This article was presented as a Presidential Address to the Division of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology (Division 24) at the meeting of the 2000 APA Convention in Washington, D.C.

[2] Aristotle, 1990, Book VI, Nicomachean Ethics: "Practical wisdom is the quality of mind concerned with things just and noble and good for man" (p. 393).

[3] Aristotle, 1990, Book VI, Nicomachean Ethics: "And let it be assumed that there are two parts which grasp a rational principle – one by which we contemplate the kind of things whose originative causes are invariable, and one by which we contemplate variable things . . . The work of both the intellectual parts, then, is truth. Therefore the states that are most strictly those in respect of which each of these parts will

reach truth are the virtues of the two parts." (Aristotle, 1990, p. 387 – 388). "Understanding, also, and goodness of understanding . . . are neither entirely the same as opinion or scientific knowledge, nor are they one of the particular sciences. . . . but about things which may become subjects of questioning and deliberation. Hence, it is about the same objects as practical wisdom. . ." (p. 392).

[4]Aristotle, 1990, Book VI, Nicomachean Ethics: "This is why choice cannot exist either without reason and intellect or without a moral state; for good action and its opposite cannot exist without a combination of intellect and character. Intellect itself, however, moves nothing, but only the intellect which aims at an end and is practical; for this rules the productive intellect, as well, since every one who makes makes for an end" (p. 388).

[5] Aristotle, 1990, Book VI, Nicomachean Ethics: "The work of man is achieved only in accordance with practical wisdom as well as with moral virtue" (p. 393). "We must grasp the nature of excellence in deliberation as well – whether it is a form of scientific knowledge, or opinion, or skill in conjecture, or some other kind of thing" (p. 391). "We credit men with practical wisdom in some particular respect when they have calculated well with a view to some good end . . ." (p. 389). "From what has been said it is plain, then, that philosophic wisdom is scientific knowledge, combined with intuitive reason, of the things that are highest by nature. This is why we say Anaxagoras, Thales, and men like them have philosophic but not practical wisdom, when we see them ignorant of what is to their own advantage, and why we say that they know things that are remarkable, admirable, difficult, and divine, but useless; viz. because it is not human goods that they seek. Practical wisdom on the other hand is concerned with things human and things about which it is possible to deliberate" (p. 390).

[6] Aristotle, 1990, Book VI, Nicomachean Ethics: "It is for this that we think Pericles and men like him have practical wisdom, viz. because they can see what is good for themselves and what is good for men in general." (p. 389). "Nor is practical wisdom concerned with universals only – it must also recognize the particulars; for it is practical, and practice is concerned with particulars" (p. 390). See also Bernstein, 1983, p. 146.

[7] Aristotle, 1990, Book VI, Nicomachean Ethics: "Since it is impossible to deliberate about things that are of necessity, practical wisdom cannot be scientific knowledge nor art; not science because that which can be done is capable of being otherwise, not art because action and making are different kinds of things" (p. 389). "That practical wisdom is not scientific knowledge is evident; for it is, as has been said concerned with the ultimate particular fact, since the thing to be done is of this nature" (p. 391).

[8] Aristotle, 1990, Book VI, Nicomachean Ethics: Practical wisdom also is identified especially with that form of it which is concerned with a man himself – with the individual . . . yet perhaps one's own good cannot exist without household management, nor without a form of government" (p. 391).

[9] Now I know that when openness, subjectivity, and contextuality are involved – as they have to be with phronesis – the specter of relativism is raised for many scientists. In fact, Thomas Kuhn posited a reasoning process in the practice of science that is analogous to phronesis and was thoroughly excoriated for it by Karl Popper and others (cf. Bernstein, 1983; Popper, 1959; Slife, in press). With his brilliance, however, Aristotle had already foreseen this issue in his sixth book of the Nicomachean Ethics, where many of his comments on phronesis lay. What keeps practical wisdom from degenerating into relativism, or mere cleverness, as Aristotle would phrase it, is the existence of nomoi or the natural principles of the polis. That is, phronesis is never captured by self-contained particulars and contexts. Indeed, the variable of the polis only exist by way of the invariable of the polis, and thus must be so grounded. In this sense, phronesis is never absolutely relative, but, as I have said, codetermined by the truth inherent in the particular and the truth inherent in the universal.