

Editorial

The *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology* has entered a new era in its publication history by becoming part of the *American Psychological Association's Journals Program*. This event is also significant for the sustained development of APA's Division 24, the *Society for Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*. If one were to reconstruct the historical continuity of this journal, its birth could be traced back to 1966, to the publication of the *Newsletter of Division 24 of the American Psychological Association*. The name of the newsletter was changed to *The Philosophical Psychologist* in 1970, and in the 1980s, theoretical and philosophical work was published in journals titled *Philosophical Psychology* and later *Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*. In 1993, the *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*, under the editorship of Brent Slife, achieved full division journal status (for this history, see Williams, 1999). This Spring issue of 2009 was based on a new electronic submission, manuscript management, and production process, which takes advantage of efficient and up-to-date publication procedures. It includes full electronic access to articles from this issue and from previous volumes. For this first issue under my editorship, I would like to present: (1) my ideas on theoretical and philosophical psychology in general, as these areas are not known to many psychologists; and (2) my vision for this journal in particular.

(1) It may be futile to attempt to do justice to the varieties and complexities of theoretical and philosophical psychologies as they have developed in the last few decades. However, I would like to understand these subdisciplines as *metatheoretical* programs working within *philosophical domains* and assuming *reflexive perspectives* on psychological issues and topics. Let me explain: Theoretical psychology, the way I conceptualize it, refers to metatheoretical work. All psychologists rely on theories, either explicitly or implicitly, in their empirical studies and practices. In that sense, all psychologists use and to a certain degree contribute to theoretical psychology; but not all psychologists reflect upon their own explicit and implicit theories and assumptions and contextualize them within philosophical domains. Such an activity—the *reflection* on theories, and on the history, status, connection, and development of psychological concepts, methods, ideas, and worldviews—is a metatheoretical task. For a metatheoretician, it is not sufficient to present and defend a theory by empirical or conceptual means, but rather it is necessary to reflect on the very process of a theory's discovery, application, and justification on the background of particular sociohistorical developments. This metatheoretical task is not confined to psychologists and, indeed, requires the knowledge and tools of philosophy, history, sociology, anthropology, linguistics, political science, cultural and science studies, and the social and human sciences in general.

The *philosophical domains* that are relevant to theoretical psychology are ontology, epistemology, ethics/practice, and aesthetics. *Ontological reflections* in psychology are at least twofold: they address the specific character of human *mental life* (using a generic term that could also mean *mind*, *soul*, *consciousness*, *subjectivity*, *experience*, *behavior*, etc.) and parts of this mental life; they discuss models, concepts, metaphors, and theories for representing and understanding human subjectivity; they argue about theories of the human mind and human nature in general and about the relationship between mind and body; they discuss the nature of psychological categories; and so on. Ontological reflections also concern questions regarding the appropriate subject matter for the discipline,

field, and practice of psychology; debates regarding the status of the discipline as, for instance, fragmented or potentially unified; and issues regarding the relationship of psychology to other disciplines, fields, and practices.

Epistemological reflections relevant to the field and discipline concern the nature of knowledge and truth, the ways of achieving knowledge, and the meanings of knowledge and truth in psychology or in psychological subdisciplines and theories. In psychology, such reflections often turn to a consideration of the methodological problems in psychology. At this point of exposition, I envision the first objection to this division: Ontology and epistemology, although separated in this editorial for heuristic purposes, are inherently intertwined as some of the examples above already suggest! Indeed, certain ontological assumptions and decisions have epistemological and methodological consequences, and a commitment to a specific conceptualization of the subject matter implies specific methodological commitments. Thus, I would like to interpret this division critically: The relationship between ontology and epistemology itself is neglected in psychology and requires metatheoretical reflection in a journal of theoretical and philosophical psychology, including consideration of the argument that the ontic specificities of an object or event demand or necessitate particular methodologies.

Ethical-practical reflections (I use a combined term) concern the quality of psychological practices and the meaning of ethics in psychology. These reflections may reach from the relationship between *fact* and *value* in the discipline to the meaning of social justice in psychology. Again, it should be pointed out that psychological practice is interconnected with epistemology and ontology. If one assumes that humans act like machines, then practice will emphasize control, manipulation, and technologies, which may have consequences that should be addressed in ethical reflections. If one conceptualizes humans as meaning-making agents embedded in sociopolitical contexts, then practice will call attention to human action and agency. Finally, there exist *aesthetic-psychological* reflections that are highly significant in personal life, but it should be pointed out that such discussions have become more marginal in theoretical and philosophical psychology, despite a short revival in some postmodern reflections.

With regard to *reflexive perspectives*, I want to mention two issues: When reflecting upon psychology it is crucial to keep the so-called larger picture in mind. This includes asking questions about the relationship between *parts* and the *whole*, and applies to human mental life and its parts (thinking, feeling, willing, etc., each of which can be subdivided), as well as to the discipline of psychology, its subfields and its relationship to the social, human, and natural sciences and to the world. Personally, I am involved in reflections, traditions, and horizons that have formed what is called *continental philosophy* and that include German idealism, hermeneutics, phenomenology, existentialism, poststructuralism, and critical theory. Yet, obviously, reflection can take on many more forms than continental philosophy and should rely on a variety of philosophical tools. Admittedly, my personal preferences are embedded in my own sociohistorical background.

It should be pointed out that many studies within theoretical and philosophical psychology are focused on a single theory or concept, family of theories or concepts, or the theory and concepts of a specific individual. Metatheoretical studies, that is, academic work that focuses on *reconstruction* via historical, theoretical, or conceptual means (including theory integration and evaluation), and *deconstruction* (i.e., a critique and identification of shortcomings and opportunities of a particular theory), form an important part of philosophical psychology. However, this journal editor would be pleased to publish articles that

have achieved theory *construction*, that is, the presentation of new and original theories. From my experience, good theory construction is rare and the development of an innovative theory in a journal article is difficult. In the human-scientific world, such attempts are usually left to full-length monographs. Again, I would be glad to send out prolegomena or overviews of new theories to the many reviewers who have volunteered to contribute to the quality of this journal.

(2) This leads us to my vision for this journal: To publish the best, most significant, original, innovative, and—if possible—unique ideas in theoretical and philosophical psychology. Although I have emphasized my own interest in *continental philosophy*, a focus that would make a journal distinctive in the publication landscape of psychology, the assumption of such a position is certainly not required. On the contrary, such a perspective might hinder innovative and unique developments in theoretical psychology. Given the plurality and variety of theoretical approaches that have developed in the last four decades, an editor for a theoretical and philosophical psychology journal must therefore be open to publishing articles within the many philosophical perspectives that are used and applied when debating psychological problems. So must, and will be, the case for this journal.

In addition, transdisciplinary studies and an understanding of the sociocultural embeddedness of many psychological categories have made us aware of the limitations of mainstream psychology, including traditional theoretical and philosophical psychology. Thus, I support *affirmative action* for neglected *ideas* in this journal. To be clear and avoid misunderstandings: this term in its practice is not confined to socially constructed characteristics of an individual or a group of persons, but to marginalized theories and ideas. Of course, in choosing a field such as theoretical or philosophical psychology, and by mentioning a continental perspective, so the argument could go, one already is embedded in a minority position of ideas. This is not what I mean by that term. This term is used to provide opportunities to ideas that are neglected within theoretical and philosophical psychology, because these ideas are for cultural or intellectual reasons beyond our immediate horizons. A challenge in establishing such a program, however, is finding appropriate reviewers. We try to find solutions to the affirmative action for ideas, for instance, by publishing *special issues* that focus on neglected approaches within theoretical and philosophical psychology. Thus, we welcome suggestions for special issues.

Affirmative action applies within a culture but also between cultures. Thus, the internationalization of theoretical psychology is an important goal for this journal. By internationalization, I do not mean the propagation of Western psychology to the rest of the world, but a process of accommodation, by which the very nature of Western theoretical and philosophical psychology is changed based on ideas from around the world. This is not in contradiction to locating oneself within a *tradition*. Tradition is important because it makes knowledge, or if one does not appreciate this term, thinking and reflection, possible. There is no prejudiceless science, as Gadamer has pointed out so aptly. Yet, tradition is at the same time the limitation that hinders us from looking further, and from understanding the unusual, the strange, the absurd, and the seemingly incomprehensible.

Tradition, challenging tradition, and moving beyond tradition all are important elements in this journal. To do justice to this notion, we invite international article submissions. In addition, we would like to publish conversations with inspiring leaders in the areas of theoretical and philosophical psychology, be they recognized nationally or internationally. This is an invitation so submit such interviews for publication or to provide suggestions for dialogue! Although this first issue in the new program does not present articles by international scholars,

the commitment to variety and quality, I suggest, is realized in the articles published in the following pages. I would like to thank the editorial board and the many reviewers who have accepted the over 130 requests for review of the 45 submission to date, and who have worked diligently and under time pressure for this and future issues. This applies also to the student members of the editorial board of this journal. These students have provided valuable contributions that, I hope, will prepare them for shaping theoretical and philosophical psychology in the near future.

This latest step in the journal's history would not have been possible without a number of individuals: I would like to thank Jeff Sugarman, who as president of the *Division for Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology* at the time, had a crucial role in negotiating the contract with APA, and the APA publication team that always addressed and often solved our contract concerns. I would like to thank the previous editors of this journal, especially Ron Miller, who, as the preceding editor, enabled a smooth transition to the APA journals program. There are many APA staffers who were very helpful in making this move possible, and in particular, I would like to thank Jessica Karp who guided us through the daily submission, review, and production process and provided her experience and expertise for assembling this first issue.

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Reference

- Williams, R. N. (1999). A history of Division 24 (Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology). In D. A. Dewsbury (Ed.), *Unification through division: Histories of the divisions of the American Psychological Association* (Vol. IV, pp. 65–89). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.