
Preface

This book has its genesis in an *American Psychologist* article entitled “Nonempirical Issues in Psychology” (Kukla 1989). My aim in the article was frankly polemical. I wanted to convince psychologists that our discipline had suffered from a gross and systematic underestimation of the scope, variety, and import of theoretical work in the scientific enterprise. Most controversially, I tried to persuade my colleagues that there are many important theoretical issues the resolution of which does not call for empirical research: They require nothing but thinking. Naturally, I marshalled a series of example to make my point. For the sake of expository convenience, I located the various examples within a rough-and-ready taxonomy of theoretical activities. Half in jest, I called the result a “job description for armchair psychologists.”

Then I got interested in the job description for its own sake. It seemed to me a worthy *metatheoretical* project to extend and clarify the rough-and-ready taxonomy, quite apart from its role in the polemical project that gave it birth. My endeavors along these lines appeared in a number of articles, the most substantial of which was “Amplification and Simplification as Modes of Theoretical Analysis in Psychology” (Kukla 1995a).

This book partakes of the spirit of both prior articles. Like the 1989 article, it is an attempt (more sustained) to persuade psychologists that they haven’t given the theoretical side of psychology its due. Like the 1995 article, it is also a descriptive survey of the field. My treatment differs from other surveys of theoretical psychology, however. Other surveys (e.g., Marx and Hillix, 1973; Wolman 1981) divide the subject matter into distinct theoretical approaches. These books characteristically include a chapter on psychoanalytic theory, a chapter on S-R theory, and so on. In contrast, my book divides the field into *types of theoretical activities*. My book isn’t

really a work *in* theoretical psychology at all; it is a book *about* theoretical psychology. More precisely, it is an attempt to delineate the scope of a neglected but entirely legitimate area of specialization within psychology.

The audience that I had in mind when writing this book is the community of experimental psychologists. Here and there, however, I have included information that is common knowledge among psychologists. For example, no psychologist needs to be told what the law of effect is. Nevertheless, when I refer to the law of effect for the first time (in chapter 4), I introduce it with a paragraph of elementary explanation. The purpose of these elementary additions is to make the book accessible to non-psychologists who might have an interest in the topic. It also renders the book suitable for use as a primary text in an undergraduate course in theoretical psychology.

Here is a more complete list of the articles from which the material in this book derives:

“Nonempirical Issues in Psychology,” *American Psychologist* 44 (1989): 785–794

“Is AI an Empirical Science?” *Analysis* 49 (1989): 56–60

“Clinical Versus Statistical Theory Appraisal,” *Psychological Inquiry* 1 (1990): 160–161

“Evolving Probability,” *Philosophical Studies* 59 (1990): 213–224

“Ten Types of Scientific Progress,” in *Proceedings of the 1990 Biennial Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association*, volume 1

“Theoretical Psychology, Artificial Intelligence, and Empirical Research,” *American Psychologist* 45 (1990): 780–781

“Teaching Armchair Psychology,” *International Society for Theoretical Psychology Newsletter* 7 (1991): 2–4

“Unification as a Goal for Psychology,” *American Psychologist* 47 (1992): 1054–1055

“Amplification and Simplification as Modes of Theoretical Analysis in Psychology,” *New Ideas in Psychology* 13 (1995): 201–217

“Is There a Logic of Incoherence?” *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 9 (1995): 59–71

“On the metametatheory of psychology: A reply to Dawson, Green, Mackay and Rozeboom,” *New Ideas in Psychology* 13 (1995): 247–257.

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