

Psychology: Usurped and Redux/ Psychology Is

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This article was motivated by Dr Goldberg's Mar/Apr 2007 article in the National Psychologist entitled "Personality Doctor". In my mind, - (mind - remember mind?- psychology is about mind [& body]) - I am living to see, at age 59, the demise of psychology, - a long time coming. The reasons are many I think, including an increasingly watered down curricula, platforms of political correctness in the stead of intellectual rigor, maintenance of the term 'therapist' v. 'psychologist' which in my mind do not share identity with each other, - etc. It seems to have had an impact as well to have carved out 'professional' psychology, inasmuch as it can erode the leverage of academic scholastic psychology, cut away from broad scope, & diminish the panoply & verve of a spectrum. There may be some analogy here in the presumed diminution of complete measure that is the case for, or difference in, 'therapists' at large versus psychologists. Be that as it may, by any means, in history, the tradition of each or any type of concentration under the rubric of psychology has been highly professional & sophisticated in scale, suis generis.

Unfortunately, the move underway to try to standardize models of therapy will cause further erosion to the already perceived expendable value & premium of psychologists in clinical practice. It stands to reason that a psychologist ultimately would not be needed to perform a paraprofessional task or a task that is seen to be manageable by whatever alternative, including an alternative of no management at all. And while psychology aptly looks for unifying themes, it is very much about the many & varied behavioral, spiritual, & mental manifestations of life as it is lived & experienced in real time as it unfolds.

The culture at large is not keen on psychology, nor are many members of the medical specialties. People tend to think that what psychologists (& therapists) do is 'talk' to people as in 'talk therapy', '1 to 1', (adjunctive to biochemical therapy). Psychologists should be more accurately seen as persons who know about behavior (mind, personality, etc). Practitioners now who are not, or who are modestly, trained in psychology are able to dictate judgments related to psychological conditions via gross observation. Co-relatively, lay persons in general hold very decided views about the cause & meaning of human nature & behavior - & much of it is out of sync with standard kinds of psychological analysis or explanation. Additionally, biological & chemical analyses do not equate with, capture, or supplant the metaphysical realities of being alive & living. It is for the psychologist to explain, illuminate, & meticulously depict the vicissitudes & significance of human psyche & behavior. This by no means obviates the rightfulness & necessity of the role for psychologists to prescribe & monitor medications, given how these, for better or for worse, are incorporated into, & indeed woefully absorbing, the treatment protocol. But psychology, as a matter of mind, spirit, attitude, motivation, habit, etc, is about all of that, including pharmaceuticals & their reasoned dispensation, delivery & effect.

As it stands, there is seemingly too much psychology 'light'. The thematic focus about needing to fix problems and bringing problems out of the closet has led to a proliferation of milk-toast advocacy agendas for psychology that have spread out to advocates in the non-specificallypsychologic culture at large. The multiplicitous themes of a culture awash in things that need to be looked at & 'fixed' harkens back to the inception of the pop psychology frameworks some decades ago. The transmission & application of psuedo-behavioral strains of meaning has resulted in further 'psychology light' perfusion to the culture at large & to the status of psychology as it sits today. We've become an 'issues' & 'population' driven aggregation. Generic therapization as an industrial tool has infiltrated far & wide to have become currency of the day.

Much of this has naught to do with intellectual, deeper, broader, & more whole psychology, whole person, whole group, whole society, whole life.

A psychologist practitioner is not a therapist (except perhaps as a sub category of general function) even if what she does can be hopefully therapeutic. The profession could benefit from emphasis on a more complete, pervasive, & theoretically fundamental psychology even as such fundamentals shift & change with time. It is for psychologists to demonstrate, by studied observation, explication, & doctrinal application, what psychology is & is estimably about sooner than it is to pursue niches & pathways in an effort to maintain viability & standing.

The phenomena of existence as an existential & practical reality is all encompassing. Trying to understand or work on human behavior, mind, spirit, ideology, etc, is arduous, intricate & complex. As intricacy & nuance abound so they should be abundantly explicated. Terms such as “self esteem or ‘self worth’ in & of themselves say very little if not nothing. Principles & understanding are amorphous, subtle, convoluted, phenomenological - yes, ladies & gentlemen, ‘dynamic’ (& behavioral!). Psychology is about basic processes which maintain in general to ALL aspects of life force & being, pathology notwithstanding. Psychology is about everything. Substantive psychology goes forward on the shoulders of great(est) thinkers and investigators from myriad lines of psychological inquiry - including those of philosophy from whence it sprang. There is much to consider and psychology should be a matter of erudition together with one’s own best perceptions. Psychology is largely a descriptive science. As such it requires precisioned linguistic articulation.

In the grander scheme of things, over time, psychology as a discipline surely is undergoing transmutation. Some great things may well come out at the other end. There well may no longer be an endeavor called ‘psychology’ as a discipline per se. (What verbal denotation of an intellectual pursuit has accrued as many connotations [& confusions!])

as the word ‘psychology’ in the culture at large [religion, philosophy?] - which attests to the breadth of its scope.) Yet, as time goes on, persons may step up to the plate & demonstrate, by descriptive language, their gravitas, basis, & reflection to ourselves of what it is to be alive. Those specialist & knowledgeable devotees may well go by titles that represent the didactics of their specialist points of view. There is a bigger psychology out there that will not disappear.

In the present, let us be mindful to continue to work on equitable status AND especially equitable REIMBURSEMENT for the psychology(ist) that is now.

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