

The Philosophy of Psychology



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The fundamental idea of psychology is that thinking, behavior and experience can all be understood systematically. This is not to say that people are predictable, or even that much is truly understood about the matrix of rules that govern how we roll, but the philosophy of psychology holds that this is because people are complex and subtle rather than because they are fundamentally mysterious. Mystery is an appropriate sensation in the face of the vast ignorance that inarguably confronts us in every

direction, so long as it stimulates art and/or a conscientious investigation into the mysterious domain in question. But this is not easy because psychologists, philosophers and scientists are all human beings with complex and idiosyncratic motives that can lead them astray. Mystery is offered as evidence for all sorts of metaphysical, psychosocial and political claims that people have a stake in for one reason or another, but mystery is not evidence for anything at all. At its best, mystery is reverent rather than didactic. The nature of mystery and its role in human affairs is a psychological question.

Genuine psychology is discriminating and not just anything you like. There is now an extensive body of solid science that clearly reveals the physical and biological basis of thinking and feeling, as well as a great deal about their evolution, although many of the most interesting details remain obscure. Although these scientific insights do not address most of the practical and existential questions my clients typically want to address, good psychology tries to be rigorous and discriminating even in reasoning about the most sophisticated human capacities; like mathematics, metaphysics, music, art, romance, relationships, adventure and parenting. We won't get it exactly right in your case, but we should be able to clarify things and cast them in a different light, which will help. Trust me. Call me.

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