

Introduction to Part Three: Common Ground and Shared Practices

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Establishing common ground where ideas and meanings can be shared is a foundation for shared purpose and for productive use of differences in perspective. Communities have members who share values, knowledge, and skills relevant to their particular positions. The effectiveness of persons in their roles is bounded, among other things, by the adequacy of the concepts they employ. The papers that follow demonstrate how Descriptive Psychology provides a set of precise conceptual tools that foster access to significant distinctions vital to a variety of communities. The first of the essays provides a basic orientation to Descriptive Psychology, the second articulates a mathematical formulation of “structure”, the third, a clarification of criminality, the fourth unpacks a negotiation of conflict between secular and the religious communities, and the last presents a cautionary note about how significant knowledge and practice can be lost if not adequately transmitted.

Ludwig Wittgenstein taught that meanings follow from use and cannot be private. “Use”, an action concept, implies a performance, an observable operation or practice, something that can be done, well or poorly. Effective use is an appropriate criterion in evaluating the fit of any concept to actual or potential practice. Peter Ossorio and others, in a manner advocated by Wittgenstein, built the subject matter of Descriptive Psychology. In the resulting conceptual system, effective use and competent practice takes the place that truth values take in ontological systems and metaphysics. The concepts of Descriptive Psychology were designed and articulated using the criteria of real world fit and behavioral effectiveness.

A community develops its objective standards in correspondence to the effective and competent outcomes

of the community's identifying social practices. Shared use requires recognizably shared social practices based on shared elements, operations, and structures, the shared "forms of life" that Wittgenstein argued are required for the verbal behaviors he called "language games" to be played successfully. The essays in this last section of the *Advances*, in their various ways, create useful and public access to key behavioral distinctions that enhance access to particular subject matters.

When sharing a subject matter, it is useful to provide an accessible introduction and Raymond Bergner provides it in his essay, "What is Descriptive Psychology?" Bergner presents the conceptual, pre-empirical nature of Descriptive Psychology as a behavioral science of "Persons". The key "Person" concepts of "Individual Person", "Action", "Language", and "Reality" are explicated and coordinated in Bergner's introduction which allows for a coherent discussion of the application of these concepts in working with the dilemmas of the real world.

Locutions regarding structure are ubiquitous. Joel Jeffrey argues that "structure" has been a vaguely defined concept that nonetheless appears vital in intellectual work and everyday speech. But what does structure mean? Structure suggests a formal or empirical regularity regarding the complexities that attend whatever is in question. Joel Jeffrey presents a mathematical definition of the concept of structure. How structures are alike and different is subjected to Jeffrey's formulation. He unfolds a mathematics of structure and complexity that allows the relevant dimensions to be quantified. He provides examples that range from the structure of the family to the structure of intracellular organelles.

Culpability, responsibility, guilt and intent are significantly linked in the law. The law, at times, distinguishes between responsibility for one's personal characteristics and for one's behaviors. The responsibility for one's personal characteristics requires self knowledge – the absence of which may result in negligence. At issue may be a person's intention, their

deliberate action, as well as non-intentional behaviors that include accidents, reflexes, and involuntary reactions.

Jane Littmann demonstrates how Descriptive Psychology's parametric analysis of Intentional Action and Deliberate Action provides direct and useful access to the crucial distinctions required to make sense of a criminal act and a guilty mind, *Actus Reus and Mens Rea*. Littmann employs Descriptive Psychology in a manner that undoes the conceptual confusions that result from an inadequate unpacking of the concept of intentionality.

Richard Singer and Paul Zeiger use basic Descriptive Psychology concepts to explore some dilemmas that attend conflicts between religion and government. Their method involves finding shared portions of the world as a ground for negotiation. The playing field is the shared practices that stem from a shared understandings and perspectives. Cooperative action requires good faith negotiation, an honest and open presentation of concept and facts, of the sort that Hannah Arendt called moral dialog. Negotiation is an act of cooperation and of community building.

But there are limits to what can be accomplished when good faith is lacking or where one system, either of government or religion, requires either the subjugation or the elimination of the other. A fundamental requirement for negotiation appears to be an absence of totalitarian desire. Here, negotiation requires real respect for a separation of the secular from the religious. Totalitarian goals are deal breakers. Accordingly, Singer and Zeiger's essay speaks to the potential limitations of negotiation under circumstances where there is no shared respect, honesty, or willingness to acknowledge differences. In the form of a dialog, Singer and Zeiger show how a negotiation could actually work out in the context of reasonable Americans facing some current dilemmas. They show both how to establish agreement and some average expected limitations in agreement. Now imagine the difficulties of this dialog with an authentic Taliban. Theocratic government is an especially problematic state of affairs, but as Singer and Zeiger

point out, some of the best scholars of the Middle East advocate using similar principles to theirs in negotiation with Islam.

Wynn Schwartz' essay concerns how a narrow vision of science threatens the viable practice of psychotherapy through a powerful but reductionistic narrative of what constitutes empirically validated knowledge and competence. He recognizes that there continues to be significant conceptual confusion in the logical presentation of psychotherapy even if psychotherapists have developed effective and worthy practices and competencies. He argues that Descriptive Psychology can resolve this confusion and intelligibly address the formal and empirical basis of sound therapeutic practice across various schools of practice. But for Descriptive Psychology to be known it must be taught, and Schwartz worries that the community of Descriptive Psychologists is neither large enough nor vocal enough to sustain the subject matter without concerted efforts to enlarge the community and to join in others.