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Psychology Informed by Faith and Reason

# The Future of Catholics in Psychology: Missionaries in need of a method

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# Missionaries

- Immersion in science and psychology
  - Learning the language, customs
  - Respecting legitimate methods and applications
- Humility in service (Mt 7)
  - Judge not
  - First the log, then the speck
- Seeking truth whatever the source



## Method

- “Psychology has been pulled in two directions, one analyzing into smaller elements, the other integrating into larger systems” (Miller)
- “Empiricism has its own legitimate role, as does the quest for universality” (Toulmin & Leary)
- Wundt: Empiricism vs. Völkerpsychologie

# Scope of Psychology

“Any particular cognition, for example, or recollection, is accounted for on the soul-theory by being referred to the spiritual faculties of Cognition or of Memory...And yet the admission is far from being a satisfactory simplification of the concrete facts. For why should this absolute god-given [sic] Faculty [sic] retain so much better the events of yesterday than those of last year, and, best of all, those of an hour ago? Why again, in old age should its grasp of childhood’s events seem firmest?...**Evidently then, the faculty does not exist absolutely, but works under conditions; and the quest of the conditions becomes the psychologist’s most interesting task.**” (James, The Principles of Psychology)

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## Underdeterminism

- Problem of reasoning logically and inevitably from universals to particulars (deductive)
- Problem of reasoning logically and inevitably from particulars to universals (inductive)
- Common Conclusion: Theories and paradigms can never be fully supported or falsified within the hypothetico-deductive method (e.g., Kuhn).

# Free Will

- Prediction vs. Determinism
  - Is 100% accuracy in prediction the same as determinism?
- Conditioning
  - What is the role of reinforcers?
- Conformity
  - Methodologies presume free will
- Automatic, Unconscious processing
  - Some automatic, unconscious processing does not equal total lack of awareness

# Personalist Epistemology

- Scientific methods can not transcend or escape the limits of human observation
- Empirical observations have a role in all knowledge, including theology and metaphysics
- Knowledge, understanding are perfected in community

## “Empirical” aspects of faith

- Natural Observations (e.g., 1 Cor 2: 1-5; 1 John 1:1-3)
- Reliability
  - Consistency over time (e.g., Mt 5:17)
  - Consistency across witnesses (e.g., 2 Cor 13:1)
- Validity
  - Concurrent – consistency of word and action (e.g., John 14: 11)
  - Predictive – accuracy of prediction (e.g., 1 Cor 15: 13)