Expanding Horizons for Christians in Psychology

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The integration of psychology and Christianity involves the juxtaposition of at least two horizons of understanding. Numerous attempts have been made to produce an expanded horizon that is faithfully and integrally both Christian and psychological. The current paper explores the role of the concept of "faithful comprehension" as a regulative ideal for integration. This idea is unpacked both in light of externalist epistemology and hermeneutical realism. Some implications for psychological and Christian knowing are considered. The paper concludes by calling Christian psychologists, and Christian psychology training programs, to develop expanded epistemologies that complement what is truth-productive in psychological science with other methods that allow a more complete range of the person to be investigated. Such calls are not unique in the integration literature. Externalism's emphasis on reliable truth production clarifies what must be accomplished by any such expanded psychological science, Christian or otherwise.

I have elsewhere proposed a model of integration of psychology and Christianity as an interpretive process that can be productively informed by hermeneutical realism (Hathaway, 2002). This model appropriates Gadamer's (1960/1984) notion of interpretation as a fusion of horizons to describe the integration process. A horizon is a sphere of understanding about the world that arises from the knower's concrete vantage point in history. Gadamer (1960/1984) has asserted that the act of interpreting a text involves a fusion, or creative expansion, of the reader's horizon in encounter with the horizon of the text. A successful fusion preserves what is true in both horizons but expands and enriches one's understanding in the process.

While hermeneutics applies most directly to the understanding of texts, contemporary philosophical hermeneutics is construed as a general account of all human understanding, not just literary exegesis (Bernstein, 1983; Palmer, 1969). I have accordingly suggest-

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ed that the integration of the horizons of psychology and Christianity involves a reciprocal encounter that moves the reader from undervaluation of either horizon, by a compartmentalized appreciation, towards an expanded perspective in which richer, unified insights emerge that are faithful to the truth(s) available separately in each horizon. I will briefly recap some of the key aspects of this interpretative model of integration below, but the reader is directed to Hathaway (2002) for a more detailed discussion. The main focus of this paper is to emphasize the central role of 'faithful comprehension of truth' as a bridge principle for this interpretative integration. This proposal focuses on epistemological issues as a connecting point for Christian and psychological understandings of the world. Some preliminary comments about my approach to epistemology are therefore needed.

KNOWING REALITY
Some Externalist Musings

Contemporary psychology has grown up within a modern self-understanding. While various characterizations of modernism have been offered in recent years, I am most concerned about modernism's predominant epistemic outlook which has been recently labeled "internalism" (Bernecker & Dretske, 2000; Bonjour & Sosa, 2003; Kornblith, 2001; Plantinga, 1992). An outlook may be 'internalist' about the nature of knowledge, the nature of justification or both (Bernecker & Dretske, 2000). Among the typical features of internalism are "...an emphasis on the justification of beliefs, a search for highly certain foundations upon which to build up our body of knowledge (classical foundationalism), and a portrayal of knowledge processes as involving 'duties' for the knowing agent" (Hathaway, 2004, p.10). Internalism about justification holds that the knowing subject must, in some truth guaranteeing way, be consciously aware of the grounds for belief (Moser, Multer, & Trout, 1998).

Descartes' (1641/1979) modernism reflected one of the clearest examples of the internalist approach to knowledge. Cartesian rationalism asserted that certain

knowledge was available through particular forms of reflective armchair thinking (Bonjour & Sosa, 2003). The truth seeker submits what he thinks he knows to 'methodological doubt,' calling into question any belief that is possible to doubt without contradiction. Once an 'indubitable' belief is identified (e.g., "I think therefore I am"), the seeker than carefully unpacks other beliefs that can be supported on the basis of this fixed 'foundational' belief. Descartes' use of 'methodological doubt' reflects the modern scientific commitment to skepticism as an investigatory virtue (Musgrave, 1993). What is vital for our purposes is to see the conception of knowledge assumed by Descartes. Descartes believed that things like everyday beliefs produced by our senses often yield true beliefs. For instance, suppose at noon I believe it to be 12 p.m. because I see what appears to be the display on my digital clock indicating that time. But Descartes did not view such beliefs as yet amounting to knowledge. In order to be knowledge, I must personally be aware of the factors that justify trust in my senses and in the accuracy of the clock display. Imagine that another person correctly believes it is noon by looking at her clock just when I form this same belief by looking at my clock. While I am aware of the logical justification for trusting my senses in this case, the other person is not. On Descartes' view, I would 'know' that it is noon but the other person would not. The Cartesian model assumes that the knowledge-producing relationship is between my belief and a certain kind of awareness that I have *internal* to my own consciousness (of the factors that justify my belief).

It would not be surprising to many psychologists, with their empirical leanings, that Descartes' armchair rationalism led him to conclude a number of false scientific assertions about the world. Yet modern empiricism was no less an internalist enterprise. Locke's (1690/1964) empiricism held that we arrive at knowledge only by limiting our beliefs to those assertions that 'fit' our sense data. We have direct awareness only of our senses and therefore knowledge is justified by an appeal to grounds that are 'internal' to the individual knower. While Descartes asserted certain qualities of ideas as the prerequisite 'internal' characteristic of knowledge (e.g., indubitability or clarity), the empiricists asserted sensory data. Yet both argued that the modern knower should use his respective 'method' as the royal road to knowledge. It is beyond the scope of this paper to trace the subsequent fortunes of modern rationalism and empiricism. Suffice it to note that both of these approaches to knowledge are now widely believed to contain serious inadequacies (Musgrave, 1993).

In recent years, a critique of all such 'internalist' approaches to knowledge has been gaining momentum. The externalist critique argues that internalism is fundamentally mistaken in its core assumption that true beliefs must be justified in some a priori manner on grounds of which the subject is aware. Externalism is the view "...that some of the justifying factors may be external to the subject's cognitive perspective" (Bernecker & Dretske, 2000, p.65). Recall the case of the two clock readers cited earlier. While the second clock reader, who correctly believed it was noon but did not know why this belief was justified, was denied the status of knowledge on the internalist view, an externalist perspective would not be so hasty. Externalists characterize knowledge as a kind of causal relationship between the aspect of the world that is known and the belief state in the individual. For instance, Goldman (1967, 1986, 2002) has asserted that knowledge is the output of a reliable belief forming process. Consequently, his influential externalist approach is known as 'reliabilism'. A subject whose beliefs are formed through such a process may have true knowledge about the world even if she is unaware of how that knowledge was obtained. As long as the second clock reader formed her belief in some way that was reliably sensitive to the correct time, then the belief would count as knowledge.

The challenge for externalist accounts of knowledge is the exact detailing of what sorts of belief forming processes reliably result in knowledge, and under what sorts of conditions. Yet as Plantinga (1993) has pointed out, this challenge only illustrates the incompleteness of a skeletal externalism, not its invalidity. "Internalism standardly incorporates the doctrine that epistemology is a purely a priori or armchair enterprise rather than one that needs help from empirical science" (Goldman, 2002, p.18). Externalists typically assert that epistemology is not a discipline that can be fully developed in an abstract, a priori manner. Rather, inductive or even empirical analysis of factual examples of successful knowledge instances must be conducted to clarify when humans likely have reliable knowledge and when they likely do not (Plantinga, 1992).

A key feature of externalism is a central role "reality" plays in its account of knowledge (Kaufman, 2002). This core insight was influentially delineated in the common sense realism of the 18th century Scottish

philosopher, Thomas Reid (1764/1997). Reid, along with his contemporary David Hume, believed that the natural outcome of both rationalism and empiricism was skepticism. If one requires certainty before a belief may count as knowledge, as Descartes did, then it is unlikely if any of our everyday knowledge claims would survive. On the other hand, if I must restrict my knowledge claims to those beliefs that have adequate sensory evidence, then many commonly held beliefs must also be excluded as 'nonsense' including beliefs in souls, the external world, or even causation. Because we can never have direct empirical awareness of such things, only of our *perception* of them, it is only our perceptions that can be known.

Rather than accept this skeptical conclusion, Reid chose to turn the modernist and internalist assumption about knowledge on its head. If internalism requires us to eliminate all common sense knowledge as knowledge then so much the worse for internalism, not common sense! Reid argued that God has providentially designed us with certain knowledge producing faculties that can correctly discern important features of the world. As long as these faculties are operating properly we have knowledge even if we do not know *how* we have such knowledge. We have knowledge because the known features of the world reliably produce the beliefs in a manner consistent with our design (Plantinga, 1993). Yet neither Reid nor contemporary externalists are naïve about the possibility of error in our claims to knowledge. They assert a fallible realism granting that it is the real world that is known but also admitting that it is often known only partially or imperfectly. On the externalist view, the task for epistemology becomes describing the actual knowledge producing faculties that operate in various contexts. Reid's (1764/1997) efforts in this regard inspired important traditions of early 'faculty psychology' (Robinson, 1995).

This approach to the theory of knowledge has also been described as "naturalistic epistemology" by various scholars (Quine, 1969; Plantinga, 1992; Goldman, 2002). This should not be confused with a metaphysical worldview of 'naturalism' that denies the supernatural as one its cardinal tenets. Rather naturalist epistemology refers to the idea that our models of knowledge have to follow from, or describe, our natural examples of knowledge formation. They are not to be built up from some speculative ideal as in the cases of Descartes or Locke. Quine (1969) went so far as to reduce epistemology to a branch of psychology. More recently, Goldman (2002) argued for *moderate natu-*

ralism characterized by two theses:

(A). All epistemic warrant or justification is a function of the psychological (perhaps computational) processes that produce or preserve belief.

(B). The epistemological enterprise needs appropriate help from science especially the science of the mind. (p. 26)

He later explained that "the most salient feature" of his view is "...that it makes no commitment to any thoroughgoing form of empiricism. It leaves it entirely open that rational insight or rational apprehension might be among the sources of epistemic warrant" (p. 27).

KNOWLEDGE IN PSYCHOLOGY
An Externalist Account

Contemporary psychology has grown up within a modern self-understanding. The internalism of contemporary psychology is reflected in its prescribed methods for coming to knowledge about psychological truths. These a priori endorsed methods were thought to provide a better way to truth than the unreliable and unscientific approaches common in folk psychology (McFall, 1991; Stanovich, 2000). While a variety of such methods have been utilized in the field, the regnant vision of psychological science has been the adoption of replicable and objective investigative strategies grounded by empirical data (Kazdin, 2002). Consequently, the field's continued support for an empiricist or even neo-positivist psychological science should not be surprising despite the decline of positivism as a formal philosophical movement. For instance, in his 1991 presidential address to the Society for a Science of Clinical Psychology, McFall (1991) argued that "...scientific clinical psychology is the only legitimate and acceptable form of clinical psychology" (p.75). He further asserted that clinical services should not be administered unless first empirically supported.

Hathaway (2004) has argued that an externalist self-understanding for psychological science would have several implications. An externalist psychology would not be rigidly delimited by a set of regnant methodologies that would specify a priori what sorts of psychological claims could be admitted and with what required evidential support. While internalism quite naturally lends itself to a methodological hegemony, externalism would have to be remain in principle open to successful demonstrations of reliable knowledge production in novel ways. This is not to deny that a type of epistemic conservatism would be natural for externalism. Once a set of reliable knowl-

edge producing strategies have been identified, a community of knowers is likely to increasingly count on those strategies and elevate them to a de facto 'preferred' status. Goldman (2002) conceptualized this as a 'two stage reliabilism'. The first stage involves the selection of standards and the second stage the "deployment" of standards.

Of course it remains possible that a community of knowers may mistakenly or prematurely deploy a set of standards. The community may believe the standards for knowledge are justified when they are not. The natural question becomes:

...when are beliefs *really* justified, as opposed to being *held* justified by this or that community? A natural response is: a belief is "really" justified if and only if it results from processes (or methods) that really are reliable, and not merely judged reliable by our present epistemic community." (Goldman, 2002, p.35)

So after a set of epistemic standards has risen to ascendancy within a knowing community, subsequent examples of erroneous performance in truth production or competition from promising novel approaches to knowledge production may unseat them or force modification. They may also be challenged when the standards are not encompassing enough to account for reliable knowledge production in areas outside of the scope of the ascendant standards (Goldman, 2002; Plantinga, 1992). Leplin (1997) has argued that new scientific theories force revisions in scientific methods or standards to allow their evaluation:

The evidence that is appropriate for the acceptance of a new scientific theory is the strongest evidence that can forseeably be obtained on the assumption that the theory is correct...If a new theory's empirical claims, in conjunction with established background theory, render existing standards of evaluation inapplicable, then these standards will adjust sufficiently to provide for the possibility of favorable evaluation. (pp. 183-184, italics in original)

Part of the expansiveness possible in an externalist epistemology arises from its underlying commitment to fallible realism. While neo-positivist psychologists continue to be squeamish about making claims about 'reality', externalists argue that it is precisely the relation between a real world and a belief state that constitutes knowledge. Because we know the world fallibly but *really*, humans are capable of an ongoing quest for improved accuracy in the knowledge of that real word (Colapietro, 1986; Kaufman, 2002). Once a set of reliable standards has been evidenced by a community of knowers, the burden falls on the person claiming knowledge through some other process to demonstrate that they can in fact reliably know what they claim to know (Trout, 1998). Furthermore, it is unlike-

ly that a novel approach will unseat the existing standards unless it displays sufficient *incremental validity* and *pragmatic utility* to warrant adoption.

But the relative fixity of a set of investigatory methods and standards within a knowing community may also be fueled by factors besides their mere validity and/or utility. Given the finite and fallible nature of human knowers, it is possible that a point of diminishing returns may arise for a scientific community. The range of reliable and efficient knowledge production strategies may expand beyond what is feasible for a single scientist or professional to master.

Clinical Judgment and Virtuous Knowledge

Another key point of relevance for externalist epistemology to clinical science is over the differing view it may afford to clinical judgment. The scientific internalism that has dominated psychology has tended to be highly suspect of tacit knowledge claims or 'intuitive' judgments (McFall, 1991; Stanovich, 2000). Part of the reason for this suspicion is the fact that such judgments are formed in a manner that seems to lack the features of 'validated' knowledge on the internalist account. For instance, the knowing subject may not have any awareness of the basis for the judgment or how he came to believe what he believes. An externalist could accept as knowledge clinical intuitions for which the clinician could not offer any justification, provided that such intuitions were the output of a reliable belief forming process (Hathaway, 2004).

Now it turns out that much research has rendered clinical judgment highly suspect as a reliable belief forming process, at least about discrete, quantifiable outcomes (Garb, 1998; Grove & Meehl, 1996; Meehl, 1986; Trout, 2001). Trout (2001) reviewed the extensive literature on the superior performance of statistical prediction rules (SPR), such as the MMPI Goldberg rule, and concludes a "Golden Rule of Predictive Modeling:" "When based on the same evidence, the predictions of SPRs are at least as reliable, and are typically more reliable, than the predictions of human experts" (p.9). Meehl (1986) reviewed the state of the findings over three decades after he authored his classic text, raising the issue of whether actuarial prediction outperforms clinical judgment. He concluded:

There is no controversy in social science which shows such a large body of qualitatively diverse studies coming out so uniformly in the same direction as this one. When you are pushing [hundreds of] investigations, predicting everything from the outcomes of football games to the diagnosis of liver disease and when you can hardly come up with a half dozen studies showing even a weak tendency in favor of the clinician, it is time to draw

a practical conclusion." (as cited in Trout, 2001, p.13)

If these convergent patterns of findings tell such a common story, then why do clinicians continue to prefer unaided or largely unstructured decision making procedures in clinical contexts? In 1986, Meehl attributed this in part to clinician ignorance over the nature of the findings. Trout (2001) saw the state of affairs as an example of the 'overconfidence bias' studied by cognitive scientists in which humans typically estimate their personal judgments to be more accurate than those of others. Scientists appear no more immune than laypersons from this bias (Henrion & Fischoff, 1986).

This empirical picture reflecting the weaknesses present in human knowing faculties highlights the importance of a new emphasis in epistemology known as 'virtue epistemology' (Fairweather & Zagzebski, 2001). Virtue epistemology has been frequently intertwined with externalist approaches to knowledge. Virtue epistemologists contend that knowledge is integrally related to the formation of the right sort of 'intellectual character' that typically has as its goal the search for truth. Such intellectual virtues should be the sort of cognitive dispositions or processes that reliably result in true beliefs (Greco, 2000). Consequently, clinicians who practice clinical judgment procedures of dubious value to the neglect of more valid decision making strategies lack virtuous cognitive processes and may be guilty of intellectual vices.

The challenge for virtue approaches is, in part, to identify the kind of intellectual habits and processes that reliably result in true beliefs about the world. Along these lines, Roberts (2003; Roberts & Wood, 2003) has been developing accounts of some intellectual virtues, informed by the Christian tradition, that are knowledge and truth conducive. He and his associate have argued that the characteristics of humility and generosity both serve as good candidates for intellectual virtue. The externalist would ask such accounts to adduce evidence of reliable truth production arising from their instantiation.

Roberts and Wood's (2003) endorsement of the epistemic virtue of humility appears particularly apt given the fallible nature of clinical judgment. Contemporary professional psychologists do not appear prepared to honestly curtail their overconfidence in clinical decision-making. This lack of humility is particularly alarming given the serious personal and social consequences that can be associated with clinician judgment in areas such as child custody, involuntary hospitalization, or criminal responsibility (Garb, 1998). In our training of Christian psychologists at

Regent University, a discussion of the human judgment literature is linked to readings on the noetic effects of the fall (Ramm, 1985). The Christian virtue of humility is seen as an important and appropriate posture for the clinician given the alternative of a prideful overconfidence that can increase error. The students also discuss whether a 'Christian perspective' on psychology results in improved accuracy in clinical judgment. Although there is no empirical data either way, beginning students often seem quite confident that their Christian outlook will render them better clinical judges. The potential relationship of this perspective to the overconfidence bias is then discussed as well as various strategies for augmenting and calibrating clinical judgment for improved accuracy and reliability (Garb, 1998).

The Subject Matter of Psychology

The subject-object duality of human existence has led some to doubt that psychology or other social sciences can ever operate as an objective science. Polkinghorne (1983), for instance, highlighted several characteristics of the human condition that distinguish it from the objects of study in the natural sciences including the open-ended, dynamic, and boundary blurring nature of human life. He also noted that social sciences study constituents that are both a "knowing subject as well as a known object" (p.260). This engenders a "special problem of access" since outside observers can only indirectly assess the subjective world of another person. Consequently, Polkinghorne (1983) argued that psychology must operate as a 'human science' with investigatory strategies more typical of ethnology or the humanities.

Trout (1998) has argued on externalist grounds for the truth productive nature of the measurement tradition in psychology, despite the distinctive features of the social-psychological world. Contemporary psychological science has developed an extensive set of procedures for using quantitative thinking to assess questions about psychological functioning. Trout adduces numerous examples from sensation and perception, psychological testing, social psychology, personality theory and other areas which exhibit a reliable knowledge production process using such methods. However, he takes issue with the positivist leanings of psychometricians who want to talk about 'construct validity' as though nothing ultimately *real* was being measured: "The introduction of "construct" as a general experimental term reflects the lingering influence of empiricism...Selective and tentative treatment of knowl-

edge claims concerning unobservables is then parleyed into a case for the diminished ontological status of unobservables" (p.70). Although the psychometric tradition associated with the language of construct validity has been truth productive on Trout's view, defining the object (or subject) being measured as a 'construct' does an injustice to the reality of the situation.

Against the metaphysically squeamish empiricist definition of valid measurement assumed by the notion of 'construct validity', Trout (1998) advances a 'measured realism' model of psychometric and sociometric success in the social sciences. He argues

...that the application and improvement of tests reflect our approximate knowledge of unobservable causal factors and that this process is the only one that adequately explains what we do when we measure. ..it may be due to the methods' demonstrated sensitivity to unobservables that empiricists fell silent when asked why we are able to increase (or improve upon) construct validity. Improvement in construct validity is just as troubling for the empiricist as the increasing precision of operational definitions. (pp. 71-72)

Trout's (1998) positive assessment of the epistemic achievements of the quantitative tradition in psychological science does not carry over to the qualitative methodologies called for by some human science advocates. He has been quite critical of the unreliable nature of narrative approaches in the human sciences. Trout criticized narrative strategies based on findings from the human judgment research. Such methods "...are especially prone to the base-rate fallacy, the availability bias, fallacies of representativeness, and other problems" (p.226). He examined numerous examples of narrative methods that have produced erroneous judgments. Trout's objection is not against narrative methods *per se* as much as against their unstructured use in a manner that is insensitive to relative quantitative data. He cites Adler's faulty generalizations about left-handed children based on clinical cases as an illustration.

Trout's (1998) naturalistic philosophy of psychology is nuanced, sensitive and very well informed by both current philosophical discussion and psychology research methodology. In addition to his formal interest in the topic, Trout benefits from simultaneously academic/research appointments in philosophy and in the experimental psychophysiology of audition. His ability to engage philosophy of psychology in compelling and helpful ways exemplifies my earlier call for informed reflection on the field of psychology by philosophers (Hathaway, 1986). If a thorough and adequate account of psychological knowing is to be produced, it will likely have to be fleshed out through

such complex vantage points.

Christian Psychology as an Interpretative Vision

Conservative Christian efforts at the integration of psychology and Christianity gained momentum with the attempt to classify various integrative postures along the lines of categorical 'types' (Eck, 1996). The classic Carter and Narramore (1979) categorization of integration into four types illustrates this project (e.g., 'parallels', 'of', 'against' and 'integrates'). Hathaway (2002) has suggested that a number of the alternative postures representing different approaches to faith-psychology integration can be viewed as different moments in a common process of interpretative understanding.

Hermeneutics is the study of interpretative understanding (Bernstein, 1984, Thiselton, 1980). The last few centuries have witnessed the expansion of hermeneutics from primarily parochial concerns about the understanding of legal, theological or classical texts, to the formulation of a general account of all human understanding (Palmer, 1969). Following Heidegger, Gadamer (1960/1984) has offered a rich descriptive account of how human interpretative understanding progresses which can be instructive for the integration program. Gadamer views interpretative understanding as the result of a 'fusion of horizons'. A horizon is the range of possible meanings available to a person within their place or situation in history. When an interpreter attempts to understand a text that contains novel perspectives, they do so by reformulating their preconceptions (or in Gadamer's terms, their 'pre-judgments') to embrace the novel meanings. The encounter with the 'other' in the text prompts the creative production of new meanings pregnant within their own original horizon and consequently results in an expansion of that horizon. Initially, such efforts will often play out as a mere attempt to assimilate the other according to one's prejudices. But if the interpreter is sensitive to the hermeneutic virtue of 'respecting the other', the interpreter will accommodate the other in ways that are faithful to both of their pre-understandings and the alien horizon (Ricoeur, 1981). It is this attentive listening to the 'otherness' of the new horizon that serves as the catalyst for creative expansion of one's own range of understanding.

Philosophical hermeneutics has often been advanced as a postmodern and anti-realist field. However, Wachterhauser (1994) has argued for a hermeneutical realist account of the Gadamerian tra-

dition. He denied cynical views of the hermeneutical circle as vicious based merely on the fact that our interpretative understandings arise from within our own particular horizons. He countered that "...contextualization does not preclude having a shared, common reality...All differences of perspective or point of view nevertheless presuppose that they are different perspectives on one and the same world or reality..." (Wachterhauser, 1994, pp. 6-7). Construed from a hermeneutical realist perspective, Gadamer's hermeneutic has significant convergence with externalism in epistemology (Hathaway, 2002, Kuenning, 1997). As I've said previously (Hathaway, 2002),

In Gadamerian terms, externalism could be reframed as the claim that the preunderstandings we bring to the hermeneutical circle do not just contain socially and linguistically constructed meanings. They also include a range of innate, or at least prefatory, cognitive dispositions or processes which enable truth approximating understandings of the real world." (p.209)

The fundamental attitude of such a hermeneutical realism is one of initial trust. It is not the naïve trust of the gullible but rather the trust characteristic of Reid's (1764/1997) "common sense realism". On such a view, it makes sense to trust the output of our epistemic faculties until sufficient reason manifests to doubt their productions. Reid highlights this point with his 'principle of credulity' (Goldman, 2002). This principle indicates that, in the absence of defeating considerations, people naturally and rationally form beliefs based on the testimony of others. Social psychologists have studied related phenomena under the rubric of 'social referencing' or 'social conformity'. While such an attitude of trust often results in faulty beliefs, it would be difficult to imagine the conduct of daily life without reliance on the principle. Much psychological science relies on the principle, as is most obviously the case in the clinical interview. Yet prior discussion has already illustrated the vulnerabilities of such unstructured judgment formation to numerous distorting biases. A psychological positivist would likely reject judgments formed on the principle of credulity because such beliefs were not first verified through some truth guaranteeing method. In contrast, externalist clinical science could adopt a more tentative acceptance of such beliefs with full awareness of their tenuousness of such information sources.

A Process Model of Integration as Interpretive Understanding

Based on these sorts of hermeneutical considerations, I (Hathaway, 2002) have elsewhere suggested a process model of integrative understanding. Integration as interpretation moves from mere *assimilative postures,* through a period in which *productive tension* is maintained, and onward to an *expanded horizon* of understanding. Assimilative integration occurs when Christians can account for a psychology in a 'ready at hand' way without any fundamental alteration of their Christian preunderstandings. Productive tension arises when a Christian recognizes something 'alien' or 'other' in the psychological realm which no ready made Christian preunderstanding can assimilate. The integrative postures adopted in the face of this tension reflect a kind of compartmentalization that is faithful to the Christian horizon and the horizon of psychology. Carter and Narramore's (1979) "parallels", Evans' (1977) territorialism, or various 'complementarian' strategies seem to evidence such postures. I (Hathaway, 2003) suggested that interpretative understanding reaches its telos "...when a person's pre-understandings are expanded to accommodate new truths from psychology without compromising either the integrity of one's Christian worldview or the psychological truth. Such a "fused horizon" would reflect a seamless coherent whole" (p.216).

Several clarifications are important before proceeding further. Each integrative posture is viewed as a potentially authentic form of integration. For instance, the compartmentalization associated with *productive tension* is quite appropriate when the otherness of a psychological truth claim cannot be neatly subsumed under a Christian pre-understanding without loss of truth. Another point is that nothing in this hermeneutical model of integration precludes the possibility that universal truths will be adduced by a Christian psychology. Such universal truths would, if discovered, arise out of the particularity of convergent fused horizons rather than in some perspective free absolutist manner. So the perspicuity of the hermeneutical account should not be thought to imply relativism.

Yet the realist commitment of the model does not imply that faithful, responsible Christian psychologists will converge on a uniform worldview, despite the expectation of some points of convergence. Given the shortness of life and the vast range of truths to be known about the universe, human knowledge projects will always likely remain highly incomplete. Depending on one's starting point in life, it should not be surprising if Christian psychologists end up with very different outlooks by the end of their lives. This point is

further compounded by the fact of the plurality possible within the Christian perspective prior to engaging in the integrative task with psychology (Murphy, 2003a, 2003b). Finally, Smith (2000) has noted that Christians have frequently attributed plurality in interpretation to the noetic effects of the fall. He argued that at least some plurality of viewpoint would not be surprising even in the pre-fallen Edenic state. While integration will likely move in a truth appropriating and unifying perspective, it should not be surprising if several Christian psychologies emerge from faithful efforts at this project.

The Spiritual Parallel to the Clinical Judgment Debate

Decker (2002) has reviewed Christian counseling journals over a 15 year period for work on the role of the Holy Spirit and counseling. He summarized various ways that Christian psychologists and counselors have recognized the Holy Spirit as an active person in the counseling process. One of his points was that the "Holy Spirit" might be a source of knowledge in counseling. Craig (2000) suggested that the witness of the Spirit can constitute a form of direct and 'unmediated' knowledge about spiritual truths that is rational and defensible for the subject to whom it obtains. Yet he further distinguished between the process of 'knowing' and 'showing', arguing that the witness of the Spirit only constitutes knowledge for those who personally experience the witness. Outside of this testimony, other individuals must either accept the purported knowledge claim on faith or be shown the truth of the claim through some intersubjectively demonstrable process. In light of our earlier discussion on externalism, there is nothing stopping a psychologist from being open to clinical knowledge arising from a 'witness of the Spirit'.

Yet the professional psychologist, Christian or otherwise, operates within a horizon that is accountable to the public. Consequently, the clinician must be prepared to 'show' the basis for clinical findings if asked by an appropriate regulatory authority. Reichenbach's (1938) classic distinction between the context of discovery and the context of justification may be helpful at this point. The witness of the Spirit would be a reasonable and valid source of discovery in the clinical situation. However, if it were the whole basis of a substantial clinical decision in the absence of other factors, it might be difficult to later demonstrate the justification for such a belief. But the Bible itself recognizes the fallibility of human judgment and enjoins believers to 'test the Spirits' and otherwise engage in public discernment activities (Murphy, 2003b). The Holy Spirit's presence may be the effectual and sufficient cause of a sense of hope in the believer, but the believer is nonetheless instructed to be prepared to give a rational account of that hope (1 Peter 3:15).

Some Epistemic Tasks for Integration on this Account

On my view, a primary task that awaits integration work is the formulation of a rich science that allows faithful comprehension of the truths available both in contemporary psychology and Christianity. Contrary to an internalist starting point, no a priori set of epistemological standards can be selected that would prejudice the outcome of such a project. But that does not mean that we have a neutral starting point. Christian thought has advocated a broad range of truth claims and provided many different philosophical models of how to recognize and/or validate those truths (Tillich, 1986). Contemporary psychology has also developed numerous strategies for delimiting its subject matter and prescribing particular pathways for the production of psychological knowledge. Because I believe in a real world created by God, I believe that faithful comprehension of truth about that world, or its maker, is the regulative ideal for any sphere of understanding.

Yet nothing in my training or experience has led me to believe that humans achieve knowledge through a singular or a even a small set of methods. It is quite possible that different types of knowledge production are appropriate to different 'spheres of reality' (Cole, 1998). The reader should note that nowhere in my realist account did I equate knowledge with 'objectivity'. Part of the world God created is the world of knowing subjects who perceive things in subjective ways and who co-create or 'construct' at least some aspects of their world (Hacking, 2000). A comprehensive Christian psychological science would therefore also have to find ways to reliably produce knowledge about subjective or constructed realities.

The recent advances in qualitative research methods show promise as a useful adjunct to the quantitative approaches which tend to reduce the psychological world to objects that can be studied through methods analogous to those used in the physical sciences. Unfortunately, advocates of qualitative and quantitative approaches have sometimes allowed their positions to be conflated with broader battles between

postmodernism and modernism (Quill, 1999). I had the opportunity in graduate school to participate in an interdisciplinary 'non-traditional' research methods group. We read Lincoln and Guba's (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry* and examined other research approaches that attempted to offer a rigorous qualitative alternative for human science. One of the professors who led the group had cut his research teeth on traditional quantitative clinical research. Later drawn to the qualitative tradition, he became enamored by techniques that seemed to reengage the rich psychological world of subjectivity. Given my Christian predilections about truth, I wondered about how we would discern 'valid' outcomes in this research from 'invalid' ones. He seemed unconcerned. For him the qualitative paradigm shift was a chance to become emancipated from the older strictures of quantitative psychological science. By the 1990s the professor had embraced a self-consciously post-modern identity and was critical of traditional psychological science as 'modernist'. Informed by postmodernism, he now responded to my validity question by stating that research should not aim at 'truth about the world', a goal he believed was now mythical. Instead, it should pursue pragmatic goals. For instance, if I compare two interpretations of a subject diary, which interpretation is more useful to a purpose that I might have as an interpreter.

My concern with the sort of pragmatic view endorsed by postmodernists such as Rorty (1998) is that it ultimately falls prey to the same epistemological problem of validity as the accounts they are attempting to supplant. To assert the usefulness of one option over the other is to make a truth claim about usefulness. How would I know it *'true'* that interpretation A is more useful than B? Like Pilate before Jesus, there is no escaping the question of truth, pragmatic dodges notwithstanding.

As a Christian psychologist, I am concerned with the appropriation of truth wherever God reveals it. Introductory texts in psychology or its subdisciplines contain numerous examples of robust psychological findings that have been obtained using quantitative methods. However, the Christian view of the person as a meaning attributing and perceiving agent leads me to believe that greater sophistication in our approach to discerning the subjective or constructed aspects of our human world is required. A critical task facing us in integration is the development of psychological scientists who are skilled investigators of both the subjective and objective aspects of personhood. This means that Christian psychologists should become proficient in the multiple investigatory strategies that evidence reliable truth production in their respective or even overlapping spheres. Yet we should not only be at the forefront of mastering such techniques, we should also be contributing to their development. This no doubt amounts in part to a challenge for Christian psychology training programs to emphasize training in qualitative research methods in addition to traditional quantitative approaches.

Finally, the focus of our Christian research agenda should not just be on the formulation of methods more compatible with the breadth of a Christian anthropology. Christian psychologists should also develop research programs and clinical foci that are particularly shaped by their anthropology. Emmons and McCullough's (2003) recent work on gratitude provides an example of such a research focus using relatively traditional research methods to explore a Christian virtue. Alternatively, Reimer's (2003) study of caring behavior in L'Arche communities productively utilizes a less traditional approach, latent semantic analysis, to explore Christian virtue. Whatever else a Christian psychology should be, it should advance methods of knowing that are sufficiently rich and varied to contribute to our redemptive task. Contemporary psychology has given us some techniques for carefully investigating truths about the more objective aspects of human functioning. Some recent research trends point to promise of a rich qualitative science as well (Smith, 2003). When a sufficiently rich and varied set of reliable knowledge producing strategies are developed and then applied to aspects of human functioning brought into focus by a Christian perspective, an expanded horizon that is authentically both *Christian and psychological* will likely emerge.

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