Chapter 1
Psychology as a Normative Science

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In keeping with the manifesto spirit of this volume, I shall put all caution aside in this chapter and initially make two foundational claims about psychological phenomena before I move on to discuss three conclusions that I believe follow from the initial claims. By invoking the rather grand idea of "psychological phenomena," I am simply referring to the processes that psychologists (*as* psychologists) should rightly be studying. Chemists study molecular processes, biologists study life processes (*zoe* to use the Greek term), and psychologists supposedly study mental life or mental processes, whatever this may signify. My claims are in short that such mental processes, at least in their developed human manifestations, should be seen as (1) *doings* that are (2) *conversational*. If so, psychology becomes a normative science, or so I shall argue.

Reasons and Causes, Actions and Behaviors

Needless to say, all claims can be challenged and discussed, and this obviously also goes for the two (rather sweeping) claims that I shall be making here, but I do believe that denying these propositions is equivalent to denying that there can be a psychological science in the first place. Paradoxically, much of contemporary psychology implicitly or explicitly denies these claims and thereby (if my argument is valid) renders its own scientific endeavors impossible. Most psychological research thus works with "variables" and is interested in measuring the "causal effects" of such variables upon human behavior. Agency, meaning, and intentionality disappear. So, as I hope to make clear, denying the two claims is tantamount to eliminating human agency, or, in other words, disregarding our capacities as human beings for being responsive to the reasons for acting, feeling, and

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thinking that are afforded by the situations and practices in which we find ourselves. Instead of beginning with these higher-order psychological phenomena, the standard account in psychology states that psychology—like all sciences worthy of the name—should study *causes* and *effects* (rather than *reasons* and *responsivity*) and conceive of human *action* as mere *behavior*.

Bios and Zoe

To borrow a distinction that goes back to Aristotle and was made famous by Arendt (1958) in the twentieth century, we can say that my argument implies that human mental life is part and parcel of *bios politikos*—a kind of life praxis that gives a person a biography—whereas *zoe* (life in a biological sense) is rightly studied by physiologists rather than psychologists. Elsewhere, I have built upon Sellars' (1997) distinction between a "space of reasons" and "space of causation" to make the point (Brinkmann 2011a), but here I shall attempt to express the idea in a less technical way. A space of reasons is one in which people operate as agents, based on judgments about what is a reason for what. Noticing the elderly lady with damaged grocery bags provides (under normal circumstances) a reason for others to help. The relationship between the situation and the preferred action (to intervene and help) is wholly unlike causal relationships between, say, the weight of the goods in her bags and the ensuing accident when the goods fall on the ground. The latter should rightly be seen within a space of causation. The goods have no reason to destroy the bags and fall on the ground. They simply do this because of blind causal powers involving gravity.

Psychological Phenomena Are Being Done *by Persons*

That psychological phenomena are done by persons is the first claim I shall be making. Establishing the link to Arendt's distinction is easy: A person's life (in the biographical rather than biological sense) is something the person *conducts*. A life does not lead itself, but is an active process involving the person in collectives of others. We *live* our lives; it is an active process. Setting the case of severely psychotic persons aside as an extreme example, we do not normally have the experience that our lives simply *happen* to us, and we do not talk about our lives in this way. When we say to someone that she should "Get a life!" we do not mean that the person should become alive, e.g., begin to breathe again after a heart attack, but rather that she should initiate meaningful actions in relation to worthwhile life projects and values.

Interestingly, the original Greek meaning of *psyche* was much closer to the biological sense (*zoe*) than the psychological one (*bios*), as it referred to the fundamental life principle of all living things (plants, animals, humans). *Psyche* was an

animating power related to breath, to being alive in a fundamental sense, and Aristotle's *On the Soul* basically belongs to biology, whereas his psychology is primarily found in his *Nicomachean Ethics* that deals with life as *praxis* (Aristotle 1976; see also Robinson 1989). The latter work is concerned with much more than living organisms, because it addresses the whole normative realm (the human space of reasons, one might say) within which we live our lives, which is why such themes as friendship, moral action, and the virtues take center stage in Aristotle's ethical psychology—or psychological ethics.

So the first claim is that psychological phenomena properly belong to the realm of *bios* rather than *zoe*. I hasten to say that my view does not imply a clearly delineated border between the two realms. Psychology is often most interesting when addressing phenomena that fall somewhere in the gray area between the things that people *do* and the things that simply *happen* to (or in) them. We can sometimes say that some psychological process is clearly done—for example when someone is trying to perform mathematical operations, which cannot meaningfully be said to happen to the person. But most of our emotional life belongs in the gray area: We might feel that our grief *occurs* to us after a loss, for example. We are overwhelmed by sadness and think of ourselves as victims or sufferers in such a situation. However, even an emotion such as grief is not simply a mechanical reaction that happens to occur like an effect following a cause.

Doing Grief and Patienthood

Grief is also *done* or *performed* by skilled human actors, who can only *grieve properly* if they know their local moral order (Harré 1983), i.e., know *how*, and *how much*, grief is called for in the social practices of their culture (Kofod 2013). This is not to say that grief is an action that can simply be stopped (like playing football with friends, which stops whenever the players become bored with the game or are leaving because of other appointments). But it is to say that grief is not a mechanical *reaction*, but rather a *response* to a loss, and the loss is not simply a *cause* that triggers an emotion, but a *reason* for feeling and expressing grief. This also explains why grief (like other emotions) may be evaluated morally: The person who does not grieve sufficiently is easily seen as shallow or aloof (whether justified or not), whereas the person who is experiencing extreme grief in a situation that does not call for deep mourning can be accused of "overdoing it." Ester Holte Kofod has recently studied parents' grief after the loss of an infant and found that they do not only struggle with the loss as such, but also struggle with navigating the rather unclear normativity in this tragic situation: On the one hand, there is a cultural discourse claiming that the worst thing a human being can experience is the loss of a child, but, on the other, there is also a discourse implying (to put it bluntly) that the loss is supposed to be less intense when the child is so small at the time of its death (Kofod's participants have lost their children either before, during, or soon after giving birth) compared to older children that the parents "have gotten to

know" (there is also a cultural discourse, which implies that the loss of very old persons should call for less intense forms of grief). How—and how much—should one grieve then? This is not an easy question, but one that Kofod's participants reflect upon, lending support to the idea that also difficult emotions that overwhelm us have a normative aspect.

In a related way, in a study of relationships between psychiatric patients and the personnel in clinics, Ringer (2013) has recently shown how patients must figure out how to perform their problems adequately: If they act as "too well," they risk being sent out of the institution too early, but if they are acting in a way that is perceived as "too much," they are interpreted as fakers, who are exaggerating their symptoms. Like grief, mental disorders exist in a gray area between phenomena that happen to us and phenomena that are done—between *bios* and *zoe*, reasons, and causes—and the challenge for researchers, who are open to this perspective, is to study these processes as performances without blaming the victims. For if a mental disorder is understood as something done in the same way that a move in a game of chess is played, it might seem to follow that the patient is responsible for her affliction—just like the chess player is responsible for the chosen move. This, of course, is an unacceptable conclusion, and the solution is to appreciate that there is what we might call a *continuum of doings*, ranging from actions that are performed with full reflective self-consciousness (e.g., deciding whether to accept a job offer) to everyday habitual conduct.

Doing Habitual Life

The pragmatists noticed that most of a human life is habitual rather than reflective, but much of what we do (perhaps even everything we do in the sense of *acting*) may become reflective under proper circumstances (Dewey 1922). Dewey would say that we only turn to reflective thinking when our habits break down and are insufficient to enable further actions. Situations of breakdown call for a readjustment of our habits, which is aided by thinking and reflection, but this is not the primordial way of being in the world. However, if some process (e.g., in the body) is completely and in principle forever outside the realm of conscious reflection, what reason do we have for counting it as a mental process? If Searle (1992) is right—and I believe he is in this case—the answer is that we have no such reason.

In her fieldwork among patients diagnosed with bipolar disorder, Emily Martin (herself diagnosed with bipolar depression) has drawn attention to the two poles (pardon the pun!) of willed action and unreflective habits, and she argues that mania should be seen as lying somewhere in the middle of this (Martin 2007, p. 83), equivalent to what I called the gray area above. She argues that by emphasizing the performativity of mania, and describing it "in terms of performance and style," we might in fact release it from "the narrow confines of pathology" (p. 84), but without ignoring the suffering associated with this difficult condition. Martin documents how patients in support groups engage in meta communication about their

symptoms and learn to perform them adequately and are thereby able to create distance to their own condition. They *are* at once bipolar patients, but also aware that they *perform* their condition in ways suited to the local context (Martin 2007, p. 86).

Normativity and Affordances

The claim that psychological phenomena—our ways of feeling, thinking, acting, etc.—are done by persons is not new. It goes as far back as Aristotle and was articulated for modern psychology by Rom Harré in the 1980s (e.g., Harré 1983) and also in later works (Harré and Moghaddam 2012). In more implicit ways, it figures, for example, in the ecological approach developed by James Gibson, according to which perception is not a passive mirroring of a static external reality (something that *happens*), but is a function of our active moving around in a changing world where we examine objects, do things, and have intentions that we try to realize (something we *do*) (see also Gibson 1986; Costall 2004). For Gibson, perception is a form of action and is thus something people *do.* It is normative in the sense that there is a difference between veridical and non-veridical perception (just as thinking is normative, we might add, because there is a difference between better and worse ways of reasoning). Gibson (1986) argued more specifically about the normativity or value-laden nature of affordances that "[t]he perceiving of an affordance is not a process of perceiving a value-free physical object […] it is a process of perceiving a value-rich ecological object. […] Physics may be value-free, but ecology is not" (p. 140). Gibson's ecological psychology is thus a science of value and meaning, locating these not in the minds of humans, but in the ecology, the ecology of where normativity lives—not in the subjective minds of people.

Doing Anger

This might be acceptable to some, but the normativity of psychological phenomena is harder to accept when we move away from perception to emotions and motivation. This is why I have discussed the example of grief at some length above, but already Aristotle articulated this normative approach in quite a clear way: Although he understood motivation as a natural phenomenon, belonging partly to the realm of *zoe*, he did not think that it could be fully understood by natural scientists (the *phusikos*). We also need the work of the "dialectician" (an equivalent to modern cultural psychologists who might agree with the substance of this chapter) in order to grasp it (Robinson 1989, p. 81). For only the latter "would define e.g. anger as the appetite for returning pain for pain, or something like that, while the former would define it as a boiling of the blood" (Aristotle quoted in Robinson 1989, p. 81).

The dialecticians understand that anger (like grief or any other psychological phe- nomenon) is never just a happening (like a boiling of the blood), but always *also* something done or performed, which is why there is such a thing as justified anger in the face of preposterousness (and certainly also unjustified anger). The point is not that anger is always done with full conscious reflection (it very rarely is), but that it *may* be reflected upon, which is what explains why an adult can be responsible for her anger. Anger can be escalated, maintained, and de-escalated in response to various reasons that are given across time, and it seems even possible that anger is inherited by others who were not in fact the victims (people born after World War II in Denmark could still be angry with the Germans, for example, and perhaps (yet perhaps not) have a reason for being so).

What makes "boiling of the blood" (or some modern neurophysiological equivalent) anger is precisely that it is performed in a practical context where it makes sense to question, justify, and state the reason for "boiling of the blood." Anger is thus a psychological phenomenon in so far as it is a normative phe- nomenon that can be done more or less *well* and therefore is subject to praise and blame. If it belonged entirely to the realm of happenings, we should confine it to the science of physiology. As Harré (1983, p. 136) once noted, the reason why dread and anger are *psychological* phenomena (i.e., emotions) but not indigestion or exhaustion—although all have behavioral manifestations as well as fairly distinc- tive experiential qualities—is that only the former are normative and fall within a moral order. Indigestion may happen to us (but we cannot really *do* indigestion), but anger is always also something we do.

Three further terms should be discussed briefly before I move on to the second foundational claim: intentionality, meaning, and the concept of a person. For together with intentionality, normativity is inherently connected to meaning. It is sometimes said (and rightly so, I believe) that cultural psychology does not just deal with "information," but rather with meaning (Bruner 1990). This is important, for, in a very minimal sense, psychological phenomena are meaningful when they cannot be adequately described in purely physical terms (as something that simply happens), but demand an understanding in terms of intentionality and normativity. Since Ryle (1949), we have been able to say that "thick description" is what is demanded. Thus, the same physical movement of a human eye, a wink for example, can express different meanings (flirtation, a signal of conspiracy, etc.) depending on the purpose and context of the wink.

Aboutness, Oughtness, and the Person

A movement is meaningful because it is *about* something other than itself (inten- tionality) and because it conforms to a social practice of winking (normativity). Aboutness and oughtness go hand in hand to constitute meaningful psychological phenomena *qua* psychological. The meaning of the movement cannot be found in its physical properties as such, and if, say, the movement is caused by the fact that

a fly enters the eye and triggers a mechanical reaction (a reflex), there is neither intentionality nor normativity and thus no meaning (and, I would add, the movement does not qualify as a *bona fide* psychological phenomenon). This argument was also made by Dewey (1916), who defined mental life in terms of meaning (a composite of intentionality and normativity): "The difference between an adjustment to a physical stimulus [e.g. a fly in the eye] and a mental act [e.g. an intentional wink of the eye] is that the latter involves response to a thing in its meaning; the former does not" (p. 29). We might add with Dewey that nothing has meaning in itself, but only on the background of a larger social practice (with its normative standards of correctness), which accentuates the importance of culture and context in understanding anything meaningful (and psychological).

Finally, the first claim includes the concept of the person, which should be incorporated to emphasize the fact that neither brains, nor minds nor social structures do the doings of psychological phenomena, but always and irreducibly persons. Persons think, feel, act, perceive, etc. and not their brains, minds, or the social structures in which they participate. The failure to respect this grammatical point (in a Wittgensteinian sense) has been called the mereological fallacy (Bennett and Hacker 2003): attributing properties to a part of something that makes sense only when attributed to the whole. Of course, persons could not perform their thinking, feeling, and acting without a brain or a mind, but that is not to say that these parts are the doers of the deeds. Rather, as I have argued elsewhere, brain, body, social practices, and material objects serve as *mediators* that enable persons to perform whatever psychological process is involved, and the *mind* is not to be thought of as a thing (or an agent), but as the range of skills and dispositions of persons (who *are* the agents) to do what they do (Brinkmann 2011b). Thus, the mind cannot be localized (e.g., in the brain), for skills and dispositions are not physically contained, but rather manifested in the life activities (the *bios*) of a human being. It is thus misconceived to look for grief or anger in the brain (even if the brain is needed for grief and anger to be enacted); as meaningful mental phenomena, they are performed by persons in biographical time. The *person* is grieving or is angry, not her brain, and we appropriately console or reproach the *person*, not her brain.

Psychological Phenomena Are Conversational

The second claim—that psychological phenomena are conversational—is more frequently made in contemporary expositions of psychological science, so I shall devote less space to explicate it here. It is apparently easier to understand and accept for psychologists from many corners of the discipline. This is not to say that everyone agrees with it, and without being able to demonstrate it statistically, I believe that the majority of psychologists today implicitly deny it by presenting psychological phenomena as discrete entities "in the head," e.g., in the form of so-called mental representations, neural networks, or something similar. If one accepts the first claim, then one cannot agree that psychological phenomena are

"entities" at all (because doings are not entities), and if one accepts the second claim, then one cannot agree that they are discrete. I already hinted at this above when arguing for the contextuality of psychological phenomena. A wink, to reiterate this example, is only a wink within a context, and nothing, which encloses it upon itself as a discrete event, can be said about this movement that renders its possible meaning visible. Cultural psychologists often express this by saying that psychological phenomena (including the self) are *dialogical*. This is one legitimate way of putting it, but, personally, I prefer the term *conversational* since it does not carry the same positive connotations as the terms dialogue and dialogical. To take a rather extreme example, the musings of a serial killer are "dialogical," and her relationships with the victims are "dialogical," without this implying any ethical value. Conversation is a more neutral term (at least in my ears), although this is not necessarily so etymologically. Conversation comes from Latin and means "dwelling with someone" or "wandering together with." The root sense of dialogue is that of talk (logos) that goes back and forth (dia-) between persons (Mannheim and Tedlock 1995, p. 4). Thus conceived, the concept of conversation is very broad and encompasses much more than a specific kind of linguistic interaction. Our emotions—grief and anger for example—are conversational and involve responses to social situations and other people's actions.

In a thoughtful little book entitled *The Conversation of Humanity*, Stephen Mulhall builds a philosophy of conversation from the fact that we are linguistic creatures and argues that language is best understood in terms of the figure of conversation (Mulhall 2007). Our psychological reality is conversational reality: "The primary human reality is persons in conversation" (Harré 1983, p. 58). What we call cultures are constantly produced, reproduced, and revised in conversations among their members (Mannheim and Tedlock 1995, p. 2). We should see language and culture as emergent properties of conversations in the broadest sense rather than the other way around. Conversations are not several monologues added together, but the basic, primordial form of associated human life. In other words, "we live our daily social lives within an ambience of conversation, discussion, argumentation, negotiation, criticism and justification; much of it to do with problems of intelligibility and the legitimation of claims to truth" (Shotter 1993, p. 29).

Not just our interpersonal social reality is constituted by conversations. This also goes for our self-interpretations, or what is sometimes reified with the concept of the self. Charles Taylor argues that the self exists only within what he calls "webs of interlocution" (Taylor 1989, p. 36). Now, I am skeptical of the widespread "self-talk" in psychology and popular culture, if it postulates the existence of some entity called "the self." Following Harré, the self is more properly a term that actually stands for the *process* of a person reflectively relating to him or herself. We might also refer to Kierkegaard, who used the term self more like a verb than a noun and famously defined the self, not as a thing in any way, but as a relation that relates to itself: "The self is a relation that relates itself to itself or is the relation's relating itself to itself in the relation; the self is not the relation but is the relation's relating itself to itself" (Kierkegaard 1849, p. 73; see also Taylor 1985). Relating to oneself is a conversational process. We are "selves" (i.e., self-interpreters) only in relation

to certain interlocutors with whom we are in conversation and from whom we gain a language of self-understanding. In referring to Heidegger's concept of *Dasein*—or human existence—Mulhall states that "Dasein is not just the locus and the precondition for the conversation of humankind; it is itself, because humankind is, a kind of enacted conversation" (Mulhall 2007, p. 58). Humankind is a kind of enacted conversation: That ought to be the starting point for psychological science. We understand ourselves as well as others only because we can speak, and "being able to speak involves being able to converse," Mulhall adds (p. 26).

We might now understand how the two foundational claims are linked: Psychological phenomena are done by persons, and the normative order that structures these doings and renders them meaningful is conversational. The processes of our lives—actions, thoughts, and emotions—are nothing but physiology (*zoe*) if considered as isolated elements outside of conversations and interpretative contexts. A life, as Paul Ricoeur has said, "is no more than a biological phenomenon as long as it has not been interpreted" (Ricoeur 1991, p. 28). As stated earlier, psychological phenomena are not simply *reactions* to whatever happens, but must be seen as *responses* to people, situations, and events. As responses they are conversational and dialogical, for, to include Alasdair MacIntyre among our conversational theorists, "conversation, understood widely enough, is the form of human transactions in general" (MacIntyre 1985a, p. 211). When people are acting or talking, they are not simply staging displays out of the blue, or putting preconceived ideas into words, but are dialogically responding to each other's (or their own) expressions and are trying to make sense by using the conversational repertoires—whether conceived as story lines, discourses, or other semiotic devices (Valsiner 2007)—that are available. In short, together with normativity, conversations are the stuff of psychology, the stuff that constitutes our mental life, and the stuff that enables us to develop as persons. Of course, "stuff" is here metaphorical, because I have here argued against what Valsiner (2007) rightly chides as "entification" in psychology. In a literal sense, there is no psychological "stuff," but only conversational doings.

Three Conclusions

After having introduced and explained the two claims that I believe are foundational for a psychological science, it is time to draw a few conclusions from these. A huge number of conclusions could be seen to follow, but I will highlight just three.

A causal vocabulary is generally inappropriate for psychology: Of course, when psychologists study brain processes (which are perfectly legitimate as an auxiliary research endeavor for psychologists), they must employ a causal language and talk about how neurochemical circuits cause cascades of electrochemical processes in the central nervous system. A causal vocabulary is needed in the neurosciences, because brain processes happen and are not done (a caveat here, however, is that

not even the workings of the brain can be thought of in purely causal terms, because of the self-organizational, systemic processes of the brain, but this takes nothing away from my general argument about psychological processes). But neuroscience is not psychology. As soon as we leave the study of neurochemical happenings and talk about psychological phenomena (and not merely the physical mediators of such phenomena), we must leave the causal vocabulary behind. We should not even say (although doing so is extremely widespread) that a certain brain process is the *cause* of a psychological process. To wit, I am convinced that a process in my brain is needed in order for me to feel grief or read the letters written in a book, but it is misguided to say that the brain process *causes* my grief or my reading. It is just as wrong as to say that the weight and size of a coin (its material properties) causes its value in the monetary system, or to say that the shapes and sizes of letters cause their meaning as words in a book. The monetary system is normative, but is upheld (not caused) by a host of material mediators (e.g., banks, notes, coins), just as written language is normative, but is upheld (not caused) by a host of material mediators (e.g., alphabets, books, libraries).

In the normative realm, there are no causes. Being a bachelor is not the cause why one is an unmarried man. The relationship between "bachelor" and "unmarried man" is normative (viz. conceptual), just as the relationship between an action and a social practice, or between grief and loss. A way of integrating the causal and normative vocabularies in psychology, which emphasizes the necessary priority of the latter, has been articulated by Harré (2002; see also Brinkmann 2011b, on which the following is based). Harré introduces what he calls the "task–tool metaphor" to explain how psychological phenomena (the doings) are enabled or mediated by material conditions. As living human beings, we are engaged in doings or tasks (looking for the keys, baking cookies, writing books, trying to remember a friend's birthday), which, as a whole, make up the subject matter of psychology. These tasks are performed by persons, but can only be brought to fruition—more or less satisfactorily—by means of material mechanisms, notably the brain (but also other bodily organs). The brain is therefore the most significant tool in carrying out our psychological tasks, a tool that is likely involved in all the tasks we perform. But we use other tools as well, and when our brains malfunction, e.g., because of neurological defects that result in dementia, we may as skilled cultural beings use other tools (e.g., a notebook to remember birthdays). This, of course, is not just something that we do in cases of brain dysfunction, but is a pervasive aspect of human life, allowing us to "supersize our minds" as a species (Clark 2008). The implication for psychological analysis is that the workings of tools (e.g., the brain) must be described using a causal language, whereas *the ways we work with tools* (i.e., the doings of persons) must be described using a normative language.

In order to carry out our analyses properly, we must keep in mind another principle accentuated by Harré: the taxonomic priority principle. This principle expresses the (logical and scientific) primacy of the normative language in psychology. In short, the principle states that tools are defined relative to the tasks that

they can be used to perform. To give an example: If I want to study the neural correlates of reading (a study which is concerned with a causal process in the brain), I must first be able to identify a certain set of psychological doings as reading, and this identification is normative (because reading is normative). Persons read, not their brains. Unavoidably, normativity takes precedence in psychology.

The normativity of psychology is embedded in cultural practices: This is the next conclusion that follows. Psychological phenomena are in other words cultural. At different times and in different places, people "do psychology" in quite different ways. Anyone reading Homer can appreciate this. Psychological phenomena get their meaning from their local cultural contexts. If I may return to the example of bipolar disorder and quote Emily Martin once again, "There is no 'thing' called mania that is, apart from its context, invariably on the side of heaven or hell, exaltation or despair" (Martin 2007, p. 229). Any psychological performance demands a social practice of carrying out that performance in order for it to be meaningful—and such social practices vary across cultures.

Many researchers, especially of a social constructionist bent, have celebrated this conclusion, arguing that it leads to cultural relativism. This, I believe, does not follow. The fact that psychological performances vary across cultures (because many norms and social practices vary) does not mean that no general norms exist. The fact that social constructions exist does not mean that no normative preconditions for socially constructed life exist that make social constructions possible in the first place. Indeed, there is good reason to think that the whole range of psychological doings, dependent as it is on cultural normativity, rest on a number of normativities that are not simply socially constructed (but preconditions for the existence of social constructions). The argument here quickly becomes difficult, but Holiday (1988) has argued that three "core language games" (as he called them) are needed in order for linguistic normativity to be in place. They are truth-telling, justice, and respect for ritual, and let me just briefly explain the first one to give an indication of the argument.

In general, we praise truth-telling and condemn and punish lying. We have linguistic practices that function to preserve the value of truthfulness, which, Holiday argues, is not a value that can intelligibly be seen as socially constructed, but rather presupposed by any process of social construction. For there to be social constructions, there must be a language, and language is only imaginable if people are committed to truth-telling. It is a fundamental fact, as Løgstrup (1956) also argued, that a basic trust is primary in social interactions and conversations. We need in most cases to trust that the other is not lying. This basic trust may of course be subdued from time to time, but it is nonetheless ontologically primary. Humans expect each other to tell the truth, for lying is logically parasitic on truth. If humans normally lied, there could be no such thing as language or communication. As Holiday says, paraphrasing Peter Winch, adherence to the truth-telling norm "is not itself conventional, but the condition of there being any conventions whatsoever"

(Holiday 1988, p. 93; the argument is greatly expanded in Brinkmann 2011a). Another way of putting all this (with the risk of sounding like a mystic) is to say that psychology is ultimately grounded in ethics, i.e., in a fundamental and non-negotiable normativity in the dealings that human beings have with each other, which I guess was the crux of Emmanuel Lévinas' exposition of ethics as first philosophy (see Williams and Gantt 2002).

Psychology is a normative science: This conclusion is the third and most foundational one and appropriate to end with. It says that psychology studies a realm of doings, performances by skilled human persons in their social practices, which is a normative realm. In a trivial sense, all sciences are normative, because sciences are human activities that are carried out with reference to norms (of objectivity, honesty, reliability, etc.). But unlike physics, for example, psychology's *subject matter* is also normative. Other disciplines resemble psychology on this point: Logic has a normative subject matter (correct forms of reasoning), and so do law, aesthetics, and ethics, for example. Since psychology is the study of persons' lives as *bios politikos* per se, however, this discipline seems to take center stage in being a science of the normative in human life.

There is one further way in which psychology is normative, and which I do not have space to unfold here: Psychology can—as a scientific activity—influence its own subject matter, and in this way affect the normative doings that it studies. MacIntyre once put the point in a simple way: Molecules do not read chemistry textbooks, whereas humans do read psychology books that affect their self-understandings (MacIntyre 1985b). And, to make matters worse (or, in some cases, better), we are not only affected by the occasional psychology book, but by a host of technologies and social practices in the "psychological society" that has emerged in the last hundred years or so. In the twentieth century, Roger Smith concludes, "everyone learned to be a psychologist, everyone became her or his own psychologist, able and willing to describe life in psychological terms" (Smith 1997, p. 577). A whole Foucauldian school in the historiography of psychology has been developed to study the impact of psychology on human life and subjectivity, and there is much to learn from this, although assessing it is outside the scope of this chapter (the classics in this field include Rose 1999; Hacking 1995; Danziger 1997).

The conclusion becomes that psychology is a normative science in (at least) two ways: It is itself normative—because it constantly fabricates new standards for its subject matter—and it addresses a realm of the world that is normative through and through.

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