INTRODUCTION TO THEORETICAL PSYCHOLOGY

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MICHAEL HYLAND

*Department of Psychology,
Plymouth Polytechnic*

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Contents

<i>Preface</i>	viii
1 Why use Theories?	1
Behaviourism <i>versus</i> Theoretical Psychology	2
Data, Theories and the History of Science	11
2 Introduction to theories: Predictive Power, Form, Content	15
Predictive Power	16
Describing a Theory	18
Form	19
Content	24
Processes	28
3 Hypothetical Constructs and Intervening Variables	32
Construct Validity	37
Explanatory Fictions	39
Using Hypothetical Constructs and Intervening Variables	40
4 The Nature of Hypothetical Constructs	42
The Operational Component	43
The Nature Component	45
Physiological Hypothetical Constructs	46
Mentalistic Hypothetical Constructs	48
Mechanistic Hypothetical Constructs	50
Identity Relations	54
5 Causal Relations in Psychology	59
What is a Cause?	60
Relations between Hypothetical Constructs	62

Relations between Hypothetical Constructs and the Situation	66
Relations between Hypothetical Constructs and Behaviour	69
Physiological Psychology and Psychophysiology	70
Mentalistic Hypothetical Constructs, Reasons and Causes	71
Causal Processes and Pseudoprocesses	72
6 Operators	76
Simple and Complex Operators	78
Consequences of using Simple and Complex Operators	80
Differences in the Form of an Operator	82
Identity Relations between Operators and Hypothetical Constructs	85
7 Theories	91
General Theoretical Framework	91
8 Explaining What?	100
Explanatory Concepts which refer to Hypothetical Constructs	101
Energy Concepts	102
Directional Concepts	104
Performance Concepts	106
Use of and Relation between Energy, Directional and Performance Concepts	107
Explanatory Concepts which refer to Differences, Changes or Relations amongst Hypothetical Constructs	110
Individual Differences, Situational Differences and Interactionism	110
Learning Concepts	115
Perception Concepts	116
Combinations of Explanatory Concepts: Perceptual Learning and Motivated Perception	119
Conclusion: Explanatory Concepts	120
Situations in which the Behaviour to be Explained Occurs	120
9 Testing Theories	123
From Theories to Data	126
Experimental and Non-experimental Paradigms	127
Predictions about Causality	128

CONTENTS

vii

Difficulties in Extrapolating from Data	134
Concluding Remarks	138
References	140
Further Reading	145

Preface

This is the first textbook to be written solely on theory construction and theory testing in psychology – which is what I term theoretical psychology. In writing it my aim has been predominantly pragmatic: I want psychologists to become more aware of how they should construct better theories, better theories which will then give rise to better and more useful predictions about behaviour. If this book does not lead in the long term to better and more useful predictions then its chief purpose will not have been achieved. There are, however, other advantages to a proper understanding of theoretical psychology. One of them is that it makes it possible to integrate the different areas of psychology. It reveals the theoretical relationship between different sorts of explanation in psychology and shows how empirical research stemming from different areas can be integrated.

There are two things this book is *not*. First, it is not a definitive textbook of theoretical psychology, because theoretical psychology is such an underdeveloped area. It is more of a starting point for further development, and as such it discusses the existing work on the subject as well as including a good deal which is original. Second, it is not a textbook on the philosophy of psychology. It is not written for those who seek a philosophical understanding of mind, matter, man or psychology, nor does it provide such. The only philosophy in the book is philosophy of science, and that is introduced simply to gain a more general perspective of psychological theories.

I have tried to make the book as simple and straightforward as possible. The intention was to make the book comprehensible to final year and postgraduate psychology students taking one of the many courses which have names such as History and Systems in Psychology, Explanation in Psychology and so forth. I hope that this has been achieved. At the same time the book ought to prove useful to all those conducting psychological research and who are seeking a better appreciation of the theoretical basis of their work.

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M.H.