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## **Article Review: “ A Reconciliation between**

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The article “ A Reconciliation between Structural and Functional Psychology” by Calkins (1906) starts with a presentation of Darwin’s viewpoints on the contrast between biological and physical sciences. While biology uses the functional method to investigate the relationship between animals and their surroundings, physical science uses the structural method to investigate the nature of elements involved in certain objects or processes and their mutual interactions. According to Calkins’ presentation of Darwin’s arguments, relying exclusively on a single approach, whether it is the functional or structural method, cannot be considered reliable or accurate.

In the context of psychology, Calkins argues that functional and structural approaches in psychology need to be united. At the time, structural psychology proponents often dismissed functional elements while functional psychologists considered the structural approach inadequate and abstract because their findings were not reliable and could not be used in practice. Calkins’ premise was that both structuralism and functionalism aimed to investigate the conscious self, so they had to combine approaches to investigate both internal and external factors relevant to the experiences of the self. Although that premise seems logical, Calkins’ paper does not have practical implications because the theoretical analysis focuses on discussing the weaknesses of structuralism and functionalism rather than establishing a framework towards creating a working two-system model.

The structural psychology school, established by Wundt, studied the self as a series of mental processes. Their main objective was to use introspection to

identify distinctive elements of consciousness, but because the introspection method alone was unreliable and could not be used in controlled experiments, Wundt developed a framework to use introspection as a quantitative method and enable other scientists to replicate experiments (D. P. Schultz & S. E. Schultz, 2012). Although Wundt acknowledged the segmentation of the complete consciousness into basic elements, structural psychology was designed to investigate the interaction of those elements as a whole entity.

However, Wundt's teachings were misrepresented by his student Titchener, who began using and teaching introspection as a qualitative method for investigating only certain aspects of consciousness while disregarding the whole (D. P. Schultz & S. E. Schultz, 2012). Therefore, it is possible to assume that Titchener's deviation from Wundt's original ideas was the main reason for the failure of structuralism as a school of psychology because it had faced severe criticism for unreliable scientific methods used to reach conclusions.

For example, Watson (1913) was one of the first behavioral psychologists who argued against the structural method because it used introspection as its main research method, which did not deliver results or advance the study of human psychology. At one point, even Calkins admits that a structural analysis of the mind is not always possible, especially when it comes to investigating emotions because they can be distinguished only when they are observed in the context of personal relations. Because of Titchener's distorted applications of structural psychology to the study of human consciousness, other schools of psychology, such as behaviorism and

functionalism, rejected the idea of using introspection and resorted to studying measurable phenomena. While behaviorists engaged in animal studies, functionalists investigated psychic events and their correlation with either biological or social factors, which made functionalism a more tangible and effective approach than structuralism.

Even though cognitive psychology carries on some of the teachings from structural psychology, structuralism itself has been eliminated from mainstream psychology and there is no reliable method for measuring and analyzing cognitive processes, which suggests Calkins' proposition for uniting two approaches cannot have any implication in the field of psychology. Furthermore, according to the theoretical analysis of two-system models by Keren and Schul (2009), two-system theories also lack exploratory power, which makes them unreliable in applied psychology without rigorous concepts and empirical evidence that supports their effectiveness. Because Calkins' paper is a theoretical analysis that attempted to find a common basal fact for both structuralism and functionalism, there is no empirical evidence that the combination of those models into a dichotomous system would be beneficial to applied psychology.

It is also important to note that some arguments Calkins presented to define the psychologist's self were not consistent with the idea of functionalism. For example, Calkins argues that the primary interest of psychology is to investigate the conscious self and its experiences, but in the effort to distinguish it from biology, Calkins reaches the conclusion that the self should be studied with the emphasis on individual experiences and personal relations while avoiding the relationship between physiological and

psychological processes. Of course, Calkins acknowledges that correlation, but that reasoning is flawed because it eliminates the basic premise of functionalism, which states that psychic events must be observed in the context of their surroundings. Because there is an evident association between biology and psychology, it would be wrong to exclude physiological processes as irrelevant to the study of psychology.

Even though Calkins is correct in defining the self as both a series of mental processes and the result of social interactions, the biopsychosocial model suggests that biological factors also influence the human mind. For example, studies on patients with anxiety disorders proved that catecholamines and their receptors can determine the presence and severity of anxiety disorders (as cited in McKeever & Huff, 2003). However, it is important to note that it is not possible to prove whether biological factors are causal or consequential in their relationship with mental states (McKeever & Huff, 2003).

Nevertheless, current studies proved that biological factors can determine mental processes because they define predispositions for disorders and the individual's psychological resilience to external stimuli (Spangel, 2009).

With that in mind, it is possible to disprove Calkins' criticism against considering the interaction between the physical body and the conscious self. While Calkins argues that only when biological aspects in psychology are absent, functional psychology is truly concerned with the study of the self. Therefore, even if Calkins managed to propose an alternative framework that would combine both functionalism and structuralism, it would have been an incomplete and flawed perspective.

However, it is important to mention that at the time of writing the paper " A

Reconciliation between Structural and Functional Psychology,” psychology was still a new and unstructured science. Considering those circumstances, it is possible to acknowledge Calkins’ reasoning and understanding of the self as an entity comprised of both internal experiences and experiences resulting from social relations. According to contemporary science, the proposition to unite those two aspects of the conscious self is valid because external influences can impact the development of the self while internal factors can contribute to becoming resilient to external influences (McKeever & Huff, 2003).

However, various weaknesses in the methodology and the lack of relevancy in many arguments do not enable Calkins make a valid point. At the beginning of the paper, Calkins proposes reconciliation between structuralism and functionalism, but the paper is mainly focused on elaborating on the weaknesses of each approach without providing a suitable strategy for uniting those two approaches. For example, Calkins mentions that emotions are not just sensational experiences as structuralism describes them, which means they must also be observed from the functionalist perspective in the context of personal relations to the self or the object. However, Calkins does not make any actionable suggestions regarding the development of an actual model that can be used to research the nature and role of emotions when both schools of psychology are combined.

Furthermore, the author must provide relevant arguments and use deductive reasoning to avoid bias and false connections between conclusions and premises in a theoretical analysis. However, Calkins often uses personal interpretations, analogies, and opinions, which are evident in the writing

style of the paper, rather than using actual evidence to support the statements in the analysis. In some cases, the arguments are not even relevant to the topic of the paper. If the author's aim was to combine the structural and functional perspectives in psychology, the arguments should have focused on elaborating why those approaches need to be combined. For the most part, the arguments discuss the weaknesses of both structuralism and functionalism. While that is important for determining and validating the problem being solved, the majority of the paper should have focused on providing an actual solution for uniting structuralism and functionalism.

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