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# The Humanistic Psychology–Positive Psychology Divide

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## *Contrasts in Philosophical Foundations*

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*The relationship between the fields of humanistic and positive psychology has been marked by continued tension and ambivalence. This tension can be traced to extensive differences in the philosophical grounding characterizing the two perspectives within psychology. These differences exist with respect to (a) ontology, including the ways in which human nature is conceptualized regarding human potentials and well-being; (b) epistemology, specifically, the choice of research strategies for the empirical study of these concepts; and (c) practical philosophy, particularly the goals and strategies adopted when conducting therapy or undertaking counseling interventions. Because of this philosophical divide, adherents of the two perspectives may best be advised to pursue separately their shared desire to understand and promote human potentials and well-being.*

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Since the initial formulation of positive psychology as a field of study, published exchanges between proponents of humanistic and positive psychology have been marked by tension and ambivalence (Friedman & Robbins, 2012; Held, 2004; Rich, 2001; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Shapiro, 2001; Sugarman, 2007; Taylor, 2001). There have been occasional efforts at reconciliation and rapprochement (Froh, 2004; Joseph & Linley, 2004; Linley, Joseph, Harrington, & Wood, 2006; Rathunde, 2001; Robbins & Friedman, 2008; Schneider, 2011) that have done little to dispel the tension. Humanistic psychologists rightly see their perspective as an important forerunner of positive psychology that addresses many of the same concerns now central to the work of positive psychologists (Robbins, 2008). In turn, positive psychologists rightly see humanistic psychology as one among several historical foundations leading to the creation of positive psychology and not the most important among its progenitors. In general, humanistic psychologists are not pleased with the direction positive psychologists have taken the study of human potentials and well-being with respect to theory, research, or therapy. In turn, positive psychologists have not, for the most part, found it useful to call on the insights and contributions of humanistic psychologists.

The principal thesis I explore in this article is that the tension between these two perspectives is a function of the

extensive differences in their philosophical grounding. Because proponents of humanistic and positive psychology start with different premises about human nature and the nature of the psychological enterprise, it has proven very difficult for them to identify common ground, even when the objectives they pursue appear similar.

In the analysis that follows, I briefly explore the precursors in psychology leading to the emergence of positive psychology and the relative importance of humanistic psychology in that process. I then turn to the consideration of the philosophical grounding for the two perspectives and the implication of those differences for (a) the ways in which human nature is conceptualized with respect to human potentials and well-being, (b) the choice of research strategies for the empirical study of these concepts, and (c) the goals and strategies adopted when conducting therapy or undertaking counseling interventions. On the basis of this analysis, my conclusion is that the philosophical differences are of such a nature that efforts at conciliation and cooperation at all but superficial levels will meet with limited success.

It is not my intent to argue that one set of philosophical perspectives is superior to its alternatives. I should make clear at the outset, however, that I am not neutral with regard to the contrasting philosophical approaches I discuss. I have found the philosophical and psychological theory perspectives of positive psychologists far more compelling and more useful than those of humanistic psychologists in my own theory building and empirical research endeavors. However, I do readily acknowledge that, over the years, I have benefited greatly from the work of humanistic psychologists, most notably the writings of Erich Fromm, Rollo May, and Abraham Maslow. It is for the reader to judge how fairly I present both sides in the debate over the study of human potentials and well-being.

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## **Psychological Foundations for Positive Psychology and the Relative Importance of Humanistic Psychology in This Context**

Arguably the most important impetus in the emergence of positive psychology was the reaction to the dramatic increase in attention devoted to the understanding and treatment of psychopathology and to the biological and environmental factors contributing to mental illness and problematic psychosocial functioning ([Linley et al., 2006](#); [Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000](#)). As valuable as advances in the amelioration of human suffering are, they provide very limited knowledge about how human potentials may be more fully fulfilled and how well-being may best be promoted. Positive psychology, as a field of study, arose as a concerted and coordinated effort to promote theoretical and research attention toward flourishing, that is, psychological functioning at its best ([Keyes, 2002](#)), thus creating a better balance with the work being done on mental illness.

The history of psychology contains a variety of forerunners of positive psychology that embodied efforts to better understand healthy psychological functioning and well-being. Among the most notable efforts at theory development regarding psychological health were those of [Goldstein \(1939/1995\)](#) on organismic theory; [Jahoda \(1958\)](#) on positive mental health; [Shoben \(1957\)](#) on normal personality; [Erikson \(1950\)](#) on the epigenetic, normative stages of psychosocial development; [Rogers \(1963\)](#) on the fully functioning person; and [Maslow \(1968\)](#) on the nature of being motivation and self-actualization. These theories and similar efforts helped to generate empirical research on aspects of positive psychological functioning that predated

the creation of positive psychology, often by several decades. [Berlyne \(1954\)](#) began publishing on curiosity in the 1950s, and [Marcia's \(1966\)](#) empirical studies of identity formation started in the 1960s. [Deci \(1975\)](#) initiated studies of intrinsic motivation in the 1970s, as did [Bandura \(1977\)](#) on self-efficacy, [Harter \(1975\)](#) on mastery, and [Csikszentmihalyi \(1975\)](#) on flow. The 1980s saw the publication of [Diener's \(1984\)](#) groundbreaking review of the subjective well-being literature and the first publications of [Ryff's \(1989\)](#) work on psychological well-being, [Emmons's \(1986\)](#) research on personal strivings, and [Tesser's \(1988\)](#) studies of self-evaluation. All of these research programs, as well as many others, established that it was possible to conduct rigorous investigations of positive psychological concepts. These various lines of research proceeded more or less independently prior to the emergence of positive psychology as its own area of study. When positive psychology was created, researchers in the field could point to such prior work to indicate what was possible and call for comparable rigor in future research efforts. Positive psychology has served to promote the integration of disparate, preestablished lines of research toward a greater understanding of human potentials and well-being ([Linley et al., 2006](#)).

The most important contribution of humanistic psychology to the creation of positive psychology was with respect to the goals toward which it is directed. The Society for Humanistic Psychology, a division of the American Psychological Association, stated the following mission on its website:

Humanistic psychology aims to be faithful to the full range of human experience. . . . In the science and profession of psychology, humanistic psychology seeks to develop systematic and rigorous methods of studying human beings, and to heal the fragmentary character of contemporary psychology through an ever more comprehensive and integrative approach. Humanistic psychologists are particularly sensitive to uniquely human dimensions, such as experiences of creativity and transcendence, and to the quality of human welfare. Accordingly, humanistic psychology aims especially at contributing to psychotherapy, education, theory, philosophy of psychology, research methodology, organization and management, and social responsibility and change. ([Society for Humanistic Psychology, n.d.](#), para. 4)

As these sentiments concern the goals of humanistic psychology, they appear fully compatible with the aims of most proponents of positive psychology.

Although Abraham Maslow, a key figure in the origin and evolution of humanistic psychology, wrote extensively about positive motivation, positive growth, and positive emotions ([Maslow, 1943, 1954](#)) and used the term *positive psychology* in *Motivation and Personality* ([Maslow, 1954](#)), positive psychologists seldom reach out to endorse humanistic endeavors. To the contrary, [Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi \(2000\)](#) criticized humanistic psychology for its association with self-help movements and for encouraging self-centeredness, criticisms that appear seriously misplaced to humanistic psychologists. [Bohart and Greening \(2001\)](#) responded by citing evidence of humanistic psychology's concerns with social welfare and social respon-

sibility toward individuals, groups, and communities and the lack of interest in or endorsement of the self-help movements that may have laid claim to its mantle. As misplaced as the criticisms of humanistic psychology by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi were, they do reflect an underlying desire to distance positive psychology from that perspective. Despite the considerable correspondence of the goals associated with both perspectives, Seligman, Csikszentmihalyi, and other positive psychologists apparently do not wish to have what they are doing labeled *humanistic psychology*. I contend that both the desire of positive psychologists to distance themselves from work in humanistic psychology and the critiques of positive psychology advanced by humanistic psychologists are based on incompatible philosophical perspectives with respect to ontology, epistemology, and practical philosophy. Because of the breadth and depth of the differences in the fundamental premises underlying positive psychology and humanistic psychology, it may be impossible for proponents of the two disciplines to find much in the way of common ground.

## Contrasting Philosophical Foundations for Humanistic and Positive Psychology

In describing humanistic psychology, the Society of Humanistic Psychology website had another statement pertaining to the range of philosophical perspectives informing the work of humanistic psychologists:

The society represents a constellation of “humanistic psychologies” that includes the earlier Rogerian, transpersonal and existential orientations as well as the more recently developing perspectives of phenomenological, hermeneutic, constructivist, feminist and postmodern (social constructionist) psychologies. (Society for Humanistic Psychology, n.d., para. 1)

In line with an existential and phenomenological orientation, when humanistic psychologists choose to cite philosophical and theological sources, those citations are most frequently to the works of Buber (Schneider & Krug, 2010; Van Kaam, 1966; Yalom, 1980), Heidegger (Frankl, 2000; Schneider & Krug, 2010; Van Kaam, 1961; Yalom, 1980), Husserl (Schneider & Krug, 2010; Yalom, 1980), Merleau-Ponty (Giorgi, 1992; Levin, 2000; Van Kaam, 1966), Nietzsche (Schneider, 2005; Wadlington, 2005), Kierkegaard (May, 1960; Schneider & Krug, 2010; Yalom, 1980), Sartre (May, 1960; Van Kaam, 1966; Yalom, 1980), and Tillich (May, 1960; Schneider, 2005). The work of Aristotle is occasionally cited in these writings, often in articles focusing on the relationship of humanistic to positive psychology.

This stands in significant contrast to the philosophical citations most frequently used by those who identify their work with positive psychology. The philosopher most consistently cited in the writings of positive psychologists is Aristotle (Kesebir & Diener, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff & Singer, 2008; Seligman, 2011; Waterman, 1990). Other philosophers that figure prominently in such work are Democritus and other classic Hellenic philosophers

(Kesebir & Diener, 2008); Christian philosophers of the Middle Ages (Kesebir & Diener, 2008); Norton, Haybron, and other contemporary eudaimonists (Kesebir & Diener, 2008; Ryff & Singer, 2008; Waterman, 1990); John Stuart Mill (Ryff & Singer, 2008; Waterman, 1984b); and Bertrand Russell (Ryff & Singer, 2008). What is notable in this comparison is the almost total lack of overlap in the philosophical influences on humanistic and positive psychology. This reliance of different philosophical foundations by humanistic and positive psychologists suggests that they view human nature, the psychological enterprise for understanding human functioning, and the functions of psychotherapy and related interventions quite differently.

## Differences Concerning Ontology and Their Implications for the Understanding of Human Nature

Humanistic psychology’s association with existentialism has critical implications for understanding the nature of being. The oft-quoted dictum “existence precedes essence” (Sartre, 1943/1956) means that we as human organisms, through consciousness, must define ourselves through our actions. Although limited by the biological constraints of what is possible for human beings to do (a generic human nature), it is up to each of us, as individuals, to decide what it is that we will do with our existence. Within psychology, this was well expressed by Erich Fromm:

Man is the only animal for whom his own existence is a problem which he has to solve and from which he cannot escape. (Fromm, 1950, p. 23)

If [man] faces the truth without panic, he will recognize that there is no meaning in life except the meaning man gives his life by the unfolding of his powers by living productively. (Fromm, 1947, p. 53)

When existentialist philosophers and existential-humanistic psychologists address concepts of meaning in life, their concerns are with how people make sense of the nature of their being and existence through establishing a coherent view about who they are, what the world is like, how they fit into it, and what lifelong aspirations are worth pursuing (Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006; Steger, Shin, Shim, & Fitch-Martin, 2013). Although people are responsible for the life decisions they make, the existentialists say that there are no absolute standards or criteria that can be used when making those decisions. There is no essential individual human nature that determines what destiny each individual is to fulfill. The individual is, and the individual must decide what he or she will become. People cannot, or rather should not, turn to external authorities or loved ones to tell them what they should do. To do so is, to use Sartre’s term, to live in *bad faith*, or in Heidegger’s reference to inauthenticity, to become *lost in the they*. It is an idea that was also central to Fromm’s concept of *escape from freedom*. If this perspective has merit, then life decisions are always relative to particular contexts, without clear internal or external bases on which they can be made. In the absence of such criteria, decisions may be experienced as arbitrary. This led some existential-

ists such as Kierkegaard and Camus to emphasize both the tragic and the absurd positions life places people in. People must make crucial life decisions to create lives and to find meaning and yet are doomed to ultimately fail in this quest because the universe itself is without meaning. Whereas Kierkegaard concluded that in the face of the absurd one must make a nonrational, religious leap of faith, Camus recommended the embrace of the absurd by continuing to live in spite of it.

Social constructionism, another conceptual system under the umbrella of humanistic psychology, also entails a similar rejection of essentialist philosophical concepts. Unlike existentialism, wherein the individual is the locus of activity with respect to establishing meaning, social constructionists see meaning as emerging from the myriad of complex social interactions within which individuals are embedded. How individuals see themselves is a function in part of reflected self-appraisals (Cooley, 1902) but more extensively a result of the many constructs that make up the social reality, constructs that are mutable on the basis of the consensual understandings of the societies within which people live, for example, the social construction of gender (M. Gergen, 2001). Consistent with the philosophical underpinnings of humanistic psychology, the process of becoming is both phenomenological and hermeneutic. A broad statement of the social constructionist perspective with respect to the nature of being can be found in K. J. Gergen's (1991) *The Saturated Self*.

The philosophical foundations of positive psychology with respect to the ontology of being stand in sharp contrast to those of humanistic psychology. From an essentialist perspective, there is no existence without form. The two arise simultaneously. For positive psychologists, there is not only a generic human nature but also an individual nature. Both the eudaimonist and the character strength themes within positive psychology rest on such philosophical assumptions. An individual nature reflects one's best potentials, that is, those things a given person can do better than all of the alternatives that person might attempt to do. This idea can be traced back to the concept of the daimon found in classical Hellenic philosophy and to eudaimonist ethics, which received its most notable treatment in Aristotle's (trans. 1985) *The Nicomachean Ethics*. Contemporary philosophical presentations of eudaimonism can be found in the writings of Norton (1976) and Haybron (2008), among others. From a eudaimonist perspective, making life decisions is not an arbitrary undertaking, nor is it a function of being shaped by the contingencies of one's social milieu. Rather, it is each person's process of discovering their latent talents, strengths, and inclinations and bringing these to fruition. This is reflected in two famous classical injunctions: "Know thyself" and "Become what you are." This places the focus for well-being on developing the best within each person (flourishing) and accounts for why positive psychologists do not resonate with concerns about the tragic and absurd in life.

Probably no philosophical issues are more problematic for the possible reconciliation of humanistic and positive psychology than those pertaining to freedom, will,

agency, personal responsibility, and determinism. The existential foundations of humanistic psychology have at their center the concept of human freedom. Individuals are conceived of as autonomous agents with the capacity for making choices with attendant personal responsibility. Although the existence of external influences on decisions is recognized, these are not thought of as ultimate determinants of the choices made and do not reduce the perceived responsibility of the person for those choices. Further, existential philosophers and humanistic psychologists appear skeptical regarding the problems entailed in mind-body dualism, problems that are inextricably tied to ideas about freedom and responsibility.

In contrast, positive psychologists, with the emphasis they place of psychological science, appear to be profoundly ambivalent about assumptions of freedom. There is a generally accepted belief that science is founded on determinist assumptions and that "uncaused causes" are to be excluded from scientific consideration. When functioning as scientists, positive psychologists, unlike humanistic psychologists, appear to accept such assumptions. The mind-body problem is not dealt with in the positive psychology literature, quite possibly because it is seen as insolvable and therefore not worthy of attention. The fact that positive psychologists are quite comfortable writing about agency, autonomy, authenticity, choice, decision making, and similar concepts indicates a concern with the same set of constructs of importance to existential philosophers and humanistic psychologists. There would appear to be considerable potential dissonance associated with applying scientific assumptions when conducting research designed to understand and promote human functioning that is broadly understood to be associated with human freedom and responsibility. However, such dissonance, if it exists, seldom makes its way into the positive psychology literature.

Another source of philosophical differences between humanistic and positive psychology concerns the nature of phenomenological experience. Philosophical phenomenology (Heidegger, 1927/1996; Husserl, 1950/1982; Merleau-Ponty, 1995) is considered a foundation of humanistic psychology. Experience is viewed as something inherently individual and thus intersubjectivity is a problem that can be only partially resolved. Communication is, by necessity, unreliable. For the existentialists, this is central to an appreciation of individual isolation and aloneness. For humanistic psychologists, establishing connections between people is seen as problematic, whether in normal social interaction or as psychologists when trying to understand the other or endeavoring to do psychotherapy.

None of the problems associated with phenomenology appear to trouble positive psychologists. Whether in research endeavors using interviews or paper-and-pencil or computer-based instruments or in counseling and coaching interactions, communication is considered good enough for its intended purposes. It may be recognized that how a question is worded affects the type of response generated, but this is perceived as a technical or methodological problem, not a philosophical one.

In sum, humanistic psychologists and positive psychologists are making very different ontological assumptions about what constitutes human nature, the nature of the world humans inhabit, and how individuals experience the world and others. Even when the issues and concerns that are of importance to those on the other side of the philosophical divide are recognized, quite different priorities exist regarding the extent to which they should be the focus of attention of psychologists.

### **Differences Concerning Epistemology and Their Implications for the Conduct of Empirical Research in Psychology**

The most consistently recognized and written about differences between humanistic and positive psychology have focused on epistemology (Friedman, 2008; Rathunde, 2001; Robbins, 2008; Shapiro, 2001). The phenomenological underpinnings of humanistic psychology are associated with the extensive and rigorous use of qualitative methodologies in research, whereas the logical positivist philosophical perspective adopted by positive psychologists and the field of psychology more generally are associated with a preference for using quantitative methodologies with rigorous experimental and/or statistical techniques. These preferences are closely tied to their philosophical foundations and are associated with quite different goals concerning what should be accomplished through empirical research. The preference for qualitative research methods is associated with phenomenological, idiographic objectives, that is, the desire to understand the psychological functioning of specific individuals within their mental, physical, social, community, and broader environmental context. In contrast, the preference for quantitative research methods is associated with positivistic, nomological objectives, that is, the desire to understand general principles of human psychological functioning that are applicable across people, or at least across broad categories of people.

Differing interests in investigating idiographic or nomological questions and the associated epistemological philosophical perspectives lead to the development of quite different types of theories for understanding psychological constructs, even when such constructs are within the purview of both humanistic and positive psychologists, for example, self-esteem (Mruk, 2008), authenticity (Sheldon & Kasser, 2001), and identity (Waterman, 1984a). Consider research questions pertaining to the influence of parents on adolescent identity formation. Given their ontological philosophical assumptions, it is likely that humanistic psychologists and positive psychologists will start with different definitions of identity. They will likely differ with respect to the variables in the relationship they consider most relevant to understanding what is taking place. Humanistic psychologists will likely design qualitative research studies applying narrative, discursive, or similar techniques, studies that can yield valuable information about the nature of the specific effects present among the participants in the (typically small) sample included in the research. For example, a specific focus might be directed toward identifying the dynamics with which identities are

coconstructed within families. However, such research does not provide information about the frequencies and magnitude of the effects, their range of variation, the role of moderating or mediating variables, or the relative importance of parental variables compared with other influences on adolescent identity formation, nor are such studies intended to yield that type of data. In contrast, positive psychologists will likely design studies involving quantitative methods with relatively large samples for the purpose of obtaining the type of information that cannot be obtained by qualitative methods. But such studies will reveal very little, if anything, about the nature of the processes of influence taking place, nor is that the purpose for which these studies are conducted. It is true but facile to say that both types of information are important in understanding the phenomenon under study. The point being made here is that the findings obtained from the use of one methodology and theories based on those findings are not particularly helpful to investigators whose research questions require data that can only be obtained by the other method.

An indication of the extent to which humanistic and positive psychologists fail to engage with theories and research generated by the other perspective on substantive themes can be gleaned from the dearth of citations in the *Journal of Positive Psychology* made to articles published in the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* and *The Humanistic Psychologist* and the corresponding relative absence of citations in the latter two journals to articles published in the *Journal of Positive Psychology* (leaving aside those articles that explicitly focus on the humanistic–positive psychology divide). This failure to communicate across the divide is exacerbated not only by the fact that few researchers are asking both idiographic and nomothetic questions regarding a given construct but also because the publication practices of the majority of psychology journals lead to the acceptance of articles reporting mostly or exclusively studies involving either quantitative or qualitative methods (few journals publish reports of both types of studies in similar numbers). Among researchers, those preferring one methodological approach seldom read the published research generated by the other methodology. In other words, in the research literature, humanistic psychologists and positive psychologists are, in most instances, talking past each other.

### **Differences Concerning Practical Philosophy and Their Implications for the Goals and Conduct of Therapy and Counseling Interventions**

*Practical philosophy*, as I will be using the term here, refers to the applications of philosophy in our everyday lives, with particular reference to the objectives of counseling and therapy. As with the differences in perspectives of humanistic psychologists and positive psychologists on ontological and epistemological questions, so, too, there are important differences with respect to matters of practical philosophy.

A variety of approaches to the conduct of psychotherapy fall under the umbrella of humanistic psychology,

including client-centered therapy (Rogers, 1951), Gestalt therapy (Perls, 1969), existential psychotherapy (Yalom, 1980), and existential-integrative psychotherapy (Schneider, 2008). Although there are many differences among these therapy approaches, the similarities are relevant here. These and other humanistic therapies generally emphasize understanding the phenomenological experience of the present moment, including the dialogic interaction of the client or patient and therapist. There is a concern with developing a response to existential isolation and meaninglessness through a process of meaning making. There are recurrent themes of personal freedom and attendant personal responsibility for one's actions. These therapies are hermeneutical, although differing in the extent to which the source of interpretation rests with the client and/or therapist. As a consequence, humanistic approaches to therapy tend to be lengthy, focus on the present to the future, and stress the importance of the relationship between client and therapist.

Similarly, the positive psychology perspective has become associated with a variety of intervention techniques to promote well-being, including those designed for promoting mindfulness (Germer, Siegel, & Fulton, 2005), character strengths development (Proctor et al., 2011), and happiness and subjective well-being (Lyubomirsky, 2007), as well as an approach referred to as life coaching (Dunbar, 2010). In contrast to humanistic therapies, these approaches are neither lengthy nor introspective, do not focus on the client-therapist relationship, and are not concerned with such themes as aloneness, the tragic, or existential angst. Rather, the philosophical assumptions underlying positive psychology interventions are based on pragmatics, that is, directing the client's attention to what can be done now to make incremental improvements in quality of life. The aim is to start a virtuous cycle whereby immediate improvements in mood, character strength, or problem solving leads to greater optimism that further improvements are possible in the future. The techniques used are generally short-term and exercise oriented.

Fredrickson's minimum 3:1 ratio of positive to negative experiences as a predictor of well-being (Fredrickson, 2009) is seen as a target for intervention exercises. Differences exist with respect to how such a ratio may be created and sustained. These include (a) exercises directly targeted to changing that ratio, for example, a gratitude visit and savoring (Bryant & Veroff, 2007; Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005); (b) exercises focused on the development of skills that promote functioning more successfully within the person's existing social context, for example, the Strengths Gym (Proctor et al., 2011); and (c) exercises directed toward making changes in one's life that increase one's sense of meaning, for example, mentoring or community service (Seligman, Rashid, & Parks, 2006). I add to this list exercises promoting a change in one's personal context such that problematic behaviors are no longer needed and more effective behaviors can be enacted.

If humanistic psychologists were asked to provide their candid appraisal of positive psychology interventions, their responses would likely include "superficial," "too

little attention to the role of the negative in life," and "insufficient concern with self-understanding or insight." Were the corresponding question directed to positive psychologists regarding humanistic psychotherapies, their responses would likely include "interminable," "too little attention to the role of the positive in life," and "insufficient concern with the pragmatics of how to live more effectively." It should be noted that these critiques are not directed toward the documented effectiveness of the alternative techniques in advancing their respective therapeutic goals but to the value of the goals themselves.

## **What Might an Integration of Humanistic Psychology and Positive Psychology Look Like and Why Would It Be So Difficult to Achieve?**

Given the shared goals of understanding and promoting human potentials and well-being, it is certainly plausible that a rapprochement or even an integration of the diverse of perspectives of humanistic psychology and positive psychology might be achieved. What might the outlines of such an integration look like?

It would need to start with efforts to find compatibilities between the concepts of existence and essence as these apply to human functioning. One can see an initial step toward that goal in the writings of Tillich and of May. While emphasizing the priorities of existence, May (1960) stated that "essences" must not be ruled out but rather presupposed in "aspects of truth that are not dependent upon any individual's decision or whim" (p. 13). In subsequent writings, May (1969) delved into the role of the daimonic in the ways people live. However, a project to reconcile existence and essence has not progressed very far.

Both humanistic psychologists and positive psychologists would likely endorse such injunctions as "Know thyself" and "Become what you are." Both perspectives apply concepts of authenticity and identity (Medlock, 2012; Waterman, 1984a). For positive psychologists, authenticity and identity are derived from the expression of a person's unique individual nature, that is, a true self that includes the person's innate potentials and strengths (and, by implication, limitations and weaknesses as well). To what extent will humanistic psychologists be willing to accept not only a generic human nature but an individual nature, given that the concept of a true self entails constraints on human freedom? On the other side, to what extent will positive psychologists be willing to accept phenomenological and hermeneutic perspectives as legitimate ways to gain access to what constitutes the authentic, as those perspectives view the self as rooted in experience, context, and interpretation? As noted above, authenticity, identity, and the self can be successfully studied using the ontological assumptions of either humanistic or positive psychology. However, the resulting theories concerning these concepts have been very different. An integration of the perspectives would require reconciling such theories,

among others, in ways that have seldom been attempted and that may not be possible.

It is perhaps easier to envision an integration of epistemological understandings of humanistic and positive psychologists. There is widespread acceptance of the idea that qualitative and quantitative research are complementary, that the findings of both approaches further the understanding of human functioning, and that findings from one can benefit the work of those favoring the other methodology (Cresswell, 2003; Greene & Caracelli, 1997). However, the proportion of psychological research actually using mixed methods is relatively small.

It is worth noting that, at present, there are few psychologists sophisticated in the use of qualitative research methods such as intuitive and sensitive interviewing who are also capable of conducting quantitative research using complex statistical modeling techniques. Similarly, there are few investigators with demonstrated ability in sophisticated quantitative methods also capable of making effective use of grounded theory or narrative methods or who would think to do a member check of the models they derive from their data. One interpretation of this state of affairs is that there has been a failure of graduate programs to provide a sufficient foundation in the broad range of research methodologies available. Certainly research skills are teachable, at least in the abstract. However, because the skills involved in actually conducting rigorous qualitative and quantitative research are very different, relatively few investigators may have the potential to be comparably talented when conducting research entailing both methodologies. Beyond the matter of talent, there are also value preferences for addressing idiographic and nomothetic research questions, preferences that may well have a basis in an element of temperament and/or intellectual predispositions. A true integration of humanistic psychology and positive psychology would require a comparable desire on the part of researchers to explore both types of questions. It seems likely that students seek out different types of graduate psychology programs at least in part because of the fit of the type of research that a program emphasizes with their particular research interests and methodological strengths.

There is an alternative route to integration that does not require investigators to use both quantitative and qualitative methodologies in their research endeavors. It is possible for psychologists to study humanistic concepts and research questions with quantitative methodologies, whereas positive psychologists might use qualitative methods in the study of their concepts and research questions. For example, the practitioners of experimental existential psychology take a positivist scientific approach to studying the existential concerns of death, isolation, identity, freedom, and meaning (Greenberg, Koole, & Pyszczynski, 2004; Koole, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 2006). Friedman (2008) called attention to the extensive quantitative research that has been directed toward the assessment of the effectiveness of humanistic therapies and to research, such as that by Reynolds and Lim (2007), addressing positive psychology themes with qualitative methods. However, these examples appear to be the exception, not evidence of

a broad and sustained trend within the field. Friedman also describes and laments a variety of instances in which humanistic psychologists have disparaged research involving humanistic constructs specifically because of the quantitative methodology used and, correspondingly, instances in which positive psychologists have been critical of research on positive psychology questions when qualitative methods were used. If this paradigmatic epistemological divide is to be closed, it will take very substantial numbers of psychologists on both sides developing a comfort level with alternative methodologies, a change that is not much in evidence on either side.

Quite apart from the personal perspectives of individual humanistic and positive psychologists, closing the divide between the proponents and practitioners of quantitative and qualitative methodologies may also take major changes in the policies of funding agencies and the publication practices of high prestige, high distribution journals to establish a priority on mixed-method research or, failing that, foster comparable status for both methodologies. It is far easier for genuine respect and collaboration to become established when status differences are not at issue. Again, movement in that direction is not evident.

With respect to an integration of humanistic psychology and positive psychology in the realm of practical philosophy, that is, the understanding in how to best promote the development of human potentials and well-being through counseling, psychotherapy, and other interventions, models currently exist. Integrative psychotherapy (Erskine & Moursund, 2010) is an approach that explicitly takes into account psychodynamic, client-centered, behaviorist, cognitive, and family therapies and other understandings of human functioning with a view toward applying those techniques best adapted to the particular needs of a certain client at a given point in time. In principle, there is no reason why a therapist could not work with one client using a humanistic-based, insight-oriented therapy while with another using short-term exercises to promote mindfulness, savoring, or a more optimal ratio of positive to negative emotions.

However, just as the philosophical assumptions, personal skills, and value predilections of investigators guide their choice of research methodologies, so too these factors influence the choice of the type of therapy in which graduate students seek training and subsequently practice. Although therapy techniques are indeed teachable, as with research methodologies, there are also important elements of talent required to be effective using any given therapy. The personal skills required for insight-oriented therapies appear to be quite different than those required for behavioral management or life coaching. There are likely also important temperamental differences that influence a clinician's choice to engage with the tragic elements in clients' lives and with the depth of the associated negative emotions, in contrast with seeking to promote well-being through an explicit focus on increasing experiences of positive emotions. Leaving aside the theoretical question as to whether generating positive emotions is the best way to help clients cope more effectively, as the broaden-and-

build advocates maintain (Fredrickson, 2009), or positive emotions are the outcome of the changes clients make, as humanistic therapists believe (Elliott, Watson, Goldman, & Greenberg, 2004; see Lambert & Erekson, 2008, for a discussion of this issue), it is not at all clear what proportion of psychotherapists have the capacity to apply both treatment modalities effectively.

## Concluding Thoughts

I summarize the state of the field with respect to humanistic psychology and positive psychology as follows: The theorists, researchers, and practitioners advancing these perspectives hold different understandings about the nature of being human; differ widely in those aspects of psychological functioning they find most interesting; and, when seeking grounding or inspiration for their work in philosophy, look for it in very different schools of philosophic thought. When the interests of researchers in humanistic and positive psychology do coincide, the researchers generally ask different types of research questions and seek to investigate those questions with quite different methodologies. The theories that guide these investigations are typically quite discrepant, at least in part due to differences in the philosophical assumptions on which they are based. As a consequence, in general, the findings generated within a positive psychology framework are seen as being of limited use to humanistic psychologists, and the reverse is equally true. Whereas therapists and counselors who adopt humanistic and positive psychology perspectives share the goals of promoting the potentials and well-being of their clients, the techniques they adopt to advance those goals are very different. As is the case with research, the theories of therapy on which they base their choice of intervention strategy are widely discrepant.

Kirk J. Schneider, the editor of the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, has called for the creation of a humanistic positive psychology and asked, somewhat plaintively, "Why can't we just get along?" (Schneider, 2011). The answer, in my view, is that as worthy of respect as these two programs of psychological endeavor are and despite the several objectives they hold in common, they are characterized by deep and seemingly irreconcilable philosophical differences. Over time, there have been more critiques of positive psychology offered by humanistic psychologists than critiques of humanistic psychology advanced by those working in positive psychology. There have also been more calls for conciliation, cooperation, and collaboration originating from humanistic psychologists than the reverse, those advances having gone largely unanswered by adherents of positive psychology. Long-standing philosophical differences are seldom resolved through persuasion. For this reason, adherents of the two perspectives would appear best advised to pursue separately their shared desire to understand human potentials and well-being. Although some, perhaps many, will see this as a regrettable state of affairs within psychology (Froh, 2004; Schneider, 2011), I believe it is preferable to recognize the depth of the differences, look for those occasions on which mutual benefit is

possible, and get on with respective projects, with as few recriminations as possible coming from either side.

The conclusion just stated above is not intended to discourage collaborative work between humanistic and positive psychologists conducted by those from each group whose overriding concerns are the common goals they share and who are relatively untroubled by the philosophic divide. There is, for example, a special interest group within the Society for Humanistic Psychology devoted to positive psychology. I am not a member of that group, but I certainly wish them well in their endeavors. My caution to them is that large segments in both the humanistic psychology and the positive psychology communities are focused more intently on the philosophic divide than on the commonality of goals and, thus, I am pessimistic that efforts to expand common ground will find wide appeal.

The five decades of work on humanistic psychology have had an invaluable impact on the way in which theory and research proceeds in psychology. Whether fully recognized or not, it has helped shape the conceptual and empirical research questions that positive psychologists are now addressing. However, even positive psychologists who incorporate into their work concepts central to the humanistic psychology project typically do so in ways very different from how humanistic psychologists might have them do. That certainly has been true in the case of my use of such concepts in the development of eudaimonic identity theory (Waterman, 1993).

Throughout the history of psychology, perspectives with differing philosophical groundings have helped provide the foundation for succeeding generations of psychologists. Successive perspectives have waxed, matured, then waned, each making durable contributions to the understanding of the psychological enterprise. This has been the case with psychoanalysis and behaviorism. Humanistic psychology had its greatest impact on the field in earlier decades, although it is not a spent third force. Currently, cognitive psychology, neuroscience, and positive psychology are in more dynamic segments of the arc. The adherents and advocates of any particular perspective seldom abandon the insights gained through their work in favor of the emerging zeitgeist, nor should they be expected to do so. And new generations of psychologists seldom delve deeply into the contributions of older perspectives seeking to recognize the ways in which earlier work is shaping current endeavors. Positive psychology, as a self-identified field, has existed for less than two decades. It is vibrant and expanding its reach. It has a considerable distance to go before it can be said to have reached its maturity. What positive psychologists will be able to accomplish with respect to advancing the understanding of human potentials and well-being within the philosophical context they use remains to be determined, as does its legacy for 22nd-century psychology. It is far too early to begin such speculations.



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