

## Humanistic psychology (the third-force)

The term 'third force' is actually a general categorisation of several orientations and emphases within psychology. The third force may be anything, which is not behaviourism or psychoanalysis. Elements of this third force are humanism, phenomenology, or existentialism. This movement is multifaceted in nature: it consists of diverse, even conflicting components. It is both a reaction to and an extension of behaviourism and psychoanalysis. It is both an abstract entity and a practical guide for living. Membership in the movement is by self-proclamation, not by acceptance of a set of monolithic principles and beliefs.

The most general and neutral term for the movement is *humanistic psychology*. Phenomenological and existential psychologies can be seen as subkinds of humanistic psychology and as antecedents of the more recent strictly American versions of humanism professed by psychologists as Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers who were not, however, the first psychologists to have an essentially humanistic orientation. Elements of humanism can be found in the psychoanalytic thought of Fromm, Horney, and even Jung and Adler and the American existential psychologist, Rollo May, anticipated many of the tenets of humanism.

Humanism is an attempt to reorient psychology to more person-oriented objectives. For a proponent of humanism, the new movement represented a return to a true concern for consciousness after 50 years of behaviourally oriented experimental psychology and by analytically oriented depth psychology (psychoanalysis). In a sense, humanism adopted the phenomenal orientation of Gestalt psychology, but extended it from the realm of more perceptual consciousness to cover the organism's entire personality or state of being.

Humanism deals with the state of a person's awareness or conscious feelings in an understanding context. The following is characteristic of humanism:

- Presumes a nonmechanistic view of man,
- Does not accept the principle of determinism,
- Views man as a subject and not an object, and
- Focuses on the holistic adaptive status of an organism's behavioural actions.
- Each person, or his/her behaviour is unique and must be resolved in terms of his/her own subjective conscious worldview.

The humanist is interested in a person's everyday life behaviour as it occurs in the natural environment, not in constricted pieces of artificial behaviour as they occur in the laboratory: By definition, humanism is both a world view (philosophy of man) as well as an applied psychology (psychotherapeutic approach).

Humanism is permeated (1) by such concepts as external validity, meaning, understanding, subjectivity, relevance, and value, and (2) by such goals or phenomena as authenticity, self-actualisation, creativity, development of meaningful human relationships, knowledge of innermost feelings, expanding one's awareness, and love. In a sense, humanism represents (1) a return to common-sense psychology, in which a person's goals, feeling, desires, and the like are a primary concern; and (2) a revival of interest in such Christian values as love, concern, goodness. While humanism is not necessarily anti-empirical, it is a protest against the mechanistic, deterministic,

reductionist orientation of Lockian, Newtonian, and Darwinian science adopted by behaviouristically oriented experimental psychology.

### **Basic assumptions**

Basic assumptions of the humanistic approach are that behaviour must be understood in terms of the subjective experience of the individual, (phenomenology), and that behaviour is not constrained by either past experience of the individual or current circumstances. (determinism). Instead, people can make choices (free will).

### **Methodological approaches**

Humanistic psychology (and Roger's theory in particular) does not easily lend itself to laboratory research, i.e. objective experimentation is impossible. Humanistic psychologists are not scientists in the traditional sense, and they don't want to be because they think that science in the present form is not equipped to study, explain, or understand human nature. A new science, a human science, is needed. A human science would not study humans as the physical sciences study physical objects, but rather study humans as aware, choosing, valuing, emotional, and unique beings in the universe. Since traditional science does not do this, it must be rejected. An idiographic approach to science is thus characteristic of humanistic research.

The sole criterion of the humanist choosing research projects is meaningfulness. A given study is undertaken because it is psychologically relevant and pertains to the human issues and concerns, as defined by the humanistic psychologists. As an expanded Gestalt psychology, humanism attempts to analyse, understand, and externalise an individual organism's consciousness, not just the content of the perceptual consciousness, but the full range of consciousness: feelings, self-concepts, goals, desires, and beliefs. As a form of depth psychology, humanism must assess some aspects of the state of well being of the organism, that is, level of self-actualisation attained, nature of self-concept, or degree of perceived change in a therapeutic situation. This implies that humanists ideally should use developmentally focused longitudinal methodology, and also must face all the problems associated with single-case study methodology so basically, this perspective favours a qualitative approach to data collection. The main source of data comes from clinical interviews (transcripts), the Q-sort and content analysis of clients' statements.

Evidence of Rogerian theory comes from a method called (1) **Q-sort** and (2) **content analysis** of statements made by clients during therapy. The goal of the Q-sort method is to discover the ideas people have about themselves and to measure the effect of therapy. The basic procedure is to give a person a packet of cards each of which contains a different statement, and then have the person sort the cards on a continuum from the statement that best describe the person to the statement that least describes him or her.

A study by **Butler and Haugh (1954)** illustrates the *Q-sort method*. The participants were people in counselling matched with a control group. In the counselling group, the correlation between the self-sort and the ideal-sort was zero, but in the control group the correlation between the two sorts was .58, indicating some degree of relationship. Following counselling (average 31 sessions per client), this group was asked to sort again. The results indicated a correlation of .34, a significant improvement over zero.

An example of *content analysis* is **Seeman (1949)** who analysed 16 interviews involving 10 clients at various stages of therapy. The verbal statements of these clients were classified into four categories: (1) expressions of problems or symptoms, (2) acceptance of therapist's responses, (3) understanding of problems or symptoms, (4) discussion of plans for the future. Seeman found that as therapy progressed, there were fewer statements of troubles and problems. Signs of acceptance rose in the beginning and then declined. In later interviews, clients showed greater understanding of their difficulties and gave more statements expressing plans for the future. This study is considered, according to those sympathetic with Rogers' theory, as giving validity to his basic concepts of growth.

## Historical and cultural background

**Historical roots to the movements** lay both back in time and in the post-WW2 period where an eclectic status quo between behaviourism, psychoanalysis and cognitive psychologist etc. was seen before the humanistic psychology appeared. Early ideas of humanism existed already in Ancient Greece, during the Renaissance and in Christianity. Humanists are like the ancient Greek humanists, **and Maslow (1973)** formulated that '*the values which are to guide human action must be found within the nature and natural reality itself*'. The humanistic psychologists could not accept the naturalistic values of the behaviourists, which in their view were treated like 'objects' with no regard to their subjectivity, consciousness, and free will.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, several European philosophers like e.g. Jean-Paul Sartre in France and Martin Heidegger in Germany associated themselves with existentialism, which focuses on personal responsibility, free will, and the striving towards personal growth and fulfillment. In existentialism major choices in life are often accompanied by anxiety, because we alone are responsible for our own lives. According to existentialists people are able to understand others by focusing on their own conscious experience, a position that Gestalt psychology called phenomenology. However, the movement of humanistic psychology in the United States evolved as a matter of concern for human individualism. **William James** published *Principles of Psychology* (1890) and showed in his writings concern about life's problems. He wrote a great deal about the self. Other self theories come from **George Herbert Mead** in his book *Mind, Self and Society* (1934), and the existential psychology in Europe also gave inspiration to the American development of humanistic psychology, which started with the publication of Roger's first book *Counselling and Psychotherapy: Newer Concepts in Practice* (1942).

The decade of the 1960s was a troubled time in the United States. There was the Vietnam War, the assassination of Martin Luther King, the Kennedy brothers, racial protests occurred in many big cities, and the 'Hippies' were in open rebellion against the values of their parents and society. They dropped out of society and returned to a more simple life, where there was no room for rational or empirical philosophy. The third-force movement became very popular in the 1960s and 1970s, but its popularity fell in the 1980s and continues to do so but it remains influential in some parts of contemporary psychology, just like behaviourism and psychoanalysis.

Humanistic psychology sought to be the third-force in psychology (behaviourism was the first-force and psychoanalysis was the second-force) and claimed to build on the

mistakes of the two other forces in psychology and go beyond them. Humanistic psychology, thus, does not reject everything from the two other forces and thereby tended to continue the eclectic spirit of the 1950s. Humanistic psychology offered a critique and an alternative to behaviourism but acknowledged that behaviourism, although limited, was valid within its domain. Humanistic psychologists sought to add to behaviourism an appreciation of human consciousness that would round out the scientific picture of human psychology. **Maslow (1973):** *'I interpret this third psychology (humanistic psychology) to include the first and second psychologies...I am Freudian and I am behaviouristic and I am humanistic.'*

#### **Basic tenets of humanistic psychology include the following**

- little of value can be learned about humans by studying animals
- subjective reality is the primary guide for human behaviour
- studying individuals is more informative than studying what groups of individuals have in common
- a major effort should be made to discover those things that expand and enrich human experience
- research should seek to find those things that will help solve human problems
- the goal of psychology is to formulate a complete description of what it means to be a human being (includes importance of language, emotions, how humans seek to find meaning in their lives).

#### **Major representatives of the humanistic perspective**

The most important founders **Carl Rogers (1902-1987)** and **Abraham Maslow (1908-1970)**. Both were initially attracted to behaviourism but became aware of its limitations.

### **Carl Rogers**

developed 'client-centred psychotherapy' in the 1940s and used it with soldiers returning from WW2. The therapy is phenomenologically oriented (the therapist tries to enter into the world-view of the client and let the client work out solutions to his/her own problem). The therapy was an alternative to the psychoanalytic method, and it was an important step in the establishment of clinical and counselling psychology in the post-war period. Rogers came into conflict with behaviourism because of his approach with empathic understanding of the client. Rogers thought that behaviourism treated humans like animals, as machines whose behaviour could be predicted and controlled without any attention to consciousness. During the 1950s, Skinner and Rogers debated the relative adequacy of their points of view.

Phenomenological psychology is especially appealing to the clinician because of the empathy and use of subjective experience.

Rogers distinguished between 3 modes of knowledge:

- (1) the objective mode where we try to understand the world as an object,
- (2) a subjective mode consisting of a person's own subjective knowledge of personal conscious experience, including intention and sense of freedom and
- (3) a subjective mode that is the subjective knowledge as an attempt to understand another person's subjective inner world. The clinician must master this third

mode. Roger's believed that the clinician can only help the client if he/she understands the client's personal world and subjective self and he hoped that psychology eventually could find systematic ways to know the personal experience of other people, so that therapy could be even better.

### **Rogers argued (1964)**

- (and this is an example of epistemological bias) that behaviourism limits itself exclusively to the objective mode of knowledge, and so limits psychology to certain techniques and theories (and not allowing for other ways of seeking knowledge)
- that behaviourism treats human beings like objects (and not like experiencing subjects in their own right), for example Skinner who only accepts physical causality (environmental influences in form of contingencies of reinforcement). According to Skinner, behaviourism does not accept the uniqueness of humans including free will, consciousness, subjectivity, and autonomy. (**Burgenthal;1964**: *Man is aware...man has choice..man is intentional*)
- that humans experience freedom of choice, also in therapy.
- that in science he accepted the term determinism, but in therapy he accepted freedom. The two exist in different dimensions.

### **Abraham Maslow**

the leading theorist and organiser of humanistic psychology. He started out as an experimental animal psychologist and then turned his attention to the problem of creativity in art and science and formulated his theory of self-actualisation based on the study of creative people. Self-actualisers made real their human creative powers (a contrast to most people who only satisfy their needs for food, shelter etc). Maslow claimed that all humans possess creative talents, which could be actualised if it were not for socially imposed inhibitions. Both Maslow and Rogers worked at making people leave more socially comfortable ways and move them to realise their full potentials as human beings.

Self-actualising people are characterised by the following

- they perceive reality accurately and fully
- they demonstrate a great acceptance of themselves and of others
- they exhibit spontaneity and naturalness
- they have a need for privacy
- they tend to be independent of their environment and culture
- they have a periodic mystic or peak experience
- they are concerned with all humans instead of with only their friends and relatives
- they tend to have only few friends
- they have a well-developed but not hostile sense of humour
- they have a strong ethical sense but not conventional ethics.

Maslow founded what was to become the *Journal of Humanistic psychology* in 1961 and the *Association for Humanistic Psychology* in 1963.

**First hand sources on humanistic psychology and Skinner's view of it in: Floyd W. Matson (1973)**

**Floyd W. Matson: Humanistic theory: the third revolution in psychology (The Humanist, March/April 1971)**

...Psychology is the study of more than the mind, and of less than the mind. It is the science of behaviour, much of which is 'mindless'. .. Humanistic psychology tries to tell it not like it is, but like it ought to be. It seeks to bring psychology back to its source, to the psyche, where it all began and where it finally culminates. But there is more to it than that. Humanistic psychology is not just the study of 'human being', it is a commitment to human becoming.

It was a humanistic philosopher, Kurt Riezler, who said that 'science begins with the respect for the subject matter'. Unfortunately that is not the view of all scientists, whether in the hard sciences of nature or in the softer sciences of man and mind. It is almost, as it seem to me, a defining characteristic of behaviourist psychology that it begins with a disrespect for the subject matter, and therefore leads straightaway to....'inhuman use of human beings'. At any rate, I know of no greater disrespect for the human subject than to treat him as an object – unless it is to demean him into drives, traits, reflexes, and other mechanical hardware. But that is the procedure of behaviourism, if not of all experimental psychology; it is a procedure openly admitted, indeed triumphantly proclaimed, in the name of Science and Truth, of Objectivity and Rigour, and of all else that is holy in these precincts. And it leads in a straight line out of the ivory tower into the brave new world of Walden two.

Everyone remembers, I am sure, that curious utopian novel, Walden Two, written more than 20 years ago by the pre-eminent behaviourist of our generation, B.F. Skinner. His book presented such a stark scenario of behavioural engineering and mind manipulation, such a 'conditional' surrender of autonomy and freedom on the part of its docile characters, that many readers at the time mistakenly supposed it to be a clever put-on, a satirical prophecy of the nightmare shape of things to come if ever a free society should relax its vigilant defence of the values of liberty and responsibility- especially the liberty and responsibility of choice.

...The key to the kingdom of Walden Two was operant conditioning; by this magical technique, applied to all residents from birth, the 'Hamlet syndrome' (the anxiety of choice) was efficiently removed. Like that wonderful Mrs. Prothro in Dylan Thomas's Christmas Story, who 'said the right thing always', so the creatures of Skinner's novel were conditioned to make the right choices automatically. It was instant certitude, at the price of all volition. Like Pavlov's dogs, Skinner's people made only conditioned responses to the stimulus of their master's voice.

Let's recognise that such a homeostatic paradise, like the classless society and the heavenly city, has great seductive appeal for many, especially in an age of anxiety and a time of troubles. It appeals particularly to those with a low tolerance for ambiguity and a high rage for order.....

Whereas behaviourism placed all its stress upon external environment (that is, upon stimuli from the outer world) as the controlling factor in behaviour, psychoanalysis

placed its emphasis upon the internal environment (upon stimuli from within, in the form of drives and instincts). For Freud, man was very much a creature of instinct- and in particular of two primary instincts, those of life and death (Eros and Thanatos). These two instincts were in conflict not only with each other but also with the world, with culture. Society was based, said Freud, on renunciation of the instincts via the mechanism of repression. But the instincts did not give up without a struggle. In fact, they never gave up; they could not be vanquished, only temporarily blocked. Life, then, was a constant alternation between frustration and aggression. Neither for the individual person nor for the culture was there a permanent solution or 'happy ending'; there were only compromises, expedients, working adjustments. The price of civilisation, indeed, was mass neurosis- the result of the necessary suppression of the natural instincts of man. But if that seems bad, the alternative was worse; whenever the repressive forces are for a moment relaxed, declared Freud, 'we see man as a savage beast to whom the thought of sparing his own kind is alien' (Civilisation and its discontent, 1930).

Perhaps the most interesting, not to say frightening, concept advanced by Freud was that of Khanates, the aggression or death instinct, which he regarded as an innate and irresistible drive toward the destruction of oneself and others. What is especially significant about this bleak conception of man's aggressive nature is the 'comeback' it has been making in recent years after a long period of almost total eclipse. the current revival of the shadow side of Freud, the pessimistic musings of his later years, does not tell us so much about Freud as it does about the temper of our own time...

The main point I want to make immediately about the psychoanalytic movement, in its Freudian form, is that it presents a picture of man as very much the 'victim-spectator' as Gordon Allport has put it, of blind forces working through him. For all its differences with behaviourism, Freudian theory agrees in the fundamental image of man as a stimulus-response machine, although the stimuli that work their will upon the human being come from within rather than from without. Freud's determinism was not environmental, like Watson's, but psychogenetic; nevertheless, it was a determinism, and it left little room for spontaneity, creativity, rationality, or responsibility. The declared faith in conscious reason that underlay Freudian therapy (rather more than Freudian theory) did not prevent his insistently minimising the role of reason as an actual or potential determinant of personality and conduct- nor, on the other hand, from maximising the thrust of irrational forces that press their claims both from 'below' (the id) and from 'above' (the superego). In Freud's topographical map of the mind, the ego, itself partially conscious, never achieves full autonomy, but functions as a kind of buffer state between the rival powers of instinct and introjected culture, between animal nature and social nurture.....

*(in the following, Matson outlines different psychoanalytic approaches of Adler, Jung, Rank etc. which differed from the Freudian approach in that they actually emphasised the existential will of the person and that this approach made them 'heretics' in Freud's opinion)... he continues: The common denominator in these various lines of theory and therapy was, I believe, respect for the person, recognition of the other not as a case, or an object, or a field of forces, or a bundle of instincts, but as himself. In terms of theory, it meant respect for his powers of creativity and responsibility; in terms of therapy, it meant respect for his values, his intentions, and, above all, his peculiar identity.*

This recognition of *man-in-person*, as opposed to *man-in-general*, goes to the heart of the difference between humanistic psychology, in any of its forms or schools, and scientific psychologies such as behaviourism. Not only in psychoanalysis, but in other fields as well, increasing numbers of students have found themselves drawn to the unsettling conclusion that the definitive features of a human being cannot be made out at all from a 'psychological distance', but can be brought into focus only by understanding...the unique perspective of the individual himself.

The emphasis upon the human person, upon the individual in his wholeness and uniqueness, is a central feature of the 'psychology of humanism'...

It follows that the relationship of therapy in its ideal development represents an authentic encounter 'on the sharp edge of existence' between two human beings, one seeking and the other helping. This mutual recognition, which is never immediate but only a possibility to be achieved, cuts through the conventional defences and postures of both partners to permit each to reach out as a person to the other as a person. What is demanded of the doctor, in particular, says Buber (1960), is that he 'himself step forth out of his protected professional superiority, into the elementary situation between the one who asks and one who is asked'.....In this new kind of therapeutic encounter ...there are no silent partners. The existential therapist (which is to say, the humanistic therapist) is no longer the blank screen or 'mute catalyser' that he was in Freud's day, but rather is a participant with the whole of his being. He participates not only for the purpose of helping, but even more basically for the purpose of knowing and understanding. 'You must participate in a self in order to know what it is. By participation you change it (Tillisch, 1959). The inference is that the kind of knowledge essential to psychology and psychotherapy is to be gained not by detached observation but by participant-observation (to use Harry Stack Sullivan's phrase). It may be possible, through detachment, to gain knowledge that is 'useful'; but only through participation is it possible to gain the knowledge that is *helpful*.

*Skinner's view of humanism and behaviourism.*

### **B.F. Skinner. (The Humanist, July/August 1972)**

There seems to be two ways of knowing, or knowing about, another person. One is associated with existentialism, phenomenology, and structuralism. It is a matter of knowing what a person is, or what he is like, or what he is coming to be or becoming. We try to know another person in this sense as we know ourselves. We share his feelings through sympathy or empathy. Through intuition we discover his attitudes, intentions, and other states of mind. We communicate with him in the etymological sense of making ideas and feelings common to both of us. We do some more effectively if we have established good *interpersonal* relations. This is a passive, contemplative kind of knowing: If we want to predict what a person does or is likely to do, we assume that he, like us, will be according to what he is; his behaviour, like ours, will be an expression of his feelings, states of mind, intentions attitudes, and so on.

The other way of knowing is a matter of what a person does. We can usually observe this directly as any other phenomenon in the world; no special kind of knowing is needed. We explain why a person behaves as he does by turning to the environment rather than to inner states or activities. The environment was effective during the



evolution of the species, and we call the result the human genetic endowment. A member of the species is exposed to another part of that environment during his lifetime, and from it he acquires a repertoire of behaviour, which converts an organism with a genetic endowment into a person. By analysing these effects of the environment, we move towards the prediction and control of behaviour....

I would define a humanist as one of those who, because of the environment to which he has been exposed, is concerned for the future of mankind. A movement that calls itself 'humanistic psychology' takes a rather different line. It has been described as 'a third force' to distinguish it from behaviourism and psychoanalysis; but 'third' should not be taken to mean advanced, nor should 'force' suggest power. Since behaviourism and psychoanalysis both view human behaviour as a determined system, humanistic psychologists have emphasised a contrast by defending the autonomy of the individual. They have insisted that a person can transcend his environment, that he is more than a causal stage between behaviour and environment, that he determines what environmental forces will act upon him- in a word, that he has a free choice. This position is most at home in existentialism, phenomenology, and structuralism, because the emphasis is on what a person is or is becoming. Maslow's expression 'self-actualisation' sums it up nicely: The individual is to fulfil himself- not merely through gratification, of course, but through 'spiritual growth'.....

Better forms of government are not to be found in better rulers, better educational practices in better teachers, better economic systems in more enlightened management, or better therapy in more compassionate therapists. Neither are they to be found in better citizens, students, workers, or patients. The age-old mistake is to look for salvation in the character of autonomous men and women rather than in the social environments that have appeared in the evolution of cultures and that can now be explicitly designed.

By turning from man *qua* man to the external conditions of which man's behaviour is a function, it has been possible to design better practices in the care of psychotics and retardants, in child care, in education (in both contingency management in the classroom and the design of instructional material), in incentive systems in industry, and in penal institutions. In these and many other areas we can now more effectively work for the good of the individual, for the greatest good of the greatest number, and for the good of the culture or of mankind as a whole. These are certainly humanistic concerns, and no one who calls himself a humanist can afford to neglect them. Men and women have never faced a greater threat to the future of their species. There is much to be done and done quickly, and nothing less than the active prosecution of science of behaviour will suffice.

### **Some criticism of Humanistic psychology**

The behaviourists have been the severest critics of humanistic psychology because of the phenomenological approach, which they feel, is purely subjective and dualistic. Thus, according to behaviourists, the theories lack any empirical validity and scientific method is abandoned in favour of introspection. Skinner and Rogers engaged in public dialogues and debates on several occasions. The general conclusion reached was that the two men were at opposite poles and would never agree.

Another critique is, that introspective self-reports are notoriously unreliable and no more than an assumption to consider that what one says is really what one feels. Probing into a hypothetical inner self is nothing more than dealing in fictions.

Humanistic psychology has been considered, by some, to be a kind of religion. These concepts must simply be taken on faith so that any kind of notion that psychology should be considered a branch of natural science is abandoned. The humanistic approach has regressed psychology back to the middle Ages and the Church Fathers. It is undoing all the efforts of the more objective and experimentally minded psychologists to help achieve the goal of psychology as an objective study of behaviour.

Psychoanalytic criticisms claim that individuals cannot explain their own behaviour because the causes are largely unconscious. Consequently, conscious explanations will be distorted by rationalisation or other defences.

Both psychoanalysis and behaviourism claim that explanation of behaviour cannot be based on evidence of the person who is behaving but on the assessment of an observer.

*Based on*

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