# From Humanism to Humanistic Psychology and Back Again

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## SYNOPSIS

**This paper reviews the origins of 'Humanistic Psychology' and critiques the view that it represents a 'third force' in psychology as, in philosophical terms, a 'category error'. The paper argues that it is clearer and more congruent for practitioners who identify as 'humanistic' to return to principles and theories of humanism which underpin diverse psychological and therapeutic practice that may encompass working with unconscious as well as conscious material, the dynamics of the psyche, and working both cognitively and behaviourally.**


## Personal Background

Some time in the early 1980s, I remember discussing with a fellow political activist our different experiences of therapy and our mutual interest to train in psychotherapy. As someone who had enjoyed a liberal upbringing and education, and was then actively involved in libertarian socialist politics, I was drawn to Gestalt and transactional analysis (TA) which, I understood, were forms of therapy in the humanistic 'school' or tradition. Interestingly, my friend, who was involved in a Trotskyist socialist group which was more focused on the political party than class or movement, went on to train as a psychoanalyst – and, gradually and unfortunately, we parted company.

Although much of my training was framed as 'humanistic', it clearly drew on a number of ideas, concepts and practices from psychoanalysis which, historically, is the 'first force' of psychology (Freud's first paper on psychoanalysis was published in 1896), and behaviourism, the 'second force' (Watson's article 'Psychology as the behaviorist views it', which has been referred to as the behaviourist manifesto, was published in 1913), although Sutich (1968) has 'positivistic or behavioristic theory' as the first forces, and 'classical psychoanalytical theory' as the second force. This sense that humanistic therapies drew on, came from and, indeed, represented aspects of other traditions or forces was epitomised for me when, some years later (in 1999), when I was applying for full membership of the UK Association of Humanistic Psychology Practitioners (AHPP) as a Group Psychotherapist (an accreditation I maintained for some ten years), I met at my interview John Rowan, whose first question to me was, 'How come you think TA is a *humanistic* psychotherapy?'! I responded robustly, and my successful interview and application was the beginning of a happy association and identification with the AHPP.

## Organisation, Argument and Terms

For many years, the three forces of psychology have been a major organising principle, and whilst, these days, the term 'force' is rarely used in this context, these traditions or approaches have formed both the literature in the field of psychology, psychotherapy, counselling and counselling psychology and the organisation of the profession, e.g. the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) and its Sections, now Colleges. They have, however, also led to 'turf wars' based on theoretical orientation or modality whereby, for instance, practitioners from one particular theoretical orientation have been excluded from placements and

employment by practitioners from another. As I have trained, worked, reflected, read and written, I have become increasingly sceptical that the three 'forces' are so clearly differentiated as such (see Hinshelwood, in Rowan and Hinshelwood, 1987) or, more fundamentally, that they are, or represent, the same category of things.

Following some brief comments on the history of Humanistic Psychology, and on differences and similarities, I put forward the argument that viewing Humanistic Psychology as a third force is, in philosophical terms, a category error, and that therapists – and their clients – would benefit from those 'humanistic' practitioners who identify as such being clearer about the philosophy or philosophies, including humanism, that underpin and inform their practice – which may be psychodynamic (if not psychoanalytic) and/or behavioural.

As a field and a discipline, 'psychology' is, of course, wider than its clinical or therapeutic applications. In this paper, as I am predominantly concerned with humanistic counselling, psychotherapy, and counselling psychology, I use the term 'humanistic therapies' to encompass these therapeutic fields and activities; and reserve the term 'Humanistic Psychology' to when I refer to the history and background to my present concerns or to other authors' use of the term. The same logic, of course, also applies to therapies rooted in the other forces, thus it is more accurate to refer to 'psychoanalytic therapies' (from psychoanalysis) and 'behavioural therapies' (from behaviourism).

## A Brief History

Humanistic Psychology has commonly been referred to as 'third force' psychology. This phrase goes back to the early 1960s when the (then) American Association for Humanistic Psychology (AAHP) reported what it sought to represent:

> Humanistic Psychology may be defined as the third branch of the general field of psychology (the two already in existence being the psychoanalytic and the behaviourist) and as such, is primarily concerned with those human capacities and potentialities that have little or no systematic place, either in positivist or behaviourist theory or in classical psychoanalytic theory. (Sutich, 1962)

The background to the foundation of the AHPP was the fact that in the 1950s, a number of psychologists, most notably Abraham Maslow, were finding it difficult to get published, due to the dominance in psychology of behaviourism. In response to this, Maslow began to contact other like-minded psychologists and, in 1954, compiled a mailing-list of about 125 people with a view to exchanging papers. In the early 1960s the individuals on this list became the first subscribers to the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* (see DeCarvalho, 1990; and, for the history of Humanistic Psychology in Britain, see Rowan, 2013). Maslow called the list 'the Eupsychian Network' because, as he later reflected (Maslow, 1968):

> all these groups, organizations and journals are interested in helping the individual grow toward fuller humanness, the society grow toward synergy and health, and all societies and all peoples move toward becoming one world and one species. This list can be called a network because the memberships overlap and because these organizations and individuals more or less share the humanistic and transhumanistic outlook on life. (p. 237)

DeCarvalho (1990) has dated the emergence of Humanistic Psychology as a 'third force' in American psychology to November 1964, when a conference was held in a small country inn in Old Saybrook, Connecticut, attended by George Allport, Jacques Barzun, James Bugental, Charlotte Bühler, George Kelly, Robert Knapp (Chair), Abraham Maslow, Rollo May, Carl Moustakas, Gardner Murphy, Henry Murray, Carl Rogers, and others.

Third-force psychology has a rich and complex history (see DeCarvalho, 1990, 1991; Moss, 1999; Schneider, Bugental and Pierson, 2001; Cain, 2002), not least as Humanistic Psychology in America and in Britain draws on different views of philosophical traditions and, specifically, existentialism, and thus has different flavours. One aspect of the history of Humanistic Psychology which is particularly significant for this present discussion is that it began as a 'discontent', especially with behaviourism, and as an alternative, both to psychoanalysis and to behaviourism. As DeCarvalho (1990) has noted, 'At first... the AHPP was little more than a protest group. Its early organizational meetings were colored by a deep dissatisfaction with and rebellion against behaviourism.' (p. 28) The fact that, in the early days of this association, there was a distinct group that wanted and tended to define Humanistic Psychology in terms of what it did *not* stand for has left us, well, 'third'! One example of this was published in the first number of the (American) Association of Humanistic Psychology (AHP)'s *Newsletter*:

> If you are dissatisfied with a psychology that views man as a composite of part functions, a psychology whose model of science is taken over from physics, and whose model of a practitioner is taken from medicine – and you want to do something to change this state of affairs, fill out this application. (AHP, 1963: 3)

Despite the fact that, over the years, humanistic therapies

have presented themselves more positively, I think this early sense of identity in opposition has left a certain legacy and, if you like, an organisational psychology of opposition and, to a certain extent, marginality.

## Claims and Territory, Roots and Branches

As Humanistic Psychology became more confident, it began to claim its distinctiveness. Thus, Sutich (1962) suggested that Humanistic Psychology was humanistic because it derived from values and ideas such as:

> love, creativity, self, growth, organism, basic need-gratification, self-actualization, higher values, being, becoming, spontaneity, play, humor, affection, naturalness, warmth, ego-transcendence, objectivity, autonomy, responsibility, meaning, fair play, transcendental experience, psychological health, and related concepts.

Some 30 years later, the AHPP suggested that humanist practitioners share certain fundamental core beliefs about:

- The theory of human nature and of self – that the individual is unique, truth-seeking, an integrated and self-regulating whole, with a right to autonomy with responsibility.
- The aims of therapy and of growth – which is self-awareness and actualisation, which, in turn, includes: wholeness and completion, authenticity, emotional competence, the furtherance of creativity, respect for difference, and integrity and autonomy whilst acknowledging interdependence.
- The nature of the therapeutic relationship – as the primary agent of change, and founded on the therapist's genuineness, empathy, openness, honesty, and non-judgemental acceptance of the client (see AHPP, 1998/2009).

In a more detailed contribution, Cain (2001) identified a number of characteristics which, he asserted, define humanistic psychotherapies. With regard to views of the person, these are:

- That she or he is self-aware, free to choose, and responsible.
- That she or he is holistic – 'The person is viewed *holistically*, as an indivisible, interrelated organism who cannot be reduced to the sum of his or her parts' (ibid.: 5) – and as embodied, and contextual beings.
- That she or he needs to make sense and find meaning, and to construe her or his realities.
- That she or he has a capacity for creativity.
- That, as primarily social beings, we have a powerful need to belong.

Cain also discussed the importance in humanistic psychotherapies of: the actualising tendency, a relational emphasis, phenomenology, empathy, the concept of 'the self' (which, in my view, is often unthinkingly and uncritically reified as 'the Self'), and anxiety.

Such claims and lists, however, imply that neither psychoanalysis nor behaviourism (nor psychoanalysts or behaviourists) hold these beliefs and views – which, simply, is not true. In his correspondence with John Rowan, Hinshelwood (Rowan and Hinshelwood, 1987: 143) wrote that 'I am not sure that you are altogether correct in implying such a radical division between psychoanalysis and humanistic psychotherapy', adding that: 'The act of appropriating the term "humanistic" for one sector of psychotherapy is itself a little provocative'. I have some sympathy with Hinshelwood's objection as, similarly, I object to the kind of territorialism that is implied by 'cognitive behaviour therapy', as if no other therapies are cognitive or behavioural! – for a critique of which and a response to which, see Tudor (2008a).

Such claims and divisions also ignore history. John Rowan's question to me about TA was, in part, probably based on his understanding of the centrality in TA of ego state theory, which derives from Federn's ego psychology, which, in turn, has its roots in psychoanalysis. Not many people would see any link between contemporary person-centred approaches and classical psychoanalysis, and yet Carl Rogers, who was influenced by Otto Rank (see Kramer, 1995), is only two degrees of separation from Sigmund Freud; and, whilst Rogers' (1942) 'newer psychotherapy' is a long way from Freud's psychoanalysis, there are elements of psychodynamic thinking in Rogers' theory, especially his concepts of defences, i.e. denial and distortion. Whilst I agree with Rowan (in Rowan and Hinshelwood, 1987; Rowan, 2001) that there are roots of humanistic and certainly transpersonal psychotherapy which are independent of psychoanalysis, when humanistic psychotherapists are tracing their therapeutic lineage, both theoretically and personally (in terms of the influence of their therapists and supervisors and *their* therapists and supervisors, and so on), thereby acknowledging what Traue (1990/2001) has referred to as 'ancestors of the mind', most of us would be only a few handshakes away from the Viennese Doctor. (I myself am personally only three handshakes away from Sigmund Freud, via my Godmother, Margaret Proctor, who met Anna Freud; and, professionally, four degrees away, via Natalie Rogers, Carl Rogers and Otto Rank.)

It is worth noting that Maslow (1962), who coined the

phrase 'third force' psychology, described Humanistic Psychology as 'epi-behavioural' and 'epi-Freudian' (*epi* meaning 'building upon'). Bugental (1964) also did not see Humanistic Psychology as a competitor to the other two 'forces': 'Humanistic psychology generally does not see itself as competitive with the other two orientations; rather, it attempts to supplement their observations and to introduce further perspectives and insights.' (p. 22) Similarly, Bühler (1965), an early feminist and one of the largely unacknowledged founders of Humanistic Psychology, wrote: 'Humanistic psychology  does not necessarily deny that many accomplishments and creations may be the by-product of procedures meant ultimately to satisfy an ambitious ego and indirectly a pleasure-seeking id' (p. 54).

As Hinshelwood (in Rowan and Hinshelwood, 1987) has observed, the criticism of psychoanalysis in the United States of America by American humanists is somewhat misplaced when translated to Britain – and, for that matter, to other countries in the world. As he put it:

> The character of the British schools of psychoanalysis (like many of the Continental ones) is deeply humanistic and is concerned with the struggling human being, and has left behind all the mechanistic trappings that Freud's nineteenth-century background encumbered him with.... The opposition between psychoanalysis and humanistic psychology has so much less relevance over here. (p. 144)

Whilst there are some obvious differences between aspects of psychoanalytic, behavioural and humanistic theories, there are, I would argue, more and significant similarities, especially between 'humanistic' and 'psychoanalytic' traditions (see Tudor, 2009) – and there are certainly differences between and within different humanistic theories, therapies and therapists (on which see, for instance, Mearns and Thorne, 2000). Rowan (in Rowan and Hinshelwood, 1987) identified that the overlap between psychoanalysis and humanistic psychotherapy would include: projection, the importance of countertransference, the emphasis on the therapeutic alliance, and the use of therapy for the therapist. In her excellent article on this theme, Gomez (2004), who describes herself as a humanistic *and* psychoanalytic psychotherapist, reviews the respective flag statements of the Analytic Psychology, Psychoanalytic & Psychodynamic (APPP), and the Humanistic & Integrative (HIP) Sections of the UKCP, and finds little to which practitioners from either Section would object. Finally (on this point), there are theoreticians and practitioners who have been very much identified with psychoanalysis, who are writing, as it were, across the divide (see, notably, McWilliams, 2005; Orange, 2010).

The old first, second and third force categorisation is simply too general, and too generalised, to be relevant or useful in contemporary debates about psychotherapy and its practice.

## Categories

Traditionally, there are five branches of philosophy: metaphysics, which deals with fundamental questions of reality; epistemology, which deals with concepts of knowledge (how we know things); logic, which studies the rules of valid reasoning and argument; ethics or moral philosophy, which is concerned with human values; and aesthetics, which deals with the notion of beauty and the philosophy of art. In logic, there are various rules by which reasoning is said to be valid, or not, and argument judged to be sound, or not. The term 'category mistake' or 'category error' is a mistake or error about ontology (the essence of things) or about semantics (meaning). For example, to claim that most readers of this journal are humanists may or may not be true; it is not a category error since it could be contingently the case. On the other hand, to claim that most apples are humanists would be to make a category error since apples belong to a category of things that cannot be said to have beliefs or values. Although there are debates within philosophy about the enterprise of categorisation and the approach to establishing a category error, here I use the concept of category to raise the question: whether 'Humanistic Psychology' is of the same nature of things as 'psychoanalysis' and/or 'behaviourism' – and, by implication, whether the first two 'forces' are the same category?

The first category error is, then, that the three 'categories', psychoanalysis, behaviourism and humanistic psychology (which is generally how the three forces have been named), are not the same order of things. Psychoanalysis, literally, the analysis of the psyche, is, fundamentally a *method* of psychological investigation (through free association and interpretation). The term, however, also refers to a therapeutic technique, which has gone through a series of modifications by Freud himself and others since; and to a body of facts and theories. Behaviourism is an approach to psychology which combines elements of philosophy, methodology and theory. Humanistic Psychology is also an approach to psychology which defines its description of and relation to psychology with reference to humanism, which encompasses a group of philosophies and ethical perspectives which emphasises certain values and the agency of human beings. Earlier, I

**Table 1**

| THE NATURE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE (BASED ON BURRELL AND MORGAN, 1979) | | |
|---|---|---|
| **The subjectivist approach to social science** | **Assumptions** | **The objectivist approach to social science** |
| Qualitative | Method | Quantitative |
| Ideographic | Methodology | Nomothetic |
| Anti-positivism | Epistemology | Positivism |
| Voluntarism | Human nature | Determinism |
| Nominalism | Ontology | Realism |

acknowledged that psychology as a field and a discipline is wider than its clinical or therapeutic applications; this also applies to psychoanalysis and humanism, and these probably more so than behaviourism. If we are referring to three (four or more) forces of *psychology,* then this category error is resolved by renaming the forces: psychoanalytic psychology, behaviourial psychology, and Humanistic Psychology – with their respective therapies.

In the previous section I quoted Bühler (1965); she continued: 'But humanistic psychology conceives of the human being differently. It conceives of man as living with intentionality, which means as living with purpose' (pp. 54–5) – and, indeed, Bühler herself had advanced a theory of four basic tendencies (Bühler, 1959). My point here is that if 'Humanist Psychology' is different from other forms of psychology by virtue of its conception of human beings, then that is a difference about human nature (see DeCarvalho, 1990) and, more fundamentally, about ontology or the essence of things – differences which are more accurately and better described as *philosophical*, and not *psychological*.

In their work on paradigm analysis, Burrell and Morgan (1979) provided a way of understanding such differences. They identified four assumptions in social science and placed them on a subjective–objective continuum (see **Table 1**). I have added 'method' and changed the order of the terms so that it reads from the bottom (the more fundamental, underlying assumptions) to the top.

Drawing on this work, it seems to me more useful to name differences between practitioners and practice, theories and models as differences of ontology, human nature, etc., than of 'force'.

One reviewer of this paper suggested that the commonly held view of the distinctions between the three forces were that:

> psychoanalytic psychology is based on a view of the essence of the person as 'basically destructive'; behavioural psychology is based on the view of the essence of the person as 'basically tabula rasa'; and humanistic [psychology] is based on the view of the essence of the person as 'basically intrinsically directional to maintain/enhance itself'. (Anon)

I think that this is a good summary of what are broad and commonly held differences and, as such, are ontological differences. The problem is that they are too broad and 'common': there are psychoanalytic and behavioural psychologists and therapists who are humanistic in their outlook; there are behavioural psychologists who are very analytic; and there certainly 'humanist' psychologists and therapists who do not value or support that view that people tend to actualise. The second category error, then, is an error of category: practitioners identify – and are too readily identified – with, in effect, a (one) category, rather than being specific about differences which are ontological, epistemological, methodological and practical.

To give a theoretical example: the person-centred approach is known for being 'non directive' and, though there are differences within the approach about this (see Levitt, 2005), this principle and its practice are based on a theory of knowledge that the client 'knows' her or his own direction; as such it is a view which represents an anti-positivist epistemology. Theory and practice that privilege what the practitioner knows and, in effect, tell the client what to do are based on positivist epistemology. Thus, when a person-centred therapist tells a client what to do or how to think, they are committing a category error.

To give a practical and professional example: when I was active in the then Humanistic and Integrative Section (HIPS) of the UKCP, and also as a member of the Institute of Transactional Analysis, I remember great debates about the terms and conditions of personal therapy for training psychotherapists. Due to the fact that some trainees had

presented for their qualifying examination without having done sufficient personal therapy, and the realisation that some trainers were not taking the existing requirements seriously and, perhaps, more importantly, holding the principles and *spirit* of the existing requirements with integrity, there was much discussion about the necessity (or otherwise) of further requirements. In the end, the HIPS asserted its position by clarifying its further condition of 40 hours personal therapy per year (see UKCP HIPS Training Standards Committee, 2003; for further commentary about which, see Tudor, 2008b, 2008c). The HIPS' decision was one clearly based on, in Burrell and Morgan's (1979) terms, a nomothetic or legal methodology. My own view was – and is – that personal therapy is too important to have as a requirement of training, a principle which was embodied in the training philosophy and standards of Temenos, Sheffield (www.temenos.ac.uk), a member organisation of the UKCP and its HIP Section/College; and, as such, represents the ideographic end of what might be viewed as a methodological dimension.

If humanistic therapies are claiming, as their fundamental difference with and from the other two forces, that they are based on different philosophical assumptions about various aspects of human nature and our psychology, then it seems more straightforward and honest to claim these as such: as differences of philosophy and not 'force', 'tradition', 'approach', 'school' or 'modality'. By using and claiming the title of a 'force', Humanistic Psychology has – and, more specifically, the humanistic therapies that sit under this umbrella term have, especially with regard to psychoanalysis – confused *philosophy* (as in humanism and, specifically, with regard to ontology and human nature) with *method* (as in psychoanalysis). In other words, the three 'forces' are not the same category of things, and to present them as such is to commit what, in philosophical terms, is a 'category error'. Rather than assuming a vague humanism about our colleagues or practitioners' practice – and personally, I have found more humanism in certain psychoanalytic colleagues than in some nomothetic, regulatory members of HIPS – we should be asking the question, 'What is "humanistic" about "Humanistic" Psychology?'.

Asking this question, I suggest, leads us to be able to resolve the second error of category by analysing or understanding both genuine differences and genuine similarities between different therapies across all forces, traditions, etc., as a result of which we may draw different conclusions. Gomez, for example, regards (or, at least, in 2004, regarded) herself as a 'humanistic and psychodynamic' practitioner, and I have some sympathy and association with that, in that one may hold broadly humanistic values and work with a psychodynamic or a psychodynamically informed understanding of therapy. Others may be clearer that humanism is fundamentally antithetical to the philosophical traditions on which psychoanalysis and, differently, behaviourism sit. Either way, this clarification, using the kind of paradigm analysis outlined by Burrell and Morgan (1979) (see, for example, Tudor, 1996), and the resulting philosophical congruence between values, theory and practice (see Tudor and Worrall, 2006), is only possible when we are clear about categories (what goes with what) and category errors (i.e. what does not). As Rogers (1957) put it, interestingly in an article he wrote as a comment on a previous article by Walker (1956), comparing Freud's view of the nature of man with his own:

> One cannot engage in psychotherapy without giving operational evidence of an underlying value orientation and view of human nature. It is definitely preferable, in my estimation, that such underlying views be open and explicit, rather than covert and implicit. (p. 199)

In this sense, it may be helpful for 'humanistic' practitioners or those who identify with this force or tradition of psychology to return to a broader and deeper understanding of humanism, its history from the *umanisti* of the late fifteenth century, based especially in Italy, and its various forms: renaissance, secular, religious, inclusive and even naturalistic (which meets the criticism that humanism is overly anthropocentric).

## Conclusion

Clearly, Humanistic Psychology is an important part of our history, and I am proud to be associated with it and, not least, as an Associate Editor of this journal. Clearly, Humanistic Psychology as a third force has, and humanistic therapies have had, a crucial role in broadly humanising psychology and psychotherapy, akin perhaps to an extra parliamentary political party: it has challenged the first two forces of psychology, especially with regard to their (implicit) values and the underlying assumptions of their theories and practices. It has been hugely successful in a number of ways:

- It is a recognised 'force' or tradition with a number of 'schools', 'modalities' or 'approaches', including: bioenergetics and other forms of body psychotherapy; co-counselling; creative and expressive therapies; encounter; experiential therapy; feminist therapy; Gestalt therapy; the

person-centred approach; primal integration; psychodrama; psychosynthesis and other transpersonal approaches; transactional analysis; and many others – and, of course, some of these would also identify with, or with aspects of, the other two forces.

- It has well-established training courses and programmes, from the first one established in 1966 in the Psychology Department of Sonoma State College, to others at West Georgia College and the Humanistic Psychology Institute, San Francisco, and many others since (see DeCarvalho, 1990); and, of course, other training courses and programmes in the modalities noted above.
- It has been the subject of a number of publications with regard to Humanistic Psychology and its therapies (see, for example, May, Rogers, Maslow et al., 1986; DeCarvalho, 1991; Moss, 1999; Rowan, 2001; Schneider, Bugental and Pierson, 2001; Cain, 2002; Whitton, 2003), as well as of numerous publications about its various modalities; and has given birth to three professional journals: in the USA, the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* (from 1961) and *The Humanistic Psychologist* (from 1973), and in Britain, *Self & Society* (also from 1973).
- It has a presence in organisations, including, significantly, as a Division (32) in the American Psychology Association, and as a College of the UKCP.

We can – and should – take enormous confidence from this. Four years ago, I and my family emigrated from the UK to Aotearoa New Zealand. As part of settling into our new professional home, both I and my wife, Louise Embleton Tudor, presented papers to colleagues (Tudor, 2009; Embleton Tudor, 2010). Having heard both talks, one colleague came up to me and said: 'You know, one thing that strikes me about you and Louise is that neither of you are apologetic for not being Freudian.' I thought this was an interesting comment, not only about us and, no doubt, him, but also about the dominance, or perceived dominance, of psychoanalytic thinking. My colleague is correct in that I am not apologetic for not being Freudian, although, following Maslow, I would claim to be epi-Freudian!

In so far as Humanistic Psychology arose as a 'third force' in some way to act, one might say (somewhat mischievously) as a corrective *organisational or philosophical* experience to its two older 'brothers', it has made its presence felt: 'Humanistic Psychology' or, perhaps, more accurately and robustly, humanistic therapies are here to stay; it is, in many respects, mainstream and institutional, if not institutionalised (see DeCarvalho, 1990). Perhaps now it is established and confident enough to regard itself not simply or merely as a 'third', but as representing, at best, a philosophy (humanism) in clinical practice (see Tudor and Worrall, 2006).

As a third force, 'Humanistic Psychology' is dead; long live humanism!

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