

2221 Theory & Practice 1: Lecture 1

THE THREE SCHOOLS OF THERAPY

© *Dr Jan Ridgway PhD*

Rationale.....	1
The Humanist Faith.....	2
The Three Schools of Psychotherapy.....	4
1. The Psychodynamic School, known as ‘first force’ psychology.....	4
a) Practice Strategy.....	4
b) History.....	4
c) Other practices.....	5
2. The Behaviourist School, known as ‘second force’ psychology: later ‘Cognitive’ developments.....	5
The Cognitive Development.....	6
3. The Personalistic Humanism School, known as ‘third force’ psychology.....	6
a) Practice Strategy.....	6
b) History.....	7

Rationale

Why learn about these schools or traditions at all?

1. **One reason is that all of them identify something of importance about counselling people.** Therefore, we can learn specific things for our own practice from this study. In general, the psychodynamic tradition alerts us to the presence of the unconscious or out-of-awareness factors in motivation. [Jeremiah has said that the human heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it? (17: 9). The Psalmist asks God to search his heart and to see if there is some wicked way in him (Ps 139: 23-24).] The personalist tradition reminds us of the great potential of humanity’s position as mirror of God in the world. The behavioural and cognitive tradition focuses attention on specific acts and their embeddedness in contexts that can be changed; the cognitive tradition, growing out of the latter tradition focuses on propositions we say to ourselves and their rationality or otherwise.

- 2. Furthermore, this module can alert to the general type of counselling that we might want to do.**¹ However, as Christians, we want to maintain a critical distance from all non-Christian, humanist therapies. Furthermore, we need to be also careful about the systems proposed by fellow Christians knowing that we are all prone to ‘let the world squeeze us into its mould’². For each tradition inducts its practitioners into a counselling ‘culture’ which involves a particular language, rights and wrongs, even a worldview and a way of life.
- 3. I’m actually hoping that this module will induce a certain disillusionment in you for the various humanist theories on other BUT awaken you to the possibilities of developing Christian approaches to therapy, using insights from the theories/therapies without adopting them wholesale. (I hope to show you at least one of my attempts to do that.)**

The Humanist Faith

The three schools of humanist therapy share a common faith in the same god, the free personality. Humanity is created to worship, to adore and to put its faith in something or Someone beyond. The humanism that pervades western life is more than a worldview; it is a religion founded on a belief in the free human personality. Humanist religion is antagonistic to the Christian faith because Christianity directly challenges humanism’s commitment to something *created* or *temporal* (i. e., humanity) as ultimate.

Each of the major schools of humanist therapies to be studied in *Theory and Practice 1* and *2* is founded in the contemporary dilemma of a humanist dialectic. This painfully, unstable dilemma arises out of the humanist, religious³ commitment to a free human personality, free from all external constraints particularly those of any supernatural God (Dooyeweerd, 1979: 149). This particular commitment posits

¹ As there are 400+ types of counselling there are probably enough to satisfy most personality and temperament types!

² Phillips’ translation of Rom 12: 2a.

³ We divide people into the ‘religious’ and ‘non-religious’ but humankind is incurably religious. It *cannot* not believe in a ‘nondependent reality all else depends on’ (Clouser, 1999: 22). The humanism that pervades western life is more than a worldview; it is a religion founded on a belief in the free human personality. This religion is antagonistic to the Christian faith because the latter directly challenges the former’s commitment to recognise something *created* as ultimate.

something *creaturely*⁴ --all pagan and humanist religions are bound to do this—as ultimate. (See Figure 1 below.)

The central belief of humanist religion is well-expressed by John Carroll, a sociologist at La Trobe University Melbourne, in these words:

[Humanism] attempted to replace God by man, put humans at the centre of the universe—to deify them. Its ambition was to found an order on earth in which freedom and happiness prevailed, without any transcendental or supernatural supports—an entirely human order (Carroll, 2004: 2).⁵

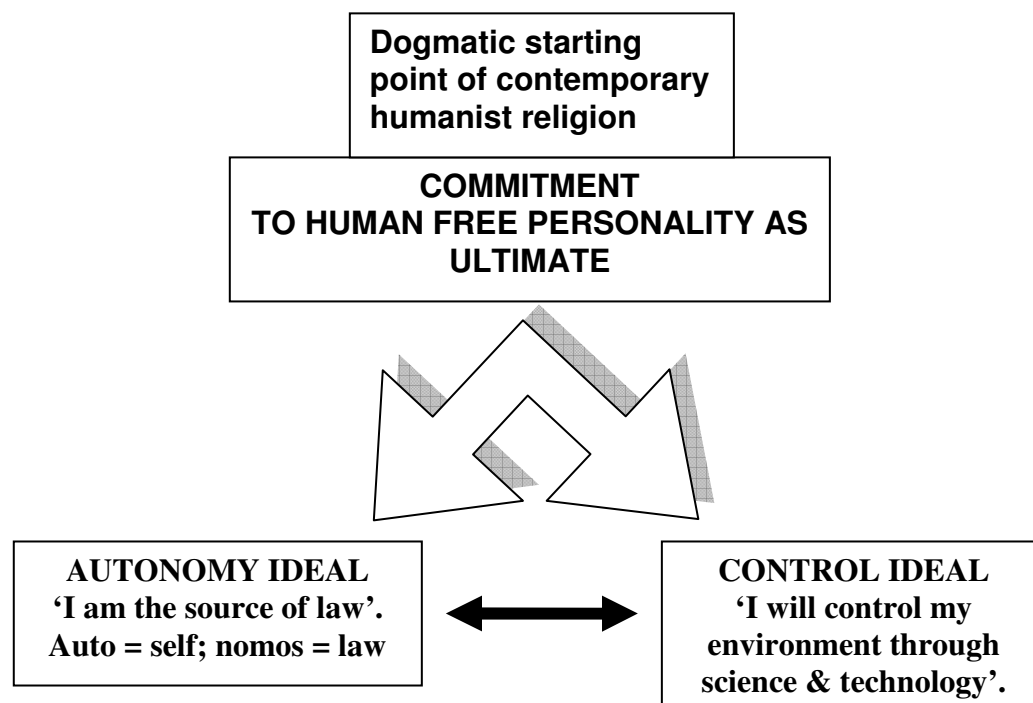


Figure 1 Humanist western religion and its dialectical, ideal components.

⁴ Whenever the creaturely is considered absolute, evil consequences invariably follow. See Rom 1.

⁵ Carroll, *a non-Christian*, argues that classical humanism posited the wonder of humankind's will to make itself, a belief that has not faltered until the downing of the twin towers [a great symbol of humanism] on the 11th September 2001.

The Three Schools of Psychotherapy

For our purposes, three⁶ schools of psychotherapy exist. One could argue that more exist (e. g., existential, eastern, Christian, Judaistic, Islamic) but we assume that number to be three for convenience and simplicity. These are the psychodynamic, the personalist, and the behaviourist and cognitive schools⁷.

1. The Psychodynamic School, known as ‘first force’ psychology

a) Practice Strategy

If we were to watch a classical Freudian psychoanalytical psychotherapist at work, we would find that the patient would be lying down on a couch with the analyst seated at her head. The basic rule given to a patient in such therapy (which is conducted 5 times a week, sometimes, for many years) would be, ‘Say whatever comes into your mind’.

The basic assumption behind this practice is that the unconscious contains intolerable contents that have been repressed because of their traumatic character. In order for neurosis to be relieved, those unconscious contents *have to be made conscious* and integrated by the ego. But, to make those thoughts conscious we have to catch the unconscious unawares, so to speak, by directing the patient not to censor what she might normally say. *Analysis of the transference*, the feelings and fantasies the patient develops toward the analyst, is also undertaken by the therapist. The position of the analyst, out of sight of the patient, is believed to encourage the development of the transference relationship.

b) History

This school was launched more widely with the publication of Sigmund Freud’s remarkable work, *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1900. From this title, we can identify two important themes in his work: the scientific (Freud insisted that his ‘interpretations’ of dreams were scientifically valid), and the introspective romantic (‘dreams’). The 19th C was dominated by the physical, biological (Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, 1859) and psychological sciences (newly broken away from philosophy in

⁶ You could argue that four exist and make cognitive therapy a separate one but I have not chosen to do that.

⁷ Be also aware that the divisions are somewhat fluid at times with theorists in one stream borrowing from those in another.

second half of the century). On the other hand, the period was also dominated by Romanticism which values passion above reason, the inner life, the irrational, dreams, fantasy, daydreaming, imagination, symbolism, freedom from conventional morals/behaviour, the unconscious, irony and jokes. All of these would play a part in Freud's writings.

c) Other practices

Beginning with Alfred Adler, and then Carl Jung and others the psychodynamic school began to fragment with each group developing different practices and various strategies. For example, Adler did not emphasise the unconscious much at all. Whereas, Freud was fascinated with humanity's 'will to pleasure', Adler was more impressed with the notion of the 'will to power'.

On the other hand, Carl Jung gave the unconscious a major part in his psychology. The unconscious for him is not just the container for repressed contents. It holds the key to humanity's psychic emotional healing and is filled with the contents of the human race's memories and images.

2. The Behaviourist School, known as 'second force' psychology: later 'Cognitive' developments

You will deal with this school in detail in theory and practice 2. It is called 2nd force psychology because it began in the mid-teens of the 20th C in direct opposition to 19th C psychology and Freudian psychology which were essentially introspective. That is, when they wanted to know about a particular phenomenon they asked their subjects to look within. Freudianism and Jungianism are essentially introspective. On the other hand, behaviourists, as the name suggests, were concerned with behaviour which they defined as what one can see, measure, objectify.

To deal with a bed-wetting problem the therapist would determine how often this was occurring each week, to establish a 'base-line' measure. A device would then be fitted to the bed to wake the child up when wetting began to occur. Perhaps the child would be rewarded when he was dry the next day. After a certain period, another measurement would be taken to determine the success or otherwise of the program. The therapy would not be concerned to find out the intrapsychic conflicts that may

have been leading the child to wet his bed. Such ‘introspective navel-gazing’ would be completely avoided.

The Cognitive Development

The cognitivists appeared concurrently with the greater commonness of computers in our society. One of their essential arguments against early behaviourism was that one’s own mental processes are also behaviour and are know to us or can be inferred by others by our behaviour.

One of the great pioneers of the therapy school⁸ (Albert Ellis) argued that humans are different to animals because humans talk to themselves inside. Because they talk to themselves both rationally and irrationally, they have the potential to become either more or less sane, or more or less crazy. To help clients become saner, identify their irrational attitudes and get them to argue with themselves to create more rational ways of thinking.

3. The Personalistic-Humanism School⁹, known as ‘third force’ psychology

a) Practice Strategy

If we were watching a typical session conducted by Carl Rogers¹⁰ with a client (CT), we would notice a marked contrast with psychoanalytical therapy. The counsellor (CR) would be facing the CT and would be listening intently to the CT’s words, and more especially, *trying to sense the emotion or feeling accompanying those words*. The CR would not merely be repeating what the CT is saying¹¹ but would try to get into the feeling-based ‘world’ that the CT inhabits. We would notice that the CR does not give advice or direction to the CT but always assists the CT to make his own decisions.

Rogers believed that we are most human in our freedom and autonomy which ought to be expressed in our feeling and emotional lives. We are often told, he suggested, to

⁸ Be careful not to confuse a psychology with a psychotherapy. For example, neither J. B. Watson nor B. F. Skinner was a therapist as such. However, both had an affect on therapy methods.

⁹ Could be known by other names but I’ve chosen this one based on Hurding’s categories.

¹⁰ Not all members of this school would counsel in this way. Fritz Perls would use a forceful confrontative approach.

¹¹ Some have tried to represent Rogers’ ‘method’ in this way but it is an unfair representation as a cursory observation of his own conduct of therapy preserved on film would reveal.

feel this way or not to feel that way, but such an environment denies the essential freedom to be ourselves that lies at our core. Therefore, the cognitive element in people's stories is not as significant as the feeling that is in the background. In order for persons to heal, this feelingful aspect has to be allowed to reveal itself, given a voice and change will naturally occur because feelings, when unblocked and accepted, are in process, always moving.

This therapy and its attendant worldview have had a profound effect upon our western world. Many phrases such as 'being your own person', 'I need to be myself', 'I can't be myself with you as my wife/husband', 'It's OK to feel that way' 'I understand why you would feel that way', and the pervasive 'I feel that....' when most of time we mean 'I think' are all evidences of the inroads of personalistic humanism.

b) History

This school, which began in the 1940s, is a reaction to both of the preceding traditions. Its main protest regarding them is that they preach the subjection of humanity to psychic forces or to reinforcers and punishers. However, the personalist school says, the one thing we know about humans is that they are free, they are autonomous and they are existing persons before anything else. Even in a Nazi prison camp, as Victor Frankl found himself to be, humans as persons (should they determine to live that way) are free.

Carl Rogers and Fritz Perls were two well-known proponents of this school, even though they developed quite different forms of therapy. Rogers believed that people were like plants: give them the right type of conditions and they will blossom. The counsellor **qualities** that facilitate growth are empathic understanding, unconditional positive regard, and congruence or transparency. I have underlined and bolded qualities to stress the fact that Rogers did *not* believe in counsellor *skills* as such because of his strong belief in humans as free persons. Skills imply that humans should be manipulated to do what is good for them. Rogers detested such notions control. Therefore, he would have nothing to do with counselling 'micro-skills' --even though these were apparently a development from his work-- because their use compromised the humanity of persons.

Rogers' work is pervaded with a *phenomenological* view of human knowing. The phenomenologists claim that none of us knows the world as others do. Each one's knowing of it is unique. Therefore, no one view is correct. Relativism rules! However, for counselling practice, this understanding has far-reaching implications. As counsellors, not only can we not know what is right for another person¹², we have to try to stand where the CT is standing in order for her to find her way forward. This quality is empathic (rather than sympathetic) understanding. Our task is to facilitate growth not to make others in our own image by control and direction. This school is wary of techniques although gestalt is more concerned with technique, control and confrontation than Rogerian CRs are (Frank, 1971).

REFERENCES

- Carroll, J. (2004). *The wreck of western culture: Humanism revisited*. Carlton Nth, Vic, Australia: Scribe Publications.
- Clouser, R. (1999). *Knowing with the heart: Religious experience and belief in God*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP.
- Frank, J. D. (1971). Therapeutic factors in psychotherapy. *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, 25, 350-361.

¹² But, Rogerian counselling is not value-free or neutral as has been demonstrated by numerous writers.