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REMAINING CHALLENGES FOR HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY



AMEDEO GIORGI received his Ph.D. in psychology from Fordham University in 1958. He was trained in experimental psychology, and he pursued a career in academic psychology. He found that the standard experimental and quantitative procedures used by mainstream psychology missed the genuine psychological questions that ought to have been asked. After a long search, he turned to phenomenological philosophy as the basis for a more adequate methodology for psychology as well as the basis for a nonreductionistic philosophical anthropology. He is currently at Saybrook Graduate School, primarily teaching courses in phenomenological methodology and phenomenological psychology.

Summary

The humanistic psychology movement that began in the late 1950s and blossomed in the 1960s was a necessary corrective to the mainstream psychology of that era. Primarily, the humanistic movement was a significant factor in restoring the image of the human person that was greatly reduced by behaviorism and strict psychoanalysis. However, humanistic psychology did not totally free itself from the methods and strategies inherited from natural scientific psychology. This article demonstrates the compatibility between humanistic psychology and a phenomenological approach and suggests that remaining challenges to humanistic psychology demand explicit acknowledgement of the need for the development of non-reductionistic human scientific methods for studying persons in psychological meaningful ways.

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There are still among us, including myself, people who have directly experienced the beginnings of humanistic psychology and who recall what psychology was like prior to the impact of various alternative psychologies, including humanistic psychology, that took place in the 1960s. In academia, behaviorism, the experimental paradigm, quantitative approaches, and the use of animals as subjects were dominant. In the clinical realm, there was the medical model, and if one departed from its strict interpretation, one moved either into the arena of tests and their quantified measures or into psychoanalysis and its pathology-laden interpretation of humans. Of course, neither behaviorism nor psychoanalysis had to be so narrowly interpreted, as subsequent decades demonstrated, but psychology was perceived to be the tail on the body of medicine or experimental science. That is, psychological facts had to harmonize with the known facts of medicine or physical science, and its facts had to be obtained with the exact procedures of the scientific method. The expectation was that there had to be continuity between the facts being discovered by psychology and those of medicine and experimental natural science. This attitude, of course, was a prejudice held by a majority of psychologists at the time, and it was a prior judgment about the nature of psychology even though all were aware that a comprehensive and precise definition of psychology was not yet on historical achievement. Nor is it yet today.

It was against such a background that a small group of psychologists protested against the dominant vision of psychology and wanted to emphasize the fact that humans could not be so easily reduced and that the image of the human person that the field was portraying to the world at large was severely distorted. The human person was far more complex and self-determining than what mainstream psychology was offering, they protested, and they insisted that psychology had to come around to acknowledge some of the more subtle, creative, unique, and positive dimensions of humans or else suffer the consequences of irrelevancy. The protest came largely from practitioners—clinical psychologists, counselors, therapists, and so forth—because they were the ones who had to deal with concrete, individual human beings who were suffering

problems in living. Their practical experience and their knowledge of what proved valuable to help those in psychological pain led to a different conception of psychology and its self-interpretation.

Humanistic psychology has had its successes in the roughly half century that it has existed. It was able to establish itself as a division within the American Psychological Association (APA), although not without some opposition (Aanstoos, Serlin, & Greening, 2000); it established the Association for Humanistic Psychology; and it founded and continues to support scholarly journals, for example, the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* and *Humanistic Psychologist*. The founders and members of the society have published many books and scholarly articles; leading humanistic psychologists have been elected presidents of APA; textbooks have been written entirely from its perspective, and many humanistic chapters highlighting humanistic issues have been included in mainstream texts; some programs in colleges and universities have emphasized the humanistic perspective; and certain institutions, such as Saybrook Graduate School and the psychology department at the State University at West Georgia, are wholly committed to its viewpoint.

Theoretically, humanistic psychology certainly did try to change the image of the human person with which psychology had to cope. Maslow (1962/1968) emphasized that he wanted to gain knowledge of persons based on personal, subjective experiences and not on abstractive systems. He also expressed the desire that the successful psychological scientist should be more philosophical, more creative, more diverse, more intuitive, and more comprehensive than what he encountered on average (Goble, 1970/1971). He was arguing against what Royce (1964) described as the "encapsulated person," quite prevalent in those days; the concept referred to those scientists who used one approach and claimed that it was the "only approach." Royce himself argued for greater flexibility and, for him, such flexibility could only begin after such scientists became aware that they were encapsulated. Rogers (1970) also noted that cognitive ability in and of itself, however important, was not sufficient and that the full dynamics of one's entire experience needed to be consulted for the development of personal growth. Cohen (1958/1962) lamented the strong reductionistic tendencies of the psychology of that day and reminded us that humans had histories as well as natures. Other humanistic psychologists, (Combs, Richards, & Richards, 1976) also emphasized that however important

external forces were in helping to determine the nature of persons, they could never be wholly explanatory because humans were also self-determining. Humans responded to situations that were meaningful, sometimes constituted by others and sometimes constituted by themselves. They were not completely determined because they were capable of self-transcendence (Kinget, 1975). Persons were not finished but in the process of becoming (Allport, 1955). Some sense of freedom had to be acknowledged, they argued. Szasz (1967) argued for an essentially moral perspective in understanding persons, and Bugental (1967) stated that he was more interested in the unpredictable than the predictable. Suddenly, the person as we know him or her in everyday life began to reemerge in psychology. The robotlike participant in experimental studies who appeared so alien to many of us began to be replaced. Although the medical model was quite accurate in terms of medical values based on anatomy, physiology, neurology, and so forth, its psychology left a lot to be desired. So, based on alternatives developed by humanistic psychology, a very human client began to reappear in psychological literature. Thus, the Third Force's main critique seemed to be answered by the Third Force—the image of the person was no longer being reduced. A psychology that spoke to persons as we know them in everyday life and aspects of experience and behavior that related to positive phenomena and to the higher dimensions of human existence began not only to appear but also to be emphasized and studied.

So, has the protest been successful? Are all psychologists today humanistic psychologists, thus rendering the expression redundant? Unfortunately, the answer has to be no. There are many members of APA who choose not to subscribe to the values professed by humanistic psychologists, to say nothing about all of the members of the psychonomic society and many others around the world. Humanistic psychologists are still minorities. We are granted a presence but mostly at the margins of the field, as most contemporary texts indicate (e.g., Hayes, 2002; Kalat, 1996; Morris, 1996). Indeed, we are more of a minority than I dared to believe. I checked with APA, and I was told that although there are about 150,000 APA members, there are only 610 members of Division 32. That is less than one half of 1% of the total membership of APA. Why does this state of affairs exist? Are we speaking to and convincing only the like-minded? Or why are so many members of APA reluctant to endorse the values that humanistic psychology pro-

claims? It seems to me that psychology's troubles began with psychology's commitment to become a natural science and only after that idea has been properly overcome might psychology find its authentic voice. So if we are to understand humanistic psychology's minority status, we have to understand the tensions that exist between the demands of being scientific as understood by psychology and the essential characteristics of being human. Humanistic psychology is very good with humans; it has more trouble with changing science (Giorgi, 1987, 2000). Moreover, the three leading founders of humanistic psychology were very much aware of this problem. Allow me to remind you of what they said.

Maslow (1966), in speaking about the type of science that psychology honored, spoke of it as meaning "primarily patience, caution, care, slowness, the art of not making mistakes" (p. 2) rather than being courageous, taking chances, "going for broke" or being truly creative rather than technically precise. It was, he said, "means centered" rather than results directed. It simply will not do, he argued, to place human actions or behaviors into the old experimental paradigm. Matson (1964/1966) also made many of the same critiques of scientific understanding in psychology. The characteristics that make humans human require a new framework if we are to be truly results oriented. You have probably rarely if ever seen a dissertation committee argue for researching significant problems even if methodical risks had to be taken. How often are the studies of vital, contemporary phenomena sacrificed or reduced to achieve the appearance of methodical rigor? Note, I am not claiming that we psychological researchers are forced into that dilemma, because I do believe that rigor and significance are compatible. I am only saying that such a state of affairs is the bias that exists in our universities and graduate schools.

I also remind you of Rogers's (1965) cautionary comments: In 1965, he raised the possibility that humanistic psychology might only be a protest group of contemporary value. To avoid that fate, Rogers made certain recommendations. First of all, he suggested that humanistic psychology would have to make some strong contributions toward the resolution of some perplexing human problems. Then, to achieve that aim, Rogers believed that we would have to develop an adequate conception of psychology that was genuinely humanistic. In the 40 years that have passed since Rogers raised that issue, have we developed that kind of science? Have we really broken free from the criteria of natural science and devel-

oped a different conception of science? I doubt it. We have been caught between quasi-breakthroughs and outright rejection of the scientific criteria. The rejection of science may be tolerable for therapeutic practices, but ultimately, those practices, too, would have to be solidly based on sound research. We have been more successful in radicalizing experiential processes than in fully understanding them. It was also Rogers (1985) who warned that unless humanistic psychology could become fairly represented in academia, it would not be successful. My point is that we are not as strong as either behaviorism or psychoanalysis in the universities and clearly not as well represented as cognitive psychology.

Rollo May's (1958) concerns were different, perhaps because he was only tangentially related to universities. His concern was squarely with the image of the human person, and in his book, *Existence*, he tried to add depth to our understanding of ourselves by attempting to ground personal understanding ontologically. We humans participate in "being," and without respecting that dimension and taking it into account, our analyses would be shallow, he claimed. A scientific attitude that refused to penetrate to that level simply because the term was ambiguous was not a science worthy of its name. The generalizations that science produced were sometimes necessary, but the abstractions and generalizations should follow the encounter with the phenomena and not precede them. Friedman (1974) was right to emphasize, as suggested by Kierkegaard, that we had to move "from the abstract to the concrete, from the general to the particular, from the static to the dynamic, from the universal to the event" (p. 19) and that the authentic and the unique could not be shunned. Nevertheless, over time, with such an approach an acquisition of knowledge would accrue concerning the particular phenomena that when sufficiently understood could count as scientific knowledge. The tensions between scientific knowledge and a proper understanding of the human person are not intrinsic contradictions such as a "square circle" but are influenced by historical and cultural factors. If there has been resistance to the claims of humanistic psychologists, it is because of the concept of science that most psychologists entertain. Let me provide one example.

As recently as 1996, Kimble published a little book titled *Psychology: The Hope of a Science*. The title refers to James's (1893) lament at the end of the last century that psychology was not yet a science but only the hope of a science. So Kimble wanted to see how

far we have progressed in a century. He was aware of the criticisms being addressed against psychology's scientific status, including Koch's (1969) claim that psychology can never become a coherent science. Kimble (1996) disagreed and reawakened the hope of a unified psychology:

This book revives the hope of unity and suggests the form that psychologists might have if that dream were to come true. It portrays psychology as a natural science and offers a set of axioms, fashioned after Newton's laws of motion, as the fundamental principles that hold the field together.

The argument begins with a reminder that a science of psychology must obey the rules of science: It must be deterministic, empirical, and analytic. To honor those criteria, it must be some form of behaviorism, based on stimuli and responses, because the sciences are about observable reality. (p. ix)

Kimble went on to claim that he could appropriate humanistic psychology within that framework. Kimble must have been reading a very different humanistic literature. We have seen in humanistic psychological literature assertions of human freedom (Kinget, 1975), not determinism; and we have seen rejection of behavioristic principles (Matson, 1973); and the desire to study experiential processes implies that some nonobservables have to be included (e.g., memories, dream analysis). We know that Kimble's program can never do justice to humanistic psychology's values before we leave the Preface of his book. He posited as absolute criteria of science features that developed in response to types of phenomena that the sciences of nature work with—things and physical forces. The criteria for science that he posited are relative, not absolute, but he presented them as absolute.

It is Kimble's (1996) commitment to a limited idea of science that undermines his project and underlies all of mainstream psychology's resistance to humanistic psychology. What psychology must do—and this is one key challenge facing humanistic psychology—is first give full credit to humanness and then come up with ways of producing solid knowledge about those phenomena. The task is the opposite of what natural scientific psychology has done, and in fact, it is the way that the natural sciences themselves developed. When modern physics began in the 17th century, there was no scientific yardstick to use as a criterion. Rather, the investigators encountered their phenomena of interest and interrogated them with the help of rigorous concepts and appropriate proce-

dures. In other words, it was a wholly original effort, and this is precisely what psychologists need to do: solve problems about human living and interrogate human phenomena in an originary way rather than look for a procedure from elsewhere to imitate. Humanistic psychology has done fairly well with respect to the meaning of being human; it now has to contribute to the development of sound research methods.

However, no science can stand alone. Philosophical guidelines and assumptions are needed. The reason I chose phenomenology as the philosophy for psychology is that it is as comprehensive as imaginable, and it accepts experiential expressions as givens. Here is what humanistic psychology is advocating and how it fits comfortably within the phenomenological outlook.

With respect to the image of the human person, humanistic psychologists are concerned with an inner sense of experiences, and phenomenology focuses on the noema, the meaning correlated with every conscious act; humanistic psychologists address transcendence, and phenomenology speaks about a transcendental consciousness and how conscious acts grasp transcendent objects; humanistic psychologists address freedom, and phenomenology acknowledges freedom and speaks about the spontaneity of consciousness; humanistic psychologists emphasize subjectivity, and one could say that subjectivity is the theme of phenomenology; humanistic psychologists emphasize a psychology that is relevant for persons in everyday life, and phenomenology notes that the lifeworld, the world of everyday life, is the basis from which scientific knowledge is derived; humanistic psychologists stress the meanings that experiences have for individuals, and phenomenology's main effort is to discover the essential meaning of experiences; humanistic psychologists speak about growth and fulfillment, and phenomenology emphasizes the genesis of experiences and the development of their meaning; humanistic psychologists acknowledge the role of intuition, and phenomenology is a philosophy of intuition; humanistic psychologists stress "becoming," and phenomenology's existential wing also sees persons as becoming—never fixed!

With respect to a science that would be adequate for persons in all their richness, phenomenology's task is to go back to the direct experience of the person and to be faithful to it. That was what Maslow, Rogers, May, and others advocated. Phenomenology's whole approach is to be against reductionism. Humanistic psychol-

ogists state that we can never finish understanding humans in their becoming, and phenomenology states that the practice of science is an infinite task. Humanistic psychologists argue against encapsulation and so does phenomenology, which is why it is so amorphous and why its method always includes a step of self-criticism. Finally, phenomenology has developed a method for researching subjectivity, which it claims is rigorous and replicable, and the use of this method would be helpful to humanistic psychologists. The fit between the goals of the two perspectives is quite close.

Another remaining big challenge is to understand phenomenology properly. There is still a gap between humanistic psychology's understanding of the key human terms mentioned above and the philosophical phenomenological meaning. But this difference can be bridged. Phenomenology is a highly diverse philosophy with many different streams, and most significantly for us psychologists, it does not come ready-made for psychological use. We have to work to make it compatible with our own goals. This is a difficult task, but there is too much richness in phenomenological thought for all of psychology for this task to be neglected, and humanistic psychologists should be at the forefront of this development.

The ultimate challenge facing humanistic psychologists is whether we dare to study humans in conceptually clarified and critically intelligent ways and not worry initially about whether the strategies used meet scientific criteria as some understand them today. Basically, I am wondering whether we can use the phenomenological procedure of bracketing with respect to established natural science—that is, put aside what we already know—and take up the task of inventing science freshly as we investigate human psychological problems. That is, we can accept the general criteria of science—gain reliable knowledge—but discover what we need to do as we dialogue with real, whole human beings rather than with partial, dehumanized processes. I suggest this because the long shadow of the sciences of nature is always coloring how we imagine what scientific work looks like. Science cannot look the same when humans and their relationships to each other replace natural forces and processes. The scientific method developed as a consequence of a concern for stable knowledge in relationship to events of nature, and control and prediction became the primary features of that development.

However, I believe that such criteria posited as primary tend to become reductionistic with humans. If we genuinely posit freedom for humans, can prediction be used in the same way? Are we not then tempted to try to control and manipulate conditions unduly, so that our predictions become more sound? Are we not then using certain human capacities that we deny to our participants? As researchers, we are free to vary, but our participants' expressiveness is constrained. But in a genuine nonreductionistic science, no interpretive characteristic can be denied our participants that we are not willing to deny to ourselves.

Space only allows a few hints concerning what this new human science might do differently. It is indeed a challenge to know how to do good limited research without reducing human possibilities. However, if we take our clues from everyday life, the task is not impossible. The first thing that should guide us is the nature of a situation. Humans are always situated, and every situation limits possibilities but, of course, always also includes many of them. Our interest should be directed toward the relationship between the actual actions taken against the range of possibilities offered in that situation. This would give us a structural understanding that is deeper than a specific prediction for a specific circumstance.

Second, the physical sciences can abstract variables from their natural contexts and then create conditions where the variables can be tested in relative isolation—and so the idea of independent and dependent variables came into being. But this ideal is impossible to bring into being with human experience. Our lived contextual experience is not separable in that way. One cannot eliminate or hold constant a research participant's memory while studying his or her perception, nor vice versa. So we have to understand psychological variables as discriminations embedded within synthetic activity. How do we make such lived experiences manageable? By allowing fuller expression to our participants so that the actually lived memories, expectations, desires, emotions, and biases can reveal themselves as they were in conjunction with all the other concrete meanings the participants were living as they participated in the research situation. Such specific experiences are not as chaotic as one might fear. Situations are normally lived in an organized way around certain salient meanings.

Third, I think that these lived meanings should be analyzed qualitatively, because it is qualitative analysis that will throw

light on the meanings and values by which people live psychologically. It is qualitative analysis that gets at the intrinsic relationships among a network of meanings and reveals motivational links. Quantitative analyses are not in principle excluded, but they are mostly related to questions of frequency and magnitude.

These examples are mere hints as to what a complete picture of a psychological human science might look like. The suggestions are strictly tied to the motivation to get trustworthy knowledge about human beings while fully respecting all human capabilities as understood from the perspective of everyday life. It will also be necessary to understand our relationship to ourselves in ways that are more than cognitive. The term *knowledge* is overburdened and needs to be differentiated. We also need to understand better the “taken-for-granted” development behind invitational and cooperative modes of relating to each other. We also need to learn more about how to embody beneficial and encouraging presences to each other. These are practices that do not drip down from theoretical knowledge but are somehow collated from significant experiences.

With these latter suggestions, I am aware that I am trying to articulate what is nearly unimaginable. However, I am convinced that such virgin territory cannot be broached by looking backward. We must discover or invent new ways of being scientific. If we do successfully bracket the hold that the natural sciences have on us, we might find ways of understanding ourselves that genuinely surprise us, ways that not only do not reduce us but enhance our humanness.

In summary, then, my argument is that humanistic psychology has done much to restore our image of the human person, but it has been less successful in articulating how to study personhood psychologically in rigorous ways. To guarantee that it will not end up as simply a temporary protest movement, humanistic psychology has to respond to some remaining challenges. As I see them, these are as follows:

1. to develop a human science that is commensurate with the more comprehensive image of the person it advocates,
2. to embrace and further develop nonreductionistic philosophies of science,
3. to be bolder in attempting new and original methods not based on the approach of the natural sciences, and
4. to become established in academia in a solid way rather than in the marginalized way that now exists.

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