

Notes on Different Psychologies

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There are many psychologies in current academic and clinical settings, and no single definition is recognised as absolute by all the different current schools of psychology, psychiatry, and psychotherapy. When people use the word 'psychology' they often mean very different things, and therefore we cannot make any assumptions about the ways in which the term is used before we understand the multiplicity of psychologies presently championed by different schools. Debates are ongoing, some of them quite virulent, between the different understandings of the word 'psychology'. In terms of etymology, psychology (logos = speech or words, psyche = soul) is the understanding of the human soul and its modes of expression, but this perspective has all but vanished from academic and clinical psychology in the modern world. Although there is currently a postgraduate programme at the University of Essex on Freudian and Jungian psychoanalysis and analytical psychology, and another at University College, London, neither Freud nor Jung are deemed to be essential or even relevant subjects to study in most academic programmes in psychology.

One way of assessing the various schools of psychology is by viewing them as roughly grouped into perspectives which might be termed organic and dynamic (although there is often an overlap between the two). Organic psychology suggests that the physiology of the brain is the chief component in examining the different manifestations of human thought, feeling, and behaviour. From this perspective, psychology is understood as a science and the research methods of the natural sciences are deemed the only appropriate means by which psychological laws can be determined. The concept of 'individuality' is problematic within this context, since individuals are biological and social units that have a generalised optimum mode of functioning, and norms must first be determined before any assessment of 'abnormal' or 'pathological' can be made. Organic psychiatry, emerging from medical practice, is the strongest champion of this approach, and psychiatric qualifications in Western countries always require a prior medical qualification. Although this perspective is often inimical to those who are involved in esoteric studies, nevertheless it remains an important dimension of social cohesion, since psychiatry must deal with those who for one reason or another are unable to function within society and may even prove destructive to themselves and others. Most astrologers do not have to deal with such seriously disturbed clients, some of whom would be entirely unable to come for a consultation or even necessarily comprehend what was being said to them. However, even organic psychiatry, which is the school most likely to evidence hostility toward astrological discourse, has its roots in early systems of human physical/temperamental characterisation such as the four elements and the 'humours' associated with them – a characterisation which became an essential

ingredient in medieval medicine as well as medieval astrology. Aristotle's idea that body and soul are an indissoluble unity led to the idea that temperament and body cannot be divided, and therefore psychic states are the result of, or even the same as, physical states. Temperament and its potential imbalances could therefore be examined through the typology of the four elements and their attributes of hot/cold and moist/dry.

Most of the focus of our course will be on dynamic psychology, which reflects the idea that the human being is not a uniform, static entity but displays fluctuating internal dynamics which reveal constantly shifting relationships between different parts of the mind/psyche/soul. Dynamic psychology, and its sister within medicine, dynamic psychiatry, is itself not a monolithic body of ideas, since some schools favour the idea of an inherent temperament with constantly shifting or developing a priori interior formations, and some schools favour the idea that the dynamism is the product of interaction between a 'normal' individual with certain typical human characteristics and the unique impact of a particular familial and cultural environment. Behavioural psychology, although it does not recognise the idea of an inherent individuality with a built-in subjective perception of reality, is nevertheless dynamic because human responses are constantly shifting according to this interaction between the person and the outer world. Transactional analysis, a psychotherapeutic approach which was popular a couple of decades ago and which was adapted in a more fluid and individual-orientated way by some astrological schools (it is often classed as one of the 'humanistic' psychologies), in fact belongs to this current of psychology; states of conflict and suffering within the individual are linked with crystallised patterns based on family dynamics, and can be 'cured' through recognition and reconditioning – a kind of reprogramming of the dynamics between individual and environment. For an example of this psychological approach within astrology, see Roy Alexander, *The Astrology of Choice: A Counseling Approach* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1983). Cognitive therapy, which is currently the government-sponsored favourite, is likewise rooted in the idea that the individual can be reconditioned and old pathological patterns broken through a recognition and restructuring of the original dynamic between the individual and society that resulted in the problem. Cognitive therapy as it is currently viewed is, however, focused more on social adaptation than on individual development. A good online journal on this psychological approach can be found at <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayJournal?jid=BCP>.

Dynamic psychology and psychiatry also have ancient cosmological roots, most of which are religious in nature and linked with phenomena such as spirit possession and shamanic processes. For a useful overview of the history of dynamic psychology, try to find a copy of Henri Ellenberger's *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1970), especially 'The Ancestry of Dynamic Psychotherapy' pp. 3-52. The idea of interiorised dynamic powers or forces or 'instincts', often in collision, eventually generated the concept of the

unconscious, leading to the work of Freud (psychoanalysis), Jung (analytical psychology), and James Hillman (archetypal psychology). This approach obviously lends itself to parallels with astrology because the internal dynamics of the psyche can be easily correlated with the planets and the dynamics of their aspects with each other. In fact it is appropriate to think in terms of the interiorisation of cosmic influences at the root of this kind of psychology because Franz Anton Mesmer, long considered the 'founding father' of dynamic psychiatry, based his work on a perception of planetary influences on the human being through an invisible cosmic 'fluid' that constantly fluctuated within the individual. Although environment in these psychologies is deemed to be critical, and family relationships lie at the centre of the development process, nevertheless there is an acknowledgement of inherent temperament or inherent individuality, nascent in the newborn child but containing its own developmental process. Developmental psychology, an approach that can straddle both organic and dynamic perspectives, perceives the human being as perpetually in a process of moving toward the fulfilment of potentials, whether these are perceived as interior (e.g. Jung's idea of individuation) or social (as in cognitive science of religion theories).

Humanistic psychology developed in the second half of the twentieth century, in part as a reaction to both the pathology-focused bias in many psychologies and the emphasis on 'normality' rather than on the optimum norm of each individual's unique development. Humanistic psychology borrows many ideas from both Freud and Jung, but minimises the lengthy process involved in psychoanalytic practice with its two- or - three-day-a-week sessions continuing sometimes for many years. Important figures in this current, which belongs in the rough category of dynamic psychology, are Abraham Maslow, who postulated a hierarchy of human needs from physical through spiritual and thus acknowledged the reality and importance of inner, subjective spiritual experiences, and Carl Rogers, who presented the idea of 'person-centred psychotherapy', counteracting the emphasis on trying to get the patient to adjust to the therapist's idea of a normative form of behaviour. Most humanistic approaches are concerned with psychotherapy rather than psychological theory, and involve such currents as gestalt therapy and group therapy. Family therapy can also be humanistic in approach, although there are also approaches to family and group therapy which belong within the dynamic psychoanalytic and psychiatric currents. Many of them are easily accommodated to astrology, especially gestalt, which can involve techniques such as the individual's enactment of the different drives or urges within the psyche – a kind of role-playing of the interiorised planets which also emerges in transpersonal psychotherapeutic approaches such as Psychosynthesis (see below). The term 'humanistic psychology', most popular in the 1970s and 1980s, is not often used in current psychological discourse because most of its perspectives are already embedded in Jungian and transpersonal approaches and it is therapy-based rather than theory-based: an application of psychology to the work of healing rather than a specific system of ideas.

Transpersonal psychology is a relatively new current in the field which has its roots partly in the spiritual elements in Jung's analytical psychology, partly in the links between humanistic psychology and the idea of spiritual development that received emphasis in the West through the introduction of gurus such as the Maharishi (transcendental meditation) and Baghwan Shree Rajneesh, and partly in the aftermath of the 1960s involvement in drug-induced altered states of consciousness. Transpersonal psychology is of great interest to many astrologers because of the emphasis on spiritual development incorporated in the belief systems of many astrological schools, beginning with Alan Leo's Theosophical astrology at the beginning of the 20th century. One of the key figures in this current is, once again, Abraham Maslow, who coined the term 'peak experience' and developed a psychology that attempted to understand altered states phenomenologically (in their own terms) rather than as pathology (although 'religiously altered states of consciousness' have now also become a chief concern of cognitive science of religion approaches). Another important figure in this current is Roberto Assagioli, a psychiatrist and Freudian psychoanalyst who became involved with the Theosophical teachings of Alice A. Bailey and developed a dynamic evolutionary spiritual psychology which he called Psychosynthesis. This approach is highly adaptable to astrological perspectives, as the subpersonalities described by Assagioli can be easily related to planetary configurations.

Social psychology may combine many of the currents described above. It may be organic in the sense that humans are perceived as driven by physical and physiological drives that are ordered, contained, and modified through social structures; it may also be dynamic, and even approached through Jungian and archetypal perspectives, e.g. important shifts in cultural structures occur when particular archetypal patterns are trying to emerge in human society in a particular cultural and historical setting. Social psychology is a close cousin of sociology, but can also be linked with psychological anthropology, exploring the psychological needs emerging in specific cultural groups that generate social patterns, structures, and rituals. A very interesting, long out-of-print, work applying archetypal perspectives to social currents (without any astrological references) is James L. Henderson, *A Bridge Across Time: An Assessment of Historical Archetypes* (London: Turnstone Books, 1975). This book is worth hunting for on used book web sites or in libraries. Astrologers have throughout history linked social changes with planetary cycles, although this has usually been entirely event-orientated, but some currents in modern psychological astrology view outer planet patterns and configurations as reflections of social and generational psychology as well as social events.