A third force arises in psychology

Humanistic psychology joins behaviorism and psychoanalysis

by James Moriarty

Two major movements in psychology in this century have been psychoanalysis and behaviorism. The former, building on the insights and clinical experience of Freud, is based on a search for childhood experience and unconscious motivation as roots of behavior. The latter starts with the simple act of response to a stimulus, builds through the conditioning theory of B. F. Skinner to the picture of a man's current behavior as a variation of past learning and exposure to social models.

Another movement has arisen in part as a rejection of behaviorism. In the last two decades it has not only produced research but has also influenced psychotherapy, education and even business management techniques. This third force, as it was termed by the recently deceased Dr. Abraham Maslow, is grouped under the rubric of humanistic psychology.

The movement has also achieved some formal status as a separate discipline. The American Association for Humanistic Psychology, founded in 1962, holds its national meeting prior to the American Psychological Association convention (see page 252), and in August the first International Conference on Humanistic Psychology was held in Amsterdam.

Although born out of dissatisfaction with the behaviorists' "mechanomorphic view of man," as Dr. James Bugental of the Stanford Research Institute terms it, humanistic psychology on a more positive side has developed in an effort to help a healthy man to realize his full potentials. In this respect it expands the concerns of psychoanalysis. Although some theorists and ego-psychologists, such as Erik Erikson, have based their work on psychoanalytic foundations, most psychoanalysts are concerned more with pathological behavior and its treatment, as befits their medical background. In this process they search for what they consider normal behavior, which often turns out to be statistically average behavior.

This "psychopathology of the normal" is rejected by the humanists. Dr. Bugental, one of the early leaders of the movement, says he would like to see psychology spend less time studying "what man has done," and more time studying "what he might do."

Central to the interest in man's potential is the typical humanist fervor over the uniqueness of man. "Some humanistic psychologists hold a transcendental view of man," says Dr. Bugental. "For them, man is little less than a god. On the more pragmatic end of the spectrum, other humanistic psychologists view man as a very unique animal. Man is to be valued for his uniqueness in the animal kingdom."

The concept of examining man's uniqueness and exploring unknown potentials is employed at the Esalen Institute of Big Sur, Calif., one of the 100 or so so-called "growth centers" that have developed in the last decade. These humanistically oriented centers are interested in developing the potential of normal people who are no more unhealthy than those who experience life as the psychopathology of the average. "Our workshops regularly bring out new states, new ways of feeling and relating," says Michael Murphy, director of Esalen. "In this sense we are part of humanistic psychology as opposed to psychoanalysis or behaviorism."

The growth centers use various processes to explore human potential and expand consciousness. Efforts are made, for example, to increase sensitivity to interpersonal relationships. Psychosomatic techniques are employed to create awareness of visceral senses. And meditation is utilized to explore intrapsychic processes such as altered states of consciousness.

An exercise that is commonly used to make people aware of alternate forms of relating is to place two persons together but not allow them to communicate with words or hands. A highly verbal person is then forced to explore alternate methods of communication and in the process becomes aware of alternate senses.

Encounter group exercises are used to create an atmosphere where people can express raw aggression, or reveal their inner fears and sense of isolation. Participants in the exercises who do not normally experience such phenomena, or commonly suppress such feelings, are invited to explore the atypical feelings. These experiences often give them insights into the life-styles of other persons. At places such as the Quest Center for Human Growth in Washington, D.C., exercises like these are used to bring about increased emotional intimacy and honest confrontation.

Because of its beliefs and techniques, the humanistic approach differs dramatically from both psychoanalysis and behaviorism in the relations between practitioner and subject.

"The humanistic therapeutic situation is a person-to-person relationship, instead of a transference relationship as in psychoanalysis," says Dr. Charlotte Buhler, one of the founders of the AAHP. The client thus perceives the therapist as another person in a trusting relationship, and not as an emotional figure from the past. Understanding present interpersonal relationships is emphasized, rather than delving into past relationships and analyzing their effects on present relations.

The patient and the therapist together examine values and beliefs in

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the process of exploring what Dr. Buhler terms "the meaningfulness of life." In contrast to more traditional therapy, the therapist reveals his own values and enters the process whereby the patient develops his values.

On the other hand, the humanistic approach rejects the behaviorist concept of scientific objectivity and an impersonal attitude on the part of the researcher toward his experimental subjects. Dr. Sidney Jourard of the University of Florida at Gainesville believes that the data subjects reveal to this impersonal model of the experimenter are qualitatively different from information that can be gathered in a trusting experimenter-subject relationship. Some exploratory research supports Dr. Jourard's hypothesis.

W. J. Powell Jr., a student of Dr. Jourard, conducted interviews with college students asking them to make themselves as fully known to him as they cared to. He compared the amounts of self-disclosure under three conditions. In one, the interviewer responded to the students' disclosure with authentic disclosures of his own; in another the interviewer responded with expressions of approval and support; in the third the interviewer responded with reflection and restatement of the students' disclosures.

Powell found that approving and supporting did not increase the students' responses at all. The process of reflection and restatement increased disclosure of negative self-statements, such as, "I sometimes have doubts about my abilities." However it did not affect positive, self-enhancing expressions. On the other hand, authentic self-disclosure on the part of the interviewer resulted in significant increases in the subjects' disclosures of both positive and negative references to themselves.

"If the aim of the research is to get the subject to disclose himself, the experimenter should show himself trustworthy," says Dr. Jourard. "If the experimenter is trustworthy, the subject will not be afraid to show himself and will be helped to explore other hidden possibilities."

Dr. Jourard points out that this process converges with the social modeling processes that social learning theorists have been examining. The experimenter or therapist is in effect showing a viable way of exerting one's being. The effect may be: "See, I am not afraid to reveal myself. In the process of throwing off suppression I am exploring new potentialities in myself."

Dr. Jourard has come to define his clients not as patients but as "fellow-seekers." He feels that such an approach can be broadened to humanize teacher-pupil, therapist-patient and experimenter-subject relationships. ☐

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Jourard: Trustworthy experimenters.

Conrad Fulton

Buhler: Therapist as open person.

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