Faith and Learning Conferece
Bogenhofen, Austria
August 15, 1998

THOUGHTS ON THE INTEGRATION OF PSYCHOLOGY AND RELIGION

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My comments this morning focus on the integration of psychology and religion, specifically, Christianity. This paper has two distinct parts. The first identifies some issues in the debate over whether the study of psychology and religion can or should be integrated. The second part of the paper provides an example of the kind of integrative study that I will argue is legitimate and necessary. The second section examines the theory of one of the most influential psychologists of this century, Carl Rogers (and the school of thought which he, along with Abraham Maslow, Rolo May and Eric From represent) and offers a critique of that theory from a Christian perspective.

Psychology as a Science

To begin a definition of psychology would be helpful. History of psychology text books date the birth of psychology back to approximately 120 years ago. Since then the definitions of the field have varied. During its first half decade psychology was defined as, "the science of mental life." Between the 1920's and 1960's psychology defined itself as "the science of behavior." More recent textbooks often combine these two elements by defining psychology as "the science of behavior and mental processes" (Myers & Jeeves, 1987).

Psychology is not as much a single discipline as it is a "federation of subdisciplines" (Myers & Jeeves, 1987, p. 11). Some psychologists investigate the interactions of individual neurons while others analyze the behaviors of large numbers of people in social settings. What the subdisciplines have in common is the effort to establish an understanding of thought and behavior at various levels of explanation and to do so by using the methodologies of science. It is worth emphasizing that each of the three definitions listed above employ the word, "science".

Christian and non-Christian psychologists who are either uneasy with, or antagonistic toward efforts to integrate the study of psychology and religion usually oppose the process by emphasizing psychology's scientific grounding. As one of my professors in Graduate School would put the issue: "science and religion are grounded in two very different epistemologies." That professor, who is himself a Christian, believes that it is important and valid to carry on a dialogue between the two disciplines, but that we should not blur the boundaries between the fields and that we should not really speak

of integrating them.

There are important reasons why psychology should emphasize and further its identity as a science. A scientific commitment encourages those within the field to set aside personal biases and conduct research based upon established design criteria and analysis. It also encourages open disclosure of investigative procedures and the identification of alternate explanations before conclusions are made. For the clinical psychologist, the ability to empirically demonstrate the effectiveness of psychotherapeutic treatment is essential for maintaining payment from insurance companies and insuring that one is providing effective and ethical treatment.

Many who are uncomfortable speaking of integration between the two fields are motivated by the above concerns. Some, however, are not so concerned that religion is a threat to psychology as they are that psychology is a threat to religion. An example would be a psychology professor who told me that he kept his faith and psychology separate so that he could keep his faith.

There are still others whose arguments against integration are a reaction against faith. Some students and teachers who enter the clinical fields of psychology, marriage and family therapy or social work, have experienced religion as judgmental and authoritarian, closed to questioning and guilt producing. For them the epistemology and culture of the mental health professions provide a way to live and to help people in an accepting and open environment and with the legitimacy offered by affiliation with medicine and other health professions. These individuals are not eager to have religion interjected into the curriculum of psychology. One SDA psychologist I know of says that "mixing psychology and religion is like mixing sand and water,." and he expresses the suspicion that individuals who call themselves, "Christian Psychologists" are primarily exercising a marketing ploy. In making this point he repeatedly emphasizes that psychology is a science, something quite separate from religion.

Psychology as the Application of Values

Values in Psychology Research

While I agree with many of the concerns of those who emphasize the differences between psychology and religion, the fact remains that a great deal of the work that psychologists, including research psychologists, do is inextricably intertwined with values and assumptions that are beyond the realm of scientific investigation. The extent to which this is true means that a careful and thoughtfully integrated study of religion and moral philosophy with the discipline of psychology would create a more honest and objective understanding (and in this sense be more scientific) than a commitment to keeping them separate. By saying this I do not mean there should be indiscriminate blending or equating of the two fields or that psychology should give up its efforts to be a science. But I would argue that a course of study in psychology that does not does not intentionally and frequently identify and critique its value based assumptions through

dialogue witb religious/philosophical thought systems will leave its students intellectually impoverished. Such programs easily create, "psychological fundamentalists" who uncritically accept and promote an admixture of philosophy and research as science with all of the conviction of religious fundamentalists.

Here we should identify some of the ways values and assumptions influence any scientific field, but especially a field such as psychology.

First, values have an influence on the type of individual that goes into the field of psychology. Research conducted in the 1960's and 1970's indicated that psychologists as group reported themselves to be less religious than individuals in the harder sciences such as physics, and significantly less religious than the American public as a whole. One third of psychologists surveyed at that time said they did not believe in the existence of God and another third described themselves as only moderately religious. By contrast, according to Gallup, 95% of Americans say they believe in God. More recent survey's however, have reported that a majority of psychologists (53%) reported that religion was valuable and 73% stated that spirituality was personally relevant (Shafranske, 1996).

Second, values and personal interests influence an investigators choice of research topics and what sources of explanation they pay attention to. Some have suggested (in what is obviously an overgeneralization), that politically conservative psychologists tend to emphasize research that supports a hereditary basis for intelligence and pursue investigations that support their view, while politically liberal psychologists pursue research that supports environmental effects on intelligence. Third, values influence the establishment of psychological constructs and the questionnaires that are devised to measure them (Myers & Jeeves, 1987).

Values in Applied Psychology

While these examples of the presence of values in psychological investigation are important, values become especially significant when psychology enters the clinical realm. (The same can be said for other areas of applied psychology, such as organizational consultation). Fortunately, during the past few years an increasing number of clinical psychologists appear to agree that the field of psychotherapy cannot legitimately present itself as a profession of applied science without at the same time acknowledging that it is a profession of applied values. One practicing clinical psychologist to make this point recently was Scott Rutan (1992) whose book on psychotherapy practice was featured by the Behavioral Science Book Service as a "selection of the month." In his opening chapter, "The Value System of the Psychotherapist," Rutan emphasizes that all theories of psychotherapy make assumptions about what constitutes the "good life" and thereby take a moral position. He uses religious language to make the point that as therapists, we must accept the fact that we are participating in a "leap of faith when we join one theoretical church or another," and he asks clinicians to consider whether we, "tithe to the church of psychoanalysis,

behaviorism, biology, cognitive therapy, or psychopharmacology, to name a few" (p. 7).

I can illustrate the shift this thinking represents by contrasting it with two personal experiences that occurred about 8 years ago, shortly after I was invited to teach a religion and family therapy course to graduate students in a marriage and family therapy program. The first experience took place during the first day of class when I asked the students to write some information about themselves to help me get acquainted with them. One student said she was very reactive against religion but that she didn't let this interfere with her work with clients. Her philosophy and practice, she wrote, was to "take whatever values the client brings to therapy and work with these values." I soon found her statement was a mantra for a significant number of the students who believed that their therapeutic interventions should be and could be value neutral and that being value free or value neutral was a necessary precondition for compassionate, accepting and self-enhancing relationships with clients. My students were, of course, merely reflecting a viewpoint that was part of the culture of the profession they were entering.

The second illustrates how a particular assumption about human nature was basic to one professors approach to therapy. This example was a conversation with a faculty member whom I asked for information about where the students in the program were coming from spiritually and religiously. She said, as an example, that the faculty had to work through some issues with one of the new students who had previously been in the ministry and who had trouble accepting the idea that people were basically good. Then she looked at me and asked incredulously, "how could someone do therapy if they didn't believe that people were basically good?" Hers was a value that would be very difficult to demonstrate empirically.

While theorists within behavioral sciences fields have long noted the relationship between the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness and cultural values, (e.g. Benedict, 1935) practitioners of psychotherapy have frequently expressed the value neutral assumptions learned by my students. However, one now sees more frequent acknowledgments by practitioners that the enterprise of counseling is laden with values at every level, beginning with its concepts of what constitutes abnormality or pathology (Benedict, 1934, Kaplin, 1983), its theoretical models for achieving growth and healing (Vitz, 1977; Browning, 1987; Rutan, 1992); and the moment by moment interactions between counselors and their clients.

A provocative discussion about cultural values' influence on theories of abnormality was presented by Kaplan (1983). She charged that the American Psychiatric Associations Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (DSM)--the diagnostic standard for all mental health professionals--was built on masculine based assumptions about what constituted healthy and unhealthy behaviors. One of her examples was the way the DSM applied the label *dependency,* particularly in its description of "Dependent Personality Disorder." The DSM described someone who had this disorder as an

individual who, among other criteria::

> Passively allows others to assume responsibility for major areas of life because of inability to function independently, . . . subordinates own needs to those of persons on whom he or she depends in order to avoid any possibility of having to rely on self. . . [and] lacks self-confidence. (pp. 325, 326).

A significantly higher percentage of women received this diagnosis than men. But Kaplan argues that the DSM pathologized ways that women more often exhibit dependency but not how men do. She observes, for example:

> The DSM does not mention the dependency of individuals--usually men--who rely on others to maintain their houses and take care of their children, who when widowed seek a new spouse to take care of them [and] whose mental illness rates are higher when they are alone than when they are married [while] women's rates are higher when they are married than when they are alone.

To avoid bias, Kaplan argues, the DSM should label both types of dependency as disorders or add new diagnostic categories. Since there is a "Dependent Personality Disorder," she asks, should there not also be an "Independent Personality Disorder." She goes on to propose that the DSM add a category for "Restricted Personality Disorder" that would be characterized by, "Behavior that is overly restrained, unresponsive, and barely expressed. . . ."

I have extended this illustration to make the point that whether or not one accepts Kaplan's criticisms, concerns such as hers cannot be refuted on empirical or scientific grounds. One cannot contrast secular psychotherapy with religious counseling by saying one is about transmitting (or as it is often put, "imposing" values) values and the other is not. This means that a clinical psychologist who chooses to identify herself as Christian might just as well be doing truth in advertising as engaging in a marketing ploy. Browning (1987) observes that all modern approaches to psychotherapy hold at least two elements in common with religious faith. These commonalities are "metaphors of ultimacy" and models for ordering the inner life. When these similarities between psychology and religion are acknowledged, the benefit of a dialogue about which values should inform therapy and where they should come from becomes apparent.

Humanistic Psychology
An Example of its "Religious" Elements and a
Critique from a Christian Perspective

The remainder of this paper illustrates the value based nature of psychotherapy further by comparing two conceptions of meaning and personal development that have been especially influential in contemporary Western culture. These are Christianity and humanistic psychology. The latter, which is sometimes referred to as psychology's "third force" (because it followed and repudiated psychoanalysis and behaviorism), rose to prominence after World War II, with Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers as its most

influential leaders. I will focus on the theory and practice of Rogers because he went further than anyone else in the movement to develop his theories and carry them to their logical conclusion.

It would be an understatement to say that humanistic psychology has had a major impact on American culture. Jones and Butman, (1991) credit Rogers with having originated what "has probably been the most widely adapted approach to people-helping that has ever been developed. Applications for the business, educational, familial, group, individual, marital and parental context abound in the literature" (p. 272; Robinson, 1988). A national opinion survey of American counseling and clinical psychologists that was published in 1982 (Smith) ranked Rogers as psychotherapy's most influential figure, although very few of those polled adhered strictly to his methods.

Even though Rogers developed his theory on American soil, and readily acknowledged the congruence between his ideas and American socio-economic philosophy (Rogers, 1951), his influence extended across cultures. Fifteen years before his death, Rogers observed that the entire body of his published books and articles had been translated into Japanese and significant portions of it into numerous other languages (Rogers, 1974).

Rogers' approach to therapy has been influential, but not nearly as far reaching as the beliefs he articulated about the nature and potential of the individual self. While the perspective he represented has undergone numerous adaptations, including vulgarizations, most of its basic presuppositions about human nature and wholeness have not changed and can be readily identified (Vitz, 1977). Christianity, of course, has also undergone many adaptations and vulgarizations, and for this reason I intend to limit my statements about Christian thinking to points over which there is wide agreement and concentrate primarily on one Christian author. I have chosen Henri Nouwen as a representative of the Christian perspective to compare with Rogers. Both of these writers present developed views of how to achieve personal fulfillment and obtain a more cooperative society, and they both apply their systems to the alleviation of psychological problems, such as anxiety and depression, as well as to issues of interpersonal relationships.

Nouwen's Christian Perspective on Wholeness

Nouwen (1981), who has published some thirty titles in the area of Christian spirituality, summarizes his understanding of "the spiritual life" in his book titled, *Making All Things New: An Invitation to the Spiritual Life.* In this book he shows how a spiritual reorientation can become a curative for anxiety and purposelessness. He uses as his starting point the words of Jesus: "Do not worry...but set your hearts on His kingdom first." With respect to the causes of worry, Nouwen observes that one of the ways in which we moderns most commonly describe our lives is to say that we are busy. But even in our busyness we find that our energies and attention are often less consumed by our occupations than by our preoccupations. Personal preoccupations, which include

obsessions with "what ifs," and doubts about whether we can meet the expectations of others, "fill our external and internal lives to the brim" (p. 28).

Often, along with the sense that our lives are "filled," we have the disquieting sense that they are "unfulfilled." Nouwen says that some of the most common sentiments beneath this sense of unfulfillment are boredom, (which comes from a sense of disconnectedness and from questioning the value of what we do); resentment (which we may experience when we sense we are being used and manipulated for random and meaningless ends); and depression. The latter is what we experience when we begin to feel that, "our presence makes little difference [and] that our absence may be preferred" (p. 31). Frequently, the dynamic of depression is the end result of lives that are filled, but fragmented and disconnected.

It is against this background that Nouwen applies Jesus' words about worry. He notes that,

> "Jesus does not respond to our worry-filled way of living by saying that we should not be so busy with worldly affairs...[or by] telling us that what we do is unimportant, valueless, or useless....He asks us to shift the point of gravity, to relocate the center of our attention...to move from the 'many things' to the 'one necessary thing.'"

For Nouwen, the most striking feature of Jesus' own life was the unwavering nature of His focus. This focus consisted of what Nouwen calls, "single minded obedience to His Father," (Nouwen contrasts the negative connotations of "obedience" in our society with Jesus' intimate and trusting relationship with God) which He maintained in the midst of the unpredictable and changing needs around Him. When Jesus said, "set your hearts on His kingdom first," He meant, says Nouwen, that we were to "make the life of the Spirit within and among us the center of all we think, say or do." This requires a self-transformation, something which may be experienced as either sudden or gradual.

Such a transformation does not remove the difficulties of life, but it places them in a context that is purposeful, meaningful and unifying. This transformation is an act of grace but this does not mean it happens automatically. Nouwen identifies two primary methodologies, which he calls "disciplines," which place one in a position that facilitates the internal changes God makes. The first is "solitude," by which Nouwen means the intentional designation of times for prayer, meditation and contemplation of scripture. He describes solitude as "the simple, though not easy, way to free us from the slavery of our occupations and preoccupations and to begin to hear the voice that makes all things new" (p. 75).

The second means of setting our hearts on the kingdom is through what Nouwen calls the discipline of community. It is related to the first discipline because God speaks to individuals through others as well as through solitude. Community, as Nouwen defines it, "has little to with mutual compatibility" and it stands in contrast to the many groups,

"that have formed to protect their own interests, to defend their own status, or to promote their own causes." He states that, "through the discipline of community we prevent ourselves from clinging to each other in fear and loneliness, and [become able] to listen to the liberating voice of God" (pp. 81–83). An element of discipline is required to maintain relationships, whether they be relationships of marriage, family and friendship, or relationships with persons towards whom we feel little natural attraction.

In summary, Nouwen sees both individual and social wholeness as achieved by a regeneration through a spiritual connection with God.

Rogers' Humanistic Perspective on Wholeness

Rogers and Nouwen agree that wholeness involves moving away from a life controlled by the expectations and evaluations of others and a corresponding reorientation to a single source of meaning and authority. For Rogers, however, this source of meaning is not found through connection with the divine, but through developing contact with ones' real and authentic self.

Rogers (1951) frequently linked his theory of human fulfillment with the methods of science. The following quotation illustrates this link as well as his deliberate move away from the need for external sources of meaning or order.

> Civilization hitherto has looked for the orientation of society through an imposed 'system' derived from some extrinsic authority, such as religion, 'cultural' education, or political suasion. The biologist conceives an order emanating from the organism living in poise in its environment. Our necessity, therefore, is to secure the free flow of forces in the environment so that the order inherent in the material we are studying may emerge (p. 62).

Rogers placed considerable emphasis on obtaining an awareness of the free flow of forces within the person because this was basic to the "self experience" which was for him the ultimate source of truth and meaning.

> It is to experience that I must return again and again; to discover a closer approximation to truth as it is in the process of becoming in me. Neither the Bible nor the prophets—neither Freud nor research—neither the revelations of God nor man—can take precedence over my own direct experience (Rogers,1961, pp. 23-24).

These statements illustrate a key difference between the sources of authority and meaning for the two perspectives being considered, but they also reveal that Rogers did not claim ultimate allegiance to empirical research as a basis for understanding persons. Both of these points will be commented on further but it will be useful to first summarize what Rogers meant by personal experience and how this meaning related to his theory of personality and mental health.

Jones and Butman (1991) have suggested that the "Core assertion of [Rogers'] personality theory is that there is but one single motivational force for all humanity: the

tendency toward self-actualization" (p. 257). He taught that every person has an innate tendency toward the positive development or actualization of his or her unique potential to the greatest extent possible. Persons also have another innate capacity called an "organismic valuing process" which provides humans with the ability to choose between what will enhance personal fulfillment and what will not.

Rogers' theory of mental health and abnormality, as summarized by Jones and Butman (1991), includes several key concepts and terms. He believed that if the parents of a growing child provided it with an atmosphere of unconditional positive regard and acceptance, the child would be blessed with a complete awareness of its actualizing tendency and valuing capacity. This awareness, or self-experience, of the child's natural inclinations would constitute a reliable guide for its ongoing process of actualization. As the child's conscious awareness developed, his or her self-concept (i.e. perception of who he or she actually is) would develop in a manner that was congruent with this self-experience rather than in a manner that was determined by the expectations and evaluations of others. In addition, the child's ideal self, which was his or her understanding of what he or she should be, would also be congruent with self-experience since he or she would not aspire to be something other than what he or she was. Thus, a fully functioning and mentally healthy individual would be one whose self-experience, self-concept and ideal self are congruent. Such an individual would exist comfortably with his or her changing feelings and experiences and would be successfully guided by them. Incongruities that might occur would be minimal and able to be quickly overcome.

Unfortunately, children rarely develop in such an open and accepting environment. The expectations and demands of parents and others make it impossible for them to achieve acceptance by relying on their instincts. These external influences cause them to deny parts of their self-experience and to develop distortions in who they perceive themselves to be and who they believe they should become. As a consequence, their internal evaluating process becomes impaired, and the choices they make are adversely affected. In Rogers' theory, lack of congruence between various aspects of the self is largely responsible for failures in living and for mental suffering or discomfort (Jones & Butman, 1991).

This theory of personality provides the basis for Rogers' conception of therapy. The therapist's task is to create an atmosphere of complete acceptance and unconditional positive regard so that the self-actualizing potential and organismic valuing process can safely emerge and the various dimensions of the self can become integrated. This happens when the person in therapy is able to replace adopted or imposed values with those learned from organic experiences. Rogers described this process as follows:

> If a [person in therapy] gives up the guidance of an introjected system of values, what is to take its place?...Gradually [the person in therapy] comes to experience the fact that he is making value judgments, in a way that is new to him, and yet a

> way that was also known to him in his infancy. Just as the infant places an assured value upon an experience, relying on the evidence of his own senses...so the client finds that it is his own organism which supplies the evidence upon which value judgments may be made. He discovers that his own senses, his own physiological equipment, can provide the data for making value judgments and for continuously revising them (1951, pp. 522–523).

An illustration of the extent of Rogers' confidence in the innate tendency of human beings to make good choices can be seen in a speech he delivered to students at a midwest college in 1957.

> The basic nature of the human being, when functioning freely is constructive and trustworthy. For me this is an inescapable conclusion from a quarter-century of psychotherapy....We do not need to ask who will socialize him, for one of his own deepest needs is for affiliation and communication with others. As he becomes more fully himself, he will become more realistically socialized. We do not need to ask who will control his aggressive impulses; for as he becomes more open to all of his impulses, his need to be liked by others and his tendency to give affection will be as strong as his impulses to strike out or to seize for himself. He will be aggressive in situations in which aggression is realistically appropriate, but there will be no runaway need for aggression....The only control of impulses which would exist, or which would prove necessary, is the natural and internal balancing of one need against another, and the discovery of behaviors which follow the vector most closely approximating the satisfaction of all his needs (Rogers, 1961, 194–195).

Critics of humanism have sometimes equated its emphasis on self-actualization with selfishness but this is not completely accurate (Jones & Butman, 1991). Humanists believe that the disposition to relate positively to others is an innate part of a person's natural tendency to actualize. One of Rogers' most far reaching assertions was that interpersonal and social problems are caused by the failure of individuals to fully actualize and accept themselves:

> The implications of this aspect of our theory are such as to stretch the imagination. Here is a theoretical basis for sound interpersonal, intergroup, and international relationships. Stated in terms of social psychology, this proposition becomes the statement that the person (or persons or group) who accepts himself thoroughly, will necessarily improve his relationships with those with whom he has personal contact, because of his greater understanding and acceptance of them....Thus we have, in effect, a psychological "chain reaction" which appears to have tremendous potentialities for the handling of problems of social relationships (1951, pp. 520-522).

This quotation illustrates the extent to which Rogers was willing to apply his

philosophical assumptions about human nature and mental health to social problems. Few theorists have been as explicit as he was in stating their conclusions and extending them to their logical end (Jones & Butman, 1991).

A Christian Critique of Humanistic Psychology

There are many elements in Rogers' theory that Christian thought can affirm and benefit from. Such points include his insistence on understanding persons in a wholistic rather than an atomized, reductionistic manner; his stress on the capacity of individuals to change and grow; his emphasis on the importance of developing an awareness and understanding of ones' feelings and internal conflicts; and his belief that every person has the potential to develop in a unique and individualized manner; (Jones & Butman, 1987). Furthermore, his singular contribution to our understanding of the dynamics and power of empathic listening, and his emphasis on the growth that is produced when people are treated with honesty, openness and unconditional positive regard deserve much commendation. However, there are fundamental points at which Rogers' theory of personality and behavior have been legitimately questioned and criticized.

Several writers have written in depth critiques of his theories from a philosophical, scientific, and/or theological perspective (e.g. Browning, 1987; Geller, 1982; Hart, 1992; Jones & Butman, 1991; May, 1982, cited in Greening, 1984; Vitz, 1977). I will discuss a number of the criticisms which are especially important and add comments from other authors. I will begin by emphasizing, as Vitz (1977) did, the quasi-religious nature of humanistic theory and the type of evidence upon which it is based. I will then consider some of the ontological, epistemological, and ethical issues raised by Rogers' view of persons and conclude by identifying potentially adverse psychological and social consequences of his theory.

Humanistic Psychology's Religious Character

Vitz (1997) is one of a number of critics who call attention to the overtly "religious" elements in humanistic psychology. If one defines religion as a developed system for ascribing ultimate meaning and purpose to life and which is dependent upon something beyond the methods of empirical observation for its verification, then Vitz is certainly right. Browning (1987), as previously noted, observes that humanism, along with other modern psychotherapeutic psychologies, has at least two important elements that it holds in common with religious faith. These are "metaphors of ultimacy" and a model for ordering the inner life. Regardless of whether it is proper to speak of humanism as a religion, its basic claims about human nature and values have not been empirically verified and are not amenable to such verification. This is a point about which Rogers expressed explicit agreement near the end of his career, when referring to his legendary and vigorous arguments against B. F. Skinner's behaviorism. At that time he said, "I have come to realize that the basic difference between a behavioristic and a humanistic approach to human beings is a philosophical choice. This certainly can be

discussed, but cannot possibly be settled by evidence" (Rogers 1974).

Although many of Rogers' philosophical descendants have been less ready to admit, or less aware of, the subjective basis for their conclusions than he was, there is, as I have already suggested, evidence that this is changing. Once the value based or subjective elements of a psychological theory have been acknowleged, a discussion of the merits of a theory such as humanism, including its religious merits, can proceed on a more sound basis.

Ontological Problems with the Theory of Human Nature

Rogers and Nouwen both see humans as suffering from internal and external conflicts. Nouwen, however, does not attribute all internal suffering to the false demands and expectations of others. He states that our lives are broken, bound by sin, and in need of "radical transformation," by the "work of the Holy Spirit" (pp. 50-53). The conclusion that human nature is broken and out of balance at the most basic and individual level, while variously interpreted as to cause and extent, is one of the most basic beliefs of Christianity and most major religions, (Solzhenitsyn, 1975, cited in Vitz, 1977). This means that some experience of inner conflict is part of what it means to be human.

It needs to be emphasized that many Christian interpreters have concluded that human nature is made up of a mixture of both positive and negative tendencies, rather than as being wholly one or the other. An example of a positive tendency which numerous psychological studies have shown to be present even in very young infants is that of empathy. This means that one cannot answer the question of whether individuals are "basically good" or "fundamentally evil" apart from a careful definition and qualification of the terms.

Rogers (1951), however, asserts that "the [human] organism has one basic tendency and striving—to actualize, maintain, and enhance the experiencing organism; [and that] rather than many needs and motives, it seems entirely possible that all organic and psychological needs may be described as partial aspects of this one fundamental need" (pp. 487–488). He further maintains that the movement of this single tendency is, "in the direction of an increasing self-government, self-regulation, and autonomy, and away from heteronymous control, or control by external forces...[and that this tendency] appears to be in the direction of socialization, broadly defined" (p. 488). This position rejects that there is any part of human nature that is basically defective or out of balance. Eric Fromm (1947) emphasized this when he said that,

> The position taken by humanistic ethics that man is able to know what is good and to act accordingly on the strength of his natural potentialities and of his reason, would be untenable if the dogma of man's innate natural evilness were true (p. 210).

The argument for a single motive force that is both individually and socially constructive raises a number of problems. Vitz (1977) points out that it runs counter, in

various ways, to the conclusions of many psychologists (particularly those in the psychodynamic tradition such as Freud & Klien); ethnologists (including Nobel laureates Konrad Lorenz and Niko Tinbergen) and biologists (such as Ludwig von Bertalanffy) who have seen dynamics such as conflict, and/or tendencies toward destructive aggression, as an innate part of the human character.

On what evidence have humanists based their conclusions for a single, harmonious motivating force? Browning (1987) points out that humanistic psychologists do not derive the idea of the self-actualizing tendency as a moral norm from observationally based explanations of human motivation. Rather they "identify a variety of goods which they recognize to be morally justifiable on grounds independent of the facts of human motivation (our various tendencies and needs) and then attribute them to our biologically grounded actualization tendency" (p. 74).

A second problem with the single-motive theory of human behavior is that it logically requires the complete externalization of responsibility for inner conflicts. Jones and Butman (1991) illustrate this difficulty in the following words:

> Suggesting one drive, and a totally good one at that, leads to attributing all human distress to forces external to the person. If we ever experience conflict, it cannot be due to a true struggle within ourselves, but rather to a pseudostruggle between our true selves (all good) and some sort of false selves, which are presumed to have originated externally from how significant others have treated us (pp. 265–266).

Since Rogers championed virtues of individual freedom and autonomy, it is paradoxical that this aspect of his theory would seem to encourage people to assume the psychological stance of being victims.

A third problem related to the single motivational theory of human nature should also be noted. When Rogers extends his theory of actualization into the arena of interpersonal relationships and suggests that it contains the key to social harmony, he creates a logical hurdle of enormous proportions. Browning (1987), in a detailed discussion of this assertion, notes that it requires one to maintain that there is a "preestablished harmony of all potentialities" (p. 760). When applied just to the microcosm of a single family unit, it necessitates the belief that, "the self-actualization of the potentials of any one member of the family could occur without interfering with or impeding the self-actualization of any other member of the family" (p. 82). When applied to the international level, as Rogers does, the belief that all potentialities harmonize requires a giant leap of faith. Yet this is the leap humanism takes. Browning (1987) refers to Maslow's (1965) reflections on synergy which specifically point in this direction and then summarizes the underlying position as follows:

> The actualization of our various potentials can be morally justified as our primary obligation simply because the world, at its depth, is basically harmonious, and all

undistorted and basic needs, potentials, and self-actualizations complement each other and lead to mutuality and reciprocity (Browning, 1987, p. 82).

The question that this theory fails to adequately explain is why social disharmony continues unabated if the single and most basic motivating force within each individual, and the most basic and true balance of moral forces in the world are harmonious and pro-social. The Christian belief that sin has caused a disruption of harmony within each individual as well as within the entire universe (Rom. 8:22), provides a more simple and parsimonious explanation for suffering and evil than does the humanistic view. The Christian view suggests that, "our good impulses and our bad impulses, our love for and rebellion against God, are both representative of our true selves" (Jones & Butman p. 266). It also maintains that self-enhancement and social harmony come about through a spiritual regeneration of our true selves. This is one of the most basic difference between the two theories of human nature.

Epistemological Problems and Issues

Rogers' theory not only merits criticism for its position on the nature of human nature, it also raises epistemological and ethical issues. With respect to the sources of knowledge, Rogers' emphasis on the ultimate reliability of self-experience leads in practice to a depreciation of any system of collected wisdom that differs significantly from Christian thought. The Christian tradition holds that all of human nature has been distorted by sin and that the individual's self-experience is not therefore, a sufficient guide for life apart from divine healing and guidance.

It is important, however, to not over draw this difference in perspective. Many theological traditions agree with Kant's belief that humans have an awareness of "the moral law within," and in this sense agree that they have, (at least under normal circumstances) an intrinsic sense of right and wrong (Lewis, 1943; Malony, 1986). For this, as well as other reasons, Christian theology would reject any suggestion that the Gospel calls upon persons to live in a way that is out of harmony with their true selves. Protestant theology has given particular emphasis to the importance of living in harmony with ones' conscience or moral intuition, but Christian thinking has stopped short of suggesting that the subjective experience of the individual is the final arbiter of moral and religious truth. It has emphasized the importance of other sources of truth, the most fundamental of which are the principles and teachings contained in Scripture as well as other sources of divine revelation, such as the role of the discerning community. Jones and Butman (1991) contrast this approach to truth with that of Rogers who they describe as, "optimistic about one's experience as the basis of determining truth, but rather pessimistic about the value of culture, dogma, traditions, and systems of morality" (p. 263).

Ethical Problems and Issues

It is hardly necessary to note that the Christian view of personal wholeness

includes an acceptance of ethical imperatives. Rogers, (1961) on the other hand, clearly stated that his theory constituted a reaction against, and an alternative to, religious ethical imperatives.

But one of the distinguishing features of his theory of personality is its implicit ethical system. Browning (1987) notes a shift in the writings of Rogers and other humanistic psychologists from simply maintaining that "the tendency toward self-actualization is the basic nature of humans to the assertion that it is good and that, therefore, all humans should pursue the life of self-actualization" (p. 70). Thus, actualization of ones' self becomes a moral imperative. But humanism's understanding of individual and social pathology creates an even more far reaching moral imperative. This is the obligation to avoid imposing values on others. The logic of this moral stance is clear. Since the self is good and obligations and expectations placed on us by others are the cause of individual and social pathology, then teaching others how to live is not only unnecessary, but individually dehumanizing and socially destructive. Freedom and unconditional positive regard (which except for during the "therapeutic hour" are often downgraded to the virtue of tolerance), both of which are important and necessary values, become the highest values because they are ultimately the only values that are necessary.

Christian ethics contends that the principle of agape love is the highest virtue and that its clearest expression is seen in the person of Jesus. Agape, which cannot exist in the absence of freedom, involves unconditional positive regard, but it cannot be reduced to unconditional positive regard in the Rogerian sense. Christian theology would emphasize that the influence of agape strengthens and integrates the self but that it also leads to the sacrifice or giving of the self when genuine good (as, opposed to such false goods as the enabling of addictions or the perpetuation of abuse) will be brought about by doing so.

Social and Psychological Problems of Humanistic Psychology

Rogers' theory of human nature and therapy developed as reaction against what he saw to be the dogmatism of conservative and legalistic religion and the rationalistic qualities of psychoanalysis (Jones & Butman, 1991). It quickly developed, as this paper has attempted to show, its own set of faith assumptions and ethical imperatives and has taken on characteristics of religious belief for many people.

It needs to be emphasized that humanistic psychology would not have experienced its wide and rapid acceptance if many of its ideas had not already been embedded in American political and economic philosophy (Bloom, 1987; Browning, 1987; Rogers 1951; Vitz, 1977). Rogers' and Maslow's theories were popularized during the years immediately following World War II when the American economy was enjoying unprecedented growth. The economic system that produced this prosperity championed individualism, creativity and the belief that the primary role of government was limited to that of protecting the freedom of its citizens to pursue their own self-interest. Humanism inferred that these political and economic principles could be applied with equal success

to the arenas of individual and social morality. This linking of political and individual values was what Hauerwas (1981) referred to when he observed that, "our private morality has increasingly followed the form of our public life. People feel their only public duty is to follow their own interests as far as possible, limited only by the rule that we do not unfairly limit others' freedom" (p. 79).

I draw attention to this connection between American cultural values and the popularity of humanism's theory of the self for two reasons. One is to observe that Rogers and his fellow humanists did not originate a completely new way of thinking as much as they helped popularize and extend one which was already present within the culture. The other is to note that problems which have become increasingly apparent in America's political system illustrate the inadequacy of the pursuit of private needs as an ethical ideal. Citizens and the media can be expected to express outrage when political leaders put personal interests or the benefits of local constituents above the good of the larger society, while at the same time professing allegiance to a belief system which says that pursuing one's self-interest is an individual's primary moral obligation and that it is destructive to question or criticize the ethical choices of others.

The humanistic understanding of personhood and wholeness fosters a public morality that Hauerwas (1981) aptly describes as "vulgar relativism," namely, a relativized view of most ethical principles combined with a non-relativized view of the principle of toleration (p. 104). The psychological and spiritual result is a diminishment of a vital part of what it means to be human, for, as Hauerwas says, "In the interests of securing tolerance, we are forced to pay the price of having our differences rendered morally irrelevant" (p. 104). Bloom (1987) has written that many college students believe that there is a necessary connection between the principles of toleration and relativism because they have been taught that a belief in the latter is necessary to avoid prejudice. But relativism ultimately undermines all principles, including the principle of toleration. Thus it provides culture with an insufficient means for its own sustenance (Bloom, 1987; Hauerwas, 1981).

The Rogerian conception that our primary innate tendency is to self-actualize in a way that is good for ourselves and others, may seem to remove the annoying concepts of guilt and sin from the psyche, but it does so, as already mentioned, at the cost of either denying evil altogether or attributing responsibility for it entirely to others. This latter tendency can lead to an undiscriminating use of psychological tasks which emphasize emotional independence from significant others as a prerequisite to mental health. It can thus affect the way we seek a balance between individuation and intimacy. A strong emphasis on individuating tasks is clearly indicated in cases where self-esteem has been damaged by over-control and abuse, but in a Rogerian system any control that does more than guarantee a growing child's physical safety and development is over-control.

A final difficulty with the Rogerian view of human nature is the unrealistic

expectations it creates. It promises that satisfying interpersonal relationships (as well as freedom from inner conflicts) will come naturally if people learn to accept themselves fully. It de-emphasizes or rejects the importance of developing character through overcoming innate tendencies toward selfishness, and creates the false expectation that families and communities can be held together without sacrifice.

A Christian Basis for Accepting Persons

Many people are attracted to the conviction that humans are by nature innately and completely good because they equate being good with being of worth and value, and/or because they have been taught to believe that if people are not basically good they must be basically evil (which is interpreted as "entirely" evil). Jesus, however, never connected the basis of human worth with the issue of human nature, (nor did he imply that all human tendencies were completely evil). He emphasized that people deserved to be valued and respected because God created them and loved them.

Summary

Nouwen has summarized some key elements of the way of life that Jesus described and some steps for beginning to live it. The purpose of Jesus' way is to change our focus from many things to one, most important thing. Rogers also emphasizes moving from a life guided by many things to being centered on one most important thing. For Rogers, this most important thing is the self. For Nouwen it is the kingdom of God. The differences between these two perspectives arises from their different beliefs about ultimate reality and human nature.

I have attempted to show that both views are based on assumptions about reality that are beyond the realm of experimental verification and cannot appeal to science as a basis of verification. Students of psychology should be taught to recognize the extent to which this is true in all areas of their field and be encouraged to identify the basis of the values which inform their therapy and research.

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