
INTERNATIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Points of Convergence and Divergence Between Existential and Humanistic Psychology: A Few Observations

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Existential and humanistic approaches to the study of human behavior are often integrated into one, The Existential-Humanistic Approach, primarily because the two approaches are phenomenological in their orientations. However, despite the shared emphasis on subjectivity, authenticity, and freedom, a number of differences exist between the approaches. In this article, I articulate points of divergence between the two approaches as reflected in their subjects of inquiry, ontological positions, temporal orientations, therapeutic goals, growth motivators, and conceptualizations of the good life. The differences underscore the uniqueness of the each approach as well as the complementarity of the two approaches.

Existential and humanistic approaches to the study of human behavior are often merged into one, The Existential-Humanistic Approach, (Bugental & Bracke, 1992; Jones-Smith, 2012) because the two approaches are considered to be maximally similar and minimally different (Corey, 2005; Hoffman, 2006). Indeed, Sartre (1945) proclaimed, “Existentialism is a Humanism” (p. 1). Accordingly, Flynn (2006) has argued that existentialism is a humanistic philosophy because it emphasizes the meaning-making capacity of a person in an inherently meaningless world; conversely, humanistic psychology is rooted in and influenced by existential thought (Bugental, 1963; Stumm, 2008). Efforts to reinforce the overlap between the two approaches have resulted in a widespread endorsement and establishment of an integrated *existential-humanistic* approach, readily observable in textbooks on introductory psychology and counselling psychology. It is noteworthy, however, that crucial points of divergence exist between the two theoretical orientations; and that articulation of these differences is necessary to explicate that the integration of the two approaches is justified on the basis of similarities

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rather than synonymy. Accordingly, one can endorse the existential tradition (but not humanistic), the humanistic tradition (but not existential), or an integrated existential-humanistic orientation.

EXISTENTIAL AND HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY: A THEMATIC COMPARISON

Points of Convergence

A phenomenological orientation. Theorists who advocate the integration of existential and humanistic approaches draw on the similarities between the two approaches such as their shared emphasis on freedom, lived experience, and subjectivity (Hoffman, 2006). In other words, both existential and humanistic psychology are phenomenological in their orientations (Corey, 2005; Jones-Smith, 2012) valuing subjective experience over objective reality. Accordingly, the two approaches have been jointly referred to as “the phenomenological approach” (Jones-Smith, 2012; Misiak & Sexton, 1973). Consistent with such an orientation, existentialists and humanists tend to be skeptical about man’s capacity to objectively experience and understand reality; the influence of one’s subjectivity, even in the hard sciences, is considered to be inevitable. Bugental (1963), for instance, has observed:

Physics itself has found that it must move beyond logical positivism . . . attention to process and the experimenter’s interconnection with the experiment are beginning to be recognized as essential to the further development of pure physics. How much more pertinent are they to psychology. (p. 564)

Kierkegaard (1846/1992), in his satirically titled book, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, rejects the possibility of finding truth through “scientific,” objective, or empirical means; “truth,” he contends, “is subjectivity” (p. 278). In accordance with such a radically phenomenological orientation, Rogers (1961) considers subjective experience rather than reason or “objective” experimentations with reality to be a surer approximation of truth. It is this organismic valuing process that Rogers (1961) considers to be an essential sign of personal growth:

Experience is, for me, the highest authority. The touchstone of validity is my own experience. No other person’s ideas, and none of my ideas, are as authoritative as my experience. 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. (p. 23, italics in original)

Accordingly, in differentiating between the phenomenology implicit in existential and humanist thought, Stumm (2008) notes that Rogers is more radical than his existential counterparts in explicating the validity of a person’s phenomenological experience:

Rogers supersedes in this respect many of the existential therapists who are often preoccupied with their frame of reference (for example, that clients should be worried about certain ‘ultimate concerns’), though they consider phenomenology as an indispensable fundamental of an existential attitude. (p. 10)

The existentialists, on the other hand, are divided on the subject of subjectivity. Heidegger (1927/1962), for instance, dismissed Cartesian dualisms (e.g., subject vs. object), and emphasized the inextricability of the Being and the world; hence, the hyphenated *being-in-the-world*. Sartre (1956), however, contended that the Being is ontologically estranged from the world; and that all that is available to the individual is one's subjective experience and the freedom to create meaning out of nothingness. Although the phenomenologies of Heidegger (1927/1962) and Sartre (1956) are similar in that they are opposed to radical positivism, Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology differs from Sartre's existential phenomenology, in that all meaning-making is understood as occurring within the context of one's socio-cultural situation (the "they;" Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 253).

The quest for authenticity. Authenticity is a recurrent theme in existential and humanistic literature; and has been variously labelled by different authors. Although there is much controversy, especially in the existential circles, as to whether authenticity is an indication of psychological health when compared to inauthenticity, existential and humanistic therapists seek to help individuals live more authentically. Rogers (1961), for instance, considered psychotherapy to be the process through which a person is facilitated "to be[come] the self that one truly is" (p. 163). Maslow (1987) also believed that a person must be whatever one can be if he or she is to be at peace with oneself. These ideals of authenticity can be traced back to existential philosophers such as Kierkegaard, who wrote, "Be the self that one truly is" (Kierkegaard, 1849/1941, p. 18) and Nietzsche who observed, "you should become who you are" (Nietzsche, 1882/2008, p. 152). Heidegger's (1927/1962) conceptualization of authenticity and inauthenticity (in contrast to Sartre's "bad" faith), however, are considered to be value-neutral concepts. Inauthenticity or conformity to the "they" can also be adaptive because it provides a structure of predetermined meanings within which the Dasein exists and operates. Conversely, authenticity necessitates the seizing of one's Being, to become more fully a being-in-the-world and to relate more authentically to the (entities in the) world. Heidegger (1927/1962) also emphasized the "givens" of human existence and the confines of the socio-cultural context within which an individual must define his or her meaning. Sartre (1956), on the other hand, considered man's freedom to be a fundamental ontological condition; accordingly, he proposed that authenticity entails the creation out of nothingness, one's meaning for existence.

A gestalt attitude. "Man," in existential and humanistic thought, "is the process that supersedes the sum of his part functions" (Bugental, 1963, p. 564). Accordingly, psychologists of both camps resist the dissection of human experience into "the ultimate units of behaviour" (Bugental, 1963, p. 564; conscious or unconscious; cognitive or affective; somatic or psychic) and emphasize the dynamic holism of the organism. Existential and humanistic approaches are similar, even in those aspects of human experience that they deemphasize. Stumm (2008), for instance, has noted that "there is no assumption of the unconscious as an agent" (p. 10) in existential or humanistic therapy. Similarly, the two approaches also dismiss the supremacy of rationality in accessing, understanding, and bettering the human experience. It is noteworthy, however, that the phenomenological approaches are "non-rational" and not "irrational" in their orientations (Fox, 2009, p. 19); it is indeed paradoxical that many of the existential greats, who explicated the limits of human reason, are considered to be some of the finest thinkers, philosophers, and intellectuals, ever known to man. May's (1992) *Cry for Myth* is indeed another ready example of defiance against mainstream intellectualism; myths, despite being "non-rational" and empirically untestable, are considered to be neither false nor defunct. Myths can be

regressive, May (1992) contends, but they are also the very fibers with which a person weaves a coherent fabric of identity and meaning. In Jung's (1912) words, "We can keep from a child all knowledge of earlier myths; but we cannot take from him the need for mythology" (as cited in Myers, 1992, p. 417).

Existential and humanistic thinkers have always been critical of medical models and biological reductionism. Accordingly, proponents of the two approaches resist the use of clinical labels because they are considered to be counterproductive. Labels, diagnostic or otherwise, tend to act as self-fulfilling prophecies; "Call a client a patient, and he is liable to act like one" (Kirschenbaum, 2007, p. 112). Rogers (1951) further cautions that diagnostic labels can inadvertently reinforce helplessness and dependency in the client. He writes, "The client [who] perceives the locus of judgment and responsibility as clearly resting in the hands of the clinician . . . is further from therapeutic progress than when he came in" (p. 223). Further, labels depersonalize and objectify human experience and are, therefore, incongruent with the phenomenological orientation (Stumm, 2008). Indeed, Bugental (1963) considers the widely-held assumption that a diagnosis is a prerequisite to treatment to be a "fallacy" (p. 566) and suggests a more effective alternative:

Diagnostic information is knowledge *about* the patient, the most effective psychotherapy requires knowledge *of* the patient. This is more than a play on words. Knowledge about a patient treats the patient as an object, or a thing to be studied and manipulated. Knowledge of the patient recognizes the patient's essential humanity and individuality. (p. 567, italics in original)

The holism of Karl Jaspers' (who also explicated the insufficiency of clinical labels), an approach that has been called "biological existentialism" (Ghaemi, 2008), however, rejects both biological reductionism and radical phenomenology. Jaspersian psychologists recognize the necessity of biomedical models as well as phenomenological methods in treating physical and mental illnesses. Ghaemi (2008), however, cautions that Jaspers' approach to psychiatry and psychology is not "eclectic," but rather "pluralistic" (Ghaemi, 2008); the treatment ought to be tailored to each person and the presenting illness (which according to the Jaspers' classification may either be a biological illness or problems of living). In other words, one size does not fit all; effective treatment of mental illness necessitates biologically based treatments (medicine) as well as phenomenological therapies (existential-humanism; Ghaemi, 2008).

Points of Divergence

Despite the many similarities between the two approaches, existential and humanistic psychology require stronger differentiation because there are, indeed, points of divergence in their theoretical orientations and views of human nature (Stumm, 2008). Accordingly, some have proposed that existential psychology is concerned with the "dark and bleak" aspects of human experience, such as anxiety and death (Bootzin, Acocella, & Alloy, 1993); humanistic psychology focuses on the positive aspects of human experience, such as growth and self-actualization (Cozen, 2008; Hoffman, 2006). Others have observed that, in contrast to humanists who believe that people are "basically good" (Rogers, 1961), existentialists, in recognizing man's potentialities for growth and greatness, as well as for evil and destruction, make no assumptions about the essential goodness or badness of human nature.

TABLE 1
Points of Divergence Between Existential and Humanistic Psychology

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Existential psychology</i>	<i>Humanistic psychology</i>
Subject of inquiry	Human existence	Human self
Ontological position	Existence precedes essence	Essence precedes existence
Temporal orientation	Future gives the present meaning	The “here and now” gives the present meaning
Therapeutic goals	Awareness and acceptance of the human condition	Awareness and acceptance of the human self
Growth motivator	Anxiety	Actualizing tendency
Optimal functioning	State of Being	Process of Becoming
The good life	The search for meaning	The search for self

The many differences between existential and humanistic psychology are elaborated in the following section and summarized in Table 1. I state, at the outset, that it is my hope that the differences serve as starting points for further explication of the finer nuances within and between the two camps; rather than as stereotypes that paint a simplistic and reductionistic picture of the respective schools of thought. The reader must also note that the differences between the two orientations are not as discrete as those presented in the table because the comparisons are based on between-groups differences, with minimal attention paid to within-group differences. In other words, *existential* and *humanistic* psychology are aggregate terms that are constituted by diverse philosophical traditions (e.g., Heidegger’s *Dasein* vs. Sartre’s Being), religio-spiritual leanings (e.g., Kierkegaard’s theism vs. Nietzsche’s atheism; Fox, 2009), etc.; the differences, therefore, may not be applicable to the approach as a whole (Misiak & Sexton, 1973). To better demarcate the boundaries of each approach, I refer only to those psychologists who have been categorized as predominantly *humanistic* (e.g., Rogers, Maslow) or *existential* (e.g., Yalom, Frankl) in their orientations and not to those who have endorsed an integrated *existential-humanistic* approach (e.g., May, Bugental; Stumm, 2008). It is hoped that establishing the boundaries of the two approaches underscores the uniqueness of each approach as well as the complementarity of the two approaches.

Subject of inquiry. According to Yalom (1980), existential psychology, much like existential philosophy, is concerned with the fundamental and inescapable aspects of human existence such as death, absurdity, estrangement, anxiety, and freedom. The humanistic approach, on the other hand, is concerned with the human “self” (Rogers, 1961) and the conditions that promote growth in individuals. Although the two concepts, human “existence” and human “self,” are inextricably entwined, especially in Heidegger’s (1927/1962) conceptualization of the being-in-the-world, and one cannot occur without the other, the two approaches differ in which aspect of human experience is the primary subject of inquiry. In existential theory, existence is studied as a person’s lived experience; whereas in humanistic theory, the self is studied in the context of one’s existence.

Existential psychologists seek to help individuals confront the anxieties that arise from the awareness of one’s existential condition; and strive to foster an authentic engagement with one’s

world. Although Heideggerian and Sartrean psychologists disagree sharply on the topic of man's fundamental isolation (and conversely, inextricability) from the world, they do jointly emphasize the many possibilities available to a person; and the capacity of the person to exist authentically by confronting nothingness. Although the crux of Heidegger's and Sartre's philosophy concerns the nature of Being, the emphasis is on the inseparability of the Being from the givens of human existence; be it time (and the world; Heidegger, 1927/1962) or nothingness (and freedom; Sartre, 1956). *Daseinanalysis*, for instance, is a school of existential psychotherapy in which the therapist seeks to foster greater engagement between the *Dasein* and the different dimensions of its existence: Umwelt, Mitwelt, Eigenwelt, and, in some cases, Überwelt (Binswanger, 1958; Boss, 1979; Heidegger, 1927/1962). Humanistic psychologists, on the other hand, are more person-focused (hence, *person-centred therapy*) and seek to help individuals become more fully-functioning and self-actualizing. The primary question that existential psychology concerns itself with is, What does it mean to exist? (Frankl, 1964). Humanistic theory, on the other hand, seeks to address the question, Who am I, really? (Rogers, 1961). In other words, although existential psychology is concerned with the search for meaning (and man's estrangement from the world), humanistic psychology is concerned with the search for self (and man's estrangement from one's own self).

Ontological position. The common factor underlying existential givens such as death, estrangement, freedom, and absurdity is the fact that they are all inevitable aspects of the human experience (Yalom, 1980). Accordingly, existential psychologists and psychotherapists believe that awareness and acceptance of the inescapability of the human condition allows a person to become more fully human (Yalom, 1980). Conversely, lack of awareness of one's existential condition and the nothingness that it entails is considered to be a state of passive and inauthentic existence. From this perspective, existential psychology bears a deterministic streak because it proposes that confrontation and acceptance of the inevitability of the human condition (absurdity, despair, isolation) is central to therapeutic change. Camus' (1955) exposition of the myth of Sisyphus is a classic example of such determinism, because he rejects any escapist attempt of providing a hope for existence; instead, he argues that the fundamental absurdity of life is, indeed, what one must come to embrace to find life worth living. (Rebellion and revolt against the absurd, however, become dominant themes in Camus' later works; the rebel, rather than the absurd hero, is exalted.) Likewise, Heidegger (1927/1962) uses the term "thrownness" (p. 252) to refer to man's lack of control over being thrown into this world. Further, he contends that the possibilities and restrictions within which the *Dasein* must exercise its freedom to become authentic, is dependent on the "they" into which one is fallen. Sartre (1956), however, in his ever-so-radical emphasis on freedom, minimizes any such limitation on the human spirit; and contends that the Being is fundamentally free. Such a radical freedom is demonstrated in the Being's capacity to terminate its very existence and no longer be in-the-world.

Existential therapists believe that confronting the inescapability of the human condition facilitates an individual to move from a sense of absurdity to a search for meaning, from a state of nonbeing to a state of being, from inauthenticity to authenticity, and from estrangement to engagement (Charnofsky, 2006). Heidegger (1927/1962) contends that the awareness of one's finitude and nothingness; and the recognition that one's way of life is largely prescribed by the "they," results in anxiety. However, it is this very anxiety that allows an individual to exercise freedom in becoming an authentic Being-in-the-world. Panza and Gale (2008) humorously use the phrase, "I do, therefore I am," (p. 124) to contrast Heidegger's prereflective and intimate

engagement between the *Dasein* and the world, against the Cartesian emphasis on reason as a requisite for self-consciousness and meaning. Heidegger (1927/1962) considers the *Dasein* and the entities in the world to be defined by an inherent usefulness (ready-to-handedness), mutual interdependency, and ontological inextricability. Although Heidegger's notion of authenticity reinforces the inseparability of the Being and the world, Sartre estranges man from the world and reinforces the inextricability of the Being and its freedom (Meizlish, 2010). The nothingness of the world, and the freedom that comes from an awareness of such nothingness, allows an individual to become the author of one's identity and purpose; "existence," Sartre (1945) famously proclaimed, "precedes essence" (p. 1). In other words, an individual (essence) is whatever one makes oneself to be (existence; Flynn, 2006). Although such differences in philosophical traditions and associated ontological assumptions persist, existential psychologists emphasize the capacity of the individual to freely explore and create one's meaning for existence.

Rogers (1961) and Maslow (1987) have presented different theories specifying the various conditions that facilitate growth in the individual. According to Maslow (1987), the fulfilment of a range of needs, to some extent, allows an individual to move toward self-actualization. Similarly, Rogers (1961, p. 183) proposed that providing a safe environment with growth producing conditions facilitates an individual to become more "fully-functioning." The hallmark of a self-actualizing or fully-functioning person is their striving for authenticity, which is the need to become the self that one truly is. Implicit to the humanistic orientation is the assumption that humans are born with unique potential as well the actualizing tendency to fulfil these potentials (Brodley, 1999). It is less-than-optimal life experiences that cause an individual to deny the self and become the self that one is expected to be (Rogers, 1961). Given that optimal functioning is considered to be the increasing actualization of one's true self, the humanistic approach appears to be more consistent with essentialism than with existentialism. In other words, an individual (existence) must be who he or she really is (essence). Therefore, in humanistic theory, essence precedes existence. This is in accordance with Stumm's (2008) observation, "[Rogers] is a determinist *and* an existentialist" (p. 11). Maslow (1962), in making a similar observation himself, distinguished the (American) humanists from the (European) existentialists:

The European [existentialists] are stressing the self-making of the self, in a way that the American [humanists] don't. . . . Self-actualization and growth theorists . . . talk more about *discovering* the self (as if it were there waiting to be found) and of *uncovering* therapy. . . . To say, however, that the self is a project and is *altogether* created by the continual choices of the person himself is an extreme overstatement. (p. 12)

Authenticity. The ontological differences between the two approaches are reflected in their conceptualizations of authenticity. Psychological health, in humanistic psychology, entails becoming the self that one truly is. In the words of Maslow (1987), "Musicians must make music, artists must paint, poets must write if they are to be ultimately at peace with themselves. What humans *can* be, they *must* be" (p. 64). Existentialists, on the other hand, emphasize human freedom and contend that humans can be whatever they choose to be; however limited or unrestricted their endowed possibilities may be (Yalom, 1980). Perhaps the differences between the two approaches can be integrated to mean that an individual, provided with growth producing conditions, will always choose to become the self that he or she really is.

The essentialism inherent to humanism has ethical implications; primarily because freedom and authenticity are often misinterpreted and misapplied. For instance, because it is impossible to definitively ascertain who a person is and is not; the freedom to be an authentic individual can always be misused as an excuse for licentiousness, with a passing, “That’s just who I am!” In other words, some fear that if the self that one truly is, is a self that has the potential to be egotistical, immature, or destructive, the consequences of facilitating such a person to become who he or she really is, would not be beneficial. Existentialists, therefore, propose that, because humans are capable of both good and bad, therapists should aim to help individuals become more responsible for their actions (Yalom, 1980). Humanists refute this contention on the grounds that humans are basically good and that all deviant behavior stems from a frustration of one’s needs (Maslow, 1987; Rogers, 1961). Indeed, Rogers (1981, as cited in Myers, 1992) has noted, “In a psychological climate which is nurturant of growth and choice, I have never known an individual to choose the cruel or destructive path” (p. 433). In other words, when an individual is provided with a safe environment, one will always become the “good self” that he or she really is. The debate nevertheless continues with humanists blaming society and culture for the perpetration of evil and the existentialists retorting, “What is culture if not the people in it?”

According to humanistic theory, if people are to be authentic, they must be everything that they can be. Conversely, they must not be what they cannot be. This might appear to be rather restrictive (especially when compared to Sartrean freedom), because it implies that people cannot and should not be something that they are not. However, the word *can* in this context does not refer so much to ability as it does to authenticity. For instance, Rogers (1961) has referred to prolific individuals such as El Greco and Albert Einstein to illustrate that success in their respective fields was, in part, a result of their capacity to trust their idiosyncratic organismic processes despite dissonant external standards. In other words, the *how* (e.g., style of expression) rather than the *what* (e.g., proficiency in science) of their actions and contributions is a stronger indicator of authenticity. It is also noteworthy that the terms *poets*, *artists*, and *musicians* do not refer to predefined and foreclosed roles, but to inherent and yet-to-be actualized potentials. For example, “poets must write” can be rephrased to mean that a person who is born with the potential to write poetry, must actualize this potential (in a manner that is uniquely his or her own) if he or she is to be at peace with oneself. Unfortunately, the cost of making peace with one’s self is often the thwarting of peace and stability with those around (e.g., family, society) because authenticity almost always goes hand-in-hand with nonconformity and rebellion. Authenticity involves a transition from being a *role* person to a *real* person, because human beings are uniquely integrated wholes who are neither defined nor bound by socio-cultural labels. Accordingly, studies have found that self-actualized individuals are resistant to enculturation and socially-prescribed norms (Cristall & Dean, 1976; Ivtzan & Connely, 2009).

The goal of humanistic therapy is to help an individual become the self that he or she truly is (Maslow, 1987; Rogers, 1961). According to Rogers (1961), there are three conditions that are both necessary and sufficient to facilitate this process: congruence, empathy, and unconditional positive regard. Growth in humanistic psychotherapy is characterized primarily by the emergence of three qualities: trust in one’s organism, existential living, and openness to experience. Humanistic therapy involves providing a safe environment for the client, in which the therapist is a constant source of genuineness, acceptance, and understanding (Rogers, 1961). The constancy of the therapeutic environment challenges an individual’s tendency to rely on arbitrary

external standards as a guide for behavior. In behavioral terms, consequences are not contingent on behavior. Instead, the individual is reinforced with positive regard that is unconditional of his or her behavior. In the absence of external cues to guide behavior, the individual is left with no choice but to look inward and to trust his or her own organism. The constant acceptance and understanding that the therapist displays toward the client allows the client to explore all aspects of the self, resulting in a nondefensive experiencing of the self in the here and now. Therapeutic change, therefore, involves a growing awareness and acceptance of the self, particularly those aspects of the self that have previously been denied from conscious awareness (Rogers, 1961).

Freedom. In humanistic theory, a fully functioning person is free because, irrespective of one's behavior, the consequences are constantly positive. As a result, the individual views himself or herself as the therapist did, with positive regard, acceptance, and genuineness. The individual is, therefore, guided by the richness of one's subjective experience rather than by arbitrary external criteria (Rogers, 1961). Freedom, in humanistic thought, involves being able to trust one's organism in the knowledge that the consequences of one's actions will be constantly positive. Maslow's (1987) self-actualizing individual personifies such a radical freedom; manifested as autonomy, authenticity, and lack of interest in or preoccupation with others' approval.

Humanistic freedom is rather different from existential freedom. True to the orientation of existential psychology, freedom is one of the inevitable aspects of the human condition (Stumm, 2008; Yalom 1980). According to Sartre (1945), "Man [by virtue of his fundamental nothingness and ontological isolation] is condemned to be free" (p. 2). In other words, a person cannot choose to not choose; he is a slave to freedom. Further, individuals must exercise their freedom with the constant awareness that they are responsible for their actions (Nelson-Jones, 2006). In other words, freedom must be accompanied by foresight of the consequences of one's behavior. From this perspective, existential therapy is oriented toward the future because it involves anticipation of the consequences of one's actions (Yalom, 1980). Likewise, it is the awareness of death (a future event; "being-towards-death;" Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 260), and its inevitability that gives the present meaning (Flynn, 2006). Humanistic therapy, on the other hand, considers the client's experience in the "here and now" to be the supreme guide for behavior (Rogers, 1961). This concurs with Stumm's (2008) observation:

It is true that existential and person-centered therapy downplay the overall importance of the past. . . . However, Client-Centered Therapy especially values the work in the *here-and-now* . . . whereas an existential perspective highlights people's orientation towards the future, their being directed towards and influenced by what is to come. (p. 12)

Anxiety. The theoretical differences between the two approaches, with respect to how freedom is conceptualized, have implications for anxiety. In existential theory, anxiety is an inevitable attribute of the human condition that stems from the awareness of nothingness, death, and freedom; and the recognition that one is solely responsible for the construction of meaning (Yalom, 1980). Further, existential psychologists believe that anxiety can be constructive because it motivates an individual to grow, rather than become ensconced in a false sense of equilibrium (Jones-Smith, 2012). The goal of existential therapy, therefore, is not to rid the client of despair, but to help the individual confront the anxiety that results from the awareness of death

and life's nothingness; and to engage with life in a more authentic manner. On the other hand, in humanistic theory, the drive for personal growth is not anxiety, but the actualizing tendency that every individual is born with (Brodley, 1999).

Optimal functioning. In humanistic theory, the good life is not a state of achievement. Both Rogers (1961) and Maslow (1987) have noted that becoming self-actualized and fully-functioning are lifelong processes. As Rogers (1961) put it, "The good life is a *process*, not a state of being. It is a direction, not a destination." (p. 186). The fully functioning individual is in a process of constant self-rediscovery, becoming the person that he or she truly is.

Existential psychotherapy characterizes growth as movement from a state of being inauthentic to a state of being authentic (being-in-the-world; Heidegger, 1927/1962; being-free; Sartre, 1956). Inauthenticity, or the loss of what it means to be a self, is characterized by a lack of awareness or a superficial and foreclosed awareness of the human condition. According to Heidegger (1962), such a state of inauthenticity is appropriated from the *they* that one is fallen into; however, inauthenticity can be adaptive because it provides a structure of meanings within which an individual can exist and function. However, when an individual is confronted with (the anxiety of) nothingness and death, he or she must embark on the daunting task of defining what it means to be an *I*, rather than appropriate the tranquilizing meanings of the *they*. The aim of existential therapy is to facilitate the client to confront one's existential concerns and to exist as an authentic being (Yalom, 1980). It must be noted, however, that the difference between *being* and *becoming* is more cosmetic than ideological because the process quality of the Being is a recurrent theme in existential literature; ready examples include Kierkegaard's (1849/1941) "process of becoming" (p. 29) and Frankl's (1964) "search for meaning." Accordingly, Stumm (2008) has noted that in existential theory, "the process character of the self dominates and . . . a reification of the self is rejected" (p. 10).

The comparative analysis of the two approaches makes it apparent that a strong differentiation between the two approaches is not plausible. One of the reasons for the deep enmeshment between the two approaches is because of the profound influence that early existential thinkers have had on humanistic psychologists. The most prominent example of such an influence is that of Søren Kierkegaard on Carl Rogers, exemplified in Kramer's (2005) observation, "Rogers worshipped Kierkegaard" (p. 129). Rogers has, indeed, explicitly acknowledged the impact that Kierkegaard's works have had on his thinking. According to him, Kierkegaard captured "deep insights and convictions which beautifully express views I have held but never been able to formulate" (Rogers, 1961, p. 199). Rogers' conceptualizations of authenticity, subjectivity, and experiential learning, have been derived primarily from the writings of Kierkegaard, which he "immersed" himself in (p. 273). He shared with Kierkegaard a sense of distress over "individual loss of personhood" in modern society (p. 214) as well as a passion to understand and foster authenticity.

Kierkegaard's philosophy also impacted Rogers on a personal level. For instance, Rogers (1961) has expressed his "indebtedness" (p. 200) to Kierkegaard, whose writings "loosened [him] up" and helped him become a more authentic person. Further, he also appears to have experienced to some extent, a sense of validation from his "sensitive and highly perceptive friend" (p. 199) upon discovering that they share similar worldviews. He has written:

I have come to feel that the only learning which significantly influences behavior is self-discovered, self-appropriated learning. . . . It was some relief recently to discover that Søren Kierkegaard, the

Danish philosopher, had found this too, in his own experience, and stated it very clearly a century ago. It made it seem less absurd. (Rogers, 1961, p. 276)

One explanation for why Rogers allowed himself to be influenced so greatly by the existential thinker could be because he identified with Kierkegaard's life and personal story. For instance, like Kierkegaard, Rogers was born into a fervently religious family, and his parents went to extraordinary lengths to ensure his fidelity to the faith (Garff, 2000; Thorne & Sanders, 2013). Further, he shared with Kierkegaard an interest in theology, only to be followed by disappointment and disgust that resulted from their exposure to the hypocrisy of organized religion. The values that Kierkegaard and Rogers came to uphold (subjectivity, authenticity, and freedom) were diametrically opposed to the orthodoxy (absolutism, self-denial, and submission) that they were raised to follow (Mayer, 1951). It becomes apparent that authenticity was central not only to their theories, but also to their lives. Such authenticity comes at a cost because it involves "defiance" (Kierkegaard, 1849/1941, p. 76) against popular culture, which often results in social estrangement. This is exemplified in Mayer's (1951) observation of Kierkegaard's nonconformity,

The orthodox thought him too audacious in his assertions, while the liberals could not stomach his religious conservatism. Nowhere did he find spiritual comrades. . . . He lived a lonely life, and yet he did not desire any other type of existence. (p. 465)

Kierkegaard (1849/1941) defined the goal of human existence; "to be that self which one truly is" (p. 18); Rogers developed a method that would help his questing clients to work toward this ideal. Indeed, Rogers (1961) has observed, "As I read some of his writings I almost feel that he must have listened in on the statements made by our clients as they search and explore for the reality of self—often a painful and troubling search" (p. 110). The Rogerian method is a means to Kierkegaardian authenticity. Kramer (2005) has made a similar observation: "Rogerian therapy is applied Kierkegaard" (p. 129). It should be noted, however, that Rogers was not strictly Kierkegaardian in his orientation, for he has written, "There is much in Kierkegaard . . . to which I respond not at all" (p. 199); one can safely assume that Rogers disagreed sharply with Kierkegaard's necessitation of the Power that posits the self (i.e., God) in one's pursuit for authenticity. Stumm (2008) has, therefore, concluded that Rogers "took up a serious liaison with an existential perspective, but not an everlasting marriage" (p. 14). He further notes that, despite the many differences between existential and humanistic psychology, the two approaches mutually benefit each other: "The dynamic balance of polarities . . . offers advantages for both models. . . . It is up to both orientations to avoid, or at least, to decrease one-sidedness and to integrate fully such polarities" (p. 14).

An elegant integration of the existential and humanistic traditions is readily observable in the work of the prolific psychotherapist, Rollo May. He shares with the existentialists the fundamental proposition that "despair is universal" (Kierkegaard, 1849/1941, p. 20; May, 1996); and a belief in the paradoxical phenomenon by which confrontation of one's existential anxiety promotes greater engagement with life and competence to handle life's difficulties. "Anxiety," May reiterates from Kierkegaard (1844/1980), "is the dizziness of freedom" (p. 61; May, 1981, p. 185). Like many existential and humanistic therapists, May (Wyatt & Seid, 2007) expressed contempt for the so-called sophisticated and standardized symptom-management

therapies, which he called “gimmicks” (p. 13), that only serve to temporarily patch up a client. He (May, 1958) feared that the “fragmentation of man” (p. 35) in modern psychotherapeutic approaches would result in man’s estrangement from his own self; and that therapy would become “part of the neurosis” than “part of the cure” (p. 35). He agreed with Rogers (1961) that it is the therapeutic relationship itself, rather than money-making techniques or “gimmicks,” that foster healing and recovery (Wyatt & Seid, 2007). May encouraged therapists to go down to the client’s “hell” (Wyatt & Seid, 2007, p. 18) and to understand what it feels like to be the other person’s “me;” a value that resonates with Roger’s emphasis on understanding the client’s phenomenological world (May, 1996).

May (1967), however, departed from the radical phenomenology of existential and humanistic psychology; and contended that a person must learn to observe oneself as an object, as well as experience oneself as a subject. He also disagreed with the humanistic premise that people are basically good; indeed, it angered May (Wyatt & Seid, 2007) when therapists failed to address the darkness of the human spirit and chose only to enjoy “an angelic bathing in the golden light of the sunset” (p. 31). Further, unlike Rogers (1961), whose predominant emphasis was on the client’s experience in “the here and the now” of therapy; May (Wyatt & Seid, 2007) explicated the need to help clients, keeping in mind the social context to which they must return. His contention that the self is inextricable from context, “person from the society” (p. 14) and “man in the world” (p. 15) resonates with Heidegger’s (1927/1962) being-in-the-world. May (1975) also shared with Heidegger (1927/1962), the contention that man and the world, which he referred to as a “pattern of meaningful relations,” (p. 50) are inseparable and interdependent. The value of history and culture in the construction of one’s identity and meaning is central to both Heidegger’s and May’s thesis. In this manner, May strings together the value of the past (historical and cultural influences), the present (the here and the now), and the future (potentialities and responsibility) in defining the meaning of one’s existence. May (1975), like Heidegger, also acknowledged the “obvious determinisms” (p. 99) of life; not only the existential conditions of anxiety, death, and estrangement; but also, the more basic biological (e.g., eye color, gender, etc.) and cultural determinisms that constrain human possibilities. Nevertheless, like Sartre (1962), he emphasized the radical freedom of the individual to authentically define one’s identity and meaning despite the accompanying anxiety, consequent isolation, and necessary rebellion (May, 1982).

May (1975), like the existentialists and humanists, was well aware of the limits of reason. However, he not only argued that emotion and reason are not antagonistic to each other; but he also went one step further in stating, “reason works better when emotions are present” (May, 1975, p. 49). May’s (1992) *Cry for Myth*; his explication of the need for structures that cannot simply be grasped by human reason but are, nevertheless, indispensable to meaning and coherence jive with the existential-humanistic spirit of antirationalism. May’s work had a postmodern thrust, not unlike the existentialists and humanists, wherein he drew from the very foundations of psychology; or as Bugental (1963) so fondly calls them, psychology’s “parents” (p. 567): philosophy, art, literature, etc. May’s unique integration of the two philosophical traditions is explicated in his attempt to address the fundamental existential issue of *Man’s Search for Meaning* (Frankl, 1964) from a person-centred perspective, in his book, *Man’s Search for Himself* (May, 1982). May’s eclecticism is truly elegant; not only did he bring together the existential and humanistic traditions; but also psychoanalysis (and psychodynamic theory); an integration that would have otherwise been considered implausible.

Rollo May's work is, indeed, an affirmation that the differences between the two approaches bode well for integration; perhaps, it is the juxtaposition of an "overly optimistic" attitude toward human potentialities against the "overly pessimistic" (DeCarvalho, 1991, p. 68) givens of human existence; or the emphasis placed on understanding one's phenomenological experience against the backdrop of inescapable existential realities; or the paradoxical recognition of the power of one's socio-cultural context in shaping the self, as well as man's potential to shape and to save a "collapsing society" (Wyatt & Seid, 2007, p. 30). Irrespective, as in any healthy marriage; it is not only the similarities that justify the integration of the two bodies (of knowledge); but also the differences, as they are complementary, rather than contradictory.

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