

Ask Dr. Robertson 2— Psychotherapy



[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#) Follow

Dec 27, 2018



Image Credit: Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson.

By **Scott Douglas Jacobsen**

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson is a Registered Doctoral Psychologist with expertise in Counselling Psychology, Educational Psychology, and Human Resource Development. He earned qualifications in Social Work too.

His research interests include memes as applied to self-knowledge, the evolution of religion and spirituality, the

Aboriginal self's structure, residential school syndrome, prior learning recognition and assessment, and the treatment of attention deficit disorder and suicide ideation.

In addition, he works in anxiety and trauma, addictions, and psycho-educational assessment, and relationship, family, and group counseling. Here we talk about psychotherapy.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: In a previous interview in two parts for *The Voice Magazine*, we covered some material on a course taught during the time at Athabasca University for you, which is the largest online university in Canada. You brought forward some analysis of psychotherapy and prominent figures in it. What is psychotherapy?

Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson: As you mentioned, I touched on this in our last interview Scott. Psychotherapy is a process of effecting change in an individual who voluntarily enters a therapeutic relationship as a client or patient. The change is psychological in that it is intended to impact positively on the client's cognitive and emotional functioning. The therapist acts as a facilitator of such change in keeping with the client's goals. There is a consensus across the schools of psychotherapy that the therapeutic process is not advice giving. To give advice is to presume that the advice-giver knows the client better than the

client does. To give advice is disempowering because, if the advice works, it leaves the client dependent on the advice-giver the next time there is a problem. Rather, the practice of psychotherapy involves the development of the individual to be a competent volitional actor with a sense of personal worth and constancy within a social milieu.

This definition, while sounding elegant, is not complete. Some schools of psychology are quite strict in proscribing advice giving. Others might allow advice giving where the client has an intact self and the focus of the intervention is problem-solving. In such cases, the therapist is not doing psychotherapy, but may be viewed as doing counselling. Still other schools conflate the terms psychotherapy and counselling. This latter view is not completely without theoretical merit as any change in behaviour that brings a feeling of success is likely to affect the psyche in some way.

Jacobsen: Following from the prior question, what did the major well-known figures, Freud and Jung, get wrong and right in their work?

Robertson: Both Freud and Jung drew attention to phylogenetic factors that contribute to the development of the psyche. By suggesting that archetypes are encoded, instinctive, preconfigured patterns of action, Jung was, in effect, taking a deterministic stance. Similarly, in Freud's tripartite division the poor ego is left

frantically balancing the instinctual drives of the id with the dictatorial culturally determined superego. Although I am not a determinist, I count the recognition of genetic and environmental constraints as an important contribution. I think Freud's greatest contribution is that he popularized the idea that psychology is a science. Another of Freud's contributions was that he brought the study of human sexuality out of the constraints imposed by Victorian morality by making it central to his theories. This is connected to something that Freud, in my opinion, got wrong and that is the notion of "penis envy." As Alfred Adler noted in reply, if women were envious of men during the beginning of the twentieth century when this conversation occurred, it was more likely due to inequality in social relations than the fact that they are born without a penis.

Jung's conceptualization of archetypes from which we create meaning has application to cultural and self studies, but he dabbled in mysticism and his notion that there exists a collective unconscious has bolstered the beliefs of some religionists. This can have dangerous consequences. For example, his speculations on the collective unconscious of the so-called "Aryan race" and the notion that they are somehow "rooted to the land" while the Jews are a "rootless people" played to the rise of Nazism. His comment that the psychology of Freud and Adler were okay for the Jews but his psychology is for the German "Volk" could be viewed as either religious or racial bigotry.

Jacobsen: Following from the first query once more, who were the figures of similar note as Freud and Jung but, unfortunately, not brought into the light of public consciousness as much as the aforementioned?

Robertson: I think Alfred Adler has not received sufficient recognition. For example, Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, leaders of Humanist Psychotherapy, failed to credit Adler as offering a precursor for some of their ideas such as self-actualization and client centred therapy. Adler included the former term in what he called “striving for perfection” and anticipated client centred therapy by declaring that the patient or client was expert in his or her self with psychotherapy defined as a collaboration between experts.

Adler also had a foot in the Behaviourist camp. His “homework assignments” were a method of shaping and reinforcing behaviour. But the classical behaviourist might have been put off by Adler’s support for the idea that mankind has consciousness and the power of choice. In this way Adler anticipated Cognitive-Behaviourism. The founder of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy, Albert Ellis, did credit Adler’s influence in the development of his school of practise. By suggesting to clients that they consider revising their worldviews, Adler was anticipating those modern psychotherapists who view humans as meaning makers.

Today we have a plethora of schools of psychological practice with the founders of each emphasizing some feature or technique that makes their school distinctive. I argued in https://www.hawkeyeassociates.ca/images/pdf/academic/Free_Will.pdf that these schools are united by a theory of human potentiality and that the project of psychotherapy is to teach people to reach the potential implied by that theory. I think Adler tapped into this vision of what it means to be human over a century ago and he addressed it holistically.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Dr. Robertson.

Image Credit: Dr. Lloyd Hawkeye Robertson.