

Ask Dr. Robertson 2 – Psychotherapy

What is this specific school of thought? How does this work in practical terms?

March 3, 2019 by [Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#) [Leave a Comment](#)



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 the psychotherapy.

In some previous interviews for the Athabasca University student magazine, *The Voice Magazine*, Robertson and I discussed some of the background and work of Robertson in addition to some material on psychotherapy and then some of the prominent figures within it.

We continued to discuss the definition of psychotherapy, especially what the therapeutic process involves for the individual student too. To Robertson, as a certified and qualified, and highly intelligent, practitioner, described psychotherapy as a process – no mention as to the specific speed – of effectuating change in the individual who voluntarily enters into a relationship with the patient or client (and vice versa), this implies a lot, and requires significant unpacking.

“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,” Robertson stated, “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.”

The central purpose of the psychotherapeutic methodology is for the development of the individual, as a client or patient, who is seen as a person of worth and volition. There are differences between schools of thought in psychotherapy.

Some incorporate advice giving. Others do not, and, instead, focus on the issue of solving problems. Thus, we come to the general field of the practice known as psychotherapy and then the individuated schools of thought within psychotherapy. Still more, some will mix and match the terminology of psychotherapy and counseling together, which was covered, in brief, in the first of this series.

Two of the main thinkers known to the public are Freud and Jung. Both, according to Robertson, brought attention to the phylogenetic factors within the work of studying the human psyche, in the broadest terms possible. Bearing in mind, of course, the two of them did not have the advanced technological means for comprehension of the physical structure of the organ producing the mind at the time.

It seems akin to the ancient Greeks with the Milesian school, and others, where we can see tremendous amounts of metaphysics without much physics; this created a number of issues in theorization about the bottom rung of the world in terms of magnitude and constituents. They talked about the *Apeiron* or the infinite, water, and air. But they did not have the physics to get at the fundamental notion of a basic structure and set of constituents of the universe.

It may have been cognitive limits. It may have been philosophical conceptual limits. At the same time, certainly, it was a limit in the ways of knowing the world through their tools. These individuals and societies had a limitation in their ability to know the world around them, in a

natural sense. But they had lots of fancy thoughts about it: sophisticated, intuitive, and, wrong, metaphysics.

Robertson continued on Freud and Jung, “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.”

Robertson considered another important contribution of Freud the bringing out of the closet – so to speak – the limitations on the sexuality of the Victorian era. He thinks Freud got the notion of penis envy wrong. Alfred Adler described how women can be envious of men in the early 20th century, not because of penis envy but, because of a great deal of social inequality.

“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,” Robertson cautioned.

According to Robertson, Jung claimed the so-called Aryan race was somehow rooted in the land; whereas, the Jewish peoples were a rootless people – nomadic almost, or even in actuality. This belief contributed to the awful rise of Nazism that led to all sorts of horrors and catastrophes. Jung looked at the ideas of Freud and Adler as okay for the Jewish peoples, but claimed his psychology was more suitable for the German “Volk.”

The conversation went into figures of similar notoriety but, unfortunately, without more public recognition within the general consciousness. Robertson’s opinion is that Adler never received, even to the present day, sufficient recognition for contributions to the intellectual life of the psychologists in the history of psychology and right into the present.

Robertson also mentioned Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers in terms of leading the charge of Humanist Psychotherapy. Duly note, Robertson is the Vice-President of Humanist Canada. This may be biased, but, certainly, not an unjustified or uninformed opinion.

Intriguingly, he described how, in fact, Adler was given insufficient recognition by these two giants – Maslow and Rogers – of Humanistic Psychotherapy, especially with Adler as a precursor to their ideas and theories. The concepts of self-actualization and client-centered therapy, in particular.

Adler concluded, on self-actualization, that this is – in the words of Adler – a “striving for perfection.” Indeed, he provided a basis an anticipatory psychological basis, or psychotherapeutic foundation – of sorts, for the client centered therapy with the declaration of

“the patient or client was expert in his or her self with psychotherapy defined as a collaboration between experts,” Robertson stated.

Adler set foot within behaviorism, too. He had, apparently, “homework assignments” intended for the reinforcement and reshaping of the behavior of clients or patients. However, Robertson speculated that, perhaps, the behaviorists of the time may have been irked, maybe, with the notion of mankind having consciousness and freedom of the will of some form. Any form – compatibilist, incompatibilist, and so on – freedom of the will becomes a problem for the fundamental substructure of the theories of behaviorists.

In this manner, Robertson proposed, rather naturally, the anticipation, once more of another field, of Cognitive-Behaviorism. Albert Ellis, who founded Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (these are all the biggest theories and methodologies, even in the current period), credited Adler with an influence on the development of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy. His basic aim was the recognition or suggestion of clients as they went about revision of their worldviews. Meaning-making is a modern view of human beings. We evolved to make meaning in the world. This is a view of some or many modern psychotherapists.

Robertson concluded, “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.”