Holistic Foundations of Psychology in Historical Perspective

Christopher M. Aanstoos, Ph.D.
University of West Georgia
United States

Abstract

In ancient Greece we encounter the first sense of how humanistic thought was founded on a holistic view, such that the profound Greek grasp of the meaning, fate and destiny of being human was grounded within an even more encompassing context of the non-dual presencing of Being. Second, during the Renaissance, scholars emphasized the irreducibility of the human experience. Finally, as part of a larger shift in the Zeitgeist, a reform movement emerged within European and American psychology in the 1960s. Inspired by previous developments in existential-phenomenological philosophy, psychologists on both sides of the Atlantic began to revision the basic presuppositions of elementism and mechanism, and a new wave of humanistic thought emerged. Key figures included Binswanger, Boss, van den Berg and Laing, from Europe, and May, Rogers, Maslow, and Giorgi in the United States. In the examination of these three "waves", this chapter presents the thesis that holism is no merely current fad. It is the deepest taproot of our civilization and the gift of 2500 years of humanism. As the philosophical heirs to this legacy, the contemporary human sciences have the opportunity, and responsibility of bringing this vision of wholeness to fulfillment – precisely when it is most needed.

The Inspiration of Amedeo Giorgi: A Personal Prologue

Amedeo Giorgi was my dissertation advisor and my mentor, shepherding my still raw novice thinking about psychology into a capacity for deeper reflection on its possibilities. But more than that, for a generation Giorgi has been an inspiration for an entire wing of psychology, through his penetratingly sustained analysis of the limitations of psychology’s traditional foundations, and the prospects of an alternative human science approach (Aanstoos, 1996; Wertz & Aanstoos, 1999). He has heroically led this reform movement for almost half a century, yet has done so with profound humility and respect. Repeatedly, he has humbly reminded us that the work is “only one percent done, ninety-nine percent to be worked out”. And he has always respected the individualized pathways taken by his colleagues on the journey. As a result of the multifarious creativities of his cohorts, the movement has been both less and more than he imagined.
As the various chapters of this book amply demonstrate, Giorgi’s leadership has been inspirational, not doctrinaire. But if there is one unifying theme that he has indelibly contributed to this movement, it has been to appreciate the real, phenomenological fullness – “the full range” (Giorgi, 1970, p. XII) – of human psychological life, and the correlative need for a psychology that can be “comprehensive” of that scope (Giorgi, 1984a, p. 27). Giorgi (1984a, pp. 22-25) sees psychological reality as being both “paraphysical” and “paralogical” – that is, as being a reality in between the purely physical and the logical, reducible to neither. In the face of a small-minded psychology that reduces the human to one or the other and so fails to capture this full scope, Giorgi’s retort has always been to remind us that "we are more than that". Yes, we are. And so, my contribution to this collective honoring of Amedeo Giorgi is an exploration of just how big we really are.

**The Holistic Vision: A Thematic Prologue**

Giorgi’s critique (e.g., 1970, 1976, 1981, 1984b, 1985, 1994, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009) is contemporaneous with a larger a dissident movement that arose within western psychology in the latter third of the twentieth century, in order to emphasize the neglected significance of specifically human being. Lacking a single vision, a variety of movements – such as humanistic, transpersonal, existential, phenomenological – developed and remained largely marginalized vis-à-vis the mainstream. I can see that these variegating branches do share an implicit core vision, whose articulation is vitally important for our times; and that Giorgi’s work contributes powerfully to that prospective unity. This core vision is that of holism, understood especially in contrast to the dominant vision of dualism.

The term "holism" has become much more common in the past decade in popular culture, largely on account of its increasing usage to indicate innovative approaches to healing (as "holistic medicine"). It remains uncommon in psychology, however, despite its having been introduced to the field even before its current usage in medicine. For example, in 1939 Kurt Goldstein’s book *The Organism: A Holistic Approach to Biology Derived from Pathological Data in Man*, appeared, with its mission of understanding biological data holistically, that is, in terms of their psychological context. In 1965 a posthumous collection of the papers of Andras Angyal was published as *Neurosis and Treatment: A Holistic Theory*. The title reflected Angyal’s approach to the person as a holistic system. In his own early major work, *Psychology as a Human Science*, Giorgi (1970) presciently employed the term "holistic" in both his critique of what traditional approaches in psychology lacked, and in his call for what was urgently needed: “psychology must take the problem of "holistic phenomena" seriously” (1970, p. 84).

With Giorgi, I am convinced that the essential core a psychology adequate to its phenomena is holism: an approach to the person as a whole, non-reducible and contextually situated within a larger, interdependent whole. Indeed, I am convinced that holism is the timely defining idea for the future, not merely of psychology, but for all the human sciences, and really for the future of humanity, faced with the now acute dilemmas that are our heritage of centuries of reductionistic, elementistic and dualistic thinking.

This vision is not only contemporary, but also timeless. Holism has infused and guided humanistic thought throughout history. Giorgi (1992, p. 424) once noted that a reason humanistic psychology did not become more influential was its failure to “link their concept of "human" to
the strong humanistic traditions of antiquity or of the Renaissance”. I think that’s a very astute observation, so to recover a holistic vision, I looked to these previous eras, during which the use of a holistic vision reached a critical mass that, for a while, became a leading paradigm and so was able to proverbially "move the culture".

By means of that historical analysis of holism (Aanstoos, 2007, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c), I found this holistic vision is built upon a long tradition in western intellectual history. For the most part, it has been the "counter-tradition" to other, more mainstream viewpoints. Whether these mainstreams originated in religion or natural science, they have been elementistic rather than holistic, indeed usually the crude elementism of an empiricism that presupposes reductionistic, dualistic, and mechanistic relations among the elements. But there have been "peak periods" in which the "wave" of holistic thought crests and becomes manifest as a "critical mass" able, for a time, to advance a decisively transformational vision. There have been three such periods: the first occurred around 600-300 B.C.E. in ancient Greece, the second during 1300-1600 in the European Renaissance, and the third in the late 20th century in the United States. In ancient Greece we encounter the first sense of how humanistic thought was founded on a holistic view, such that the profound Greek grasp of the meaning, fate and destiny of being human was grounded within an even more encompassing context of the nondual presencing of Being. Second, during the Renaissance, scholars emphasized the irreducibility of the human experience. Finally, the 20th century rise of the human sciences was carried forth on such a wave. As part of a larger shift in the Zeitgeist, a reform movement emerged within European and American psychology, and coalesced in the 1960s. Inspired by previous developments in existential-phenomenological philosophy, psychologists on both sides of the Atlantic began to revision the basic presuppositions of elementism and mechanism, and a new wave of humanistic thought emerged. A careful examination of each of these waves will reveal key insights of foundational value to the development of a truly holistic psychology.

The First Wave. Being and Logos: The Greek Roots of Humanism

Let us first consider the wave of humanism from ancient Greece. Here we encounter the first sense of how reflecting on the being of human being was founded on a holistic view. The Greeks profoundly grasped that the meaning, fate and destiny of being human was grounded within an even more encompassing context. So let’s reflect on the origins of that vision in the realm of Greek antiquity. Ancient Greek thought flowered in that millennium between the 7th century BCE through the 3rd century CE. During that time it shifted through three phases: the pre-Socratic, the classical, and the neo-Platonic. It is the first phase, the pre-Socratic period of the 7th through 4th centuries BCE, I want to examine here, as having provided the original and earliest roots of holistic thought. A more usual standard for scholars is to focus instead on the 'classical' period, the "golden age" of Athens – roughly 500-300 B.C.E., especially on the major philosophers: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle; supplemented by the major dramatists: Sophocles, Euripides, Aeschylus. And this approach does offer the human sciences a rich yield at the hands of skilled classicists (such as Hamilton, 1930; or Dillon, 2008). But I think that Heidegger’s (1975; Seidel, 1964) insight about the significance of earlier Greek thinking is even more crucial for our inquiry into the holistic roots of the human sciences. Heidegger found these earlier Greek philosophers had understood the human in relation to a very deep grasp of wholeness at a profound,
ontological level (Heidegger, 1992; Heidegger & Fink, 1979). So let us follow him there, to articulate this holistic vision by searching into these ancient Greek roots of western humanism.

But it is not easy to think with these ancients – to leap across millennia and all the subsequent conceptual encrustations. And, of course, any effort to slice into the past and locate a "beginning" is a pretense, and an always futile gesture, since any historical age necessarily owes the roots of its own understanding to an even earlier period. And certainly this is true of the pre-Socratic thought of ancient Greece. So, allow first a very brief excurses into its antecedent roots in the archaic age that preceded this period.

The earliest Greeks – the Hellenes – migrated between 2000-1000 BCE into an area already settled by an even older culture, the Mycenaeans, then already is disrepair, which itself was the outgrowth of the earlier Minoan civilization, centered on Crete, but extending through the Aegean islands and coastline. This preceding Minoan culture was itself the blend of the Levantine (likely Phoenician) and Egyptian – racially similar to the Phoenician and artistically resembling Egyptian. The now excavated ruins of elaborate palaces and cities indicate a previous high level of development for the Minoans, which was likely ultimately brought down by a series of devastating earthquakes and volcanic eruptions in the 12th century BCE, leaving them vulnerable to conquest, and subsequent absorption by the migrating Hellenes (Durant, 1939; Fox, 2006).

This prehistory of Greek society is important because of what the Minoans contributed to the Greek mind, for the Minoans were the last surviving matriarchal culture in the west. In Minoan culture, the status and possibilities of women were relatively more equal to that of men in both public and private life – a characteristic shared by the other two waves of holistic thought as well (in the Renaissance and in the 20th century). And so, as in earlier matriarchal cultures, the divine power – the power to create new life – was imaged as feminine. As the Hellenes conquered the Minoans, the Minoans’ feminine deities of the earth – Mother Nature – married the male sky-gods of the Greeks. A marriage that richly contributed to the emerging Greek vision of holism. For the early Greeks, the divine was not some entity residing in some remote redoubt off behind the clouds. Oh no – the gods dwelt amidst the people, right here on earth. And the voices of the gods and goddesses were heard everywhere, in the babbling of the brook, in the sound of the wind, in the swaying of the tree (von Hildebrand, 1966). The Naiads, fresh water nymphs, could be heard amidst the churning waves, just as the river gods could be heard in the rushing waters, cascading over the rocks. The Dryads, or tree goddesses, were heard whenever the wind rustled the branches. The earth itself was lushly full of divinity, just as Persephone returned to her mother from the underworld each Spring with the new blossoms. Indeed, so co-extensive was the world of mortals and the world of the divine, that the land itself was sensed as having eyes, living eyes, in flowers, trees, water. “So crowded full is the air with them”, wrote one poet of the time, “that there is no room to put in the spike of an ear of corn without touching one” (MacGregor, 1959, p. 1).

The gods “were not simply up in heaven… gloating over human suffering. Greek life was lived with a sense of their potential presence, in the clamour of storms or the stresses of sickness, in the dust-clouds of battle or on distant hillsides […] Greeks saw around them [...] gods crowding their public spaces [...] they seemed to stand beside’ them as “manifest helpers” [...] gods and goddesses [...] made love [...] to [...] mortals” (Fox, 2006, pp 49-50). Gods and goddesses lived nearby, had human forms, and consorted with human friends and rivals. To the
Greek of this archaic age, the experience of wholeness was very palpable. Heaven and earth were not yet bifurcated. As the poet Hesiod wrote in the 8th century BCE in his *Theogony*, earth and sky were originally one, and were never fully separated. Rather, the subsequent oppositions are understood as polarities, kin, familial relationships (Robinson, 1968, pp. 3-12).

This core mythical-religious vision continued to exert its influence on the stirrings of pre-Socratic philosophy in the subsequent three centuries. Its guiding insight was that not only were human and divine one whole fabric, but – even more generally – each and every thing was seen in relation to the whole. As Anaxagoras in the 5th century BCE said, “the beings we perceive as separate and distinct from one another are simply different kinds of seeds [...] Everything has a share in everything” (in Cahill, 2003, p. 148). The temple, for example, was not perceived as an independent entity, but sited in relation to the land, the hill, the sky and the sea (Hamilton, 1930, pp. 221-248; also cf. Heidegger, 1960/1971; Steiner, 1979, pp. 134-135; Scully, 1979). Individual actions are seen nested within their larger, fateful historical context. Even the transient and the eternal wrapped round one another like a Mobius loop. Mind and spirit, the manifest and the hidden, the finite and the infinite, the human and the divine, go together. Or, as Heraclitus wrote in his *Fragments*: “That which differs with itself is in agreement: harmony consists of opposing tension, like that of the bow and the lyre”. We can distinguish, but not separate, for we deal with polarities, not opposites.

To the great pre-Socratic philosophers, this vision of a unified whole guided their questioning about the nature of reality, about the nature of Being itself. They knew this interrogation was no merely analytical exercise, in which the whole is to be taken apart, an then re-assembled so as to discover what it is made of. No! They knew to approach the whole in terms that would be appropriate. Their approach was wonder and play. Their aim was to know. Their methods were oracular, visionary, lyrical, mythical, epic, dramatic.

From the start, pre-Socratic philosophy understood that Being presenced as a whole. For Thales, the first philosopher (7th century BC), there was no fundamental distinction between the immanent and the transcendent, between mortality and immortality – all things are alive, and all are full of gods, and the gods are blended with all things. For his follower, Anaximander (6th century BC), this immanent/transcendent unity was infinite and boundless. He called it the "apeiron". But it was for the next two generations, those of Heraclitus and Parmenides, that this wholeness of reality would be articulated. For them, it was clear that reality, as *Physis*, or Being, presences. Yes! For the Greeks, *Being itself presences!* And *we* are capable of knowing Being, of knowing what it means to be, of being the sheltering place for the unconcealment of Being. That is our human potential. And our human responsibility. Our destiny – and the destiny of Being itself. For with this presencing of Being, says Heraclitus, “the fateful occurs: One unifying All” (Heidegger, 1975, p. 75). The *presencing* of Being. The *worlding* of the world.

This obviously is holism in the very big sense of that word – human/Being as an ontological whole. But it is also quite a riddle to our contemporary ears. And it was not easy for the ancient Greeks either! For, ultimately, as Heidegger points out, their effort to articulate this presencing of Being, this very coming-forth-into-appearance of Being, this worlding of the world, lent itself to a basic misunderstanding, one which, over time, gradually rent that unified whole. Over the three centuries from Thales to Aristotle, the effort to articulate this presencing came more and more to take the form of a two-fold: "the presencing" itself and "that-which-presences" through such presencing. Over time, "that-which-presences" came more and more to resemble "beings" – that
is, objects, entities, separate things. And the "presencing" itself a more and more abstract notion. Plato was the last to try to hold together the creative tension of this two-fold, but his already dualistic sense of it led directly to his student Aristotle’s simple reversal of his teacher’s idealistic view of it into an empirical one. And with it, to a fateful fissuring of Being – a legacy that, in the hands of the subsequent Roman synthesis of the Hebraic and the Hellenic, became the seedling of the dualistic western tradition. As Heidegger wrote, “the lightning abruptly vanished. No one held onto its streak of light and the nearness of what it illuminated” (Heidegger, 1975, p. 78).

To summarize so far, pre-Socratic Greek philosophy was premised upon an insight about an intrinsic unity, an intrinsic unity between the timely and the timeless, between the immediate perceptual world and a world of eternal or infinite meaning, between the individual and the whole, between the timely and the timeless, the immanent and the transcendent, the human and divine, the historical and the mythological. Heidegger hoped that, by retrieving the insight underlying that worldview, we could overcome the nihilistic metaphysics of duality that bedeviled western thought ever since. So he wanted to recover those origins in order to rebuild anew the holistic understanding that he saw there.

How did that forgetting of that truth of Being take place? As he points out, the seeds for that forgetting must have already been there for that to happen. Certainly if we compare the span from Anaximander to Aristotle, we can see how during those three centuries there was a shift, so by the time we get to Aristotle we’re not talking about Being anymore; we’re talking about beings. Physis has come to be understood as nature, taken as the sum total of all beings. But once you slide one into the other, what gets forgotten is the ontological difference between Being and beings. The difference between Being and thing. For the pre-Socratics – Parmenides, Heraclitus and Anaximander – as contrasting as their ideas are about Being, they all understood that Being is not a thing, but the very presencing itself – a process, a verb, not a noun, not an entity.

Now we do have to ask: what is the relationship between Being and beings? Being is presencing. But notice how easy it is to slide into a certain metaphysic such that when you start looking for Being, what you are looking for in this presencing are the things that are present. And, we get already a weird kind of premonition of the splitting in the way that we speak about this eventing of Being as a presencing and as that-which-presences. To say, for example, "there is a chair that presences" easily leads us to implicate what Heidegger calls a "two-fold". And this sense of "two-fold" is the beginning of a later splitting apart. Because once you have a presencing and that-which-presences, you can start looking at that-which-presences and identify the types of things that they are. And, as we focus on identifying what kinds of things are present, the presencing itself becomes an additional sort of quasi-thing. Being – some mysterious ultra – or abstract thing behind or at the back of these actual things. (“It’s God” the theists say, unawarefully compounding its characterization as an entity.) Or, it just becomes too abstract and unreal to talk about it anymore. It’s the sort of embarrassment that gives philosophy a bad reputation in our thing-centered culture. And something the human sciences ought not get too close to, for fear of contamination.

But instead of slinking away, let’s go back and recoup what Heidegger got from the Greeks on this point as a way to recover from such destructive entity-metaphysics. Recall that for the Greeks Being is originally called presencing. And presencing, as far back as Anaximander, is an enduring here in unconcealment now, and for a while. In other words, a bringing forth of unconcealment in and as the present moment. But when depicting the presencing by the word

Les Collectifs du Cirp
© 2010 – Cirp (Cercle interdisciplinaire de recherches phénoménologiques)
ISBN 978-0-9866654-1-7
Being, we are already beginning to slide into trickier and nebulus terminology. The verb "to be" is a later and more abstract way of thinking. What does it mean "to be"? What do we mean when you say that that table is? That they are having an affair? What does this verb "to be" really mean here? Heidegger says that to name this upsurging presencing "Being" is both an effort to articulate the eventing and at the same time laying the seeds for that later metaphysical dualism, as "Being" becomes defined by "beings" and that which is present becomes focused upon rather than the presencing itself.

How did the original pre-Socratic understand this relation of this two-fold, of the worlding of the world, of the presencing and that which is presenced? What is the relation? Logos. Heraclitus says “listen not to me, but to the logos. It is wise to say, that according to the logos, all is one”. Listen to the logos of Being. And what do you hear? The logos of Being unconceals or manifests that all is one. In other words, that-which-presences is not just scattered random stuff. Logos – the term for that non-randomness – Heidegger (1975, p. 59) sometimes translates as "meaning", "meaningfulness", or in the original Greek sense: "gathering". The logos is a gathering, a bringing meaningfully together, of that-which-presences. As such, it is a work of recollection (Levin, 1985) – an understanding that this isn’t merely stuff; it is no-thing-ness; this is the manifestation of Being. Heidegger, in his remarkable 1966 seminar with Eugen Fink on Heraclitus (Heidegger & Fink, 1970/1979, esp. pp. 84-86) devotes considerable attention to this "coming-forth-into-appearance" using Husserl’s notion of "constitution" as a clue, trying as always, to cut between the dualistic and reductionistic notions that meaning is either to be "found out there" as an objectivity, or "created in here" as a subjectivity. Rather, this old Greek sense of logos cuts between and beneath these antimonies of realism and idealism, opening exactly the space for phenomenology and the human sciences.

Now of course the word logos has been trampled by so many different traditions that modern thought no longer understands what Heraclitus meant. For modern thought logos just means the power to put something into words. But what the Greeks meant by logos was much more powerful than merely "word". It only came to mean word by the much later Aristotelian metaphysics of Being. Remember Aristotle’s famous definition of the human is "zoon logon echon": Man is the rational animal. By Aristotle’s time, the power to logos becomes the power of rationality. The power to identify, and classify and name the things – that’s what he saw logos as.

But for Heidegger "zoon logon echon" means something very different than just rationally classifying the categories of things. With Heidegger, we could re-translate Aristotle’s phrase as: Man is the being that has the power to logos (Murray, 1975). Logos, Heidegger (1975, p. 76) tells us is our capacity to “breathe things into existence” – “the laying that gathers […] that which gathers all present beings into presencing and lets them lie before us”. To let Being be. Heidegger develops this translation of logos from the double sense of the Greek verb form legein which means both "to speak" and "to lay" – “in the sense of bringing things to lie together, collecting them, gathering them together” (Sallis, 1975, p. 7). It is both a "planting" (as a donating) and a harvesting (as an accepting). Thus, when you let Being be, it is a way of "being with" not a "challenging forth". Phyis as Poesis – which I think is not a bad mantra for the human sciences.

What these Greeks understood is that human being is the place of the unconcealment of Being. As Heidegger was fond of putting it, we are the anwesen – the lighted clearing – of Being. In that way of unconcealing, we are gathering the eventing of Being itself. And, human being
then is that which gathers all present beings into presencing and lets them lie before us […] in the presencing. This is the human responsibility as human being.

A very shorthand answer to the question "what are we here for?": to let Being be. If you’re looking at this answer from a dualistic metaphysics, you’d naturally react: "what hubris to think, you let Being be! How full of pride the human is". But that’s only if you hypostatize Being as if it were some quasi-thing – over there, like a trained monkey, and you’re in charge of it. But that leaves you with a mere pile of entities. You can’t find Being in that. When entities are taken to be the hallmark and basis of reality, then meaning is squeezed out. Not an object, it becomes a mere epiphenomenal, something added "merely subjectively" on top of the "objective" reality of things. But therein lies the rub – for once meaning is stripped away, it cannot then be subsequently added back since, as Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962) long ago showed, you cannot derive intrinsic meaning from the extrinsic meaninglessness.

But that’s not what the Greeks sought. That kind of degeneration, when the metaphysics of things has come to see beings as entities, is not at all the relation of logos to physis that the Greeks understood. How do we let Being be? How does human being manifest the truth, the unconcealment, of Being? If our destiny, if our responsibility is to let Being be, how do we fulfill this charge? How are we to be the place of the presencing of Being? How do we let Being be? Such a task refers to a deeper, holistic relationship, an anterior or preconceptual or non-mediated relationship to Being, that lets Being be, and that’s what Heidegger means by truth as aletheia – truth as the unconcealment of Being. Truth in this sense does not equal a correspondence between proposition A and object B, whereby A is true if it corresponds to thing B. On the contrary, to be the place of the unconcealment of Being – to let Being be – isn’t to make statements about the objectivity of things. How then do we let Being be?

The Greek sense is that human existence is open to Being-as-a-whole. The here and now of my life – of living in this place at this time – is inter-penetrated by the whole of Being. Oedipus was not just a story of some guy that lived 2,400 years ago. It’s both mythological and psychological. It’s both personal and general. The plays of Euripides and Sophocles, the poetry of Aeschylus and the fables of Aesop, the love poems of Sappho, these were not just about historical characters, they were about your life. In other words, the timeless and the timely, the infinite and the finite, together form a synthesis, an intrinsic unity. The immediately given perceptual and the timeless meanings are manifesting in our everyday lives here and now – here and now. Being presences whenever we bring awareness. Right here. Right now. The present moment is saturated with Being. The everyday is fraught with meaning.

This very deep point can be well illustrated with a story about Heraclitus that Heidegger (1947/1977) is fond of repeating. When Heraclitus was old, and renowned throughout Greece as a celebrated thinker, a group of foreigners came to see him. Having arrived at his house, they found him stooped over his stove, warming himself. At this disappointing spectacle of a shivering old man, the visitors lost their interest in coming any closer and indeed are on the verge of leaving, when Heraclitus encouraged them to enter by saying “here too the gods are present”.

Or, to use another idiom, as Jesus replied to his apostles’ question of where to find the kingdom of heaven, “split the wood, and I am there. Lift the rock, and I am there”. But, as he added, it is “only when you make the two as one, the above as the below, that you enter the kingdom” (cf., Pagels, 1979; Pagels & King, 2007). Or, as the Tibetan Buddhists are long fond of noting, the jewel of enlightenment, nirvana, is right here, at our feet, in these very weeds.
That’s the holistic vision I’ve sought to recover from the Greeks. And that’s why, as Tarnas (1991, p. 72) wrote, “for the Greeks it’s as if heaven and earth have not yet been fully rent asunder”. Rather, in the wholeness of the un-bifurcated ever-present moment, there is a freshness “as of the world lit by a kind of six o’clock in the morning light and the due imperishably on the grass” (Tarnas, 1991, p. 72). It is this sense of unvarnished wonder and awe in the face of the actually lived world that Husserl summoned in his followers with his injunction to "return to the things themselves".

**The Second Wave. Renaissance Humanitas : The Irreducibility of Human Experience**

But as the classical worldview was swept away, replaced eventually by a medieval worldview, this heritage was lost, though not forever. Rather, it lay dormant beneath a medieval cosmology that very sharply divided earth from heaven, this life and the next, the temporal from the eternal, the true faith from the damned. Wholeness waited for a re-awakening, a renaissance. This occurred in Italy in the late 14th century, and spread through Europe, deeply infusing the western tradition, for a while, with a re-invigorated sense of humanism. And, once again, this sense of humanism had a taproot in a profoundly holistic vision.

Many different influences sparked this renaissance, from the Bubonic Plague to the new mobility of money derived from commerce rather than land. But most of all it was the impact of ancient Greek texts that inspired a new generation of thinkers and artists. The artifacts and ruins of Greco-Roman antiquity had lain buried for a millennium in virtually every farmer’s field in Italy, but with the discovery and faithful translation of original texts by a small band of humanist thinkers, a renewal in our conception of ourselves was launched: an enlarged conception that re-integrated the “voiceless zone” (Hale, 1991) of that previous medieval era. These new voices included: women (who could now be scholars, orators, poets, politicians); "the heart" (in contrast to the abstract Scholastic tradition whose mental gymnastics had nothing to contribute to real life); and "the pagan" (those pre- and non-Christian scholars whose texts now came into prominence once more.

A new vision was emerging: the world itself came to be seen, not as the Devil’s playground of temptation and sin, but as enchanted. Likewise, the human was understood not as a hopelessly befouled creature, but a worthy emanation of the divine. Human and world, possessing a divine spark (Tarnas, 1991). Perhaps the clearest example of Renaissance humanism was Pico della Mirandola’s *Oration on the Dignity of Man*. He argued that the greatness of human being is our freedom to choose our own way, and that can we attain this ambition responsibly through knowledge and love. He then grounded this claim in scriptural sources from the New Testament, then from the Old, and then from pre-Christian sources, Greek and Asian. His *tour de force*, synthesizing the worlds of Christianity and antiquity set a clear tone for the holistic aims of the Renaissance.

This mending of the rupture between the Christian worldview of medieval Europe with the "pagan" world of antiquity brought with it an enlarged vision of the organic, indeed seamless, intertwining of the previous dualism of human/divine. The work of Marsilio Ficino may stand as a particularly shining example. His *Theologia Platonica de immortalitate animorum* (1469-1474/2006), a multi-volume study of Plato and the key neo-Platonists, especially Plotinus, was an effort to show that in fact that Platonism was the intellectual root of Christianity, but of a
particularly non-dual vision of spirituality (c.f., Kristeller, 1964; Mahoney, 2006). This holistic vision was rooted in the concrete, natural order of actual life. The interrelatedness of human/divine Ficino expressed most poignantly in his understanding of the human soul:

This is the greatest of all miracles in nature. All other things beneath god are always one single being, but the Soul is all things together. It possesses the images of the divine things on which it depends itself and the concepts and originals of the lower things [...] since it is the center of all things, it has the forces of all. Hence it passes into all things. And since it is the true connection of all things, it goes to the one without leaving the others. It goes into an individual thing and always deals withal. Therefore it may be rightly called the center of nature, the middle term of all things, the series of the world, the face of all, the bond and the juncture of the universe. (as translated in Kristeller, 1964, p. 120)

What medieval theology had rent asunder, Renaissance scholars, guided by a spirit of "determined decompartmentalization" (Tarnas, 1991, p. 230), were now putting back together: the contrapuntal, the paradoxical harmonized within an enlarged whole. Painting lends us many fine examples. Early on, Botticelli’s two most famous paintings: The Birth of Venus and Primavera brought together the Christian and pagan. But perhaps Raphael’s School of Athens will best exemplify this point. Commissioned by the Pope, and painted as a fresco on the wall of the Stanza della Signatora, the room in the Vatican where the pope signed key documents, it faced on the opposite wall his fresco Disputa del Sacramento – a vision of the glories of the Christian church through an assemblage of dozens of its historical and Biblical figures. To face this august religious assembly, Raphael now chose to paint "the glorification of philosophy":

[...] half a hundred figures summing up rich centuries of Greek thought, and all gathered in an immortal moment under the coffered arch of a massive pagan portico... Plato... Aristotle... Socrates... Pythagoras... Heraclitus... Diogenes... Archimedes... Ptolemy... Zoroaster... all in all, such a parliament of wisdom had never been painted, perhaps never been conceived before. And not a word about heresy, no philosophers burned at the stake here; here, under the protection of a Pope too great to fuss about the difference between one error and another, the young Christian has suddenly brought all these pagans together, painted them in their own character and with remarkable understanding and sympathy, and placed them where the theologians could see them and exchange fallibilities, and where the Pope, between one document and another, might contemplate the co-operative process and creation of human thought. This painting and the Disputa are the ideal of the Renaissance – pagan antiquity and Christian faith living together in one room and in harmony. (Durant, 1953, p. 459-460)

But, in contrast to the theological, the humanistic viewpoint does not have a similarly univocal legitimating authority; surely not only a weakness but also its source of innovativeness and range of topics (Bullock, 1985) – namely the whole human experience. As the great French Renaissance scholar, Montaigne, pointed out, everything we know comes through our experience
and so the key is to be fully human, to cultivate our actual experience. Modernism and postmodernism have both incorrectly identified the Renaissance with the maxim that "man is the measure of all things" (e.g., by Barnes, 1937). But that maxim (actually derived from Protagoras) is a decisive mis-characterization of the true Renaissance project: that the proper study of mankind is man (from a poem by Alexander Pope in 1870 and linked to the Renaissance by many, e.g., Durant, 1953).

Emphasizing this primacy of experience, the humanists of the Renaissance redirected the focus from the abstract metaphysical questions of medieval scholasticism to the practical concerns of actual life: "the art of living". As Petrarch, an early Renaissance humanist, argued, people have a right to concern themselves with their actual human life, to enjoy an open delight in the here and now, and to augment its beauties, and to seek fulfillment in it (Barzun, 2000; Durant, 1953). Renaissance writers provided books of advice on good living, such as Marsilio Ficino, who’s contribution, *Three Books on Life* (1489), recommended sleeping well, not repressing sexual desire, and laughing and being merry as often as one can. Other notable treatises on how to live well included Francesco Barbaro’s *Concerning Marriage* (1414), Leon Battista Alberti’s *On the Family* (1433), Matteo Palmieri’s *On Civil Life* (1435-1438), and especially Lorenzo Valla’s (1433) *On Pleasure*. (c.f., Nauert, 1995). Even minor Renaissance scholars, such as Bartolommeo della Fonte, whose orations in the 1480s vigorously sought to defend the value of humanism in all its branches, from rhetoric to philosophy, did so in terms of its contributions to the concord of the individual and civic life of the community – to the arts of civilization (c.f., Trinkaus, 1960). Summing up this impact, Stinger (1988, pp. 176-177) demonstrated that humanism “contributed answers to moral issues Florentines confronted in the conduct of their daily lives, and it inspired the exercise of creative intelligence in the pursuit of human virtue and fulfillment”. Renaissance humanists were “urbane and lusty spirits […] who feed and live on this legacy of mental freedom, esthetic sensitivity, embracing its joys of sense, mind, and soul; and hearing ever in their hearts, amid hymns of hate and above the cannon’s roar” (Durant, 1952, p. 728). An all-embracing ode to Joy.

They brought philosophy back down to earth by re-introducing the old Greek question of how to live a good life. But what, exactly, does it mean to "live a good life"? For the humanists of the Renaissance, this question involved much more than merely frivolity or good-natured conduct. They understood that people are actively embedded within a world, understood as inclusive of a social world, civil world and a natural world. Their answer to this question was that one lives a good life by an active involvement in the world and that men and women, through education (as *paidagogy* – the old Greek sense of education), could sharpen and use their curiosity, their imagination, their will, their creative and free power to transform themselves and to affect their fate and aspire to the highest excellence.

The key to the good life was to develop one’s capacity for awareness. But awareness of what? Ultimately, of one’s self and of one’s situation, one’s context, one’s relation to the world. To wake up, to become aware, for them, meant understanding these world-relations. Regarding one’s self, the depth of one’s own engaged, worlded consciousness became a key discovery.

In the literary arts, many key examples abound. From Boccaccio’s *Decameron* to Machiavelli’s *Mandragola*, to More’s *Utopia*, Renaissance fiction displayed the rough and tumble of lives lived within the contexts of their worlds, with the all-too-human dilemmas of relationships of love and loss, played out within the even wider contexts of plague and political
intrigue. Nonfiction literature likewise took very seriously the importance of contextual analysis. For example, Colet’s 1496 lectures at Oxford on St. Paul’s Epistles, took them in their original Greek, and located Paul clearly in his own time and place, and so “enabled Paul to speak almost as directly to the students at Oxford as he had spoken to the Corinthians” (Hale, 1994, p. 196). Likewise, Erasmus’s analysis of St. Jerome’s letters portrayed Jerome as a human being, alive in his own place and time, stripped of all the confabulating conventions that had stripped Jerome of his historical credibility (Rice, 1988, pp. 19-20). Rabil (1988b, p. 170) notes that the Renaissance civic humanists “introduced a historical consciousness that has ever since characterized western thinking”. They replaced notions of “immobility, monarchy, authority, eternity, hierarchy” that had dominated political writing with ideas of “progress, patriotism, equality, liberty, and utopia”. Furthermore, they understood that the role of fate in human destiny can be mitigated by one’s own wise and skillful action.

The visual arts likewise offer many excellent examples. A telling implication of this insight came through the development of the new use of perspective in Renaissance art. Alberti systematized the theory of perspective which Brunelleschi had begun. Perhaps the best illustration of the use of perspective can be seen in the bronze cast panels on the doors on the Baptistery of San Giovanni in Florence, sculpted by Lorenzo Ghiberti. These magnificent panels offered a revolutionary new vision, in two respects. First, through the use of innovative techniques in gradation of relief, a sense of perspective is achieved, so that the standpoint of the beholder is implicated, thus achieving in bronze casting the effect newly developed by Renaissance painters. Furthermore, what the viewer is invited to stand in relation to is also unprecedented. In contrast to previous pictorial relief work, in which solitary figures were immersed in a hazy and vague atmosphere, an undefined and indefinable space, these panels portrayed not merely isolated figures, but astonishingly complete situations, including their background. The narrative complexity of each panel was far more comprehensive and coherent than anything previously envisaged. In these ways, Renaissance art disclosed the humanistic conception of people existing within the world of their involvements, rather than as detached figures lacking any intrinsic relatedness.

This same grasp of our human situatedness was also being utilized in architecture. Palladio’s buildings are still masterpieces for their excellence in this regard, such as his La Rotonda and the Villa Poiana near Vincenza, and the Basilica in Venice. By placing the person in the world, humans acquire an awareness not only of the world, but of themselves as participants in this world. This holistic grasp of self, this conscious self-awareness is the basis for the Renaissance call to fulfill the potential of human being. Hickey calls Palladio’s house “a house undivided” and credits Palladio with “the science of happiness”. He adds:

An aura of sweet self-consciousness […] less critical or ironic than joyfully self-aware […] rescues his buildings from the vice of pretension by the simple stratagem of not pretending […] Palladio is never impersonating classical architecture, he is performing it […] the real benison of Palladio’s performances is the good-natured permission they grant us to take the stage he has provided and perform with commensurate self-conscious elegance. (Hickey, 2003, p. 69)
So, human experience is accorded its full due as awakened consciousness being-in-the-world, and is accorded its due as the proper study mankind, a study that synthesizes its philosophical interest in the profound meaning of being human with the practical affairs of everyday life. This Renaissance impetus may be best exemplified by Leonardo da Vinci’s masterpiece: the Mona Lisa. Here is Durant’s (1953, p. 212) description of da Vinci’s “engaging merger of painting and philosophy”:

This, then, is the face that launched a thousand reams upon a sea of ink. Not an unusually lovely face [...] It is her smile that has made her fortune through the centuries [...] What is she smiling at? The efforts of the musicians to entertain her? The leisurely diligence of an artist who paints her through a thousand days and never makes an end? Or is it not just Mona Lisa smiling, but woman, all women, saying to all men: “Poor impassioned lovers! A Nature blindly commanding continuance burns your nerves with an absurd hunger for our flesh, softens your brains with a quite unreasonable idealization of our charms, lifts you to lyrics that subside with consummation – all that you may be precipitated into parentage! Could anything be more ridiculous? But we too are snared; we women pay a heavier price than you for your infatuation. And yet, sweet fools, it is pleasant to be desired, and life is redeemed when we are loved.”

“Sweet fools”, she smiled. Yes, when we embrace the whole of Being, all so very human foibles are redeemed, enfolded within and so manifesting the whole. As with the Greek spirit of "play", so too the Renaissance placed its value on "all consuming laughter". But, as Kundera (1996) has pointed out, humor, play, laughter signify much more than mere mirth. Something deeper is being brought forth – a relation to the world in which dogmas are relativized, presuppositions called into question and self-importance deflated by implying alternative possibilities. “Laughter is the instrument of detachment; it breaks down the spiritual rigidity that seeks to clutch at its values as if they were so many coins hoarded by a miser” (Barrett, 1972, p. 204).

**Interregnum. The Ascendancy of the Scientific Attitude : Excluded Knowledge**

This Renaissance spirit spread north from Italy, through much of Europe. France, Holland, England were particularly imbued. We can recall Erasmus’ quirky and brave *In Praise of Folly*, a mischievous satire against orthodoxy. Or Rembrandt’s work, for example, his magnificent painting *The Night Watch*, to gather an illustration of the power of seeing people within their engaged world-relations. In contrast to previous group portraiture, wherein the people merely stood still, Rembrandt’s painting captures them in the moment, in action, moving about the nighttime streets of the town, on duty. The effect was a startling revolution in vision.

But the Renaissance did not survive the violent reactions to the schism within Christendom that followed the Protestant Reformation. When a religious fanatic assassinated Henry IV, the humanist ruler of France who sought to institutionalize multi-denominational tolerance, the hopes of the Renaissance were eclipsed by a continent-wide plunge into sectarian religious warfare – the infamous Thirty Years War. It became a generation-long slaughter, ultimately decimating
central Europe as effectively as had the Black Death of the plague. Positions hardened with the battle lines, orthodoxy was re-established, and the deviant were driven into silence. Sin and guilt became paramount once again, along with the compulsory darkened confessional box. Women covered themselves, and chastity once more replaced ecstasy. But the slaughter went on, and on, and on, as the Catholic and Protestant sides were relatively evenly matched. And so millions were massacred, in the name of religion. It finally ended when, under the cynical tutelage of Cardinal Richelieu, Catholic France switched sides, and fought with the Protestant faction to defeat the Catholic empire of Austria, to attain the pre-eminence of the major land power on the continent. All in the name of religion.

From that catastrophe, intellectuals recoiled in horror at the corruption of the authority of religion, and rushed to put together another basis for legitimation, an authority that could not be so cynically corrupted. Science, of course, was their alternative. And the next two generations, from Descartes to Newton, built an edifice of certainty based on Science as the legitimating authority (Toulmin, 1992).

But this Science derived its authority from an epistemology of dualism and a metaphysics of mechanistic causality. Newton’s science of nature was not about the world of human experience but only of "brute" matter (Burtt, 1932). This approach, promising the desperately sought for certainty, was quickly adopted not only for physics, but also for all the human studies. For example, the British Empiricists saw the mind as likewise governed by "laws of association" and in the next century the search was on for the "elements" of consciousness, analogous to the periodic table of elements from chemistry. Modernity dawned, not as a continuation of the Renaissance (as is sometimes mistakenly assumed by postmodernists, e.g., Kvale, 1990), but as its repudiation.

The Third Wave. Contemporary Humanistic Psychology in the United States

For the next three hundred years this view of science dominated inquiry into human experience as well as into nature. And when, in the late nineteenth century, the various social sciences established themselves independently from philosophy, they very self-consciously pledged their allegiance to this standard of science. Indeed, as the recently converted so often do, they strove even to out-orthodox the orthodox. Hence the long sterility of modern psychology, locked into a dualistic conception of its own subject matter. But its long search for the "laws of mental life" proved barren, epitomized by the reign of behaviorism through the mid-twentieth century.

Finally, as part of a larger shift in the Zeitgeist, a reform movement emerged within European and American psychology. Inspired by previous developments in existential-phenomenological philosophy begun by Edmund Husserl (1934/1965, 1954/1970, 1911/1981), psychologists on both sides of the Atlantic began to revision the basic presuppositions of elementism and mechanism, and a new wave of broadly humanistic thought emerged. Key figures steeped in the phenomenological tradition included Ludwig Binswanger, Medard Boss, R. D. Laing and J. H. van den Berg from Europe, and, in the United States, Rollo May and Amedeo Giorgi. This was a very loosely emerging movement, with no sole leader, so there were many different lines of development (Aanstoos, 1987), eventually including an indigenously American humanistic movement, pioneered especially by Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow and a
transpersonal movement pioneered by Ken Wilber. It quickly grew and became a very
multifarious movement, but guiding and pervading it was a sense of valuing the human as a
whole. One of its early and most prominent advocates, Rollo May, even characterized it in 1958
as “the endeavor to understand man by cutting below the cleavage between subject and object
which has bedeviled Western thought and science since shortly after the Renaissance” (May et al.,
1958, p. 11). This depiction was entirely in line with the thrust of phenomenological philosophy,
of which Merleau-Ponty wrote: “the chief gain from phenomenology is to have united extreme
subjectivism and extreme objectivism in the notion of the world” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1962, p.
xix). Likewise, Simone de Beauvoir (1946, p. 363) summarized this core insight with this
extraordinary potency and succinctness:

One of the immense merits of phenomenology consists in having restored to man the
right to an authentic existence by abolishing the opposition between subject and
object. It is impossible to define an object while cutting it off from the subject by
which and for which it is an object. And the subject reveals itself only through the
objects in which it engages itself. Such an affirmation merely makes explicit the
content of our naïve experience. But it is rich in consequences... Hence it is of
extreme importance to establish solidly and to restore to man that child-like audacity
which his years of verbal docility have deprived him: the audacity to say “Here I am”.

The other chapters in this volume provide an exemplary variety of concrete illustrations that
demonstrate this holistic taproot contributed by phenomenology to contemporary psychology.
Rather than adding further to that, I would now like to emphasize how relevant and timely holism
is as we move toward the future.

The Impact of a Holistic Vision

This claim of timeliness can be gleaned by considering some of the prospective benefits from
a holistic vision. There are many areas in which we could demonstrate that claim, but here I can
focus only briefly on four urgent crises in which this prospect is particularly evident: the medical,
the social, the spiritual and the ecological.

Holistic Health

Despite enormous and ever-increasing expenditures, health care in this country is in a state of
seemingly intractable crises. Immunities weaken while bacteria become resistant, fitness declines
while obesity increases, cancer is epidemic while toxins proliferate, and the population consumes
ever larger amounts of Prozac in the face of an epidemic of depression. And worldwide “rising
incidence and prevalence of psychosomatic diseases, mental disorders, anxiety and neurosis”
(Lambo, 2000, p. 114). The old "medical model" seems unable to comprehend or respond
adequately to the new challenges we face, precisely because they do not conform to the old,
mechanistic view of the body and disease.

In the past twenty years, however, humanistic psychologists such as Achterberg (1985),
Borysenko (1988) and Criswell (2001) have been developing a "holistic" approach, in the sense of
a "mind/body" holism. Such developments have already demonstrated many significant
concrete results, such as the healing potential of imagery, counseling, meditation and yoga on life-threatening illnesses, from heart disease to cancer. The next step is to comprehend the even larger whole: beyond one’s own mind/body is the wider relationship of person/world, most clearly manifest through the immune system, and approached through the emerging field of psycho-neuro-immunology. And the powerful impact of an even more comprehensively holistic vision on health is only now beginning, as we start to study nonlocal and transpersonal impacts on healing (Dossey, 1999).

Globalization and Its Discontents

As technology weaves its world wide web, the planet has become smaller than ever. And boundaries that once stood as impediments are now so permeable that popular commentaries now use the metaphor that "the world is flat" (e.g., Friedman, 2006). Transnational corporations now exercise tremendous power everywhere, as capital has become so incredibly mobile that a country’s currency can be withered overnight. The resultant acceleration in the pace of economic development has disrupted indigenous economies and cultures, forcing upon them within a single generation the changes western cultures took the previous three centuries to transition.

The serious crises generated by rapid globalization have accrued because thinking and planning on this issue has tended to be too short term and too fragmented. The contextual inter-relationships woven within an indigenous culture (such as a local farming techniques for this particular region, rather than a generic chemical-based agribusiness) have been ignored or simply over-looked (Diaz-LaPlante, 2007; Norbert-Hodge, 1991), leading to increasing divisiveness between young/old, urban/rural, and different ethnic and religious groups. These differences are not endemic, but have been exacerbated by economic tumult. It is the humanistic vision of holism that can redress this neglected awareness, and thus humanize this wrenching shift of globalization.

A Spiritual Emergence

Mainline religions become less meaningful and people drift increasingly toward fundamentalism, or substance abuse, driven by a spiritual hunger the modern era knows no way of satisfying. The loss of meaning, or anomie, has been the haunting side effect of the most materialistically abundant century in the history of humanity. Our culture now pays entertainers far more than thinkers, as distraction and escape become ever more paramount goals.

As the distinction between religion and spirituality is increasingly recognized by humanistic psychologists (e.g., Elkins, 1998), the value of a holistic vision of spirituality is now becoming more evident. Contemplative, meditative and mindfulness traditions are now being deployed in many arenas, from chronic pain (Kabat-Zinn, 1994) to psychotherapy (Epstein, 1995; Welwood, 2000) to living everyday life more fully (Kornfield, 2000; Walsh, 1999), while other scholars are striving to build a psychology fully integrative with spirituality (e.g., Wilber, 1995, 2000). Questions of meaning and the ultimate purpose of one’s life simply cannot be drowned out by television and antidepressants. They must eventually be addressed by a holistic psychology uniquely positioned to serve the spiritual well-being of the next generation.
The Ecological Crisis

Daily we are now confronted by the evidence of looming ecological disasters: the polar ice caps are melting as we live through the hottest decade on record, penguins are washing up on shores a thousand miles off their traditional migratory path as even the ocean currents have been shifted to that extent, the accumulation of greenhouse gases has changed global climate and weather extremes become ever more commonplace, the air is poisonous smog, the rain is acid, the ozone is depleted, the land is deforested, the groundwater contaminated, and oxygen endangered, deserts are growing while topsoil is lost, and mountains of nuclear waste will remain radioactive until the sun burns out. No longer the purview merely of a counter-cultural perspective, the recognition of a serious ecological crisis has been widely acknowledged even by the most mainstream scholars (e.g., Gore, 2006; Friedman, 2008).

A "deep ecology" movement (e.g., Naess, 1986) has recently been coalescing around the basic vision of radical inter-connectedness. The utter compatibility of this movement with humanistic psychology’s holistic vision is just now being comprehended, and an emerging subfield of ecopsychology is being born. Metzner (1999, p. 2) urges psychology to undergo a “fundamental […] revision that would take the ecological context of human life into account”. Pilisuk & Joy (2001, p. 107) note that ecological and humanistic thought converge in challenging the basic assumption of a mechanistic worldview. Roberts (1998) and Roszak, Gomes & Kanner (1995) provide that subfield with a variety of practices aimed at restoring the earth and healing the mind.

Conclusion

As can be seen from the peaks of these waves of holistic thinking in the west, this vision has a long history – co-terminus actually with the very history of western thought. In this light, we can see it is not merely a one-generation reform movement that will pass away with the ending of its late 20th century incarnation. Rather, though it may only peak at timely occasions, holism provides psychology with an enduring taproot, a vision of the meaning of being human more than twenty-five centuries in the making. As the heirs to this legacy, contemporary psychology has the opportunity, and responsibility, of bringing this vision of wholeness to fulfillment – precisely when it is most needed.

References

Aanstoos, C.M. (2009b). Foundations of humanistic psychology. Lectures presented at University of West Georgia, Fall.

Les Collectifs du Cirp
© 2010 – Cirp (Cercle interdisciplinaire de recherches phénoménologiques)
ISBN 978-0-9866654-1-7


Les Collectifs du Cirp
© 2010 – Cirp (Cercle interdisciplinaire de recherches phénoménologiques)
ISBN 978-0-9866654-1-7


Les Collectifs du Cirp
© 2010 – Cirp (Cercle interdisciplinaire de recherches phénoménologiques)
ISBN 978-0-9866654-1-7

Notes

1. Of course I am aware that a variety of non-Western cultures also have a history of holistic thinking: native American (especially Amazonian), Arctic (especially Inuit, Suomi, and Siberian), Polynesian (especially Maori and Australian aboriginal), African (especially Fong, Kung and Xhosa), and south and east Asian (especially Vedic, Buddhist and Taoist). But, since the contemporary human science approach arose mainly from western roots that have only recently been deeply impacted by these nonwestern sources, I wanted to discover our own indigenous sources of holism.