

Jungian psychology and the human sciences

International Association for Jungian Studies 2020 conference
to be held jointly with Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, USA
April 2-5, 2020

Notes from the IAJS Conference Chair, Roger Brooke, also Professor of Psychology at Duquesne University.

Jung was in some ways eclectic; he wrote from many perspectives, including medical, psychoanalytic, social anthropological, historical, phenomenological, poetic, alchemical, and mythic, to name the main ones. Jung called himself an empiricist, but in a way that was more European than Anglo-American; he also called himself a phenomenologist and rightly described his method as hermeneutic. Even his experimental studies into complexes involved an interpretation of physiological findings in terms of meaning, language, and personal history.

Some people have an interest in Jungian psychology but are unsure about the human science field. The terms are all loosely described; nobody has copyright. But here are some notes that might help you understand the broad terms of reference for the conference.

The term human sciences originates from the distinction made by Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) between the natural sciences (*naturwissenschaften*) and the human sciences (*geisteswissenschaften*). The natural sciences include physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy, anatomy, physiology, etc. The human sciences had not yet developed into their various disciplines, but would include psychology. Psychology as a human science was founded on assumptions and methods that are consistent with the ways in which we understand ourselves and each other. The differences can broadly be tabulated as follows:

<u>Natural sciences</u>	<u>Human sciences</u>
Quantitative research methods	Qualitative research methods
Experimentation	Description and interpretation
Measurement and statistics	Meaning and significance
Analysis of variables	Exploration of horizons of meaning
Assume determined reactions	Assume subjects in dialogue with a world
Causal relations (assumed)	Historical contexts dialectically engaged
Scientific explanation	Human understanding
Ideal is an independent observer	Reality of the participant observer is embraced
Assumes a philosophy of science and method	Philosophically and historically self-questioning

Both natural and human science are sciences in the sense that: 1. They both have teachable, replicable methods of data collection and analysis, 2. They both require evidence and have rules for disconfirmation, 3. They both involve the publication of research in peer reviewed journals and books, open to criticism from others. There is interesting and careful scholarship regarding each of these points (eg. what are evidence and validity?) but the general terms of reference have tended to remain, despite significant blurring of the distinctions in some regards. For instance, Ricoeur famously argued that psychoanalytic human “understandings” have explanatory power.

The human sciences are closer to philosophy and the humanities, especially in their reading and interpretation of texts, but they are not the same thing. Jung’s psychology spans both natural scientific

and human scientific approaches, but he is best situated in the human science field. His interpretation of bodily phenomena in terms of psyche, his commitments to phenomenology and hermeneutics, his “comparative” method of description and analysis, his preoccupation with meaning, and his discussion of archetypes and complexes as centers of meaning approached interpretatively—all these situate Jung’s psychology in the human sciences.

At Duquesne University we typically describe human science psychology as a field in which there are five broad traditions, all of which meet the criteria of the right-hand column above:

1. Psychoanalysis (Freud and Jung and their descendants)
2. Phenomenology, including existential phenomenology, and hermeneutics (Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Binswanger, Boss, Rollo May, and others and their descendants). The kind of textual discourse analysis that Susan Rowland has developed belongs here, since it involves (feminist) interpretations of Jung’s texts (hermeneutics).
3. Humanistic and transpersonal psychology (the tradition of Rogers and Maslow, but now would include ecopsychology, since the thought of David Abram has had a big impact).
4. The various critical traditions, which explore the outer horizons in which our lives are constituted: critical theory, feminism, methodological deconstruction, social construction, and so on (de Beauvoir, Foucault, Derrida, Irigaray—and many of our own contemporary Jungian colleagues in this tradition.)

An assumption underlying human science psychology is that the human being is not a neurochemical cocktail wrapped in skin, with an electrochemical buzzing in the head that magically becomes psychological life. As Jung understood, the psyche is not inside us, but, rather, we are inside it, inside psychological life, in the same way as we are inside language and culture. The human being is a being-in-the-world, and psychological life is unintelligible apart from this network of relationships we call a world. This world is the gathering of our biosphere, others, the myths, images, and language of our cultural and familial history; it is the context in which we ourselves are constituted. What we call a world is not a set of external “variables” having an effect on us; it is the very stuff of our identities and psychological lives. As human scientists we like to push this even further, arguing that even our physiology is ultimately intelligible only in terms of its world-relatedness. It is obviously factually true that we can see because we have eyes, but ontologically it is truer to say that we have eyes because we are seeing beings.

The humanities in general have not really been incorporated in any systematic way into the human sciences, but they belong here as part of the conversation.

On the other hand, developments in the natural sciences, including evolutionary psychology and psychobiology, neuroscience, and attachment theory, have been in creative dialogue with the human sciences, especially with psychoanalysis and phenomenology. There are journals devoted to these conversations. The aim is not to reduce human science insights to neurology and brain activity but to show how what we see in brain activity requires psychoanalysis and phenomenology as human sciences for its interpretation. I hope that some of the recent discussions on the IAJS listserv will make their way into the conference. This was creative, genuinely integrative work.

There has been a long-standing interest in the possibility of using Hegel to reinterpret Jung. Some of us are hoping that the challenges in this regard might get some clarity and development. In a more general way, human scientists are especially sensitive to the philosophical and historical assumptions and conditions within the work we do, so submissions on Jungian psychology’s assumptions and conceptual investigations into Jungian concepts are encouraged.

I hope that some folks from the Jung-Lacan dialogues in Cambridge (and elsewhere) might be enticed to submit papers and to come to Duquesne. There is a strong interest in Lacan as well as in Jung in our

Psychology Department, and our graduate students could have their minds set on fire with exciting papers and presentations.

One of the assumptions that we have accepted in the human sciences is that what we see or understand always reflects a way of seeing or understanding. This perspective does not negate natural science's rules of evidence (eg. Popper) but it invites us to enquire into the human perspectives (historical, cultural, perhaps political and economic) that condition the natural scientific assumptions and methods in the first place. For example, my pet peeve at the moment is the psychiatric construction of the wounds of war as a psychiatric issue instead of approaching it as a social, moral, and spiritual one, as it has always been in traditional warrior societies. So instead of simply testing hypotheses about which "treatment" is most "effective," in "symptom relief," the human scientist would want to question and deconstruct the underlying psychiatric assumption that trauma is to be found and treated behind the eyes and between the ears—the assumption underlying its supposedly empirical methods. This is especially relevant since the pharmaceutical industries are spending billions of dollars as neocolonialists persuading local cultures in Africa, Vietnam, and elsewhere that their distressed members are suffering from undiagnosed mental illnesses and require medication (not ritual healing). The human scientist in such cases is interested in understanding the horizons of meaning and significance of, say, war, within their own worlds, and, if anything, learning from them about our own deeply human needs for healing, social integration, and transformation. We are also interested in exposing what is a massive scam.

These notes on the human sciences do not imply that we are looking only for papers that conceptually bridge the Jungian and human science fields. As already mentioned, Jungian psychology is already a human science.

I and the IAJS Board and the Department of Psychology at Duquesne University look forward to hearing from you and, we hope, to meeting you next year.

Sincerely,

Roger Brooke, Ph.D.
Duquesne University

PS I have been asked already for an introductory book on psychology as a human science. The best introductory book I know was written by my Departmental Chair for our students. Lots of pictures too. He is a wonderful scholar so the book is rich in history, mythology, pictures, and so on, with fascinating chapters on the meanings of science in First Nation societies, the renaissance, William James, Wilhelm Wundt, Freud, the existentialists and humanistic psychologists, and so on: just a delightful read. Laubscher, L. (2016). *An introduction to psychology as a human science*. Cognella Academic Publishing.

An introductory paper on the common themes underlying human science psychology is my introductory chapter, Some common themes in psychology as a human science. It can be found here:

<https://rogerbrookephd.com/papers-and-presentations/>