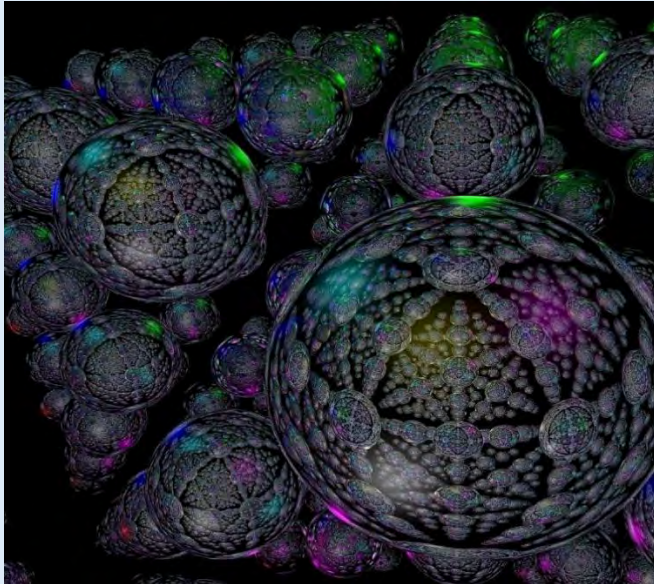


Society for Humanistic Psychology Newsletter

Summer 2026

News, Views, and Announcements from APA Division 32



In this issue...

Shannon Elgert, Lydia Stetson, and Lauren Mizock explore the cultural debate about and contemporary adaptations of Maslow's work.

Tobi Goering reflects on the relevance of existential-humanistic therapy for addressing moral injury when working with traumatized veterans.

D. W. Darling urges greater exposure to and practical applications of the existential-humanistic perspective to keep it alive for future generations.

Published twice annually, the newsletter of the Society for Humanistic Psychology (Division 32 of the American Psychological Association) explores the intersections of psychology, the arts and humanities, and current events. It aims to capture the discussions, debates, and new ideas at the center of research, teaching, clinical practice, advocacy, and social justice. Like Indra's Net (illustrated above), humanistic psychology honors the beauty of the individual while acknowledging cultural and social context, interdependence, and complexity. Co-editors: Andrew Bland and Julie Falk.

Letter from the Editor

Revaluation: Humanistic Principles Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

Andrew Bland, PhD, LP

Sixty-one years ago, standing both in the midst and on the brink of sweeping personal and global changes, Bob Dylan centered his album, *Bringing It All Back Home*, around the theme of trusting oneself when confronting existential boundary situations—that is, rapidly approaching a crossroads and needing to make a split decision whether to turn left or right without a map (see <https://samaritanlancaster.org/blog/boundary-situations-opportunities-for-presence-revaluation-and-intentionality>). He began the closing song with this line:

"You must leave now. Take what you need, you think will last. For whatever you wish to keep, you'd better grab it fast" (Dylan, 1965).

Today, humanity stands in the midst of and on the brink of another round of sweeping changes and the boundary situations those entail. Arguably, both the potential implications and transformations are of greater magnitude than those in the mid-1960s—the era both characterized by Dylan and out of which the humanistic movement began to rapidly formalize and take hold in psychology and society. Therefore, today, existential-humanistic (EH) psychology requires a revaluation—with emphasis on *valuing*.

This issue of the Division 32 newsletter explores how both EH and the world have evolved since the era and context in which it emerged. What specific EH principles need to persist in order for it to endure? What needs adjusting for it to remain relevant to current and future generations without devolving into age segregation?

We begin with President Dr. Derrick Sebree, Jr.'s reflection on generational equity in addressing questions involving suffering, meaning, and responsibility in the light of the Division 32 2026 annual conference in March. Then contemporary graduate students offer responses to classic humanistic perspectives of Carl Rogers (by Indira Rucic), Abraham Maslow (by Shannon Elgert and Lydia Stetson with their mentor, Dr. Lauren Mizock), and existentialism (by Tobi Goering). From there, three contemporary EH educators offer a supervisor's perspective on the necessity of keeping EH alive in clinical training (by Dr. D. W. Darling); a humanities-centered perspective on authenticity, creative living, and responsibility (by Roberta Cappellini); and a transpersonal perspective on psychedelics and transcendent experiences (Dr. Richard Schaub). Thereafter, Dr. Seth Zuihō Segall reviews Dr. Belinda Khong's book, *Raising Spring Kids*. That is followed by reflections on the 2025 APA Animal Summit in August (by Dr. Harold Takooshian) and the 4th World Congress of Existential Therapy in June 2026 (by Dr. Andrew Bland). The issue concludes with announcements of interest to Division 32's membership.

Reference

Dylan, B. (1965). It's all over now, baby blue. On *Bringing it all back home* [LP]. Columbia.



Andrew M. Bland is a member of the graduate clinical psychology faculty at Millersville University in Lancaster Co., PA, USA. He earned a master's degree from the University of West Georgia's humanistic psychology program and a Ph.D. in counseling psychology from Indiana State University. He is a licensed psychologist, currently practicing at Samaritan Counseling Center in Lancaster, PA. Andrew is past president of Division 32 (2023-24) and currently chairs its Fellows and Epistemological Diversity Committees and its Humanistic Education Task Force. He is a review editor for its journal, *The Humanistic Psychologist*, as well as an associate editor of the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*. Andrew's scholarship provides both qualitative and quantitative support for the practical application of themes/principles from existential-humanistic psychology in the domains of cross-cultural encounters, relationships, work/careers, psychological suffering, the processes of therapy and education, creativity, leadership, and lifespan development.

President's Column**Generational Equity, Liberation, and Our Responsibility to the Lineage***Derrick Seabee, Jr., PsyD, LP*

As I reflect on our time together this year, I find myself sitting less with conclusions and more with a felt sense of continuity. I left this year's conference deeply appreciative of the honesty, care, and intellectual courage members brought into our shared spaces. Across presentations, conversations, and informal moments together, there was a palpable willingness to wrestle with difficult questions while remaining grounded in the relationship.

Throughout the conference, many of us returned to questions of suffering, meaning, and responsibility. Beneath those questions was generational equity, not simply as a concept, but as a lived reality. Together, we found ourselves asking what we are carrying forward.

These questions are not abstract. They are psychological, relational, and deeply human. They appear in the consulting room, in our classrooms, and in the communities we serve. Increasingly, they appear in our recognition that what we encounter as individual distress is inseparable from historical and structural conditions.

I was struck by the ways many of us spoke about liberation, not as an abstraction, but as something lived within our clinical, scholarly, and communal relationships. Liberation, in this context, is a practice. It involves seeing people within the fullness of their histories, refusing to reduce structurally produced suffering to individual pathology, and creating spaces where dignity is not negotiated but assumed.

One of the themes that continued to surface throughout the conference was the recognition that healing is not only individual but also collective, relational, and structural. Humanistic psychology has long emphasized the importance of acknowledgment, presence, and dignity within the therapeutic encounter. Increasingly, many of us are asking what it means to extend those same commitments outward into communities shaped by historical trauma, exclusion, and intergenerational harm.

Repair, in this sense, becomes more than symptom reduction. It becomes an act of recognition. A willingness to tell the truth about suffering, to create spaces where lived experience is validated, and to imagine forms of care capable of restoring dignity where it has been fractured across generations.

This year, we also found ourselves sitting with loss and remembrance. Brent Dean Robbins, a past president of Division 32 whose work shaped the intellectual and relational life of humanistic psychology, has become an ancestor. Brent's work and presence remind many of us what it means to live with intellectual courage, relational depth, and fidelity to one's values.

To speak of ancestors in our field is to recognize that our thinking, our language, and our commitments are not created in isolation. They are inherited. And with that inheritance comes responsibility.

As we move forward, we are called not to abandon what defines humanistic psychology, but to deepen it. To take seriously that human beings are embedded in context, historical, cultural, structural, and ecological.

I offer this as an invitation: to remain connected, to stay in conversation, and to remember that we are not only practitioners and scholars, but stewards of a field, of values, and of a lineage we are now responsible for carrying forward.



Derrick Sebree, Jr. is a licensed psychologist, educator, and social justice advocate serving as MA Program Director and Core Faculty at the Michigan School of Psychology. His work integrates humanistic, existential, multicultural, and ecopsychological perspectives, with particular emphasis on Black existentialism, climate psychology, environmental justice, and community-oriented advocacy. Dr. Sebree currently serves as President of APA Division 32: Society for Humanistic Psychology and has held numerous leadership roles within national psychological organizations.

Generational Perspectives on Humanistic Psychology

Within You

Indira Rucic, MS

I wrote this poem while taking an Existential-Humanistic Therapies course taught by Dr. Andrew Bland, shortly before finishing my master's program at Millersville University in southeastern PA. A bit of background before the poem came to life: I began my healing journey sometime before the start of 2025, not realizing that this class would align perfectly with the timing of that process. During the years of being a student, daughter, first-time mother, and wife, I somehow lost touch with myself. It took many hardships and lessons for me to finally notice that I no longer recognized the person looking back at me in the mirror. I often asked myself how it had happened and eventually realized that I had never truly addressed my trauma or emotions in a healthy way. Long story short, the poem emerged during a class discussion about Carl Rogers—possibly the topic of the real versus ideal self. After class ended, I went straight home and began writing. Something in Dr. Bland's lecture had sparked something inside me. I connected so deeply with the topic that I became emotional while writing; I knew I had not been living authentically or being true to myself, I was tired of living a lie. As a lifelong therapist, I hope to incorporate many aspects of humanistic psychology into my work and continue sharing the legacy of Carl Rogers and other amazing psychologists. As you read "Within You," I hope you can see just how deeply the humanistic approach has influenced me.

I think of earth's beauty and all there is to explore
 I love to travel and wonder what else I can adore
 This voice inside me says, "you."
 But I've never met her before
 The voice comes back to say, "you don't recognize me, not anymore."
 And then it struck me, I do know her, but life's chaos came along
 And somewhere among the challenges, she fell and became less strong
 She blamed the world for her falling apart
 But whose fault was it really? That's a good start
 She looks in the mirror and says, "I've missed you, dearly."

The voice returns and asks, "sincerely?"

Puzzled by the question, she takes a step back and wonders if she's really on the right track
Then the voice says, "don't go or you might lose me for good, and that's a chance you don't want to take."

She agreed to come back admitting all her mistakes

And with each day as she grew, the voice inside her said, that's beautiful, if only you knew

She became the girl who thinks of poems in the car

Who takes pictures of sunsets too many

Loves passionately and deeply when she's ready

She takes life by the hand and now holds it steady

She values time too much and some may ask why

"Isn't every second precious?" she replies

Life is too short to live in disguise

And now she really knows what it means to be alive.



Indira Rucic, MS is a Functional Family Therapist at TrueNorth Wellness Services, serving the Adams/York County, PA area. She earned a master's degree in Clinical Psychology from Millersville University (Lancaster, PA). She supports families navigating challenges related to parent-child conflict and diagnoses such as ADHD, autism, DMDD, MDD, mixed mood disorders, and PTSD. While continuing to grow in the field of psychology, she is committed to practicing through a humanistic lens. She believes empathy is one of the most essential qualities in creating meaningful therapeutic change. She is bilingual; Bosnian is her first language. She loves traveling and eating dessert, spending time with friends and family, and writing poetry or short stories when inspired.

Maslow's Theory of Human Motivation and Cultural Implications for Training in Humanistic Psychology Today

Shannon Elgert, MA; Lydia Stetson; and Lauren Mizock, PhD

Among our first lessons in humanistic psychology was Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, with self-actualization featured at the pinnacle. His theories of human motivation are commonly taught in undergraduate and graduate psychology classrooms. Maslow has been credited as a founder of humanistic psychology (DeCarvalho, 1990), and he was among our early inspirations for choosing a humanistic psychotherapy orientation. However, learning of the cultural critiques of this model as cultural appropriation and biased towards individualistic values (Feigenbaum & Smith, 2020; Smith & Feigenbaum, 2012; Wachter, 2003; Yurdakul & Arar, 2023) caused us to question Maslow's work. By exploring the literature, we have learned that though there is often partial validity to these critiques, cultural elements of his theory of self-actualization are sometimes misinterpreted and/or overlooked. Maslow (1965) himself cautioned: "Beware of stressing only the pleasures of ... actualization of the individual self. Not enough attention has been given to being in a [loving] community with which one can identify" (p. 24). Researchers have also expanded the cultural and modern relevance of his work. In this brief paper, we will provide an overview of the cultural debate and contemporary adaptations to Maslow's work for students and practitioners in humanistic psychology today.

Cultural Critique of Maslow's Theory

A core critique that has emerged of Maslow's theory of human motivation is a neglect to credit the Blackfoot people for some of his ideas and accurately convey their beliefs (Smith & Feigenbaum, 2012). In 1938, Maslow spent six weeks living, learning, and working among a community of Blackfoot people on the Siksika reservation in Alberta, Canada (Feigenbaum & Smith, 2020). The purpose of Maslow's stay was to conduct an anthropological study of the security needs of the Blackfoot people under the direction of Ruth Benedict (Smith & Feigenbaum, 2012). Maslow (1943) wrote that this "summer's field work with the Northern Blackfoot Indians... influenced" his insights about democratic (versus authoritarian) character structure (p. 401), a core aspect of self-actualization. After he completed his work with the Blackfoot, Maslow concluded that individuals fit themselves into their given cultural environments but remain distinctly separate from the culture. In other words, people adapt to their surroundings, but individual personality factors provide a stronger basis for behavior and needs than cultural factors.

Head and Blood, two Blackfoot educators, posited that Maslow's approach to scientific inquiry was that of detachment and dehumanization (Smith & Feigenbaum, 2012). Furthermore, the authors argued that Maslow adopted and misapplied the ideas on synergy of his mentor on the project, Ruth Benedict, with a less holistic notion of the individual and culture. Maslow has not been without cultural critics in other examples as well, including early research he conducted on women's sexuality that reflected gendered and sexist leanings (Cullen & Gottell, 2002).

Re-Interpreting Maslow

Another body of literature suggests that this interpretation of his theory omits significant details made by Maslow in his later writings that evolved over three decades of research (Bland, 2026; Jones, 2020). For example, Maslow often attempted to emphasize the paradox that self-actualization entails both autonomy and social interest with the intention of improving culture and connecting to community (Maslow, 1971, 1987, 1999). Maslow identified the Blackfoot as an exemplar of a secure, high synergy society, which he contrasted with the rugged individualism of and hypermasculinity in the U.S. at that time (an insecure, low synergy society). He (Maslow, 1971) regarded the latter as a form of social pathology that inhibits (versus promotes) the awareness of and acting in accordance with the realities of interdependence that he associated with self-actualization.

Furthermore, Maslow (1987, 1999) identified independence from groupthink as characteristic of self-actualization. In his later writings, the self-transcendent aspects of self-actualization took on increasing focus on his work (Maslow, 1971). With such autonomy, an individual can begin to understand people from diverse sociocultural contexts and contribute to society as a whole, instead of focusing on a discrete and isolated environment. This effort represented some of Maslow's cultural consciousness and attempts to avoid ethnocentrism.

Compton (2018) addressed other myths of self-actualization—that it is not backed by empirical research to support the concept, or that Maslow's theory rejected scientific psychology. Maslow in fact saw the relationship between humanistic and scientific psychology as complementary and engaged in rigorous research to support his theory. Compton also discussed the misunderstanding that lower needs must be met before climbing up the hierarchy, which was not Maslow's original intent. Maslow (1987) spoke about this issue:

[The statement that] if one need is satisfied, then another emerges... might give the false impression that a need must be satisfied 100% before the next need emerges... A more realistic description... would be in terms of decreasing percentages of satisfaction as we go up the hierarchy of prepotency... The emergence [of a new need] is not a sudden, saltatory phenomenon, but rather a gradual emergence by slow degrees" (pp. 27–28).

He viewed self-actualization as an idiosyncratic, ongoing process rather than a destination. Finally, the theory has been critiqued for being elitist and classist, assuming that self-actualized people are happier or wealthier than others. Maslow actually rejected happiness and wealth as the result of achieving our wants and needs, and instead suggested fulfillment and authenticity. Furthermore, self-actualization has been measurably demonstrated in homeless individuals, attributable to efficacy in survival (Sumerlin & Bundrick, 2000). In addition, in work environments, self-actualization has been found not to be confined to the upper echelon (Dorer & Mahoney, 2006).

Expansions and Cultural Adaptations of Self-Actualization

Recent articles on cultural adaptations of self-actualization theory have updated Maslow's theory to different groups, emphasizing the cross-cultural experience of this phenomenon. For example, Ortiz (2020) described the centrality of the family and relationships as the source of experience and expression of self-actualization, and the context of Latinx culture and valuing *familismo*, *personalismo*, *respeto*, and *simpatia*—psychological health, family longevity, belongingness, affection, respect, and love.

Jones (2020) explored self-actualization in African American culture as represented by the lives of three well-known leaders: Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Booker T. Washington. Jones identified several core attributes common to their process of self-actualization. These qualities include a drive toward equality, social justice, socioeconomic fairness, and racial equity, as well as the advancement of understanding the oppressive experiences of African American communities. Jones identified 15 key attributes to self-actualization that were unique to his sample of African American men that he felt should be integrated or Maslow's concept of self-actualization among culturally diverse individuals. He found more of what Maslow termed "nadir" experiences or low moments to be part of their process of development rather than "peak" or bliss experiences than what Maslow may have commonly found among self-actualized individuals given the context of poverty and disenfranchisement faced by the men in his study. Jones indicated that individuals belonging to African American culture may tend to center values in resilience, faith and justice, and finding fulfillment in the strength of one another as part of the process of self-actualization.

Moreover, Bland (2026) summarized advancements in conceptualizing self-actualization, which include existential, transpersonal, constructivist, and postmodern theories. It is clear that Maslow's original conceptualization of self-actualization has come to include a wide range of cultural variations and conceptual expansions.

Conclusion

In sum, our review of the literature suggests that the cultural critiques of Maslow's work contain both validity and myths. It is important to challenge inaccurate information but also acknowledge the cultural limitations to Maslow's theory that reflect biases of his era and positionality. Training psychologists and practitioners can become informed about the cultural adaptations, conceptual expansions, and current applications of self-actualization. Humanistic psychologists can include diversity in their conceptualization of self-actualization with increased flexibility around the hierarchy

that may be reflective of different cultural backgrounds. Further research in self-actualization for humanistic psychologists can continue to incorporate advocacy as part of this concept and allow the theory to achieve its own potential for growth in the current era of humanistic psychology.

References

- Adedeji, A., Olonisakin, T. T., Buchcik, J., Metzner, F., Tsabedze, W., Boehnke, K., & Idemudia, E. S. (2023). The multicultural conceptualization of well-being. The role of culture and circumstance in operationalising well-being in South Africa: A mixed-methods approach. *BMC Public Health*, 23, 2041. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-16966-0>
- Bland, A. (2026). Self-actualization and co-actualization. In Hoffman, L. (Ed.), *APA handbook of humanistic and existential psychology: Vol.1. History, research, philosophy, and theory*. (pp. 325-347). American Psychological Association.
- Compton, W. C. (2018). Self-actualization myths: What did Maslow really say? *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 64(5), 743-760. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167818761929>
- Cullen, D., & Gotell, L. (2002). From orgasms to organizations: Maslow, women's sexuality and the gendered foundations of the needs hierarchy. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 9, 537-555. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0432.00174>
- DeCarvalho, R. J. (1990). A history of the "third force" in psychology. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 30(4), 22-44. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002216789003000403>
- Dorer, H. L., & Mahoney, J. M. (2006). Self-actualization in the corporate hierarchy. *North American Journal of Psychology*, 8(2), 397-410.
- Feigenbaum, K. D., & Smith, R. A. (2020). Historical narratives: Abraham Maslow and Blackfoot interpretations. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 48(3), 232-243. <https://doi.org/10.1037/hum0000145>
- Greene, L., & Burke, G. (2007). Beyond self-actualization. *Journal of Health and Human Services Administration*, 30(2), 116-128.
- Jones, W. J. (2020). The lives of Douglass, Du Bois, and Washington: Self-actualization among African American males. *The Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 60(3), 303-329. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167817739761>
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). The authoritarian character structure. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 18(2), 401-411. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545>
- Maslow, A. H. (1965). *Eupsychian management: A journal*. Irwin/Dorsey.
- Maslow, A. H. (1971). *The farther reaches of human nature*. Viking Press.
- Maslow, A. H. (1987). *Motivation and personality* (3rd ed.). HarperCollins.
- Maslow, A. H. (1999). *Toward a psychology of being* (3rd ed.). Wiley.
- Ortiz, F. A. (2020). Self-actualization in the Latino/Hispanic culture. *The Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 60(3), 418-435. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167817741785>
- Smith, R. A., & Feigenbaum, K. D. (2012). Maslow's intellectual betrayal of Ruth Benedict? *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 53(3), 307-321. DOI: 10.1177/0022167812469832
- Sumerlin, J. R., & Bundrick, C. M. (2000). Happiness and self-actualization under conditions of strain: A sample of homeless men. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 90(1), 191-203. <https://doi.org/10.2466/pms.2000.90.1.191>
- Watcher, K. (2003). Rethinking Maslow's needs. *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences*, 95(2), 68-69.
- Yurdakul, G., & Arar, T. (2023). Revisiting Maslow's hierarchy of needs: Is it still universal content? *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 33(8), 1103-1130. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2023.2177227>



Shannon Elgert is a student at Fielding Graduate University's Clinical Psychology PhD program and holds a Master of Arts in Counselling Psychology. Shannon is a licensed psychotherapist in private practice in Alberta, Canada.



Lydia Stetson, MA is a PhD Candidate in the Clinical Psychology program at Fielding Graduate University and expects to graduate in the summer of 2026. She provided mental health services in various settings, including a correctional facility, state psychiatric hospital, medical school clinic, and private practice. Her clinical interests center on the intersection of queer and autistic identity, and specifically the lived experiences of queer autistic women, girls, and individuals assigned female at birth.



Lauren Mizock, PhD is Core Faculty in the Clinical Psychology PhD program at Fielding Graduate University and a licensed psychologist in private practice in San Francisco. At Fielding, she is Director of the Social Justice and Diversity Specialization and Director of the Humanistic-Existential Therapy Track. She is the President-Elect of the Executive Committee of the Society for the Psychology of Women of the American Psychological Association (APA).

Moral Injury and the Reinvigoration of Existential–Humanistic Psychology

Tobi Goering, LMHC, LPC

Often, I find myself sitting across from a combat veteran who feels profoundly disconnected from humanity, buried in a hole dug by shame, convinced they are morally irredeemable after a moral rupture they can barely name, let alone speak aloud. The stories they carry feel forbidden. Early in my work, I tried to rely on the conventional techniques I had been taught, but something in me knew that moral injury was not responding because it is not simply a diagnostic construct. It is a soul wound. Veterans drowning in shame do not need quick cognitive restructuring or premature reassurance; they need someone willing to sit with them, soul to soul, without flinching. Existential–humanistic psychology (EHP) gave me language for what I was already discovering in practice: therapy is not primarily about fixing, but about presence, witnessing, and relational depth (Edelstein, 2015; Moss, 2015; Spaeth, 2019). It invites us to engage and explore moral anguish without pathologizing it and to honor responsibility, agency, and meaning making in the aftermath of a moral rupture. Spiritually informed EHP further calls us to show up as fully human, authentic, and soul-attuned clinicians, attending to the spiritual longing many clients bring into the room, a longing often overlooked in symptom-focused models (Cohen, 2019; Hammer, 2019). However, the unfortunate truth is that I was not adequately trained for this work in graduate school. If we are serious about reinvigorating our field, Division 32 has an opportunity to lead by advocating for required coursework in existential, spiritual, humanistic, and military cultural competencies—so that future clinicians are prepared not only to treat symptoms, but to sit courageously with the moral and spiritual dimensions of suffering.

Existential and humanistic theories were briefly mentioned on one page of a counseling theories book in my first semester. Spiritual and religious competence courses were not offered, even though I

attended a Jesuit Catholic graduate school. Military culture and moral injury were not part of the curriculum. Humanistic psychology remains marginal in mainstream training (Henry, 2017), and spiritual competence is inconsistently integrated into required coursework (Vieten & Lukoff, 2022). I remember early sessions when veterans disclosed religious/spiritual disconnection, and I realized I lacked the framework to respond ethically and effectively. I had to seek additional training on my own. Both the American Psychological Association (2017) and American Counseling Association (2014) ethical codes are clear: we are to practice within our competence, avoid harm, and refrain from imposing our personal values, among other principles. When clinicians are not trained in existential, spiritual, and military cultural competence, we risk violating all three.

Many veterans now receive care in civilian systems and may avoid Veterans Affairs settings due to stigma or logistical barriers (Collins et al., 2024). Veterans often hesitate to disclose spiritual struggles because they fear misunderstanding or judgment (Mandelkoff et al., 2022; Vieten & Lukoff, 2022). Military culture itself requires literacy—understanding duty, honor, cohesion, sacrifice, reintegration challenges (Collins et al., 2024; Kopacz et al., 2017). Without that competence, therapists working with them risk unintentionally invalidating the very people we are trying to serve. All of this leads me to one conclusion: existential, humanistic, and spiritual competencies should not be electives. They should be required components of graduate education.

If we know that clients bring moral and spiritual struggles into therapy—and we do—then training must prepare clinicians to meet them. If we know that moral injury affects veterans at significant rates—and it does—then military cultural competence must be built into trauma curricula. If we know that spirituality is central to meaning making for many clients, then spiritual assessment, interdisciplinary collaboration, and ethical discernment and integration should be developmental expectations, not optional interests. Competence is not static. It develops through structured learning, supervision, and reflective practice (Pearce et al., 2019/2024). Existential–humanistic foundations should anchor this work because they teach clinicians how to be present with suffering that cannot be neatly resolved (Spaeth, 2019).

As I reflect on my own path—from Marine wife and former financial advisor to therapist serving military service members and combat veterans, I recognize that this work feels like a calling, a form of soul care. I walk alongside service members as they navigate some of the most painful terrain imaginable. I help them reconnect with fractured parts of themselves and rediscover purpose aligned with their authentic values. The principle of common humanity guides my work. It reminds both me and those I serve that none of us suffers in isolation. When veterans feel seen and heard—not evaluated or corrected, healing becomes imaginable. As I deepen my commitment to spiritually integrated existential–humanistic therapy, I have come to view it as more than a framework. It feels like an embodied expression of love, authenticity, and faith in the human spirit’s capacity to heal (Cohen, 2019; Hammer, 2019). When I listen with my whole being—when I allow my soul to be fully present, I experience therapy as an act of moral witnessing. I am reminded of Nietzsche’s (1882/1974) question: *What is most humane? To spare someone from shame* (as cited in Taylor-Jones, 2023). In this shared journey, I am transformed alongside those I serve. But I also know how easily I was unprepared.

Moral injury invites EHP to expand itself and calls on the discipline to go beyond neutrality into moral witnessing. Beyond individual meaning-making into moral meaning-making. Division 32 has an opportunity to advocate for something concrete: graduate programs that treat existential–humanistic and spiritual competence as core developmental learning rather than elective enrichment or intellectual curiosity. In a cultural moment where moral suffering is increasingly visible, our profession needs clinicians who are formed, not just trained.

Reinvigorating existential–humanistic psychology is not just about nostalgia. It is about remembering who we are as a discipline. EHP has long been described as a rich tapestry of voices that has profoundly shaped contemporary psychology, even when not explicitly credited (Schneider et al., 2015). Now, in a time marked by moral rupture, existential uncertainty, and spiritual fragmentation, its voice feels especially necessary. If we are willing to cultivate presence, humility, and courage in ourselves and in our training programs, we may not only prevent EHP from becoming a historical footnote—we may help it become a guiding light for the next generation of clinicians (DeRobertis, 2013, 2016, 2020). And when one soul is able to sit with another without turning away, healing becomes not only possible—but shared. When I sit with a veteran who believes they are beyond redemption, it is important that I show up with authenticity, integrity, humility, and depth. That kind of presence does not happen accidentally. It is cultivated. And our graduate programs should reflect that. In a time when veterans seek dignity, we must be prepared to meet them.

References

- American Counseling Association. (2014). *2014 ACA code of ethics*. <https://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/ethics/2014-aca-code-of-ethics.pdf>
- American Psychological Association. (2017). *Ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct*. <https://www.apa.org/ethics/code/>
- Cohen, V. (2019). Spirituality and therapeutic action. *Spirituality in Clinical Practice*, 6(2), 135–138. <https://doi.org/10.1037/scp0000169>
- Collins, A. L., Russell, M. C., & Figley, C. R. (2024). Toward military cultural competence among new civilian mental health providers. *Traumatology: An International Journal*, 30(3), 288–295. <https://doi.org/10.1037/trm0000448>
- DeRobertis, E. M. (2013). Humanistic psychology: Alive in the 21st century? *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167812473369>
- DeRobertis, E. M. (2016). On framing the future of humanistic psychology. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 44(1), 18–41. <https://doi.org/10.1037/hum0000014>
- DeRobertis, E. M. (2020). The humanistic revolution in psychology: Its inaugural vision. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167820956785>
- Edelstein, B. (2015). Frames, attitudes, and skills of an existential-humanistic psychotherapist. In Schneider, K. J., Pierson, J. F., & Bugental, J. F. T. *The handbook of humanistic psychology: Theory, research, and practice* (2nd ed., pp. 435–449). Sage.
- Hammer, D. (2019). Cultivating soulfulness in psychotherapy. *Spirituality in Clinical Practice*, 6(2), 139–143. <https://doi.org/10.1037/scp0000173>
- Henry, C. D. (2017). Humanistic psychology and introductory textbooks: A 21st-century reassessment. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 45(3), 281–294. <https://doi.org/10.1037/hum0000056>
- Kopacz, M. S., Ducharme, C., Ani, D., & Atlig, A. (2017). Towards a faith-based understanding of moral injury. *The Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling*, 71(4), 217–219. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1542305017743249>
- Mandelkow, L., Austad, A., & Freund, H. (2021). Stepping carefully on sacred ground: religion and spirituality in psychotherapy. *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*, 24(3), 288–308. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19349637.2021.1939834>
- Michael, L. (2019). Spirituality as agency and restoration in existential recovery. *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*, 21(3), 206–214. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19349637.2018.1458690>
- Moss, D. (2015). The roots and genealogy of humanistic psychology. In Schneider, K. J., Pierson, J. F., & Bugental, J. F. T. *The handbook of humanistic psychology: Theory, research, and practice (Second edition)* (pp. 3–18). Sage.
- Pearce, M. J., Pargament, K. I., Oxhandler, H. K., Vieten, C., & Wong, S. (2019). A novel training program for mental health providers in religious and spiritual competencies. *Spirituality in Clinical Practice*, 6(2), 73–82. <https://doi.org/10.1037/scp0000195>
- Pearce, M. J., Pargament, K. I., Wong, S., Hinkel, H., Salcone, S., Morgan, G., Kemp, D., Brock, B., Kim, E., Oxhandler, H. K., Vieten, C., Fox, J., Polson, E. C., & Currier, J. M. (2024). Enhancing training in spiritual

- and religious competencies in mental health graduate education: Evaluation of an integrated curricular approach. *PLoS One*, 19(9), e0306114. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0306114>
- Schneider, K.J., Fraser Pierson, J., & Bugental, J. F. T. (2015). *The handbook of humanistic psychology: Theory, research, and practice* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Spaeth, D. (2019). Religious and Spiritual Diversity and Humanistic Psychology. In H. Cleare-Hoffman, N. Hoffman, & D. St. John (Eds.), *Humanistic Approaches to Multiculturalism and Diversity* (pp. 203–214). London: Routledge. From <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351133357-16>
- Taylor-Jones, C. (2023). When shame becomes deadly: The relationship between suicidality and shame; a personal perspective. *Psychological Perspectives*, 66(2), 155–167. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00332925.2023.2242019>
- Vieten, C., & Lukoff, D. (2022). Spiritual and religious competencies in psychology. *American Psychologist*, 77(1), 26–38. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000821>



Tobi Goering, LMHC, LPC, NCC, is a Washington State native now based in Norfolk, VA. A former financial planner turned therapist, she specializes in moral injury, existential therapy, suicide prevention, and BPD/C-PTSD across military and civilian populations. She is pursuing a Ph.D. in Existential-Humanistic Psychology at Saybrook University and holds master's degrees in Organizational Psychology (Central Washington University) and Clinical Mental Health Counseling (Gonzaga University). Tobi is a Pug mom, die hard sports fan, and frequently attends music festivals.

The Throw-Ins: Notes on Transmission from a First-Year Supervisor

D. W. Darling, PhD

Once, several years ago, some friends and I enrolled in a cooking class taught by an Armenian matriarch and her aged servant. Since they spoke no English and we no Armenian, communication was not easy. She taught by demonstration; we watched (and diligently tried to quantify her recipes) as she prepared an array of marvelous eggplant and lamb dishes. But our recipes were imperfect; and try as hard as we could, we could not duplicate her dishes. 'What was it,' I wondered, 'that gave her cooking that special touch?' The answer eluded me until one day, when I was keeping a particularly keen watch on the kitchen proceedings, I saw our teacher, with great dignity and deliberation, prepare a dish. She handed it to her servant who wordlessly carried it into the kitchen to the oven and, without breaking stride, threw in handful after handful of assorted spices and condiments. I am convinced that those surreptitious 'throw-ins' made all the difference. Formal texts, journal articles, and lectures portray therapy as precise and systematic... Yet I believe deeply that, when no one is looking, the therapist throws in the 'real thing.'

- Irvin Yalom (1980, p. 3)

I came to supervision uncertain what I had to offer to my supervisees—aware, in the way newly licensed clinicians often are, that the people across from me might see through me before I figured out what I had to give. The program where I work, a rural, newly established PsyD program at a state university, is excellent at what it is designed to do. Our program's faculty are experienced clinicians and empiricists. Our students are trained in evidence-based treatments with rigor and care. I believe in that thoroughly scientific training. I, myself, have been shaped by it.

And yet, sitting with my four doctoral students, one from each year of the program, gathered weekly for group supervision, I kept returning to the same question: What could I possibly offer them that the rest of their training does not?

The answer I kept arriving at was not a model or a framework. It was a book. Specifically, it was Yalom's (1980) *Existential Psychotherapy*, the text that had changed how I practiced more than almost anything else in my training. I assigned it to my students not because I had a carefully theorized pedagogy, but because I genuinely did not know what else to offer. It was the "throw-in."

This is, I think, the underexamined version of the problem facing humanistic psychology today. The concern is usually framed as relevance: Does humanistic psychology speak to contemporary clinical realities? Can it hold its own in an evidence-dominated field? These are fair questions. But beneath them is a quieter and perhaps more urgent one: Who is passing it on, and how? Humanistic psychology does not have a relevance problem so much as a transmission problem. Early career clinicians are not rejecting it. Many are simply not encountering it. It does not fit neatly into training structures that privilege what can be manualized and measured, and so it may arrive late, if at all, in the professional formation of new psychologists. Yalom sits within the existential tradition that humanistic psychology has long embraced, and it is precisely this corner of the literature that may get crowded out first.

In our group supervision reading, we began with death, as Yalom does. The first several weeks of our incorporation of the reading were... uncomfortable. My first-year student—already a clinician with a master's degree, not someone easily rattled—told me directly that the material scared her. There was reluctance in the room, the kind that signals genuine contact with something rather than disengagement from it. We did not rush past this discomfort, as we would not with a client sitting with their own mortality.

We then reached the section on freedom. In Yalom's framing, freedom is not relief, it is the terrifying recognition of "groundlessness": that existence precedes essence, that we are the authors of our own structure, that the choices available to us are genuinely unlimited, even as their consequences are real. In our second week of the section on freedom, near the end of a group supervision meeting, I suggested we skip the book discussion for the week and close early. My first-year student objected immediately, and what followed was one of the better clinical conversations I have been part of. My students were not just discussing a concept but rather reorganizing how they understood their clients. They were recognizing that therapy does not move between a small set of options but opens onto something much larger: the full weight of human agency, the realization that rules exist but are not determinative, that consequences follow choices but do not foreclose them. One student connected this to social justice, and another was able to describe a specific case in a new way. The existential framework was not replacing their evidence-based training, but was sitting beneath it, giving it ground to stand on.

I want to be careful about what I am claiming here. I do not know if two hours of group supervision per week, filtered partly through assigned readings, is sufficient to transmit something as hard-won as a humanistic sensibility. I suspect it is not sufficient on its own. What I believe is that it is not nothing, and that the alternative, which is simply not introducing this material because it does not fit the existing structure, produces clinicians who are technically excellent and existentially underprepared.

The revaluation humanistic psychology requires today may be less philosophical than practical. The question is not whether humanistic psychology's core principles—presence, freedom, human agency, the irreducible reality of the therapeutic relationship—are still worth holding. I think they plainly are. The question is whether we are finding the small windows, the moments between the curriculum, the

supervisory relationships and seminar discussions and assigned readings through which those principles can move from one generation of clinicians to the next.

Yalom's Armenian teacher did not explain the throw-ins. She did not manualize them or demonstrate their efficacy. Her aide simply carried the dish to the oven and added what she knew. The dish was better for it, even if no one watching could fully account for why.

Humanistic psychology's future probably depends on what we decide is worth grabbing fast in the moment. It depends on enough people, in enough small instances, deciding to pass it on, imperfectly, implicitly, without a map. The question worth asking is not whether humanistic psychology remains relevant. It is whether we are still throwing it in.

Reference

Yalom, I. D. (1980). *Existential psychotherapy*. Basic Books.



D. W. Darling, PhD, is a United States Air Force veteran, licensed psychologist, and assistant professor of psychology at Southern Utah University, where she teaches at both graduate and undergraduate levels and provides clinical supervision for the PsyD program. She also serves rural and underserved populations in private practice. Her research interests sit at the intersection of existential psychology and personal finance. d.w.darling@outlook.com

A Step Back Forward: The Loss and Need of Awareness of Our Times (Art and Existential Psycho-sophy through Images)

M. Roberta Cappellini, MA, MEd, MSC

Why a reflection on humanism and its actual declinations in post-humanism (trans-eco-neo)? Why turn to the past to advance towards the future? The crisis of civilization which we are living is a crisis of the human condition that requires an anthropological reshaping—a total change of direction—because we are living at the possible end of an era, at its possible point of no return (nuclear armament, ecosystem crisis, pandemics, humanitarian catastrophes). Many existential questions are open now: Which era are we living in? Which values and project to adopt? An existential-humanistic reflection on the loss and need of awareness of our times is here turned to the connection of the world of art and the thought in images, to show the passage from the actual anthropological perspective to the anthropophanic one—as existential, intuitive phenomenological experience, opening to new horizons.

According to Rilke (1922), *weltinnenraum* refers to thinking in images, archetypes, dominion of the psyche, from which poetry and art draw through the intensity of the artist's gaze, able to connect things into their inner world. For this reason, artistic expressions do not coincide with their chronological time but with their psychic one, and artists in their works often intuit the future through their visionary gaze. In their *avanguardie* view, they can make us aware in hindsight of the reality in which we live, as we can never be fully conscious of our historical present (Cappellini, 2010). But how to open ourselves to the rise of this awareness is the basic question.

Let's start from an image: the *Angelus Novus*, a painting by Paul Klee (1920), as described and interpreted by Walter Benjamin (1940). It can be still considered a post-humanistic example of this conscience-awakening existential process, as showed in the Angelus dramatic description of the figure. While advancing with his back towards the future, forcibly driven by a storm, he cannot take his eyes off the pile of ruins of the past (which we call progress), on which he seems to fix his gaze of horror and pity. Benjamin's emotional identification—so important in the economy of his thought—seems to give voice not to a simple form of pity, but to a more complex feeling of *pietas*, the highest expression of human pathos and sensitivity, is here declined in its innumerable affective shades, embracing care, empathy, compassion, sadness, mercy, reverence, love. We could say a gaze full of pathos that envelops all the sadness and injustice of the world, indicating an underlying holistic sense of devotion or of holy duty towards life and its creatures. Benjamin's Angel of History would have liked to hold back, to awaken the dead and put back together what has been shattered, taking charge here and now and all in one, of the bad actions, the faults, the guilts, the crimes of the human tragedy and the deep wounds of a suffering humanity, at the same time expressing the desire, perhaps the utopian hope, for a future of reconciliation, of justice and peace. The special paradoxical horrific beauty of this image, spreads a light emerging from the author's feeling of deep empathy and awareness of the helpless human condition. The Angel's meaningful gaze carries with it a deep sense of *response-ability*, a willingness to respond to the questions of life that call us from our past (the past generations) and at the same time from our future (the next generations) in a unique human chain. The Angel's disarmed, humble, maternal gaze, in the author's words, evokes a glimpse of our past to be redeemed and never definitively healed, in the now. The Angel's perception of the wholeness, together with his full presence, are able for a moment to stop the time of the continuum of historicism of the great deeds, to collect the bleeding wounds of humanity and fully stay with them for a meaningful while; a while not full of "humanism," but of humanness and hope.

Taking "a step back" (Heidegger, 1957) means here this awareness and human care, this deep vision of reality, an ethical attitude we can learn from our psyche, under the emerging form of a clear image of wholeness, awakening feelings and new conscious interconnected ways of perceiving the world, the others, the environment, in spite of the existential groundlessness and helplessness of our human condition.

The radical re-elaboration of our thinking process of the 20th century, has developed through a slow interdisciplinary process of the sciences and humanities, but perhaps we are not yet fully aware of its Copernican revolution, not having fully metabolized our ego-shift from its anthropocentric, fixed mono-perspective to a dynamic, relational pluri-perspective. This passage, this splitting experience of the ego's loss of its central identity, has projected it towards the abysses of being and to a disorienting "depth of field" (Lacan, 1964, 1973). But the ego-wound can become loophole of the self only if we allow it, as its essential relating no longer lies in the Cartesian coincidence between the being and thinking of a safe anthropology, but between the being and appearing of a life phenomenology, in its anthropo-panic becoming and coming-to-be of its awareness (the art of seeing). "The world is around me and not in front of me," as Merleau-Ponty (1985, p. 16) claimed in his theory of vision.

In the humanistic faith of man's rational capacities and certainties of mastering the world and nature, we have finally traced the harbingers of anthropocene and its pile of ruins. But the new multi-perspective between our past and future has showed us the repressed and neglected realm of our psyche and its invisible forms and archetypes that for centuries have populated the mysterious myths and imperceptible processes of our micro-macrocosm. We have to let her talk, intuit, and inspire art, poetry and human thought, through an existential renewed bodily synesthetic capacity of sensing,

listening, seeing and responding, that is through an authentic “art of living” here and now (Rank, 1932). Existential-humanistic research is paradoxical in that it requires an exit from oneself in order to enter one's own depths, a suspension and abandonment of the circumscribed shell of the external ego dimensions, to penetrate the depths of our self's stream of consciousness and felt sense of human pieties, through which *perhaps* our world can be newly re-imagined.

References

- Benjamin, W. (1942). *Über den Begriff der Geschichte*.
 Cappellini, M. R. (2000). *Sulle tracce del sogno dell'uomo*. Mimesis.
 Gendlin, E. (1978). *Focusing*. Everest House.
 Heidegger, M. (1957). *Identität und Differenz*.
 Kierkegaard, S. (1843). *Aut-aut*. Adelphi.
 Lacan, J. (1973). *Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*. Seuil.
 Merleau-Ponty, M. (1964). *Le visible et l'invisible*. Gallimard.
 Rank, O. (1932). *Art and artist*. Knopf.
 Rilke, R. M. (1923). *Duineser elegien*. Leipzig.



Maria Roberta Cappellini, MA, MEd, MSC is trained in psychoanalysis and developmental psychology and has practiced for 30 years in humanistic education, language-literature teaching, and philosophical research. She is co-founder of the interuniversity-intercultural center, CIRPIT. She is active as an author, editor, conference presenter, CE trainer (CEPI-Catalunya, Eranos-Ascona, LMU-Munich), and teacher (Gestalt-Mi, Existential-Humanistic Institute, Laengle's PsyClass, and the Master in Biodiversity program at the EU Institute of Innovation for Sustainability).

Respecting the New Spiritual Search

Richard Schaub, PhD

One new source of relevance for humanistic psychologists is the emergence of the widespread use of psychedelic drugs. The relevance does not exist in the promoting nor rejecting of “psychedelic medicine.” Rather, it is in encouraging patients and, by extension, the general public, to appreciate that the beneficial aspects of psychedelic experiences are available without drug use. Such an appreciation then crosses over to the wider territory of realizing that there are many dormant potentials to be awakened in our brain-mind—surely the very territory of humanistic psychology.

Within the psychology world, the study of non-ordinary, spiritual, metaphysical, mystical, transpersonal and religious experiences is represented by the transpersonal branch of psychology, an offshoot of the humanistic movement. But, if my assessment is accurate, there is little current work going on within our community on the nature and benefit of transpersonal experiences. I would be glad to be corrected and to find out that many such investigations are taking place. This area of transpersonal study would be of great benefit to the “seekers” in the general public who are currently hoping for new discoveries and new feelings through the psychedelic experience.

In addition, the search for such experiences through psychedelics should come with an intelligent and non-judgmental warning label. A recent referral to my psychotherapy practice is a retired physician

who, with no previous psychiatric history, had to be psychiatrically hospitalized because of a frightening reaction to a psychedelic “medicine.” Having taken the drug at home alone out of curiosity, his wife arrived to find him lying in a fetal position and crying out for his mother. This may sound like a dramatic example, but we can be certain that, in the general enthusiasm about psychedelics, negative experiences are being underreported. This need for caution even extends to a far milder and highly effective method—mindfulness meditation—in which negative effects need to be recognized and articulated (Britton et al., 2021; Goldberg et al., 2021).

The timeless search for “something more”—represented in the wide variety of religious, spiritual, meditative, and philosophical studies—can be appreciated as healthy, developmental and in accord with our commitment to humanistic psychology. Therefore, nothing that serves this purpose in *a safe and effective way* should be outside of our scope of inquiry. The question becomes how should each of us contribute to this centuries-old, cross-cultural human search. At the least, the search should be a subject of curiosity as part of our initial interviews with potential patients and clients. In my experience, you may very well find out that many people have had transpersonal/spiritual experiences but were reluctant to share for fear of being judged. For such patients, it is such a relief to know that their clinician honors and is interested in whatever experiences they had and what discoveries they made.

References

- Britton, W. B., Lindahl, J. R., Cooper, D.J., Canby, N. K., Palitsky, R. (2021). Defining and measuring meditation-related adverse effects in mindfulness-based programs. *Clinical Psychological Science*, 9(6). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167702621996340>
- Goldberg, S.B., Lam, S. U., Britton, W. B., & Davidson, R. J. (2022). Prevalence of meditation-related adverse effects in a population-based sample in the United States. *Psychotherapy Research*, 32(3), 291-305. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10503307.2021.1933646>



Richard Schaub, PhD (drrichardschaub@gmail.com) is the director of the Huntington Meditation & Imagery Center and guest faculty of the Society for Psychosynthesis Psychotherapy in Florence, Italy. Richard has an MS from Hofstra University in rehabilitation counseling and a PhD from St. John's University in counseling psychology. With 45 years of professional experience, his current focus is the training of professionals in Clinical Meditation and Imagery (CMI) skills to reduce anxiety and increase peace. Along with his wife, Bonney Gulino Schaub, he is the author of five books on meditation-related topics, including *Transpersonal Development*.

Book Review

Khong's *Raising Spring Kids*

Seth Zuihō Segall, PhD

Most readers will need no introduction to Dr. Belinda Siew Luan Khong, who has contributed to *The Humanistic Psychologist* for many years as an author, guest editor, and consulting editor. She was the co-guest editor of the special double issue, “Revisiting and Re-envisioning Mindfulness: Buddhist and Contemporary Perspectives” (Khong & Segall, 2021). Dr. Khong is a leading proponent of integrating Eastern and Western approaches to psychology. She has also authored a series of charming, illustrated children's books designed to educate young children about mindfulness and the values that promote

flourishing and social harmony: *Am I a Tiger?* (Khong, 2022), *Water Rabbit Mindful Adventures* (Khong, 2023), and *Dragon and Friends' Mindful Adventures* (Khong, 2024). Nothing, however, could prepare readers for Khong's unique and remarkable new book, *Raising Spring Kids: A Psychologist's Guide to Nurturing Mindful Kids* (Khong, 2025). This visually attractive volume—intended to be read by parents, kids, educators, and therapists—combines thoughtful advice on parenting with imaginative storytelling, heartfelt personal recollections, whimsical illustrations, poetry, and clinical vignettes all in the service of helping children cultivate the character strengths that contribute to well-being.

The book is organized around the metaphor of raising SPRING kids (an acronym for *spiritual, positive, resilient, imaginative, nimble, and grateful*) so they can grow up to be GREAT (*generous, respectful, empathetic, appreciative, and thoughtful*). The ancient Chinese Philosopher Mencius believed we are all born with the “seeds” of goodness within, but that the seeds need cultivation if they are to grow. Khong seems to be of the same mind, believing that children have the innate capacities and desires to develop SPRING and GREAT qualities when they are nurtured by the right kind of parenting.

Good parenting involves modeling these values and also cultivating one's capacity for mindfulness so one is able to listen to, be present, and respond to children's needs. At the same time, parents need to avoid coddling or indulging their children. Khong warns against overprotection or dictating solutions to their problems. Instead, she believes in helping children unleash their natural creativity, discover their own solutions, and learn from their mistakes so they become resourceful and resilient rather than vulnerable and fragile.

But this is not just another “how to” book written from the perspective of yet another expert. This is, above all else, a deeply personal book. Its themes, illustrations, poetry, stories, and underlying philosophy draw richly from Dr. Khong's Malaysian-Chinese heritage. She shares her lessons about resilience from her remarkable mother who grew up under the severe hardships imposed by the Japanese occupation of Malaya, and who in later life recovered from a horrifying accident that severely injured her and took her husband's life. She shares overcoming her personal childhood adversity due to a misdiagnosed stroke. She shares her daughter and grandchildren with readers—both in her recollections of raising them, and through their own creative stories and drawings. She shares her wisdom as a therapist in inspiring tales of helping young patients develop and depend on their own inner resources. As a parent and therapist, Belinda does not “fix” children but helps them surmount life difficulties through discovering their own inner strengths.

In the third part of her book, Dr. Khong shares clinical vignettes from therapy sessions with challenging young clients. Since most readers of this review will be psychologists, I thought it would be useful to share one of these vignettes to give a sense of the way Dr. Khong works. It concerns a 13-year-old client who came to therapy because her mother wanted her to be there, but who made it abundantly clear that she herself had no interest in participating. Dr. Khong, picking up on her reluctance, tells her:

It sounds like you don't really want to see me and came because your mum paid for your session. So how about I give you some options? We could sit here quietly, and you don't have to talk. Or you could keep scrolling through your mobile phone until your mum picks you up. Or I could make the first 10 minutes of our session free. If you still don't like us working together, your mum doesn't have to pay for it. The 10 minutes will be on the house. Would you like to give that a try?

This therapeutic move restored the client's sense of agency and hooked her curiosity. Eyeing Khong suspiciously, she asked, “Why would you want to do that? No one has given me a freebie before.

Everybody wants something.” Dr. Khong nonchalantly replied, “Oh, I don’t know. Because I’m generous. Because I like you. Because I think that it’s good to share what’s bothering us. Take your pick.” The client at this point was still wary, but the interchange marked the beginning of what became a successful therapeutic collaboration. In this interaction, Khong embodied many qualities she encourages parents, teachers, and clinicians to develop: mindful presence, empathy, creativity, generosity, and respect for young persons’ autonomy.

Khong is best known for her pioneering work incorporating Buddhist principles into psychotherapy, and her Buddhist sensibility infuses every page of this book. This sensibility is apparent in her choice of parables and narratives (e.g., “empty your teacup”; “the monk and the scorpion”; “Sakura and the cherry blossoms”; her recounting of the Buddha’s life and teachings), in her poetry (e.g. *The Orchid*), and in Pip Tweed’s charming illustrations that creatively incorporate Zen-inspired inkbrush-style *Enso*. Her Buddhist sensibility is most apparent in the values the book epitomizes and embraces: beginner’s mind, mindfulness, generosity, and compassion.

Khong concludes her book with her poems presented earlier in the text rendered in both English and Chinese, explanations about Chinese cultural elements in the book such as the meaning of the character names, information about the lunar calendar zodiac animals, notes about the illustrations, and recommendations for further reading.

Throughout the book, Khong demonstrates how good parenting can creatively make use of art, imaginative play, role playing, storytelling, and helping children absorb nature’s lessons—methods that enrich child and parent alike. The book is filled with useful examples of how to engage children in learning values and developing character, examples parents can readily put into practice. There is a way in which the word “character” in the previous sentence has come to sound old-fashioned. This is a tragedy, since, as the philosophers of antiquity knew, it is character that allows us to live happy lives as individuals and as members of families and communities. This fundamental insight has been obscured by our culture’s increasing focus on wealth, status, power, and fame—values that ultimately fail to promote wellbeing and fulfillment. Khong reminds us that a good heart, a deep connection with others and nature, and an ability to rise above life’s challenges are what is most essential to the good life. This book provides parents, kids, educators, and clinicians with a guidebook that can help them manifest these qualities in their daily lives.

References

- Khong, B. S. L. (2022). *Am I a tiger? A mindful water tiger cub’s journey of love, friendship, and self-discovery*. Phoenix Tiger Press.
- Khong, B. S. L. (2023). Water Rabbit’s mindful adventures: *The great race of animals and human friends*. Phoenix Tiger Press.
- Khong, B. S. L. (2024). *Dragon and friends’ mindful adventures: The great race again!* Phoenix Tiger Press.
- Khong, B. S. L., & Segall, S. Z. (Eds.). (2021). Revisiting and re-envisioning mindfulness: Buddhist and contemporary perspectives [special issue]. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 49(1).
- Segall, S. Z. (2023). Review of the book *Am I a tiger? A mindful water tiger cub’s journey of love, friendship, and self-discovery*, by B. S. L. Khong. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 51(2), 232-234.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/hum0000321>



Seth Zuihō Segall, PhD is a clinical psychologist and Zen Buddhist priest. He is a contributing editor for *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*, a member of the editorial board of *The Humanistic Psychologist*, and science writer for the *Mindfulness Research Monthly*. He is the author of *Buddhism and Human Flourishing: A Modern Western Perspective* (2020); *The House We Live In: Virtue, Wisdom, and Pluralism* (2023); and "Buddhism and Western Psychology" for *The St. Andrews Encyclopedia of Theology* (2024).

Conference Reports

4th World Congress of Existential Therapy

Andrew Bland, PhD

The 4th World Congress of Existential Therapy took place in Aurora, CO (near Denver) in June 2026. Spearheaded by Dr. Louis Hoffman and Rocky Mountain Humanistic Counseling and Psychological Association, this was the first time the conference was hosted in the U.S.

The programming included 4 full days of presentations, invited sessions, roundtables, and experiential workshops—along with numerous opportunities for dialoguing, reminiscing, and reconnoitering. Principal emphasis was given to applying existential theory/principles (authenticity, creativity, mystery, the other, relationships, community, death, humor, embodiment, resilience, presence, meaning, freedom, awe, existential unconscious, etc.) to address numerous concerns not only in conventional therapy but also education, primary care, family life, and global society. Of particular relevance to our times was the incorporation of topics like AI and the digital era, climate anxiety, LGBTQIA+, terror management theory, and research on and the continuing legitimization of existential therapy in a medicalized ethos.

The tenor of the conference was characterized by an effort to cultivate a stance on existentialism that accounts *both* for common humanity and for nuanced variations that reflect the lived contexts and perspectives of Asian, Black, Indigenous, and Latinx individuals and communities to complement White European and U.S. iterations. Importantly, a common belief among numerous attendees I interacted with—across generations, cultural backgrounds, and phases of professional development—was that the conference served to counter professional loneliness and inspire a strong sense of global community. We left feeling invigorated to continue daring to offer an I-Thou alternative to an I-it world.

Division 32 Co-Hosted the 2025 APA Animal Summit

Harold Takooshian, PhD

At the APA convention in Denver, CO, Division 32 cooperated with 9 other APA divisions to co-list the 2025 APA Summit for Animals, to examine "human-animal interaction" (HAI)—an emerging field pioneered by Division 32 stalwarts Scott D. Churchill and Grant J. Rich.

First, a one-hour poster session featured a total of 27 poster research presentations (12 live and 15 virtual) on diverse topics involving animals, such as animal-assisted therapy, pet loss and grief, factory farming, and attitudes toward animals. Second was a lively 100-minute conversation hour among the participants.

The 2025 summit was organized and chaired by Nina Ekholm Fry, Director of Equine Programs in the Institute for Human-Animal Connection at the University of Denver. Nina headed a four-person team with Drs. Grant J. Rich (Alaska), Scott D. Churchill (Texas), and Harold Takooshian (New York). A history of the Animal Summits appears online (<https://psycnet.apa.org/fulltext/2023-84135-001.pdf>).

The next Summit will convene at APA in Washington, DC in August 2026, hopefully in cooperation with local NGOs in DC. Early program suggestions / inquiries are most welcome. To join the APA animal network listserv, contact takoosh@aol.com



Congratulations to Our Incoming Division 32 Board Members!

- **President-Elect:** Zenobia Morrill
- **Secretary:** Johanna Buzolits
- **Treasurer:** Shawn Rubin
- **Members-at-Large:** Courtney Cabell and Anthony Pavlo

We are excited by the experience and perspective you will bring to our executive board when your terms begin August 2026!

Division 32 Hospitality Suite Schedule

1421 New Jersey Ave NW Washington, DC 20001

Have questions or need help? Contact Shawn @ 510-725-7600

Thursday

8.6.26

11:00 am - 12:00 pm

Ethical Reasoning at the Human-Animal Boundary
Duberstein, Ibanez-Casas, Worthington, & Martinez

12:00 - 1:00 pm

LUNCH

1:00 - 3:00 pm

The Hate Incidents Within: An Experiential Poetry Workshop
Jackson, Granger, Christensen, Johnson, & Kamens

3:00 - 4:00 pm

HP and AI: A Community Discussion on Human-Machine Relationships
Sarah Kamens & Louis Hoffman

4:00 - 5:00 pm

Brent Dean Robbins Tribute
With Dean Robbins

5:00 - 6:00 pm

SHP Outgoing Board Meeting
Derrick Sebree & Sarah Kamens

Div 24 Interdivisional

Social Hour - 6:00 - 8:00 pm

Poster Presentations

Friday

8.7.26

10:00 - 10:30 am

Consciousness Studies Task Force Update
Shawn Rubin & Courtney Block

10:30 am - 12:00pm

Extraordinary Experiences around the Boundary of Life and Death
Julie Exline (45 minutes); Children Who Recall Past Lives Jim Matlock (45 minutes)

12:00 - 1:00 pm

Demonstration of Dream Projection Method
Stanley Krippner & Tom Eelkema

1:00 - 2:00 pm

What is the "Weapons Program?" Exploring Harm Reduction & Juvenile Justice
Ra-Twoine Fields

2:00 - 3:00 pm

Movement Therapy for Depression in Men with Parkinson's Disease
Courtney Cabell

3:00 - 4:00 pm

The Existential Reality of Racialized Trauma in non-WEIRD Communities
Courtney Cabell

4:00 - 5:15 pm

Otto Rank's Contributions to Humanistic and Existential Psychology
Wadlington, Kramer & Schneider (75 Minutes)

5:15 - 6:00 pm

Late Diagnosis of Autism in Women and the Reconstruction of Identity,
Julissa Garcia

6:00 - 8:00 pm Busboys & Poets

Saturday

8.8.26

10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Div 32 Awards Ceremony,
Theopia Jackson

12:00 - 1:00 pm

Incoming Executive Board Meeting

1:00 - 3:00 pm

New Edges in Humanistic and Existential Psychology
Louis Hoffman, Theopia Jackson, Zenobia Morrill, Pratyusha Tummala-Narra, Kirk Schneider

3:00 - 4:00 pm

Come Speak With Us: A Liberatory Retrospective and Practical Envisioning
Xochitl Vallejos

4:00 - 5:00 pm

The Humanistic Psychologist (APA Journal) Board Meeting
Louis Hoffman

5:00 - 6:00 pm

Presidential Address
Derrick Sebree & Sarah Kamens

Social Hour

6:00 - 8:00 pm

Poster Presentations

DIVISION 32 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Division 32 a “Model Division”

APA named Division 32 a “Model Division” in its August 2025 *Division Digest*. For the full article, see: <https://www.apa.org/about/division/digest/leader-resources/existential-humanistic-psychology>

[MODEL DIVISIONS](#)



[Division 32 strengthens the foundations of existential-humanistic psychology](#)

New publications, ethical engagements, and editorial transitions [Read More](#)

Coming Soon:

Directory of Graduate Programs in Humanistic Psychology

Division 32's Humanistic Education Task Force is pleased to announce the arrival of the 7th edition of the *Directory of Graduate Programs in Humanistic Psychology* this fall. Stay tuned!

In Memorium

Brent Dean Robbins (1970-2026)

Division 32 mourns the loss of our dear colleague, mentor, friend, and brother, Dr. Brent Dean Robbins. Words cannot capture the magnitude of his love, his wisdom, his intellect, his care, and his passion for people and community. A special issue of the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* celebrating his life and work is on the way.

