8.1: Chapter Introduction

In contrast to both the often dark, subconscious emphasis of the psychodynamic theorists and the somewhat cold, calculated perspectives of behavioral/cognitive theorists, the humanistic psychologists focus on each individual’s potential for personal growth and self-actualization. Carl Rogers was influenced by strong religious experiences (both in America and in China) and his early clinical career in a children’s hospital. Consequently, he developed his therapeutic techniques and the accompanying theory in accordance with a positive and hopeful perspective. Rogers also focused on the unique characteristics and viewpoint of individuals.

Abraham Maslow is best known for his extensive studies on the most salient feature of the humanistic perspective: self-actualization. He is also the one who referred to humanistic psychology as the third force, after the psychodynamic and behavioral/cognitive perspectives, and he specifically addressed the need for psychology to move beyond its study of unhealthy individuals. He was also interested in the psychology of the work place, and his recognition in the business field has perhaps made him the most famous psychologist.

Henry Murray was an enigmatic figure, who seemingly failed to properly acknowledge the woman who inspired much of his work, and who believed his life had been something of a failure. Perhaps he felt remorse as a result of maintaining an extramarital affair with the aforementioned woman, thanks in large part to the advice and help of Carl Jung! Murray extended a primarily psychodynamic perspective to the study of human needs in normal individuals. His Thematic Apperception Test was one of the first psychological tests applied outside of a therapeutic setting, and it provided the basis
for studying the need for achievement (something akin to a learned form of self-actualization).