



Book Review

A Book on Human Nature: Does the Author Do Justice to Either the Historical or the Human Dimensions of this Theme?

Ron Dultz (2007). *Who Are We?* Reseda, CA: Ron Dultz Publishing
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by **Larise du Plessis**

Introduction

Many psychologists, philosophers, anthropologists, evolutionary scientists and theologians have had difficulty providing a clear, complete and exhaustive operational definition for human nature. This is a slippery and ubiquitous term and many have attempted to formulate a coherent description of what this term represents. Many avoid an explicit definition; some feel human nature is a self-evident phenomenon requiring no operational definition. The term, or concept, is contentious and its protean faces a product of different worldviews including the Cartesian mind-body split; free will and determinism; nature and nurture; the objective or subjective self. Colloquially, human nature is a blanket description of the basic range of normal human behaviours actualised in our daily lives. Cognizant of this diversity, any attempt to address the concept of human nature in a scholarly manner is a commendable one. However, such an endeavour comes at a high price – the risk of sacrificing conceptual and theoretical clarity.

To my mind, Ron Dultz, author of *Who Are We?*, has paid this price. Setting out, I will assess Dultz's theoretical integrity by examining his worldview. I

will follow on by attempting to distil his central constructs and illuminate their intelligibility. Lastly, I will try to identify the book's target audience since it informs its utility. A problem when reviewing a text lacking conceptual and theoretical clarity and presented unsystematically is that any commentary tends to mirror the reviewed text, sully instead of clarifying. In order to avoid this, I will make use of ample examples, allowing Dultz to speak for himself, clearly separate from my commentary.

The author of *Who Are We?* contends that the subject matter is seated in humanistic and existential epistemologies: a claim that may prove untrue. In essence, the book addresses three main constructs worthy of deliberation: the idea of "Self", mental health, and a "need-based psychology or psychotherapy". The ideas contained within the constructs may well prove valuable to scholars of existential phenomenology searching for practical research material, and as such justifies the inclusion of a review of this specific book in a journal of phenomenology. However, scholars who read *Who Are We?* with this purpose in mind should note that its author inconsistently adheres to the rule of epoché; his descriptions are often coloured with explanations; and his unsuspected expectations bias his descriptions to favour his own views above others. Often, the reader is left to draw his or her own inferences where Dultz is not sufficiently explicit.

The author's intended audience is large. Attempting

to address everyone, all the time, and covering as much ground as can be crammed into 174 pages, is daunting, if not impossible. Dultz also intimates that he wants the psychological community to consider and adopt his as a central theory and, in doing so, to alter the philosophical direction of psychology.

Before proceeding, I believe it prudent to provide a brief outline of *Who Are We?*. The book consists of twelve chapters, ostensibly set out to reflect the three constructs of self, mental health and “need-based psychology/psychotherapy”. Chapter 1 is titled “The Self” and includes sixteen subheadings. Chapter 2 goes under the heading “Role of the Individual and The Supremacy of Individual Rights”. The third chapter asks who we are, and chapter 4 addresses mental health and psychological needs. Chapter 5 proposes a model of “need-based psychology”. Chapter 6 presents manifestations and characteristics of mental health. The influence of the environment on mental health is under the microscope in chapter 7, with the following chapter continuing the theme by highlighting “paths and procedures” leading to mental health. Chapter 9 touches on the role of conscience in managing psychological needs. Character, and its purportedly indispensable role in a healthy personality and society, is considered in chapter 10. Chapter 11 makes a case for an independent psyche, and the closing chapter proposes a purportedly novel and comprehensive model of “need-replenishment” and “environment-enrichment” therapy.

Three Constructs

With his book, Dultz attempts “to offer a better understanding of the mental and emotional essence of human nature than is currently available in handy format” (Dultz, 2007, p. 1). Dultz logically interlinks the constructs of self, mental health, and “need-based psychology/psychotherapy”. He proposes that introspection, or understanding one’s self, is essential for “self-development/self-unfoldment” (Dultz, 2007, p. 19) and ultimately mental health. He further posits that “our human, psychological needs are genuine expressions of our psychological self” (p. 64).

Within this context, I am inclined to surmise that many a scholar is likely to approach Dultz’s claims regarding “the essence of human nature” and “expressions of our psychological self” with an admixture of anticipation and suspicion.

In his comment on the cover of *Who Are We?*, James J. Johnson (2007), professor emeritus of psychology at Illinois State University, commends Dultz for his effort, remarking that “Dultz begins with an

admirable goal – to offer a better understanding of human nature than is currently available – and proceeds to provide just that. The result is a comprehensive look at human beings and human behaviour from the humanistic perspective”. What makes this commendation astonishing is the implication that Dultz has accomplished in 174 pages what psychologists, philosophers, scholars and sages have grappled with for centuries. I agree that his is indeed an admirable goal – if not also patently romantic. Regrettably, disappointment greets this anticipation of scholarly exposition, confirming the suspicion that writings making such generalized claims tend to be superficial or poorly integrated.

The scholarly disappointment emerges from the details of Dultz’s presentation and follows two lines of critique, applicable to each of the three main constructs:

- (a) Dultz’s constructs are not situated within a *particular worldview*. Although he declares that he follows a humanistic/existential approach, Dultz applies this worldview neither explicitly nor consistently. Put another way, the author neither discusses the constructs within the limitations of his proposed worldview, nor declares how his worldview informs the constructs. This makes for an incoherent and confused presentation of the constructs and leaves the reader stranded.
- (b) Partly because of this meta-theoretical confusion, and partly because of scholarly ignorance, Dultz’s conceptualisation or explanation of each construct is *not exhaustive*. The impression of ignorance thus created is especially evident when he presents his ideas as novel, whereas those very ideas are well established in the field of psychology. His conceptualizations fail to represent the coverage the constructs have enjoyed within the field of psychology. Perilous generalizations may result.

For the sake of theoretical clarity on Dultz’s worldview, a summary of his philosophical approach follows.

Humanistic/Existential Epistemologies

Existentialism, fetching its roots from Kierkegaard and later Sartre, established a philosophical trend, or attitude (Speake, 1978, p. 115). This attitude implies that the essence of so-called reality “consists of ‘subjective truths’ which, though they cannot be proved or extended to others, are the sole basis of individual actions” (Macrone, 2002, p. 69).

Existentialists will argue that “neither nature nor society can offer us certainty about good and bad, right and wrong and that the ultimate meaning and value of our actions are always uncertain” (Macrone, 2002, p. 70). Sartre’s idea of “I am condemned to be free” (1943) infers that, as humans, we are “solely responsible for making out of each situation our own ‘world’ – for choosing our own goals, our methods of coping, our responses to the anxiety of choosing” (Macrone, 2002, p. 72). In essence, “Existentialism is better at describing than prescribing” (Macrone, 2002, p. 73). Dultz appears highly prescriptive in his modular approach to psychological needs. He implies that there is an objective reality applicable to all humans. This reflects a confused worldview. Broadly he adheres to an existential attitude when he describes elements such as “psychic need for significance, meaning and purpose” (p. 77). But, contradictory in its contents as it is, Dultz’s work becomes clearly deterministic, less descriptive and more explanatory, based on tacit behavioural as well as psychodynamic epistemologies.

Humanistic psychology, on the other hand, was developed in the 1960s by Maslow, Rollo May and followers, and rejected behaviourist approaches and psychoanalysis, focusing instead on a so-called third force human potential (Rohmann, 2002, p. 186). Humanism is “a term that has been given a wide variety of often very vague meanings, two being more important than the rest: 1. The intellectual movement that characterized the culture of Renaissance Europe Such students were optimistic about human possibilities, attended enthusiastically to human achievements and eschewed refined enquiries into theological niceties. 2. In this century the label has been appropriated by those who reject all religious beliefs, insisting that we should be exclusively concerned with human welfare in this – allegedly, the only – world” (Speake, 1978, p. 153).

Dultz focuses on human possibilities, achievements and welfare as general trends, but fails to declare this explicitly when he presents his main constructs: indeed a central criticism of his *magnum opus*. As Maslow’s ideas appear as the main inspiration for Dultz’s theory, his worldview is assumed to follow Maslow’s slavishly. If this were so, it can be inferred that his theory lives within humanistic philosophy. Yet, in his book, this assertion is also not declared, giving his theory the guise of randomness.

Even within existential and humanistic camps there are commonalities and contrasts. If Dultz presents his model as useful for psychotherapy, he is palpably unaware of the intricate philosophical similarities and

differences between existentialism and humanism. Cain (paraphrased in Corey, 2009) provides an elegant take on the comparisons between these two approaches and explains: “[t]hey share a respect for the client’s subjective experience, the uniqueness and individuality of each client, and a trust in the capacity of the client to make positive and constructive conscious choices. They have in common emphasis on concepts such as freedom, choice, values, personal responsibility, autonomy, purpose, and meaning. Both approaches place little value on the role of techniques in the therapeutic process, and emphasize instead the importance of genuine encounter. They differ in that existentialists take the position that we are faced with the anxiety of choosing to create an identity in a world that lacks intrinsic meaning. The humanists, in contrast, take the somewhat less anxiety-provoking position that each of us has a natural potential that we can actualize and use to find meaning. Many contemporary existential therapists refer to themselves as existential-humanistic practitioners, indicating that their roots are in existential philosophy but that they have incorporated many aspects of North American humanistic psychotherapies” (Cain, cited in Corey, 2009, p.168). In his general approach, Dultz seems to follow a more humanistic trend, focusing on the meaning locked up in self-actualisation. But, occasionally, he hints at the importance of creating one’s own identity in a meaningless world. This often indistinguishable conceptual tangle exposes his lack of systematic presentation in worldview.

Many of the examples discussed under the heading below (regarding Dultz’s worldview) also double as illustrations of Dultz’s impoverished review of the existing literature concerning the now familiar constructs.

Constructs Are Not Situated Within a *Particular* Worldview

The Self

Dultz seems to lay the cornerstones of his so-called comprehensive theory/model for a mentally healthy person by philosophizing about the ontology of human nature with a focus on the Self.

Different theoretical perspectives interpret and define the self very differently. Dultz’s definition is a colloquial and eclectic admixture. For example, he calls on Karen Horney, the American Heritage Dictionary (3rd ed.) and a sprinkling of humanist/existentialist authors in his quest for a definition of the self. The choice of Horney contributes to the momentum of his conceptual confusion: Horney (1885-1952) is considered a neo-Freudian and

psychodynamic therapist. It is most surprising that, whilst testing both humanistic/existentialist and psychodynamic waters, Dultz excludes Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) in his quest for understanding the Self. And yet, Dultz's claims of a universal self are so clearly reminiscent of Jung's archetypes. Also ignored is Heinz Kohut (1913-1981), who, in his *self-psychology*, asserted that psychopathology is the result of unmet *needs* and that addressing the self is necessary to make therapy work. Dultz also notes that Maslow's "skeleton of psychological structure" is best identified by the term "self" and understands that to denote a "person's mental and emotional essence" (Dultz, 2007, p. 4).

Without clarifying his meta-theoretical understanding of "the self", he opines: "since there is no official, scientific or incontrovertible definition of the Self, it is up to philosophers, sages or anyone who wants to try, to come up with a suitable definition and explanation of the Self" (Dultz, 2007, p. 4). Dultz proceeds to explain, rather than define, the self, using confusing colloquial language. To represent the self, he uses the words "identity" and "psyche" interchangeably. He says that "a person's self is who that person is as a conscious being, with motives, goals, a belief system, attitudes, a memory, a history, habits, thoughts, feelings, moods, hopes, a unique personality, and with talents, abilities, vulnerabilities, doubts, fears, courage, aesthetic appreciation, etc. In essence, one's Self is one's identity as a conscious, thinking, feeling being who is fully engaged in the process of living life" (Dultz, 2007, p. 5). Perhaps the use of "etc." in his explanation of self alludes to problems with his conceptualization.

Under the subheading "Formation of the Self", Dultz enters the philosophical realm of determinism and free will. Unbeknownst to him, he initially sides with the deterministic stance: "[I]t is our human destiny" to be true to one's Self. But, by the second chapter, he has switched allegiance, wittingly or unwittingly: "Freedom is our human destiny" (Dultz, 2007, p. 38).

Other examples of this kind of inconsistency abound, but Dultz's theoretical confusion is best encapsulated by the pronouncements contained under the subheading "Difficulty of Understanding One's Self". Here he declares that the self is complex, and that therefore understanding the self is complex. Earlier, however, he had pleaded for a single definition, without acknowledging that different worldviews conceptualize the self differently.

Mental Health

Dultz calls for a standardized, or widely agreed-upon,

body of knowledge for the mentally healthy person and likens this to the universally known Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). But, unlike the DSM, his is not a nosology, not a study of disease, but rather an atheoretical categorical approach to mental health. The idea of mental health is like the idea of self, a construct which can be interpreted from diverse worldviews. Unfortunately, this appears to be Dultz's *modus operandi*, favouring his personal, eclectic worldview in preference to others.

He polarizes the idea of mental health: psychopathology on one side and healthy functioning on the other. On this rests his bias. He takes the dogmatic standpoint that the domain of mental health is constructed around the concept of "illness", where "illness" and "health" are diametrically opposed concepts. This, as we know, is not so, and mental health is a much more complex concept than the mere opposite of mental illness (*viz.*, the Gestalt principle in psychotherapy).

If Dultz had set out to address this complexity, he failed dismally, managing only to sow confusion.

As before, this failure can be traced to Dultz's disregard of the theoretical philosophical comparisons between approaches to illness and health. Applying Corey's aphorism of therapy to the construct of mental health makes a "clear case for theoretical pluralism, especially in a society that is becoming increasingly diverse" (Corey, 2009, p. 4). Many approaches exist, each with useful dimensions, each making its unique contribution to understanding human behaviour, and it is not a matter of one being right and another wrong. Dultz does not convince that he even perused the existing literature on mental health.

Needs

Bravely, Dultz sells his list of needs (representing a model) as the 'truth'. Dultz's list of Psychological Needs are found in Chapter 5 and the headings are provided here:

1. The Psychic Need for Mental Activity
2. Psychic Need for Territorial Space
3. The Psychic Need to Communicate Clearly and Effectively
4. Aesthetic Needs
5. The Psychic Need for Autonomy
6. The Psychic Need for Human Companionship
7. The Psychic Need for Community
8. Psychic Need for Significance, Meaning and Purpose

9. Psychic Need for a Suitable Life Style (Way of Life)
10. Psychic Need for Self-Development
11. The Need for a Guiding Philosophy and Code of Ethics
12. The Psychic Need to be what Nature Intended Us to be
 - (a) (Comfort Principle)
 - (b) (Native Frailties and Vulnerabilities)
 - (c) (Prosperity Factor)
13. Soundness of One's Ideas and Clarity of Thought
14. Self-Expression (an essential psychic need)
 - (a) Creativity and Spontaneity
15. The Psychic Need for Acceptance/Approval (from others)
16. The Psychic Need for Self Love/Like/Acceptance

When considering needs, Dultz manages to conflate paradigms: a smorgasbord of theories is presented under the guise of a general existential trend. As with the constructs of "self" and "mental health", he fails to make explicit which ideas are of his making as distinct from those belonging to others. This is a tangle left to the reader to undo. For example, Horney (1885-1952) identified ten patterns of neurotic needs based upon things she regarded as prerequisites to succeed in life. Dultz's list of needs is suspiciously similar. The similarity between Maslow's (1908-1970) hierarchy of needs and Dultz's distillation of needs is obvious. Other parallels exist: Murray's (1893-1988) theory of psychogenic needs, with Murray having posited as early as 1938 that psychological needs are acquired rather than innate; Alderfer's (1969, 1972) need satisfaction theories/ERG theory of motivation; McClelland's (1917-1998) motivational/learned/acquired needs theory; and Heider's (1896-1988) attribution theory.

Dultz further seems unaware that "[r]eality therapists explore the tenets of choice theory with clients, helping clients to identify basic needs, discovering clients' quality world ..." (Corey, 2009, p. 325); that "Self-Determination theory maintains that an understanding of human motivation requires a consideration of innate psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness" (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 227). Much of Dultz's theory also bears a resemblance to Deci and Ryan's ideas, but again he fails to acknowledge this. At the very least, one would have thought that Dultz would have clarified his work, or contrasted it with Hull's: Hull (1943) held that, rather than acquired motives, needs represent behavioural necessities of an organism.

If indeed Dultz developed his conceptualization independently, it is a commendable effort and

indicative of obvious creativity. Even on this upbeat note, however, there are sully clouds on the horizon. Corey (2009) is of the view that people continually ask certain fundamental questions about themselves, the selfsame questions philosophers have pondered throughout Western history: "Who am I?", "What can I know?", "What ought I to do?", "What can I hope for?", "Where am I going?". These quintessential human questions are not new and form the basis of existential philosophy. According to existential theory, the basic dimensions of the human condition are: (1) the capacity for self-awareness; (2) freedom and responsibility; (3) creating one's identity and establishing meaningful relationships with others; (4) the search for meaning, purpose, values, and goals; (5) anxiety as a condition of living; and (6) awareness of death and nonbeing (Corey, 2009, p. 139). Dultz, expectedly, does not structure his models according to these broad principles, nor does he offer systematic, informed, novel or insightful contrasts or alternatives.

In his uncritical compilation of a theory of human nature with needs insipidated in its essence, Dultz has not examined "basic needs" as a construct and has failed to locate its theoretical co-ordinates.

Conceptualisation is *Not Exhaustive*

The Self

If Dultz were to consistently apply his worldview, it stands to reason that he should address some of the contentious ideas of self – like the self as "I" (subjective knower) and the self as "Me" (object that is known) (James, 1890/1981). Nor does he include current views on the self that depart greatly from this early understanding, positioning the self as playing an integral part in human motivation, cognition, affect and social identity (Gaertner, Sedikides, & Graetz, 1999). He proceeds with the sweeping statement that "(t)he importance of knowing or understanding one's Self is not properly appreciated in modern times" (Dultz, 2007, p. 3). He argues that "[n]owhere in our society here in the United States do I find that the search for self-knowledge is comprehensive or vigorous, unless it is among small groups of psychologists who delve into the Self as an area of specialized study, or among isolated individuals who are driven to achieve a thorough understanding of themselves" (Dultz, 2007, p. 3).

Not acknowledging his sources or attempting to draw upon the existing literature, Dultz trivializes the contribution psychology has made, and continues to make, in understanding the Self. By misinforming the reader of the ostensible absence of discussion of the

self in the existing literature, he creates an opportunity to opine and to make his voice heard. In so doing, he does not re-invent the wheel, but lays claim to having *invented* it.

The following extract further illustrates Dultz's ignorance of the construct of self:

If the science of psychology would follow in Maslow's footsteps, and begin to give the human psychological Self the credit it deserves by assigning it an identity of its own, which differs from the identity of the human's physical body, I believe it would revolutionize the science of psychology, reinvigorate it and humanize it. (Dultz, 2007, p. 6)

His far-reaching sentiment that Maslow disappeared off the horizon of modern psychology is baseless. Nowhere does he give credence to the possibility that Maslow's contributions have become integrated in the repertoire of modern therapists.

Mental Health

Dultz's reflection on the construct of mental health and psychotherapy in its attendance is as restricted as his ideas on the Self. I will let his words explain:

If psychotherapy is to be of optimal value, it must speak to all aspects of human nature and it must aim to help humans fulfil their potential. To accomplish this, psychologists need to have a good sense of the characteristics and manifestations of mental health, and of the ingredients needed in the environment to service mental health. They need to know what a person is like who has excellent mental and emotional health, who is fully engaged in living life, who can effectively meet life's challenges, and who is living a rich and rewarding life. (Dultz, 2007, p. 164)

At this juncture, Dultz proceeds with a selection of ideological aphorisms, including:

A human cannot sit or stand still for long, or continuously have idle thoughts, or be emotionally unconnected and still be healthy. A human cannot have nothing going on in his life and still be healthy. A human cannot be a non-participant and still be healthy. And the participation, involvement, connecting with others and with other things and situations must make

sense. (Dultz, 2007, p. 165)

It is likely that traditional forms of psychotherapy do not focus on the ultimate potentials of people, nor on the needs of the fully functioning person, So most psychotherapy likely settles for trying to identify symptoms, ease pain and rescue people from their misery. (Dultz, 2007, p. 167)

If one approaches the human psyche primarily from the standpoint of what has gone wrong with it (which I believe to be the typical approach taken by psychologists), one is assuming the role of a rescuer. A rescuer's job stops once the immediate crisis has been mitigated. (Dultz, 2007, p. 168)

In psychology or philosophy, the idea of a 'point of view' that investigates 'what keeps us healthy' rather than 'what makes us ill' is not a new one, especially not in humanistic/existential approaches to therapy. In particular, Dultz seems unaware of the existence of Positive Psychology (Seligman, 2002; Sheldon & King, 2001; Snyder & Lopez, 2005); Psychoneuroimmunology, with much of its focus on what keeps a person healthy rather than what promotes illness (Ader, Felten, & Cohen, 1991; Hafen, Karren, Frandsen, & Lee, 1996; and Kobasa, 1979); and postmodern approaches grounded on the assumption that people possess both internal and external resources to draw upon when solving problems (Corey, 2009, p. 6). He seems unacquainted with the integration of humanistic/existential principles into psychotherapies that consider the well-functioning, integrated, 'self-actualized' person.

When acknowledging their capabilities and competencies, therapists view clients differently from when they only consider their psychopathology (Corey, 2009). This is precisely one of the strengths that humanistic/existential philosophy has added to the training of most therapists since the Second World War. Is it possible that Dultz has such a misguided idea of psychotherapy?

Needs

Dultz claims to have created a comprehensive model of need-fulfilment. His own model comprises an unsystematic catalogue of needs and hinges on the idea that fulfilment of human needs is central to mental health and optimal living. The model is described in a dense, often incoherent-sounding way and it does not impress as either novel or practical.

Much of Dultz's theoretical poverty and confusion were illustrated in the previous section, already suggesting that the [needs]-model is not exhaustive. However, allow me to comment here on the outflow of his needs model, namely his recommendation for a so-called 'new psychotherapy'. Dultz proposes the need for "need-replenishment" and "environment-enrichment" therapy and hails these as novel psychotherapeutic concepts.

David Katz (1935) intimated that phenomenological psychologists seek to bring "disciplined naïveté" to the therapeutic relationship, observing and describing experience without prejudging it. Even if I attempt to approach Dultz's recommendation for the development of such therapies with this attitude, I struggle to view his recommendations as contributing any more than a therapeutic method or technique. I hold this view with much conflict, as humanistic/existentially-conceived psychotherapies traditionally do not ascribe to the application of techniques. Most therapists would, however, agree that, regardless of approach, they would notice the obvious absence of "health impulses" (Dultz, 2007, p. 168) on a person's advance to self-enhancement/improvement.

The Audience

Dultz states that his book "...is written not just for psychology students, psychologists and workers in the mental health profession; but for the benefit of all people who can think and feel, hope and dream, strategize and plan, and who want to participate in making our world a more human place in which to live" (Dultz, 2007, p. 1).

When presenting his theory to psychologists, it appears that he had in mind a wide-ranging audience within the field of psychology. This audience conceivably ranges from theoretical psychologists, philosophers, psychotherapists, and organizational, research and social psychologists as agents for social change. The problem here is that each of these branches in psychology might require a different approach or worldview to make a contribution. Dultz

About the Author



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presents his theory to the whole psychological community, enticing them to further investigation. If this expectation were to be met, an explicit paradigm (Kuhn, 1962) needed to have been stated. The specific questions he asked and how his ideas evolved are all necessary steps that must be declared (Rohmann, 2000). Sadly, Dultz seems to present his theory as a blanket approach to psychology and life in general. This is problematic, as, without an explicit paradigm, his ideas are rendered useless, and although he claims to approach his ideas from a humanistic/existential perspective, this is not what emerges when reading the text. To the contrary, his approach is prescriptive and dogmatic.

My Final Take

Because his worldview is confusing, his ideas unsubstantiated, his intended (or unintended) audience awkwardly large, and his focus disturbingly wide, I found myself having to work unusually hard to extract the essence of Dultz's thoughts – a task that should have been facilitated by the author. His theory is probably applicable to some aspects of psychology, psychotherapy and human experience, but certainly not, as it pretends to be, to all. General applicability and utility are sacrificed at the altar of superficiality and stating what is already known. As a comprehensive resource on human nature, Dultz's book is of doubtful reliability. It stands as an eclectic monologue of limited value and appeal. The manner in which Dultz presents his main constructs is clearly not representative of the current discourses and main tenets in the field of psychology. This is unfortunate, as Dultz's ideas are mostly common sense, and common sense usually makes for good theory.

In content, argument and style, Dultz's *Who Are We?* is reminiscent of a manualised self-empowerment pop-psychology text. His is a personal account of the obvious, coloured in Dultz's own unique human experience. Conceivably, certain of Dultz's ideas can be used as a basis for theory-building. Otherwise, his book provides the starting point for self-indulgent after-dinner discussions with friends.

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Author's Response to Review

by Ron Dultz

I am struck by this reviewer's inability to appreciate *Who Are We?*. While it takes thousands of hours of dedicated work to compile a serious treatise on human nature (or to demonstrate a serious effort at compiling such a treatise), it is odd that a reviewer can think him- or herself victorious by pulling out a couple of six shooters and trying to riddle it with holes. It is far more difficult to build a structure than to demolish one; and individuals who pride themselves on blowing up things or setting them on fire (even if those things are honest efforts by serious writers) could well be compared to having a terrorist mentality. Art is to be appreciated, not assaulted; and reasonably good ideas should be enhanced by pointing out ways of improving upon them; not by trying to exterminate them, as Hitler tried to exterminate the Jews.

There was no mention of the author's motives or intentions by this reviewer. The reviewer was bound and determined to paint the book as ludicrous in its inception, and was incapable of dwelling on the possibility that the author may have had the very best of motives and intentions in writing the book.

In Western movies (please forgive my incompetence at citing examples here), there is the long standing theme of wannabes targeting the best gunfighters of the times because they thought they could gain stature by assassinating them. This was obviously the methodology of very weak egos in the days of the old west, as it is now; as evidenced in this reviewer's review of *Who Are We?*. If *Who Are We?* has as little substance as the acrid criticisms of this reviewer imply, why did the reviewer waste so many words trying to undermine it? A truly worthless work would

not garner any attention from an individual who valued his or her time, not to mention his or her input.

Since the book does not contain a flood of citations seeping into its sentences and paragraphs from every angle, but depends upon clean, clear and concise thinking to move its ideas forward, the reviewer may have been seized by a type of academic apoplexy, whose symptom is an inability to function in a milieu of pure thought, unadulterated by the crutch of citations. I think academically trained individuals sometimes forget that many of the greatest thinkers in the history of psychology and philosophy did their best thinking and writing without the aid of citations.

In defense of this book, I should mention that at least two reviews of it (both more positive than negative) can be found in psychology and sociology journals on the internet. But perhaps more impressive are the more than two hundred critiques I received of its original, shorter version from psychology students studying at three American Universities. Admittedly, the most advanced class were only third year psychology students studying personality theory at Illinois State University. Ninety percent of these students were exuberant about the work. Here are some of their exact comments, each set of comments quoted coming from a different student, and all of them typical of the type of responses I received:

Student #1: "If the psychology community recognizes the direction Dultz is taking, I believe there could be tremendous advances in the science of psychology."

Student #2: "I think the new theory is the missing link that is needed to cure or at least help lots of people."

Student #3: “Dultz’s book is a great guide for understanding one’s self and the world around him or her.”

Student #4: “I believe that Dultz’s new theory of human psychology contributes vast amounts of new views and theories to the world of psychology.”

Student #5: “In all my experience with psychology, I have never had mental health described to me the way Dultz did. Some of his ideas are ingenious and I wonder why no one else has actually taken part in his thinking, and why psychologists aren’t experimenting on his ideas instead of the traditional ideas they now hold.”

Student #6: “I think this theory contributes the truth about the human psyche.”

Some individuals may feel that this rejoinder was a bit hard on the reviewer. But I felt no sense of maliciousness when I penned it. The reviewer’s mission was to destroy my creative, sincere and worthwhile effort; and my response is simply to point out what she was trying to accomplish. The reviewer sowed the seeds of hate and mockery; and all I did was to provide the reviewer with a mirror for seeing her self. Should the literary legend, Robin Hood, have felt ignoble for stealing from the rich and giving to the poor? Should I feel self-contempt for righting a wrong that was done me? I think not.

About the Author



Ron Dultz is a freelance writer working in the areas of philosophy and popular psychology who describes himself as “an eclectic philosopher, writing on topics of importance to humanity”. In addition to his books, his writings have been published in magazines and journals in eight countries. Despite his having had what he terms “virtually no formal education”, his articles have been accepted for publication in academic journals in countries ranging from America, Australia and New Zealand to Sri Lanka, Qatar and India, on topics ranging from democracy, the nature of freedom and business ethics to the philosophy of education.

Ron Dultz’s theories have also been noted in the psychological domain. In the mid-1990s, the review by Dr Albert Ellis of one of Dultz’s books, *Educating the Entire Person* (1993), in the APA’s book review journal, *Contemporary Psychology* (now *PsycCRITIQUES*), was followed by a debate in the journal between himself and Dr Ellis. More recently, a mini-article by Dultz, titled “A Paucity of Philosophy”, was published as the lead letter in *The Psychologist*, the official monthly publication of the British Psychological Society. In Spring 2008 he was welcomed as a member of the American Psychotherapy Association (APA). Currently, his focus is on refining and promulgating his theory of psychotherapy, called *Need-Replenishment and Environment Enrichment Therapy*, which he is seeking to validate empirically within a therapeutic setting in collaboration with practising psychologists.

In his youth, Ron Dultz made his living for ten years as a street-corner poet, and, in addition to his other writings, he is the author of an extensive collection of poetry, two volumes of which have been published to date.