Encountering America: Humanistic Psychology, Sixties Culture, and the Shaping of the Modern Self

by Jessica Grogan


Jessica Grogan, Ph.D., author of Encountering America: Humanistic Psychology, Sixties Culture, and the Shaping of the Modern Self (Harper Perennial), is a cultural historian. She examines the impact of humanistic psychology on American culture during the 1960s, a period marked by significant cultural and social changes.

In her book, Grogan discusses how humanistic psychology, with its emphasis on personal growth and self-actualization, resonated with the counterculture of the 1960s. She explores the role of humanistic psychologists in shaping American thought and the ways in which their ideas influenced the development of self-help and personal development movements.

Grogan highlights the contributions of key humanistic psychologists such as Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and Rollo May, who sought to move psychology away from a focus on pathology to a focus on human potential. She argues that humanistic psychology's emphasis on the individual's capacity for self-discovery and growth was particularly appealing to a generation that sought to challenge traditional hierarchies and rigid societal norms.

Grogan also considers the ways in which humanistic psychology's emphasis on personal and spiritual growth intersected with the broader cultural and political movements of the 1960s, such as civil rights, anti-war protests, and women's liberation. She suggests that humanistic psychology's focus on the individual's search for meaning and fulfillment resonated with the wider social movements of the time.

Overall, Grogan's book provides a comprehensive overview of the rise of humanistic psychology in the 1960s and its influence on American culture, offering insights into the ways in which psychological ideas can shape and be shaped by broader social and cultural contexts.