

The Humanistic Approach



Pages 120-121 of course text book (20/21 of Year 2 book)

Specification details

Humanistic Psychology: free will, self-actualisation and Maslow's hierarchy of needs, focus on the self, congruence, the role of conditions of worth. The influence on counselling Psychology.

Origins and History

HUMANISTIC IS THE STUDY OF A WHOLE
PERSON AND HIS OR HERS UNIQUENESS.



- The humanistic movement developed in America in the early 1950s
- It was termed the '**third force**' since it aimed to replace the two main approaches - Behaviourism and Psychoanalysis
- Humanism was intended to offer a less deterministic and artificial approach.
- Humanistic theories are concerned with human experiences, uniqueness, meaning, freedom and choice.

Free Will



This is the notion that humans can make choices and are not determined by biological or external forces

- Humanistic psychology is quite different from the other approaches by claiming that human beings are self-determining and have free will
- This does not mean that people are not affected by external or internal influences but we are active agents who have the ability to determine our own development

Abraham Maslow

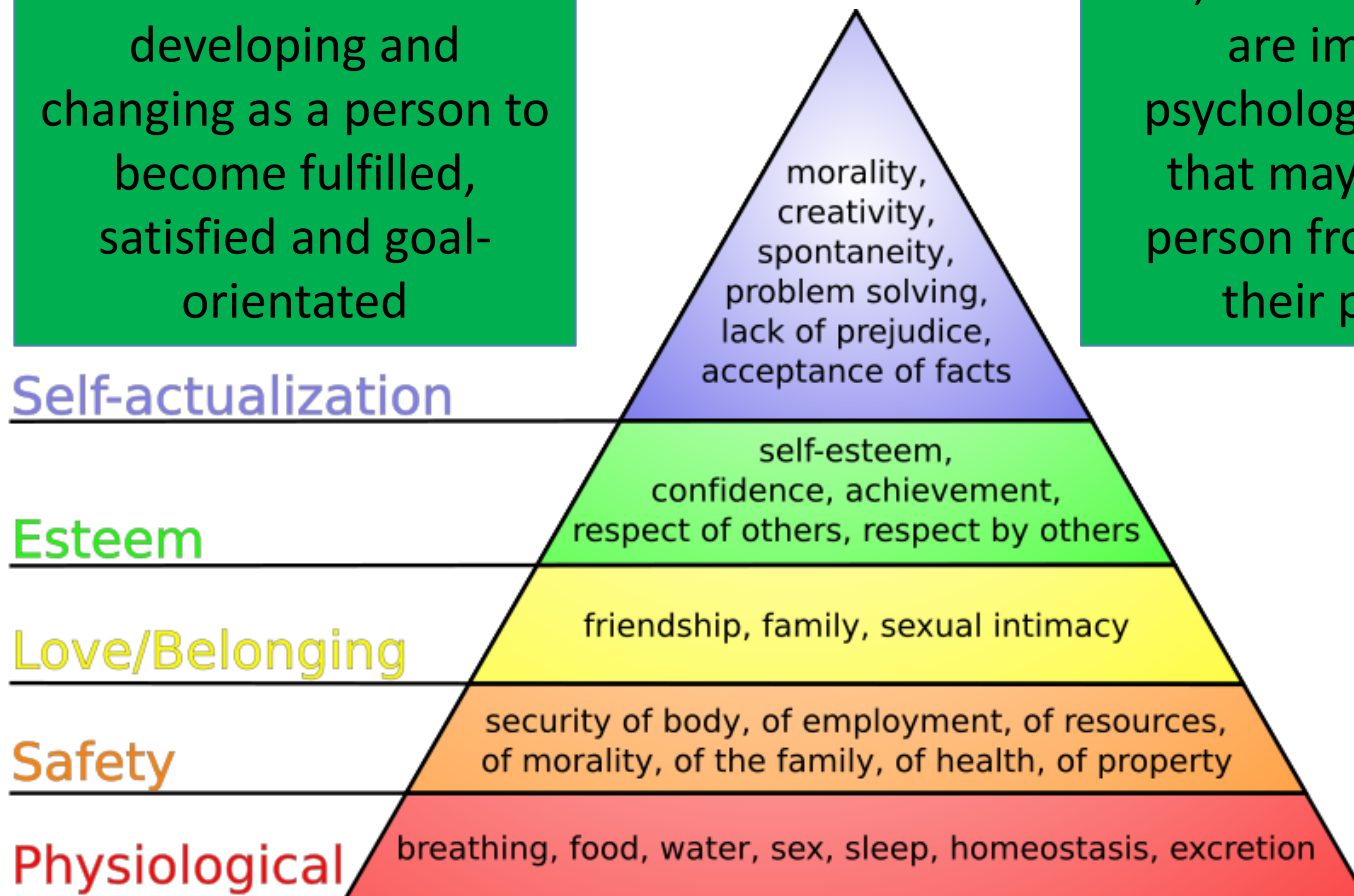


- Maslow believes humans are motivated by needs beyond those of basic biological survival.
- Fundamental to human nature is the desire to grow and develop to achieve our full potential - referred to as '*self-actualisation*'.
- Maslow's hierarchy of needs ranges from basic needs to higher level psychological and actualisation needs.
- All four levels of the hierarchy must be met before an individual can work towards self actualisation
- Maslow's theory emphasises uniquely human motivational factors - higher level needs are a later evolutionary development of the human species

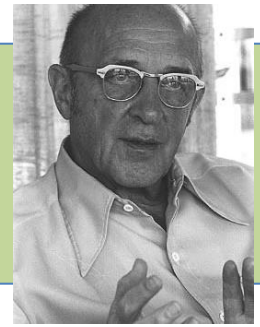
Motivation - Maslow

Personal growth is concerned with developing and changing as a person to become fulfilled, satisfied and goal-orientated

Not everyone will manage this, however, and there are important psychological barriers that may prevent a person from reaching their potential



Carl Rogers



Carl Rogers points out that individuals strive to achieve their ideal selves because they are motivated towards self-improvement.

“each client has within him or herself the vast resources for self-understanding, for altering his or her self-concept, attitudes, and self-directed behavior—and that these resources can be tapped by providing a definable climate of facilitative attitudes.”

Rogers felt that Freud had dealt with the “sick half” of psychology, so the humanistic approach concerned itself with explanations of healthy growth in individuals – a positive image of the human condition

Assumptions



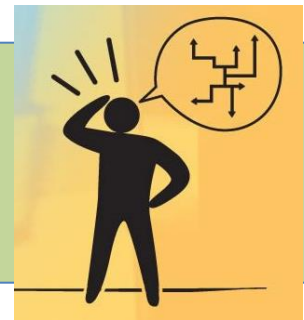
- Humans have a basic need to feel nurtured and valued by significant people in their lives, such as parents (love, praise and acceptance).
- If this is given freely, without conditions (*unconditional positive regard*), then people will develop a healthy sense of self-worth, recognising their abilities and difficulties.
- Children who receive negative regard, such as criticism and blame, develop low self-esteem.
- To avoid this, the parent's should blame the behaviour not the child.

A sense of well-being



- A healthy sense of wellbeing is established if an individual maintains a reasonable consistency between ideal self and actual behaviour. This is known as **congruence**.
- The greater the gap between the ideal self and the actual self, the greater the incongruence.
- Incongruence can lead to low self-worth and maladjustment.
- Defence mechanisms (distortion, denial, blocking) can stop the self from growing and changing, and widen the gulf between our ideal self and true self.

Assumptions



- In order to reduce the gap between the self-concept and the ideal self, Rogers developed client-centered therapy (CCT).
- **Conditions of worth**: a parent who sets boundaries or limits on their love for their child is storing up psychological problems for that child in the future
- An effective therapist is able to provide clients with the unconditional positive regard they had failed to receive as children
- The whole person should be studied in their environmental context and Psychology should study the individual case (*idiographic approach*) rather than the average performance of groups (*nomothetic*)

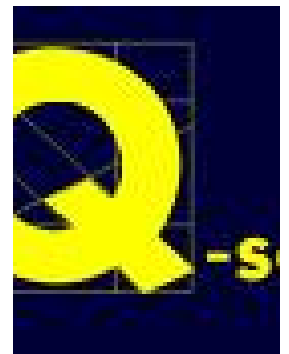
Contribution to society



- The humanistic approach's primary application has been to therapeutic treatment.
- Client-centered therapy (CCT), whereby the client is encouraged to develop positive self-regard and overcome the mismatch between their perceived self, true self and ideal self.
- Gestalt therapy - the aim is to help the client become a 'whole' (gestalt) person by getting them to accept every aspect of themselves. Techniques of gestalt therapy include confrontation, dream analysis, and role playing.

Methods of investigation

- The Q-Sort assessment was developed by Stephenson (1953) and it was quickly adopted into Client Centered Therapy by Carl Rogers.
- The measurement of a person's congruence/ incongruence is measured by a Q-SORT. A q-sort is a series of cards, each containing a personal statement.
- For example, “needs recognition from others” or “is self-defeating” or “is personally charming”. The person sorts this statement into a forced distribution under two sets of conditions:
 - A) to describe their “real self”,
 - B) to describe their “ideal self”.



Strengths of humanistic approach

- It emphasises choice (free will and responsibility) – largely ignored by the other approaches
- It considers subjective conscious experience
- It values personal ideals and self-fulfilment
- It has enabled psychologists to explore human existence with more sensitivity than the more scientific methods
- It has contributed to psychological theories and has been shown to be effective in the treatment of some disorders such as depression and stress



Applications of the approach

Topic area	Application
Depression	Depression/low self-esteem results from lack of <i>unconditional positive regard</i> and an inability to accept one's self
Schizophrenia	Humanistic therapies cannot directly tackle serious disorders but can be used as a supportive therapy, for relatives for example
Aggression	Aggressive behaviour results from people who are not fully functioning at a psychological level. As a result this blocks personal growth and prevents of self-actualisation. To remove aggression facilitates personal growth.
Stress	Counselling for stressful life events such as divorce and bereavement allows clients insight and control.

Limitations of humanistic approach

- This approach has less impact on mainstream psychology than the other approaches
- The use of qualitative techniques has been questioned
- As the subject matter is individual experience it is not possible to formulate general laws of behaviour and as such is not a comprehensive theory but rather a loose set of abstract ideas.
- Due to the vagueness of such terms as 'self-actualisation' and 'fully-functioning person', little empirical research has been carried out – untestable concepts
- Not all cultures share the assumption that individual achievement brings fulfilment



Essay

Can you answer the following?

Describe and evaluate the humanistic approach in psychology.

Refer to at least one other approach in your answer (12 marks)



Homework

Ensure you have written up your class notes to include the following:

- *The assumptions of the humanistic approach including:*
 - free will
 - self-actualisation and Maslow's hierarchy of needs
 - focus on the self and congruence
 - the role of conditions of worth
 - the influence on counselling Psychology.
- *The strengths and weaknesses of the approach*

