

Humanistic Perspective

Humanistic psychology emerged as a third force during the late 1950's in the United States as an **alternative to the deterministic orientations** of behaviourism and psychoanalysis. There was a powerful element of European existentialism and phenomenology present in the earliest years of development, but humanistic psychology has now developed into an eclectic movement that attracts a diverse range of theorists.

Humanistic psychology's emphasis on the possibility of **personal growth** and change found immediate acceptance. The methodology applied by humanistic psychologists tends to use alternatives to those focusing on quantification and scientific rigour, but often produces useful data. The humanistic perspective is not applied universally, perhaps because of its emphasis on the individual and its optimistic view of human potential.

Development and cultural concepts

- Humanistic perspective originated in **1940s after war**, reflecting **dissatisfaction** with prevailing **learning** and **psychodynamic** views of the human condition (added new dimension because it was an **alternative to these scientific**, too **deterministic** and **rigid theories**)
- many psychologists who contributed to HP had been in **concentration camps**, a major contributor was **Viktor Frankl**
- many **Europeans** (from concentration camps) **moved to America**, they set up an approach for **dealing** with stuff they had seen (in CC)
- After WW2 everything started to **change** (social change), world looked for change
- **soul searching** especially in the **USA**
- **Movements** (civil rights, anti-Vietnam, **feminism**) developed in which **people expressed their dissatisfaction** at **social injustices** and **unfair treatment** of minority groups – these movements **reflected the humanistic view** that people **recognise the needs of others** as well as **their own** and **strive towards self-fulfilment**
- two main proponents of the perspective: **Maslow** (hierarchy of needs and self-actualisation), **Karl Rogers** (development of counselling – client centre therapy and theory of self)

Development of counselling/therapy

The humanistic approach to therapy as personal change describes a process whereby a person who has experienced a psychological crises and subsequent disintegration of his self-concept to **regain a more positive self-image** and to be in a situation where **personal growth will result**. For this process to occur, the client needs to feel that the **counsellor** can convey a sense of **empathy, unconditional positive regard** and **genuineness**. These attributes are vital for a humanistic therapist and also the principles upon which all human interaction should be based and thus represent the building blocks for successful human relationships.

Rogers proposed five stages through which a person is supported in achieving personal growth in humanistic therapy;

- the release of pent-up emotions
- release of emotions of which the person was until now unaware
- acceptance
- insight
- development of an action plan to achieve personal growth via a positive self-concept

Framework

1. Assumptions

- Humans are **intrinsically good**
- Humans have **free will**; not all behaviour is determined
- All individuals are **unique** and have an **innate drive to achieve their maximum potential**
- A proper understanding of human behaviour can only be achieved by **studying humans** – NOT animals

- Psychology should research areas that are meaningful and important to human existence, not neglect them because they are too difficult. Psychology should be applied to enrich human life.
- Psychology should study **internal experience** as well as **external behaviour**
- Psychology should study the **individual case (idiographic)** rather than the average performance of groups (**nomothetic**)
- The **whole person** should be studied in their **environmental context** (not in lab etc)

2. Key concepts

- **Maslow's** Hierarchy of Needs and self actualisation
- **Rogers** Client Centred Therapy and Unconditional Positive regard

a) Key Concept 1 – Hierarchy of Needs and Self Actualisation

• Abraham Maslow (1957)

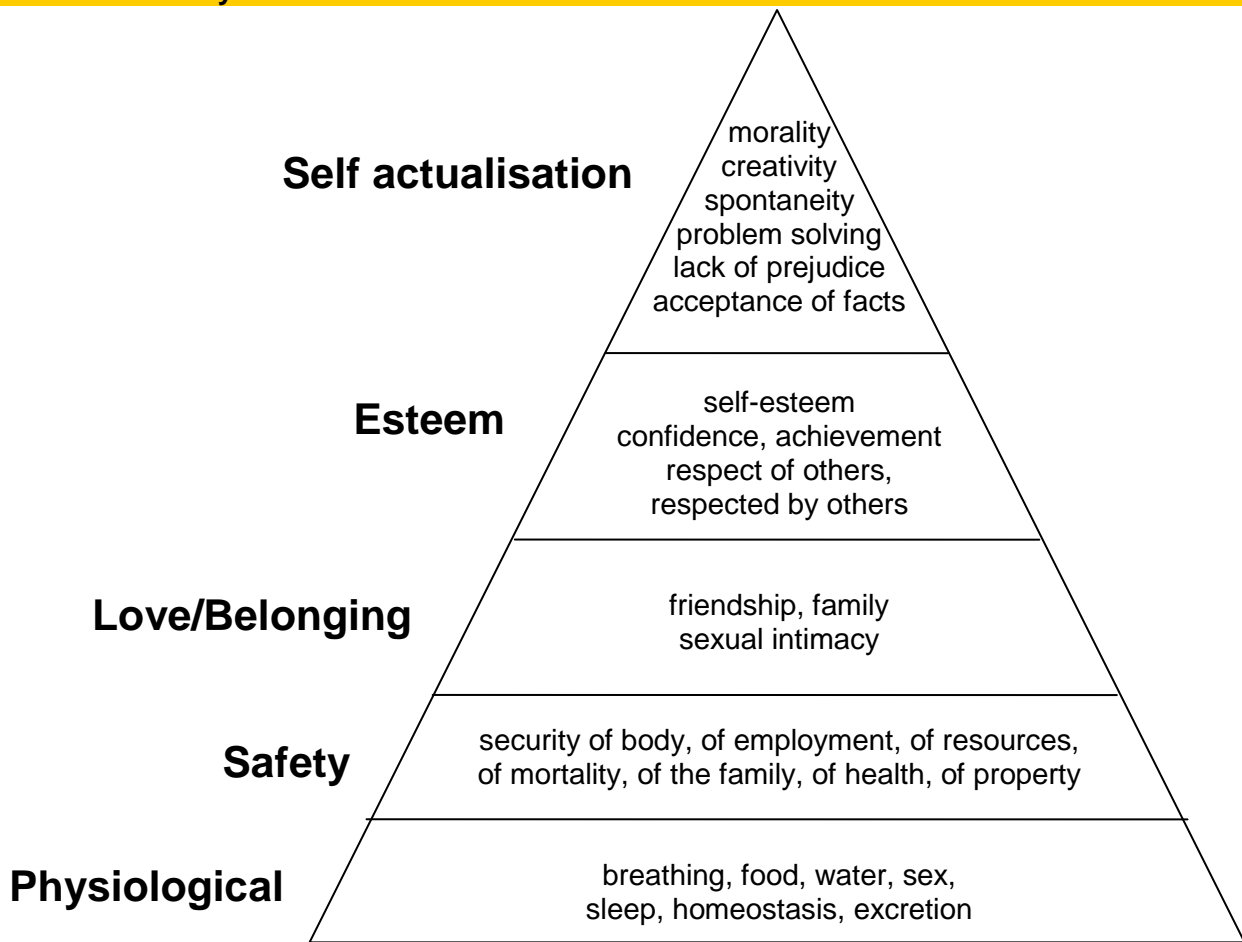
- Born 1908
- Died of heart attack
- Was Jewish
- Not many friends as child (instead books)
- Studied law

- Believed psychology should focus on healthy needs
- Proposed that there are 2 sets of human needs
 - Basic survival needs
 - Self-actualisation
- These various needs are arranged in a hierarchy
- Also argued that many of us do not reach our full potential of self-actualisation

• Description how an Individual becomes self actualised

- Needs that are lower down the hierarchy must be satisfied before the next level can be reached
- Needs are more difficult to meet as you go up the hierarchy
- The higher up the hierarchy we go, the greater the need to become linked to life experience and the less biological character of the need
- The human being is fundamentally free and responsible in deciding what kind of life to lead
- The older a person becomes, the higher the climb on the need ladder the more freedom that person has e.g. infants = dominated by physical needs (eating, sleeping) but their potential is already present at birth

• The Hierarchy of Needs



• Evaluation - Evidence for Maslow's Theory

Key Study Interviews	Fishermen	Aronoff 1967
Compared fishermen and cane cutter in British West Indies		
Fishermen:	Cane cutters	
worked on their own	worked in groups	
generally earned more	paid on the basis of the amount of cane cut by the entire group	
	more secure job, because the rewards fluctuated less than for fishermen and were even paid when they were ill	
It seems to follow from Maslow's theory that it would be mainly those whose security and esteem needs were met who would choose the more challenging and responsible job of fishermen. As predicted from Maslow's theory, only 25% of the fishermen had a high need for security or safety, against 80% of the cane cutters. In addition, 80% of the fishermen had high self-esteem, but only 20% of the cane cutters.		

Key Study – Interviews	Peak experiences	Maslow, Czikszentimihalyi
One way of measuring self-actualisation is to study people's <i>peak experiences</i> , moments of ecstatic happiness when people feel most 'real' and alive.		
Maslow 62 interviewed several people, many of whom were successful in their chosen field. His view was confirmed that at such moments, the person is concerned with 'being' and is totally unaware of any deficiency needs or the possible reactions of others.		
Czikszentmihalyi 75 interviewed a wide variety of prominent sportsmen and reported experiences, similar to those reported by Maslow, of ecstatically losing themselves in the highly skilled performance of their sport.		
Such peak experiences cannot be planned and yet, for many, the growth of humanistic psychology is almost synonymous with <i>planned</i> attempts to enhance personal growth through encounter groups and other short, intensive, group experiences. (This is associated more with Rogers's theory than with Maslow's.)		

Engler (1999) pointed out, Maslow's view of people as striving for personal achievement is extremely culture-bound, being firmly located in the **individualistic culture of the USA**. Cross-cultural research by **Kitayama & Markus 92** has shown that, whilst positive feelings in American students were associated with personal achievements, Japanese students by contrast tended to associate positive feelings with good relations with others. This shows that Maslow's idea of self-actualisation as individual achievement has **limited explanatory power in cultures** different from the USA and Western cultures.

• Evaluation (other strengths and weaknesses)

- May **lack temporal validity**
- Can't be measured scientifically
 - no evidence that needs operate as a strict hierarchy
 - little direct empirical evidence
- uniquely human emphasis
- doesn't consider the **complexity of human motivation** (reductionist)
- **can't be generalised** to other cultures (lacks ecological validity)

b) Key Concept 2 – Client Centred Therapy and Unconditional Positive Regard

• Carl Rogers (1950's)

Family believed in hard work

- Socialised little
- Religious
- Lonely childhood
- Enjoyed reading scientific books
- Studied agriculture and history
- Married, 2 children – said they taught him more than he could have learnt professionally
- Drifted into child psychology
- Rejected medical model; instead growth model
- Died after surgery of a broken hip (1002-1987)

• Key Features

Empathy: trying to understand a person's life from his point of view

Unconditional Positive Regard: with no conditions attached (people think good about others)

Genuineness: being yourself (true self) and being honest

• Description of Client Centred Therapy

The assumption is that all people are good and up to then the main therapies had assumed negative things (biological, behaviour theories; e.g. something wrong with brain, had a bad childhood etc) and were too scientific.

Carl Roger believed that you have your **true self** – what you really are – and an **ideal self** – what you would like to be (“to fit” in the society, what the society expects of one... Society accepts us with “conditions of worth” = tick boxes you are supposed to have)

The **greater the gap** between these two selves is, the **more likely you are to have a psychological disorder**.

The aim of the therapy is to **shorten the gap**

- environment has to have empathy, unconditional positive regard and genuineness
- “talking therapy”, positive, gives time and attention
- outcome: accept your true self (however, it will change over time)

• Evaluation - Evidence for Rogers' Theory

LE + Q-sort	P show better recall for things related to them	Cartwright 1956
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Studied self-consistency as a factor affecting immediate recall.• Following Rogers' theory, he hypothesized that individuals would show better recall for stimuli that are consistent with the self than for stimuli that are inconsistent.• He hypothesized further that this tendency would be greater for maladjusted than for adjusted subjects.• In general, subjects were able to recall adjectives they felt were descriptive of themselves better than they were able to recall adjectives they felt were most unlike themselves.• Also, there was considerable distortion in recall for the latter, inconsistent adjectives. (e.g. a person who viewed himself as hopeful mis-recalled the word "hopeless" as being "hopeful")• As predicted, poorly adjusted subjects (those applying for therapy and those for whom psychotherapy had been judged to be unsuccessful) showed a greater difference in recall than did adjusted subjects (those who did not plan on treatment and those for whom psychotherapy had been judged to be successful). This difference in recall scores was particularly due to the poorer recall of the maladjusted subjects for inconsistent stimuli.		

• Evaluation

- + Rogers' approach (and humanistic psychological approach in general) has made psychologists aware that there is perhaps more to behaviour than objectively discoverable facts.
- + His **positive view** on humans and his **emphasis on personal responsibility** in life have given people the notion of choice in relation to their own lives.
- + **Client-centred therapy** is a major contribution in therapy, and counselling has become a huge industry underpinning self-help groups, and telephone help lines as well as trained therapists.
- + The fundamental element of humanistic psychotherapy is **unconditional positive regard** and the power of each individual for **self-healing**.
- Humanistic psychology is concerned only with those thoughts of which we have conscious awareness and it **relies to heavily on self-reports** (which may be distorted). The humanistic perspective is **vague, unscientific, and untestable** mostly.
- The theories are not set out in a way that lends itself to empirical verification but this is to some extent because psychologists within this perspective do not strive for this kind of confirmation.
- Humanistic theories also lack falsifiability, and this prevents our advance of understanding.
- For many, free will is not a reality. There are too many things in their lives that dictate how they must behave, so **free will may be the luxury** of the middle classes in the Western world.

Methods

a) Self Reports (see RM booklet: Questionnaires and Interviews)

Self-report devices, used by Viktor Frankl to develop his theory of logotherapy, are prized for being the truest method for understanding a person as an individual yet criticized for its subjective nature. Users herald it for its unparalleled ability to report actual human thought, whereas critics denote its inability to conform to standards.

Case studies, similar to self-report devices, use the individual for the contribution of data. Characterized by similar strengths and weaknesses, case studies were employed by Abraham Maslow in his development of "self-actualized" people. Case studies are uncharacteristically unreplicable.

b) Q Sort

Developed by W. Stephenson and widely used by CCT, **measure congruence** (whether it's the same or not) between the **ideal and true self**. The Q-Sort combats critics who note the humanistic approach's "un-scientific" qualities as a subject measure of an individual instead of an object measure of the whole.

List (of adjectives/ sentences) has to be sorted in rank order for how you would describe yourself and then for how you would wish to be. Therapists use it before and after therapy, whether therapy has worked because the gap should be less.

Applications

How does the Humanistic perspective help us to answer social and psychological questions?

Psychological question:

How does the Humanistic perspective suggest dysfunctional behaviour should be treated?

Social question:

How does the Humanistic perspective explain motivation in the workplace?

• Applications – Client Centred Therapy (uses Q-Sort!)

- Developed by **Carl Rogers** in the 1940's and 50's
- Provides a comfortable environment
- **Non-directive** approach-
(*directive= asking questions, offering treatments, interpreting behaviour and responses to make diagnoses*)
- Encouraged to express **feelings/emotions**
- Repeat the phrases back to patient
- Allows **patient to examine own problems** and come up with a **solution for themselves**
- The foundation of this is the assumption that people tend to naturally move towards self growth and healing
- **Key Features: Empathy, Unconditional Positive Regard, Genuineness**

Thomas Szasz

- Born April 1920, Professor at the State University of New York since 1990.
- His beliefs include the right to **freedom from violence** from others and physical and mental self-ownership.
- He also believes that “diseases” such as schizophrenia are a **medical myth** to describe behaviour that breaks social boundaries.

RD Laing (1927-1989), “Post-modern” psychiatrist

- Influenced by **existential philosophy** going against the psychiatric orthodoxy of the time, which was under the belief that mental illness was only biologically caused. He thought that it was also strongly **influenced by social, intellectual and even political factors**.
- He believed that there was no justification for giving biological treatment when the diagnosis was based only on behavioural symptoms. This is not in line with the rest of medicine.

Criticism of Client Centred Therapies

- Lack of structure, making it possible for a solution not to be found
- + Has proved popular and effective, particularly because patients feel that their **destiny is in their own hands** (i.e. they have complete **control** of the situation)
- + Less dependant than therapist-led, directive therapies in terms of the characteristics of therapists in terms of influencing patients' responses as their role is less active.

• Application – Education

The role of humanistic teachers is to organize their classrooms so that students will "**wish to learn, want to grow, seek to find out, hope to master, and desire to create**" (Rogers, 1959).

The 5 Principles of Humanistic Education are:

1. Students' learning should be **self-directed** - they should be able to **choose what they want to learn**. Students will be motivated to learn a subject if it's something they want to know.
2. Schools should produce students who **want and know how to learn**. Students should be **self-motivated** in their studies and desire to learn on their own.
3. Humanistic educators believe that **grades are irrelevant** and that only **self-evaluation is meaningful**. Grading encourages students to work for a grade and not for **personal satisfaction**.
4. **Feelings**, as well as **knowledge**, are important in the learning process.
5. Students learn best in a **non-threatening environment**, where they feel **secure** to learn. Once they feel secure, learning becomes easier and more meaningful.

The objectives of humanistic education are to encourage students to:

- Take **responsibility** for their learning.
- Be **self-directed** and independent.
- Be **curious** about the world around them.
- Be **creative** and interested in the arts.

Roots of the Humanistic Movement in Education

A. S. Neill is considered to be the first of the modern humanistic educators. 1921 he founded **Summerhill**, a school in England based on humanistic principles. Children who attended the school were given the freedom to study and attend lessons when they wanted. It was reported that the students were never bored and that they were energetic, responsible, and willing to take initiative in their studies.

In the United States, **Carl Rogers** and **Abraham Maslow** laid down the psychological foundations of the humanistic movement in education. The humanistic movement led to the development of **open education programs**. Some of the characteristics of open classrooms are as follows:

- freedom of choice in what subjects students will study
- ability to move freely around the classroom
- relationship with the teacher as a facilitator rather than a lecturer
- emphasis on individual and small group instruction

Montessori and **Waldorf Schools** are examples for Humanistic Education. Principles in common:

- Great respect for the child as an individual, spiritual, creative being.
- Believe in protecting the child from the stresses of modern life, overuse or misuse of technology such as television and computers.
- Emphasize the education of the whole child, spiritual, mental, physical, psychological, over any particular academic curriculum.
- Base their education on the needs of the child, believing that this will lead to meeting the needs of society as a whole.
- Provide a rich variety of art, music, dance, and theatre at all ages.

- + Children have control over their own lives
- + Less stressful than conventional education
- + Produces confident self-assured people
- Doesn't prepare for the capitalist world
- Doesn't prepare for pressure in everyday life + compulsory tasks
- More expensive + time consuming – can't be provided for everyone