
UNIT 4 HUMANISTIC AND SELF THEORY (MASLOW AND ROGERS)

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4.0 INTRODUCTION

The theories which focus on the entire person and emphasise the view that persons are inherently good with unique attributes for greatness has been labeled as humanistic, or organismic, or person-centered theories of personality. In this unit we will first discuss the characteristic features of humanistic theories, and then we will come across to explain the distinctive features of Abraham Maslow's Humanistic Theory of Personality. After that we will turn to discuss the Carl Rogers's Person-Centered Theory of Personality.

4.1 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Define the humanistic approach of Maslow and Rogers;
- Explain the theories of Maslow and Rogers;
- Describe the characteristic features of Maslow's theory of personality;
- Explain the hierarchy of needs as given by Maslow;
- Differentiate between deficit needs and growth needs;
- Explain the characteristics of self-actualised person; and
- Analyse various methods used in social psychology.

4.2 HUMANISTIC AND SELF THEORIES OF PERSONALITY

The Humanistic Approach began in response to concerns by therapists against perceived limitations of Psychodynamic theories, especially psychoanalysis. Psychologists and psychoanalysts such as Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow felt that the existing (psychodynamic) theories failed to adequately address issues such as the meaning of behaviour, and the nature of healthy growth. However, the result was not simply new variations on psychodynamic theory, but rather a fundamentally new approach.

There are several factors which distinguish the Humanistic Approach from other approaches, that is, the difference can be seen in the emphasis on subjective meaning, a rejection of *determinism*, and a concern for positive growth rather than pathology.

While one might argue that some psychodynamic theories provide a vision of healthy growth (including Jung's concept of *individuation*), the other characteristics distinguish the Humanistic Approach from every other approach within psychology (and sometimes lead theorists from other approaches to say the Humanistic Approach is not a science at all).

Most psychologists believe that behaviour can only be understood objectively (by an impartial observer), but the humanists argue that this results in concluding that an individual is incapable of understanding their own behaviour—a view which they see as both paradoxical and dangerous to well-being.

Instead, humanists like Rogers argue that the meaning of behaviour is essentially personal and subjective; they further argue that accepting this idea is not unscientific, because ultimately all individuals are subjective: what makes science reliable is not that scientists are purely objective, but that the nature of observed events can be agreed upon by different observers (a process Rogers calls *intersubjective verification*).

The main aim of humanistic approach is to provide concepts and methods for stimulating learning, growth and development both in individual persons as well as in society, thus enhancing well-being and the overall quality of life. Maslow coined the term “the Third Force” to describe the Humanistic Approach, to emphasise how it differed from the Psychodynamic and Behaviourist Approaches, which dominated psychology in the 1950's.

This “third force”, in contrast with clinical psychology, influenced by Freudian psycho-analysis, which studies mental illness, i.e. the negative side of human behaviour, and traditional academic, experimental psychology, influenced by behaviourism, which tends to reduce human behaviour to statistical correlations between different kinds of stimuli, responses and personality traits. Instead of merely modeling normal behaviour or of curing clear dysfunctions, a humanistic psychologist tries to help people to develop in a better way, thus making them more competent, more aware, happier, in the hope of reaching some state of “optimal” mental health.

The central theme in humanistic theories is the drive towards self-actualisation, to realise one's full potential. Other themes include personal growth, openness to experience, living in the present, personal responsibility, and inherent goodness of people. For the humanists, the unit of analysis is the perceived reality.

Probably the best known proponent of this approach is Abraham Maslow. What distinguishes his work from that of other "humanists", such as Carl Rogers or Erich Fromm is that he proposes a model of how a happy, healthy, well-functioning person behaves, which is based on concrete observations of real people, rather than on formulating ideal requirements.

Also Maslow proposes a simple and intuitively appealing theory of motivation, which explains where such a "self-actualising" personality comes from. In parallel with systems theory, Maslow reacts against too much reductionism in psychological modeling, and proposes an alternative holistic approach of personality research.

In recent years, a number of initiatives have appeared which, while influenced significantly by humanistic ideas and theories, have new directions. Perhaps the most significant is *positive psychology*, a term coined by Dr. Martin Seligman when he was President of the American Psychological Association in 2000. Positive psychology, like the humanistic approach, focuses on enhancing human potential, but embraces research methods (e.g., surveys, group data) which humanists have traditionally avoided.

Another area influenced by the humanistic approach has been *coaching psychology*. While the term originated in "personal coaching" in sports, it more generally refers to a focus on enhancing individual potential, and the field has gradually become a specific area within many psychology associations.

4.3 ABRAHAM MASLOW: HUMANISTIC APPROACH TO PERSONALITY

Abraham Maslow, widely regarded as one of the founders of the Humanistic Approach, was born on April 1, 1908 in Brooklyn, New York. He received his BA in 1930, his MA in 1931, and his PhD in 1934, all in psychology, all from the University of Wisconsin. A year after graduation, he returned to New York to work with E. L. Thorndike at Columbia, where Maslow became interested in research on human sexuality. He began teaching full time at Brooklyn College. During this period of his life, he came into contact with the many European intellectuals who were migrating to the US, and Brooklyn in particular, at that time. Persons like Adler, Fromm, Horney, as well as several Gestalt and Freudian psychologists also migrated to Brooklyn initially. Maslow served as the chair of the psychology department at Brandeis from 1951 to 1969. While working here he met Kurt Goldstein, who had put forward the idea of self-actualisation in his famous book, *The Organism* (1934).

It was also here that he began his crusade for a humanistic psychology, something ultimately much more important to him than his own theorising. He spent his final years in semi retirement in California, until, on June 8 1970, he died of a heart attack after years of ill health.

Maslow developed a theory of personality that has influenced a number of different fields. This wide influence is due in part to the high level of practicality of Maslow's theory. His theory accurately describes many realities of personal experiences. Humanists do not believe that human beings are pushed and pulled by mechanical forces, either of stimuli and reinforcements (behaviourism) or of unconscious instinctual impulses (psychoanalysis).

Humanists focus upon potentials. They believe that humans strive for an upper level of capabilities. Humans seek the frontiers of creativity, the highest reaches of consciousness and wisdom. This has been labeled "fully functioning person", "healthy personality", or as Maslow calls this level, "self-actualising person." Maslow's theory of personality can be explained under the following headings:

1) Hierarchy of needs, 2) Deficit needs, 3) Growth needs, 4) Self-actualisers

4.3.1 Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow proposed a theory of human motivation based on hierarchy of needs. The lower a need in the hierarchy the more prepotent or dominating that need is. In other words, when several needs are active, the lowest need will be most compelling. The higher order needs emerge only when the lower level needs are satisfied.

The first four levels are considered *deficiency* or *deprivation needs* ("D-needs") in that their lack of satisfaction causes a deficiency that motivates people to meet these needs.

For instance the Physiological needs which are at the lowest level on the hierarchy, include necessities such as air, food, and water. These tend to be satisfied for most people, but they become predominant when unmet. During emergencies, *safety needs* such as health and security rise to the forefront. Once these two levels are met, *belongingness needs*, such as obtaining love and intimate relationships or close friendships, become important. The next level, *esteem needs*, include the need for recognition from others, confidence, achievement, and self-esteem. The highest level is *self-actualisation*, or the self-fulfillment.

Behaviour in this case is not driven or motivated by deficiencies but rather one's desire for personal growth and the need to become all the things that a person is capable of becoming (Maslow, 1970). Now we will discuss each level of needs one by one:

The lowest level in the Maslow's hierarchy is the *physiological needs*.

These include the most basic needs that are vital to survival, such as the need for water, air, food and sleep. Maslow believed that these needs are the most basic and instinctive needs in the hierarchy because all needs become secondary until these physiological needs are met. These needs are such that if they are not satisfied the organism dies. If the threat of dying because of perturbation of the physiological equilibrium has vanished, the organism can direct its attention to more indirect threats, such as the danger of being caught by a predator, and try to avoid them

The next needs in the hierarchy are *safety needs*.

These include needs for safety and security. Security needs are important for survival, but they are not as demanding as the physiological needs. Examples of security needs include a desire for steady employment, health insurance, safe neighbourhoods and shelter from the environment.

At the third level of the hierarchy are *belongingness needs*.

These include needs for belonging, love and affection. Maslow considered these needs to be less basic than physiological and security needs. Relationships such as friendships, romantic attachments and families help fulfill this need for companionship and acceptance, as does involvement in social, community or religious groups.

At the fourth level of hierarchy are *self-esteem needs*

After the first three needs have been satisfied, esteem needs becomes increasingly important. Maslow noted two versions of esteem needs, a lower one and a higher one.

The lower one is the need for the respect of others, the need for status, recognition, fame, prestige, and attention.

The higher one is the need for self-respect, the need for strength, competence, mastery, self-confidence, independence and freedom. These needs rank higher because it rests more on inner competence won through experience. Deprivation of these needs can lead to an inferiority complex, weakness and helplessness. Satisfaction of the self-esteem need leads to feelings of self-confidence, worth, strength, capability and adequacy of being useful and necessary in the world. These feelings in turn give rise to either basic discouragement or else compensatory or neurotic trends. An appreciation of the necessity of basic self-confidence and an understanding of how helpless people are without it, can be easily gained from a study of severe traumatic neurosis

The highest level need is *self-actualisation*.

“What a man can be, he must be”. This forms the basis of the perceived need for self-actualisation. This level of need pertains to what a person’s full potential is and realising that potential. Maslow describes this desire as the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming. This is a broad definition of the need for self-actualisation, but when applied to individuals the need is specific.

For example one individual may have the strong desire to become an ideal parent, while for another it may be expressed athletically, and in the third it may be expressed in painting, pictures, or inventions. As mentioned earlier, in order to reach a clear understanding of this level of need one must first not only achieve the previous needs, physiological, safety, love, and esteem, but master these needs. Below are Maslow’s descriptions of the consequences that what will happen if these needs are not satisfied.

4.3.2 Deficiency Needs

It has been stated in the earlier discussion that the first four levels of needs are called *deficit needs, or D-needs*. If you don’t have enough of something, then it is said that you have a deficit that is you feel the need.

But if you get all you need, you feel nothing at all! In other words, they cease to be motivating. He also talks about these levels in terms of *homeostasis*. Homeostasis is the principle by which the bodily system (thermostat) operates. In other words, when it gets too cold, the thermostat switches the heat on and when it gets too hot, it switches the heat off. In the same way, human body, when it lacks a certain substance, develops a hunger for it; when it gets enough of it, then the hunger stops.

Maslow simply extends this homeostatic principle to needs, such as safety, belongingness, and esteem about which we do not ordinarily think of in these terms. In terms of overall development, we move through these levels a bit like stages.

As newborns, our focus (if not our entire set of needs) is on the satisfaction of the physiological needs. Soon, we begin to recognise that we need to be safe. Soon after that, we crave attention and affection. A bit later, we look for self-esteem. Mind you, this is in the first couple of years! Under stressful conditions, or when survival is threatened, we can “regress” to a lower need level.

When you find that your great career falls flat, you might seek out a little attention. When your family decides to leave you, it seems that love is again all you ever wanted. If you have significant problems along your development, that is a period of extreme insecurity such as hunger as a child, or the loss of a family member through death or divorce, or significant neglect or abuse, it is possible that one may “fixate” on that set of needs for the rest of one’s life.

4.3.3 Growth Needs

Maslow has used a variety of terms to refer to the last level of needs. He has called it growth motivation (in contrast to deficit motivation). They are called the *being needs* (or *B-needs*, in contrast to *D-needs*), and self-actualisation. These are needs that do not involve balance or homeostasis. They involve the continuous desire to fulfill potentials, to “be all that you can be”. If you want to be truly self-actualising, you need to have your lower needs taken care of, at least to a considerable extent. This makes sense, which is if you are hungry, you are scrambling to get food; if you are unsafe, you have to be continuously on guard; if you are isolated and unloved, you have to satisfy that need; if you have a low sense of self-esteem, you have to be defensive or compensate. When lower needs are unmet, you can not fully devote yourself to fulfilling your potentials.

The question becomes, of course, what exactly Maslow means by self-actualisation. To answer that, we need to look at the kind of people he called self-actualised persons. Fortunately, he did this for us, using a qualitative method called biographical analysis. He began by picking out a group of people, some historical figures, some people he knew, whom he felt clearly met the standard of self-actualisation. Included in this august group were Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, Albert Einstein, Eleanor Roosevelt, Jane Adams, William James, Albert Schweitzer, Benedict Spinoza, and Aldous Huxley, plus 12 unnamed people who were alive at the time Maslow did his research. He then looked at their biographies, writings, the acts and words of those he knew personally, and so on. From these sources, he developed a list of qualities that seemed characteristic of these people, as opposed to the great mass of us.

4.3.4 Characteristics of Self-actualisers

According to Maslow, people who are self actualised, were

- 1) *Reality-centered*, which means they could differentiate what is fake and dishonest from what is real and genuine.
- 2) *Problem-centered*, meaning they treated life's difficulties as problems demanding solutions, not as personal troubles to be railed at or surrendered to.
- 3) Had a different *perception of means and ends*. They felt that the ends do not necessarily justify the means, that the means could be ends themselves, and that the means, that is the journey was often more important than the ends.
- 4) Had different ways of relating to others. First, they enjoyed solitude, and were comfortable being alone. And they enjoyed deeper personal relations with a few close friends and family members, rather than more shallow relationships with many people.
- 5) Enjoyed *autonomy*, a relative independence from physical and social needs.
- 6) Resisted *enculturation*, that is, they were not susceptible to social pressure to be "well adjusted" or to "fit in". They were, in fact, nonconformists in the best sense.
- 7) Had an *unhostile sense of humor*. They preferred to joke at their own expense, or at the human condition, and never directing their humor at others.
- 8) Had a quality of *acceptance of self and others*, by which he meant that these people would be more likely to take you as you are than try to change you into what they thought you should be.

This same acceptance applied to their attitudes towards themselves: If some quality of theirs wasn't harmful, they let it be, even enjoying it as a personal quirk.

- 9) They were often strongly motivated to change negative qualities in themselves that could be changed.
- 10) They possessed qualities such as *spontaneity and simplicity*.
- 11) They preferred being themselves rather than being pretentious or artificial.
- 12) They had a sense of *humility and respect* towards others — something Maslow also called democratic value.
- 13) They had a quality Maslow called *human kinship*, that is social interest, compassion, and humanity.
- 14) Were strong in their ethical behaviours.
- 15) They were spiritual but never conventionally religious in nature.
- 16) They had a certain *freshness of appreciation*, an ability to see things, even ordinary things, with wonder.
- 17) They had the ability to be *creative, inventive, and original*.
- 18) They tended to have more *peak experiences* than the average person. A peak experience is one that takes you out of yourself, that makes you feel

very tiny, or very large, to some extent one with life or nature or God. It gives you a feeling of being a part of the infinite and the eternal. These experiences tend to leave their mark on a person, change them for the better, and many people actively seek them out. They are also called mystical experiences, and are an important part of many religious and philosophical traditions.

Maslow did not however think that self actualised persons were perfect. There were several flaws or imperfections he discovered along the way as well. These were as given below:

- 1) They often suffered considerable anxiety and guilt. These anxiety and guilt were realistic ones rather than misplaced or neurotic versions.
- 2) Some of them were absent minded and overly kind.
- 3) Also some of them had unexpected moments of ruthlessness, surgical coldness, and loss of humor.
- 4) Maslow also stated that when a self actualised person does not get their needs fulfilled, they respond with metapathologies. That is they respond with a list of problems.
- 5) When forced to live without these values, the self-actualiser develops depression, despair, disgust, alienation, and a degree of cynicism.

4.3.5 Evaluation

Maslow has been a very inspirational figure in personality theories. In the 1960's in particular, people were tired of the reductionistic, mechanistic messages of the behaviourists and physiological psychologists. They were looking for meaning and purpose in their lives, even a higher, more mystical meaning. Maslow was one of the pioneers in that movement to bring the human being back into psychology and the person back into personality.

Moreover, Maslow's unique contribution lies in his preoccupation with healthy people rather than sick ones and his feeling that studies of two groups generate different types of theory. Maslow chose the more direct course of studying healthy people whose wholeness and unity of personality are readily apparent. But in spite of this unique contribution Maslow's theory has been criticized on many grounds.

The most common criticism concerns his methodology: Picking a small number of people that he himself declared self-actualising, then reading about them or talking with them, and coming to conclusions about what self-actualisation is in the first place does not sound like good science to many people.

Another criticism is that Maslow placed certain constraints on self-actualisation. First, Kurt Goldstein and Carl Rogers used the phrase to refer to what every a living creature does, that is to try to grow, and to fulfill its biological destiny. Maslow limits self actualisation to be achieved only by about two percent of the human species, while most do not achieve this. While Rogers felt that babies were the best examples of human self-actualisation, Maslow saw it as something achieved only rarely by the young.

Another criticism is that we take much care of our lower needs before self-actualisation comes to the forefront. And yet we can find many examples of

people who exhibit least aspects of self-actualisation and were far from having their lower needs taken care of. Many of our best artists and authors, for example, suffered from poverty, bad upbringing, neuroses, and depression.

Self Assessment Questions

1) Discuss the importance of humanistic approach in the study of personality.

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2) Describe the salient features of Maslow’s theory of personality.

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3) Critically evaluate Maslow’s need hierarchy theory.

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4) Distinguish between deficiency needs and growth needs.

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5) Explain the characteristics of self-actualising person.

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4.4 CARL ROGER'S THEORY OF PERSONALITY

Carl Rogers was born on January 8, 1902, in Oak Park, Illinois. Raised on a farm from the age of twelve, Rogers entered the Agricultural College of the University of Wisconsin in 1919, where he graduated with a degree in history. While in college he felt a religious calling and eventually began training to become a Protestant minister, and after graduating in 1924 he enrolled at the Union Theological Seminary in New York City. From there he transferred to Teachers College at Columbia University in order to pursue counseling rather than the strictly religious aspect of his ministerial profession.

He subsequently focused on clinical and educational psychology, writing his doctoral dissertation on personality adjustment in children. Throughout the 1930s, Rogers worked in the field of child psychology, and in 1940 he accepted a position as a professor of psychology at Ohio State University. It was at this time that he began to develop the theories and methodology for which he would later become renowned. The incipient concepts of Rogers's therapeutic approach appeared in his 1942 book *Counseling and Psychotherapy*, and within the next few years he developed his concept of the self as the organising element in human personality and the principles of the "nondirective," or client-centered, style of therapy.

In 1945 he took a position as professor of psychology and head of the counseling center at the University of Chicago, where, over the next twelve years, he further refined and articulated his ideas, publishing *Client-Centered Therapy* (1951) during this time. A charismatic figure, Rogers's influence over students, colleagues, and various collaborators, as well as his publication of best-selling books such as *On Becoming a Person* (1961) and *Person to Person* (1967) made him the central figure in American humanistic psychology throughout his lifetime.

Carl Rogers was not only one of the founders of the Humanistic Approach, but also arguably the most influential therapist in the 20th century. Rogers's theory is basically phenomenological, in that it placed a strong emphasis on the experience of the person, their feelings, their values, and all that is summed up by the expression "inner life". His theory is also known as self-theory. The other name of his theory is person-centered theory. His theory grew out of his own experience in working with individual in the therapeutic relationship

In terms of his theory, there are two fundamental ideas which are particularly worth noting. First, Rogers talked about healthy development in terms of how individuals perceived their own being. Healthy individuals will tend to see *congruence* between their sense of who they are (*self*) and who they feel they should be (*ideal self*). While no one tends to experience perfect congruence at all times, the relative degree of congruence is an indicator of health.

The second fundamental idea is Rogers's concept of the *conditions for healthy growth*, and the role of a therapist in fostering healthy growth. Through a process Rogers called person-centered therapy; the therapist seeks to provide empathy, openness, and unconditional positive regard. Rogers called his technique non-directive therapy, based on the concept that the therapist is simply a "mirror" who reflects the individual's thoughts and feelings.

Rogers's theory can be explained under the following three headings:

- 1) Enduring aspects of personality
- 2) Self-actualisation
- 3) Development of self

4.4.1 Enduring Aspects of Personality

Rogers' theory of personality evolved out of his work as a clinical psychologist and developed as an offshoot of his theory of client-centered (later called person-centered) therapy. Since the main aim of his theory is to explain the growth and development within the individual, so his theory does not appear to lay much emphasis on personality development, rather prefer to devote his attention to such constructs that are of fundamental importance to his theory. These are: (i) the organism and (ii) the self.

4.4.1.1 The Organism

Rogers approach to the study of persons is phenomenological and idiographic. His view of human behaviour is that it is "exquisitely rational". Furthermore, in his opinion: "the core of man's nature is essentially positive" and he is a "trustworthy organism".

According to Rogers the organism is the locus of all experience, including everything potentially available to awareness, at any given moment. The totality of experience constitutes the phenomenal field. The phenomenal field is the individual's frame of reference that can only be known to the person. It can never be known to another, except through empathetic experience and at that level too, can never be known perfectly.

Rogers emphasised that the individual's way of behaving depends upon the phenomenal field (subjective reality) and not upon the stimulating conditions (external reality). The phenomenal field at any given moment is made up of conscious and unconscious experiences. The person tends to check his or her experiences against the reality. This testing of reality provides with dependable knowledge of the world so that one is able to behave realistically. In most of the cases the person accepts his or her experiences as true representation of reality, while in reality they may not be the true representation. As a result the person may develop misconceptions about himself/herself and about the external world.

4.4.1.2 The Self (Real and Ideal)

Rogers developed one of the most systematic models of self, in relation to the personality-functioning. The self or self-concept, is one of the central concepts in his theory, and the theory is often referred to as the self-theory of personality. Rogers defined self as the organised, consistent, conceptual gestalt composed of perceptions of the characteristics of the "I" or "me", and the perception of the relationship "I" or "me" to various aspects of life, together the values attached to those perceptions.

In short, it is one's picture of him or hers. Rogers further distinguishes two aspects or subsystems of self: The real self and the ideal self. The real self is the "you" that, if all goes well, you will become, while the ideal self is what the person would like to be.

By ideal, Rogers is suggesting something not real, something that is always out of our reach, the standard we can not meet. Thus, Rogers's personality theory distinguishes between two personalities. The real self, which is created and developed through the actualising tendency, it is the self that one can become. The demands of society, however, do not always support the actualising tendency and we are forced to live under conditions that are out of step with our tendencies. The ideal self is the ideal created through the demands of society. Rogers does not see it as something to strive for (that is the real self) but an ideal imposed on us we can never fully reach. Rogers' view of 'hidden' personality relates to the person one could be given the right circumstances within society and for an individual to be truly happy (and for self-actualisation to be realised) their public and private selves must be as similar as possible. For an individual to be truly happy and for self-actualisation to be realised, the public and hidden selves must be as similar as possible. Rogers believed that when all aspects of a person's life, surroundings and thoughts are in harmony then the ideal state of congruence is reached (Pervin & Oliver 1997).

4.4.1.3 Congruity and Incongruity

The importance of the concept of organism and self, in Rogers theory becomes clear when we examine the idea of congruence and incongruence between this self as perceived, and the self as actually experienced by the organism. When the symbolised experiences that constitute the self, faithfully mirror the experiences of the organism, the self and organism are said to be congruent, that is the individual is believed to be adjusted, mature and fully functioning. Otherwise, there would be incongruence. According to Rogers, most of the ways of behaving that are adopted by the organism are those that are consistent with the concept of self. In some instances, behaviour may be brought about by organic experiences and needs which have not been symbolised. Such behaviour may be inconsistent with the structure of the self but in such instances the behaviour is not "owned" by the individual.

Rogers suggests that the incongruent individual who is always on the defensive and cannot be open to all experiences is not functioning ideally and may even be malfunctioning. They work hard at maintaining/protecting their self concept. Because their lives are not authentic this is a difficult task and they are under constant threat. They deploy *defense mechanisms* to achieve this. He describes two mechanisms: *distortion* and *denial*.

Distortion occurs when the individual perceives a threat to their self concept. They distort the perception until it fits their self concept. This defensive behaviour reduces the consciousness of the threat but not the threat itself. And so, as the threats mount, the work of protecting the self concept becomes more difficult and the individual becomes more defensive and rigid in their self structure.

If the incongruence is immoderate this process may lead the individual to a state that would typically be described as neurotic. Their functioning becomes precarious and psychologically vulnerable. If the situation worsens it is possible that the defenses cease to function altogether and the individual becomes aware of the incongruence of their situation. Their personality becomes disorganised and bizarre; irrational behaviour, associated with earlier denied aspects of self, may erupt uncontrollably.

Thus, it may be concluded that psychological adjustment exists when the concept of the self is such that all the sensory and visceral experiences of the organism are, or may be, assimilated on a symbolic level into a consistent relationship with the concept of self. Psychological maladjustment exists when the organism denies awareness of significant sensory and visceral experiences, which consequently are not symbolised and organised into the gestalt of the self structure.

When this situation exists, there is a basic or potential psychological tension. Any experience which is inconsistent with the organisation of the structure of the self may be perceived as a threat, and the more of these perceptions there are, the more rigidly the self structure is organised to maintain itself.

4.4.2 Self-Actualisation

According to Rogers, only the single motive is there that impels human beings to action, and that motive can be described as the actualising tendency. Rogers (1959) maintains that the human “organism” has an underlying “actualising tendency”, which aims to develop all capacities in ways that maintain or enhance the organism and move it toward autonomy. This tendency is directional, constructive and present in all living things.

The actualising tendency can be suppressed but can never be destroyed without the destruction of the organism (Rogers, 1977). The concept of the actualising tendency is the only motive force in the theory. It encompasses all motivations; tension, need, or drive reductions; and creative as well as pleasure-seeking tendencies (Rogers, 1959).

Only the organism as a whole has this tendency, parts of it (such as the self) do not. Maddi (1996) describes it as a “biological pressure to fulfill the genetic blueprint”. Each person thus has a fundamental mandate to fulfill one’s potential. This tendency is selective, and pays attention only to those aspects of the environment which promises to move the person constructively, in the direction of fulfillment and wholeness. Therefore, as already stated, the single motivating force is ‘the self-actualisation drive’ and single goal of life is ‘to become self-actualised’

4.4.3 The Development of Self

Rogers, unlike Freud, Sullivan, and Erikson, did not try to propose a stage theory of personality development. In other words, Rogers did not explain the personality development in steps or stages; rather he emphasised the importance of congruence between the self of the person and his experiences in the development of personality.

Adjustment and psychological health have also been explained in terms of realistic self-concept that is congruent with self. Rogers maintained that unless we are taught inappropriately by those whose love we need, our self-concept is based on our own perceptions, and fits well with our experiences.

If we are taught to have a self-concept that does not match what we actually experience, we are going to have difficulty. For example, you might learn that nice people never get angry and then find yourself in a situation in which you are insulted; your self-concept does not allow you to perceive your feeling of anger accurately.

The greater the discrepancy between our self and our experiences, the greater the maladjustment and anxiety, and the harder we must reconcile what we believe ourselves and what we encounter in the world around us.

Rogers also suggests that if there is a large self-experience discrepancy, and if there is no way to avoid all of the relevant experiences, the defensive system may be unable to handle anxiety; it may breakdown and result in a disorganisation of personality.

Early in our lives, we each have direct experience with pleasure and pain; for example, we obviously learn that it is good to eat and bad to be hungry, good to be in mother's arm and bad to touch a hot stove and so on. Beyond these simple physical reactions, there is a need for positive regard. That is, we want to be loved and respected as individuals. Our parents tend to be the primary source of love and affection, and it is desperately important to maintain their good will.

We want them to praise us, say that we are good, and express positive feelings toward us. When we do something they dislike and they let us know it, the experience is painful one. We strive to alter our behaviour to get back in their good graces.

The crucial problem occurs when the beliefs, values, and perceptions of parents do not fit the child's experiences and feelings. Let us look at an example of the process. A three year old boy is upset when his mother gives birth to a second baby. He must share love and attention with the new addition, be quiet when the baby is sleeping and so on. From the brother's perspective, the situation involves rejection and loss of status: most likely he feels not only depressed but hostile. The obvious target of his hostility is the new sister. One day his mother finds him deliberately pinching the sister's arm to make her cry. What does the mother do? Her decision at this point is described by Rogers as a critical one in the development of the boy's self-concept. The usual response of the mother will be to punish the child and reject him because of his hostility and force him to love his sister. The conflict for the boy is clear. Since the need for mother's love is vitally important, so he may alter his self-concept to conform to what the mother wanted. In this case, the mother's reaction might serve to help give this child a self-concept, inconsistent with his experiences.

Rogers recognised the three crucial points for the parents to keep in mind.

- 1) First, the child's feeling must be recognised and accepted.
- 2) Second, the mother should avoid threatening the child with the most threatening punishment of all – loss of love.
- 3) Third, the hostile behaviour must be clearly and unmistakably rejected and prevented.

4.4.4 Evaluation

The person-centered approach, being the unique approach to understanding personality and human relationships, found wide application in various domains such as psychotherapy and counseling, organisations, and other group settings. Rogers's greatest contribution may lie in his encouraging a humane and ethical treatment of persons, approaching psychology as a human science rather than a natural science.

Rogers’s person-centered approach has been criticised on many grounds. The most important being the charge that many psychologists tend to impose their views based upon naïve phenomenology. For instance, Rogers accepted client’s statement to be always true and reliable, when self-reports normally lack credibility.

Rogers has also been criticised for ignoring unconscious determinants of behaviour, attested by psycho-analytic investigators over a long period.

It is also criticised on the ground that the theory deals only with surface issues and does not explore deeper areas.

Self Assessment Questions

- 1) Discuss the salient features of Rogers’s theory of personality.
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- 2) Explain the importance of self-concept in Rogers’s theory of personality.
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- 3) What do you mean by congruence and incongruence of self. What role dose it play in the development of personality?
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- 4) Discuss the development of personality from Rogers’s phenomenological point of view.
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4.5 LET US SUM UP

The central theme in humanistic and self theories is the drive towards self-actualisation, to realise one's full potential. Other themes include personal growth, openness to experience, living in the present, personal responsibility, and inherent goodness of people.

For the humanists, the unit of analysis is "perceived reality".

Probably the best known proponent of this approach is Abraham Maslow. Maslow proposes a model of how a happy, healthy, well-functioning person behaves, which is based on concrete observations of real people, rather than on formulating ideal requirements. Moreover Maslow proposes a simple and intuitively appealing theory of motivation, which explains where such a "self-actualising" personality comes from. Maslow's theory can be explained in terms of Hierarchy of needs, deficiency needs, growth needs and characteristics of self-actualising persons.

Maslow proposed a theory of human motivation based on hierarchy of needs. The lower a need in the hierarchy the more prepotent or dominating that need is. In other words, when several needs are active, the lowest need will be most compelling. The higher order need emerge only when the lower level needs are satisfied.

The first four levels are considered *deficiency* or *deprivation needs* ("D-needs") in that their lack of satisfaction causes a deficiency that motivates people to meet these needs.

Physiological needs, the lowest level on the hierarchy, include necessities such as air, food, and water. These tend to be satisfied for most people, but they become predominant when unmet.

During emergencies, *safety needs* such as health and security rise to the forefront. Once these two levels are met, *belongingness needs*, such as obtaining love and intimate relationships or close friendships, become important.

The next level, *esteem needs*, include the need for recognition from others, confidence, achievement, and self-esteem.

The highest level is *self-actualisation*, or the self-fulfillment. Behaviour in this case is not driven or motivated by deficiencies but rather one's desire for personal growth and the need to become all the things that a person is capable of becoming.

In order to study the characteristics self-actualisers of Maslow studied a group of people, whom he felt clearly met the standard of self-actualisation. Using a qualitative method called biographical analysis; he developed a list of qualities that seemed characteristic of the self-actualisers, as opposed to the great mass of us.

Rogers's theory, also known as self-theory, is basically phenomenological, in that it placed a strong emphasis on the experience of the person, their feelings, their values, and all that is summed up by the expression "inner life". His theory grew out of his own experience in working with individual in the therapeutic relationship

In terms of his theory, there are two fundamental ideas which are particularly worth noting. First, Rogers talked about healthy development in terms of how the individual perceived their own being. A healthy individual will tend to see *congruence* between their sense of who they are (*self*) and who they feel they should be (*ideal self*). While no one tends to experience perfect congruence at all times, the relative degree of congruence is an indicator of health.

The second fundamental idea is Rogers's concept of the *conditions for healthy growth*, and the role of a therapist in fostering healthy growth. Rogers's theory is explained under the three headings: enduring aspects of personality, self-actualisation and development of self.

Organism and the self are of the fundamental importance in Rogers's theory. According to Rogers the organism is the locus of all experience, including everything potentially available to awareness, at any given moment. The totality of experience constitutes the phenomenal field.

The phenomenal field is the individual's frame of reference that can only be known to the person. Rogers emphasised that the individual's way of behaving depends upon the phenomenal field (subjective reality) and not upon the stimulating conditions (external reality). Rogers developed one of the most systematic models of self, in relation to the personality-functioning. The self or self-concept is one of the central concepts in his theory. Self is one's picture of him or hers. Rogers further distinguishes two aspects or subsystems of self: The real self and the ideal self. The real self is the "you" that, if all goes well, you will become, while the ideal self is what the person would like to be.

Thus, Rogers's personality theory distinguishes between two personalities. The real self, which is created and developed through the actualising tendency and the ideal-self, which is created through the demands of society. Rogers, unlike Freud, Sullivan, and Erikson, did not try to propound a stage theory of personality development. He emphasised the importance of congruence between the self of the person and his experiences in the development of personality. Adjustment and psychological health have also been explained in terms of realistic self-concept that is congruent with self.

4.6 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Discuss the characteristic features of Humanistic approach to personality.
- 3) What are the main features of Maslow's theory that makes it applicable in organisation?
- 3) Critically evaluate the main tenets of Maslow's theory of personality.
- 4) What do you mean by need hierarchy?
- 5) Discuss the importance of deficiency needs and growth needs in the development of personality
- 6) What are the main characteristics of self-actualising person? Discuss it in detail.
- 7) On what ground does Maslow's theory differ from Rogers's theory of personality?

- 8) Critically evaluate Rogers's theory of personality.
- 9) Discuss the importance of self in Rogers's theory of personality.
- 10) In the light of Roger's theory explain the development of personality
- 11) What do you mean by phenomenal field? Discuss its importance in the light of Rogers's theory.

4.7 GLOSSARY

- Client-centered therapy** : The therapeutic approach developed by Carl Rogers in which therapist helps clients to clarify their true feelings and come to value who they are.
- Deficiency needs** : In Maslow's Need hierarchy model, the first four levels of need- physiological, safety, belongingness, and esteem- are referred as deficit needs.
- Growth needs** : In Maslow's Need hierarchy model, the fifth level need, i.e. self-actualisation is called growth needs.
- Humanistic psychology** : An approach to understand personality that emphasises self-fulfillment and growth as the prime motivators of behaviour.
- Ideal self** : In Rogerian theory, the self-concept an individual would like to have.
- Self-actualisation** : According to Maslow's view, the highest motive of human behaviour, the motive to realise oneself fully as a person.
- Self-concept** : In Rogerian theory, the attitudes and beliefs and individual has about himself.

4.8 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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