4.0 INTRODUCTION

The Humanistic Approach began in response to concerns by therapists against perceived limitations of Psychodynamic theories, especially psychoanalysis. Individuals like Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow felt existing (psychodynamic) theories failed to adequately address issues like the meaning of behaviour, and the nature of healthy growth.

Maslow’s ideas surrounding the Hierarchy of Needs concerning the responsibility of employers to provide a workplace environment that encourages and enables employees to fulfill their own unique potential (self-actualisation) are today more relevant than ever.

Humanist psychologist Carl Rogers opposed psychoanalytic personality theory as he was dissatisfied with the ‘dehumanising nature’ of this school of thought. The central tenet of humanistic psychology is that people have drives that lead them to engage in activities resulting in personal satisfaction and a contribution to society: the actualising tendency.

4.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

1. Define the humanistic approach to personality;
2. Describe the theory of Abraham Maslow;
Discuss the theory of Carl Rogers; and
Analyze the humanistic theories.

4.2 INTRODUCTION TO HUMANISTIC THEORIES

The Humanistic Approach began in response to concerns by therapists against perceived limitations of Psychodynamic theories, especially psychoanalysis. Individuals like Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow felt existing (psychodynamic) theories failed to adequately address issues like 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.

In humanistic psychology it is emphasised people have free will and they play an active role in determining how they behave. Accordingly, humanistic psychology focuses on subjective experiences of persons as opposed to forced, definitive factors that determine behaviour. Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers were proponents of this view, which is based on the “phenomenal field” theory of Combs and Snygg.

Maslow and Rogers emphasised a view of the person as an active, creative, experiencing human being who lives in the present and subjectively responds to current perceptions, relationships, and encounters. They disagree with the dark, pessimistic outlook of those in the Freudian psychoanalysis ranks, but rather view humanistic theories as positive and optimistic proposals which stress the tendency of the human personality toward growth and self-actualisation. This progressing self will remain the center of its constantly changing world, a world that will help mould the self but not necessarily confine it.

Rather, the self has opportunity for maturation based on its encounters with this world. This understanding attempts to reduce the acceptance of hopeless redundancy.

Humanistic therapy typically relies on the client for information of the past and its effect on the present, therefore the client dictates the type of guidance the therapist may initiate. This allows for an individualised approach to therapy. Carl Rogers found patients differ in how they respond to other people. Rogers tried to model a particular approach to therapy, that is he stressed the reflective or empathetic response. This response type takes the client’s viewpoint and reflects back his or her feeling and the context for it. An example of a reflective response would be, “It seems you are feeling anxious about your upcoming marriage”. This response type seeks to clarify the therapist’s understanding while also encouraging the client to think more deeply and seek to fully understand the feelings they have expressed.

4.3 THEORY OF ABRAHAM MASLOW

Abraham Maslow developed the Hierarchy of Needs model in the 1940-50’s in the USA, and the Hierarchy of Needs theory remains valid even today for understanding human motivation, management training, and personal development. Indeed, Maslow’s ideas surrounding the Hierarchy of Needs concerning the responsibility of employers to provide a workplace environment that encourages and enables employees to fulfill their own unique potential (self-actualisation) are today more relevant than ever.

Maslow took this idea and created his now famous hierarchy of needs. Beyond the details of air, water, food, and sex, he laid out five broader layers: the physiological
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needs, the needs for safety and security, the needs for love and belonging, the needs for esteem, and the need to actualise the self, in that order.

4.3.1 Hierarchy of Needs

1) The physiological needs: These include the needs we have for oxygen, water, protein, salt, sugar, calcium, and other minerals and vitamins. They also include the need to maintain a pH balance and temperature. Also, there’s the need to be active, to rest, to sleep, to get rid of wastes, to avoid pain, and to have sex.

Maslow believed, and research supports him, that these are in fact individual needs, and that a lack of, say, vitamin C, will lead to a very specific hunger for things which have in the past provided that vitamin C — e.g. orange juice. I guess the cravings that some pregnant women have, and the way in which babies eat the most foul tasting baby food, support the idea anecdotally.

2) The safety and security needs: When the physiological needs are largely taken care of, this second layer of needs comes into play. You will become increasingly interested in finding safe circumstances, stability, protection. You might develop a need for structure, for order, some limits.

Looking at it negatively, you become concerned, not with needs like hunger and thirst, but with your fears and anxieties. In the ordinary American adult, this set of needs manifest themselves in the form of our urges to have a home in a safe neighborhood, a little job security and a nest egg, a good retirement plan and a bit of insurance, and so on.

3) The love and belonging needs: When physiological needs and safety needs are, by and large, taken care of, a third layer starts to show up. You begin to feel the need for friends, a sweetheart, children, affectionate relationships in general, even a sense of community. Looked at negatively, you become increasingly susceptible to loneliness and social anxieties.

In our day-to-day life, we exhibit these needs in our desires to marry, have a family, be a part of a community, a member of a church, a brother in the fraternity, a part of a gang or a bowling club. It is also a part of what we look for in a career.

4) The esteem needs: Next, we begin to look for a little self-esteem. 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, fame, glory, recognition, attention, reputation, appreciation, dignity, even dominance. The higher form involves the need for self-respect, including such feelings as confidence, competence, achievement, mastery, independence, and freedom.

Note that this is the “higher” form because, unlike the respect of others, once you have self-respect, it’s a lot harder to lose!

The negative version of these needs is low self-esteem and inferiority complexes. Maslow felt that Adler was really onto something when he proposed that these were at the roots of many, if not most, of our psychological problems. In modern countries, most of us have what we need in regard to our physiological and safety needs. We, more often than not, have quite a bit of love and belonging, too. It’s a little respect that often seems so very hard to get!

All of the preceding four levels he calls deficit needs, or D-needs. If you do not have enough of something, that is, if you have a deficit, you feel the need. But if you get all you need, you feel nothing at all! In other words, they cease to be motivating.
4.3.2 Homeostasis

Maslow also talks about these levels in terms of homeostasis. Homeostasis is the principle by which your furnace thermostat operates: When it gets too cold, it switches the heat on, and when it gets too hot, it switches the heat off.

Maslow sees all these needs as essentially survival needs. Even love and esteem are needed for the maintenance of health. He says we all have these needs built in to us genetically, like instincts. In fact, he calls them instinctoid, that is, instinct like needs.

Under stressful conditions, or when survival is threatened, we can “regress” to a lower need level. When a person’s good career is in jeopardy, the person might seek out a little attention. Similarly when the family leaves the person for certain reasons, it seems that love is what the individual wanted. When the person faces sudden reduction in income, especially after a long and happy life, the person may not be able to think of anything except money.

Maslow suggested that we can ask people for their “philosophy of the future”, that is what would their ideal life or world be like and get significant information as to what needs they have or have not covered.

If the person had faced significant problems along the many stages of development, that is if the person had faced a period of extreme insecurity, or suffered from hunger pangs for long hours as a child, or had sustained the loss of a family member through death or divorce, or had faced, the possibility of the person getting fixated at that stage of development where such problems occurred to the individual. Fixated means that the person continues to look for satiating those needs for the rest of life.

4.3.3 The Concept of Neurosis

As for neurosis, Maslow was of a totally different viewpoint. He stated that every individual would like to reach the stage of self actualisation, which is the last stage in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Maslow has used a variety of terms to refer to this level and he has called this as growth motivation in contrast to deficit motivation. That is, there are certain needs which contribute to the growth and development of the person, and these are called as ‘being’ needs (or B-needs,), which is in contrast to Deficit or the D-needs), and self-actualisation.

These are needs that do not involve balance or homeostasis. Once engaged, they continue to be felt. In fact, they are likely to become stronger as we “feed” them! They involve the continuous desire to fulfill potentials, to “be all that you can be.” They are a matter of becoming the most complete, the fullest, “you” — hence the term, self-actualisation.

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.

The self-actualisers also had a different way 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.

They enjoyed autonomy, a relative independence from physical and social needs. And they 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.
They had an unhostile sense of humor — preferring to joke at their own expense, or at the human condition, and never directing their humor at others. They had a quality he called 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.

Further, they had a sense of humility and respect towards others — something Maslow also called democratic values — meaning that they were open to ethnic and individual variety, even treasuring it. They had a quality Maslow called human kinship or *Gemeinschaftsgefühl* — social interest, compassion, humanity. And this was accompanied by a strong ethics, which was spiritual but seldom conventionally religious in nature.

And these people had a certain freshness of appreciation, an ability to see things, even ordinary things, with wonder. Along with this comes their ability to be creative, inventive, and original.

And, finally, these people 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.

Maslow doesn’t think that self-actualisers are perfect, of course. There were several flaws or imperfections he discovered along the way as well: First, they often suffered considerable anxiety and guilt — but realistic anxiety and guilt, rather than misplaced or neurotic versions. Some of them were absentminded and overly kind. And finally, some of them had unexpected moments of ruthlessness, surgical coldness, and loss of humor.

Two other points he makes about these self-actualisers: Their values were “natural” and seemed to flow effortlessly from their personalities. And they appeared to transcend many of the dichotomies others accept as being undeniable, such as the differences between the spiritual and the physical, the selfish and the unselfish, and the masculine and the feminine.

### 4.3.4 Metaneeds and Metapathologies

Another way in which Maslow approaches the problem of what is self-actualisation is to talk about the special, driving needs (B-needs, of course) of the self-actualisers. They need the following in their lives in order to be happy:

*Truth*, rather than dishonesty.
*Goodness*, rather than evil.
*Beauty*, not ugliness or vulgarity.
*Unity, wholeness, and transcendence of opposites*, not arbitrariness or forced choices.
*Aliveness*, not deadness or the mechanisation of life.
*Uniqueness*, not bland uniformity.
*Perfection and necessity*, not sloppiness, inconsistency, or accident.
*Completion*, rather than incompleteness.
*Justice and order*, not injustice and lawlessness.
*Simplicity*, not unnecessary complexity.
*Richness*, not environmental impoverishment.
*Effortlessness*, not strain.
*Playfulness*, not grim, humorless, drudgery.
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Self-sufficiency, not dependency.
Meaningfulness, rather than senselessness.

In fact, Maslow believes that much of the what is wrong with the world comes down to the fact that very few people really are interested in these values — not because they are bad people, but because they haven’t even had their basic needs taken care of.

When a self-actualiser doesn’t get these needs fulfilled, they respond with metapathologies — a list of problems as long as the list of metaneeds! Let me summarize it by saying that, when forced to live without these values, the self-actualiser develops depression, despair, disgust, alienation, and a degree of cynicism.

Maslow hoped that his efforts at describing the self-actualising person would eventually lead to a “periodic table” of the kinds of qualities, problems, pathologies, and even solutions characteristic of higher levels of human potential. Over time, he devoted increasing attention, not to his own theory, but to humanistic psychology and the human potentials movement.

Toward the end of his life, he inaugurated what he called the fourth force in psychology:

1. Freudian and other “depth” psychologies constituted the first force;
2. Behaviorism was the second force;
3. His own humanism, including the European existentialists, was the third force.
4. The fourth force was the transpersonal psychologies which, taking their cue from Eastern philosophies, investigated such things as meditation, higher levels of consciousness, and even Para psychological phenomena.

Perhaps the best known transpersonalist today is Ken Wilber, author of such books as The Atman Project and The History of Everything.

Self Assessment Questions

1) What do you understand by Humanistic approach in theories of personality?

2) Discuss Maslow’s hierarchy of needs with the help of diagrams.

3) What are metaneeds and metapathologies?
4.4 THEORY OF CARL ROGERS

Humanist psychologist Carl Rogers opposed psychoanalytic personality theory as he was dissatisfied with the ‘dehumanising nature’ of this school of thought. The central tenet of humanistic psychology is that people have drives that lead them to engage in activities resulting in personal satisfaction and a contribution to society: the actualising tendency. This tendency is present in all organisms and can be defined as the motivation present in every life form to develop its potentials to the fullest extent. Humanistic psychology is based on an optimistic view of human nature and the direction of people’s movement is basically towards self-actualisation.

The entire theory is built on a single “force of life” he calls the actualising tendency. It can be defined as the built-in motivation present in every life-form to develop its potentials to the fullest extent possible. Rogers believes that all creatures strive to make the very best of their existence. If they fail to do so, it is not for a lack of desire.

A person’s identity is formed through a series of personal experiences, which reflect how the individual is perceived by both him or herself and the outside world – the phenomenological field.

The concept of the self is, according to Rogers, primarily conscious. The most important determinants of behaviour are those that are conscious or are capable of becoming conscious. Rogers argues that a notion of the self that includes a reference to the unconscious (as with Freud) cannot be studied objectively as it can not be directly known.

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.

He said that an ecosystem such as a forest, with all its complexity, has a much greater actualisation potential than a simple ecosystem such as a corn field. If one bug were to become extinct in a forest, there are likely to be other creatures that will adapt to fill the gap;

On the other hand, one bout of “corn blight” or some such disaster, everything is destroyed. The same for us as individuals: If we live as we should, we will become increasingly complex, like the forest, and thereby remain flexible in the face of life’s little and big disasters.

Rogers tells us that organisms know what is good for them. Evolution has provided us with the senses, the tastes, the discriminations we need: When we are hungry, we find food not just any food, but food that tastes good. Food that tastes bad is likely to be spoiled, rotten and unhealthy. This is called organismic valuing.

Among the many things that we instinctively value is positive regard, Rogers umbrella term for things like love, affection, attention, nurturance, and so on. It is clear that babies need love and attention.
Another thing that we value is positive self regard, that is, self esteem, self worth, and a positive self image. We achieve this positive self regard by experiencing the positive regard others show us over our years of growing up. Without this self regard, we feel small and helpless, and again we fail to become all that we can be.

Rogers believes that, if left to their own devices, animals will tend to eat and drink things that are good for them, and consume them in balanced proportions. Babies, too, seem to want and like what they need. Somewhere along the line, however, we have created an environment for ourselves that is significantly different from the one in which we evolved.

Our society also leads us astray with conditions of worth. As we grow up, our parents, teachers, peers, the media, and others, only give us what we need when we show we are “worthy,” rather than just because we need it. We get a drink when we finish our class, we get something sweet when we finish our vegetables, and most importantly, we get love and affection if and only if we “behave!” Getting positive regard on “on condition” Rogers calls conditional positive regard. Because we do indeed need positive regard, these conditions are very powerful, and we bend ourselves into a shape determined, not by our organismic valuing or our actualising tendency, but by a society that may or may not truly have our best interests at heart. A “good little boy or girl” may not be a healthy or happy boy or girl!

Over time, this “conditioning” leads us to have conditional positive self-regard as well. We begin to like ourselves only if we meet up with the standards others have applied to us, rather than if we are truly actualising our potentials. And since these standards were created without keeping each individual in mind, more often than not we find ourselves unable to meet them, and therefore unable to maintain any sense of self-esteem.

4.4.1 Incongruity

The aspect of your being that is founded in the actualising tendency, follows organismic valuing, needs and receives positive regard and self-regard, Rogers calls the real self. It is the “you” that, if all goes well, you will become.

On the other hand, to the extent that our society is out of synch with the actualising tendency, and we are forced to live with conditions of worth that are out of step with organismic valuing, and receive only conditional positive regard and self-regard, we develop instead an ideal self. By ideal, Rogers is suggesting something not real, something that is always out of our reach, the standard we can’t meet.

This gap between the real self and the ideal self, the “I am” and the “I should be” is called incongruity. The greater the gap, the more is the incongruity. The more the incongruity, the more the individual suffers. In fact, incongruity is essentially what Rogers means by neurosis: being out of synchrony with your own self.

4.4.2 Defenses

When you are in a situation where there is an incongruity between your image of yourself and your immediate experience of yourself (i.e. between the ideal and the real self), you are in a threatening situation. For example, if you have been taught to feel unworthy if you do not get A’s on all your tests, and yet you are not really all that great a student, then situations such as tests are going to bring that incongruity to light, that is tests will be very threatening.
When you are expecting a threatening situation, you will feel anxious. Anxiety is a signal indicating that there is trouble ahead, that you should avoid the situation. One way to avoid the situation, of course, is to pick yourself up and run for the hills. Since that is not usually an option in life, instead of running physically, we run psychologically, by using defenses.

Denial means very much what it does in Freud’s system: You block out the threatening situation altogether. An example might be the person who never picks up his test or asks about test results, so he doesn’t have to face poor grades (at least for now!). Denial for Rogers does also include what Freud called repression: If keeping a memory or an impulse out of your awareness — refuse to perceive it — you may be able to avoid (again, for now!) a threatening situation.

Perceptual distortion is a matter of reinterpreting the situation so that it appears less threatening. It is very similar to Freud’s rationalisation. A student that is threatened by tests and grades may, for example, blame the professor for poor teaching, trick questions, bad attitude, or whatever. The fact that sometimes professors are poor teachers, write trick questions, and have bad attitudes only makes the distortion work better: If it could be true, then maybe it really was true! It can also be much more obviously perceptual, such as when the person misreads his grade as better than it is.

Rogers also has a partial explanation for psychosis: Psychosis occurs when a person’s defense are overwhelmed, and their sense of self becomes “shattered” into little disconnected pieces.

4.4.3 The Fully Functioning Person

Rogers, like Maslow, is just as interested in describing the healthy person. His term is “fully-functioning,” and involves the following qualities:

1) **Openness to experience.** This is the opposite of defensiveness. It is the accurate perception of one’s experiences in the world, including one’s feelings. It also means being able to accept reality, again including one’s feelings. Feelings are such an important part of openness because they convey organismic valuing. If you cannot be open to your feelings, you cannot be open to actualisation. The hard part, of course, is distinguishing real feelings from the anxieties brought on by conditions of worth.

2) **Existential living.** This is living in the here-and-now. Rogers, as a part of getting in touch with reality, insists that we not live in the past or the future — the one is gone, and the other isn’t anything at all, yet! The present is the only reality we have.

3) **Organismic trusting.** We should allow ourselves to be guided by the organismic valuing process. We should trust ourselves, do what feels right, what comes natural. Rogers meant trust your real self, and you can only know what your real self has to say if you are open to experience and living existentially. In other words, organismic trusting assumes you are in contact with the actualising tendency.

4) **Experiential freedom.** Rogers felt that it was irrelevant whether or not people really had free will. We feel very much as if we do. This is not to say, of course, that we are free to do anything at all: We are surrounded by a deterministic universe, so that, flap my arms as much as I like, I will not fly like Superman. It means that we feel free when choices are available to us. Rogers
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5) **Creativity.** If you feel free and responsible, you will act accordingly, and participate in the world. A fully-functioning person, in touch with actualisation, will feel obliged by their nature to contribute to the actualisation of others, even life itself. This can be through creativity in the arts or sciences, through social concern and parental love, or simply by doing one’s best at one’s job. Creativity as Rogers uses it is very close to Erikson’s generativity.

### 4.4.4 Therapy

Carl Rogers is best known for his contributions to therapy. He originally called his therapy to be *non-directive*, because he felt that the therapist should not lead the client, but rather be there for the client while the client directs the progress of the therapy. As he became more experienced, he realised that, as “non-directive” as he was, he still influenced his client by his very “non-directiveness”. In other words, clients looked to therapists for guidance, and they did find it even when the therapist was trying not to guide.

So he changed the name to *client-centered*. He still felt that the client was the one who should say what is wrong, find ways of improving, and determine the conclusion of therapy. His therapy was still very “client-centered” even while he acknowledged the impact of the therapist. Unfortunately, other therapists felt that this name for his therapy was not correct as many other therapies are also client centered taking care of the client and oriented towards clients.

Rogers used to describe his therapy as “supportive, not reconstructive,” for example: When you help a child to learn to ride a bike, you can not just tell them how. They have to try it for themselves. And you can not hold them up the whole time either. There comes a point when you have to let them go. If they fall, they fall, but if you hang on, they never learn.

It is the same in therapy. If independence (autonomy, freedom with responsibility) is what you are helping a client to achieve, then they will not achieve it if they remain dependent on the therapist. They need to try their insights on their own, in real life beyond the therapist’s office.

*Reflection* is the mirroring of emotional communication: If the client says “I feel like shit!” the therapist may reflect this back to the client by saying something like “So, life’s getting you down, hey?” By doing this, the therapist is communicating to the client that he is indeed listening and cares enough to understand. Reflection must come from the heart — it must be genuine, congruent.

Rogers felt that a therapist, in order to be effective, must have three very special qualities:

1) **Congruence** — genuineness, honesty with the client.
2) **Empathy** — the ability to feel what the client feels.
3) **Respect** — acceptance, unconditional positive regard towards the client.

He says these qualities are “*necessary and sufficient*.” If the therapist shows these three qualities, the client will improve, even if no other special “techniques” are used. If the therapist does not show these three qualities, the client’s improvement will be minimal, no matter how many “techniques” are used.
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<td>2) Define the following:</td>
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<td>v) Conditional positive self regard.</td>
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4.5 **LET US SUM UP**

The Humanistic Approach began in response to concerns by therapists against perceived limitations of Psychodynamic theories, especially psychoanalysis. Individuals like Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow felt existing (psychodynamic) theories failed to adequately address issues like the meaning of behaviour, and the nature of healthy growth.

Maslow’s ideas surrounding the Hierarchy of Needs concerning the responsibility of employers to provide a workplace environment that encourages and enables employees to fulfill their own unique potential (self-actualisation) are today more relevant than ever. Maslow took this idea and created his now famous hierarchy of
needs. Beyond the details of air, water, food, and sex, he laid out five broader layers: the physiological needs, the needs for safety and security, the needs for love and belonging, the needs for esteem, and the need to actualise the self, in that order.

Maslow suggested that we can ask people for their “philosophy of the future” — what would their ideal life or world be like — and get significant information as to what needs they do or do not have covered.

Humanist psychologist Carl Rogers opposed psychoanalytic personality theory as he was dissatisfied with the ‘dehumanising nature’ of this school of thought. The central tenet of humanistic psychology is that people have drives that lead them to engage in activities resulting in personal satisfaction and a contribution to society: the actualising tendency. The entire theory is built on a single “force of life” he calls the actualising tendency. Rogers discussed on positive regards, positive self regard, condition of worth, condition positive regard and conditioned positive self regard. Rogers used to describe his therapy as “supportive, not reconstructive.

4.6 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1) Discuss the humanistic theories in terms of their contribution.
2) Elucidate the theory of Abraham Maslow.
3) How does Maslow conceptualise self actualisation? What is its importance?
4) What are the meta cognitive needs and what are meta cognitive pathology?
5) What is Carl Rogers Theory?
6) Discuss incongruity, defenses in terms of Rogers theory.
7) What do you understand by the term fully functioning person? Elucidate.
8) What is client centered therapy of Rogers? Why is it called person centered therapy?

4.7 SUGGESTED READINGS


