

Humanistic Psychology: A Brief Introduction

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Technology is the *science* of understanding people. Formally, it is the scientific study of thought and behavior. It is often a social science but increasingly it is also a biological science. Moreover, not only is it a science, in an analysis of all of the scientific disciplines, it emerged as one of the few core sciences around which other sciences revolve. The other core sciences are medicine, earth science, chemistry, physics, and math (Boyack, Klavans, & Borner, 2005).

Humanistic Psychology is so named due to its core belief in the basic goodness present in and respect for humanity. Its core is founded upon *existential psychology*, or the realization and understanding of one's existence and social responsibility. Two psychologists, *Carl Rogers* and *Abraham Maslow* initiated the movement with this new perspective on understanding people's personality and improving their overall life satisfaction. Contrasting Freud's and biological approaches, focusing on the belief that human behavior and cognition are causally determined by prior events and actions, such that we lack self-control, this branch of psychology believe that an individual is very powerful and bases itself on the concept of *free will*.

Humanistic theory provides an understandable mechanism for examining an individual's need for conflict in order to create peace. This simplistic theory has become a

favorite and popular topic throughout self-help literature. Additionally, the struggle for mankind to gain greater understanding and meaning for life and existence is a timeless cornerstone conflict in entertainment and literature. Humanists adhere to the following beliefs:

1. The present is the most significant aspect of someone. As a result humanists emphasize the *here and now* instead of examining the past or attempting to predict the future.
2. To be mentally healthy, individuals must take personal responsibility for their actions, regardless if those actions are positive or negative.
3. Each person, simply by being, is inherently worthy. While any given action may be negative, these actions do not cancel out their value as a person.
4. The ultimate goal of living is to attain personal growth and understanding. Through constant self-improvement and self-understanding, an individual ever can be truly happy.

Maslow's Theory: The best known and most widely understood guideline in humanistic psychology is provided by Abraham Maslow. The horrors of World War II inspired

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a vision of peace in him and this led to his groundbreaking psychological studies of self-actualizing people. Maslow was one of the pioneers in that movement to bring the human being back into psychology and the person back into personality.

Abraham Maslow (1943) in his influential paper, 'A Theory of Human Motivation' attempted to formulate a positive theory of motivation. This theory is known to be in the functionalist tradition of James and Dewey, and is fused with the holism of Wertheimer, Goldstein, and Gestalt psychology, and with the dynamicism of Freud and Adler. This fusion or synthesis was arbitrarily called as a "general-dynamic" theory. This theory is sometimes called *the third force in psychology* and holds that people are continually motivated, characterized by a hierarchy of needs and that, under the proper circumstances, they can reach a level of psychological health called *self-actualization*. According to Maslow, self-actualization corresponds to ultimate psychological health. The term was originally introduced by the organismic theorist K Goldstein (1934) for the motive to realize one's full potential.

The purpose of such humanistic therapy is thus to help the people approach a stronger and healthier sense of self, also known as self-actualization.

The most significant *criticism* of humanistic psychology centers around its lack of specific approaches to treatment aimed at precise problems. Many opines that since the core belief behind Humanistic theory is that of free will, it is very complicated to both innovate a technique for treatment as well as a means to

study the efficacy. *Transpersonal Psychology* comes to our rescue here. Transpersonal psychology is the scientific study of experiences of altered consciousness that traditionally were classified as mere fantasies or psychotic episodes. It also places religious experiences within these alternative ways to experience consciousness.

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