

Carl rogers: humanistic psychology assignment

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The French existentialism movement during the early and mid twentieth century influenced many areas outside of the philosophical world. Among those affected was uprising humanistic psychology. Carl Rogers played a principal role in this new concentration. Rogers's psychological contributions consisted mainly of his practice of client-centered therapy and his idea of the self and self-actualization. Both of these theories have strong existentialist connections.

Rollo Mays the Origins and Significance of the Existential Movement in Psychology also presents interesting relationships between Rogers and prominent existentialists. Rogers, while not an existentialist philosopher, incorporated existentialist themes and ideas into his contributions to the humanistic psychology movement. Table of Contents Introduction Page 4 ExistentialismPage 5 Self-ActualizationPage 6 Existential Movement Page 7 LimitationsPage 8 ConclusionPage 9

ReferencesPage 10 Introduction To understand Carl Rogers's ideas, it is important to first briefly examine his life history. Rogers was born in 1902 in Chicago. His family life was that of a strict, religious household that held the family unit to the utmost importance. Rogers made few friends growing up and in college did not stray much from his religious foundations. Originally planning on a life as a minister, Rogers did not turn to psychological studies until he started working with abused children at the Rochester Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

Here Rogers formed the basis for many of his ideas regarding client-centered therapy and the self (www. psychology. jrank. org, Retrieved 11/27/2008).

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Rogers would continue studying these ideas throughout his career. In examining Rogers place in existentialist history, it is interesting to note how Rogers himself viewed it. Rogers considered himself an existentialist by nature. A book titled “ Carl Rogers the Man and His Ideas” details an interview with the author, Richard Evans (1975) and during the interview Rogers comments on a lecture that he once gave, titled: How to be an Existentialist without really trying (p. 9). He believed that instead of trying to think like an existentialist, he discovered many main existentialistic ideas through his research with patients and their quest for self-actualization. In respect to American versus European existentialism, Rogers felt that he related more to the positivism of the American movement, but still connected with Europeans like Soren Kierkegaard and Martin Buber (Evans, p. 69). Existentialism Rogers’s ideas on existentialism are obvious in the work that he did and the contributions he made to the humanistic psychology movement.

As one of the forerunners in this movement, Rogers contributed many ideas and theories. One of the most influential was client-centered therapy, which is actually one of the oldest forms of humanistic therapies. In client-centered therapy the therapist listens to the client (the word client is used in place of patient) in order to gain an exact and perceptive understanding of the client’s experiences. From this understanding, the therapist helps turn the attention of the client on to the experience of the moment.

One of the main themes in existentialism is the concept of a moment as many existentialists experience moments where they are acutely self-aware. William James Varieties on Religious Experience, a collection of detailed <https://assignbuster.com/carl-rogers-humanistic-psychology-assignment/>

accounts of religious moments, shows how the existentialist experiences painfully enlightened moments and often is at a loss for how to cope with the insight that remains after the moment has passed. In client-centered therapy, the therapist recognizes the client has acquired this anxiety and would help guide him /her to an understanding of it.

Rogers felt that during client-centered therapy, it is essential for the therapist to be genuine at all times, and to offer unconditional positive regard. The concept of genuineness underlies all themes relevant to existentialism. Existentialists feel that being genuine to oneself is of the utmost importance. Jean Paul Sartre's concept of good versus bad faith symbolizes this. He explained: when one does not take the responsibility to choose what one desires, or when one lives his life merely acting out the role of what one is supposed as, then one is in bad faith. Thus, one's lack of genuineness causes one to exist in bad faith.

Rogers's values genuineness so greatly that he extends its importance by saying that even the therapist must be genuine in order for the client to have insight into self. Client-centered therapy relies on the ability of the genuine therapist, through listening, to aid the client to self-acceptance. Self-Actualization Rogers's concept of the self also contains existentialist themes. Rogers defines the self as including all of the individual's perceptions of his organism, of his experience, and of the way in which those perceptions are related to other perceptions and objects in his environment and the whole exterior world (Evans, p. 6). The existentialist views are obvious in this definition of the self. All existentialists focus on the importance of the self existing and being aware of this existence, or in relation to Rogers's <https://assignbuster.com/carl-rogers-humanistic-psychology-assignment/>

definition, the perception of the self. Rogers also contended that man is constantly trying to actualize himself. Self-actualization includes man recognizing the different, continually changing parts of himself and trying to relate them to one another. When the organism focuses not on actualizing the self, but instead on the static aspects of the self, then maladjustment occurs (Evans, p. 6). Not unlike Rogers's idea of the lack of genuineness, his idea of maladjustment is also comparable to Sarte's concept of bad faith. The common example of the waiter, who acts only as waiter and fails to see himself in any other aspects, describes a man who is both in maladjustment and in bad faith. Rogers's ideas of the self and self-actualization contain existentialist themes. Existential Movement In Rollo May's (1958), *The Origins and Significance of the Existential Movement in Psychology*, connections between Rogers's work and prominent existentialists present themselves.

In one instance, May states, the existential analysis movement is a protest against the tendency to see the patient in forms tailored to our own preconceptions or to make him over into the image of our own predilections (p. 8). Rogers's client-centered therapy directly relates to this statement. In his form of therapy, the therapist's main role is listening to the client and directing the client to find his/her own solutions for anxiety. This role of the therapist removes the tendency for the therapist to mold the client into the therapist's ideal or predilection.

May goes on to describe existentialism as an attitude of a constantly changing man and therefore a man who forever exists in a potential crisis. This idea also correlates to Rogers. His concept of the self is that of a

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combination of all aspects of man that invariably change in nature. The self-actualized man does not dwell on one aspect of existence but considers them all. The same crisis has potential to occur when man stops self-actualization and preoccupies himself with fixed circumstances of his existence. In his introduction, May quotes the German existentialist Nietzsche in saying: Follow not me, but you (p. 0). The role of the therapist in Rogers's client-centered therapy follows this advice by merely guiding the client to find his own instead of giving him direct answers. Another of Nietzsche's ideas, the critical need for man to live to his own potential, relates to Rogers. According to Rogers all men desire to and strive to maintain and enhance themselves. Among all the similarities between May's ideas and examples to Rogers, exist a few contrasting concepts. For example, May states: technique emphasized by itself in the long run defeats even technique (p. 0). Rogers's client-centered therapy, while a unique psychological process, still remains a technique that Rogers believed would help clients by not rendering a man whose self-actualization has been stumped by the use of a typical psychological system. With a few exceptions, May give insight into the relationship between existentialism and Rogers's psychological ideas. Theory Limitations The main problems with this theory of personality are related to the lack of precision and specificity regarding some of the terms and concepts.

Krebs & Blackman (1988) also rate the logical consistency as only "fair", maintaining that some connections are not completely clear. While this theory has become increasingly comprehensive over time, a major weakness is that it does not sufficiently address stages of development (Krebs &

Blackman, 1988; Maddi, 1996). Due to his emphasis on conscious experience, Rogers has also been criticized for a lack of attention to the unconscious (Nietzel, Benstein, Milich, 1994). This criticism is not entirely justified.

While Rogers contribution in the area of psychotherapy is substantial, clinical applicability of his therapy may be limited to those segments of the population whose intellectual and cultural backgrounds are compatible with this therapy (Nietzel et. Al, 1994). This theory's development from therapeutic practice may be both a blessing and a curse. The theory can be seen as practical and the basic premise is on human experience, yet it leads to the extension of concepts that while appropriate to therapy may not be comprehensive or specific enough to apply to all people.

Some human conditions, such as psychopathy, do not make much sense according to this theory. The psychopath apparently feels no guilt, discomfort or remorse for his/her actions. There is no anxiety. Incongruence is not apparent, although the theory suggests it would be substantial indeed. I also wonder about those human beings that have limited potentialities in the first place. Is one " fully functioning" if one has fulfilled all potential, even though there is an extremely limited amount in the first place? The capacity for creativity and free expression might not exist in such a case.

Despite my questions and criticism, this theory's value is substantial and should not be minimized. It offers a reasonable alternative to dominant theories that would have us objectify and control human beings. It also recognizes persons as the most important focus in the study of personality.

Conclusion Rogers's ideas and contributions to the humanistic psychological movement contain many existentialist ideas. Client-centered therapy is a process that relies on the therapist to guide the client to understanding his/her moments by being genuine and unconditionally positive.

Both the concept of a moment and the importance of being genuine reflect existential themes. Rogers's definition of the self and self-actualization also contain existential ideas. In May's article comparisons are presented that relate Rogers and psychological movements to existentialism and specific existentialists. Rogers contributed much to the humanist psychologists and also to clients, or people, searching for self-actualization. A major part of these contributions contain ideas and themes directly related to the philosophy of existentialism.

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