

# Humanistic psychology

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University of Saint Leo | Humanistic Psychology | How Maslow influences Humanistic Psychology | | | Abstract This paper demonstrates how Abraham Maslow's self-actualization and transpersonal psychology influence Humanistic Psychology today. An elaborate background of Maslow is presented to show how Humanistic Psychology took ground.

A discussion of the self-actualization theory and peak experiences is also presented to reveal the whole concept behind the Humanistic Psychology. Further, an analysis and discussion of the importance of Human Psychology in our society today is offered in this paper to give the reader better insights on the topic. Introduction Humanistic Psychology is a very old tradition of challenging implicit assumption about the nature of subjectivity.

The challenges and critiques made upon Humanistic psychology led it in a more liberatory direction. The humanistic tradition is known for its commitment to developing research and clinical approaches that are sensitive to the richness and complexity of lived experience. Since its beginning, humanistic psychology has consistently theorized neglected topics in psychology, and the challenge to traditional assumptions about the nature of subjectivity is one of the field's most important contributions.

Specifically, questioning the meaning of human has exposed psychology's natural attitude and in so doing, has led it in a more liberatory direction. The goal of this paper is to focus on some theoretical work of humanistic Psychology. Like I said on my proposal, Humanistic psychology was not as familiar to me as the other school of thoughts listed. I wanted to

take on the challenge of finding out about it and learning as much as I can on it as possible.

My goal is to accumulate social and historical theories about this school. I also want inform my reader about the applications of this theory. What is Humanistic psychology Well, Humanistic Psychology emphasizes on human strengths and positive aspiration. It supports the belief in the basic goodness present in and respect for humanity, and the realization and understanding of one's existence and social responsibility. However, many working within the field (i. e. Abraham Maslow) have noted that the potential originality of humanistic psychology has not been fully realized (Giorgi, 2005). Abraham Maslow, one of the founders, better yet the father of humanistic psychology and transpersonal psychology.

Maslow assumed that a precise and practical theory of personality must include not only the depths but also the heights that each individual is capable of attaining. The concepts of both Skinner and Freud, and their followers, have tended to ignore or to explain away the cultural, social, and individual achievements of humanity, including creativity, love, altruism, and mysticism (Leonard, Decement 1983). These were among Maslows greatest interests. Abraham Maslow has done more to change our view of human nature and human possibilities than has any other American psychologist of the past fifty years.

His influence, both direct and indirect, continues to grow, especially in the fields of health, education, and management theory, and in the personal and social lives of millions of Americans. (Leonard, Decement 1983).

Philosophical and Historical Context : Throughout history many individuals and groups have affirmed the inherent value and dignity of human beings. In Western civilization we honor the times and places, such as Classical Greece and Europe of the Renaissance, when such affirmations were expressed. Humanistic Psychology is a contemporary manifestation of that ongoing commitment.

Its message is a response to the denigration of the human spirit that has so often been implied in the image of the person drawn by behavioral and social sciences. During the first half of the twentieth century, American psychology was dominated by behaviorism and psychoanalysis but Neither fully acknowledged the possibility of studying values, intentions and meaning as elements in conscious existence. Although various European perspectives such as phenomenology had some limited influence, on the whole mainstream American psychology had been captured by the mechanistic beliefs of behaviorism and by the biological reductionism and determinism of classical psychoanalysis. humanistic psychology began to in the period before World War II in the writings of men like, Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, and Rollo May. These ideas began coalesce into a movement in the 1950s, with the public acceptance of the more popular writings of Rogers, Maslow, and May, as well as in the philosophical and psychiatric interest in European existentialism.

It was crystallized in 1962 by two events: the publication of Abraham Maslows Toward a Psychology of Being, in which humanistic psychology was defined as the “ Third Force” in contrast to behaviorism and psychoanalysis,

and by the first of a series of conferences sponsored by Sonoma State College that led to the creation of the American Association for Humanistic Psychology. (These events had been slightly preceded by the foundation of the Journal of Humanistic Psychology, which was actually the original sponsor of AAHP.) During the 1960s and 70s, humanistic psychology became a major force shaping middle class culture in the United States, a development also known as the Human Potential Movement. There were many aspects to humanistic psychology. There was a dialectic relationship between the Europe-oriented human scientists and existential psychoanalysts on the one hand, and the American self psychologists, including Maslow, Rogers, Clark Moustakas, and James F.

T. Bugental on the other. There was a thoroughgoing revolution in the practice of psychotherapy, which added a wide range of group process, somatic, and non-verbal approaches to the therapists repertoire.

From the point of view of the social sciences, there were three essential characteristics to the humanistic movement: 1. An epistemology that admits the centrality of human experience as basic data. 2. An emphasis on holistic theoretical models.

3. An advocacy of value-based and value-affirming social science. Social Context: Maslow and Self-actualization Initially, Maslow stated that self-actualizing people see life in a different perspective than other people; self-actualizing people see life vividly. They are less emotional and more ??? objective???, less likely to allow ??? hopes???, ??? fears???, or ??? ego defenses??? to distort their observations.

Maslow found that all self-actualizing people are dedicated to a vocation or a cause. Two requirements for growth are ??? commitment to something greater than oneself and success at ones chosen tasks??? (Maslow, The Father reaches of Human Nature, 1971) Major characteristics of self-actualizing people include ??? creativity???, ??? spontaneity???, ??? courage???, and ??? hard work???. Maslow lists the following characteristics of self-actualizers: \* More efficient perception of reality and more comfortable relations with it \* Acceptance (self, others, nature) \* Spontaneity; simplicity; naturalness \* Problem centering [as opposed to ego-centered] \* The quality of detachment; the need for privacy \* Autonomy; independence of culture and environment \* Continued freshness of appreciation \* Mystic and peak experiences \* Gemeinschaftsgefühl [a feeling of kinship with others] \* Deeper and more profound interpersonal relations \* The democratic character structure \* Discrimination between means and ends, between good and evil \* Philosophical, un-hostile sense of humor \* Self-actualizing creativeness \* Resistance to enculturation; the transcendence of any particular culture (Maslow, The Father reaches of Human Nature, 1971) One who meets all of the characteristics will be most likely to be self-actualization. This chart will be important later on in this paper to show how self-actualization will give rise to Humanistic psychology.

One of the main reasons why I chose Humanistic Psychology as my subject is because I really like the concept and the graph of self actualization. Self-actualization is Maslow??™s view that each person possesses an innate tendency. Self-actualizing people are less emotional and more objective, they see life clearly and They are less likely to allow hopes, fears, or ego

defenses to distort their observations. I strongly believe in fulfilling one's individual potential.

**Maslow's Peak experiences** Virtually everyone has encountered a number of peak experiences. A person's reactions while watching the nature or listening to classical music is peak experiences. According to Maslow, peak experiences tend to be triggered by intense feeling that one to be inspired: "It looks as if any experience of real excellence, of real perfection ... tends to produce a peak experience" (Maslow, Religion Values and Peak Experience, 1996). These experiences may also be generating by heartbreaking events. Recovering from depression, stress or the death of a love can initiate extreme moments of love and joy.

The lives of most people are filled with long periods of relative inattentiveness, lack of involvement, or even boredom" (Maslow, Religion Values and Peak Experience, 1996). By contrast, peak experiences are those moments when we become deeply involved, and absorbed in the world. The most powerful peak experiences are relatively rare. For Maslow, the highest peaks include "feelings of limitless horizons opening up to the vision, the feeling of being (Maslow, Religion Values and Peak Experience, 1996).

**Maslow's Influence on Humanistic Psychology** Although Maslow himself did little in the way of formal research, his work has inspired a number of dedicated investigators. Shostrom (1963) developed the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) as a measure of self-actualization. A significant body of research has been conducted using this instrument (Gray, 1986; Kelly & Chovan, 1985; Rychman 1985).

Maslows concept of peak experience has also sparked research (Wilson & Spencer, 1990; see Mathes, et al., 1982, for a literature review). Case studies of self-actualizing individuals have confirmed Maslows theory and also related self-actualization to Dabrowskis (1967) theory of emotional development (Piechowski, 1978, 1990; Piechowski & Tyska, 1982; Brennan & Piechowski, 1991). Content validation has further clarified Maslows original formulation of self- actualization (Leclerc, et al.

, 1998). Maslow added transpersonal psychology to the first three forces in Western psychology-behaviorism psychoanalysis, and humanistic psychology. For Maslow, ??? behaviorism and psychoanalysis were too limited in range to form the basis of a complete psychology of human nature. Psychoanalysis is derived largely from studies of psychopathology???. Behaviorism has attempted to reduce the complexities of human nature to simpler principles but has failed to address fully such issues as values, consciousness, and love (Transpersonal Pioneers).

In the early 1960s humanistic psychology emerged from the work of Maslow, Rogers, and other theorists concerned with psychological health and effective functioning. Many humanistic psychologists have used Maslows theories, especially his work on self-actualization, as the framework for their writing and research (Division of Humanistic Psychology). In 1968 Maslow called attention to the limitations of the humanistic model. In exploring the farthest reaches of ??? human nature???, he found that there were possibilities beyond self-actualization. When peak experiences are especially ??? powerful???, ??? the sense of self dissolves into all awareness



of a greater unity???. The term self-actualization did not seem to fit these experiences (Transpersonal Pioneers).

Implication and The Importance of the research For the Field. Humanistic Psychology has several implications in today??™s world. First and to me the most important one, is the self-actualization by Maslow??™s. Since Early in History, psychologists and Individuals has valued the importance of being Unique and striking out on our own and developing our own personalities, basically the value to be Unique. Maslow??™s self actualization is the theory of Individual ability to reach their full potentials. When face life as a series of choices, then self actualization is the process of making each a choice for growth If we think of life as a series of choices, then self actualization is the process of making each decision a choice for growth. We often have to choose between growth and safety, between progressing and regressing and Each choice has its positive and its negative aspects.

A self-actualized person is realistically oriented and has more efficient perception of reality. They are unthreatened, not frightened by the unknown. They have a superior ability to reason, to see the truth and be logical and efficient. In the process of self-actualization we become more aware of our inner nature and act in accordance with it.

Responsibility and honest for one??™s action are essential elements in self actualization. We learn to trust our own judgement and own inner feelings to act accordingly. It is important to not confuse great talent or intelligence as self actualization.

People may be gifted but fails to use their abilities fully. All human possess potential to succeed and that potential only needs realization and activation for accomplishment. If a person doesn't act upon his potential , he will achieve nothing. Self-actualization evokes a feeling in us that nothing is left wanting, a sense of freedom and liberation, a sense of harmony and satisfaction that, I am an integral part of all that surrounds me and that, I am fulfilling my true individual purpose. However, it is important to identify toxic actualizations and meanings, and release them from mind as only positive actualization can be useful for oneself and the country.

The Importance/Strengths of Humanistic Psychology Humanistic psychology emphasizes the role of the individual. It gives more credit to the individual in controlling and determining their mental state of health. This approach carried out strong points that made it a particularly useful theory in the modern world. These theories take into account environmental factors in shaping personal experience, rather than focusing on our internal thoughts and desires. Humanistic Psychology continues to influence therapy, education, healthcare, and other areas. It helped remove some of the stigma attached to therapy and make it more acceptable normal healthy individuals to explore their abilities and potential through therapy. Element of the humanistic psychology have incorporated in different styles of therapy.

It put an emphasis on personal responsibility, social tolerance and responsibility and made it a useful basis for positive social and personal change. It provides simple and practical tools for self-examination. Criticism of Humanistic Psychology Unfortunately, Humanistic Psychology has its share

of flaws. The biggest criticism centers around its lack of scientific approaches to treatment of specific problems. Humanistic psychology has also been criticized for lacking an integrated, clearly defined theory.

It is also believed that the humanistic theory falls is unable to help ones with severe mental or personality disorders. Humanistic psychology has been criticized for promoting an optimistic but often vague view of the mind, and for promoting narcissistic interests. Last but not least, The humanistic theory applies some human generalization which are believed to be complete. The questions that some individuals appear to consciously take negative alternatives or make negative choices while positive choices are available right in front of them, continue to haunt humanistic psychologists.. Lastly, humanistic theory applies some human nature generalizations which are widely believed to be complete.

Are all people? good at the core of their being, or are some? people just not there Can we? effectively? position that Maslows needs hierarchy, as explained, applies to everyone universally? Or is it possible that each individual can impose their own belief system or their order of attainment, or even their very definition Why is it that some individuals appear to consciously? take negative? alternatives while positive? choices are right in front of them These? doubts? huant humanistic? psychology? and the complexity associated with performing measurable research of the theory further exacerbates the issue.