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Humanistic Perspective and Personality

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Rogers, Maslow and Kelly

Learning about your personality can lead you to have better life goals, develop your strengths and conquer your weaknesses. Because the study of personality is this important, theorists have come up with the respective studies that help us understand the different personality types. The humanist approach to personality has been developed by famous theorists like Rogers, Kelly and Maslow. The connection between humanistic perspective and personality is relatively modern compared to cognitivist and behaviorist views.

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Personality and Rogers

In his theory, Rogers stated that the organism has one basic goal: self-actualization. He expressed his extremely optimistic approach when he explained that all of us have the tendency to grow until we reach “actualization”. According to him, we exist because we need to gratify this need.

Rogers described a “fully functioning person” as someone who is actively taking steps to self-actualization. In relation to personality, this individual is open-minded and trusting to their own feelings and their environment.

Rogers' theory emphasized that the chief indicator that we will reach self-actualization is our experiences during childhood. Every child needs to obtain unconditional love and acceptance from his significant others. However, today's society dictates that a child will only be loved and taken good care of if he suits the expectancies of the significant others (e.g. quiet, well-mannered, obedient). Because of this, Rogers theorized that these external conditions give an increasing level of influence to the person's behavior. When his behavior and actions are continually reinforced by such conditions, the individual develops the personality type that corresponds to the generality of his behavior.

Personality and Maslow

One of the most common models used in psychology, the Hierarchy of Needs was the result of Abraham Maslow's research on the basic motivations of animals and humans. Maslow explained the human needs in a pyramid-like figure. At the bottom of the pyramid are the physiological needs (air, food, water, etc). Next to it are the safety and security needs (shelter, protection, etc). Love and belongingness needs come next (acceptance, affection, friendship, etc). The fourth portion includes the self-esteem needs (sense of mastery, power, appreciation, etc). And at the top is self actualization, or the tendency of being your finest. These five human needs are the ones that motivate us- to go from primitive needs to the higher needs.

Just as what Rogers theorized, Maslow believed that our ultimate life goal is self-actualization. Some characteristics of a self-actualized person are:

- Autonomous and independent
- Have accurate perceptions of reality
- Is able to accept himself, others and the society
- Often feels as one with nature
- Democratic and Appreciative

Because it is human nature to aim for these positive characteristics, we tend to

Personality and Kelly

The theory developed by George Kelly was grounded in the thinking that we have various ways of interpreting and predicting circumstances, and that this leads to our individual differences. These differences he dubbed as "personal constructs" are the tools we use in acquiring information from the outside world and processing them inside our minds. When we interact with our environment and within ourselves, this manner of interacting is, for Kelly, our personality.

Kelly's humanistic theory is based on the Fundamental Postulate, which says that the manner by which a person anticipates events psychological channelizes his process. This means that our actions are determined by our expectancies of the outside world, based on our interpretation of past experiences. For instance, if an individual views others as open-minded and friendly, he would have a greater tendency to become more sociable and open to people. However, if he sees others as rude and egocentric, he would tend to trust only himself and become indifferent.

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