

Humanistic Psychology emerged in the USA during the 1950's. The humanistic approach began in response to concerns by therapists against the perceived limitations of Behaviourism and Psychoanalysis. Individuals like Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow felt that existing 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 the then current theories, but rather a fundamentally new approach. There are several factors which distinguish the Humanistic Approach from other approaches within Psychology, including the emphasis on subjective meaning, a rejection of **determinism** in favour of individual choice, and a concern for positive growth rather than pathology. While one might argue that some psychodynamic approach theories provide an image of healthy growth (including Jung's concept of individuation), the other characteristics distinguish the Humanistic Approach from every other approach within Psychology.

The basic assumptions of the humanistic approach are that behaviour must be understood in terms of the subjective experience of the individual, and that past or current circumstances do not limit behaviour. Human behaviour is not simply a response to an immediate stimulus. If you wish to understand behaviour, the humanists argue, you must understand the person producing the behaviour, including how the person sees the world - sometimes described as the **phenomenological** viewpoint

Humanistic Psychology acknowledges that the mind is strongly influenced by intrinsic forces within society and the unconsciousness, some of which are negative and destructive. Nevertheless, humanists focus upon the independent importance and value of human beings and their conscious ability to develop personal competence and self-respect. This value orientation has led to the development of therapies, promoting personal and interpersonal skills as well as enhancing the quality of life.

Carl Rogers was not only one of the founders of the Humanistic Approach but also arguably the most influential therapist in the 20th Century. In terms of his theories, there are two fundamental ideas. Firstly, Rogers talked about healthy development in terms of how the individual perceived themselves. A healthy individual will tend to see **congruence**, between their sense of who they are (**self**) and who they feel they should

be (**ideal self**). While no one tends to experience perfect congruence at all times; the relative degree of congruence is an indicator of health. The second fundamental idea is Roger's theory of the conditions for healthy growth, and the role of a therapist in fostering healthy growth. Through a process Rogers called **Person-centred therapy**, the therapists seeks to provide empathy, openness, and unconditional positive regard.

Like Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow is widely regarded as one of the founders of the Humanistic Approach. While less influential among therapists than Rogers, Maslow may actually be better known to the general public, because of his interest in applying psychological principles to areas like behaviour in business settings. His **Hierarchy of Needs** has been a basic concept in human resources and organisational behaviour for several decades. Maslow's hierarchy of needs was produced as a basis for achieving self-actualisation. Often shown graphically as a triangle, this theory basically begun with humans needing to satisfy survival and safety needs before moving up to social, esteem needs and then finally achieving self actualisation (the realisation of ones' full potential). Maslow coined the term "The Third Force" to describe the humanistic approach, emphasising how it differed from the Psychodynamic and Behaviourist Approaches, which dominated psychology in the 1950's. His theory, underlines motivation as the key to understanding human behaviour. One difference between Maslow and Rogers is the importance that Maslow gave to **peak experiences**. Peak experiences are moments in life, which take us beyond our original thoughts, perceptions and feelings. Peak experiences arrive unexpectedly and transform the individuals understanding of themselves and the world. Because of the ambiguous nature of peak experiences, some psychologists are less comfortable with Maslow's theory than Rogers, which uses concepts more easily related to "mainstream" psychology. This may account for Maslow being viewed as less influential among therapists.

Evaluating the Humanistic Approach by conventional scientific criteria is difficult because of its phenomenological emphasis. The sources of evidence used to reinforce the theories are almost entirely correlational (case histories and interviews), which in comparison to experiments do not produce falsifiable predictions. Although the Humanistic approach remains important, it has limited influence in psychological research because of its untestable ideas and emphasis on the experiences of the individual. Nevertheless in the past 30 years, few approaches in

psychological thought have had as much influence on our culture as Humanistic Psychology.

The Biological Approach to Psychology looks at the ways in which our understanding of biology can be applied to helping us understand human psychology. The approach developed out of the interest in two major areas: the relationship between body and mind, and the influence of heredity on behaviour. Each reflects our biological nature. Within Psychology, it is the only approach, which tries to explain behaviour in terms of the structures of the physical body.

Over two hundred years ago, Julien de La Mettrie made the assumption that the mind has its physical basis in the brain. From here, this concept of **materialism**, which assumes both behaviour and consciousness has a physiological basis, has increasingly gained acceptance. In essence, the brain is the mind. Thus, the task is to identify the structures and processes, which produce conscious awareness. Today, as our understanding of physiological processes increases, it seems more and more evident that mind and body are linked. Roger Sperry, a pioneer in the study of hemispheric specialisation, has described consciousness as an **emergent process** of the brain - emerging from complex neurophysiological and biochemical components. One of the earliest methods to explore the workings of the brain was the detailed analysis of clinical patients. Pierre Broca in 1861 was able to identify an area of the brain involved with speech production (now called "Broca's area") based on studying an individual who had suffered with a language defect. From his Behavioural observations and an anatomic analysis after the patient had died, Broca concluded that the function of speech is located in the third convolution of the frontal lobe of the right hemisphere. This represented a dramatic advance in physiological understanding, creating a direct connection between the structure of the brain and Behaviour. Broca saw the future implications of his analysis, predicting that all Behaviour can be associated to some specific mechanism/structure in the brain - a concept called **localisation of function**.

One of the greatest challenges involves the complexity of the human body. There are approximately ten billion neurons in the cortex of the brain alone, which are interconnected in diverse ways. In addition, there are countless chemical interactions involving neurotransmitters, hormones and neuropeptides, as well as considering environmental factors. This complexity makes achieving a complete understanding of the processes affecting behaviour a daunting goal.

The second important aspect of the biological approach, is the role of heredity upon behaviour. The study of heredity involves both the direct study of genes and how they function, as well as looking at interactions between hereditary and environmental factors, by studying twins who have identical genetic makeups. Several twin studies of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder have been carried out in recent years. These studies have pointed towards the high heritability for hyperactive symptoms. Genetic links have been found. Other research has shown that reading disability also shows moderate heritability - concordance for non-identical and identical twins are about 40% and 70%. Schizophrenia, mood disorders and anxiety is also heritable. Genetic influences are not limited to behavioural disorders; they also contribute to normal variations in personality and in cognitive abilities, as well as psychopathology.

Recently, researchers have announced that the mapping of the human genome is nearing completion. Identifying our genes poses the possibility of understanding what role genetics plays in our Behaviour