

10 Short answer questions from the humanistic perspective and suggested answers by a student.

Question 1.

A: Identify one theoretical explanation of behavioural change from the humanistic perspective related to one topic of your own choice.(4 marks)

B:How effective is the explanation? (4 marks)

A: One theoretical explanation of behavioural change from the humanistic perspective is unconditional positive regard, i.e. , liking and accepting all of another person's feelings and self-concept; a non-judgemental and non-possessive caring for, and prising of another person. This may lead to behavioural change during e.g. therapy according to Rogers but it is also important in explaining behavioural changes in a child. An unconditional positive regard from significant others is important if the individual is to become congruent (i.e. moving towards the ideal of self-actualisation). Unconditional positive regard takes place when the person feels that all about him/her is seen as equally valued and that there are no 'conditions of worth' to use a Rogerian concept. -

B: This theoretical explanation of unconditional positive regard has been applied in explanations of outcome of child rearing and child development with the Coopersmith(1967) study, which was designed to assess the origins of self-esteem. In his study, 9 to10 year-old white middle class boys filled out the self-esteem Inventory and provided ratings of their parents, staff members interviewed mothers, and mothers filled out questionnaires. The results indicated that positive regard from parents was a major factor in the development of self-esteem. The study has been criticised for a biased sample but all the same, it gives some valuable ideas of the origins of self-esteem in a Western cultural context.

It can thus be argued that, unconditional positive regard is effective in explaining behaviour to some extent in that it provides an idea of how self-esteem can affect people's behaviour but since the word 'unconditional' is problematic and hence difficult to test , since it is an ideal it is not easy to validate the explanation. However Coopersmith's(1967)study shows that the explanation seems somewhat effective in terms of behavioural change as a result of 'positive regard' in the child-parent relationship.

Question 2.

A: Describe one method used by psychologists working within the humanistic perspective (4 marks)

B: Use one psychological study to illustrate your point (4 marks)

A: One method used by Psychologists working within the humanistic perspective is the Q-sort method, i.e. a method used to collect data on outcome of therapy based on changes in clients self-concepts before, during, and after therapy in that it is used to measure actual changes based on differences between self and ideal self. An individual is presented with a pile of cards, each of which contains a personal statement (about 100 statements printed on separate cards). The individual decides which statements best describe his or her own self , which statements are the next best ,and so on, right down to those statements that are the least descriptive. The same procedure is followed with respect to the ideal self. The experimenter works out the size of the gap between the statements selected as descriptive of the self and the ideal self. The idea is that discrepancies between the self-sort and ideal-sort should decrease during therapy. The Q-sort is

based on content analysis in that it counts the development of of positive and negative self –statements at different points in the therapeutic process (point sampling).

B: One study that illustrates the principles of the Q-sort method is done by Coopersmith (1967) whose work was originally designed to assess the origins of self-esteem. In his study he used a psychometric test called the 50-item Self-Esteem Inventory, with most of the items coming from scales to measure the self-esteem of 9 to 10-year –old middle class boys. The boys filled out the inventory, and their scores were used to define groups with high, medium, and low self-esteem. Compared to children low in self-esteem, those high in self-esteem were found to be more assertive, independent and creative. However Coopersmith used triangulation in data collection to have a fuller picture of the factors influencing the boys' self-esteem. .

Question 3.

Outline important historical and cultural factors that gave rise to the humanistic perspective (8 marks)

Humanistic psychology emerged as a third force in the late 1950s as a reaction against psychoanalysis and behaviourism (determinism). Although humanistic psychology originated in United States there was a powerful element of European existentialism (holding the view that human beings have free will and the result of the choices they make will determine/influence their lives) and 'phenomenology' from its earliest years of development. Other important historical and cultural factors that gave rise to humanistic perspective was Eastern philosophy with its focus on 'inner life' and spirituality, The Civil Rights movement with Martin Luther King in America, the impact of the second world war which resulted in the appreciation of the need to focus on the totality of human experience, and the anti-authoritarian movement (Hippie movement) which began around 1964 which was a revolt against traditional western values. Humanistic psychology fitted into this pattern since it was a radical critique of conventional values and opting for individual freedom and 'phenomenal field', i.e. the individual can only be understood in terms of their own experience. In this sense, the focus on individualism makes the humanistic movement an expression of Western Individualism as a contrast to collectivist cultures. The two important founders of humanistic psychology were Rogers and Maslow who build their theories on old ideas, e.g. Aristotle and Romanticism and included ideas that happened to be part of the zeitgeist in the USA during the 1960s and in that sense, humanistic psychology reflects an important way to understanding that period from a psychological point of view.

Question 4.

Examine one key concept associated with the humanistic perspective in dealing with one topic of your own choice. (8 marks)

One key concept within the humanistic perspective is 'self-actualisation', i.e. innate strive for personal growth and self-fulfilment. According to Rogers (1970), self-actualised people are those who are fulfilled and doing all they are capable of. However, it is not all people who can become self-actualised but we all have the potential for it . Maslow carried out an archival research over famous people that he regarded as self-actualised. He identified several individuals (e.g. Roosevelt). This study is not regarded as scientific because of the mostly post-descriptive method including sample bias (people considered self-actualised are chosen to fit the theory). This concept of self-actualisation relates to Maslow's theory of motivation and it can be applied in a work setting, e.g. in Aronof (1967) study where he compared fishermen and cane cutters in British West Indies (tested if lower needs must be fulfilled before higher needs (self-actualisation). He found that cane-cutters security needs were higher than fishermen's' and 80% of fisherman had a high self-esteem compared to 20% of cane cutters. This empirical study then seems to confirm Maslow's theory of

motivation and self-actualisation in that cane cutters who had a more secure job situation but also less freedom to develop self-actualisation had less self-esteem than the fishermen.

Question 5.

Evaluate the extent to which free will and determinism are integral to the humanistic perspective (8 marks)

Free will, a view that behaviour is a function of personal choice and determinism-behaviour determined by the various factors outside the person's control are integral to the humanistic perspective according to Rogers, who was a scientist and a therapist and he acknowledged that a person's behaviour is both determined and a result of freedom. He said that objective scientific inquiry based on deterministic assumptions about humans has a place in the study of humans (science) but is limited in the sense that it leaves out inner human experiencing (phenomenology). He believes that a person in therapy (client) becomes more and more able to make choices as the therapy progresses since the person and the therapist engage in a therapeutic relationship that is based on openness and responsiveness. Although Rogers believe much more in free will, he acknowledges that determinism is present in the case of conditional love because that may affect a person's self-esteem. In this way free will and determinism are integral to some extent in the humanistic perspective.

Question 6.

A: Outline 2 basic assumptions on which the humanistic perspective are based (4 marks)

B: Evaluate these assumptions using an alternative perspective.

- A. Two basic assumptions on which the humanistic perspective is based are that humans have a free will – they are free to choose when they are congruent (Rogers) or self-actualised (Maslow) and secondly humans are innately good, which means there is nothing inherently negative or evil about them (humans). In this way the humanistic perspective takes an optimistic view of human nature that humans are born good but during their process of growth they might turn evil.
- B. According to the learning perspective humans' behaviour is determined by the environmental 'contingencies of reinforcement' (environmental determinism) and that behaviour can only be conditioned. Skinner, a famous behaviourist argued that free will is completely an illusion created by our complexity of learning. This is a contrast to the assumption of free will in the humanistic perspective. Furthermore, the learning perspective states that humans are like a 'tabula rasa' or blank slates at birth, that is humans are born neutral which is different to the assumption that humans are born innately good in the humanistic perspective.

Question 7.

A: identify one application of humanistic ideas in one topic of your own choice (4 marks)

B: evaluate this using evidence (4 marks)

- A. The humanistic ideas have been applied in education with open classrooms. Summerhill School in the UK, founded by A.S.Neill is one of the schools that have applied the humanistic ideas fully with some success to enhance motivation in students. The school has clear structure and rules according to their own prospectus but students are involved in many things regarding their life at the school, e.g. how their learning process should take place. As a consequence, students from Summerhill are very creative, self-directed (free to choose subjects, learning materials, etc.), responsible and tolerant. The non-directive approach adopted in this school is in line with

the open-classroom policy and student-centred learning of the humanistic movement that was created as a contrast to the traditional classroom setting, which is teacher-and curriculum-centred and where learning may involve 'conditions of worth' for the student when they cannot live up to teacher expectation.

- B. According to Erich Fromm's forward (1960) to A.S Neill's book on Summerhill school, education must be both intellectual and emotional and that the individual must explore the world without symbiotic attachment to become truly independent. This supports the humanistic ideas. However, Dr. Coulson (1991), a psychologist working within non-directive therapy with Rogers for many years and originally a firm believer in applying his ideas in a school setting, stated that non-directive methods in education had showed to have an opposite effect to what was wanted because of the spirit of non-judgementalism in the system, which often led to anarchy and lack of fundamental values. According to Coulson, and it was important to teach kids what was wrong and right especially, concerning drug use and sex.

Question 8.

Outline recommendations for change in lifestyles from this perspective (8 marks).

Humanistic ideas have been applied in education and therapy. The purpose of humanistic education is to provide foundation for personal growth and development towards life-long learning in a self-directed manner and self-actualisation. 'Open classrooms' follow the humanistic education ideology. In open -classrooms settings students are the most important is the idea of student-centred, self-directed education (they're free to choose what to study) and the teacher acts as facilitator who provides an atmosphere of freedom and support for individual. So a recommendation for change in lifestyle within the humanistic perspective in relation to education would be that conditions for students to develop at their own pace will make them change behaviour to be more self-directed (and not just conditioned by the teachers' feedback). Another recommendation for change in lifestyle may include Roger's client-centred therapy which helps individuals in the process of self-actualisation and the clients' natural and healthy growth tendencies to determine choices and behaviours which are truly their own and not dictated by other people.

Question 9.

To what extent are there cultural limitations to the acceptance of humanistic ideas in the explaining human behaviour? (8 marks)

There are cultural limitations of the acceptance of humanistic ideas in explaining human behaviour to a large extent because since the humanistic perspective is rooted in Western ideas, esp. from North America and these ideas of individual freedom and focus on personal self are not relevant in more collectivist cultures. This was shown in a cross-cultural research concerning education by Kitayama and Markus (1992) who showed that, whilst positive feelings in American students were associated with personal achievements, Japanese students by contrast tended to associate positive feelings with good relations with others. This seems to show that Maslow's ideas of motivation and of self-actualisation as individual achievement has limited explanatory power in non-western cultures and Western cultures. Furthermore many humanistic ideas are very culture bond (individualistic versus collectivist cultures) and it also seems that the hierarchy needs (Maslow) may be different in different cultures, except perhaps for the survival needs. .

Question 10.

A: Account for the application of one concept within humanistic psychology (4 marks)

B: Evaluate to what extent this explanation can be used in all cultures (4 marks)

A. 'Self-direction' is one of the concepts within the humanistic perspective that has been applied in Rogers's ideas on education. Self-direction means to direct oneself and find one's own way. In education, self-direction has a great importance in open classrooms setting, which follow the humanistic education ideology. In the open classrooms, students are the ones who decides how learning should take place (student-centred), they should be self-directed, they're free to choose what to study and the teacher merely acts as a facilitator who provides an atmosphere of freedom and support for individual pursuits. Summerhill School in UK, founded by A.S.Neill is one of the schools that have applied the humanistic ideas fully with some success to enhance motivation in students. The school has clear structure and rules and that students from Summerhill are very creative, self-directed (free to choose subjects, learning materials, etc.), responsible and tolerant.

B. Self-direction is mostly a western cultural explanation. In some cultures, you're supposed to follow what is dictated by society. This is particularly true for women. The result is that you do not develop a sense of self that is individual, but rather collective, i.e. you are more a part of a group that some individual striving for your own personal development. According to a cross-cultural research by Kitayama and Markus (1992), whilst positive feelings in American students were associated with personal achievements, Japanese students by contrast tended to associate positive feelings with good relations with others. This shows that Maslow's idea of self-actualisation as individual achievement has limited explanatory power in cultures different from the USA and Western cultures. This refutes the assumption, self-direction. There is a contrast between. Self-direction is very culture-bond (individualistic cultures versus collectivist cultures. However, way of learning outlined by open-classroom ideology (as applied in Summerhill) is perhaps not fit for all human beings. It seems that it is particularly valuable for strong individuals who know what they want. Weaker students may in fact waste their time and procrastinate without really fulfilling their potential because what they need is guiding. This shows some limitation in the application of self-direction in education and it probably also applies to other areas as well.