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THE FULLY FUNCTIONING PERSON: A BIO-PSYCHO-SOCIAL VIEWPOINT

Abstract: We live in a period of globalization and growing complexity and need new and effective ways to cope with our fast paced changing realities in order to meet our present and future challenges. New capacities of our ways of knowing are required, new ways to become aware of how we construe our experiences of what we call reality: the relationship with ourselves, the others, the world.

Research shows that people who develop more fully their potentialities (their individuality) have more self-efficacy, resilience, self-esteem and are able to cope better with adversities, are more resistant to stressors and are also more respectful and helpful with their fellow human beings. We need to foster a new *psychological literacy* for billions of people, a sort of *psychological compass*, a needed systemic way of being to navigate in the rippling currents of change.

We need to deepen our understanding of the social construction of individuality (or social capital) as well as the process of social construction on individualism and of learned helplessness.

What are the variables of the process of social construction in a culture, a society, a community, or a family that contribute to the fostering of individuality? What are the personality traits and competences that are the common denominators of a mature and effective person, partner, parent, community member, citizen?

Some illustrations will be made of the processes of identification, value introjections, individuation of what Carl Rogers defines as the fully functioning personality, as well as the role and impact of the vision of human nature, the implicit and explicit norms and rewarded behaviours of genders, and minorities have on individuality at various levels:

MACROSYSTEM

culture, shared beliefs, social expectations, laws, etc.

EXOSYSTEM

government agencies, economic system, religious organizations, etc.

PowerPoint presentation delivered at the Conference.

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MESOSYSTEM

all the systems of daily life interacting with each other

MICROSYSTEM

workplace, friends, family

The work and research of some authors that are offering important tools for understanding these processes will be illustrated: Rogers, Dewey, Buber, Maslow, Jung, E. Morin, Lasswell, Adorno. Reich, Berger & Luckmann

Some useful insights can also be acquired from the biographies of philanthropists and social activists.



The most valuable natural resource
of every nation, community
or work organization
is
PEOPLE.

WE live in a period of globalization and of growing complexity.

And in order to meet our present and future challenges we need effective ways to cope.

Research shows that people who develop more fully their **potentialities (their individuality)** have more self-efficacy, resilience, self-esteem and are able to cope better with adversities, are more resistant to stressors and are also more respectful and helpful with their fellow human beings.





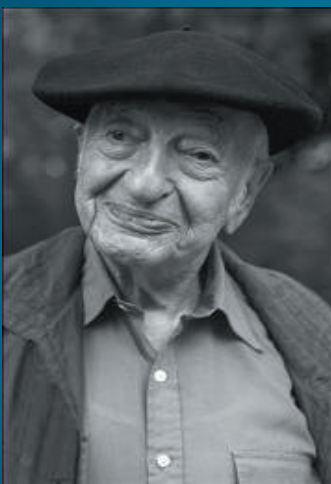
In the **Anthropocene Era**

promoting processes that protect and foster the development of fully functioning persons, families, organizations and communities is not only of **vital importance for human survival and welfare** but also for the welfare of the entire **planet**.

All paradigms of psychotherapy are based on a vision of human nature, from which descend their view of health and illness, the processes that create disease and pain and what promotes healing, health and well-being.

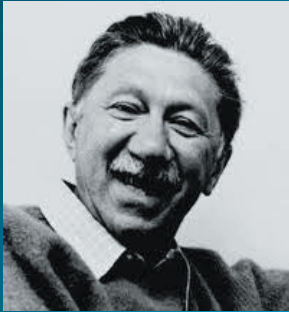
The humanistic view is that people become dysfunctional when spontaneous movement towards **self- actualization and successful connections** with significant others are cut-off, blocked, violated or exploited.

Humanistic Psychology instead of focalizing on pathology has studied people that are particularly healthy and fully functioning, investigating the common denominators of those people



Kurt Goldstein described **self-actualization** as the tendency to actualize, as much as possible, the organism's individual capacities in the world.

The tendency toward **self-actualization** is the only **drive** by which the life of an organism is determined.

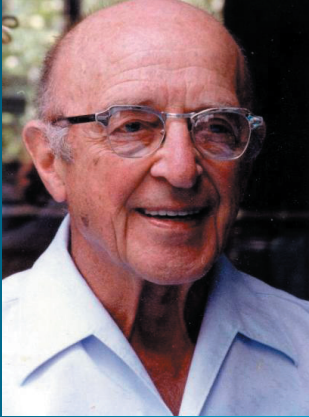


Abraham Maslow based his theory on his case studies of historical figures whom he saw as examples of **self-actualized individuals** including Albert Einstein, Ruth Benedict, Frederick Douglass, Jane Addams, Eleanor Roosevelt, Max Wertheimer, Henry David Thoreau....

Maslow examined the lives of each of these people in order to assess the **common qualities** that led each to become **self-actualized**.

In general he found that these individuals were, accepting of themselves and of their life circumstances; very creative; **focused on finding solutions to cultural problems rather than just to concentrate on personal problems**; open to others' opinions and ideas; had a strong sense of privacy, autonomy, human values and appreciation of life; and a few intimate friendships rather than many superficial ones.

They also all reported the frequent occurrence of **peak experiences**. These occasions were marked by feelings of harmony and deep meaning: feeling at one with the universe.



For Carl Rogers human nature has a fundamental tendency: the **actualizing tendency** where **self-awareness generates self-regulation**.

The actualizing tendency aims to develop all capacities in ways that maintain or enhance the organism and **move it toward autonomy**.

This tendency is directional, constructive and present in all living things.

The concept of the actualizing tendency encompasses all motivations; tension, need, or drive reductions; and creative as well as pleasure-seeking tendencies a drive to fulfill the genetic blueprint.

Each person thus has a fundamental mandate to fulfill their potential.

The research of Carl Rogers on the fully functioning persons found the following common denominators:

- Self aware, integrated, in touch, authentic, trusting, creative, sociable, balanced and realistic
- Psychological health, maturity, existential depth, effective self-regulation, respect for themselves and others
- Openness to experience (instead of the rigid defense stance of the person feeling under threat)
- Personality: mature, fluid, absence of rigidity / fundamentalism
- Maximum of adaptability and resilience
- Trust in themselves, their organism, their intuition, feelings and their values
- Sense of direction, purpose, leadership qualities

The process of the fully functioning person is seen by Rogers as a challenge:

“This process is not, I am convinced, a life for the faint-hearted.

It involves the stretching and growing of becoming more and more of one's potentialities.

It involves the courage to be.”

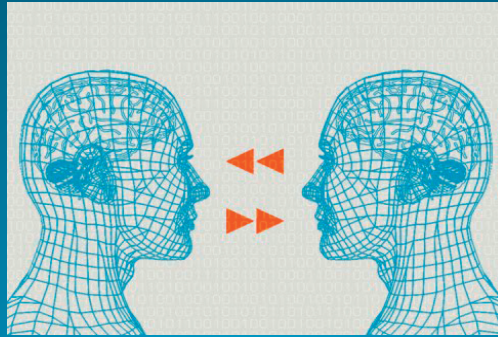
(Carl Rogers 1961)

Carl Rogers' research has identified specific qualities in relationships which promote the development of fully functioning people as well as the healing of partially functioning people:

Respect

Empathic understanding

Authenticity/congruence (deep contact)



**People that are related to
in this nourishing way
tend to reproduce these qualities
in their new relationships.**

Unfortunately, this also tends to hold true in
the **opposite case**:

when people are related to in unhealthy,
dysfunctional, demeaning, disrespectful and
violent ways they tend to suffer from such
mistreatment and tend to reproduce the
same relational patterns with others;

their **capacity of contact with their inner
core is lost, self-regulation becomes
impaired** and as a result they become rigid
and defended and **risk fragmentation**.

We need **more** self actualized people
that relate to themselves, to others and to
the planet with **more**

Respect

Empathy

Authenticity/congruence (deep contact)



How can we
protect and promote
Individuality
and
Fully Functioning Persons?

By fostering the conditions that protect and promote individuality in all the processes of the construction of reality, identity, social roles and behaviors.

By relating to others in respectful, emphatic, genuine and congruent ways and applying them as the relational foundations in:

- **Parenting**
- **Schooling**
- **Workplaces**
- **Community**
- **Society**
- **Culture**

*Each of us is part of the daily
social construction of reality.*

***Are we part of the solution
or
are we part of the problem?***

