Topic 5: Approaches in Psychology
Humanistic Approach (Application)
Example Essay

Tatiana's parents are concerned about her mobile phone use. She is an anxious child and has low self-esteem. Tatiana only feels good about herself when she receives messages or positive comments on social media. She feels safe when she has her phone and socially isolated without it.

Tatiana's parents worry that her dependence on her mobile phone is starting to affect her well-being and achievement at school.

Outline and evaluate the humanistic approach. Refer to Tatiana's behaviour in your answer (16 Marks)

The humanistic approach is an approach in psychology that emphasises the role of free will in one's personal growth and development. This contrasts directly most other approaches which place emphasis on the role of external factors, such as societal and biological influences on behaviour. **AO1**

Maslow was a humanistic psychologist, believing that the optimum state of being in regards to personal growth was 'self-actualisation'. For this reason, Maslow constructed his hierarchy of needs, with self-actualisation- the ability to experience periods of extreme ecstasy and inspiration being placed at the top of the hierarchy. **AO3**
However, before self-actualisation can be realised, other basic needs lower down on the hierarchy need to be met, for example, physiological needs like food, sex and water, followed by needs such as love and self esteem. **AO1**

Tatiana is said to have 'low self-esteem', which could be prohibiting her- according to Maslow from reaching self-actualisation. As Tatiana is unable to reach self-actualisation, she is consequently suffering in school- her achievement is said to be affected. **AO2**

Rogers was another humanistic psychologist, who argued that personal growth was dependent on the self being congruent with the 'ideal self'- how you would like to be. It is when the gap between the two gets too big is self-actualisation inhibited from occurring. Again, Tatiana's low self-esteem seems to indicate a lack of congruence between herself and her ideal self, preventing her from self-actualising and performing well in school- as well as being happy in school. **AO2**

Another key figure in determining personal growth according to Rogers is positive regard. If conditional positive regard is given, whereby one believes they will only be loved if they meet the terms of the conditions set by others, then a person develops conditions of worth. **AO1** In Tatiana's case, she only feels good about herself after getting positive comments only social media. The implications here being that she feels as if she has to meet the

conditions set by others in order to feel worthy. This again is affecting her ability to be happy and to succeed in school. **AO2**

Roger's theory on the importance of unconditional positive regard has had implications for psychology. This is because Roger's helped to identify the importance of other's opinions on an individual's sense of worth. Due to this, psychologists take an approach that is empathetic, non-judgmental and offers unconditional positive regard, in line with Roger's findings. **AO3**

However, it is argued that although Rogers' findings have had influences on counselling psychology, and Maslow's hierarchy can explain motivation, the impact of the humanistic approach on psychology as a science has been minimal. These claims come from the fact that much of Maslow and Rogers' beliefs come not from sound research that uses the scientific method, limiting the reliability of their findings, unlike other approaches like the biological. **AO3**

That being said, the humanistic approach has its merits in places that other approaches like the biological do not. The biological approach is very reductionist, leading to it potentially ignoring vital factors that may influence behaviour. Conversely, the humanistic approach takes a holistic view of things, making it in theory, a more comprehensive approach. **AO3**

Teacher's Comment:
Coherent essay written under timed conditions, application needs to be developed further.
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