

## Humanistic Psychology: Carl Rogers



Rogers's theory of the self is humanistic and phenomenological. Rogers's elaboration of his own theory is extensive. He wrote 16 books and many more articles describing it. However, in spite of a 'New Age' fascination with Rogers, his work is neither ephemeral nor unempirical. He always stood for embracing and evaluating evidence from the phenomena and experiences of the people he met and the meanings that they made of their lives.

His theory was based on 19 propositions that I have reduced to the **12 most important for our Course and practice:**

1. All individuals (organisms) exist in a continually changing world of experience of which they are the centre.
2. The organism reacts to the field as it is experienced and perceived. This perceptual field is "reality" for the individual.
3. A portion of the total perceptual field gradually becomes differentiated as the self.
4. As a result of interaction with the environment, and particularly as a result of interaction with others, the structure of the self is formed - an organized, fluid but consistent conceptual pattern of perceptions of characteristics and relationships of the "I" or the "me", together with values attached to these concepts.
5. The organism has a basic tendency and striving - to actualize, maintain and enhance the organism. On occasions this can lead to maladaptive behaviour.
6. The best vantage point for understanding behaviour is from the internal frame of reference of the individual.
7. Behaviour is basically the goal-directed attempt of the organism to satisfy its needs as experienced, in the field as perceived.
8. Emotion accompanies, and in general facilitates, such goal directed behaviour, the kind of emotion being related to the perceived significance of the behaviour for the maintenance and enhancement of the organism.
9. Most of the ways of behaving that are adopted by the organism are those that are consistent with the concept of self.
10. In some instances, behaviour may be brought about by organic experiences and needs which have not been symbolized. Such behaviour may be inconsistent with the structure of the self but in such instances the behaviour is not "owned" by the individual.
11. Any experience which is inconsistent with the organization of the structure of the self may be perceived as a threat, and the more of these perceptions there are, the more rigidly the self structure is organized to maintain itself.
12. Under certain conditions, involving primarily complete absence of threat to the self structure, experiences which are inconsistent with it may be perceived and examined, and the structure of self revised to assimilate and include such experiences.

Additionally, Rogers is known for practicing "unconditional positive regard," which we have adapted for our Course and practice as a 'culture of acknowledgment'.

