

MASLOW

Getting To Self-actualisation 1

Abraham Maslow is perhaps the only American Psychologist to have achieved extensive recognition around the world within every stream of psychology. Like Carl Jung he had an experiential awareness of 'The Higher Self' which carried him well beyond the mundane sphere of his traditional contemporaries.



Abraham Maslow conceived 'a positive theory of human motivations' organised hierarchically into a sequence of five salient needs, each of which rises in turn to dominate the person and then falls away in proportion to its satisfaction in an ongoing process of psycho-social development, beginning with the basic needs.

For example,

Gandhi is reported to have said

"Even God can't talk to a hungry man, unless its in terms of bread." Thus the person in primitive circumstances must first satisfy needs for air, water, sleep and food. These **Physiological needs** are the first level in the hierarchy, called Maslow's heirarchy or pyramid of needs, and these tend to dominate the individual until they are satisfied, even at the expense of personal safety.

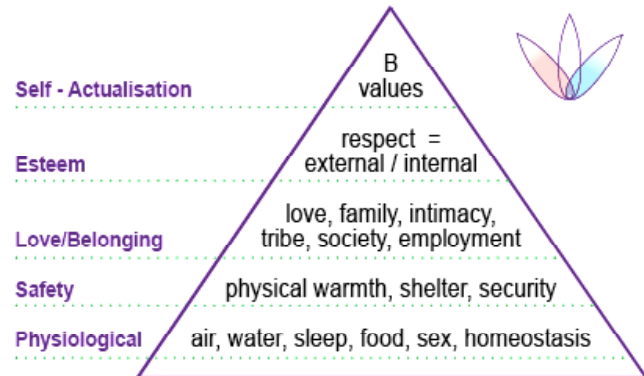
Safety needs are for shelter, security, order and protection and these arise when physiological needs reach some level of gratification, and in turn are transcended for higher social needs. One might be reminded of Eliza's song from My Fair Lady : "All I want is a room somewhere, far away from the cold night air" and then she goes on to include an imaginary fire, food and armchair.

Social needs are for acceptance, belonging, employment, intimacy and love. Eliza sings, 'Wouldn't it be lovely' as she goes on to this 3rd level to wish for someone gentle to "take good care of me." Likewise her drive to learn to speak as a lady expresses her belonging and need to achieve a greater degree of self esteem.

Esteem needs are for acknowledgement, status, prestige, and self-esteem. Eliza finally wins acceptance as a 'real lady' not only amongst the public, but from her mentor Dr Higgins who assisted her in her transformation, and ultimately of course in her own mind as well i.e. Esteem is **first gained externally** through recognition and **then derived internally** through self-fulfillment. The mature person is then intrinsically motivated and seeking their higher **B Values**.

So finally, we seek Self-Actualisation, the desire to realize and become everything we can become. The self-actualised person is aware of how little can be accomplished by themselves. Having achieved a sense of independence the more mature self-actualising person realises they exist as part of a whole. Maslow's later work is concerned with synergy, the process where one can combine optimally with another. The self-actualising person seeks fulfillment in a way that keeps the other needs and other people, optimally satisfied. Persons developing at this fifth level do not therefore outgrow, or become superior, to their lesser needs or less developed people, rather, the person's life is organised ultimately to satisfy and express all the needs.

Maslow's Pyramid of Needs



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Getting To Self-actualisation 2

Self-actualization Maslow explained

“is a description, not a prescription.”

It could only come to those people concerned
with something beyond themselves.

Maslow made a special study of these self-actualizing persons in history and modern society.

He found them to be:

- more efficient in perceiving reality (Discernment and Intuition awareness)
- more accepting of themselves and others (Detachment and Diplomacy)
- more spontaneous in their relationships (Grounded and Spontaneous)
- with a tendency to focus more on solutions than problems
- to have a quality of privacy and detachment (Internally derived Self-Esteem)
- an autonomy from cultural influences (Self-mastery and Self-Confidence)
- a freshness of appreciation (Open minded and Open hearted)
- a capacity for transcendence and oceanic feelings (Inspired awareness + Mental Silence)
- a deep identification with humanity as a whole (Collective consciousness)
- a humorous and democratic character structure (Open to Change and Collaboration)
- and a rare capacity to resolve moral dichotomies and dilemmas. (Balanced Leadership)

Maslow explained

“Self-actualizing individuals (more matured, more fully human), by definition, already gratified in their basic needs, are now motivated in other higher ways, to be called **‘metamotivation’**.”

Maslow declared that the definition of human nature must include these meta-motivations and **‘B-Values’** and that these were ‘instinctoid’, **intrinsic values in each person**.

“They are equally part of his ‘nature’, or definition, or essence, along with his ‘lower’ needs, at least in my self-actualizing subjects. They must be included in any ultimate definition of ‘the human being.’ It is true that they are not fully evident or actualized (made real and functionally existing) in most people. And yet, so far as I can see at this time, **they are not excluded as potentials in any.**”

In approaching these higher values he could not suggest a hierarchy as the ‘metaneeds’ seemed equally potent among themselves.

“It looks as if any intrinsic or ‘B-Value’ is fully defined by most or all of the other B-Values. Perhaps they form a unity of some sort, with each B-Value being simply the whole seen from another angle. That is, truth, to be fully and completely defined, must be beautiful, good, perfect, just, simple, orderly, lawful, alive, comprehensive, unitary, dichotomy-transcending, effortless, and amusing.

Beauty, fully defined, must be true, good, perfect, alive, simple etc.. It is as if all the B-Values have some kind of unity, with each single value being something like a facet of this whole.”



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Getting To Self-actualisation 3

So how to approach these B-Values, to attain more Self-actualisation?

Maslow goes on to explain:

"It is so easy to forget the ultimates in the rush and hurry of daily life, especially for young people. So often we are merely responders, so to speak, simply reacting to stimuli, to rewards and punishments, to emergencies, to pains and fears, to demands of other people, to superficialities.

"It takes a specific, conscious ad hoc effort, at least at first, **to turn one's attention to intrinsic things and values.** e.g. perhaps seeking actual physical aloneness, perhaps exposing oneself to great music, to good people, to natural beauty, etc. Only after practice do these strategies become easy and automatic so that one can be living in the B-realm even without wishing or trying, i.e., the 'unitive life', the 'meta-life', the 'life of being'."

"**Contemplation of ultimate values** becomes the same as contemplation of the nature of the world. Seeking the truth (fully defined) may be the same as seeking beauty, order, oneness, perfection, rightness (fully defined) and truth may then be sought via any other B-Value. Does science then become indistinguishable from art? love? religion? philosophy? Is a basic scientific discovery about the nature of reality also a spiritual or axiological affirmation?"

"I have suggested elsewhere the need for, and usefulness of, being conscious that there is a hierarchy of pleasures, ranging from, e.g. relief from pain, through the contentment of a hot tub, the happiness of being with good friends, the joy of great music, the bliss of having a child, the ecstasy of the highest love-experiences, on up to the fusion with the B-Values.

"These B-Values, seen as gratifications of metaneeds, are then also the highest pleasures or happinesses that we know of.

"From the point of view of the eternal and absolute that mankind has always sought, it may be that the B-Values could also, to some extent, serve this purpose. They are 'per se', in their own right, not dependent upon human vagaries for their existence. They are perceived, not invented. They are transhuman and transindividual. They exist beyond the life of the individual.

"They can be conceived to be a kind of perfection. And yet they are also human in a specifiable sense. They are not only his, but him as well. They command adoration, reverence, celebration, sacrifice. They are worth living for and dying for."

