

ABRAHAM H. MASLOW (1908–1970) AN INTELLECTUAL BIOGRAPHY

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SOME PSYCHOLOGISTS DURING THE “GOLDEN AGE” OF BEHAVIORISM after World War II, discontented with behaviorism’s view of human nature and method, drew upon a long tradition linking psychology with humanities and in a rebellious manner institutionally founded humanistic psychology. They believed they were a “third force,” an alternative to the dominant behavioristic and psychoanalytical orientation in psychology. Some of the best minds of the psychological world of the 1960s, such as Gordon Allport, Carl Rogers, Rollo May, and Henry Murray, adhered to the movement. Maslow was at the forefront of this group of founders of humanistic psychology in the mid-1960s.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Abraham H. Maslow was born on April 1, 1908 in New York City, the first of seven children. Maslow’s relationship with his parents, Russian-Jewish immigrants from Kiev, was neither intimate nor loving. He attended New York City public schools. At the age of nine he moved to a non-Jewish neighborhood and, since he looked quite Jewish, discovered anti-semitism there. He described himself during his first twenty years as extremely neurotic, shy, nervous, depressed, lonely, and self-reflecting. He isolated himself at school

and, since he could not stand being at home, practically lived in the library. At school he was an achiever. Later, upon the advice of his father he enrolled in law school. He lost interest, and never finished the freshman year. At the end of 1928, then twenty years old, he married Bertha, a cousin, whom he had courted for a long time. They enrolled at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he earned a BA (1930), MA (1931), and PhD (1934) in psychology.¹

In Madison, Maslow remained shy and timid, but well liked by his teachers. Fascinated by Watson's behaviorism, which was then in vogue, Maslow concentrated on classical laboratory research with dogs and apes. His earliest papers focused on the emotion of disgust in dogs and the learning process among primates. In his doctoral dissertation he explored the role of dominance in the social and sexual behavior of primates, arguing that dominance among primates is usually established by visual contact rather than by fighting.

From 1934 to 1937, Maslow worked as a research assistant in Social Psychology for Edward L. Thorndike at Teachers College, Columbia University. His first teaching position was with Brooklyn College between 1937 and 1951. During this period, exiled German psychologists made New York City an intellectual capital. Maslow associated with Max Wertheimer, Erich Fromm, Karen Horney, Kurt Goldstein, and Ruth Benedict.

In 1951 Maslow was invited to head the recently established department of psychology at Brandeis University, a position he held for ten years. In 1969 he accepted a fellowship at the Laughlin Foundation in Menlo Park, California.

Soon after leaving Madison, Maslow became convinced that most of modern psychological research and theory relied too much on subjects who had turned to psychologists for pathological reasons. The image of human nature delineated by studies of these patients was inevitably pessimistic and distorted. Trying to remedy the situation, Maslow began studying what he thought were the finest examples of healthy people. He called them "self-actualizing" persons, since they showed a high degree of need for meaningful work, responsibility, creativity, fairness, and justice.

In his epoch-making article of 1943, "A Theory of Human Motivation," and more explicitly in *Motivation and Personality* (1954), Maslow argued that there are higher and lower needs in human motivation. Both are "in-

¹ For an extensive discussion of the place of Maslow in the history of humanistic psychology see Roy J. DeCarvalho, *The Founders of Humanistic Psychology*. Significant autobiographical references for Abraham Maslow are: *Motivation and Personality*, ix; "Two Kinds of Cognition and Their Integration"; "Eupsychia-The Good Society"; "Lessons From the Peak-experiences"; "A Dialogue With Abraham H. Maslow"; *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*, xi-xxi, 41, 3; "Conversation With Abraham H. Maslow"; Willard B. Frick, *Humanistic Psychology*, 19-49; *Abraham H. Maslow: A Memorial Volume; The Journals of A. H. Maslow*; "Interview." For secondary sources see: Edward Hoffman, *The Right To Be Human*; Frank G. Goble, *The Third Force*; Carroll Saussy, *A Study of the Adequacy of Abraham Maslow's Concept of the Self to His Theory of Self-Actualization*; Richard Grossman, "Some Reflections on Abraham Maslow"; Misako Miyamoto, "Professor Abraham H. Maslow"; Richard J. Lowry, *A. H. Maslow*; Thomas Robert, "Beyond Self-Actualization"; Colin Wilson, *New Pathways in Psychology*.

stinctoid” and arranged in a hierarchy. These needs are, in order: physiological well-being, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. Each group of needs relies on prior satisfaction of previous needs. Thus, in Maslow’s reasoning, human nature is the continuous fulfillment of inner needs, beginning with basic physiological needs and progressing to meta-needs. Self-actualizers, he argued, were persons who had satisfied the lower needs and sought to fulfill higher reaches of human nature by becoming all they were capable of becoming.

In *Religion, Values and Peak-Experiences* (1964) Maslow argued that one could find in self-actualizing persons the guiding or ultimate values by which mankind should live. These values were meant to be the basis of a science of ethics. In the same work Maslow concluded that self-actualizing persons have had simple and natural experiences of ecstasy or bliss, moments of great awe or intense experiences—“peak-experiences,” as he named them.

In *Eupsychian Management* (1965) Maslow attempted to introduce his thought into the new field of organizational psychology. In that work, under the assumption that he could not improve the world via individual psychotherapy, he presented the idea of “Eupsychia” or good psychological management. He used the term “Eupsychia” originally to describe the culture that would be generated by a thousand or so self-actualizing persons in a sheltered environment free from external interference. In *Eupsychian Management* he maintained that workers could achieve the highest possible productivity if their “humanness” and potential for self-actualization were given the opportunity to grow so that their higher or meta-needs could be fulfilled. Towards the end of his life, mainly in the posthumously published *Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (1971), Maslow went a step further and argued that there are needs beyond self-actualization—that is, transcendental or transpersonal needs. According to Maslow, these are transhuman needs centered on the cosmos, religion, and the mystical realms of being.

Throughout the 1960s Maslow with the cooperation of Anthony Sutich was instrumental in the institutionalization of humanistic psychology by establishing the Journal and Association for Humanistic Psychology. He supported in the late 1960s the emerging transpersonal psychology.²

Maslow died of a heart attack on June 8, 1970, at the age of 62.

VIEWS ON BEHAVIORISTIC PSYCHOLOGY

The humanistic psychology advocated by the founding members of the Association for Humanistic Psychology and by leading humanistic psychologists such as Gordon Allport, Carl Rogers, Rollo May, and James Bugental was an outcry against what they thought was a mechanistic image of human nature and an academic sterility in behaviorism. Thus the writing of human-

² DeCarvalho, “A History of the ‘Third Force’ in Psychology.”

istic psychologists often contrasted behavioristic and humanistic views of human nature, psychotherapy, method, and ethics. Maslow was not an exception.³

Maslow was nurtured in the best behavioristic tradition in the early and mid 1930s in the primate lab of Harry Harlow in Madison, Wisconsin. Thus great familiarity with behaviorism was often evident in his critique of behaviorism. His critique developed during the 1940s in the context of his theory of motivation. It focused on the concept of behavior, the psychological implications of behavioral prediction and control, the definition of scientific method in the psychological sciences, and images of human nature implicit in behaviorism.

Maslow had a romance with and a tragic divorce from behaviorism. Maslow first encountered behaviorism as a philosophy student at Cornell. His dislike of the speculative character of philosophical discourse attracted him to the empirical and physiological nineteenth-century psychology advocated in America by Titchener. It was, however, when reading Watson in his early twenties that he realized the potential of behaviorism. The discovery of Watson's behavioristic program, he wrote many years later, produced such "an explosion of excitement" that he went "dancing down Fifth Avenue with exuberance." All you needed, he thought, was to work hard and everything could be changed and reconditioned. The techniques of conditioning seemed to promise a solution to all psychological and social problems, and its easy-to-understand positivistic, objective philosophy, protected him against repeating the philosophical mistakes of the past. With such ideas in mind, Maslow joined the graduate program of the department of psychology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where his entire training and education were behavioristic.⁴

Maslow's MA thesis (1931), an experimental study of the effect of varying simple external conditions on learning, initiated him into the science of prediction and control of behavior. His doctoral dissertation, written under the supervision of Harry Harlow, and dealing with the role of dominance among primates, was behavioristic in concept. A year after graduation, however, Maslow departed Wisconsin and left behind the behavioristic approach of his teachers. In New York City, while teaching first at Teachers College and then at Brooklyn College, Maslow read Freud, the Gestalt psychologists, and the embryologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy. He then became disillusioned with English philosophy, particularly as represented by Bertrand Russell. In New York he met Alfred Adler, Max Wertheimer, Kurt Goldstein, and Ruth Benedict, and under their influence he replaced Harlow's primates with New York college women in his experimental studies. Along with his research on

³ DeCarvalho, *The Founders of Humanistic Psychology*, 66-96.

⁴ Frick, *Humanistic Psychology*, 19-20; Maslow, *The Psychology of Science*, 7; "Conversation With Abraham H. Maslow," 37, 55.

dominance, Maslow developed the theory of motivation that made him famous.⁵

Maslow's critique of behaviorism may be said to have three phases. The first phase began with his arrival in New York City and lasted until the early 1940s, when he began publishing his need-hierarchy theory of motivation. The second phase extended throughout the 1940s and was the period of the key essays on human motivation compiled in *Motivation and Personality* (1954). The last phase extended from the early 1950s until his death in 1970.

During the first phase Maslow regarded human behavior not merely as result of a linear connection between a single and isolated stimulus and a single response, but also as determined by all the feelings, attitudes, and wishes that go into making a complete personality. These personality determinants Maslow believed to result in great part from the introspection or interiorization of social convictions and ethical norms of the group. During the second phase Maslow made these ideas an integral part of his theory of motivation. He repeatedly argued that the study of isolated single behaviors and the idea that such behaviors are self-contained is a simplistic and misleading approach to the understanding of human motivation. Maslow continued writing in the 1950s on method and theory in psychology, but his criticism addressed only positivistic psychology in general.

Maslow's critique of the behavioristic concept of control and prediction was argued within terms of the need-hierarchy theory of motivation. This theory distinguished between expressive and coping behavior, and Maslow blamed behaviorists for concentrating almost exclusively on the study of coping behavior, which he argued was the least significant part of personality. Expressive behavior—artistic creation, play, wonder, and love—is part of a person and a reflection of personality even if it is non-functional and persists without reward. It is an epiphenomenon of inner character-structure, the study of which should be the goal of psychology. On the other hand, coping behavior is functional, instrumental, adaptive, and the product of an interaction of the character-structure with the world. Since coping behavior is learned or acquired in order to deal with specific environmental situations, it dies out if not rewarded or continually bombarded with stimuli. Maslow concluded that one should be cautious in extrapolating from coping behaviors to general conclusions about human nature. The behaviorist, according to Maslow, sees only the animal-like aspects of human nature, precisely because he focuses exclusively upon coping behavior. Gordon Allport made a similar analysis, critique and a distinction of expressive and coping behavior in 1961.⁶

In *The Psychology of Science* (1966) Maslow compared external scientific control of the behavioristic type with the internal self-knowledge posited by

⁵ Maslow, "Individual Psychology and Social Behavior"; *The Effect of Varying External Conditions on Learning, Retention and Reproduction*; "Conversation With Abraham H. Maslow."

⁶ For the first phase, see "Dominance-Feeling, Behavior and Status"; "Dominance, Personality and Social Behavior in Women."

humanistic science in their ability to predict behavior. He argued that people resent and rebel against external scientific control, but they accept the increase of self-knowledge that allows them to control their own behavior. Thus self-knowledge of the humanistic type has much more predictive power. Carl Rogers had written an almost identical argument in "The Role of Self-Understanding in the Prediction of Behavior."⁷

Maslow argued, much as did Allport, that even if the behaviorists could add up a collection of single behaviors, the behaviorists' picture of human nature would still be incomplete; the human organism is more than just the sum of each isolated and reduced part. The parts affect the whole and vice versa in a continual process of mutual transformation. In reply he argued that the person was a unit, self, gestalt, whole, or process. A behavioral act has many components that cannot be studied in isolation from the self-containing organism. For Maslow the self is a complex, internal patterning agent that organizes the stimulus and emits a response that relates to the stimulus through the organism. Human motivation is purposive, or choice-oriented, proactive rather than reactive, self-motivated rather than restricted to "anticipatory goal reaction." Every one of us, he argued, has a peculiar set of subjective values that provides guidance and direction to life. An understanding of such inner attitudes and motives is an absolute prerequisite to the understanding of human behavior and human nature.⁸

VIEWS ON PSYCHOANALYSIS

When humanistic psychologists wrote about themselves as a "third force" in psychology, they were thinking of behaviorism as the first dominant force; the second force was psychoanalysis. Like most of his colleagues, Maslow set his views in contrast to classical Freudian psychoanalysis, arguing that humanistic psychology was a protest or outcry, not only against behaviorism but also against the formalism, determinism, and dogma of psychoanalysis. Perhaps ambivalently, Maslow also paid a tribute of reverence to Freud. Quite often, he even referred to humanistic psychology as complementing rather than replacing Freud's observations.⁹ Maslow distinguished between facts and theory in Freudian thought; he praised the facts or clinical experience but despised Freud's metaphysics. In the late 1960s, he argued that Freud the fact-finder, rather than Freud the metaphysician, is still required reading for a humanistic psychologist.¹⁰

⁷ Rogers, "The Role of Self-Understanding in the Prediction of Behavior"; Rogers, "Some Issues Concerning the Control of Human Behavior"; Maslow, *Farther Reaches of Human Nature*, 226–36.

⁸ Allport, "Scientific Models and Human Morals"; "The Psychologist's Frame of Reference"; "Fifty Years of Change in American Psychology"; *Motivation and Personality*; *The Psychology of Science*; "The Farther Reaches of Human Nature."

⁹ DeCarvalho, *The Founders of Humanistic Psychology*, 97–126.

¹⁰ Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, xiii, 66–67, 103.

Maslow was psychoanalyzed at least three times, in the late 1940s and early 1950s by Emil Oberholzer and Felix Deutsch respectively, and in the 1960s by Harry Rand. He described his analysis as “the best of all learning experiences” and he said it taught him about psychoanalysis “from the inside, by experiencing it.”¹¹

A distinction must be made within the psychoanalytical movement between Freud or classical psychoanalysis and the neo-Freudians. Maslow and most humanistic psychologists were indebted, as noted above, to the neo-Freudians. Maslow often acknowledged having been inspired by Alfred Adler, Erich Fromm, Karen Horney, David Levy, Abram Kardiner, Sandor Rado, and Franz Alexander. Most of Maslow’s contacts with the neo-Freudians took place during the post-doctoral years in New York in the 1940s, when the city was flooded with learned émigrés from Europe.¹²

About this time Maslow met Heinz L. Ansbacher, who introduced him to Alfred Adler’s informal seminars held at the hotel where Adler lived. Adler read Maslow’s dissertation on the social behavior of primates, and encouraged Maslow to present a summary of his conclusions in the *Journal of Individual Psychology*. The results invited comparison between the behavior of humans and primates. Adler’s encouragement thus had an important role in causing Maslow to replace primates with humans as experimental subjects in his studies of dominance. Maslow and Adler remained friends, occasionally dining together until Adler’s death in 1937. Heinz Ansbacher believes that as the humanistic psychology Maslow advocated matured it came to resemble the Individual Psychology of Adler ever more closely.¹³

The encounters with Fromm and Horney also were important in Maslow’s intellectual development. Fromm and Horney were, along with Adler, Goldstein and Rogers, Maslow’s most quoted authors. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, Maslow often discussed his ideas on motivation with Fromm and Horney, and he subsequently acknowledged that he had learned psychoanalysis from them and that his psychology was to a certain extent an effort to integrate the partial truths he found in their theories. He also often juxtaposed their ideas to those of Freud and defended them from criticism.¹⁴

When Maslow arrived in Madison, for graduate school, he expressed some interest in psychoanalysis. The behavioristic orientation of the faculty seems

¹¹ Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, x; *Toward a Psychology of Being*, xi; *The Psychology of Science*, xix.

¹² Maslow wrote about New York City in this period as the center of the psychological universe of that time, see his *Motivation and Personality*, ix.

¹³ Throughout Maslow’s extensive list of writings, Adler was one of the most quoted authors after Freud. He mentioned Adler by name at least 77 times, see Jenny Scheele, *Register*, 411. See also, Maslow, “Individual Psychology and the Social Behavior of Monkeys and Apes”; *Motivation and Personality*; “Was Adler a Disciple of Freud? A Note”; author’s personal correspondence with H. L. Ansbacher of October 29, 1985; Heinz L. Ansbacher, “Alfred Adler and Humanistic Psychology.”

¹⁴ Maslow, *Principles of Abnormal Psychology*, xii–xiii; “The Authoritarian Character Structure”; *Motivation and Personality*, x; Review of John Schaar; *Farther Reaches of Human Nature*, xi; Frick, *Humanistic Psychology*, 20; Scheele, *Register*, 435, 444.

to have eclipsed this interest, however. Maslow wrote in the 1940s that his attitude towards Freud was one of reverence with reservations. Maslow accused Freud and other classical psychoanalysts of studying only half of personality and of being the “worst offenders” among all psychologists in their depiction of human nature. According to Maslow, Freud was mistaken that all behavior is determined by unconscious motives. Maslow rather distinguished between neurotic motivation and healthy motivation, the latter being much less directed by unconscious forces. This distinction suggested Maslow’s study of self-actualization in healthy people.¹⁵

In the 1950s and 1960s, Maslow criticized Freud for always considering the unconscious and regression to be unhealthy processes needing to be controlled and examined. Maslow argued that they could also be sources of creativity, art, love, humor, gaiety, and the like; they could be healthy aspects of personality that should be accepted and nurtured. Towards the end of the 1960s Maslow blamed Freud for studying only the basic needs humans share with the animals and neglecting the “higher human qualities” unique to mankind.¹⁶

Maslow distinguished between neurotic and non-neurotic motivation. He thought that Freud’s mechanisms explained the neurotic personality quite well, but he argued that it was a mistake to extend the conclusions of such studies to generalizations about all humankind. When developing his need-hierarchy theory of human motivation in 1940, Maslow argued that the behavior of healthy persons is much less unconscious than that of neurotics. Healthy behavior, he wrote, is not always directly related to an underlying and ultimately unconscious aim.¹⁷

As Maslow explored self-actualization and peak-experiences, he argued that Freud was mistaken in describing the unconscious as irrational, dark, and obscure. Id impulses, he suggested, need not be signs of sickness, regression, and enslavement. The unconscious could be good, beautiful, and desirable. In artistic creation, inspiration, humor, love, and the like, unconscious impulses were indeed revelations of the inmost core of human nature. Growth towards self-actualization, he argued, depends on this essential unconscious core of the person, which needs to be accepted, respected, and loved. One should use the unconscious rather than fear it, accept it rather than control it. In self-actualizing people, Maslow argued, the Freudian id, ego, and superego, the dichotomies of conscious and unconscious, and all internal conflicts are much less sharp than in unhealthy personalities. In peak experiences, for example, these oppositions tend to dissolve. Healthy people have a sense

¹⁵ Maslow, “Dominance, Personality and Social Behavior in Women,” 4–5; *Motivation and Personality*, 66–67, 77–79, 90–91, 101, 193–98.

¹⁶ Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, 56–57, 141–42, 182–83, 196, 60, 207–08; *Religion, Values and Peak Experiences*, 6–8; *The Psychology of Science*, 19; “The Farther Reaches of Human Nature,” 2–3.

¹⁷ Maslow, “Dominance, Personality and Social Behavior in Women,” 4–5; *Motivation and Personality*, 66–67, 77, 79, 90–91, 101, 193–98

of themselves as conscious, active agents rather than as helpless victims of unconscious forces. Their behavior is understandable without reference to their unconscious life.¹⁸

VIEWS ON EXISTENTIALISM AND PHENOMENOLOGY

Another important theme in the establishment of humanistic psychology is its relations with European existential and phenomenological psychology. The founders of humanistic psychology agreed that this idiosyncratic and ill-defined European tradition of thought had an impact on the shaping of humanistic psychology as a source of inspiration and was an important stream within humanistic psychology.¹⁹

It is, however, historically inaccurate to see humanistic psychology as an import of European existentialism. The idea of "Parallelism" is more accurate than the "root analogy." In most cases when humanistic psychologists discovered existentialism in the late 1950s, they had already formulated the core of their psychological thought, although in Maslow, Rogers, and May, the reading of Kierkegaard and Buber had a "loosening up effect."²⁰

In Maslow we find substantial discussion of existentialism only after the late 1950s. Maslow was particularly impressed by Martin Buber, but he was also critical of some trends in existentialism, in particular its anti-scientific and anti-biological dimensions. He was as critical of the despairing nihilist (Nietzsche), nothingness (Sartre), and absurd (Camus) style of existentialism as he was of behaviorism's S-R philosophy and Freud's psychic determinism. In this sense he was certainly closer to the Kierkegaardian and Buberian brand of existentialism.

Maslow first encountered existentialism in the late 1950s when Adrian Van Kaam, Rollo May, and James Klee introduced him to the literature of existentialism. In the early sixties he already acknowledged that existentialism was a powerful influence in humanistic psychology. With the exception of scarce references to Sartre and Buber, however, he rarely discussed in writing the work of any existentialists. He referred to Sartre as "flat" wrong in his views of human nature. As to Buber, he considered the "I-thou relationship" an example of the emerging humanistic paradigm in psychology.²¹

Maslow complained that existentialism was difficult and inaccessible to him. When he studied this literature he questioned "what's in it for me as a psychologist?" Like Allport, Maslow thought that existentialism would enrich American psychology, though he saw many of the existentialists' insights as mere "stressing" confirmation of existing trends in humanistic psychology.

¹⁸ Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* 56-57, 141-42, 182-83, 56-57, 207-10; *Religion, Values and Peak Experiences*, 6-8.

¹⁹ DeCarvalho, *The Founders of Humanistic Psychology*, 127-58.

²⁰ DeCarvalho, *Founders*, 136-38.

²¹ Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, ix, xi.

Maslow identified himself with existentialists' interest in the concept of identity and in subjective experiential knowledge. He praised the existentialists for studying unique characteristics of human nature. He was impressed by their discussion of existential dilemmas, human aspirations and limitations, and the mystery, paradox, and tragic aspects of life.²²

After Sartre, Martin Buber was the existentialist most often mentioned by Maslow. Maslow, like Rogers, thought that Buber's description of the I-Thou relationship constituted a new paradigm in psychotherapy. Following Buber, Maslow argued that the I-thou knowledge that emerges in the experience of deep communication between two people is more valid than "objective" I-It knowledge. The latter, he argued, belongs to the medical paradigm, where the physician treats the patient as an object. The I-Thou paradigm, on the other hand, is based on the intimacy of the encounter between two equal persons and is much more therapeutic.²³

As to Kierkegaard, Maslow agreed with Rogers's favorite quote from Kierkegaard that the aim of life is "to be that self which one truly is." Like Rogers, Maslow thought that if people are free to grow and to actualize their inner potential, they make the right choices. Self-actualizers, argued Maslow, choose what is good for them, primarily because the inner core of their real self is good, trustworthy, and ethical.²⁴

Maslow praised the existentialist attack on abstract systems of philosophy that have nothing to do with actual experience. There was no place to turn, Maslow agreed with the existentialists, except for the inner self as the source of all validation. In this sense he thought, existentialism, would supply psychology with the underlying experiential and phenomenological basis it desperately needed.²⁵

He often juxtaposed the phenomenological world of the self with the physical world of the scientist and argued that external validation of the positivistic and atomistic type was no more real than the subjective phenomenological world of the experiential self. He believed that phenomenological studies were more truthful to the person, because they focused on how it feels from the internal point of view of the self.²⁶

²² Maslow explicitly stated his views on existentialism in a paper he presented at the Symposium on Existential Psychology at the 1959 convention of the APA. Rogers and May also presented papers at this symposium. The enthusiastic interest it attracted led Random House to invite Rollo May to edit the papers published under the title *Existential Psychology* in 1961. Maslow's paper, "Existential Psychology-What's in it For Us?" was further published in the first pages of *Existential Inquiries*, under the title "Remarks on existentialism and psychology," which was reprinted twice, translated into Japanese and revised for the *Psychology of Being*. In the *Eupsychian Management* 127-32, he wrote five additional pages to be added to the original essay. These notes were also reprinted in the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 4 (1964): 45-58. See also Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* 59, 174.

²³ Maslow, *Eupsychian Management* 128-29; *The Psychology of Science* 52, 102-07.

²⁴ Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* 168; *Farther Reaches of Human Nature* 186.

²⁵ Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* 52-60.

²⁶ Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* 99; *Religion, Values and Peak Experiences* 26, 41; *The Psychology of Science*, 76.

Throughout the 1960s Maslow often rejected what he called Sartrean “arbitrary existentialism.” More specifically he addressed Sartre’s famous statement that “freedom is existence, and in it existence precedes essence.” Sartre argued that there are no essences or reality in human nature. Humans (“being-for-itself”) are a “nothingness,” a “non-substantial absolute” that exists merely by virtue of the relation towards “being-in-itself.” In this sense, argued Sartre, human existence is defined primarily by its freedom and the result of our “project” in life. Like most humanistic psychologists, Maslow agreed with Sartre that “man is his own project.” It is commitment and determination, will and responsibility that make oneself. But he thought that Sartre had gone too far in assuming that we are “nothingness” and that the process of becoming had no biological basis.²⁷

He agreed with Sartre that one is ultimately responsible for one’s decisions and life project, but he thought that there is also a biological or “instinctoid” basis of human nature. According to Maslow, there is potential in human nature pressing towards actualization. It is a potential that desires by nature to be actualized in the same way that an acorn desires by nature to become an oak tree. These potentialities, however, are dormant and require a culture in order to awaken. “Culture permits or fosters or encourages or helps,” wrote Maslow, “what exists in embryo to become real and actual.”²⁸

Unlike Sartre, Maslow argued that one’s life project is not created at random by psychological and life paradoxes but primarily by trends, bents, and tendencies intrinsic to human nature. “To discover” one’s nature was for Maslow a much better term than “to create.” He thus thought that humanistic psychology was closer to psychodynamics than to Sartre’s existentialism. The “uncovering” therapies of the former were meant to help the person to discover true identity rather than to create a self in the Sartrean existentialist sense.²⁹

OTHER SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

The revolt against behaviorism and psychoanalysis and the inspiration of the neo-Freudians and existentialists were key forces in the making of humanistic psychology. But the founding fathers of humanistic psychology such as Allport, Rogers, and May found inspiration for the development of their psychological thinking also in Kurt Goldstein, the personality theorists, Gestalt

²⁷ Maslow, *New Knowledge of Human Values* 130–31; *Toward a Psychology of Being* 167, 174–75; *Religion, Values and Peak-Experiences* xvi; *Farther Reaches of Human Nature* 186, 315–16, 149; *Motivation and Personality* (revised edition, 1970) xvii–xviii; Frick, *Humanistic Psychology* 22–23.

²⁸ Maslow, *New Knowledge* 130–31; *Toward a Psychology of Being* 167, 174–75; *Religion, Values and Peak-Experiences* xvi; *Farther Reaches* 186, 315–16, 149; *Motivation and Personality* xvii–xviii; Frick, *Humanistic Psychology* 22–23.

²⁹ Maslow, *New Knowledge* 130–31; *Toward a Psychology of Being* 167, 174–75; *Religion, Values and Peak-Experiences* xvi; *Farther Reaches* 186, 315–16, 149; *Motivation and Personality* xvii–xviii; Frick, *Humanistic Psychology* 22–23.

psychology and, to a lesser degree, Eastern thought. Maslow was not an exception.³⁰

Maslow met Goldstein in the late 1930s in New York, an event that he recognized many years later as fortunate. In gratitude for this intellectual indebtedness Maslow dedicated *The Psychology of Being* (1962) to Goldstein. According to Maslow, Goldstein influenced two important aspects of his thought: Goldstein helped him to recognize that the “cool” aspects of Gestalt psychology could be integrated with the psychodynamics psychologies, and also to formulate the holistic-dynamic approach, which stemmed from Goldstein’s organismic psychology in the sense that it was holistic, functional, dynamic, and purposive, rather than atomistic, taxonomic, static, and mechanical.³¹

Maslow became well known in psychological circles for his studies on self-actualization. The term “self-actualization,” however, was first coined by Goldstein in his studies of brain-injured war veterans. Goldstein employed the concept of self-actualization to explain the reorganization of a person’s capacities after injury. According to Goldstein, a damaged organism attempting to survive reorganizes itself into a new unit that incorporates the damages. In this sense the organism is active, generates and recreates itself as it strives towards self-actualization. “Organismic oughtiness” was Maslow’s term for this phenomenon.³²

Maslow acknowledged that he had adopted the concept of “self-actualization” from Goldstein, though he used it in a broader sense. For Maslow “self-actualization” meant the tendency to actualize inner potential. It was the desire to become all one is capable of becoming, to achieve the fullest realization of one’s potentialities and intrinsic nature. Like Goldstein, Maslow thought that specific gratification of basic needs helped the individual towards self-actualization.³³

Maslow carried out a comparative analysis of Goldstein’s studies of brain-injured subjects and Skinner’s behavioristic psychology, examining in particular the reduction to the concrete and the ability to abstract. The brain-injured do not think in terms of general categories and are unable to integrate separate phenomena into a unity. When they see a color, for example, they see it in isolation and are unable to compare it with any other color or category. This phenomenon represents “selective attention” or “obsessional neurosis” at its

³⁰ DeCarvalho, *The Founders of Humanistic Psychology* 159–78.

³¹ Maslow’s significant references to Goldstein are: *Principles of Abnormal Psychology* xiii; *Motivation and Personality* ix, 27, 36, 80, 89, 91, 95, 109, 116, 124, 161, 166, 192, 206, 262, 286, 287, 291, 296, 342, 383; *Toward a Psychology of Being* ii, v, ix, xi, 118; *Eupsychian Management* 247; *The Psychology of Science* 23, 42, 69; “Conversation With Abraham Maslow,” 55; *Farther Reaches of Human Nature* 119, 252.

³² Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* ix, 27, 36, 80, 89, 91, 95, 109, 116, 124, 161, 166, 192, 206, 262, 286, 287, 291, 296, 342, 383.

³³ Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* ix, 27, 36, 80, 89, 91, 95, 109, 116, 124, 161, 166, 192, 206, 262, 286, 287, 291, 296, 342, 383.

best, wrote Maslow, comparing it to Skinner's stress on predictability, control, lawfulness, and structure. In both cases the subjects maintain equilibrium by avoiding what is strange and unfamiliar; they neatly arrange and order their restricted world, so that they can count on it and guaranty that changes will not occur. In other words, they narrow their worlds in order to avoid problems they are unable to handle.³⁴

Furthermore, Maslow might easily be grouped with the personality theorists. Maslow often complained of a lack of emphasis on the study of personality in mainstream psychology. He believed that at the core of the self was a positive growth tendency that strove toward fuller development. If the basic needs are gratified, the self is then released for self-actualization and for the gratification of higher needs. This idea would indeed justify including him among the personality theorists.³⁵

Gestalt psychology Maslow learned from Max Wertheimer and Kurt Koffka at the New School for Social Research in New York in the late 1930s. It was, however, Max Wertheimer who had the greatest impact on Maslow. He described Wertheimer as a loving person, who acted as a parent to Maslow, allowed him to "hang around," and answered his questions. In the prefaces to all his major publications, Maslow expressed his indebtedness to Gestalt psychology and to Max Wertheimer in particular.³⁶

Maslow emphatically complained that the lessons of Gestalt psychology had not been integrated into mainstream psychology. A person, to the Gestalt psychologists, was an irreducible unit, where every aspect of personality is part of an interrelated pattern based on varying relationships within the person and between the person and the environment. Maslow's discussion of the "syndrome"—a complex of symptoms occurring in an organism—in his holistic dynamic theory in the study of personality is a good example of his borrowings from the Gestalt psychologists.³⁷

But Maslow was not a mere follower of Gestalt psychology. He emphasized that his health-and-growth psychology represented an attempt to integrate Gestalt theory with the dynamic and functionalist psychologies. In the famous "A Theory of Human Motivation" (1943), for example, Maslow argued that his theory of motivation fused the functionalist tradition with the holism of Gestalt and the dynamism of psychoanalysis.³⁸

³⁴ Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* ix, 27, 36, 80, 89, 91, 95, 109, 116, 124, 161, 166, 192, 206, 262, 286, 287, 291, 296, 342, 383.

³⁵ See for example, Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* 116; "Deficiency Motivation and Growth Motivation" 1-30; "Personality," in *Theoretical Foundations of Psychology* 602-55.

³⁶ Maslow, *Principles of Abnormal Psychology* xii, xiii; *Motivation and Personality* 97, 80; "The Authoritarian Character Structure" 31-37; *Toward a Psychology of Being* 215; "A Dialogue With Abraham Maslow" 23; *Farther Reaches of Human Nature* 42, 117-19; "Conversation With Abraham Maslow" 55; Frick, *Humanistic Psychology* 21.

³⁷ Maslow, *Principles of Abnormal Psychology* xii, xiii; *Motivation and Personality* 97, 80; "Authoritarian Character" 31-37; *Toward a Psychology of Being* 215; "A Dialogue With Abraham Maslow" 23; *Farther Reaches* 42, 117-19; "Conversation" 55; Frick, *Humanistic Psychology* 21.

³⁸ Maslow, *Principles of Abnormal Psychology* xii, xiii; *Motivation and Personality* 97, 80; "Authoritarian Character" 31-37; *Toward a Psychology of Being* 215; "A Dialogue With Abraham Maslow" 23; *Farther Reaches* 42, 117-19; "Conversation" 55; Frick, *Humanistic Psychology* 21.

Eastern thought had a minor influence in the shaping of Maslow's psychology. Maslow first heard of Taoism in Max Wertheimer's seminars in the New School for Social Research. As early as 1949 he used Taoism to describe purposeful spontaneity in the expressive component of behavior. Later he often referred to Taoism as synonymous with passivity or resignation in the understanding of nature and the self. He often wrote that Western psychologists should learn from the "taoistic fashion" or "taoistic let-be" or "taoistic listening" when exploring human nature. He meant by this that the scientist should be receptive, trustful, and relaxed and should let things happen without interference in order to attain "experiential knowledge from the inside." He also explored the similarities between the concepts of Satori, Nirvana, peak-experiences, and self-actualization.³⁹

In *The Psychology of Science* (1966) Maslow dedicated a chapter to "taoistic science." He described it as an approach to learning meant to complement Western science. He argued that the organization, classification, and conceptualization methods of Western science remove our perception of reality to an abstract realm invented by the mind. This negative aspect of Western science should be balanced against taoistic non-intruding receptivity and contemplation of experience. In one of his last writings he referred to "taoistic objectivity" as opposed to "classical objectivity."⁴⁰

IEWS ON HUMAN NATURE

The image of human nature is the most striking feature of humanistic psychology. Early humanistic psychologists often asserted that any psychology deserving the name entailed a view of human nature. Psychologists' view of human nature, they argued, determines psychological research, the gathering and interpretation of psychological evidence, and above all the construction of theories. In the long run it was that image of human nature that served as a common ground and unifying element of the humanistic movement.⁴¹

Humanistic psychologists shared a conviction that it was the nature of a person to be a "being-in-the-process-of-becoming." A person at his or her

³⁹ Maslow, *The Psychology of Science* 96; *Motivation and Personality* 182, 291; "Deficiency Motivation and Growth Motivation" 25; *Toward a Psychology of Being* 55, 78, 119, 136, 184; "Lessons from the Peak-Experiences" 12, 14, 16; *Eupsychian Management* 6, 7, 105, 154; "A Dialogue with Abraham Maslow" 23; *Farther Reaches of Human Nature* 16-18, 115, 124, 189, 191; *Religion, Values and Peak-Experiences* x, xiii, 33, 80, 100; *The Psychology of Science* 95-101, 124, 103.

⁴⁰ Maslow, *The Psychology of Science* 96; *Motivation and Personality* 182, 291; "Deficiency Motivation and Growth Motivation" 25; *Toward a Psychology of Being* 55, 78, 119, 136, 184; "Lessons from the Peak-Experiences" 12, 14, 16; *Eupsychian Management* 6, 7, 105, 154; "A Dialogue with Abraham Maslow" 23; *Farther Reaches* 16-18, 115, 124, 189, 191; *Religion, Values and Peak-Experiences* x, xiii, 33, 80, 100; *The Psychology of Science* 95-101, 124, 103.

⁴¹ DeCarvalho, *The Founders of Humanistic Psychology* 179-82.

best, they said, is proactive, autonomous, choice-oriented, adaptable, and mutable, indeed continuously becoming. To reach the highest levels through the process-of-becoming, a person must be “fully functioning” (Rogers) or “functionally autonomous” (Allport); the self must be spontaneously integrated and actualizing (Maslow); there must be a sense of self-awareness and centeredness (May); there must exist an authenticity-of-being (Bugental). Humanistic psychologists believed that the process-of-becoming was never simply a matter of genetics and biology and they were convinced that the rejection of becoming was a psychological illness that should be the main concern of psychotherapy.⁴²

Although they agreed that the process-of-becoming characterizes human nature, humanistic psychologists disagreed regarding the exact causes of that process. Maslow, Rogers, and to a lesser degree Allport, believed that the process-of-becoming had a biological basis. They were nevertheless extremely careful not to revert to simple biological determinism. Maslow thought that humans had an “instinctoid” inner core that contained potentialities pressing towards actualization. Rogers argued that the human organism had a directional and actualizing tendency toward the fulfillment of an inner potential. Bugental and May regarded the biological assumptions of the growth hypothesis as overly vague. They explained the process-of-becoming as a product of self-awareness and affirmation—i.e., intentionality—in the face of existential anxiety and contingencies.⁴³

Human nature, according to Abraham Maslow, depends upon both biology and culture. It seemed obvious to Maslow that there could be no such thing as human nature without the human body. But it seemed equally clear to him that a simple biological determinism could not explain human nature.

Central to Maslow’s view of human nature was the concept of an “instinctoid” inner core within the human organism. Innate human capacities, talents, and idiosyncrasies, he thought, have a biological basis in that inner core. However, the biological inner core exists merely as potential “raw material” waiting to be subjectively developed or actualized by the person. The inner core was nothing like an all-powerful animal instinct. It was rather an instinct-remnant, very subtle and easily suppressed and repressed or developed and actualized. There were, according to him, both cultural and psychological dimensions in the process of actualization or suppression. The species-specific potentialities of the human body were, on one hand, shaped by family, education, environment, and culture; on the other hand, they were determined by the person, by his or her choices, will, and decisions, by all these things that Sartre had called the “project.”⁴⁴

⁴² DeCarvalho, *Founders* 179–82.

⁴³ DeCarvalho, *Founders* 179–82.

⁴⁴ Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* 9, 139, 382; *Toward a Psychology of Being* 3–4, 138; *Religions, Values and Peak-Experiences* xvi; *Farther Reaches of Human Nature* 22–24, 186.

Since Maslow believed that human biological potential is extremely malleable, he emphasized the importance of a proper cultural environment. A synergetic society, argued Maslow, must create special conditions that encourage the free expression of instinctoid human nature; more important, it must allow the human organism to actualize itself positively by means of subjective choice. Subjective choice did not mean for Maslow what it meant for Sartrean existentialism. Choices for Maslow were determined by the species-specific biological core residing within the person. The person needed to recognize the impulses (or instinct-remnants) of his or her own body, love and respect his or her own biological organism, then actualize its potential. In spite of the biological foundations of human nature, however, the person as a subjective being is responsible for the manner in which he or she individuates and actualizes his or her own existence. Ultimately it is the person who is the active agent, the mover and chooser, and the master of himself or herself.⁴⁵

Signifying the importance of the person in the unfolding of his or her inner potential, Maslow argued that the inner core developed only by a process of self-discovery and "creation." Although the organism develops from within by virtue of intrinsic growth tendencies, the manner in which this development is accomplished depends upon the person. Maslow agreed with Carl Rogers that there are "positive growth tendencies" that lie within the human organism driving it to fuller and fuller development. He also agreed with Rogers that a primary task of psychotherapy is to create an environment conducive to self-discovery and to the conscious exercise of will.⁴⁶

Maslow was greatly interested in ethics, and he argued that it was possible to make a scientific study of human values. Values, he thought, were deeply embedded within the structure of human nature, and he believed that the possession of wrong values was a kind of mental illness. Wrong values included the suppression of one's inner biological core, the inhibition of growth, and wanting "what-is-not-good-for-us." Mental health, on the other hand, was synonymous with "good-growth-toward-self-actualization," or the development and actualization to the fullest extent of the capacities latent within the biological core. Maslow considered values leading to self-actualization to be the right values. Actualization is always possible, argued Maslow, because human nature is fundamentally trustworthy, self-governing, and self-protecting. Provided with a synergetic environment and full freedom of self-expression, human nature will unfold and grow in the right direction. Maslow believed that Carl Rogers's ideal of a "fully functioning person" suggested the ethical implications of his own concept of self-actualization.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* 9, 124, 145, 153, 349, 382; *Farther Reaches of Human Nature* 101, 148, 223.

⁴⁶ Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* 116, 124; *Toward a Psychology of Being* 138; Frick, *Humanistic Psychology* 22–24.

⁴⁷ Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* 116; *Toward a Psychology of Being* 167–85, 81, 130; *Farther Reaches of Human Nature* 28, 211.

Maslow's most famous concept is that of a hierarchy of needs. The inner core of human nature, argued Maslow, consists of urges and instinct-like propensities that create basic needs within the person. These needs have to be satisfied; otherwise frustration and sickness will result. The first and most basic needs are physiological and are related to survival. If the physiological needs are not satisfied, all other needs are temporarily pushed aside. Once basic physiological needs are fulfilled, relatively higher and higher needs emerge, such as those for safety, love, and esteem. When safety needs are satisfied, love and esteem needs arise. Social needs stand at the top of Maslow's hierarchy of needs.⁴⁸

According to Maslow the drive to gratify needs is instinctoid; needs must be gratified or illness will ensue. Mental illness is manifested by the person who compulsively seeks gratification of a particular need and does not move on to higher needs. Maslow agreed with Gordon Allport that the satisfaction of higher needs in healthy people is unrelated to the lower needs. Higher needs are independent from lower needs and thus functionally autonomous.⁴⁹

At the very top of the hierarchy of needs Maslow placed the need for self-actualization, or the desire to become all that one is capable of becoming. A desire for self-actualization arose with the emergence of a need to know, a need to satisfy our curiosity about nature, a need to understand the perplexities of life; it was also a response to the needs for meaningful work, for responsibility, for justice, for creativity, and for the appreciation of beauty. In *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (1971) Maslow discussed a need yet higher than self-actualization, one that was transcendental and centered on cosmic rather than human awareness. All humans, said Maslow, possess an instinctoid need to penetrate the cosmic mysteries and to live in a realm of symbols and religion.⁵⁰

The desire to transcend one's own nature, said Maslow, was just as much an aspect of human nature itself as were all lower needs. Denial of this ultimate need could be just as pathological as a denial of one's need for vitamins and proper nutrition.⁵¹

In an age when many psychologists understood human nature as a mere response to stimuli and studied psychologically maladjusted persons, Maslow stood for human dignity and values; he advocated a humanistic psychology that studied healthy people, trusted and placed the unique potential of each person at the core of its concerns.

⁴⁸ Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* 80, 106, 116, 154, 345-47, 379-90.

⁴⁹ Gordon W. Allport, "A Unique and Open System" 12: 1-5.

⁵⁰ Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* 183; "Eupsychia-The Good Society" 3; *Religion, Values and Peak-Experiences* xvi; "The Farther Reaches of Human Nature"; *Farther Reaches of Human Nature* 186.

⁵¹ Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* 146-51, 379-90; *Toward a Psychology of Being* 222; "The Farther Reaches of Human Nature" 3.

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