

Rod Farmer

"HUMAN RIGHTS AND SELF-ACTUALISATION THEORY"

The concept of human rights has stimulated individuals and various groups throughout much of modern history; witness for example the role of the concept human rights in the rhetoric of the American Revolution, the French Revolution, the European revolutions of 1848 and recent debates in the United Nations General Assembly. True, the concept has at times been falsely used as political campaign slogans. But, the concept of human rights has in the past, and continues today, to rouse people. Although denied to most of the world's more than four billion people, millions cherish the idea, the hope, of human rights.

One must not assume that the present concern over human rights will diminish. It may in fact increase. As Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "Man's mind stretched to a new idea never goes back to its original dimensions." Humanity will not and cannot forget the human rights ideal. Also, the "revolution of rising expectations" in the so-called underdeveloped nations no longer includes merely material items such as automobiles and refrigerators, but also the dream of freedom, of human rights. Everywhere this is heard.

An understanding of and progress in human rights has usually been partially thwarted by confusion as to the nature of human rights. One of the more troublesome questions surrounding human rights has been whether human rights were absolute and from an absolute source or were situational and human-made. It is not the purpose of this paper to enter this debate; instead, it is here assumed that the absolutist position has failed to supply the needed evidence that either supernatural sources or natural physical/biological laws dictate human rights. Therefore, the task of determining human rights appears to have come, by default, into our own hands. Humans themselves create human rights.

The second major question surrounding human rights has to do with determining what the human rights are to be. What human rights can humanity intelligently develop? It has always been easy to find someone willing to suggest particular human rights. Too often these suggestions are products of a particular culture and are seen as undesirable by those from different cultures. This failure to develop a theoretical rationale for and source of suggested cross-cultural human rights has hindered the global growth of these needed ideals.

Students of human rights can develop a theoretical rationale for cross-cultural human rights. Human rights are rights of humans and must find theoretical support in a theory of human nature. Abraham Maslow's theory of self-actualization is such a theory, a theory which illuminates cross-cultural and universal human needs. Maslow's theory provides a worthy theoretical rationale for and source of cross-cultural human rights. I do not claim to specify with finality what human rights should be for all time. All one can do is to try to justify, through use of human reason, a theory, describing and supporting those human rights which seem to be necessary for human nature as we know it.

SELF-ACTUALISATION THEORY

Maslow's theory is a theory of innate human needs and of the motivations to satisfy these needs. (1) Maslow held that each person has certain needs which must be satisfied before the individual can become fully developed, self-actualizing. The self-actualized person is the most mentally healthy individual. The needs form a hierarchy; the bottom several needs are labelled the basic or primary needs (see Figure 1). Maslow held that physiological needs are most potent, but once satisfied, security becomes the most urgent need. Once security needs are satisfied belongingness and love needs become most potent. Then come the esteem needs. Maslow labelled a human need a basic need if 1) its absence breeds illness; 2) its presence prevents illness; 3) its restoration cures illness; 4) under certain complex free choice situations, it is preferred by the deprived person over other satisfactions; 5) it is found to be inactive, at a low ebb, or functionally absent in the healthy person. The basic needs are defined as follows: 1) **Physiological needs**. Examples of physio-

logical needs would be food, water, sleep, and exercise. When these needs are not being satisfied, for example, when one is close to starvation, the person becomes dominated by that which will satisfy his need. 2) **Safety needs.** Safety needs include freedom from fear, physical violence, and anxiety. 3) **Belongingness and love needs.** These needs include the needs for friendship, love, and a feeling of rootedness. 4) **Esteem needs.** These include the needs for respect from others and for a positive self-concept. (2)

The two growth needs follow the basic needs. The first growth need is for self-actualization. This is the need to develop one's innate talents and potentials. Maslow held that, "What a man can be, he must be. He must be true to his own nature. This need we may call self-actualization." (3) Although each individual's collection of capacities is unique, the need for self-actualization is universal among the human species. It too is an innate need. Maslow at first thought that the self-actualizing need was the last need to be fulfilled in fully developed people. He later discovered, through clinical studies, that another higher growth need level existed. (4) He found that, although all self-actualized people had satisfied their basic and self-actualizing needs, some had transcended their own egos to become motivated by higher needs, metaneeds, needs for cross-cultural values. This he labelled metamotivation; metamotivation is an individual's search for what Maslow called the Being Values. The Being Values are: the need for a wholistic sense of understanding, purpose, justice, beauty, aliveness, uniqueness and meaningfulness in life. Metamotivation can lead to transcending one's own ego to experience a oneness with nature, humanity and life. If the metaneeds are not met, psychological problems such as depression, alienation from life and nature, and purposelessness can result. Thus, Maslow found that some people become "transcending" self-actualizers, they go beyond satisfying the need for self-actualization. In this paper, both transcending self-actualizers and non-transcending self-actualizers will be referred to as self-actualizers. Also, metamotivation will be seen as part of self-actualization.

Deficiency-motivated (non-self-actualizing) people also can be attracted to the Being Values. However, it is the degree of attraction which is important; the self-actualizing person

has more freedom to be attracted to the Being Values which satisfy the metaneeds. Although most authors fail to place the metaneeds in the hierarchy, Maslow stated that, "basic needs and metaneeds are in the same hierarchical-integration." (5) Also according to Maslow, there are two continual needs, the needs for freedom and knowledge. (6) The continual need of freedom refers to many kinds of freedoms, such as the freedoms to learn, to be free from subconscious fears, and to be free to defend oneself. The continual need for knowledge refers to the many kinds of knowledge needed to satisfy the various needs. This addition of the continual needs slightly modifies the traditional view of Maslow's hierarchy (see Figure 1).

According to Maslow and other humanistic psychologists, because the self-actualized person's basic and growth needs are satisfied, he/she has, compared to the non-self-actualizing individual, the following personality characteristics: 1) free from crippling anxiety; 2) free from neurosis or psychosis; 3) less dogmatic; 4) superior perception of reality; 5) less conformist and more inner-directed; 6) higher frequency of peak experiences (peak experiences are mystic feelings, feelings of wonder, awe, wholeness, which are dissociated from theological or supernatural interpretation); 7) increased acceptance of others; 8) more democratic; 9) more creative; 10) more spontaneous; 11) more healthy interpersonal relations; 12) increased identification with the human species; 13) more humanistic values; 14) ability to turn inward in a meditative way to solve personal problems; 15) more altruistic and loving; 16) greater appreciation for solitude and privacy; 17) a more witty, philosophic sense of humor; 18) more liberal on political, social and religious questions; 19) greater sense of purpose and meaning in life; 20) more peace of mind and feeling of harmony with life and nature.

Maslow held that the drive to satisfy the various needs are instinctoid, i.e., are biologically based tendencies. (7) Though full animal instinct no longer exists in humans, there still exists the remnants of the old animal instincts. These instinct remnants can be thought of as species-wide urges or capacities which can be easily perverted by the cultural environment. The instinct remnants are part of our evolutionary heritage. Deprivation

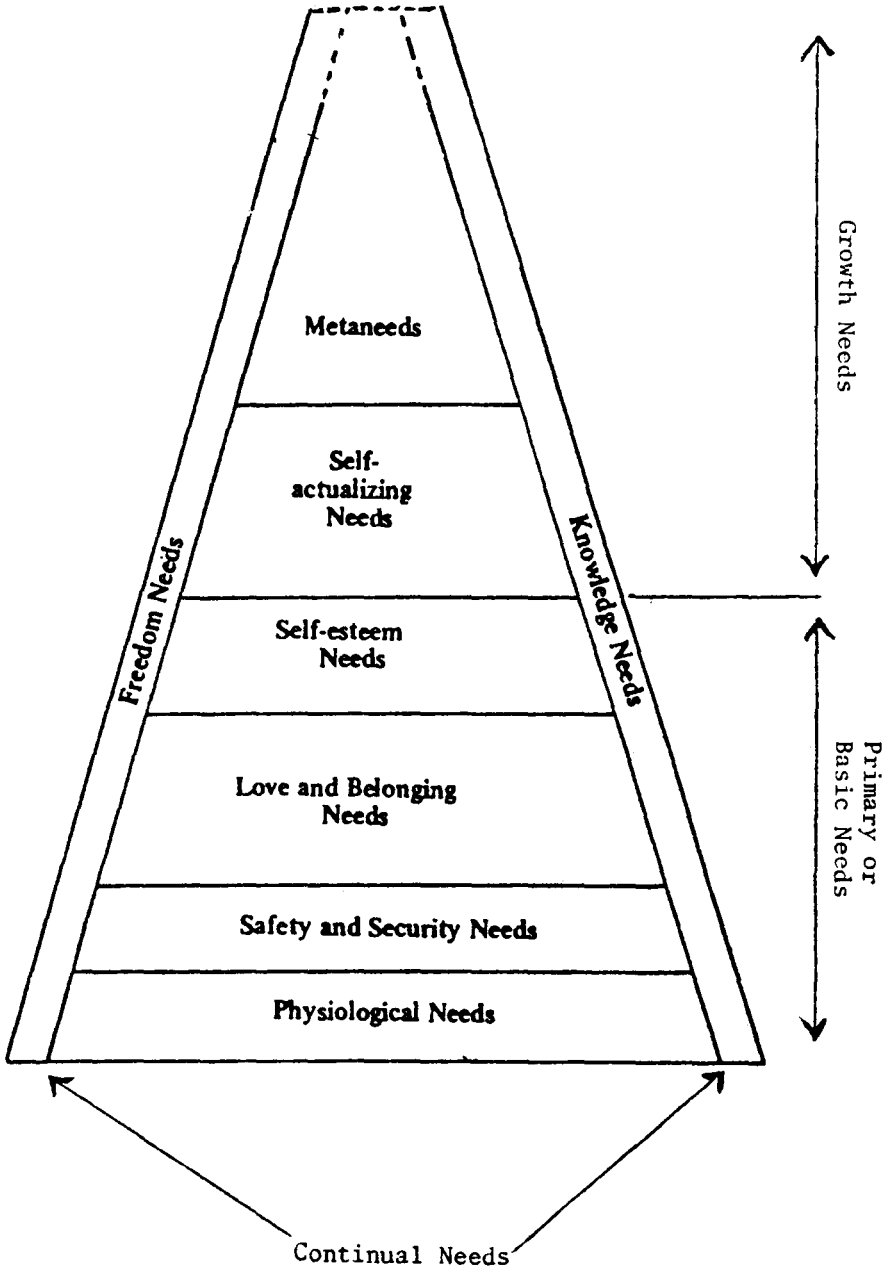


Figure 1

of the various needs can lead to death (physiological and safety needs) or mental pathologies (psychological and growth needs). If members of a species are destroyed or crippled when they fail to attain certain needs satisfactions, one can justifiably think in terms of the needs being innate and biological.

APPLICATION OF MASLOW'S THEORY

The primary human right is the right to self-actualize, to be a fully developed human being. Secondary human rights may be found in each of the basic and growth needs. Use of Maslow's theory as a source from which to draw human rights does not provide humanity with an algebraic equation with which to produce mathematically exact human rights. Human nature is too great to be placed in a test tube. Subjective interpretation, hopefully governed by reason and honesty, is an integral part of human rights. Still, Maslow's theory is well supported by research and degree of self-actualization can be scientifically measured. (8) Maslow's model of the healthy person is scientifically developed and is a model that will in the future be progressively refined by social and behavioral science.

No other theory of personality and human nature is so positive about human potential as is Maslow's. Each theory of personality has its own implicit philosophy of humanity. For the behaviorist the human is a mere machine, for the Freudian the human is irrational and in the grip of his/her past, of unconscious motives. (9) It would be difficult and perhaps even dangerous, to use a pessimistic theory of human nature from which to draw human rights. While other personality theories, especially behaviorism and Freudianism, could be easily applied by regimes intent on denying human rights, Maslow's theory is nearly incapable of such an application. Legislators and private citizens reflecting on human rights from the perspective of self-actualization theory, would not be as likely to manipulate humanity into an Orwellian society. In contrast to behavioristic and Freudian perspectives, the Maslovian view of humanity assumes humans can have a degree of free will and can become healthy fully-functioning beings.

A human rights theory based on human needs provides a theory free of archaic chauvinistic nationalism. It may be that the modern technological explosion and the threat of nuclear war has made the nation-state as archaic and obsolete as the industrial Revolution made feudalism. Using Maslow's theory, from which to draw cross-cultural human rights, would enable human rights to be free of alignment with the ideology of nationalism. The theory would do well in a world of increasing global interdependence.

A theoretical support for human rights, if it is to avoid being an insult to the concept of human rights, must be above narrow provincial or parochial interests. Too often various interest groups' personal desires are indiscriminately labelled as "human rights." A group may claim it has the right to emigrate, to have self-government, to use a particular official language, etc. But, human rights must be seen as something more than a label placed on an interest group's personal desires. Certainly the desires of all groups are not humane. Groups may have desires which are selfish, violent or based on ignorance. For people to merely want something does not mean that they seek human rights. In using self-actualization theory as a tool for identifying human rights, the concerned citizen can more easily separate genuine human rights claims from mere political rhetoric. There are dangers in using a definition of human rights which is trapped in the wishes and hopes of one historic period. Since human nature and the innate needs have remained unchanged during the historic period, a sound theory of human nature, such as Maslow's, would provide a sensible base for human rights.

The problem of identifying human rights will increase in importance as our limited world's finite resources decrease. When an individual or group claims: a right to work, a right to be mobile, a right to land or food, etc., then, inevitably, pressures will occur on other individuals and groups in the human community. (10) A hermit living alone in the desert, without contact with other people, can make innumerable assertions to oneself and to the wind about the hermit's own human rights. But, in a crowded world of four billion people, most of whom are not hermits, human rights are claims upon other people. The more limited the world the more limited the rights. As our space-ship earth depletes

its non-renewable resources, it becomes ever more important to identify the essential needs of humans and thus the essential rights of humans. Thus, a theory which identifies essential human needs will be a useful and applicable theory in future human rights questions.

Humanity will not find absolute human rights and absolute theoretical justification for these rights. Instead, humanity can develop rights and theoretical support of these rights through honest human reasoning. It is here that Maslow's theory of self-actualization can be fruitfully applied. It is not far fetched that global human rights be based on a theory of individual human needs. It is even appropriate. Historian Theodore Roszak, in his call for more humane alternative economies and technologies, held that:

The needs of the person are the needs of the planet.
The rights of the planet are the rights of the person. (11)

It is time that efforts be made to give the presently formless and directionless concept of human rights a form and a direction. Maslow's theory of self-actualization may be a helpful tool in this noble effort.

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Written In The Cotswolds – A royal Progress.

I have no crown; and though the sunlit miles
Lie prone behind the conquest of my wheels,
I have no courtiers and the sky reveals
No secrets, and I fear no menial smiles.
I tap my foot to make wide views appear
In the great palace windows of my flight,
And in my kingdom there is such delight
As roving country queens of old held dear.
My court is autumn-dressed in gold and red
And time and space before me make a way –
No obsequies my headlong speed delay
And royalty sits lightly on my head.
When, shadowed by some cloud, I haply frown,
The trees, the golden trees do not bow down.

Marion B. Alford