'This is the book we've all been waiting for – nothing less than a breathtaking new psychology of humanity.'
SUSAN CAIN, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Quiet*

TRANSCEND

THE NEW SCIENCE OF SELF-ACTUALIZATION

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A Note on Pronoun Usage

During the course of writing this book, I consulted a number of views on whether it would be appropriate to make all quotes gender-neutral throughout. My initial thinking about the matter was that since this is a book about our common humanity, the heavily gendered language of the founding humanistic psychologists seemed antithetical to that goal. However, upon further reflection, I decided to keep all quotes in their original form. For one, I wanted to maintain the integrity of the original writings and did not want to inadvertently change their intended meaning in unexpected ways. Also, I believe that hiding or whitewashing instances of sexism of the past isn't conducive to transcending sexism in the future. With that said, I believe the gendered quotes merely reflect the context and meaning of the word "man" in their time, which was universally understood as meaning all of humankind. Quotes aside, considering the strides we are making toward equality in this generation, I take responsibility for using more inclusive language whenever I can, and I hope this book reflects that intention. In essence, I hope everyone reading this book feels a sense of belonging, unconditional positive regard, and a sense of common humanity.

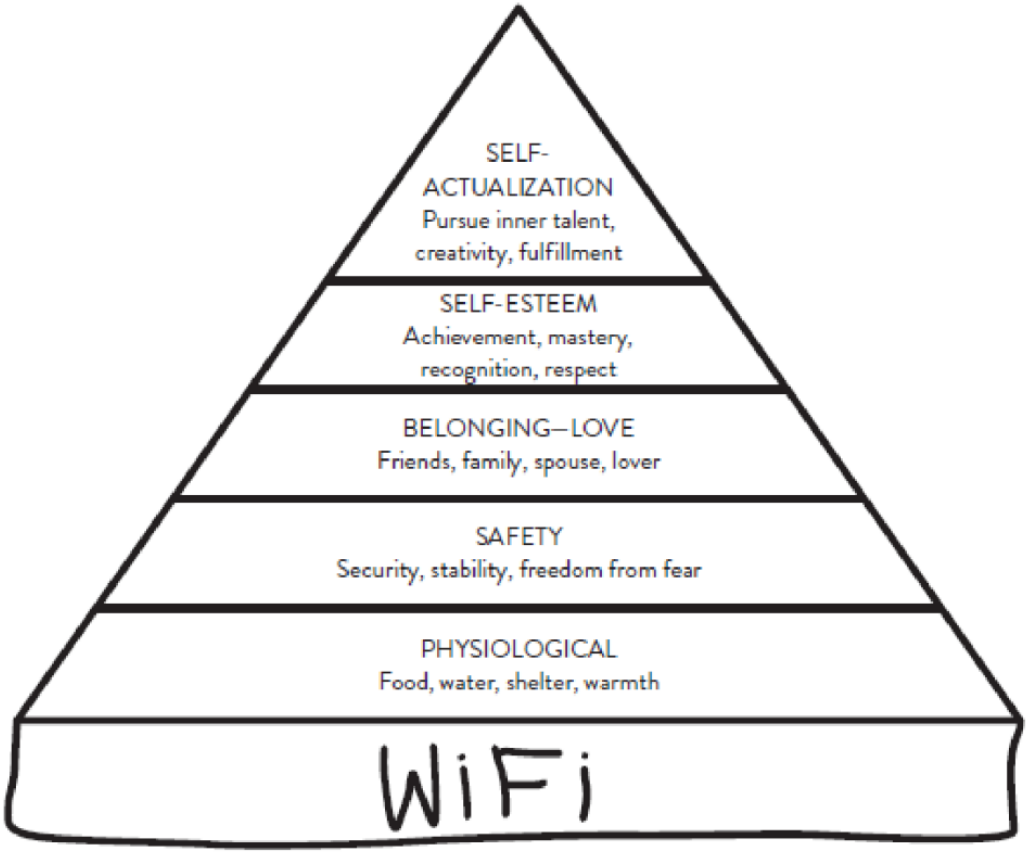
Preface

On June 8, 1970, a warm summer day in Menlo Park, California, Abraham Maslow was furiously writing in his notebook. His mind was full of so many theories and ideas about the higher reaches of human nature, including a theory he had been developing for the past few years: Theory Z. His wife, Bertha, lounged a few steps away by the pool at their home. Glancing at the time on his stopwatch, Maslow begrudgingly realized it was time to do his daily exercise. He was under strict doctor's orders to engage in light exercise to help rebuild his heart. Ever since a heart attack in December 1967, he had experienced frequent chest pains, constantly reminding him of his mortality. He canceled all speaking engagements and even declined to give a prestigious presidential address at the American Psychological Association.

Most people are familiar with Maslow's "hierarchy of needs," with self-actualization depicted at the top of a pyramid. Chances are, you learned about it in your introduction to psychology course in college or saw it diagrammed on Facebook.

As it's typically presented in psychology textbooks, humans are motivated by increasingly "higher" levels of needs. The basic needs—physical health, safety, belonging, and esteem—must be satisfied to a certain degree before we can fully self-actualize, becoming all that we are uniquely capable of becoming.

Some modern-day writers have interpreted Maslow's notion of self-actualization as individualistic and selfish.[1] However, a deeper look at Maslow's published and unpublished writings tells a very different story. In an unpublished essay from 1966 called "Critique of Self-Actualization Theory," Maslow wrote: "It must be stated that self-actualization is not enough. Personal salvation and what is good for the person alone cannot be really understood in isolation. . . . The good of other people must be invoked, as well as the good for oneself. . . . It is quite clear that a purely intrapsychic, individualistic psychology, without reference to other people and social conditions, is not adequate."[2]



During Maslow's later years, he became increasingly convinced that healthy self-realization is actually a *bridge* to transcendence. Many of the individuals he selected as self-actualizing people experienced frequent moments of transcendence in which awareness was expanded beyond the self, and many of them were motivated by higher values. At the same time, Maslow observed that these individuals had a deep sense of who they were and what they wanted to contribute to the world.

This created a deep paradox for Maslow: How could so many of his self-actualizing individuals simultaneously have such a strong identity and actualization of their potential, yet also be so *selfless*? In a 1961 paper, Maslow observed that self-actualization seems to be a "transitional goal, a rite of passage, a step along the path to the transcendence of identity. This is like saying its function is to erase itself."[3]

Maslow believed that striving toward self-actualization—by developing a strong sense of self and having one's basic needs met—was a crucial step along this path. As he wrote in his 1962 book *Toward a Psychology of Being*: "Self-actualization . . . paradoxically makes more possible the transcendence of self, and of self-consciousness and of selfishness."[4] Maslow observed that self-actualization makes it *easier* to merge as a part of a larger whole.

Maslow's lectures, unpublished essays, and private personal journal entries make clear that he became preoccupied with this paradox of transcendence in the last few years of his life.

On September 14, 1967, Maslow delivered a riveting lecture at the San Francisco Unitarian Church titled "The Farther Reaches of Human Nature."[5] Those who were in attendance remarked that he looked frail and weak as he walked down the aisle to reach the podium at the front of the room. However, once he started speaking, he immediately lit up the room. "It is increasingly clear that a philosophical revolution is underway," he began. "A comprehensive system is swiftly developing like a fruit tree beginning to bear fruit on every branch. Every field of science and human endeavor is being affected."

Referring to the "Humanistic Revolution," Maslow explained that humanistic psychology is beginning to unearth the mysteries of "real human experiences, needs, goals, and values." This includes our "higher needs," which are also part of the human essence, and include the need for love, for friendship, for dignity, for self-respect, for individuality, and for self-fulfillment. After pausing for a moment, he took a bold next step:

> If, however, these needs are fulfilled, a different picture emerges. . . . The fully developed (and very fortunate) human being working under the best conditions tends to be motivated by values which transcend his self. They are not selfish anymore in the old sense of that term. Beauty is not within one's skin nor is justice or order. One can hardly class these desires as selfish in the sense that my desire for food might be. My satisfaction with achieving or allowing justice is not within my own skin; it does not lie along my arteries. It is equally outside and inside: therefore, it has transcended the geographical limitations of the self.[6]

Maslow was working with great urgency on this idea. Just a few months after this speech, however, he suffered a coronary heart attack, revealing the source of his frailty during his lecture. He survived, but he said he suddenly felt less urgency. This confused him because it seemed to contradict his original theory, in which he argued that physical survival is the most important human need. In a journal entry dated March 28, 1970, he wrote:

> That's weird—that I should be enabled to perceive, accept, & *enjoy* the eternity & preciousness of the non-me world just because I became aware of my own mortality. The "being able to enjoy" is puzzling.[7]

Instead of falling all the way down to the bottom of his hierarchy, the awareness of his mortality actually *heightened* his own personal experience of transcendence. Noting a significant shift in values, Maslow observed: "The dominance hierarchy, the competitiveness and glory, certainly become foolish. There is certainly a shifting of values about what's basic and what's not basic, what's important and what's not important. I think if it were possible for us to die and be resurrected, it might then be possible for more people to have this post-mortem life."[8]

In his last major public seminar just a few months prior to his death, Maslow elaborated: "It's quite clear that we are always suffering from this cloud that hangs over us, the fear of death. If you can transcend the fear of death, which is possible—if I could now assure you of a dignified death instead of an undignified one, of a gracious, reconciled, philosophical death . . . your life today, at this moment, would change. And the rest of your life would change. Every moment would change. I think we can teach this transcending of the ego."[9]

During the last few years of his life, Maslow was working on a series of exercises to transcend the ego and live more regularly in the "B-realm"—the realm of "pure Being." He was also working on a comprehensive psychology and philosophy of human nature and society. In a journal entry dated December 26, 1967, just as he was leaving the hospital after his heart attack, Maslow wrote:

> New worries about the journals. What to do with them? The way I feel now, I just don't feel up to writing all the things I feel I ought to, the world needs, my duties. Wouldn't *mind* dying as a result, but I just don't have the stamina to *do* them. So the thought is save it all in little memos in these journals & the right person to come will know what I mean & why it *must* be done.[10]

On that warm, sunny day in Menlo Park, on June 8, 1970, Maslow put down his notepad, and with great frustration, he got up to do his daily exercise. He did not want to leave his work, even for a second. As he slowly started to jog, his wife, Bertha, wondered why he seemed to be moving in such an odd way.[11] Just as she was about to ask whether he was all right, Maslow collapsed. By the time she rushed to his side, Maslow was dead at the age of sixty-two, with so much of his work left unrealized.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Maslow is destined, in my view, to be rediscovered many times before the richness of his thought is fully assimilated.

—Irvin D. Yalom, *Existential Psychotherapy* (1980)

The typical textbook version of Maslow's hierarchy of needs is seriously inaccurate as a reflection of Maslow's later formulation of theory. . . . The time has come to rewrite the textbooks.

—Mark E. Koltko-Rivera, "Rediscovering the Later Version of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs" (2006)

When I discovered Maslow's later writings, sprinkled throughout a collection of unpublished essays, journal entries, personal correspondences, and lectures, I immediately felt a deep resonance with his thinking and vision, and deep admiration and affection for his life and work.

After listening to one particular lecture of Maslow's, I now even count him as a friend. One evening, while sitting on my bed listening to a series of public lectures he gave at the Esalen Institute in 1969, I was struck by his answer to a question from an audience member: "How do you define the word 'friendship'?"[12] Maslow began by defining a friend as someone who is truly "need-gratifying" and whose needs you want to gratify in return. He then defined the friendship of lovers as one where each other's needs melt into one, as the partner's needs become your needs.

But it's what Maslow said next that really got to me: "At a higher level . . . then something else happens that it's possible for me to feel very friendly, as I do, to count among my friends Abraham Lincoln, Socrates . . . Spinoza, I have great affection for Spinoza, great respect. At another level, corresponding to love or admiration or respect for the being of the other person. . . . It could be said that I have love for William James, which I do. I am very fond of William James. It happens sometimes, I talk about him in such an affectionate way, that people ask me, 'Did you know him?' [To which I reply,] 'Yes.' [Audience laughs.] 'Which [of course] I couldn't have.' "

My career as a psychologist—and my personal approach to life—has been profoundly shaped by Maslow's thinking and by the thinking of an entire generation of humanistic thinkers from the 1930s to the late 1960s, including Alfred Adler, Charlotte Bühler, Viktor Frankl, Erich Fromm, Karen Horney, Rollo May, and Carl Rogers. Their combined wisdom about essential human concerns—security, commitment, love, growth, meaning, authenticity, freedom, responsibility, justice, courage, creativity, and spirituality—is just as

relevant today, if not more so. We live in times of increasing polarization, selfish concerns, and individualistic pursuits of power.[13]

Humanistic psychology sings to my own deepest being and resonates with my belief that to help people reach their full potential, we need to take into account the *whole person*. I have spent the past twenty years studying all kinds of minds,[14] from those who struggle with learning differences such as autism, dyslexia, ADHD, and generalized anxiety but who nonetheless have substantial talents, passions, and creativity; to prodigies with the normal social interests and playfulness of children but who also have an intense rage to master in a specific domain; to savants who have extraordinary dysfunction (e.g., have difficulty speaking) coupled with incredible skills (e.g., painting, playing the piano); to intellectually precocious youth who often feel isolated and awkward in school but who are ready and eager to master material many grade levels ahead of their peers; to adults with extremely high levels of narcissism who, though impeded by their intense self-absorption, have many other facets of themselves that want to be actualized.[15]

In my career it has become clear that the more we have limiting notions of potential that are dictated by others (schoolteachers, parents, managers, etc.), the more blind we become to the full potential of each and every unique individual and their own unique path to self-actualization and transcendence. My research has convinced me that we all have extraordinary creative, humanitarian, and spiritual possibilities but are often alienated from them because we are so focused on a very narrow slice of who we are. As a result, we aren't fulfilling our full potential. We spend so much time looking *outward* for validation that we don't develop the incredible strengths that already lie *within*, and we rarely take the time to fulfill our deepest needs in the most growth-oriented and integrated fashion.

Indeed, so many people today are striving for "transcendence" without a healthy integration of their other needs—to the detriment of their full potential. This ranges from people who expect a mindfulness retreat or yoga class to be a panacea for their traumas and deep insecurities, to spiritual "gurus" abusing their positions of power, to the many instances of vulnerable people (especially vulnerable young people) seeking unhealthy outlets for transcendence, such as violent extremism, cults, and gangs.

We also see this at play among the many divisions we see in the world today. While there is a yearning to be part of a larger political or religious ideology, the realization of this yearning is often built on hate and hostility for

the "other," rather than on pride and deep commitment for a cause that can better humanity. In essence, there is a lot of pseudo-transcendence going on, resting on a "very shaky foundation."[16]

I have written this book to reinvigorate the wise, profound, and essentially human insights of humanistic psychology with the latest scientific findings from a wide range of fields—including positive psychology, social psychology, evolutionary psychology, clinical psychology, developmental psychology, personality psychology, organizational psychology, sociology, cybernetics, and neuroscience. The integration of a wide variety of perspectives is necessary for a more complete understanding of the full depths of human potential, as too much focus on a single perspective runs the risk of giving a distorted view of human nature. As Maslow said, "I suppose it is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail."[17]

In this book, I will attempt to flesh out Maslow's outlines on the highest reaches of humanity, unravel the mysteries of his later writings, and integrate the corpus of ideas put forward in the humanistic psychology era with the wealth of scientific findings that have accumulated since then on the higher reaches of human nature, including my own research on intelligence, creativity, personality, and well-being. Throughout this book, I'll highlight the human potential for truth seeking, beauty, connection, exploration, love, flow, creativity, purpose, gratitude, awe, and other transcendent experiences that are deeply embedded in the fabric of human nature. I will also help you recognize and reflect on your most *unmet* needs, so that you can make concrete changes in your life to come closer to wholeness and transcendence in your daily life.

While this book is about our higher possibilities, I wholeheartedly believe that the best way to move toward greater growth and transcendence is not by ignoring the inevitability of human suffering but by *integrating everything that is within you*. This requires penetrating the depths of your being with piercing awareness with the intent of experiencing the full richness of human existence. This is very much in line with Maslow's call for a "Being-Psychology," which incorporates a full understanding of human needs that transcends the "psychopathology of the average" but also "incorporate[s] all its findings in a more inclusive and comprehensive structure which includes both the sick and the healthy, both deficiency, Becoming and Being."[18]

Too many people today are feeling deeply unfulfilled in our chaotic and divided world, which encourages the pursuit of money, power, greatness, even

happiness, as the pinnacles of humanity. Yet despite climbing the status hierarchy and achieving monetary feelings of success, or even experiencing momentary feelings of happiness, we are still left feeling deeply unsatisfied, yearning for deeper connections with others and with our own fragmented selves. The social psychologist and humanistic philosopher Erich Fromm was quite right that there is an art of being.[19] But now there is also a *science* of being.

This book will present an update on Maslow's hierarchy of needs that is grounded in the latest science and provides a useful framework for making sense of your patterns of behavior and how your current way of being may be hindering your growth and transcendence. The aim is to help you boldly and honestly face who you are head on, so that you can become the person you really want to become. You'll find insights you can put into action in your own life. In the appendices I've presented even more practical exercises and ideas. And to deepen your quest further, go to *selfactualizationtests.com* for online tests to help you gain deeper insight into your personality patterns so that you can help realize the best version of yourself.

Throughout the book, I hope to show you greater possibilities for yourself and the human species than you ever realized was possible. It turns out that self-actualization is only part of the journey; I'll help take you all the way.

Introduction: A New Hierarchy of Needs

There is now emerging over the horizon a new conception of human sickness and of human health, a psychology that I find so thrilling and so full of wonderful possibilities.

—Abraham Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (1962)

Through his research on self-actualizing people, Maslow discovered that those who are reaching the full heights of their humanity tend to possess the characteristics most of us seek in life; they tend to be altruistic, creative, open, authentic, accepting, independent, and brave. However, Maslow did not prescribe that one *must* be this way. Instead, it was his belief that if society can create the conditions to satisfy one's basic needs—including the freedom to speak honestly and openly, to grow and develop one's unique capacities and passions, and to live in societies with fairness and justice—what naturally and organically emerges tends to be the characteristics that resemble the *best* in humanity.

Maslow viewed the role of the teacher, therapist, and parent as horticulturists, whose task is to "enable people to become healthy and effective *in their own style*."[1] To Maslow, this meant that "we try to make a rose into a good rose, rather than seek to change roses into lilies. . . . It necessitates a pleasure in the self-actualization of a person who may be quite different from yourself. It even implies an ultimate respect and acknowledgement of the sacredness and uniqueness of each kind of person."

Maslow was passionate about the need for a "Being-Psychology"—a field that involves the systematic investigation of ends rather than means—*end-experiences* (such as wonder, laughter, and connection), *end-values* (such as beauty, truth, and justice), *end-cognitions* (such as efficient perception of reality and newness of appreciation), *end-goals* (such as having an ultimate concern or purpose), and with *treating people as ends unto themselves*, not means to an end (what Maslow referred to as "Being-Love," or "B-Love" for short). Maslow's call for a Being-Psychology—which he also sometimes referred to as "positive psychology"[2] or "orthopsychology"—was in response to a psychology focused more on "not-having rather than having," "striving rather than fulfillment," "frustration rather than gratification," "seeking joy

rather than having attained joy," and "trying to get there rather than being there."[3]

Maslow was not alone. Between 1930 and 1970, a group of like-minded thinkers arose—including Alfred Adler, James Bugental, Charlotte Bühler, Arthur Combs, Viktor Frankl, Erich Fromm, Eugene Gendlin, Karen Horney, Sidney Jourard, Jim Klee, R. D. Laing, Rollo May, Clark Moustakas, Carl Rogers, Donald Snygg, and Anthony Sutich—who all saw the limitations of the experimental psychology, behaviorism, and Freudian psychoanalysis of the day. These disciplines, they felt, did not do justice to the individual as a whole; they left behind humanity's immense potential for creativity, spirituality, and humanitarianism. Referring to themselves as the Third Force, they attempted to integrate the insights of the more traditional perspectives while exploring "what it means to be fully experientially human and how that understanding illuminates the fulfilled or vital life."[4]

Eventually, the Third Force psychologists became known as the "humanistic psychologists," and the field was officially created when Maslow and Anthony Sutich launched *The Journal of Humanistic Psychology* in 1961. Today, there exist a number of psychotherapists and researchers explicitly working within the humanistic psychology tradition (many of them refer to themselves as "existential-humanistic" psychotherapists),[5] and there remains a strong emphasis on such humanistic themes as authenticity, awareness, compassionate social action, societal and ecological conditions most conducive to growth, spirituality, self-transcendence, integration, wholeness, and embracing the inherent struggles and paradoxes of human existence.[6] Within the humanistic psychology framework, the healthy personality is considered one that constantly moves toward freedom, responsibility, self-awareness, meaning, commitment, personal growth, maturity, integration, and change, rather than one that predominantly strives for status, achievement, or even happiness.[7]

In the late nineties, psychologist Martin Seligman galvanized the field of positive psychology in order to generate more rigorous scientific research on well-being and what "makes life worth living."[8] Today, humanistic psychologists and positive psychologists share a desire to understand and foster healthy motivation and healthy living.[9, 10] The following thirteen sources of well-being have been rigorously studied over the past forty years, and each one can be reached in your own style:[11]

Sources of Well-Being

- *More positive emotions* (higher frequency and intensity of positive moods and emotions, such as contentment, laughter, and joy, in one's daily life)
- *Fewer negative emotions* (lower frequency and intensity of negative moods and emotions, such as sadness, anxiety, fear, and anger, in one's daily life)
- *Life satisfaction* (a positive subjective evaluation of one's life overall)
- *Vitality* (a positive subjective sense of physical health and energy)
- *Environmental mastery* (the ability to shape environments to suit one's needs and desires; to feel in control of one's life; to not feel overwhelmed by the demands and responsibilities of everyday life)
- *Positive relationships* (feeling loved, supported, and valued by others; having warm and trusting interpersonal relationships; being loving and generous to others)
- *Self-acceptance* (positive attitudes toward self; a sense of self-worth; liking and respecting oneself)
- *Mastery* (feelings of competence in accomplishing challenging tasks; a sense of effectiveness in accomplishing important goals one has set for oneself)
- *Autonomy* (feeling independent, free to make one's own choices in life, and able to resist social pressures)
- *Personal growth* (continually seeking development and improvement, rather than seeking achievement of a fixed state)
- *Engagement in life* (being absorbed, interested, and involved in one's daily activities and life)
- *Purpose and meaning in life* (a sense that one's life matters, is valuable, and is worth living; a clear sense of direction and meaning in one's efforts; a connection to something greater than oneself)
- *Transcendent experiences* (experiences of awe, flow, inspiration, and gratitude in daily life)

Note that many of these sources of well-being go beyond stereotypical notions of happiness. Becoming fully human is about living a full existence, not one that is continually happy. Being well is not always about feeling good; it also involves continually incorporating more meaning, engagement, and growth in one's life—key themes in humanistic psychology.

In this introduction, I will present a new hierarchy of human needs for the twenty-first century that is in line with the spirit of humanistic psychology but is also grounded in the latest science of personality, self-actualization, human development, and well-being. I believe the new hierarchy of needs can serve as a useful organizing framework for the field of psychology as well as a useful guide for your own personal journey of health, growth, and transcendence.

But first there are a number of common misconceptions about Maslow's hierarchy of needs that we must dispel at once.

LIFE IS NOT A VIDEO GAME

Maslow's theory of needs is often presented as a lockstep progression, as though once we satisfy one set of needs, we're done forever with concerning ourselves with the satisfaction of that need. As if life were a video game and once we complete one level—say, safety—some voice from above says, "Congrats, now you've unlocked belonging!," never to return to the prior need in the hierarchy. This is a gross misrepresentation of Maslow's theory, as well as the spirit of Maslow's overall body of work. While rarely acknowledged as one, Maslow was actually a developmental psychologist at heart.[12]

Maslow emphasized that we are always in a state of becoming and that one's "inner core" consists merely of "potentialities, not final actualizations" that are "weak, subtle, and delicate, very easily drowned out by learning, by cultural expectations, by fear, by disapproval, etc.," and which can all too easily become forgotten, neglected, unused, overlooked, unverbalized, or suppressed.[13] Maslow made it clear that human maturation is an ongoing process and that growth is "not a sudden, saltatory phenomenon" but is often two steps forward and one step back.[14]

An underdiscussed aspect of Maslow's theory is that his hierarchy of needs serves as an organizing framework for different states of mind—ways of looking at the world and at others. Maslow argued that, when deprived, each need is associated with its own distinctive world outlook, philosophy, and outlook on the future:

> Another peculiar characteristic of the human organism when it is dominated by a certain need is that the whole philosophy of the future tends also to change. For our chronically and extremely hungry man, Utopia can be defined simply as a place where there is plenty of food. He tends to think that, if only he is guaranteed food for the rest of his life, he will be perfectly happy and will never want anything more. Life itself tends to be defined in terms of eating. Anything else will be defined as unimportant. Freedom, love, community feeling, respect, philosophy, may all be waved aside as fripperies that are useless, since they fail to fill the stomach. Such a man may fairly be said to live by bread alone.[15]

While Maslow often relied on extreme examples such as these, he was also quick to point out that most people "are partially satisfied in all their basic needs and partially unsatisfied in all their basic needs at the same time."[16] He was insistent that "any behavior tends to be determined by several or *all* of the basic needs simultaneously rather than by only one of them," and that any one of us at any moment in time can return to a particular state of mind depending on the deprivation of the need.[17]

Another common misconception is that the needs are isolated from one another or don't depend on one another in any meaningful way. Again, this couldn't be further from what Maslow's theory *actually* stated: "[The human needs] are arranged in an integrated hierarchy rather than dichotomously, that is, they rest one upon another. . . . This means that the process of regression to lower needs remains always as a possibility, and in this context must be seen *not* only as pathological or sick, but as absolutely necessary to the integrity of the whole organism, and as prerequisite to the existence and functioning of the 'higher needs.' "[18]

The English humanistic psychotherapist John Rowan used the analogy of Russian nesting dolls to illustrate Maslow's notion of an integrated hierarchy: each larger doll includes all the smaller dolls but also transcends them.[19] Once we are working on our highest purpose, for instance, our needs for safety, connection, or self-esteem don't vanish; instead, they become *integrated* with our more transcendent purpose. When the whole person is well-integrated, all of their basic needs are not merely met but work together to facilitate growth toward realizing their highest goals and values.

Maslow never actually created a pyramid to represent his hierarchy of needs.

Another implication here is that if you try to grow too soon without a healthy integration of your insecurities and deprivations, the growth is less likely to reach its full height. Listening to a meditation app for a few minutes once a week or doing the downward-facing dog yoga pose every morning won't magically give you a deep sense of self-worth and connection with others. Again, Maslow viewed development as often involving a two-steps-forward, one-step-back dynamic,[20] in which we are continually returning to

our basic needs to draw strength, learn from our hardships, and work toward greater integration of our whole being.

Modern-day presentations of Maslow's theory often leave out this critical notion of an integrated hierarchy and instead focus on the stage-like pyramid —even though in his published writings *Maslow never actually created a pyramid to represent his hierarchy of needs.*[21], [22] Todd Bridgman and his colleagues examined in detail how the pyramid came to be and concluded that "Maslow's Pyramid" was actually created by a management consultant in the sixties. From there, it quickly became popular in the emerging field of organization behavior. Bridgman and his colleagues note that the pyramid resonated with the "prevailing [post-war] ideologies of individualism, nationalism and capitalism in America and justified a growing managerialism in bureaucratic (i.e., layered triangular) formats."[23]

Unfortunately, the continual reproduction of the pyramid in management textbooks had the unfortunate consequence of reducing Maslow's rich and nuanced intellectual contributions to a parody and has betrayed the actual spirit of Maslow's notion of self-actualization as realizing one's creative potential for humanitarian ends.[24] As Bridgman and his colleagues noted, "Inspiring the study of management and its relationship to creativity and the pursuit of the common good would be a much more empowering legacy to Maslow than a simplistic, 5-step, one-way pyramid."[25]

We can work on multiple needs simultaneously.

Finally, there is a common misconception that Maslow's theory didn't allow for cross-cultural variation or individual differences. However, Maslow acknowledged that not only can our basic needs ebb and flow in salience across a person's lifetime, but there can also be significant cultural and individual differences in the order in which people satisfy their basic needs.[26] For instance, a number of societies that lack important resources for security and health—such as a war-torn society where there is real danger and fear on a regular basis—will certainly be focused more on the basic necessities of survival. Even so, such societies can supply, to a certain extent, a sense of community, respect, and the opportunities to develop skills and talents. As the consultant Susan Fowler notes, "People are 'self-actualizing' all over the

place."[27] Addressing real structural inequalities around the world is absolutely *essential* to giving everyone opportunities to self-actualize and transcend, but this does not mean that people must wait to work toward a deeper sense of fulfillment until more security-related needs are met. We can work on multiple needs simultaneously.

Even *within a society*, people differ in what needs they are most motivated to pursue due to a combination of temperament and environmental experiences. For instance, some people are consistently more interested in forming deeper connections with others, whereas others are more consistently driven by accolades and the respect of others. And even *within individuals*, our needs are likely to change in importance as we mature and develop. Again, the key here is change and growth.

While the precise ordering of Maslow's hierarchy of needs has shown to vary by culture, from person to person, and even within a person's own lifetime, there is one core aspect of Maslow's hierarchy that *has* stood up remarkably well to modern scientific scrutiny. Let's take a look at that now.

DEFICIENCY VS. GROWTH

While most people focus on the triangular arrangement of the needs, Maslow actually emphasized a different feature of the hierarchy. Maslow argued that all the needs can be grouped into two main classes of needs, which must be integrated for wholeness: deficiency and growth.

Deficiency needs, which Maslow referred to as "D-needs," are motivated by a lack of satisfaction, whether it's the lack of food, safety, affection, belonging, or self-esteem. The "D-realm" of existence colors all of our perceptions and distorts reality, making demands on a person's whole being: "Feed me! Love me! Respect me!"[28] The greater the deficiency of these needs, the more we distort reality to fit our expectations and treat others in accordance with their usefulness in helping us satisfy our most deficient needs. In the D-realm, we are also more likely to use a variety of defense mechanisms to protect ourselves from the pain of having such deficiency in our lives. Our defenses are quite "wise" in the sense that they can help us to avoid unbearable pain that can feel like too much to bear at the moment.

Nevertheless, Maslow argued that the growth needs—such as self-actualization and transcendence—have a very different sort of wisdom associated with them. Distinguishing between "defensive-wisdom" and "growth-wisdom," Maslow argued that the Being-Realm of existence (or

B-realm, for short) is like replacing a clouded lens with a clear one. Instead of being driven by fears, anxieties, suspicions, and the constant need to make demands on reality, one is more accepting and loving of oneself and others. Seeing reality more clearly, growth-wisdom is more about "What choices will lead me to greater integration and wholeness?" rather than "How can I defend myself so that I can feel safe and secure?"[29]

From an evolutionary point of view, it makes sense that our safety and security concerns, as well as our desires for short-lived hedonic pleasures, would make greater demands on our attention than our desire to grow as a whole person. As the journalist and author Robert Wright put it in his book *Why Buddhism Is True,* "The human brain was designed—by natural selection—to mislead us, even enslave us."[30] All that our genes "care" about is getting propagated into the next generation, no matter the cost to the development of the whole person. If this involves narrowing our worldview and causing us to have outsize reactions to the world that aren't actually in line with reality, so be it.

However, such a narrowing of worldview runs the risk of inhibiting a fuller understanding of the world and ourselves. Despite the many challenges to growth, Maslow believed we are all capable of self-actualization, even if most of us do not self-actualize because we spend most of our lives motivated by deficiency. Maslow's emphasis on the dialectical nature of safety and growth is strikingly consistent with current research and theorizing in the fields of personality psychology, cybernetics, and artificial intelligence. There is a general consensus that optimal functioning of the whole system (whether humans, primates, or machines) requires both stability of goal pursuit in the face of distraction and disruption as well as the capacity for flexibility to adapt and explore the environment.[31]

Recognizing that security and growth are the two foundations necessary for becoming a whole person, including healthy transcendence, it's time for a *new* metaphor.

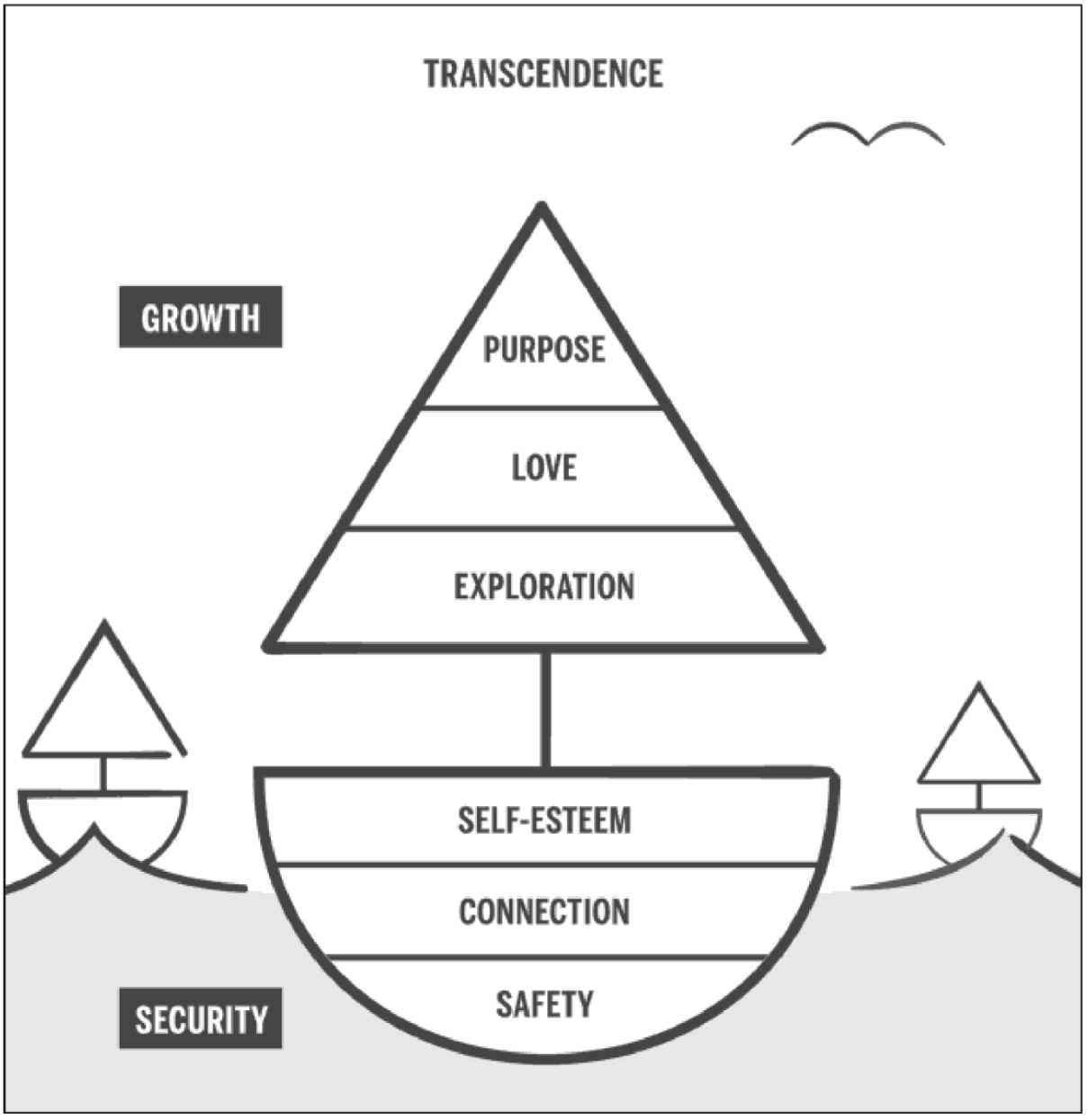
A NEW METAPHOR

The pyramid from the sixties told a story that Maslow never meant to tell; a story of achievement, of mastering level by level until you've "won" the game of life. But that is most definitely not the spirit of self-actualization that the humanistic psychologists emphasized. The human condition isn't a competition; it's an experience. Life isn't a trek up a summit but a journey to

and make sense of novel, challenging, and uncertain events.[33] While security is primarily concerned with defense and protection, exploration is primarily motivated by curiosity, discovery, openness, expansion, understanding, and the creation of new opportunities for growth and development. The other needs that comprise growth—love and purpose—can build on the fundamental need for exploration to reach higher levels of integration within oneself and to contribute something meaningful to the world.

I believe the drive for exploration is the core motive underlying self-actualization and cannot be completely reduced to any of the other needs, including our evolved drives for affiliation, status, parenting, and mates. While I do agree with evolutionary psychologist Douglas Kenrick and colleagues that the hierarchy of needs can be built on an evolutionary foundation, I believe the need for exploration deserves a place at the evolutionary table all on its own.[34]

Finally, at the top of the new hierarchy of needs is the *need for transcendence*, which goes beyond individual growth (and even health and happiness) and allows for the highest levels of unity and harmony within oneself and with the world. Transcendence, which rests on a secure foundation of both security and growth, is a perspective in which we can view our whole being from a higher vantage point with acceptance, wisdom, and a sense of connectedness with the rest of humanity.



ALL AT SEA[35]

Life comes from physical survival; but the good life comes from what we care about.

—Rollo May, *Love & Will* (1969)

The new hierarchy of needs that I present in this book is fundamentally human. Yes, we are apes, but we are apes insatiably curious about personal identity, creative expression, meaning, and purpose. Humans have developed a capacity for growth unprecedented in the animal kingdom. We are truly unique in the long time scale of our goals and in the flexibility to choose which goals we most wish to prioritize, and therefore in the number of ways

we can self-actualize. Think about the many diverse forms of art, music, science, invention, literature, dance, business, and sports that humans are capable of actualizing. We evolved the capacity to produce very elaborate and diverse cultures, and what makes cultures so elaborate is precisely our unique flexibility of goal pursuit.

The fact that humans are so unusual in this regard means that not every goal that satisfies a human being has any direct connection to evolutionary fitness. Take Skee-Ball, for instance. While the goal of becoming a Skee-Ball champion could be linked in some way to the evolved desires for status, esteem, and mastery, to *completely* reduce the Skee-Ball goal to these other needs in the hierarchy of human needs misses the fundamental *humanity* of Skee-Ball. As personality neuroscientist Colin DeYoung notes,

> It's hard not to realize that there is something more than the usual evolutionary constraints, when you think of the Skeeball Champion of the Universe. We don't have monkeys who are Skeeball champions. There is this freedom to select various goals and to invent new goals. We can certainly tie them back to certain evolved motives, but you can't just list the individual's evolved adaptations and from there be able to figure out what the range of human beings' possible behaviors is going to be. We have to be able to give people the freedom to choose from a very large menu of possible goals and pursuits and, even more than that, freedom to invent new ones.[36]

Of course, we do share many drives with other animals, and understanding the panoply of evolved psychological mechanisms is a very worthy goal.[37] However, it's notable that no other animal has existential crises quite to the extent that we do. In *The Sane Society,* Erich Fromm argued that the human condition involves the fundamental tension between our common nature with other animals and our uniquely developed capacities for self-awareness, reason, and imagination. As Fromm notes, "The problem of man's existence, then, is unique in the whole of nature; he has fallen out of nature, as it were, and is still in it; he is partly divine, partly animal; partly infinite, partly finite."[38]

While we each travel in our own direction, we're all sailing the vast unknown of the sea.

To use the sailboat metaphor, while we each travel in our own direction, *we're all sailing the vast unknown of the sea.* Human existence comes with conditions that are sometimes hard to swallow and difficult to comprehend, but there is something comforting about the fact that we all exist together and have to confront the same existential dilemmas. As one patient told existential psychotherapist Irvin Yalom, "Even though you're alone in your boat, it's always comforting to see the lights of the other boats bobbing nearby."[39] Here are the four "givens of existence" that Yalom argues all humans must reconcile:

(1) Death: the inherent tension between wanting to continue to exist and self-actualize and the inevitability of perishing,
(2)Freedom: the inherent conflict between the seeming randomness of the universe and the heavy burden of responsibility that comes with the freedom to choose one's own destiny,
(3)Isolation: the inherent tension between, on the one hand, wanting to connect deeply and profoundly with other human beings and be part of a larger whole and, on the other hand, never fully being able to do so, always remaining existentially alone, and
(4)Meaninglessness: the tension between being thrown into an indifferent universe that often seems to have no inherent meaning and yet wanting to find some sort of purpose for our own individual existence in the incomprehensibly short time we live on the planet.[40]

Therefore, the new hierarchy of needs is not only a theory of human nature but is ultimately a theory of *human existence.* Unearthing the evolved tendencies and instincts of humans is very important, and I will do so throughout this book. But I'm ultimately interested in what makes human life valuable and significant to the individuals *who are actually living it.* This book is not only about the parts of our evolutionary heritage but also about how each and every one of us can *transcend* our parts—becoming something greater than the sum of our parts as we each deal with the givens of existence in our own style.

THE GOOD LIFE

I do not accept any absolute formulas for living. No preconceived code can see ahead to everything that can happen in a man's life. As we live, we grow and our beliefs change. They must change. So I think we should live with this constant

discovery. We should be open to this adventure in heightened awareness of living. We should stake our whole existence on our willingness to explore and experience.

—Martin Buber, as quoted in Aubrey Hodes, *Martin Buber: An Intimate Portrait* (1971)

"No one can build you the bridge on which you, and only you, must cross the river of life. There may be countless trails and bridges and demigods who would gladly carry you across; but only at the price of pawning and forgoing yourself. There is one path in the world that none can walk but you. Where does it lead? Don't ask, walk!" . . . It is . . . an agonizing, hazardous undertaking thus to dig into oneself, to climb down roughly and directly into the tunnels of one's being.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *Schopenhauer as Educator* (1874)

The vision of the good life I present in this book isn't one that is typically touted these days. It's not one where the primary motivation is money, power, social status, or even happiness. Instead, the good life that I present, which is deeply grounded in the core principles of humanistic psychology and a realistic understanding of human needs, is about the healthy expression of needs in the service of discovering and expressing a self that works best for *you*.

The good life is not something you will ever achieve. It's a way of living. As Carl Rogers noted, "The good life is a *process,* not a state of being. It is a direction, not a destination."[41] This process won't always bring feelings of happiness, contentment, and bliss, and it may even sometimes cause pain and heartache. It's not for the "faint-hearted," as Rogers notes, as it requires continually stretching outside your comfort zone as you realize more and more of your potentialities and launch yourself "fully into the stream of life."[42] Just like it takes courage to open your sail on a sailboat and see where the winds will take you, it takes a lot of courage to become the best version of yourself.[43]

Nevertheless, if you stick with it, you are sure to live a richer life, one that is better characterized by adjectives such as "enriching," "exciting," "rewarding," "challenging," "creative," "meaningful," "intense," and "awe-inspiring." I believe in the fundamental capacity of humans for growth. No matter your current personality or circumstance, I believe that this book can help you grow in precisely the direction you truly want to grow, in your own style, and in such a way that allows you to show the universe that you really existed, and benefited others, while you were here.

Let's begin the process of becoming.

friendship with Ruth Benedict, drawn to her wit, brilliance, and kindness. Maslow also became a member of the American Anthropological Association and delivered talks at their conferences.[4]

In 1938, early in Maslow's professional career as a psychologist, Ruth Benedict helped him secure a grant-in-aid to spend (along with Lucien Hanks and Jane Richardson) an entire anthropological summer among the Northern Blackfoot Indians on the Siksika reserve in Alberta, Canada.[5] Maslow became very fond of the Blackfoot way of life. According to Martin Heavy Head, Maslow was so inspired by his visit that it "shook him to his knees."[6] Maslow was particularly impressed with the general lack of crime, violence, jealousy, and greed among the Blackfoot, along with their high levels of emotional security, firm yet caring child-rearing practices, community feeling, egalitarianism, and generous spirit. In fact, Maslow believed that the Blackfoot Indians scored so high on his tests of emotional security precisely because of their societal structure and community spirit.

According to Maslow's biographer Edward Hoffman, Maslow observed among the Blackfoot that "wealth was not important in terms of accumulating property and possessions: *giving it away* was what brought one the true status of prestige and security in the tribe."[7] In contrast, Maslow was shocked by the cruelty of the European-Americans who lived nearby: "Those Indians on the reservation were decent people; and the more I got to know the whites in the village, who were the worst bunch of creeps and bastards I've ever run across in my life, the more it got paradoxical."[8] It's clear from Maslow's visit that he learned quite a bit about the First Nations perspective, including the importance of community, gratitude for what one has, and giving back to future generations.[9, 10]

At the same time, the visit also had a deep influence on Maslow's thinking about an intrinsic human nature.[11] While he went into the visit with a strong belief in cultural relativism, he was struck by how much of a connection he felt with the Blackfoot Indians.[12] In a summary report a few weeks after his fieldwork, Maslow wrote:

> It would seem that every human being comes at birth into society not as a lump of clay to be molded by society, but rather as a structure which society may warp or suppress or build upon. My fundamental data supporting this feeling is that my Indians were first human beings and secondly Blackfoot Indians, and also that in their society I found almost the same range of personalities as I find in our society—with, however, very different modes in

the distribution curves. . . . I am now struggling with a notion of a "fundamental" [or] "natural" personality structure.[13]

In an unpublished note in December of the same year, Maslow wrote: "My new notion of Fundamental or Natural Personality . . . Proposition: That human beings are at birth and today deep down, secure and with good self-esteem, to be analogized with the Blackfoot Indian or the chimpanzee or the baby or the secure adult. And then societies do something to this Natural Personality, twist it, shape it, repress it . . ."[14]

In his book, Sumner emphasized that cultural folkways should not be evaluated as universally "good" or "bad" but should be understood based on their adaptive value—their effectiveness in satisfying an impelling need. Likewise, Maslow believed that humans are basically good but that life's pressures and frustrations make them seem otherwise.[15] In another unpublished note from 1938, Maslow wrote: "People are all decent underneath. All that is necessary to prove this is to find out what the motives are for their superficial behavior—nasty, mean, or vicious though that behavior may be. Once these motives are understood, it is impossible to resent the behavior that follows."[16] Suffice it to say, this was a radical departure from the psychoanalytic view of the time that what people really are underneath is a cauldron of destructive impulses relating to either self-preservation or sex!

In the same unpublished note, Maslow then went on to ponder why people could be so cruel. He concluded that it's due to "the insecurity cycle—from this flows everything. . . . The person who behaves badly behaves so because of hurt, actual and expected, and lashes out in self-defense, as a cornered animal might. The fact is that people are good, if only their fundamental wishes are satisfied, their wishes for affection and security. Give people affection and security, and they will give affection and be secure in their feelings and behavior." Continuing his train of thought, Maslow argued that everything that is "nasty, mean, or vicious" is an overcompensatory attempt to satisfy the basic needs of security, affection, and self-esteem.

Many contemporary studies from a wide range of perspectives support Maslow's thinking on the behavioral manifestations of the "insecurity cycle." The common core of this cycle is *fear*. Whatever the particular form it takes, some sort of fear pervades the deprivation of each of the needs that comprise this cycle.

If you have too many psychological fears, this may be an indication that you may be too caught up in securing your boat, with potentially serious

consequences to actually moving along the expansive ocean. This first section of the book is dedicated to helping you curb your insecurities, so that you can stand on as secure a foundation as possible and really focus on the things that give you the greatest meaning, growth, and creativity in your life.

Let's start with the most essential need that comprises security: safety.

CHAPTER 1

Safety

The average child and, less obviously, the average adult in our society generally prefers a safe, orderly, predictable, lawful, organized world, which he can count on and in which unexpected, unmanageable, chaotic, or other dangerous things do not happen, and in which, in any case, he has powerful parents or protectors who shield him from harm.

—Abraham Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (1954)

While overall the world has dramatically improved in many ways—people are living longer, healthier, freer, and more peacefully[1]—many people around the world in the first quarter of the twenty-first century still find themselves living in an unpredictable, chaotic world, and for many, chaos invades their personal environment. In the United States alone, around ten million Americans working full time are still living below the official poverty line. Basic fundamental needs such as housing and health care are in crisis for large swaths of Americans, despite the striking growth in incomes of the top 1 percent. Indeed, over thirty-three million Americans do not have health insurance, and over half of Americans do not even have $400 on hand to help deal with a catastrophe.[2]

As the author Ruth Whippman has pointed out, we have created a societal narrative around health and wellness that essentially inverts Maslow's hierarchy of needs, placing self-actualization as a viable alternative to these fundamentals, instead of something that is built on a strong foundation of safety and security. In her article "Where Were We While the Pyramid Was Collapsing? At a Yoga Class," Whippman writes, "We are focusing on the tip of Maslow's pyramid at the clear expense of its base."[3]

While Maslow never actually created a pyramid to represent his theory (see Introduction), he repeatedly emphasized the need for the most fundamental needs to be met in order for one to even have the opportunity to realize their full potential. Maslow's own working-class upbringing as the eldest son of Russian Jewish immigrants, and being the target of constant anti-Semitic bullying as a child, influenced his lifelong focus on social change. One of his students who took his class in the 1960s noted that Maslow fiercely advocated for the reduced-price meals in schools as a way of reducing the roadblocks to the healthy growth and development of impoverished children.[4]

Modern-day science makes clear that unpredictability has far-reaching consequences for the lives we can envision and create for ourselves. The need for safety, and its accompanying needs for stability, certainty, predictability, coherence, continuity, and trust in the environment, is the base upon which all the others are fulfilled. The need for safety is tied to the struggle to make sense of experiences and a motivation to gain control over violated expectations. Having a safe base allows a person to take risks and explore new ideas and ways of being, while also allowing the opportunity to become who you truly want to become. In the absence of that base, people become overly dependent on the protection, love, affection, and esteem of others, which can compromise growth, development, and meaning in life.

The need for safety is tied to a particular form of meaning in life. Psychologists have identified three different forms of meaning: coherence, purpose, and mattering.[5] Purpose involves a motivation to realize future-oriented and valued life goals. Mattering consists of the extent to which people feel that their existence and actions in the world are significant, important, and valuable.

The need for coherence is the form of meaning that is most strongly tied to the need for safety. Does my immediate environment make sense? Is there any predictability and comprehensibility in my life? Coherence is necessary to even get a chance to pursue one's larger purpose or pursue various ways that one can matter in this world.[6] As the meaning researchers Frank Martela and Michael Steger put it, "We need something to anchor our values upon, and when our lives feel incomprehensible, finding the things that make our lives worth living might be hard if not impossible."[7]

There are constructive routes to coherence. For instance, researchers have found that coherence is associated with greater religiosity, spirituality, and the ability to grow from trauma, such as enduring cancer.[8] But there are also more destructive routes to coherence, and the need to regain a sense of safety can lead to aggression and antagonism. Too much chaos and unpredictability pitches us into a state that psychologists call "psychological entropy."[9]

PSYCHOLOGICAL ENTROPY

The human brain is a prediction machine.[10] We are constantly processing incoming information and assessing how it matches our expectations. Instructed (but not completely determined) by a blueprint from our genes, the brain attempts to help us satisfy our basic needs by directing our behaviors, thoughts, and emotions in ways that will reach its goals. Keep in mind that "goals" is used very broadly here, ranging from security goals, such as acquiring food, belonging,

human behavior through such a lens allows us to see maladaptive behavior nonjudgmentally yet gain a good understanding of our fellow humans.

Any person at any point in time could become dominated by safety needs and would likely act in a predictable fashion in accordance with fundamental principles of human nature. When safety needs are thwarted, we lose trust in others and regard people with suspicion. We can very easily turn to destructive routes in order to regain safety, such as involvement in gangs and organized crime. As Maslow put it, "There is a character difference between the man who feels safe and the one who lives his life out as if he were a spy in enemy territory."[21]

Let's begin with an example we can all relate to: hunger.

FEELING HUNGRY

We should never have the desire to compose music or create mathematical systems, or to adorn our homes, or to be well dressed if our stomachs were empty most of the time, or if we were continually dying of thirst, or if we were continually threatened by an always impending catastrophe, or if everyone hated us. . . . Obviously a good way to obscure the higher motivations, and to get a lopsided view of human capacities and human nature, is to make the organism extremely and chronically hungry or thirsty.

—Abraham Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (1954)

"Hangry"—literally a combination of "hungry" and "angry"—has emerged as a cute little expression often used in a joking manner. But true hunger is no laughing matter for the billions of people around the world who experience food insecurity on a regular basis.

There are serious consequences of hunger for both humans and nonhumans. Lack of a reliable source of food gives rise to food insecurity, which tends to produce a specific cluster of negative behaviors: increased impulsivity and hyperactivity, increased irritability and aggression, increased anxiety, and a propensity to use rewarding narcotics.[22] The evidence that food uncertainty begets this cluster of behaviors is striking and vast; it includes studies of induced food deprivation among insects, birds, and mammals (including humans); studies of people who are crash dieting and forced to undergo "therapeutic" starvation; and studies of people with clinical eating disorders.

The cluster of behaviors results specifically from extreme hunger, not from preexisting personality differences. In one classic study, researchers noted that patients began the experiment compliant, pleasant, and optimistic but became increasingly impulsive and angry—to the point of engaging in physical abuse—during therapeutic starvation.[23] In one instance, a "man asked for help after

discharge because he was so angry when in traffic that he feared he would kill any aggravator by smashing his car into them."[24]

Hunger increases the motivation to work or pay for food, while it decreases motivation to work or pay for any kind of non-food reward.[25] The suite of behaviors associated with hunger is best viewed not as a system failure but as an adaptation, a response consisting of alternate strategies to improve the location, capture, and defense of food resources, even at the expense of achieving other goals.[26]

If the alternate strategies keep failing to achieve their aim, anxiety and hyperactivity may eventually give way to depression and lethargy. This point is really key: it is prolonged food uncertainty that produces this cluster of behaviors, not complete deprivation. Prolonged food uncertainty causes so much psychological entropy that a sense of helplessness eventually sets in and other systems start deteriorating. British psychologist Daniel Nettle contends that some behaviors commonly seen among the economically deprived—such as impulsivity, aggression, and anxiety—result more from regular hunger deprivation than from any preexisting differences among social classes.[27]

Most strikingly, many of the behaviors that arise from hunger significantly reverse upon refeeding.[28] We are hungry until we're not. And when we're not, we forget what it was like to feel hungry. Until the next time.

Now that we covered an example that all of us can resonate with, let's start to build up to more complex and psychological forms of insecurity, starting with our next example, attachment.

THE NEED FOR ATTACHMENT SECURITY

Life is best organized as a series of daring ventures from a secure base.

—John Bowlby

The human infant starts life as a totally helpless creature, completely dependent on a caregiver to get basic physiological needs met. Through the responsiveness and reliability of the caregiver, the infant develops a sense of security that needs will be met. At the same time, the infant develops an emotional attachment to the caregiver, and that bond provides a secure base and safe haven for the ever-growing infant to survive, deploy curiosity, and explore the environment.

Integrating Freudian theory with the emerging science of ethology (the study of animal behavior through an evolutionary lens), cybernetic theory, control systems theory, and developmental psychology, British psychologist John Bowlby proposed the existence of an "attachment behavioral system" designed over the eons of human history to motivate the desire to increase proximity between

caregivers and vulnerable infants, children, or adults.[29] Proximity-seeking behaviors, according to Bowlby, serve the function of reducing feelings of fear and anxiety and are activated when the infant feels scared or vulnerable.

In outlining this sytem, Bowlby drew a lot on core principles of control theory, which rely on if/then procedures. Indeed, we have many unconscious drives that are encoded into our system in an if/then manner, and as we'll see later in the book, that insight is precisely what allows us to consciously override the system and take control of our automatic habits. However, as children we don't yet have the cognitive brakes of reflection that allow us to halt the attachment behavioral system.

Bowlby argued that the attachment system goes through a series of if/then questions, starting with "Is the caregiver near, attentive, and responsive?"[30] If the child perceives that the answer is "yes," she will feel loved, secure, and confident and be more likely to explore, play, and socialize with others. If the child perceives the answer to be "no," she will experience anxiety and be more likely to show a range of behaviors designed to bring a caregiver close, including heightened vigilance and vocalizations of distress (crying). Bowlby theorized that such behaviors would continue until the child is able to establish a comfortable level of proximity to the attachment figure. And if the attachment figure failed to respond, the child would completely withdraw, as so often happens with prolonged separation or loss.