

emissaries of the devil. How else can we explain the viciousness and depth of religious hatred and intolerance?

But there is one similarity among all men which can be used to bridge our differences: we are all potentially effective time-binders, the present crown of the evolutionary tree, the most complex and artfully constructed of all organisms. It is in our symbol-using ability that all of us are brothers, members of the most exclusive clan on earth. When we do anything to damage the symbol-using capacity of any member, we hurt the clan and we hurt ourselves by destroying our sense of clan and belongingness. The damage we do ourselves by debasing the time-binding capacity of others is subtle yet all-pervasive, difficult to describe, yet, I believe, a potent generator of the faceless anxieties which ride the rootless wanderers in Eliot's "The Waste Land."

#### THE EFFECTIVE TIME-BINDER AND MASLOW'S "SELF-ACTUALIZING PERSON"

We shall begin our elaboration of this theme by a rather detailed reference to what I consider a remarkable book, *Motivation and Personality*, by A. H. Maslow. Maslow postulates what he calls a "holistic-dynamic theory of human motivation." In his view, there is an ascending hierarchy of needs. As each order is satisfied, it releases, or allows to emerge, the needs of the next higher order. The most basic are the physiological needs such as those for food, water, oxygen, sleep, and the physiological aspects of sex.

As soon as these are fairly well satisfied, there arise what he calls the safety needs, after these the belongingness and love needs, then the esteem needs, and finally the need for self-actualization. Tools for achieving the satisfaction of these needs are the desires to know and to understand and the aesthetic needs for order, symmetry, and

closure. This is not an inflexible ordering of these needs, nor does it imply that one need must be fully satisfied before the next higher needs can be met. If in childhood the lower scale of needs is never adequately satisfied, they may develop into unsatisfiable neurotic needs in the adult. Thus an adult whose love needs were not satisfied as a child will have an insatiable compulsion to be loved like a child and will not be capable of the more mature, non-compulsive, outgoing love of the person whose childhood love needs were satisfied. Moreover, he will be fixated at that level and will not be able to proceed to the satisfaction of the higher needs of self-actualization.

Some of the differences between the higher and lower needs are:

1. The higher needs came later in evolutionary development.
2. The higher the need the longer its satisfaction can be postponed and the less imperative is it for physical survival at the moment.
3. Gratification of the higher needs produces more desirable and longer lasting subjective results—more profound serenity and happiness.
4. Greater value is placed upon the satisfaction of the higher needs than of the lower by those who have experienced both.
5. Gratification of the higher needs leads to an increased capacity for love and a truer individualism.
6. Pursuit and gratification of the higher needs have desirable social consequences; they are in effect a higher form of selfishness, i.e., unselfish selfishness.
7. The higher the need level, the more effective, and easier, are psychotherapy and self-therapy.

Using Korzybskian terminology, we can say that the higher needs postulated by Maslow are more symbol-dominated and symbol-mediated than the lower. The very lowest order needs can be satisfied only by lower-order abstractions—objects, i.e., food, oxygen, climatic conditions, etc. As we move up the scale to the higher needs, the satisfiers become more symbolic, less immediately dependent upon

the environment. The highest needs are almost entirely symbol-satisfied and independent of the external environment. Only the person himself through his symbol-using capacity can satisfy them.

Maslow contends, and he is not alone in this, that Freudian psychologists and most of the other psychologists have built "cripple psychologies." They have studied only the psychologically sick, people who, because of their unsatisfied lower needs, were never able to satisfy or even develop their most human needs and impulses. Consequently, in these psychologies there is little or no place for, or discussion of, altruism, equanimity, ecstasy, joy, creativeness.

Not until recently have studies been made of what psychologically healthy people are like. The implication of the older studies is that mental health is merely the absence of neurosis. But this, as we have seen, is a type of additive, elementalistic thinking. When the higher needs emerge and are satisfied, these are not "just a few more." They are on another level of abstraction and their characteristics cannot be deduced from a study of those of the lower orders.

Consequently, Maslow and his collaborators decided to make a study of people having excellent psychological health. Their criteria were of two types, negative and positive. The negative was the absence of neurosis or a strong tendency toward a psychopathic personality or psychosomatic illness, determined by using standard tests such as the Rorschach. The positive criterion was the evidence of self-actualization. Admittedly this was difficult to define very precisely, but it can be loosely described as the full use and exploitation of talents and potentialities.

The subjects were chosen from among friends, college students, public and historical figures. A screening of 3000 college students yielded only one usable subject and about two dozen possible future subjects, so that the investigators had to depend almost wholly on public and historical figures. All in all, they wound up with a list of 45. I should like to present some of their findings as to the

characteristics of these self-actualizing, psychologically healthy people, and try to translate them into g.s. terminology.

1. *They had "a more efficient perception of reality and more comfortable relations with it."* In all areas in which subjects were tested, their powers of perception were above average. They had "an unusual ability to detect the spurious, the fake, and the dishonest in personality." Consequently, their predictions of the future from the facts at hand were more often correct.

One particularly impressive and instructive aspect of this superior relation with reality . . . was [their ability to] . . . distinguish far more easily than most the fresh, concrete, and ideographic from the generic, abstract, and rubricized. The consequence is that they live more in the real world of nature than in the man-made mass of concepts, abstractions, expectations, beliefs, and stereotypes that most people confuse with the world. They are therefore far more apt to perceive what is there rather than their own wishes, hopes, fears, anxieties, their own theories and beliefs or those of their cultural group.<sup>5</sup>

Using g.s. terminology, these people were more efficient in their abstracting processes. They could distinguish more clearly between lower- and higher-order abstractions. What is more, they followed the natural order of abstraction by giving more value to lower orders ("reality") than to higher orders when the problem of verification arose. When they made predictions, they were more often based upon factual knowledge and observation than on the unverified inferences which form the higher-order components of neurotic anxieties, fears, wishes, and fancies.

2. *Acceptance of self and others.* They were able to accept themselves and all their frailties and those of others without real concern. Not that they were self-satisfied. They would like to and did try to improve, but they accepted themselves as they found

<sup>5</sup> A. H. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, New York, Harper & Brothers, 1954, p. 205.

themselves *at the moment*. They felt no shame about their bodily functions. They tended to be lusty and hearty, with good "unfinicky" appetites.

Restated, they did not allow their higher-order abstractions to influence unduly what they abstracted on the lower levels. They did not allow theories, fads, names, the unverified opinions of other people—all higher-order abstractions—to distort what they could taste smell, feel. To them bodily functions were not "nasty" or "disgusting," because they did not confuse the levels of abstraction. People who do find them disgusting have built a picture, a map, of the human body that does not fit the territory. According to this map, the body should be free of smells, by-products, etc., and because it is not, they do not change their map to fit the territory but attempt to warp the territory by implicitly denying the existence of these functions by attempting to ignore them, apparently on the theory that if you don't look they will go away. People who abstract in this fashion are said by general semanticists to be intensionally oriented.

3. *Spontaneity*. The behavior of these people is marked by simplicity and naturalness. Very often their behavior is highly unconventional, but it is not a superficial unconventionality. In unimportant matters they will follow conventions even if they seem silly, simply to avoid hurting people. But when it comes to what they consider important, they do what they think is right despite convention. They have "codes of ethics that are relatively autonomous and individual rather than unconventional."

They are the most ethical of people even though their ethics are not necessarily the same as those of the people around them. It is this kind of observation that leads us to understand very assuredly that the ordinary ethical behavior of the average person is largely conventional behavior rather than truly ethical behavior, e.g., behavior based on fundamentally accepted principles.

Because of this alienation from ordinary conventions and from the ordinarily accepted hypocrisies, lies and inconsistencies of social life, they sometimes feel like spies or aliens in a foreign land and sometimes behave so.

Their ease of penetration to reality, their closer approach to an animal-like or childlike acceptance and spontaneity imply a superior awareness of their own impulses, desires, opinions, and subjective reactions in general. Clinical studies of this capacity confirm beyond a doubt the opinion, e.g., of Fromm, that the average, normal, well-adjusted person often has not the slightest idea of what he is, of what he wants, of what his opinions are.

It was such findings as these that led ultimately to the discovery of a most profound difference between self-actualizing people and others; namely, that the motivational life of self-actualizing people is not only quantitatively different but also qualitatively different from that of ordinary people. . . . Our subjects no longer strive in the ordinary sense, but rather develop. They attempt to grow to perfection and develop more and more fully in their own style. . . . They work, they try, and they are ambitious, even though in an unusual sense. For them motivation is . . . self-actualization. Could these self-actualizing people be more human, more revealing of the original nature of the species, . . . ? Ought a biological species to be judged by its crippled, warped, only partially developed specimens, or by examples that have been overdomesticated, caged, and trained? <sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile, back at g.s., when Korzybski spoke of following the natural order of abstraction, of not confusing and identifying the levels of abstraction, he asserted that this type of evaluative behavior would lead to a truly *human* form of behavior, would produce what we have called an effective time-binder. These characteristics of the self-actualizing people described by Maslow have a remarkable similarity to those predicted by Korzybski. In effect, Maslow finds that when people do not warp their abstracting processes they approach the ideal of the effective time-binder.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 210-211.

Some of the other characteristics of these self-actualizing people are:

1. *They are problem centered, rather than ego centered.* They are not a problem to themselves and therefore can turn to problems outside themselves. Their chief concerns are, "Basic issues and eternal questions of the type we have learned to call philosophical or ethical. Such people live customarily in the widest possible frame of reference. . . . it seems to impart a certain serenity and lack of worry over immediate concerns that make life easier not only for themselves but for all who are associated with them."<sup>7</sup>

Not only are these people better able to order their lives on the lower levels of abstraction so that their perceptual processes are more efficient and reliable, but also they direct these lower-order activities by means of a well-structured set of higher-order abstractions which have a wide range of applicability, and which do not cause confusion of the levels of abstraction. In turn, they evoke a complex of higher-order feelings which in themselves facilitate the orderly and efficient working of their symbol-using capacities on all levels of abstraction.

2. *Continued freshness of appreciation.* "Self-actualizing people have the wonderful capacity to appreciate again and again, freshly and naively, the basic goods of life, with awe, pleasure, wonder, and even ecstasy, however stale these experiences may have become to others."<sup>8</sup>

This freshness of appreciation of the most common "moment-to-moment business of living" is, I believe, a product of greater than ordinary consciousness of abstracting, bringing with it greater conscious control of the process. That is, these people can deliberately focus on a specific level of abstraction and thrust other levels into the background. By cutting down on the theoretic, higher-order

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 212.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 214-215.

abstractions they allow the lower levels to gain in intensity. They do not allow memories, speculations, theories, opinions, to interfere with what they are abstracting at the moment on the lower levels. Thus each sensory perception is seen as it "is," new and different and bright, and this in turn induces the feelings of wonder, awe, ecstasy. When this concentration on differences and uniqueness is replaced by a focusing on similarities through memory and theory, then the sense of newness and uniqueness is lost.

It is important to note that we are not saying that concentration on one level is better than on another. Rather, focusing on the level of abstraction most appropriate to the situation of the moment enables the organism to operate at greater all-round efficiency and effectiveness on all levels. When theorizing is called for, it is "good" theorizing; it produces inferences of high predictability, gives greater control over the environment, and induces an appropriate set of feelings which implement this activity. When low-order activity is in order, the higher orders are not allowed to interfere or warp it and this also evokes a set of feelings which enhance the processes on all levels of abstraction. Anxieties and tensions thus are not produced which lead, in many people, to the invention of theories and fancies thoroughly untrustworthy for predictive control of the environment, and which, in turn, exacerbate the anxieties and tensions.

In addition to these characteristics, Maslow found that the mystic experience, or, using Freud's term, "the oceanic feeling," was quite common among his subjects, that these people, without exception, had a democratic character structure in the deepest possible sense, that they were strongly ethical and had a philosophical, unhostile sense of humor, and that they had developed the ability to love profoundly.

If this list of characteristics makes these people sound far more saintly than human, we should hasten to add that Maslow found they still had many imperfections. Like all of us, they had silly and

wasteful habits, they had their vanities, their stubborn and irritating idiosyncracies. Nor were they free of guilt, anxiety, and internal strife. But according to Maslow, these arose out of non-neurotic sources.

I should like to quote Maslow's summary of his study of these people in some detail because it so beautifully summarizes many of the points we have tried to emphasize throughout this book. He writes:

At this point we may finally allow ourselves to generalize and underscore a very important theoretical conclusion derivable from the study of self-actualizing people. . . . What had been considered in the past to be polarities or opposites or dichotomies were so *only in unhealthy people*. In healthy people, these dichotomies were resolved, the polarities disappeared, and many oppositions thought to be intrinsic merged and coalesced with each other to form unities.

For example, the age-old opposition between heart and head, reason and instinct, or cognition and conation were seen to disappear in healthy people where they become synergic rather than antagonists, and where conflict between them disappears because they say the same thing and point to the same conclusion. . . .

The dichotomy between selfishness and unselfishness disappears altogether in healthy people because in principle every act is *both* selfish and unselfish. Our subjects are simultaneously very spiritual and very pagan and sensual. Duty cannot be contrasted with pleasure nor work with play when duty *is* pleasure, when work *is* play, and the person doing his duty and being virtuous is simultaneously seeking his pleasure and being happy. If the most socially identified people are themselves also the most individualistic people, of what use is it to retain the polarity? If the most mature are childlike? And if the most ethical and moral people are also the lustiest and most animal?

. . . In these people, the id, the ego, and the super-ego are collaborative and synergic; they do not war with each other nor are their interests in basic disagreement as they are in neurotic people. So also do the cognitive, the conative, and the emotional coalesce into an organismic unity and into a non-Aristotelian interpenetration. The higher and the lower are not in

opposition but in agreement, and a thousand serious philosophical dilemmas are discovered to have more than two horns, or paradoxically, no horns at all. . . .

. . . It becomes more and more clear that the study of crippled, stunted, and unhealthy specimens can yield only a cripple psychology and a cripple philosophy. The study of self-actualizing people must be the basis for a more universal science of psychology.<sup>9</sup>

#### A CROSS-CULTURAL NORM OF SANITY

Our ideal of the effective time-binder provides us not only with a cross-cultural standard of ethical and moral behavior, but also a cross-cultural norm of sanity. The ideally sane man is one who never confuses the levels of abstraction, who never reverses the natural order of abstraction, who uses all his potentialities. He is the self-actualizing individual whose nervous system acts as an integrated whole without internecine battles among the various levels. Admittedly, probably no such man exists, perhaps never will. Yet this is an ideal which can be approached and through our sciences we can devise methods for facilitating the long journey. It is an ideal founded upon man's psychoneurological structure and is independent of peculiarities of custom and creed. It does not splinter man by focusing upon one segment of his behavior and structure at the expense of others. Sanity, morality, ethical behavior become one; they are an inextricably interwoven pattern of behavior. It does not matter whether a group or culture accepts certain confusions of levels of abstraction (neurotic or even psychotic behavior) as average, and, because prevalent, therefore, sane. A whole culture, according to our ideal of sanity, can be insane to the degree that its members warp their abstracting abilities.

Accepting these ideals does not mean that we want all men to have the same thoughts, customs, language. Diversity, even more than

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 232-234.

humor, is the spice of life. Without it there would be no challenge, no contrast, no pool of "genes" out of which new characteristics, new ideas, new customs could grow. Let the American eat his meat and the Japanese his rice; only do not encourage warping of their abstracting processes in such a way that each considers his the only food fit for man; do not encourage them to confuse map and territory so that, for example, the label "white" becomes synonymous with "superior," causing both the Japanese and the American to throw away the vitamin- and mineral-filled parts of the rice and wheat in order to have white and, therefore, "superior," rice cakes and bread and, as a consequence, come down with beri-beri and other vitamin-deficiency diseases.

#### FOOD FANTASY AND THE INTENSIONAL ORIENTATION

We in the United States are considered to be the best fed and most poorly nourished (in light of the quantity of food we eat) of any people in the world. I do not propose to document these assertions about our eating habits and the deficiencies thereof attributable to semantic confusions. This could fill volumes. But consider all the forms of bizarre theories, false information, and outright quackery that we have all around us as, for example, the various food fadists who propound mutually contradictory doctrines on the basis of no scientific observation or experimentation. One group will eat only vegetables and knows for sure that meat is poisonous for man; a larger group will eat only meat and knows for sure that all vegetables, other than potatoes, are for rabbits. Pin one label on a food and they will eat it; give it another name and it becomes nauseous. Call a biscuit "dog biscuit" and it is not fit for human consumption, even though the manufacturer assures us on the box that it is baked under the same sanitary conditions that it uses for its "human biscuits." Indeed, the analysis given there shows it to