

Archetypes Based on Maslow's Need Hierarchy

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Abraham Maslow has conceived a hierarchy of needs as a model of human happiness, which is attainable through self-actualization. While Maslow believed that self-fulfillment is attainable through the sequential satisfaction of specific human needs, represented in the hierarchy as a linear movement from base to its summit, he recognized that many individual human journeys in relation to the hierarchy are fitful, circuitous, and often incomplete. This article describes categories of human behavior that approach the satisfaction of needs in non-linear ways. The article posits that a linear approach to the satisfaction of needs is optimal and scientifically sound, but that non-linear approaches create definable human types that can be accounted for in an updated version of Maslow's model that accounts for recursive, non-linear movement regarding the satisfaction of needs. To account for various gaps, shortfalls, and overextensions in the process of needs fulfillment—variations that might be termed misapprehensions of the natural linear path to happiness that Maslow established. This article divides the traditional hierarchy into three basic need categories, which will allow us to identify eight archetypes existing across a broad spectrum of needs fulfillment. Each of these archetypes is briefly described and analyzed with the hope that a more thorough accounting of variations in sequencing will give researchers additional flexibility in applying Maslow's model to account for human behavior and the elusive pursuit of happiness.

Keywords: Hierarchy of needs, Archetypes, Self-actualization, Self-transcendence.

Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs is one of the most prominent need-based motivational theories. Maslow originally recognized five human needs—psychological, safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). Later, he elaborated on the concept of self-actualization and differentiated between self-actualization and self-transcendence needs (Maslow, 1972; Maslow 2013). He labeled these two higher needs as 'being' needs or B-needs and the lower four needs as 'deficient' needs or D-needs (Maslow, 1964; Maslow, Frager, & Cox, 1970).

Deficient needs include the need for homeostasis, financial and political security, love, intimacy, sex, recognition, appreciation, etc. Self-actualization needs focus on an individual's attention on personal growth, knowledge, and fulfillment of potential. Some examples of self-actualization needs are the need for knowledge, truth, meaning, understanding, creativity, and the need for seeking one's true inner passion, potential and purpose in life (Maslow, 2013).

Self-transcendence needs include 'the need to further a cause beyond the self and to experience a communion beyond the boundaries of the self through peak experiences' (Koltko-Rivera, 2006, p.303). Some examples of self-transcendent activity are involvement in political activism, joining a charitable organization, volunteering in a soup kitchen, scientific innovation, deep meditation, giving up desires, performing austerities, peak experiences, devotion to an ideal, environmental activism, a strong appreciation of beauty, etc.

Maslow claimed that individuals typically satisfy their D-needs before embarking on self-actualization needs (Maslow, 1972). When he introduced self-transcendence as the final stage of the hierarchy, he further argued that individuals usually self-actualize before they self-transcend. However, he also noted that some people satisfied their D-needs but never self-actualized, and some stopped at self-actualization and never transcended. Furthermore, he also observed some individuals

exhibiting self-actualized or self-transcendent behavior but who clearly did not have their D-needs satisfied. Maslow never fully accounted for why many individuals chose to depart from the linear progression of needs satisfaction and called for further investigation of the matter (Maslow, 1972). This article aims to describe the different archetypes that emerge from groups of individuals choosing to take various non-linear approaches to needs satisfaction. The article separates the six aforementioned needs into three categories – deficient, self-actualization, and self-transcendence, and identifies eight different archetypes within the three categories. The archetypes are described based on whether the needs within each category are satisfied, not satisfied, or partly satisfied, as shown in Table 1. Each archetype is briefly analyzed and the motivations behind choosing to depart from the natural linear sequence are tentatively explored.

Need Categories and Archetypes

In practice, needs are experienced—satisfied or denied, obsessed over or ignored—in a dynamic way; the boundaries between the levels established by Maslow are porous and fluid, individuals often seek satisfaction on multiple levels simultaneously, pursue satisfaction at a higher level before lower level needs have been fully—or even partially—satisfied. Life is rarely experienced as a one-way journey towards ever-increasing and deepening satisfaction; rather, our lives are complex networks of progress, darkness, enlightenment and regression. Research suggests that many factors like socioeconomic status, childhood upbringing,

political status, age, genetic factors, privilege, personal attitudes, and life circumstances may impede an individual from following the needs hierarchy (Goebel & Brown, 1981; Ivtzan, Gardner, Bernard, Sekhon & Hart, 2013). In positing that Maslow's hierarchy stands as an objective model of the most efficient path to happiness, we seek to understand more about the relatively common decision to depart from the linear path and pursue needs satisfaction in non-linear ways.

In describing the archetypes that emerge from this new understanding of Maslow's hierarchy, we considered four distinct modes regarding the status of a particular need:

1. The need exists but, is not recognized or is willfully thought of as insignificant.
2. The need is overemphasized to the point that it is experienced as insatiable and a source of obsessive behavior.
3. The need is not yet satisfied, though its satisfaction is being pursued in a healthy manner.
4. The need is satisfied.

We argue that *true* self-actualization and self-transcendence are possible only after D-need satisfaction. Individuals pursuing the satisfaction of higher needs before satisfying lower needs could be doing so for various reasons, including job requirements, duty, fear, delusion, ego, ignorance, poverty, circumstance, escapism, obsessions, etc. We identify a clear difference between being *truly* self-actualized and engaging in the potentially self-actualizing

Table 1. Archetypes based on need satisfaction and pursuit

Archetype	Pursues Self Transcendence	Pursues Self-Actualization	D-Need satisfaction
Regular	No	No	No
Civilized	No	No	Yes
Starving-Artist	No	Yes	No
Cultured	No	Yes	Yes
Fanatic	Yes	No	No
Politician	Yes	No	Yes
Mystic	Yes	Yes	No
Sage	Yes	Yes	Yes

activity. With the foregoing in mind, we present the following archetypes and initial analysis.

The Regular Individual

Regulars do not have their deficient needs satisfied and do not pursue self-transcendence or self-actualization. *Regulars* are everyday people who are working towards satisfying their D-needs. They do not generally worry about problems outside of their own immediate physical and emotional interests. Maslow estimated that only 1% of people truly self-actualized after fully satisfying their D-needs and most of them self-actualized towards the end of their lives (Maslow, 2013). Based on this assumption, most young and middle-aged individuals fall into this archetype and are trying to understand what their needs are and how best to satisfy them.

Individuals beyond middle age who are still defined by this archetype might suffer from psychological disorders, poor ontogenesis, and/or live in poor socioeconomic conditions. The older individual who lives with few or none of his basic needs satisfied becomes alienated from himself and others. Existence may even descend into a day-to-day struggle for deficient needs satisfaction, while meaningful, satisfying contact with others becomes limited and transient; worse, encounters with others can degrade into open hostility within an environment of fierce competition for limited resources. Stripped of dignity and naked before the harsh, unmitigated elements of nature, the elder Regular figuratively and often literally becomes homeless. S/he has no sense of generativity and lives in disgust.

The Civilizer

Civilizers have their deficient needs satisfied but are not actively engaged in pursuing their self-actualization and self-transcendence needs. The *civilizer* understands what his or her needs are and has mastered ways to satisfy them. Having conquered his or her personal environment, the *civilizer* is generally content. Physical and emotional needs have been satisfied, and the individual has gained a sense of self-worth. The *civilizers* cultivated a world to live in that is safe, comforting, and fulfilling. The *civilizer* establishes a career, builds

relationships, and acquires material goods that contribute to feelings of stability and satisfaction. Self-satisfaction might prevent the civilizer from pursuing self-actualization and transcendence; they may lack the time needed for such pursuits or suffer from a lack of exposure and access to B-need activity.

The Starving Artist

Starving Artists pursue self-actualization needs even though they have not satisfied their deficient needs. Furthermore, they do not pursue self-transcendence. Individuals expressing this archetype could be frustrated and/or depressed because of the lack of satisfaction of their deficient needs which, according to Maslow, must be satisfied to relieve psychological and physiological stress (Maslow, 2013). The *starving artist* might view beauty as an end in itself, to be pursued at all costs; they might seek to create beauty through artistic expression and pursue such an endeavor obsessively. The starving artist might choose his or her path because of escapism, hopelessness, disdain for reality, poor socio-economic conditions, or a misguided sense of the essential nature of D needs and the real life struggle necessarily involved with their satisfaction. It should be noted that the *starving artist* is not truly self-actualized but, only involved with activities that truly self-actualized individuals would pursue.

The *starving artist* embraces self-reflection and is enchanted by it, potentially to the point of narcissism. In its spell, he or she neglects, ignores, or minimizes basic existence needs in favor of pursuing enlightenment through art and philosophy. The powerful yearning for aesthetic experience, beauty, and truth are not applied to higher moral ends but are viewed as ends in themselves. The *starving artist* often withdraws from mainstream society and views the pursuit of societal norms - such as a career and a family - as a betrayal of personal core values. At some point, the starving artist may come to recognize these normative societal needs as legitimate and lying dormant within oneself and redouble efforts to satisfy them in order to emerge as a fully realized cultured individual grounded on the firm basis of his civilizer self.

The Cultured Individual

Cultured individuals have their deficient needs satisfied and pursue self-actualization needs, but not their self-transcendence needs. A possible reason for not pursuing self-transcendence could be the lack of opportunity or time. As stated, the *civilized* may remain content or come to recognize that despite an existence built on a basis of personal accomplishment, material acquisition, and enhanced social standing, other needs exist and remain unfulfilled. *Cultured* individuals are happy, enlightened, wise, and fulfilled. They strike a balance between their inner lives and the world outside. They understand the importance of going beyond life's selfish pleasures and experiencing the wonders of knowledge and the universe at large. They strive to understand themselves internally and realize their true passion and potential. *Cultured* individuals turn to human culture for fulfillment; in the words of Matthew Arnold (1869, p. 8) 'the best that has been thought and said.' One becomes immersed in the larger story of mankind in order to find solace and a way out beyond the self. Through study and self-reflection the *civilized* individual evolves into the *cultured* individual, one who understands the complexity of human affairs and no longer views oneself as at the center of them. Through cultural awareness—deep exposure to history, science, philosophy, and the arts—the individual becomes increasingly aware of the endless struggles of his or her fellow man. While the personal achievements of the previous stage continue and may even expand exponentially, the cultured individual additionally becomes aware of and sensitive to the problems and paradoxes of existence.

The Fanatic

Fanatics focus on their self-transcendence needs without satisfying their deficient and self-actualization needs. These individuals could be frustrated and/or depressed because of their unsatisfied lower needs (Maslow, 2013). Once again, the *fanatic* has not truly self-actualized or transcended but is involved with activities that manifest as self-transcendence. Possible reasons for this behavior could be a moral or spiritual career, escapism, strong delusional

convictions, obsessions, etc.

Arguably, these individuals could be potentially harmful to society because they try to be moral and bring about social change without being enlightened and internally fulfilled. From the consequentialist standpoint, their moral and utilitarian intent and actions could possibly do more harm than good because of their ignorance and dissatisfaction with life. For example, a politician who is a *fanatic* has the potential to make decisions that could negatively impact the lives of his/her constituents. Often external obstacles, such as pressing socio-economic conditions, lead individuals to despair in order to satisfy the basic existence needs of the *civilizer*. These individuals may find solace in a system of thought that seeks to destroy the status quo and provide salvation. While he lacks the stable basis of the *civilizer*, he also lacks the vision of the *cultured* individual, a sense of the complexity and variety of the human condition, who knows there is no simple, single solution to the problem of existence. Without the support of a deep sophisticated, multi-faceted cultural awareness, the *fanatic* perceives the world narrowly and could impose his morality without regard to the needs of others.

The Politician

Politicians have their deficient needs satisfied and focus on self-transcendence needs without pursuing their self-actualization needs. These individuals are content and feel the need to better the society or further a cause, while concurrently seeking their own self-aggrandizement. Once again these individuals might have the potential to take dissolute moral action due to unenlightened ideas. We argue that self-actualization satisfaction and deep knowledge of the world and of others must be precursors to moral decision making and social utilitarian justifications. The *politician*, in the pejorative sense, is the most slippery of archetypes. The *politician* lacks the broad understanding of life and humanity that only deep exposure to culture can bring. Political ambition is a call to the will to power and can only effectively assert itself upon the firm basis of the *civilizer's* accomplishments.

The will to 'change the world' in the individual is stronger than the need to understand the world. The *politician* thinks he or she knows what mankind needs but the ego of the *civilizer* is not tempered by the humility of the *culture*, and so his or her vision is distorted and uninformed and threatens to lead mankind in the wrong direction. Possible reasons for this behavior could be an eagerness to further a cause leading to blind ambition, and lack of time to introspect and gain deep knowledge of the world.

The Mystic

Mystics pursue their self-transcendence and self-actualization needs without satisfying their deficient needs. These individuals are enlightened and are capable of making beneficial, moral decisions. However, they might be frustrated and/or depressed because their deficient needs are not met. In some cases, their moral and altruistic actions might be impure because it could be a facade designed to satisfy their deficient needs. The *mystic* views his or her own individuality as a creation of the ego and the harmful product of living in a false society.

The truth lies behind-the-scenes and the mystic dwells in self-actualized isolation and solitary bliss. He recognizes and sympathizes with the struggles of mankind, but has transcended them, in that he views them as tragic and unnecessary. Rather than immerse himself in the absurdity of life, he remains at one with the universe, and the moral order of a perfect world, which he wants his own existence to attest to as a possibility, but which is not real. Minimizing 'existence' needs results in a focus on his self-actualization, but he does not exist upon the solid ground that the *civilizer* is driven to establish. The *mystic* does not dwell among men within the society, but attempts to improve the human condition from a solitary perch. Possible reasons for this archetype might be psychological disorders, fear of social interactions, poor socio-economic conditions, escapism, emotional disorders, etc.

The Sage

Sages have their deficient needs met and they actively pursue self-actualization and

self-transcendence. These individuals are happy, content, fulfilled, knowledgeable, and wise; in addition, they actively engage in and help advance enlightened meaningful causes. Maslow argued that every individual should strive to become a *sage* (Maslow, 1972).

In the tradition of Plato's Philosopher-King, ideal *sages* are informed by profound cultural awareness. The *sage* has evolved to see that his or her talents and abilities are best applied to the improvement of society and mankind than to expanded acculturation and self-glorification. When culture becomes an end in itself, rather than a means to something higher, it decays. Thus the Nazis, as the critic George Steiner (1971) has pointed out, could murder Jews during the day, and return home to listen with highly-developed aesthetic and cultural sensibilities to the music of Wagner. In the end, the moral imperative is seen to lie at both the root and summit of man's place in the universe, compelling the self-transcendent *Sage* to lead all *Regular Individuals*, and all the archetypes in-between, to the full expression of humanity in the universal struggle to bring about a just and moral world.

Conclusion

Maslow claimed that individuals generally satisfy their deficient D-needs before embarking on higher needs, although he admitted that this is not always the case. He saw an individual's drive towards self-actualization and self-transcendence as being beneficial to society as a whole since these individuals were more altruistic, spiritual, and moral (Maslow, 2013). From the discussion above it is argued that though all eight archetypes exist, it is in society's best interest for individuals to follow the need hierarchy in a linear way and to aspire to become sages. Individuals who do not follow the linear growth-motivation path could suffer from a variety of psychological and physiological deficits and stress because of the dissatisfaction of their lower deficient needs. Developing an inventory and conducting a study to figure out the percentages of individuals for each archetype within a sample population is suggested for future research.

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Manuscript submitted on November 04, 2016

Accepted on March 06, 2017

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