



The Enlightenment



The Newsletter of the
Humanist Association of London and Area
An Affiliate of Humanist Canada (HC)

Volume 6

Number 4

April 2010

Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) - Humanistic Psychologist

Abraham Maslow, the son of uneducated Jewish parents, grew up in New York City. He studied psychology at the University of Wisconsin where he pursued an original line of research, investigating primate dominance behavior and sexuality. He went on to further research at Columbia University, continuing similar studies; there his mentor was Alfred Adler, one of Sigmund Freud's early colleagues.



Abraham Maslow

Maslow brought a new face to the study of human behavior. He was inspired by great minds, and his own gift of thought created a unique concept of Humanistic Psychology. Humanistic psychologists believe that every person has a strong desire to realize his or her full potential, to reach a level of Self-realization. To prove that humans are not simply blindly reacting to situations, but are trying to accomplish something greater, Maslow studied mentally healthy individuals instead of people with serious psychological issues. This enabled him to discover that people have "peak experiences," high points in life, when the individual is in complete harmony with himself or herself and their surroundings.



A visual aid to explain his theory, which he called the Hierarchy of Needs, is a pyramid (shown at left) depicting levels of human needs, psychological and physical. When a human has ascended the first four steps of the pyramid, he or she reaches self-actualization. At the bottom of the pyramid are the "Basic Needs" of an individual, food, water and touch. The next level is "Security and Stability." These two steps are important to the physical survival of a person. Once individuals have basic nutrition, shelter and safety, they usually attempt to accomplish more. The third level of need is "Love and Belonging," which are psychological needs; when people have taken care of themselves physically, they are ready to share themselves with others. The fourth level is achieved when individuals feel comfortable with what they have accomplished. This is the "Esteem" level of success and status. At the top of the pyramid is "Self Actualization," which occurs when individuals reach a state of harmony and understanding. *(Continued on page 6)*

President's Remarks

Don Hatch's excellent article on Abraham Maslow in this issue of the *Enlightenment* relates to my own academic discipline of psychology. Anyone who has taken a course in Introductory Psychology will likely remember learning about Maslow, who in the 1960's was a leading proponent of the approach known as humanistic psychology. However, course lecturers and textbooks rarely draw the connection between this school of psychology and Humanism as the organized movement and life stance that we are part of as members of HALA. I'm grateful to Don for drawing attention to this link. At a time when psychology was dominated by mechanistic views of humans as being pushed and pulled helplessly by powerful inner unconscious drives (in the case of Freudian psychoanalysis) or by environmental conditioning (in the case of Skinnerian behaviorism), Maslow championed a "third way," focusing on human freedom and the innate potential to flourish and thrive, which he called "self-actualization." His views are clearly a powerful statement of Humanism as we know it. In 1967, he was quite fittingly honoured as "Humanist of the Year" by the American Humanist Association.

This issue also contains a very thoughtful essay by Dick Krupka outlining his reasons for being an atheist and calling for tolerance toward differing views within Humanism. I think he is espousing a very reasonable middle ground between a militant atheism that has no truck with religion on the one extreme, and a view of Humanism itself as a form of "religion" on the other. Dick's contribution to our ongoing dialogue is very welcome.
~ Rod Martin

The Board of the Humanist Association of London and Area (HALA)

President– Dr. Rod Martin - (519) 673-6635 – e-mail – ramartin@uwo.ca

Secretary– Don Hatch – (519) 472-6167 – e-mail – dahatch@rogers.com

Treasurer – Claire Van Daele-Boseret – (519) 451-5962 - e-mail, c.v.d.b@rogers.com

Member at Large – Ed Ashman – (519) 457- 9982 – e-mail, edward017@sympatico.ca - Promotions

Member at Large –Dave Mabee – (519) 697-6010 – e-mail – davemabee@rogers.com - Membership

Member at Large – Charlotte Kurn – (519) 434-0605 – e-mail – ckurn@execulink.com

Member at Large – Walter Heywood – (519) – e-mail – wjheywood@yahoo.com

The Humanist Association of London and Area meets at the Cross Cultural Learner Centre, 505 Dundas Street in London, on the second Wednesday of the months September to July inclusive at 7:30 p.m. Please use the rear door off the parking lot. *The Enlightenment*, edited by Don Hatch, is published quarterly in January, April, July and October. Please note: We reserve the right to edit and publish articles at our discretion.

Visit our web site at www.humanists-london.org

New members are welcome. Contact Membership Secretary Dave Mabee at (519) 697-6010, e-mail davemabee@rogers.com Membership fees are listed below.

	<u>HC</u> <u>Basic</u>	<u>Humanist</u> <u>Perspectives</u>	<u>HALA</u> <u>Basic</u>	<u>HALA Limited</u> <u>Resources</u>
Single	\$40	\$22	\$20	\$10
Family	\$50		\$25	\$15
Life	\$700			

Humanism in Norway

The Human-Etisk Forbund (HEF), which translates into the Norwegian Humanist Association (NHA), was formed by a group of university academics in Oslo in 1957. The first leader was Kristian Horn. Growth was very slow in the first 20 years. By 1977 there were only about 2000 members. Then something happened. Membership doubled in a couple of years and then doubled again. In the early 1990s membership totaled 40,000. When the organization celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2007, there were 70,000 members out of a population of 4.5 million. This made NHA the second largest life stance organization in Norway---after the Lutheran State Church---larger than the Pentecostals and twice as large as Catholics. How did this happen?

The Lutheran State Church has a strong position in Norway and has managed to maintain old laws, and to obtain new ones that effectively discriminate against non-Lutherans and especially non-Christians. This discrimination annoys many people, who will tend to seek support from NHA---often ending up as members. A big breakthrough occurred in 1982 when NHA members were allowed to transfer the compulsive church tax to NHA. This was a big factor in the growth of membership and at the same time improved the financial position of NHA. At least 20% of members are under age 35. Although 20% of Norwegians consider themselves humanists, only 1.5% seem to be interested in becoming members of NHA.

The association's activities are centred on ethical issues such as abortion, euthanasia, the changing of discriminatory laws, and peaceful cooperation between people of various denominations and skin colours. They avoid political issues, except ethical ones, and they have minimized internal conflict and broadened their membership base. A principal aim is to eventually achieve complete separation of church and state. The ultimate goal is the making of a better society through the infusion of humanist thought and ideas.

A large part of NHA's work is the provision of ceremonies. This all began with civil confirmation in the early years. Civil ceremonies also include funerals and weddings, but they cannot yet perform same-sex marriage ceremonies. About 10% of Norwegian youth take part in the NHA confirmation courses. At the finishing ceremony they bring parents, relatives, and friends. It is a big social occasion and is a source for new NHA members. At least a quarter of Norwegians have attended a humanist civil ceremony in their lifetime.

Today NHA has 25 people employed to work in all 19 counties of Norway. There are 120 local groups in the country. Another 25 employees take care of administration at Oslo headquarters.

Over the years NHA has managed to achieve a considerable amount of media visibility. The organization is often consulted by government committees that are working on social issues of common interest. A few of their members are represented in Parliament. This increasing public visibility is considered to be one of the reasons for the growth of membership.

Why has humanism become so prominent in Norway? Is the country unique? Yes, to some extent it is unique because of the opposition by many to the one and only state church. This concern is probably the principal reason for the growth. But then, as mentioned above, there is also the willingness to work actively on ethical social issues that provides visibility. Perhaps being actively visible on appropriate social issues is an area in which other humanist organizations can learn something from the Norwegian experience. (Sources – Wikipedia)

Humanists, Atheists, and Agnostics: A Plea For Tolerance

By Dick Krupka, HALA Member

Openness to a variety of opinions is the strength of the Humanist movement; its breadth of interests and concerns, and its range of sympathies, make Humanism a civilizing force in society. But the ideal of openness should not be taken for granted. Intolerance, even if not recognized as such, can be a danger. An incident at the January meeting was perplexing. During the question period following the talk, we heard about an attempt to keep another Humanist group from forming any alliance with 'atheists'. The aim is to move this other group in 'the right direction', that is, well away from 'atheists'.

And a year or more ago, in two opinion pieces in the Enlightenment, atheists were reproached as people who were "hateful towards religion", and who were themselves "hateful". Based only on this assertion of flawed character, the feeling was left that the ideas of atheists are wrong and should be abandoned. But even if the character of atheists is so badly flawed (which I doubt), it does not logically follow that their ideas are wrong. This type of argument, called an *ad hominem* argument, proves nothing. Thus, Christianity is not discredited because some very bad people have been Christians -- Hitler being one. To discredit a set of ideas, the ideas themselves must be shown to be flawed, not the people who hold them.

Too much zeal in the promotion of correct opinion, or denigration of persons holding unpopular views, is likely to weaken the Humanist group, whereas reasoned argument for or against some definite idea can strengthen the group. Free discussion can promote understanding, and tolerance, of the ideas of all members. To be open to rational criticism, the atheist position needs to be stated explicitly, and it may therefore be useful for me to explain what I mean by 'atheist'. Others might put it in a different way, but my account will provide a target to shoot at. I have long held the following view.

First, I consider what can be known with certainty. The philosophers Hume and Berkeley showed in different ways that *nothing* can be known with *absolute* certainty! We cannot be absolutely certain that the sun will rise tomorrow, or that our familiar world exists, or that other people exist, and so on. Further, the concept of cause and effect is a mistake. Common sense denies all this but Bertrand Russell says the reasoning cannot be refuted. Modern science has shown that common sense can be misleading. In quantum mechanics, which describes matter and energy, and which has been verified in minute particulars, probability governs; certainty and causal relations disappear, and matter dissolves into a sort of myth.

Now, if I know that nothing is absolutely certain, should I be an agnostic, not an atheist? I think not. In science it is assumed that things can be known with only relative certainty: some conclusions, which are supported by much evidence, are taken to have a high probability -- i.e. likelihood -- of being correct; other conclusions, more weakly supported, are taken to have a lower probability of being correct. This approach seems necessary not only in science but in ordinary life. No one acts as if *everything* is uncertain. In making ordinary decisions, we are guided by common standards of likelihood. I'll bet Hume and Berkeley ate their suppers, and slept, with the greatest confidence that the sun would rise again, that their world and their friends really did exist, and that some particular cause would have some particular effect, for example that they might feel better if they ate their breakfast.

Although we cannot be *absolutely* certain whether our God, or any other god, does or does not exist, we *act* on the basis of our estimate of likelihood. The estimates do differ widely. To the atheist, the likelihood that God exists is very low; to the Christian, extremely high; and to the agnostic, somewhere in between. In spite of the moderation of the agnostic, people generally see him as lacking faith and lump him in with atheists. Agnostics and atheists are undeniably alike in not being religious in the usual sense. They are alike too in wholeheartedly assenting to the Humanist credo.

I have asked myself the following question. What is the *likelihood* that a personal God -- all knowing, all-powerful, all loving -- exists; that this God has designed the world and still determines events in it; that He (in our religion it's been He, not She) may be swayed by our entreaties? What is the likelihood that suffering of humans and other animals is part of God's plan; that God allows evil to flourish; that there is another world, an afterlife, where some are punished and some rewarded? This view, which often seems cruel and wish-fulfilling, seems to me to be most unlikely. My view, then, does not involve a god; it is in this sense an a-theist view of human life. I do not suppose that bad things, such as Katrina or the Haiti earthquake, are part of any god's plan, punishing sinful people. I do not suppose

that any god takes a personal interest in me. I do not suppose that the world has been designed by any God. But the sense of wonder is not diminished. Contemporary physics and cosmology show us a universe immeasurably more wonderful and more mysterious than the Biblical vision. In the realm of living things, Darwin explained how there could be design *without* a designer, how plants and animals had been created in the absence of any controlling intelligence, how even *human* intelligence came into being. And with this intelligence came the experience of purpose, of wonder, of love. The creature so designed learned to contemplate design itself, and to create new designs.

Contemplating a world without God is for the atheist only a first step. Many issues must be faced: claims of the planet earth and of all animals and plants; the foundation of ethics and of community solidarity; the province of the mind -- music, from drum to voice to dance; pictures, from cave to cubism; the spoken word, from myth to drama to philosophy. All these come within the atheist's purview. Our purposes, our dignity, the welfare of others, here or in other countries, will have to depend on our insights, understanding, and actions.

The atheist finds no ultimate text explaining the secret of it all, such as Christians take the Bible to be. An understanding of life and the world has to come from many sources. First, from innate promptings. It is now clear that the brain is no *tabula rasa*, as Locke had proposed, and as behaviorist psychology has assumed in our day. It is a prepared instrument. For example, there is a deep innate grammar in us, from birth, that is the basis of all human languages, as Chomsky showed. Innate moral impulses have been inherited from earlier primates, as de Waal found. Even babies, without experience, respond to music, and tunes make immediate sense. And so on. Next, we learn from experience in living. Then, understanding is deepened by acquaintance with all aspects of human culture -- all the arts, everywhere, at all times.

As to religion, the atheist understands it as metaphor and allegory. The Hallelujah Chorus in Handel's 'Messiah' is as meaningful as to a Christian, for it expresses the sense of wonder. Myth -- all myths including the Christian story -- is to be thought on, not dismissed, for insight into life's journey is often the content, as brought out by the scholar and writer Joseph Campbell.

The atheist lacks the unquestioning certainty of traditional religious belief. In this precarious world, deep anxieties can be stirred up by threats to a faith instilled from an early age. The anxiety may be sharper in persons who have given up their early *literal* belief but who hold on to a religious sense of place, ceremony, and values, as a still safe harbor in the storm of modern life and modern ideas. When this harbor too is threatened by the atheist view, the anxiety may become acute. Considering this, the strong opposition, even by non-religious people, to the books by Dawkins and Dennett critical of religion, is understandable. Significantly, objections to the books appear not to be on grounds of factual error; rather, the feeling seems to be that no criticism should be voiced at all.

One last thing. Two of my oldest friends, from boyhood, are clerics, one an Anglican priest, the other a Lutheran minister. Though living far apart now, we continue to write long letters, sometimes taking different positions on religious questions. I mention this to emphasize that differences in viewpoint, even large differences, need not lead to disregard or rancor, provided intelligent people of good will are involved.

Editor's comments:

Thank you Dick for this excellent article. It provides a well-thought-out view of what atheism should be about. I believe it is a given that most humanists call themselves atheists or agnostics and would largely agree with your concepts. The challenge for humanists and humanist organizations lies in deciding just how big a role non-belief should play in the total scheme of things. There is obviously a whole range of options.

A principal purpose of humanism is to aid in the establishment of a prosperous, caring, democratic, secular society with total separation of church and state. Just how much does proselytizing atheism help achieve this aim? This could be an interesting subject for debate. Another challenge is deciding how to convince a significant portion of the general public that atheists and secular humanists are not "agents of the devil" as Jerry Falwell and his ilk proclaim.

Dick, you are absolutely right in stating that there are important humanist issues that require openness and constructive dialogue. We welcome comments from *Enlightenment* readers on these important topics. (DAH).

In Memoriam

It was with profound regret that we learned in early February 2010 of the death of Canadian teacher, sociologist, author, and humanist, Dr. Pat Duffy Hutcheon. She was 83 years old.

Pat became a free thinker at an early age and rejected any belief in the supernatural. She was indeed a natural born humanist with a common-sense concern for fairness and justice. Perhaps above all, she possessed a natural talent for teaching that was soon recognized by the school inspectors with whom she came in contact. As well as being recognized as a leading Canadian educator and sociologist, Pat was an accomplished writer. In 1975 she published the textbook *A Sociology of Canadian Education*, the first ever on that subject. Subsequent books are *Leaving the Cave: Evolutionary Naturalism in Scientific Thought*; *Building Character and Culture*; *The Road to Reason: Landmarks in the Evolution of Humanist Thought*; a mystery novel entitled *Something Lost*; and her autobiography *Lonely Trail: The Life Journey of a Free Thinker*. And we must not overlook her moving poetry, the caliber of which is plainly evident in the several poems included in *Lonely Trail*.

I got to know Pat quite well when I ordered 25 copies of her book *The Road to Reason* for a book review session held at a HALA meeting five or six years ago. Every year since then I have visited her at her wonderful high-rise condo in Vancouver, while vacationing in B.C. She had a fantastic view over False Creek and English Bay, and she described her condo as a little bit of heaven for her final years. My last visit was in August 2009 when I learned that unfortunately her cancer, which had been in remission for some time, had returned.

Two *Enlightenments* have contained articles about Pat. She was featured on the cover of the November 2005 issue, and a book review of *Lonely Trail* (which she proofread) was published in the July 2009 issue. She was a consummate humanist having received the Humanist Association of Canada's "Humanist of the Year Award" at an HAC conference in Winnipeg in 2000. She was later declared a recipient of the American Humanist Association's "Distinguished Humanist Award" for 2001. She will indeed be missed. (DAH)

(Maslow continued from page 1)

In addition to his theory of the Hierarchy of Needs, Maslow's ideas on education are also of interest to humanists. He believed that the reason many people did not move up through the levels of needs to self-realization was because of the hindrances placed in their way by society. For example, education is often a hindrance, perhaps with ideas imposed on them by their culture. On the other hand, respectful teaching can promote personal growth. Maslow suggested that educational processes could use some of the steps listed below to promote educational growth.

1. We should teach people to be authentic, to be aware of their inner selves and to hear their innermost feelings and voices.
2. We should teach people to transcend their own cultural conditioning and become "world citizens."
3. We should help people discover their talents and vocation in life. This should be especially focused upon finding the right career and the right mate.
4. We should teach people that life is precious, that there is joy to be experienced in life, and if people are open to seeing the good and joyous in all kinds of situations, it makes life worth living.
5. We must accept the person and help him or her to become aware of their inner nature. From real knowledge of ones aptitudes and limitations, one can learn to build upon those potentials.

6. We must see that the person's basic needs are satisfied. That includes safety, belongingness and self esteem.
7. We should refresh consciousness, teaching the person to appreciate beauty and the other good things of life.
8. We should teach people that controls are good, but complete abandon is harmful. It takes control to improve the quality of life in all areas.
9. We should teach people to transcend the trifling problems and grapple with the serious problems in life. These include the problems of injustice, pain, suffering and death.
10. We must teach people to make good choices. They must be given practice in choosing between one good and another.
11. We must make sure they understand the role of responsibility in freedom. Real freedom is not licence – it involves real responsibility in every aspect of ones life – in personal affairs, in family, in society and in working life.

These common-sense dictums not only provide guidelines for education, some also outline principles for living a satisfying life. It is noted that there is nothing about religious belief, suggesting that, as Thomas Paine said, "...how I live is more important than what I believe." The implication is that belief, or non-belief, is a personal matter of choice that should be adopted by adults only after looking at the alternatives, and after due consideration, selecting the one that appears right for them. Religious views should not be foisted on anyone, and individuals should not impose their chosen belief on others, recognizing that many people change their beliefs, or become non-believers, as they grow older and presumably wiser.

Maslow was definitely a humanist, and he has been described as the "father" of American humanism. He was a contemporary of the European existentialists, and nowhere in my reading did I find that he was critical of the beliefs of others.

Getting back to Maslow's pyramid, the first four levels are pretty much self-explanatory, and many successful people reach the fourth level. The fifth level, self-actualization, is a bit different from the others, and Maslow suggests that only about 2% of the world's population reach this level. But what exactly does he mean by self-actualization? To arrive at his conclusions he examined the lives of a few outstanding historical figures including Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, Albert Einstein, Eleanor Roosevelt, Jane Adams, William James, Albert Schweitzer, Benedict Spinoza, and Aldous Huxley, plus twelve unnamed people who were alive when he did his research. From the biographies, writings, and the acts and words of these personalities, he developed a list of qualities that seemed to be characteristic of these people, as opposed to the rest of us. (It is worth noting that the beliefs of many of these historical figures would include Deism, pantheism, agnosticism and atheism, rather than conventional religious beliefs.)

Maslow found these outstanding people were **reality-centred**, which means they could differentiate between what is genuine and what is fake or dishonest. They were **problem-centred**, meaning they treated life's problems as difficulties demanding solutions. They enjoyed **solitude**, and were comfortable being alone. They enjoyed deep **personal relations**, with a few chosen friends and family members, rather than more shallow relationships with many people. They enjoyed **autonomy** and **resisted enculturation**, i.e., they were not subject to social pressures to conform. They had a **non-hostile sense of humour** – preferring to joke at their own expense, instead of directing their humour at others. They had a quality Maslow described as **acceptance of self and others**, which means taking one as he or she is, and not trying to change them into what others might think they should be. And then comes **spontaneity and simplicity**, being oneself rather than pretentious or artificial. Furthermore he found these people

had a sense of **humility and respect** toward others as well as a feeling of **human kinship** – social interest and compassion accompanied by a **strong ethics** that was spiritual, but seldom conventionally religious. Self-actualized people had a certain **freshness of appreciation**, an ability to see things, even ordinary things, with awe and wonder. And it almost goes without saying that these people were **creative, inventive and original**. Finally, these individuals had more **peak experiences** than the average person. A peak experience takes one out of oneself, and makes one feel very insignificant or very large, at peace with life or nature and provides a feeling of the infinite and the eternal. Putting all, or even most, of these qualities and characteristics together, you indeed have a very rare and admirable person. It is probably correct to suppose, as did Maslow, that no more than 2% of humanity reach or even approach this level of **self-actualization**.

It is interesting to observe that comparisons have been made between Maslow's self-actualization and the experiences of some practitioners at the highest levels of Taoism and Zen Buddhism, in which certain individuals are able to rid themselves of worldly possessions, thus freeing themselves from societal pressures and power. The self-actualized person may not have the same freedom from society as the Taoist or Zen Buddhist, but all three find their fulfillment as one who is independent and makes decisions based upon inherent enlightenment, and not on the conventional authority of society or an external supernatural deity. (Sources, Wikipedia)

Maslow Quotes -The story of the human race is the story of people selling themselves short.
- What is necessary to change a person is to change his awareness of himself.
- Dispassionate objectivity is itself a passion, for the real and for the truth.

Note

It is always a challenge deciding on what or who to feature on the front page of *The Enlightenment*. I hope readers will find the above discourse on Maslow to be of interest and relevant to humanism. Any suggestions for future front pages will be welcome. (DAH).

Important Notice - HALA Charitable Status.

The Canada Revenue Agency granted charitable status to the Humanist Association of London and Area in late January 2010. In order to keep this privilege in effect, it is necessary that we fulfill our commitment "to educate and increase the public's understanding of the principles of secular world views through the provision of seminars, conferences and newsletters."

We believe our regular meetings that generate active discussion after each presentation qualify as seminars, and we have *The Enlightenment* as our newsletter. Our challenge now is to organize and put on an event each year (similar to the Darwin event in 2009) that will qualify as a conference. Obviously we cannot do this without adequate financing. We believe, now that we are able to issue tax receipts, donations from our members and friends will be facilitated. We have received our first donation and urge all members and friends to consider making whatever they consider an appropriate donation in 2010.

Donations should be directed to our Treasurer Claire Van Daele Boseret at 1229 Osborne Street in London, N5W 3J2. Claire will also be able to receive donations and issue receipts at any of our regular meetings. Thank you for your consideration.