SELF-ACTUALIZATION REFLECTIONS

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The following articles or *Reflections* were written as a weekly series for the international Neuro-Semantic egroup, *Neurons.* These reflections are about the subject of Self-Actualization. Some of them deal with the origin of what we are now developing as Self-Actualization Psychology, namely, the Human Potential Movement and the role that Maslow, Rogers, and others played in that development. Other articles are my own reflections about the strengths and weaknesses of the human potential movement, Maslow, NLP, etc. Yet other articles are about the new Neuro-Semantic workshop, *The Ultimate Self-Actualization Workshop.*

FROM META-STATES
TO THE ACTUALIZING OF POTENTIAL

When I began thinking about initiating the *Meta-Coach Training* in 2001 the thought never crossed my mind that I would have to invent some new models to handle the demands of the new field of Coaching. That idea never so much as scampered across my awareness. Nor did it arise for some time afterwards.

In fact, it wasn't until after Michelle Duval and I began collaborating on the *Meta-Coach Training system* as a complete systematic system that we realized that if we were going to be consistent with our proposition that *coaching* is *not* the same as *therapy*, and that the two are truly very different modalities that we began to take a new and hard look at all of the "Change Models" that were in the field of Coaching. And what we discovered surprised us. Every change model was based upon some *therapy* model and not a single one was based upon the premises that governed coaching clients.

So it was off to the drawing boards to invent afresh a brand new model for coaching clients in contradistinction to therapy clients, and *how they change*. The result of that was the invention of the *Axes of Change model* which we put together from both the literature and research and from modeling how self-actualizing people change and how a masterful coach works with those processes. You can read all about that in *Coaching Change, Meta-Coaching Volume I.*

But that didn't end the need for new models. As Michelle and I identified the minimum requirements for Coaching as a new methodology, that led us to rigorously question whether we had sufficient models and mechanisms for facilitating the unleashing of potential. So I began exploring such questions as the following:

What actual models do we have that facilitate the self-actualization?
What models did Maslow, Rogers, May, Assosioli, etc. create that launched t he Human Potential Movement?
What did those leaders and developers say about the process of self-actualization?
What has NLP contribute to self-actualization?
Why has NLP hardly used the term "self-actualization?"
How does Neuro-Semantics take this to yet another level?

As you can imagine, my first attempt was to put together a Self-Actualization *Matrix*. What are the *frames of mind* and *meaning* that best support actualizing one's best self and becoming all one can become? Researching this led me back to the two key leaders in the Human Potential Movement—Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers. So I reread their works for such models. But they were not there. Except for Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs" the Human Potential Movement did not create models of self-actualization. I thought that was strange. So I began looking for

patterns and wondering what a model of the unleashing process would look like.

Eventually that led me to create the *Self-Actualization Quadrants* based on the two axes of Meaning and Performance, which of course, highlights Neuro-Semantics (neuro- *performance* and semantics *meaning)*. From that I eventually identified 11 meta-programs that make up the meta-program continua that formulate the Meaning / Performance axis.

Then I discovered something kind of surprising. NLP was but one of the many hundreds of off-shoots of the Human Potential Movement!

I didn't know that. I didn't know that Fritz Perls (Gestalt Therapy) and Virginia Satir (Family Systems) were two of the people recognized as key contributors of the Human Potential Movement. And I didn't realize that most of the *presuppositions* that we value in NLP were the basic *premises* of the Human Potential Movement that Rogers and Maslow originally invented. While I do remember hearing Bandler criticize Rogers and Maslow, somehow I never contextualized such, and so didn't really understand it or tie some things together.

What does all of that mean? It mostly means that the *grand and exciting ideas of NLP* are as much the grand and exciting ideas of the Human Potential Movement as anything else. Nor did NLP initiate the idea of modeling the brightest and best. Maslow began doing that in the 1940s and 1950s! That's right. A long, *long* time before the Cognitive Movement and before NLP, Maslow was studying *self-actualizing people* to understand their patterns. How about that!?

Ah yes, that brings us back to Isaac Newton who said, "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulder of giants." So in a similar fashion, if we have seen further or developed more, it is due to the work of those giant souls who have gone before us.

So if Maslow changed the paradigm in psychology from studying broken people to studying the healthiest, those stand out as the most mature, psychologically healthy, self-actualizing, and productive, then what NLP added to it all was some of the detailing of how to elicit and describe the *strategies* of such, enriching those strategies with the representational systems. And that was revolutionary in its time.

Now enter Meta-States. What the Meta-States model added to all of that is the meta-levels of strategies, the way our self-reflexive consciousness creates layers of meaning frames upon meaning frames to create an entire semantic network, a matrix of frames. And if we actualize our best selves through creating rich and robust *meaning* which we then actualize by embodying in our neurology as peak *performances,* then you can count on Meta-States and Neuro-Semantics taking the process of self-actualization to the next level.

Interested? If so, then this will be my focus in the weeks to come in this new series on *Self-Actualization Reflections.* And for those of you attending any of the upcoming APG trainings, you will be hearing a lot of new things about Unleashing your Potentials through Accessing your personal genius states. There's a lot more to say about all of this – and so we shall in the weeks

and months to come.

ACTUALIZING YOURSELF THROUGH
ACCESSING PERSONAL GENIUS

The idea of *self-actualization* is simple and profound. It speaks about *making real and actual* all that you are capable of becoming, experiencing, having, feeling, thinking, choosing, giving, and contributing. It might surprise you that the term was not first used by Abraham Maslow but by Kurt Goldstein in his work with brain damaged soldiers. In the 1940s he noticed and documented the body and the mind's ability to regenerate, to re-organize, to self-organize and to move forward to self-actualizing its possibilities for health.

Carl Rogers used a different term. He talked about people becoming *fully functioning* as human beings. Obviously both were focusing on *the bright side* of human psychology, on the possibilities, the potentials, the innate tendency for growth and that was an absolute paradigm shift from the psychology they had learned.

While Rogers focused on therapy and developed *Client-centered Therapy* using three key tools: empathy, unconditional positive regard, and congruency, Maslow turned his focus to modeling self-actualizers. He wanted to know what made them tick, what made them different, their patterns, their traits and qualities, and their ways of thinking. Out of that came the language of *peak experiences* —those near-mysterious moments when one "is all there," completely absorbed in something that gives one tremendous pleasure, commitment, and presence.

If this then is *one* thing that facilitates self-actualization, then consider what we have in the APG training. When I originally designed that training, I did not put it together with Maslow's distinctions or models in mind, but I very well could have. Instead I depended more on the work of Robert Dilts' *Strategies of Genius* along with Grinder and DeLozier. From them I collected as many *prerequisites* of genius as I could find and then used them as the very qualities that we would *meta-state* as layers until we create the *genius state of total engagement.*

When I first began presenting APG, I would often do a little quiz with the participants by inviting everyone to brainstorm "the prerequisites of genius." What are the qualities? What are the characteristics? When we complete that then I gather up those qualities into the very states that we meta-state during APG.

If you wanted to experience more self-actualization, how would you go about it? What enables you to *make real and actual* your inner potentials? The meta-stating format in APG training

enables us to texture our state with the following qualities:

> *Day 1*: Power, energy, ownership, validating what's significant, dis-validating what's not welcomed, acceptance, appreciation, a sense of awe, pleasure, and pleasuring in our pleasure.
> *Day 2*: Aligning concepts, developing a better relationship to any and all "concepts" that we have built semantic constellations around, taking charge of our meaning-making, taming the dragons, accepting emotions, translating great ideas into the body, and using imagination for creative problem solving.
> *Day 3*: Setting high intentions, aligning attentions to intentions, focus, boundaries, screening, alignment, and congruency.

So there you have the content that we meta-state ourselves with in APG to create a Genius Matrix. And do you think that will unleash potentials? You can count on that! We begin to tap into the possibilities when we take ownership of our mind-body-emotion system as meaning-makers. Then, as the framers, we set the frames. That frees up so much energy. Simply stopping all of the interference that goes on in our heads by "turning our energies against ourselves" (the structure of most Dragons) releases so much energy that sometimes people are amazed at how well they feel for the first time in years.

They feel more playful, more childlike, more able to take pleasure in all kinds of things, more able to stop and enjoy each and every day, to seize the present moment. And of course, all of that releases even more potentials. Playing with the *As if* frame, the miracle pattern, and the ability to *step back* from our own experiences facilitates more creativity.

This *stepping back* skill that's inherent in the Meta-States model leads one to become truly aware of the executive level of your mind and the place where "spiritual" or meaning intelligence begins, with intentionality. Here we can stopping wasting all of the energy that goes into the distractions of responding to every *attention* as we strengthen our *intentions* allowing them to become attractor frames.

What else releases potentials? *Beliefs* —powerfully positive and robust beliefs that support us, others, and what we can develop and contribute to the world. For this we Meta-*No* the limiting and toxic beliefs and Meta-*Yes* the empowering ones. And given that it is "beliefs all the way up" the Matrix, this puts us truly in charge of ourselves and our self-actualization.

What does Neuro-Semantics offer to the vision of self-organization? Much! And APG is just the beginning. Perhaps that explains why some people completing APG (and maybe after two or three exposures) begin to *unleash potentials* in a truly magical way.

By the way, do you know that *the Meta-States model is the cure for NLP*? To this day, NLP suffers from the inability to "apply to self." Why? Apart from the meta-States Model, NLP does not have a way to handle reflexivity — our self-reflexive consciousness. But with Meta-States, there is now a cure.

NEW MODELS OF ACTUALIZATION
FOR PEAK PERFORMANCES

Before I encountered NLP, I had never really given all that much thought to the idea of *modeling* expertise, experts, or the most productive and brightest of people. But when I first read about the modeling approach, it immediately made sense.

> "Dahhhh! [I said as I put my palm to my forehead]. Yes, of course! No need to focus on where every problem came from and what it means, just identify the structure and strategy of excellence and replicate that!"

So NLP hit a chord that resonated very deeply with me as it shifted the focus from *problems* to *solutions*, to accelerating learning and development by simply finding great models or exemplars and modeling what they do well. During my early years in NLP, I used Robert Dilts' book *NLP: The Structure of Subjective Experience* as my NLP bible. I studied it chapter and verse to understand as fully as I could how to *get the strategy* of an experience.

Talk about excitement! Starting from the premise that there's a structure of every experience, I was feeling like a child in a candy factory. What shall I model first? What experience do I most need? What expertise shall I take on and replicate in myself?

Having never heard of *modeling* as a discipline or study until I found it in NLP, I assumed that Bandler and Grinder invented it. But no. They didn't. And in spite of some NLP P.R. that's on the web modeling began long before NLP. Actually Maslow was modeling in the 1940s. When I read of Maslow's seeking to understand the patterns of self-actualizing people in the 1940s and how he picked people as his models, I began to understand how *the Human Potential Movement* had created the intellectual atmosphere in which NLP grew and thrived.

Maslow wrote his masterpiece, *Motivation and Personality* in 1954. In that book he presented the full model from lower and higher needs, to meta-motivation, meta-pathologies, meta-needs, meta-values, meta-drives, and the prepotency of his Hierarchy of Needs. He created all of that by modeling. In that work he also described the focus of his modeling — *peak experiences* and *peak performances.* He wanted to identify what was going on inside of people who were having the most influence and the most impact in the world. [By the way, he also used the word *meta* and John Grinder, he could hardly write a paragraph without using it!]

In spite of all these wonderful things, Maslow became mis-directed in my opinion. What mis-directed Maslow was how the kind of consciousness that he found in self-actualizers and "peakers" (that was his term for them) —a consciousness that struck him as highly mystical and

spiritual. To describe the self-reflexivity of these people and how they could "become one" with their subject of their absorption, he began to use more and more eastern metaphors, religious symbols, and terminology. Eventually, this led him to coin the term, "transpersonal" psychology and, in spite of being an avowed atheist, went off in that direction.

I think this mis-directed him and dispersed the power and focus of the Human Potential Movement. This happened, in part, because he moved on beyond "the third force" in psychology (e.g., the Human Potential Movement) and focusing on what he called "the fourth force" (e.g., Transpersonal Psychology) that eventually contributed to the Human Potential Movement fizzling out and eventually disappearing as a movement. Another consequence of him *not completing* his work on self-actualization and peak performances and moving on to the spiritual and mystical things of transpersonal psychology was that the movement began to splinter into dozens, even hundreds of competing camps.

By 1985 some of the key thinkers were writing in the Journals in *Humanistic Psychology* and saying at the Conferences that the *Human Potential Movement* never solidified in to an actual School of Psychology and was losing all of its momentum and focus. In my opinion what went wrong in all of the hustle and bustle and excitement of those days when so many new approaches and therapies and experiments in to human consciousness there were too many choices and *so the heart and soul of self-actualization was not nailed down.* It was not meta-detailed down to specifics because too many other exciting things were catching their attention.

Fast forward now 35 years. Not only is almost no one speaking about "self-actualization" as such or the structure of peak performances, no one has returned to the early models of Maslow to mine all that has proven durable in value. Realizing that my first thought is,

> "What an opportunity! I don't need to reinvent the wheel at all. So much of the foundational work about self-actualization has already been done. Let's just see where it needs something and see what we have learned in the past 35 years and continue the original vision."

So that's what I've been working on in the past 18 months. One of the first results of that has been the creation of the *Self-Actualization Quadrants.* These are made up of two axes, two axes that make up the heart and soul of Neuro-Semantics, namely *Meaning* and *Performance.* I think that this was actually revolutionary.

What was so revolutionary about this development? It supplied to the idea of Self-Actualization a key factor that Maslow knew about and yet overlooked— *meaning.* There are passages in his work indicating that Maslow struggled trying to figure out what was it that caused some needs (food, security, love, etc.) to lose all of its drive and what causes these same drives in others to become totally dominating. Using psychoanalysis and some behaviorism he worked to "explain" things, yet all the while neglecting *the critical role of the meanings that we attribute to things.*

Interested? Great, there's a lot more to come.

A PSYCHOLOGY
FOR WORLD PEACE

The story of Abraham Maslow is a story of a man who caught a vision and who pursued that vision to such an extent that he actually created an entire *paradigm shift* in the field of psychology. In doing this he led the way in changing psychology from the dark side to *the bright side of human nature*. Amazing, wouldn't you say? And due to his commitment to modeling self-actualizers, he established a human and scientific basis for the vision of people having far more potential than we ever dared to imagine.

It happened in 1941 immediately upon the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the entrance of the United States into the Second World War. Maslow had been paying attention to the disastrous events in Europe and the world war that had been initiated. Then in that December, he had a peak experience, an *Aha!* that changed his life. His first thought was that he wanted to do something to help. But he said, "I'm too old to join the army." So what could he do? What could he contribute? That's when the *Aha!* occurred. Suddenly he recognized that what world leaders really needed to create peace was a comprehensive and accurate model of human motivation, so he set out to create that.

To create peace we have to really understand what people want, we have to be able to answer such questions as:
> Why do people do what they do? What do people really want?   What do leaders want? Why are some attracted to Hitler, Stalin, and Mussilini? What do people really want? What motivates them? What structures their personalities to be motivated as they are?

It was at that moment in time, December of 1941, that Maslow decided that the best he could do for the peace table was to provide an accurate and useful model of human motivation. And so his mission began in earnest. Then in 1954 he published his classic work that changed the face of psychology, *Motivation and Personality.*

In *Motivation and Personality* Maslow presented a model of human motivation that classified needs in two categories: lower and higher needs or drives.
> *The lower needs* operate by deficiency and powerfully drive us until the need that we lack is supplied or gratified. Then the drive dissipates and vanishes.
> *The higher needs* are very different. They are growth drives, drives for expression, development —for self-actualization. Here we are driven not by lack, but by desire to be *all that we can be,* to more fully express ourselves. When these drives are satisfied, they grow. They become stronger.

Maslow introduced this model of motivation as *a hierarchy* with certain sets of needs giving rise to the next level of needs. The prepotency of the needs shows how all needs are not the same. Survival needs give rise to safety and security needs which then gives rise to social needs of love and affection which gives rise to self needs (self-esteem and self-regard). From these lower needs we then move up to the self-actualization needs—to the needs for knowing, organizing, creating beauty, order, truth, perfection, justice, spirituality, etc.

How does the hierarchy of needs help us understand people, communities, and nations? What does it offer to leaders and politicians? Because we are drive by *deficiency* for the lower needs, and the lower the need, the greater the desperation. So the first task is to create a society or community where people can easily satisfy their needs for survival, safety, social connection (love and affection) and self-value (self-confidence, self-esteem). If the structure and economics enable people to satisfy these lower needs, then no dictator strongman will be able to attract or appeal to people in terms of rescuing or "taking care" of them.

Then a society can move up the level of actualizing human possibilities for order, truth, discovery, beauty, knowledge in people. Maslow called these higher or meta-needs. Here we experience the meta-values and drives as well as the *Being*-cognition. The most radical aspects of Maslow's model was how he showed that our higher needs or meta-drives were *biologically-based*. They are part of human nature! They reveal the bright-side of human nature.

Question: How do we get there? We get there by fulfilling our lower needs. As we gratify the first level, the next level arises and then the next. As each of the lower needs is satisfied, it disappears from our consciousness and new higher needs emerge. In this way we move up the hierarchy and eventually we rise up to the truly human needs and here there is no ultimate satisfaction. The more we get of beauty, truth, contribution, meaning, value, love, etc., the more we have to give and the more appetite we have for more. And it is here that we do things, not so much to get and attain, to make the drive go away (since it can't), but to *express* ourselves, to *release the possibilities and potentials within.*

World peace— how does this work for peace on this planet? For Maslow it meant that he kept asking himself and others such questions as the following:
> "How good a society can we create given human nature?" "What do we need to do for the drives and needs of people so that we can create good people and a good society?" "What interferes with people getting their needs met and moving to the highest needs where they can move beyond the law of the jungle of the lower needs?"

In Neuro-Semantics (as in NLP) we begin with the Maslow premise that there is a *Bright Side of Human Nature* that gives them resources and all kinds of possibilities. Assuming this we then work to release those potentials, activate a person's fundamental *powers of response* and enable him or her to move to *choice point* for unleashing those possibilities. This is what APG is all about as well as the other Neuro-Semantic Trainings —
> Unleashing your Wealth Creation Potentials and becoming financially independent
> Unleashing your Business Genius

Unleashing your Writing Genius
Unleashing your Health and Fitness Genius
Unleashing your Learning Genius
Unleashing your Reframing Genius (Mind-Lines)
Unleashing your Perceptual Genius (Meta-Programs)

HOW MASLOW SET THE HEALTH FRAME
IN PSYCGHOLOGY

A paradigm shift was in the making during the 1940s as Maslow began *modeling self-actualizing people.* He had picked up on this from his relationship with Alfred Adler, Ruth Benedict, Max Wertheimer his studies of the Blackfoot Indians in Canada, etc. Then the second World War occurred, and for Maslow that event called forth from him a new vision and mission for his life. The result? He created a new model of human motivation and so changed the face of psychology with his 1954 classic, *Motivation and Personality.*

When I first read it in the 1970s I didn't realize just how radical or transformative his work was. And there was a reason for that. By the 1970s, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, distinction between higher and lower needs, and exploration into the *bright side* of human personality, into peak experiences and self-actualization had already permeated psychology and had become fairly common knowledge. That's how quickly the "Third Force" of psychology, namely, Self-Actualization or Humanistic Psychology got a favorable hearing.

Maslow's challenging question in his first works and speeches was this:
> Have we not studied enough about how people become sick and neurotic? What do we know about how people grow, develop, become well, and transcend their problems and circumstances? What is possible for humans? What distinguishes the healthiest humans, the most mature, and those who contribute the most?

In this Maslow set a *health frame* for the field of psychology which began a revolution in psychology that has all but relegated Psychoanalysis and Behaviorism (the first and second forces) to a back seat as a hundred new therapies and psychologies. From Logotherapy, client-centered therapy, Reality Therapy, dozens of Cognitive therapies, Brief psychotherapy, Ericksonian, NLP, etc. up to Neuro-Semantics—there have been an explosion of therapies that begin from an entirely new and different premise, from *the premise* that we are made to grow, develop, and self-actualize, that human nature is basically good and that given the right conditions, people will want to move beyond the lower needs to the higher needs.

None of this means that the *sick frame* that Freud and others began with was wrong, only that it was limited. Further, it makes perfect sense that psychology began with an exploration into neurosis, disease, psychopathology, and mental ill-health. That was the first and most demanding need—to understand what was going on with those who were severely suffering, but whose suffering didn't seem to have any physiological source. Freud began with hysterics.

But after the first fifty years of psychology, psychological knowledge of humans, human nature, growth and development, emotions, needs, etc. were based almost entirely upon *the disease model*. It was based upon the study of those hurt and traumatized. It was not based upon those who were the best specimens, the superior men and women in terms of mental and emotional health. That's what Maslow did.

Studying Behaviorism and working with Harry Harlow, the original researcher with monkeys and chimpanzees, Maslow learned and really valued the insights of Behaviorism. Later he received Psychoanalysis and worked with Karen Horney, Alfred Adler, and others. But then he met two professors in his graduate work who could not be explained with all of the tools and models of psychology: Ruth Benedict and Max Wertheimer. They seemed like a different kind of human beings given his psychological studies. None of the principles, tools, or models enabled him to understand them.

The presence of these two self-actualizing people was the original initiative that launched his modeling project. So he set out to understand and model mentally and emotionally healthy individuals, *self-actualizers* whom he later called "peak-experiencers." In this way he set the growth frame in psychology and shifted the assumptions and premises of psychology from the "cruel or nasty animal" model of Freud to an uniquely human model.

This created *the new psychology of Self-Actualization* which exploded on the scene and during the 1960s worked along with a lot of the cultural factors to create so much of the counter-culture movement at that time and the exploration into the farther reaches of human consciousness. Encounter-groups, growth groups, wild and crazy psychotherapies, etc. arose at that time. This plus the untimely death of Maslow in June of 1970 led the "Third Force" movement of Humanistic Psychology to never become a full-fledge "School of Psychology."

So here we are some 35 years later and surprise of surprise— there has been almost nothing written or developed upon Maslow's work in all of that time. Without a single leader to step into Maslow's shoes, while the new paradigm of the *bright side* of human nature is well accepted and while there are many millions interested in self-actualization —the focus has been scattered into hundreds of competing camps, schools, models, and personalities.

What's tragic about this is that during all this time, Maslow's models have not grown or developed. Nor has there been much confirming research on self-actualization. In this, Maslow was *too successful* in getting people to step out of the old paradigm and imagining all kinds of new possibilities and yet simultaneously he was also completely unsuccessful in leading the movement.

What's the next step? What is missing in the Maslow models? What can Neuro-Semantics add to the field of self-actualization? A great deal! Neuro-Semantics can supply the one element that Maslow missed— the role of meaning in our psychology. Neuro-Semantics can also rescue Maslow's work from the static and rigid implications of the metaphor that he used (the Hierarchy). Neuro-Semantics can give Maslow's impetous of self-actualization a fresh remake

with a systemic model and integrate the world of Csikszentmihalyi on "flow." These are the things that I've incorporated in the new training workshop — *The Ultimate Self-Actualization Workshop: Unleashed!*

HOW MASLOW MISSED MEANING

So in the 1940s Maslow set out on to do one of the first projects (if not the very first) for modeling experts. His goal at that time was to model *self-actualizers* and from that the process of *self-actualization* itself. To do that he began identifying the features and qualities of self-actualizing people and then began selecting people (living and dead) who met those qualifications. As he did, he also had to theorize about what motivated these people and how their motivational life and level differed from people who were not self-actualizing their potentials, but living at the level of the jungle, at the level of the basic needs.

In the process of doing this, Maslow collected "needs, drives, instinctions, goals," etc. that move and motivate people and then began classifying them. From that came his creative insight that differentiated lower and higher *needs.* He called the higher needs, *meta-needs*. In fact, he used the word *meta* abundantly during the 1940s and may have been along with Bateson the first to so use the term. He spoke about *meta-values, meta-pathologies, meta-pay,* etc. [Of course what I don't know is who began using the term first. Of course, given his work with Ruth Benedict and then his correspondence with Margartet Mead, he discovered and met Gregory Bateson, so which one influenced the other regarding the use of the term?]

Out of this arose the only "model" that we have from Maslow and his pioneering efforts in *Self-Actualization Psychology,* namely, the Hierarchy of Needs. Yet this simple model was so useful and insightful, that it very quickly (I mean very quickly) began to permeate psychology, self-improvement, management, leadership, communication, motivation, learning, education, etc.

Psychology prior to Maslow there had been in a War of Instincts. This began about the first of the twentieth century and continued for decades. Every psychologist and theorist was trying to identify *the primary instinct,* the key instinct, the mother of all instincts in their effort to understand and create a theory of human nature: Was it sex, aggression, fear, self-esteem, love, food, death, meaning, etc.? One psychology textbook that I read said that over 137 "instincts" had been identified.

What Maslow did in that morass of confusion was to offer a model that brought all of the human instincts or drives or needs together and provided an unifying mechanism. And he put them together in a format that showed the prepotency of the lower needs, which explains why we feel them so strongly and why they are so biologically based.

We experience a similarity to the animals in our lower needs for survival (food, water, air, sex, shelter, warmth, etc.) in that they are very strong and driving. The primary difference is that

while animals have innate *programs* for knowing what will satisfy their needs and even *how to satisfy their needs,* we do not. We have the urge and need, but not the information content. We are program-less compared to them. Maslow said that we only have *instinctoids*.

This becomes more and more true as we move up the levels. As the need for safety and security drives us, as the social needs for love and affection, as the self needs drive us for feeling important, unique, special, and valued. *How do we satisfy these inner drives*? What will satisfy them?

Maslow insightfully recognized the nature of *deficiency* as the driving mechanism in the lower needs. When we do not have them, we feel a powerful sense of *lack.* We feel desperate. We want. We need. Yet something strange happens when we gratify the need. *The drives goes away!* Poof! It vanishes. Suddenly, we are no longer hungry, cold, insecure, etc. In fact, gratification not only makes the drive go away so that we *do not want it any longer,* but we typically even *forget* how drive it was. Maslow called this "post-gratification forgetting."

If the lower or deficiency needs arising from our biology and describes our connection with the animals, *it is the higher needs that differentiates us from them.* By gathering all of the other needs, the ones that make us uniquely human, Maslow created the category of *higher needs.* Here we want meaning, purpose, direction, intention, beauty, order, contribution, truth, and all of the needs-wants-instincts that we call that relate to our "spirit" and that the lack of causes us to feel "dis-spirited" and the fulfillment causes us to feel "in-spirited."

These *needs* do not operate by deficiency. We can live without them. When we lack them, we aren't desperate as we are without the survival needs. Yet something other than death occurs without them. Without them we will tend to live "quiet lives of desperation" to quote Thoreau. Nor is there any post-gratification relief. Satisfy these higher needs and instead of going away, they become stronger! We then want them more. We also then develop more capacity for them. In this we cannot get too much truth, beauty, meaning, contribution, etc.

When we live at the level of the meta-needs and meta-values, we live very differently. It's a world of abundance rather than deficiency. It's the uniquely human world of growth and *expressing* ourselves, rather than trying to get. Maslow struggled for the decades trying to find the right words to describe this very special place. It is the place of *Being* and so we lose motivation to try to do or achieve as we become *expressive*. The value of the experience is the experience itself, hence, "non-purposive." This is the place for self-actualizing, *becoming* more and more all we can become, and the place of "peak experiences."

Yet in all of these, Maslow missed something.   While he put meaning as one of our meta-needs, he missed another role that *meaning* and *meaning-making* plays in human personality. And this is precisely what we in Neuro-Semantics are adding to the whole study and research on Self-Actualization.

Maslow missed the role of meaning-making and meaning attribution that tempers and governs

even our experience of our needs. Now, true enough, he was close to it. For example, he recognized that the hierarchy of needs was not a strict hierarchy. He realized and spoke about how that any *need* can become so important that it can come to dominate all other needs. He wondered about why some *needs* can become so unimportant, that they fail to drive us at all. But he didn't identify the mechanism of *meaning* as the mechanism that made the difference.

Failing to recognize this meant that Maslow didn't see how *the meanings we create in our mind* then self-organize our entire mind-body system as an attractor frame creating a self-fulfilling process. Yet now that we know that, we can introduce a more *systemic understanding and images* into the old static hierarchy pyramid of Maslow. To the static and rigid pyramid, we can add the information feedback loops to show how *meaning* influences our experience of our needs.

It is our meaning-constructions via our self-reflexive consciousness that enables us to add layer upon layer of *meaning* to our experiences that describes the highest and most critical human "instinct" of all.   Most about that next time.

ACTUALIZING MASLOW
WITH NEURO-SEMANTICS

In the last Reflection (#6), I described Maslow's model for *Self-Actualization Psychology,* the critical distinction he made between lower and higher needs, and how that he missed meaning. In this, Maslow was *not cognitive enough* in his approach. While he became a good friend to Adler and incorporated some of Adlerian psychology not his approach as well as some of the cognitive anthropology of Benedict and Meade (and of Bateson), and while Maslow discovered Korzybski and even spoke at one of the International Conferences on General Semantics in Mexico and quoted him about "the map is not the territory," Maslow missed the meaning-making role and so did not incorporate that into his model or understandings of self-actualization. And it is this gap that we have, in Neuro-Semantic, addressed as we have incorporated it into our newest models on Self-Actualization in order to extend Maslow's pioneering work.

This now enables us to explains why even our lower *need* have a certain degree of plasticity within them so that we can deny them, ignore them, channel them (sublimate) and even alter them so much that we experience them as an over-drive need or as a non-existent need.

Take something as basic as food. As a basic need, our bodies *need* and absolutely *require* nourishment. What we use as "food" (or attempt to use as food), however, we have to learn; it is not a given. Also, as we use our mind to *attribute meanings* to food and about food, we can over-load food semantically so that it means too much to us. We can semantically frame food as reward, being good, success, the good life, love, winning, sociality, etc. Doing this enables us to *psycho-eat,* that is, eat for psychological reasons. Then we can eat for reward and love, to prove that we have success, for de-stressing, etc.

Conversely, we can give food negative meanings and create an entirely different phenomenon. We can view food as dangerous, as fattening, as being out-of-control, of threatening femininity, etc. Doing this can lead to the eating disorders of anarexia and bulimia. Then we *not-eat* for *psychological* reasons or meanings.

Even life, survival, not-dying can be over-riddened by meanings. Otherwise we would not have suicide or martyrdom. In fact, *all "needs" can be over-ridden, altered, and changed, by meanings.* The meanings we give and attribute to our lower needs govern how we experience those needs. The *heart* of the matter in human affairs is *meaning.* So we ask, "What does that mean to you?" And whatever it *means,* that's what it *is* for that person in that person's mind-body system. He or she will *feel* that meaning, experience that meaning, perceive that meaning,

etc.

For us in Neuro-Semantics, the Meta-States model mediates the dynamic structuring of meaning. As we reflexively think-and-feel about our constructions, we construct higher and higher levels of meaning. Given that, we can now take Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs model to yet another level of development. We add *meaning attribution* to the pyramid. Over the static hierarchy we now overlay the spiraling whirlwind of *meaning creation.* What happens when we do this? We transform the static and rigid pyramid so that it becomes a dynamic picture of how our layeirng of meanings influences, informs, and governs our basic needs.

You can still see one of the ways I first sought to work with Maslow's hierarchy of needs. It's in an article on the website about Self-Actualization. At the time my thought was to think of the different faces of the pyramid as different developmental stages as our meaning-making develops from merely experiencing our needs, to developing *coping mechanisms* for handling our needs, to finally *mastering* our drives.

A more recent development shifts from the multiple-face representation to representing the communication loops of the layering of meaning *inside* the pyramid. Beginning with the meaning spiral inside, we picture the highest self-actualization needs (to know, to order, to create beauty, etc.) as bursting forth from the top of the pyramid. As you imagine the pyramid. opening up at the top, see the higher or meta-needs exploring like fireworks.

See the higher needs shooting off in many directions and revealing *an inverse invisible spiraling pyramid* above it. This spiraling of meaning represents our self-reflexive awareness that layers levels upon levels of meanings and then spirals downward to inform and govern our needs. We still have the hierarchy, but it is now becoming a holoarchy. Now we can represent *both* the biological needs *and* the cognitive-connative *meaning-making* that uniquely distinguishes the human kind of consciousness.

That's but one way we have begun to expand and extend the work of Maslow. The Self-Actualization Quadrants introduces yet another. Built from the twin Axes of *Meaning* and *Performance*, the Quadrants reveal the pathway to *the zone* of Self-Actualization, the flow zone. It, in fact, emerges as we integrate and synthesize our best meanings and performances.

What these models offer is a way to *actualize* Maslow and his pioneering development of Self-Actualization Psychology. After all, since his death, 36 years ago (1970) Maslow's model and ideas of self-actualization have remained stagnant and, for the most part, unuseable. Yes, it was a pioneering advance when he enabled us to recognize the distinction between lower and higher needs. Yet, the Hierarchy of Needs as such offers no practical application. What can we do with it? The problem is that as a metaphor, it is too static and rigid and so doesn't allow for *doing* something with it.

Yet because our mind-body-emotion system is dynamic and ever-changing, and operates within layers of family, language, and cultural frames interacting with others, to understand our drives,

needs, and motivations and work with it to facilitate self-actualization, we need a systemic model about meaning that's dynamic and flexible enough. To that end I have mostly been applying the Meta-States model nad again finding that it is enabling us to expand Maslow's work to generate the Holoarchy of Needs that enables us to recognize the place our psycho-logics play, the fluid logical levels of our meta-states, and how all of it creates our Self-Actualization Matrix.

What's the bottom line? We can now facilitate the *unleashing of potentials* with greater efficiency. And that leads to *The Ultimate Self-Actualization Workshop: The Construct, the Crucible, and the Zone* coming soon to an Institute of Neuro-Semantics near you!

FROM MASLOW'S LEVELS OF NEEDS
TO THE NEURO-SEMANTICS OF
SELF-ACTUALIZATION

It was absolutely *revolutionary* when Maslow came up with the idea. Prior to his sorting out the *levels of needs,* nobody else had even thought in those terms. In fact, psychologists and theorists about human nature had all been working on the assumption that people had *needs—*drives, urges, "instincts," etc. and that *one* or more of these would be "the driving need" that could explain all the rest.

Actually, this was also the foundation of the Nature versus Nurture debate that had raged in Philosophy for centuries and which the new field of Psychology inherited. In fact, the "Need" or "Instinct" debate raged in the early twentieth century. Various pioneers posited that it was sex, food, survival, death, life, superiority, dominance, and a hundred other possibilities.

In the midst of all of that Maslow created a true paradigm shift by positing that there were basic or lower needs and then higher or meta-needs. He even used the term *meta.* What led him to this conclusion? Where did his originality arise from? You might be as surprised as I was to discover that Maslow's first graduate study research was in Wisconsin with Harry Harlow and his monkeys. He studied the chimpanses and basic animal instincts in the famous studies about bonding.

Next, Maslow did research on human sexuality. In fact, there was a time, several years before McKinsey began his studies, that Maslow was recognized as one of the world's leading experts on human sexuality. That's right, Abraham Maslow!

Then came the beginning of the second World War in Europe in the late 1930s and finally American's entry into it in Dec. of 1941. And that changed everything. Maslow himself described December 7, 1941 as a day that became a epiphany for him as it gave him a direction for his life.

How so? On that day, he made a decision. He decided that what political leaders needed was a more accurate and useful theory of human motivation, that if they had that, that would contribute to peace among nations.

To understand this we have to remember that at that time psychology was dominated by two models of human nature which were both mostly negative and deterministic about changing human nature. You also have to remember that the primary model of human nature at work was

what McGregor later called Theory X —people don't really want to work, have to be forced to work by playing on their fears and anxieties, have to be watched every moment, can't be expected to take responsibility, will resist, deny, etc.

It was these theories of human nature and human "drives, needs, or instincts" that Maslow felt were fundamentally wrong that he set out to correct. From this background came his breakthrough discovery as he mapped *the levels of human needs.* Regarding this he wrote and researched extensively throughout the 1940s about *the basic needs* of human beings and how they differed from the content programming that instincts give animals. He also poked fun at the psychologists who would compare people to the "bad" animals (snakes, wolves, tigers, pigs, vultures, and other predators) instead of the "good" and more peaceful animals (chimpanzee, deer, elephant, dog, etc.).

H introduced the term *instinctoid* to distinguish the instinct-like left-over within humans in contradistinction of a true *instinct* in animals that has *content information* regarding how to be. Maslow noted that as a species, we humans have a hard time being a species since we are left with almost *no information content*. Our instinctoids give us a only general disposition or drive.

He also noted that the basic needs were *deficiency needs (D-Needs),* driven by lack. When we first experience these, deficiency *drives* us and dominate personality. All we can think about is gratifying the lack. But then when we do, the "need" goes away. Afterwards, and we even forget how driving the deficiency was. Maslow called that "post gratification forgetting."

How different are the *higher needs.* These need are not driven by deficiency and only emerged once the lower needs are basically satisfied. These include the cognitive needs for knowing, understanding, discovering, etc., the aesthetic needs for beauty, form, and so on, the structural needs for order, sequence, patterning, the spirit needs for meaning, significance, importance, contribution, etc. These needs are the *growth*, *expressive,* and *self-actualization* needs. Instead of deficiency, they are driven by *abundance* so that when we gratify them, they don't go away but grow. Our capacity for them grows and expands.

At what level do we live? At what level do we live in our businesses or societies? Do we individually or as a group, live at the deficiency level or at the abundance level?

In distinguishing the *levels of needs* within the lower needs Maslow showed that we move from *survival* to *safety* (safety and security) to *social needs* (love and affection) and to *self* needs (self-regard). In the basic needs, we move from one to the other as the lowest needs are prepotent to the higher ones, that is, they are more powerful, driving, and dominating. This generated the idea of a hierarchy of needs until we reach the higher needs.

What was so revolutionary with this analysis of human needs? The paradigm shift that this initiated was how our needs are sequenced developmentally and naturally move us to the higher needs. These truly *human needs* are not driven by deficiency. It is in our nature to actualize our highest needs and not to live at "the jungle level."

From this Maslow argued that in business we can move from Theory X to Theory Y and that in society, we need to create structures that support the best in people and that facilitate groups and societies living at the highest levels instead of the lowest. He even called this *the meta life.* Maslow freely used the term *meta* for this area: meta-needs, meta-values (B-values), meta-pathologies, meta-pay, etc. This takes us to "the farther reaches of human nature" (the title of his fourth book) where we experience peak experiences and peak performances. This is the area of Self-Actualization Psychology, the psychology that describes anyone who has moved into the *being* dimension.

So it was the discovery of *levels* that opened up the new psychology. As he could not understand the first two self-actualizers that he met with the tools that psychology provided him because they lived at a different level, so he believed that business owners, leaders, politicians, sociologists, etc. could not create models for working with groups of people without a new psychology. Yet while he created the foundation for that new psychology with the hierarchy of needs, he died before he was able to create the new psychology. And it is that gap that we in Neuro-Semantics have been addressing – the subject of Reflection #9.

A NEWLY FORMULATED PSYCHOLOGY
— SELF-ACTUALIZATION PSYCHOLOGY

While there is no such thing yet, Maslow pioneered the beginnings of *Self-Actualization Psychology.* So while you won't find that phrase in psychology books, or in any directory of courses, or degree programs *yet*, I'm predicting that it is a psychological model in the making.

Throughout his life, Maslow had wanted to write a psychology textbook, but his fragile health in mid-life and his busy life after the publication of *Motivation and Personality* and his untimely death in 1970 at only 62 meant that he never wrote that textbook. So even today, some 36 years later, there's not even a textbook on *Self-Actualization Psychology.*

Yet in another sense Self-Actualization Psychology is present. At least *the idea, the premises, and the vision* of this kind of psychology are everywhere. Today *the idea* of a positive psychology based on the premises that human nature is basically good, that people have all the resources they need, that people are natural learners, that they will grow and develop, that they will naturally move to actualizing their best potentials when there are "good conditions" and interferences are removed, and so on—these ideas are at the core of many of the offsprings of the Human Potential Movement. You can find them in Humanistic Psychology, Positive Psychology, Cognitive Psychology models, Ericksonian models, Brief Psychotherapy, Narrative, etc.

So even though the Third Force in Psychology never became an official School of Psychology and even though the Human Potential Movement did not succeed as a school, *the premises and vision* of "actualizing all of our potentials," becoming "fully human," and becoming fully responsible human beings has spread into a hundred off-springs of the Human Potential Movement.

In fact, NLP, based on directly on the work of two key players in the Human Potential Movement, Fritz Perls and Virginia Satir, is one of the off-shoots of that movement. The premises of the human potential movement was even brought over directly into NLP so that every NLP practitioner has learned them. They were re-labeled and colonized in such a way as to become what today we call "the NLP Presuppositions." Where did these ideas come from? From Maslow, Carl Rogers, Rollo May, Fritz Perls, Virginia Satir, etc.

So in extending Maslow's work and in creating *Self-Actualization Psychology,* what is it? What makes up this new form of psychology? Here's what Maslow developed:

1) Modeling the bright side of human nature.
> Self-Actualization psychology studies "the best specimens" of the human race to catch a vision about what's possible for human beings and the structure and variables of the most highly desired experiences. That makes SA psychology about generative change and the highest possible development. It is not about remedial change or pathology,

2) The developmental level of needs.
> SA psychology is a developmental psychology. It views our biological needs as the source of our drives and urges and which progresses developmentally. We first experience the lower or basic needs then progressively move up to the higher needs.

3) The hierarchical movement from lower to higher.
> The needs are not only developmental but hierarchical. Because the lower needs are prepotent, we move from the lower to the higher. The lower are driven by *deficiency*, the higher by *expression.*

4) The higher can become more dominating than the lower.
> Once we have reached the higher growth or *being*-needs, the higher needs can be felt as strongly as the lower needs, they can even over-ride the lower needs. Maslow recognized this but often said he didn't understand how it occurs.

5) Progressing, growing, and developing necessitates active responsiveness.
> While growth is innate and organic, it can be interfered with, sabotaged, stunted, and we can become stuck at any level. To move forward on the path to self-actualization necessitates initiative, responsibility, acceptance of reality, ego-strength, flexibility, openness, and continuous learning. We have to choose growth.

6) The higher levels of peak experiences of self-actualizers.
> While self-actualizing is a potential for all, it is not actual. As we choose it, engage in the processes that facilitate it, we have to embrace anxiety because at the self-actualization level, we are forever restless and anxious. We are forever expanding and growing and discovering or creating more of who we are and what we can become. It is a never-ending process.

These premises describes Self-Actualization Psychology at the time of Maslow's death in 1970. Yet because it offered an exciting view of the future, a hundred splinter groups arose from it, each pursuing its own version of this vision. That was both fortunate and unfortunate. Fortunate because it generated a great deal of excitement about various facets of self-actualization and ways to unleash potentials in people.   Yet unfortunate because this led to the dispersing of the Human Potential Movement.

Now to create a complete *model* we have to have four things: theory, variables, guidelines, and patterns.   So one of the first things I did was to take the premises and models of Maslow and Rogers and formulate them to create

A conceptual theory of self-actualization
A set of components, elements, and variables to work with in actualizing one's potentials
A set of guidelines for using these variables
And a set of patterns or processes that facilitate unleashing potentials.

Of course, in doing this, I have been able to see its strengths and weaknesses and what yet needed to be done to create a more fully developed *Self-Actualization Psychology*. In Neuro-Semantics, this has led to the Matrix of Self-Actualization and the Self-Actualization Quadrants.

7) The role of meaning in the hierarchy of needs.
Our "needs," being instinctoids and not instincts with content information, are empty of content. That opens up a space wherein we have to find and create *meaning*. Maslow and others missed this cognitive nature of our drives. We make meaning by how we "think" and that includes the dozen or more kinds of meanings that we make and layer reflexively as we think (the Meta-States model).

8) The holoarchy as a volcano of human needs.
The hierarchy (and pyramid) turns out to actually be holoarchy as it operates as a hologram with embedded holons within holons all the way up. That's because our self-reflexive consciousness keeps layering meanings upon meanings. So our meaning-making is not linear but non-linear and always in flux. Instead of a static and rigid pyramid, our meaning-endowed-needs *swirl* round and round creating our emotions and motivations (the Matrix model).

9) The psycho-logics of human needs.
What's "logical" in our needs makes sense *from within*, not from without. This makes our needs psycho-logical. And the psycho-logics of our needs *depends* on our meanings (understandings, beliefs, intentions, etc.).

10) We unleash our potentials via a crucible.
Our boiling needs embedded and informed by our hot, confused, and swirling thoughts (meanings) need a place so that something new can emerge. We call this place, the crucible. Having potential is not sufficient. For potential to become actuality, we have to *hold these energies* with awareness, acceptance, exertion, honesty, appreciation, challenge, etc.

Self-Actualization Psychology is the larger frame of Neuro-Semantics. This is what we are all about—actualizing people and organizations, families and countries so that each and every person can become fully alive/ fully human and then as groups and communities, we can actualize ourselves culturally to create self-actualizing companies, corporations, and even countries.

THE LARGER FRAME

When I first heard about NLP, entered the field, learned the models, and then later began contributing to the model, I was not quite sure how to think about where NLP fit in the field of psychology. My own journey in psychology to becoming a psychologist began with psychoanalysis, then Adlerian individual psychology, I dabbled in Jungian, got caught up with the transactional analysis movement in the 1970s, and when I next found cognitive psychology (Beck and Ellis) in the early 1980s, I made that my model of choice.

It was during the time that I was focusing on the cognitive-behavioral approach to communication that I found NLP. And, having known and read Chomsky and George Miller (two of the key individuals who launched the Cognitive Psychology movement), I was not surprised to later see NLP put into the category of Cognitive Psychology in various textbooks.

Sometime later, I wrote that Bandler and Grinder created *a cognitive model* of communication by using the formulations of transformational grammar and general semantics as they looked at Gestalt therapy (Perls), Family Systems (Satir), and medical hypnosis (Erickson). And yet I missed another frame, another category, and one that I now realize is actually *the larger frame.* I missed how NLP was but one of scores and scores of off-shoots from the third force in psychology, the Human Potential movement.
> Why did I miss that? How did I miss that?
> And how did *everybody* else who has written about the sources and history of NLP miss it?

My guess is that we missed it, in part, from being too close to it and because perhaps Bandler and Grinder didn't even know the larger from within which they were working.

As every student of NLP knows, it all began with Fritz Perls and Gestalt theory. It began when Richard Bandler, working as a student stocking the books for *Science and Behavior Book Company* was asked to transcribe some audio-tapes of Perls. Perls who prided himself in being "a dirty old man" was getting old and Dr. Robert Spitzer had some tapes that he wanted transcribed for a book.   So he found a student to do the transcribing.

Now Perls was living at Esalen at Big Sur, the key "growth center" of the Human Potential Movement and Richard was at the University of California at Santa Cruz, he took the transcription job on the side from his school work. Then, as he put on headphones and transcribed the tapes, he began to pick up on Perl's language and intonational patterns which he later used as a fourth-year student for a class on Gestalt therapy. Later, just prior to Per's death,

Richard went to Esalen to interview meet him.

Then Dr. Spitzer asked Richard to record and transcribe sessions from Virginia Satir. Now she had been the first person in charge of the residential training program at Esalen and creator of Family Systems therapy. At the same time, another person who played a key role at Esalen was none other than Gregory Bateson. In fact, the two last years of his life, he moved to Esalen and lived in the house that Perl's had lived in.

In this way NLP was directly influenced by *these key leaders* of the human potential movement. And where did the idea of *modeling experts* come from other than Abraham Maslow who began doing that in the 1930s. What Richard discovered from his ability to hear the *patterns* of influence from Perls, Satir, and Erickson and John discovered from his ability to articulate the *linguistic structure* of those patterns was *a way to model* these experts — and that began the content of NLP.

Well, almost. They also introduced other content into NLP as they picked up on the premises of the third force in psychology and colonized as *the NLP presuppositions.* I say "colonized" because typically in NLP practitioner training and in the early NLP books the presuppositions are presented as just a set of *ideas* that they heard which didn't come from anywhere in particular. But that was not exactly t rue. They came directly from the human potential movement! They came from Maslow, Carl Rogers, Rollo May, and others.

So what's the larger frame? The third force in psychology, the Human Potential Movement. NLP came into existence from those who lived in southern California where "the spirit of the times" was the counter-culture hippie movement, the anti-war movement, the Cognitive psychology movement, and the Human Potential Movement.
>   Why is this important?
>   How is this relevant to anything?

It is critically important because it helps us understand the larger frame. It helps us understand what "running your own brain," taking charge of your states, communicating with more precision, etc. is all about. These are the sub-goals that Maslow and Rogers set in the third force in psychology. These were expressions of **how** we begin to *actualize* our highest *potentials.* And they come from the new psychology that emerged in the middle decades of the twentieth century that assumed people were not broken but had all the necessary resources to become fully human.

And if that's the larger frame, now we can see where NLP and Neuro-Semantics stands and what these models were originally designed to achieve. Unlike the pessimistic and deterministic nature of the first two forces in psychology, Psycho-analysis and Behaviorism (Learning theory), NLP and Neuro-Semantics believes in human possibilities, in change, in ongoing development, and in modeling the best specimens for advancing and accelerating development.

Of course, without this larger frame some people have used NLP to sell cars, "persuade" people

in order to get their way, and to manipulate others without a concern for the ethics or ecology of such. Not surprising, this is the biggest complaint against NLP. People who have studied just enough NLP to be dangerous have used it in hurtful ways to their own advantage. And a model that began with the vision of each and every person *running his or her **own** brain* has now many offering a way to use language patterns and processes covertly so that others don't know what you're doing or installing. This has become *the shame of NLP* and something that we in Neuro-Semantics strongly oppose.

Why? *Because of the larger frame.* All of the models, tools, patterns, and languaging is about *enabling and empowering people to take charge of their own lives* and to actualize the potentials of talent and wisdom so that they can become fully themselves. It is also about enabling people to be *conscious* and reflectively *mindful* of what we do with them.

It is *the larger frame*, in fact, that today can rescue us from the shame of NLP. It is also *the larger frame* that can enable us to take the models of self-actualization from Gestalt, Family Systems, NLP, Cognitive, Ericksonian, Narrative, Humanistic Pyschology, and the scores and scores of other off-shoots of the Human Potential Movement and now pull them together to create the Neuro-Semantics of Self-Actualization.

It is *this larger frame* that has opened up lots of new things –
> Self-Actualizing Companies
> Self-Actualizing Cultures
> The Self-Actualizing of Synergy
> Living *above* the Deficiency Motivation Level
> Enlightened Management and Leadership (Self-Actualizing Managers and Leaders)
> Managing through Meta-Pay (Maslow's term)
> The Volcano of Meaningful Needs (Maslow's new Motivation theory enriched by Neuro-Semantics)
> The Peak Experiences through Meta-Motivation (Maslow's term)
> Etc.

LIVING ABOVE
THE DEFICIENCY LEVEL

Here's a Neuro-Semantic question about your own self-actualization:

> At what *motivational* level do you live your life?
> Do you live at the *deficiency* level or the *abundance* level?
> Do you know the difference each makes?

Deficiency Level

If we humans are driven and motivated by our *needs*, and the most surface and external needs are our biological needs, then using Maslow's revolutionary Hierarchy of Needs model, this means that developmentally we move through the *deficiency needs—*the survival, safety, social, and self needs. In these "needs" we *need* something. We are *needy*.

These basic lower needs operate by *deficiency*. Hunger is a need for food; thirst is a need for water. We also need safety, security, affection, love, approval, respect, dignity, etc. In these needs, we are needy. We are demanding. "Feed me!" "Protect me!" "Love me!" "Respect me!" "Approve of me!" "Don't reject me!" "Don't criticize me!"

When we live at this level, we see the world and the world of other people *in terms of satisfactions for our needs.* People and things are *objects* for our satisfaction. We use food, money, people, work, and everything else *psychologically* to feel safe, loved, valued, etc. As a result it is impossible to see the world and others *as they are*. Instead, we see them through the clouded lens of *what they can do for us.*

Maslow said this is what prevents clear perception. He said this deficiency driven level of motivation is what lies at the heart of "jungle motivation." By way of contrast, when we move *beyond* the "lower" needs and have a basic satisfaction of the first four levels (survival, safety, love and affection or social, and self needs for value, approval, and respect), the higher or meta needs emerge. Now an entirely different kind of motivation occurs.

Up to the Abundance Level

At this level, we no longer *need.* Maslow called this the *meta-motivation* level. This is the level where we experience the drive for self-actualization. Now we *want* and *long for* other things—beauty, form, justice, love, contribution, kindness, etc. Here there is no longer the inner demandingness of "Love me!" "Protect me!" etc. Here our motivation changes. We now shift our concern to that of *expressing* ourselves, *being* oneselves, *growing*, and actualizing our highest potentials.

This explains why self-actualizing people have a "more efficient perception of reality and more comfortable relations with it." Why? Because they are not seeing the world or others through the clouded lens of deficiency. Maslow (1954, *Motivation and Personality*) wrote,

> "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." (page 205)

When we move to the level of self-actualizing, we lose the *inner demandingness of deficiency motivation* and now live to be and to *express* ourselves, to find and express our gifts, passions, and potentials. In Neuro-Semantics, this is a description of the "genius" state where we become so absorbed in something *outside* of ourselves that we are able to let go of all of the inner structures of our Matrix—Self, Time, World, etc.

As we are no longer trying to *do* anything or *get* something *from* the world or others, we can see it more clearly. We are no longer a slave to our deficiency fears and hopes. We are *free* to just witness, just *be*, just experience. This allows us to be non-judgmental and solution focused rather than ego-centered. Now we can look at problems without caving in or having fight/flight responses. We just look at the problem from the perspective of solution—"How can we solve it?" While we work hard for solutions, it is not from a demandingness to be someone, approval, love, recognition, etc. but for the *joy of discovery and solution.* This also describes the "genius" state of self-forgetfulness.

In the flow state of genius, Self goes away. We get the ego out of the way. And because we don't put the ego on the line, we're no longer stumbling over it! What we do, our successes and failures, are not about *us*. They do *not* determine our worth, value, loveability, approval, etc. They are about some action or expression. Now we are free to explore, experiment, take risks, try things out, fail, succeed, try again, etc. No wonder this is the core of resilience!

Our Layers of Needs
Maslow's work demonstrated that human motives are *hierarchically structured.* This means that their arrangement within the hierarchy are defined by their respective levels of urgency, intensity, and priority. Maslow used the word *prepotency* to describe how we experience the lower needs more intensely and urgently as we satisfy one, new needs emerge.

What was so *revolutionary* about Maslow's theory of motivation? It is that *all of our needs are basic and fundamental to us as human beings* and that there are structured hierarchically. This means that the "lower" needs are *not* more any more "basic" or fundamental than the "higher" needs, only that they are earlier in ascendency.

In his day, traditional psychology (Freud's psychoanalysis and Watson's behaviorism) dismissed the "higher" motives as merely secondary. They did not see the higher needs as universal in the human species. This is what Maslow challenged and changed. The relative prepotency of the

hierarchy of needs means that the higher needs are just as core, only less prepotent and later in emergence. They are there all along, they simply do not arise until other needs are satisfied.

Today, having *lower* and *higher* needs is so obvious that it seems insignificant. Who gets excited about that?   We may even wonder, "So what? What difference does it make?" What are the implications of this? Of course we need survival needs of food, shelter, water, warmth, sex, oxygen, etc. in a more primitive way than we need love and affection or self-regard. It's also obvious that we *develop* over the life-span to move beyond lower needs to higher needs.

In the 1940s and 1950s these facets were *revolutionary.* And yet even today there are still implications from the distinction between lower to higher needs that provides critically important distinctions for managing, leading, parenting, etc. What are these?

One of the most important has to do with profiling and identifying *at what level of need are you living?* If you are living at the lower needs, then *deficiency* will be the mechanism and factor that will mostly be governing and directing your experience and psychology. How is this? How does this work?

It works because the way the lower needs operately by satisfying deficiencies. We *lack* something, we *need* something. And that *need of lack* drives our entire mind-body-emotion system to scream and clamor for gratification. We feel *pushed* and driven from without by the lack to get what we need. We feel *needy,* and we are. Yet that *needy* feeling, arising from our deficiency, typically influences our thinking-and-feeling so that we think of the world as a place of limited resources.

As *scarcity* then becomes one of our frames, we see life and others in terms of scarcity.
> "There's only so much. When others have more, that takes away from what I have. It's them or me. It's win or lose. The world is a jungle. Ge what you can because others are always ready to take from you. Life is a red claw."

This is the feel of deficiency motivation. It is the attitude of living at the level of the lower needs. This is true for survival, it is also time for safety, love and affection, and self-regard.
> "There's only so much. The more you have, the less I have." "We have to divide equally to have peace."

Because they are not based on deficiency and because you can never satisfy them, a whole new world arises when we move to the self-actualization needs. In fact, the more you get, the more you have to give and the more you want.

So, at what motivational level are you living?
> Deficiency or self-actualization?
> Inner neediness and demandingness or free expression?
> Do you see the world and others through the spectacles of your needs?
> Are you always processing what others say and do through what it means about you?
> Do you bring your inner needs and make demands of life and others?

Or, are you able to see things *as they are* without judgment and projection?
Are you ready to raise the level at which you live?

That's what self-actualization is all about – and why we move there by the *unleashing process.*

THE SYNERGY THAT
SELF-ACTUALIZING CREATES

When I first began my research into Maslow and the Human Potential Movement I did not know that Maslow was the person who introduced the concept of *synergy*. I also did not know *where* he got that concept. What I discovered was that he did not come up with it on his own, but that he popularized what he had learned from Ruth Benedict.

It was *Ruth Benedict,* as a pioneering anthropologist, who invented the concept of *synergy* to explain different cultures. It happened when she was exploring different cultures and seeking to create a comparative sociology. After trying numerous formulations, Ruth came up with *the idea of synergy* and from that created the distinction of low to high synergistic cultures.
> "*High* social synergy is where institutions insure mutual advantage . . . and *low* social synergy occurs where the advantage of one individual becomes a victory over another.*"*

What is synergy? *Synergy* is what occurs when *the cooperative action of discrete individuals or groups has the total effect that's greater than the sum of the effects taken independently.* The term itself , *to work* (ergon) *together* (syn), speaks of cooperation and collaboration. Benedict found that in secure, high synergy societies, wealth tends to get spread around so that it is siphoned off from the high places to the low places. Maslow discovered this also in his field research with the Blackfoot Indians of Alberta Canada.

As long as people live at the *deficiency* level, they see and use each other as *objects of their own needs* (Reflection #11). This undermines synergy. Synergy between people and groups arise when people can move to a higher motivational level, to the self-actualization level.

We can think about synergy individually within a person and collectively within a group. By creating a synergy within ourselves we are able to synergize our own energies and collaborate with others to create a collaborative culture or company.

What is the opposite of synergy? The opposite is conflict, dichotomy, and polarization. The opposite is linear *either/or* thinking rather than both/and systemic thinking. With linear thinking, the world becomes a set of polarities and human life and relationship becomes oriented to framing things in terms of duality and conflict:
> Selfish (Self) or Unselfish (Others)
> Work or Play
> Stingy or Generous

Mind or Body
Optimism or Pessimism
Enthusiasm or Skepticism
Reason or Emotion
Impulse or Control
Win or Lose
Competitive or Cooperation
Scarcity or Abundance
Socialism or Democracy
Innocence or Guilt
Friend or Enemy

Does this list sound like the everyday conflicts and issues that we read about in the newspaper or see on the evening news? Are these still the issues that leaders and managers deal with in boardrooms? Are these the issues that couples and families still argue about?

What then is the solution? The solution is to *rise above* any continuum, recognize the either-or framing, and synergize a higher unifying frame. Ah, the meta-stating process! The problem with *either-or* linear thinking is how we perceive reality as a duality. We then dichotomize things using either-or framing to simplify things, yet this only poorly represents the territory.

What's the solution to this? It is to make a *meta-jump* to a higher level where we can create a unifying frame, a synthesis of the polarities. Doing this gives us a chance at finding a unifying frame that more holistically integrates the different aspects of life. Then we can create a synergy inside of ourselves and within the conflicting differences in a community or society.

Synergy arises from a higher and more complex process, a meta-thinking process. Instead of either-or, we think systemically in terms of a multitude of contributing influences and variables. Now we think in terms of *both-and, degrees of, extent of, and relative influence of various variables.*

Benedict said that a culture can be *synergic with* human biological essence (with our lower and higher needs) or it can be *antagonistic* to it. Culture and biology are not in principle opposed to each other. Maslow asked, "Can we say that everyone yearns for the higher life, the spiritual, the B-values?" and answered it positively.

> "It is a potential in every newborn baby until proven otherwise. It is unwise to give up the possibility of the meta-life completely, and in principle for any living persons."

So in the process of self-actualizing, as we become our best selves, we transcend and resolve the dichotomies. Polarities disappear and many oppositions, thought to be intrinsic, merged and coalesced with each other to form unities. As we self-actualize we discover that the higher and the lower needs are not in opposition. We discover also as Maslow said, "A thousand philosophical dilemmas have no horns at all." (*Motivation and Personality*, p. 41).

Regarding the dichotomy of work and play, Maslow wrote about the new synergy that arises in

self-actualization.

> "We can learn from self-actualizing people what the ideal attitude toward work might be under the most favorable circumstances. These highly evolved individuals *assimilate their work into the identity into self,* i.e., work actually becomes part of the self part of the individual's definition of himself. Work can be psychotherapeutic, psychologic (making well people grow toward self-actualization). (1965 *Maslow on Management*).

This speaks about the synthesizing power of self-actualization and how the self-actualizing process operates as an integrative process of opposites and polarities.

> "My subjects had *put opposites together* in such a way as to make me realize that regarding selfishness and unselfishness as contradictory and mutually exclusive is itself characteristic of a lower level of personality development. So also in my subjects were many other dichotomies resolved into unities, cognition vs. conation (heart vs. head, wish vs. fact) became cognition 'structured with' conation as instinct and reason came to the same conclusions. *Duty became pleasure, and pleasure merged with duty*. The distinction between work and play became shadowy. How could selfish hedonism be opposed to altruism, when altruism became selfishly pleasurable? Those most mature of all people were also strongly childlike. These same people, the strongest egos ever described and the most definitely individual, were also precisely the ones who could be most easily ego-less, self-transcending, and problem-centered." (*Ibid.,* pp. 139-140)

> "They are all *integrators*, able to bring separates and even opposites together into unity. We speak here of the ability to integrate and of the play back and forth between integration within the person, and his ability to integrate whatever it is he is doing in the world. To the extent that creativeness is constructive, synthesizing, unifying, and integrative, to that extent does it depend in part on the inner integration of the person." (140)

As we self-actualize, the lessening of fear and the growing of acceptance enables us to integrate more. The self-actualizing process itself enables us to transcend and resolve such dualities that once created conflicts for us. This is one of the powers of self-actualization.

> "It can be said of such a person with real meaningfulness that he is being his own kind of person, of being himself, of actualizing his real self. *His work is his play and his play is his work.* If a person loves his work and enjoys it more than any other activity in the whole world and is eager to get to it, to get back to it after any interruption, then how can we speak about "labor" in the sense of something one is forced to do against one's wishes?"

> "What sense is left to the concept "vacation?" For such individuals it is often observed that during their vacations, that is, during the periods in which they are totally free to choose whatever they wish to do and in which they have no external obligations to anyone else, that it is precisely in such periods that they devote themselves happily and totally to their 'work." Or, what does it mean "to have some fun," to seek amusement? What is now the meaning of the world "entertainment?" How does such a person "rest?" What are his "duties" responsibilities, obligations?"

> "A synergistic institution was one that arranged it so that a person pursuing his selfish ends was automatically helping other people thereby; and that a person trying to be altruistic and helping other people and being unselfish, was also automatically and willy-nilly helping along his own selfish advantages."

> "At this level of discourse the mutual exclusiveness between selfishness and unselfishness has also disappeared. What is good for us is good for everyone else, what is gratifying is praiseworthy, our appetites are ow trustworthy, rational, and wise, what we enjoy is good for us,

seek our own (highest) good is also seeking the general good." (318)

THE IDEA OF
A SELF-ACTUALIZATION COMPANY

I have talked about self-actualization as a process for *individuals,* but what about *groups*?

> Can *a group* self-actualize?
> Can a business become a Self-Actualization *Company?*
> If so, what would that be like?
> How would a business operate if it were committed to the self-actualization of all of its people?
> What would self-actualizing managing and leading be like?

Maslow began exploring this these very questions the 1960s. Taking a break from his teaching at the University, he went to California and became a Visiting Fellow at the Non-Linear Systems, Inc. plant in Del Mar, CA. He did this at the invitation of Andrew Kay, President of Non-Linear Systems (NLS). In preparation he read Peter Drucker and Douglas McGregor who originated the idea of Theory X and Theory Y regarding two paradigms of business and management. Kay and Maslow later said that NLS was demonstrating that organizational and worker interests could converge through enlightened management (*On Eupsychican Management*, p. 270).

Maslow described *enlightened management* as what a self-actualization manager would engage in. Of course, he then muddled things up by giving it an esoteric name—*eupsychian*! He invented the term eu-psychician, meaning new-psyche or new-self, as meaning "moving toward psychological health." No wonder *Eupsychican Management* did not become a best seller! (As an aside, in 1999 when the book was reprinted, the title was changed to *Maslow on Management.*) In that work, Maslow explored the question of extending self-actualization to work, management, leadership, groups, politics, and society. To that end he asked such questions as:

> "What conditions of work, what kinds of work, what kinds of management, and what kinds of reward or pay will help human nature to grow healthily, to its fuller and fullest stature? How treated? What conditions will they work best? (p. 227)

He also challenged the current economic theory in the following way:

> "Classic economic theory, based as it is on *an inadequate theory of human motivation,* could be revolutionized by accepting the reality of higher human needs, including the impulse to self-actualization and the love for the higher values."

When we think about self-actualizing people working together and creating *a Self-Actualization Company,* we are faced with fundamental questions about human psychology and the basic issues of motivation, responsibility, relationships, etc. We are faced with multiple beliefs about

many facets of organizational life.

> How good a society does human nature permit?
> How good a human nature does society permit?
> How good a society does the nature of society permit?
> Do you believe that people are trustworthy?
> Do you believe that people seek responsibility and accountability?
> Do you believe that people seek meaning in their work?
> Do you believe that people naturally want to learn?
> Do you believe that people don't resist change but resist being changed?
> Do you believe that people prefer work to being idle?

Maslow's ideas about enlightened management elaborated the concept of synergy originated by Ruth Benedict. How can we create *synergy* in a business, company, cooperation, and society? How can enlightened management create a synergy between building an organization *and* attending to the well-being of the individuals working within it? And what did he conclude?

> "The old-style management is steadily becoming obsolete . . . The higher people get, the more psychologically healthy, the more will enlightened management policy be necessary in order to survive in competition, and the more handicapped will be an enterprise with an authoritarian policy . . . that is why I am so optimistic about Eupsychian management . . . why I consider it to be the wave of the future." (286)

For a company or culture to become synergistic, we set up a mutually beneficial relationships between individuals and the company so that which is beneficial for the individual is beneficial for everyone and for the organization. Why? Because as Benedict showed, in a high synergy cultures people feel secure, benevolent, and high in morale. There is an emphasis on generosity, abundance, cooperation, and personal responsibility. In low synergy cultures people are insecure, in conflict, and low in morale.

If self-actualization is fulfilling our gifts, talents, and passions, if it is being our best selves even at work, then we can begin to design work to fulfill not only our lower needs, but also our highest needs.

> "Perhaps we shall soon be able to use as our guide and model the fully growing and self-fulfilling human being. The one whom all potentialities are coming to full development, the one whose inner nature expresses itself freely." (1965, p. 17)

Maslow believed that this enlightened management would be "the wave of the future" and so it is even now becoming. In the leadership and management of organizational life and corporate governance, we are even now in the midst of this rising wave which is what continues to make Maslow so relevant.

Back in 1965 Maslow even started a Journal, *Eupsychian Management: A Journal*. He used the journal to assert *the importance of higher needs* in all employees, whatever their level in a company. He insisted that authoritarian top-down management strategies robbed companies of their worker's intelligence and creativity and robbed the individual worker of an opportunity to experience the fulfillment of true productive work.

Fast forward some 40 years and today we are in the midst of the ever-changing nature of how to integrate and synergize the intellectual, personal, and creative *capital* of people within a business or corporation. No wonder business consult and coaching has become so important today. More than ever before leaders and managers are asking these self-actualization questions:

> How does one become a self-actualizing leader or manager?
> What does it mean to have a self-actualizing job?
> How can we change things so that work is not only about making a living, but expressing one's meanings and purposes?
> How can we lead and manage people to express their highest and best within the context of the products and services that we create?

As we think about creating *Self-Actualization Companies* and societies today, we look to the structures, systems, and conditions that we currently have and begin to explore what alterations will be needed. What will this mean in terms of economics? Today we know that money can only motivate workers to a certain limit and afterwards, loses its power. Why? Because we want more than just money as part of our pay, we want recognition, acknowledgment, being part of a team, having good and fun relationships, getting a chance to experiment, create, lead, etc. Maslow called this *meta-pay*.

> "To think of 'pay' in terms of money alone is clearly obsolete in such a framework. It is true that the lower need-gratifications can be bought with money— but when these are already fulfilled, then people are motivated only by higher kinds of 'pay,' e.g., belongingness, affection, dignity, respect, appreciation, honor, as well as the opportunity for self-actualization and the fostering of the highest values – truth, beauty, efficiency, excellence, justice, perfection, order, lawfulness, etc." (228)

It is when we are able to synthesize our talents and passions into a "job" that what we do becomes highly meaningful in its significance and as an expression of who we are. Then our actions and performances as expressions of what we do for a living enables us to self-actualize via our jobs and careers. Then our "jobs" becomes so much more. Maslow said that it is at the point where "the self-actualization job is assimilated into the identify or into the self by introjection," that our work not only becomes therapeutic, but self-actualizing.

Business that operates *only* from the lower human needs will inevitably incorporate deficiency, scarcity, and win/lose competition and that will become the quality and feel of the business. When we do business and create businesses, however, that includes the *higher self-actualization needs*, a new paradigm is given birth. Now we think about the creation of products and services, economic exchange, the creation of companies that recognize the full development of people, etc. in new and different terms. Now we begin considering the possibility of *a Self-Actualization Company*—the subject of the next reflection.

Self-Actualization Reflections #14

A SELF-ACTUALIZATION COMPANY
WHAT WOULD IT BE LIKE?

The great majority of companies, businesses, and corporations today are *not* Self-Actualization Companies. That's *not* what they are about; that is *not* their structure, their objective, their nature. Yet they could become such.

       How are they *not*?
       What would a Self-Actualization look like?
       How would it work?
       Would it be commercially viable?

A single owner of a company (a CEO or president) and a group of owners (shareholders) invest capital into a business to provide products and services to customers for the purpose of creating more wealth in many forms: money, investment, stocks, brand, etc. In the beginning of industries and the industrial age, owners needed people primarily for raw man-power, not for ideas or creativity. They needed workers for manual labor and some skilled labor and so structured their organizations after the military model. The primary motive of workers was money, it was for income to survive and make a living.

The higher needs of workers were hardly considered at all. But as the industrial age matured, and the information age began, things changed. Workers were not merely satisfied with their lower needs gratified, now they wanted financial and job security, then better relationships with colleagues, then status, recognition, dignity, etc. This societal growth of businesses continued as we moved into the computer and service ages.

The result is that today in most Western societies with an almost full employment rate (below %5 in the USA at this writing), people have many choices. They do not *only* work for a paycheck, for an income, for survival, nor even for security, social needs or even self needs, now they are living, thinking, and feeling at an even higher level—the level of self-actualizing. Now they want such things as to make a difference, to contribute, to learn, create justice, discover, create, and other things that makes the job *meaningful* and the work experience with colleagues, bosses, employees as *rich in significance and value.*

Yet, can "work" —can employment and career be expected to meet such self-actualization needs? And if it can, how would that influence the very structure and direction of a company or business? How would that change and influence the way leaders and managers work?

Maslow began thinking about the idea of a *Self-Actualization Company* from his work with the Blackfoot Indians in Canada and his mentorship with Ruth Benedict and her concept of synergy.

She said that groups and societies, which includes companies, can become synergistic. A business with high synergy, rather than low synergy, is one in which the success and achievements of one individual enriches everyone in the business.

Structurally this would mean a radical reduction of *internal* competition and the development of more of a sense of *team*. It would mean more democratization so that people treat each other more as equals and as colleagues, and so communicate more openly, keep fewer secrets, support each other, validate each person's different gifts and strengths, and reduce all that has become associated with *bad* politics. If any of this sounds familiar, you will recognize that this has been the direction that business has been moving for decades: de-centralizing bureaucratic structures, flattening hierarchy, management by walking around and coaching, opening the books to employees and teaching them to read a financial statement, etc.

In the mid-1960s Maslow become a Visiting Fellow at a company in California (Non-Linear Systems) to translate and apply his theory of motivation and personality to corporate life. This enabled him to take McGreogory's Theory X / Theory Y to a whole new level. In *Enlightened Management* he suggested numerous ways for coming come together in a company so that we relate to each other and to set up structures and systems that take into account human motivation at all of its levels. We have been selling human nature short, he asserted, and we have been managing processes based on a limited understanding of human motivation and personality.

Today it is now common knowledge, even a cliche, to assert that "our best resource is our people." As we have moved from industrialism to an economy of service and creativity, we have come to realize the critical importance of *human capital*. In most businesses, the company's human capital of the knowledge, creativity, and human skills walk out at 5 p.m. So what holds them there? What could or does drive them out? Research shows that 80% of people who leave, leave because of their immediate manager. In fact, retention of "talent" has become one of the biggest challenges. So also the field of how to profile, select, hire, and retain the best people. Whole industries have arisen to deal with these issues.

Why? Because "workers" no longer have to stay. They can leave. And they do leave if some of their higher needs are not met. Our expectations of what we want from "work" have risen so that we use our work to follow our passions, to express our talents, to develop more skills, to enjoy working with colleagues, to be a part of a successful team, to be a part of something bigger than ourselves, etc.

Without question, this puts a lot of pressure on owners, CEOs, leaders, managers, and entrepreneurs. It has also challenged theorists about how do we create self-actualization companies, societies, and cultures.

In a joint research study at Columbia University supported by the Sloan Foundation, Carnegie Mellon University, and the World Bank, David Lewin researched 495 organizations. He especially tracked the relationship between human resource practices and economic indicators since 1986. Among his conclusions were the following.

1) Companies that share profits and gains with employees have significantly better financial performance that those who don't.
2) Companies that share information broadly and that have broad programs of employee involvement perform significantly better than companies that are run autocratically.
3) In these companies, flexible work design is significantly related to financial success.
4) Training and development has a positive effect on business financial performance. In fact, two-thirds of the bottom line impact was due to the combined effect of group economic participation, intellectual participation, flexible job design, and training and development.

What is a self-actualization company? It's a business or company that recognizes that people are *motivated* at multiple levels and that as individuals move to the level of the self-actualization needs, so do groups of people. Societies are just as prone to keep growing and maturing and will do so until they come to the place where *meaning*, significance, and value become critical factors in the psychological makeup of how we work together.

In a self-actualization company, leaders and managers fully appreciate the role that *meaning* plays in terms of producing top performers. To get peak performance from people, they not only know that their people have to find their work meaningful, they have to frame the vision in terms of meaning so that it creates buy in and commitment. All of this highlights the crucial role of *soft skills* in taking a company from good to great.

Within a Self-Actualization Company we understand that our success is dependent upon working as a team, communicating with precision and clarity, and constantly learning and improving. That's why a Self-Actualization Company will have a coaching culture, will recognize the problem of paradigm blindness, and will know how to capitalize on the mental-emotional, personal, creative, and spiritual *capital* of everyone.

Given this, those leading a Self-Actualization Company know that *attitude* is critical as is the goal of bringing out the best in other (which is the purpose of management), facilitating new resources, activating creativity, and communicating in a way that inspires.

HOW MASLOW MISSED MEANING
Part II

Maslow Missed Meaning. I wrote about that in Reflection #6. In spite of the exciting and even revolutionary insights that he achieved with the Hierarchy of Needs model, it was because Maslow overlooked the role of meaning in our experience that his model became static and rigid. *How* he missed it I know don't.

Perhaps he missed it because he put *meaning* as one of the self-actualization needs and having filled the category he didn't see it having other functions. Perhaps he missed it because he used other words (value, significance, "for the sake of," "symbolic value," etc.) which blinded him from it. Perhaps he was so focused on describing the higher states of self-actualization, modeling self-actualizers, and linking it to the lower biological needs that he just didn't think it was important. And finally, perhaps that's why, toward the end of his life, his dissatisfaction with "the third force" in psychology (the growth or human potential movement), he felt ready to pioneer an entirely new approach, his "fourth force," the transpersonal psychology.

Whatever caused it, Maslow missed the most dynamic factor of all. He missed the key factor that actually serves as the *leverage* within human experience for change, ongoing development, and transformation.

What is the *meaning* that Maslow missed? And how does it play such a critical role? The *meaning* that Maslow missed is the freedom we have for defining, representing, associating, framing, and evaluating things. In Neuro-Semantics, I have recently traced out 10 kinds or levels of *meaning*. Our ways of creating meaning are so many. We create associative meaning, representational meaning, metaphorical meaning, linguistic meaning, evaluative meaning, perceptual meaning, intentional meaning, etc.

So when we ask the question, "What does that *mean* to you?" we have to listen to the many things that they "hold in mind" about the reference, the many ways that they encode or represent their meanings, and the levels or layers of meaning. In that way, we can identify the entire meaning system (or matrix).

What does *food* mean to you? What does *eating* mean to you? Does it *only* mean fuel, energy, vitality, and health? Or does it mean love, reward, comfort, the good life, deserving, de-stressing, socializing, feeling full, enjoyment, fun, etc.? Whatever it means to you determines how you *experience* it, how you *feel* about it, and how you relate to it and it relates to you. If you over-load it with meaning, if you semantically load it with too much meaning—food can

become dominating, controlling, even destructive to you.

People who can't say *no* to food and to over-eating, may now have a habit that *has* them, but within and above the habitual way of handling food is "what saying *no*" means. If it means deprivation, loss of joy, loss of love, loss of comfort, misery, etc., then we would experience and feel saying *no* to three extra helpings of dessert as far too painful to endure.

Actually, the feeling of *pain*, loss, deprivation, dieting, giving up, etc. have are *semantic reactions*. They are reactions from the *meanings* we attribute to food and eating. Give food and eating opposite meanings, "fat, ugly, undesirable, out-of-control," etc. and we create another problem, "eating disorders." Then, our meanings about being fat, about the importance of being thin, etc. will even shift our perceptions distorting our body image.

Ultimately, meaning is the most critical factor. There's nothing more critical. In the end, no experience and no event makes us feel anything. In itself, it means nothing. It is the *meanings* we create and attribute to those events that *create our experience and our emotions.* That's why every emotion is always right— right in relation to the meanings (the maps) out of which they come. That's also why we cannot blindly trust our emotions. Emotions are derived from our mappings. They reflect the *relationship* between the meanings we have mapped and our experiences of the territory they seek to help us navigate.

Knowing all of this now enables us to recognize the static nature of Maslow's hierarchy and how he missed the most *dynamic variable* of all in human motivation and personality—a dynamic that would energize the hierarchy and transform it into a more dynamic model.

He even admitted such. In *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (1971), Maslow wrote:
> "It is a great mystery to me why affluence releases some people for growth while permitting other people to stay fixated at a strictly materialistic' level." (p. 316)

In his classic work, *Motivation and Personality* (1954) he described meaning as a *cognitive capacity:*
> "If we remember that the cognitive capacities (perceptual, intellectual, learning) are a set of adjustive tools, which have, among other functions, that of satisfaction of our basic needs, then it is clear that any danger to them, any deprivation or blocking of their free use, must also be indirectly threatening to the basic needs themselves." (p. 47)

In the same work, about the search for meaning, he describe it as one of our higher needs:
> "This process is called by some, search for meaning. We shall then postulate a desire to understand, to systematize, to organize, to analyze, to look for relations and meanings, to construct a system of values." (1954, p. 50)

Yet Maslow came very close to recognizing the distinction between needs and the meanings we attribute to them:
> "Eating may be partially for the sake of filling the stomach, and partially for the sake of comfort and amelioration of other needs. One may make love not only for pure sexual release, but also to convince oneself of one's masculinity, or to make a conquest, to feel powerful, to win more basic

affection. (1954, p. 55)

In that quote, he used the phrase "for the sake of" as synonymous with meaning. Perhaps that's what caused him to miss the significance of meaning. In the following, he used the phrase "symbolic value" for meaning.

> "A goal object may have two meanings for the individual. First, it has its intrinsic meaning and secondly, it may have a secondary, *symbolic* value. A certain child deprived of an ice-cream cone that he wanted may have lost simply an ice cream cone. A second child, deprived of an ice cream cone, may have lost not only a sensory gratification, but may feel deprived of the love of his mother because she refused to buy it for him."

> "For the second boy the ice-cream cone has an intrinsic value, but may also be the carrier of psychological values. First, carries the physiological value only, the second adds a psychological value to it. It's only when a goal object *represents* love, prestige, respect, or other basic needs that being deprived of it will have the bad effects ordinarily attributed to frustration in general." (1954, p. 106)

Regarding celibacy, he wrote:

> "It's now well known that many cases are found in which celibacy has no psychopathological effects. But if it felt to represent rejection by the opposite sex, inferiority, lack of worth, lack of respect, isolation, or other thwarting of basic needs – it is pathological."

He even recognized that the experience of deprivation differs from the meaning of a threat. "Deprivation is not psycho-pathogenic; threat is." (p. 107). In this he understand that "Most neurotic symptoms or trends among basic-need gratification bent impulses that have got stymied or misdirected or confused." That is, distorted meanings and responses about needs can create distortions.

It is precisely because our construction and attribution of meaning is a *dynamic process* that what something means can and does change. It changes all the time. First we frame it one way, then we frame it another. This reframing of meaning creates a transformation. Missing this *dynamic variable* caused Maslow's hierarchy to be rigid and static and led to the pyramid metaphor and emblem.

But now, recognizing and incorporating *the dynamic variable of meaning construction* into the picture enables us to re-frame the old pyramid so that we can now see it as a volcano with the spiraling, swirling reflexive thoughts-and-emotions of a human being within it creating all kinds of meanings about things. If we can accept, embrace, and use our ego-strength to look this in the face, we have a holding place for meaning-making, *a Crucible.* So within the volcano of our driving needs is *the Construct* of our meaning making as we meta-state layers upon layers of meanings and when we construct meanings that work, that fit the territory, and that can enable us to navigate in our development, then we explode into the higher self-actualization needs where we are in *the Zone.*

This describes the latest model in Neuro-Semantics: *The Construct, the Crucible, and the Zone* and the theme of my first book on self-actualization. As we are pushed by desires and pulled by

meanings, as we take charge of our construct and meta-state the transformational holding place of a Crucible, we are able to jet propel ourselves into the Zone of self-actualizing — the flow zone of the genius state. And all because we have recovered meaning in the self-actualizing process.

THE POWER AND WONDER OF
UNLEASHING POTENTIALS

Yes, I've written another book. I tried to avoid it, but you know how it goes when you get passionately fascinated by something and then step in and out of the genius flow state, suddenly you find yourself with a manuscript in hand.   Well, at least that seems to be more true for me having been through the patterns of the APG training.

Anyway it is entitled, *Unleashed.* I'm currently playing around with some sub-titles for the book. One is *What they didn't Tell you about Self-Actualization* and the other is *The Construct, the Crucible and the Zone,* another is, *How to Unleash your Highest Potentials for Peak Performance.*

What is the focus of this new book? It is on *the how of self-actualization*. How do we actualize our highest and best? And of course, my inspiration for it all was the vision of Abraham Maslow who set forth the initial vision:

> "Every baby has possibilities for self-actualization but most get it knocked out of them. I think of the self-actualizing man not as an ordinary man with something added but rather as the ordinary man with nothing taken away. The average man is a human being with dampened and inhibited powers." (174)

What is self-actualization? *It is being fully human.* It is being an *ordinary person with nothing taken away from you*! How about that? It is get over, and releasing, anything and everything that interferes with us growing to full maturity. It is releasing everything that *dampens* and *inhibits* our powers. It is as Carl Rogers put it, being a "fully functioning human being" or "becoming a person."

This vision of self-actualization by Maslow and Rogers was not about becoming *extraordinary*. The vision is to become everything that you already have the latent potential to become. That's different. That's why it is not about *adding* things to you, it is about *reclaiming* all that you already have.

In the 1940s Maslow began his "Good Human Beings" research, looking for people who were psychologically healthy and who developed the full range of their potentialities. This eventually grew into his modeling of self-actualizers. By 1950 he had developed a paradigm shifting model about human *Motivation and Personality* (the name of his 1954 classic). The following comes from his 1956 paper to the American Association of Psychology.

> "Self-Actualizing people, those who have come to a high level of maturation, health, and self-fulfillment, have so much to teach us that sometimes they seem almost like a different breed of human beings. But because it is so new, the exploration of the highest reaches of human nature and of its ultimate possibilities ... is a difficult and tortuous task."

At that time, this was absolutely revolutionary. No one had studied psychologically healthy, productive, and actualizing people before. No one had explored *the bright side* of human nature. This was cutting-edge. Eventually it led Maslow to write his third book, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature.* What was so revolutionary about this?

Namely that Maslow was asserting that there is a certain sense in which these extraordinary, whole, healthy person is *the only genuine representatives* of human nature and psychology. If the self-actualizing person is *not* an ordinary person with something added, but an ordinary person "with noting taken away," then the self-actualizing person is a full human being. This is then a description of the regular or ordinary person who has been *unleashed* from all of the man-made restraints of society, the human being without "dampened and inhibited powers and capacities." This makes the self-actualized person synonymous with human nature in general.

Wouldn't you say that this is quite a vision that he established? Yet there is more to it.
> "But the truth which we can see more and more clearly is that man has infinite potentiality, which, properly used, could make his life very much like his fantasies of heaven. In potentiality, he is the most awe-inspiring phenomenon in the universe, the most creative, the most ingenious."

For Maslow and the other pioneers fo the human potential movement, being creative, authentic, unique, and self-directing was part and parcel of the farther reaches of human nature—it's what within us already. It only needs to be unleashed. No wonder that he constantly asserted that "human nature for centuries has been sold short!" There is within all of us a tendency, an "instinct," and a predisposition to actualize our highest potentials.

> "Even if all these needs are satisfied, we may still often expect that a new discontent and restless will soon develop, unless the individual is doing what *he*, individually, is fitted for. A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write. What a man *can* be, he *must* be. He must be true to his own nature. This need we call self-actualization." (1954, p. 46)

This has numerous consequences and implications. It explains why we are never satisfied. Just as soon as we gratify one need, another emerges and we feel dissatisfied again. We are inherently restless. Have you noticed that? *Restlessness* is part of our nature, it is not something to be despised or eliminated. It is the basis of our full humanity. Restlessness and its emotional component, anxiety, is to be embraced, welcomed, and enjoyed. This is essential if you want to unleash your potentials.

In the studies of creativity, this is described as *embracing ambiguity* and being able to live with non-closure. If, however, somewhere along the way you "learned," or concluded, that you don't like non-closure, ambiguity, anxiety, restlessness or worse, that you created a belief that such is bad or unacceptable, you then created a frame against such and yet in doing so you dampened and inhibited your potentials.

To be creative is to be self-actualizing. When you are actualizing your highest and best potentials, you are becoming more creative not only in what you *do,* but more importantly in what you *are.* That's why *creativity* is par and parcel of self-actualization.

Have you sold yourself short? Are you living life having dampened and inhibited some of your best potentials? Are you ready to *unleash* new possibilities? Are you ready to awaken the genius within and learn how to step into the flow state of total engagement at will? If so, you're ready for Neuro-Semantics —for the revolutionary advances that you can make in unleashing your potentials by meta-stating yourself with the prerequisites of genius.

Here's to your highest and best!
May you be fully unleashed from any dampening and inhibiting!

WHAT DO WOMEN REALLY WANT?

As Maslow opened his classic work *Motivation and Personality* (1954), he asserted this:
> "Human life will never be understood unless its highest aspirations are taken into account. Growth, self-actualization, the striving toward health, the quest for identity and autonomy, the yearning for excellence must now be accepted beyond question as a widespread and perhaps universal human tendency." (p. xvi)

Now for a confession. I came up with the title of this Reflection just to get your attention, not to write about women, although I will be writing about what women want, I will also be writing about what human beings in general want. In this, our *needs* are not really all that different. Neither the needs of women versus men, the needs of whites versus blacks, the needs of Russians versus Americans, the needs of first world countries versus third world countries. All of these distinctions and the thousands of other distinctions that we create do *not* negate the similarity of our needs.

What do we want? What do we need? Maslow's answer to this question created a unifying frame for all human beings, one which invites a trans-cultural approach. Because while we may differ in *how* and *what* counts for gratification, the driving needs are the same: air, water, food, shelter, sex (survival needs), safety and security needs, social needs (love, affection, friendship), self needs (respect, recognition, achievement), and self-actualization needs (knowledge, order, beauty, justice, etc.).

We may differ at the level of our motivational at various times in our lives. At what level are you now living? What do we want? We want according to the level of our need gratification. This describes the natural order of things. And it describes the fluid nature of our *motivations*. Our motivation changes moment by moment according to how well we are adjusted and gratified to the ever-changing environment. It also changes according to *the meanings* that we have created about the needs we are experiencing. What do women want? It all depends, does it not?
— Where is the woman you're thinking about in fulfilling her needs?
— How does she think and what meanings does she give to those needs?
— How resourceful is she in getting her needs met?

What do men want? Again, the same questions apply. At what level is he living? Has he basically gratified the lower needs and is he ready to move on to the self-actualization needs? Or has some meanings and/or set of actions and relationships led to the distorting, mis-directing, and confusing his basic need gratification? If so, to what extent has he developed neurotic needs?

Neurotic needs? Yes, overload any need with too much meaning, and that *semantic overloading* will create distortions which will undermine our ability to cope and adjust with reality. Give "safety and security" too much meaning and a person can become obsessive-compulsive, refusing to accept basic human fallibility and anxiety. Neurotic "needs" on this order can actually be felt inside us as "needs" through the meanings that we invent and attribute. Where does it come from? It comes from semantically loading. And it leads to *semantic reactions.* This term, from Korzybski, refers to an automatic, unthinking, knee-jerk type of *reaction* that occurs so quickly and so systematically that it operates like a physiological reaction—like blinking when someone shines a light into our eye or a muscle jerking when someone taps a rubber hammer on our knee.

The difference is that we *react* to the meanings that have become embodied within our mind-body-emotion system. Do you have any *semantic reactions?* Do you bristle when certain words are used, ideas are expressed, tones of voice used, eyes roll in a certain way, someone raises their middle-finger, etc.? If so, that's a *semantic reaction.*

In our semantic reactions, *meanings* are moving and motivating us in defensive and reactive ways because at some level, we feel threatened. By the threat is entirely psychological, not physiological. The threat is a threat regarding *what something means.* Consider that. Isn't it amazing? Our whole mind-body-emotion system can *react* because of what something unconsciously means to us. We can become afraid of what something means, or would mean, *if* something occurs!

So at that moment, what do we want? Obviously we want to eliminate or reduce the threat. We want the threat to go away. But here's the rub. If the threat is a threat to our *meanings*, and our meanings are outside-of-our-awareness (unconscious) and embodied so deeply in our muscle memory that it is psycho-somatic, how do we then make the threat go away? How do we satisfy the *want* or *need* then?

While Maslow did not have the answer to this, Neuro-Semantics following Korzybski and the modeling of meta-levels with Meta-States does. The answer? We tease out the meta-levels of meaning frames, identify where the semantic threat lies, and correct the epistemological error.

"Epistemological error?" What's that? Epistemology refers to *how we know what we know*. It's the cognitive reasoning that makes up our conclusions, decisions, and beliefs. And when we have self-sabotaging and limiting *semantic reactions* there is always a cognitive or epistemological error involved. Here's what Maslow wrote about this:

> "The neurotic person is inefficient; he does not perceive the real world so accurately or so efficiently as does the healthy person. The neurotic is not emotionally sick, he is cognitively *wrong*." (1954, p. 153)

Lacking instincts, knowledge content in our inward knowings, we have to *learn* what things are and how to cope with them. Because of this we can make epistemological errors. We can be cognitively wrong. All it takes is a false map, a limiting belief, a mistaken decision, a cognitive distorted way of thinking, a toxic thought-virus. It is precisely because our mental maps *are not*

the territory that we have to work with them to make them as accurate and useful as possible. Otherwise we will not have a map to navigate the territory of reality.

What do women want? What does anyone want? *We want the satisfaction of our basic and higher needs.* Yet because we have so much freedom to influence our experience of our needs, we can and usually don't know what we want. That's why we have to *discover* our needs, accept them, learn first to cope with gratifying them and later to master their gratification as we adjust within our environment. That's why we have to explore our matrix of meaning frames and be able to step back from ourselves to just observe our demanding needs and make good healthy decisions about how to gratify them.

What do women want? It all depends. And it depends on many, many things. If all of this was simple, a simple model would work. Yet because we are not simple, but complex beings who have multiple variables driving our experience simultaneously, we need a systemic model that can work with this multiplicity. And that's why in Neuro-Semantics we have several models: the NLP communication model, Meta-States, Matrix, Axes of Change, Self-Actualization Quadrants. And with these models we can now develop the competency to know *what* to do *when*, *with whom*, and *why*.

ARE YOU READY TO
UNLEASH YOUR FULL POTENTIALS?

Here's some very personal questions, questions sure to upset some people, trigger anger in some challenge others, and begin an unleashing process for those with the ego-strength to face them and let them work within us.
— How much of your potential have you released to date?
— How much more potential do you believe lies dormant within awaiting to be unleashed?
— What would bring out your best and open up new possibilities?
— What dreams lurk on the edge of your awareness inviting you forward?
— What's stopping your from releasing your highest and best?
— What potentialities are now actualities in your life?

Several years ago I began working on the *knowing-doing gap*, the gap between all of our great ideas, insightful principles, and conceptual understandings and our ability to *put those into action* to make a profound difference in our lives. As a result the Mind-to-Muscle pattern and numerous other integrative patterns emerged.

Now there's another gap that I'm working on —*the Potential-Actual gap*. This is the gap between the self-actualization *potentialities* and our current everyday *actualities* of capabilities, competencies, and achievements. We all know that every human being is born with all kinds of *potentials*, but how many of these potentials are fully tapped, activated, and unleashed? Ten percent? Fifty percent? Does anyone ever unleash *all* of his or her potentials?

When we think about mental and intellectual potentials, emotional potentials, creative potentials, interpersonal potentials, health potentials, innovative potentials, enjoyment potentials, and so on — is anyone even half way there? And what if the purpose and adventure of life in the world as we know it is nothing more than the *adventure of unleashing our potentials* so that we can make an ever-greater contribution?

Okay, so how does *the unleashing process* work? What takes off the leashes holding us back? First and foremost is the dream itself. If we don't know, or believe, that there is vast potentiality within us, we wouldn't even start the process. So *awakening* to the dream is the first step. Ironically, traditional psychology has been one of the biggest detriments to this.

How is that? Primarily because traditional psychology was invented to answer a very different question. Not, "What are the wonderful possibilities in human nature?" Not, "How great can

average men and women become?" Not, "What are the potentials awaiting to be awakened within us?"

Those were *not* the questions that Freud and associates were asking at the end of the nineteenth century. They were asking a whole different set of questions: "What causes people to become hysterical?" "What are all of the ways that human nature can go wrong?" "What are the primitive urges pulsating within human nature that society and morals are trying to control?"

Traditional psychology arose as a way of *trying* to understand the aggressive, crazy, painful, destructive, and inexplicable urges of people. We could say that they were trying to understand *the dark side*. In that day, personality disorders, psychosomatic illnesses and acting out, regressive states of hypnotic pain, etc.—depression, dissociation, destructiveness, etc. were not understood at all and there were almost no cures or ways to manage such states. Fast forward a hundred years and psychology today has made tremendous advances in understanding *abnormal psychology* and *psycho-pathology*. Today there has been significant advance in helping people suffering from these distortions.

During that time psychology not only mapped out *abnormal* psychology, but also *normal* psychology as Developmental Psychology (Lifespan Psychology) became a discipline in its own right and numerous leaders pioneers the study of mental or cognitive development, emotional development, psycho-social development, sexual development, cultural, and so on.

Once this had been explored, then others began exploring *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (to quote the title of one of Maslow's books). That is, they began to study *the bright side*. They began to ask, "What's possible?" "What's the most we can anticipate and facilitate in human development?" And that opened up a whole new adventure.

So now there is at least *awareness*, and perhaps *awakening*, to the fact of human potential. Yet is that enough? Will the mere awareness of having latent potentials enough to unleash them? We all know that it is not. Things can interfere.

So we ask the interference question, "What stops you? What holds you back from unleashing your talents, predispositions, capabilities, energies, dreams, etc.?" And here we discover that the *biggest hindrance and interference to unleashing our potentials lies in **the messages** that are playing in the theater of our mind.* In other words, how we are communicating to ourselves about our potentials.

We question whether we really have the potential, "Can I do this? Maybe it's too big."
We question our right, "Who am I to think that? This is selfishness, egotism, pride!"
We fear the process, "It would take too much work, discipline, etc."
We feel insecure, "But what if I don't succeed?"

In other words, we get into *unresourceful states of mind and emotion **about** it.* Of course, these are negative meta-state *about* the primary state of learning, developing, exploring,

experimenting, trying, giving it a go, learning what doesn't work, refining our skills, bouncing back from set backs, stretching, continuous learning and improvement, etc.

And, if we don't know how to effectively and gracefully handle our meta-states, then transformational change of these states will either be a lot of work and "hard," or we will only make things worse for ourselves. But (and here is the magic of Meta-States) if we do know how to meta-state ourselves with positive frames to neutralize the toxic ones and set potential-releasing frames in the matrix of our mind-body system — then, unleashing will occur.

Now, you know why we spend day two of APG *clearing the path.* We do that by slaying dragons, readjusting our matrix of frames, developing a good relationship to concepts, meta-stating our emotions. And we do that to eliminate the negative meta-stating that interferes with unleashing our inner genius.

OH THAT THERE WAS
A CRUCIBLE FOR UNLEASHING!

When it comes to *unleashing potentials*, we're talking about a very dynamic experience. Like a seed in a museum or laboratory, the potentials are there, just waiting for the right ingredients, yet in the meantime, nothing happens. So much of "nothing happens" in fact, that we are sometimes surprised when the critical variables are supplied (some soil, sun, and water) and suddenly that inert little seed that seemed so simple, so small, so insignificant begins to explode with life! Suddenly it becomes very dynamic.

When a beautiful flower, delicious food, or gigantic tree emerges from the seed, we go, "What happened?" "Where did all of that come from?" This is just as true for a human seed and even more true of a human mind, a human heart, and a human being. Who knows what possibilities might emerge? I'm sure those who saw and experienced the little blind and deaf girl named Helen had *no idea of the potentials* that were just awaiting to be awakened. And what awakened them? What got through the darkness and the silence? The feel of water on the hand and face and the movement of a finger "writing" a symbol for water. That's when the magic occurred.

What are the variables in human experience for this kind of magic to occur? Do we need to study and research this question? Are there any clues about this? Actually, one of the key leaders in the Human Potential Movement has already researched and identified the critical success factors for awakening potentiality. I'm speaking about Carl Rogers. I'm also speaking about his classic work, *Becoming a Person*. While I read it two decades ago, until recently I didn't have a clue as to the pioneering insights that he demonstrated in that work. It wasn't that I had forgotten, it was that I didn't have "ears to hear" his genius when I first read it. It took another two decades for me to be prepared.

So what's in *Becoming a Person*? Rogers mostly argues from his psychotherapeutic practice and research through case studies that people who are hurt and struggling and even traumatized (his context was therapy) need involves three things: empathetic understanding, unconditional positive regard, and authenticity, genuineness, and congruency.

Rogers, the person who pioneered *client-centered therapy*, operated from the self-actualization premise that we are innately driven to grow, develop, and become all that we can become, that we have the necessary resources to do this, and that working with a client (even a therapy client) isn't about doing things *to* him or her, but facilitating a context, atmosphere, and relationship that allows the client to show the direction.

> "It is the client who knows what hurts, what directions to go, what problems are crucial, what experiences have been deeply buried. Unless I had a need to demonstrate my own cleverness and learning, I would do better to rely upon the client for the direction of movement in the process." (Rogers, 1961, p. 12)

Rogers fully accepted the premises of self-actualization that Maslow had enunciated. He said that man's nature is basically "positive" in nature, "is basically socialized, forward-moving, rational, and realistic." (p. 91).

For Rogers, the variables that make for healing, for change, and for transformation are:
> 1) *Empathy,* accurate empathy, empathetic understanding of a person which accepts the person, understanding *with* a person and not just *about* him.
> 2) *Positive unconditional regard* for someone as a person, a non-possessive love, care, or warmth for the person.
> 3) *Authenticity / genuineness, congruency:* being real, honest, and forthright about what one thinks, feels, and experiences in the relationship so that one is congruent in communications.

Rogers, even more so than Maslow, believed so much in the *natural organic* nature of change that he argued that it should be completely *non-directive.* In fact, this became his calling card. For him, *change just happens* under good conditions.
> "[Acceptance] seems to me to have value because the curious paradox is that *when I accept myself as I am, then I change.* . . . We cannot change, we cannot move away from what we are, until we thoroughly *accept* what we are. Then change seems to come about almost unnoticed." (Rogers, 1961, p. 17 italics added)

To facilitate this organic nature of change, the therapist (or coach, helper, facilitator) uses his own authenticity and reality. The change-agent works first and foremost on self, not other.
> "The more I am simply willing to be myself and the more I am willing to understand and accept the realities in myself and in the other person, the more change seems to be stirred up. It is a very paradoxical thing— that to the degree that each one of us is willing to be himself, then he finds not only himself changing but he finds that other people to whom he relates are also changing." (p. 21)

For Rogers, the facilitator's own authenticity and being-ness is his or her primary tool.
> "Personal change is facilitated when the psychotherapist **is** what he *is,* when in the relationship with his client he is genuine and without 'front' or facade, openly being the feeling and attitudes which at that moment are flowing *in* him. The more genuine and congruent the therapist in the relationship, the more probability there is that change in personality in the client will occur." (p. 62)

What creates the "space" —the atmosphere, the context, and the crucible for self-actualizing growth and unleashing to occur is the acceptance, care, concern, and warm regard.
> "The more *acceptance* and *liking* I feel toward this individual, the more I will be creating a relationship which he can use. By acceptance I mean *a warm regard* for him as a person of unconditional self-worth—of value no matter what his condition, behavior or feelings. I feel a continuing desire to understand—a sensitive empathy with each of the client's feelings and

communications as they seem to him at that moment." (p. 33).

What further creates the special space is the belief in the client's potentialities and behaving toward him or her in that way.

> "If I accept him [my client] as *a process of becoming,* then I am doing what I can to confirm or make real his potentialities. If I see this as his potentiality, he tends to act in ways which support this hypothesis. If I see a relationship as an opportunity to reinforce *all* that he is, the person that he is with all his existent potentialities, then he tends to act in ways which support *this* hypothesis." (p. 55, 56)

All of these critical factors creates a crucible wherein transformation can occur. Here, by listening empathetically to the person enables that person to begin to learn how to listen to him or herself in an accepting way. That cuts out the judgment (the negative meta-stating that creates dragons) and begins to set frames for discovery and understanding. Rogers says frees the person from rigidity, fixity, and impersonality of functioning.

What is a crucible? It's a place where we *hold hot and intense* emotions, thoughts, energies, needs, wants, desires, hopes, fears, angers, etc. Rogers doesn't use the metaphor of a crucible, but that of climate and atmosphere:

> "My aim has been to provide a *climate* which contains as much of safety, of warmth, empathetic understanding, as I can genuinely find in myself to give. Away from facades: move away from a self that one is not. Away from oughts. Away from meeting expectations, from the enormous pressures to become the characteristics expected. Away from pleasing others. Toward self-direction: becoming responsible for oneself, deciding what activities and ways of behaving having meaning for you, and what do not. Toward being process: fluidity, changing. An existing individual is constantly in process of becoming." (p. 167)

The crucible of human change, transformation, and unleashing starts here, but it doesn't end here. There's more to a crucible, things that Rogers missed, and that's the subject of the next Reflection.

THE CRUCIBLE OF SELF-ACTUALIZATION

What is a crucible?   The dictionary describes it as
> "A pot of a very refractory or heat-resisting non-metallic ceramic material used for melting and calcining a substance that requires a high degree of heat."

It is into a crucible that we pour steaming hot metals, metals at the boiling point so that in that space we can form and mold new products. Yet most crucibles are themselves made of fragile materials, from either clay graphite or silicon carbides. If you were to drop a crucible on a concrete floor, it would crack or shatter. So while a crucible is fragile yet we pour into it molten bronze!   There it swirls, burbles, hisses, and steams. We use these strong and resilient vessels as crucibles in order to profoundly change a substance as we create castings of various sort.

What then is the job of a crucible? It's simply to *hold* whatever is poured into it. So, is there a crucible for holding human needs and emotions? What would serve as a crucible that would assist us in unleashing our potentials?

In the last *Reflection* I mentioned the *kind of interpersonal space* that Carl Rogers described from his research that creates the safety and openness so that we allow what's deep inside to emerge. Rogers' research led him to specify empathetic understanding, unconditional positive regard, and authentic realness.
> *"My aim has been to provide a climate which contains as much of safety, of warmth, empathetic understanding, as I can genuinely find in myself to give."* (pp. 167-168).

If we need *a working space* for potentialities to emerge and a space where we can work with our drives, needs, aversions, emotions, passions, wants, fears, dreams, etc., having a *safe place* is first and foremost. How do we do this? What enables us to create this kind of space?

We begin by distinguishing person and behavior so that we know at the feeling level that people are more than their actions. We know this about ourselves; *we are more than our behaviors.* We are more than our thoughts, our emotions, our responses. This then empowers us to *unconditionally* value and esteem ourselves as "somebodies" so that we do not put our value or worth on the line based on some fallible aspect of human nature, like our thinking, feeling, acting, understanding, etc. And when we can do that, we can recognize the same about others.

It is precisely when we stop confusing *what people do* with *who they are as human beings* that we are able to rise above judging them. Judgment is what prevents the creation of a safe space, a transformational crucible.   What we need to create is a *real* or *authentic* space where we can

allow what *is* to just be without judgment or evaluation. This speaks about the critical role of acceptance. As we access an acceptance of people as real live human beings, fully fallible, we can step into the state of *just witnessing what is*.

And when we can simply *witness* what *is*, we can then face reality, deal with the cards dealt us, and make choices with clarity about what to change and what to let go. As a clay crucible doesn't judge or fight with the hot boiling metals poured into it, so we don't judge the intensity of a person's emotions, needs, or drives. There's no need to. This is just the human stuff from which our potentials emerge. Maslow liked to describe this as the ability to be a good animal, accepting our needs and drives as such, appreciating them for what they offer, and then handling them effectively.

> "See human nature as it is, not as they would prefer it to be. See what is before them without being strained through spectacles of various sorts to distort, shape, or color the reality. Self-actualizing people tend to be good animals, hearty in their appetites, and enjoying themselves without regret or shame or apology. They are able to accept themselves not only on those low levels, but at all levels as well; love, safety, belongingness, honor, self-respect." (*Farther Reaches,* p. 127)

While these are the things that begin to create a Crucible, Rogers missed something. He missed one of the most important and critical facets of a Crucible. He missed *what to do* with the safety, warmth, empathetic understanding space that he discovered was so important. He missed *using* that space for engaging in a direct conversation that gets to the heart of the client's difficulties. Because he presupposed that change would just organically occur, he failed to see the importance of the direct fierce conversation.

That's why next comes *the fierce conversation* as we begin to explore and discuss the brutal facts of the case. A fierce conversation doesn't mean that we are aggressive, ugly, mean, cruel, or uncaring, it simply speaks about the skill of "getting to the heart of things" without cover-ups, roles, personas, masks, defenses, etc. In a fierce conversation we can speak the truth regarding what *is* without needing all of the conventional correctness and politeness that more often than not prevents us from getting to the heart of things.

There's a verse in the Bible that describes this crucible quality, a verse that says we need to set aside cunning, crafty deceitfulness, and "speak the truth in love" so that we can grow up and mature (Ephesians 4:15). And that's the idea here. We speak *truth* with a frank *honesty* as we confront whatever brutal facts that need to be faced without caving in or reacting in defensiveness. After all, we don't need to be afraid of reality or to make ourselves an enemy to it.

This describes what we mean by the term "ego-strength," the ability to look reality in the face without falling apart. No wonder it takes a strong sense of self (*ego*, "I") to fearlessly face reality with a solution-focus orientation. Now we can hold a fierce conversation that can use the power of acceptance to *honesty* face and deal with reality as we find it rather than how we wish it would be. A fierce conversation is not a debate, the confrontation is with truth—finding it and facing it for whatever it is.

Because self-actualization is a function of synthesizing rich and robust *meanings* with effective *performances*, the fiercely honest conversation gets to the heart of things, the heart of *meaning.* And with that we discover the driving influences and the leverage factors for change. Yet to do that we have to cut through the roles, personas, excuses, "reasons," "explanations," justifications, defenses, and all forms of the bullshit. This is where speaking our truth and facilitating the emergence of another's truth comes in.

How do we do that? How does the fierce conversation occur within the Crucible. That will be the subject of the next *Reflection.*

THE FIERCE CONVERSATION
WITHIN THE CRUCIBLE

In Reflection #19 I spoke about *the Crucible,* and in Reflection #20 I wrote briefly about the art of having a fierce conversation, but what's the story about having a fierce conversation in the Crucible? In a word it is using acceptance and appreciation to create a safe and protected space of brutal honesty for getting to the heart of things and confronting the truth of our lives.

The problem in describing this, rather than experiencing it, of course, is with language. It is finding the right kind of words and examples so as to precisely identify what we meaning by "fierce conversation." As mentioned previously, it is not about being mean, nasty, crude, obnoxious, or hurtful. It is about being able to *describe* what *is* for whatever it is, without judgment, without evaluation, just descriptively. That's what the terms truth, bluntness, the brute facts, confrontation, forthright, etc. are trying to get at.

Yet how do we do that so that the other person doesn't feel attacked? So the person doesn't take it personal? So that another don't feel ganged upon and mistreated?   Obviously, there has to be the contextual space that I'm calling a Crucible so the other knows of our care, respect, acceptance, appreciation, etc. It is only *inside* that kind of space that we can apply honesty, truth, and brutal facts. Otherwise, these become too bitter of a pill to swallow. There also has to be the inner strength in the other which knows how to suspend meaning and just witness, to look at another's mirroring feedback without personalizing, the requisite ability to distinguish person from behavior, and the passionate commitment to one's own growth and development.

It was toward the end of his life that Maslow began discovering this facet of the crucible and wrote about his new insights in *Farther Reaches.* The occasion was his visit to a rehab center in New York. He wrote about it as *Synonon and Eupsychia* (Chapter 16, *Farther Reaches*). Here he wrote about the heat and intensity of the Crucible of the kind of "encounter" that people at the center experienced. In reflecting upon it, he wrote about his own experience in relating authentically and with brutal honesty to people.
> "I have spent a whole lifetime learning to be pretty careful with people , to be sort of delicate and gentle, and to treat them as if they were brittle china that would break easily."

Then he commented that he had read about Synanon and then went to an encounter where he experienced it in person.
> ". . . maybe [my] whole attitude is wrong. [Synanon] suggests that the whole idea of the fragile

teacup which might crack or break, the idea that you mustn't say a loud word to anybody because it might traumatize him or hurt him, the idea that people cry easily or crack or commit suicide, or go crazy if you shout at them— that maybe these ideas are outdated." (217)

It was there that Maslow saw and experienced what was called "an encounter group." Speaking to the leaders of the Synanon group, he wrote,

"The assumption in your groups seem to be that people are very tough, and not brittle. They can take an awful lot. The best thing to do is to get right at them, and not sneak up on them or be delicate with them, or try to surround them from the rear."

Maslow described this as getting —

". . . right smack into the middle of things right away. I've suggested that the name for this might be "no-crap therapy." It serves to clean out the defenses, the rationalizations, the veils, the evasions, and politeness of the world. In these groups people refuse to accept the normal veils. They rip them aside and refuse to take any crap or excuses or evasions of any sort."

How about that? "No-Crap therapy!" From these reflections, Maslow then stepped back one more level and write the following as he reflected on all of this.

"It raises a real question about the nature of the whole human species. How strong are people? How much can they take? The big question is how much honesty can people take? How is it good for them, how bad for them?"

Maslow, noting that T.S. Eliot said that "Mankind cannot bear very much reality" contrasted the attitude that believes that people cannot take it straight with what the "encounters" at Synanon where they gave feedback *straight,* pulling no punches.

"On the other hand, the kind of experience that you are having here indicates that not only can people take honesty, but also that it may be very helpful, very therapeutic, it may move things faster. This is true even when the honesty hurts." (217)

"The things that people need as basic human beings are few in number.   Do you think that this honesty, this bluntness that even sounds cruel at times, provides a basis for safety, affection, and respect. It hurts, it must hurt. The swords were out, and there was no gentleness about it. It was very straight, very direct, very blunt. Do you think that this works for you? Give out as much as they can take, dish it out, the faster the whole thing will move."

All of this led Maslow to reflect more about the role of responsibility in unleashing growth to "breed grown-up people" as well as the development of responsibility in the human personality.

"It looks as if one way to breed grown-up people is to give them responsibility, to assume that they can take it, and to let them struggle and sweat with it. Let them work it out themselves, rather than over-protecting them, indulging them, or doing things for them." (220)

Finally, on a much more personal note, Maslow commented,

"Nobody has ever been that blunt with me in my whole life. It is certainly a striking contrast to the conventional world, the world of university professors. It shook me up a little last night. In the world I come from everyone is so polite because they are avoiding confrontation. There are a lot of prissy old maids around—I mean masculine "old maids." (224)

The fierce conversation in the Crucible is one of reality. We don't become authentic until we

can honestly and truthfully face reality (the territory) on its own terms. And we can't do that without the support of safety, value, compassion, and respect. When that's supplied (by self or other) and we have a Crucible, then we can face the mirror. We can then lay things on the line and get to the heart of the matter by *acknowledging the brute facts* without flinching. And that is the soil from which unleashing grows.

Self-Actualization Reflections #22

WHAT DO SELF-ACTUALIZING PEOPLE WANT?

In the well-formed outcome pattern and in all forms of coaching, question number one is, *"What do you want?"* We have this week been driving that question home in the Coaching Mastery (ACMC) training as we've been teaching the art of getting a KPI (key performance indicator) for a coaching sessions and as we have been learning the Change Dance on the Axis of Motivation.

What do you want?, as a question, begins the exploration into motivation and drive. It begins the exploration into a person's Matrix of need, desire, hope, fear, agenda, intention, and outcome. It begins the upward or meta-adventure into a person's matrix of frames and feelings. And so we repeat the question, level upon level. *What do you want? And when you get that, what are you going for?* Eventually we ask the ultimate *what* questions, *When you get that highest value completely and fully, what does that give you?*

If you've been in a Neuro-Semantic training, you recognize this as the Intentionality Pattern as well as the Pleasure pattern—patterns which simultaneously elicit values. That is, they elicit a hierarchy of your belief frames about what you value and consider highly significant and important. Simultaneously, they elicit your *being-values.*

Ah yes, *being*-values. These are the values of *being* in contradistinction to *doing or achieving.* These are the things that we value as significant not because of what they give us or lead to but because of the experience itself. Maslow described them as being "purposeless and useless." They were not *means* values to get to some other end-value, but an *end* in themselves. They are experiences where we just *"be"* and express ourselves.

Maslow had many other ways of describing these *being*-values. He said that the *being*-values were descriptions of the world as perceived in peak experiences. We experience *being-values* in these times when we are at our best and doing what's most important. He even created a hypothesis: about them, asserting that the B-values (*being*-values) are what most people deeply yearn for in their lives and in this they are the "deep satisfiers." In *Further Reaches* Maslow wrote that we experience and feel the B-values as *the meaning* of life.

> "I would go so far as to claim that these B-Values are the meaning of life for most people, but many people don't even recognize that they have these meta-needs. Part of the counselors' job may be to make them aware of these needs in themselves." (p. 43)

Imagine that! The *meaning* of life for us, the meaning that we feel and yearn for, are the very *being*-values that occur in the self-actualization level. And if the meaning of life is to experience them, then this requires a change of consciousness, a change of state, a change of orientation. So no wonder we call this kind of change —*transformation.*

Yet it doesn't stop there. Maslow also applied *being*-values to work.

> "What we call good jobs and good working conditions on the whole help to move people toward the B-Values. People in the most desirable jobs most often value highest the possibilities for self-actualization." (135)

In the Neuro-Semantic Meta-Coaching we speak about this (i.e., good job, good working conditions, etc.) as the *external* resources (along with the *internal* resources) that we access and mobilize in order to actualize our full potentials. Such may facilitate for us the self-actualizing orientation and movement.

So what are these *being*-values? What are yours? Here is Maslow's list of the most basic *being*-values.

> 1) *Truth:* honesty, reality, nakedness; simplicity, richness; essentiality, oughtness, beauty, pure, clean and unadulterated completeness.
> 2) *Goodness:* rightness, desirability, oughtness, justice, benevolence, honest.
> 3) *Beauty:* rightness, form, aliveness, simplicity, richness, wholeness, perfection, completion, uniqueness, honesty.
> 4) *Wholeness:* unity, integration, tendency to oneness, inter-connectedness, simplicity, organization, structure, order, not dissociated, synergy, homonomous, and integrative tendencies.
> 4a) *Dichotomy-transcendence:* acceptance, resolution, integration or transcendence of dichotomies, polarities, opposites, contradictions, synergy.
> 5) *Aliveness*: process, not-deadness, spontaneity, self-regulation, full-functioning, changing and yet remaining the same, expressing itself.
> 6) *Uniqueness:* idiosyncrasy, individuality, non-comparability, novelty, quale, suchness, nothing else like it.
> 7) *Perfection*: nothing superfluous, nothing lacking, everything in its right place, unimproveable, just-rightness, just-so-ness, suitability, justice, completeness, nothing beyond, oughtness.
> 7a) *Necessity*: inevitability, it must be *just* that way, not changed in any slightest way, and it is good that it *is* that way.
> 8) *completion*: ending, finality, justice, it's finished, no more changing of the gestalt, fulfilment, *finis* and *telos*, nothing missing or lacking, totality, fulfillment of destiny, cessation, climax, consummation closure.
> 9) *Justice:* fairness, oughtness, suitability, architectonic quality, necessity, inevitability, dis-interestedness, non-partiality.
> 10) *Simplicity:* honesty, nakedness, essentiality, abstract unmistakability, essential skeletal structure, the heart of the matter, bluntness, only that which is necessary, without ornament, nothing extra or superfluous.
> 11) *Richness* differentiation, complexity, intricacy, totality, nothing missing or hidden, all there, non-importance, i.e., everything is equally important.
> 12) *Effortlessness*: ease, lack of strain, striving, or difficulty, grace, perfect and beautiful functioning.
> 13) *Playfulness*: fun, joy, amusement, gaiety, humor, exuberance, effortlessness.
> 14) *Self-sufficiency*: autonomy, independence, non-needing-any-thing-other-than-itself-

in-order-to-be-itself. self-determination, environment transcendence, separateness, living by its own laws.

For your own self-actualization, you will want to find your own list, prioritize them, run both ecology and quality control checks your life with them. You might also compare them against this list for a reality check. After all, Maslow's research indicated that healthy self-actualizing people also tend to be good choosers, that they tend to choose things that promote health and well-being in all dimensions of life.

> "Real choice is enhanced by freedom from social pressure. The hierarchy of values, in which the B-values are the highest, is in part determined by the hierarchy of basic needs, by the prepotency of the deficit-needs over growth-needs. An expectable, highly probably preference for B-Values rests in principle upon prior gratification of lower, more prepotent values." (140)

> "The B-Values, seen as gratifications of meta-needs, are then also the highest pleasures or happinesses that we know of." (317)

So, what do self-actualizing people really want?   We want the values that are *being* or growth values, that's what we really want. We have within a drive to self-actualize by living the *being-values.* We are inwardly driven to express these significant values and that's what unleashes ever-new potentials.

Here's to your self-actualization!

DO SELF-ACTUALIZING PEOPLE
EVER HAVE BAD DAYS?

— Okay, suppose we actualize our best self, what will that be like?
— What are self-actualizing people like in terms of their moods and emotions?
— Does a self-actualizing person ever get angry, feel fear, worry, or become anxious?
— When we live at the level of self-actualization, do we experience "negative" emotions?

The marvelous answer to all of these questions is, "Yes, of course!"   After all, self-actualizing people are just that — *people,* human beings, fallible human beings still making their way through the world. So just because we move beyond the lower needs and have moved into the truly human needs (e.g., the higher needs) doesn't mean that we lose our humanness. Actually, the opposite is the case. We become more fully human than ever before and more open and receptive to the fallibility and vulnerabilities of our humanity.

On this I'm delighted to say that Abraham Maslow and I agree, or perhaps more accurately, I find myself on the same page as Abraham Maslow.   In his work on Management (1970), Maslow described the fact that self-actualizing people experience the so-called "negative" emotions.

> "In self-actualizing people: they experience hostility, hatred, violence, malice, destructive aggression much less often than average people. They do not lose their anger or aggression, but *its quality* tends to be changed into indignation, to self-affirmation, to resistance against being exploited, to anger against injustice. Healthier people are must less afraid of their own angers and aggressions. Able to express them more wholeheartedly when they do express them at all. Violence has two opposites: less violence or control of violence, and healthy violence. (p. 127)

Thirty pages later, Maslow wrote,

> "Closely related to self-acceptance and to acceptance of others is lack of defensiveness, protective, pose. Since they can live comfortably even with their own shortcomings at all, but simply as neutral personal characteristics." (p. 156)

What lies at the heart of self-actualization? Acceptance.   An acceptance of our basic humanity and fallibility so that we're not shocked or surprised or disillusioned or disappointed or sad or angry or fear or anxious to discover mistakes or shortcomings. After all, what did we expect? What did we think? There's an embracing of reality for what it *is* which then allows those who are self-actualizing to live comfortably with the fact and experience f being fully human.

So does the experience of self-actualizing absolutely exclude or totally eliminate bad days or moody feelings? No. We continue to be vulnerable to the ups-and-downs of life. Yet in the self-actualizing process, we now experience a new ease in living with the up-and-down nature of

our emotions and the unpredictability of life. Being fallible and experiencing our inherent vulnerability to such is now not only accepted, but appreciated for making us more human.

Now our moods and emotions are *just* emotional states that do not define us or even tell us what to do. Now we can ride the emotional ups-and-downs knowing that they reflect the difference between what we have mapped about the world and our current experience of the world. This enables us to stop over-loading our emotions with unwarranted meaning.

Now our emotional states offer us an invitation to explore our inner matrix of frames to fully realize the mappings that are guiding us. In this, there are now no "negative" emotions, only those that inhibit and those that excite. Thinking about emotions in this way fits the structure of our neurology with our *inhibitory* nerve impulses and our *excitatory* nerve impulses.

In other words, our emotions as such are not our enemies. And so we don't need to forbid, banish, or slay them. At most, we may need to transform our emotions so that we use them an informational signals and somatic energies.

So yes, self-actualizing people do sometimes have "bad" days when things don't go well for them, when plans are not executed as designed, when disturbing interruptions occur. And when these upsets occur, self-actualizing people use them and the emotions they arise to update their maps and/or upgrade theis skills in handling things.

When "bad" days do occur, they are more easily endured and handled with more mastery so that they do not undermine the self-actualizer's highest intentions and passions.

From: L. Michael Hall
The Crucible?

This last week two regular readers of *Self-Actualization Reflections* wrote to inquire what I meant by "the Crucible" and how that contributes to the unleashing of potentials. So #19 and #20 (coming next week July 9, and the following week) is devoted to more about *the Crucible*.

Without giving it away now, I'll just say that since Neuro-Semanticists (which includes Meta-Coaches) know how to use the NLP and Meta-States communication model to "get to the heart of things" and have a fierce conversation that's truly transformational have to also be able to create a crucible. If they don't, then the conversation will not open up the meta-leverage points for change. In fact, without being able to create a crucible for the person experiencing the conversation, one could make things worse.

It is *the Crucible* that facilitates the transformational the "dialogue" so that meaning (*logos*) will move through (*dia*) us and expose the heart of the matter. Failure to do this, and there will be no true dialogue, only talk. The conversation will go nowhere. The conversation will not be a coaching conversation that gets to the heart fo the matter.

And the Crucible is just one of the *new things we are introducing in the Meta-Coach Trainings* this month in Colorado. Interested? Now is the time to register for
> *Coaching Essentials* — the core of NLP
> *Coaching Genius* — Meta-States for coaching yourself for mastery
> Coaching Mastery — systematic coaching for your best performances

Ready to unleash your potentials for peak performances?

L. Michael Hall
What is a fierce conversation?

If you have read *Coaching Conversations* or some of the other Meta-Coach materials, you know that one of the distinguishing characteristics of a truly transformative coaching experience is that it involves a *fierce conversation.* Recently, several people have written to know more about what this means and how it works.

A *fierce conversation* is *fierce* in focus. It is fierce because it invites us into "the heart of the matter" ---whatever that matter is for us. And as such, it puts us in touch with our inner essence, with our uniqueness, with our particular vision and values, and as such creates a moment of existential awareness. It gets to the heart of the *meanings* that we have absorbed or created for ourselves or that we want to create.

I picked up this terminology several years ago from Susan Scott who wrote a powerful book (*Fierce Conversations*, Viking 2002) which described the kind of conversations that enable us to take our competencies in life and succeed to a new level.

The fierceness is not in being hard, harsh, mean, or cruel. It is not in style. Of course, this is where *the art* comes in. Normally, when we confront or are confronted, there are strong emotions and intensity of our energies. The fierceness is in focus because it enables us to experience reality in a more direct and raw form. It is fierce because we are not let off the hook but have to face the mirror of our reflections.

What enables such a conversation? A safe place where you know that you are more than your behaviors, where you know that you worth and dignity and value is unconditionally given, and where you feel safe to be open and vulnerable to the eyes of another. In Neuro-Semantics, we call that a Crucible. There you can be ruthlessly compassionate as Graham Richardson calls it. There you can speak the raw truth in love and *facilitate the unleashing of hidden potentials*.

L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.
Neuro-Semantics Ltd., Executive Director
ISNS —— International Society

THE THERAPY OF SELF-ACTUALIZATION

— What is the relationship between self-actualization and therapy?
— Can the processes of self-actualization provide therapy for wounded people?
— Can a person use "coaching" for the work of therapy?

These and many other questions regularly come up whenever I present the Neuro-Semantic models of Self-Actualization. Why? Well, in part because every presentation has been in the context of *Coaching,* and in that context, I have always attempted to communicate a clear line of demarcation between therapy and coaching.

And, why have I done that? Primarily because of where the field of Coaching is today. Having recently emerged from a mixture of disciplines (mentoring, therapy, training, consulting, hypnosis, etc.), *Coaching as a movement* is only now becoming a "field" and is still a long way from becoming a Profession. So in adding what we can to support that movement, in Meta-Coaching Michelle and I have created a "space" for Coaching that's apart from, and different from, the other disciplines.

> [You can see some of this on www.meta-coaching.org and diagrams of the difference in the two volumes of *Meta-Coaching*, Volume I is *Coaching Change,* Volume II is *Coaching Conversations.*]

When I made the presentation in Paris a few years ago, several people began asking questions about the possibility of doing "therapy" by using the "coaching" methodology and enabling a person to self-actualize through the healing principles. And of course, the short answer is "Yes, of course."

In fact, this has been a major direction and movement in the field of psychotherapy for several decades. Beginning with the Cognitive Psychological Movement (initiated in 1956 by George Miller and Noam Chomsky), and then the Ellis – Beck forms of cognitive therapy, the Ericksonian therapies which led to Solution-Focus Therapy, Brief Psychotherapy, Narrative psychotherapy, even NLP psychotherapy (now called NLPt in Europe and England) along with many others, psychotherapy as a discipline has been breaking with the past and has been increasingly moving to a more collaborative and facilitative approach.

As such therapists have been setting aside the role of the expert of the client, doing less diagnosis (esp. using the DSM-IV) and working to *enable* and *empower* the client. This was the dream that Carl Rogers began in the 1950s and which he developed into the Client-Centered Therapy approach.   [If you want to examine a whole book on the 14 "personality disorders" of

In fact, most of the developers of the Human Potential Movement were in the field of therapy when the paradigm shift of modeling *healthy self-actualizing humans* and using the principles of self-actualizing psychology in working with clients. This was not only true of Carl Rogers, but of Viktor Frankl (Logotherapy), Roberto Assagioli (Psycho-Synthesis), Rollo May (Humanistic Existentialism), etc.

Maslow was the major exception. He was not a therapist and so he did not do therapy. He was a college professor, researcher, and life-long explorer into "the farther reaches of human nature." And yet (here comes the good part) Maslow did speak and write about the relationship between self-actualization and therapy. In fact, he used his meta-motivation theory of the hierarchy of needs to correlate the relationship between illness, pathology, and the experience of self-actualizing human needs.

By working forwards from the actual biological and physiological *needs* of humans, Maslow created a paradigm shift as he challenged the assumptions of the old psychologies. First he questioned comparing human needs to "the bad-animal model" of our inner nature. "What about the good animals?" he asked. "Why not identify with the better, or at least the milder, animals like deer, elephant, or dog, or chimpanzee?" Next, he questioned the whole idea of "instincts" in humans. While animals have instincts that are "powerful, strong, unmodifiable, uncontrollable, unsuppressible, this is not true for humans." At best, we only have instinoids which are "easily repressed, suppressed, controlled, and that can easily be masked, modified, or suppressed by habits and culture." (1954 *Personality and Motivation,* p. 80). He wrote that when we—
> ". . . recognize instinctoid needs to be not bad, but neutral or good, and a thousand
> pseudo problems solve themselves and fade out of existence." (p. 87)

Maslow then declared that when we recognize that pleas for acceptance, love, admiration, meaning, order, etc. are legitimate demands or rights, "of the same order as complaints of hunger, thirst, cold, or pain," we then move to gratify them rather than frustrate them. And in doing so we exert a healthy therapeutic force. In fact, to frustrate such basic needs is what causes illness and pathology. For Maslow "therapy" means "a pressure toward breaking controls and inhibitions" against our basic needs (p. 103).

Maslow also distinguished two kinds of deprivation: an unimportant deprivation and a threatening one. This is where he came very close to recognizing the critical role of *meaning* as I mentioned in previous Reflections.
> "Deprivation is not psycho-pathogenic; threat is." (p. 107)

Self-actualization, as the forward movement of growth, stands in opposition to the hurt and pathology that needs healing (e.g., "therapy"). Therefore anything that hurts, wounds, traumatizes, and inhibits growth creates pathology and needs healing. Anything that facilitates the growth of actualizing one's best is therapeutic. And because we are born without instincts as

such and have to learn how to be human, this includes the cognitive distortions that creates erroneous maps that we try to use to navigate human experience. Again, Maslow,

> "The neurotic is not emotionally sick, he is cognitively *wrong*!" (p. 153)

Maslow even asks and answers the question about what is psycho-pathological.

> "What is psycho-pathological? Anything that disturbs or frustrates or twists the course of self-actualization. What is psychotherapy? Any means of any kind that helps to restore the person to the path of self-actualization and of development along the lines that his inner nature dictates." (p. 270)

In *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*, Maslow (1971) wrote that neurosis

> ". . . is a failure of personal growth; falling short of what one could have been. Human and personal possibilities have been lost. World has been narrowed, capacities have been inhibited." (p. 30)

> "The people we call 'sick' are the people who are not themselves, the people who have built up all sorts of neurotic defenses against being human. Learning to break through one's repressions, to know one's self, to hear the impulse voices, to uncover the triumphant nature, to reach knowledge, insight, and the truth— these are the requirements. To become more, more actualizing, more realizing what you are in potentiality." (p. 51)

What then is the relationship between self-actualization and therapy? The self-actualizing dynamics and processes are inherently *therapeutic* processes. And, as you can undoubtedly tell, there's a lot more to be said about al of this. So until the next Reflection — here's to your own self-actualizing your highest and best!

THERAPEUTIC SELF-ACTUALIZATION

If self-actualization is all about *becoming our potentials,* if it is about finding and activating our capabilities, then *coaching* that level of growth change makes perfect sense, does it not? We *coach* a person's self-actualization by *awakening* him or her to the inner possibilities and then soundly challenge that person to make those possibilities real in everyday life.

We do this with healthy people who are ready for stretching and who are hungry for challenge. With their basic needs satisfied, they are not content with those gratifications. Another has need arised, the *need for challenge.* They want change. They long for adventure. They want to grow, to be more, to experience more, to shake things up, to be stretched. They want to contribute, to be a part of something bigger than themselves, to contribute to the world, to make a difference socially, and to leave a legacy. They have grown to the place where the meta-needs have kicked in.

We coach such self-actualiztion by holding *a fierce existential conversation* about the things that really matter, about things that get to the heart of the matter. "What's your biggest dream? What's even bigger than that? What are you doing today about actualizing that dream? How are you hold yourself back from it? How are you selling yourself short? How are you locking your potentials from fully blossoming? What's impossible that you are going to do today? How are you playing yourself small? Are you ready to go for your highest and best?"

All of this presupposes a generous dose of ego-strength—the ability to look reality in the face without blinking. It presupposes the ability to be authentically strong and true to oneself and to not let oneself off the hook from self-responsibility. It presupposes a healthy personality.

But what about people who are hurt and damaged? What about people who don't have such ego-strength, self-acceptance, self-confidence, self-esteem, self-initiative, and self-responsibility? What about people who suffer from the parenting errors of parents who never darkened the door of the *Parenting 101* class?

— Can we *coach* self-actualization as a form of therapy?
— Can we use the self-actualization models to *coach* people who are not yet "up to average" and fully free to discover and be themselves?

Before we can explore these questions, we need to define what we mean by "therapy." *Therapy*, which means *healing*, presupposes hurt, wounds, trauma, ego-defenses, etc. This brings up the subject of pathology—how human nature can become sick and distorted, how self-description and experience can become malformed. It also brings up the *degree and extent* of such

malformations in human personality, *how much* therapy will a given person need?

Obviously, anything that facilitates growth, learning, and human maturization is a *therapeutic influence*. Here basic human kindness, acceptance and love are therapeutic forces. Here healthy communication that's open, honest, and transparent is therapeutic. So also are supportive relationships that provide care, understanding, geniueness, listening, etc. In this, there are lots of *therapeutic influences* that we can activate and provide without being a trained therapist. Maslow spoke to this in *Motivation and Personality* (1954):

> "Accepting this, it is our clear conviction that not only is every good human being potentially an unconscious therapist, but also we must accept the conclusion that we should approve of this, encourage it, teach it. Let people realize clearly that every time they threaten someone or humiliate or hurt unnecessarily or dominate or reject another human being, they become forces for the creation of psycho-pathology, even if these be small forces. Let them recognize also that every man who is kind, helpful, decent, psychologically democratic, affectionate, and warm, is a psycho-therapeutic force even though a small one." (p. 254)

Yet such differs from the discipline, science, and art of Therapy as such. Psychotherapy, as a profession, arose at the end of the nineteenth century as a supplementary force to the medical profession. As medicine had been making tremendous strides to heal and cure physical aliments at that time, therapy sought to heal and cure mental-emotional and personal-interpersonal aliments. It sought to deal with the pathologies of the soul (*psyche*) and at first to address the disorders that made people unable to cope with reality, who were unable to get along with others, to work, or to even endure themselves.

From the point of view of Self-Actualization Psychology, therapy is for people in whom the natural growth tendency has been blocked or interfered with in some way. In some way or other, the organic developmental process of growing into a healthy, autonomous, authentic, self-actualizing person has been blocked. The person is stuck. Perhaps he is "living in the past." Perhaps she is defensive and shut down. Perhaps he is delusional. Perhaps she is trying to "finish" some "old business" deemed unfinished.

Whatever the block, the interference, or distortion of the pathology, the person is not "okay," not "up to average," not in the present, not open, response-able, empowered, and doesn't have the ego-strength to get beyond the block.

That's why a competent and qualified therapist is needed. That's why someone who understands normal human development, who can identify where the client is in the process, and who can create a relational context for the person is so critical. This context is mostly the creation of a therapeutic relationship wherein the person can experience the acceptance, understanding, and non-judgment that was missing from parents.

That's why therapy almost inevitably tends to activate the transference of the client's original feelings about parents and authority figures to the therapist. Failure to recognize this, as well as the "power" differential, the possibility of counter-transference, and one's skill set for working with various levels of dysfunction and personality disordering are essential skills for the

psychotherapist. Accordingly, most states and nations have established a set of criteria of study, experience, and testing to determine competency for therapists.

Can we use the coaching methodology in doing therapy with someone? Would this be a wise choice?

COACHING THERAPY

Within the past two *Reflections,* I have posed some therapy questions of coaching and self-actualization:
— Can we use the coaching methodology in doing therapy with someone?
— Would this be a wise choice?
— Can we *coach* therapeutic issues with people who are in need of remedial change?
— Where is the line between therapy and coaching?
— Can the coaching of self-actualization be applied to neuroses or psychoses?
— Can it be used for the reordering of the disordering of personality?

In the previous *Reflections* I have danced around these questions talking about the unique role of Coaching, what Michelle and I are doing in pushing out a space unique for Coaching in contradistinction to therapy, and some of the unique distinctions of both therapy and coaching.

Psychotherapy (or therapy) differs from counseling in that, *typically,* counseling addresses how to cope with everyday problems whereas therapy addresses how to re-adjust in mind-body-emotion to the problems regarding how we order our inner world (e.g., our "personality").

Developmentally, when we fail to appropriately grow through the first stage of differentiation of self and reality, we develop what's called *psychosis,* that is, the lack of clear boundaries, sense of reality, sense of self.   This makes us unable to cope with work, life, reality, or even self. When we fail to manage the stage of self-boundaries, we develop a *borderline disorder.* Then, suffering from weak emotional boundaries, we are easily overwhelmed by anxiety, depression, fear, etc. due to getting close to people and experiencing intimacy. And when we fail to navigate the developmental stage of accepting ourselves with all of our fallible emotions, needs, and so on, we develop *neuroses.* Because we repress the emotions, needs, and thoughts that we've mapped as "unacceptable," this leads to hypochondria, obsessive-compulsive behaviors, irrational fears, and so on.

As a model, psychotherapy began with Psychoanalysis as an expert-based, authoritarian approach derived from the Medical Model. Freud based Psychoanalysis on the assumption that the doctor knows best the patient needs. So the doctor diagnoses the patient's condition, prescribes the intervention, evaluates when the patient has completed therapy, and if there is any resistance, codes it as the patient's defensiveness.

This approach is designed to get through all of the ego-defenses of the patient and help the patient develop ego-strength to face the Reality Principle. "Where there is id, let there be ego"

was the gospel according to Freud. If the therapy is not progressing, the patient is resisting.

It began here, but it did not stay there. By the middle of the 20th century all of this was in a process of change. Increasingly more psychoanalysts tired of the authoritarian approach and began to pioneer new approaches. Frankl took psychoanalysis to a new level in creating *Logotherapy;* Ellis rejected psychoanalysis and created *REB*; Glasser did the same and created *Reality Therapy* and then *Control Theory;* Beck followed the same path and created *Cognitive Therapy.* Milton Erickson transcended psychoanalysis with medical hypnosis and from that many others created *Brief Psychotherapy, Solution Focus Therapy, Narrative Therapy,* and the list goes on and on.

The movement toward a less authoritarian approach continued until the late 20th century when most of the new therapists were entirely *facilitative* and based upon the paradigm that Carl Rogers' launched with *Client-Centered Therapy* in the 1950s. This model made therapist and client co-partners in a search for wholeness and working from the premise that clients only need an appropriate learning context.

As the old assumptions were turned upside down, new premises were identified.
— The person is not a patient at all but a client— a responsible and capable person.
— The client's defenses are symptomatic of threat and should be respected.
— The client's defenses always makes sense when we discover his or her inner contexts.
— The client has sufficient resources within for healing and responsibility.
— The client's Id needs is not the problem, nor the unconscious, or society (superego).
— Conscious awareness alone is usually not sufficient for healing.
— Human problems involve the mental maps that we operate by.
— There's more to people than their psycho-sexual stages.
— People also develop cognitively, socially, emotionally, etc.
— Our mind-body system is a self-organizing system designed for self-healing.
— Our past does not *cause* the present, it only provides the contexts in which we learn to cope and adapt as we have.
— The past identifies the contexts in which we made our first maps for coping.

Actually, the idea of *facilitating or coaching* therapy has been gaining favor for several decades as the principles of the human potential movement have been increasingly accepted about the nature of human nature. Accordingly, as we understand that we growth not only through psycho-sexual stages (Freud), but also through psycho-social stages (Eric Erickson), psycho-mental or cognitive stages (Piaget), faith stages (Fowler), etc., we realize that we can *coach* therapeutic blocks, issues, and challenges in these stages. This doesn't mean that Coaching is the same as Therapy. They are not. It only means that it is possible to use the facilitative process of *coaching* for handling some therapy issues. Until the field of Coaching is established as a profession, it is not wise to mix and confuse these modalities. There's enough confusion without adding to it!
> [That's why it is also critical for Coaches to *refer* therapy issues to Therapists. It is not only the legal thing to do, it is business-wise as we emphasize in Meta-Coaching.]

Roger's client-centered approach changed the paradigm. He led the way in researching the critical variables that generate therapeutic change and discovered that it rested not so much in the therapist's ideas, models, or processes, but in the therapist's way of relating to the client. He argued that people are healed via the therapist's unconditional positive regard, congruency of authenticity, and non-possessive empathy. So the new facilitative therapeutic approach invites a true partnership of co-creating outcomes and exploring together the full range of factors that influence a client's hurt— cognitive, behavioral, emotional, relational, cultural contexts, physiological. As the therapeutic relationship evolves, the client increasingly becomes his or her own expert her with the therapist as an expert partner for guidance.

So, can we *coach* someone through the developmental stages to address therapeutic blocks and interferences? Can we use the coaching of self-actualization to work with neuroses and psychoses? The ultimate answer is yes. And *how* to do that with the Neuro-Semantic models of Self-Actualization —that will be the direction that some in this community will be developing in the future. If you're interested in that, I'd recommend you register for one of the *Ultimate Self-Actualization Workshops* coming in 2007.

SELF-ACTUALIZATION
AND SELF-RESPONSIBILITY

Can you self-actualize without being self-responsible?
Is self-responsibility a precondition of self-actualization?
Can a person who doesn't own and operate from self-responsibility unleash all his or her potentials?

You probably recognize that these questions are all rhetorical. Of course we can't self-actualize without self-responsibility. Of course, self-responsibility is a precondition for actualizing one's best potentials. If someone where to ask, "Why is that so? Why can we not self-actualize without self-responsibility?" what would you say?

Would you not explain that self-actualization is not an inevitability for us, but arises as a personal choice and one that occurs over time and which involves effort, focus, vision, and the whole actualizing of talents, dreams, and passions?

In this, self-actualization is not something that happens *to* us apart from our awareness, vision, and effort. Self-actualization does not come in a way that's similar to how one wins a lottery. And that's precisely why self-actualizing is not for the passive, the lazy, the unimaginative, those following the path of least resistance, the blamers, the complainers, or the whiners. It is for the *response-able* ones who catch a vision of finding and following their talents and passions and unleashing their potentials to become their best.

No wonder self-responsibility operates as one of the prerequisites of self-actualization and without it, there can be no actualizing of one's best. Self-actualizing doesn't happen apart from our mindful responses. In fact, it is indeed a function of our responses, our best responses— the performances that we create day-in and day-out as we seek to turn our dreams, visions, and values into reality.

Self-responsibility begins with our basic powers, our powers of thinking-and-emoting and speaking and behaving. It begins with this zone of power that we all have as our basic heritage of being human. That's why owning and fully claiming these powers is the function for unleashing potentials. Only then can we begin to develop the self-responsibility that's necessary. How self-responsible are you? Test yourself. Take the following sentence stem and generate a dozen endings. Keep repeating the stem until you generate many endings.
> "If I took complete responsibility for what I think, what I feel, what I say, and what I do
> ..."

Don't worry whether the endings you generate are positive or negative, that's not the point. The point of the process is to increase awareness. It is to download what's in the back of your mind (your meta-states and meta-frames) *about* responsibility. Doing that will then put you at choice point where you can use your executive level of mind to forge the path that you want.

> "If I were to take full responsibility for all of my words . . ."
> "If I were to take full responsibility for all of my states ..."
> ... for my attitudes, happiness, resilience, playfulness, seriousness, relationships, values, goals. etc.

Self-responsibility is owning our powers, and our expressions of them, and then taking a proactive stance to the things that need done in our lives to fulfill our dreams. That leads to yet another sentence stem that we can use to develop self-responsibility:
> "If I were to take full responsibility for making my dreams and visions come true ..."

Obviously, self-responsibility is not for the faint of heart. It is not for those with low ego-strength; it is not for those who make their self-esteem, value, and worth *conditional* so that their self-esteem is always on the line. Self-responsibility takes us a long way along the path of self-actualization because we then stop wasting energy blaming, accusing, complaining, and whining. We get on with things. We look for what needs to be done, and we *do* it.

So what is *self-responsibility* and what are some of the ways we can describe it? The self-responsible are proactive. They initiate action, they think through decisions, they continuously question and learn, they identify their values, their visions, and stand up for them, they pursue their goals, they bounce back from set-backs, they are awake to their resources, they keep accessing their strengths, they boldly make decisions and follow through, they turn new learnings into habits, they make themselves accountable to others, they are great team players, they work with and through others, and so are socially responsible. They allow others to hold them accountable and, in fact, search for and build structures of accountability.

Nathaniel Branden in his book *Taking Responsibility* describes self-responsibility as follows:
> "The essence of self-responsibility is the practice of making oneself the cause of the effects one wants, as contrasted with a policy of hoping or demanding that someone else 'do something' while one's own contribution is to wait and suffer. It is through independence and self-responsibility that we attain personal power." (p. 13)

If the heart of self-responsibility is *"making oneself the cause of the effects one wants,"* how do we do that? How do we make ourselves *the cause* of our desired effects? How do we develop the sense or feeling that we are *the source* of our actions, our thoughts, our choices?

The answer goes back to the meta-state of *self-efficacy.* This refers to the sense, the understanding, the belief, and the realization that we are able to make a difference, that we can always *do something*, and that we can trust our basic powers of mind, emotion, speech, and behavior for navigating our way through life. Unlike self-confidence which demands proof,

historical evidence, and successful references, self-efficacy is more about the future and what we have not yet successfully accomplished. It is the meta-state of trust in self that we can figure it out, develop the skills, hone the required competencies, and make it happen. When we develop that meta-frame as our meta-state, then we are able to truly "make ourselves the source and the cause" of the results we want.

How self-responsible are you today? Where would you gauge yourself in this moment in time? If you were to become even 5 percent more self-responsible, what difference would that make toward actualizing your best self?

     [More about Self-Responsibility and Self-Actualization in the next two Reflections.]

ACHIEVING SELF-ACTUALIZATION THROUGH SELF-RESPONSIBILITY

If you have seen the Self-Actualization Quadrants and the Flow Zone, then you know that it is in the fourth quadrant that we begin moving toward full optimization of our *highest meanings* and *robust performances.* Quadrant 1 is where we all begin and so reflects the lack of development of either meaning or performance. Quadrant 2 gauges the development of skill as competency grows and so refers to *performance.* Quadrant 3 gauges the development of meaning, vision, passion, inspiration, great ideas, etc. and so refers to *meaning.*

But *meaning without performance* is just dreaming. And *performance without rich meanings* is just empty and compulsive behavior. So it is in the synthesis of meaning-and-performance that we actualize our best meanings and embody our best performances with the most robust meanings. All of this describes how it is with the challenges of our meanings and the development of our competencies synthesizes that we are propelled into peak experiences and peak performances.

All in all, this describes the process of self-actualizing. And with this, we are in the "zone" of being at our best and fully engaged with whatever activity we're involved with. The same axes that create the flow zone creates the self-actualization quadrants. In Neuro-Semantics we identify them as *Meaning* and *Performance* whereas Csikszentmihayli identified them as *Challenge* and *Competency*.
— How do these relate?
— How do they describe provide different perspectives on the same experience?
— And how do these relate to self-responsibility?
Activities or experiences that we give *meaning* to, and that become highly *meaningful* to us, are those that also *challenge* us to grow, that push us past our current competency level, and that stretch us to what we perceive to be higher levels of our potential. We need that kind of challenge. Without challenge, we get bored. Life becomes stale. We become disinterested, reduce our level of awareness, and don't extend ourselves. For an activity to be meaningful, it has to challenge us at an appropriate level.

The *performances* that we engage in depend upon skills and competencies and as we keep using our skills, they become refined, honed, and more fully developed. This enables us to then take on more challenge since it is in the actual *performance* that we actualize the meanings in our body and via our competencies.

On the *Meaning* axis, if we go for too big of a meaning, too much of a challenge, we get

overwhelmed. And with overwhelm, we go into the Panic or the Overwhelm Zone. The result? We shut down. We dream, but don't do. We create in our mind, but not in our lives. On the *Performance* axis, if we expend too much skill for something, we feel it overkill and so feel bored, unchallenged. And with under-whelm, we enter the Drone or the Bored Zone. In both instances, too much or too little challenge we fail to optimize our best. And so we exit the flow state of the Self-Actualizing Zone.

It is in the proper combination that allows us to synthesize meaning and performance, challenge and competency and optimize both into the self-actualizing experience. So given all of that, does this relate to self-responsibility? If it does, how does it?

To think about these two axes, the self-actualization axes, the Neuro-Semantic axes, and the flow axes, we only need to think of them in terms of self-responsibility, we only need to rename them *Responsibility* and *Capability*. When we do this, we can see that the higher the level of *responsibility* which we assume and own moves us upward into more *meaning* and *challenge.* That's the vertical axis. Similarly, the more capability we demonstrate over time as we grow and develop, the more we move along on that axis in terms of *competency* and *performance.* And that's the horizontal axis.

In other words, *the level of responsibility assumed* describes the meaningful vision, goals, hopes, dreams, etc. that we accept and hold ourselves to. Taking on too much, all at once, creates overwhelm. Taking on too little and there's no development, no stretch, no growth. As we give ourselves time (which necessitates the states of patience, persistence, commitment, resilience, etc.) to keep developing our performance / competency as the capacity is developed, we keep fulfilling one level of responsibility. That prepares us for the next. If we go too slow, we get bored and quit; if we push too fast with too much impatience and not enough persistence, we get overwhelmed and defeated.

In all of this, self-responsibility is the meta-state that enables us to keep using the right amount of pull and push as we set stretch goals, keep holding ourselves accountable and inviting others to hold us accountable, keep synthesizing our dreams, meanings, and responsibilities with the development of our performances.

So, does self-actualization depend on self-responsibility? You bet it does! It depends on lots and lots and lots of *self-responsibility.* That's why only the self-responsible are able to self-actualize. Those who depend on others, or luck, or circumstance and those who wait for the right time, the right circumstances, the right motivation, etc. never get around to it. To self-actualize, we have to keep finding our current capability level and assume responsibility to stretch that level just a little bit beyond it and to keep exerting that kind of effort day in, day out.

Putting this altogether, the very axis of meaning (which includes challenge) entails *responsibility*. And the axis of performance (which includes competency) entails *capability* and these are the two components of self-responsibility. And because we are responsible *for* our capabilities, accepting and owning that facilitates the process of actualizing our highest and best.

SELF-RESPONSIBLE
SELF-ACTUALIZATION

When it comes to self-actualization, *you have to do it yourself.* No one can do it for you! (Hey, this is reminding me of a song!) You've got to walk the path of self-actualization all by yourself. Okay, enough of the song, that part doesn't exactly work. Due to our social needs and social constitution, and that we are social creatures, we can and do walk the pathway of self-actualization with others— in relationships, collaborations, being a good team player, etc.

The bottom line about self-actualization is that it occurs through *the individualizing process* as we become more fully ourselves, mature, grown up, able to stand on our own two feet, autonomous, differentiated, and able to find the strengths, talents, and gifts that we have to develop and to offer to others. So it ends in relationships. It culminates in interactions, joint ventures, and shared experiences. Like Dorothy, we need friends to go with us to the Emerald City.

The truth is that it takes a lot of self-responsibility in order to enter and maintain the self-actualizing process. Why is that? Because it takes a lot of independence to be inter-dependent. Only then can we enter into relationships with others while maintaining a strong sense of self and contributing our voice, our opinion, our gifts, our creativity. It's only through complete differentiation in discovering how to be true and authentic to ourselves that we are the enabled to become truly good and effective team players and colleagues to each other.

In all of this, it's through fully accepting *the challenges of self-responsibility* that we are able to actualize our gifts and become a full participant in healthy relationships. Self-responsible self-actualization is all about having enough of self, and a strong enough sense of self, so that when we are in relationship, we can be fully present and available. In this, self-responsible actualization goes beyond self-esteem, self-confidence, ego-strength, and glories in the higher quality of self-efficacy.

All of this reminds me about the ongoing debate that's been raging in educational circles for perhaps the past thirty years (at least in the United States). I'm referring to the debate about whether teachers should focus on the 3-Rs (reading, writing, and arthmetic) or whether they should put more focus on addressing a child's level of "self-esteem." Of course, an *Either/Or debate* like that doesn't have to be dichotomized in that way; why not do both?

Yet even doing both doesn't resolve the problem. That's because when we take the time to ask educators what they mean by "self-esteem," their answers are all over the place. Most use the

term "self-esteem" as a synonym for self-confidence; the next largest group uses it an equivalent for "feeling good about oneself," others use it for a sense of personhood and worth, yet others use it as a synonym to one's social self, and so it goes. And with that confusion and ambiguity in what they mean by "self-esteem," no wonder there are scores and scores of processes trying to raise the level of "self-esteem," and all too often undermining the basic learning competencies.

What's really needed is *self-efficacy*. This meta-state is *meta* to the other meta-states of *confidence* in one's ability to do some particular task (self-confidence), *positive feelings* about oneself (self-appreciation), *esteeming and valuing* one self as a human being of worth and dignity (self-esteem), and acceptance by one's peers and social group (other-esteem).

While self-confidence speaks about past skill and competency, the faith-in-oneself (con-fideo) that you can *do* something, and while self-esteem speaks about an abstract evaluation of unconditional value in oneself, we develop self-efficacy as we move above specific confidences in the realization that we count and don't have to prove anything to be a somebody. Then, at that higher level, we can abstract that as we have used our mind-and-body, our senses, coping skills, etc. to figure things out, so we can with things yet to come. Self-efficacy is the feeling and evaluation that we can and do *trust* our talents, gifts, consciousness, etc. to cope and master challenges of the future.

Self-efficacy grows along side of what we call "ego-strength." This is the state of mind that empowers us to look reality in the face without blinking. It enables us to face what *is* without falling apart, caving in, or activating the fight/flight syndrome. We have the presence of mind, the presence of person to face what we have to face without ego-defenses.

What children need in school and what we all need for ongoing learning, development, and transformation is self-efficacy to trust ourselves. To trust our minds, to develop a trust in our intuitions, to trust our problem-solving skills, to trust our questioning, to trust our ability to build supportive relationships, and so on — this is what develops a solid and vital sense of self-efficacy. And with that, then we are more ready to actualize our potentials, to explore latent talents, to experiment with weird possibilities, to think out of the box, to take calculated risks, etc.

As you can tell, *self-efficacy* is one of those magical qualities (meta-states) that facilitates the unleashing of potential. It's one of the ways that we can enable the self-actualizing process so that we can increasingly move to actualizing more and more of our potentials. If we were to test for self-responsibility, if we were to benchmark it, what would we measure and test for?

__ Do you think ahead and take initiative in your own growth and development?
__ Do you assume full responsibility and accountability for your actions?
__ Do you accept full responsibility for your happiness, mood, emotions, states?
__ Do you stand up for your values and principles?
__ Do you continuously question, explore, and expand your possibility thinking?
__ Do you plan for new changes and transformations?

__ Do you apply truths, principles, insights to yourself?
__ Do you proactively approach your relationships?
__ Do you discern what you're responsible FOR and whom you are responsible TO?
__ Do you access and awaken new resources?
__ Do you keep expanding your problem solving skills?
__ Do you regularly step back and evaluate where you are and make adjustments?

STEVE IRWIN
AND SELF-ACTUALIZATION

In the last couple of weeks millions upon millions of people around the world have been stunned at the untimely early death of Australia's crocodile hunter, Steve Irwin. I was in Sydney when the news of his death came and the very night I returned to Colorado, I sat and watched the entire Memorial Service at the Australia Zoo, a most emotionally moving memorial— one viewed by over 300,000 people!

One camera shot was replayed several times that I really loved. I had seen it before, but it was only after Michelle Duval said, "Now that's an example of self-actualization, don't you think?" that the scene took on new meaning for me. The scene was of an interview where Steve was talking about wildlife and conversation.

> "This is my purpose!" he said in his uniquely passionate way raising his voice and gesturing with his hands. "This is my job, my mission — the reason I was put on this planet was to save wildlife!"

In reflecting on that passionate explanation as to *why* he did what he did, I realized that in terms of the two key variables in self-actualizing, *meaning* and *performance*, Steve Irwin provides us a great example of the self-actualizing process.

After all, here was a man who early in life discovered his passion and then devoted his life to following that passion. Somewhere and somehow he discovered along with his love for, that he had a natural talent and an uncunning sense of animals, how they feel, how to work with them. I'm sure he picked up a good bit of that from his dad, Bob Irwin, who was himself a conservationist and had created the Queensland Reptile Part which Steve later transformed into the Australia Zoo. As Steve gave this more and more meaning, spending time in the outback and learning how to deal with crocodiles he became increasingly skilled. In all of this, he transformed the richness of his vision and understandings into his competency in working with animals.

Eventually this led to him recording himself out in the wilds capturing a crocodile and with that he discovered yet another natural talent, communicating his enthusiasm about working with wild animals. And that, of course, opened up yet more opportunities, opportunities for doing documentaries and then television interviews. And with success and recognition came money and tremendous publicity and in all of that, he continued to translated his vision into effective performance as he created the Zoo and brought up thousands of acres of outback for conservation.

And in actualizing his talents and meanings, he created his own unique way of being passionate about life, being authentic ("true blue") to what mattered to him — his wife and children, his animals, and his leadership in fighting for conservation. The testimony of all who knew him speak of these things, especially his authenticity, that what you see is what you get. That it wasn't about him, his ego, it was about the vision, the meanings, the performances.

And if you've ever seen Steve in his documentaries, commercials, or interviews, you have seen and heard a passionate man—a man totally in love with life, with animals, with what he was engaged in. Did he experience the "flow" state? Did he step into a genius state of total engagement and focus? Did he have control over being totally present in his engagements? From everything that I have seen, it all indicates that yes he did.

And did he fully enjoy and delight himself in those genius states of focus? The glow of his face, the sparkle in his eye, the excitement in his voice, his gestures, etc. all speak of that. And that, of course, is the *feel* of self-actualization, the inherent happiness of living your potentials and of actualizing your best.

Self-Actualization is living your life true to yourself—to your gifts, talents, loves, passions, and opportunities. Who would have thought that a young boy loving to hike in the brush and wrestle with crocodiles and wanting to save wildlife would have over a short 44 years create such a world-wide influence? At the memorial, Prime Minister of Australia John Howard described Steve Irwin as a great Australia ambassador. And actor Russell Crowe, a mate of Steve's, commenting on the world-wide response, said, "How many Zoo keepers can claim that?"

Steve's objective was not to be a hero to 500 million people around the world, it was just to follow his passion of saving wildlife. And that's a great example of what living in the *being-needs* (Maslow) and simply *expressing* your passions can do. Here's to Steve Irwin's memory and model.

SELF-MANAGEMENT
AND SELF-ACTUALIZATION

If *self-responsibility* describes one of the vehicles to self-actualizing, if we bring to life and make it real in our actual lives by owning our innate responses, and if we fully experience this meta-state of self-responsibility through self-efficacy and commitment to our own growth, then a key expression of a self-actualizing person is that of *self-management.*

Ah, self-management—the ability to manage ourselves. This was, and continues to be, the draw of NLP in spite of how so many people distort that message and use the tools of NLP for manipulation. Yet the misuse of a tool does not argue against the tool. It only argues against the *misuse* of it. It argues that anything powerful for good can be mishandled and used for hurt and destruction. And that's all the more reason for *applying to self* and first developing the self-mastery and management before attempting to use it with others.

NLP without self-application and self-management seeks to do things *to* others and so quickly degenerates into a covert form of manipulation. But with self-management, then the tools (the models and patterns) become useful for co-creating with another the kind of experiences that lead to the best states and the most productive performances. We can then use it for self-actualization and working collaboratively *with* others.

The promise that NLP provides the map and navigational tools for "running my own brain" was what first attracted me to NLP. When I read the line, "If you don't take charge and run your own brain, someone else will!" I intuitively knew the wisdom in that and so began my adventure into the area of self-management. Managing ourselves means managing our thoughts— our hopes and dreams, our imaginations and memories, our construct of meaning, and the quality of our representations and framing. Managing ourselves means managing our emotions— our states, meta-states, moods, and attitudes. It means managing our activities, choices, time, relational skills, growth, mistakes, learnings, health, and much more.

And if we are aiming to actualize our best, then we have to take charge to not only engage in self-leadership, but also self-management. The leadership part is actually easier than the management part. Catching a vision, setting the course, establishing the operational frames for the inner game, etc. is actually much more exciting than the everyday management tasks by which we translate the self-leadership into practical lifestyle, where the rubber meets the road is in self-management.

It is also in self-management that we discover the reality and quality of the self-responsibility that we've developed. Are we fully able to be a responsible adult in owning and exercising our responses to bring the vision to life? Are we truly able, as a responsible, grown-up adult, to figure out what we have to do to actualize our potentials and then use the discipline to follow through on our action plan? Those who are childishly dependent are forever in need for someone else to do it for them.

What vision or meaning do you want to actualize? It takes self-leadership to answer that question. Once you answer that question, then it will take self-management for you to create the action plan for managing your mind, emotions, time, energy, and responses as you make it happen. Can you do that? Will you do that?

Now apply this to each and every area of life. What vision or meaning in your career do you want to actualize? What dream or significance in your relationships? In your health and fitness? In your finances? When we exercise the meta-state of self-responsibility so that it becomes so habitual that it becomes part of our Matrix, part of the mental-emotional atmosphere that we live in, then we operated from the joyous pleasure of being a self-directed person. We are self-directed in our career, money, fitness, skill development, continuous learning, etc. And that puts us on the royal of being a self-actualizing person.

THE FEEL OF
SELF-ACTUALIZATION

__ What does self-actualization *feel* like?
__ Is there a *feel* to self-actualization?
__ Is there more than one *feel* to self-actualization?

In 1967 one of the key leaders in the Human Potential Movement broke onto the national scene in the United States (and perhaps around the world) with his book on the third force in psychology movement. In that year the book *Joy: Expanding Human Awareness* by William C. Schultz was published. It immediately caught the public's eye and Schultz was interviewed on a great many television and radio programs about this vision that Maslow and Rogers had initiated.

I bring this up because the theme highlighted in the book *Joy* focuses on what self-actualization *feels* like. Schutz wrote on the first page of the book, "Joy is the feeling that comes from the fulfillment of one's potential." Later in the book he added this,

> "Since our assumption is that the chief source of joy is the realization and use of one's resources, it follows that failure to use these resources leads to a lack of joy. A good skier enjoys skiing more than he would if he couldn't ski well. The more of his abilities an individual has developed and can use, the more pleasure he feels within himself."

What does self-actualization feel like? *Joy. Pleasure.* It has the feel of exhilaration, vitality, being fully alive, being fully present, the feeling of strength, extension of one's capacities as one stretches to newpossibilities, fun, etc.

Interesting enough, when Mihayli Csikszentmihayli began his studies in "happiness" for his doctorate, he ended up developing a model about "flow" states, the states wherein people experience the highest and best kind of human happiness, expression of one's competency in response to a challenge. And as so many have noted, that kind of happiness isn't achieved by pursuing it directly. It is achieved more indirectly as a consequence of finding some activity, adventure, or challenge that fully captivates one's attention and demands all of one's skills and capabilities.

What then does the self-actualizing process *feel* like? Maslow used the term *peak experiences* to describe those occasions of great joy, of intense happiness and satisfaction when one is so fully present to something and so completely engaged that it seems that he or she is "one with that experience." He spoke about such peak experiences occurring by knowing one is loved or by

loving someone unconditionally, by experiencing a sexual climax, completing a long and difficult project, by eating a simple meal after a long privation, expending all of one's energy after an intensely contested game of golf, tennis or any other game.

The event that triggers the "peak experience" is not as important as the state of one's consciousness in it— namely, being completely present and engaging all of one's capabilities and treating it as significant, important, and meaningful. Mihayli Csikszentmihayli discovered the same thing. It isn't the specific activity that creates the flow state, it is *the synergy* of challenge and competency—or as we say in Neuro-Semantics, meaning and performance.

Synthesize meaning into your everyday performances or begin performing your highest meanings and, presto! —you enter the *flow* state. You step into the genius state whereby you lose your meta-mind and come fully to your senses, so fully into your senses that everything else disappears. And as the world vanishes, as others vanishes, as time, self, and a thousand other meta-awarenesses all vanish, we experience that almost mystical sense of being so present that we merge with and become one with the engagement.

Now imagine that as a way to read a book. What a way to be with a client, a lover, a child! What a way to move through your day, stepping in and out of various "genius" states! What a way to make love, to watch a movie, to share a meal!   And who was wondering about the practicality of Neuro-Semantics? Get your neuro-semantics to do that and life itself becomes a mystical experience of pure joy. Would you like that?

What is the feeling of self-actualization?   It is the feeling of being able to multi-track, store things at all levels of your mind *and* to be able to turn that off and *slide into a one-ness with the world* state of flow and focus and total presence at any moment that you choose. What would you pay for that skill? How much would that joy or meta-pleasure be worth to you?

In Neuro-Semantics we end day one of APG with the *Pleasure Pattern*. It's a pattern about discerning how we humans can and do add pleasure to anything. And I mean everything. Starting with the primary state of the sensory pleasures and noticing how we are so absolutely wired for a thousand pleasures, ten-thousand pleasures of sight, sound, sensation, smell, taste, touch, movement, etc., we can take any such sensory pleasure and add layer upon layer of meta-pleasure to it. [See *Meta-State Magic* for a full description of that pattern.]

What's a meta-pleasure? It is the higher pleasure that we get from the first pleasure. It's a meaning or belief or value or significance that we attach to the first pleasure. The meta-pleasures refer to the semantic and conceptual pleasures of the mind that we texture into the body. It's the pleasures of meaning by which we can enrich something (actually, anything!) with such significance that it now multiplies the intensity of the pleasure. And that's what self-actualization *feels* like.

Flow arises from the gestalting of the meta-pleasures of your mind. All you have to do is add rich and robust *meaning* to whatever you're doing. All you have to do is to see and perceive that

activity as a fascinating and inviting *challenge*. And the magic is that once you have done that, your body begins to activate resources and capabilities to actualize the challenge, to rise up to meet and satisfy the challenge and when that happens, you take your performance to the next level and when you reflect on all of that you experience *joy*. Meta-Pleasure! A Peak Experience. And that's the feeling of self-actualization.

CULTURAL
SELF-ACTUALIZATION

In previous *Reflections* I wrote about self-actualizing companies and communities. What would a self-actualizing company be like? How would a group of people dedicated to the principles of self-actualization operate? How would their community differ from the way communities arise and develop who don't believe in and operate in a supportive way of bringing out the best in every person?

For self-actualizing individuals to unite together to create a movement, a community, a company, or a nation, they will create a union around the principles of what I have been calling Self-Actualizing Psychology. Operating from the *bright-side* of human nature, they will assume that people *want* to grow, assume new responsibilities, stretch to new levels of performance, take pride in learning, developing, and achieving. They will assume that people want to make a difference, create and experience meaning in their activities, career, and relationships.

They also assume that as people gratify the lower needs and move beyond them to the higher, they develop a whole new form of motivation, from deficiency motivation to abundance motivation. This enables them to be less competitive with others, more collaborative, more of a team member, and more supportive.

Given all of that, you can begin to imagine what a self-actualizing company may be like. It would not be a top-down, command-and-control type of hierarchy. It would be more democratic, as it would support people learning, recovering from mistakes, interacting with others, and exploring possibilities.

Maslow, especially in his work on business and management (*Maslow on Management*), address a lot of these questions as he spoke about translating the ideas of self-actualization to the culture in general. As he did, he spoke about the necessary *conditions*, the "good conditions" that seem correlated with self-actualizing people.

Yet what about these good conditions? What does that mean? Is that a guarantee that everyone will self-actualize?   Maslow (1971, *The farther reaches of human nature,* wrote:
> "It is now quite clear that the actualization of the highest human potentials is possible — on a mass basis—only under "good conditions. . . . Or more directly, good human beings will generally need a good society in which to grow.   That society is good which fosters the fullest development of human potentials, of the fullest degree of humanness." (p. 7)

So what are the *good conditions* that make self-actualization possible? And how many of these *good conditions* do we need in order to begin or continue the self-actualizing process? We need the freedoms of democracy that provide freedom of thought and freedom of speech. We need the ability and opportunity to explore new possibilities by using the marketplace of supply and demand to determine value. We need the good conditions of having lower needs (survival, safety, social, self needs) gratified so that we can explore contribution, beauty, music, mathematics, and all of the other things that create meaningful significance in our lives.

Yet the surprise in that even *good conditions*, in and of themselves, *are not enough.* Merely having the time, money, energy, and intention to self-actualize does not automatically "cause" a person to self-actualize. There are plenty of people with the financial and time resources who do *not* self-actualize, and who have no intention of doing so. There are also those who, when given the time, space, and money for self-actualization, will use it for the very opposite. They will use it for taking advantage of others, engaging in crime, and even hurting people. As Maslow realized this, he wrote,

> "The big point is not to think that good conditions inevitably make all human beings into growing, self-actualizing people. The little bit of larceny and sadism and all the other sins which you can find in practically any human being may be called forth by these 'good conditions' when the person is trusted and put completely on his own honor."

What does this mean? It means that without the kind of self-responsibility that undergirds self-management, people will not be on their best or do what's noble. Give a person "good conditions" who is not able to control his or her own thinking, emoting, valuing, believing, acting, etc. and you might only create a criminal, even a sociopath. The mere fact of the external conditions that are "good," i.e., democratic, full of resources such as time, money, energy, health, etc. does not make self-actualization inevitable. In this, self-actualization is a much more inside job. It is something chosen and envisioned. It is a stage of developmental the person, of the person's mental and emotional maturity.

So, given that, what does self-actualization say about economic theory? How does it relate to economics? Or, how do we pay someone for work or a job when it is a self-actualizing job? Again, Maslow addressed this also.

> "One characteristic of good conditions that are emerging is that good conditions can have a bad, even catastrophic effect on a certain small proportion of the population. Freedom and trust given to authoritarians will simply bring out bad behavior in these people. Freedom and permissiveness and responsibility will make really dependent and passive people collapse in anxiety and fear." (235)

How about that? *Good conditions can have bad effects.* It can even have catastrophic effects. Amazing, is it not? Give some people (i.e., authoritarians, fanatics, "true believers") the conditions that are "good" and useful for self-actualization and what happens? It brings out the worst in them. Give it to people who are ill-intentioned, undeveloped, stuck in an resourceful state, etc., and good conditions can actually make things worse.

What a dilemma! We identify the conditions that are good for calling forth the self-actualizing vision and process and, with some people, it evokes the opposite. In this we cannot rely only upon social engineering. We have to rely upon changing and transforming the belief frames of people so that they have a new inner game. When they have a new inner game, then the new outer game that we want to support and facilitate will occur.   And that, my fellow Neuro-Semanticists, gives us the marching orders of our mission, does it not?

WHY CAN'T THEY JUST GET ALONG?

Maslow's exploration of self-actualization did not begin there, it began somewhere else. It began with a question about war, about human nature, about human motivations, about why there's conflict and war in the world, and about why peole don't seem to be able to get along. It began with America's entry into World War II against Hitler and others forms of tyranny and dictatorship. It began with Maslow being unable to join the army because he was too old. The question that then drove him was, "What can I do to contribute?"

Ultimately he decided that the way he thought he could truly contribute was to create *a model of human motivation* that leaders at all levels, and especially world leaders, could use to understand people. Yet this did not come out of the blue. For years Maslow had been studying motivation and human nature. His first studies involved working with Harley and the chimpanezes which surprised him in terms of their intelligence and gentleness. His studies in psychology until then had implied the "bad animal" model of instincts focusing on aggressive, competition, and survival of the fittest. What he discovered was that the higher an animal on the evolutionary scale, the more intelligent, gentle, and less violent.

Then he shifted and began studying female sexuality. Yes, that's right. In fact, Maslow was the first psychologist who began using the interview methodology and began interviewing college women about their sexuality. This was ten years before Kinsey, and later when Kinsey started his studies, he studied Maslow has written and even consulted with Maslow about things. When Maslow was later described as the foremost authority on women sexuality, he was amused, embarrassed, and shocked.

Anyway, these were the studies, along with his studies in anthropology under Ruth Benedict, that prepared him for exploring human "instincts," drives, needs, and motivation. And from out of that research, Maslow wrote his classic work which put his name on the international scene, *Motivation and Personality* (1954).

So back to my question: *Why can't they just get along?* Why do we as human beings get into so many conflicts with each other and then behave poorly? Where is the source of our aggressive behaviors? Why do we get so competitive, form packs and tribes, dehumanize other tribes as sub-human and then seek to hurt and destroy them?

The common theory in that day from many philosophers and psychologists was the Freudian idea that people are animals, that they are just evolved aggressive competitors, and that they partake of all of the worst qualities of animals. This is the theory of human nature as "red and

bloody, a cruel claw of aggressive impulses." Maslow disagreed.

The problem is not that we have an aggressive nature that's destructive, hurtful, and ready to do evil and that needs to be controlled. It is that when our basic needs are *not* gratified, we become desperate. We feel hurt and distressed and from that deficiency we become aggressive and reactive. And if this continues, if it is chronic, it then begins distorting and disordering our personality. In this model, "evil," reactiveness, and aggression make sense if we view them as signs of unsatisfied basic needs. The problem is our unfulfilled needs. This lies at the heart of the process creating what we call human evil and psycho-pathology.

In other words, human aggressiveness is *not* a sign that we are innately bad or evil. It does not indicate that human nature is inherently dangerous and aggressive. Rather, it is a sign that one or more of our core needs have not been adequately satisfied and that we are simply reacting from a state of hurt and pain created by deficiency. Give a person safety and security, love and affection, trust and affirmation, self-value and dignity and then stand back to watch that person blossom! Watch new properties, talents, skills, visions, and values emerge.

Maslow described this as *thwarting,* an important distinction in his model.
> "Thwarting of unimportant desires produces no psychopathological results; thwarting of a basically important need does produce such. A conflict or a frustration is not necessarily pathogenic. It becomes so only when it threatens or thwarts the basic needs, or partial needs that are closely related to the basic needs."

The first answer to the question, "Why can't they just get along?" is that it is *the ongoing thwarting* of basic needs that primarily creates aggression. Yet even that alone is inadequate to fully explain the human aggression which we saw in Hitler and that we still see in current wars and confilcts around the world. What else is there?

Meaning, of course, and more specifically, the *distortion of meaning.* I can best illustrate this using Hitler's case. Lacking gratification of the basic need of self-respect, he became a sucker for any sick idea about race superiority by which he could attempt to feel okay about himself. Yet the longer the thwarting of that basic need went on and the longer he fed his mind with fanatic ideas, the more he fed his neurotic obsessions by which he then justified his arguments for war, destruction, and annihilation, all of which he wrote about in *Mein Kampf.* (See, Games Hitler Played" on the website, www.neurosemantics.com).

So today, when people just can't get along, and when there are constant fights, conflicts, mistreatment, and wars, we can expect to find two things occurring. First we can expect that there is the thwarting of some basic human need and second that there are cognitive and semantic distortions about that need and how to gratify that need. In this, we only have to look for limited beliefs and especially fanatical beliefs about having the ultimate Truth and justification about imposing that upon unbelievers. And why? All of this is done to feel safe and secure, to protect one's group, or to build up oneself.

Now if Maslow's theories on self-actualization leads to this diagnosis, then what is the solution? It is two-fold.

First, it is to create *the kind and quality of* families, schools, businesses, communities, and governments that can provide the basic human needs of survival, safety, social needs, and self needs. In fact, the ability to adequately provide for the gratification of these needs facilitates creates a better world, better conditions for people to thrive and to experience their full humanity. Doing that will change their motivations because it enables them to move to the higher human realm of self-actualization.

Second, the next part is tougher. It is to create and provide the *kind* and *quality of meanings* that promote deep democracy of all peoples so that there is a profound sense of equality, care, and respect for all people. What mostly does damage to us, to our relationships, and that creates conflicts and wars are the *meaning frames* of erroneous ideas and beliefs. Here is where our neuro-semantic frames and responses comes in and where we need a world of skilled Neuro-Semanticists! Here is the place for new frames for new games. Here is the place for Neuro-Semantic Trainers providing new frames for taking performance to a higher level and for Meta-Coaches to coach people for a whole new inner game.

SELF-ACTUALIZATION
AND THE NEURO-SEMANTIC VISION

One of my recent discoveries, as I continue my research and study in self-actualization, brought me in contact with an older book, one by Robert Carkhuff. In *Toward Actualizing Human Potential* (1981) he wrote a description of what self-actualizing people are like. And while the book mostly focuses on operationalizing the process of "actualizing" and measuring (which was what got my interest in the book originally), one passage at the beginning of the book made me think I was reading a version of the Neuro-Semantic vision. See what you think.

> "People functioning at the level of self-actualization tend to be very creative and productive people. They are interdependent in their reception and contribution to input and feedback for all of their actions. They are experiential, experimental, and operational in their orientation to all new learnings." (p. 38)

What are self-actualizing people like?
1) First, they are creative and productive.
2) Then they have the quality of being inter-dependent in interactions as they take and give effective feedback.
3) Then there is a passion for ongoing learning.

> "Mastery at this level is dependent upon cooperative harmony between the various levels of need within the individual and between people. Self-actualization is a function of synergistic inner-personal and interpersonal relationships. When relationships, both within and between people are characterized by synergistic interdependence, people interact with others and the situation— not only in the service of themselves but also in the service of others as well as the situational objectives."

4) He now adds synergy and suggests that this results in rich synergistic relationships which produces harmony.
5) Then there is service, service to others.

> "Self-actualization is encouraged in a climate of trust and openness where appropriate information and skills are shared, and personally and socially validatable responses that make possible a system of negative entropy are generated. In closed, suspicious, or strategizing climates, self-actualization creativity is inhibited and inhibition is manifested by frustration at external or internal limits. Regression from the level of interdependent self-actualization is not to the esteem or belonging needs level but to the independent

self-actualization level." (p. 38)

6) Next we have other interpersonal traits such as trust, openness, and sharing.

Does any of this sound like the Neuro-Semantic vision? It certainly struck me as very similar to what we set out originally. After all, our vision in Neuro-Semantic is to *apply* the principles and patterns to ourselves so that we become congruently authentically, creatively productive, cooperative and collaborative, great team players, highly ethically professional, and combine our forces so that we can do so much more together than apart. That's all that I originally set out to do in putting for the Meta-States model as a process for incorporating "apply-to-self" into NLP.

From the beginning of Neuro-Semantics as a model (1994), I've been imagining that if those of us using NLP would first mobilize our own resources so we begin to move out of the deficiency motivation realm into abundance motivation realm (self-actualization), we could take NLP to a whole new level. We could rise above the conflicts that scarcity drives.

Obviously, since then the vision of Neuro-Semantics has been evolving and growing as we've added new models and patterns. This has been especially true in the past two years as it has dawned on me that the *kind* of psychology we are dealing with is *not* the psychology of therapy (psycho-therapy), but that of actualization (psycho-actualization). And as we have been making that our focus in the Meta-Coach trainings, all of this has helped us refocus the vision of Neuro-Semantics.

From the beginning my focus has been on finding ways to *close the knowing-doing gap* so that we can actually do and *apply* what we know. I wanted that for myself; and I wanted that as one of the key themes of Neuro-Semantics. And the reason is simply—only then can we truly unleash our highest potentials! Talking and philosophizing without taking action leaves us impotent and ineffective. So translating what is rich and exciting in our minds (all of our semantics) into our behaviors, physiology, and performances (our neurology) enables us to *live* and *perform* richly significant meanings.

If that's the first part of our vision, *embodying meaning*, then the second part and the backside of that is to look at all of our behaviors and performances that we know are important to do, but which are anemic of meaning*ful*ness and to *enrich those performances with meaning*. This is what Neuro-Semantics is all about, a rich synthesis of meaning and performance. This also describes self-actualization since actualizing our highest and best is a function of meaning and performance.

When we put all of this together, we see that the Neuro-Semantic vision involves becoming self-actualizers.and enabling others to become self-actualizers. The vision is to let the models and patterns change us, so that "being the change" we become much more effective change-agents. Neuro-Semantics, like Self-Actualization Psychology, seeks to find and model extraordinary people, self-actualizing people, people who are healthy in mind, body, and relationships so that we made explicit the strategies and processes for mapping such excellence.

Both Neuro-Semantics and Self-Actualization are about creativity. Both focus on the higher motivation of actualizing our talents so we meaningfully create new possibilities for ourselves and others. Then, we live not merely to survive, feel safe, get along with others, and feel good about oneself (the lower basic needs), but to contribute our own uniqueness.

Neuro-Semantics and Self-Actualization, by both dealing with the vision of creating and living the richest meanings possible, empower ourselves and others for peak experiences and peak performances. This means developing an increasingly creative *mind*, creative *emotions,* creative *speech,* and creative *responses.* And, moving to this level we experience the higher motivational state of abundance in contrast to the deficiency of the lower needs. This enables us to collaborate more effective, be an excellent team player, and contribute to the functioning of the whole. So self-actualization is all about walking our talk (congruence), actualizing in our bodies what we conceptualize in our minds as creative ideas, and making a creative difference in the world.

The bottom line?   Living a life that truly counts. That's the vision.

MAY YOUR GRUMBLES

ALL BE META-GRUMBLES!

Grumble.   We all do it. We grumble about things. Mostly we grumble about what we do not like, what isn't working well, what we don't have, what we want, and what others have that we want. In fact, everybody all over the world in every culture grumbles. It's an uniquely wonderful human trait.

> "A unique human trait I can buy, but 'wonderful?' What's so wonderful about grumbling?"

Before I give you the scoop on this, let me tell you about Maslow's theory of the Grumbles. No, I'm not kidding. He actually developed a Theory of Grumbles and Meta-Grumbles. And no, I'm not exaggerating or using my own words, those are his words. The theory comes out of his work on the *Needs Hierachy* and identifies the fact that the level of our grumbles, what we dislike and complain about, reveals the motivation level at which we are living. First is the fact that the level of need at which we live.

> "People can live at various levels in the motivation hierarchy, they can live a high life or a low life, they can live barely at the level of survival in the jungle, or they can live in an enlightened society with good fortune and with all the basic needs care of so they can live at a higher level and think about the nature of poetry or mathematics or that kind of thing." (1971, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*, p. 231)

Next is the level of need correspond with the level at which we grumble.

> "Everything implies strong that human beings will always complain. Never expect a cessation of complaints. Expect complaints will get to the higher complaints. . . . To complain about rose gardens means that your belly is full, have a good roof over your head, the furnace is working, you are not afraid of bubonic plague, assassination, etc. The complaints gone up the motivational level."

When our complaints are at low level, we complain about the cold, or being wet, or endangered, or fatigue, or poor shelter, that kind of thing. This is the level of survival, of just getting by. When these needs are satisfied and we move up the levels, then content and nature of our complaints change. At the level of safety and security, our focus and what we grumble about has to do with the lack of safety, whether on the job, in the neighborhood, by the government, etc. At the level of our social needs for love and affection, we grumble about our friends, how much or little attention they give us.

At whatever level we live, the focus of our complaints and grumbles tell on us. They tell about the level of our motivational life, they gauge our *need* level, and they reveal the needs that mostly occupy our focus in life. The next higher need level is mostly at the level of esteem and so focus on questions of dignity and respect, about saving and losing face.

> "If you ask a person what's good about his place, he won't think to tell you that his feet didn't get wet because the floors were flooded, or that he is protected against lice and cockroaches in his office. He will take all of these for granted. He won't put them down as pluses. Yet if you take any of these away, and you'll hear a big howl." *Maslow on Management*, 1998 (originally *Eupsychian Management,* 1965).

The reason for this is that everything habituates. Typically, we get used to every blessing and begin taking it for grant and assuming that we are now entitled to. With the gratification of any need, the next level need emerges and that, in turn, directs our attention to that need. And this is an unending process.

William Tageson noted that Maslow made this observation, "workers will never be satisfied, given the unending array of human needs." Why? Because new higher needs emerge as lower ones are gratified. But one can gauge the health of an organization by attending to the quality of workers' gripes, which Maslow classified as *grumbles* or *meta-grumbles.* (p. 233, Tageson, C. William. (1982). *Humanistic Psychology: A synthesis.* Homewood, IL: The Dorsey Press.

In his study of grumbles, Maslow highlighted a basic principle in human motivation and behavior as we climb the levels. The principle? There is a widespread tendency in us to *under-value* our already achieve need-gratifications, to *de-value* them and *throw them away.* And this, according to Maslow, is one of the largest and most devastating sources of human *evil.* Yet it is one that we could easily overcome. We only need to choose to do so.

By way of contrast, people who are self-actualizing in their development are relatively exempted from this profound source of human unhappiness. How is that? In a word, they are capable of *gratitude.* The blessedness of their blessings remains conscious. to them. They mindfully keep cultivating eyes of a fresh appreciation which they bring to their everyday life.

And at the same time, at the level of self-actualization, we also enter into the level of the *meta-grumbles.* Here we complain about higher things. Here we complain about the lack of justice. Here we complain about virtue not being rewarded sufficiently. We complain about villainy getting rewards (i.e., the failure of justice), that X or Y lacks sufficient meaningfulness.

In other words, as we find our lower needs gratified and we move up the levels, so does our complaints. Our complaints become *meta-grumbles.* We now see broader than just under our own nose, and we care about and want more for people, for mankind, for the development of this generation, the human race. Now at the height of life, even our complaints have gone meta!

So the more enlightened we are, the higher our complaints, the more our *meta*-complaints and *meta*-grumbles. Maslow said this is also true of a rich and highly developed marriage or

relationships, or business and company. That the health and level of development of any human interpersonal relationship can be evaluated by the height of the meta-grumbles. So, are you complaining about low things or high things?

Now that you know what's so wonderful about grumbling, especially if you can grumble at meta-levels, and use that energy to become a change-agent individually and culturally, then may you now learn how to manage your grumbles well, keep a freshness of appreciation about you, and so may all your grumbles be *Meta-Grumbles!*

LIVING UP TO YOUR POTENTIAL

With this *Reflection* I will be bringing this series to an end. Because I am continuing my research and modeling in this area, I could go on another year. Instead of doing that here, I'll do that in some upcoming books. So, next week begins a new series that I am titling, *Meta Reflections.* So with this last entry, I thought I'd write a summary about self-actualization and Neuro-Semantics.

— What are the core ideas in "self-actualization?"
— What are the premises of self-actualizing one's best?
— Is self-actualization for everybody or just for those who happened to be interested in it?
— Are you living up to your potential? Do you want to?

There are several core ideas to the concept of *self-actualization.* First and foremost is the idea that *we humans are made to actualize our possibilities.* And within that idea is the premise that it does not occur automatically or naturally, that we have to participate in the process. That is, that it takes consciousness or mindfulness, that we have to use our human form of "instinct," namely our mind, in order to find and actualize our best.

Without the kind of information-loaded instincts that animals have, we only have "instinctoids" at best. Negatively, this lack of instinct means that we do not know how to be human. Maslow often said that we are the only species who do not know how to be the species that we are. Yet on the positive side, this means that we have an incredible degree of *freedom* within, freedom that allows us to participate in our nature and our becoming. We have a space within that leaves our development *open* to our own influence as well as the influence of others. So this creates great openness and freedom, and this is the foundation of our anxiety, restlessness, and responsibility.

Another core idea is that *it is up to us to find, detect, unleash, and live up to the possibilities within us.* We can resist it. We can deny it. We can accept or adopt limiting beliefs that interfere and sabotage actualizing our highest potentials. If we aim to only live a conventional life, we will not discover our unique contributions and will not live true and authentic to ourselves. If we make "pleasing others," "getting along without any conflict," saving face," "being approved," "not rocking the boat," etc. as the most important thing in life, we will effectively prevent our own self-actualization.

Essential to the idea of self-actualization also is the role of human *responsibility.* Each of us is a responsible person who has to live his or her own life. No one can do this for us. Playing victim, believing in entitlement (that the world owes you, the government owes you, your family

owes you, etc.), and playing your life small also sabotages self-actualization. To unleash potentials each of us has to acknowledge, accept, own, and act on our own inner *response-powers.* Only then will we take the initiative to discover our strengths and weaknesses and take action to discover what makes us most fully ourselves.

All of this may sound "selfish" or self-centered, yet that's the paradox. Self-actualization, as the unique human adventure of discovery involves us, and is through us, yet ultimately it is not merely about us. To self-actualize, we first have to gratify our basic needs for life, safety, friendship and community, and a strong sense of self. That much is true. And when we do, and actually move into self-actualization, the deficiency of the lower needs shifts to a new dimension, a dimension of abundance. And from this sense of abundance, we experience a whole new level of motivation. Now life is not about gratifying needs in order to make the need go away. Now life is about expressing what we have to offer; it is about contributing.

In the level of self-actualizing we are looking to see how we can best express our unique contributions so that we create a meaningful life, a meaningful legacy, and make a difference. This level is often call "spiritual" because it does move us into the unique human dimension of purpose, intention, and meaning that gives our life spirit, that is, inspiration and direction. This is the dimension of philosophy and theology, our sense of *why* we are here.

When we move to this level, we discover that we self-actualize best as we find what we can contribute that expresses our uniqueness. In this, we transcend the narrow polarity of selfish *or* unselfish. Here we take care of ourselves *so that* we have more to give and contribute that expresses our unique gifts and perspectives.

Because self-actualization is about *living up to your potentials*, the heart of the training we call *Accessing Personal Genius* (APG) is a training specifically designed to facilitate this. Using the Meta-States Model, you discover your incredible self-reflexive consciousness so that you can rise up, take charge of the levels of your consciousness, and become *mindful*. With that, you can then access your inner powers, set frames through meta-yes-ing ideas, thereby transforming them into "beliefs." With the ability to step back from our own processing, we become the architects of our nature, releasing possibilities through managing our meta-pleasures, welcoming our emotions for emotional intelligence, creating semantic frames that enhance our everyday life, and using our highest intentionally for being able to step in and out of a flow state.

In all of this, Neuro-Semantics is about *embodying the highest and best meanings and intentions* so that *what* we know in our mind becomes "our way of being" in the world and in relationships. This enables us to expand our understandings and then close the knowing-doing gap as we coach our body how to feel great ideas. And this unleashes potentials.

In this sense the models and patterns in Neuro-Semantics are all about unleashing our potentials so that we can move from the deficiency motivations to the level of abundance motivations. For ten years, APG has been the leading Neuro-Semantic training focused on unleashing potentials. Yet there is more. In the Meta-Coach Training System we have incorporated self-actualization a

psychology as our model of choice. And because this psychology is unformulated as a model, we have made the one of our objectives in Meta-Coaching. The next step will be to release that model and to make explicit the *unleashing of potential process*, which we will do in the new workshop in 2007.

Self-actualizing our highest and best is built into our very nature and essence as human beings. We are not designed to merely live at the lower level, merely gratifying those needs. Doing so puts us at too low a level for the kind of *meaning* that activates that which is most human, most humane, and most significant in us.

Merely living for need gratification keeps us in the land of deficiency and scarcity and that puts us in competition with each other. It is moving up to actualize our highest and best that invites us to live in the land of abundance and contribution. This is where true "wealth" occurs, the inner wealth of experiencing a rich inner world of thought, emotion, speech, and behavior for relating, connecting, and making a difference. This is the land of the *Being-values* that are inherently healthy, respectful, and inspiring.

If you are ready to *live up to your potential*, then take full ownership of your powers for creating rich and wholesome *meanings* and then begin to *embody* those meanings in your very neurology so that they govern and inform your very way of being in the world.

Here's to your Highest and Best!

L. Michael Hall

www.self-actualizing.org
www.neurosemantics.com
www.meta-coaching.org

In 2007 meet me in Portland, Oregon, Brisbane Australia, or Geneva Switzerland for the *Ultimate Self-Actualization Workshop* and experience a journey into the Construct, the Crucible, and the Zone of self-actualization.