Rethinking the Place of *Love Needs* in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

III. Young Perspectives

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Writing in the midst of World War II, the construction of Maslow's hierarchy of needs was influenced by the Zeitgeist, leading to an overemphasis on the role of safety needs. I suggest a rearrangement of Maslow's pyramid. In my view, love needs are part of the basic needs rather than the psychological needs. Moreover, within the basic needs category, love needs precede the safety needs in importance.

The idea that one is typically less concerned with security and safety is reiterated in Maslow's writing. Maslow acknowledges that "the peaceful, smoothly running, 'good' society ordinarily makes its members feel safe enough from wild

animals, extremes of temperature, criminals, assault and murder and tyranny" and hence "the need for safety is seen as an active and dominant mobilizer of the organism's resources only in emergencies" (Maslow 1943: 379).

I believe that this assertion should be extended. It is not only in 'good' societies that one is less engaged with issues of safety needs, but love is an important prerequisite for a feeling of safety both in materially secure modern societies and in primitive and dangerous societies. This is to generalize that one is more concerned with her intimate relationships with spouses, friends and family members, than with her physical safety.

The view that "it is not good that the man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18) is mirrored in the historical development of humankind. Chronologically speaking, the development and maintenance of love relationships with lovers, family members and friends preceded the establishment of the organized society. As Hobbes suggested almost four hundred years ago, human society – the institution that aims at protecting its members from dangers, risks and injuries – is based upon interpersonal relationships: "And as small families did then; so now do cities and kingdoms, which are but greater families (for their own security), enlarge their dominions upon all pretences of danger, and fear of invasion, or assistance that may be given to invaders" (Hobbes 2006 [1651]: 103–104). Love needs are a necessary condition to fulfilling safety needs, as the formation of interpersonal relationships precedes and enables society's formation.

Furthermore, the placing of love needs before safety needs clarifies innumerable examples of people who have endangered their lives –or, to use Maslow's terms, have voluntarily cast aside their safety needs – for the chance of keeping their beloved, be they friends, lovers or family members, from harm. This veneration of human selflessness and sacrifice has been celebrated and perpetuated across disparate societies

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for millennia. It is illustrated in the Greek mythological story of Orpheus who takes a fearsome journey to the underworld to try and bring his lover Eurydice back; in the Christian idea of loving your wife “just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:25); and in the tale of Anarkali who agrees to be entombed alive to save her beloved Salim.

Nowadays, the number of stories about lovers, parents and friends who endanger their lives to save their beloveds is greater than ever. In an era in which long-established meaning systems have been worn down and the only safe thing in one’s life is her intimate relationships, people are more willing to sacrifice their lives for their beloveds. In this vein, in the twenty-first century,

love needs precede the safety needs in importance even more than ever.

Further Reading

Hobbes, T. 2006. *Leviathan*. Print: A&C Black.

Maslow, A. H. 1943. A theory of human motivation. *Psychological review*, 50(4), 370–396.

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