

THE BIG IDEAS

Eupsychian Ideal

Sounds a lot like Eudaimon-ology!

Psychology of Happiness

Sounds a lot like Eudaimon-ology! :)

Stoic Philosophy

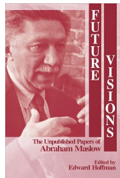
Is where it's at.

Vicious Cultural Influences

Need to be addressed.

The Jonah Complex

Answering the call to live heroically.



Future Visions

The Unpublished Papers of Abraham Maslow

EDITED BY DR. EDWARD HOFFMAN · SAGE PUBLICATIONS, INC © 1996 · 240 PAGES

“In researching Abraham Maslow’s biography several years ago, I was excited to discover that he left behind many significant unpublished writings. Ever since, I have been eager to share these papers with others inspired by his unique vision of human potential and achievement. Maslow had always been an essentially intuitive and interdisciplinary thinker, and these pieces were truly wide-ranging in scope, encompassing motivational psychology, counseling and psychotherapy, managerial theory and organizational development, and even wider concerns such as politics, government, and global peace.

In editing this volume, I have selected those articles that seemed most timely and relevant for contemporary audiences. Aside from providing descriptive titles for each piece, my task has mainly involved enhancing Maslow’s style for readability and correcting various errors in syntax and spelling. To place all these papers in the wider context of Maslow’s evolving career, I also have written appropriate introductions and a glossary of his technical terms.

If this book sheds new light on Maslow’s unpublished projects and additionally helps to reawaken interest in his important, overall legacy, my hopes will have been fulfilled.”

~ Edward Hoffman from *Future Visions*

“[Maslow] once asked his class, ‘Which of you believe you will achieve greatness?’ When they stared at him blankly, he asked, ‘If not you, who then?’”

~ Colin Wilson

I got this book after leading positive psychologist Scott Barry Kaufman referenced it in his great new book called *Transcend*, in which, as per the sub-title of the book, he extends Maslow’s thinking and presents “The New Science of Self-Actualization.”

As you know if you’ve been following along, I love Abraham Maslow and feel a deep kinship to him and his work. We have featured two of the books he published during his lifetime: [Toward a Psychology of Being](#) and [Motivation and Personality](#).

Maslow created the “hierarchy of needs” and boldly stated that our need to “self-actualize” was, in fact, a fundamental need that naturally arises within each of us as our more basic needs are met. I like to call this need to actualize our potential in service to the world “Soul Oxygen.” We talk about it in THE VERY FIRST Optimize +1 I ever shared called [-1 or +1 = Destiny Math](#).

Now... Although this book has only ONE review on Amazon and I could only buy a used copy of it, I knew I’d love it. And, although I had already been deeply influenced by Maslow and his thinking, there was something about reading his unpublished essays and journal thoughts that made me feel that much more connected to this great man.

Edward Hoffman was a contemporary of Maslow’s. He wrote a biography of him and did a wonderful job curating this collection of unpublished papers.

If you’re a fan of Maslow and have some extra time on your hands for some extracurricular reading (lol) I think you’ll love it as much as I did. (Get the book [here](#).)

For now, I'm excited to share a few of my favorite Big Ideas we can apply to our lives TODAY, so let's jump straight in!

"Anybody, any person whatsoever, under any circumstance whatsoever, can be a psychological success—at least in the above sense, of doing the best that one can and doing fully what one can—to be himself or herself and to accept the reality of himself or herself."

~ Abraham Maslow

THE EUPSYCHIAN IDEAL

"The point is that my vow—that's what it would have been called 500 years ago—was also a resolution; to do like Sumner. I swore that I would try to make a similar contribution to philosophy, psychology, and anthropology. Why these particular fields, I don't remember. But that evening, my ethnocentrism dropped away like old clothes, and I became a citizen of the world.

If I had been in King Arthur's court, I suppose that I would have kept vigil beside my sword and before an altar all night long. That was exactly the spirit of it. In any case, that's what I've done with my life."

That's from the very first chapter called "My Early Revelations About Culture and Personality."

There's a lot in there that's worth talking about. But, first, let's go back to the *very* first words of the book. These words were written FOUR days before Maslow died of a heart attack at the age of 62. The seventh word struck me like lightning.

Maslow says: "*The more I think of the eupsychian society...*"

I circled and underlined and pointed to "***eupsychian***."

"*Eupsychian*"? Yep. *Eupsychian*.

Bonus points if you know what that makes me think about!

Of course, if you've been following along, you know that I'm ALL about (and by extension our Optimize Coach program is all about!) helping us create a "good soul." The Greeks called that a "eudaimon." We call the study of that good soul and how to high five it "Eudaimon-ology."

Maslow called the same ideal "*eupsychian*." We'd call it "*eudaimonian*" or "*eudaimonic*."

So... Yah. There's that. (!!!)

Then there's the HEROIC vow Maslow took to dedicate his life to making a contribution to the world via his integration of philosophy, psychology and anthropology.

Later in the book (via a speech he gave 4 years before he passed away), Maslow tells us: "*I remember when I discovered psychology in college. I had been struggling with law, geology, and mathematics, and this was so different! It was like falling in love with someone. Ideally, one's vocation is an expression of the self: It is a way of finding one's identity, one's real self. The luckiest person in the world is the one who gets paid for being in love: who is fascinated by something and finds that he or she can make a living by it.*"

When I read THAT, I thought of a day in early 2001. I was 26 and had recently sold my first business (etteamz) to a company (The Active Network) that was based in La Jolla, California. I had led the integration of our company into theirs and was trying to figure out what I wanted to do when I grew up. I found myself at the research library at the University of California, San Diego when I stumbled upon the January 1st, 2000 edition of the *American Psychologist*.

The cover article was by [Martin Seligman](#) and [Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi](#). It was called *Positive psychology: An introduction*. You can read it [here](#). I remember sitting there with my heart racing at the prospect of scientifically establishing how to live a good life.

I KNEW that being involved in this movement in some way was what I wanted to do with my life.

Not too long after that I read Michael Gelb's *How to Think Like Leonardo da Vinci*. He has his [100 Questions Exercise](#). Then he has a set of "Power Questions." I picked this one for

"In short, I do not seek perfection in human nature. To do so is a big mistake and a sure path toward disillusionment and unhappiness in life."

~ Abraham Maslow

contemplation: "How can I get paid to do what I love?" In my mind's eye, I can *still* see the lined paper on which I wrote that question and the floss with which I hung it from the shower head as I took a bath and pondered that question.

My life over the last two decades has been an attempt to answer that question—sometimes more successfully than others (!) but always spiraling up to a place where I feel blessed to be here typing this and sharing it with you.

All that is a long way to say: How's YOUR hero's journey? How can YOU get paid to do what you love? Who are you and what are you here to do? Is it time to get more clarity and/or to make a VOW to give yourself to whatever it is that has arisen as your path?

Finally: As I thought about our society's lack of ritualistic celebration of heroic vows, our beloved Joseph Campbell came to mind as well. In *The Power of Myth*, he tells us: "If you want to find out what it means to have a society without any rituals, read the New York Times."

P.S. I was recently interviewed by [Larry King](#) and [James Pawelski](#) for a podcast called [Positive Voices](#) that is produced by an Optimize Coach graduate, Donna Hemmert. James co-founded (with Martin Seligman) the Masters of Applied Positive Psychology program at the University of Pennsylvania. I took it as a wink and high five from the Optimizing gods! :)

P.P.S. We need to go back to the idea of a "vow" for another moment. In *Buddhism Day by Day* we learn: "In any field of endeavor, making a vow is the foundation for achieving something great. If for whatever reason a person gives up halfway or backslides, his or her commitment hasn't been based on a vow. Halfhearted desire doesn't amount to a vow."

There's so much more to write about here but, alas, we need to move on. For now, check out the Notes on [The Undefeated Mind](#) and check in: To what are you willing to make a sacred vow?

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF HAPPINESS

"I am convinced that the hedonistic definition of happiness is false, for real happiness necessarily implies difficulties. For example, it is a privilege to undergo the 'misery' of creativity, even the related insomnia and tension. It is a privilege to have children to weep over because of their troubles, rather than to have no children at all. It is a privilege to love family members and friends, even though doing so inevitably means to suffer all their pain in addition to your own. Indeed, this situation is infinitely better than the misery of being wholly alone in life. We must, therefore, define 'good living' and happiness to include these 'misery privileges.'"

That's from the second chapter called "The Psychology of Happiness."

When I read THAT section, I immediately wondered if Maslow had studied Aristotle's *Ethics* and wished he was still alive so we could chat about his eupsychian and our eudaimonian ideas!

Speaking more directly to this particular passage, Maslow also tells us: "Thus, we must learn to enjoy the 'miseries of the higher life' and of creativity, of real problems rather than pseudoproblems."

He also tells us: "In my view, human nature always involves seeking better and better heavens. We must abandon our expectation of never-ending contentment and serenity, for such peak feelings can come only from transient episodes."

And: "Perhaps we should, therefore, redefine happiness as experiencing real emotions over real problem and real tasks."

Tal Ben-Shahar comes to mind. In *Happier*, he tells us: "Attaining lasting happiness requires that we enjoy the journey on our way toward a destination we deem valuable. Happiness is not about making it to the peak of the mountain nor is it about climbing aimlessly around the mountain; happiness is the experience of climbing toward the peak."

"I am not saying that humans can become psychologically perfect. They cannot, except perhaps for a moment or two. Rather, I am only stating that humans can improve and, furthermore, that we should help them to do so. Psychotherapy and humanistic education should become the science of helping people improve."

~ Abraham Maslow

Kelly McGonigal also comes to mind. In *The Upside of Stress*, she tells us: "So as we begin this journey together, I offer this conception of stress: Stress is what arises when something you care about is at stake. This definition is big enough to hold both the frustration over traffic and the grief over a loss. It includes your thoughts, emotions, and physical reactions when you're feeling stressed, as well as how you choose to cope with situations you'd describe as stressful. This definition also highlights an important truth about stress: Stress and meaning are inextricably linked. You don't stress about things you don't care about, and you can't create a meaningful life without experiencing some stress."

Here's to embracing the "pleasant tortures" of a life well-lived.

STOIC PHILOSOPHY

"Finally, I think that all the writings on Stoic philosophy are quite relevant. It might be useful to reread the Stoic philosophers and look at their phrasings. Much of what I have been saying in this essay is simply the Stoic outlook in another format. As a matter of fact, much of psychiatrist Viktor Frankl's self-styled existential approach to human personality can be aptly called a form of Stoicism. This philosophical connection might be important to establish."

Those are the final words of an unpublished essay Maslow wrote in which he explored some ideas he was contemplating at the time.

I'm sharing that passage here because I just love that he, too, knew that the ancient Stoics were worth studying deeply. As we've discussed, Viktor Frankl was essentially a Stoic. And the founders of cognitive behavioral therapy make the connection to Stoicism.

Here's my ad for the day: "Stoicism. It does a mind, body, soul good! Study it. TODAY! :)"

I'm proud of our significant library of Notes on DOZENS of the best books on Stoicism. Check them out along with Stoicism 101 for more.

VICIOUS CULTURAL INFLUENCES

"Can I buttress my theory with any concrete examples? Yes, because human history has unfortunately produced entire societies—like Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union under Stalin—where the populace has been denied truth or justice, and all sorts of definite pathologies arose. Plenty of places exist on the globe today that lack a free press or where citizens don't dare say certain things in public for fear of being jailed or shot. Well, I am suggesting that certain kinds of emotional pathologies will arise in such societies. That is my point.

Less pernicious destroyer of B-values but nevertheless harmful is the impact of commercial television in American society. I believe that its influence is utterly immoral, corrupting, and damaging to the human spirit, especially to children who have so little ability to cope with its power. They watch a program with an impressive hero and then during the commercial break that same figure tells his youthful audience, 'Okay, kids, now I want you to buy this cereal!' or 'This is the toy that I want you to tell your parents to buy!' In this way, American television is undermining children's capacity to experience truth, and I am sure that this situation is leading to metapathologies among them."

Maslow spoke those words in a speech he gave at the University of Maine in 1966.

Pause for a moment. Reflect on his thoughts on how television's influence was "utterly immoral, corrupting, and damaging to the human spirit."

Then fast-forward 50+ years and tell me what you think he would say if he was alive today. Of course, he'd be EVEN MORE (!) appalled by the current state of not only television but the attention economy at large driven by addictive consumption of social media via smartphones, etc., etc. etc.

"If we want to answer the question, how tall can the human species grow, then obviously it is well to pick out the ones who are already tallest and study them. If we want to know how fast a human being can run, then it is no use to average out the speed of the population; it is far better to collect Olympic gold medal winners and see how well they can do. If we want to know the possibilities for spiritual growth, value growth, or moral development in human beings, then I maintain that we can learn most by studying our most moral, ethical, or saintly people."

~ Abraham Maslow

Cal Newport's stats in [Digital Minimalism](#) on suicide and self-harm among teenagers SKYROCKETING at the exact time smartphones were introduced comes to mind.

I also think of Mark Hyman's enraging manifesto [Food Fix](#) in which, among many other things, he reminds us that we are one of the very few countries that still even ALLOWS junk food manufacturers to prey on our children via ads during cartoons, etc.

We take it for granted but, again, to quote our beloved Professor, this is "utterly immoral, corrupting, and damaging to the human spirit." It's also, of course, damaging to the human body and one of the leading causes of childhood obesity/diabetes/etc.

btw: Mark also tells us: "Food is a social justice issue. Our industrial food system is an invisible form of oppression." How? For many reasons including: "The big food companies target black and Hispanic youth with their least nutritious products, including fast food, candy, sugary drinks, and snacks. From 2013 to 2017, food advertising on black-targeted TV increased by 50 percent. Black teens viewed 119 percent more junk-food-related ads—mostly for soda and candy—than white teens."

THE JONAH COMPLEX

"It frequently takes half a lifetime for the creatively talented individual to come to terms with one's own talent, to accept it fully, and to unleash oneself, that is, to be postambivalent about one's talent. ...

In our society, the superior individual generally learns to put on a chameleon-like cloak of false modesty or humility. Or at the very least, she has learned not to say openly what she thinks of herself and her high capacities. ...

In order to avoid punishment, she becomes humble, ingratiating, appeasing, even masochistic. In short, due to fear of punishment for being superior, she becomes inferior and throws away some of her capacity; that is, she voluntarily diminishes her possibilities of humanness. For the sake of safety and security, she cripples and stunts herself."

That's from chapter 9 called "The Jonah Complex." And... THAT's the passage Scott Barry Kaufman quoted in *Transcend* that a) blew the hair I don't have back (lol) and b) led me to get the book from Amazon the next time I was online.

WOW. (Right?)

A few pages later, Maslow also tells us: "To say it even more simply, neurosis can be seen as containing the same impulse of growth and expression that all animals and plants share but with a mixture of fear. Therefore, growth will take place in a crooked, tortuous, or joyless way. ... If we concede that the core self is at least partially biological in the sense of anatomy, constitution, physiology, temperament, and preferred, biologically driven behaviors, then it also may be said that one is evading one's biological fate or destiny. Or, I could even say that such a person is evading her vocation, mission, and calling.

That is, she is evading the task for which her peculiarly idiosyncratic constitution fits her, the task for which she was born, so to speak. She is evading her destiny. That is why the historian Frank Manuel has called this phenomenon the Jonah complex. As we remember, the biblical tale of Jonah was that he was called by God to prophesy, but he was afraid of the task. He tried to run away from it. But no matter where Jonah ran, he could find no hiding place. Finally, he understood that he had to accept his fate. He had to do what he was called to do. In this case, we each are called to a particular task for which our nature fits us. To run away from it, fear it, become half-hearted, or ambivalent about it are all 'neurotic' reactions in the classic sense."

CUE CHOIR OF ANGELS!!! (Right?)

"A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be ultimately at peace with himself. What a man can be, he must be. This need we may call self-actualization. ... It refers to man's desire for self-fulfillment, namely, to the tendency for him to become actually in what he is potentially: to become everything that one is capable of becoming."

~ Abraham Maslow

Finally, Maslow wraps up this chapter with this: "Yet, from another perspective, it is possible to see these very same mechanisms as instances of our drive toward health, self-actualization, and full humanness. The difference between the diminished individual, wistfully yearning toward full humanness but never quite daring to make it, versus the unleashed individual, growing well toward her destiny, is simply the difference between fear and courage."

MIC. DROP!!! (Right?) (Laughing.)

I don't even know what to say about that other then: I'm going back to reread that all now. (lol)

Alright. I'm back. It's impossible to touch on all the power in that so I'll leave you to a personal check in with Abe and your daimon. I'll just say that the word "unleashed" struck me profoundly.

For whatever reason (perhaps because Maslow talked about his ideas of the uberman), I thought of Nietzsche. In [Thus Spoke Zarathustra](#), he tells us: "They have turned the wolf into a dog and man himself into the man's best domesticated animal."

Finally, as I read that first line about it "frequently taking half a lifetime for a creatively talented individual to come to terms with one's own talent, to accept it fully, and to UNLEASH (!) oneself," I thought of Confucius.

Here's what he says in [The Analects](#): "The Master said, Give me a few more years, so that I may have spent a whole fifty in study, and I believe that after all I should be fairly free from error."

Confucius also tells us: "The Master said, At fifteen I set my heart upon learning. At thirty, I had planted my feet firm upon the ground. At forty, I no longer suffered from perplexities. At fifty, I knew what were the biddings of Heaven. At sixty, I heard them with a docile ear. At seventy, I could follow the dictates of my own heart; for what I desired no longer overstepped the boundaries of right."

As I read that I realized I'm about ten years behind his schedule but feeling great about my progress and inspired by his long game. (Hah.)

How about you? Now a good time to ANSWER THE CALL?! (Good answer! :)

Here's to stepping into the Future Vision of YOU and your most radiantly alive, eudaimonically and joyfully heroic self. TODAY!!

B

Brian Johnson,
Philosopher in Residence

If you liked this Note,
you'll probably like...

[Motivation and Personality](#)

[Toward a Psychology of Being](#)

[The Nicomachean Ethics](#)

[Man's Search for Meaning](#)

[Flourish](#)

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About the Editor of "Future Visions"

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Brian Johnson loves helping people optimize their lives so they can actualize their potential as he studies, embodies and teaches the fundamentals of optimal living—integrating ancient wisdom + modern science + practical tools. Learn more and optimize your life at optimize.me.