

CHAPTER ONE

MetaValues ... The Lost Discovery of Abraham Maslow

“Perhaps my most important finding was the discovery of what I am calling B-values or the intrinsic values of Being ... this list of described characteristics of the world as it is perceived in our most perspicuous moments is about the same as what people through the ages have called the eternal verities, or the spiritual values, or the highest values, or the religious values [truth, beauty, and goodness].”¹³

ABRAHAM MASLOW

Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences

On a beautiful Colorado afternoon several years ago, I watched several brave people leap, one by one, off Lookout Mountain and ascend effortlessly on paragliders into the cloudless sky. As though being lifted by some mysterious, invisible power, they circled higher and higher—the way the eagle and hawk have for untold ages. I knew, of course, that there was no mysterious power operating; rising warm air thermals naturally lifted these bird-emulators. The fliers knew this as well, secure in the understanding that nature and humanity’s ingenuity would keep them safe.

As I watched, a thought occurred to me: Long before recorded history, people surely envied the flight of birds as they soared

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effortlessly on air thermals. Yet, it was not until the middle of the twentieth century that someone created the simple design for the paraglider and built the first prototype. Why did it take so long? People had access to the raw materials to make a paraglider many centuries before. And, of course, air thermals always existed, waiting for humans to use them the way birds instinctively did. The only thing lacking was the design and someone daring enough to leap into thin air to test it.

It dawns on me that, centuries from now, historians will look back at our failure to actualize more of our potential—when all of the “raw materials” are within reach—with an equal degree of puzzlement. They will likely wonder why Abraham Maslow’s peers broadly rejected his discovery of the reality and power of MetaValues. They will note that Maslow’s other ideas had significant impact on what scientists imagined to be the limits of the highest reaches of human nature. I can’t help but believe, though, that they will find it puzzling that, nearly four decades after the premature death of the man who started the self-empowerment revolution, most Americans are still actualizing only a tiny fraction of their potential.

On that bright Colorado afternoon, the themes of this book began to coalesce for me. At that moment, I understood something that you will understand as you read further. We don’t need to wait for a MetaValues revolution to sweep the world. You can set up the conditions that will allow MetaValues to prove themselves to you personally. In a sense, each Self-Actualizer has learned to build an individual, mental paraglider that will capture MetaValue energies.

In this book, I will show you how to build yours. I will help you overcome the blocks and fears that have kept you from making the

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faith-leap into the possibilities of self-actualization. But first you will need to understand the nature of the MetaValue “thermals” that are waiting to lift you out of your present circumstances and carry you to undreamed of happiness and achievement.

Understanding the Power of MetaValues

The “thermals,” of course, are the MetaValues themselves. You cannot put MetaValues under a microscope to examine them. You can’t weigh or measure Truth, Beauty, and Goodness in physical terms. Much like thermals, we know MetaValues exist because we can take note of how they influence the behavior of observable, finite things. As I explained in the Introduction, the MetaValue terms of Integrity, Excellence, and Caring are not to be substituted for the classic values; they are, rather, expressions of the MetaValues of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness *made visible through action*.

Most people have been conditioned to believe that values are purely humanly-contrived ideas, a kind of furniture for the mind. When Abraham Maslow announced that he had discovered MetaValues operating as *active agents* influencing the behavior of every self-actualizing person he studied, his colleagues were shocked. Maslow wrote, “[MetaValues] are perceived, not invented ... They exist beyond the life of the individual. They can be conceived to be a kind of perfection. They could conceivably satisfy the human longing for certainty.”¹⁴

Maslow’s ideas about values are probably very far from what you may have read or heard. The common claim is, “My values are mine and yours are yours.” This can be accurate enough when applied to our tastes for things such as clothing, music, and food, but it is not

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valid at all when applied to the cardinal issues of Truth and Integrity. You may have come to believe that values are merely admonitions designed by society to keep you in line—various do’s and don’ts that operate as reins to hold you back and channel your behavior. Dr. Maslow acknowledged the nature of these society-contrived values, and he determined that they tend to be imposed from the outside. However, as we mature into Self-Actualizers, we begin to resist these intrusive, coerced values. MetaValues then awaken from somewhere inside and begin to stir into action. Unlike the values of childhood that sometimes served as reins to retard and control us, MetaValues are more like a team of powerful horses that pull us along toward uncharted possibilities.

The Secret of Unlocking the Power of MetaValues

There is a secret to unlocking the potential of MetaValues and becoming a Self-Actualizer. Again, this secret has been hiding in plain sight for decades—available to anyone who carefully examines the work of Abraham Maslow. It comes in three parts.

Early on, Dr. Maslow uncovered three attitudes that are unique to Self-Actualizers and potential Self-Actualizers. When he began his studies, Maslow accepted the conventional wisdom that it is natural for most people in our culture to feel unwarranted guilt, crippling shame, and stressful anxiety. As he studied Self-Actualizers, though, he detected that they were relatively free of this baggage. Over time, they developed an attitude of impregnable self-respect. This self-respect was not overbearing or narcissistic, but rather balanced by an equal degree of respect for other people.

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How does such extraordinary self-respect evolve? Self-Actualizers are able to endure challenges to their self-worth because they believe that there is a higher, more effective version of themselves to actualize—a more fully developed model. Self-Actualizers sense, in a matter-of-fact way, that there is greatness within them. Most of us share an intuitive belief that we have a higher, better self within. However, the majority of us feel we can't access this self. We believe that, if there was a time when we could have become the best versions of ourselves, that time has passed. We beat ourselves up for our failures. We exaggerate the losses and minimize the wins. We accept that we have limitations. In doing so, we lose the self-respect necessary to release our inner power. The first part of the secret, then, is to restore the natural, innocent self-respect we had as children while also increasing to an equal degree the respect we have for other people.

The second part of the secret is a precious attitude that Maslow uncovered in Self-Actualizers: they assume a nonnegotiable responsibility for the inner life experience. Again, most of us don't have this attitude. For instance, how often do you say things like, "He makes me angry"? How often do you hold resentments about past injustices? How often do you rehash them? What Maslow saw in Self-Actualizers is that they refused to see themselves as victims, regardless of their circumstances. They perceived their lives as their own and understood that, while they did not have absolute control of their fates, they had absolute control over how they *felt* about their fates. They understood that we cannot control what others may do or say—but we have *total* control over our attitudes and responses.

The third part of the secret is that Self-Actualizers habitually make growth decisions rather than safety decisions. Most people live

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mundane lives that are virtually devoid of courageous decisions; we want structure and predictability. Many individuals with high IQs waste their lives arranging, classifying, and polishing the known rather than enjoying the adventure of discovering the unknown. Yet actualization is all about new and unfolding possibilities. Potential Actualizers are better able to take advantage of these opportunities because they make growth decisions and act on those decisions. Actualizers acquire an independent spirit and a habit of being active, deciding agents rather than tentative, helpless whiners.

No special training is necessary to utilize this secret. You have, right now, access to exactly the same core of power, energy, and inspiration that sustains the top one percent of achievers. But you cannot think your way into the self-actualizing process—you need to act your way into it. You need to make the components of this secret a fundamental part of your everyday life.

With this in mind, let's look at each of the MetaValues.

Truth: The MetaValue Expressed by Uncompromising Integrity

All normal people share a common need to trust the information someone shares with them. This need transcends cultures, languages, and continents. It does not matter whether you are a Harvard professor, a dockworker, or an Australian bushman. We all value the truth and abhor deceit. We cannot imagine rational people who would hold the belief that truth is not important to them.

The MetaValue of Truth is essential to an actualizing personality. When we are accurate in what we say, and do what we promise to do—we express integrity. However, on the deepest level, integrity also means that our talk—especially our inner talk—must honor

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who we really are. Downplaying ourselves is not noble; it shows a lack of integrity. We must know ourselves and be true to what we really are by striving to become what we ought to be.

How does this depth of integrity relate to the process of self-actualization—to a lifestyle that is constantly moving from what we are toward becoming what we ought to be? Simply put, Self-Actualizers are more real. Maslow referred to the highest values as “Being values” for good reason. He meant that as we actualize more and more of our potentials, we become more and more real.

The term “being” is important to understand, but it is elusive and hard to define. Saint Augustine had a brilliant way of helping us understand its meaning. He showed us that it is the difference between what *has* value and what value *is*. He would ask students, “Would you rather have a beautiful pearl or a mouse?” The answer was always the same, of course, because we would all rather have the valuable pearl than the mouse. Then he would ask, “Would you rather *be* a beautiful pearl or a mouse?” The answer changed at that point. A mouse, limited as it is, has more being, more power to act than a lifeless pearl. Absolute nonbeing is OK for a pearl. But for a human being, it is an unthinkable disaster.

Integrity as a MetaValue requires that we are willing to face and accept the reality of the way we are at a given moment. It would be wrong, however, to say that Self-Actualizers are self-satisfied. They feel reasonable guilt about improvable shortcomings such as laziness, loss of temper, and hurting others. In general, the Self-Actualizer is disturbed by personal discrepancies between what is and what ought to be. Integrity also implies that we are willing to have faith in the

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possibilities of the vision of what we ought to be and willing to engage in the process of becoming all that we can be.

This MetaValue is not static. It is a living, evolving thing. Integrity involves a constant, tireless effort to integrate what we are with the possibilities of what we ought to be. The ultimate questions we should ask ourselves are not simply, “Who am I?” but also, “What am I becoming?” and “How can I do better?”

We all share a natural, positive response to the MetaValue of Truth. We respond to Truth because we also share, to some degree, an inner endowment that you might call a reality-response. This means we don't have to be helpless victims of the opinions of so-called experts. As laypersons, we have access within to a resource of uncommon sense. We can demonstrate our own inner reality-response to what we recognize as Integrity. Dr. Maslow observed that Self-Actualizers are very much in touch with, and trust in, the authenticity of their inner feelings. They reasonably consider expert opinions, but they are not intimidated or overwhelmed by them.

Individuals who can balance a childlike clarity to perceive and accept the emerging realities of life with a tireless passion to make things better, are released from the fetters of stress, guilt, shame, and mediocrity. Such a remarkable reaction to Truth fosters Integrity and illuminates a closely related source of energy and inspiration for self-empowerment—the MetaValue of Beauty. Love of Truth leads to love of Beauty. For most of us, Beauty is something we enjoy. But enjoyment of Beauty, important as it is, is passive. Actualizers eventually see the need for more beautiful things and strive to make things better by creating more Beauty.

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Beauty: the MetaValue of World-Class Excellence

We know people love Beauty when they demonstrate higher and higher levels of order and personal Excellence in their lives. Absolutely nothing will affect your material success to a more important degree than a dedication to—and a love of—Excellence.

How do we determine what is truly excellent? Do we follow the advice of experts? Not slavishly. Maslow warns us that we should avoid the dangers of rule by experts. We should weigh their opinions, but ultimately rely more fully upon our own reality-response. While the experts may argue about the merits of a painting, a book, or a piece of music, we all admire obvious quality in performance. We do not need an expert to tell us when these things please us. Beyond that, we all sense the beauty of excellent service by a waitperson, a salesclerk, or a plumber. We don't need a master chef to tell us we had an excellent meal or a sportswriter to tell us when a basketball player has just made an astounding shot. We recognize Excellence when an impoverished mother raises wonderful children on her own.

Maslow discovered an unmistakable originality, preciseness, and grace in the performance of Self-Actualizers. This remarkable degree of excellence seems to spring naturally from an inner life driven to develop and grow in character. The Actualizer does not strive to acquire things from the environment in the conventional sense, but rather to achieve excellence and increasing perfection in the expression of self. This drive manifests in an unconscious, childlike way.

We need both facts and values. A left-brained scientist will emphasize fact. A right-brained visionary will accentuate values. Both perspectives of reality are necessary to fully recognize Beauty;

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they complement each other. Leon Lederman, a Nobel Prize-winning physicist, offers a clue to this relationship in his book, *The God Particle*. He says that the universe is the answer—but what is the question? This brilliant and amusing philosopher-scientist saw the role of modern science as that of discovering something that you may find surprising:

“When Coleridge tried to define beauty, he returned always to one deep thought: beauty, he said, is ‘unity in variety.’ Science is nothing else than the search to discover unity in the wild variety of nature—or more exactly, in the variety of our experience.”¹⁵

We see beauty when we detect a harmonious unity of colors and patterns in nature and art. We also hear beauty as music in the melodious arrangement of notes. We enjoy the beauty of words masterfully unified in prose and poetry. We experience beauty in textures, smell it in lovely fragrances, and even taste it. Beyond the physical senses, we discern beauty intellectually in ideas, in what Shakespeare called the mind’s eye. Thus, beauty is unity in variety for not only the scientist, but also the visionary, the religionist, the artist, and the poet. On one level, we may debate about what is beautiful. But on another, we generally share a favorable reality-response to unity in variety.

Self-Actualizers are driven to create beauty. It is a turning point when Actualizers realize they have a role—actually a mission—to create something true, beautiful, and good where it did not exist before; something that is excellent, greater than self, and worth any sacrifice. Self-Actualizers feel called, much in the manner that members of the clergy feel themselves called.

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The life missions chosen by Actualizers are unselfish duties that benefit humankind in general. The passion and energy focused upon these missions are extraordinary.

There is an interesting side effect of the Actualizer's commitment to a mission they believe has supreme importance. This person is aware of the evil and chaos in the world, but is less acutely disturbed by it than most people are. Actualizers are doing all they can within their spheres of influence. Therefore, they are not wringing their hands; they are taking action, attempting to make things better.

While Self-Actualizers trust their inner feelings and are remarkably independent, they also know that they cannot be a law unto themselves. This brings us to the third MetaValue, which is necessary to avoid the fatal landmine of narcissism. Integrity and Excellence help illuminate this third dimension of reality—response that all Self-Actualizers share—Goodness or Caring. It is perhaps the most important MetaValue of all. It is also the most challenging, because one cannot practice it in a vacuum. Goodness involves the development of caring and respectful relationships with other people.

Goodness: The MetaValue of Caring

Goodness is vastly more than a technique for being nice and getting along with other people. Goodness fosters the quality of Caring in a self-actualizing personality. Goodness modifies the drive to excel, resulting in a wholesome tension between self-interest and service to others. Without Caring and respect for all human life, any political, industrial, or religious philosophy or movement eventually corrupts into a lethal danger to humankind.

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Self-Actualizers share a definite tendency to see the life experience as a wonderful gift. To most people, existence becomes stale as we grow older; dimness sets in. But to Self-Actualizers, life becomes new again. There is rebirth, the “second naiveté.” Today’s sunset once more appears as beautiful and fresh as the first sunset they ever noticed with awe and appreciation. A flower examined today appears full of wonder and beauty, even though they’ve seen a million flowers before. The thousandth baby seems as miraculous as the first. And this ever-fresh appreciation eventually extends to personal relationships. Self-Actualizers may consider themselves as lucky after thirty-five years of marriage as they did on their wedding days.

As sunshine and water nurture a tree, MetaValues nurture the Self-Actualizer. For some Self-Actualizers, their quest for Goodness and Beauty is inspired and fueled by nature. Others find joy by observing and relating to children. Many draw strength and inspiration from great music.

Maslow noted that all Self-Actualizers derive great pleasure from the day-to-day process of life itself—yet none of his subjects got much out of things like partying or receiving a windfall of money. This is not to suggest that they are staid or boring people. Many Self-Actualizers derive inspiration from deep and even lusty love relationships. Where they differentiate themselves from ordinary people is in their ability to count their blessings. The lack of this ability among most of us is a common generator of suffering, pain, regret, and loss of self-respect. Husbands, wives, parents, and children are too often appreciated more after they have died than when they are still alive and able to enjoy the attention. Likewise, we

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tend to value good health, freedom, and economic well-being much more highly when they are lost.

Self-Actualizers assume the role of a loving and patient big brother or big sister. Self-Actualizers do things better than most people they know, accomplish more, and appear to be relatively fearless in the face of the immensity of destiny. They are also independent, and may often appear withdrawn and aloof. Yet, in spite of occasional feelings of annoyance at the weaknesses of others, Self-Actualizers have a genuine desire to help the human race. However isolated Actualizers may feel from their fellow creatures at times, they retain a kinship toward humanity in general. "It is as if they were all members of a single family," Maslow noted. "One's feelings toward his brothers would be on the whole affectionate, even if these brothers were foolish, weak, or even if they were sometimes nasty." ¹⁶

Self-Actualizers are also color-, status-, and class-blind in their relationships. They are friendly and open with any person of suitable character. They are willing to learn from anyone who is willing to teach them. In the role of a learner, Actualizers demonstrate what can only be called humility. They exhibit no pretenses or attempts to retain dignity or status of any kind. They have an authentic respect for anyone who demonstrates unusual skill and knowledge in a particular field.

Still, Self-Actualizers are discriminating in their choice of associates. They choose from the elite, but it is an elite of character, capacity, and talent rather than worldly status or rank. They choose their close relationships carefully, usually people who are further along in the process of self-actualization than the average. This, of

course, limits their pool of friends because there are so few who have reached these levels.

Self-Actualizers do not find funny what most people call humor. They do not enjoy racial slurs or hostile humor (making people laugh by poking fun at someone), superiority humor (laughing at someone's perceived inferiority), or smutty, potty humor. They are philosophical in their humor, often making fun of pretentiousness and self-aggrandizement. A principal characteristic of Self-Actualizers is that they often laugh at themselves, especially their own vanities and shortcomings. The Self-Actualizer is amused by human pride, busyness, ambition, self-absorption, and the like.

Achieving Synergy

When combined with Integrity and Excellence, the MetaValue of Caring exponentially increases charisma and one's power of being. When all three MetaValues are coordinated and made real in personality experience, the result is synergy. Synergy is a term coined by Ruth Benedict to describe what happens when the nature—or power—of a system cannot be predicted by adding up its parts. For example, when you integrate two volatile gases (oxygen and hydrogen), you get water—a liquid that puts out fires. In the same light, when MetaValues are in perfect sync and harmony, Actualizers will often perform far beyond their expected capacity. Synergy is not exclusively science, nor philosophy, nor religion. It is rather an integration of all three.

Synergy takes place when a fine pianist achieves a moment of transcendence, when he is observing himself playing without conscious effort and playing in a magnificent way. There have been

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many names for synergy over the years. Charles Garfield, an Olympic coach, discovered that athletes reach levels of performance like this and called it *Peak Performance* or being *in the zone*. Psychologist and noted author Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls it *Flow*. We will discuss the secrets of these performance pioneers in later chapters.

Dr. Maslow referred to the ultimate human state of consciousness as the *Peak Experience*. His research revealed that most people, whether Actualizers or not, achieved a peak experience state for brief periods. Maslow believed that this state of being happens when all three MetaValues are in perfect balance and fuse into one. This fusion produces Love in its most pure and effective expression. Not romantic love, but love on another level, one that includes all human relationships. He wrote:

“I believe that synergy is an actual perception of a higher truth, of a higher reality, which actually exists and that the development over into synergy is like the development from becoming blind into becoming seeing ... The truth is that human interests, especially when people know each other and love each other, are pooled rather than being mutually exclusive. Any analysis of good marriage can easily show this. Any analysis of a good partnership in business can easily show this.”¹⁷

Dr. Maslow believed that it is not too far from saying that one’s responsibility to one’s life and activities is like a love relationship, a recognition of belongingness, and the need to strive for greater and greater being. Maslow saw this MetaValue fusion of Integrity, Caring, and Excellence into the ultimate MetaValue of Love as an unlimited resource. He believed that in a relationship of

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Caring, respect, and appreciation, love breeds more love, and the spending of love does not diminish love, but instead creates a greater wealth of love.

What Does All of This Mean to You?

There's a good chance that your response to the notions of MetaValues and self-actualization is that it is the exclusive domain of superpeople. Certainly, the highest levels of peak performance are available to a limited few. But all of us can embrace and benefit immensely by incorporating MetaValues into our lives.

Remember the three parts of the secret that set the MetaValues process into motion:

An impregnable self-respect.

A nonnegotiable responsibility for the inner life.

A habitual willingness to make growth decisions rather than safety decisions.

These are the three precious attitudes that unlock the door. And they are readily available to you. All you need to do is set up the conditions that will allow MetaValues to prove themselves to you. You can begin to do so immediately.

It is your unquestionable birthright to confront the day's challenges lifted by the wings of confidence and love. Yet most of us, even the wealthy, wake up every morning believing that life is about the struggle to survive and get ahead in a world of limited resources.

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It does not have to be that way. This is what Rosamund Stone Zander and Benjamin Zander said in *The Art of Possibility*.

“Let us suppose, now, that a universe of possibility stretches beyond the world of measurement to include all worlds: infinite, generative, and abundant. Unimpeded on a daily basis by the concern for survival, free from the generalized assumption of scarcity, a person stands in the great space of possibility in a posture of openness, with an unfettered imagination for what can be ... Emotions that are often regulated to the special category of spirituality are abundant here: joy, grace, awe, wholeness, passion, and compassion.”¹⁸

One of the primary objectives of this book is to help you achieve your positive recognition and actualization of a completely new universe of possibilities. I have researched, gathered, and tested the material in these pages for decades. I have used every technique or method recommended in this book successfully myself and with other people.

For the first time in history, large numbers of people have the freedom to choose. You are one of them. How can you be sure you will choose correctly? How will you acquire an impregnable self-respect so that you won't run out of gas and give up as you have so many times before? How will you achieve an inner life of sustained peace and power? The answer lies within, with your personal MetaValues breakthrough.

But first, you must remove the blocks that prevent the full activation of that breakthrough.