

Sarah Medley

Psychology 101/ Feres

Short Paper #1

27 September 2010

Dostoevsky and Maslow:

Needs in Life, How They Are Prioritized, and the Exceptions

Dostoevsky has written, "Without a clear perception of his reasons for living, man will never consent to live, and will rather destroy himself than tarry on earth, though he be surrounded with bread." (The Grand Inquisitor) With indirect opposition, Maslow's idea on these needs is stated in his quote, "A person lacking food, love, and self-esteem, would most likely hunger for food more strongly than anything else." A number of instances stand as evidence to both Maslow and Dostoevsky's statements.

First let us look at the claim Fyodor Dostoevsky has made. The Bible also has three references for a very similar idea. Scripture has expressed, in Deuteronomy 8:3, Matthew 4:4, and Luke 4:4, that 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' (The Bible) All individuals have accepted the Bible as truth would feel this way and therefore approach life's needs as Dostoevsky. The act of fasting is also an example of how Fyodor's statement might come into play during an individual's life. Another group of individuals who might be observed to follow the Dostoevsky idea would be those who are suffering from serious mental disorders. A loss of regular and proper diet is a symptom of severe cases of depression, anxiety, and stress. (MayoClinic) They become so focused on their struggle to overcome these feelings, of being lost, or alone, or unorganized, and unsafe, that the priority of food becomes pushed aside. But in Maslow's Pyramid the feelings of safety and organization,

love and belonging, are all placed higher, or less important, than the need to satisfy hunger.

(Myers) Order of prioritization is the foundation of contradiction between the two statements.

Abraham Maslow's idea seems to be more realistic to a majority of the remaining population. How is it reasonable to think a person would have the capability to even find their identity or "the purpose in life" without the energy supplied by fulfilling basic needs, like eating?

This was a common reaction I heard from peers and adults after telling of Dostoevsky's statement. Gandhi said, "Even God cannot talk to a starving man except in terms of bread."

(Aldrich) Some needs take priority over others. (Myers) Our brain causes us to have feelings of motivation for needs; the most concrete are physiological needs, like our drive to eat. It would be unhealthy and tiring to suppress and ignore your bodies drive to eat while you find your identity. In extreme measures you could even die doing this.

As we can see, neither Maslow nor Dostoevsky's claims can be applied to human beings as an entirety, as there are exceptions. The differences and personal circumstances attached to individuals are all too different. Even Abraham Maslow himself recognized that not all personalities followed his proposed hierarchy of needs. (Huitt) We have discovered though, that both of our statements tend to be more applicable to one group over the other. Religious individuals would be highly likely to side with Dostoevsky's views, where as people who do not value an identity outside their own would agree with Maslow's prioritization of needs.

To build off of Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, it has been proposed, (Norwood) a joint effort of trying to satisfy a single level of a need is also learning how to continue to satisfy this need. During this process an individual is forming part of their identity by developing and adopting a personalized method of reaching a need. For example, people at the esteem level seek out empowering information, and those at the safety level would need helping information. If Norwood's more currently proposed statement, that finding identity and satisfying needs are

interrelated, is correct, then Maslow and Dostoevsky would both have part in creating one universal statement.

As for now, Fyodor Dostoevsky and Abraham Maslow's statements of needs in life and how they are prioritized stand separately. Across humanity, some people accept one over the other as true. In my research for the paper, I have been able to loosely affiliate certain groups of people with Maslow or Dostoevsky's claims. A number of instances stand as evidence to both statements. Each idea is held accountable in the correct situations. It is not a surprise to me how the controversy of deciding on a dominant idea has not been settled.

Works Cited

- 1) Huitt, W. (2007). "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs"
Educational Psychology Interactive. Valdosta, GA: Valdosta State University. 20
 September 2010
 <<http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/topics/regsys/maslow.html>>
- 2) Norwood, G. (1999). "Maslow's hierarchy of needs"
The Truth Vectors (Part I). 20 September 2010
 <<http://www.deepermind.com/20maslow.htm>>
- 3) Dostoevsky, Fyodor (1879) *The Grand Inquisitor; Quotations*
 Goodreads 21 September 2010
 <<http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/show/201175>>
- 4) The Bible, *Luke 4:4, Matthew 4:4, Deuteronomy 8:3*
 Searched for on BibleGateway.com, 19 September 2010
 <<http://www.biblegateway.com/quicksearch/?quicksearch=Man+does+not+live+on+bread+alone&x=5&y=7>>
- 5) Aldrich, Joseph, *Life-Style Evangelism*
 September 1999, 21 September 2010
 <<http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/BookReviews/lifestyl.htm>>
- 6) MayoClinic.com, *Symptoms: Loss of Appetite*
 11 February 2010, 19 September 2010
 <<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/depression/DS00175/DSECTION=symptoms>>
- 7) Myers, *Psychology: Ninth Edition* (2010)
 Pages 446 and 447, Including Figure 11.2, 23 September 2010