The Dao of Maslow: A New Direction for Mentorship

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Abstract

Despite its historical importance for human achievement in many fields, mentorship has received meager research attention until relatively recently. Now recognized as a distinct personal relationship, mentorship is linked to a variety of psychological benefits to mentees including greater self-esteem, well-being, career focus, and leadership capability. Mentors have also been found to experience gains related to generativity. However, lacking has been a meaningful conceptualization of mentorship based on humanistic psychological concerns related to the "whole person." In particular, the idea that mentoring can facilitate the self-actualization process has been neglected in the literature. In this article, we draw upon Maslow's writings, particularly related to Daoism, to propose a new conceptual model. For at the time of his sudden death, he was directly seeking to apply Daoist notions to a variety of helping relationships including teaching, counseling, psychotherapy, and even friendship and parenting. After differentiating *growth-centered mentorship* from *skill-centered mentorship*, we delineate the former's essential features based on Maslow's unfinished legacy in this domain. These aspects include (a) incorporating and fostering the far goal of self-actualization; (b) guiding mentees to better identify their calling by identifying peak and foothill experiences; (c) helping mentees to overcome what Maslow termed the Jonah complex, as well as what subsequent researchers have dubbed the

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imposter syndrome; and (d) recognizing the mutuality of growth for both participants into a potentially synergic relationship.

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Mentorship is a uniquely important human relationship spanning history and culture. Even a casual perusal of art, music, literature, and science shows how mentorship has nurtured creativity and inspiration. Although myriad people go through life without ever having been mentored or mentoring another, growing evidence points to significant psychological benefits in this relationship for both participants. Mentees gain greater self-esteem, career focus, well-being, and leadership capability (Daloz, 1999; Eby et al., 2008; Grocutt et al., 2020; Kass, 2017; Lee et al., 2020; Van Dam et al., 2018); they may also find their sense of calling validated and strengthened (Ehardt & Ensher, 2021). Mentors experience gains related to generativity in a variety of capacities (Bengtsson & Flisback, 2021; Lodi-Smith et al., 2021; Mendez et al., 2019; Seeman et al., 2020; Villar & Serrat, 2014) and professional development (Hudson, 2013). Evidence exists too concerning economic and career benefits for recipients of mentoring in diverse fields (Allen et al., 2004; Timpe & Lunkenheimer, 2015). Yet, perhaps reflecting the individualistic biases of American psychology (Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008; Compton & Hoffman, 2020; Sampson, 1988), mentorship has been almost completely ignored by researchers until relatively recently.

To be sure, early founders of humanistic psychology had a keen interest in aspects relating to this dyad. For example, in Rollo May's homage to his mentor Paul Tillich, May (1973, pp. 23–24) poetically stated, "A great teacher, like a good therapist, changes with (one's) students. . . A person finds the human beings he needs to guide him, to influence him..(who) pushes him toward what he needs to become." Although Carl Rogers insisted that he never had a mentor (Evans, 1981), he pioneered a theory that would serve as a model for healthy mentoring even to this day. Rogers viewed counseling as a reciprocal relationship involving acceptance, honesty, empathy, and unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1959, 1961); these are all necessary for healthy interpersonal relationships and especially mentoring. As a colleague and former student of Rogers, Kass (2017) developed a model of mentorship based on person-centered pedagogy including what Rogers called "the tendency toward transcendence" (cited by Kass, 2017, p. 82). And in Clark Moustakas's (1966) influential writings on the avocation of teaching, he stressed the salience of authenticity as a vital

constituent of education. However, in our view, the work of another founding figure of humanistic psychology regarding mentorship has long remained unexplored, namely, that of Abraham Maslow. We therefore highlight the relevance of Maslow's ideas for revisioning mentorship today, particularly his attraction for Daoism as a major non-Western perspective on human flourishing and growth.

Mentorship in Psychological Focus

Clawson (1980) was among the first and most prominent theorists to conceptualize mentorship as a distinct relationship, with a primary focus on managerial-organizational studies. Noting that there had been "an explosion of interest in recent years in mentor-protégé relationships. . .in adult life and career development" (p. 144), he first traced the term mentor and the model for its usage to Homer's *Odyssey* of ancient Greece. That is, before Odysseus went off to the Trojan War, he entrusted his son Telemechus's care and education to their household manager, Mentor. More than simply a scholastic tutor, Mentor acted as a confidant, counselor, moral-spiritual advisor, and even martial arts instructor, helping his younger charge to grow in wisdom; Telemechus responded with dedication. Thus, Clawson observed that "The first mentor-protégé relationship had high levels of mutual, respect, and affection—all of which contributed to (their) mutual commitment. . ." (p. 146).

In Clawson's view, this broad, multifaceted relationship narrowed significantly as trade guilds rose to dominance in Europe between the 16th and 19th centuries; Homeric or life mentorship gave way to apprenticeship, that is, occupational training. Clawson argued that apprenticeships are not really mentorships at all, for not only do these lack a multifaceted essentiality, but they also lack mutuality. Citing Levinson's (1978) seminal work on adult development, Clawson asserted that in successful mentorships, not only do mentees feel admiration, appreciation, respect, and gratitude for their mentor, but that the latter shares the mentee's "dreams, give (one's) blessing on that dream, and creates space" (p. 147) in which the mentee can actualize that dream. Clawson (p. 148) suggested that it would therefore be more accurate to use such descriptors as "quasi mentor-protégé relationships" (similar to life mentorship but focusing solely on career growth), "superior-subordinate relationships" (basically formal supervision), and "developmental relationships" (involving intensive skill acquisition).

By the late 1980s, as the topic of mentorship spread from the corporate world to that of educational administration, a growing number of educators noted a debasement of the concept in their own field. For example, Hardcastle (1988, p. 165) coined the phrase "significant mentorship" to differentiate

"intimate, long lasting, authentic, and life changing. . . relationships from those "that are currently labeled. . .(and exist merely) to ease entry into new situations or improve morale and/or production." Similarly, Gehrke (1988, p. 193) decried the trend to commodify this relationship in education through anti-humanistic phrases such as "shopping for a mentor" and "deciding when to cut your losses." More than a decade later, Davis (2001, p. 3) lamented that while "only a few years ago. . .educators recognized mentorship as a special, personal, and unusually productive relationship," it had become increasingly bureaucratized and hollow. Unfortunately, this reductionism in conceptualization has continued to dominate fields ranging from psychology (Al Makhamreh & Stockley, 2019; Cobb et al., 2018) to medicine (Fallatah et al., 2018; Rehman et al., 2014).

As a pediatric resident recently recounted about her "mentorship program" at a large North American hospital,

> My assigned mentor, a staff pediatrician, was matched to me by ethnicity; we are both originally from South America. She has helped me to navigate my day-to-day tasks successfully. But she herself is much too busy with her own workload to nurture my career plans and goals, let alone my personal development. (Anonymous, October 2, 2021, personal communication)

Maslow's Interest in Daoism

During Maslow's lifetime, mentorship had not yet emerged as a distinct psychological topic, but he sustained a long interest in helping relationships that transcended existing paradigms, and in this light, he saw Daoism as highly relevant (Hoffman, 1999). Interest in this subject had been present among American intellectuals and some academicians since at least William James's seminal work on religion (Taylor, 1999), but Chinese philosophy and meditation entered popular American culture during the early-to-mid 1970s, catalyzed by President Richard Nixon's historic visit to mainland China in 1972 to normalize relations between the two countries. For example, the television series *Kung Fu* (1972–1975) introduced millions of Americans to Chinese martial arts, and the bestseller *The Tao of Physics* (Capra, 1975) argued that ancient Daoist teachings provided an integral understanding of the universe paralleling that of quantum physics.

Maslow recalled to an interviewer in 1962 that he had become intrigued by Daoism decades earlier when his mentor Max Wertheimer lectured on "Being and Doing" with allusions to Daoism, Lao Tzu, and Zen Buddhism. "I'd never even heard these words before. And this is what started me off, and a lot of other people as well" (Hardeman, 1979, p. 24). In this 1942 lecture,

Wertheimer had insisted that Western psychology was preoccupied with goal-seeking behavior and needed to learn from Eastern thinkers about such "unmotivated" aspects of human experience as awe, playfulness, and wonder. On another occasion, a Chinese woman presented a paper on Lao Tzu, spurring Maslow to read books on Eastern philosophy, particularly related to Daoism (Hoffman, 1999).

Maslow's first major book, *Motivation and Personality* (Maslow, 1954), contained only a single allusion to the relevance of Daoism, in a vivid explication of uninhibited dancing. It is interesting to note that in this explication, his direct quotation came not from the Tao Te Ching as translated by Dwight Goddard, but from a fictional interpretation within the same volume (Borel, 1919) by the Dutch Sinologist Henri Borel, enamored of Chinese culture and philosophy (Heijns, 2021). The following year, Maslow began to refer to Daoism in a variety of academic presentations and journals. The contexts were varied, including the nature of personality growth, peak-experiences, "Being-cognition," the sensory perceptions of self-actualizing people, the requisites of successful psychiatric research, and effective parenting.

Maslow incorporated some of this material in his next book, *Toward A Psychology of Being* (1962), and for the remaining 8 years of his life, he accentuated this interest. For example, Maslow devoted an entire chapter in *The Psychology of Science* (1966) to "Taoistic Science and Controlling Science," a conceptualization strongly influenced by Ralph Hiu's now obscure work *The Tao of Science* (1957). Maslow also offered many allusions to Daoism in *Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences* (1964), the 2nd edition of *Motivation and Personality* (1970a), and his posthumously published *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (1971). Maslow's private journals (1979) reveal that as late as a few weeks before his sudden death, he noted the relevance of Daoism for promoting personality growth in both children and adults.

Maslow's View of Daoism

Throughout Maslow's writings, he frequently faced the difficult challenge of describing the experiential and behavioral characteristics of people who embodied his vision of optimal mental health, flourishing, and self-actualization. Maslow often used the term "Taoist" as he attempted to communicate those qualities to readers. As noted earlier, he first used the term "Taoistic" to characterize the uninhibited spontaneity of persons who dance well. In later works, Maslow identified a wide range of mental states and human endeavors as capable of possessing "Taoistic" qualities. These included artistic/musical performances, counseling and psychotherapy, creativity, unitive consciousness,

B-cognition, Being-values, humanistic education, self-transcendence, and even objectivity and science. The personality characteristics and behaviors that Maslow often described as "Taoistic" can also be seen in many of the 15 characteristics he associated with highly self-actualizing persons. And in the 2nd edition of *Motivation and Personality* (1970a, p. 277), his vision of "psychological utopia or eupsychia" embodied a more "Taoistic" society than currently existed.

Maslow indisputably found Daoism as offering a compelling vision of desirable qualities associated with the triad of individual personality, interpersonal activities, and broader societal conditions. But what exactly did Maslow mean when he described something as "Taoistic?" A very brief synopsis of Daoism may help illuminate this question.

Daoism

Daoism is a religious-philosophical system that emerged in nascent form in China around 4,000 years ago. The forms of Daoism known today began to coalesce about 700 BCE. In general, Daoism is based on the concept of the Dao, which is the "impersonal and unnamable force behind the working of the universe" (Wong, 1997, p. 23). It is "the supreme principle of order, or the reality behind the origin of the universe; it is the life principle" (Compton, 2012, p. 23). The Dao is both transcendent and immanent; it is "the driving power in all nature, the ordering principle behind all life" (Smith, 1991, p. 198). In Daoist writings, it is often referred to simply as the Way. Practitioners of Daoism seek to align themselves with the Dao to create a profound harmony and balance between human beings and nature. To accomplish this task, many Daoists cultivate self-transcendence, humility, openness to experience, and reverence for the natural world.

Many scholars divide contemporary Daoism into five divisions or schools (Wong, 1997). Magical Daoism focuses on harnessing the forces of Nature, divinational Daoism seeks to understand the patterns of change in the universe (the art of feng-shi and the *I Ching* or the *Book of Changes* are associated with this school), ceremonial Daoism is concerned with rituals that can influence Nature and deities, action Daoism is the way of right actions that bring rewards, and internal-alchemical Daoism emphasizes internal psychological transformation and contemplative spirituality. Internal-alchemical Daoism is the way of the sage, the mystic, and the monk. The Daoist sage is a person who is perfectly in tune with Nature, who exhibits a naturalness and spontaneity born out of a selfless unity with the cosmos, and whose actions flow with the same ease and fluidity as the forces of the natural world. The internal-alchemical school is the one that has been given the most attention in

the Western world. From Maslow's writings, it seems clear that his allusions to Daoism implied its internal-alchemical form.

When Maslow described something as "Taoistic" he referred to a variety of psychological qualities and behaviors. The most prominent of these were spontaneity, autonomy, yielding to healthy needs and impulses, letting go, noninterference, naturalness, noncritical or selfless activity, receptivity, openness, and a sense of internal psychological freedom. It appears that Maslow used the term Daoist because he found it difficult to find words within the Western psychology of his era that conveyed the concepts he was seeking to articulate. If Maslow were writing today, he would probably have used terms such as flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), hypo-egoic state (Leary & Guadagno, 2011), or the quiet ego (Bauer, 2008), as well as providing frequent allusions to the concept of mindfulness.

Maslow and Helping Relationships

As mentioned earlier, Maslow did not refer explicitly to mentorship in his writings. The closest parallel to that relationship would be the counseling or psychotherapy dyad. It is not surprising that Maslow disliked the terms psychotherapy and patient. Indeed, he expressed this attitude quite clearly in saying, "I hate all these words and I hate the medical model that they imply" (Maslow, 1971, p. 49). Neither was he fond of viewing the therapist as a teacher nor using the helping model as a means to conceptualize therapy. For Maslow, all of these terms and concepts implied hierarchical and possibly authoritarian relationships, diagnoses that labeled the help-seeker as sick and in need of a cure, and ways for psychotherapists to tell "people what to do and how to do it" (p. 50). When Maslow wrote about the type of counseling or psychotherapy he wished to see implemented, he identified desirable qualities of the therapist such as spontaneity, openness, efficient perception of reality, acceptance, and humility.

Maslow struggled with how to describe the style of psychotherapy he was advocating. He suggested Oswald Schwarz's term "psychogogy" and James Bugental's "ontogony," but he seemed to settle on Alfred Adler's idea of the "older brother" as the best way to describe the proper therapeutic relationship (p. 50). In this context, Maslow identified "Taoistic uncovering" as a necessary part of effective psychotherapy. He described this as a "letting be," noninterfering, and a process that helps the client "to unfold, to break through the defenses against his own self-knowledge, to recover himself, and to get to know himself" (p. 50).

It is clear that Maslow was dismissive of traditional styles of psychotherapy based on the medical model. However, he did identify several therapists

by name whom he admired including Adler, Fromm, Horney, some existentialist therapists, Rogers, and even "Freudian and other systems of psychodynamics" (p. 51). Out of all these therapies, it seems that the model of psychotherapy proposed by Carl Rogers would be the one that most closely approximated the features of Daoism that Maslow delineated. Rogerian concepts such unconditional positive regard, empathy, and genuineness require openness to experience, noninterference, letting go, respect, humility, and a deep respect for the process of psychotherapy rather than a focus solely on the outcome. The parallels between Rogers's ideas and Daoism have been noted by others (Hermsen, 1996).

Daoism and Esalen

Although Maslow was certainly familiar with Daoism by the time he regularly visited the Esalen Institute, it seems likely that his interest was reinforced by its heavy emphasis on Eastern philosophy and meditative practice. During the early-to-mid 1960s, the Chinese philosopher-practitioner Gia-Fu Feng was a resident Tai Chi teacher and personally interacted with Maslow, Rogers, and other founding figures of humanistic psychology (Wilson, 2009).

Born in Shanghai, Feng immigrated to the United States after World War II, initially gaining a master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania, where he developed a keen interest in Daoism. Eventually settling in the San Francisco area where he joined the faculty of the American Academy of Asian Studies, Feng became friendly with Alan Watts, as well as the young Michael Murphy. Upon cofounding the Esalen Institute in 1962, Murphy invited Feng to join the fledgling staff. Due to conflicts with the resident gestalt therapist Frederick "Fritz" Perls, Feng quit Esalen in 1966 to establish his own growth facility called the Stillpoint Center. As he reminisced to an interviewer, it was "a Taoist retreat with Taoist philosophy put into practice, mainly centered on the flowing of chi" (Gia-Fu Feng, undated). Later, the Shanghai-born professional dancer turned Tai Chi instructor Chungliang "Al" Huang, who had also become close with Alan Watts, took over this role at Esalen to considerable, wider influence (Kripal, 2007). Huang recently recalled that

> Maslow was certainly one of the most important mentors during early Esalen's evolving days. I was very aware of his teaching and influences there, but unfortunately, by the time I began teaching with Alan Watts at Esalen, Maslow was no longer there. (Huang, September 13, 2021, personal communication)

The Daoist Mentor: A Maslovian Perspective

Maslow never specifically addressed the concept of mentorship. This fact is hardly surprising because this concept was essentially non-existent in psychological and organizational literature until well after his death in 1970. For example, a Google Scholar search involving the word pair "mentorship psychology" failed to yield even a single study between 1950 and 1969. However, Maslow certainly referred in varying contexts to what is termed mentorship today. These included both his evolving notions of humanistic education (Maslow, 1971) and social scientific and even biological research (Maslow, 1966, 1971). Thus, it is possible to conjecture about the qualities he would have assigned to the mentoring relationship. Because Maslow (1971) differentiated education designed to impart knowledge from education designed to unleash creativity, our focus will be exclusively on what we call *growth-centered mentorship* rather than *skill-centered mentorship*.

In growth-centered mentorship, the mentor provides support for the mentee's intrinsic motivation, challenges the mentee to accept counterintuitive information, and provides vision. Growth-centered mentorship is not simply providing information to the mentee. Rather, it is viewing the mentoring relationship as a transformational journey that will impact both the mentor and the mentee (Daloz, 1999; Palmer, 1993). In this context, one of the best places to begin this extrapolation is with the 15 traits that he originally associated with highly self-actualizing people. Not all the traits appear relevant, but an ample number of these can reveal something about how Maslow might have described mentoring, at least as practiced by highly self-actualizing people, and hence serve as an ideal paradigm.

The first trait that Maslow (1970a, 1970b, p. 153) described is a "more efficient perception of reality and more comfortable relations with it." He elaborated on this trait by saying, "an unusual ability to detect the spurious, the fake, and the dishonest in personality and in general to judge people correctly and efficiently" (p. 153). It is readily apparent how this trait would be beneficial in a mentor as many potential interpersonal conflicts could possibly be avoided or dealt with more quickly if the mentor possessed it. A second relevant trait is "acceptance (self, others, nature)" (p. 156). Maslow explained that this trait is expressed by low use of defense mechanisms, an acceptance of one's shortcomings and those of others, and as a lack of pretentiousness in one's demeanor. It seems quite clear that a mentor who presented in this way to a mentee would be able to form a close working relationship more quickly and efficiently.

Among the most salient similarities between the self-actualizing traits and mentorship can be seen in the third trait of "problem centering." Maslow's explained this trait by noting that

> Our subjects are in general strongly focused on problems outside themselves. In current terminology, they are problem centered rather than ego centered. . .these individuals customarily have some mission in life, some task to fulfill, some problem outside themselves which enlists their energies. (Maslow, 1970a, 1970b, p. 159)

It is difficult to imagine a successful mentorship in which the mentor is not committed to some task that she or he finds important, valuable, and meaningful. Indeed, if the mentor is not committed to the subject of the mentor–mentee relationship, then the relationship inevitably becomes stale, rote, and empty.

In identifying a fourth trait associated with highly self-actualizing people, Maslow used a term created by Alfred Adler: *gemeinschaftsgefuhl.* Maslow characterized it as a "deep feeling of identification, sympathy, and affection" for human beings, and because of this outlook, a "genuine desire to help the human race. It is as if they were all members of a single family" (p. 165). Clearly, this desire to be of service and to enter into supportive, helping relationships is crucial for successful mentorship and appears conceptually linked to generativity (McAdams et al., 1986). Continuing with this theme, Maslow identified a fifth trait simply as "interpersonal relationships" and stated that highly self-actualizing people had "deeper and more profound interpersonal relationships than any other adults" (p. 166).

Although this trait appears to be at the core of mentorship, Maslow's description leads us to express a small caution. That is, he asserted that highly self-actualizing people tend to have deep friendships, but only a small circle of friends. If friendships are built on a similarity of personality and interests, and only a relatively tiny percentage of the population are highly self-actualizing, then such individuals have statistically fewer people among whom to choose when seeking friendships. Given this caveat, however, possession of this fifth trait could help create more engaging, vibrant mentorships.

A sixth trait that Maslow identified has less ambiguity in this context, namely, what he called the "democratic character structure." Maslow stated, "These people. . .can be and are friendly with anyone of suitable character regardless of class, education, political belief, race, or color" (p. 167). Continuing with his description, Maslow noted that this trait manifests when individuals exhibit receptivity to many different kinds of people, and while learning or teaching, show indifferent to status. Rather than insisting on being

treated with deference, they are honest, respectful of others, and humble. It seems that if mentorship is to have any semblance of two-way communication, then this trait is essential. Finally, Maslow described highly self-actualizing persons as tending to have the seventh trait of frequent peak-experiences. Although initially commenting that *all* such persons experience transcendental, spiritual, or mystical experiences, Maslow later differentiated highly self-actualizing people into two categories: those whom he termed "peakers," who regularly underwent peak-experiences and "nonpeakers," who essentially never did so (Maslow, 1970a, 1970b, 1971)

How might peak-experiences relate to mentorship? Possibly, if the mentor has had peak-experiences that inform the subject of the mentoring relationship, then these powerful moments would provide a passion, commitment, eagerness, and joy that could be transmitted to the mentee. However, in our view, the mentor would need to be careful to avoid conveying the message that peak-experiences are *necessary* for achievement, for as Maslow (1971, 1979) himself noted, some very successful people are nonpeakers. In this regard, Maslow's lesser known concept of foothill experiences seems quite relevant. As he (2019, p. 339) explained to students in reviewing their self-journaling assignment, "I didn't stress (these) enough. . .the low peaks, and the fact that most of our peak-experiences are not of that kind I described in the extreme." Undoubtedly, therefore, an important element of growth-centered mentorship would be to help mentees notice the small moments of delight and fulfillment that accompany their activities, whether occurring in a classroom, laboratory, or office setting. As we leave this component of Maslow's work, it seems plausible that all 15 traits of highly self-actualizing people could be applied to mentorship. Indeed, it may be reasonable to state these traits provide a template for successful mentoring.

Overcoming the Jonah Complex

Another significant aspect of growth-centered mentorship involves the Jonah complex. Developed late in Maslow's career, it was formulated by historian Frank Manuel at Brandeis University (Maslow, 1971) and derives from the biblical Book of Jonah. It relates that the prophet Jonah was tasked with a difficult divine mission to perform, but fearful of failure, he attempted to flee from it. While doing so, Jonah was thrown overboard from a storm-tossed ship and swallowed by a whale. Swathed unharmed in its belly, Jonah finally accepted his mission and was thereupon thrown up onto the shore so he could perform his appointed task. In Maslow's secularized view, virtually all people experience this harsh ambivalence about fulfilling their life purpose based on their unique mental and physical attributes. For example, he stated,

> In my own notes, I had at first labeled this defense the "fear of one's own greatness" or the "evasion of one's destiny" or the "running away from one's own best talents." . . .So often we run away from the responsibilities dictated (or rather suggested) by nature, by fate, even sometimes by accident, just as Jonah tried—in vain—to run away from his fate. (1971, p. 34)

As Maslow's private journals (1979) reveal, he readily saw the Jonah complex within himself, and at the peak of his fame, often mused that he was still struggling to accept his mission to transform psychology into a world-saving science. Maslow traced the Jonah complex to 3 main causes: first, to a "partly justified fear of being torn apart, of losing control" (Maslow, 1971, p. 37) akin to the fear of mental disintegration during a powerful peak-experience; second, to a paranoia about being attacked by those jealous or envious of one's achievements; and perhaps most importantly, to "the fear of *hubris* . . ." (or) sinful pride. . . (of one's seeming) grandiosity (and) arrogance" (Maslow, 1971, p. 37). Presenting the example of a person who seeks to become a great philosopher and rewrite Plato but then retreats from this potentiality, Maslow (1971, pp. 37–38) wryly observed that "What he doesn't realize is that Plato, introspecting, must have felt the same way. . . but went ahead anyway, over-riding his doubts about himself."

How does the Jonah complex pertain to growth-centered mentorship? If a mentor wishes to foster the real potentials of the mentee rather than simply convey information, then at some point the mentee's tendency to embrace the Jonah complex will enter the relationship. It is inevitable. It may well be that at this juncture the relevance of Maslow's traits of highly self-actualizing people becomes crucial. Why? Because it is only when the mentor can rise above his or her self-centered concerns and truly focus on the mentee's growth that the Jonah complex can be confronted, explored, and resolved. Mentors who are too embroiled in their own matters and status will fail to navigate the Jonah complex in mentees, to their considerable detriment. Their fears of losing egoic control, jealous attack by others, and hubris will go unaddressed and ultimately smother their highest aspirations: they will settle for safety and mediocrity. This outcome is far from idle conjuncture. As both educators and clinicians, we have seen it played out repeatedly during the course of our careers.

Ameliorating the Imposter Syndrome

Relevant to growth-focused mentorship and related to the Jonah complex is the imposter syndrome (IS), initially called the imposter phenomenon (IP). First identified by Clance and Imes (1978) several years after Maslow's

death, it described the psychological characteristics of a group of high-achieving women who were struggling to internalize their outward success. They reported persistent feelings of self-doubt, fear of making mistakes, difficulty in taking credit for their accomplishments, and even self-perceptions of fraudulence. Typically, they attributed their attainments not to personal competence but rather to blind luck or other factors. In recent years, studies have linked IS to anxiety (Chrousos et al., 2020), burnout (Villwock et al., 2016), low self-esteem (Schubert & Bowker, 2019), and perfectionism (Wang et al., 2019). In the first systematic literature review of IS, Bravata, Madhusudhan, et al. (2020) found strong evidence for its existence among students and workers at various educational levels in multiple ethnic groups, especially minorities. Noting a total absence of trials of therapeutic interventions for IS, Bravata, Watts, et al. (2020, p. 14) concluded that "Imposter syndrome should be considered for rapid inclusion in the next edition of the *DSM* so that patients with these symptoms can be identified and treated by behavioral providers." Whether IS has become more pervasive in American society since first identified by researchers is unclear, but its popularity as a psychological descriptor indicates a widespread resonance among many people today.

Because IS involves feelings of inauthenticity (Fields, 2021; Winter, 2020) coupled with what we would characterize as existential loneliness ("I mustn't let myself be unmasked"), IS seems attributable, at least partly, to inadequate or nonexistent mentorship. In this light, Maslow's (1971, p. 50) emphasis on the importance of "Taoist uncovering" in the helping relationship seems highly relevant. Specifically, Maslow (1971, pp. 50–51) asserted that a chief task for the "older" person in this bond is to help the "younger" charge to "break through the defenses against (one's) own self-knowledge, to recover (oneself), and to get to know (oneself). . . The finding of the true self requires the uncovering of these unconscious aspects." Such guidance certainly requires more engagement than provided in the skill-centered mentorships dominant in today's mainstream American workplace. Moreover, this guidance is predicated on the mentor's ability to serve as a role model for authenticity; its dimensions necessary to facilitate this type of personal growth in the mentee all involve a commitment to genuineness, heartfelt self-reflection, integrity, and willingness to recognize and abandon defensive posturing and pretense. In our view, the common use of the phrase "true self" in descriptions of authenticity should be viewed as a metaphor rather than an empirical phenomenon. There is no hidden self in the unconscious waiting to be discovered; rather there are dimensions of authentic experience that have yet to be acknowledged and integrated into one's current and evolving sense of self.

Within this context, Maslow frequently cited Clark Moustakas's (1966) seminal work *The Authentic Teacher*, which posited the teacher as an exemplar of change, growth, and learning. In an unpublished letter to Henry Geiger, editor/publisher of the humanistic newsletter *Manas*, Maslow explained his view:

> Authentic persons are those who have discovered and accepted their own biological, temperamental, and constitutional cues, the signals from within. . .If you achieve this ability to hear your own impulse voices, then you have attained an inner "supreme court" from which comes virtually infallible suggestions and even commands. (Cited in Maslow, 1996, p. 172)

It is important to note that the developmental path of the mentor–mentee relationship will be marked by periods of uncomplicated growth and transition periods that often involve conflict and resistance. It is at these points of transition that the imposter syndrome and the Jonah complex may be most pronounced (Daloz, 1999).

Mentorship as Synergy

Finally, Maslow's (1962, 1971) focus on synergy is highly relevant for growth-centered mentorship, implicit in his advocacy of relationships in which "somehow two people have arranged their (engagement) in such a fashion that one person's advantage is the other person's advantage rather than . . . the other's disadvantage" (Maslow, 1971, p. 200). He credited this concept to his mentor Ruth Benedict's work in evaluating cultures based on the extent to which they fostered cooperativeness versus competition among its members. Beginning with his book *Eupsychian Management* (1962), Maslow increasingly emphasized this formulation as significant beyond cultural anthropology. For example, he stated,

> The synergy principle is so important . . . not only because it furnishes a scientific basis for Utopian theory, but also for more technical social phenomena in other areas . . .(With) high synergy (there is) the possibility of arranging social institutions in such a fashion that . . . people (become) colleagues and teammates rather than rivals . . .The synergy concept can also be applied on the individual level, to the nature of interpersonal relationships between two persons. (Maslow, 1971, pp. 199–200)

In attempting to concretize interpersonal synergy, Maslow provided such diverse examples as romantic love and marriage, parent–child relations, athletic teamwork, and organizational collegial relations. All such synergic

bonds, he asserted, embody the qualities of mutual respect, dignity, empathy, warmth, and genuine happiness (even delight) in the other's achievements (Maslow, 1971, 1996).

We find it odd that this vital affective dimension is almost completely ignored or suppressed in many current explications of mentorship; missing is any recognition that mentors and mentees may grow together emotionally from their interactions or that such growth matters at all.

However, in view of the growing reliance in corporate America to replace human relations with computer technology in areas ranging from employee selection and training to customer service, perhaps this omission is not surprising. After all, mental health professionals quickly learn that what individuals refrain from verbalizing is often more revealing about their underlying feelings and values than what they outwardly express.

In broader terms, the last quality on Maslow's list, the ability to experience pleasure in another's achievements, is noteworthy for its absence from most Western theories of personality development. However, in Buddhist psychology, the four sublime attitudes or *brahma-viharas* are indicators of the enlightened mind and include sympathetic joy or *mudita*: that is, feeling joy in another's good fortune. The fact that Maslow included this trait as a major quality of synergistic bonding suggests once again the influence of Eastern thought and Daoism on his outlook. To advance mentorship as a uniquely important relationship between two people is a key task for those with a humanistic perspective. In this light, Maslow's work, drawing significantly on Daoist philosophy as well as growth-oriented psychological insights, offers a new and clear direction toward this goal.

Conclusion

Almost all the literature on mentorship focuses on the dyadic relationship between the mentor and the mentee. Future research should also investigate the mentoring environment of people and resources outside the mentoring dyad. The ideal mentoring environment can provide both the mentor and the mentee with social support, encouragement, and a resource for renewed passion and vision (Daloz et al., 1996; Kass, 2017; Parks, 2000).

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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