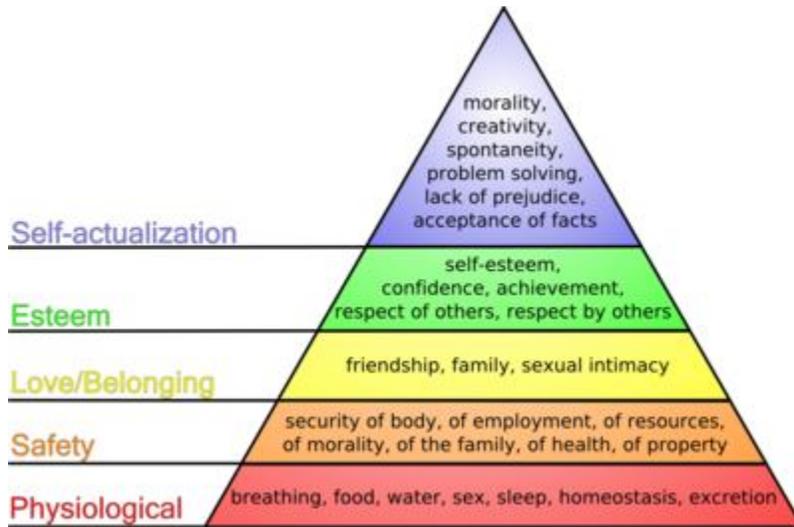


Security or Liberty?

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Abraham Maslow's Pyramid of Needs

Perched at the top of Maslow's pyramid we discuss morality, strive to create that masterpiece, solve everyday problems and seek out the news. The news is often bad news. A terror strike, a needless war, a cycle of greed or rape of a mother planet is shaking my perch. I realize I have to step off my high horse and check on its foundations.

Just because we are humans we may think we are entitled to sit atop Maslow's pyramid and self actualize till our meta-needs are satisfied. Hey, what about the basic needs, the lower rungs of the real needs pyramid!

In Mumbai we saw a handful of twenty somethings, trained to slaughter, armed to the teeth hijack our lives. Their motivation is mysteriously frightening. They have college degrees and technical mastery. They use their knowledge to infiltrate, hack and embezzle. Is this an education? One wonders. And who is manipulating this twenty something strapping young man and directing him to hurtle knowingly towards a violent death, his legacy a trail of blood of innocents? Which part of the pyramid is he on?

The boys had almonds in their rucksacks. Their perpetrators realized their basic physiological need. But they could not climb any higher in the pyramid of needs. Their mentors do not think they are entitled to live with security of life and limb. Without safety (the second level need) who cares for Love and Belonging.

Maybe our mentors have allowed us to be free in thought. We have food, air, water, sex and sanitation, we have homes and families. But look at the shaky foundations of our homes – are we safe? (Safety is a rung below Love and Belonging)

When we chalk out priorities it is wise to hold a diagram of Maslow's Pyramid of Needs before us. It could adorn the offices of heads of government and planning commissions. Until we realize that we need to be safe before we can be free, we will keep voting the wrong priorities into power?