

Declaring Justice to be a Human Need

Taylor AJW*

School of Psychology, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, P.O. Box 600, New Zealand

*Corresponding author: Taylor AJW, Phd, School of Psychology, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, P.O. Box 600, New Zealand, Tel: 64-4-2927570; E-mail: tony.taylor@vuw.ac.nz

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Abstract

Justice is a matter of universal importance that subtends judicial systems: It is an inalienable feature of the human condition. As such it has often been a concern of clinical, forensic and social psychologists in their practice, but rarely of academic psychologists and researchers. It is time the situation was remedied, and the topic given the attention it deserves in a theory of human behaviour.

Keywords: Justice; Psychologists; Communities

Introduction

Justice has three strands- the criminal, civil and social. The first two of which are given prominence in the growing complexity of legal systems, and the third is rapidly commanding attention for its cultural and political significance. Collectively, all three reflect the underlying codes of behavior that in practice and principle different local communities, their national affiliations and international assemblies have adopted [1,2].

The codes vary according to the particular stage of political and social development that communities and nations have reached, and they reflect reactions to various internal and external threats the countries perceive. To the uninitiated they present a legal, moral, political and social maze, but they are grist to the mill of jurisprudential scholars [3-5].

Among such, Lloyd [3] asserted that 'law is in effect no more than a form of psychology, since it is really a symbolic expression for the fact that the human mind responds in particular ways to certain kinds of social pressures.

However apart from Abraham Maslow, very few psychologists have addressed the topic [6] and even he was hesitant about including justice as a basic need. Consequently the present author took the extra step and presented Maslow's familiar figure as a three legged stool on which self-esteem and self-actualisation rely: the respective legs representing physiological needs, those of love and belonging and safety (now including justice) (Figure 1).

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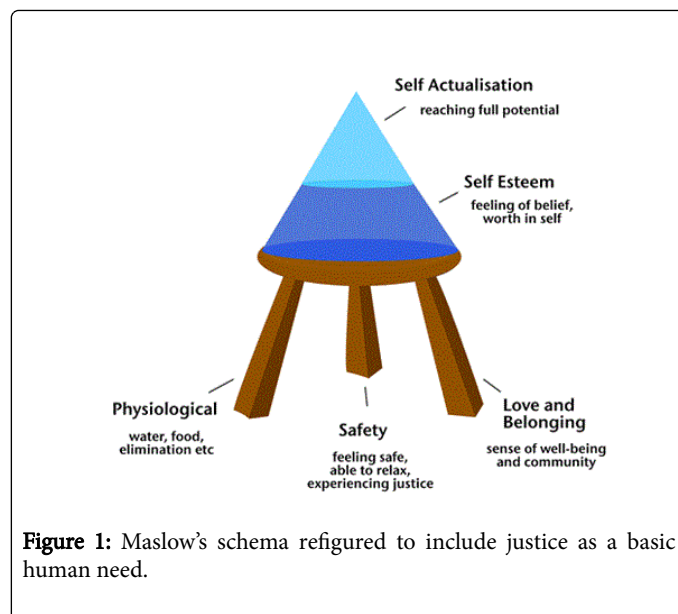


Figure 1: Maslow's schema refigured to include justice as a basic human need.