

Lesson I

Human Development: The Framework

A hard truth that must be accepted is that all humans are self-interested, all the time. Now, I know you helped your grandmother with the laundry last Sunday and you volunteer once a month down at the Y, and you can't resist putting a quarter in the palm of every glossy-eyed child you encounter begging on the street. Yet as altruistic as you think you are, all of your actions are done for your own self-interest. You will not progress in your development as long as you hold illusions that you're not self-interested in everything you do. I'm making a big deal of this because many of the people I tell this to throw up their arms and attempt to make the case that they're the second coming of Christ in their altruism. They'll fight to the death in defence of their self-proclaimed selflessness. Even if you suffer through something to help another person, you're doing it out of self-interest. You're not necessarily calculating or deceptive, you're just

helping somebody because helping others suits you in that moment for whatever reason, be it for pay, a favour, respect, to strengthen a relationship, personal growth, appreciation, or even a sense of purpose. Many people join protests because of the unity, the togetherness, the feeling of belonging, and the sense of purpose. Everything you do is self-interested. If you can't get past that, should you continue reading? Probably not, but maybe so...

In my opening *story*, I said I realised I was living my life for everybody but myself, but that doesn't mean it wasn't self-interested. I was letting everybody else choose the direction of my life because I didn't have the knowledge, resources, or courage to choose my own path. Living for others is easy. Working hard and excelling at things that others like makes you feel good about yourself. I was living a life I didn't want, but the respect and admiration I was getting was improving my self-esteem, and that was more important, until it wasn't. And I know this only from reflection—I wasn't consciously trading away my enjoyment of life for self-esteem—I also thought I was selfless.

So, if everything we do is self-interested, what are our interests? Do we have the same interests? Looking around the world, there seems to be an infinitude of interests. What does your Wall Street banker, feminist women's rights lawyer, transgender teenager, bohemian beta male, and alpha male gym rat have in common? Almost everything. While it may seem like they're all motivated towards completely different things, that's just expression—the surface of their motivation—and that can vary to infinity. But underneath all that, we're driven by the same things. We all want the same things.

Maslow's Motivation

Abraham Maslow in his 1943 paper, *A Theory of Motivation*, asserts that people are motivated to fulfill their needs, which come in five categories:

- Physiological
- Safety
- Belonging
- Esteem
- Self-actualisation

Maslow understood that we don't all have the same needs or satisfy them in the same way, though he asserted that we do have the same categories of needs that are fundamental to the human experience. Now, there is debate over the categories of needs, with some people proposing different, more, or fewer categories, or no categories at all, but removing categories increases vagueness, while I want an actual actionable *story* that is also easy to understand. For this, categories help. The main thing is that everything we do is to satisfy our needs, and we need a framework to help us understand our needs because they can either be subtle or very strong and misunderstood. Either way, every action you take— from scratching your nose, to impulsively buying \$50k worth of stocks in coconuts, to burning your bra on the steps of Parliament, to defying traditional washroom etiquette, to inviting your friends over to watch a Woody Allen flick, to wearing a Speedo while deadlifting 250kg—is to satisfy a need or multiple needs from these categories.

Nietzsche's Master Drive

You're probably asking, *But if all we are doing is satisfying our needs, where's our choice? How can we try to change? How can we possibly be the agent of our own development?* These questions were already answered by Nietzsche in his 1886 book, *Beyond Good and Evil*. Nietzsche asserts that we cannot know any other reality beyond the reality of our drives, but that our drives are always competing for center stage. Drives and needs are two sides of the same coin. While a need draws your attention to something you are lacking, the drive pushes you to satisfy that deprivation. Since recognising a deprivation pushes us to satisfy it, the words *need* and *drive* are nearly interchangeable. So, Nietzsche's drives are the same as Maslow's needs, and while Nietzsche gives examples, such as hunger and the sex drive, he refrains from creating a framework and agrees that not everybody has the same drives in the same strengths.

The important point is that at any given moment, we have many needs begging for our attention, and through conscious decisions and unconscious influences, we do something that will satisfy one or more of those needs. For example, if you're lonely and horny, maybe you'll start swiping through your favourite dating app, but if you're hungry and horny, maybe you'll eat a huge meal so all your blood goes to your digestive system thus reducing your sexual desire.

Nietzsche considered the competition of these drives as chaotic; in other words, we're constantly being pulled in different directions by whichever drive can command us the loudest. If you're weak, there's no such thing as free will, just the will of your drives. One of the drives is your

conscious drive, your ‘will to power’ that is essentially your free will. For example, if you consciously want to eat healthy, but when given the option between a burger and a salad, you choose the burger, it means another drive overpowered your conscious drive and reduced your free will. Development, then, is the mastery of all other drives under the will to power. Remember, there is no reality outside of our drives, so it is not ‘us’ mastering our drives—some detached self—but another drive (conscious drive, our need to be in control) that attempts to master the other drives.

Under this model, it’s not that the other drives disappear or are muted, just that their satisfaction must also satisfy the master drive, which is the drive or need that directs the way we satisfy all of our other needs. Some people, for example, allow their hunger to be their master drive, meaning that they satisfy all of their needs through food. Soon, eating becomes the primary way to turn off those signals that you’re lonely, horny, bored, nervous, stressed, sleepy, etc. When the will to power, or your conscious drive, is your master drive, it means you satisfy all of your drives in a way that aligns with your conscious desire to be who you want to be.

For example, if you consciously desire to lose weight, you will ensure that the satisfaction of all your other needs support your goal of losing weight. You’ll satisfy your hunger with healthy food; maybe you’ll satisfy your social needs with fitness groups and workout partners; your esteem will be improved by your progress; and you’d be satisfying a purpose of healthy living.

As another example, the devout monk will satisfy his hunger according to the doctrine of his religion. He will sublimate his sexual energies and find friendship and intimacy in brotherhood, self-esteem in the strength of his conviction, and purpose in his religion. He wants to be a devout monk so strongly that he still satisfies all of his needs, but does so in a way that supports his will to power instead of drawing attention from it.

Giddens' Ontological Security

Now, a difference between humans and other animals is that we humans have an advanced concept of time in which we see patterns and trends and can make predictions for the future. This can either give us confidence or anxiety and allows for us to plan or to have a little more freedom to fly blind. We do not only process the signals of the immediate needs of the body but also predict future needs based on past occurrences.

Anthony Giddens, in his 1991 book, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, coined the term *ontological security* and asserted that all people seek a sense of order throughout their experiences. Essentially, we seek security through a pleasant, predictable life in all respects. So, we are driven to rectify insecurities. For example, we don't only want to satisfy our hunger now, but we want to be sure we'll have meals in the future as well, and we feel insecure if we can't be sure of our future hunger satisfaction.

I don't agree that all people are seeking ontological security at all times because when we reach that security, we feel safe enough to explore and reintroduce chaos into our lives. Once the chaos is no longer interesting and has become unbearable, we then seek ontological

security again, and the cycle continues. While this idea helps us to complete a theory of motivation, it also allows us to say that everything we do is to satisfy our needs and to ensure the satisfaction of our future needs. Our insecurities about the future become immediate needs or drives that must be addressed. At any given moment, our current needs and insecurities over the satisfaction of future needs are competing for attention and our actions are the result of that competition and our will.

Sen's Capability Approach

Our theory of development is still too vague, however, because the mastery of drives or needs can be interpreted in many ways. If you become an expert fisherman and seafood chef, have you mastered your insecurity about food forever? What if a moratorium is announced and fishing isn't allowed? What if there's an environmental disaster preventing the fisherman from fishing? If you get married, does that mean you've taken care of all your sexual, social, and intimacy needs for the rest of your life? What if your spouse leaves you? We still need more pieces to complete the puzzle.

Nobel Prize winner Amartya Kumar Sen was one of the first people to say that international development should focus on human development, and specifically the increasing of freedoms. In his 1999 book, *Development as Freedom*, he created the *capability approach*. He says if we're given freedoms to do a wider variety of things, which he calls functionings, we'll develop more capabilities, which will translate into more freedoms that we have reasons to enjoy. Now, he said a lot of other things, but this is the genius—the diamond in the rough. I say *in the rough* because this is the complete theory left

vague and unfinished. However, this is all we need as we already have the rest.

Now, ever since the book came out, people have been trying to complete the theory. Sen believes the theory should be left vague so that nations can democratically choose which freedoms they want to include in their own process of development. The economic community, however, felt that specific lists of freedoms, capabilities, and functionings should be made. Now, I certainly haven't seen all the lists that have been attempted, but the sheer randomness of these attempts made me give up in disgust. I won't name any names, but some of the biggest names in the field, representing the finest institutions in the world, had such things as *being able to go to the cinema* and *being able to form relationships with animals* on their lists. Don't get me wrong, while I enjoy a good trip to the cinema and having a cat or dog (or both!) sit in my lap, they're not crucial to human development and freedom.

Even when Sen gave examples of some freedoms necessary for human development, some of them seemed random. If we're left to simply think up lists of freedoms we should have without any logical basis, these lists can go to infinity. How could we not include the freedom to go to the cinema? A list that goes to infinity, however, isn't helpful because it doesn't tell us priorities or where to start. We can't go to the government with a list of a million freedoms that they need to give us. This is not actionable, so nothing will happen. So, this dilemma is exactly why we need a rational framework.

Returning to the capability approach, with its functionings, capabilities, and freedoms, for now, we'll skip Sen's first

freedom in his theory and go straight to the functionings, which are the actual things we do. We think, eat, learn, have sex, talk with friends, and do other stuff. Capabilities are what we are able to accomplish by doing these things. Eating satisfies hunger needs; learning satisfies curiosity and develops further capabilities; having sex satisfies sexual and intimacy needs; and talking with friends satisfies social needs, etc. Freedoms, in this context are what we are freed from in that accomplishment. We are freed from hunger; our curiosity is sated; we're sexually satisfied; and we're no longer lonely, etc. So functionings are what we do to satisfy needs. Being able to satisfy a need represents a capability. Satisfying a need frees us from having to expend our energies on that need so we can spend them elsewhere. When we are free from one desire, we are then free to do things that satisfy other needs.

Returning to the question of the fisherman, his perfection of the art of fishing, the fishing itself, and the eating of fish are functionings. These functionings give him the capability to satisfy his hunger, as well as other needs such as esteem and possibly self-actualisation, and the insecurity over future meals. Being freed from the drive to satisfy these four needs, the fisherman is now free to devote his energy towards his other needs, such as his social needs.

In/dependence

At this point, I have to add my own element to the framework. We have many different ways to satisfy needs. A person in a coma in an intensive care unit is having many of his physiological needs met without even being awake. This is thanks to the machines, nurses, doctors,

hospitals, government, and insurance company who are making this possible. In this case, the patient has the capability to satisfy these needs, but he depends on others for that capability, thus he has a dependent capability. Children usually have all of their needs taken care of by their parents, teachers, and the government, as left to their own devices, they would be severely affected and in constant danger, so children generally have many dependent capabilities. In the case of the fisherman, he satisfies many of his needs through fishing, so he depends on fishing, and has dependent capabilities as well.

An independent capability, however, is when we have mastered a capability and are no longer dependent on it for satisfaction. A person who has only ever had one friend depends on that friend for many of her social needs. However, a person with many friends and the tools to make new friends isn't dependent on specific people for satisfying her social needs and is independent. She has power over her social life. The distinction is important because dependence creates insecurity and a feeling of powerlessness, while independence gives power and freedom.

However, this does not mean that dependence is undesirable. The insecurity of dependence is not nearly as bad as the insecurity over unmet needs. When you have no friends, that first friend you get will provide a major source of relief as well as of enjoyment. Being temporarily freed from the shackles of loneliness will give you the space to develop yourself both socially and otherwise. Hence, dependent capabilities can be, and often are, the steps towards gaining independent capabilities. However, if dependence goes on too long, it can cause insecurity and

even decadence—a reversal of development. People get stuck in dependent relationships, distracting themselves from the insecurity of dependence, while feeling that their need is being satisfied, thinking no development is necessary.

In the case of the fisherman, if he can't fish, the satisfaction of at least four of his needs will be in jeopardy. Recognising his dependence will nag at him until it's resolved, which might be years if the fishing is going well and he doesn't feel there is a need to address it. How can it be addressed? The fisherman would need to expand his functionings to reduce his dependence. If the fisherman started hunting and farming as well, he would be increasing his functionings and reducing his dependence, because if one or two of them happened to fail, he'd have a third source of food, as well as an activity that supports his esteem, possibly self-actualisation, and security over future needs' satisfaction. This is development.

A Theory of Human Development

So, now we have a complete theory of human development as the expansion of functionings that lead to us gaining independent capabilities to satisfy our needs and relieve us of our insecurities, granting freedom from uncontrolled desires, and power over one's own life.

So, if freedom is the domain in which we are free, human development seeks to expand our domains by giving us freedom from the necessity to expend our energy and resources on the satisfaction of our needs. Furthermore, when we demand freedoms from others, they should be the freedoms necessary to enhance our ability to develop ourselves; anything else is superfluous, since we only act towards or care about the satisfaction of our needs.

However, our needs are wide-ranging. I'm not simply referring to food, clothing, shelter, and a toothbrush. Our framework of needs is based on Maslow's five categories, all the way up to self-actualisation. All of your needs must be fulfilled or you'll have growing feelings of distress until all needs are satisfied. While Maslow presents the categories of needs as a hierarchy, with each level needing to be satisfied before moving to the next, I disagree, as we're often seeking the satisfaction of many needs at once. However, it is certainly true that some needs are more time-sensitive than others. If you're not getting any oxygen, it takes priority over all else. If you're not self-actualised, you will have feelings of distress, but it won't hurt to put it off for a little while, so you can take care of your other needs. Unfortunately, many people put that off forever and find ways to temporarily mute that distress. So, while freedom of speech may not necessarily affect the satisfaction of many of our material needs, it may greatly affect our need for self-actualisation.

So how do we satisfy all our needs and also remove any insecurity about them? Five categories of needs, with potentially hundreds of needs in each category, can seem daunting, like it would be a scheduling nightmare trying to juggle all of their satisfactions. I assure you it isn't, as some functionings can serve to satisfy multiple needs, as in the example of the fisherman.

Mindfulness

I must stress that a certain level of mindfulness could be extremely helpful as you proceed. By mindfulness, I mean learning to listen to and understand yourself, understanding what you're doing and why you're doing it. We cloak ourselves in webs of illusion to justify the

existence we wish to portray, so it can be unsettling to tear it all down and reveal yourself for who you are. If it helps, just remember everybody is in a stage of development—nobody is fully developed. We are motivated to act to attend to our needs. The most motivated and busiest are the neediest. Any conscious desire you have can be traced to multiple fundamental needs. Why do you want to go to that rock concert? Why do you want the red Lamborghini? Why do you want to be an accounts manager? Why do you want people to follow you on social media? The answers aren't simple, and they can be traced to multiple needs, but when you learn to understand the motive behind your thoughts and actions, it sets you free from the clutter in your head, allowing you to satisfy your needs directly, instead of hoping that a new car will improve your self-esteem.

Additionally, for those scrutinising my work for academic integrity, while my framework appears to be a synthesis of the work of Sen, Giddens, Nietzsche, and Maslow, I'm not necessarily using their work as they intended. I consider each of their theories to be incomplete or slightly off, though with considerable merit. So, my framework has similarities to their work, but does not hold true to it. While I initially thought of discrediting their theories, I realised it is much better to build on what they have started than to tear everything down and start from scratch.