

Aisha Elsanadidy

Self-actualization in William Somerset Maugham's "The Razor's Edge" and "Of Human Bondage"

Master's Thesis

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Dedication

This study is wholeheartedly dedicated to my beloved parents who have been my source of inspiration and strength. They continually provide me with their moral, emotional, and financial support. Without their presence in my life and their sincere prayers, I could not be able to complete this thesis.

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Abbreviations

<i>The Razor's Edge</i>	<i>R. Edge</i>
<i>Of Human Bondage</i>	<i>Bondage</i>
<i>Toward A Psychology of Being</i>	<i>Psychology of Being</i>
<i>Religions, Values and Peak- Experiences</i>	<i>Peak-Experiences</i>
<i>Motivation and Personality</i>	<i>M. Personality</i>
<i>The Farther Reaches of Human Nature</i>	<i>Farther Reaches</i>
<i>The Gentleman and the Parlour</i>	<i>The Gentleman</i>
<i>Ten Novels and Their Authors</i>	<i>Ten Novels</i>
<i>The World of Somerset Maugham</i>	<i>The World</i>
A Theory of Human Motivation	A Theory
Freewill and Determinism	Determinism
Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs	Needs
W. Somerset Maugham: An Appreciation	Appreciation

Abstract

Abstract

The main objective of this thesis is to examine William Somerset Maugham's *The Razor's Edge* and *Of Human Bondage* through Maslow's Theory of Psychology. It tackles the aspects of the Third Force Psychology and its positive sides. It focuses on illustrating the strong relation between literature and psychology because they are inseparable and interdependent. Moreover, it reveals the needs of the characters of the two novels through Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The study also illustrates that man desires and craves satisfying all of the basic needs in order to reach the highest level of self-actualization. Finally, it shows that there are some characteristics of self-actualized people that distinguish them from ordinary ones. It shows how self-actualized people are distinguished, successful and admired. Subsequently, it is interested in explaining how these qualities are applicable to the two protagonists.

Introduction

Introduction

This thesis aims at analyzing *The Razor's Edge* (1944) and *Of Human Bondage* (1915) by William Somerset Maugham through Abraham Maslow's Theory of Motivation. First, it sheds light on the positive side of the theory (Third Force) and depicts the pessimistic side of the two previous Forces of Psychoanalysis and Behaviorism. It essentially deals with the idea that man is free and can use all of his potentialities to achieve the ultimate goal in his life which is self-actualization. Therefore, the study shows that the main characters of the two novels are free enough to satisfy their basic and deficiency needs in order to fulfill their growth need for self-actualization.

As a result, the thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter introduces some of the theorist's life events that, in turn, affect his life and let him focus on such a positive theory. He thinks that man is not predetermined but has a great amount of freedom instead. Moreover, it highlights Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and its influence on people. Ordinary human beings have basic needs in their life that are important to be gratified. Amongst those deficiency needs are the needs for food, water, safety, belongingness, and the need for achievement and reputation.

According to Maslow, one cannot move to a higher need - only if s/he gratifies the lower one first. That is why he thinks that man is motivated to fulfill each need of the basic ones till s/he reaches the need for self-actualization. He also asserts that only few people can satisfy the supreme level of needs because the basic ones satiation may not be met continuously. Therefore, this chapter discusses -in detail- the

difference between the deficiency and growth needs as well as their influences on forming people's personalities. It also illustrates that there is a strong bond between literature and psychology. The latter may tend to study and analyze the fictional characters while the literary works form their characters through the psychological perspectives; it sounds that they intrinsically benefit from each other.

The second chapter tackles Maugham's two novels and their relation to Maslow's theory of motivation. It gives a hint to the reader about the novelist and his interest in the psychological aspects of his fictional characters. It also shows how Maugham is interested in human nature and its psychological concerns. It seems that some of Maugham's literary works deal with the theme of self-fulfillment and growth. Through the two novels, the protagonists' motivation can be found so that the chapter focuses on analyzing how the characters are somehow free and motivated in order to fulfill their deficiency needs to reach the highest level of self-actualization.

The last chapter explains that there are some characteristics that distinguish self-actualizing people from ordinary ones. The main point of this chapter is to reveal how those characteristics are applicable to both of the protagonists. It also shows how the main characters of the two novels manage to reach the supreme level of needs by expressing their characteristics as self-actualized persons. Maslow thinks that people who can satisfy their basic needs are able to reach the need for self-actualization. It is also important to know more about self-actualization by studying the qualities of the people who enjoy a great amount of this level.