

# Eupsychian Versus Authoritarian Leadership: Existential–Humanistic Underpinnings and Empirical Support

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[journals.sagepub.com/home/jhp](https://journals.sagepub.com/home/jhp)**Andrew M. Bland<sup>1</sup>**  **and Brett A. Swords<sup>1</sup>**

## Abstract

This article surveys Maslow's views on eupsychian leadership and how his vision of *eupsychia* may be regarded as a contemporary expression of the Greek philosophical notion of the Good. This involves actively and ongoingly cultivating cultural conditions that promote awe-based creative living in accordance with human nature, authentic freedom, and social justice in the interest of developing character via self-determination. Then we outline essential qualities of Maslow's notion of eupsychia as they have been empirically validated by Rego et al.'s qualitative study of the characteristics and outcomes of eupsychian (humanistic) versus antieupsychian (authoritarian) leadership. The findings thereof also provide a heuristic framework for integrating the results of numerous quantitatively-based research studies in recent international applied psychology literature. This applied leadership literature both (a) satisfies Maslow's call for empirical research to guide perspective-taking and decision-making when considering the possible practical implementation of a eupsychian society and (b) provides empirical support for his dynamic systemic and synergistic theorizing on leadership.

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eupsychia, existential–humanistic leadership, democratic leadership, authoritarian leadership, Abraham Maslow

In the hands of a mature, healthy human being, . . . power . . . is a great blessing.  
But in the hands of the immature, vicious, or emotionally sick, power is a  
horrible danger.

—Abraham Maslow (1996, p. 177)

As part of his research project to explore the farther reaches of human nature and potential, Maslow (1968) addressed the “empirical and realistic” questions of “How good a society does human nature permit?” and “How good a human nature does society permit?” and “What is possible and feasible [and] what is not?” (p. 143). He conceptualized *eupsychia* as “psychologically healthy culture” (Maslow, 1961, p. 2) that entails neither “unrealistic perfectionism” (Maslow, 1968, p. 146) à la Skinner’s (1948) behavioral engineering, nor “just another materially-based utopia” (Maslow, 1961, p. 2), nor pollyannish optimism or unbridled anarchy. Rather, Maslow suggested that eupsychia involves continuous improvement in the interest of facilitating “the self-actualization of all individuals” in the society (Maslow, 1968, p. 144). By constructing “social institutions [that] will encourage individuals to be synergic with each other” (Maslow, 1968, p. 144), eupsychia is conducive to both personal fulfillment via self-determination and the cross-generational health and prosperity of the collective (Maslow, 1971). Maslow’s (1943, 1971, 1987, 1999) dynamic systemic theorizing (see also Bland & DeRobertis, 2020) assumed a holistic, recursive, synergistic relationship among individuals, organizations, and society (see also McGregor, 1960/1985), and he (Maslow, 1968) proposed that to enhance one is to work at all three concurrently.

For a eupsychian society to be possible, Maslow (1961) proposed that fear must be transcended in order to “permit what is inside [oneself] to emerge” spontaneously and creatively (p. 4)—versus prescriptively—in response to the demands of situations (see also Miller et al., 2010). Accordingly, both individuals and organizations/societies become more flexible and adaptable in the face of inevitable change without attempting to cling to the familiar and/or to past accomplishments (Maslow, 1961). In addition, the rollout of eupsychia requires a slow simmer—versus a quick boil—approach to systemic change that requires mindful deliberation in planning as well as buy-in and commitment from everyone involved (Maslow, 1965; see also Goldman,

2009). Such conditions are conducive to “the deepest layers of human nature [showing] themselves with greater ease” and thus to a “Taoistic, nonintrusive, and basic need gratifying” society that is characterized by both greater interpersonal honesty and free choice-making and by less violence, contempt, and social control (Maslow, 1987, pp. 121-122). This is because, with people’s basic needs for physical survival/safety, relational security/belonging, and esteem having been consistently met (Maslow, 1943, 1971, 1987, 1999), competition can be transcended as the primary object for both individuals and organizations/societies, thereby paving the way toward cooperative interdependence as an alternative to corporate conformity (Maslow, 1965; see also Erikson, 1959/1994; McGregor, 1960/1985).

Contrary to a common mischaracterization of Maslow as overoptimistic (see Henry, 2017), he did not deny the existence of human destructiveness—but rather conceptualized it as “a secondary, reactive consequence of thwarting of or threat to the basic human needs” (Maslow, 1987, p. 88; see also Maslow, 1943, 1971, 1999). Accordingly, he proposed that the health of a given organization/society can be best gauged by the complaints of its members and the unfulfilled needs reflected therein. More interestingly, even in the healthiest organizations/societies, it should be expected that complaints will be voiced/heard—the content of which typically reflects higher-order needs involving *social interest* (see Adler, 1938) and best use of resources to promote flourishing for all involved (Maslow, 1965). Furthermore, Maslow (1968) acknowledged the possibility of regression in psychologically-healthy people: “Even the best individuals placed under poor social and institutional circumstances behave badly” when social institutions “guarantee that individuals will be at each other’s throats” (p. 144; see also Raskin, 2020).

## Maslow and Leadership

Maslow declined the opportunity to serve as inaugural president of the Association for Humanistic Psychology in 1963 because he believed that the then-fledgling organization should develop without a leader (Vich, 2008)—seemingly reflecting DuBose’s (2020) observation that “an existentialist leads no one and is led by no one” (para. 1). Maslow (1965) urged that “we have to give up forever the notion of . . . some great leader who will take care of everything and do everything” (p. 253; see also Maslow, 1996). Rather, he advocated for *functional leadership* wherein “each task will have as leader the one person suited for leadership in that task” (Maslow, 1982, p. 33; see also McGregor, 1960/1985). On the other hand, Maslow did not altogether deny or eschew the significance of effective leadership, and during the final decade of his life, he served as a consultant in several organizational settings

in the interest of exploring conditions that are most conducive to promoting psychological health and human flourishing both between and among the individuals that comprise the organizations (Hoffman, 1999; Maslow, 1965, 1982, 1996). In his view, the task of a leader is to “bind together and . . . coordinate into a good organization all the various specialists . . . who are needed for the job” (Maslow, 1965, p. 253)—a strategy he enacted himself as president of the American Psychological Association in 1968 (Hall, 1968). Such an environment serves to support and promote *both* individuality and collaboration by simultaneously involving “many people . . . rather than a select few” to serve the goal of developing each person’s unique capacities/potentialities “rather than common objectives for all participants” (McGregor, 1960/1985, p. 187).

Maslow envisioned a two-pronged approach to eupsychian—or “enlightened” (Maslow, 1996, p. 186)—leadership that embodies his (Maslow, 1943) *democratic character structure*. On one hand, he suggested the Taoistic, non-interfering approach of the Bodhisattva who helps others by committing to becoming a better person oneself (Maslow, 1968) in the interest of promoting the betterment of all sentient beings. See his writings on Theory Z (Maslow, 1971), in which he expanded on McGregor’s (1960/1985) Theory X (authoritarian) and Theory Y (eupsychian) styles of management by better accounting for qualities of transpersonal leadership that McGregor did not broach. On the other hand, Maslow also recognized the value of strong and decisive—but not forceful (Maslow, 1943)—figures whom he referred to as *aggridants*, or natural leaders whom he believed were born and not made (Hoffman, 1999). In this sense, Maslow envisioned effective leadership as psychologically androgynous—that is, rooted in a fluid center betwixt archetypically feminine (empathy) and masculine (resoluteness) qualities. He remarked, “A mature, psychologically healthy attitude . . . is typical of the [leader] who feels authentically self-confident and who can, therefore, be tender” (Maslow, 1996, p. 191; see also Maslow, 1943).

This stands in contrast with toxic leaders who, “[lacking] self-confidence, . . . have to act tough all the time and [thus] overdo tough behavior” (Maslow, 1996, p. 191). Toxic leader behavior both reflects and reinforces macrosystemic hypermasculinity (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2020; Maslow, 1943, 1971; Schneider, 2019) and absolutism and mistrust of pluralism (Arons, 2020; Maslow, 1943), both of which beget psychological polarization (Schneider, 2013, 2019, 2020), loneliness (Olds & Schwartz, 2009), and commodification of other people (Fromm, 1955; Maslow, 1943, 1971). Under such precarious social conditions, individuals are more likely “to prefer bad leaders . . . who will lead them to destruction” (Maslow, 1968, p. 151). Lipman-Blumen (2005; see also Maslow, 1943, 1996) explained that, to individuals

who struggle with ambiguity, change, and/or perceived failure to meet their culture's achievement norms (see also Dean & Altemeyer, 2020; Hochschild, 2016), at both the organizational and societal levels, toxic leaders are regarded as stronger and smarter, and they vicariously provide feelings of reassurance, accomplishment, power, and protection by offering illusions of security and certainty—typically involving efforts to isolate, scapegoat, and/or eliminate others whom they perceive as threatening—in exchange for uncritical loyalty and the ability to insist that they alone are the saviors. Such absolute power desires “simple problems, simple solutions, simple definitions” and perceives complexity as a product of weakness and the prospect of compromise as a threat (Hoffer, 2006, p. 44).

Moreover, Maslow (1987) observed that “the threat of chaos or of nihilism” can spur “regression . . . to the more prominent safety needs,” which results in “easier acceptance of dictatorship or of military rule” (p. 19). He continued,

If [people] are seeking leaders who must appear strong, self-confident, and unshakable, then we can better comprehend why they should flock after paranoid or selfish power-seekers or those who just *have* to control everybody and everything. We also can understand why more thoughtful, rational people—who can see both sides of an issue—would not appeal very much to those seeking absolute decisiveness. Finally, because selfish, narcissistic, and power-driven people find it easier to use others as mere tools for self-advancement, it makes sense why they disproportionately gain power. (Maslow, 1996, p. 176; see also Kakkar & Sivanathan, 2017; Maslow, 1943)

Indeed, against the backdrop of the current trend toward authoritarianism, nationalism, fundamentalism, and psychological polarization both in the United States and in other societies around the world in the face of globalization and rapid change (Schneider, 2013), research by Rast et al. (2016) found that individuals are quicker to express trust in charismatic leaders when they feel uncertain and they find a group psychologically meaningful to their self-concept (typically, in part, as a means of dealing with unresolved trauma that begets fear of insignificance, Schneider, 2013). In contrast, among psychologically-healthy individuals for whom group identification is less psychologically important (see also Maslow, 1987), charismatic leadership is trusted less when uncertainty is high. This may be because, tragically, highly charismatic leaders tend to overestimate their competency, underestimate their limits, and insufficiently attend to details (Vergauwe et al., 2018).

Meantime, “an important irony is that those individuals who are psychologically healthy, self-actualizing, and democratic in their management styles

often do not make their way into leadership positions in great numbers” (Schott, 1992, p. 114; see also Kakkar & Sivanathan, 2017; Maslow, 1943, 1996). This is particularly tricky given that Americans tend to be indoctrinated into the belief that U.S. society celebrates antiauthoritarianism (Levine, 2018) despite the high degree of conformity (DeRobertis, 2020; Erikson, 1959/1994; Hassan, 2019; Maslow, 2019) and narcissism (Fromm, 1955; Schneider, 2019) in the mainstream U.S. cultural landscape (and, arguably, its global reach in light of Americanization propelled by technology; Aanstoos, 2015) that has set the stage for more authoritarian rule in the Trump era (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). In particular, Dean and Altemeyer (2020) summarized four decades of empirical research demonstrating that authoritarian followers tend to be either excessively socially dominant or highly submissive and loyal to authority figures. In addition, they are likely to demonstrate highly-compartmentalized thinking; to use double standards; to hold conflicting and contradictory beliefs; to have difficulty deciding between what does and does not constitute sound evidence; and to be highly ethnocentric, prejudiced in what they believe about others, and dogmatic in their beliefs.

Accordingly, Maslow (1961) envisioned education as a forum for promoting individuals’ discovery and enactment of their “precious [inner] nature” in order to make the possibility of eupsychia more probable (p. 8). He challenged his students to consider questions such as:

Who will pick this ideal leader? How [does one] guarantee that this leadership will not fall into the hands of tyrants? . . . What happens when the good leader dies? How possible are leaderlessness, decentralization of power, retention of power by each individual? . . . How many non-helping persons can a society assimilate? . . . What kinds of political structure make it more possible for . . . paranoid characters, psychopathic personalities, blusterers . . . to have great power? . . . Any good society that hopes to grow must be able to choose . . . leaders . . . who are best suited for the job in fact, in actual talents and capacity. How can such good choices be enhanced? (Maslow, 1968, pp. 150-152)

## **Eupsychian Leadership and the Good**

Maslow’s eupsychia may be understood as a contemporary expression of the Greek philosophical notion of the Good (see Dillon, 2020). Specifically, it begets “the kinds of cultures in families, schools, communities, and nations under which human nature flourishes” (Dillon, 2020, p. 251; see also Dillon, 2008) in the interest of promoting both individual growth and the common good “in a cultural world that tends either to fear or ignore” the Good (Dillon,

2020, p. 253; see also Dillon, 2008; Maslow, 1943, 1971). Indeed, Maslow emphasized that essential human nature is “weak, subtle, and delicate, very easily drowned out by learning, by cultural expectations, by fear, by disapproval, etc.” and therefore prone to being “‘forgotten’ (neglected, unused, overlooked, unverballed, or suppressed)” (Maslow, 1999, pp. 212-213) and supplanted by “more selfishness, hatred, aggression, and destructiveness” (Maslow, 1987, p. 86; see also Maslow, 1943, 1971).

Dillon (2020) identified three dimensions of living in accordance with human nature (the Good): authentic freedom, awe-based creative living, and social justice. First, authentic freedom is to be understood not as an end but as a means—that is, a skill that requires not only ongoing cultivation but also that needs to be “tempered and educated” in order to set the stage for human flourishing to take place (Dillon, 2020, p. 250; see also Maslow, 1961, 1971) in accordance with “the limits imposed by human nature” (p. 250; see also Bland, 2020; May, 1981; Schneider, 1990). This perspective stands in contrast with contemporary notions of freedom that “often cast freedom as the purpose of life itself” characterized by “endless self-fashioning, novelty, and invention” (Dillon, 2020, p. 250; see also Krishnamurti, 1954) and in which essential human nature, values, and virtues are feared (Maslow, 1943, 1971) because it is distortedly perceived as a threat to personal freedom (see also Fromm, 1941/1969; Hoffer, 2006).

Second, “at its best, culture is the expression of a people’s slow pursuit of the Good, a collective trust imparting the wisdom and experience gained from effective ways of realizing human nature over time” (Dillon, 2020, p. 250; see also Maslow, 1965). That is, healthy cultures promote awe-based (Schneider, 2004, 2019) and creative (Arons, 2020; DeRobertis, 2017; Maslow, 1971, 1999) living that reciprocally promotes human flourishing both individually and collectively (Dillon, 2008; Maslow, 1971, 1999).

Third, with its foundation in existential–humanistic psychology principles, eupsychia promotes the active realization of the common good of the social body “rather than protecting private rights and personal pursuits” (Dillon, 2020, p. 251). This offers an antidote to “our present political and cultural context [that] often pits social justice against personal growth” via ideological competition (p. 252; see also Maslow, 1961) that has resulted in psychological polarization (see also Maslow, 1943, 1971; Schneider, 2013, 2020) and in culture wars. In this situation, the pursuit of individual happiness also is divorced from the pursuit of the common good (Fromm, 1955). Accordingly, the Good is confused for “a rigid moral code of values and behavior” (Dillon, 2020, p. 252) that diminishes the possibility of individuality by imposing a collectively conformist vision of rugged individualism (DeRobertis, 2020; van Kaam, 1961).

## **Eupsychian Versus Authoritarian Societies**

Similarly, Sassoon (2015) proposed that at one end of a societal spectrum are democracies that “foster self-actualization, democracy, liberty, human rights, secularity [in contrast with blind faith; see also Arons, 2020], empathy, longevity, and opposition to injustice everywhere” (p. xv). Like Maslow’s (1961, 1965, 1968, 1971, 1987) eupsychia, Sassoon (2015) emphasized that such societies are predicated on empirical evidence that guides the process of determining how to most effectively “bring out the best in people” (p. 52) based on “common values, derived from nature” that “unite all people regardless of cultural diversity” (p. 98). In contrast, at the other end of the continuum are authoritarian societies characterized by despotism, coercion, propaganda, corruption, high levels of poverty, expansionism, efforts to eliminate enemies, and “[pathologically violating] human nature [by denying] basic human needs” (p. xvi). Applied to epidemics/pandemics like COVID-19, Zakaria (2020) noted that authoritarian regimes “want to control information tightly” and tend to “mishandle outbreaks” in ways that historically have resulted in significantly higher death rates compared with democracies of the same income level (p. 33).

## **Promoting the Good Society: Qualities of Eupsychian Leadership**

The essential qualities of Maslow’s eupsychia have been empirically validated by Rego et al.’s (2008) qualitative study of the characteristics and outcomes of eupsychian (humanistic) versus antieupsychian (authoritarian) leadership in employment settings. Like Sassoon (2015) above, these leadership styles are best approached as points along a continuum rather than categorically (Goldman, 2009). Rego et al.’s findings provide a heuristic framework for integrating the results of numerous quantitatively-based research studies in recent international applied psychology literature, which are summarized in the tables below to provide empirical support for Maslow’s (1943, 1961, 1965, 1971) theorizing on eupsychian leadership.

### *Eupsychian Leadership*

Based on the findings of their analysis of reflections on critical incidents, Rego et al. (2008) identified qualities of eupsychian (humanistic) leaders. These include (a) promoting self-determination in and personal development of the people they lead (providing opportunities for people to take responsibility and self-develop their potential and, in the process, to learn/develop



competencies; showing appreciation for, confidence in, and respect for the personal/inner lives of those they lead); (b) courageousness and open-mindedness (assuming responsibility for mistakes, open to suggestions); (c) promoting collaboration and community (via mutual respect and open communication); and (d) kindness, compassion, transparency, and respect (in making requests of those they lead). These qualities of *relational leading* (see Beshai, 2012) are conducive to (a) higher levels of well-being (contentment, gratitude, calm); (b) greater commitment and motivation and a stronger sense of calling; and (c) enhanced self-confidence and sense of feeling respected/appreciated in the people they lead—all of which (d) result in positive attitudes toward the leader and in helpfulness toward the collective akin to *social interest* (Adler, 1938).

Eupsychian leaders (a) lead “with their hearts (and not only with their heads)” (Rego et al., 2008, p. 186); (b) create conditions that are conducive to individuals feeling understood and appreciated; and (c) inspire and energize behavior based on meaning and purpose beyond mechanistic (see also Bugental, 1965), functional (see also Vos, 2020) values involving material rewards and security (see also McGregor, 1960/1985). Paradoxically, they encourage integrity (being true to oneself and truthful to others, living one’s values more fully) as well as transcendence of self-interest in those they lead. This lends itself to enhanced creativity, resilience, social connectedness, physical and psychological health, commitment and productiveness, and the holistic integration of body (physical), mind (logical/rational thought), heart (emotions), and spirit (see also Beshai, 2012). Eupsychian leadership, therefore, is consistent more with the characteristics of self-actualization (Maslow, 1971, 1987, 1999) and less with behavior and attitudes that reflect truncated development, deficient fulfillment of basic needs, and tension reduction (Maslow, 1943, 1961, 1971, 1987, 1999). That is, people are guided by more idiosyncratic and intrinsic aims while also becoming more self-transcendent at the higher end of Maslow’s needs hierarchy whereas at the lower end they are simultaneously both more externalized and ego-centered (Bland & DeRobertis, 2020). With this self-transcendence comes increased enactment of cosmocentric (vs. anthropocentric) eco-sustainability values associated with Maslow’s (1971) aforementioned Theory Z, which recently have been addressed in the *sustainable leadership* literature (e.g., Heizmann & Liu, 2018; Wolfgramm et al., 2015). Furthermore, Lipman-Blumen’s (2005) *connective leadership* requires “the capacity to see even the smallest sliver of mutuality in the needs and agendas of others . . . [and] to foster interdependent relationships among diverse parties” (p. 244).

Table 1 outlines several models of leadership in the contemporary international applied psychology literature that correspond with Rego et al.’s characteristics and outcomes of eupsychian leadership. An EBSCO/Google

**Table 1.** A Comparison of Models of Leadership in the Contemporary International Applied Psychology Literature and Rego et al.'s (2008) Characteristics and Outcomes of Maslow's Eupsychian Leadership.

Rego et al.'s (2008) themes	Parallel models and characteristics	Outcomes
<p>Promoting self-determination and personal growth. Showing appreciation for, confidence in, and respect for the personal/inner lives of those they lead.</p>	<p><i>Transformational leadership:</i> Inspire, intellectually stimulate, promote intelligence and problem-solving, instill a sense of purpose; increase interest to look beyond oneself; showing concern about the needs of those they lead (Bass, 1990; Breevaart &amp; Bakker, 2018).</p> <p><i>Inspirational leadership:</i> Empower and appropriately challenge the people they lead (Salas-Vallina et al., 2020).</p> <p><i>Empowering leadership:</i> Promote intrinsic responsibility, instill independence, communicate trust, provide developmental support (Kim et al., 2018).</p> <p><i>Benevolent leadership:</i> Express authentic concern about personal and familial well-being in those they lead. Tailor relationships to meet varying needs at an individualized level (Chan &amp; Mak, 2012; Chen et al., 2014).</p> <p><i>Authentic leadership:</i> Transparent, genuine, support the people they lead in setting goals that coincide with their own personal values (Lyu et al., 2019).</p>	<p>Low levels of emotional exhaustion and cynicism. Relationships strengthened when leaders show health-related awareness (Kranabetter &amp; Niessen, 2017).</p> <p>High levels of engagement, satisfaction, and organizational commitment in employment settings (Salas-Vallina et al., 2020).</p> <p>High levels of motivation, positive attitudes, and performance in employment settings (Kim et al., 2018).</p> <p>Enhanced performance and citizenship behavior (Chan &amp; Mak, 2012; Chen et al., 2014).</p> <p>Promotes work-family balance (Lyu et al., 2019).</p>
<p>Being courageous and open-minded.</p>	<p><i>Humble leadership/Leader humility:</i> Value learning from others, aware of own strengths and weaknesses, willing to admit mistakes, request and remain open to feedback and willing to learn from the people they lead (Lin et al., 2019; Oc et al., 2020).</p>	<p>Reduced vulnerability in the people they lead (Oc et al., 2020). Also, indirect effect on those they lead feeling empowered and willing to speak up and make suggestions (Lin et al., 2019).</p>

(continued)

**Table 1. (continued)**

Rego et al.'s (2008) themes	Parallel models and characteristics	Outcomes
Promoting collaboration and community.	<p><i>Integrator role:</i> Make necessary adjustments based on previous blunders (Vilkinas et al., 2020).</p> <p><i>Interpersonal facilitation:</i> “Deliberate acts that improve morale, encourage cooperation, [and] remove barriers to performance” by giving power to those one leads (Van Scotter &amp; Motowildo, 1996, p. 526).</p>	Linked to interpersonal facilitation in both individualistic and collectivistic cultures (Cem Ersoy et al., 2012) and to engagement in helping behaviors (Podsakoff et al., 2000).
Kindness, compassion, transparency, respectfulness.	<p><i>Ethical leadership</i>, comprised of two dimensions:</p> <p><i>Moral manager:</i> Explicitly focusing on ethics through communication and modeling (Brown &amp; Treviño, 2006).</p> <p><i>Moral person:</i> Leader is honest, principled, trustworthy, fair, and takes others into consideration when making decisions (Brown &amp; Treviño; 2006; Wang &amp; Xu, 2019).</p>	<p>Negatively correlates with turnover intention, positively correlates with a sense of meaningfulness in and intrinsic commitment to the organization as well as creativity (Feng et al., 2018; X. Liu et al., 2020; Wang &amp; Xu, 2019).</p> <p>Promotes agentic responsibility and draws out moral motivation/ behaviors by making salient “the moral core [one] already possesses” (Owens et al., 2019, p. 157).</p>

Note. By proxy, these research findings also provide empirical support for Maslow’s (1943) observations about the *democratic character structure* in eupsychian leadership.

Scholar search in October 2020 suggested that, of these, leaders promoting positive relationships and a sense of community via interpersonal facilitation has received minimal attention in the literature; thus, inquiry in that area is suggested. Furthermore, while researchers have identified leader *characteristics*, they also should explore both *process* dynamics and specific *skills* needed to enact eupsychian leadership (Warrick, 2017).

### Authoritarian Leadership

In contrast, Rego et al. (2008) described antieupsychian (authoritarian) leaders as characterized by (a) power abuse and bossiness (discretionary and/or

dictatorial decision-making, employing pressure tactics, blaming others for problems for which they are not responsible); (b) ruthlessness, unkindness, disrespect for the personal and inner lives of the people they lead (publicly discrediting others, disregarding individual beliefs/values); (c) laziness and cowardice (leaving problems unaddressed, diffusing responsibility); (d) dishonesty (omitting or adulterating data in official documents, denying what others have said to them, communicating inconsistently to different parties); (e) discrimination (engagement in preferential treatment and/or microaggressions); and (f) instigating poor relationships among the people they lead by pitting them against each other. Among the people they lead, antieupychian leaders spur (a) negative emotions (deception, shame, sadness, resentment, anger/rage, shock, insecurity, revolt/repulsion, unhappiness); (b) disapproval of the leader; (c) neglect and passivity (indifference, resignation, discouragement, false assent, silence); (d) retaliation and disobedience (refusal to comply, tit for tat, defiance, unavailability); (e) decreased performance; (f) fear/suspicion of and solidarity against the leader as well as strained climate and consternation amongst the team; and (g) exiting the situation (literally and/or psychologically). McGregor (1960/1985) noted that, in workplaces, authoritarian leadership contributes to employees approaching work “as a form of punishment” (p. 40) as well as to Frankl’s (1959/2006) *Sunday neurosis*.

Table 2 summarizes contemporary applied psychology literature that parallels Rego et al.’s characteristics and outcomes of authoritarian leadership. In addition, evoking Maslow’s (1996) observation that “there is no power-seeker more stubborn and persistent than the one who is paranoid” (p. 175; see also Hoffer, 2006), controlling leader behavior has been found to be more commonly witnessed among those who embody high degrees of desire for authority and maintaining subordination through control combined with low degrees of seeking voluntary respect (Lee et al., 2020; see also Hassan, 2019). This narcissistic quality typically is rooted in emotional injury wrought by lack of mirroring during childhood (Kets de Vries, 2003; see also Trump, 2020).

In Rego et al.’s study as well as in Maslow’s (1965, 1971, 1996) observations, authoritarian leaders encompassed the majority. This seems attributable to their ability to speak to individuals’ deficient fulfillment of basic needs (Maslow, 1965; see also McGregor, 1960/1985). Echoing Maslow’s (1987, 1999) holistic-dynamic theorizing on psychological needs, Kakkar and Sivanathan (2017) empirically demonstrated that, internationally, support for dominant leaders is escalated when individuals are faced with the situational threat of economic uncertainty and they find appealing an external agent who can help assuage the psychological sense of lacking personal control over their lives. Accordingly, comparable to Maslow’s observations

**Table 2.** A Summary of Findings From Contemporary International Applied Psychology Literature That Parallel Rego et al.’s (2008) Characteristics and Outcomes of Maslow’s Authoritarian Leadership.

Parallel models and characteristics	Outcomes
<i>Destructive leadership:</i> “The systematic and repeated behavior by a leader . . . that violates the legitimate interest of the organization by undermining and/or sabotaging the organization’s goals, tasks, resources, and effectiveness and/or the motivation, [and] well-being” of those they lead (Einarsen et al., 2007, p. 208).	Lower satisfaction, higher turnover intention, decreased performance, and lower overall well-being in employment settings (Schyns & Schilling, 2013).
<i>Abusive supervision:</i> Hostility, reminding others of past mistakes and failures, not giving proper credit, blaming others for the leader’s mistakes, expressing anger, making negative comments about others, lying, ridiculing (Tepper, 2000).	Decreased commitment, greater work-family conflict, and higher psychological distress in employment settings (Tepper, 2000).
<i>Toxic leadership:</i> Attacking others’ self-esteem; lacking integrity; displaying anger; promoting social exclusion, divisiveness, and inequity; threatening the security of those that they lead; ignoring others’ ideas and self-promoting; disengaging; being abusive, unpredictable, narcissistic, authoritarian (Pelletier, 2010; Schmidt, 2008).	Higher turnover intention and lower satisfaction in employment settings (Schmidt, 2008).
<i>Narcissistic leadership:</i> Charisma, self-interested influence, using deception to motivate others, intellectual inhibition of those that they lead, and simulated consideration that involves manipulation and exploitation (Ouimet, 2010).	Brings about harm to others, decrease in organizational effectiveness, and a toxic work environment (Lipman-Blumen, 2005; Ouimet, 2010).

*Note.* By proxy, these research findings support Maslow’s (1943) observations about the *authoritarian character structure*. These characteristics identified by Rego et al. are observed across the models: (a) power abuse and bossiness; (b) ruthlessness, unkindness, disrespect for the personal and inner lives of the people they lead; (c) laziness and cowardice; (d) dishonesty; (e) discrimination; and (f) instigating poor relationships among the people they lead by pitting them against each other.

surveyed in the Maslow and Leadership section above, “people prefer a leader who is perceived to be decisive . . . and dominant over [one] who is respected [and] knowledgeable” (Kakkar & Sivanathan, 2017, p. 6738). Similarly, Dean and Altemeyer (2020) summarized four decades of empirical

research suggesting that authoritarian followers “appear to have a lot of ‘hurt’” and to be fearful of a dangerous world, to have a deep need to belong to a powerful movement that they feel will safeguard them, to be simultaneously deeply dependent on others for social reinforcement of their beliefs and self-righteous in their in-group loyalty, and to “not know themselves very well” and thus to be “uniquely vulnerable to manipulators who know it is the open door to their allegiance and wallets” (pp. 172-173). To deal with cognitive dissonance when problematic leader behavior arises, they elevate and reinforce one idea/perspective at the expense of conflicting ones, thus setting the stage for psychological polarization (see Schneider, 2013).

Similarly, Lipman-Blumen (2005) identified rationalizations rooted in Maslow’s needs that serve to further uphold authoritarian leadership: submitting to a toxic leader provides critical resources when alternatives are scarce (physiological needs); the devil one knows is better than the one does not (security needs); fear of ostracization (belonging needs); unseating a toxic leader requires more effort than one can muster, and it would result in having to forego one’s own interests and assume more responsibility (esteem needs). These rationalizations eventually become sedimented into paralyzing control myths (again, based on combinations of deficient Maslowian basic needs) that inflate the leader to super-human proportions and serve to make one feel simultaneously both inferior and safe, that instill the fear of repercussions and deprivation of resources, that protect the status quo, that enable one to avoid their own responsibility as leaders, and that promise ennoblement and immortality. Thus, authoritarian leaders “offer [a] grand illusion of security to quell two stubborn types of anxiety: [one’s] existential angst . . . and [one’s] situational fears” by promising “simultaneously the possible and the impossible, [assuring that] they can both calm [one’s] fears *and* keep [one] safe” (Lipman-Blumen, 2005, p. 236). Then they are able to maintain power by “compelling [one] to keep [oneself] and other potential resisters in check” (p. 137; see also Dean & Altemeyer, 2020). “Only later, [does one] realize that the leader is using [their] power, unchecked, against [one’s] associates, [one’s] friends, [one’s] families, and eventually against [oneself]” (p. 237).

Antidotes to authoritarian leadership include cultivating courage as well as allies to hold toxic leaders accountable (Lipman-Blumen, 2005), employing humor as a dialectical counterpart to hubris (Kets de Vries, 2003), and fostering a climate (a) that encourages emotional expression, collaborative dialogue and transparency in policy development, and an ethic of care and (b) that values and models psychological-mindedness, emotional intelligence, and responsibility (Goldman, 2009; Lipman-Blumen, 2005). Indeed, intentional engagement in empathetic behavior and mindfulness-based practices

has been found to mitigate the association between toxic leadership and negative individual and organizational outcomes thereof (Nowack & Zak, 2020; see also H. Liu et al., 2017).

## Conclusion

The applied leadership literature reviewed above satisfies Maslow's (1965, 1968) call for empirical research to guide perspective-taking and decision-making when considering the practical implementation of a eupsychian society. As an alternative to a "simple pushbutton theory of social betterment" (Maslow, 1965, p. 248) typically based on prescriptive strategies and sometimes misuse of metrics to assess short-term outcomes at the expense of process (Muller, 2018), this approach facilitates self-reinforcing relational conditions to promote the gradual creative development of *character* in accordance with human nature (Dillon, 2008). Consistent with Maslow's (1943, 1971, 1987, 1999) dynamic systemic and synergistic theorizing, this entails ongoing being-in-becoming situated within an ecological-cultural-spiritual context (see also Bland & DeRobertis, 2019, 2020). Eupsychian leadership involves a collaborative and mutually participatory approach (Maslow, 1943, 1971) to narrowing the divide in one's perceptual field between me and not-me (Combs, 1999), which is conducive to a more post-conventional ethic and a holistic, synergistic system of values that "can never be totally understood by any one human being" (Maslow, 1965, p. 249). Rather, "in a world that tends to see politics and social justice as a Hobbesian struggle for power and dominance between competing groups," eupsychian leadership, as an outgrowth of existential-humanistic psychology, "works to build a common world for all to thrive" (Dillon, 2020, p. 252) via self-determination and meaning-making. This offers an alternative to the outcomes of a hypercapitalistic society that begets exaggerated needs for love (Horney, 1937; Fromm, 1956) and for status (Maslow, 1943, 1971; Prinstein, 2017) and that falsely propagates a vision of the United States as antiauthoritarian (Goldstein, 2020; Levine, 2018) in a multicultural global society. In addition, Maslow's theorizing also offers a framework for understanding the psychological needs that reciprocally reinforce authoritarian leadership in the interest of promoting healing dialogues (Schneider, 2020) as an alternative to psychological polarization in the current era (Schneider, 2013).

Furthermore, to supplement the relatively limited body of explicitly humanistic leadership literature to date (e.g., Beshai, 2012; DuBose, 2020; McWhinney, 1984; Miller et al., 2010; Raskin, 2020; Rego et al., 2008; Saiter, 2009; Schott, 1992), in preparing this article, we intentionally strived to build bridges between existential-humanistic and mainstream psychology

by drawing from the latter to provide empirical support for Maslow's theorizing in the spirit of Bland (2019), Bland and DeRobertis (2020), and Kaufman (2020). In so doing, we have (a) further demonstrated that his ideas on eupsychian leadership "appear to be more realistic than some criticisms regarding their allegedly utopian aims would suggest" (Rego et al., 2008, p. 187) and, therefore, (b) further contributed to an emerging body of literature that serves to clear up misconceptions about Maslow (see also Bland & DeRobertis, 2019, 2020; Compton, 2018; Henry, 2017; Hoffman, 2017) as an antidote to the "recurrent Maslow bashing that one finds in the literature" (Winston et al., 2017, p. 309).

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