



A New Psychology of Human Well-Being: An Exploration of the Ego-soul Dynamics of Mental and Physical Health

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The soul is not a popular category in academic psychology, although psychologists like Jung, Assagioli, Maslow, Grof, Wilber and others have elaborated their own models. Richard extends such analysis to the recent debate on happiness and well-being and provides a coherent developmental model evolving towards a recovery of soul consciousness and a motivation of service. See also my review of his book in the book review section.

My primary inspiration for writing this book was the following statement from the introduction to the second edition of *Toward a Psychology of Being* by Abraham Maslow.

There is now emerging over the horizon a new conception of human sickness and human health, a psychology that I find so thrilling and so full of wonderful possibilities that I yield to the temptation to present it publicly even before it is checked and confirmed, and before it can be called reliable scientific knowledge.¹

What Maslow was courageously attempting to do, was to establish the ground rules for a larger jurisdiction for psychology. What I am attempting to do in *A New Psychology of Human Well-Being* goes further: I am trying to build a theory of human well-being that unites psychology with spirituality and science. To achieve this purpose, I needed to bring the soul back into psychology.

At the heart of the theory I am putting before you is what I refer to as the Seven Levels Model. There are two aspects to this Model: the Stages of Psychological Development Model and the Levels of Consciousness Model. We grow in stages of psychological development, and we operate at levels of consciousness. Under normal circumstances, the level of consciousness we operate from will be the same as the stage of psychological development we have reached. I developed this model in 1997. Since that time it has been used to map the consciousness of over 6,000 organisations, 5,000 individuals and 25 nations.

Ego needs vs soul's desires

Maslow referred to the needs associated with the first three stages of psychological development, as “deficiency” needs, and the needs associated with the last three stages of psychological development, as “growth” or “being” needs. From a psychological perspective, the needs of the first three stage of development correspond to our ego's needs, and the needs of the last three stages of development correspond to our soul's desires. Thus, we can state:

Ego needs = Deficiency needs
and
Growth needs = Being needs = Soul desires

We feel anxious and fearful when we are unable to meet our deficiency needs, but once they are met we no longer pay much attention to them. The joy we experience when we can meet our soul's desires leaves us wanting more. Maslow points out the importance of satisfying our deficiency needs as a foundation for satisfying our growth needs:

Man's higher nature rests on his lower nature, needing it as a foundation. The best way to develop this higher nature is to fulfil and gratify the lower nature first.²

Maslow also makes a direct link between the satisfaction of our needs and health. He states:

...satisfying our deficiencies avoids illness; growth satisfactions produce positive health.³

In other words, when we can satisfy our ego's needs, we stay well, and when we can satisfy our soul's needs, we thrive. Maslow goes on to state:

...deficit needs are shared by all members of the human species ... all people need safety, love and status from their environment ... once satiated with these elementary, species-wide necessities ... development of individuality can begin ... each person proceeds to develop in his own style ... development then becomes more determined from within rather than from without ... self-actualisation is idiosyncratic.⁴

Maslow called the moments we are consciously aware of satisfying our growth needs as “peak” experiences. He describes these experiences in the following way:

...the powers of a person come together in a particularly efficient and intensely enjoyable way, and in which he is more integrated and less split, more open for experience, more idiosyncratic, more perfectly expressive or spontaneous, or full functioning, more independent of his lower needs, etc.⁵

Here Maslow expresses two important ideas: the idea that self-expression links to the satisfaction of our growth needs; and the idea that aligning our ego motivations with our soul motivations—becoming more integrated and less split—allows us to express ourselves in a particularly efficient and intensely enjoyable way.

We can conclude from these statements that the path to health and well-being involves satisfying our ego's needs and our soul's desires; if we are unable to satisfy the former it will be difficult to satisfy the latter. Without a solid foundation for operating in your physical, social and cultural framework of your existence, you will not be able to focus on satisfying your soul's desires. In other words, satisfying your ego's needs is a necessary foundation for satisfying your soul's desires. When you can satisfy your ego's needs *and* your soul's desires, you will find personal fulfilment and experience a deep sense of well-being.

I believe what makes *A New Psychology of Human Well-Being* different compared to most modern books on psychology is that it explores the topic of human well-being from the perspective of the ego-soul evolutionary dynamic. You will not find this approach in any scientific papers because the soul (sometimes called the higher-self or the inner core), for the most part, is ignored by the academic world. Let me recount an anecdote that illustrates my point.

In 2015 I gave an opening keynote address at a conference put on by one of the top business schools in Europe. My title was *The Spiritual/Psychological Dimension of Creativity and Flow*. The audience of close to 300 people was comprised of academics, coaches and business people. At the beginning of my speech, I conducted an experiment with the audience: I asked them to stand if any of the statements I was going to make were true for them.

I started by saying "I have a car", and most of the audience stood up. Then I said "I am a car" no one stood up. Then I said, "I have an ego" and after that "I am an ego." Most people stood up when I said "I have an ego" and sat down when I said, "I am an ego." Then I said "I have a soul," everyone stood up. After that, I said "I am a soul" and everyone remained standing.

What I had half expected, but was amazed to see, was that everyone stood up for both of the final statements. Not just one, both of them! After jokingly pointing out the high level of confusion they must have about who they are, I suggested to the audience that having a soul was the stage of development that preceded being a soul, but the ultimate truth was that your soul has you! Since that occasion, I have repeated this exercise with diverse audiences in many parts of the world and each time I got the same result: the vast majority of people believe they have a soul, and they are a soul.

But it was what happened next that made me realise there is something wrong with the mainstream scientific approach. The next speakers, two very bright and influential academics were talking about neuroscience research.

They had a statement on their first slide that read "Assumptions we make: There is no soul." When I saw this statement, I could not help smiling to myself. The entire audience of academics, coaches and business people had just indicated that they believed they not only had a soul, but they were souls.

What this experience clearly pointed out to me, and probably the rest of the audience, was how the objective, scientific approach not only has a tendency to deny our inner knowing and our subjective experiences.

I believe there are two problems that arise from the objective scientific approach: the dualistic notion that the body and the mind belong to different realms, and the plethora of disciplines that keep our minds blinkered from the larger realities of life. In this respect, the following words written by Peter D. Ouspensky (1878–1947) early in the last century are almost as meaningful now as they were then:

We fail to understand many things because we specialise too easily and too drastically, philosophy, religion, psychology, natural sciences, sociology, etc. each has their special literature. There is nothing embracing the whole in its entirety.⁶

However, all the different areas of knowledge must have significant interrelationships. We need to identify and explore these linkages if we are to develop theories that unify psychology, spirituality and science.

The proposition I set out in *A New Psychology of Human Well-Being* is that there is a unifying model. Furthermore, we can only grow to understand this model by removing our blinkers, embracing self-knowledge, and acknowledging the limits of our three-dimensional (3-D) physical perception. The unifying model I propose transcends birth and death and leads us into an energetic dimension of reality where we encounter the soul.

The problem with perception

Even though the human mind/brain is surrounded by frequencies of vibration coming from a larger multi-dimensional energetic continuum, it is constrained in the frequencies it can intercept by the body's five physical senses. Like the dials on a radio receiver, the body's senses can only register a narrow band of frequencies, thereby preventing us from intercepting and interpreting the larger domain of our existence: the four-dimensional (4-D) energetic frequencies of the soul and the universal energy field. What we are not aware of is still there, it is just not in our conscious awareness.

Although mystics and shaman have been aware of the unity of the physical and energetic worlds for millennia, it wasn't until the early part of the twentieth century, with the development of the quantum field theory, that scientists began to acknowledge that there was a crack in our 3-D material interpretation of the world. Albert Einstein (1879–1955) was aware of this crack. He fully recognised that we live in a 4-D energetic continuum. He put it this way:

The non-mathematician is seized by a mysterious shuddering when he hears of four-dimensional things, by a feeling that is not unlike the occult. But there is no more commonplace statement than the world in which we live is a four-dimensional continuum.⁷

Einstein was not alone in this way of thinking. Ervin László, a Hungarian-born philosopher of science, describes the two-world problem in the following way: he calls the observable, manifest, physical 3-D world the M-dimension (M for material or manifest), and he calls the unobservable, energetic 4-D world—the world of the soul—the A-dimension. The A-dimension (Akashic or energetic dimension) is a universal field of information and potentiality that is in constant interaction with the M-dimension.

... the A-dimension [energetic] dimension is prior: it is the generative ground of the particles and systems of particles that emerge in the M-dimension [material] dimension.⁸

Max Planck (1858–1947), a theoretical physicist, who was one of the originators of quantum theory, is quoted as saying: "I regard consciousness as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness. We cannot get behind consciousness."

Even though we derive our sense of personal reality from focusing our attention on the 3-D material world, what we are observing is just a thin sliver of a much larger energetic world.

One of the links we have to the energetic world is our thoughts. Our thoughts are energetic impulses of positive, neutral or negative intention. Consequently, whatever thoughts you are thinking not only influence the energetic vibration of your energy field (the body-mind) but the energetic vibration of the world around you. Fear-based thoughts make things feel heavy and serious, whereas love-based thoughts make things feel light and cheerful. This is because the energy of fear has a low frequency of vibration and the energy of love has a high-frequency vibration. Love energy feels light because it connects (people); fear energy feels heavy because it separates (people), it goes against the natural state of energetic order. We feel "at home" in our soul when we love, and we feel "separate" from

our soul when we fear. Feelings are the antennae that allow us to tune into the status of our ego-soul dynamic.

When the fear-based energies of the ego-mind are juxtaposed with the love-based energies of the soul-mind, you feel a sense of instability in your energy field and sensations of discomfort in your body. As you release the fear-based energies of your ego-mind and align with the love-based energies of your soul-mind, the ego-mind and the soul-mind come into energetic alignment, and your body feels vital and healthy. This following quote from Maslow describes the process:

...the powers of a person come together in a particularly efficient and intensely enjoyable way in which he is more integrated and less split.⁹

The key words here are “he is more integrated and less split”. In other words, when we raise the frequency of vibration of the ego-mind by releasing our fears, we align with the frequency of the vibration of the soul-mind.

The journey of the soul

There are seven stages of human development that souls pass through from the moment they enter into our three-dimensional material world (the moment of conception) and the moment they leave our three-dimensional material world (the moment of death). I call these the seven stages of psychological development. These are shown in the following Figure. The first three stages are about the development of the ego, and the last three stages are about the activation of the soul. The fourth stage involves aligning the motivations of the ego with the motivations of the soul. The seven stages of psychological development are also shown in the following Table along with the approximate age ranges when they occur and the developmental task of each stage.

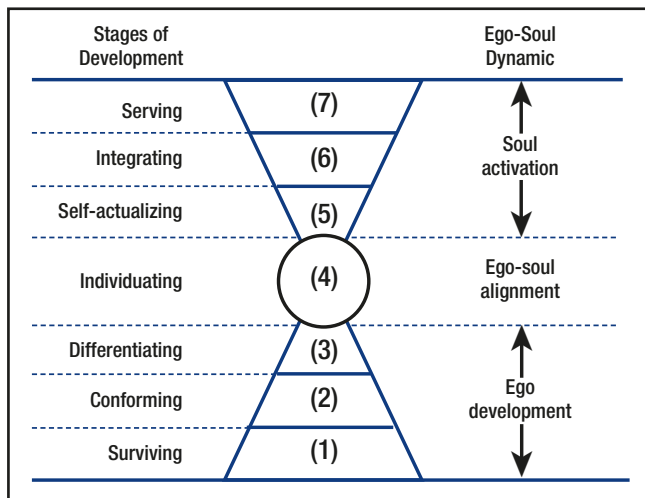


Figure: The Seven Stages of Psychological Development and three evolutionary stages of the ego-soul dynamic.

Stages of psychological development	Age ranges	Developmental tasks
Serving	60 + years	Contributing to the well-being of future generations, humanity and the planet.
Integrating	50 – 59 years	Connecting with others in unconditional loving relationships to make a difference.
Self-actualising	40- - 49 years	Expressing your true nature by embracing your soul’s values and purpose.
Individuating	25 – 39 years	Discovering your true identity by letting go of your fears and your dependence on others.
Differentiating	8 – 24 years	Feeling recognised and respected by establishing yourself in a community that values who you are.
Conforming	3 – 7 years	Feeling safe and protected by staying close to your kin and your family.
Surviving	Conception to 2 years	Staying alive and physically healthy by getting your survival needs met.

Table: The Seven Stages of Psychological Development, the approximate age ranges when they occur, and the developmental task at each stage

Before restricting its consciousness so it can embark on a journey into 3-D material awareness, the soul is fully centred in 4-D energetic awareness—a world of abundance and love. By choosing to incarnate—restrict itself to 3-D material awareness, it enters into a very different world—a world of limitation and fear.

Material awareness

The fundamental properties of 3-D material awareness are time, space and matter. By conjoining time and space, we experience the illusion of separation; by conjoining time and matter, we experience the illusion of death and decay; by conjoining space and matter, we experience the illusion of physical forms and mass. Together, taken as a whole, all of these concepts align with the interpretation of reality explained by Newtonian mechanics and the First and Second Laws of Thermodynamics.

Energetic awareness

The fundamental properties of the soul’s world—4-D energetic awareness—are timelessness, omnipresence and energy. Because the soul has no awareness of time or space to give the illusion of separation, the soul experiences a sense of oneness and connectedness. Because the soul has no awareness of time and matter to give the illusion of death and decay, it experiences a state of being (present moment awareness). Because the soul has no awareness of space and matter to give the illusion of form and mass, the soul experiences shifts in energetic vibrations (emotions). Together, taken as a whole, all of these concepts align with the quantum mechanical interpretation of reality, which is explained by Quantum theory.

The soul’s desires

The soul’s purpose in incarnating is to attempt to recreate its 4-D reality in a 3-D material awareness by a) fully expressing its unique character and gifts, b) by connecting with others in unconditional loving relationships to make a difference, and c) by contributing, through acts of self-less service, to the good of humanity. These three “desires” are the motivations of the soul that drive the 5th, 6th and 7th stages of development.

However, before these desires can be pursued, the soul must establish itself in 3-D material awareness: it must learn how to survive—keep the body alive; it must learn how to be loved so it can feel safe and protected; and it must learn how to be admired and recognised so it can feel secure in its 3-D material reality. The soul delegates these tasks to the ego.

The ego’s needs

These three sets of “needs” are the motivations of the ego. They are the drivers of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd stages of development. Only when we have learned how to master these three stages of development are we in a position to find the freedom and autonomy we need to enter the 4th

stage of development. This is the stage of development where we begin to align our ego's motivations with our soul's motivations by letting go of the ego's fears and dependencies developed during the first three stages of development. We have to become a viable independent human being before we can begin to align with the motivations of the soul.

The journey begins

The soul's journey into 3-D material awareness begins when it restricts its awareness to material existence by taking possession of the energy field of a human embryo during the first few weeks of pregnancy. This is when the baby's heart starts to beat. The heart and the soul are intimately linked: The energy field of the heart is the access point of the energy field of the soul. At this stage, you are totally heart-centred and the soul mind is the centre of conscious awareness of the embryo.

The body-mind

Around five weeks later, towards the end of the first trimester of pregnancy, the reptilian mind/brain (body-mind) which has been forming in the background, takes over from the soul mind as the dominant centre of conscious awareness.

The period from conception to the age of 18 – 24 months, while the reptilian mind/brain is the dominant centre of conscious awareness, is known as the surviving stage of development. The job of the body-mind is to keep the body alive and functioning so the soul has a vehicle through which it can experience 3-D material awareness. The body-mind keeps the body alive by controlling the homeostatic regulation of the body.

When the body-mind takes over as the dominant centre of conscious awareness, the soul mind becomes the subconscious of the body-mind. From this point on, the primary motivation of the foetus and baby is to stay alive.

The emotional mind

The limbic mind/brain (emotional mind) takes over from the reptilian mind/brain as the dominant centre of conscious awareness when the baby reaches 18 – 24 months. This is when the ego begins to form. The period from 18 – 24 months to about 2 to 7 years, while the limbic mind/brain is the dominant centre of conscious awareness, is known as the conforming stage of development.

The job of the ego-mind at this stage of development is to keep the body safe and protected in its family/social framework of existence. The ego mind does this by attempting to build relationships which allow the child to feel loved, accepted and protected.

When the emotional mind takes over as the dominant centre of conscious awareness, the body-mind becomes the subconscious of the emotional mind, and the soul mind becomes the unconscious of the emotional mind. From this point on, the primary motivation of the infant and child is to keep safe.

The rational mind

The neocortex mind/brain (rational mind) takes over from the limbic mind/brain as the dominant centre of conscious awareness around the age of eight and keeps on growing and developing until around the age of twenty-four. The ego continues to develop during this period and remains dominant for the rest of our lives or until the soul mind is reactivated. The period from around 7 or 8 to about 24 years, while the neocortex mind/brain is still growing and developing, is known as the differentiating stage of development.

The job of the ego mind at this stage of development is to keep the body secure and comfortable in its cultural framework of existence. The ego mind does this by attempting to become a recognised and valued member of a group or community.

When the rational mind takes over as the dominant centre of conscious awareness, the emotional mind becomes the subconscious of the rational mind; the body-mind becomes the unconscious of the rational mind, and the soul mind becomes the super unconscious of the rational mind. From this point on the primary motivation of the teenager and young adult is to feel secure.

The suppression of the soul

During the first three stages of development as the ego's needs assume greater prominence, the soul's desires get pushed further and further into the background. If the ego's motivations are strong and deeply embedded because of difficulties it had in getting its safety and security needs met, the ego's motivations may stay dominant for the rest of your life.

Accessing the soul

The fourth stage of development—the individuating stage—is the stage you must master to reactivate your soul awareness at the 5th, 6th and 7th stages of development. The goal at the individuating stage of development is to find freedom and autonomy—to let go of your social and cultural dependencies—so you can become responsible and accountable for every aspect of your life.

The ego is not *who* you are; it is who you think you are. It is the mask you wear to get your needs met in the physical, social and cultural framework of your material existence. The ego represents your sense of identity in relation to the physical, social and cultural context in which you live. You must remove your ego mask to find your soul self.

Activating the soul: self-expressing

The last three stages of psychological development represent various stages of soul activation. If you have been relatively successful in mastering the individuating stage of development, you will begin to feel the pull of the self-actualising stage of development in your early 40s. Your challenge now is to fully embrace your soul's character and purpose by accessing your inborn gifts and talents and thereby give your life meaning.

If you failed to master your survival needs, the fears you developed about being able to exercise control over your environment will make it difficult to master your soul's desire for self-expression.

Activating the soul: connecting

The next stage of soul activation—the integrating stage of development, which usually occurs in the 50s—involves connecting with others in unconditional loving relationships so you can use your gifts and talents to make a difference in the world. Your challenge now is to develop your social intelligence and empathy skills so you can connect and collaborate with others and thereby use your gifts and talents to make a difference in people's lives.

If you failed to master your ego's safety needs, the fears you developed about forming relationships will make it difficult to master your soul's desire for connection.

Activating the soul: contributing

The last stage of soul activation—the serving stage of development, which usually occurs in your 60s—involves living a life of self-less service focused on future generations and the good of humanity. Having learned how to connect, what you are now tasked with doing is making a contribution to the common good. Your challenge now is to develop your compassion skills—to embrace the deepest aspects of your soul's intelligence and wisdom to help those who are suffering, disadvantaged or are less well off than yourself.

If you failed to master your ego's security needs, the fears you developed about being able to become a valuable member of a community will make it difficult to master your soul's desire to make a contribution.

Conclusions

How well your parents, guardians and teachers support you during the first three stages of development—surviving, conforming and differentiating—not only affects your physical health and mental well-being, during your early life, it also significantly affects your physical health and mental well-being, during the latter stages of your life.

Only when you have learned how to master your survival, safety and security needs and are successful in mastering the

individuating stage of development, can you move to the self-actualising stage where you begin to activate your soul-mind.

Mastering the self-actualising stage of development brings meaning and purpose to your life. Mastering the integrating stage of development enables you to make a difference in your world. Mastering the serving stage of development enables you to find fulfilment in your life. By this time, your soul will be fully activated and you will be leading a life of selfless service for the good of humanity.

Richard Barrett is an author, speaker and internationally recognised thought leader on the evolution of human values in business and society. He is the founder and chairman of the Barrett Values Centre, a Fellow of the World Business Academy and Former Values Coordinator at the World Bank.

He is the creator of the internationally recognized Cultural Transformation Tools (CTT) which have been used to support more than 6,000 organizations on their transformational journeys. To date, more than 5,000 change agents, consultants and coaches have been trained by the Barrett Values Centre to use the Cultural Transformation Tools in over 50 countries

Richard Barrett is the author of many books, including *A New Psychology of Human Well-Being: An Exploration of the influence of Ego-Soul Dynamics on Mental and Physical Health* (2016), *What My Soul Told Me: A Practical Guide to Soul Activation* (2012), *Love, Fear and the Destiny of Nations: The Impact of the Evolution of Human Consciousness on World Affairs* (2011), *The New Leadership Paradigm* (2010). www.richardbarrett.net

Endnotes

- 1 Abraham Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (Second Edition) (Van Nostrand Reinhold: New York), 1968, p. 3.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 32.
- 3 *Ibid.*, pp. 33–34.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 97.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- 6 Peter D. Ouspensky, *Tertium Organum: A Key to the Mysteries of the World* (New York: Vintage Books), 1982, pp. 262–263.
- 7 R. W. Clarke, *Einstein: the Life and Times* (New York: World Publishing), 1971, p. 159.
- 8 Ervin László, *The Self-actualizing Cosmos: The Akasha Revolution in Science and Human Consciousness* (Rochester: Inner Traditions), 2014.
- 9 Abraham H. Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (second edition) (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold), 1968, p. 97.

