



Measuring Human Consciousness

By Richard Barrett, Chairman and Founder, Barrett Values Centre

Excerpts from The Metrics of Human Consciousness

Before reading this article you may want to measure your consciousness. It will help you in understanding what follows. Simply follow this link—[Personal Values Assessment](#)—and do the free assessment. A few minutes after completing the assessment, you will receive a personalized feedback report. Look over the report and if you want to dig deeper, take some time to do the exercises you will find at the back of your report. Then read this article.

Introduction

I started work on defining a metric for measuring human consciousness around 1995. It was an accident really; I was trying to bring together the ideas of Vedic philosophy regarding the higher levels of consciousness and Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs. It struck me that the different graduations of higher levels of consciousness, as expressed in the Vedic tradition, corresponded to the varying degrees of self-actualization expressed by Maslow. From this research came the idea for the Seven Levels of Consciousness Model.

Once I had defined the model, I quickly realized that specific values and behaviours could be associated with each level of consciousness, and consequently, if you could ascertain the values of an individual or group you could identify what levels of consciousness they were operating from. The measuring system I developed became known as the Cultural Transformation Tools (CTT). In 1997, I formed a company, the Barrett Values Centre (BVC), and began to use this measuring system to map the consciousness of leaders and organizations all over the world.¹ To date BVC has measured the consciousness of more than 5,000 organizations, 4,000 leaders and 24 nations.

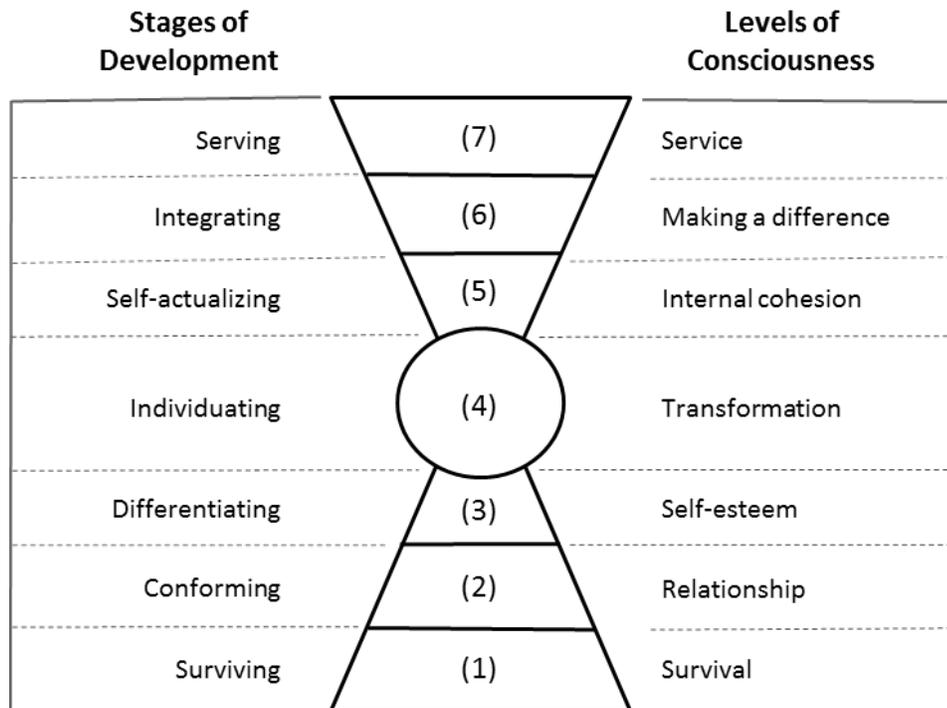
In recent years, I began to recognize that in addition to mapping human consciousness, the Seven Levels Model could also be used as a template to describe the stages of human psychological development. Figure 1 shows the stages of psychological development and their correspondence with the seven levels of consciousness.

We grow in stages (of psychological development) and we operate at levels (of consciousness). The Seven Levels Model differs from most other models in one important way: It looks at personal development through the lens of the ego-soul

¹ For more information go to www.valuescentre.com

dynamic—the progressive, and normally subtle, influence of the motivations of the soul over the motivations of the ego.

Figure 1: Stages of psychological development and levels of consciousness



Under normal circumstances, the level of consciousness you are operating from will be the same as the stage of psychological development you have reached. However, no matter what stage of psychological development you are at, when you are faced with what you consider to be a potentially negative change in your circumstances or a situation that you believe could threaten your internal stability or external equilibrium—anything that brings up fear—you may temporarily shift to one of the three lower levels of consciousness.

Alternatively, if you have a “peak” experience—an experience of euphoria, harmony or connectedness of a mystical or spiritual nature—you may temporarily “jump” to a higher level of consciousness. When the threat or peak experience has passed, you will return to the level of consciousness that corresponds to the stage of psychological development you were at before the experience occurred. In rare situations, a peak experience may have a lasting impact, causing you to shift to a higher stage of psychological development and operate from a higher level of consciousness.

Similarly a “negative” experience, if it is traumatic enough, and particularly if it occurs in your childhood and teenage years, can impede your future psychological development by causing you to be anchored, through frequent triggering of the traumatic memory, into in one of the three lower levels of consciousness.



The stages of psychological development

Up to the point in time where we reach physical maturity, around 20 years-of-age; we all follow the same natural path of psychological development—surviving, conforming and differentiating. During these stages of psychological development, we learn to satisfy what Abraham Maslow referred to as our basic or “deficiency” needs: We get anxious if these needs are not met, but once they are met, we no longer pay any attention to them.

From the mid-twenties onwards, we move into the adult stages of psychological development—individuating, self-actualizing, integrating and serving. During these stages of psychological development, we learn to satisfy what Abraham Maslow referred to as our “growth” needs. Once we experience the meaning and joy that mastering our growth needs brings, we want to experience them more.

At the same time as we are growing “vertically”—becoming more fully who we are by giving expression to the deepest level of our being, we are also growing “horizontally”—acquiring knowledge, skills and experience about living in increasingly complex environments. If we fail to grow horizontally, we will compromise our ability to grow vertically.

Ego development

The stages of psychological development you pass through in your formative years—surviving, conforming and differentiating, are *not* optional: Everyone experiences these stages of development on their journey to physical maturity. The aspect of our personalities that develops during these stages of development is the ego. By the time we reach our twenties, our egos are more or less fully developed. How well we are able to master the ego stages of development depends to a large extent on the degree and quality of the parental programming and cultural conditioning we experienced during our childhood and teenage years.

Soul emergence

The adult stages of psychological development begin at the individuating stage. Individuating requires you to do two things: first, let go of the aspects of your parental programming and cultural conditioning that do not reflect who you truly are—the aspects you do not resonate with—and second, learn to release any conscious or subconscious fears your ego may have regarding any unmet needs you may have from the earlier stages of your development. Only when you have accomplished these two tasks, will you be ready to begin the process of embracing your full human emergence. The individuating stage of development usually occurs begins in our twenties and continues through our thirties. Many people, because of the conditions in which they live or their lack of mastery of the first three stages of



development, either never reach this stage of development or only begin to work on it until much later in life.

You reach your full human emergence after you have passed through the self-actualizing, integrating and serving stages of development.

Obstacles to growth

Unlike the stages of psychological development you pass through in your childhood and teenage years, the adult stages of psychological development are optional. Your progress through these stages of development depends on two factors: the level of freedom you feel you have to explore who you are in the family, community and societal cultures in which you are embedded; and the degree to which you are able to focus on leading a values- and purpose-driven life.

Some cultures, such as tribal cultures or authoritarian cultures, have a world view that actively discourages individuation; other cultures, such as liberal democratic cultures, encourage individuation. The cultural world views we live in are described by the model known as Spiral Dynamics.² If you live in a liberal democracy, have benefited from a higher education and had a chance to travel the world, you can expect to embark on the *individuation* stage of your development in your mid-twenties to late twenties.

Depending on your ability to let go of the aspects of your parental programming and cultural conditioning that do not reflect who you truly are and release any conscious or subconscious fears you may have regarding your unmet needs from the earlier stages of your development, you may then move to the *self-actualizing* stage of development. The self-actualizing stage usually occurs in our forties.

Assuming all goes well, and you are able to identify your soul's purpose and begin to live a values-driven and purpose-driven life, you will feel the pull to the *integrating* stage of development. This stage of development usually occurs in our fifties. If you are able to actualize your purpose by making a difference in your world, then a few years later—in your sixties—you will feel the pull to the *serving* stage of development.

If you do not live in a liberal democracy, have not benefited from a higher education and have not had the opportunity to travel the world, then the chances are you will not feel the need to individuate: You will be relatively content living in the community and social milieu of your childhood and teenage years, never questioning who you are at a deeper level, and never pursuing any promptings you may feel to examine your life, your beliefs or your values. Only if you experience some deep trauma that

² Don Beck and Christopher Cowan, *Spiral Dynamics: Mastering Values, Leadership and Change* (Blackwell Publishing: Malden), 1996.



leads you to question the meaning and purpose of your life will you feel any level of incitement to ask yourself, Who am I? and Why am I here?

Based on the above understanding of stages of psychological development and levels of consciousness, we can reach a preliminary conclusion about what “measuring consciousness” means: First, measuring consciousness means determining *what stage of psychological development you have reached*; and second, determining *what stages of psychological development you have passed through that are still important to you, where you may still have some unmet needs*.

The needs you have at the stage of development you have reached, and the needs from the stages of development you have passed that are still important to you will determine your motivations. These in turn will tell you where your consciousness is focused. The motivation of the stage of development you have reached will be your primary motivation, and the motivations of the stages you have passed through that are still important to you will be your secondary motivations.³ If your secondary motivations are strong, they may undermine your ability to meet your primary motivation.

Stages of psychological development

The motivations associated with each stage of psychological development are shown in column 4 of Table 1. The lower three stages of development represent our ego motivations, and the upper three stages represent our soul motivations. The individuating stage of consciousness is the bridge we must cross to successfully align the motivations of the ego with the motivations of the soul.

³ For a full discourse on primary and secondary motivations and how to identify them, please consult *Evolutionary Coaching: A Values-based Approach to Unleashing Human Potential* by Richard Barrett.

Table 1: Motivations and value priorities at each stage of psychological development.

Stages of Physiological Development	Normal age range	Overview of task/needs	Motivation	Value priority
Serving	60+ years	Alleviating suffering by caring for the well-being of humanity and the planet.	Self-less service	Social justice
Integrating	50-59 years	Cooperating with others who share the same values and purpose.	Making a difference	Contribution
Self-actualizing	40 to 49 years	Becoming more fully yourself by finding and expressing your gifts and talents.	Meaning and purpose	Integrity
Individuating	25 to 39 years	Becoming more fully yourself by finding and expressing your own values and beliefs.	Freedom and autonomy	Independence
Differentiating	Eight to 24 years	Looking good or displaying your skills and talents so you can become part of a group.	Respect and recognition	Security
Conforming	Two to eight years	Staying close to your kin and community so you feel safe and protected.	Love, acceptance and belonging	Safety
Surviving	Birth to two years	Getting your physiological needs met by staying alive and healthy.	Physical well-being and nutritional needs	Survival.

Column two of Table 1 indicates the approximate age range when each stage of psychological development occurs. It is possible to accelerate your development to a certain degree, but for most people these age ranges are relatively precise.

Column three of Table 1 describes the developmental task or needs associated with each stage of development, and, column five lists the value priority at each stage of development. At any moment in time, our values are a reflection of our motivations which are a reflection of our needs. Consequently, as we grow and develop, our values change in accordance with our changing needs.



A question I frequently get asked is, "How does the consciousness of the millennials fit into this schema?" These are the children who were born in or after 1982. In so far as the U.S. is concerned:

Millennials are unlike any other generation in living memory. They are more numerous, more affluent, better educated, and more ethnically diverse... They are beginning to manifest a wide array of positive social habits that older Americans no longer associate with youth, including a new focus on teamwork, achievement, modesty and good conduct.⁴

They are optimists: They are happy, content and positive. They are cooperative team players. They accept authority: They trust and feel close to their parents. They are the most watched over generation in memory. They are smarter than most people think. They believe in the future and see themselves as its cutting edge.

In my mind, the millennials display all the characteristics that I would associate with being brought up by self-actualized parents in a liberal democracy. They have been loved and cherished, treated fairly and generously, and have been encouraged from an early age to express who they are. In other words, they feel secure in themselves: To a large extent, they have mastered the first three stages of psychological development.

Levels of consciousness

During the first 24 years of our lives the levels of consciousness we operate from, unless we experienced severe childhood trauma, is the same as the stage of psychological development we have reached.

Once we have left the shelter of our home and parental care, the level of consciousness we operate from is determined by three main factors: the stage of psychological development we have reached, the unmet needs from the stages of psychological development we have passed through or the needs from these levels that are still important to us, and our ability to grow and develop in the cultural framework and world views in which we are embedded. The needs and values that are important to us as adults and the levels of consciousness they represent are shown in Table 2.

⁴ Neil Howe and William Strauss, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (New York: Vintage Books), 2000, p. 4.

Table 2: Levels of consciousness and value priorities.

Levels of consciousness	Needs	Value priorities
Service	Alleviating suffering by caring for the well-being of humanity and the planet.	Compassion, humility, future generations, ecology, social justice.
Making a difference	Cooperating with others who share the same values and purpose.	Collaboration, empathy, mentoring, coaching, environmental awareness.
Internal cohesion	Becoming more fully yourself by finding and expressing your gifts and talents.	Authenticity, integrity, fairness, trust, transparency.
Transformation	Becoming more fully yourself by embracing your own values and beliefs.	Freedom, autonomy, independence, continuous learning, adaptability.
Self-esteem	Looking good or displaying your skills and talents.	Achievement, status, continuous improvement, security.
Relationships	Staying close to your kin and community.	Belonging, friendship, loyalty, harmony, safety.
Survival	Staying alive in the best possible conditions.	Survival, health.

Ego motivations and soul motivations

In order to understand how we grow and develop vertically through the different stages of psychological development and the levels of consciousness that we operate from, we have to understand the mechanisms at play in the ego-soul dynamic. To do this we must establish a clear understanding of what the ego is, and what its motivations are, and what the soul is, and what its motivations are.

Your ego is a field of conscious awareness that identifies with your physical body. Consequently, the ego believes it can die. 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 cultural framework of your physical existence. Because the ego believes it inhabits a body and lives in a physical world, it believes it has needs and it believes in separation. Because it believes it has needs, the ego develops conscious and subconscious fears about not being able to meet its needs. The needs of the ego are shown in the lower part of Table 2. When your ego is able to satisfy these needs you feel at ease—you feel a sense of stability. When the ego is unable to satisfy these needs you feel anxious—you experience instability.



The Soul

Your soul is a field of conscious awareness that identifies with your energy field. It is who you really are. You don't have a soul; you are a soul. Your soul and the soul of every other human being is an individuated aspect of the universal energy field from which everything in our physical world arises. Because the soul identifies with your energy field and not with the body, the soul knows it cannot die and it has no fears. The soul understands that it has no needs because at the energetic level of its existence it is able to create what it requires through its thoughts.

Even though the soul has no needs in the way that the ego has needs, it does have desires. You know your soul's desires are being met when you feel your life has meaning; when you discover your innate gifts and talents—what you are passionate about—and can use your gifts and talents to make a difference in the world. The only things preventing the soul from fulfilling its desires are the fear-driven beliefs of the ego. The desires/needs of the soul as interpreted by the ego are shown in the upper part of Table 2.

Two worlds

The reality of the ego-mind is based in what Ervin Laszlo, the Hungarian born philosopher of science, refers to as the M-dimension (the observable, manifest, three-dimensional world), and the reality of the soul-mind is based in what he refers to as the A-dimension (the unobservable, potential, four-dimensional world)—what Einstein refers to as the four-dimensional continuum. The A-dimension (Akashic dimension) is a universal field of information and potentiality which is in constant interaction with the M-dimension.

The M-dimension and the A-dimension are related diachronically (over time) as well as synchronically (at a given point in time). Diachronically, the A-dimension is prior: it is the generative ground of the particles and systems of particles that emerge in the M-dimension. Synchronically, the generated particles and systems of particles [in the M-dimension] are linked with the A-dimension through bidirectional interactions.⁵

Even though the ego-mind derives its sense of reality by focussing its attention in the M-dimension (physical reality), it exists energetically in the same energy field as the soul-mind in the A-dimension (energetic reality).

⁵ Ervin Laszlo, *The Self-actualizing Cosmos: The Akasha Revolution in Science and Human Consciousness* (Inner Traditions: Rochester), 2014.



The Ego-Soul dynamic

Thus your energy field contains two minds—the ego-mind and the soul-mind. Consequently, whatever is going on in the energy field of your ego-mind has an effect on the energy field of your soul-mind. When your thoughts are generated from the fear-based beliefs of the ego-mind, you will feel the impact of your thoughts in your energy field as heaviness and instability. This is because fear is a low frequency vibration.

Love, the energy that emanates through the soul, is a high frequency vibration—it feels light and stable. It feels connecting rather than separating. Thus, when the fear-based energies of the ego-mind are closely juxtaposed to the love-based energies of the soul-mind, your energy field will experience internal instability. This instability arises from your fear based emotions—anxiety, stress, anger, frustration, impatience and in some situations, where you have bottled up your emotions over long periods of time, rage.

As you shift the locus of your identity from your ego to your soul—as you pass through the individuation stage—you will experience less fear and more alignment in your life and your energy field will shift to a higher frequency of vibration. You will feel happier, more joyful and more content. You may even experience moments of bliss.

As you make progress on this journey, you may find that your friends and the people who you hang around with will change. You will find yourself drawn to people who are operating at the same frequency of vibration as you.

What all this means is that your experience of the M-dimension is conditioned by the degree of alignment of your ego-mind with your soul-mind in the A-dimension: most importantly, by the level of fear that exists in the ego-mind and the level of alignment of the ego's motivations with the soul's motivations. As the conscious and subconscious fear-based beliefs of your ego-mind decrease, the opportunity for your soul-mind to influence your decision-making increases.

The conclusion we reach from the above is that the optional part of the journey of the evolution of consciousness, which corresponds to the adult stages of psychological development (from the individuating to serving stages), depends on three conditions:

- The degree to which you are able to separate yourself from the aspects of your parental and cultural conditioning that no longer aligns with your own sense of self.
- The degree to which you are able to let go of your ego's fear-based beliefs.



- The degree to which your soul-mind is able to live a values- and purpose-driven life in the three-dimensional physical reality—the degree to which you are able to embrace your unique gifts and talents.

These are the stages of development I refer to as self-actualizing, integrating and serving.

The Body-mind

In addition to the ego-mind and the soul-mind, we also have a body-mind. The body-mind represents the conscious awareness of the atoms, molecules, cells and organs of the body. The purpose of the body-mind is to keep the body in a state of internal stability by responding to changes in its external physical environment. For example, when the temperature rises, we sweat: the evaporation of the water molecules on our skin cools us down. This ability of the body to self-regulate is known as “homeostasis.” The body-mind, like the ego-mind, is contained within the energy field of the soul-mind.

The energy field

The energy field of the body-mind is known as the etheric field: The energy field of the ego-mind is known as the emotional field, and the energy field of the soul-mind is known as the spiritual field. The etheric field, which penetrates the physical body, is surrounded by the emotional field, which in-turn is surrounded by the spiritual field. The energy field of the ego-mind is separated from the energy field of the soul-mind by a mental field—a dispassionate logical information processing facility which can be used by the ego or the soul to satisfy their motivations.

Each layer of the energy field has a different frequency of vibration. The lowest frequencies occur in the etheric field, and the highest frequencies occur in the spiritual field. Thus, whenever our energy fields are out of alignment—electromagnetic imbalance—we feel discomfort or dis-ease in our bodies.

The mental field—let us call it the rational mind—is available to both the ego-mind and the soul-mind; however, the ego mind can only access the mental field when it is calm and relaxed. When it is in a state of agitation or excitement (emotion) it is unable to make use of the mental field. Rationality flies out of the window when emotionality takes over our mind space.

Because of its close proximity to the body-mind, the vibrational frequencies of the ego-mind have a direct influence on how the body-mind operates: Whatever is happening in the ego-mind is immediately felt in the energy field of the body-mind. When the ego-mind is operating from fear, the body-mind reacts by releasing chemicals that prepare the body for fight or flight. When fear reaches a semi-permanent state, by turning into anxiety or stress, the continuing production of



these chemicals becomes harmful to the body's health, eventually resulting in disease and sickness—the body becomes internally unstable: It has to work harder to maintain internal stability.

Getting back into alignment, means bringing your electromagnetic energy field into a state of internal stability. The way we do this is by finding ways to align the energy field of the ego-mind with the energy field of the soul-mind. This is called personal mastery or leading yourself. The key element of such programs is learning how to manage your emotions.

When the ego-mind is in alignment with the soul-mind—when the ego shares the same values and motivations as the soul, and operates with minimal levels of fear—the body experiences a state of internal stability: Your body feels healthy and you experience a sense of inner well-being.

Values alignment

What all this means is that when you achieve values alignment internally—when your ego's values and motivations align with your soul's values and motivations, you experience a sense of internal stability and well-being.

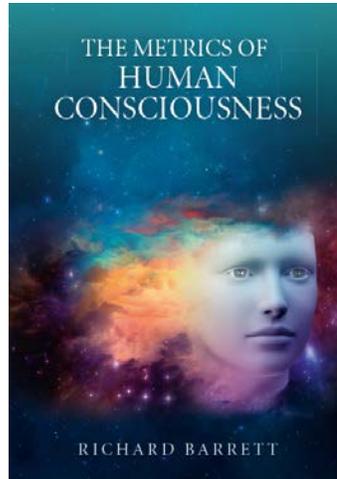
Similarly, when your values and motivations are in alignment with the values and motivations of the culture you work in or the community you live in, you experience a sense of external equilibrium.

Values alignment is not only the key to living in internal stability and external equilibrium, it also the key to health and well-being.

Conclusion

What the Seven Levels Model and the Cultural Transformation Tools enable us to do is make the evolution of consciousness, conscious, because if you can measure something, you can manage it.

If you want to find out more about the stages of psychological development, the Seven Levels of Consciousness and how the Cultural Transformation Tools are used to measure consciousness of individuals, leaders, organizations and nations please read *The Metrics of Human Consciousness* and visit www.valuescentre.com or www.richardbarrett.net.



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