The Metrics of Human Consciousness

Richard Barrett

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“Every noble work is at first impossible.” – Thomas Carlyle
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1. Background

I started work on defining the metrics of 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 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. An overview of the origins of this model can be found in Annex 1.

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. In 1997, I formed a company, the Barrett Values Centre, and began to use the measuring system to map the consciousness of leaders and organizations.¹

Over the subsequent years, based on feedback from users of the Cultural Transformation Tools, we made some adjustments to the measuring system which improved its reliability and validity. Now, more than sixteen years later, we have a well-established and globally-recognized set of tools for mapping the values and measuring the consciousness of individuals and human group structures (teams, organizations, communities and nations). To date (Summer 2014), we have used the tools to measure 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 map the stages of human psychological development.

Figure 1.1 shows the stages of human 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. Under normal circumstances, the level of consciousness we operate from will be the same as the stage of psychological development we have reached.
**Figure 1.1:** Stages of psychological development and levels of consciousness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serving</td>
<td>Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrating</td>
<td>Making a difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-actualizing</td>
<td>Internal cohesion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuating</td>
<td>Transformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiating</td>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conforming</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surviving</td>
<td>Survival</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(7) (6) (5) (4) (3) (2) (1)

There are two situations that can cause someone to shift the focus of their consciousness from the stage of psychological development they have reached to a lower level: first, if they are triggered into remembering an unmet need they have from one of the first three stages of development, and second, if the circumstances of their life are such that they are forced to operate close to survival. In both cases, their ability to focus on their higher order needs will be compromised by the attention they need to give to their lower order needs.

**My top ten values**

In Figure 1.2, I show how the model can be used by mapping my own top ten values to the Seven Levels of Consciousness. You can do the same by going to at [www.valuescentre.com/pva](http://www.valuescentre.com/pva). The box following Figure 1.2 contains the report that was generated by this free assessment.

**Figure 1.2:** My top ten values
REPORT R. BARRETT

You have chosen positive values at each level. This indicates that you are able to lead a balanced and fulfilled life. From the values you selected it is clear that you are a person for whom meaning is important. You have a strong set of moral standards which are important in how you treat others and how you wish to be treated.

Your values show:

- A gift for thinking imaginatively and using your skills to produce new ideas help you to make positive change in the lives of others.
- Living with a passionate and an upbeat, fun-loving approach are important to you.
- You appreciate high standards of quality and are driven to maintain these in all aspects of your life.
- Remaining in control of your finances and ensuring that you are not over-stretched provide you with comfort.
- Having meaningful close relationships with others is important in your life.
- Demonstrating determination and resolution to follow through ensure that you are able to fulfil your aims.
- It is important for you to have meaning and a sense of contentment in your life.
- You see possibilities where others cannot and you have an understanding of the steps needed to get there.

The type of values you selected indicates that your individual capabilities are most important to you. From your choice of values you also demonstrate care for the greater good (making a difference).
What does measuring consciousness mean?

Before exploring the Seven Levels Model and its uses, I think it is important to spend some time understanding what it means to “measure consciousness.”

Between the moment we are born and the time we reach physical maturity, we all pass through the same three stages of psychological development: surviving, conforming and differentiating. During these stages of 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 much attention to them.

If we progress through these stages of development normally (without significant psychological trauma), when we reach our mid- to late-twenties, we begin to feel a pull towards the adult stages of psychological development: individuating, self-actualizing, integrating and serving. During these stages we learn to satisfy what Abraham Maslow referred to as our “growth” needs. Once we experience the sense of meaning and joy that focusing on 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 levels of our being, we are also growing “horizontally,” acquiring the knowledge, skills and experience we need to live in the more complex environments we experience at each new higher stage of development. If we fail to grow horizontally—master the skills necessary to live at the level of complexity of the stage of psychological development we are at—we will inhibit our ability to grow vertically.

There are many models that focus on adult psychological development, each of them describe vertical development in slightly different ways. The model of adult psychological development described here, the Seven Levels Model, differs from most other (academic) models in one important way: it looks at development through the lens of the *ego-soul dynamic*—the progressive, and normally subtle, influence of the motivations of the soul over the motivations of the ego. In my writings I also refer to this process as liberating the soul or spiritual unfoldment.
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 master our ego development, depends, to a large extent, on the degree and quality of the parental programming and cultural conditioning we experience during our childhood and teenage years.

Soul development
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 values and beliefs you do not resonate with—and second, learn how to release any conscious or subconscious fears you may have about meeting the unmet needs from the earlier stages of your development—flaws or inadequacies in your ego 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 in our thirties. If, however, you have been brought up by self-actualized parents, live in a liberal democracy, 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 a few years earlier.

Obstacles to growth
Unlike the first three stages of psychological development, the adult stages of psychological development are “optional.” Your progress through these stages depends on three factors: first, the level of freedom you feel you have to explore who you really are (discover your true self) in the family, community and societal cultures in which you are embedded; second, the degree to which you are able master any conscious or subconscious fears you may still have about being able to satisfy your deficiency needs; and third, the degree to which you are able to focus on leading a values- and purpose-driven life (discover your unique self).

Some societal cultures have world views that inhibit or discourage individuation; other cultures have world views that support or encourage it. The cultural world views we are
embedded in are described by the model known as Spiral Dynamics. A discussion on how different world views support or inhibit our psychological development can be found in Chapter 6 of my book, Evolutionary Coaching, published in 2014. For the sake of convenience, I have included the conclusions of this chapter in Annex 2 of this book.

If, in your thirties, you are able to let go of the aspects of your parental programming and cultural conditioning that do not reflect who you truly are, and you are able to release some of the conscious or subconscious fears you may still have about satisfying your unmet deficiency needs, you will move forward, usually in your forties, to the self-actualizing stage of development. Assuming all goes well, and you are able to identify your higher purpose and begin to live a values-driven life, you will feel the pull to the integrating stage of development. This shift usually occurs in your fifties. If you are able to fully actualize your purpose by collaborating with others to make a difference in your world, then you will feel a pull to the serving stage of development when you reach your sixties.

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 and you will ignore any pull you may feel to move in that direction. 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 to examine your life, your beliefs or your values. Only if you experience some deep psychological trauma that 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 this understanding of the stages of psychological development and levels of consciousness, we can reach some preliminary conclusions about what “measuring consciousness” means: first, measuring consciousness involves determining what stage of psychological development you have reached, and second, determining what stages of psychological development you have passed through where you still have unmet needs.

The needs you have at the stage of development you are at and the unmet needs from the stages of development you have passed through will determine your motivations. These, in turn, will tell you what you value and where your consciousness is focussed. 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 you have not yet mastered, will be your secondary motivations. If you have any significant secondary motivations, they will
take precedence in your life, and you will find it difficult to focus on your primary motivation. For a detailed account of how to identify your primary and secondary motivations please consult, my book entitled *Evolutionary Coaching*.

**Stages of psychological development**

The needs associated with each stage of psychological development are shown in the fourth column of Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1:** Need requirements and value priorities at each stage of psychological development and level of consciousness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages of Physiological Development/Levels of Consciousness</th>
<th>Approximate age range of each stage of development</th>
<th>Overview of task</th>
<th>Need requirements</th>
<th>Value priorities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serving/service</td>
<td>Late 50s to early 70s</td>
<td>Fulfilling your destiny by caring for the well-being of humanity and/or the planet.</td>
<td>Satisfying your need to lead a life of significance by being of service.</td>
<td>Compassion, humility, future generations, ecology, social justice, service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrating/Making a difference</td>
<td>Late 40s to early 60s</td>
<td>Aligning with others who share the same values and purpose to create a better world.</td>
<td>Satisfying your need to make a difference by actualizing your purpose.</td>
<td>Making a difference, collaboration, empathy, coaching, mentoring, sustainability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-actualizing/Internal cohesion</td>
<td>Late 30s to early 50s</td>
<td>Becoming more fully who you are by leading a values- and purpose-driven life.</td>
<td>Satisfying your need to find meaning through activities or work you are passionate about.</td>
<td>Meaning, purpose, integrity, fairness, commitment, creativity, trust transparency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuating/Transformation</td>
<td>Late 20s to early 40s</td>
<td>Letting go of the aspects of your parental and cultural conditioning that no longer serve you.</td>
<td>Satisfying your need for freedom and autonomy by becoming accountable for your life.</td>
<td>Freedom, autonomy, challenges, adaptability, continuous learning, adventure, independence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiating/Self-esteem</td>
<td>8 to early 30s</td>
<td>Distinguishing yourself from the crowd by honing your skills and talents.</td>
<td>Satisfying your need for recognition and acknowledgement for your skills and talents.</td>
<td>Excellence, status, pride, recognition, achievement, continuous improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conforming/Relationship</td>
<td>2 to 8 years</td>
<td>Keeping safe and secure by staying loyal to your family, kin and culture.</td>
<td>Satisfying your need for love, respect and belonging at home and work.</td>
<td>Belonging, friendship, loyalty, caring, respect, tradition, harmony.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surviving/Survival</td>
<td>Birth to 2 years</td>
<td>Staying alive and healthy in the best conditions possible.</td>
<td>Satisfying your physiological and nutritional needs.</td>
<td>Survival, safety, control, financial stability, wealth, health, job security.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The lower three stages of development represent our ego needs and the upper three stages represent our soul needs. The transformation level of consciousness or individuating stage of development, is the bridge we must cross to successfully align the needs of the ego with the needs of the soul.

The second column of Table 1.1 indicates the approximate age range when each stage of psychological development begins. It is possible to accelerate your development to a certain degree, but for vast majority of people these age ranges are generally applicable. The third column describes the tasks associated with each stage of development, and the fifth column lists the value priorities at each stage of development/level of consciousness.

At any moment in time, our values are a reflection of our needs. Consequently, as we grow and develop, our values change in accordance with our changing needs. Figure 1.3 shows how the proportion of people choosing the value of friendship as one of their top ten values varies by age in the UK. What is apparent, as you might expect, is that younger people place a higher priority on friendship than older people.

**Figure 1.3:** Proportion of people choosing the value of friendship in different age ranges.

![Friendship](image)

**Ego motivations and soul motivations**

In order to understand how we grow and develop vertically through the different stages of psychological development, 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 body; it believes it lives in a three-dimensional physical reality. It has two primary objectives and three overriding needs. The ego’s objectives are to survive and protect itself. To achieve these objectives it needs to keep the body—the vehicle it identifies with—and the bodies of those it cares about, safe from harm (surviving); it needs to love and be loved so that it can feel a sense of belonging (conforming); and, it needs to be recognized by others for its gifts and talents so it can feel a sense of self-worth (differentiation). These needs are described in the lower part of the fourth column in Table 1.1.

When your ego is able to satisfy these needs you feel at ease; energetically, you feel a sense of internal stability. When the ego is unable to satisfy these needs you feel anxious; energetically, you experience a sense of internal instability.

Your soul is a field of conscious awareness that identifies with your energy field; it lives in a four-dimensional energetic reality, in the space-time continuum of the quantum level of existence. Einstein was familiar with this concept. He once said:

*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.*

Your soul—who you really are—is an individuated aspect of the universal energy field from which everything that exists in our physical world derives its existence. Because it knows it cannot die, the soul has no fears. The soul never loses consciousness. When we die, the soul simply withdraws its attention from the three-dimensional physical world to the four-dimensional energetic world. It inhabits this world even while it is projecting itself into our three-dimensional physical reality.

The soul has two primary objectives and three over-riding needs. Its objectives are to lead a values- and purpose-driven life. To achieve these objectives the soul needs the ego to align with its values and purpose (self-actualizing), live out its purpose by collaborating with others to make a difference in the world (integrating), and lead a life of selfless service for the
good of humanity and the planet (serving). These needs are described in the upper part of the fourth column in Table 1.1.

Before you can embark on the journey of soul-activation, the soul requires the ego to align with its values and let go of the fear-based beliefs the ego developed during the formative years of your life—the surviving, conforming and differentiating stages of psychological development. This is the work of the individuating stage of psychological development.

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.

Even though the ego-mind derives its sense of reality from focussing its attention on the M-dimension (physical reality), it exists in the same energy field as the soul-mind in the A-dimension (energetic reality). Another way of looking at this is to say your energy field (your personality) contains two minds—the ego-mind and the soul-mind. Whatever is going on in your ego-mind significantly impacts your energy field and thereby affects your soul-mind. When your ego generates fear-based thoughts, you will feel a sense of heaviness, separation and instability. This is because fear has a low frequency of vibration, whereas love, the energy that emanates through the soul, has 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 with the love-based energies of the soul-mind, your energy field will experience internal instability. This shows up in our lives as emotional pain: 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 of development—you will experience less fear in your life and your energy field will gradually shift to a higher frequency of vibration. You will feel happier, more joyful and more content. You may even experience moments of bliss.

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.

This leads us to the conclusion 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 values and beliefs of your parental programming and cultural conditioning that no longer align with your sense of self.
- The degree to which you are able to master your ego’s conscious and subconscious 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 of the M-dimension—the degree to which you are able to embrace your unique self.\(^8\)

A full description of the seven stages of psychological development can be found in Annex 3.
**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, and soul-mind is contained within the human energy field.

**The energy field**

The part of your energy field related to the body-mind is known as the etheric field; the part of the energy field related to the ego-mind is known as the emotional field; and, the part of the energy field related to the soul-mind is known as the spiritual field. The etheric field which surrounds and 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.

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 unease 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 the energy associated with emotionality takes over our mind space.

Because of its close proximity to the body-mind (etheric field), the vibrational frequencies of the ego-mind (emotional field) 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, because of anxiety or stress, the continuing production of these chemicals becomes harmful to the body’s health, eventually resulting in physical dis-ease and sickness.
Getting back into alignment, means bringing your electromagnetic energy field into a state of internal stability. We do this by finding ways to realign the vibrational frequency of the ego-mind with the vibrational frequency of the soul-mind. This is called personal mastery or leading self. The key elements of leading self and personal mastery programmes are learning how to manage your emotions, and learning how to practice mindfulness and meditation.

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; you feel fit and healthy, and experience a sense of inner well-being.

Notes

1. For more information go to www.valuescentre.com.
2. For a list of adult development models, see Dr. Alan Watkins, Coherence: The Secret Science of Brilliant Leadership (Kogan Page: London), 2014.
5. For a full discourse on primary and secondary motivations and how to identify them, see Evolutionary Coaching: A Values-based Approach to Unleashing Human Potential by Richard Barrett.
2. Understanding Consciousness

With this brief overview of the Seven Levels Model and the ego-soul dynamic, we are now ready to explore my two objectives for writing this paper:

1. To explain the theory behind the Seven Levels Model.
2. To show how the Seven Levels Model can be used to measure the consciousness of individuals and groups.

I would like to focus on four questions:

1. Why is it important to measure consciousness?
2. What are the attributes of consciousness that allow it to be measured?
3. What is consciousness and how does it evolve?
4. How could a metric of consciousness be deployed?

I will tackle the first two questions in this Chapter, the third question in the Chapter 3, and the last question in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Why is it important to measure consciousness?

The benefit of being able to measure something is that you can manage it. Measuring enables you to learn what you need to do, and what you need to avoid or stop doing, to get more of what you want. Measuring gives you the ability to locate yourself on a scale. We are all familiar with scales. We use them to help us monitor our weight, test our IQ and manage our vital indicators such as blood pressure and heart rate.

I believe the consciousness scale I am proposing in this paper enables you to find out:

1. What stage of psychological development you have reached in your life.
2. What stages of psychological development you have passed through that you have not fully mastered; and
3. As a consequence of these, what primary and secondary levels of consciousness you are operating from.

In addition, the consciousness scale can be used to measure the levels of consciousness the cultures you are embedded in are operating from and to what extent you are aligned with these cultures.
The hope

The great hope that developing a metric for human consciousness brings is that we can make the evolution of consciousness conscious, not just at the individual level, but also at the organizational, community and societal levels too. The ability to measure consciousness gives you the opportunity, if you so wish, to manage your own evolution and the evolution of the human group structures in which you are embedded.

This is exactly what the leaders and organizations who work with the Cultural Transformation Tools do. Each year they measure the culture (consciousness) of their organizations by carrying out a Cultural Values Assessment, track their own personal evolution, by carrying out a Leadership Values Assessment, and based on the feedback they receive, make personal and cultural changes which result in an overall improvement in their own performance and the performance of their organizations.

This shows up in the following year’s assessments as either a greater concentration of positive values at a particular level of consciousness (horizontal growth) or as a shift of values to higher levels of consciousness (vertical growth).

The basics of measurement

In order to measure consciousness, we must do two things: first, we must develop a scale that we can measure against—a model of consciousness; and second, we must identify the attributes of consciousness that enable us to determine where we are on that scale. Only when we have defined these two—a scale and the attributes—do we have a measuring system. This means we must arrive at a clear understanding of what consciousness is, and what attributes or qualities are associated with both growth and regression in consciousness. In other words, what are the factors that cause us to move up or down the consciousness scale?
What are the measurable attributes of consciousness?

Let’s start our inquiry into what the measurable attributes of consciousness are by looking at some popular conceptions of consciousness.

First, it is generally agreed that consciousness evolves in stages, and that developing your consciousness means two things: *mastery*, learning how to operate successfully at a particular stage of psychological development, and *growth*, shifting from one stage of psychological development to a “higher” stage. There is an underlying assumption that if you are unable to master the requirements for operating at one stage, you will find it difficult to successfully shift to the next higher stage.

**Stages and levels**

Before looking at what “higher” means in terms of consciousness, let us first explore in a little more detail the difference between stages and levels of consciousness.

The simplest way I can explain this is to say that we grow in stages (of psychological development), and we operate at levels (of consciousness). All things being normal, the main level of consciousness we operate from will correspond to the stage of psychological development we have reached.

When we are faced with what we consider to be a negative change in our circumstances or a situation that threatens our internal stability or external equilibrium in some way—anything that brings up fear—we may temporarily drop down to operating from one of the three lower level of consciousness. Alternatively, when we have a “peak” experience—an experience of euphoria, harmony or connectedness of a mystical or spiritual nature—we may temporarily move to a higher level of consciousness.

When the threat or peak experience has passed, we usually return to the level of consciousness that corresponds to the stage of psychological development we were at before the experience occurred.

In rare situations, a peak experience may have a lasting impact, causing us 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 our childhood and teenage years, can severely impede our psychological development and cause us, in our adult life, to remain anchored at one of the lower levels of consciousness.
What does “higher” mean

Now let’s get back to the determining what “higher” means in the context of consciousness. It is generally agreed that higher means more inclusive. Whenever you assume a larger identity, your sense of self expands to include others who share the same identity. You will still be operating from self-interest, but the self that has the interest will have an expanded sense of identity.

For example, when you shift from being single to being married and have children, you expand your sense of identity to include your spouse and children: you identify with your family. When you find a job that you like, in an organization where you feel comfortable, that may even support your professional and personal growth, you expand your sense of identity to include the colleagues you work with (your team); as you move into the realms of management or leadership you may start to identify with the organization itself.

One of the most notable changes that occurs when we assume a higher level of identity is we start caring about the well-being of the members of the groups we identify with. When you identify with your family you care about the well-being of the members of your family. When you identify with a work team you care about the well-being of the members of your team. When you identify with an organization you care about the well-being of the members of your organization. When you identify with humanity you care about the well-being of everyone on the planet. When you identify with the planet you care about the well-being of all the natural living organisms on Earth.

If you fail to care for the members of the group you belong to, and stay primarily focussed on your own self-interest, you may find yourself ignored, marginalized or not included in the activities of the group.

Another meaning we often give to “higher” in the context of consciousness is the ability to operate in increasingly complex frameworks of existence. As we progress from being babies, to infants, to children, to teenagers, to young adults, to middle-aged, the physical and social frameworks of our existence become increasingly larger and more complex. In order to successfully survive and thrive in these larger, more complex environments, we must develop more complex minds; our minds must increase their breadth perception (knowledge) and increase their depth perception (understanding), not just about our surroundings, but also about the people who are members of the groups we identify with in these expanded frameworks of existence.
Some of the natural outcomes of being more inclusive and developing a more complex mind are that we increase our level of maturity, we learn to handle ambiguity, we learn to think in longer-term time horizons, we become less fearful, more trusting, more at ease with uncertainty, and more confident in our abilities to cope with whatever life throws at us.

For me, these popular conceptions of the evolution of human consciousness—increased inclusivity, greater complexity of mind, more maturity, longer-term thinking and ease with uncertainty, and less fear—provide a good starting point for understanding how consciousness evolves, but they do not get to the heart of the matter. I believe if we really want to understand what consciousness is and how it grows, then we have to take a deep dive into understanding how consciousness evolved in our three-dimensional physical framework of existence.

**How did consciousness evolve?**

According to scientists, everything that exists in our universe originated from a “big bang” that occurred about fourteen billion years ago.¹ After that, it was all about evolution: the evolution of energy into matter, matter into living organisms, and living organisms into creatures. One of those creatures—Homo sapiens—is now attempting to carry the baton of evolution to the next level—to make the concept of humanity palpable.

When I say everything in the universe had its origins fourteen billion years ago, I literally mean everything, including not only the physical world of atoms, cells, and Homo sapiens, but also the energetic world of instincts, thoughts, feelings, beliefs and values. Indeed, evolution would not have happened if the faculties we attribute to the physical brain (data gathering and information processing) had not evolved in parallel with the faculties we attribute to the mind (meaning-making and decision-making).

Consequently, we find ourselves living in two worlds: the three-dimensional physical world of the body, the tangible part of our existence, and the multi-dimensional energetic world of the mind, the intangible part of our existence.

If the big bang theory is correct, then it follows that the physical world emerged from the energetic world. Not only did energy precede matter, we know, thanks to Einstein, that energy and matter are related \((E=mc^2)\). Energy is equivalent to matter times the speed of light squared. In other words, energy is the fundamental backdrop to our physical universe.
A world where space and time become interwoven in a single energetic continuum, not only challenges our physical senses, it also challenges our beliefs. We are so conditioned to our physical reality that any other form of reality seems ludicrous. However, when you understand the implications of particle physics and quantum theory, the idea that we live in a strictly physical world starts to get a bit wobbly.

Modern science tells us that at the quantum level of existence, energy can exist either as electrically charged particles or as waves of information. The reality of the particle is three-dimensional: it has specific physical properties. The reality of the wave of information is four-dimensional: it is an energy field unbounded by space and time. Only when an observing consciousness is present does the wave of information (or potentiality) collapse into a specific form. When the observing consciousness is the ego, the reality we experience will align with the beliefs of the ego. When the observing consciousness is the soul, the reality we experience will align with the beliefs of the soul. In other words, the three-dimensional world of physical form is dependent on the four-dimensional world of the mind and which pole of consciousness (ego or soul) we identify with and operate from.

To appreciate the differences between these two worlds—our three-dimensional reality and our four-dimensional reality—I am going to suggest we do a mind experiment. Let us explore the differences that exist between two-dimensional reality and three-dimensional reality and then, based on the results, try to draw some conclusions about the possible relationship between our three-dimensional physical reality and our four-dimensional energetic reality.

**Five finger exercise**

Take a sheet of paper and lay it down on a flat surface. Imagine that there is a very small person living on the surface of this paper in what is known as “Flatland”. For this person, the world has length and breadth, but no height. In other words, this person operates in a world of two-dimensional awareness (she cannot perceive height). Along comes a human being with three-dimensional awareness (this person can perceive height) and places the fingers of one hand on the paper—on the surface of Flatland.

Imagine now, that the person living in Flatland is out for a morning stroll. When passing this place yesterday, she noticed nothing unusual. Suddenly, overnight, five separate circles have appeared (the projection into two-dimensional consciousness of the five fingers). The
two-dimensional being is mystified by the appearance of the five circles. She calls her friend, a two-dimensional scientist, and asks him to explain the nature of the five circles. The scientist explores the five circles using his two-dimensional logic.

His experiments show that if he puts a force on one circle, it will move and eventually appear to drag the other circles with it (although the fingers of the hand are separate they are connected, but in a dimension of awareness [height] that the two-dimensional scientist cannot perceive). The two-dimensional scientist repeats his experiments. He builds equations to verify the relationship of the circles to each other and before too long he believes that he knows everything there is to know about the five separate circles. He publishes a paper about the five separate circles and calls a meeting of the academy of two-dimensional scientists to show them his discovery. The two-dimensional scientists repeat the experiments and get very similar results. Everyone in the two-dimensional world believes they know all there is to know about the five separate circles.

Viewed from the perspective of three-dimensional awareness, we know that these are not five separate circles. They are five connected fingers which form part of a living organism. The two-dimensional beings are completely unaware of this larger picture. They believe the five circles to be physically separate, but somehow linked, probably through some type of energetic force field. They have no sense of the connection that exists at a higher dimension of awareness.

This is exactly the situation we find ourselves in with regard to the fourth dimension of consciousness. We have countless experiences that appear unconnected, but in reality are linked, and have their cause in the fourth or even higher dimensions of consciousness. Some we try to explain with our three-dimensional logic, this is the domain of science, and some are simply inexplicable, these we classify as paranormal, synchronistic, magical, religious or miraculous experiences. We use these classifications to cover up our ignorance because we do not have a full understanding of the linkages that exist at the higher dimension of consciousness where these experiences originated.

When we focus our awareness exclusively on the third dimension, we are focusing on a world of symbols and effects, the origins of which lie in higher dimensions of consciousness. The average person relying on his three-dimensional senses simply is unaware of the greater connectivity or unity that exists in the higher dimensions of consciousness.
Let us use another analogy. Take a comb and cover up the top half. What you see are the unconnected teeth of the comb. You see separation. When you uncover the top half of the comb you can see that the teeth are joined together at a higher level. You see connectedness; you see the unity of the comb. Indeed, the teeth of the comb without the higher-level connection would fall apart and could not fulfil a useful purpose.

As human beings, this is how we are. What we perceive in our three-dimensional awareness are separate human beings (teeth of the comb). When we raise our awareness to a higher plane of consciousness, we can see the connection at the energetic level—we are all individuated aspects of the same unifying energy field. Just as it is difficult to understand the meaning and purpose of the separate teeth, until we are aware that they belong to a comb, so too it is difficult for us to understand who we are until we become aware that we are all individuated aspects of a universal energy field; souls connected through our energy fields in the fourth and higher dimensions of consciousness.

This field of connectedness is referred to by the renowned psychiatrist and psychotherapist, Carl Jung, as the collective unconscious: collective, because it belongs to all of us, and unconscious, because it is not directly accessible through conscious thought.

There is one more point we should consider about the five finger exercise. Just as the two-dimensional beings experiencing the phenomena of “the five circles” did not suspect that the circles were controlled by the mind of a three-dimensional being, so we in our three-dimensional world are unaware of the control that our souls exercise in our lives from the fourth dimension of consciousness.

What seem like random events or chance encounters may be due to purposeful connections occurring between souls at a higher dimension of consciousness which we are simply unaware of. These are usually described as synchronistic events. I prefer to call them soul prompts.

Carl Jung described synchronicity as “unconnected events with a common meaning”. In my experience, if you dig deep enough, you will almost always find that chance events and encounters have a meaning that in some way furthers the soul’s purposes. It is as if the synchronistic experiences are communications from our souls at the fourth dimension of consciousness that are designed, not only get our attention, but to convey important messages to us about taking some form of action in our three-dimensional plane of existence.
The limitations of our senses

Why are we not more aware of our four-dimensional energetic reality? The answer is simple. We are not aware of it because of the limitations of our physical senses. Just as the being living in two-dimensional awareness could not sense height, we as three-dimensional beings only have a vague awareness of the four-dimensional energetic world of our souls.

We have five physical senses which we use to inform us of what is happening in the physical world around us. Everything we can personally know about our external physical world is experienced through these senses. However, the physical senses that the human species (and all other creatures) have developed are extremely limited in terms of the frequencies of vibration that we can sense, and consequently are at odds with much of what science tells us. There are vast ranges of sound that we cannot hear and there are vast ranges of radiation we cannot see or feel. It is as if we are trapped within a body that only allows us to experience a very small part of reality, the three-dimensional world of physical forms.

The truth is we live in a multi-dimensional energetic world, but because of the limitations of our senses, we only perceive three of these dimensions. Thus, we can state that three-dimensionality and physical form are not properties of the world, but properties of our senses. Everything in our physical universe is composed of matter, and at the same time is contained within an energy field that is “invisible” to our physical senses.²

The universal stages of evolution

Evolution began by energy coalescing into particles that became viable and independent in the physical framework of existence. These particles then bonded together to form protons, neutrons and electrons that “cooperated” with each other to form atoms. From this stable platform, life on Earth began: atoms learned how to become viable and independent in the framework of their existence and then bonded together to form molecules, which cooperated with each other to form complex molecules and cells.

Once cells had learned how to become viable and independent in their framework of existence—manage their internal stability and external equilibrium—they bonded with each
other to form organisms, and organisms cooperated with each other to form complex organisms and creatures.

One of those creatures—Homo sapiens—is now learning how to become viable and independent (manage its internal stability and external equilibrium) in its framework of existence, and how to bond with other members of the species to form bands, tribes, city-states and nations; nations are learning how to cooperate with each other to create higher-order regional entities such as the European Union and global entities such as the United Nations. This evolutionary journey is summarized in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1: Three universal stages of evolution.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planes of being</th>
<th>Sub planes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creatures (Homo sapiens)</td>
<td>Regional groups and global groupings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bands, tribes, city-states, nations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Humans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cellular Plane (Eukaryotic cell)</td>
<td>Complex organisms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organisms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cells.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atomic Plane (Carbon atom)</td>
<td>Complex molecules.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Molecules.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Atoms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energetic plane:</td>
<td>Quantum reality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 2.1 we can see that each plane of being can be divided into three sub-planes differentiated by scale and complexity: the plane of being of an individual entity; the plane of being of the group structures that are formed by that entity; and the plane of being of groups of group structures of that entity, some of which evolve to become a larger entity and the starting point for the next plane of being. I call this evolutionary progression “the three universal stages of evolution.”

We see, displayed in this evolutionary progression, both in the overall schema and at each plane of being, the characteristics of increasingly higher levels of consciousness—an increase or expansion in the sense of identity (inclusivity) of the entity, and an increase in size and complexity of the entity’s framework of existence requiring a commensurate increase in the complexity of the entity’s mind. For evolution to have progressed, the entities
and group structures at one plane of being had to provide a stable platform for the entities and group structures at the next plane of being.

In order to understand how and why these different entities and their group structures at each plane of being decide to share a common identity, we have to take a close look at the causation that leads to the three universal stages of evolution.

**Stage 1: Becoming viable and independent**

In order to survive, the fundamental entities at each plane of being (particles, atoms, cells, and creatures) have to learn how to become viable and independent (be able to maintain internal stability and external equilibrium) in their frameworks of existence. If an entity cannot learn how to do this it will quickly perish (cease to exist in the physical world and disintegrate into its component parts at a lower plane of being).

**Stage 2: Bonding to form a group structure**

When the framework conditions of entities become more complex and life threatening, they respond by bonding with other viable independent entities to share resources and form a more resilient group structure with a shared sense of identity.

In order for this to happen, the entities that form part of a group structure have to learn how to bond with each other so they can work together for the good of the whole. In other words, individual entities have to expand their sense of identity to include the other entities in the group structure.

Once entities have bonded—developed a high level of internal cohesion by increasing their capacity for unified decision-making—and a group structure has been formed with its own sense of identity, the ability of the group structure to survive and prosper depends on the ability of the entities forming the group structure to share resources and work together for the common good.

Entities that fail to put the needs of the group structure ahead of their own needs (such as cancer cells) not only threaten the survival of the group, they also threaten their own survival and the potential survival of every entity that is part of the group. In other words, when individual entities in a group structure focus too much on their own “self-interest” rather than the good of the whole—when they fail to shift to a higher level of identity (consciousness)—the viability of the group structure is compromised.
This is why we have rules and laws in our human social world. The rules and laws provide a framework of acceptable behaviours that allow our group structures (families, organizations, communities and nations) to create internal stability.

Whenever individual entities focus on their own self-interest rather than the interest of the group structure, internal tensions are created that lead to cultural entropy. Cultural entropy is the level of disorder or dysfunction that occurs within a human group structure due to a lack of internal cohesion. When cultural entropy (the self-interest of the entities that make up the group structure) reaches a high level, the group structure will break down into its component parts and will cease to exist.

**Stage 3: Cooperating to form a higher order entity**

When the framework conditions of a group structure become more complex and “life threatening”, group structures respond by cooperating with other group structures to share resources and create a higher order entity (an enlarged group structure) which is more resilient than any of the group structures could be on their own.

In order for this to happen every entity and every group in the larger group structure has to share resources and work together for the good of the whole; they have to shift to a higher level of identity. When the group structures that form a higher order entity focus too much on their own “self-interest” rather than the good of the whole—when they fail to shift to a higher level of identity—the viability of the higher order entity is compromised.

Once a higher order entity is formed and has developed a strong level of internal cohesion—capacity for unified decision-making—the ability of the group structures to survive and prosper now depends on the ability of the higher order entity to survive and prosper. This is true at every plane of being.

The ability of a cell which is part of an organ to thrive and prosper depends on the ability of the organ of which it is a part to survive and prosper. Similarly, the ability of a human being to survive and prosper depends on the ability of the group structures it is part of (clan, tribe, organization, community or nation) to survive and prosper. This is why identity is so important to survival. If you identify with your clan, tribe, organization, community or nation, the members of these groups will not only care about you, they will also share resources.

Individuals and group structures that fail to put the needs of the higher order entity ahead of their own needs—fail to adopt an expanded identity—not only threaten the survival of the
higher order entity, they also threaten the survival of the group structures to which they belong. In other words, when individual group structures in a higher order entity focus too much on their own “self-interest” rather than the good of the higher order entity, the viability of the higher order entity will be compromised.

Based on the universal stages of evolution, we can clearly see that bonding and cooperating are evolutionary imperatives. Without them, evolution could not have happened and higher forms of consciousness (identity) would not have been possible.

In other words, evolution progresses not by entities becoming the fittest, but by becoming the most stable and most inclusive. There is a definite evolutionary advantage in being able to expand your consciousness (your sense of self or self-identity) to include others—in other words, there is an evolutionary advantage in advancing your psychological development.

This idea is backed up by the latest scientific research. Using game theory, two evolutionary biology researchers found that “evolution will punish you if you’re selfish and mean. For a short time and against a specific set of opponents, some selfish organisms may come out ahead. But selfishness isn’t evolutionary sustainable.”

This finding has significant implications for our personal psychological evolution and the cultural evolution of the species. If we want to evolve it is vitally important that we learn how to bond and cooperate with others, not just in difficult times but also in good times. To survive and prosper, we need to focus on the interest of the group structures in which we are embedded rather than our own self-interest.

Based on the theory of the universal stages of evolution we can conclude that evolution will only continue to progress if we, the members of the species known as Homo sapiens, can learn how to bond with each other to create human group structures that cooperate with each other to solve the problems of humanity.

This leads us to the fundamental question: “Why are some entities able to bond and cooperate more easily than others?” If we can find the answer to this question, we will not only be able to identify the attributes that make evolution possible, but the attributes that allow consciousness to expand.
The attributes of consciousness that make evolution possible

Among all the different entities that existed at each plane of being, there was only one entity that was able to form a stable physical and energetic platform (starting point) for the next stage of evolution. At the atomic plane, it was the carbon atom. At the cellular plane, it was the eukaryotic cell. Now in the plane of being of creatures, it is Homo sapiens.

If you ask the question: “What attributes do these specific entities (the carbon atom, eukaryotic cell and Homo sapiens) possess that enabled them to become the platform for the next stage of evolution?” you will begin to see a pattern emerging. The answer to the question is quite simply, the ability to bond and cooperate.

The carbon atom

The carbon atom is one of the most stable elements because it has four electrons available for covalent bonding. Covalent bonding is the strongest form of chemical bonding. It involves the sharing of electrons (resources) between pairs of atoms.

Because of the stability afforded by this type of structural bonding, carbon was able to form durable complex molecules with many different elements. Consequently, carbon is the second most abundant element in the human body after oxygen and the fourth most abundant element in the universe after hydrogen, helium and oxygen. There are more compounds of carbon than all the other elements put together. Carbon atoms form the chemical basis of almost all forms of life known to man.

The eukaryotic cell

The eukaryotic cell differs from its evolutionary predecessor, the prokaryotic cell, not just because it is larger, but because of its internal structure and its ability to form communities of shared awareness. Unlike the prokaryotic cell, which has its “organelles” located in the cell membrane, the eukaryotic cell has its “organelles” (each organelle being a specialized prokaryotic cell) in the interior of the cell. This enables the cell membrane of the eukaryotic cell to grow in size and develop more sophisticated communication systems than the prokaryotic cell. Consequently, the eukaryotic cell can bond and cooperate with other eukaryotic cells to build organisms and specialized physiological structures such as muscles.
bones, and organs. Eukaryotic cells are the cellular basis of all life because they are able to communicate with each other.

**Homo sapiens**

*Homo sapiens* are potentially the third link in the chain of evolution because it has a greater propensity for bonding and cooperation than any other creature. Not only do we have the most sophisticated communication system (language), we are also able to organize ourselves into communities of shared interest and shared identity.

In order to survive and prosper in our globally interconnected world, we must shift from focussing on our own self-interest, to focussing on the interest of the group structures we belong to, and our group structures must shift from focussing on their self-interest, to focussing on the interests of the higher order group structures that represent our common humanity.

This message is vitally important for all of us at this point in history, particularly for our leaders, because the problems of existence we are facing are global but the structures of governance we have for dealing with them are primarily national. We will only be able to evolve if we put aside our self-interest and pay more attention to our collective interest. In other words, focus on the values that promote bonding and cooperation.

**Notes**

1. There are other theories about how the world we live in originated. Like Laszlo’s theory mentioned earlier, many of them are built on two worlds—a manifest physical world and an energetic world of emergent potentialities.
3. Life threatening means challenging the ability of the entity or group structure to maintain its internal stability and external equilibrium.
3. Defining Consciousness

Now we have a clearer idea of the mechanisms that drive the evolution of consciousness—becoming viable and independent, bonding to form a group structure, and cooperating to form a higher order entity—and their relationship to identity, cohesion and inclusion, let us get to grips with the problem of defining consciousness.

For evolution to have progressed from the energetic plane all the way through to the plane of creatures and the emergence of Homo sapiens, every entity and every group structure in the chain of evolution had to develop a way of maintaining its internal stability and external equilibrium in its framework of existence. In other words, they had to find ways of becoming viable and independent under their normal operating conditions (managing their internal stability and external equilibrium). Without this ability, entities and group structures would not have survived, and would not have become stable platforms for subsequent planes of being to build on.

What this means is that every entity and group structure at every plane of being had to be able to sense changes in its environment, determine if the changes were threatening to its survival, and if they were, take some form of action to adapt to these changes, or if the changes were too threatening, take evasive action.

If an entity or group structure could not adapt or take evasive action, then the only option left for survival—remaining present in our three-dimensional physical world—was for the entity or group structure to bond or cooperate with other entities or group structures to share resources in temporary or permanent alliances and thereby increase their collective resilience. In other words, evolution favours those entities that are:

1. Adaptable in terms of identity, and
2. Able to bond and/or cooperate with other entities for the purpose of sharing resources.

Without some form of awareness (consciousness) and an ability to decide how to respond to changes in their environment (mind), entities at every plane of being could not have taken actions to preserve their internal stability when changes occurred in their external environments.
Antonio Damasio, author, and internationally known Professor of Neurology, puts it this way: *Homeostasis is the key to the biology of consciousness*.\(^1\) In other words, consciousness is the mechanism that enables living entities to maintain their internal stability.

What I am saying goes further than Damasio’s statement: the concept of homeostasis does not stop at the biological level; it goes all the way down to the atomic level and beyond to the energy field. *Ergo*, “homeostasis” and consciousness are intimately linked. Without some form of conscious awareness, “homeostasis”—the ability to maintain internal stability in a changing external environment—would be impossible not just at the cellular plane of being but also at the atomic plane of being. In other words, beyond self-reflective human consciousness (what Damasio calls extended consciousness) there are other forms of consciousness (what Damasio calls core conscious)—the consciousness of cells and their group structures as well as the consciousness of atoms and their group structures.

Based on the above we can define core consciousness as *awareness with a purpose* and the primary purpose of core consciousness is *to support an entity or group structure in maintaining or enhancing its internal stability and external equilibrium so it can stay present in our three-dimension physical reality*. This applies to all entities and all group structures on all planes of being.

It follows therefore, from the above, that the primary purpose of *extended* consciousness is *to support human individuals or group structures in maintaining their internal stability and external equilibrium at the stage of psychological development they have reached and at the stages of development they have passed through where they still have unmet needs*.

Ultimately, however, when one realises that everything in our three-dimensional physical world depends for its existence on our four-dimensional energetic world, we can say the purpose of consciousness (core and extended) is *to support an entity or group structure in maintaining or enhancing the internal stability and external equilibrium of its energy field by satisfying the needs of the entity at the stage of psychological development it has reached, and needs of the entity at the stages of psychological development it has passed through that it has not yet mastered*.

Each time we shift to a new stage of psychological development, we have to begin again to learn how to manage our internal stability and external equilibrium in the new more complex framework of existence. Only when you have successfully learned how to manage
your internal stability and external equilibrium at every stage of psychological development can you be considered to be a full spectrum individual.

**Mind and consciousness**

There are two major implications that can be drawn from the above statements: first, wherever you have an entity or group structure that is attempting to maintain its internal stability and external equilibrium, you have consciousness; and second, wherever you have consciousness you have a mind. Mind and consciousness are synonymous because consciousness is a property of mind. There can be no conscious without a mind.

Consciousness needs a mind to make decisions that lead to behaviours that enable an entity to maintain its internal stability and external equilibrium in the face of threats, and mind needs consciousness to identify threats to its existence as well as opportunities for thriving—increasing its internal stability and external equilibrium so that an entity can become more resilient (more skilled at coping with threats and satisfying its needs).

How mind decides what actions to take to stay present (alive) in our three-dimensional physical world depends on the plane of being the mind exists at and its ability to store “memories” about how to react or respond to changes in its environment that have been successful in the past.

At the physical or body level, we use memories stored in the energy field of our DNA molecules to help us stay alive. DNA encoded reactions (instincts) operate like beliefs. For example if the body mind/brain complex notices in its awareness an information pattern (energetic signature) of an event or situation labelled “a,” it will respond by doing “x”; and if it notices in its awareness an event with an energetic signature labelled “b,” then it will respond by doing “y”; where “x” and “y” are species memories that generate emotions and actions that the entity “believes” will give it the best chance possible to maintain or enhance its internal stability and external equilibrium when encountering events “a” or “b” based on past species experiences.

At the individual human level, in addition to our species memories, we also have autobiographical memories to help us survive. These memories operate in exactly the same way as our species memories. If we notice an incoming information pattern that reminds us of threat to our internal stability or external equilibrium we have previously experienced, we
will react in the manner that gave us the best chance possible of maintaining or enhancing our internal stability and external equilibrium in the past.

The purpose of consciousness

Based on the above we can draw the following conclusions:

1. The primary purpose of consciousness is survival; staying present in the three-dimensional physical world of matter.
2. In order for consciousness to fulfil this purpose it must be associated with a mind which is (a) conscious and (b) has a sense of its own identity.

The energy field of the mind must be able to distinguish what is “me” and “not me.” What is internal and external; and if it is to bond to form a group structure, then it must be able to adapt its sense of “me” and “not me”—its identity—to include other entities with which it wants to bond.

What we learn by studying the different planes of being that comprise the human body is that the concept of identity is expandable. Even though atoms, molecules, cells and organs have a sense of what is internal and external, and know how to keep themselves in internal stability and external equilibrium, they are able, at the same time, to assume a higher level of identity—the identity of the body—for the purpose of staying alive. In other words, just like human beings, they have multiple identities. They maintain internal stability by identifying with themselves, and they maintain external equilibrium by identifying with other similar and larger entities. To do this, all the entities involved must share a common purpose.

If the energy fields (minds) of the atoms, molecules, cells and organs of our bodies did not share a common purpose (staying alive) and identity (the body), they would not be able to work together for the common good in the same energy field. Cells that stop working for the common good and focus on their own self-interest are called cancer cells. Normal cells become cancer cells when they focus exclusively on their own self-interest: They start to compete for resources, thereby challenging the internal stability of the body.
Studies have revealed that a significant number of cancer patients suffer from unresolved anger towards other people; a condition of the mind which creates a sense of separation. It appears that most cancer begins in the mind before it manifests in the body. It is the antithesis of bonding and cooperation and therefore creates a situation which is not evolutionary sustainable.

Based on the foregoing, we can state that every building block of the human body is conscious, from the organs to the cells, to the molecules, to the atoms and their particles. Even when we are unconscious or asleep, the body is conscious: it is constantly self-regulating based on the feedback it is receiving from its external environment.

If the body-mind is unable to self-regulate for any reason, let’s say because the conditions in its physical environment go beyond the limits of what it can manage, then it signals its distress to us—the higher order entity which it is serving and identifies with—through pain or discomfort. The pain or discomfort we feel originates in the energy field of the body-mind and is felt in the energy field of the personality mind. When we get such a signal, we attempt to alleviate the pain or distress in the body-mind by taking actions which the body-mind is unable to do without our cooperation. For example, if the body gets too hot, the body-mind causes us to sweat and the discomfort we feel signals to us that we should find ways to cool off and increase our intake of fluids.

**The ego-mind**

If we assume for a moment that our full potentialities are contained within the quantum energetic field of the soul—our true identity and the aspect of our being that remains forever conscious and transcends the death of the body—then we can ask the question, what is it that blocks us from expressing these potentialities? The answer is quite simple: the beliefs of the ego-mind, particularly its fear-based beliefs. When we allow these beliefs to rule our decision-making, we choose safety over growth and we limit the potential of the soul.

Abraham Maslow puts it this way:

...we can consider the process of healthy growth to be a never ending series of free choice situations, confronting each individual at every point throughout his (or her) life, in which he (or she) must choose between safety and growth, dependence and independence, regression or progression, and immaturity and maturity.²
The ego-mind is the aspect of your personality that has been conditioned, through the experience of identifying with a human body and its three-dimensional perception to living in a physical world. The ego will do everything in its power to protect its physical integrity. It believes in scarcity, and considers life to be a zero-sum game: I win and you lose; you win and I lose. Consequently, the ego readily embraces the concept of self-interest and the need to compete for resources.

Because the ego identifies with the body, it believes in death. The ego believes when the body dies it will no longer exist. Consequently, the consciousness of the ego-mind, like the consciousness of the body-mind, is constantly focussed on survival, safety and protection; finding ways to maintain its internal stability and external equilibrium.

The ego is totally absorbed in making the best of its three-dimensional existence: it not only wants to survive, it also wants to thrive. Thriving for the ego mind means finding ways to accumulate more material resources, get more love, and gain more recognition. When it is able to satisfy these needs it feels happy. The ego is unaware of its quantum energetic reality, and the world of the soul.

Those who have been pronounced clinically dead and have come back to life (three-dimensional physical awareness) can attest to this fact. During their “death” experience they did not experience a loss of consciousness. They simply experienced a different reality. Many people recount experiences where they left their body and were no longer reliant on their normal three-dimensional physical perception (senses).

What I believe they experienced during these experiences was the energy field of the soul. They were able to let go of the energy field of the ego-mind and the body-mind. Such experiences not only convince people that they cannot die, they take away their ego’s fears about surviving. This can result in a permanent shift to a higher stage of psychological development and a higher level of consciousness.

The soul-mind

Your soul is the reason why you exist in this three-dimensional physical reality. Your soul-mind is a field of conscious awareness that exists in the energetic realm of the fourth dimension of reality, beyond space and time, in the quantum electromagnetic energy field. Your soul is an individuated aspect of the universal energy field from which everything that exists in our physical world derives its existence. In other words, the soul-mind is the aspect
of your personality that identifies with the human energy field, whereas the ego-mind is the aspect of your personality that identifies with the human body.

The soul lives in abundance and sufficiency. It is at ease with uncertainty and thrives on change. Because it is comprised of the fundamental energy of existence (spirit), it cannot be created or destroyed and it cannot lose consciousness. At death, your soul’s consciousness continues. The energy field of your soul-mind lets go of the body-mind and ego-mind so that it can be fully present in a higher dimension of reality.

Your soul projected itself into your physical body shortly after your conception and imbedded every atom and cell in your body with the will to survive. Thus, we can state that the will to survive, which is found in the body-mind of every living creature, and the ego-mind of every human being is the soul’s will to be present in physical form in our three-dimensional reality.

The reason your soul incarnated into your body is to bring the soul experience of being into three-dimensional physical reality. In pursuit of this objective, your soul has two strategic objectives which your ego can choose to align with or not: first, to lead a values-driven life, and second, to lead a purpose-driven life.

Your soul cannot fulfill these objectives unless your ego is able to shift into energetic alignment with your soul—shift its sense of identity from the physical body to the energy field of the soul.

Understanding internal stability

In order to understand how the ego-mind aligns itself with the soul-mind, we must explore further the topic of internal stability. The idea I want to explore is this: what we refer to as internal stability at one plane of being is external equilibrium at the previous or lower plane of being.

This means that every mind at every plane of being relies on the minds of entities at lower planes of being to achieve internal stability (cohesion). In the meantime, while this is happening, the mind at the higher plane of being is focusing on external equilibrium.

Thus the mind of the atom relies on the minds of its particles to support its internal cohesion while it focusses on its external equilibrium in the world of atoms; the molecule relies on the minds of its atoms to support its internal cohesion while it focusses on its external equilibrium in the world of molecules; and so on all the way up the chain of being.
Human group structures rely on individual human beings to support their internal stability (through bonding), while they focus on their external equilibrium (through cooperating) in the world of human group structures.

**The ego-soul dynamic**

Similarly, the soul-mind relies on the ego-mind and its sub-personalities to support its internal cohesion while it focuses on its external equilibrium in the world of souls. Any form of upset—disturbance in the ego-mind (the emotional field)—causes the energy field of the soul-mind (the spiritual field) to become internally unstable.

At any moment in time, the feelings we are experiencing are a reflection of the status of the ego-soul dynamic in our energy field; more particularly, the degree to which the fear-based beliefs of the ego-mind are affecting the vibrational frequency of the soul’s love-based energy field.

To understand the principle factors that affect the ego-soul dynamic—the energetic relationship between the ego-mind and the soul-mind—we need to dig deep into the fundamental principles of evolution. We need to understand how an entity achieves internal stability? Based on the preceding discussion we can identify three conditions that must be met for an entity to experience internal stability:

1. The lower order entities must identify with the higher order entity.
2. The lower order entities must have a unanimity of purpose which is the same as the higher order entity; and
3. The lower order entities must be energetically compatible with each other and the higher order entity.

If we take the human soul as an example, internal stability occurs when: the ego identifies with the soul; the ego shares the same purpose as the soul; and the ego embraces values that enable the soul to bond and cooperate with other souls to further the process of evolution.

If your ego does not shift it sense of identity to align with the soul, does not align with the soul’s purpose and does not embrace values that promote bonding and cooperation with other souls, then your energy field will never achieve internal stability and you will never be able to evolve to the higher stages of psychological development.
If we take a human organization as an example, internal stability occurs when employees share the same sense of identity, work towards a common purpose and are energetically aligned. Let us for the moment say the shared sense of identity is the organization, the unanimity of purpose is the organization’s mission, and the energetic alignment is an agreement among all members of the organization to operate from a common set of values.

Based on the above, we can see that values are significantly important to the evolution of consciousness. Without shared values we cannot achieve internal stability, and without internal stability we cannot evolve in consciousness because achieving internal stability is a prerequisite for evolving to the next stage of psychological development.

**What are values?**

According to sociologists, “values” are: *The ideals and customs of a society toward which the people have an effective regard.* I prefer to define values in a more pragmatic way: *Values are a shorthand method of describing what is important to us individually or collectively (as an organization, community or nation) at any given moment in time.*

From a fourth-dimensional perspective, we can define values as: *the energetic containers of our aspirations and intentions.* Values are “energetic” because they belong to the intangible world of our energy field.

From the soul’s perspective, we can say values are *the principles we need to live by to support bonding and cooperation—the values that promote evolution.*

Values are different from beliefs. The values that promote bonding and cooperation are universal; they transcend contexts. Beliefs, on the other hand, are context-dependent. They depend on the world views of the culture you are brought up in and the parental programming you received in your formative years. Consequently, values unite people and beliefs tend to separate people. This is particularly true of religious and ideological beliefs.

Positive values are the universal guidance system shared by all souls, whereas beliefs are the context-related guidance system of the ego. When you shift from the control of your personality from your ego to your soul, you automatically move from belief-based decision-making to values-based decision-making. This shift means that you can effectively throw away the rulebooks you learned when you were young. Every decision you now make will be sourced from what you consider to be “right action”—actions that are fully aligned with who you really are—your soul self, and values that promote bonding and cooperation (evolution).
Values-based decision-making allows you to create a future that resonates deeply with who you really are. It creates the conditions that allow your authenticity and integrity to flourish.

If you want to live in soul consciousness, every critical decision you make in life should pass the values test. If a decision you want to make seems logical but goes against your soul-based values—does not promote or prevents bonding and cooperation—you should not proceed.

The way you know a decision is not aligned with your soul’s values is because of how it makes you feel; the impact it has on your energy field. When you make decisions that are sourced from fear, you promote separation and your energy field takes on an increased negative charge: You feel a sense of heaviness. When you make decisions that are sourced from love, you promote cohesion and your energy field takes on an increased positive charge: You feel a sense of lightness.

I am not saying there is no place in our lives for conscious belief-based decision-making based on logic or rational thinking. There is. What I am saying is that before arriving at a final decision about how to deal with a situation, you should always explore how your decision makes you feel. If it does not feel right—does not promote bonding or cooperation—then you should think again. As previously stated, decisions based on self-interest, in the long run, do not promote evolutionary sustainability.

Note

3. Why do I say “world of souls”? Because that is who we are! We do not have souls, we are souls! We live in a world of souls attempting to bring soul consciousness into our three-dimensional physical reality.
4. Measuring Personal Consciousness

Having defined a framework for measuring human consciousness and identified how your sense of identity (inclusivity) expands through various stages, from your ego identity to your soul identity, let us now explore the mechanics of measuring consciousness. To this end we will need to define two new concepts: personal entropy and cultural entropy.

Personal entropy is the amount of fear-driven energy that a person expresses in his or her day-to-day life as measured through his or her interactions with, or behaviours toward other people. Personal entropy arises from the subconscious fear-based beliefs that we learn during the surviving, conforming and differentiating stages of our psychological development. These represent our ego’s unmet needs—not having enough, not being loved enough, and not being enough—also known as secondary motivations. When we are operating with—making decisions based on fear-based beliefs—we focus on our own self-interest. As a result, we promote separation.

Cultural entropy is the amount of conflict, friction and frustration that people encounter in their day-to-day activities that prevent a human group structure (team, organization, community or nation) from achieving its peak performance. The main source of cultural entropy is the fear-based actions and behaviours of the current leader(s) and the institutional legacy of past leaders—the fear-based beliefs embedded in the structures, policies, systems and procedures of the organization.

At the individual level, personal entropy creates disturbances in your personal energy field which prevent your ego from bonding and cooperating with your soul. At the group level, cultural entropy creates disturbances in the group’s energy field which prevent members of the group from bonding and cooperating with each other.

Cultural Transformation Tools

The measuring instruments I am going to present are described in several of my previous books. Collectively, these measuring instruments are known as the Cultural Transformation Tools (CTT). A description of the latest version of these measuring instruments can be found

Since their inception, the CTT have been used to measure the consciousness of more than five thousand organizations, four thousand leaders, and twenty-four nations. More than five thousand people in sixty countries have been accredited in the use of these tools.

You can measure your own consciousness by doing a free self-assessment at [www.valuescentre.com/pva](http://www.valuescentre.com/pva). This assessment gives you your perspective on your values. These are the values you believe you operate with or the values you aspire to.

In order to find out where you actually are on the spectrum of consciousness, you must do a feedback assessment; find out how others see you. In a feedback assessment 15–20 people are asked to pick ten values/behaviours which reflect how you operate. They choose from a list (template) of 80–90 words or phrases. The values/behaviours included in the template represent all levels of consciousness and contain positive as well as potentially limiting (negative) values.

Positive values include words such as friendship, family, accountability, trust and making a difference. These are values that promote connection, bonding and cooperation. Potentially limiting values include words such as control, blame, manipulation, status-seeking and arrogance. These are values that promote separation and conflict and create personal entropy.

The top ten highest scoring values and the distribution of all the values chosen by the assessors are plotted against the Seven Levels of Consciousness model. The level of personal entropy is arrived at by calculating the proportion of votes for potentially limiting values chosen by all the assessors.

**Measuring the consciousness of a high entropy individual**

Figure 4.1 shows the results of a feedback assessment obtained for an individual operating with high personal entropy. The number alongside each value represents the number of votes for this value by the assessors. The total number of assessors in this case was fifteen. An (L) next to a value indicates a potentially limiting value. The white dots indicate the placement of potentially limiting values and the grey dots represent the placement of positive values.
Figure 4.1: Levels of consciousness of an individual with high personal entropy.

**Assessors’ Perspective**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top ten values</th>
<th>Distribution of values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>achievement</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>authoritarian</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>being the best</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>competitive</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demanding</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>determination</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>excellence</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>power</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>results-orientation</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>risk-taking</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

In the opinion of his assessors this individual is focussed in his ego-mind, 73% of his values are located in the first three levels of consciousness (ego-mind); 27% of his values are at the ego-soul alignment levels. There are no values at the activated soul-mind levels. The level of personal entropy (36%) is arrived at by adding up the proportion of votes for potentially limiting values at the first three (ego) levels of consciousness (9%+18%+9%).

This person has started the process of individuation (primary motivation) but has not yet reached the level of self-actualization. What is blocking the evolutionary progress of this person is his high level of personal entropy related to his secondary motivations. The potentially limiting values in the top ten values chosen by the assessors suggest this person is achievement-focussed: he is an authoritarian, highly competitive, demanding and power seeking. All of these values promote separation rather than inclusion.
The degree to which a person is fully aware of who they are and how they are perceived by others can be gauged by asking the person whose consciousness is being assessed to also pick ten values about how they see themselves operating. Their view of their own values is then compared to their assessors’ view of them.

Figure 4.2 shows how the person assessed in Figure 4.1 views himself, along with the assessor’s perspective (shown in Figure 4.1). The percentages in parenthesis on the extreme right-hand side of the figure are the individual’s own assessment of their distribution of values compared to the assessors.

**Figure 4.2:** Comparison of how a high-entropy individual sees himself and how he is seen by his assessors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual’s Perspective</th>
<th>15 Assessors’ Perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top ten values</td>
<td>Top ten values</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Distribution of values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ambitious</td>
<td>achievement</td>
<td>Activated Soul-mind 0% (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>courage</td>
<td>authoritarian (L)</td>
<td>Ego-Soul Alignment 27% (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>creativity</td>
<td>being the best</td>
<td>Ego-mind 73% (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>excellence</strong></td>
<td>competitive (L)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>integrity</td>
<td>demanding (L)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>long-term perspective</td>
<td>determination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>passion</td>
<td><strong>excellence</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>results orientation</td>
<td>knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strategic alliances</td>
<td>power (L)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vision</td>
<td>results orientation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>risk-taking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is immediately obvious from this example is the mismatch between how the person sees himself and how others see him; this person does not have a realistic view of himself.
His ego projects a false persona. He views himself as operating at higher levels of consciousness than his behaviours would suggest to his assessors.

He has two matching values between how he sees himself and how others see him: *excellence* and *results orientation*. He does not attribute any personal entropy to himself (no potentially limiting values in his top ten) but his assessors’ indicate he is operating with a very high level of personal entropy (36%).

**Measuring the consciousness of a low entropy individual**

Figure 4.3 shows the results obtained for an individual with low personal entropy.

**Figure 4.3:** Levels of consciousness of an individual with low personal entropy.

![Chart showing levels of consciousness](image)

**19 Assessors’ Perspective**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top ten values</th>
<th>Distribution of values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>caring</td>
<td>Activated Soul-mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coaching/mentoring</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enthusiasm</td>
<td>Ego-Soul Alignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>caring</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collaborative</td>
<td>Ego-mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>making a difference</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>authenticity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>integrity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>listening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>open to new ideas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>team builder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the opinion of the nineteen assessors, this individual is focussed in the higher levels of consciousness: 43% of the assessor’s votes are at the transformation and internal cohesion
levels of consciousness (ego-soul alignment) and 27% are at the making a difference and service levels of consciousness (activated soul-mind). This person is well advanced in their self-actualization and has a low level of personal entropy (4%).

Figure 4.4 compares how this person sees herself compared to the feedback from 19 assessors. The percentages in parenthesis on the extreme right-hand side of the figure are the individual’s own assessment of their distribution of values. In this case, compared to the previous one, there is a much stronger correlation between how people see this person and how she sees herself: there are four matching values in the top ten: listening, open to new ideas, team builder and vision.

What is striking about this person compared to the previous example is that she has a slightly more modest perception of who she is compared to her assessors. Interestingly, neither of the two people is aware of how they are coming across to others: she underestimates herself, while he overestimates himself.

**Figure 4.4:** Comparison of how an individual with low entropy sees herself and how she is seen by her assessors.
The main difference between these two examples—the high entropy and low entropy individuals—is that the first individual is primarily operating from the ego levels of consciousness and the second individual is primarily operating from the ego-soul alignment levels of consciousness and above.

Let us now take a look at how we can measure the consciousness and cultural entropy of an organization.
### 5. Measuring Organizational Consciousness

The technique involved in measuring the consciousness of a human group structure such as an organization, a community or a nation is slightly different to the way we measure individual consciousness. We ask people who are part of the group structure to pick ten values/behaviours from a template of 80–90 words or phrases that best describe who they are, how their group operates (current culture) and how they would like their group to operate (desired culture). For the moment, let us focus on the results of the question about how the group operates (current culture).

The values included in the template that people pick from represent all levels of consciousness and contain positive as well as potentially limiting (negative) values.

Positive values might include words such as financial stability, accountability, openness, trust and making a difference. Potentially limiting values might include words such as control, blame, hierarchy, fire-fighting and bureaucracy. The top ten highest scoring values and the distribution of all the values chosen by the people in the group are then plotted against the Seven Levels of Consciousness Model and the level of cultural entropy is calculated. This is the proportion of all the votes for potentially limiting values chosen by the individuals in the group.

The template can be customized for a particular group: this involves putting words in the template that represent values/behaviours that are specific to the context of that group.

**A high cultural entropy, low alignment organization**

Figure 5.1 shows a typical result for high cultural entropy (fear-driven), low alignment organizations. Eighty managers in this organization were asked to assess the current culture of their organization. The number alongside each value represents the number of votes for it. An (L) next to a value indicates it is a potentially limiting value. The white dots represent the placement of potentially limiting values and the grey dots represent the placement of positive values.

What is immediately obvious from this example is the low level of consciousness and high level of cultural entropy in the current culture of this organization: 73% of the values in are located at the level of the ego-mind; 22% at the level of ego-soul alignment; 5% at the
level of the activated soul. Seven of the top ten values in the current culture are potentially limiting values.

**Figure 5.1:** Levels of consciousness of an organization with high cultural entropy.

Let us now compare the current culture with the managers’ desired culture. This comparison is shown in Figure 5.2.

The managers are asking for a significant shift in consciousness. Although none of the top ten values are located at the fifth level of consciousness, 20% of the votes were for values/behaviours at this level, making the total proportion of votes for ego-soul alignment 51%, and 16% for an activated soul-mind.

The top ten values/behaviours requested in the desired culture are all different to the top ten values reported in the current culture. This organization is stuck in a culture of blame. The leaders are demanding and controlling and because of the poor performance there is strong
focus on cost reduction. Despite working long hours, people are not appreciated and are feeling insecure about their jobs.

**Figure 5.2:** Comparison of current culture and desired culture.

![Figure 5.2](image)

Figure 5.3 compares the self-reported personal values/behaviours and the distribution of the values/behaviours of the managers with the desired culture. What we notice immediately is the distribution of personal values of the managers is very similar to the distribution of the desired culture values. The results show 34% and 33% of votes for values/behaviours at the level of the ego-mind, 53% and 51% at the level of ego-soul alignment, and 13% and 16% at the level of the activated soul-mind. People want to work in a culture that reflects their personal consciousness.

The most significant difference is at levels 4 (transformation) and 5 (internal cohesion). Whereas their personal values are primarily located at level 5, the level of internal cohesion, the desired culture values are located at level 4. This shows the managers recognize that in order to reduce the level of cultural entropy and the number of potentially limiting values in the current culture they must first work at the level of transformation (level 4) before working at the level of internal cohesion (level 5). It is from the transformation level that these
managers can resolve the issues that are causing the cultural entropy in the organization. This will involve working with the senior leaders to reduce their levels of personal entropy.

**Figure 5.3:** Comparison of personal consciousness with desired consciousness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Values</th>
<th>Desired Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. commitment</td>
<td>1. continuous improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. honesty</td>
<td>2. customer satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. making a difference</td>
<td>3. accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. positive attitude</td>
<td>4. coaching/mentoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. achievement</td>
<td>5. leadership development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. humour/fun</td>
<td>6. teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. integrity</td>
<td>7. open communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. fairness</td>
<td>8. adaptability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. performance</td>
<td>9. employee recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. initiative</td>
<td>10. information sharing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this example I have mainly focussed on the distribution of values rather than on the actual values themselves. In a normal cultural values assessment we would pay a lot of attention to the actual values in order to determine what needs to be done to transform and improve the performance of the organization (See *The Values-Driven Organisation: Unleashing human potential for performance and profit* (July 2014)).

**A low cultural entropy, high alignment organization**

In my second organizational example, I show the results from typical low cultural entropy, high alignment organizations. This is a small organization of 18 people with 2% cultural entropy, four matching personal and current culture values, and seven matching current and desired culture values. All of these indicate a high level of cultural alignment.
Figure 5.4 shows the distribution of the personal, current culture and desired culture values. What we immediately notice is the high degree of alignment between the levels of consciousness. The strong alignment along with the low level of cultural entropy creates a high level of engagement. This is a highly productive, very successful company.

**Figure 5.4:** Distribution of consciousness in a low cultural entropy, high alignment organization.

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**Employee engagement and cultural entropy**

In Figure 5.5 I present the results of the research we carried out with Hewitt Associates into the correlation between employee engagement and cultural entropy. Not surprisingly, high cultural entropy leads to low engagement, and low cultural entropy leads to high engagement. Highly engaged employees are not only more productive, they are also more committed to the success of the organization; they are willing to go the extra mile to make sure the organization is successful. For more information, see Chapter 2 of the *Values-Driven Organisation, The impact of values on performance.*
**Figure 5.5:** Correlation between employee engagement and cultural entropy.

Since cultural entropy is a measure of the fear-based attitudes and behaviours that are found in a group culture, we arrive at the conclusion that people work best in a caring, love-based environment rather than a fear-based environment.

**Conclusions**

Based on the results of thousands of measurements of individuals and organizations we have reached two conclusions:

1. Higher states of consciousness are inversely correlated to personal and cultural entropy (fear-based energy). As the amount of fear-driven energy reduces, the level of ego-soul alignment and soul activation increases.

2. Soul activation on its own does not lead to higher levels of human or organizational performance; the most successful individuals and human group structures are those where attention to the ego’s needs is balanced with attention to the soul’s needs, and a significant amount of attention is continuously given to working on ego-soul alignment—eliminating fears.
Note

1. Since these are their self-reported values, they either represent their actual values or the values they aspire to. The shadow aspect of someone’s personality tends not to show up in self-reported values.
6. Measuring National Consciousness

A high cultural entropy, low alignment nation

The following data is taken from the UK national values assessment undertaken in 2012. Figure 6.1 shows the distribution of all the votes for personal, current culture and desired culture values. There is very little alignment between who the people are and the values they see in the nation. The level of cultural entropy is 59%. There is 6% entropy in the personal values and 4% entropy in the desired culture values. The high cultural entropy reflects the citizen’s perspective on how the country is run.

Figure 6.1: Distribution of consciousness in the UK.

A low cultural entropy, high alignment nation

The following data is taken from the Bhutan national values assessment undertaken in 2008. Figure 6.2 shows the distribution of all the votes for personal, current culture and desired culture values. There is an extremely strong alignment between participant’s personal values,
the values they see in the nation and the values they would like to see in the nation. The level of cultural entropy is 4%. There is 6% entropy in the personal values and 4% entropy in the desired culture values.

**Figure 6.2:** Distribution of consciousness in Bhutan.

Compared to the UK, the distribution of citizen’s consciousness in Bhutan is significantly higher. 24% of the Bhutanese citizen’s personal values are at the level of soul activation compared to 15% for the UK (personal values). I believe this is due to the strong Buddhist influence found in Bhutan. People from both nations have roughly the same proportion of values at the ego-soul alignment level (46% and 44%).

Even though Bhutan is a developing country without many of the modern conveniences of the UK, the level of ego-driven energy (focus on deficiency needs) among the citizens of Bhutan is smaller than the UK (32% compared to 39%). Compared to the UK, with 5% of values at the level of self-actualization in the current culture, Bhutan has 18%. In some ways this is a surprising result, because Bhutan, at the time the survey undertaken was a kingdom, whereas the UK was a democracy.
These results—the high level of alignment, and the low level of cultural entropy—suggest the people of Bhutan have a strong level of trust in their leaders.
Annex 1: Overview of the Origins of the Seven Levels Model

I created the Seven Levels Model to give greater definition and understanding to human motivations. The model is based on Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and the higher levels of consciousness described in Vedic philosophy.

It was clear to me that Maslow’s research and thinking was ahead of his time. Abraham Maslow died in 1970 at age 62 well before the consciousness movement had taken root. I saw that, with some minor changes, his hierarchy could be transposed into a framework of consciousness. I worked on this task from 1996 to 1997.

The Seven Levels of Consciousness Model and the changes I made are summarized in Table A1.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maslow</th>
<th>Barrett</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchy of Needs</td>
<td>Levels of Consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-actualization</td>
<td>7 Service</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 Making a difference</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5 Internal cohesion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Know and understand</td>
<td>4 Transformation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>3 Self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging</td>
<td>2 Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physiological needs</td>
<td>1 Survival</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Changing from needs to consciousness
The first change I made to Maslow’s model was to shift the focus from needs to consciousness. It was evident to me that when people have underlying anxieties or subconscious fears about being able to meet their deficiency needs—survival, relationship and self-esteem—their subconscious or conscious minds remain focussed on finding ways to satisfy that need. They are focussed at the level of consciousness that represents the need they are experiencing.

For example, when a person has a fear-based belief at the survival level of consciousness, no matter how much money he or she earns they will always be left wanting more. For them, enough is never enough. Such people can remain focussed at the survival level of consciousness all their lives, even though they may have mastered some of their other needs, for example, they may be in a loving relationship and have all their needs met at that level.

Those who have underlying anxieties or subconscious fears about belonging, being accepted or being loved, subconsciously operate from the relationship level of consciousness. They have a strong need to experience affection or affiliation that was not accorded to them in their childhood. As adults they may compromise their own integrity to get these needs met. They want to be liked and they want to be loved. They find it hard to deal with conflicts and may use humour to reduce tensions and bring harmony to a situation. They are afraid of not being loved or accepted. They are dependent on others for the love they crave.

Those who have underlying anxieties or fears about their performance or ranking in relation to their peers subconsciously operate from the level of self-esteem consciousness. They have a strong need for the recognition or acknowledgement that they failed to receive in their childhood. As adults they seek power, authority or status to get these needs met. They can never get enough praise or acknowledgement. Consequently, they become perfectionists, workaholics and overachievers. Despite all the accolades they may get, they are always left wanting more.

These considerations led me to recognize that our early maladaptive schema (subconscious fear-based beliefs) directly influence the levels of consciousness we operate from and can block or undermine our ability to shift to the transformation (individuate) and internal cohesion (self-actualize) levels of consciousness. They show up in our lives as negative (potentially limiting) values such as greed, control, blame, status-seeking, etc.
Early Maladaptive Schemas (beliefs) seem to be the result of dysfunctional experiences with parents, siblings, and peers during the first few years of an individual’s life. Most schemas (beliefs) are caused by on-going everyday noxious experiences with family members and peers which cumulatively strengthen the schema (belief). For example a child who is constantly criticized when performance does not meet parental standards is prone to develop the incompetence/failure schema.1

**Expanding the concept of self-actualization**

The second change I made was to expand Maslow’s concept of self-actualization. I wanted to give more definition to our soul’s needs (often referred to as our spiritual needs). I achieved this goal by integrating the concepts associated with the states of consciousness described in Vedic philosophy—soul consciousness, cosmic consciousness, God consciousness and unity consciousness—into the Seven Levels of Consciousness Model.

According to Vedic philosophy our multi-dimensional minds have the ability to experience seven states of consciousness. The first three—waking, dreaming and deep sleep—are part of everyone’s daily experience.

In the fourth state of consciousness (soul consciousness) you begin to recognize that you are more than your ego and your physical body. You begin to identify with the values and purpose of your soul and its energetic reality. You can experience this state of consciousness through meditation. During meditation the body and its neurological systems become fully relaxed. At the same time your mind basks in the peace that lies beyond space and time.

Beyond soul consciousness is a fifth state of consciousness, known as cosmic consciousness. In this state of consciousness you remain totally identified with your soul at all times, not just when you meditate. You live in a fear-free state of mental and physiological functioning. In this state, you effortlessly fulfil your desires while simultaneously supporting the interests of others. You are able to live your life to its fullest without ever feeling dependent on others for approval. You are the master of your destiny because you have become the servant of your soul.

At the sixth state of consciousness, known as God consciousness, you become aware of the deep level of connection between your soul and all other souls; there remains only the finest sense of separation between you and others. You begin to realize that beyond the soul level of consciousness there are no “others”; we are all individuated aspects of the same
universal energy field. When I give to you, I am giving to another aspect of myself. When I criticize you, I am criticizing another aspect of myself.

At the seventh state of consciousness, known as unity consciousness, you become one with all there is. The self fuses with the self-aspect of every other form of creation in total oneness. There is no separation between the knower and the object of knowing. As far as I am aware, this represents the highest state of consciousness that humans can attain.

As you progress through these different stages of consciousness, you experience an increasingly higher and more inclusive sense of identity.

Whereas we all experience the first three states of consciousness—waking, dreaming and sleeping—almost every day of our lives, the frequency of our experiences of the higher states depends on the level of our psychological development and the evolution of our personal consciousness in the waking state; the degree to which we have learned how to release our conscious and subconscious fears and live a values-driven and purpose-driven life.

As we make progress on mastering our basic physical and emotional needs, letting go of our subconscious fear-based beliefs and liberating our souls, we gain more frequent access to the higher states of consciousness. You will recognize these moments quite easily because you will be overcome by feelings of love, joy or bliss. You may feel energy surging or tingling through your body in moments of resonance, or you may feel a profound sense of connection to another person or to the world in general. Sometimes these experiences will last for a short moment, sometimes for several seconds, and if you are lucky, for several days.

Transformation

The first realization I had from studying the states of consciousness described in Vedic philosophy was that the onset of soul consciousness corresponds closely to Maslow’s need to “know and understand” and Carl Jung’s concept of “individuation”. This is the fourth level of consciousness. I called this level “transformation”. It is an essential precursor to self-actualization. Transformation is the level of consciousness where we begin to inquire into the true nature of who we are, independently of the culture and environment in which we were raised. At this level of consciousness, we are able to step back far enough from our parental programming and social conditioning to make our own choices so we can become the author of our own lives and develop our own voice.
The first level of self-actualization

I believe cosmic consciousness corresponds to the first level of self-actualization. I refer to this level of consciousness as “internal cohesion”, the fifth of the seven levels of consciousness. At this level of consciousness, your ego and your soul blend together in unison: this is the meaning of internal cohesion. At this level of consciousness, you find your personal transcendent purpose (soul’s purpose). Your ego and soul become energetically aligned. You become a soul-infused personality wanting to lead a values-driven and purpose-driven life.

The second level of self-actualization

I believe God consciousness corresponds to the second level of self-actualization. I refer to this level of consciousness as “making a difference”, the sixth of the seven levels of consciousness. At this level, you begin to uncover the deeper attributes of your soul. You develop a sense of knowing that goes beyond logic and reasoning, and your intuition plays a larger role in your decision making. At this level of consciousness, you fully activate your soul’s purpose by making a difference in the world. You quickly learn that the degree of difference you make can be significantly enhanced by your ability to collaborate with others who share the same values and a similar mission, vision or purpose.

The third level of self-actualization

I believe unity consciousness corresponds to the third level of self-actualization. I refer to this level of consciousness as “service”, the seventh of the seven levels of consciousness. We arrive at this level of consciousness when the pursuit of making a difference becomes a way of life. At this level of consciousness, we embark on a life of selfless service. We are at ease with uncertainty and can tap into the deepest sources of wisdom. We learn to operate with humility and compassion. We become one with our soul and we base many of our decisions on our soul’s inspiration.

Whilst I fully realize the correlations I have made between the Vedic philosophy and the seven levels of human consciousness may not be exact, they are sufficiently close to warrant our attention and provide insights into the motivations and underlying spiritual significance of the process of self-actualization.

Re-labelling the lower levels of consciousness
The last change I made to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs was to combine the physiological survival level and the safety level into a single category. I felt justified in doing this because it is our cells and organs (our body-mind) that essentially care for the physiological needs of our body, not our personal consciousness. Only in times of distress or dysfunction does our personal consciousness intervene in the functioning of the body. For example, our body sends signals to our personal consciousness when it needs food and water or needs to eliminate waste. Our personal consciousness is not in control of these natural functions. I named this combined level “survival consciousness” because it focuses on issues of physical survival, physical safety and physical health.

I also renamed the level of love/belonging: I gave it the name “relationship consciousness”. I felt justified in doing this because our ability to experience a sense of belonging and love depends on the quality of our relationships. I did not rename the self-esteem level. The self-esteem level, together with the relationship level, represents our emotional needs.

I thus created three levels of human consciousness from the first four levels of Maslow’s hierarchy of basic needs: survival consciousness (survival and safety combined), relationship consciousness (replacing love/belonging) and self-esteem consciousness. Together, these three levels of consciousness represent the emergence and development of the ego; the first three stages of psychological development.

With these three changes to Abraham Maslow’s model (needs to consciousness, expanding self-actualization and relabeling the basic needs), I was able to construct a model of consciousness that corresponds to the evolution of the human ego and the activation of the human soul. Every level of the model represents an evolutionary need that is inherent to the human condition.

The needs we have generate motivations that in turn determine our behaviours. If you are unable to meet a particular need, your consciousness will remain focused at that level until you are able to satisfy that need. When we have learned to master the needs of a particular level, we automatically shift the focus of our consciousness and our motivations to satisfying our next most important need; usually a need that exists at the next higher level of consciousness.
Note

Annex 2: World views and stages of psychological development

Table 6.1 (from Evolutionary Coaching) shows a possible correlation between the stages of psychological development and world views. Let me stress that this mapping is approximate.

**Table 6.1** Stages of psychological development and world views.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages of psychological development</th>
<th>World views</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serving</td>
<td>Holistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrating</td>
<td>Integrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-actualizing</td>
<td>People</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individuating</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiating</td>
<td>Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conforming</td>
<td>Tribal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surviving</td>
<td>Survival</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I would like to make the following comments on Table 6.1.

First, whereas it took three shifts of world views (power, authority and status) to gradually open up the possibility of the differentiation stage of psychological development to the masses, it took only one shift of world view (from status to people) to open up the possibility of the masses experiencing the individuation and self-actualisation stages of psychological development.

Second, whereas there are no societies operating with the integrative world view, some communities are beginning to experiment with this world view. This is something we can expect to see emerging in the communities of the most advanced democratic nations in the next few decades.
Third, the bonding that takes place in the tribal world view is different from the bonding that takes place in the people world view. Bonding in the tribal level world view is exclusive; it happens only in groups that share the same ethnicity or heritage. People of different ethnicities or with a different heritage are excluded from the group. Bonding in the people world view is inclusive; everyone in the same community and society, including people of different ethnicities is included as part of the group.

Fourth, viewed in its entirety, the framework of collective human emergence described above contains some evolutionary patterns. Each world view is progressively more inclusive: the criteria for community or society membership become less focused on ethnicity and religion and more focused on character or competence. Each world view progressively reduces the level of cultural fear and reflects a higher stage of psychological development and higher level of consciousness.

This finding is confirmed by my own research. In Love, Fear and the Destiny of Nations\(^1\) I show that there is a strong link between the level of cultural fear in a nation and the level of democracy (as measured by the Economic Intelligence Unit’s Democracy Index). As the level of democracy increases, the level of cultural fear decreases: and as fear decreases, the levels of equality and trust increase.

Also, in The Values-Driven Organisation\(^2\) I show that the level of cultural entropy (impact of fear-based behaviours) reduces as organisations embrace the values associated with the higher stages of psychological development.

The shift in world views is now accelerating at a rapid pace. Whereas previously it took several millennia, and then centuries for new world views to appear, when the conditions are right (basic needs met and democracy established) new world views are now emerging in just a few decades. The impact of this is that consciousness can evolve at a faster pace than ever before in human history because the barriers to psychological development have been removed.

As more and more communities or societies are able to meet the basic needs of their people, more and more people in those communities or societies feel supported in moving from the differentiation stage of their psychological development to the individuation stage. This in turn creates pressures to implement democratic governance. Once democratic governance and principles are well established, people no longer experience the cultural fears that prevented them from individuating and self-actualizing.
Notes


Annex 3: The Seven Stages of Psychological Development

The seven stages of psychological development occur in consecutive order over the full period of our lives. We begin the journey by learning to survive, and we complete the journey by learning to serve. Whereas the first three stages of psychological development are about developing the skills (physical and emotional) to master our deficiency needs, the last three stages are about learning to master our growth needs. Our ability to shift from focusing on our basic needs to focusing on our growth needs depends on many factors, the most important of which are:

*The level of psychological development of your parents.*

If the pressures to conform to the values, beliefs and traditions of your parents are strong, you may find it uncomfortable to explore your own values and beliefs. Your family may not understand why you want to be different or what you think is wrong with their way of being.

*The level of cultural evolution of the community and society you are raised in.*

If the pressures to conform to the values and beliefs of the community and culture you belong to are strong, then you may risk censure, excommunication or even imprisonment if you begin the process of individuation. Your desire to have the freedom to explore your uniqueness will be viewed as a threat.

*The level of education you attain.*

Unless you engage in some form of public or private education (or international travel) that is beyond the level attained by your parents, you may not be able to surpass their level of psychological development.

*Your will power to explore your full human potential.*

It takes immense will power and courage to explore the higher stages of psychological development if the pressures to conform from your family, community and society are large. If you proceed, you risk cutting the bonds that enabled you to meet your basic needs. You risk isolation and loneliness.

For some or all of these reasons, the majority of people in the world never move beyond the third stage of psychological development. There is too much at stake (particularly for
women and people living in authoritarian cultures) for them to risk exploring the higher stages of psychological development.

What holds people back is the fear of not being able to meet their deficiency needs and what pulls them forward is their search for meaning and significance.

The first three stages—surviving, conforming and differentiating—are stages of ego development that we all naturally pass through from the moment we are born up to the time we become young adults. How well we are able to master these stages of development—satisfy our basic needs and develop a healthy ego—will determine, to a significant extent, our ability to engage in the higher stages of development.

Whereas the first three stages of development are about learning how to survive in the parental and cultural framework of your existence where you are dependent on others to fulfil your basic needs, the fourth and subsequent stages of development are about discovering who you really are outside of your parental programming and cultural conditioning; embracing the unique sense of your own self and becoming truly independent, overcoming your dependence on those around you for your survival, relationship and self-esteem needs.

To fully embrace these higher stages of development, you must be prepared to let go of the aspects of your parental and cultural conditioning that you assimilated during the first three stages of your development that no longer serve you or do not align with who you really are. You must begin to embrace the values, beliefs and passions that you were born with that reflect your unique self.

Because of poverty, and the cultural and political circumstances in which the majority of people on the planet live, most people never get to the fourth stage of development. They live in a state of dependency, unable to individuate because they identify with the cultural and religious beliefs of their childhood and teenage years. Or, alternatively, they are held back from expressing their unique selves by repressive political regimes or strong religious cultures. It requires great courage in such circumstances to separate yourself from the crowd and become who you really are.

This is one of the major evolutionary benefits that modern economic and social development has brought about: by alleviating poverty and introducing democratic governance, we have enabled the masses to meet their basic needs and given them the freedom to pursue their growth needs.
If you are fortunate enough to live in a community or culture where uniqueness is celebrated, higher education is easily available, and you are encouraged from a young age to be independent (think for yourself) then you may begin to feel the pull of your soul towards the higher stages of psychological development—towards individuation and self-actualization—even during your early adult years.

In some rare cases, we find people—let us call them mystics—who attain the higher stages of psychological development without seemingly passing through the lower stages. They naturally evolve into soul consciousness without having experienced any significant ego needs. They tend to spend a large part of their lives in deep meditation unconcerned by their basic human needs.

The following text provides a brief description of the key features of each of the seven stages of psychological development.

**Surviving**

The quest for survival starts as soon as a human baby is born. The infant child instinctively knows that it must establish itself as a viable entity if it is to remain in the physical world. At this stage, the infant is totally dependent on others to care for its needs. During the first stage of psychological development the child has to establish its own sense of identity, separate from its mother, and learn how to exercise control over its environment so that it can get its survival needs met.

If, for whatever reason, the child is unable to get its survival needs met because its parents are not vigilant enough, it is abused by its parents, or it is left alone or abandoned for long periods of time, the child’s nascent ego will very likely form subconscious fear-based beliefs that the world is an unsafe place and that other people cannot be trusted.

If on the other hand, the child’s parents are attentive to its needs and are watchful for signs of distress, then the child will grow up with a sense of security and the feeling that others can be trusted. The feeling of being able to meet its physiological survival needs is the first and most important need of the ego-mind.

**Conforming**
During the next stage of psychological development, the conforming or self-protective stage, young children learn that life is more pleasant and less threatening if they live in harmony with others, particularly their parents. The task at this stage of development is to learn how to feel loved and safe in your family group. Adherence to rules and rituals (conforming) becomes important because they consolidate your sense of belonging and enhance your sense of safety.

At this stage, children also learn beliefs and behaviours that allow them to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. If punishment is used to assure conformity, then the child may adopt a strategy of blaming others to avoid reprimands. If the child believes the rules, reprimands or punishments are unjust or unfair, he or she may develop a rebellious streak.

If for any reason (usually because of poor parenting) you grow up feeling unloved or you don’t belong, your ego may develop subconscious fear-based beliefs that the world is unfair and that you are not lovable. Later on in life you may find yourself constantly seeking affection and wanting to find a group or community that accepts you for the way you are.

If on the other hand, your parents treat you with respect and consideration, but firmly insist that you live by the rules, you will grow up feeling secure. Feeling loved by others and a sense of belonging to a group or community is the second most important need of the ego-mind.

**Differentiating**

During the next stage of psychological development, the differentiation stage, children want to feel recognized for the things they do well. The task at this stage of development is to develop a healthy sense of pride in your accomplishments and a feeling of self-worth. You want to feel good about who you are and you want to feel recognized by your parents and peers.

Your parents are instrumental at this stage of your development for giving you the positive feedback you need. If you fail to get this feedback, you will grow up with the subconscious fear-based belief that you are not good enough. You will feel driven to prove your self-worth. You may become highly competitive, attempting to seek power, authority or status so that you can be recognized as someone important or someone to be feared. If your ego-mind does not get the reinforcement that it needs, you could grow up with a feeling that no matter how hard you try, recognition escapes you; the successes you achieve will never be
enough. Feeling a sense of self-worth or pride in your accomplishments is the third most important need of the ego-mind.

If you were able to successfully transition through these first three stages of your psychological development without significant trauma and without developing too many subconscious fear-based beliefs, then you will find it relatively easy to establish yourself as a viable independent adult person in your framework of existence providing you have the opportunities you need to earn a living that meets your survival needs.

**Individuating**

During the next stage of your psychological development—the individuation stage—which normally occurs after we have become adults, we begin to transcend our physical and emotional dependence on our parents and the family or the community or cultural group to which we belong and we start to learn how to release or overcome the subconscious fears we learned about not having enough of what we need to survive, to feel loved or to feel good about who we are.

Unlike the previous stages of psychological development which are thrust on us as we move from being an infant to a toddler, to a child and then to a teenager, individuation is a subconscious choice. The choice is not so much a choice, but rather whether we develop the willingness, once we feel secure in our selves (have satisfied our survival and relationship needs and have a healthy sense of self-esteem), to respond to the pull we feel inside to becoming more accountable for our emotions and more responsible for our beliefs and values.

Learning to be accountable for your emotions involves releasing or overcoming the fear-based beliefs about your survival, relationship and self-esteem needs that you developed during the first three stages of your development. This may require a long-term commitment to personal mastery.

Learning to be responsible for your beliefs and values can be challenging, especially if you grew up in a close-knit kinship or tribal culture or an oppressive authoritarian regime where people are either dependent on each other for survival or where the pressures to conform are large. If on the other hand, you grew up in a liberal regime with self-actualized parents who took care of your basic needs and always treated you like a young adult, by teaching you to be responsible and accountable for your life and your emotions, then you will find the process of individuation relatively easy.
Those individuals who have been brought up by self-actualized parents and live in a liberal democracy may reach the individuation stage before they reach midlife. This is because the parental programming they receive and the cultural conditioning they experience supports them in mastering the first three stages of their psychological development without experiencing any significant fears, anxieties or traumas.

Once you have learned how to master your basic needs and have established yourself as a viable independent individual in the larger world, rather than the community or culture you were brought up in, you may, after a certain amount of time, feel a natural pull towards the next stage of your psychological development: self-actualization.

**Self-actualizing**

The self-actualization stage of psychological development involves learning to align the needs of your ego with the needs of your soul and leading a values-driven and purpose-driven life, free from fear.

Leading a values-driven life means letting go of the decision-making modalities of the ego (beliefs) and embracing the decision-making modalities of the soul (values). The progress you make in this regard will dictate how well you are able to manifest your soul’s purpose. You will need to learn to live with trust, empathy and compassion if you are going to fully actualize your soul’s purpose.

Finding your soul’s purpose or your calling or vocation, usually begins with a feeling of unease or boredom with the work on which you depend for your livelihood. You may no longer find your work challenging. You may feel blocked in your progress, unable to grow and develop. As you begin to discover your soul’s purpose, you will feel a pull towards a new activity or a lifetime interest that you have pushed into the background; something more meaningful to you personally. Uncovering your soul’s purpose—your sense of mission—will bring passion and creativity back into to your life and give you a deep sense of meaning.

Sometimes your soul’s purpose unfolds slowly in front of you. You get a feeling or thought about a change you want to make in your life. The thought keeps coming back and won’t go away. So you follow your inspiration: you do what it is you feel called to do. This leads to another thought or an opportunity: you follow that, and before too long you find yourself embarked on a journey that brings meaning to your life.
Finding your soul’s purpose and embarking on living a values-driven life represents the first level of soul activation.

**Integrating**

The next stage of development involves joining forces with other people to make a bigger difference in the world than any one of you could have done on your own. The people you collaborate with will be people with whom you empathize and resonate; people who share your values and your sense purpose, or who are operating from a similar frequency of vibration and level of consciousness. Making this shift entails moving from independence to interdependence. The level of fulfilment you feel will depend on the impact you have in the world and the quality of the connection you establish with the people you are working with. Integrating with others represents the second level of soul activation.

**Serving**

The last stage of psychological development involves leading a life of selfless service for the common good. You will find yourself getting involved in actions to alleviate the suffering of humanity and finding ways to preserve the world’s life support systems for future generations; embodying compassion and living sustainably in everything you do.

When you reach this stage, you may find that your job and your workplace become too small for you to fulfil your calling. You may need to find a new and larger role for yourself in society: you may become an elder in your community; you may become a mentor to those who are facing life’s challenges; you may care for the sick or dying; or you may find ways to support young children or teenagers in dealing with the difficulties of growing up. It does not matter what you do, your purpose will in some way help to improve the well-being of your family, your organization or the community and society in which you live. Deep down, you will begin to understand that we are all connected energetically, and that by serving others you are serving yourself. Selfless service represents the third level of soul activation. You fully engage at this stage of development when become the servant of your soul.

For a more detailed account of the process of the higher stages of psychological development read *What My Soul Told Me: A Practical Guide to Soul Activation* by Richard Barrett.