

Understanding values, beliefs, and worldviews and
how they relate to consciousness.



A publication of the Barrett Academy for the Advancement of Human Values

Richard Barrett

Understanding values, beliefs, and worldviews and how they relate to consciousness.

What do values, beliefs, and worldviews have in common? They are mental resources we use to help us make decisions about how to get our needs met. Why are they important? Because they are the fundamental drivers of our individual and collective motivations: they are the source of our actions, and behaviours. By measuring our values, we can understand why we do things. We can make the intangible, tangible, thereby allowing us to become conscious. Becoming conscious helps us to become accountable for our actions and allows us to operate with integrity. Only when we are conscious can we design the future we truly want for ourselves – the values that lead to a sense of individual fulfilment and a deep sense of collective wellbeing.^[1]

Values

When I began working with values over 25 years ago, I described values as:

A shorthand way of describing what is important to us.

About ten years later, I began to described values as:

The energetic drivers of our aspirations and intentions.

In recent times, I have come to the following conclusion:

Whatever we need is what we value. In other words, our values reflect our needs.^[2] When we can satisfy a particular need, we experience a sense of inner peace and contentment – emotional equilibrium. When we are content with what have and all our needs have been met, we experience a sense of wellbeing. Based on this understanding, I now define values in the following way:

Values reflect the needs we must satisfy to experience an inner sense of wellbeing at the stage of psychological development we are at.

Our needs change as we grow and develop. What a baby needs to feel a sense of wellbeing is different to what a child needs; what teenagers need is different from young adults, and so on. The needs of each stage of (psychological) development are summarised in Figure 1 and more detail is provided in Table 1.



Figure 1: Seven stages of psychological development

The six modes of decision-making

Humans, like all other living creatures, are natural meaning-making "machines." We are constantly attempting to make meaning of whatever is happening to us so we can:

- Get our survival, safety and security needs met (Maslow's Deficiency Needs), and
- Utilize the different situations that arise in our lives as opportunities to get our personal growth needs met (Maslow's Growth or Being Needs).

Understanding values, beliefs, and worldviews and how they relate to consciousness.

In addition to using our meaning-making and decision-making skills to increase our personal well-being, we can also use these same skills to improve the well-being of our families, our communities, and the society in which we live. Meaning-making and decision-making skills are also vitally important for creating successful businesses and societies.

What is little known is that our meaning-making and decision-making skills improve as we move through the seven stages of psychological development. Therefore, people who focus on their personal evolution, get better and better at meaning-making and decision-making as they grow in consciousness. They become more successful, and they experience higher levels of well-being.

The predominant mode of decision-making at the survival stage is instincts. At the conforming stage, we primarily use subconscious beliefs which are supplemented by conscious beliefs when we reach the differentiating stage. Most people on the planet operate unconsciously from the first three stages of development. This corresponds to Kegan's Socialized Mind.^[4]

As you evolve and grow your primary mode of decision-making changes. The Figure 2 shows the primary mode of decision-making at each stage of psychological development.

When we reach the individuating stage of development our conscious beliefs tend to dominate as we learn to let go of our fear-based subconscious beliefs and at the same time begin to explore our values.

At the self-actualising stage we make the shift from belief-based decision-making to values-based decision-making. This corresponds to Kegan's Self-Authoring Mind.

Values-based decision-making is supplemented by intuition-based decision-making at the integrating stage, and by inspiration-based decision-making at the serving stage.^[5] This corresponds to Kegan's Self-Transforming Mind.

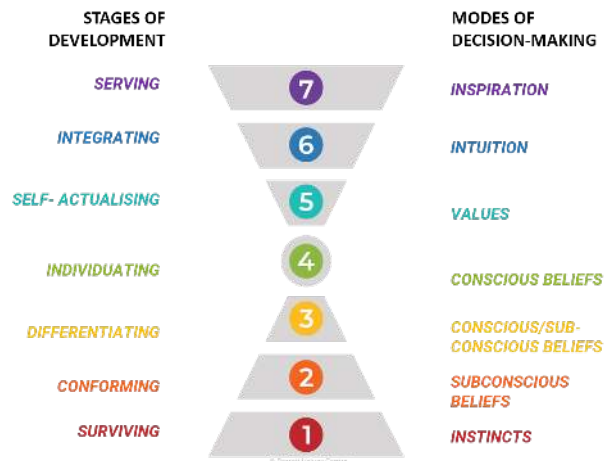


Figure 2: Stages of development and primary modes of decision-making.

Becoming Conscious

The first step in becoming conscious is to be aware of your values and beliefs. We do this through self-reflection. The next step involves becoming aware of your unmet ego needs – the needs from the first three stages of development that you have not yet mastered. These are your subconscious limiting beliefs. Usually, we only become aware of these needs when we get feedback from other people – this is sometimes referred to as the shadow aspect of our personalities. These first two steps in becoming conscious occur at the individuating stage of development. The third step involves becoming aware of your soul's desires – finding your purpose in life. This occurs at the self-actualizing stage of development.

Understanding values, beliefs, and worldviews and how they relate to consciousness.

What are Beliefs?

Beliefs are the assumptions we make that we hold to be true. Because beliefs are assumptions, they may be true, or they may not be true.

There are two types of beliefs – conscious beliefs and subconscious beliefs. We use both types of beliefs to guide our decision-making.

We are aware of our conscious beliefs; we are not aware of our subconscious beliefs. We can easily talk about our conscious beliefs and can explain how they impact our behaviours. We are mostly unaware of our sub-conscious beliefs and unless we dig deep and unearth them, we are not aware of how they impact our behaviours. The more conscious we become the less we allow our subconscious beliefs to dominate our decision-making. It is interesting to note that beliefs tend to separate people, values unite people.

Becoming Conscious also involves:

- Becoming aware of the impact your actions and behaviours have on others and the planet.
- Becoming aware of the impact your thoughts and beliefs have on your mental and physical health.
- Caring about the impact that your actions and behaviours have on others and the planet and caring about the impact your thoughts and beliefs have on your mental and physical health.

Worldviews

A worldview is a collection of beliefs and values that large groups of people (communities, nations, and societies) adopt to support them in their collective decision-making.

When a new worldview emerges, it affects every aspect of people's lives – gender relations, governance systems, social hierarchies, justice systems, child-rearing practices, education systems, health care, spiritual/religious practices, and so on.^[6]

Since the arrival of Homo sapiens on the evolutionary scene 200,000 years ago, six worldviews have emerged. Each worldview was precipitated by changes in human living conditions that triggered new stages of collective human psychological development. The world view of Humanity Awareness, which is now emerging, represents the seventh worldview- a collective shift from the Individuating Stage of Human Development to the Self-Actualizing Stage.^[7] The relationship between the Stages of Personal Development and the Stages of Societal Development (worldviews) is shown in Figure 3 and Table 2.



Figure 3: Stages of Development and Worldviews.

Understanding values, beliefs, and worldviews and how they relate to consciousness.

Worldview	Focus of worldview	Stage of development	Need
7 Humanity Awareness	Self-expression through creativity.	Self-actualizing	To find meaning and purpose.
6 People Awareness	Freedom through equality and accountability.	Individuating	To discover who we really are.
5 Wealth Awareness	Security through status and influence.	Differentiating 1	To feel a sense of self-worth.
4 Nation Awareness	Security through authority and education.	Differentiating 2	To feel a sense of self-worth.
3 State Awareness	Security through power and strength.	Differentiating 3	To feel a sense of self-worth.
2 Tribe Awareness	Safety through loyalty and belonging.	Conforming	To feel safe, protected and loved.
1 Clan Awareness	Survival through sharing and reciprocity.	Surviving	To stay alive and thrive.

Table 2: Stages of development and worldviews.

The worldview that groups adopt reflects the average stage of development of the people in the community, nation, or society. The worldview provides a common belief structure that helps to maintain the internal stability of the group. For example, the stage of development that corresponds to the worldview of People Awareness is the individuating stage and the stage of development that corresponds to the worldview of Wealth Awareness, Nation Awareness and State Awareness are evolutionary substages of the differentiating stage of development (see Table 2).

New worldviews emerge when the consciousness of the people (stage of development) reaches a tipping point that triggers a new stage of development and the emergence of a new worldview. Table 3 shows the historical triggering events that precipitated each worldview.

Worldview	Triggering event
7 Humanity Awareness	Recognition of the climate crisis in the 21 st century.
6 People Awareness	The French Revolution, the abolition of slavery and the adoption of women's voting rights in the late 19 th and early 20 th centuries.
5 Wealth Awareness	The adoption of secularism in the 16 th century.
4 Nation Awareness	The adoption of a State religion in the 4 th and 7 th centuries.
3 State Awareness	Climate change in Africa and East Asia 5,500 years ago.
2 Tribe Awareness	Agriculture in the fertile crescent of the Levant 10,000 years ago.
1 Clan Awareness	The emergence of <i>Homo sapiens</i> 200,000–300,000 years ago.

Table 3: Triggering events that precipitated new worldviews.

Worldviews are comprised of three types of belief systems: a personal belief system, a cultural belief system, and a cosmological belief system. Every worldview is a blend of these three belief systems (See Figure 4).

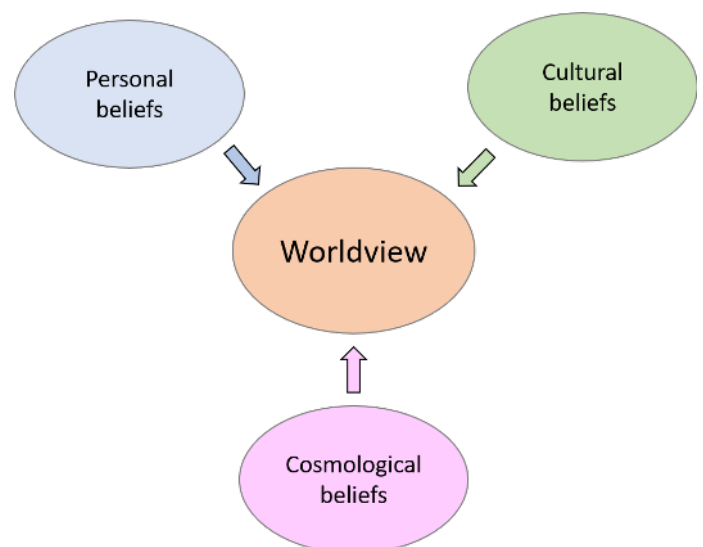


Figure 4: Three belief systems that comprise a worldview.

Understanding values, beliefs, and worldviews and how they relate to consciousness.

Cosmological Belief System: Our cosmological belief system defines our place in the universe: it explains the origin and structure of our material world, our relationship to other dimensions of existence, and, most importantly, how we should conduct and align ourselves with whomever or whatever we consider to be the divine creator/provider so that we can get our needs met in this life and the next. The cosmology of the worldview of Nation Awareness is monotheistic religions. The cosmology of the worldview of Wealth Awareness is science. The cosmology of the worldview of People Awareness is spirituality. The cosmology of the worldview of Humanity Awareness is soul consciousness.

Cultural Belief System: A cultural belief system defines how we relate to other members of our (ethnic) community, and how we should conduct ourselves in that community to get our needs met on a day-to-day basis. This belief system is based on the collective history of the group. It is very closely linked to our sense of identity. As we expand our sense of identity, our cultural belief system becomes less important.

Personal Belief System: A personal belief system defines how we believe we should react or respond to what is happening to us moment to moment so we can get our personal needs met. This belief system will always reflect the priorities of the stage of psychological development we have reached and the unmet needs we still have from previous stages of psychological development that we have not yet mastered.

Currently (data from 2020) there are no nations operating from the worldview of Humanity Awareness but there are an increasing number of individuals operating from this worldview. There are seven nations operating from the worldview of People Awareness. These include the Nordic nations plus Switzerland and New Zealand. There are eight nations operating from the worldview of Wealth Awareness. These include Luxembourg, Austria, Canada, Netherlands, Ireland, Austria, Germany and the UK. There are 18 nations operating from the worldview of Nation Awareness. These include the Japan, Belgium, Singapore, France, the United States, South Korea and Italy. All the remaining nations operate from varying degrees of State Awareness. These include Russia and China.

Global Wellbeing Indicator (GWI)

The worldview of a nation is determined by its GWI score (formerly the Global Consciousness Indicator). The GWI is calculated using 17 national indicators of performance which are aligned to the seven levels of consciousness model. The methodology for calculating the GWI for 145 nations is explained in the GWI website (under construction) at www.globalwellbeingindicators.com.

What is Consciousness?

I define consciousness as awareness with a purpose. The purpose of consciousness is to support an entity in maintaining internal stability and external equilibrium within its framework of existence. If an entity cannot maintain internal stability and external equilibrium it will eventually perish. This applies to atoms, molecules, cells, organisms, creatures, Homo sapiens, organizations and nations.

Understanding values, beliefs, and worldviews and how they relate to consciousness.

Individuals and groups expand in consciousness as their sense of identity becomes more inclusive of others. Thus, someone who identifies themselves as a citizen of the planet has a higher level of consciousness than someone who identifies with a particular nationality. Overtime, the consciousness of Homo sapiens has expanded from the level of clan awareness (survival consciousness) to tribe awareness (relationship consciousness) etc. as shown in Figure 3 and Table 2.

Conclusion

It is vitally important for the future of humanity that we accelerate the evolution of human consciousness – we create a collective shift from the differentiating stage of development (worldview of Wealth Awareness), through the individuating stage of development (worldview of People Awareness) to the self-actualizing stage of development (worldview of Humanity Awareness). Business and political leaders have an important role to play in this process.

In my book, The New Leadership Paradigm, I stated that business is a wholly owned subsidiary of society and society is a wholly owned subsidiary of the planet. If the planet fails, society will fail and if society fails business will fail. Covid-19 is a perfect example of society failing. As a result, businesses all over the world went bankrupt. It therefore behoves our business leaders to develop policies that not only support the planet, but also support society. How business leaders can do this is fully explained in the Humanity Awareness Initiative website – it begins by supporting them in becoming conscious.
www.humanityawarenessinitiative.org.

Copyright Richard Barrett © 2021

1. Richard Barrett, [Everything I Have Learned About Values](#). ↑
2. Abraham Maslow had a Hierarchy of Needs. Richard Barrett expanded this model and created a hierarchy of values. For example, when you need to survive, you value good health and financial stability; when you need to meet your relationship needs, you value friendship and family; when you need to meet your self-esteem needs your values respect and recognition, and so on throughout the seven levels of consciousness. ↑
3. Richard Barrett, [Evolutionary v Coaching](#). ↑
4. Robert Kegan, [The Evolving Self](#). ↑
5. For a full explanation of the six modes of decision-making go to: <http://bitly.ws/c6HF>. ↑
6. Richard Barrett, [Worldview Dynamics, and the Wellbeing of Nations](#). ↑
7. For more information on worldviews go to: <http://bitly.ws/c2Ei> ↑