

A Model for Individual, Institutional and Community Development

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Abstract

Knowing (thinking), loving (feeling) and willing (doing) are the basic capacities essential to the development of individuals, institutions and communities. These capacities correlate to the philosophic ideals of truth, beauty and goodness. How these capacities develop through the physical (body), mental (mind) and spiritual (soul) dimensions of an individual is briefly explained. Individual development is used as a model for examining institutional and community development from physical (objective) and mental/spiritual (subjective) perspectives.

Knowing, Loving and Willing Capacities

The purpose of life is to know, love and create. On an individual level that purpose is expressed by developing the virtues of knowing, loving and willing. On a societal level these virtues take form in the development of communities and institutions able to nurture individual progress and further advance civilization. Knowing, loving and willing then are the vehicles for both individual and collective advancement.

Support for these three aspects of human capacity can be found in religion, philosophy and psychology. In religion, they reflect a synthesis of the guidance found in most of the world scriptures: to know God, to love God and to use our wills to serve God. In philosophy, these capacities are found in the ideals of truth, beauty and good. These three ideals are explored in logic that studies reasoning, aesthetics that studies beauty and ethics that studies moral standards and conduct. In psychology, these capacities are discussed in the literature on the cognitive (knowing), affective (loving) and conative (willing) domains.

Knowing requires independent investigation of reality to understand greater truth. Loving is a force of attraction that gives us energy and directs our actions toward greater beauty and harmony. Willing is the power to choose, to strive to better our lives and to do good.

Physical, Mental and Spiritual Natures

In this section we will explore how these three capacities develop from the perspective of an individual human being. In the next section we will expand this exploration to include collective development in institutions and communities. Individual developmental stages of knowing,

loving and willing can be viewed from the perspective of the three natures of a human being: physical (body), mental (mind) and spiritual (soul). Institutions and communities also have these capacities and natures.

These three natures unfold in similar patterns to one another. For example, we learn to develop knowing capacities beginning with sensation in ways that are comparable to how we learn to develop our mental and spiritual knowing powers of understanding and insight. It is only after our physical eyes and our perception have developed that we can begin to make out shapes that our minds can identify. Over time and many trials, we can perceive most physical objects without any apparent effort. Later we are similarly able to mentally make out concepts and principles with our mental senses and then spiritually identify virtues such as truth and justice with our spiritual senses.

As the mind is largely situated in a physical organ, the brain, some mental and psychological functions have organic requirements, and therefore can not develop until the brain has adequately developed. The soul is completely non-organic, but uses the body and mind as vehicles for expression and progress, and therefore also develops in relationship to them. Only when the person reaches maturity are the full capacities knowing, loving and willing able to be realized through the body, mind and soul.

A simple model to explain how these basic capacities interact with one another through our physical, mental and spiritual natures to develop our human potential is presented below (see Figures 1, 2 and 3). More information on this model may be found in other papers and presentations by the author (see <http://www-instruct.nmu.edu/education/rclarken/>). See especially a webcast entitled *A Model of Human Development* at <http://mediasite.nmu.edu/MediasiteLive30/LiveViewer/NoPopupRedirector.aspx?peid=d941d792-ea65-4df7-9531-19ca1c3456bb&shouldResize=False> and a paper presented at the American Educational Research Association entitled *Knowing, Loving and Willing: Basic Capacities for Developing Human Potential* at <http://www-instruct.nmu.edu/education/rclarken/Knowing,LovingandWilling-AERApap.doc>

These three natures are always active, though more or less so at different times. Certain developments can mark different stages, but the process is continuous. The initial fertilized egg, which constitutes the unified and integrated body at conception, begins the process of dividing itself that will continue until full physical maturity, and then gradually decline until the decomposition of those cells at death. That one-celled body at conception contains all the potential to develop our mature body. The mind and soul exist in potential from the beginning like the body does in our DNA.

Unlike the body in which a stage of growth is reached and then maintained until that body experiences a gradual decline in physical health and capacity until death, the mind and soul have the ability to continue to grow and develop throughout physical life. In physical decline, the brain will begin to lose some powers, and therefore the part of the mind that depends on this organ is affected. The soul reaches its full powers only after death of the body.

Our thinking, feeling and behaving is expanded, altered and influenced by internal and external forces. All require interactions with and within environments to actualize those potentialities. Given the proper environment, our capacities unfold or come into existence naturally. With proper diet, exercise and physical care, the body develops to its full capacity and powers. The skills and functions of the body then become the foundation for developing the mind and soul.

Knowing, Loving and Willing in the Individual, Institution and Community

Similar to individuals, humanity has also gone through analogous stages institutionally and as higher order collective communities. At the lowest levels of development individuals and societies show signs of progress starting with physical survival and then progresses to mental and spiritual concerns. Currently the international institutions and community are moving from predominately materialistic (physical) world views to more mental orientations. More spiritual views will emerge as humanity strives to adapt to new realities and challenges that require higher orientations to effectively address.

Just as individuals have evolved based on genetics, so too have institutions and communities. As individuals are parts of and are affected by institutions and communities, institutions and communities are parts of and are affected by larger and related institutions and communities. Historically institutional and community developments have roughly progressed from lower to higher order organizations—from family units, clans, tribes, feudal states, city states, nation states to the now emerging world state. Humanity has passed through technical, economic, institutional and social developments connected with the hunting and gathering, horticultural, agricultural, and industrial ages, which have led to the present information age and the emerging globalization age. Each higher stage has allowed for greater individual and collective expression of and opportunities for growth of potentialities and capacities.

The individual, the institution and the community are connected to and shape one another. We develop a healthy body, mind and soul in interactions with others, differentiating and integrating their ways of knowing, feeling and willing. We shift from self to ever expanding group foci as we come in contact with wider communities of others, differentiating, selecting and integrating their views and ways.

Development of an individual's cognitive, affective and conative abilities affects, and, is affected by, the institutions that promote and provide knowledge, care and justice, as well as by the community in which these institutions and virtues are nurtured and valued. This developmental process of increasing autonomy, differentiation and integration, results in more complex, higher order wholes, identities, articulations and unities in diversities. These patterns can be seen in the physical, mental and spiritual realities of individuals, institutions and communities. As individual, institutional and community components multiply (differentiating) and combine into larger more complex parts (integrating), forming greater unity and diversity (integrity) and capacity (autonomy) in more intricate networks (systems).

Individuals and communities go through physical (objective) and mental and spiritual (subjective) developmental changes that can be categorized in terms of knowing, loving and willing through the physical, mental and spiritual dimensions of reality. The mental and spiritual

(subjective) can often be seen in physical (objective) manifestations, and visa versa. For example, changes in subjective thought, feeling or volition can be seen with the proper tools and techniques in changes in outward behavior or in internal physiological and neurological functioning. The community is a physical entity that possesses beliefs, values and desires. Institutions are formed related to individual and community needs and values. Each influences the other: individual (part) and community (whole), objective (external-physical) and subjective (internal-mental/spiritual).

What knowing, loving and willing might look like considering the various aspects of individual, community (collective), objective (physical) and subjective (mental and spiritual) transformation is presented in Table 1 below.

The changes in subjective, objective, individual and community reality influence each other. Development in knowing, loving and willing is a gradual, predictable and necessary process. Individuals possess the potentiality for knowing, loving and willing at the beginning of their lives, but only when the physiological correlates and collective forces--community and institutions--come into play do these potentialities manifest themselves.

By understanding the interactive quality of development, we can better appreciate and evaluate the various contributions of all of these factors to present conditions and make adjustments to facilitate progress. We can work with our past and build on it in the present, developing those qualities that will further our advancement and changing those characteristics that are no longer useful or appropriate.

The qualitative and quantitative increases and differences in knowing, loving and willing distinguish humans from the rest of our known universe. It is these individual faculties of knowing, loving and willing that create communities, culture, institutions and society, which in turn then influence the individuals connected to them. These endowments enable people to develop and advance civilization, which enable individuals to further develop and advance.

Individual subjectivity is generally influenced through our objective view of reality, which normally is processed through our physical senses. Community cultures and institutional structures pass on traditional knowledge that is generally accepted by the individual. We have access to an intuitive and spiritual sense that some call inspiration and insight, which can transcend both our physical senses and community traditions, though it may be influenced by them.

We differentiate and integrate our ways of being, feeling and knowing within institutional and community contexts. As we come into contact with wider groups of others in our institutions and communities, differentiating, selecting and integrating their views and ways using capacities and criteria developed at earlier stages, our sense of knowledge and self is expanded and altered. All of these changes in knowledge affect institutions and the communities in which we operate, as well as is affected by them.

Communities and institutions often define and reinforce norms. Communities and the institutions within them are being challenged by the waves of new knowledge, values and attitudes that

threaten their views and beliefs. They struggle to find the balance between change and stability, trying to adapt to shifting conditions.

Generally the influence of whole (community) on the part (individual) is greater than the part on the whole. If a community and its institutions are not open to the progressive thoughts available to them from individuals, they will suffer decline. Communities and institutions throughout the world are in travail, clinging to ways, means and traditions that are no longer suited to the present age. Resistance to change is a normal reaction as it is a dying from one stage of reality to be born into another higher stage which will transcend the lower, but incorporates its learning and features into the higher (see Figure 1). Challenge and crisis are the normal route to change for both the individual and the community.

Universal education, justice and basic care are fundamental human rights. The acquisition of knowledge, morality and love for all is the primary means for the advancement of individuals and societies. Governments and other institutions should see that the necessary infrastructure exists so that its communities can receive education, justice and care adequate to their individual and collective needs and aspirations.

It is the institutions of society that produce and manage the resources and support and make available the technology, discoveries, research, laws, inventions, arts, reforms and regulations necessary for progress. One of the most potent institutions for progress is religion, but it can also be an impediment by clinging to superstitions and rejecting or trying to suppress knowledge that does not accord with its conceptions. True religion serves as the well spring for individual, community and institutional progress. Devoid of religion, no true happiness or well being can be found individually or collectively. The corruption of religion is the surest sign of the downfall and collapse of a society and civilization. Science provides a means for eliminating superstitions and dogmas from religion.

Religions have evolved, building on preceding beliefs and introducing necessary adaptations according to the growing spiritual, social, cultural and physical demands of each successive age. Each age has different needs and requirements which religion must address if it is to be relevant and useful. The paternalistic and mythological aspects of religion that were appropriate for a less developed humanity need to be replaced by standards and approaches more suited to the current needs. Individuals and communities in turn affect the institution of religion adapting it to their personal biases and cultural practices.

Conclusion

Individual and collective change is needed in knowledge, love and action. An example of how this will look can be seen in the principle of the oneness of humanity. Objectively this principle that there is only one human species, though varied in superficial and secondary features, is strongly supported by findings in the physical and human sciences, e.g., genetics, physiology, medicine. Individually realizing this principle will largely be subjective: the seeing of all peoples as part of one whole family, the human race. Though objective science confirms this fact, prejudices and blind imitations continue to subjectively hold much of humanity back from acknowledging it. Collectively the realization of the oneness of humankind will be manifest in

subjective and objective aspects of institutions and communities as we increasingly move towards a world culture with common information; values; and ways of thinking, feeling and acting; along with global institutions, corporations, standards, technology and communications.

The physical, mental and spiritual barriers among nations, religions, classes and other institutions that have kept peoples apart for centuries are breaking down in the face of a great movement towards oneness and unity. The oneness of humankind will entail the elimination of prejudice of all kinds; the realization of the oneness of religion; a world government supported by worldwide institutions to administer its affairs; a uniform system of standards, laws, regulations and commerce and a universal auxiliary language. The new level of global unity and world community to which the peoples are being rapidly propelled is that of one social organism representing the rich diversity of humankind.

By using the principles in this paper, we should better be able to understand and analyze the forces that are at work and use them for our individual and collective benefit. Knowledge, love and will are the primary tools needed for change. The better these capacities are developed individually, the better the change they can produce collectively in communities and institutions. Ignorance, apathy and lethargy limit progress and well being. The most fundamental aspect of progress is to replace ignorance with knowledge, apathy with love and lethargy with willpower. When knowledge and its acquisition are guided by love and will, and when love and willpower are guided by knowledge, benefits will accrue to the individual and the community.

Subjective knowledge, love and resolve alone will produce no results unless applied to the realities and problems facing the individual and society. Objective results and manifestations are signs of subjective understanding, caring and motivation. Knowledge combined with passion, resolve and action bears fruit. Individuals must strive to obtain truth, harmony and goodwill, communities should encourage and value them and institutions should supply the ways and means for their attainment.

	Knowing	Loving	Willing
Individual/Physical (It-objective body/brain)	Instincts, Conditioned responses	Hormones, Instinctual emotional reactions	Natural drives, Stimulus and response
Individual/Mental-Spiritual (I-subjective)	Thoughts (in my mind), perceived reality	Feelings (in my heart), affect	Intentions (in my being), desires, goals
Community/Physical (They-objective, ex. institutions)	Learning and educating	Caring and unifying	Law and order
Community/Mental-Spiritual (We-subjective, ex. culture)	Understanding (Truth)	Values (Beauty)	Morals (Good)

Table 1: Knowing, Loving and Willing in the Individual, Community, Physical, Mental/Spiritual Dimensions

Human Nature

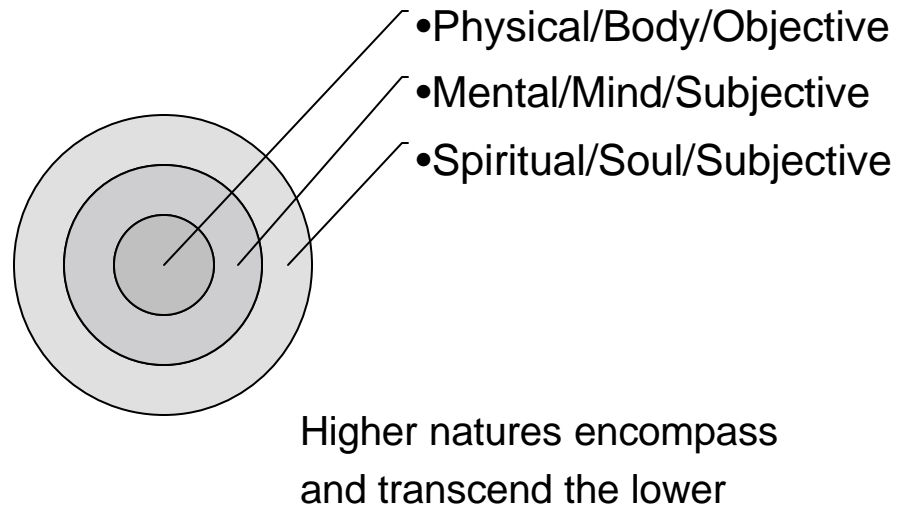


Figure 1: Physical, Mental and Spiritual Natures

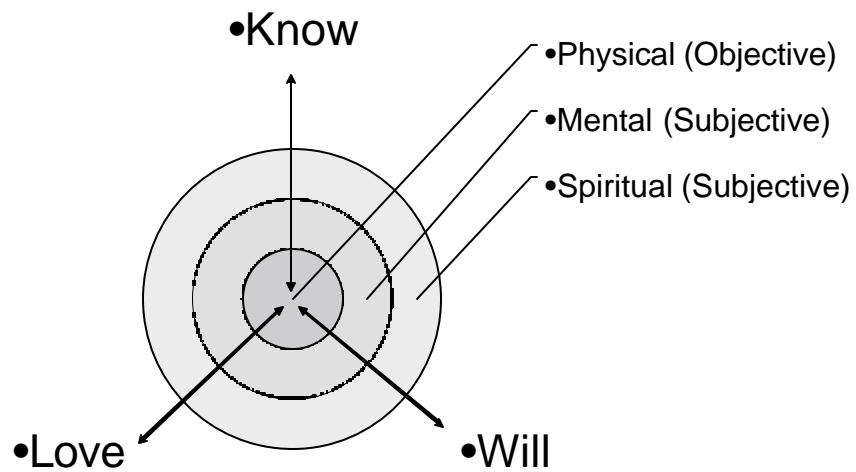


Figure 2. Know, Love and Will in Physical, Mental and Spiritual Domains

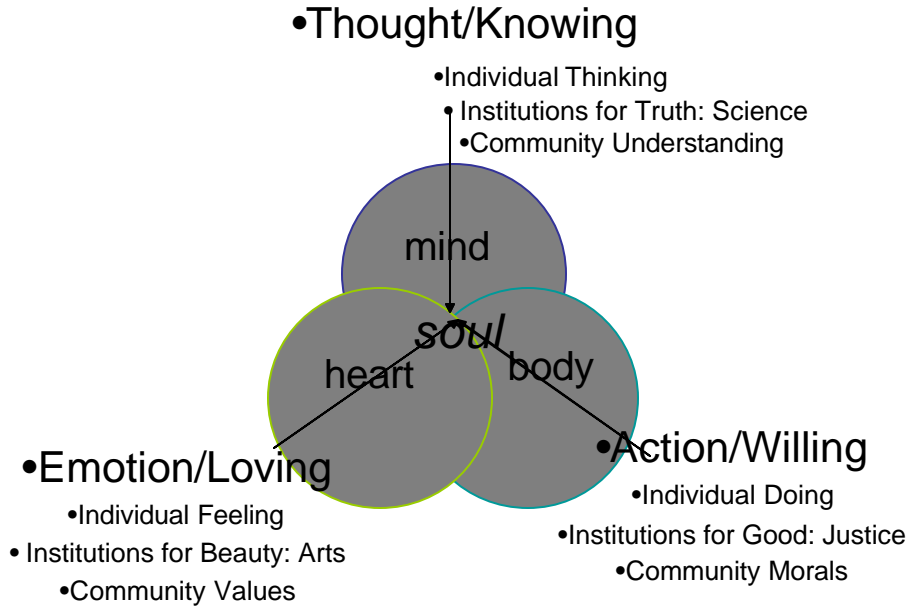


Figure 3. Know, Love and Will through Body, Heart, Mind and Soul in Individuals, Institutions and Communities.