

Esoteric Psychology And the Psychology of Motivation

By Ron Newbold

In the European tradition, speculation on what makes people behave as they do goes back, as so many things do, to the Greeks. What motives drive, orient, and select behavior? One answer to the problem, the Epicurean, was essentially hedonistic, that is, humans naturally sought pleasure and avoided pain. Seeking pleasure and avoiding pain can be seen as needs. Humans have a need to do what maximizes their comfort and pleasure or minimizes discomfort and pain. Such a belief in forms much psychological thought about motivation in the 20th Century. However, the ways in which pain is avoided and pleasure sought have been elaborated into an array of different needs, since it was recognized that a particular act or form of behavior could have a variety of causes; hedonism alone was too simplistic an explanation for the complexities of human motivation.

A Major Advance in the Study of Motivation

A major advance in the study of motivation came in 1938 with the publication of Henry Murray's *Explorations in Personality*. Murray identified 20 needs that drove or motivated human behavior. He defined a need as "a force that organizes perception, apperception, intellection, conation and action in such a way as to transform in a certain direction an existing, unsatisfying situation" (Robinson 1992: 220) and believed that the presence of these needs was best elicited from the unconscious by studying the spontaneous imagination as it manifests in free association, fantasy, and creative work. He devised a number of techniques for identifying the

presence of needs, notably the Thematic Apperception Test, and took into account the effects of environmental pressures on their expression. The thrust of this work was to measure the strength of motives rather than list personal characteristics and construct syndromes. Three of Murray's needs were elaborated and further investigated by followers such as Atkinson (1958), McClelland (1961, 1975, 1985), and Winter (1973). These three, the need for power, affiliation and achievement, happen to closely correspond to the three rays of aspect of esoteric psychology. For the next four decades, theory and experiment by a number of psychologists illustrated and elucidated the functioning of these three needs on individual and societal levels. It is with their work that this paper is primarily concerned. Although these needs are recognized as having various levels and aspects, they are essentially personality centered and as explanations of behavior lack the multilevel approach offered by esoteric psychology; they correspond with only some of the features typical of any one ray, as will be apparent below.

Motivational and Esoteric Psychology

If we set aside the earlier drive and field theories of Hull and Lewin, we find, by contrast, that both motivational and esoteric psychology postulate an enduring center or director and monitor of operations that can exercise a degree of choice about just how to satisfy a need or express the ray type or energy that colors the individual's component vehicles. Esoteric psychology would account for the expression of a personality ray by factors such

as the degree of soul influence and the presence and resultant combination of other rays in an individual's make-up. To further complicate the picture, ray influences can come from zodiacal constellations and from the planets, from the cities and countries one inhabits, and from the rays that play cyclically through the planet as a whole. Therefore, while the nature of the social and physical environment can determine the course of one's spiritual evolution and the manner in which ray energy manifests, that environment in turn is permeated by various ray inputs. Motivational need theory argues that the strength of a particular need can be temporarily and enduringly increased by environmental stimulus, whether from parents, school, or society. For example, the need for achievement which drives much entrepreneurial activity can be boosted by training and indoctrination. Advertising offers clear evidence of how needs can be both created and strengthened. More problematic is the evidence for fluctuations over a century or more, on a societal level, of the strength of a need. The evidence for such fluctuations, derived from content analysis of creative productions such as art, literature, and primary school readers, while persuasive, begs the question as to why they occur at all. What stimulates their rise and fall? Historical stimuli such as war, revolution, and impoverishment can be adduced, but in turn their presence has to be accounted for.

The Rays and Motivation

The First Ray: The First ray of will and power, closely attuned to the Law of Synthesis, manifests differently according to whether it operates at the soul or personality level and has its characteristic glimmers, strengths, and weaknesses. Essentially, it is about purpose, direction, initiative, and the exercise of power that can produce widespread creation as well as destruction. Positively, it can be seen at work in the visionary leader or principled statesman. Negatively, it is evident in self-

centered power-hunger, ruthless domination, unrelenting ambition, and the world of shortsighted politics.

Of the three needs studied extensively by motivational psychologists, the need for power has been perhaps the most thoroughly explored and illustrated. It is about having impact, directing, organizing, arguing, and enjoying status. A sophisticated portrait has been built up of how people satisfy their need for power and, correspondingly, cope with the fear of helplessness. This can range from imbibing a sense of powerfulness from a charismatic leader (reminiscent of sixth ray devotion) or alcohol, to the creation of a sense of self-control and autonomy, to the exercise of leadership, and to identification with and subordination to a higher duty and philanthropic organizations.

The need for power can be personalized for the self or socialized for others. Seeking a position of power in a voluntary organization, trade union, or student body may or may not be a prelude to a career in politics, but typical methods to ensure success include building alliances and a network of obligations and making oneself known and popular. An ability to work with and attract people is as necessary as the ability to inspire and direct them.

The comprehensives of the studies on power as a need to be satisfied allows the concept to be applied to almost every area of life. Differences between cultures can be illuminated by the way power is understood and valued, or rather, how the need for power is satisfied. Little emphasized in academic discussions of power is the first ray feature of detachment, though it is implicit in observations about the power-seekers' tendency to avoid or conceal recourse to expert aid and keep threats to leadership at bay by being unique, needing to stand out from the crowd, and embracing unpopular positions. Not emphasized at all is synthesis and why, along with detachment, it is so integral to the first ray, arising as it does from an intuition of the essential oneness of all and identity with that greater oneness.

The Second Ray: The second ray of love-

wisdom is the way of the teacher and relates to the Law of Attraction. It is characterized by empathy, receptivity, patience, tolerance, the need to relate to others, and a strong sense of the communal good. Its weaknesses include fearfulness, over-sensitivity, over attachment to things and persons, non-assertiveness, and too much love of being appreciated. The need to be loved can lead to compromises of integrity, difficulty in saying no, a fear of standing alone, and a reluctance to make hard decisions. The need for affiliation, seen as being about socializing and enjoying friends, has been the least thoroughly explored of the major needs; the need for intimacy has been spliced onto it to provide a fuller picture of what can be seen as a response to the fear of rejection and loneliness.

In the need to integrate, be with, and relate to people, and the need to be loved and to avoid confrontation, there is a clear affinity with aspects of the second ray. Significantly, people who have a high need for affiliation are sometimes not liked much, as if the craving for approval, ingratiation, and lack of integrity involved in the search for affection is sensed and rejected. More positively, the need for affiliation can breed loyalty, kindness, benevolence, unselfishness, keen letter writers and club-joiners, a willingness to pardon, and a compassionate sense of fellow feeling. According to the analysis of U.S. presidential inaugural speeches, the highest scorer for affiliation was the only one who did not have to engage in the ruthless combat of election to win his position, Gerald Ford. He justified his pardon of Richard Nixon by observing, "The man has suffered enough."

In English history, religious revivals are associated with rises in the national need for affiliation, so there is a recognition of the connection between religion and the role of the preacher. What is lacking in the portrait of the affiliation and intimacy need is the wisdom aspect of the second ray, the connection with intuition, illumination, consciousness expansion, initiation, the role of the teacher, and the place of the second ray Word of Power,

"I see the greatest light," as well as the downside of the pursuit of wisdom, excessive absorption in study and coldness towards others.

The Third Ray: The third ray of active intelligence is the way of the manipulator, weaver, intellectual, and economist. It entrains with the Law of Economy. It is characterized by abstract thought, mental fertility and agility, planning and strategy, executive and business aptitudes, rapidity of speech and movement, verbosity, restlessness, adaptability, and concern with efficiency and economy. Weaknesses include excessive criticism and cerebralness, conspiratorial deviousness and deceit, opportunism, love of variety, having too many irons in the fire, and indifference to material detail.

The need for achievement, driven in part by the fear of failure, seen as a restless striving and busyness, clearly embraces a number of these features. Essentially it is about competition, the pursuit of excellence, and pride in performance, pursued in such a way as to increase efficiency. Possibly a better label would be doing things better and more rapidly, improving operations, and achieving maximum output from the minimum input. It thus seeks economy in every way and abhors unnecessary waste, preferring to save rather than squander. Winning competitions, breaking records, and achieving standards of excellence usually require energy, prudence, intelligence, foresight, self-confidence, and perseverance; a favorite arena for high achievers is commerce.

Entrepreneurs typically have a strong need for achievement and economic efficiency and are usually willing travelers. Some also operate in shady ways. The Greek god Hermes was a patron of travel and commerce and had a reputation as a trickster. In their anxiety to achieve, some may cheat (athletes taking drugs) and engage in sharp practices. The shortest line between two points may be quick and efficient at times, but taking this route can lead to amorality, dishonesty, and unscrupulousness. The need for achievement captures the restless striving, routine-

avoidance, and dynamism of the third ray but does not emphasize its tendency to abstraction. Being critical, however, is a competitive ploy; intellectual activity and seeking new information can also be a competitive arena.

The third ray is strongly associated with the media and communication, and with success in fields such as academe, business, and sports coaching where they are aided by persuasiveness, articulateness, and good communication skills. While an interest in novelty, cousin of variety, may be a third ray characteristic, the practical inventiveness of some high achievers may be more of a fifth ray characteristic.

Comparing the Rays and Motivation

The Words of Power of the first and third rays, respectively "I assert the fact" and "Purpose itself am I" both suggest force and dynamism; the two rays need careful disentangling at times to emphasize their basic difference. Similarly, it is easy to confuse the need for power and achievement; their essential difference must be delineated. They may indeed overlap, as when winning a competition confers power as well as acclaim (an Olympic gold medallist takes the opportunity to run for office), and when a signal achievement has impact on an audience (building a better mousetrap increases one's power as the world beats a path to the door). Furthermore, the doodles of high achievers feature diagonal, arrow-type designs as well as circuitous s-shapes.

But the orientation of power is essentially towards the present or short-term future, getting the world to come to one's door anyway. Power in the distant future does not really count. Some planning is necessary, of course, to gain power, but often planning seeks to increase existing power. Achievers are more future-oriented, more willing to pursue distant goals and delay gratification to reach a high standard of performance. Power can be more creative than achievement when it pushes through bold initiatives and dramatic

innovations. It breaks through rather than rearranges.

Just as esoteric psychologists ponder upon the combination of rays in an individual's or group's make-up, so motivational psychologists have investigated the effects of various levels of need, such as high, medium, or low, for power, affiliation, and achievement (all three or any two) in individuals or groups. Scores for each of these three motives, when derived from U.S. presidential inaugural speeches, throw much light on the nature of each presidency. Many political leaders have a high need for power; those who also have a low need for affiliation tend to be more ruthless than those who have a higher affiliation need. A high societal need for affiliation can protect individual rights against government violence. The elevation of the need for power in the fantasy life of a nation, derived from imaginative literature, indicates increased likelihood of civil strife and foreign war immediately or soon after. An upsurge in achievement imagery may foreshadow and be a factor in increased inventiveness and entrepreneurial and economic activity, such as occurred in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Europe. A good deal has been written on the connection between the need for achievement, Protestantism, and capitalism supposedly fostered by the Protestant ethic. Protestantism emerged in the sixteenth century and capitalism took off then too. The third ray came into planetary manifestation in 1425.

Finally, a word on some of the other needs that Murray identified and which have not received the same development as power, affiliation, and achievement. The first ray could include the need for autonomy, defined as the need to act independently of others or of social values and expectations. Indicative adjectives include aggressive, aloof, autocratic, cynical, hard-hearted, individualistic, opinionated, and self-confident. The high scorer on autonomy is independent, autonomous, assertive, willing to take initiatives and lead, and often indifferent to the feelings and preferences of others. Also

germane is the need for aggression, defined as engaging in behaviors that hurt others, and indicated by adjectives such as arrogant, autocratic, cruel, forceful, hostile, quarrelsome, hard-hearted, and intolerant.

The second ray could include the need for nurturance, defined as engaging in behaviors which extend material or emotional benefits to others--indicated by adjectives such as affectionate, appreciative, considerate, cooperative, forgiving, friendly, kind, loyal, soft-hearted, and warm. High nurturers may be benevolent, but too attentive to the feelings and wishes of others.

The need for change would be the most useful addition to the third ray's achievement aspect. Defined as seeking novelty of experience and avoiding routine, its typical adjectives are adaptable, changeable, curious, and distractible.

Exhibition speaks for the fourth ray, behavior that elicits the immediate attention of others (reminiscent of the need for power) and which is affected, arrogant, boastful, humorous, jolly, loud, outgoing, poised, quick-tempered, self-seeking, unconventional, uninhibited, and witty. Also relevant is the need for sentience, seeking and enjoying sensuous impressions, and displaying genuine delight in the arts.

The fifth ray, like the first and sixth, includes aspects of the need for endurance defined as persisting in any task, determined, industrious, methodical, painstaking, patient, persevering, precise, rigid, serious, steady, self-controlled, and concerned about truth. The need for understanding embraces the second and third rays as well as the fifth ray.

The devotee aspect of the sixth ray is suggested by the need for abasement, expressing feelings of inferiority through self-criticism and guilt, and the need for deference, seeking and sustaining subordinate roles in relationship to others.

The seventh ray has most affinity with the need for order, emphasizing neatness, organization, and planning activities. Indicative adjectives are cautious,

conservative, deliberate, formal, dependable, fussy, logical, methodical, predictable, and rigid.

The Relationship between Motivational and Esoteric Psychology

Motivational psychology, in the sense in which we have used it, is sometimes known as dynamic psychology because it insists that humans be studied as dynamic, developing wholes. It falls within the broad stream of Freudian and psychoanalytic psychology and is distinct from behavioral, humanistic, and transpersonal psychology. It differs from esoteric psychology in its focus on the remedying of an unsatisfactory situation rather than the emanation of a force. Work on power, affiliation, and achievement drives seems to in relative abeyance. It may be that further elaboration will bring about closer matches with the first, second, and third rays.

By focusing on the contents of the imagination and discounting deeds except as they provide a window on interior life, motivational psychology may or may not be thought to have a special affinity with esoteric psychology. But if one were to call motives "rays" and observe what has been uncovered and published in life-science books and journals, it is clear that contemporary academic psychologists, adopting their own investigative procedures, have developed a taxonomy that has much in common with certain teachings of Alice Bailey and does much to corroborate them.

As it happens, much of the psychological work mentioned above took place while, or not long after, the Bailey books were being composed and published. The foundations for making the match between the two taxonomies more complete, by investigating further the "rays" of order, deference, exhibition, and so forth, are already in place, although 20 needs and seven rays means that the correspondence will always be limited. Motivational psychology will never match the comprehensiveness of the

combination of esoteric psychology and esoteric astrology in accounting for individual, national, and global characteristics and fluctuations.

Rand McNally, 1973.

Winter, D. *The Power Motive*. London: Free Press, 1973.

Bibliography

Atkinson, J. (ed.). *Motives in Fantasy, Action and Society*. Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1958

Atkinson, J. *Introduction to Motivation*. New York: Van Nostrand, 1964

Bailey, A. *Esoteric Psychology*, Vols. I - II. New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1936, 1942.

Franken, R. *Human Motivation*. Monterey: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1982.

Fyans, L. (ed.). *Achievement Motivation*. New York: Plenum Press, 1978.

McClelland, D. *The Achieving Society*. Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1961.

McClelland, D. *Power: The Inner Experience*. New York: Irvington, 1975.

McClelland, D. *Human Motivation*. Palo Alto: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1985.

Murray, H. *Explorations in Personality*. New York: Oxford U.P., 1938.

Robbins, M. *Tapestry of the Gods*, Vols. I & II, Jersey City Heights: University of the Seven Rays Publishing House, 1988.

Robinson, F. *Love's Story Told. A Life of Henry A. Murray*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard U.P., 1992.

Spence, J.(ed.). *Achievement and Achievement Motives*. San Francisco: Freeman, 1983.

Stewart, A. (ed.). *Motivation and Society*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1982.

Wiener, B. *Theories of Motivation*. Chicago:

Copyright © 1997 Ron Newbold--All rights reserved.

Ron Newbold is a Senior Lecturer in the Center for European Studies, University of Adelaide, South Australia. He became interested in motivational and esoteric psychology as a means to better understand history. He is currently investigating some early proponents of chaos theory and can be contacted via email at rnewbold@arts.adelaide.edu.au.