

Noetic Psychology: a Conceptual Model of Psychology Integrating Spirituality with Affect, Cognition, Behaviour and Physiology

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Abstract

A theoretical model of “human be-ing” is fundamental. This paper introduces such a model called Noetic Psychology. The Noetic Psychology model developed by Dr. Leigh Kibby describes the relationship between spirituality and the psychological and physiological dimensions of our existence. The creation of this model provides a new and innovative structure for exploring and examining spirituality and values as a function of the fulfillment of fundamental human needs and drivers and the affective and cognitive expression of these needs and drivers in human behaviour and physiology.

Introduction

Spirituality, the attainment of meaning, is a natural inclination (Frankl, 1963, 1967). Lives without meaning suffer existential i.e. spiritual, angst (Frankl, 1963, 1967). We also know that emotions generate existential angst and a search for meaning involving the integration of affect and cognition (Rimé 1999, Rimé et al 1991 a & b, 1992, 1998, Rimé, B. & Zech, 2001) and that there is a clear connection between emotions and physiology (Spiegel, 1999; Pennebaker et al 2001, 2003). Therefore, spirituality is inevitably connected to our emotional, intellectual and physiological selves. Hence, any model of human psychology must include the emotional, cognitive and physiological dimensions of human life with the realisation of our spiritual journey through the attainment of meaning.

This paper therefore proposes a theoretical model of human psychology which provides a model of the relationship between spirituality, affect, cognition and physiology.

This paper therefore integrates hitherto disparate but related notions of meaning (Frankl 1963, 1969), the self (Wilber 1993), affect and cognition (Kibby and Härtel 2002) using a systems thinking approach akin to Wilber's (2000) integration of spirituality, science and human existence. The integrated model was developed by Dr. Leigh Kibby utilising the affect-cognition relationship proposed by Kibby and Härtel (2002, 2003 a & b, 2004 a & b). and the quest for meaning proposed by Frankl (1963, 1967).

Affect, Cognition, Spirituality and Physiology

Human beings are comprised of affect, cognition and physiology (Härtel, C.E.J., Kibby, L. & Pizer, M. 2003), a contention which is supported by a strong body of research into the relationship between emotions and cognition (Rimé 1999, Rimé et al 1991 a & b,

1992, 1998, Rimé, B. & Zech, 2001), emotions and physiology (Spiegel, 1999) and emotions and spirituality (Tischler 2002). We also know that human beings are driven to seek purpose and meaning (Frankl 1963, 1967, Wong 1998), a search that is as true in the workplace as it is in life (Ikehara, 1999, Butts 1999, Neal et al 1999). This spiritual search links behaviour with action and is especially significant in a challenging and changing world (Dehler & Welsh, 1994).

Noetic skills (see Kibby and Härtel, 2002 and 2004 a & b) proposed emotions management techniques that facilitated spirituality. By providing the Noetic model upon which those skills were based, this paper provides a framework that address Ikehara's (1999) concern for integration of the multiple dimensions of the self. The model which provided the basis for behavioural techniques is the missing element in the discussions of Senge (1990), Fairholm (1996), Burdett (1998), Cacioppe (2000 a & b) and the growing search for spiritual leadership.

The Noetic model can also contribute to health which scientific evidence suggests improves through managing emotions (Spiegel, 1999; Pennebaker et al 2001, 2003) and well-being through the formation of meaning (Wong, 2000) which is linked to emotions (Rimé 1999, Rimé et al 1991 a & b, 1992, 1998, Rimé, B. & Zech, 2001). By doing so, the Noetic model will also foster the type of psychological success proposed by Mirvis and Hall (1996).

The techniques of Noetics (see Kibby & Härtel, 2002, 2004 a & b), include facilitating narrative in order to discover meaning and so also appears to answer questions regarding narrative currently being explored by some researchers (see, Janson et al 2006) whilst providing connectedness to the inner self (see Stamp 1971). Thus the Noetic model

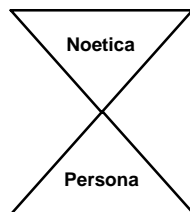
can also fulfill can foster positive mental states that Walsh and Vaughan (1993) propose flow from ethical behaviours.

Overview of the Noetic model

As proposed by Kibby & Härtel (2004b), “Noetic leadership is a new kind of leadership built around principles of servant-leadership (Spears, 2003, 1996), spiritual leadership (Fairholm, 1996), transcendental leadership (Cardona, 2000) and the counseling models and therapeutic interventions designed to resolve the existential dilemma,” Kibby & Hartel (2004a, p 3). This paper now looks at the heuristically developed Noetic model of Dr. Kibby which underpinned the Noetic proposition in Kibby & Härtel (2003a & 2004a).

Dr. Kibby proposed two components of the self, the Persona (Ego) and Noetica (Soul) an approach consistent with Wilber’s (1993) separation of differing aspects/dimensions of the self. Figure one below depicts the initial Noetic model.

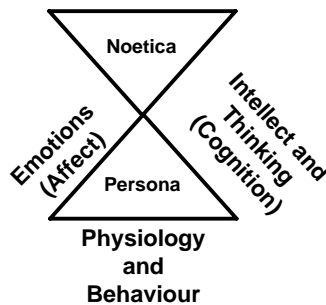
Figure One – The Noetic Model depicting the two dimensions of the self, the Persona and Noetica



By applying the notion of a relationship between affect (emotions), cognition and behaviour (see: (Rimé 1999, Rimé et al 1991 a &b, 1992, 1998, Rimé, B. & Zech, 2001, Kibby & Hartel 2003), Pennebaker’s exploration of the relationship between physiology

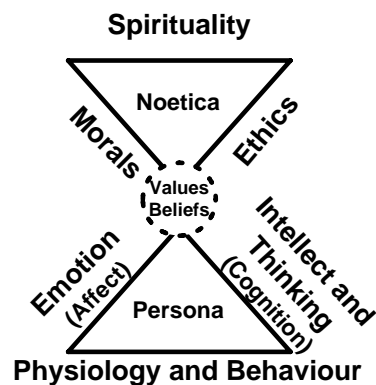
and emotions (see Pennebaker et al 2001, 2003), Spiegel's (1999) assertion of the physiological connection between emotions and thinking and the contention that emotions and thinking govern attitude and behaviour (see Fry 2004), the Noetic model can then be expanded as depicted as in figure two below.

Figure Two – The Noetic Model including emotions, thinking and behaviour



The Noetic model further evolves as depicted in diagram three below with the inclusions of concepts associated with values, ethics and morals and the relationship between these and spirituality as proposed by Frankl (1963, 1967) and Fry (2003).

Figure three - The Noetic Model including Ethics and Morals



The Noetic model now depicts the relationship between affect and cognition as proposed by Brown, (1976), values and spirituality (Frankl, 1967, Fry 2004), and emotions and meaning (Kibby & Härtel, 2002 and 2004 a & b) and emotions and spirituality (Tischler, 2002), plus the contention that values transform behaviour into the spiritual realm by creating meaning (Frankl 1963, 1967). In summary, the model explains the relationship between "Psychophysiological" self (Parks, 1997) and the spiritual dimension.

Conclusion: the Noetic Model and research

The Noetic model proposed in this paper offers an exploratory platform for embracing the notions of values, ethics, spirituality proposed by researchers such as Fry (2004) with which the model is highly consistent. The model also addresses spiritual needs (see Frankl 1963, 1967 and Fry 2003) and psychological well-being as hypothesized by Ryff and Singer (2001), affect and cognition (Rimé 1999, Rimé et al 1991 a & b, 1992, 1998, Rimé, B. & Zech, 2001) emotions and physiology (Spiegel, 1999; Pennebaker et al 2001, 2003). As such, the Noetic model is a substantial and new construct which provides a new basis for research to into the relationship between affect, cognition, ethics, morals and spirituality.

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