**The Intrinsic Foundations of Extrinsic Motivations and Goals: Towards a**

**Unified Humanistic Theory of Wellbeing and Change**

Mick Cooper

University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, UK

*Author Note*

Mick Cooper, Counselling Unit, University of Strathclyde.

Correspondence to: Mick Cooper, Counselling Unit, School of Psychological

Sciences and Health, 76 Southbrae Drive, Glasgow G13 1PP, E-mail:

mick.cooper@strath.ac.uk

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**Summary**

A key contribution of both classical and contemporary humanistic theories is their distinction between *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* motivations and drives, and their demonstration that psychological wellbeing is more strongly associated with the former than the latter. However, such a dimensionalization raises the question of how extrinsic motivations and goals emerge; and classic humanistic attempts to account for this tend to contradict some of the basic tenets of humanistic thinking: that human beings are integrated, meaning-seeking agencies consistently striving to maintain and enhance their being. An alternative framework is therefore proposed, a *hierarchy of wants*, in which extrinsic motivations and goals are seen as attempts -- albeit often unsuccessful ones -- to reach the highest order, most intrinsic goals. Here, "extrinsic" motivations and goals are not considered pathogenic, *per se*, but problematic because of their indirectness and lack of fit to present contexts. This model also suggests that human beings are most likely to achieve a state of wellbeing when their goals are *synergetically* related: determined both by the internal configuration of goals and external resources.

At the heart of humanistic models of personality, development and wellbeing is a distinction between *intrinsic*, *authentic*, or *congruent* motivations and goals, and those that are considered to be *extrinsic* to, or *incongruent* with, a person's authentic needs and experiences. Rogers (1951, 1959, 1961), for instance, in his classical person-centered model of personality and development, argues that human beings come into the world with an *organismic valuing process*: an innate tendency to positively value experiences which maintain or enhance the organism. Through the existence of conditional positive regard, however, they are seen as coming to introject the values of others and act in ways that are no longer self-maintaining or self-enhancing. Similarly Fromm (1942, 1961, 1991, 1965b), like other advocates of a humanistic psychoanalytic and Marxist perspective (e.g., Marcuse, 1966), argues that human beings, within a capitalist socio-economic context, come to develop *false* and synthetic needs; *alienated* from their *genuine* human motivations and desires.

Developing these basic humanistic ideas, contemporary self-determination theorists have gone on to postulate a continuum of motivational types, ranging from nonself-determined motivations to self-determined motivations (Ryan & Deci, 2000). At the most extreme nonself-determined end is *amotivation*; followed by four increasingly self-determined types of extrinsic motivation (*external regulation*, *introjected regulation*, *identified regulation*, *integrated regulation*); with intrinsic motivation at the most self-determined end of the spectrum (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Most recently, this framework has been extended to the domain of goals through a distinction between *intrinsic*, or *self-concordant* (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999; Sheldon & Houser-Marko, 2001), goals, "those that are likely to satisfy basic and inherent psychological needs" (Kasser & Ryan, 1996, p. 280) and *extrinsic* goals, those that "primarily entail obtaining contingent external approval and rewards" (Kasser &

Ryan, 1996, p. 280).  Examples of intrinsic goals, as given by Kasser and Ryan

(2001), are such desires as for self-acceptance, affiliation and community feelings: all

attempts to directly satisfy such basic psychological needs as relatedness, autonomy

and personal growth.  By contrast, examples that they give of extrinsic goals are the

desires for wealth, appearance, and fame: all outcomes that are intended to heighten

one's standing in the eyes of others and to earn public admiration.

Over the last two decades, a wealth of research has demonstrated the empirical

validity, and importance, of this intrinsic--extrinsic dimension.  Self-determination

research, for instance, has shown that people who are intrinsically motivated,

compared with those who are externally controlled, have more "interest, excitement

and confidence" in their actions, leading to "enhanced performance, persistence and

creativity" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 69).  Similarly, while the pursuit of intrinsic goals

is associated with higher levels of psychological wellbeing and greater achievement of

goals; the pursuit of extrinsic goals is associated with lower wellbeing, lower vitality,

and more anxiety, depression and physical symptoms (Kasser & Ryan, 1993, 1996,

2001; Koestner, Lekes, Powers, & Chicoine, 2002; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999, p. 484;

Sheldon & Kasser, 1998).  Confirmatory factor analysis has also demonstrated the

validity of this intrinsic--extrinsic goal dimension across a range of cultures (Grouzet

et al., 2005).

**The aetiology of extrinsic motivations and goals**

Theory and research based on this intrinsic--extrinsic dimension is one of the major

contributions -- if not *the* major contribution -- that humanistic psychology has made

to the wider psychological field (Cooper, O'Hara, Schmid, & Bohart, in press;

Sheldon & Kasser, 2001).  However, a conceptual question that this

dimensionalization raises is that of the aetiology of extrinsic motivations and goals. That is, what is our understanding of why people come to act towards goals that are alien to their actual, innermost needs and desires; particularly if, from a humanistic standpoint, we hold that human beings are actualizing organism with the sole motive of developing all their capacities "in ways which serve to maintain or enhance the organism" (Rogers, 1959, p. 196).

### Extrinsic motivations as externally-derived

In Rogers's (1951) earlier work, the existence of extrinsic motivation is attributed to the direct *introjection* of attitudes and perceptions from external figures, in particular parents. Similarly, for Fromm (1942, p. 84), human beings are seen as *internalizing* external demands, coming to believe that these are their own. Fromm (1942, p. 162) writes "we can have thoughts, feelings, wishes, and even sensual sensations which we subjectively feel to be ours, and yet that, although we experience these thoughts and feelings, they have been put into us from the outside, are basically alien, and are not what we think, feel, and so on." For Fromm (1942, p. 218; 1965a, p. 215), modern man is an "automaton", driven by capitalist society to "consume more and more, and for whom everything becomes an article of consumption: cigarettes, liquor, sex, movies, television, travel, and even education, books and lectures."

Such accounts of extrinsic motivations as directly introjected can explain much of the particular form or content of people's goals and motivations. What they are less able to account for, however, is *why* people introject or internalise these motivations in the first place. Fromm (1942) likens this internalisation to the process of hypnosis, but such an account would seem to come dangerously close to a socially deterministic viewpoint, and contradict the basic humanistic assumption that human

beings are active, agentic subjectivities who experience and act towards their world in meaningful, choice-making and *intelligible* ways (Bohart & Tallman, 1999; Cain, 2002; Laing, 1965). As Rollo May (1990, p. 244) writes in an open letter to Carl Rogers (albeit specifically in relation to the problem of evil):

> If you conclude that the troubles lies in the fact that human beings are so susceptible to influence by their culture, so obedient to orders that they are given, so pliable to their environment, then you are making the most devastating of all judgment…in human beings.  In such case we are all sheep, dependent on whoever is the shepherd; and Fred Skinner is right.

From an existential standpoint (e.g., Cooper, 2003), human beings only appear as passive recipients of their environmental circumstances when viewed in non-phenomenological, *I-It* (Buber, 1958) ways.  Ingleby (1991, p. xlvi) makes this point when he writes, "'Modern man' appears to Fromm as a robot, but one suspects that this is because he has not gone to the trouble of getting to know him well enough." Indeed, he goes on to suggest that Fromm's (1991) view of the "man in the street" as an environmentally-determined automaton represents something of a cultural elitism, whereby "Only the culture of his own class…is true culture: the rest is scathingly dismissed by Fromm as an 'opiate'".

In fact, Fromm (1942, p. 248), himself, rejects a *sociological relativism*, "in which man is nothing but a puppet, directed by the strings of social circumstances". This suggests, then, that to fully understand the aetiology of extrinsic motivations, it is necessary to also consider the active, agentic role that human beings may have in coming to act towards these externally-determined goals and standards.  And this

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includes motivations that are at the most "externally regulated" (Ryan & Deci, 2000) end of the self-determination spectrum.

**Extrinsic motivations as derived from a non-actualising part of the organism**

A humanistic understanding of the aetiology of extrinsic motivations that gives more credence to client agency is that some "part" of the person *does* act to internalise and introject these drives, but that this part is essentially distinct from the person's authentic, organismic intents: their actualizing tendency? This is, effectively, the perspective that Rogers' (1959) adopts when, drawing on the work of his student Standal (1954), he argues that the need for positive regard is probably a secondary, learnt need, based on the infant coming to associate positive regard with other positive stimuli, such as being fed and changed. Along similar lines, Ryan and Deci suggest that the person may have drives or desires that are non-actualising: they write "there are many strivings that do not fit the criterion of being essential for well-being and may, indeed, be inimical to it" (Ryan & Deci, 2002, p. 8).

From a humanistic standpoint, however, such an argument again runs into difficulties. First, at the heart of humanistic psychology is the belief that the organism functions as a whole (Bugental, 1964; Maslow, 1987) or, as Rogers (1959) puts it, that there is just *one* basic motive in the human being: the actualizing tendency, which is "operative at all times" (Rogers, 1980, p. 118). He adds: "There are no homunculi, no other sources of energy or action in the system" (Rogers, 1959, p. 196). Hence, it would seem inconsistent with Rogerian thinking to hypothesize the existence of a drive that is separate or disconnected from other organismically-maintaining and enhancing forces. Second, if human beings are hypothesised to act in ways that are

fundamentally meaningful and intelligible, it makes little sense to posit the existence of a drive that takes people away from what they believe is self-maintaining and self-enhancing.  Third, the assumption that certain motivations and goals are inherently actualizing, while others are inherently non-actualizing or actively inimical to growth, would seem to be at odds with an approach that advocates *unconditional positive regard* for all aspects of a person's experiencing self (Rogers, 1957); as well as a phenomenological commitment to *bracketing* assumptions and biases (Spinelli, 2005). If the aim of a humanistic psychology is to prize the Other in the fullness of their otherness (Cooper, 2009; Levinas, 1969), how is it possible to ascribe one set of drives as positive and actualizing, and another as pathogenic?

A further problem with the suggestion that "extrinsic" motivations and goals arise from outside of the actualizing tendency is that it necessitates an empirical and conceptual distinction between the "intrinsic" need for affiliation, and the "extrinsic" need for positive regard and admiration.  Factor analysis *has* demonstrated the validity of this distinction at some level (Grouzet et al., 2005); yet, as Maslow (1943, 1987), himself, suggests (see below), the need to be loved and the need to be respected by others would seem to be very closely connected.  Some years ago, for instance, I worked as a group therapist with a young woman who had experienced very little affection as a child, having been brought up in an orphanage, and constantly sought the attention and approval of those around her (for reasons of confidentiality, some features of this client have been changed).  She would willingly comply with any suggestions that emerged from the group, was desperately kind to any other group member, and very rarely expressed her own needs for fear of upsetting others. Through psychotherapeutic exploration, this client -- and the group -- increasingly came to believe that such behaviour was her way of trying to secure the love and

attachment (Bowlby, 1969) that she had failed to experience as a child. Here, her desire for love and her desire for approval appeared very closely connected.

Buber (1988, p. 61) takes this argument one step further when he argues that the need for public acceptance is one of human being's most intrinsic and existential needs. He writes:

> The human person needs confirmation because man [sic] as man needs it…. Sent forth from the natural domain of species into the hazard of the solitary category, surrounded by the air of chaos which came into being with him, secretly and bashfully he watches for a Yes which allows him to be and which can come to him only from one human person to another. It is from one man to another that the heavenly bread of self-being is passed.

Furthermore, even if it is argued that this desire for positive regard comes from somewhere altogether different than the desire for relatedness, it still leaves open the question of where, exactly, it comes from. If it is rooted in an attempt to fulfil some other basic need -- such as the desire for autonomy or competence (Ryan & Deci, 2000) -- then it is still, effectively, an attempt to satisfy some "basic and inherent psychological needs" (Kasser & Ryan, 1996, p. 280). Self-determination theorists, like Rogers (1959), have suggested that such extrinsic goals and motivations may be based in "contingencies or reinforcements" (Ryan & Deci, 2002, p. 10), but reinforcements for what? If they were not, ultimately, associated with -- or directed to -- some basic and inherent need, it is difficult to see how they could be sustained, or maintain such influence in a person's life. Ryan and Deci (2002) also suggest that they may be "compensatory" for more authentic needs but, again, if they compensate

they must provide the person with some form of needs satisfaction, and it is by no means clear what need is being satisfied here, or how it can be construed to be a less fundamental and authentic need than others. Again, if extrinsic motivations and goals were only satisfying "peripheral", non-essential needs, it is difficult to see how they could come to dominate over more "intrinsic," "authentic" desires.

### Extrinsic motivations as derived from intrinsic needs

Like other members of the humanistic community, Maslow (1968, p. 52) hypothesises a primal "fork in the road" between growth-oriented and approval-oriented behaviours. However, his *needs hierarchy* (Maslow, 1943, 1987) provides, perhaps, the most robust and parsimonious foundations for understanding how extrinsic motivations and goals may arise. For Maslow, human beings have belongingness and love needs, and they also have esteem needs, part of which is a desire for "reputation or prestige…status, fame and glory, dominance, recognition, attention, importance, dignity or appreciation" (Maslow, 1987, p. 63). Consistent with Buber (1988, p. 61), but in contrast to Rogers (1951), Maslow does not put these needs for positive regard as outside of the principal organismic tendencies. Rather, for him, they are one, fully-integrated element of a holistic-dynamic needs structure, as *basic* as the needs for safety or self-actualization.

Understood in this way, "extrinsic" motivations and goals can be seen as being ultimately rooted in intrinsic needs and wants. People may act towards goals that are social determined but, ultimately, this is to satisfy personal, internal desires. Such a model overcomes the problem of seeing the person as a passive channel for external motives; and it also allows for a view of the human being as integrated, agentic and intelligible.

However, if extrinsic goals and motivations are understood as being intrinsically derived, how can we conceptualize the relationship between different wants, and the possible tensions that may emerge between them?  More importantly, how can such a framework account for the pathogenic effect of "extrinsic" wants, and help us understand how people can be facilitated towards greater wellbeing?

**A hierarchical model of human wants**

One potential solution to be developed here is a *hierarchical* model of human wants (see, Cooper, 2000, 2006), of the sort proposed by the highly-influential, and "humanistically-biased" theorist, William T. Powers (1973, p. xii).  (Note, the hierarchical model proposed here is quite distinct from the Hierarchical Model of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation proposed by Vallerand & Ratelle, 2002); (as well as Maslow's classic Hierarchy of Needs, Maslow, 1968).  The term *wants* is used here to refer to those things that we feel a wish or desire for (Cooper, 2006; Oxford University Press, 1995), and is adopted to cover the full range of goals and intents, from the most micro-level desires (for instance, "I want to complete this sentence"), to the most macro-level life projects (for instance, "I want to contribute something meaningful by my existence").

In this hierarchical model, the most basic human wants -- for instance, to maintain and enhance one's being (Rogers, 1959); or autonomy, relatedness and competence (Ryan & Deci, 2000) -- can be posited to exist at the highest level of a motivational hierarchy, with lower order wants established as means of achieving consecutively higher order ones.  For instance, I may strive to attain competence by trying to be a knowledgeable academic; and one way I may attempt to achieve this is by striving to master a new statistical technique; and, to obtain this mastery, I may try to clear time from other projects in my life (Figure 1).  Here, numerous wants can be

posited to exist at both higher order and lower order levels, with the possibility that human beings may strive for a particular higher order want in a multiplicity of ways (Austin & Vancouver, 1996). For instance, as well as trying to achieve competence by being an able academic, I may also try to do this by being a "good" father, and I may strive to achieve "good fatherhood" by aiming to spend more time with my children.

With respect to "intrinsic" and "extrinsic" goals and motivations, this framework suggests that, rather than being dichotomized, they can be conceptualized as existing within a single, unified hierarchical model. For instance, a person may strive to attain relatedness to others through an "intrinsic" goal, such as trying to spend more time with close friends (Figure 2). Alternatively, they may strive to achieve this through an "extrinsic" goal, for instance through achieving fame. Here, in this latter case, the hope might be that, through achieving fame, the individual will accrue positive regard and respect from others; consequently, others will behave in a kinder and more loving manner; and, consequently, there will be more opportunity for relatedness.

In terms of what determines the particular strategies that individuals may adopt to attain their higher order wants, it seems most straightforward to suggest that these will be shaped by an individual's particular experiences and learning. A person, for instance, who has been through psychotherapy and assertive training, may have learnt that the most effective means of experiencing relatedness with others is by directly inviting people to engage with them at this level of intimacy. On the other hand, if a person has learnt, perhaps as a child, that directly reaching out for intimacy leads to rejection and humiliation, then they may have developed more circuitous strategies to get this want met. For instance, they may have found that affection

comes only when they behave in a poorly manner, such that they consequently adopt a "victim" role to try and obtain relatedness.  Or, perhaps, through constant exposure to reality TV shows like *X Factor* and *America's Got Talent*, they may have come to believe that fame brings with it multiple opportunities for admiration, love and intimacy.

Hence, within this hierarchy of wants, motivations and goals that have been deemed "extrinsic", "peripheral" and "compensatory" (Ryan & Deci, 2002) are re-conceptualised as intelligible, meaningful attempts by the person to fulfil their most basic wants, in the best way that they know how.  Moreover, as with "intrinsic" wants, they are conceptualized as emerging from the interaction between a person and their environment.  However, this is in no way to suggest that both forms of motivations and goals are equivalent or, indeed, that they are equally salutogenic -- clearly, as the evidence shows (e.g., Kasser & Ryan, 2001, see above), they are not.


**Wants and wellbeing**

So how can a hierarchy of wants, in attempting to overcome an intrinsic--extrinsic dichotomization, account for the empirically-demonstrated relationship between "intrinsic" wants and wellbeing?  A starting point to answer this question is the finding that people experience greater psychological wellbeing and positive affect when they move towards, and attain, their most fundamental, highest order wants (e.g., Brunstein, 1993; Emmons, 1986; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999).


**Directness.**

In this respect, a key reason why "intrinsic" wants may be more salutogenic than "extrinsic" wants is because they are, by their very nature, direct and im-mediate

means of satisfying wants and goals (Kasser & Ryan, 1996, 2001). This compares with "extrinsic" motivations and goals which do not provide direct satisfaction in themselves, but are performed for some "separable outcome" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 71), and are highly dependent on "the contingent reaction of others" (Kasser & Ryan, 1996, p. 286). For someone to achieve relatedness by being famous (Figure 2), for instance, this fame must translate in to positive regard from others, which must then translate into genuine desire and affection, which must then lead to closer relatedness. And, of course, the person must also achieve fame in the first place. By contrast, approaching others and directly inviting closeness, presuming that the other is receptive to this, is much more likely to achieve the desired goal.

**Fitted to the context.**

In the example above, and more generally, "intrinsic" motivations or goals may also be more likely to achieve satisfaction than "extrinsic" ones because they are more suited to, and effective within, an individual's particular socio-environmental context. If an individual strives to attain relatedness through approaching close friends, for instance, there is a good likelihood that this strategy will be successful. If, however, they attempt to do this by striving for fame, they first meet the obstacle that fame is only available to a very select few. Furthermore, even if they did achieve the fame that they desire, the assumption that this, then, leads to positive regard from others -- and, with it, affection and relatedness -- may well turn out to be wrong. For instance, others may become more jealous of them for their fame, or "use" them to boost their own sense of self-worth. In this respect, "intrinsic" wants, by being much less contingent on external factors, may be much more reliable and consistent means of achieving one's goals.

In contrast to self-determination and self-concordance theories, however, this hierarchy of wants model would predict that, in certain circumstances, people may experience greater wellbeing following "extrinsic" goals as compared with "intrinsic" ones. Say, for instance, an individual is met with genuine cold rejection when they express such "intrinsic" desires as to be creative or to be loved, and say they experience some degree of warmth and affection when they act in "extrinsically" compliant ways. *And*, crucially, say that they cannot escape from this context. Here, a hierarchy of wants model would predict that they may, indeed, experience greater wellbeing and happiness if they adopt compliant ways of behaving.

Such an analysis provides a means of explaining why human beings -- as intelligible, meaning-oriented organisms -- may develop "extrinsic" motivations and goals in the first place, and also how these "extrinsic" strategies can then come to be associated with poorer psychological health. As infants, human beings are often brought up in contexts in which basic wants can only be achieved through highly circuitous, indirect and externally-mediated routes; *and*, in which escape is generally not possible. Hence, "extrinsic" motivations and goals may, often, be the most effective means of achieving the fulfilment of basic, inherent wants. These strategies and learnings can then be carried over into adulthood: the individual continues to believe, for instance, that the best way for them to achieve relatedness is through adopting a "victim" role. As adults, however, these external contingencies may no longer be in place; moreover, as adults, they now may have much more freedom to escape from their environment. Hence, by sticking to outdated, "extrinsic" strategies for achieving their most basic wants, the individual comes to experience lower levels of wellbeing than more "intrinsic" strategies might afford them.

Within this hierarchy of wants model, however, an individual's wellbeing is by no means independent of their specific socio-relational context. Indeed, not only does this model provide a means of integrating "extrinsic" and "intrinsic" motivations and goals, but it also provides a means of integrating individual and social processes. For while psychological difficulties may be associated with a poor fittedness to one's context; the model would also predict that a psychological environment in which basic human needs cannot be achieved will also lead to higher levels of psychological distress -- an association that has been consistently demonstrated in the empirical literature (e.g., Brown & Harris, 1978; Layard, 2006; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010).

**Synergy and dysergy between goals.**

A hierarchical model of wants suggests a third reason why certain configurations of motivations and goals may be more associated with wellbeing than others. This is, in some respects, also related to the salutogenic benefits of more direct, "intrinsic" motivations and goals, but broadens this analysis out to a wider understanding of psychological wellbeing and change. The basics of this analysis are that, even if a person's wants are direct and fitted to a context, and even if that context has the potential to meet their goals and motivations, they may still struggle to progress towards their wants -- and, with it, to achieve good psychological health -- if these wants are pulling in very different directions. In the example given in Figure 1, for instance, a person may find that their desire to achieve competence by spending more time with their children runs into direct conflict with their desire to achieve competence by spending more time at work. Consequently, they may fail to achieve either goal and, with it, the sense of competence that they are ultimately striving for.

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*Goal conflicts*, *intergoal interference* (Riediger & Freund, 2004) or *dysergies* between goals (Cooper, 2010), can be hypothesized to exist across similar levels in a wants hierarchy, or across very different levels.  With respect to the latter, for instance, a person may indirectly attempt to attain relatedness by acting in a very submissive manner in a relationship, and this may conflict with their much higher order goal of achieving autonomy.

The hypothesis that dysergetic relationships between goals is associated with psychological difficulties is postulated by Maslow (1971, p. 202), and strongly supported by empirical research, which shows that goal conflict is associated with lower levels of psychological functioning, affect, mobilization and life satisfaction (Austin & Vancouver, 1996; Emmons, 1986; Emmons & King, 1988; Karoly, 1999; Riediger, 2007; Riediger & Freund, 2004).  Clinical experience also demonstrates this link.  Powers (1973, p. 265) writes: "Since the time of Freud and no doubt for much longer than that, inner conflicts [between goals] have been recognized as a major cause of psychological difficulties.  Unresolved conflict leads to anxiety, depression, hostility, unrealistic fantasies, and even delusions and hallucinations." Concomitantly, *intergoal facilitation*, *horizontal coherence*, or *synergies* (Maslow, 1971, p. 200) across wants, while less strongly associated with levels of wellbeing, does predict the extent to which people actively pursue their goals (Riediger & Freund, 2004; Sheldon & Kasser, 1995; Wiese & Salmela-Aro, 2008).

To some extent, dysergies may be more likely to emerge if there is a predominance of "extrinsic" goals and motivations in a person's wants hierarchy. This is because, if a person is attempting to satisfy their wants through a diversity of highly indirect, circuitous and externally-mediated route, there is a good chance that some of these will run up against others.  If, on the other hand, a person is aiming to

satisfy their wants in the most direct ways possible, entanglements may be less likely.

However, and particularly from a perspective that is more existential than humanistic

(e.g., van Deurzen, 2002), it may be argued that *tensions* can exist between even the

most highest level, "intrinsic" wants. A person desires autonomy, for instance, but

they also desire relatedness, and the achievement of one will always, by its very

nature, compromise the achievement of the other. Here, conflict between wants is

posited as a fundamental *given* of human existence: an aspect of human being that is

ultimately unsurpassable (Cooper, 2008).

A more comprehensive and nuanced framework for understanding the

emergence of dysergetic goal relationships, however, is proposed by Riediger and

Freund (2004). They suggest that such conflicts can emerge through two basic routes:

*incompatible goal attainment strategies* and *resource constraints*. The first of these

covers the many different forms of conflict that can exist when the way that a person

attempts to achieve one goal cuts across their strategies for achieving another goal.

This includes, but is not limited to, the *dysergenic* (i.e., conflict-generating) effect that

"extrinsic" goals and motivations may often have. A person who strives to be liked

by being submissive, for instance, may indeed be attempting to attain relatedness, but

such a strategy could also be highly incompatible with their desire for autonomy or

competence, and hence lead to lower levels of psychological wellbeing.

As Riediger and Freund (2004) suggest, however, dysergetic goal relationship

may also exist because of limited resources in the social environment. Cooper (2006,

p. 88), following similar ideas, writes:

> [O]ur wants are often in tension with each other…because we inhabit an
>
> environment in which the achievement of one want frequently necessitates the

subjugation of another. A person in a context of limited financial resources, for example, might only be able to achieve their desire for financial security by suppressing their desire for excitement and stimulation: for instance, by taking a job in a fast food restaurant. Alternatively, in that environment, the person may be able to actualise their desire for stimulation by forming a musical group with their friends, but then they might have to compromise their desire for financial security.

This "dual model" understanding of how intergoal conflicts may arise -- and, with them, psychological distress -- may be a particularly useful framework for developing a more politically-aware humanistic model of psychological change. It suggests that improved wellbeing can come about through a reconfiguration of one's goals towards a more synergetic arrangement -- essentially, the process of therapy (Cooper, 2006; Mansell, 2005) -- but it also suggests that improved wellbeing can come about through real social change: through the creation of social environments in which the achievement of one goal does not necessitate the subjugation of others. And this requires the creation of *synergetic* cultures (Maslow, 1971): in which the way in which one person achieves their wants facilitates, rather than undermines, the want-attainment of others.

**Conclusion.**

The aim of this paper has been to develop a humanistic understanding of psychological wellbeing and change that overcomes a number of conceptual, political and, ultimately, ethical difficulties associated with the positing of a strict intrinsic--extrinsic dichotomy.

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This model can be summarised as follows: psychological wellbeing is associated with the extent to which we progress towards, and attain, our deepest, most fundamental wants: for instance, relatedness, autonomy and esteem. As intelligible, meaning-orientated human beings, we always work towards achieving such wants, but the way we do so will be heavily influenced by our experience and perceptions of what are successful and unsuccessful means of doing so. If the strategies that we have developed become unsuited to our present context -- being less direct and more dysergetic than they need to be -- we will experience lower levels of psychological wellbeing than it is possible for us to attain. However, the extent to which we can experience psychological wellbeing will be heavily dependent on our environments, and the extent to which they require us to forego the attainment of one goal by the achievement of another.

Within this general conceptual framework, psychological motivations and goals that have been termed "intrinsic" will tend to be more associated with wellbeing than those termed "extrinsic". This is not because they are derived from a different source to "extrinsic" goals and motivations, but because they are more direct and immediate means of satisfying our most fundamental, highest order wants. As such, they are also most likely to be effective at attaining our highest order wants within a particular socio-relational context, and the ones that are least likely to conflict with other higher and lower order goals.

The hierarchy of wants developed in this paper outlines a means of understanding both "intrinsic" and "extrinsic" goals and motivations within a unified conceptual framework. It avoids judging or dismissing "extrinsic" wants by construing them as intelligible -- albeit often inefficient or ineffective -- means of attaining the highest order goals. In this respect, it retains an image of the human

being as an active, meaning-seeking organism that, in whatever circumstance, strives to do its best.

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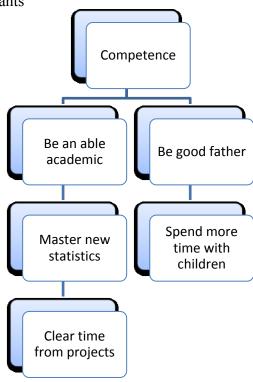
Figure 1. A hierarchy of wants



Figure 2. "Intrinsic" and "extrinsic" wants: A hierarchical view