

The Evolution Of The Human Soul:
Developmental Practices in
Spiritual Guidance

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Chapter One: Roots and Branches

Overview:

Spiritual direction as a profession has expanded and grown throughout the centuries and most spiritual lineages have directors, guides and/or soul friends to support the laity (Empereur, p. 23). As a field, it continues to grow and develop, adding the insights from other knowledge areas and expanding its reach to all spiritual paths. The work herein simply falls into that continued expansion by further exploring the integration of the understanding and research of adult developmental levels with spiritual direction practices.

In Chapter One of this thesis, I will provide a history of the inclusion of psychological and developmental practices in spiritual direction. Next will be the introduction to developmental structure stages, which includes a definition of terms. A more specific overview of *developmental patterns* that wind their way through the developmental stages will be delineated, and then comes a brief foray into the field of *spiritual guidance and some of its lineages*, including definitions of spiritual terms, which will be used throughout the thesis, and spiritual patterns that arise. Lastly will be a section that integrates the developmental stages with the state stages.

Chapter One forms an underpinning for basis for Chapter Two of this thesis, which will center on *how this developmental understanding can support spiritual guides* from all lineages and traditions in their work with those they guide. If this is your primary interest, you can skip directly to Chapter Two, on page 32 and come back to the definitions and patterns in Chapter one as needed.

Development in Spiritual Direction, a History

For centuries, spiritual direction and guidance has been one way for people to explore their human sacredness. Though in earlier times, finding a teacher was often difficult, in these more modern times, this kind of guidance has become far more available in all traditions, (Brown, p. xv; Wilber, p.1). In more recent years there have been important milestones to “incorporating spiritual beliefs and practices into the practices of psychotherapy” (Moon & Benner, p. 7), a step that came along with incorporating psychological approaches into spiritual direction. An initial step across this gap from the side of spiritual direction was made when Benner wrote his book “Psychotherapy and the Spiritual Quest” in 1988. (p. 8). In 1995, the first gathering was held for mental health workers and pastoral counselors who had adopted a psychological theme from Christian Spirituality. This was eventually followed by a book by Gary Moon, *Homesick for Eden*” which discussed the explicit integration of spiritual direction practices into Psychotherapy (p. 8). Meanwhile, psychological approaches were simultaneously being recognized as a support to spiritual direction. ”All psychology encompasses spiritual direction and all spiritual direction encompasses psychology” says Patricia Coughlin (p. 81). They form a continuum (p. 82).

As a part of the exploration of the adult psyche from the perspective of Spiritual Direction, adult developmental research also began to find its way into the spiritual traditions as a means of support for guiding spiritual development, particularly in Christian Traditions (Fowler, p. 1-323; Liebert, p. 77-119; Empereur, p. 29-45; Bowler, p. 93-99).

James Fowler was one of the first people to bring adult developmental research into the spiritual traditions. He drew on the earlier works of Erikson, Piaget and Kohlberg (Fowler, a, p. 52) Erickson’s stages were related to the natural aging process (Fowler, a, p.

52; Liebert, p. 29-30). Piaget's work involved cognition from a developmental perspective, primarily for children (Fowler, a, p. 53; Liebert, p. 32) and Kohlberg delineated the stages of moral development in his research (Fowler, p 52; Liebert, p. 2). Kohlberg followed from Piaget with his work on morals, " he decided against trying to generate a psychology of the moral self. This meant that strictly speaking, he elected to follow Piaget in separating moral cognition from the affections and from the broader questions of the relation of moral reasoning to ego or personality development". In his work Fowler compared these three theories, and pointed out their strengths and limitations; it was out of this lineage that he began his research on the stages of faith derived from hundreds of interviews. (Fowler, a, p. 89, 312-323).

His research on stages of faith outlined 6 successive levels of adult development related to faith (Fowler, p. 244). They are, Intuitive-Projective Faith, Mythic-Literal Faith, Synthetic-Conventional Faith, Individuative-Reflective Faith, Conjunctive Faith and Universalizing Faith. (Fowler, p. 117-199). These stages seemed to correlate with Piagetan model of developmental stages (Fowler, p. 244).

The Intuitive-Projective Faith is "the fantasy-filled initiative phase in which the child can be powerfully and permanently influenced by examples, moods, actions, and stories of the visible faith of primally related adults" (p. 133). This is the first stage of faith.'

Stage two is the Mythic-Literal faith stage. In this stage, the person takes on the beliefs and stories that symbolize their membership in their community. The spiritual figures are anthropomorphic, such as God being depicted like a particular kind of human being. (p.150).

In the Synthetic-Conventional stage of faith, the person now extends beyond their family or community, and involves themselves in a number of spheres, which their faith must bring a coherent orientation. (P. 172)

In the fourth stage, the Intuitive-Reflective stage the individual begins to take responsibility for their own “commitments, lifestyle beliefs and attitudes” (p. 182) but they are caught between their own need to preserve their own well-being and the paradoxical or divided nature of the world (p. 200).

The next stage, Conjunctive Faith integrates suppressed and unrecognized parts of oneself into the whole.

The last stage, Universalizing Faith, Fowler says to be rare (P. 200). “Here symbolic power is reunited with conceptual understandings” (p. 197) and the paradoxes of the previous stages seem to be united, “They have become incarnators and actualizers of the spirit of an inclusive and fulfilled human community (p. 200).

Fowler did his developmental research in 1972-1981. He began to apply these stages in his spiritual work with people, involving “both the formally describable operations of ...knowing and valuing and the structuring power of the symbols, beliefs and practices of the faith community,...in faith both the “forms and the “contents exert power in shaping a person’s life sustaining, life-guiding meanings.” (p. 273). He subsequently recognized that conversion could happen at any one of these stages, and recapitulate throughout the stages as they arise (p. 290). Ultimately Fowler didn’t have a process of using these stages with people, but planted the seed that “Through a skillful combination of therapy and the use of forms of prayer and spiritual direction involving guided meditations, Mary might have been

helped to rework images of God, self and others formed in infancy and childhood in the light of her new relations to Christ” (p. 288).

In the meantime, Jane Loevinger was also conducting her research (Loevinger & Wessler, 1970), from which Elizabeth Liebert drew in her work in spiritual development. Liebert also drew on the work of Erickson, Piaget, and Kohlberg, as Fowler did, but added the research of Robert Kegan, whose work came from the same lineage that Fowler’s did. She identified three waves of structural theories from which spiritual direction drew (Liebert, p. 35). The first wave was Piaget’s cognitive structures; the second wave was Kohlberg, who advanced the developmental research into the adult population and applied it to moral thinking (p. 32). She also places Robert Kegan’s subject-object theory and Jane Loevinger’s theory into the second generation of developmental models. Together they lend information to the third generation, which is noting the underlying assumptions that all developmental models seem to hold in common. Liebert notes these underlying assumptions (p. 35)

First, these structural theories “order the formal principles of the personality and the way they function to organize a coherent outlook on the world (Liebert, p. 35)”. As well, one can only see from within the perspective that one inhabits and each new stage describes a qualitatively different way to view the world (Liebert, p 36). Another assumption is that one must develop to a higher level of complexity to move to the next stage, even though one can understand, cognitively up to one stage later than they are, but they will look through their own lens to interpret that later level (Liebert, p. 36). Each stage transforms the prior stage, and these stages are quite stable as systems, and represent entire systems of meaning construction (p36). Movement from one stage to the next seems to require some dissonance

in life, and isn't necessarily related to age, even though people may stay in a stage for some time. People are likely to use all of the learning from all the stages that they have been through, in addition to the one they presently inhabit. (p. 36-37)

Liebert used some of these assumptions in her adaptation of the Loevinger developmental scale to spiritual direction. In so doing she made several points of observations that would be important to note in work with spiritual direction and stages of development.

First one must know the difference between simple change and structural development; they are not synonymous. "Thus for a change to qualify as development it must demonstrate three conditions. It must increase in complexity, it must encompass and surpass the prior level (it must be a new order of ordering) and once attained it must not be lost, though it could be unused" (p. 56). This helps a director or guide to intuit what their directees developmental "cutting edges"(p. 58) might be.

Secondly one must be able to recognize a developmental transition; and understanding the natural evolutionary trajectory of development as opposed to trying to make development occur; "Trying to cause stage change simply does not work"(60). While transitions happen naturally, this inability to engineer stage change can serve to bring spiritual directors "face to face with the mystery of (their) role" (p. 61). However what one can do is provide a context that encourages stage change by encouraging people to be where they are developmentally (61). Thus building "Naturally Therapeutic Holding Environments" between the Spiritual Director and their directees is an appropriate approach.

Liebert also builds on Fowler's and Loevinger's work related to the aspects of the natural "pacers", or the formula for non-revolutionary growth of development; three that are

apparent are society, culture, and socioeconomic status. Thus the holding environment one creates in a spiritual direction relationship may be of assistance to allow for movement a rather than the typical function of holding them back. (67).

Liebert applies these insights derived of integrating the work of Fowler, Kegan, Loevinger into spiritual direction, starting with where a seeker is at developmentally and working with them through their developmental movements by being aware of the signals that fall within the seeker themselves, shifting one's own way of working as the seeker shifts (p. 72, 73).

Liebert adapted Loevinger's developmental stages for her use in Spiritual Direction (Liebert, 212). Her stages are Impulsive, Self Protective, Conformist, Self Aware, Conscientious, Individualistic, Inter-individual, Integrated (p. 212), and are described and included throughout this thesis as a basis of development in Spiritual Direction. She also used this developmental model to work with group spiritual direction (Emperreaur, p. 29), recognizing along with Fowler and Robert Kegan that the holding environment extended from director-seeker into the seeker's culture and society.

James Emperreaur drew on Liebert's developmental application of the ego stages by looking at how the Enneagram related to spiritual direction and development. (Empereur, p. 30). He was interested in how a spiritual guide could accompany others over time on a journey to clarify their psychological and spiritual issues so that they could move towards a deeper union with the Sacred (p. 43). He used three developmental levels, the Conformist, the Conscientious and the Inter-individual stages, to depict three different ways that each enneotype could be interpreted, and applied this model to spiritual direction. Thus, his

contribution was to combine development with a typology, bringing a more nuanced and complex view of the directee to light.

Bowler (p. 95) describes the importance of being aware of the transitions between the stages, as common times for the dryness that people experience at times on their spiritual journey. The later stages may more easily usher in the experiences of Mystical Union (p. 98)

In summary, the history of development in Spiritual direction, as a part of its connection with psychology, has continued to expand from the first generation of Piaget, to the second generation of Loevinger, Fowler, Kegan, and other developmentalists, to the third generation of recognizing the assumptions underlying all of these scales, and actual application of this knowledge to the relationship of spiritual directors to their directees.

This thesis is continuing this developmental exploration in the support of spiritual growth and updating with a more detailed exploration of Loevinger's and Cook Greuter's ego developmental stages by adding the author's own developmental research to the process of soul-friending. Just as each of the previous approaches has stood on the shoulders of the generation before it, I will be adding to the models that have come before.

These previous models all have worked with developmental models in spiritual direction. This model uses an update on the the Loevinger-Cook Greuter scale, StAGES, which has research on additional levels. In addition the model being depicted in this thesis identifies certain iterating patterns of development, which have not been previously written about related to spiritual guidance. It also describes the spiritual developmental stages and their patterns. Finally it integrates and interpenetrates the two areas of developmental stages and spiritual stages and suggests some ways to apply this knowledge in a practical way.

But most importantly, it identifies and recognized the autopoietic function of developmental models and spiritual paths themselves; that is, that spiritual paths themselves are not immune to the horizontal recursiveness that happens through the paces of society, cultures and socioeconomic status and others. Spiritual paths themselves can become just as developmentally hypnotized as an individual, rather than adapting, developing and transitioning their very beliefs and theories, in the seemingly sticky attachments we have to the comfort of the belief structure of the path we love; beliefs that have been laid down centuries before, or even in more recent times.

Here I reiterate one of my favorite exercises by David Spangler, which I use to this day: Think of someone you are not all together fond of. In your imagination, find a pack of sticky notes, and write a quality that you attribute to that person on the top note. Now stick that note on the image of that person's face. Continue to do this until you can't think of anything else to write. Then take a good look at the face of the person you are imagining. Note that you probably can't see anything but the sticky notes; you can't see that person's face at all.

That person has probably changed but our own assumptions about that person can actually freeze them there...thus we may be a part of actually causing them to be like we imagine them to be, rather than being the person they actually have the potential to be or actually are; this judging supports them to robotically behave in the mode we have frozen them into.

This notion also seems to apply to our spiritual paths. We seem to have beliefs about what is and what isn't involved in a spiritual path, and we freeze those assumptions and notions in our minds, holding those paths to the conditions they began with, when the paths

themselves, perhaps need to, and perhaps even “want to”, evolve and take on new views that transcend the old ones, even as they include the ones that were previously there. The developmental work in this thesis recognized this automatic, autopoietic, hypnosis that is so difficult to see by using a process of recognizing iterating patterns that seem to apply to individuals, to groups and to spiritual paths themselves.

With this background, I begin with two spiritual direction scenarios that could be encountered within a spiritual guidance session. There are any numbers of ways that these situations can be approached and it is my hope that the integrated developmental-spiritual information in this thesis will provide a theoretical background for and practical approaches to guiding in these and other spiritual coaching scenarios.

Scenario 1.

You are engaging with someone who is in consideration of you as his spiritual guide. He begins to interview you, saying that he is looking for a particular kind of relationship with his spiritual guide: in this relationship he doesn't want to be the only one sharing, but wants sharing from you as well—a mutual conversation and sharing of experiences without a hierarchy between the two of you.

Scenario 2:

One of your directees has always been very deep practitioner, and seems to have a spiritual depth and relationship with God. You begin to notice some changes; a lack of interest in their spiritual practices, and a questioning of their belief in God.

These two scenarios hold developmental clues that may support a spiritual guide in their work with these people and will be briefly discussed through a developmental lens at the conclusion of this presentation.

This thesis has two aspirations: 1) to build a field that integrates the use of humanity's more recent research in *adult development* as it can be applied within the long-standing lineages of *Spiritual Direction*, *Spiritual Friending* and *Spiritual Guidance*, and 2) to support spiritual guides in a purposeful, practical way, within this integrated field.

Delving Into Developmental Structure Stages

Adult human development has been researched for over 50 years (Hy & Loevinger, p. ix). The theories and research have clearly shown that children and adults develop through a series of stages (Loevinger & Wessler (p. 10-11), and in each of these stages, an entirely different way of looking at the world occurs (Wilber, p. 50). The developmental trajectories are evolutionary and continue to unfold, (Hi & Loevinger, p. 9-25; Loevinger & Wessler, p. 3-7) and the latest model researched by Cook Greuter (Dissertation, p. 176) describes ten adult levels (Cook Greuter 1-36); Impulsive, Opportunist, Rule Oriented, Diplomat, Expert, Achiever, Individualist, Strategist, Construct Aware, and Unitive. The StAGES model adds two additional levels; the Transpersonal (after Construct Aware) and Illumined (the latest stage), and renames some of the stages: Impulsive, Egocentric, Rule Oriented, Conformist, Expert, Achiever, Pluralist, Construct Aware, Transpersonal, Universal, Illumined. The StAGES model also measures and integrate four areas within each stage:

- 1) doing, or the individual *behavioral, action oriented* aspects of living, what they need and what they do to meet their needs, including a feeling of direction or purpose to their behavior
- 2) being, which involves a) an individual *affective* dimension that recognizes and works with feelings, affect and experiences in one's self b) the *cognitive*:

thinking, conceptions, knowledge, interpretations, worldviews and meaning making schemes, c), consciousness capacities such as *awareness* of one's exterior behavior, of interior thoughts and feelings, focus or concentration, and awareness of the focus of awareness. (1-15).

3) the *collective structures* in which we all live, such as families, contexts and Kosmos

4) *interior collectives*, or the ways we experience living inside of collectives, including relationship with others and relationship with ourselves.

Development is a dynamic movement of wave-like holistic movements as one grows progressively throughout life.

Developmental Structure Stage Definitions

These definitions are informed by material developed by Cook-Greuter (1-36), Wilber (50-71), Aurobindo (*The Synthesis of Yoga*), and by my own experience and research (O'Fallon 19-21).

1. *Structure stage*: the capacity to take a first person perspective (Impulsive and Egocentric levels) a second person perspective (Rule Oriented and Conformist levels), a third person perspective (the Expert and Achiever levels) a fourth person perspective (the Pluralist and Strategist levels), a fifth person perspective (the Construct Aware and Transpersonal levels), and/or a sixth-person perspective (the Universal and Illumined levels).
2. *Structure stage patterns*: repeated iterations of themes that run through the person perspectives of the structure stages, such as receptivity, one way seeing,

reciprocity and interpenetration; time, space, awareness, prioritization, and opposing poles.

3. *Floor*: a tier of stages that form when several structure-stage patterns congeal at once, from immaturity to maturity. Each floor generally holds four stages; First, the Concrete floor stages: these four stages are a highly researched description of people who experience primarily the exterior concrete objects with their senses and can imagine concrete objects with their interior senses; second the Subtle floor: the two 3rd and the two 4th person stages which describe people who the capacity to see subtle objects like a goal, or the future and can imagine what is going on inside of others and contexts and systems; third, the Causal floor: the two fifth and two sixth person stages which describe people that have experiences of Awareness of awareness of emptiness and fullness; and fourth, the Nondual floor which holds levels that describe people who have non-dual experiences beyond the 6th person perspective.

Transitioning Between Stages

At times it is a mystery to understand the reasons that cause people move from one stage to the next. Boyd's (161), Cranton's (94) and Mezirow's (147), research indicates that having a disorienting dilemma, inducing critical reflection (wrestling with something that we can't make sense of in our current meaning-making scheme) may lead or even catapult people into a later stage. These dilemmas can be life dilemmas (one's spouse passes away or their house burns down), work dilemmas, (loss of job, income, retirement), faith, hope and love dilemmas (loss of relationship with the Divine, Dark Nights of the Senses, Soul, and Self). Spiritual guidance has encompassed all three of these areas. At times the expansion

we have is a horizontal one, with no change of developmental level or no change of how we see the world, but rather a deepening of the spaces we inhabit in the present.

Developmental Stage Patterns

There are a number of developmental patterns that express through these stages most of which Cook-Greuter, clearly describes in her paper Ego development, Nine Levels of Increasing Embrace, (1-35). It is helpful to understand them because they weave their way progressively through all the developmental stages. It is by being aware of these themes and how they arise at each level that one's discernment is supported relative to where a person might be developmentally, supporting appropriate guidance approach.

Time

At the earliest stages, the perception of time is in the moment without much recognition or remembrance of the past, nor an envisioning of anything in the future. Gradually one's awareness of the past and future evolves such that at the latest levels, one is aware of eternity forward and back. This relates directly to the spiritual direction focus on recollection, for one's recall is dependent on their capacity for awareness of time.

Space

A similar pattern evolves with awareness of space. At the earlier levels, the perception of space begins and ends with one's own skin, for there is no real awareness of anything other than one's own concrete self and its desires. Awareness of space evolves through the developmental levels to include awareness of "other", awareness of community, awareness of all people, awareness of sentience, awareness of planet and outer and inner spaces and their infinity. The themes of life, work, love and incarnation all rely on the capacity to envelop certain spheres of space. The expansion of awareness of space very

much relates to the world-views people are able to take, for if they can only hold space that is close to their skin, their world view will be far more limited than if they can hold the space of all sentience, or of the entire cosmos through infinity.

Person Perspective

The ability to take perspectives is a refinement of the space pattern. In the Cook-Greuter and the StAGES model there are six person perspectives. At the *1st person* perspective, one can only see self and self wants. At the *2nd person* perspective, one can see one's desires and those of others. Fowler describes it as having the capacity to stand in the shoes of another (p. 107b). In the *3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th* person perspectives, one gradually stands farther and farther back, seeing how you are seeing others seeing, for example, until one's awareness unifies the polar opposites of transcendence and immanence.

Feedback.

This pattern focuses on how people take feedback. As you can tell by the previous patterns, each pattern begins more narrowly and expands with the developmental levels. In this case at the earlier levels, feedback is unrecognized or threatening (fight or flight). At the middle levels, increasingly feedback is invited and eventually projection is recognized. At the latest levels, of fifth and sixth person perspectives, one can see that feedback is a construction, an illusion, and a non-reactive acceptance begins to arise.

Qualities

One of the critical defining characteristics of each person perspective is a unique quality that permeates each one. The first person perspective of Impulsive and Egocentric is permeated with the focus on the concrete *self*. The second person perspective of Rule Oriented and Conformist, focus on concrete self/other and *concrete operations*. The Third

person perspectives of Expert and Achiever focus on the *subtle self within* and the quality of *formal operations*, or analysis. The fourth person perspectives of Pluralist and Strategist focus on *awareness of the collective context*. The fifth person perspectives focus on *awareness of individual constructs*, and the sixth person perspectives focus on the awareness of *unification* of polar opposites, or Unity consciousness.

The Rocking Chair Pattern

This pattern (O’Fallon, 12) recognizes the alternating ability to prioritize or not, within the new arising quality defined above. Each person perspective has two stages, an early and a late level. At the early level, the new quality (such as “contexts”), described above, is apprehended, but because it is so new, there is little ability to prioritize it or to take it out into the world, so people tend to be quite interior with it. It is like moving to a new home, and seeing boxes all over the floor. The boxes are all filled with this new quality which one never noticed before. There is no sense of whether this new quality fits in the bathroom, the living room, or the kitchen, so all one can do is to continue to open the boxes and become very familiar with it. At some point one matures with their understanding of the quality and sees just where to use each part of that new understanding. Prioritization becomes possible.

Thus one rocks back and forth between discovering a new quality, then rocking forward and prioritizing and taking it out into ones practices in the world; then rocking backward once again when a new quality is discovered at a later person perspective, and then maturing into it such that one can prioritize and use it in the world. Each person perspective goes through this alternating pattern. It is very useful to know this pattern as a spiritual director: is a directee in an early part of a person perspective, sinking into their

understanding of how this quality relates to their spiritual life, with faith and hope, or are they mature in this quality, taking it out into their life and their work?

Polar Opposites Pattern

This pattern has to do with a progression people take with understanding opposing poles and opposites, such as aversion and desire, love and hate, sacred and profane, transcendence and immanence (O'Fallon, p. 14).

When one first encounters a new set of polar poles, individuals tend to see only one side of the pole in the moment, rigidly; this is a capacity for *receptivity* of something new. For instance, they can see (receive) a desire but not an aversion at the same time. Or they can see an aversion, but not a desire and they gradually become more flexible with their one side and prioritize (good, better, best; poor, poorer, poorest) and finally they can see both sides of a pole (either/or thinking) and make choices between them (the choosing brings one to “one way seeing or *action orientation* related to ones choice). Next they can see both at the same time and choose them both, (Both/and thinking) and finally they can bring the poles together (for example one can see that aversion is actually a desire to get away from something, and desire is actually an aversion to something they want to avoid...thus they become the same thing in some way) This allows a *reciprocal* way of being. Awareness of these steps of 1) *receptiveness* to the new with rigid thinking of one side with gradual flexible thinking of one side, 2) *active* choice, or either/or thinking, 4) *reciprocity* which evokes both/and thinking and 5) *interpenetration* or the acceptance of the unification of opposites, is a great discernment skill to have, for one can engage with these levels of polar opposites to support a directee's movement toward Unity.

Ego Pattern

A concrete ego self accompanies the concrete floor; this ego self is focused on materialism (e.g. a focus on how one looks, what one owns, keeping up with the Jones's). A Subtle ego accompanies the subtle floor; this ego is focused on one's interior life of ideas, planning, spiritual experiences, and the ability to figure things out. A causal ego comes with the causal floor; this ego is aware of the awareness of subtle distinctions, subtle awareness in one's connection or unity with the sacred or attainments and capacity to see multiple tier associations.

One cannot see the ego that is presently being occupied, thus when one moves into the subtle floor, they can see their concrete ego, but not their subtle ego. When one moves into the causal floor they can see their subtle ego, but not their causal ego. When one moves into the non-dual floor, they can see their causal ego, until it eventually dissolves.

Below, is a table depicting the stages and their patterns as described above.

Developmental Patterns

Stages	Person Perspect	Time Aprox	Space	Feedback	Qualities	Prioritize	Poles
CONCRETE FLOOR							
Impulsive Egocentric	1st	1 day	skin	Threat	Self	desires	Receptive Active
Rule oriented Conformist	2nd	1-5 week	Clan	Guilt (rules)	Self/ Other	other	Reciprocal Integrate
SUBTLE FLOOR							
Expert	Early 3rd	18 mo's	people	Cause of	Abstract Ideas	Can't Prioritize Ideas	receptive
Achiever	Late 3rd	5 yrs	Hum- anity	Cause/ effect	Analysis	Ideas and Analysis	active Either/or
Pluralist	Early 4th	10 yrs	Sent- ience	Aware Defensive ness	Context Aware	Can't prioritize Contexts	reciprocal Both/and
Strategist	Late 4th	25 yrs	Sent- ience	Invites	Context Aware	Prioritize Contexts	Integrate
CAUSAL FLOOR							
Construct Aware	Early 5th	25+ Yrs	Gross/ subtle cosmos	Construc- ted	Const- ruct Aware	Can't Prioritize Constructs	receptive
Transpersonal	Late 5th	25+ Yrs	Gross/ subtle cosmos	Construct- ed	Const- ruct Aware	Prioritize Constructs	active Either/or
Universal	Early 6th	Eter- nity	Infin-ity	All is Perfect As is	Unified Poles	Can't prioritize Tier patterns	reciprocal Both/and
Illumined	Late 6th	Eter- nal	Infin-ity	All is Perfect As is	Unified Poles	Prioritize tier/worlds patterns	Integrate
NON-DUAL FLOOR							
Intuitive	Early 7th	Beyon d world	Beyond worlds		Whole Mind Aware	NA	receptive
Over Mind	Late 7th	Over the Mind	Over the Mind		Over the whole mind	NA	active
Super Mind Ishwara	Early 8 th Late 8th				Final Awaken	NA	Reciprocal Integtrate

Figure 1: Developmental Patterns

Delving into Spiritual Stages

This next section will first describe definitions of states. Second, will be a description of stages of state training that are held in common with many spiritual traditions. Next will be a section on the themes or patterns we find in the spiritual stages. Lastly will be a section that describes the integration of the state stages and the developmental stages as they interpenetrate in practice. This will lay the ground for section two, which describes spiritual guidance that can be discerned at the intersection of development and spirit.

State Stage Definitions

The following definitions related to states were influenced by Wilber (71-84), DiPerna (1), and Aurobindo (The Life Divine); by my own experiences; and by observations of how they appeared in people in their waking everyday life.

1. *Gross state*: in-the-moment experience of the concrete- anything one can experience with external senses (e.g foot rub, sunset, music)
2. *Subtle state*: in-the- moment experiences of the subtle or anything that one cannot generally measure with the external senses, including thought, emotion, imagination, daydreams, dreams, interior sounds, interior vibratory experiences, and so on.
3. *Causal state* :*in the moment experiences of* awareness of or witnessing of the very subtle, experiences of pure formlessness, or emptiness.
4. *The Witness*: that which is aware. There is a progression of awareness from (a) awareness of the concrete self and concrete objects to (b) awareness of the subtle self and subtle objects (c) the Witness of one's own awareness.

5. *Non-dual*: witnessing/awareness merging with gross, subtle, and/or causal realities which includes two and not two; neither two or not two (emptiness); Both two and not two (fullness); both two and not two (fullness) and neither two or not two (emptiness) This definition recognizes different levels of non-duality from gross, subtle and causal levels.

Definitions of Gradations of the Awareness of States

1. *First*: no awareness of a gross, subtle, or causal object or state, although it exists. An example of this might be a babies lack of awareness that they have a body, even though they have one...and also deep dreamless sleep, which we all experience but may not be aware of.
2. *Second*: reflective awareness after the fact of an experience of a gross, subtle, or causal object or state.
3. *Third*: awareness in the moment accessed at will of gross, subtle, or causal.
4. *Fourth*: awareness that merges with and disappears into what it is witnessing (gross, subtle, or causal) and becomes one with it.
5. *Sixth*: a state that has become an ordinary part of life, inseparable from it and not experienced as a state.

Other spiritual definitions

Consolation: the sensible pleasures that arise from devotional practices

Desolation or Dark nights: a period of spiritual dryness and passive purification of one's motivation (Keating, p. 162)

Dark night of the Senses: the soul divorces itself from the senses, a purification of human desires, devoid of all delight to the senses and is dry and hard. (Backhouse, p. 37-38; Keating, p. 162)

Dark night of the Soul: "The soul's senses, and spirit, inner and outer faculties must come to the position of being empty in the darkness....the soul is purified in dryness and the faculties are purified in the emptiness"(Blackhouse p. 64). The last remnants of the false self are eliminated (Keating, p. 162).

Dark night of the Self: The position that sees the emptiness of the "mind that makes distinctions" upon which the definition of all human life has been based, before the non-dual union (Turiyatita). (O'Fallon,p. 24; Wilber, p. 83; Aurobindo, p. 281, 601, the Synthesis of Yoga)

Early Maya: The Hindu corollary of the Dark night of the Senses; "transient, limited, fragmentary, ignorant, suffering, nature, mechanical self driven operation, illusion (Aurobindo, pp.111, 113, 601).

Mid Maya: Will of being and becoming, or cessation, self-concealment of spirit, spirit hiding itself in form behind the veil of manifestation (Aurobindo p. 601)

Basic Roots of Spiritual Guidance

In most spiritual lineages, preliminary practices have to do with ethical *concrete* (gross) actions and delaying gratification of the senses. For example, in Hinduism, Tharavada Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, (Brown, pp. 272-284, Aurobindo pp. 5-14) and Orthodox Christianity, (Chirban, pp. 298, Keating pp. 23, 85; Borgeau, pp. 7-18), the preliminary practices of ethics are the first stages of spiritual practice; they include generation of faith, sensory and behavioral regulation, and attitude changes, which often

include rule based practices such as keeping the Ten Commandments and the Eight Fold Path. Entire paths and churches are built around these concrete teachings, and are critical to the forming a sturdy base upon which later spiritual practices are built. These are concrete practices that prepare individuals for more subtle practices.

Spiritual lineages have also developed practices that move beyond the concrete preliminary sensory practices and delay of gratification (Brown, p, 272). These subtle practices, include concrete awareness and learning, but add awareness of the subtle interior of the self, the part of the self that one can't see, such bringing awareness to one's thinking, (e.g. are you thinking generous thoughts or angry thoughts), interior experiences of the sacred which involve light, experiencing energetic beings, archetypes, (Wilber, pp. 91, 92, Spangler, p. 94) subtle concentration practices, practices of "Light" and turning within, Deification and spiritual marriage (Brown pp, 272-284; Chirban, pp, 298, 312; Keating pp, 38-54; Underhill, p. 413)

Next are "Causal" spiritual stages within which there is recognition of the illusory aspects of the life we lead. It is in these stages that certain kinds of insight practices leading to understanding of emptiness, the pure witness, deep silence, formlessness and divine transforming union arises, (Brown, 2006, p, 292 Brown, pp, 246-256; Chirbam p, 298; Keating, pp, 66-71, Borgeau, pp, 69-79). It can also involve experiencing the essence of being (Kesler, p, 6)

Finally there are the rare non-dual stages that Aurobindo describes in his books, the Life Divine and the Synthesis of Yoga. I will offer a little information on these latest developmental stages, which seem to be congruent with developing late non-dual experiences the ordinariness of life, while apprehending the entire scope of the

developmental trajectory (Aurobindo, *The life Divine*, 1079, O’Fallon, 29). Non Duality can be experienced at the gross level, the subtle level and causal level stages. Hence, the objects one is Non Dual with are gross, subtle or causal.

Spiritual patterns

Particular to the integration of Developmental levels and Spiritual levels are evolutionary patterns that both have in common; developmental patterns that weave themselves through the progress of our human souls. This section will cover several patterns: Dark nights (May pp, 155-180; Backhouse, pp, 1-131), in which consolation (Backhouse, p. 24; Keating, p, 162; Merton, p, 74) and desolation (Benner, p, 136, Merton, p, 67) reveal themselves; awareness (De Pernia, p, 1) and discernment (Chirban, p, 47; Dougherty, p, 1), which involve recognition of these and other patterns.

Awareness and States:

One of the most relevant patterns to spiritual direction and soul befriending is the understanding of patterns of *awareness* (O’Fallon, 20). At first, one’s *awareness, in the form of “knowing”* begins and ends with the skin, gradually moving to the recognition of others, and finally not seeing an essential difference between themselves and the community they identify with. They are *aware* of the concrete; for example they are *aware* of how they look, how others look, what kind of food they like, etc (though there is no recognition of this awareness).

Later the individual is still *in recognition* of the concrete, but they begin to have subtle states. For example they can “know” they see, hear, feel objects on their interiors (imagining a fairy for example) and even later they can “*know*” how they think

(strategizing) and they can *know* the feeling of deep abiding compassion, or other complex emotions. This may include subtle states where one is *aware* of bliss, ascertaining the guidance of the Divine interiorly, reflecting about their projections or experiencing subtle energetic connections.

Later, *awareness* becomes even more refined. People begin to be more *aware of the focus of their awareness*. For example they can *witness* their being *aware* of their projections in the moment. Their witnessing capacity is generally moved to the moment rather than after the fact or rather than reflectively.

Consolation and Desolation (Dark Nights and Maya)

This pattern is an alternation between consolation experiences and desolation, or uncomfortable experiences of dryness and/or emptiness. The most difficult desolation experiences are Dark Night and Maya experiences, and usually happen when one is transitioning from one floor to the next (for example from the Concrete floor to the Subtle floor, and from the Subtle floor to the Causal floor). There are peaks and valleys of consolation and desolation, which can happen any time but are more common when moving between developmental stages. Consolation experiences are the opposite of desolation experiences; feelings of joy and even ecstasy may arise.

Other patterns exist, which are primarily refinements of the previous patterns. The key to working with these patterns is to recognize how they manifest within each level, thus honoring each person where they are in their spiritual journey, and to recognize transitions, where people may welcome a deeper awareness of their changing understanding of the Sacred.

Integrating the Developmental Stages and the State Stages

To bring back a summary of the developmental stages, the Ego Development research describes the early and late expressions of the first through sixth person perspectives (Cook Greuter p. 1-35; O'Fallon, 2010). The first (Impulsive and Egocentric) and second (Rule Oriented and Conformist) person perspectives hold *concrete* viewpoints (p. 9-15); the third (Expert and Achiever) and fourth (Pluralist and Strategist) person perspectives mature one's understanding of interior *subtle* life (p. 15-27); and the fifth (Construct Aware and Transpersonal) and sixth (Universal and Illumined) person perspectives (27-35) focus on a *causal* essence related to immanence and transcendence. Summarized below are descriptions of how the developmental stages interpenetrate with the state stages. Out of that integration a description of the application approaches for spiritual guides will be offered.

The Concrete Floor

Human development begins with birth and it is the focus of the newborn to engage with their concrete development (Cook Greuter, p. 8). Learning about their bodies and their impulses, and controlling them is of importance at these concrete stages, which can and do extend into adulthood for some people (p. 8-15). The *Concrete* floor (O'Fallon 2010), holding the Impulsive, the Egocentric, the Rule Oriented and the Conformist stages, describe primarily the concrete *self*, related to concrete *others* (Cook Greuter p. 9-15).

People at these *stages* easily experience *states*, but the object of those states is generally a concrete object. For example, when they daydream, which is a subtle state, the object of that daydream will likely be concrete (food, mom, a car, etc). Traditional Shamanistic practices, fairy practices, and nature beings generally fall in this concrete realm; even as they are being in the subtle state of the underworld or the over world, they

primarily relate to objects that are concrete, such as bear, wolf, owl, water, tree, etc. As well, those who see a personification of a God in the sky outside of themselves (Spangler, 71), tend to fall into one of the concrete levels. If they should experience causal states of emptiness, they are emptying their consciousness of these concrete objects.

The Subtle Floor

The *Subtle* floor, which holds the Expert, Achiever, the Pluralist and the Strategist stages (O'Fallon p.15-27) describe those who begin to have an interior life that isn't yet recognized at the concrete levels. At these levels people tend to focus on and live within the polar opposites of the *interior* and *exterior*. They easily bring themselves into subtle interior states, as did those at concrete levels; however the objects of their subtle states can be both concrete and subtle. For example, people at these stages tend not to see God only as a being in the Sky, but rather, the Sacred in their interior (Spangler, 95); a subtle Sacred that isn't a concrete personification of a human being. They may have experiences of Causal states of emptiness or fullness without any objects at all, but the objects they empty themselves of are both concrete (sensory) and subtle (e.g., bliss, ideas) objects, and when they come out of causal states of emptiness, they tend to interpret their experience with a subtle mind rather than a concrete mind, expressing their feelings, their thoughts and causes and effects.

The Causal Floor

The *Causal* Floor holds the Early Construct Aware level, the Transpersonal level, the Universal level (27-35) and the Illumined level (Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 981-83, O'Fallon p. 28). In these stages people begin to see that they are looking "through the filter of the symbolic construction of and mapping of reality"(Cook Greuter, p. 29) through our language and self-referential systems (Cook Greuter, p, 29-30; Spangler p, 22). The new

arising insight holds the subtle and concrete selves as illusory because they are ever changing and not solid as they had been previously experienced, and because subtle definitions and boundaries are arbitrarily constructed but taken by most as real. Also is the discovery of a new dimension to the self, a causal self (O'Fallon, 28). These levels have a deep understanding and felt sense in their daily life of the emptiness and illusion-like aspects of the concrete and the subtle worlds they had previously inhabited only in meditation. They see through the constructed nature of their minds and the polar opposites they seem to explore, and eventually unite the opposing poles of transcendence and immanence (O'Fallon, 16). They progressively let go and open to this very subtle veil which holds them; a veil that is neither concrete, nor subtle but rather, a Causal ether so delicate that much of the unconscious can spring through to the surface.

Non-dual Floor

The Non-Dual floor holds four more levels (Aurobindo, Synthesis of Yoga, p, 789-853) but it is so rare that there is no research supporting them, only accountings by a very few saints, sages and siddhi's who have found their way to these extraordinary capacities. It is at this level where the discerning mind is transcended (Aurobindo, p, 401; Hubbard, p, 77; Roberts, p, 69, 70; Underhill, p, 415; Wilber, p, 141) albeit included, and seen from a non-dual space or the space of Oneness that we hear Western, and Eastern mystics speak of.

With section 1 as a background integrating the developmental stages and spiritual states, section 2 will highlight each floor; describe each of the developmental levels within, including ways to discern each level; and show a direct application to spiritual direction as integrated with Incarnational Spirituality. First will be a description of an adult level stage followed by some easily understood applications for directors: the discernment of the stage

their directee may be displaying, the approach that would likely work best for that stage, and the levels of soul and ego that evolve along with each level. This next section of the thesis could be seen as a manual for spiritual guides to use in their work with their directees. It will show how development, and spiritual direction can be integrated and interpenetrated in the act of befriending souls.

Part Two: Application of the Developmental path to Spiritual Direction

The Concrete Floor Levels

As described above, the Concrete Floor (O’Fallon, 2010) holds the Impulsive, the Egocentric, the Rule Oriented and the Conformist levels (Cook Greuter p, 1-15). The first three levels of this floor are not likely to seek spiritual direction or soul friending, for their capacity to practice is by research identification and definition, limited. These first three levels ordinarily develop before the age of 12, gradually beginning to understand boundaries that hold promise of supporting creative edges at a later time (Spangler, (c) 19), and gradually learn to follow societal rules and guidelines without guidance. Generally people who are at these levels tend to be at home with parents or ones who are guiding them. Though there may be some Egocentrics under the religious supervision, it is uncommon for them to ask for guidance on their own; in most circumstances it is when the world of the Egocentric becomes unmanageable because of their inability to follow the rules of society, that they may seek spiritual guidance under their own volition, sometimes in the form of a religion. This helps them learn how to follow a particular straight and narrow path and it is at this point that the Egocentric moves into the Conformist stage.

So we begin with the Egocentric, where we will focus on the specific ways the patterns unfold at this level

Egocentric

While one is not likely to have an Egocentric as their directee, many guides may be a parent or relative of someone who occupies this level so it is useful to have some understanding of those who are at this early level of development.

The Egocentric has only a rudimentary perspective on others, late *first person perspective*. This means that they are aware of others, but see them as competitors to their own desires and wants. They have a concrete egocentric view; that is, their own desires and needs are the most important thing to them. They have learned that their needs are more important than their impulses however, and can prioritize needs over their impulses. Regarding their *time* pattern, they are generally aware primarily of what is happening right now, and this puts them at a disadvantage, for they can't learn from a past they can't be aware of, and can't predict dangers and outcomes in a future they can't imagine. Thus the Egocentric is a slave to his wants and needs in the moment without much thought or concern of the possible consequences of his actions nor recollection of learning coming from the past. Because they are unable to sense what is to come in the future, Egocentrics are generally hyper-vigilant in the present, and feel no guilt for troubles they get into. They feel that their actions are "bad" only if they are caught. *Feedback* is viewed as an attack. Fight-or-flight is their modes of response.

Since they can't predict the future, they have an uncanny ability to take charge in an emergency, for they tend not to evaluate the danger in the future, and have no compunction when it comes to breaking rules, which they mostly don't remember anyway. Their instincts have been their guide so they have a nose for opportunities and have a great ability to act on

those opportunities quickly. Egocentrics use very concrete language, such as “Its hard”, “Its for the birds”, etc. They often speak vaguely and passive aggressively.

Spiritual life for an Egocentric is usually a magical kind of understanding; because they can't see forward or backward in time they make their connections by unifying events that are happening simultaneously in the moment--thus if they happen to be doing a dance or gesture when something good happens they tend to want to repeat that gesture, attributing the gift as something that comes from a diva, a nature spirit or some other imaginary phenomena given concrete form. Thus a myriad of rituals, including oracles, tea leaves, good luck charms, evil eyes, community rituals, inter-cessionary prayer, and so on tends to arise (Gebser, 250-251) Supporting a widened time span to increase their recollection of past events is a useful approach.

Working with an Egocentric involves direct intervention, and being the banks to their river (providing boundaries for them for they can't do so for themselves), so that they don't get into trouble, which can easily happen in any event. Even so they are often charming and likable; their deeds are generally not premeditated, for the future is not yet there for them, and generally, given their level, they can't help the conundrums they get themselves into. Their spiritual understanding tends to be magical and superstitious.

When the Egocentric gets into trouble often enough, they begin to look for a way to keep themselves safe, and become frustrated with the constant struggle they live in. This is a time when they may begin to look for assistance, for someone to guide them and help them stay out of trouble. Their rituals and good luck charms haven't worked, so they look for someone to tell them what to do. When in this transition, it is not unusual for Egocentrics to join a rather strict or conservative church that will hold them to the line, for this brings them

some relief from their troubled lives. The rules of the church and the church community can support them to lead a less frazzled life. It is at this point when they move into the early Rule Oriented second person perspective and begin to be aware of how others see them and how they see others. Conservative Churches perform a great service for Egocentrics transitioning into Rule Oriented, and it is here and at the next level, the Conformist, they may ask for the guidance of a Spiritual Director.

Rule Oriented

Those at the Rule Oriented stage enter into an *early second person perspective*, and begin to see that not only do they see others, but others see them in return. This is a profound leap from the one-way seeing, active response of the Egocentric to a more collective reciprocal response. This allows them to begin to make agreements with others for now they see that it isn't only their way but others also have a way of doing things.

In addition to seeing that others see me, they recognize that others can see me when I am not looking, just as I can see them when they aren't looking. This simple recognition changes their worldview from magic to mythic, for, if others can see them when they aren't looking then of course so can the spirits that provided the magic in their lives—and in order to see me when I am not looking they have to be able to see from a particular vantage point, which is usually high in the sky. This is where the mythic Gods reside. Hence, agreements become important not only with others, but also with these mythic Gods. Following rules, then, seems agreeable to them even though it is difficult, for a new kind of habit has to be formed to comply with the ethical requirements such as the ten commandments, and the eight fold path, of most religions.

Since this level doesn't yet know how to prioritize, there is little distinction between a mortal and venial sin, so their tendency will be to treat all transgressions the same; usually with harsh repercussions.

Most people arrive at this stage during their childhood but some adults are still in this stage and this is when they may seek a more fundamentalist structure to support their ethical training, and this is the stage that this ethical training of following rules is most appropriate.

Spiritual Direction for the Rule Oriented

Guidance for someone at this stage is to support them in following the ethical rules of their chosen spiritual path, and to gradually discern the difference between more or lesser transgressions. In addition, learning how to pray in various ways, including memorized prayer, inter-cessory prayer can be helpful. The key to growth at this stage is to support the directee in their internal sensory memory systems so that they can hear, visualize and feel when something is amiss in the present, so that they don't repeat errors of the past, and to visualize the repercussions they experience from their transgressions so that they won't repeat them in the future.

Conformist

The Conformist has a *late second person perspective*: they can step into another's shoes and imagine what it would be like if they themselves were standing there. This brings an entering level of empathy for others. Because they can imagine how other people see them, it becomes very important to them to dress the right way and to look like the others in their group, be it a family group, a peer group, or church group. They want to have the same "things" as they see others in their group having as well, so are motivated to work hard to realize similar material existences as their peers.

Their place in the pattern of *time* is still “today” but now they can follow the traditions of the past, which have been tried and true and they can learn from their mistakes and the mistakes of others from which rules have been formed. Conformists see these proven traditions as a benefit since they need to have something or someone to tell them what to do, which tends to keep them safe and relatively happy. These rules take precedence over the needs they prioritized as an Egocentric, because those needs often got them into trouble. They can also prioritize these rules, recognizing, for example that killing someone is a far greater transgression than stealing a penny. *Feedback* is seen as disapproval, or a reminder of the rules, which they tend to follow religiously. Here, learning to hold the boundaries of rules is part of the work, and often there is an attempt to hold them rigidly, a necessary step in the movement toward later stages where boundaries can be used as “communication and exchange (Spangler, 19).

Their *space* frame is ethnocentric; that is, they can relate to their own circle, family, or group, which provides an identity, values and protection. Boundaries between self and the in-group are confused; they tend to over-identify with their group, and will suppress any negativity related to their peers. However, anyone outside of the group is in the out-group and represents a threat, and to these people they are not “nice”.

The Conformist does not yet recognize that they have an independent interior self. Self/other is the *polar pair* they are learning to negotiate, and at this level, generally, “other” in the form of their peer group is more important than they are, so they tend to be in submission to the group, which is a closed system. This is in contrast to the Egocentric, whose focus is on the self and its desires and wants, and who cannot delay gratification easily. Still the Conformist and the Egocentric have some similar things in common. They

are both within the concrete floor, where the senses are very much activated and wants and desires reside very much in what they see, hear, touch, taste and smell. The Rule Oriented is gradually learning to delay gratification to their senses, and the Conformist is much better with this delay and prioritizes the rules, but the senses are still the primary focus of their concrete materialistic existence and they find meaning and purpose in life through symbols, status, appearance, material goods, reputation and prestige. Delayed gratification controls their impulsivity, often through feelings of guilt and shame. Hierarchies are honored and there is primarily one right way to do things. They often genuinely desire to do service to a higher purpose.

Spiritual Direction for the Conformist:

A Spiritual Director can discern the Conformist level through the characteristics described above but also through language, which is often concrete and factual. The Conformist will often use clichés and speak in platitudes (“wasn’t that nice”) where everything is “fine, good, important, wonderful”. They tend to see things in a rigid manner speaking in a “black/white” approach about only one right thing at a time, and unable to see the other side of a conversation or opinion. Gossip is not uncommon, and they will speak of “in and out” groups.

Regarding their relationship to the Sacred or God, the Conformist is still in a very concrete world, and though they may have subtle states related to God, they continue to see a concrete or mythic “God” which they generally apprehend outside of themselves; God’s “rules” such as the Ten Commandments or the eight-fold path, have become very important as a safeguard from their disruptive Egocentric experiences. In the Egocentric, the Rule Oriented and Conformist levels, statues and artifacts tend to be used as a means of

anchoring their experiences to the sense of the Sacred through concrete forms (Gebser, 250-251). Entering Conformists who ask for spiritual direction would likely want their director to teach them, or tell them what to do; to give them a practice, to show them how to pray, or how to understand Sacred Texts, and to help them keep from being over powered by their senses and sinning, like they felt they did when they were an earlier level. They will not want to go against their group, so will want to conform to the structure of their group and their community.

Supporting the entering Conformist with preliminary practices of prayer and moral behavior is generally very helpful, especially at the beginning, but at some point success in their ethical practices and praying may bring to them awareness of interior experiences of joy and love, sometimes described as consolation. These interior experiences are a signal to the Director that an interior self may be forming, for vivid emotions, while they may be present, are generally below the focus of awareness at this level. The exterior moral practices, which bring a focus to anger, lust, gluttony, and other below-the-surface urges, (Blackstone, p. 2-22) gradually bring them into the light of day so they can be managed. However, encouraging interior practices of meditation and emptiness before a focus into the interior is present can be frightening, because they have not yet experienced the interior sense of self, and this can bring experiences that some may interpret as the work of the devil trying to fill their being with evil. We see this focus with some fundamentalist religions that discourage any kind of opening of the mind for fear of the devil getting in. Nonetheless, with considerable practice of the preliminary practices they can learn to empty themselves of uncontrolled sensory impulses and desires.

The transition from Conformist is one of the most difficult ones, because this is a move from the *Concrete* floor to the *Subtle* floor, and a move from embodiment of their concrete self to arising embodiment of their subtle self which they have not seen previously. All the concrete assumptions they had identified themselves by suddenly seem to dissolve, and a deep experience of dissolution can arise, which often begins with the discovery of a self outside of the group they had been so situated in. A particularly useful practice at this stage is the Standing Practice, which bridges the physical act of standing up, with the notion of having an individual and sovereign self. (Spangler, web)

The Subtle Floor Levels

The transformation from the Concrete floor to the Subtle floor begins with the Expert, and continues on through the Achiever, the Pluralist and the Strategist levels (Cook Greuter, p. 15-27). Inhabitants of the Subtle floor levels become progressively focused on their interiors in addition to their exteriors, which they gradually became aware of during their movement through the subtle floor. Whereas “Self/other” are the polar opposites being negotiated at the Concrete floor, “interior/exterior” are the polar opposites being negotiated on the Subtle floor. Moving into the first level of the Subtle floor is particularly difficult, for any time someone moves from one floor to the next floor, the transformation is much more major and stunning to consciousness. It is the move to the Subtle floor where one’s realization arises that the Mythic concrete God they had invested so much of their belief system in, is not the real basis of their identity any more; concrete experiences are no longer a means by which they can describe the whole of their “self”. But who is this new self that is arising?

The Expert

The Expert expands from a second person perspective to a *third person* perspective and awareness of the interior subtle self begins to dawn. This means that they can not only stand in other's shoes as they see things, but they can stand back and objectively watch several others engaged in conversation and behavior and get a sense of their interiors; they can now see beyond their own individual interactions with someone else. Being able to watch from this distance allows them to see subtle causes, where, as a Conformist they accepted what they were told was a cause without question, because they couldn't "figure out" or analyze causes for themselves. Being able to see cause, Experts begin more and more to ask the question "why" on a subtle level (Why does that idea work?), where as before their "why's" were primarily on an exterior concrete level (Why does a tree loose their leaves in the winter?). These interior questions bring them to awareness of their subtle self and they can begin to see and experience for the first time, their own *individual subtle* feelings and understandings about what they see in the behaviors and conversations of others, aside from what the group "think" can see. Therefore understanding others, and deepening an interior feeling of love is a prominent focus (Cook Greuter, p. 1-35) A sense of independence and sovereignty arises (Spangler (c), 22) for the first time. New careers and work that capitalizes on the expanded third person perspective is appealing. Technical and craft-like careers such as engineering, dentistry, architecture, medical doctor, computer programming and other technical professions become interesting. However this new ability to generate their own individual ideas, analysis, and causes, and understanding is still very new and the capacity to prioritize their ideas and line them out into the future is limited. Because they are so passionate about their ideas they tend to want to do them all, preferring perfection to deadlines.

Along with this is a sense of who to take *feedback* from. In their Conformist phase they took feedback from the hierarchical chain and people who would guide them to stay true to rules. Now, however, the Expert realizes that they can be the Expert, and they are loathe to take feedback from anyone who hasn't proven that they are a better expert at something than they are. To those who have credibility, they gladly take feedback, and otherwise they rely on their own expert capacities. Because of their new analytical capacities they feel they have it all "figured out" and they have a tendency to the "yes, but" syndrome, using one up-man-ship as a part of their argumentative stance. Still they hold in common with the Conformist the inability to see both sides of an argument, even though they are now more flexible, being able to see comparatives such as "good, better, and best" sides to the *one* side of the argument they stand in, as well as "bad, worse, worst". They now feel that they are entitled to impose their views on others and actively give feedback to others.

This third person capacity prompts them to look objectively at their group and outside of their group, so their experience of *space* expands beyond their own peer group to a beginning understanding of all of humanity, although practically, they still have alliances with their primary group and their country. Their sense of human rights expands; feminism and other isms began to arise, prompted by this growing sense of an individual self expressing in a much wider space than before. However, the experience of having an *individual* interior sovereign self (Spangler (c) 22), that is just being formed, and which is a new experience for them, tends to prompt a focus on themselves, and thus, they tend to not be good team players.

An expanded sense of *time* also comes to the Expert, for they begin to see into the future, although perhaps only a number of months, but this gives them an early sense of the effect of their actions, and they start to think beyond following rules, to seeing forward vaguely, which can be a contribution to a short range future. They bring with them a value of high moral standards from their past learning at the Conformist.

Spiritual Direction for the Expert:

In addition to the characteristics described above, a spiritual guide can learn to recognize Expert consciousness through the language they use. This can help them discern the kinds of support to give directees at this level.

Experts constantly compare themselves to others (we are “different”, “similar”) in subtle ways (different ideas, different feelings, etc). They will brainstorm multiple options and alternatives and tend to cling to all of their ideas but they don’t know where to stop, and can’t prioritize what they come up with. They often have a hostile sense of humor, ridiculing others, and at times become ultra rational, wondering “why” about everything, being obsessed with cause. They also externalize blame because they are just becoming familiar with their interior self. Their conversations are often oppositional and they want to impose their ideas on others. Their new ability to see the passage of time is indicated by the words, “sometimes” and “often” and they add comparatives to their adjectives (from black, to blacker; from nice to nicest). Because they are perfectionists, they tend to use percentages as proof of their exactness. They want to do things themselves, and struggle when people tell them what to do.

The move into Expert consciousness is a particularly difficult transformation from a spiritual perspective. Many will stay in a church situation but may move towards a more

moderate kind of church and away from a fundamentalist “rule following” approach. Their values generally remain conservative. However, coming from this new *subtle* view some may feel “duped” by the mythic God they previously got so much benefit from, for there is no analytical “proof” of this kind of God. Their very image of the concrete mythic God may begin to dissolve. In spiritual direction they may begin to question deeply their understanding of God, for they are searching for a way to perceive God from a non-sensory, and more intellectual and analytically based, interior mind, and this is the point at which a Dark Night of the Senses may naturally arise, (described by St John of the Cross, as interpreted by Backhouse, p. 25).

Previously, they got much satisfaction from their dedication to taming the senses by following rules such as the Ten Commandments, and engaging in moral practice, purification and prayer. This new movement into experiencing a subtle self-sense can be a disorienting dilemma, for what once brought satisfaction from the spiritual life they previously had with God no longer brings them consolation, but instead, desolation. They may feel that they have drifted away from God and the previous prayerful connection and imagination related to the image of the God they used to know seems impossible to access, despite desperate attempts to do so. They may feel dark and dry, for much of their former spiritual life hinged on their old concrete, sensory image of self and of God and they have nothing as-of-yet to replace it with. The consolation they previously felt in their connection with God seems to turn into an empty pit that they can’t seem to fill up.

This experience can lead them in the direction of agnosticism or atheism (doubt and denial of the Mythic God as the only God they presently know) not yet having the capacity to re-envision and experience God on their interior. However, this opening that feels so

strange to them is actually a new, but unrecognized opening of the interior sacred. (Roberts, 19) The work of spiritual guidance during this time can be a critical support to this transformed image and corresponding interior experience, which is often difficult for the Expert to do. They may feel like they are moving backwards in their practice; the deep silence they were able to access in contemplative prayer and their meditations now may be filled with a chattering mind again. What they may not recognize however is that the chattering may not be so about the concrete, but now *subtle* chattering about ideas are arising; their work is now taming a new mind, the *subtle* mind. They have transcended but included the beautifully tamed concrete self, and this new subtle taming may take several stages to do.

Since Experts want to do things “by themselves”, supporting them to discover a new spiritual life within can be done by introducing them to, or continuing to support them in meditative approaches, such as Lecto Divina, contemplative prayer (Keating, p. 147), mindfulness meditation (Brown, p. 136) and since their interior is waking up for the first time this creates an experience of the beginning understanding of wholeness, “between spirit and matter, soul and personality, self and others, the individual and the world, being and sacredness” (Lorian, web). While they won’t likely be able to grasp all of the opposing poles of wholeness, they will be able to apprehend one side, which will be a step towards their being able to see their own wholeness at a later time. In addition supporting them to transcend and include their corporal and embodied experiences is important in this developmental leap. Seeing the connection between their concrete embodiment and their subtle self is an integration that is important, beginning at this level and generally lasting over this stage and the next three stages.

Helping them see that they are in charge of their insights and are not being told by someone else what they are supposed to learn shifts the focus of these practices as they begin to harness the wildly undisciplined subtle mind, just as they learned to harness wildly undisciplined senses on the concrete floor. Giving them plenty of space to share their experiences, and encouragement to continue to be alert to their interior, can support their growing sense of the interior Sacred. This encourages a spiritual transformation of the Sacred, rather than leaving the Sacred behind as a result of their inability to redefine it according to their new subtle realizations. The spiritual director or soul friend can be more effective if they can be seen as a “Spiritual” expert, for the Expert mindset needs to take direction from someone who knows more in an area than they do. Establishing your credentials can bring a sense of safety and trust to the Expert mind.

The Achiever

The Achiever level matures the Expert’s third person perspective. The interior life becomes more settled, and analysis, thinking, planning become more commonplace due to the increase in awareness of *time*, and *space*.

Achievers begin to add a greater focus on the future, and consciously begin to look into the future. In doing so, their capacity to see forward in *time* extends to about five years. The increase in awareness of future time brings changes to the capacity to see what should come first, and what should come next; planning and benchmarking in a time-related fashion becomes possible. Thus flexibility in boundary setting (Spangler p. 74) begins to occur. This supports prioritization because if one wants to complete a project on time, then one must decide which things are important and what might be left behind. In addition, for the first time long term goals begin to appear and the Achiever begins to see the importance

of *feedback* for the realization of their goals and objectives, so it is not uncommon for them to design many feedback loops where they can perfect a plan or a project as they are working on it. Strategic planning and five year plans begin to appear. This systematic process of reasoning is the *formal operations quality* of this level and this capacity takes precedence over the craft expertise of the Expert.

The Achiever also retains a wider sense of *space*. While the Expert has a vague sense of all of humanity being their family, the Achiever can actually take this into world centric action. Given their analytical and quantitative research capabilities, they generally believe that there can be a perfectibility of human kind through the scientific method. Human rights become even more important to them, and delivering results and taking responsibility is their hallmark.

In addition to their capacity to get things done, they begin to work well in teams and to lead, so they begin to expand their experiences of individual sovereignty with co creation with collectives (Spangler (c) 36). They also have a rich interior life. They are interested in understanding themselves forward and backward in time; introspection and reflection are common. Since they are quite independent, self-help materials become useful to them, and they become aware of competing commitments between family and work; now their interest in getting *feedback* for their work and plans extend to themselves, which they may welcome from considered sources of all kinds.

In addition, at this level, for the first time, the concrete ego becomes visible to them; the ego that tries to keep up with their neighbors, and covets material things. Seeing this ego doesn't mean ridding oneself of it, but this recognition begins to bring an early sense of humility coming from the interior, rather than having it come from the exterior by rule.

Spiritual Guidance for the Achiever:

In addition to the characteristics delineated above, the spiritual director can further discern the Achiever mind through their language. They may describe particular traits of “what is now”, compared to goals for what “should be” (future planning). They commonly speak of achievements, reasons, causes, goals, planning, effectiveness, and agreements and making choices (Spangler, 53). They now can see both sides of an argument and begin to make *choices* on both the concrete realm and the subtle realm; for example they might make a choice for work that has the opportunity for interior growth and education (subtle) over one that has a higher salary (concrete). They begin to use psychological language related to inner conflicts (e.g. being both delighted and frightened).

The Achiever has an even more dedicated mind to the subtle than does the Expert. They can easily roam around in the analytic, intellectual and planning, goal oriented mind, and they bring this mind to their spiritual life. However, the subtle Achiever mind can easily be a distraction to their spiritual life because it is often very goal oriented on an external basis and they tend to bring an over busyness to their doing life. Their focus on achievement can be equally rewarding in their interior spiritual life and they can bring this orientation to their spiritual practices, especially if they can set goals and feel some control over their movement forward. For example, They might set a goal to increase their meditation by five minutes each week, and then log their progress on whether they followed their breath through a count of 10, or if they had to start counting over on an earlier number. Or they may set a goal to read certain spiritual texts, or to journal about something they want to bring to their attention more often. It is important for them to continue to have access to spiritual practices that will help them tame their active subtle mind, for it continues to grow through

the four subtle stages; finding a replacement for the profound experience of God that they once had as a Conformist may not be easy, and this can leave some dipping in and out of an extended Dark Night which can last for a number of years, “it continues to experience from time to time spells of dryness and darkness and these are sometimes even more intense than they were before” (Backhouse, p. 51). Because of their busyness, some may abandon spiritual direction and spiritual practice all together so it is critical that they have a way to feel movement and achievement in their spiritual practices, which can involve the development of faith, and hope. Feedback on their spiritual progress is exceedingly useful to them.

Since introspection and reflection is so important to them, continued work with contemplative prayer (Keating, p. 38) and sitting meditation (Brown, p. 153) is still useful, and journaling often works well for this level, but it is important for them to make the *choice*. The director can support them by suggesting to them that it is more important to practice even five minutes a day rather than an hour on the weekend, for the habit of daily connection with the Sacred has an opportunity to grow into longer periods, and a once a week practice, no matter how long, is apt to be forgotten. They tend to be avid information gatherers, so recommendations for appropriate reading are often welcomed; perhaps some with short contemplations that they can refer to often during the day. Achievers also tend to appreciate the technology; so using an exterior meditative device such as Bill Harris’s (p. 179) Holosync may be a satisfactory experience for them.

Learning to set interior and exterior boundaries is also a useful practice at this level. The Incarnational Spirituality approach to working with Boundaries using the Holding exercises can be useful (Spangler, (c) 21, Lorian, web).

For people who live within the subtle floor, a relevant goal is to gradually become aware of and familiar with the workings of the subtle mind, and to gradually tame it without limiting its creativity, just as they did their with senses in the concrete stage. Thus any approach that supports them to slow the mind and to bring attention to it is worthwhile. First the attention may be after the fact, or introspective or reflective, but with attention and practice, they can begin bring their attentiveness to thought in the moment and let it go, more and more bringing silence once again into their attention. Directors can probe into the directees progress along these lines as well as to the reflective understandings and interpretations they get from sacred texts, sermons, and insights and provide feedback. The key here is to tame one's attention to the subtle movement of the mind.

The Pluralist

The Pluralist is the third of four levels in the subtle floor, and this level brings a new person perspective to the fore; the *early fourth person perspective* (Cook Greuter, p. 22). This perspective generally comes about because of many trials with goal setting; they become aware of all of the times that they have planned get to the goal but had gotten somewhere else; or sometimes, the “there” that they arrived at was different then the “there” they had envisioned. They begin investigating these phenomena by standing back even farther then they did in the third person perspective.

An example of this fourth person view is to imagine watching someone who is watching two other people in conversation. The person watching the two people in their third person perspectives is generally making factual judgments about what they see, but the fourth person watcher can see that the third person watcher is standing in a context that they can't see, and that this context is coloring their factual judgments. Thus, the forth person

watcher becomes very context aware, recognizing that goals and outcomes are context dependent; that we as watchers sit in subjectivity because we can't always see the situation we ourselves are embedded in. This is a very large and complex insight for people who enter this new world, and they tend to become very introspective about this experience, searching for their own subjective assumptions. In their interior searching, they tend to find different voices for different interior contexts...a mommy voice, a wife voice, a worker voice, a friend voice, a moral voice, a voice that puts out fires, a voice that is their inner child, a voice that has psychological insights, a sacred voice; a deep introspection arises in a search for the one authentic self amid all these contextual selves, for they *cannot prioritize* or categorize these voices on the interior, *nor can they prioritize* contexts on the exterior. Everything seems to be socially constructed and situationally relative. In their attempt to discover their authentic self they are motivated toward unique personal accomplishments independent of any socially approved roles or tasks, and begin to see even more clearly that their self is *not* a role, but independent of any role they play.

Since they see that goal orientation hasn't always been an effective way to approach things, they become more interested in *process* and how it unfurls in the moment. As an Expert and Achiever, they were very focused on the analytical mind, and now they see the folly of pure analysis being the answer to everything, so they become very interested in feelings, the connection between the mind and the body and an expanded sense of boundary arises; the "boundary of empathy" (Spangler, (c) 23), "is the point at which we become participants in the well-being of a wholeness larger than just our own". Also an awareness of subtle energies may arise on the subtle floor, and more predominately at this stage, which can at times become quite disorienting. In addition their *time* awareness expands to ten or

more years so they can see even more possible contexts and the relativity of time itself and several generations. Awareness of *space* extends beyond the human family to all of sentience, and the planet itself. Since sentience is thought of as part of their family they now become interested in not only human rights, but also the rights of sentience such as animal rights, and an increased interest in liberating humans from dogma, greed, and judgment. Equality is very important to them, for they don't prioritize any kind of life over any other (the life of an endangered snail may be seen equal to that of a person). Rather, all differences are celebrated as they strive for inner tranquility and social responsibility.

The Pluralist welcomes *feedback* as necessary for self-knowledge and to uncover the hidden aspects of their own behavior. They tend to form warm relationships and love to spend hours engaging in dialogue, sharing stories and experiences in the moment. This is because they know that others can see parts of themselves that they themselves can't see, and the reverse is also true, so the learning and reciprocity in dialogue is often seen as a priority. They now have the capacity to work with "both/and" choices, which allows them to see the value of both sides of an argument or select both side of a polar opposite rather than just one side. While the Expert and Achiever focused most of their attention on the interior analytic mind making a difference in their exterior work through goals, and making either/or choices; the Pluralist deepens the interior and exterior focus and holds both of them together seeing subtle contextual collectives.

Spiritual Direction for the Pluralist:

In addition to the Pluralist qualities spoken about above, the spiritual director can recognize the Pluralists mind by the language they use. They often use subtle language in the here-and-now; for example, inserting into a conversation, "I am feeling or experiencing

x, y, or z". This kind of language shows how they are focusing on their interior and exterior processes. They also recognize the role of context (Spangler, web) in the relativity of reality so they often will say, "It depends on..." and then will describe the context. They know that because things are context dependent, much of what they are thinking is an assumption, so they will actively look for and describe their assumptions.

It is common for the Pluralists to reject rational and elitist suppositions for they believe in equality and are interested in other ways of knowing than the analytical, which they may feel has failed them. Thus they may want to speak about dreams, somatic elements, embodiment, intuition and other ways of knowing. They realize that science isn't the only valid way of knowing so they may become interested in non-scientifically verified areas such as astrology and the I Ching (Cook Greuter, p. 22, Spangler, (c) p. 14). All ways seem equally valid, because prioritization within this forth person view has not yet matured.

Even as the interior awakens in the Expert and is further explored in Achiever consciousness, the interior, unseen, bodily felt-sense of self and others; sometimes called Subtle energy; may become of interest to the Pluralist. This is generally an area that is difficult to measure by statistical standards so it is much less often engaged at earlier levels. Bringing awareness to this felt sense is a part of the practice; feeling ones own energetic pulse within, and how it affects others, and experiencing other's subtle energy and its effect. Subtle energy practices may include such things as creating and expressing interior and exterior wholeness with and of one's own energy and in relationship to others energies, coherency between interior and exterior energies, and subtle boundaries.

Spiritual Direction with the Pluralist takes a completely different approach than the previous levels. Pluralists are passionate about discovering their authentic self, and have

further developed their mind, emotions, somatic feelings, intuitions, dream analysis and at times make assumptions that receiving knowledge from these realms is a voice of the Sacred; they can sometimes get very attached to and quite hypnotized by these further reaches of mind and body. In addition, because they feel that everyone is equal, and that ‘everyone is beautiful’, they often want to have an equal relationship with their director. They may want to inquire into the sacred life of the director, and to hear their guide’s stories of how they handled certain experiences. Generally this is not an attempt on their part to emulate or judge the life of the director, but rather, to put their own experience against the experiences of the director to see if they can find their own authenticity in the process. It is through collective “storying” that they explore their new fourth person contextual self. If the experience of their spiritual guide doesn’t ring true for them, it is generally fine, but they have a better idea of what their own truth is. Guiding through this kind of relationship can be tricky, for knowing how much to share, or not, is sometimes difficult to determine. Previous practices of asking them about their own experiences and drawing them out, at times, may not work any more because of this preference toward equality and a desire to compare experiences and feelings so they can more clearly identify their own authentic self. Sessions may become a back and forth story-telling session, weaving the stories of the directee with carefully selected authentic stories of the guide that can pose as models for the directee to consider. In addition, helping them quiet both an active subtle *mind* and the multiply nuanced subtle *feeling* senses can be difficult to do while they are in exploration of this fourth person self. Having a strong energetic holding, much patience and bringing a sense of faith to oneself as well as the self of the directee at this level can be quite helpful. This involves a sense of trust, vigilance and discernment within the guide to engage with

personal examples in a transparent way, (but without losing oneself, in the process) for the directee to have enough concrete-case-in-points that they can compare their own authentic truth against.

The Strategist

The Strategist matures the *fourth person perspective*, and a transition occurs when the Pluralist has exhausted their search for their own authenticity and settles on an image of their authentic self that they can accept. This settling in brings an overall sense of confidence. Also they begin to see that working primarily with process has its own drawbacks and they begin to *prioritize both exterior and interior contexts*. Exteriorly, they begin to see general and nested systems beyond the complex adaptive horizontal systems of the Pluralist, and interiorly they begin to see the developmental nature of the levels within themselves and in other people. Seeing clearly for the first time that development does occur, they often become adamant about their own developmental progress and are willing and eager to take on any and all practices that might support their movement forward.

The realization that working with process is not an answer to the struggles they had with goal orientation, they now embrace both process and a future focus by working with principles rather than goals, within which they cast their work. Their principles generally are based on mature ethics based on insights from the work they did on their own authenticity.

Their *time* horizon also changes. They now can see the world of their parents, grandparents, children and grandchildren, a multi generational knowing. As they perceive the multigenerational trek they begin to see generational patterns, and the exterior circular causes and effects of one generation on another one. They also begin to see interior circularity, after-the-fact, in the way of their own projections. Reflectively, they apprehend

that the very things they judge others for, is but a quality in their own being. This supports their embrace of paradox. Their focus is both on being, doing, and functionality in a flexible and accepting approach to diverse experiences.

Feedback is very important to the Strategist, and they actively seek it even as they are quite discriminating about what they receive, analyzing it and using what is helpful.

The Strategist continues to develop interior mind and exterior body, bringing together interior/exterior into mind/body integration. Cook-Greuter reports that statistically only about 5% of people in the United States arrive at this very mature fourth person perspective (p. 5). This is a transitional level preparing for the leap into the next floor, the Causal floor. The discovery of circular causation and projection is a pivotal support to this transition even as this level is still deeply ensconced in the subtle nature of the body/mind discovering and learning about aspects of itself that it will later transcend.

Spiritual Direction and the Strategist:

In addition to the qualities described above, Strategist's have their own way of expressing themselves through language. They can see the situational nature of contexts and their inter-dependent nature, so they still use the "it depends..." language. However they will now look at how these contexts can integrate over many years, and can plant seeds even though they may not germinate for a generation. They will actively speak of *learning* as a part of life and focus not only on their own *development* but the development of anyone important to them. They may describe refined plans they have for practices leading to development and speak of their calling to be an instrument of service to the world. They are aware of development, which earlier levels don't speak to, for they now can prioritize internal and external contexts. They can give abundant psychological explanations for

behaviors and conundrums and have no problem with expressing their inner conflicts, ambivalence and self doubt openly, in addition to expressing an elevated self-esteem. As expressive as they seem to be, they tend to sanitize their language, trying to say just the right words even when they may be in turmoil within themselves.

An important energy for the spiritual guide to notice in the Strategist is their intense desire to develop (Cook Greuter, p. 25). Generally they have a lot of confidence in their ability to grow and will often amass a lot of information on different practices that will support their precise understanding of the best approaches for a holistic growth and development. Wholness (Spangler, web; Cook Greuter, p. 25) is result of the integration of their previous disparate selves as they begin to connect, integrate, and cohere body, mind, feelings. They will generally be delighted with any and all resources the director suggests and will willingly schedule practice time for their movement forward; this is due to their realization that there are many stages left for them to develop through; it is generally their desire and motivation to conquer this growth by their sheer effort and will, and they have strong confidence in their ability to do so.

It is important to note again that this is the culminating stage to the Subtle floor, where insights are beginning to accumulate that will support spiritual growth to the Causal floor. The Strategist's interior authenticity is deeply recognized and acknowledged after three previous stages of growth. Despite this they do not yet see that the very image of their own authenticity is held up by a subtle ego. Thus, others can sometimes see the Strategist as arrogant and pushy and this can be off-putting. The Strategist often won't stop their willful approach to development until every practice they can apprehend has been deepened and exhausted. What they don't see is that this will is also coming from their subtle ego, and the

need to let it go is necessary to move to later levels. Any experience they have of subtle divinity is but a step to the next spiritual stage and will be surrendered and transcended in order to make progress to the next level.

The Strategist may be of a level of development later than their spiritual guide, but with experience with and understanding of this level the director can be of considerable support. One of the most effective ways to work with the Strategist is to continue to support them in their willful progress, to suggest reading, practices, and approaches that will support their development. Along side of this, helping them become very familiar with their projections is a most important practice that will move them forward. Having them keep a journal or a create a daily time of reflection on how their judgments, good or bad, can be found within their authentic subtle self can begin to bring projection into sight. Byron Katie's (p. 1-13) practices working with projection fit well at this point.

This kind of practice is best to introduce when they gain some early insights into their projections in reflection, or perhaps after they have been at the Strategist stage for a while. After reflective practice on their projections, helping them bring their awareness to them *in the moment* will support the continued flowering of awareness consciousness, and along with this will come the capacity to begin to see their subtle ego and support their transition into the Causal floor where they may encounter another Dark Night. Movement through the Strategist stage can take considerable time for some people, so as with all stages, patience is a virtue here as it is at all stages.

The Causal Floor

Transitioning between stages that leap from one floor to the next floor are much more difficult than transition between stages within a floor. Thus, the move from

Conformist to Expert, which is the move from the Concrete floor to the Subtle floor, is a very difficult move. In this move, the Expert may get glimpses of their concrete ego which is based on the senses, and they are likely to go through the Dark Night of the Senses, for their previous experience and image of God has been obliterated and an opening to the subtle divine experience, (which they don't recognize for quite a time), can be difficult for them to apprehend. They feel the loss even as they are growing in the subtle divine world, and through time they are searching for their authentic subtle self, which is also a necessary building of their subtle ego.

At the transition between the Strategist and the Construct Aware, the subtle experience of the divine is seen through, the subtle ego may be glimpsed and there is a realization that neither the concrete sensory Divine or the subtle Divine reflects all of who they are. It can be a crushing blow, for this apprehension is placed at a very rare altitude where very few people arrive (about 1%) and thus generally there isn't a community of others to process this with. This floor opens up a new overarching set of polar opposites that the stages within begin to understand and live within: Transcendence and Immanence; these qualities develop from Construct Aware, through Transpersonal and Universal (Cook Greuter, p. 27-35) through Illumined (Aurobindo, The Life Divine, p. 981-83)

Construct Aware

Construct Aware moves into an *early fifth person perspective*. (Cook Greuter, 29) Previous perspectives have progressively backed off, taking a perspective on the previous one, but when one moves into Construct Aware, a different kind of realization begins to happen. The *pattern* of standing back to take a perspective on a perspective becomes present to them, and they begin to see a hall of mirrors, being able to take successive perspectives

on perspectives at will. Cook Greuter calls this the fifth person perspective through the *n*th person perspective (p. 29).

Some people experience this new person perspective through the actual envisioning of these multiple loops; others, who are more in a feeling mode, find themselves aware of their feelings looping in a somewhat wordless way.

The fifth person perspective begins often when there is insight around projections in one's interior experience *in the moment*. The witness (awareness of awareness) is activated and it becomes aware, in the moment of projections arising. Judgments and thoughts about anything outside of the self, are finally recognized as being projected from what is inside oneself; awareness of the mind and emotions making up these feelings, stories and judgments, loops back to one's own interior. At some point, all conceptions that seemed so solid within the subtle floor are experienced as an illusion, a mere ever-changing story; a construct made up by the subtle mind.

This understanding can often bring on an existential angst, for everything one thought of as solid, either concrete or subtle, no longer seems real. One's "ground" is empty of the concrete and the empty of the subtle.

To add to the complexity and confusion, *time* stretches again and the capacity to be aware, in the moment, of constructions and stories through multiple generations, historically arises. Awareness of *space* is also expanded beyond the concrete (galactic space) and the subtle (interior space) to bring a larger sense of reality. The wideness of the interior and exterior space is stunning, and even so, the Witness continues to watch; in the profundity of the insight of this, as well as their new glimpses of the awareness of the subtle ego, a worry about hubris arises, and a genuine humility presents itself.

Feedback can be very helpful but it takes on a new tone. When one can see one's own constructions of everything, (and everyone else's) what of the feedback should one take seriously? Sometimes a cynicism and skepticism can arise out of this conundrum. As well, this is a first new stage on a new floor (the Causal floor) so it is often experienced as the swallowing of a tsunami, with little warning and little ability to *prioritize* any of the constructs that one is seeing. (O'Fallon, p. 13) How does one begin to work with the apprehension of such complex insights along with the experience of losing subtle and concrete parts they used to recognize as "themselves"?

Spiritual Direction with Construct Aware

Aside from the observations above, there are behavior and language cues one can become aware of when someone moves into this stage. Because the Witness (awareness of awareness) is perpetually activated in the moment, people at this stage are aware of watching what is coming out of their mouths as they are speaking, and to them it sometimes feels like being on a bad phone connection with a feedback loop of their own words appearing a second after they say them. Needless to say it is very difficult to speak coherently, or to get words out, when this happens, and often this is descriptive of the experience of someone just getting used to having the Witness activated all the time. In addition, they will begin to speak of their own projections by remarking after any judgments or discernments they make, that this applies to them as well. ("...and that is me as well"). They tend to remark about things being their current story, as if it might change. Also their language is no longer sanitized; because they are so in the moment, words that have been under the surface but in the past were preempted, now may come out in raw language blurts. In addition they may remark about their concern about having hubris. If the director

inquires about their ego they may speak about things like spiritual materialism, complex psychological insights and arrogance about their insights and all they know. They may comment about their feelings of “hubris”, for they know that they can understand some things that other people can’t, and at the same time they begin to see the subtle ego that wants to take credit for this advanced understanding. Thus they may understate themselves and their capacities and ability to deal with complex issues.

Working with the Construct Aware often involves supporting them to find their way through this second Dark Night, (Backhouse p. 51-131) for they now have a hole where their subtle spiritual life seemed to be earlier. This may be reminiscent of the feeling they had when they saw the folly of the concrete mythic God of the Conformist, but this time, they see the illusions and made up stories of the subtle stages. They often do not recognize that this gaping hole is a new face of the divine because they have never experienced it before so they can feel quite lost. Furthermore, there are very few people at this level, so they generally have no one who can understand this sometimes stressful place which, though it is a normal transition, it may not feel that way to them or look that way to others. Indeed they may wonder at times if they are crazy in some way.

It can be a great relief to people at this level to know that their process, and yes, the pain of their Dark Night of the Soul, is a natural step forward, and with this support they generally relax and can find some modicum of humor in the complexity and the confusion. It can be very helpful to them to have someone point out to them that the Divine has not left them but rather, the Divine is putting on a new face, and it is beneficial to be open to an entirely new experience of the Divine. Where-as contemplative prayer was particularly useful in the past in finding sacred silence by taming and emptying the concrete thoughts of

the Conformist and the subtle thoughts in the Expert through the Strategist mind, now, emptiness gradually moves toward an underlying silence in their waking life as an ordinary experience. They gradually become very familiar with the fullness of the silent Witnessing Awareness, which becomes more and more activated during the waking hours, as another face of God, a face that now follows them into their lives in each moment. The hollowness they feel in the entrance into the Construct Aware stage gradually, over a period of several stages, becomes this underlying, perpetual Divine silence as they begin to have a strong experience of being able to hold all of the illusions that are playing out in the daily lives of all of humanity and begin to get some ideas as to how they might actually use those very illusions and constructs, as tools for a better world. Explanations of this nature to someone entering this stage can be exceedingly liberating; just the understanding that this is a normal process that will be transcended generally gives them the faith and impetus to continue their spiritual life, even as they see once again that their mind will benefit from continued taming of all the wild circularity and reflexivity that seems to be out of control.

Transpersonal

The Transpersonal, or the *late fifth person* follows the priority pattern that the other perspectives have at their later stage; the Construct Aware perspective is gradually integrated internally, and at the late fifth person perspective of Transpersonal, the directee can begin to see that some illusionary stories and constructs serve better than others do; they begin to *prioritize* them and make *choices* between them related to the real effects they seem to have on situations and people, most of whom can't yet see them as constructs. They have the capacity to "move the line" rather than step "over the line" or "out of line", for they see that the line itself as a construction that can be changed. .

This is the second level of the *opposing poles* pattern on this floor, where making choices between two sides becomes possible. In the Causal floor, the over arching poles are transcendence and immanence, and they may make choices between a basic life of immanence (which is the pole that integrates interior/exterior, mind/body). If this choice occurs, they may focus on living an embodied life, bringing complexity into the habits of the heart. Or, they may choose a more transcendent approach of bringing complexity to their habits of mind, reflexive and looped thinking and-or focusing on witnessing but not both at the same time, although they can engage both ways. At this stage the subtle ego is seen with ease.

People at this level begin to bring together many of the constructions that seem effective, and integrate them in quite amazing ways-often seamlessly weaving typical approaches, ideas, conceptions together into complex mazes. The original conceptions are not unique, but the way they are woven together are, and the capacity to bring complexity together is quite astonishing; so much so that, while people may admire what they do, many can hardly understand the fullness and complexity of these integrations. This can leave the Transpersonal person feeling quite unseen, misunderstood and at times, and incredibly lonely. This complex whirlwind continues, often for some time. The label Transpersonal fits well for this level; there is often a burst of exterior activity that applies complex approaches that would bring most people to their knees.

Time and *space* remain historic and inter-generational; the Transpersonal has the capacity to bring the complex constructs together in a way that can support this historic time span in addition to awareness of it. Because of their high level of self esteem related to their

capacity to see and prioritize complex constructions, they may not accept *feedback* well if they sense that there isn't an understanding of the complexity they are trying to bring forth.

Spiritual Direction for the Transpersonal

In addition to the qualities named above, a spiritual director can recognize this levels by language and behavior. The Transpersonal is very fluent with their language, and most people can immediately recognize them as having a remarkable intelligence, though they may not be able to put their finger on its qualities immediately. Their language is complex, vivid, and often playful. They also hold a level of compassion, heart-fullness, and general care for virtually everyone, with an uncanny way to speak to almost anyone, often with a stream-of-consciousness quality. Along with that, however, can also come, a kind of confidence in understanding their particular brand of complexity, that can seem quite arrogant to others; they are generally quite sure of their choices and at times may even suggest that if someone can't go along with their way of doing things, that they don't need to participate at all. This can seem quite paradoxical to others who also see an unusually compassionate person on the other side of the coin who is willing to give and yield in so many kind ways except, perhaps in the personal areas of the giving of their perceived gifts to the world.

Much of this behavior comes because of the need the Transpersonal has to make these high level choices, though they can see both sides, they can't easily hold both at the same time; so they often choose one or the other.

Typical spiritual practices may fall to the wayside; Witnessing Awareness tends to be constant and ordinary. Their practices, once in sitting or contemplation, now come into

their entire wakeful life, with smoothness to their constant witnessing as they bring the complex understandings into the world, often with an intention of service.

At the Conformist level Contemplative prayer and meditation can be used to tame the senses and to delay gratification. Through the Subtle floor, the subtle mind and feelings arise, and contemplative prayer and meditative approaches can be beneficial in taming the subtle mind and bringing one to the silent state once again. Here, at the Causal floor, causal silence begins to develop from a state into an ordinary aspect of life. At the Construct Aware stage, the acclimating to the constant witness is much of the work, and somewhere in the two stages, awareness of this base of silence begins to appear at first sporadically. Calling attention to this quietitude under the whorl is a focus that the spiritual director can bring, encouraging a more constant awareness of this silent base that lies under the day-to-day activities and complexity of daily life. The Transpersonal may continue with the Dark Night of the Soul but generally when this silent base begins to appear and the new ever present face of God builds under the complex fray it seems to begin to dissipate.

The Universal

The Universal can take a sixth person perspective; it can step out of the hurricane of the Transpersonal's complex mind, and sit in the eye of the storm even as it whirls about them, letting go of the complexity even as they are living within it. It is at this place that a deep peace, acceptance and interior silence seems to permeate every part of one's being and life. The Universal can now unite the *opposing poles* of transcendence and immanence by seeing and integrating them into a both/and perspective, often with a still point centering between them. They can see and hold the largeness of the Kosmos (concrete, subtle and causal time and space) along with their child needing new shoes, all in one breath. Their

mode of being is a deep acceptance of all of life just as it is, without any need to change the self or anyone else.

Time is experienced as eternal and *space* is experienced as infinite. The causal silence underlies the fabric of their very life, and the causal veil is so thin that occasional spontaneous eruptions in the form of “all at once” kinds of knowing seem to arise without a sense of where it is coming from. A self doesn’t seem to be at the center of this stage, and there is a general experience of wonder and gratitude for life with a sense of universal connectedness and yet a sense of ordinariness; this is the bringing in what was once a causal state into the ordinariness of ones life such that it is no longer a state, but life itself. Feedback is accepted easily with little fan fare and an ease of reception where appropriate. Generally, there is lightness in this stage, without extremes of emotions. What may have been a Universal state in meditation, now becomes an ordinary experience in daily life.

Spiritual Direction for the Universal

Because the Universal is so rare, it is not likely that one will encounter one as a directee. In addition to the qualities described above the Universal can be recognized through their language and behaviors. In order for them to describe the unification of opposites and the wide space and time spans they have, they may use unique and vivid metaphors to express themselves. They can have a kaleidoscopic bridging of levels and types of contrasts and can stand outside of the desperate need for meaning making. (Cook Greuter, p. 35) Everything is perfect just as it is. This is the early part of the sixth person perspective, so it is a time of interior integrating of this new kind of perspective, a rocking back in the cosmic rocking chair, looking for a new face of God; generally people at this stage have stepped out of the Dark night of the Soul and it can generally be seen as a stage

of consolation. It is a transpersonal stage where the causal soul is at peace and what was once seen as meditation or contemplative prayer seems like a natural waking, peaceful state.

The Illumined

It is hard to imagine a stage later than the Universal stage, but the Illumined stage brings transcendence into immanence such that they integrate into a oneness beyond unification. This stage is a transitional stage before the next floor, the Non-Dual floor. In the rocking chair/priority pattern this stage is a forward moving stage once again, an active/interpenetrative stage rather than laid back, like the Universal. It holds a late sixth person perspective.

People at this stage look forward and back through out all of the history of development across multiple fields in the wideness of all space and time; spontaneous knowing seems to begin to erupt through the thin causal floor in the form of cross floor and cross world (the concrete world of matter, the subtle world of life and the causal world of mind) patterns. One can begin to see the patterns of humanity as they live within each person, and again, maps or patterns seem to arise to the fore out of the ether. However this patterning is different than the Transpersonal patterns; they tend to be simple on the surface yet seem to hold some form of the entire cosmos within them, if or when one takes the time to sink deeply into them; they don't integrate maps that are already present, though what is already present is within them. They can take what has always been present and see that in new and different ways, redefining ways to apprehend consciousness. These maps may be interior maps that express in the immanent behavior of the Illumined or they may be philosophical maps that can support the developmental life of most people who encounter them. When asked about these maps, an Illumined might say that they just come through

without warning; indeed entire books are sometimes written spontaneously in the mind in a matter of minutes. The intuitive bursts that erupt through this causal floor in this last stage of the causal floor may be concrete (knowing the illnesses of others) subtle (receiving revelatory maps or other cross tier material). These kinds of experiences can happen at other levels as well, but generally at earlier levels the intuitive information people receive spontaneously tends to be more of a concrete nature rather than of a subtle level and the earlier levels seem to feel that this intuition is a talent that they hold. Universal's and Illumined's may see themselves as vessels that receive this information and not as a talent that they can own. When they speak, a flow of information seems to come spontaneously out of their mouths, feeling to them almost as if they are not doing the speaking, but speech comes through them. This is NOT to be mistaken as an experience of channeling, however. They know what they are supposed to be doing because and when they are doing it.

This stage can be a very fertile stage, and the few people who reach this stage may be seen as visionaries, though often times, while open to sharing what they know, they may be somewhat reclusive or under the radar.

I report this stage for the purposes of awareness, because it exists, understanding that a spiritual director is not likely to have a directee at this level.

Transition to the Non-Dual Floor

Beyond the Illumined level (Aurobindo, 401) very little information is directly available about the stages in the non-dual floor. However the primary experience that one begins to understand during the transition into this new floor is the recognition in ordinary every day life, *of the mind that can do nothing but make distinctions*. (Aurobindo, p. 779, O'Fallon, 30) All of the stages through Illumined operate under the gaze of this

categorizing, distinction making and perspective-taking mind. A signal of a move into the Non-Dual floor is this deep apprehension of that mind by another Mind that is not ruled by making distinctions, but instead, is edging into a the Non-Dual mind stepping into the nondual floor

Entering into the non-dual floor is another huge leap, yet humans seem far from realizing this world of the non-dual as an every-day ordinary experience. After witnessing this mind's capacity to construct distinctions and patterns which can span gross, subtle and causal floors, and the common effortless eruptions coming out of the formless ether in the Illumined mind for, while.... a shock...a stab, an internal tsunami....there suddenly can feel a tumble..a dive...a rolling down hill...an agonizing, tearing and ripping of the fabric of mind, another Dark Night once again; a crashing clarity seeing the causal ego and the discovery of the illusion of the distinction making, perspective taking mind itself, the mind that all along has constructed this gross, subtle and causal self; this causal Maya that hypnotizes us once again, tumbles us in its playful hurricane, the washing machine scrubbing the mind drenched in gross, subtle and causal distinctions through a the Dark Night of the Self. The flashes and glimpses of the operation of this mind who has led for so long, completely unaware that it is not leading at all, but rather, incessantly discriminating amongst its own constructs regardless of how ethereal, and not able to see itself constructing gross, subtle and causal floors and worlds. The non-dual floor is a very sloshy place, a tipping in-and-out of mind and in-and-out of an awareness of discriminations after the fact, and increasingly in the moment in waking life. But, what is this That, that is watching this mind-self? This is a wondering that seizes one's gaze as one fitfully surrenders mind to the non-dual Divine. Few, if any, know the full trajectory of the Intuitive Meta mind, the Over mind, the Super

Mind space, and at this point, the mind we operate with can only bow in service to this level of the Divine calling described by Aurobindo (The Life Divine, p. 1108) “...for beauty and plentitude, a hidden laughter in and sweetness in all things, a sunshine and gladness of life are...powers of Spirit...a great diversity and liberty of self-expression based on an underlying Unity...everywhere would be harmony and truth of order”.

Summary

This thesis began with two scenarios that a spiritual guide might encounter in their work with directees. Holding those scenarios in mind, Part 1 outlined preliminary understandings of developmental stages, of Impulsive, Ego-centric, Rule Oriented, Conformist, Expert, Achiever, Pluralist, Strategist, Construct Aware, Transpersonal, Universal and Illuminative. It defined the first through the sixth person perspectives, the floors (tiers) and developmental patterns, which were then presented in a table for review. Next a description of spiritual definitions, and a summary of the stages that most spiritual paths have in common, along with thematic patterns was presented.

Part two organized all of this information for the use of spiritual guides, into information about each stage, divided into two parts; a description of each stage as a support for recognizing someone at that stage, and secondly, the kinds of spiritual approaches that would most likely be welcomed by someone experiencing a stage.

Now let us return to the two scenarios outlined at the beginning of this thesis:

You are engaging with someone who is in consideration of you as his spiritual guide. He begins to interview you, saying that he is looking for a particular kind of relationship with his spiritual guide: in this relationship he doesn't want to be the only one sharing, but

wants sharing from you as well-a mutual conversation and sharing of experiences without a hierarchy between the two of you.

If you were to go back over the descriptions of the stages, you might see that this person has the qualities of a Pluralist: accepting their need to have story telling conversations where the guide participates with their stories in an aware and targeted way, might be a worthwhile approach to attempt.

One of your directees has always been very deep practitioner, and seems to have a spiritual depth and relationship with God. You begin to notice some changes; a diminishing interest in their spiritual practices, and a questioning of their belief in God.

Looking back over the qualities of the different levels in this guide, you might be able to see that this person has some of the characteristics of a Conformist moving into Expert, accessing desolation or the Dark night of the senses. In this case it might be helpful to point out to the directee that this new experience is actually a new face of God that is showing up in their interior, and that they can find the Sacred there, beginning with identifying the hole or pit they are experiencing, and helping them recognize the birth of a new face of the Sacred.

It is my hope that the information in this thesis might be of assistance for spiritual guides everywhere who are interested in refining their guidance practices by recognizing different adult levels of development and spiritual levels and moderating their approaches based on the intersection of these two fields.

We come together

At the same table of Love

Reaching into our Divine Self

Reaching out with a Divine Hand

Guided by it and guiding

One soul at a time

And

Participating in humanity's Sacred Pilgrimage

From a tiny stream to the

Divine Ocean

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