

The Evolution of the Human Soul:
Developmental Practices in
Spiritual Guidance

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Chapter 1: Roots and Branches

Overview

Spiritual direction as a profession has expanded and grown throughout the centuries, and most spiritual lineages have directors, guides, or soul friends to support the laity (Empereur 23). As a field, spiritual direction 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 1 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 the developmental patterns that wind their way through the developmental stages will be delineated, followed by a brief foray into the field of spiritual guidance and some of its lineages, including definitions of spiritual terms that 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 1 forms an underpinning for chapter 2, which will center on how this developmental understanding can support spiritual guides from all lineages and traditions in their work with those they guide.

Development in Spiritual Direction: A History

For centuries, spiritual direction and guidance has been one way for people to explore their human sacredness. Although in earlier times finding a teacher was often difficult, in these

modern times, this kind of guidance has become far more available in all traditions (Brown, Painting xv; 1). Recent years have seen important milestones to “incorporating spiritual beliefs and practices into the practices of psychotherapy” (Moon and Benner 7), which has come along with incorporating psychological approaches into spiritual direction. An initial step across the gap between psychological and spiritual approaches, from the side of spiritual direction, was made when Benner wrote *Psychotherapy and the Spiritual Quest* in 1988 (Moon & Benner 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 (Moon & Benner 8). Meanwhile, psychological approaches were also being recognized as a support to spiritual direction. “All psychology encompasses spiritual direction and all spiritual direction encompasses psychology,” Patricia Coughlin has said (81); they form a continuum (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 *Stages* 244; Liebert 77-119; Empeur 29-45; Bowler; Ruffing). 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 *Stages* 52). Erickson’s stages were related to the natural aging process (Fowler *Stages* 52; Liebert 29-30). Piaget’s work involved cognition from a developmental perspective, primarily for children (Fowler *Stages* 53; Liebert 32), and Kohlberg delineated the stages of moral development in his research (Fowler *Stages* 52; Liebert 32). Kohlberg followed from Piaget with his work on morals: “[H]e 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” (Liebert 32). 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, derived from hundreds of interviews, on the stages of faith (*Stages* 89, 312-23).

Fowler’s research on the stages of faith outlined six successive levels of adult development related to faith (Fowler, *Stages* 44): Intuitive-Projective faith, Mythic-Literal faith, Synthetic-Conventional faith, Individuative-Reflective faith, Conjunctive faith, and Universalizing faith (Fowler *Stages* 117-99). These stages seemed to correlate with the Piagetan model of developmental stages (Fowler *Stages* 244).

The Intuitive-Projective faith stage 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” (Fowler *Stages* 133). This is the first stage of faith.

The second stage is the Mythic-Literal faith stage. In this stage, people take on the beliefs and stories that symbolize their membership in their community. The spiritual figures are anthropomorphic, such as God being depicted as a particular kind of human being (Fowler *Stages* 150).

In the Synthetic-Conventional stage of faith, people now extend beyond their family or community and involve themselves in a number of spheres, to which their faith must bring a coherent orientation (Fowler *Stages* 172).

In the fourth stage, the Intuitive-Reflective faith stage, individuals begin to take responsibility for their own “commitments, lifestyle, beliefs and attitudes” (Fowler *Stages* 182)

but they are caught between their need to preserve their own well-being and the paradoxical or divided nature of the world (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 (Fowler *Stages* 200). “Here symbolic power is reunited with conceptual understandings” (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 (200).

Fowler did his developmental research from 1972 to 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’ (Fowler *Stages* 273). He subsequently recognized that conversion could happen at any one of the stages and could recapitulate throughout the stages as they arise (290). Ultimately Fowler did not develop a process of using these stages with people, but he did plant this seed: “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” (288).

In the meantime, Jane Loevinger was conducting her research (see Loevinger and Wessler), 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 as Fowler’s. She identified three waves

of structural theories from which spiritual direction drew (Liebert 35). The first was Piaget's cognitive structures; the second was Kohlberg, who advanced the developmental research into the adult population and applied it to moral thinking (32). She also placed 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 wave, which is noting the underlying assumptions that all developmental models seem to hold in common.

Liebert noted these underlying assumptions (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" (35). As well, one can see only from within the perspective that one inhabits, and each new stage describes a qualitatively different way to view the world (36). Another assumption is that people must develop to a higher level of complexity to move to the next stage, even though they can understand, cognitively, one stage later than they are, but they will look through their own lens to interpret that later level (36). Each stage transforms the prior stage, and these stages are quite stable as systems and represent entire systems of meaning construction (36). Movement from one stage to the next seems to require some dissonance in life and is not 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 learning from the one they presently inhabit (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 observations that are 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” (56). This helps directors and guides to intuit what their directees’ developmental “cutting edges” (58) might be.

Second, one must be able to recognize a developmental transition and understand the natural evolutionary trajectory of development as opposed to trying to make development occur: “Trying to cause stage change simply does not work”(Liebert 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” (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” (61) between oneself and one’s 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 nonrevolutionary 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 help to allow for movement rather than the typical function of holding the directee back (67).

Liebert applied the insights she derived by integrating the work of Fowler, Kegan, and Loevinger into spiritual direction. She recommended starting with the seekers developmental level and working with them through their developmental movements by being aware of the signals that fall within the seekers themselves, shifting one’s own way of working as the seeker shifts (72, 73).

Liebert adapted Loevinger’s developmental stages for use in her spiritual direction model (212). Her stages, Impulsive, Self-Protective, Conformist, Self-Aware, Conscientious,

Individualistic, Interindividual, and Integrated (212), are employed throughout this thesis as a basis of development in spiritual direction. Liebert has also used this developmental model to work with group spiritual direction (Empereur, 29), recognizing, along with Fowler and Robert Kegan, that the holding environment extended from director-seeker into the seeker's culture and society.

James Empereur drew on Liebert's developmental application of the ego stages by looking at how the Enneagram related to spiritual direction and development (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 toward a deeper union with the Sacred (43). He used three developmental levels, the Conformist, the Conscientious, and the Interindividual stages, to depict three different ways in which each enneotype could be interpreted and he 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 (95) described the importance of being aware of the transitions between the stages as common times for the dryness that people periodically experience on their spiritual journey. The later stages may more easily usher in the experiences of Mystical Union (98).

In summary, the development of the connection between spiritual direction and 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 actually applying this knowledge to the relationship between spiritual directors and their directees.

This thesis continues this developmental exploration in the support of spiritual growth with a more detailed look at Loevinger's and Cook-Greuter's ego developmental stages in 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.

The previous approaches have all worked with developmental models of spiritual direction. This model uses an updated scale, the Loevinger–Cook-Greuter scale, which has been researched on more levels than any other scale. In addition, the model depicted in this thesis identifies certain iterating patterns of development that have not previously been written about in relation to spiritual guidance. It also describes the spiritual developmental stages and their patterns. 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.

Finally, and most importantly, it identifies and recognizes the autopoietic function of developmental models and spiritual paths themselves; that is, it recognizes that spiritual paths themselves are not immune to the horizontal recursiveness that happens through the paces of society, cultures, and socioeconomic status, among others. Spiritual paths themselves can become just as developmentally hypnotized as an individual. Rather than adapting, developing, and transitioning their very beliefs and theories, they—and we—become mired in the seemingly sticky attachment we have to the belief structure of the path we love and find comfort in, a belief structure that has been laid down centuries before or 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 altogether 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 the person's face. Continue to do this until you cannot think of anything else to write.

Then take a good look at the face of the person you are imagining. Note that you probably cannot see anything but the sticky notes; you cannot see the person's face at all.

People change over time, but our own assumptions about them can actually freeze them in the past. Thus we may be a cause of them being as we imagine them to be, rather than being the people they actually have the potential to be or actually are. This judging supports them in robotically behaving in the mode into which we have frozen them.

This notion also seems to apply to our spiritual paths. We have beliefs about what is and what is not involved in a spiritual path. We freeze those assumptions and notions in our minds, holding those paths to the conditions they with which they began, 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 exposes this automatic, autopoietic hypnosis that is so difficult to see by using a process of recognizing iterating patterns that apply to individuals, to groups, and to spiritual paths themselves.

With this background, I begin with two scenarios that could be encountered within a spiritual guidance session. There are any numbers of ways in which 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 interacting with someone who is considering engaging 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 does not 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 a 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 her spiritual practices and a questioning of her belief in God.

These two scenarios hold developmental clues that may support a spiritual guide in his or her work. These will be briefly discussed through a developmental lens at the conclusion of this thesis.

This thesis has two aspirations: (a) to build a field that integrates the use of humanity's more recent research in adult development as it can be applied within the longstanding lineages of spiritual direction, spiritual friending and spiritual guidance and (b) 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 (Lê, H and Loevinger ix). Research has clearly shown that children and adults develop through a series of stages (Loevinger and Wessler 10-11), and in each of these stages, an entirely different way of looking at the world occurs (Wilber, *Integral Spirituality* 50). The developmental trajectories are evolutionary and continue to unfold (Lê, H and Loevinger 9-25; Loevinger and Wessler, 3-7). The latest model proposed by Cook-Greuter (*Post-Autonomous* 176) describes ten adult levels; Impulsive, Opportunist, Delta, Diplomat, Expert, Achiever, Individualist, Strategist, Construct Aware, and Unitive (Cook-Greuter *Ego* 1-36). It also measures and integrates four areas within each stage:

1. Doing, or the *behavioral* aspects of living: how people operate in relationship to others; what they need and what they do to meet those needs; and a feeling of direction or purpose to their behavior.
2. Being, which involves an *affective* dimension that recognizes and works with feelings, effects, and experiences in one's self and in relationship to others.
3. The *cognitive*: thinking, conceptions, knowledge, interpretations, worldviews, and meaning-making schemes.
4. *Awareness* of one's exterior behavior, of interior thoughts and feelings and of the focus of awareness (1-15).

Development is a dynamic movement of wavelike holistic movements as one grows progressively throughout life.

Developmental Structure Stage Definitions

The following definitions are informed by material developed by Cook-Greuter, *Ego* (1-36), Wilber, *Integral Spirituality* (50-71), and Aurobindo (*Synthesis*), and by my own experience and research (O'Fallon).

1. *Structure stage*: the capacity to take a first-person perspective (Impulsive and Opportunist levels), a second-person perspective (Delta and Diplomat levels), a third-person perspective (Expert and Achiever levels), a fourth-person perspective (Individualist and Strategist levels), a fifth-person perspective (Construct Aware and Catalyst levels), or a sixth-person perspective (the Unitive and Illumined levels).

2. *Structure-stage patterns*: repeated iterations of themes that run through the person perspectives of the structure stages, such as time, space, awareness, prioritization, and opposing poles.
3. *Floor*: a tier of stages that forms when several structure-stage patterns congeal at once, from immaturity to maturity. Each floor generally holds four stages:
 - a. Concrete floor: These four stages are a highly researched description of people who experience primarily the exterior concrete with their senses.
 - b. Subtle floor: The two third-person and the two fourth-person stages describe people who add awareness of experiences on the interior that the senses cannot see, such as thinking, dreaming, and emotions.
 - c. Causal floor: The two fifth-person and the two sixth-person stages describe people who have experiences of emptiness/immanence.
 - d. Nondual floor: This floor holds levels that describe people who have nondual experiences beyond the sixth-person perspective.

Transitioning between Stages

At times, the reasons that cause people to move from one stage to the next are a mystery. Boyd and Meyers (161), Cranton's (94), and Mezirow's (147) research indicates that having a disorienting dilemma that induces critical reflection (wrestling with something that we cannot make sense of in our current meaning-making scheme) may lead or even catapult people into a later stage. These can be life dilemmas (one's spouse passes away or one's house burns down); work dilemmas (loss of job or income, retirement); or 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 in 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.” 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 ability to discern where a person might be developmentally and choose an appropriate guidance approach is supported.

Time

At the earliest stages, the perception of time is in the moment, without much recognition or remembrance of the past or 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 one’s 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 innerspace, and awareness of 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 worldviews people are able to take, for if they can hold only space that is close to their skin, their worldview is 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 model there are six person perspectives (*Ego*). At the first-person perspective, one can only see self and self wants. At the second-person perspective, one can see one’s desires and those of others. Fowler describes this perspective as having the capacity to stand in the shoes of another (*Weaving* 107). In the third-, fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-person perspectives, one gradually stands farther and farther back, seeing how one is 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 illustrated by the previous patterns, each pattern begins 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, feedback is increasingly invited and eventually projection is recognized. At the fifth and sixth-person perspectives, one can see that feedback is a construction, an illusion, and a nonreactive acceptance begins to arise.

Qualities

One of the critical defining characteristics of each person perspective is the unique quality that permeates it. The first-person perspective of Impulsive and Opportunist is permeated with the focus on *self*. The second-person perspective of Delta and Diplomat focuses on self/other and *concrete operations*. The third-person perspectives of Expert and Achiever focus on the quality of *formal operations*, or analysis. The fourth-person perspective of Individualist and Strategist focuses on *awareness of the context*. The fifth-person perspective focuses on *awareness of constructs*, and the sixth-person perspective focuses on the awareness of *unification* of polar opposites, or Unity consciousness.

The Rocking Chair Pattern

The rocking chair pattern (O'Fallon) 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 awareness of context) is apprehended, but because it is so new, there is little ability to prioritize it or to take it out into the world; thus, 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 continue to open the boxes and become very familiar with it. At some point one's understanding of the quality matures and one 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 and later prioritizing and taking it out. At a later person perspective, one rocks backward once again when a new quality is discovered and then rocks forward, 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. It allows spiritual directors to ask themselves whether directees are 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 whether they are mature in this quality, taking it out into their life and their work?

Polar Opposites Pattern

This pattern describes a progression people go through with understanding opposing poles and opposites, such as aversion and desire, love and hate, sacred and profane, and transcendence and immanence (O'Fallon). When people first encounter a new set of polar opposites, they tend to see only one pole in the moment, rigidly. For instance, they can see a desire but not an aversion. Or they can see an aversion, but not a desire. Next, they can be a bit more flexible with that one pole and prioritize (good, better, best; poor, poorer, poorest). Finally they can see both poles (either/or thinking) and make choices between them. 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). Awareness of these steps of (a) rigid thinking of one side, (b) flexible thinking of one side, (c) choice, or either/or thinking, (d) both/and thinking, and (e)

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. For example, one may focus on how one looks, on what one owns, or on keeping up with the Joneses. 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 focused on very subtle distinctions, on subtle awareness of one's connection (unity) with the sacred, and on the capacity to see multiple-tier associations.

One cannot see the ego that is presently being occupied; thus when one moves into the subtle floor, one can see one's concrete ego but not one's subtle ego. When one moves into the causal floor one can see one's subtle ego but not one's causal ego. When one moves into the nondual floor, one can see one's causal ego, until it eventually dissolves.

Table 1 depicts the stages and their patterns as described above.

Table 1

Developmental Patterns

Stages	Person Perspective	Time	Space	Feedback	Qualities	Prioritization	Poles
Concrete Floor							
Opportunist	1st	1 day	Skin	Threat	Self	Desires	1 pole
Diplomat	2nd	1–5 weeks	Clan	Guilt (rules)	Self/other	Other	1 concrete pole
Subtle Floor							
Expert	Early 3rd	18 months	People	Cause of	Abstract ideas	Cannot prioritize ideas	1 subtle pole
Achiever	Late 3rd	5 years	Humanity	Cause/effect	Analysis	Ideas and analysis	Either/or
Individualist	Early 4th	10 years	Sentience	Aware of, defensiveness	Context aware	Cannot prioritize contexts	Both/and
Strategist	Late 4th	25 years	Sentience	Invites	Context aware	Prioritizes contexts	Integrate
Causal Floor							
Construct Aware	Early 5th	25+ years	Cosmos	Constructed	Construct aware	Cannot prioritize construct	1 causal pole
Catalyst	Late 5th	25+ years	Cosmos	Constructed	Construct aware	Prioritizes construct	Either/or
Unitive	Early 6th	Eternity	Infinity	All is perfect	Unified poles	Cannot prioritize tier patterns	Both/and
Illumined	Late 6th	Eternal	Infinity	All is perfect	Unified poles	Prioritizes tier patterns	Integrate

Nondual Floor

Intuitive	Early 7th	All time, no time	All space, no space	All is perfect	Mind aware	Not applicable	Not applicable
Over Mind	Late 7th	All time, no time	All space, no space	All is perfect	Nondual	Not applicable	Not applicable
Super Mind	Early 8th	All time, no time	All space, no space	All is perfect	Nondual	Not applicable	Not applicable

Delving into Spiritual Stages

This section will first describe definitions of state. This will be followed by a description of stages of state training that are held in common by 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 groundwork for chapter 2, which describes the 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 (*Integral Spirituality* 71-84), DiPerna, and Aurobindo (*Life*); by my own experiences; and by observations of how they appear in people in their everyday waking life.

1. *Gross state*: awareness of the concrete or anything one can experience with external senses or their extensions (e.g., microscopes, X-rays, telescopes, etc.).

2. *Subtle state*: awareness or witnessing 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*: awareness of or witnessing of the very subtle, of formlessness, or of emptiness or of the positive side of what might be described as essence.
4. *Unity states*: awareness connecting with gross, subtle, and/or causal experiences (feeling at one with). This definition recognizes different levels of unity, for one can unite only the form or experience of which one has the capacity to be aware.
5. *The Witness*: that which is aware. There is a progression of awareness from (a) instinct to (b) simple awareness to (c) the Witness, which is aware of the kind of object of which he or she is aware, to (d) Turiya, which is the capacity to witness twenty-four hours a day, even in deep sleep.
6. *Nondual states*: witnessing/awareness merging with gross, subtle, and/or causal realities. This definition recognizes different levels of nonduality.

Definitions of Gradations of the Awareness of States

Awareness is a capacity that is developed from birth. It seems to have a progression that may continue through the lifetime, or it may peak at a particular place and remain static. The following stages related to awareness seem to indicate the progression and maturity of awareness from the most rudimentary to the experience of awareness of the most profound connection with the Divine in the moment.

1. *First*: no awareness of a gross, subtle, or causal object or state, although it exists. An example of this might be deep dreamless sleep, which we all experience but of which we are not aware.

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 a gross, subtle, or causal object or state.
4. *Fourth*: awareness that merges with and disappears into what it is witnessing (gross, subtle, or causal) and becomes one with it.
5. *Fifth*: a state that has become an ordinary part of life, inseparable from it and not experienced as a state.

Other Spiritual Definitions

Several other areas are referred to repeatedly related to the experiences of the Sacred, I refer to them here as experiences that seem to have endured through the millennia and indeed seem to grow in their meaning through the stages.

1. *Consolation*: the sensible pleasures that arise from devotional practices.
2. *Desolation or Dark Nights*: a period of spiritual dryness and passive purification of one's motivation (Keating *Intimacy* 162).
 - a. *Dark Night of the Senses*: the soul divorces itself from the senses, is devoid of all delight to the senses, and is dry and hard; a purification of human desires (John of the Cross, ed. Peers 37-38; Keating, *Intimacy* 162).
 - b. *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. . . . [T]he soul is purified in dryness and the faculties are purified in the emptiness" (John of the Cross, ed. Backhouse 64). The last remnants of the false self are eliminated (Keating, *Intimacy* 162).

- c. *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 nondual union (Turiyatita) (O’Fallon; Wilber *Integral Spirituality* 83; Aurobindo, *Synthesis* 281, 601).
- 3. *Early Maya*: the Hindu corollary of the Dark Night of the Senses: “transient, limited, fragmentary, ignorant, suffering, nature, mechanical self-driven operation, illusion (Aurobindo *Life*, 111, 113, 601).
- 4. *Mid Maya*: will of being and becoming, or cessation, self-concealment of spirit, spirit hiding itself in form behind the veil of manifestation (Aurobindo *Life* 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 *Painting* 272-84; Aurobindo *Synthesis* 5-14), and Orthodox Christianity (Chirban, *Developmental Stages*, 298; Keating *Open Mind*, 23, 85; Bourgeault 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 or the Eightfold Path. Entire paths and churches are built around these concrete teachings, and they are critical to forming a sturdy base upon which later spiritual practices are built. These concrete practices 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, *Painting* 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 cannot see, such as bringing awareness to one's thinking (e.g., is one thinking generous thoughts or angry thoughts?), interior experiences of the sacred that involve light, experiencing energetic beings, archetypes (Wilber 91, 92 *Sex*; Spangler, *Pilgrim* 94), subtle concentration practices, practices of "Light" and turning within, deification, and spiritual marriage (Brown, *Painting*, 272-84; Chirban *Developmental Stages*, 298, 312; Keating *Intimacy* 38-54; Underhill 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, *Pointing* 292; Brown, *Stages*, 246-56; Chirban, *Developmental Stages* 298; Keating, *Intimacy*, 66-71; Bourgeault 69-79). These stages can also involve experiencing the essence of being (Kesler, 6).

Finally there are the rare nondual stages that Aurobindo describes in his books *The Life Divine* and *The Synthesis of Yoga*. I will offer a little information on these, the latest of the developmental stages, which seem to be congruent with developing nondual experiences of the ordinariness of life while apprehending the entire scope of the developmental trajectory (Aurobindo, *Life* 1079; O'Fallon).

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 155-80; John of the Cross, ed. Backhouse 1-131), in which consolation (John of the Cross, ed. Peer 24; Keating, *Open Mind* 162; Merton *Spiritual Direction*, 74) and desolation (Benner 136; Merton *Spiritual Direction*, 67) reveal themselves, and awareness (DiPerna 1) and discernment (Chirban, *Sickness* 47; Dougherty 1), which involve recognition of these and other patterns.

Awareness and States

One of the patterns most relevant to spiritual direction and soul befriending is awareness (O'Fallon). At first, one's awareness begins and ends with one's skin. It gradually moves to the recognition of others, and finally to not seeing any essential difference between oneself and the community with which one identifies. In the beginning, one is aware of the concrete; for example of how one looks, how others look, what kind of food one likes, and so on.

Later, individuals are still aware of the concrete, but they begin to have subtle states. For example they can be aware of how they think (strategizing), and they can be aware of the feeling of deep abiding compassion, or of other complex emotions. These subtle states may include being 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 occurring after the fact or reflectively.

Consolation and Desolation (Dark Nights and Maya)

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

Other patterns exist; they 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 he or she is in his or her 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

Returning to the developmental stages, the ego development research describes the early and late expressions of the first- through sixth-person perspectives (Cook-Greuter, *Ego* 1-35). The first-person (Impulsive and Opportunist) and second-person (Delta and Diplomat) perspectives hold *concrete* viewpoints (9-15); the third-person (Expert and Achiever) and fourth-person (Individualist and Strategist) perspectives mature one's understanding of interior *subtle* life (15-27); and the fifth-person (Construct Aware and Catalyst) and sixth-person (Unitive and Illumined) 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 sacred 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 newborns to engage with their concrete development (Cook-Greuter *Ego* 8). Learning about their bodies and their impulses and how to control them is of importance at these concrete stages, which can and do extend into adulthood for some people (8-15). The concrete floor, holding the Impulsive, the Opportunist, the Delta, and the Diplomat stages, describes primarily the concrete self, related to concrete others (Cook-Greuter *Ego* 9-15).

People at these concrete 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 in the subtle state of the underworld or the overworld, they relate primarily to objects that are concrete, such as bear, wolf, owl, water, tree, etcetera. As well, those who see a personification of a God in the sky outside of themselves (Spangler *Revelation*, 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, the Achiever, the Individualist, and the Strategist stages (O'Fallon) describes those who begin to have an interior life that was not yet

recognized at the concrete levels. At these levels people tend to focus on and live within the polar opposites of the *interior* and the *exterior*. They easily bring themselves into subtle interior states, as do those at concrete levels; however the objects of their subtle states can be concrete or subtle. For example, people at these stages tend not to see God as a human in the sky, but rather as the Sacred in their interior (Spangler *Revelation*, 95): a subtle Sacred that is not 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., planning, ideas) objects, and when they come out of causal states of emptiness, they tend to interpret their experience with a subtle mind rather than with 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 Catalyst level, the Unitive level, and the Illumined level (Aurobindo, *Life* 981-83; O'Fallon). 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, *Ego*, 29) through their language and self-referential systems (Cook-Greuter, *Ego*, 29-30) The newly arising insight holds the subtle and concrete selves as illusory because they are ever changing and not solid as they had been previously experienced. Also at these stages is the discovery of a new dimension to the self, a causal self (O'Fallon). People at these levels have a deep understanding and felt sense in their daily lives 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 constructing nature of their minds and the polar opposites they seem to explore, and eventually unite the opposing poles of transcendence and immanence

(O'Fallon). 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.

The Nondual Floor

The nondual floor holds four more levels (Aurobindo, *Synthesis* 789-853), but attaining this floor is so rare that there is no research supporting these levels. There are only accountings by a very few saints, sages, and siddhis who have found their way to these extraordinary capacities. It is at this level that the discerning mind is transcended (Aurobindo, *Synthesis*, 401; Hubbard 77; Roberts 69, 70; Underhill 415; Wilber, *Integral Spirituality*, 141), albeit included, and is seen from a nondual space, or the space of Oneness of which we hear both Western and Eastern mystics speak.

Chapter 2: Application of the Developmental Path to Spiritual Direction

With chapter 1 as a background integrating the developmental stages and spiritual states, chapter 2 will highlight each floor; describe each of the developmental levels within them, including ways to discern each level; and show how the levels within the floors can be directly applied to spiritual direction. First will be a description of an adult level stage; this will be followed by some easily understood applications for directors: the discernment of the stage their directees 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 chapter can 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.

The Concrete Floor Levels

As described in chapter 1, the concrete floor holds the Impulsive, the Opportunist, the Delta, and the Diplomat levels (Cook-Greuter *Ego*, 1-15). People at the first three levels of this floor are not likely to seek spiritual direction or soul friending, for their capacity to practice is limited, by definition and as supported by research identification. These first three levels ordinarily develop before the age of 12, when individuals gradually begin to understand boundaries that hold promise of supporting creative edges at a later time (Spangler, *Pilgrim* 19) and gradually learn to follow societal rules and guidelines without guidance. Generally, people at these levels tend to live at home with parents or with others who are guiding them. Though there may be some Opportunists under religious supervision, it is uncommon for them to ask for guidance on their own; in most circumstances it is when the world of the Opportunist 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 Opportunist moves into the Diplomat stage.

So we begin with the Opportunist, focusing on the specific ways in which the patterns unfold at this level.

The Opportunist

While one is not likely to have an Opportunist as one's director, guides may be a parent or a relative of someone who takes perspectives at this level. Thus, it is useful to have some understanding of those who are at this early level of development.

Opportunists have only a rudimentary perspective on others, a late first-person or early second-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 impulses. Regarding their time pattern, they are generally aware only of what is happening right now, and this puts them at a disadvantage, for they cannot learn from a past they cannot bring to their awareness and cannot predict dangers and outcomes in a future they cannot imagine. Thus, Opportunists are slaves to their wants and needs in the moment, with little thought or concern for the possible consequences of their actions or recollection of learning coming from the past. Because they are unable to sense what is to come in the future, Opportunists are generally hypervigilant 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 mode of response.

Since they cannot predict the future, they have an uncanny ability to take charge in an emergency, for they tend not to evaluate the potential for danger in the future. They have no compunction when it comes to breaking rules, which they mostly do not remember anyway. Their instincts are their guide, so they have a nose for opportunities and have a great ability to act on those opportunities quickly. Opportunists use very concrete language, such as “It’s hard,” “It’s for the birds,” and so on. They often speak vaguely and passive aggressively.

Spiritual life for an Opportunist is usually a magical and superstitious kind of understanding; because they cannot take perspectives 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 making a gesture when something good happens, they tend to want to repeat that action, attributing the gift as something that comes from a diva, a nature spirit, or some other imaginary phenomenon given concrete form. Thus myriad rituals, including oracles, tea leaves, good luck charms, evil eyes, community rituals, intercessionary prayer, and so on, tend to arise (Gebser 250-51). Supporting a widened time span to increase their recollection of past events is a useful approach.

Working with Opportunists involves direct intervention and one’s being the banks to their river (providing boundaries for them, for they cannot do so for themselves), so that they do not 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 cannot help the conundrums into which they get themselves.

When Opportunists get into trouble often enough, they begin to look for a way to keep themselves safe and become frustrated with the constant struggle of their lives. This is 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 have not worked, so they look for someone to tell them what to do. When in this transition, it is not unusual for Opportunists 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 that they move into the full 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 Opportunists who are transitioning into Diplomats, and once this transition has occurred, they may ask for the guidance of a spiritual director.

The Diplomat

Diplomats have a 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. They also begin to imagine how other people see them, so it is 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 a church group. They also want to have the same things as others in their group have, so they are motivated to work hard to realize similar material existences as their .

Their place in the pattern of time is still today, but now they can follow the traditions of the past, which are tried and true, and they can begin to learn from their mistakes and the mistakes of others, from which rules have been formed. Diplomats see these proven traditions as a benefit since they need to have something or someone tell them what to do, which tends to keep them safe and relatively happy. These rules take precedence over the needs they prioritized as Opportunists, because those needs often got them into trouble. Feedback is seen as disapproval or as 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, *Pilgram*, 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 overidentify with their group and will suppress any negativity related to their . However, anyone outside of the group is in the out-group and represents a threat, and to Diplomats they are not “nice.”

Diplomats do 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 Opportunists, whose focus is on the self and its desires and wants and who cannot delay gratification easily. Still Diplomats and Opportunists have some 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. Diplomats are gradually learning to delay gratification to their senses, but 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 shame. Hierarchies are honored and there is only one right way to do things. They genuinely desire to do service to a higher purpose.

A spiritual director can discern the Diplomat level not only through the characteristics described above, but also through language, which is often concrete and factual. Diplomats will

often use clichés and speak in platitudes (“Wasn’t that nice?”) where everything is “fine,” “good,” “important,” or “wonderful.” They tend to see things in a rigid manner, speaking in a black-and-white approach about only one right thing at a time, and are 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, Diplomats are still in a very concrete world, and though they may have subtle states related to God, they tend to see a concrete or mythic “God” which they generally apprehend outside of themselves; God’s rules, such as the Ten Commandments or the Eightfold Path, are very important as a safeguard from their disruptive Opportunist experiences. In both the Opportunist and Diplomat 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 250-51). Entering Diplomats 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 overpowered by their senses and sinning, like they felt they did when they were Opportunists. They will not want to go against their group, and thus will want to conform to the structure of their church and church community.

Supporting entering Diplomats 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 bring awareness of anger, lust,

gluttony, and other below-the-surface urges (-22) and gradually bring them into the light of day so they can be managed. However, encouraging interior practices of meditation and emptiness before any awareness of the interior is present can be frightening for Diplomats 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, Diplomats can learn to empty themselves of uncontrolled sensory impulses and desires.

The transition from Diplomat is one of the most difficult ones, because this is a move from the concrete floor to the subtle floor, and a move from awareness of the concrete self to arising awareness of the subtle self, which Diplomats 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 have been so situated in.

The Subtle Floor Levels

The transformation from the concrete floor to the subtle floor begins with the Expert level and continues on through the Achiever, the Individualist, and the Strategist levels (Cook-Greuter *Ego*, 15-27). Inhabitants of the subtle floor levels become progressively more aware of their interiors in addition to their exteriors, which they became aware of during their movement through the concrete floor. Whereas self/other are the polar opposites being negotiated at the concrete floor, interior/exterior are the polar opposites being negotiated at 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, the transformation is much more stunning to and has a larger effect on consciousness. It is during the move to the subtle floor that the realization arises that the mythic concrete God one has invested so much of one's belief system in is not the real basis of one's identity anymore; concrete experiences are no longer a means by which one can describe the whole of one's self. But who is this new self that is arising? "The central point is that the process of incarnation itself—the process of being a specific, particular, unique, individual, physical and personal human being—can generate spiritual energy" (Spangler, (e) 6).

The Expert

Experts expand from a second-person perspective to a third-person perspective and awareness of the interior subtle self begins to dawn. This means that not only can they stand in others' shoes, but also they can stand back and objectively watch several others engaged in conversation and behavior; they can now see beyond their own individual interactions with someone else. Being able to watch from this distance allows them to see causes, where, as Diplomats, they accepted what they were told was a cause without question because they could not figure out or analyze causes for themselves. Being able to see causes, Experts begin more and more to ask "Why?" on a subtle level (e.g., "Why does that idea work?"), whereas before their *whys* were primarily on an exterior concrete level (e.g., "Why does a tree lose its 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 are two prominent focus areas (Cook-Greuter *Ego*, 1-35). A sense of independence and

sovereignty arises (Spangler, *Pilgrim* 22) for the first time. New careers and work that capitalizes on the expanded third-person perspective are appealing. Technical and creative careers, such as engineering, dentistry, architecture, medicine, and computer programming, become interesting. However, Experts' new ability to generate their own individual ideas, analyses, and causes, and their understanding are 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 comes a sense of whom to take feedback from. In their Diplomat phase, they took feedback from the hierarchical chain and from people who would guide them to stay true to rules. Now, however, Experts realize that they, themselves, can be the expert and they are loathe to take feedback from anyone who has not proven that he or she is a better expert than they are. From those who have credibility they gladly take feedback; 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-upmanship as a part of their argumentative stance. Still, they hold in common with Diplomats the inability to see both sides of an argument, even though they are now more flexible and are able to see comparatives, such as the good, better, and best sides of the *one* side of the argument in which they stand, as well as bad, worse, and 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 people in general, although practically, they still have alliances with their primary group and their country. Their sense of human rights expands; feminism and other -isms

begin 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, *Pilgrim* 22), which is just being formed and which is new 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 Experts, for they begin to see into the future. While they may perhaps be able to see ahead only a number of months, 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 learning at the Diplomat level, but they become quite aware, for the first time, of an ego: the concrete ego, which tries to keep up with their neighbors and covets material things. Seeing this ego does not mean ridding oneself of it, but this awareness begins to bring an early sense of humility coming from the interior, rather from the exterior by rule.

In addition to the characteristics described above, a spiritual guide can learn to recognize Expert consciousness through the language that Experts use. This can help them discern the kinds of support to give directees at this level. Experts constantly compare themselves to others, including early interior comparisons (“We have different ideas” or “We have similar ideas”). They will brainstorm multiple options and alternatives and tend to cling to all of their ideas, but they do not know where to stop and cannot prioritize what they have come up with. They often have a hostile sense of humor, ridiculing others, and at times become ultrarational, wondering “Why?” about everything and 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 and superlatives to their adjectives (e.g., 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 they may move away from a fundamentalist rule-following approach toward a more moderate kind of religion. Their values generally remain conservative. However, with their new subtle view, some may feel duped by the mythic God from whom they previously got so much benefit, for there is no analytical proof of this kind of God. Their very image of the concrete mythic God seems 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; 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, 25).

At the Diplomat level, people get much satisfaction from their dedication to taming the senses by following rules such as the Ten Commandments and by engaging in moral practice, purification, and prayer. This new movement into experiencing a subtle self-sense at the Expert level can be a disorienting dilemma, for the spiritual life they previously had with God no longer brings them satisfaction or consolation, but instead brings desolation. They may feel that they have drifted away from God and that the prayerful connection and imagination related to the image of the God they used to know now 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 cannot seem to fill.

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), as they do not yet have 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 Experts. 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 may again be filled with a chattering mind. What they may not recognize, however, is that the chattering may not be so concrete now, but may rather be subtle chattering about ideas. 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 Lectio Divina, contemplative prayer (Keating *Intimacy*, 147), and mindfulness meditation (Brown, *Stages* 136). 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 Association, *Core elements*, web). While they will not 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 toward their being able to see their own wholeness at a later time.

In addition, supporting Experts 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 important integration, beginning at this level and generally lasting over 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 Experts 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 a leaving of the Sacred behind as a result of their inability to redefine it according to their new subtle realizations. Spiritual directors or soul friends can be more effective if they can be seen as *spiritual* experts, for those with the Expert mindset need 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, and planning become more commonplace due to the increasing 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, *Pilgrim*, 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 which might be left behind. In addition, for the first time long-term goals begin to appear and Achievers begin to see the importance of feedback to the realization of their goals and objectives, so it is not uncommon for them to design many feedback loops through which 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.

Achievers also retain a wider sense of space. While Experts have a vague sense of all people being their family, Achievers 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 are their hallmarks.

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, *Pilgrim* 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 extends to themselves, and they may welcome such feedback from considered sources of all kinds.

In addition to the characteristics delineated above, the spiritual director can further discern the Achiever mind through Achievers' language. Achievers may compare particular traits of what is now with goals for what should be (future planning). They commonly speak of achievements, reasons, causes, goals, planning, effectiveness, agreements, and making choices. 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 choose work that has the opportunity for interior growth and education (subtle) over work that has a higher salary (concrete). They begin to use psychological language related to inner conflicts (e.g., being both delighted and frightened).

Achievers have a mind even more dedicated to the subtle than do Experts. They can easily roam around in the analytic, intellectual, 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 Achievers tend to bring an overbusyness 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 ten or whether they had to start over at 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 awareness 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 Diplomats 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: “[I]t continues to experience from time to time spells of dryness and darkness and these are sometimes even more intense than they were before” (John of the Cross, ed. Peer 51). Because of their busyness, some may abandon spiritual direction and spiritual practice altogether, 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 *Intimacy* 38) and sitting meditation (Brown, *Stages*,) 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 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 technology, so using an exterior meditative device such as Bill Harris’s Holosync (179) may be a satisfactory experience for them. Learning to set interior and exterior boundaries is also a useful practice at this level.

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 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 awareness to it is worthwhile. First the awareness may be after the fact, or introspective or reflective, but with attention and practice, they can begin to bring their

awareness to thought in the moment and let it go, more and more bringing silence once again into their awareness. Directors can probe into the directees' progress along these lines, as well as into the reflective understandings and interpretations they get from sacred texts, sermons, and insights, and provide feedback.

The Individualist

The Individualist 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 *Ego*, 22). This perspective generally comes about because of many trials with goal setting; Individualists become aware of all the times that they have planned to get to a goal but have gotten somewhere else; sometimes the “there” that they arrived at was different than the “there” they had envisioned. They begin investigating these phenomena by standing back even farther than 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, who is in a third-person perspective, is generally making factual judgments about what he or she sees, but the fourth-person watcher can see that the third-person watcher is standing in a context that he or she cannot see, and that this context is coloring his or her factual judgments. Thus, the fourth-person watcher becomes very context aware, recognizing that goals and outcomes are context dependent and that we as watchers sit in subjectivity because we cannot 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 they begin to see even more clearly that their self is *not* a role, but is independent of any role they play.

Since Individualists see that goal orientation has not always been an effective way to approach things, they become more interested in *process* and how it unfurls in the moment. As Experts and Achievers, they were very focused on the analytical mind, but now they see the folly of pure analysis being the answer to everything, so they become very interested in feelings and the connection between the mind and the body, and an expanded sense of boundary arises. The “boundary of empathy 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 may do so more predominately at this stage, which can at times become quite disorienting. In addition, Individualists’ time awareness may expand to ten or more years, so they can see even more possible contexts and the relativity of time itself. Awareness of space may extend beyond the human family to all of sentience and to the planet itself. Since sentience is thought of as part of their family, they now become interested not only in human rights, but also in the rights of sentience, and they have an increased interest in liberating humans from dogma, greed, and judgment. Equality is very important to them, for they do not prioritize any

kind of life over any other (e.g., the life of an endangered snail may be seen as equal to that of a person). Rather, all differences are celebrated as they strive for inner tranquility and social responsibility.

Individualists welcome feedback as necessary for self-knowledge and for uncovering 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. 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 to select both sides of a polar pair rather than just one side. As pointed out earlier, the overarching poles for the subtle floor is interior/exterior, and while Experts and Achievers focus most of their attention on the interior analytic mind making a difference in their exterior work through goals and on making choices, Individualists deepen the interior and exterior focus and hold both of them together. In a shared space.

In addition to the Individualist qualities spoken about above, the spiritual director can recognize the Individualist mind by the language Individualists use. They often use subtle language in the here and now; for example, they may insert “I am feeling or experiencing *x*, *y*, or *z*” into a conversation. This kind of language shows that they are focusing on their interior and exterior processes. They also recognize the role of context 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 Individualists 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 want to speak about dreams, somatic elements, embodiment, intuition,

and other ways of knowing. They realize that science is not the only validity, so they may become interested in nonscientifically verified areas such as astrology and the I Ching (Cook-Greuter, *Ego*, 22; Spangler, *Pilgrim* 14). All ways seem equally valid, because prioritization within this fourth-person view has not yet matured.

Even as the interior awakens in the Expert and is further explored in Achiever conscious, the interior, unseen, bodily felt sense of self and others, sometimes called subtle energy, may become of interest to the Individualist. 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 one's own energetic pulse within and how it affects others, and experiencing others' 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. "Developing and practicing connectedness, engagement, love, and a compassionate participation in life" is the other side of this coin: "In its full expression, it's a practice of 'walking whole' and living your potential as a generative source of blessing in the world" (Spangler, *Subtle Activism*).

Spiritual direction with the Individualist takes a completely different approach than at the previous levels. Individualists are passionate about discovering their authentic self. They have further developed their mind, emotions, somatic feelings, intuitions, and dream analysis and at times make assumptions that receiving knowledge from these realms is hearing 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 he or she 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 does not 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 determining how much to share, or not, is sometimes difficult. Previous practices of asking them about their own experiences and drawing them out may not work anymore because of this preference toward equality and a desire to compare experiences and feelings so that they can more clearly identify their own authentic self. Sessions may become a back-and-forth storytelling 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 and much patience and bringing a sense of faith to oneself as well as to 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) so that the directee has enough concrete case-in-points against which he or she can compare his or her own authentic truth.

The Strategist

The Strategist matures the fourth-person perspective; the transition occurs when Individualists have exhausted their search for their own authenticity and have settled 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 Individualist, 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 may 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 to find their own authenticity.

Their time horizon also changes. They now can see the world of their parents, grandparents, children, and grandchildren, a multigenerational 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 can apprehend that the very things they judge others for are but a quality in their own being, especially when this is pointed out. This supports their embrace of paradox. Their focus is on being, doing, and functionality in a flexible and accepting approach to diverse experiences. Feedback is very important to Strategists, and they actively seek it even as they are quite discriminating about what they receive, analyzing it and using what is helpful.

Strategists continue 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 (*Ego*, 5). This is a transitional level preparing for the leap into the next floor, the causal floor. The initial 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.

In addition to the qualities described above, Strategists have their own way of expressing themselves through language. They can see the situational nature of contexts and their interdependent 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 also on 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, to which earlier levels do not speak, 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 Strategists is their intense desire to develop (Cook-Greuter *Ego*, 25). Generally they have a great deal of confidence in their ability to grow and will often amass much information on different practices that will support

their precise understanding of the best approaches for holistic growth and development. Wholeness; Cook-Greuter *Ego*, 25) is result of the integration of their previous disparate selves as they begin to connect, integrate, and cohere body, mind, feelings, spirituality, love, unobstructed energy, emergence, and boundary principles, or a wholeness between spirit and matter, soul and personality, self and others, the individual and the world, being and sacredness (Lorian, *Core elements*, web). 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. Strategists' 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. Strategists often will not stop their willful approach to development until every practice they can apprehend has been deepened and exhausted. What they do not see is that this will is also coming from their subtle ego, and the letting it go is necessary for moving 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.

Strategists 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 Strategists is to continue to support them in their willful

progress by suggesting reading, practices, and approaches that will support their development.

Alongside 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 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 (1-13) practices working with projection fit well at this point. This kind of practice is best introduced when they have gained some early insights into their projections through 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 those projections *in the moment* will support the flowering of the Witness 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 a Dark Night of the Soul. Movement through the Strategist stage can take considerable time for some people, so as with all stages, patience is a virtue here.

The Causal Floor

Transitioning between stages that leap from one floor to the next is much more difficult than transitioning between stages within a floor. Thus, the move from Diplomat to Expert, which is the move from the concrete floor to the subtle floor, is a very difficult move. In this move, Experts see their concrete ego, which is based on the senses, and they are likely to go through a Dark Night of the Senses, for their previous experience and image of God have been obliterated and an opening to the subtle Divine experience (which they do not 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 is apprehended, and there is a realization that neither the concrete sensory Divine or the subtle Divine reflects all of who one is. It can be a crushing blow, for this apprehension is placed at a very rare altitude at which very few people arrive (about 1%) and thus there is generally not a community of others with whom to process this. 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 Catalyst and Unitive (Cook-Greuter *Ego*, 27-35) and Illuminative (Aurobindo, *Life* 981-83).

The Construct Aware

The Early Construct Aware moves into a fifth-person perspective (Cook-Greuter *Ego*, 29). Previous perspectives have progressively backed off, taking a perspective on the previous one, but when people moves into Construct Aware, a different kind of realization begins to happen. The actual 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 (*Ego*,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 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 the emotions making up these feelings, stories, and judgments loops back to one's own interior. At some point, the subtle ego is seen, and 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 empty of the subtle.

To add to the complexity and confusion, time stretches again and the capacity to be aware, in the moment and historically, of constructions and stories through multiple generations arises. Awareness of space is also expanded beyond the planet to bring a cosmic 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 in their new 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 parts 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). How does one begin to work with the apprehension of such complex insights along with the experience of losing subtle and concrete parts one used to recognize as "oneself"?

Aside from the observations above, there are behavior and language cues of which one can become aware when someone moves into this stage. Because the Witness is perpetually activated in the moment, people at this stage are 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 judgment or discernment they make that it applies to themselves 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 express their concern about having hubris or egoism and speak about seeing their ego, though they may not realize which ego it is (the subtle ego). 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 cannot, and at the same time they 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 Early Construct aware often involves supporting them to find their way through this second Dark Night, the Dark Night of the Soul (John of the Cross, ed. Peer 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

Diplomat, 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 and they can feel quite lost. Furthermore, there are very few people at this level, so they generally have no one who can understand this stressful place, which, although it is a normal transition, 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 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. Whereas contemplative prayer was particularly useful in the past in finding sacred silence by taming and emptying the concrete thoughts of the Diplomat and the subtle thoughts in the Expert through the Strategist mind, now, emptiness gradually moves toward an underlying silence in Early Construct Awarers' waking life as an ordinary experience. They gradually become very familiar with the fullness of the silent Witness, 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.

The Catalyst or Late Construct Aware

The Catalyst, or the late fifth-person Construct Aware, follows the priority pattern that the other perspectives have at their later stage; the new Construct Aware perspective is gradually integrated internally, and at the late fifth-person perspective of Catalyst, directees 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 cannot yet see them as constructs. Those inhabiting this stage have the capacity to “move the line” rather than “step over the line” or “step out of line,” for they see 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 overarching poles are transcendence and immanence, and those at this stage may choose 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 or focusing on witnessing, but not both at the same time, although they can engage both ways.

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,

and conceptions together into complex mazes. The original conceptions are not unique, but the ways in which they are woven together are, and the capacity to bring complexity together is quite astonishing—so much so that, while others may admire what the Catalyst does, many can hardly understand the fullness and complexity of these integrations. This can leave the Catalyst feeling quite unseen, misunderstood at times, and incredibly lonely. This complex whirlwind continues, often for some time. The label Catalyst 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 intergenerational; the Catalyst has the capacity to bring the complex constructs together in a way that can support both this historic time span and awareness of it. Because of their high level of self-esteem related to their capacity to see and prioritize complex constructions, Catalysts may not accept feedback well if they sense that there is not an understanding of the complexity they are trying to bring forth.

In addition to the qualities named above, a spiritual director can recognize this level by language and behavior. Catalysts are 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 of speaking 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 cannot go along with their way of doing things then they do not 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, one 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 Catalysts have to make these high-level choices. Although they can see both sides, they cannot easily hold both at the same time, so they often choose one or the other.

Typical spiritual practices may fall to the wayside; witnessing tends to be constant and ordinary. Their practices, once in sitting or contemplation, now come into their entire wakeful life, with a smoothness to their constant witnessing as they bring the complex understandings into the world, often with an intention of service.

At the Diplomat 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 Early Construct Aware stage, the acclimating to the constant Witness is much of the work, and somewhere during the two stages, awareness of this base of silence begins to appear, at first sporadically. The spiritual director can call attention to this quietude under the whorl, encouraging a more constant awareness of the silent base that lies under the day-to-day activities and complexity of life. The Catalyst 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.

Unitives can take a sixth-person perspective; they can step out of the hurricane of the Catalyst'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 seem to permeate every part of one's being and life. Unitives 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 both the largeness of the cosmos and their child's 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 Unitives' 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 they are coming from. There does not seem to be a self 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 of what was once a causal state into the ordinariness of one's life such that it is no longer a state, but is life itself. Feedback is accepted easily with little fanfare and with an ease of acceptance where appropriate. Generally, there is lightness in this stage, without extremes of emotions. What may have been a Unitive state in meditation now becomes an ordinary experience in daily life.

Because the Unitive is so rare (about .05% of the population) it is not likely that a spiritual director will encounter one as a directee. In addition to the qualities described above, Unitives 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 they can stand outside of the desperate need for meaning making (Cook-Greuter *Ego*, 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 any Dark Night of the Soul they may have experienced and this stage can be seen as a stage of consolation. It is a transpersonal stage in which the causal soul is at peace and what was once seen as meditation or contemplative prayer seems like a natural waking, peaceful state.

The Illuminative

It is hard to imagine a stage later than the Unitive stage, but the Illuminative 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 nondual floor. In the rocking chair/priority pattern this stage is another forward-moving stage, an active stage rather than a laid-back one like the Unitive. It holds a late sixth-person perspective.

People at this stage look forward and back throughout 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 patterns. One can begin to see the patterns of humanity as they live within each person, and again, maps or patterns seem to come to the fore out of the ether. However, this patterning is different than the Catalyst patterning; Illuminative patterns 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 do not 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 Illuminative or they may be philosophical maps that can support the developmental life of most people who encounter them. When asked about these maps, an Illuminative 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 floor may be concrete (e.g., knowing the illnesses of others) or subtle (e.g., receiving revelatory maps or other cross-tier material). These kinds of experiences can happen at other levels as well, but at earlier levels the intuitive information people receive spontaneously tends to be of a more concrete nature rather than of a subtle nature, and the earlier levels seem to feel that this intuition is a talent that they hold. Illuminatives are likely to see themselves as a vessel that receives this information; it is not 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 with an experience of channeling, however. Illuminatives know what they are supposed to be doing because and when they are doing it.

This can be a very fertile stage, and the few people who reach it may be seen as visionaries, though oftentimes, 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.

Transitioning into the Nondual Floor

Beyond the Illuminative level (Aurobindo *Life*, 401) lies the nondual floor. Very little information is directly available about the stages in this floor. However, the primary experience that one begins to understand during the transition into this new floor is the recognition in ordinary, everyday life of the mind that can do nothing but make distinctions (Aurobindo *Life* 779; O'Fallon). All of the stages through Illuminative operate under the gaze of this categorizing, distinction-making, and perspective-taking mind. A signal of a move into the nondual floor is a deep apprehension of that mind by another Mind that is not ruled by making distinctions, but instead, is edging into a nondual mind stepping into the nondual floor.

Entering into the nondual floor is another huge leap, yet humans seem far from realizing this world of the nondual as an everyday, 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 a while, one may experience a shock, a stab, an internal tsunami; one can suddenly feel a tumble, a dive, a rolling downhill, an agonizing tearing and ripping of the fabric of mind, a Dark Night once again. A Dark Night of the Self arises: 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 that 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. The nondual 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 nondual 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: "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" (*Life* 1108).

Chapter 3: Summary

This thesis began with two scenarios that a spiritual guide might encounter in his or her work with directees. Holding those scenarios in mind, chapter 1 outlined preliminary understandings of developmental stages: Impulsive, Opportunist, Delta, Diplomat, Expert, Achiever, Individualist, Strategist, Construct Aware, Catalyst, Unitive, and Illuminative. It defined the first- through the sixth-person perspectives, the floors (tiers), and the developmental patterns, which were then presented in a table for review. Next, spiritual definitions and a summary of the stages that most spiritual paths have in common, along with thematic patterns, were presented.

Chapter 2 organized all of the information about each stage into two parts for the use of spiritual guides: (a) a description of each stage as a support for recognizing someone at that stage and (b) the kinds of spiritual approaches that would most likely be welcomed by someone experiencing that stage.

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

Scenario 1: You are engaging with someone who is considering engaging 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 does not 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 qualities of an Individualist: accepting his need to have storytelling conversations in which the guide participates by sharing his or her stories in an aware and targeted way might be a worthwhile approach.

Scenario 2: One of your directees has always been a 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 her spiritual practices and a questioning of her belief in God.

Looking back over the qualities of the different levels in this guide, you might see that this person has some of the characteristics of a Diplomat 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 her interior, and that she can find the Sacred there, beginning with identifying the hole or pit she is experiencing, and helping her 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 in 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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