

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Jonathan V. Smith for the degree of Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies in the co-departments of Religious Studies, Human Development and Family Sciences, and Counselor Education and CSSA presented on April 13, 1992.

Title: The Cross and The Spiral: A Contemplative Model of Human Development for Prayerful Parenting

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This paper outlines a model of human development to help guide contemplative practice in parenting and facilitate prayerful understanding of parent-child development with a focus upon one's own parent-child relationship.

The model draws from the tree of life symbolism represented by the cross and the spiral and further elaborated through symbolic interpretations of the seed, root, stem, branch, leaf, and fruit. Contemplative prayer is seen as a path of self-development that allows parents to respond to children with goodness, love, wisdom, and justice.

The Cross and The Spiral:
A Contemplative Model of Human Development
for Prayerful Parenting

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This thesis is dedicated to the tree at the center of my life to which my brother's ashes and my son's placenta returned.

"Everything that lives on earth, lives in cycles from birth to death."

From a poem by Kip Smith, my brother, written just a month before he died in August 1982.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of any creation by placing it within its time and place. This project emerged from three events in my life. The first and most profound event was the birth of our first child, Haidan, on May 1, 1990. The second event was quitting my job in October 1990 with an agency "serving" developmentally disabled adults and setting up a small consulting business working with people with developmental disabilities who have behavior problems. The third event was returning to graduate school in March 1991 and taking my first ever religious studies course from Professor Marcus Borg entitled Religion and Psychology.

These three events converged into the awareness that parenting is a spiritual calling, that most people with developmental disabilities are searching for parenting, and that everyone's core need is to be embraced by the universal parent of all parents who exists within all of us, and within all things.

In the past year, as I reflected upon these topics, I became very moved and excited by the spiritual teachings that were unfolding before me, but they seemed largely inaccessible to my most profound spiritual teachers, my son and people I serve with developmental disabilities. In the quest to harmonize the world's great spiritual teachings with the teachings of my teachers, this project arose.

This project would never have been written at all if there had not been others that gave me encouragement that I had something in me worth sharing. The main person who helped me to see was my partner, Woody Williams. From our physical, emotional, intellectual, and intuitive spiritual union has come many births including the birth of a vibrant and truly alive child. Her openness, and deep searching spirituality has guided my own search into greater depths. The beauty, love, truth, and harmony of her being and our relationship have been among the clearest windows upon truth that anyone could hope for. My spiritual friendship with both Woody and Haidan has helped to ground my ideas and hopes in the world of

creation. Without the groundedness of this friendship, this thesis would never have been written.

I also wish to acknowledge the charitable and unconditional support of my parents, Courtland and Linda Smith. Their support in many realms was invaluable. They have always welcomed me into the world of ideas with the license to explore without restraint or judgement. It is the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual food they have provided me throughout my life, that have given me the sense of fullness which allows for sharing with others.

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No acknowledgement is complete without the acknowledgement of the author's limitation. In this project I touch upon many areas that I am barely, if at all, qualified to say anything about. I am writing from a particular phase of my spiritual life that is far short of being enlightened or complete. I write as a student not as an initiate or teacher. I seek to share what has been useful to me in the hope it might have some usefulness for others.

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THE CROSS AND THE SPIRAL: A CONTEMPLATIVE MODEL
OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT FOR PRAYERFUL PARENTING

INTRODUCTION TO THE MODEL

"How can we put ourselves into a frame of mind that will lead us to live life in its fullness? Out of that question every path springs."¹

-Brother David Steindl-Rast

The model to be outlined in this paper is an attempt to outline an understanding of human development that is rooted in contemplative prayer that is accessible to parents. It is similar to many developmental theories of human development. It differs in that I seek to outline a process whereby one may experience how the truths of development are being revealed in the lives of both parents and children in each moment of living.

The model arises from four basic sources. First, it arises from experience as a behavior specialist serving people with developmental disabilities, mental illnesses, and/or traumatic life experiences. Second, it arises from experiences as a parent. Third, it arises from personal experiences of healing and spirituality. Fourth, it arises from a study of contemplative religious understandings and symbols.

1. Quoted in Susan Walker(ed.)(1987), Speaking of Silence, Paulist Press, Mahwah.

In my work as a behavior specialist, I have seen the deep transformative change that is possible within people through the power of compassionate relationship with them.

In recent years, I have attempted to share my methods with others in the field. The techniques have met with measurable objective success in improving behavior, but my concern is not simply with improved behavior. I seek to facilitate core and transforming personal change. I have seen that this is possible only in the depth of subjective relationship.

This deep personal transformation of others can only occur when we allow ourselves to be transformed in our relationships with them. The model proposed in this paper is a largely subjective model of how we can allow ourselves to awaken to our fullest humanity and thereby create, in relationship, the space for others to awaken to their full humanity as well. Its focus is not upon techniques to facilitate change in others. Its focus is upon self-development.

Personal Contemplative Method

When I began in the field, my method was simple. I sought to be consistent with my conscience regardless of what the "experts"² said the effect on behavior would be. I found that this approach was dramatically more

2. I have never had any course work in psychology and psychologists are considered the experts on behavior in the field in which I work.

successful than the approach of the "experts", in fact the behavior we sought to reduce would gradually disappear altogether.

However, I also found myself unable to articulate my approach to others because we understood the "problem" in completely different ways and because my "method" was essentially a personal religious witness, rather than an objective technique. As I began studying various religious teachings, the language came to me with which I could explain what I was doing.

In relationship with each person and situation, I sought communion with the presence of unconditional goodness, love, truth, and justice. In contemplative awareness, I sought to perceive the core of each person and their behavior in these qualities. In this awareness, there is a point where instinct, emotion, intellect, and intuition unite. In this silent, still center of every person and situation is an insight which is like a seed.

When we see every person's and situation's seed in goodness, love, truth, and justice, we are able to parent that seed to fruition if we are in communion with others within this core insight. In this parenting relationship, both parent and child grow in goodness, love, truth, and justice.

This seed exists within every person and situation. There is no one who is wholly bad, hateful, false, and unjust. It does not matter how small the seed is or how

long it has been neglected. If the person is still alive, so is the seed.

The task of parenting and all helping professions should be to seek communion with others in this seed of our lives so that it can come to fruition in both ourselves and others. We cannot change others without changing ourselves. In transforming our own lives, we create, in communion with others, the space for others to transform theirs as well.

The Use of Symbolism

The model that will be proposed in this paper is a synthesis of various symbolic understandings of reality found in many religious traditions. I draw heavily from the works of J.C. Cooper³ and J.E. Cirlot⁴ in elaborating the meanings of symbols in a cross-cultural psychological and spiritual perspective. The model which follows derives from my reflections upon and synthesis of the interpretations of symbols given by Cirlot and Cooper, with a particular emphasis upon the symbol of the tree of life⁵.

The use of this model is intended to occur mainly through interaction with symbols and archetypes. The

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3. J.C. Cooper (1978), An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, Thames and Hudson, London.
 4. J.E. Cirlot (1971), A Dictionary of Symbols, Dorset Press, New York.
 5. See Cirlot p. 346-50 and Cooper p. 176-9. See also Mircea Eliade (1958) Patterns in Comparative Religion, Meridian Books, New York, p. 265-331.

model is to be reflected upon and recreated through contemplative prayer in the personal experience of anyone who uses it.

This model is at best a map. If we never look up from the map, we will never find our way. We need reference points from reality. The aspects of the model described are forms to assist in illuminating the formless principles from which they emerge. These formless principles are given form by symbols. Symbols are the windows through which we may witness the formless and eternal.

It is important that symbols be accessible to help facilitate contact with and understanding of reality. In addition to divine and fantastic manifestations, we need to see the mundane and ordinary manifestations in an unbroken continuum. Even the language of symbol is limited but it is best language I know of if we are to try to speak of reality with words⁶.

The Use of Contemplative Experience

Since the model is rooted in contemplative prayer, it is necessary to briefly discuss contemplative or mystic ways of knowing. William James⁷ attributes two primary

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6. For a discussion of religious symbol, see Paul Tillich (1958), The Dynamics of Faith, Harper Torchbook, New York, p. 41-55.
 7. William James (1902) The Varieties of Religious Experience, Mentor Books, New York, p. 292-3.

qualities to mystical states. These are ineffability and a noetic quality.

Ineffability means that the knowledge of the contemplative defies expression in words and necessitates direct personal experience. It is an understanding that is more subjective, emotional, and intuitive than objective, concrete and intellectual.

Noetic quality means that mystical states provide insight into reality through illuminations and revelations which are not fully explainable by the rational and intellectual faculties yet one who experiences such states is left without doubt as to the truth of the insight⁸.

For the purpose of this model, it is important to bear in mind that contemplative discourse is inevitably personal, subjective, paradoxical, experiential, and ultimately inexplicable in words. Precise definitions and explanations of all aspects of experience are not possible without losing sight of the essential insight.

Reality cannot be fully described to another, it must be experienced. There can be no substitute for our own experience. This model is meant to be evocative, intuitive, dynamic, interactive, and invitational. It could be explained in a way that is objective, rational, static, descriptive and prescriptive, but that is not my intent in this work. It is both archetypal in its

8. This can be found in the eureka experiences of various scientists who subjectively and intuitively knew the truth of their discovery even before they set out to prove it objectively and intellectually.

symbolic components and prototypical in the reflections of each individual.

Religious language is both literal and symbolic. All great spiritual teachers invite us to experience spiritual reality, to live the scriptures, not just read them. To understand anything, we must become a part of it, become one with it. All ideas and concepts are lifeless bodies without the animating breath of experience which gives them meaning. Models and ideas are only supporting evidence for one's own experience. There is no ultimately true model or idea. Truth can only be revealed through experience. Our experience of life is itself the teacher.

The Use of Science

The languages of science and psychology describe the world as primarily an objective, physical, and material reality that is understood by dividing it into its component parts. The language of religion describes the world as a subjective, spiritual reality that is understood by integrating its component parts into a whole⁹. Experience and symbol is to religion what data and concepts are to science¹⁰. This model is based in experience and symbol and enriched by further experiences and symbols, just as scientific models are enriched by further data and concepts.

9. This "whole" can be thought of as God.

10. For discussion of science and religion see Ian Barbour (1990), Religion in an Age of Science, Harper and Row, New York.

A scientific or psychological interpretation is not inconsistent with the model described. It is however but one aspect of description. I hope to elaborate these interpretations at some future point but I lack the time, space, and desire at the present time.

This model is a contemplative model to guide the inward search. I do not wish to diminish science. I wish only to emphasize that I am not a scientist or a psychologist. When I speak of science in this model it is science as a religious story which like other religious stories repeats timeless archetypes and symbols. It is symbol and archetype that is my central concern in this work.

I have worked professionally in an environment that stresses the quantitative study of human behavior. The specific techniques and practices I have employed in my work have correlated with dramatic quantifiable, external changes in behavior, by seeking to understand the qualitative, inner experience of the person whom I serve. These techniques and practices for use with others are not the concern of this thesis. My concern here is a process for facilitating unquantifiable, qualitative inner changes and experiences within the self.

I have seen that in attempting to influence external changes in others, that self-development of the parent, counselor, or caregiver is an essential variable to any

success. Success¹¹, in my experience, rests in the qualitative relationship rather than in the quantitative technique. Techniques succeed or fail based upon the quality of relationship.

It is the development of relationship that is my concern in this work. I have seen that objectified behavioral approaches can lack balance and create unneeded suffering when they are not in harmony with subjective experiences of relationship. For now, I offer the model as an unproven hypothesis to be proven or disproven through one's personal relationship to it in the experience of contemplation¹².

The proof of contemplative understandings of reality are not inconsistent with scientific understandings¹³. In the model I will describe in the following chapters, the understanding of reality is judged by a stricter, more encompassing criteria than simply the scientific method.

The model I am proposing asserts that reality has as its core a timeless, spaceless unity. As this core reality is revealed in time and space, various aspects of reality emerge. In looking at human development, I elaborate four aspects. They are the physical, the

11. Success here can be defined as behavior change that is internally maintained over long periods of time without external interventions.

12. Mircea Eliade writes in The Quest, "Neither the history of religions nor any other humanistic disciplines ought to conform - as they have already done too long - to models borrowed from the natural sciences..." p.61.

13. See Barbour note #10.

emotional, the intellectual, and the intuitive. These correspond to the religious values of goodness, love, truth, and justice¹⁴.

For a contemplative to understand reality as it is, the understanding must be consistent through all four aspects which emanate from a common center. An objective, rational, and intellectual understanding alone is inadequate if it is inconsistent with subjective, emotional, and intuitive understanding. Rational, intellectual and mechanical understandings can explain part of the model but fall short of more complete explanations. There are no easy formulas.

Many discredit religion as a merely subjective, emotional, and intuitive understanding¹⁵. Many could similarly discredit science as a merely objective, physical, and intellectual understanding. As we will see in the model that follows, the scientific and the religious are two axes of reality which are found in the cross aspect of the model which follows¹⁶. It is where these two axes share a common point of intersection that authentic insight into reality is found.

14. This is a theological assertion that needs more room to fully elaborate. Love and knowledge in the Christian tradition are equivalent to the central concepts of prajna and karuna in the Buddhist tradition. Goodness is related to the beatific vision and its awareness. For elaboration of biblical understandings of justice see the works of Meister Eckhart with translation and commentaries by Matthew Fox (1980), Breakthrough, Doubleday, New York.

15. Here I am referring to scientific materialist schools of thought predominantly.

16. See the figure 1 on page 40.

The authenticity of reality in this common center demands that the physical, emotional, intellectual, and intuitive are harmonized and unified in any genuine understanding. The objective-physical-intellectual axis alone or the subjective-emotional-intuitive axis alone is inadequate. Inauthenticity represents inconsistency between the various aspects of understanding reality.

Many great scientists such as Einstein have been religious mystics¹⁷ and many great mystics such as Swedenborg have been scientists. There is no inherent inconsistency. The reality is described differently by mystics and scientists but it is the same reality. The language of description that I will use is predominantly the language of religion rather than the language of science. A scientific description is possible and necessary, but it is not my focus in this work.

The Use of Developmental Psychology

The model which will follow seeks to be inclusive of many developmental theories. Here I am indebted to the pioneering work of Ken Wilber¹⁸ in synthesizing

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17. For a collection of the mystical writings of famous physicists, see Ken Wilber (1984), Quantum Questions, Shambala, Boston.
 18. See Ken Wilber (1982) The Atman Project, Quest Books, Wheaton, Illinois. This work is updated in the following journal articles: "The developmental spectrum and psychopathology: part I, stages and types of pathology." *Journal for Transpersonal Psychology*, vol.16, #1, 1984. and "The developmental spectrum and psychopathology: part II, treatment modalities." *Journal for Transpersonal Psychology*, vol. 16, #2, 1984.

developmental psychology and religious teachings. He seeks to synthesize contemplative religious understandings into a developmental psychological model. I seek to synthesize developmental psychological understandings into a contemplative religious model¹⁹. I attempt to incorporate many of the same basic components of human development arranged as a whole emerging from a central point of unity, rather than the traditional form of hierarchy and linearity.

By removing hierarchy from development, the central concern becomes being centered upon the infinite and eternal and acting in harmony with time and place. Development then is about remaining centered in both childhood and adulthood, rather than ends and means.

We do not naturally divide ourselves into cognitive, physical, or emotional selves²⁰. We say only "I" which is all aspects of selfhood in relationship. We do not say "my mind is reading this" or "my body walked to the store". Our need is for wholeness, salvation, the putting together of our fragmented selves. A religious model of development must affirm the fundamental wholeness of human existence in every moment of life. Development is the revelation of our wholeness not the construction of it²¹.

19. The mandala is a universal contemplative device. See Cooper p. 103. The model I propose uses a mandala type model.

20. See two-language theorists such as Donald MacKay (1980), Brains, Machines, and Persons, Collins Press, London.

21. Among the best articulations of this idea can be found in the Upanishads.

The meaning of development is "to unwrap, unfold, unveil, reveal". It is the unwrapping, unfolding, unveiling, and revelation of what is already there. Human development is awakening to and remembrance of our full humanity. This humanity is essential to and inseparable from every human life. Development is a natural process of self-discovery.

Holistic Process

A religious model that affirms our wholeness at every moment must consist of interpenetrating wholes within wholes and fields within fields that are organically related not mechanistically constructed²². No whole or field can exist alone. Such a model is to be understood and applied intuitively through contemplation and ritual. Contemplative prayer is the revelatory process of development, ritual is the enactment of revelation.

Symbols and archetypes are to be intuited and awakened to and internalized in a holistic and organic manner through contemplation. Every phase of life is inseparable from the whole and must itself be an archetype of wholeness as it is in the core or center of our true selves. A religious model need not only make sense of

22. This draws from systems theory. For a fuller elaboration see Mark Davidson (1983), Uncommon Sense: The Life and Thought of Ludwig von Bertalanffy, Father of General Systems Theory, J.P. Tarcher, Los Angeles. and Ervin Laszlo (1972), An Introduction to Systems Philosophy, Gordon and Breach, New York.

religious experience and practice, it must be grounded and centered fully within it.

Development is not a means towards an end. In the infiniteness of time and space, each successive moment is no closer to the endless end, nor farther away from the beginningless beginning. The meaning of development must exist fully in each moment if it is to have any meaning at all. Childhood is not a means to adulthood, it has its own inherent value that is not less than nor greater than any other moment of experience.

Life and development are fundamentally about harmony, balance, and reconciliation in each moment of living. They are not about ends such as enlightenment, self-actualization, or success to which what goes before is but preparation. There are no final attainments, no enduring or substantial modes of being.

Spirituality and the revelation of our full humanity are not the ends of life, they are the very processes of life. Growth and healing in every moment of life is grounded in the revelation of our true spiritual nature. Not only do spiritual practices exist at every phase of life they are a natural part of living and development.

A truly holistic model must not only make sense to itself, but make sense of other models that also propose to speak to the reality of the human condition. A religious model must be inclusive if it is to point to a more unconditional reality. The many models that have

been proposed must be shown to represent principles of reality.

Service and Parenting

My specific purpose is to provide a useful model or beginnings of a model for a life of service in the world. Especially the service of the oldest profession, parenting, and the various forms of spiritual direction that have emerged from it. It is to be used for self-development through service in parenting and helping professions.

Life is relationship and relationship has a life of its own²³. This model speaks not only to individual lives, but the lives of relationships such as parent-child and all other relationships that support, maintain and make life possible.

Any description of development runs the risk of making too much sense and leaving one content with the explanation. This gives the illusion of definiteness to life that impedes actual experience and understanding. The danger of any model is that the model begins to shape experience and we forget how experience shapes the model. In responding to a model we must be as open to the unknown as we are to the known. The better the model, the more questions it leaves to be answered by experience. Models

23. See Martin Buber (1947), Between Man and Man, Macmillan, London.

are at best enticing menus which are put aside when it is time to partake of the nourishing food of experience.

There are two aspects to this model and in this work I am discussing mainly just one²⁴. The two aspects are prayer and ritual. Contemplative prayer is a process of inner self-development and self-awakening. Ritual is the essential outer actualization of contemplative awareness.

Most of our work as parents and caregivers is the creation of shared rituals, actions which are carried out in the world. Ritual action is essential, but it must be informed with prayerful understanding. This model intends to help those in a life of service to perceive the meaning in their own lives and thereby see clearly enough to create meaningful rituals which invite others to heal as well.

This model is to be internalized through contemplation and externalized through ritual. It is to be used for one's self if it is found to be valuable. This prayer is not evangelical, it is an inward process if it is to be true contemplative prayer. Outward or external prayer is not true prayer²⁵. Both inner prayer and outer ritual are essential for us to achieve our full humanity. In this work I am speaking primarily of

24. There is also the objective scientific aspect which is not a main focus in this work.

25. Jesus says, "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so they may be seen by others...But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret." Matthew 6:5-6.

contemplative prayer, not of ritual. The discussion of ritual must await a future time and space. Though meaningful rituals will emerge spontaneously from a life of contemplative prayer.

No one can fully explain another's life. No one can awaken another to their full humanity. The life of the spirit cannot be explained fully in words. The best we can do is to offer someone two seasoned sticks. If they rub them together long enough and with enough effort, they might get a spark. This model represents my search through the wood pile to find two sticks that seem to be well-seasoned through time. In sifting down spiritual teachings to two sticks, much of value is lost. What is important though is not that we use Buddhist sticks or Christian or Hindu sticks, what is important is that we get a spark. In the end the spark consumes the sticks anyway.

CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER AND RITUAL

Prayer and ritual are the two sticks that together can awaken the spark of our full humanity. Prayer as meditation and contemplation is the receptive stick and ritual is the active stick. In contemplative prayer, one seeks to unify one's conditional self with one's unconditional self known as Christ, Buddha, Atman, or other names. In ritual, one seeks to actualize this unified true self in creation.

Contemplation and ritual connect and unify conditional and unconditional reality. Contemplation seeks an unconditional state of being in conditional reality. Ritual seeks a conditional state of being within unconditional reality. Every awareness can be thought of as a form of contemplation. Every action can be thought of as a form of ritual.

Contemplation and ritual are to be lived in each moment. Their aim is the unification of awareness and action, unconditional and conditional, self and other, this and that, spiritual and material, and the limited and the unlimited. This unification allows for our full humanity to be released because it is harmonized with the true nature of reality¹.

Too often prayer and ritual are limited to conditional forms and do not function as bridges to unconditional reality which is their true aim. If done in

1. This can also be thought of as God.

limited time and space, they remain conditional.

Contemplative prayer and ritual are meant to center us in our full humanity in the timeless, spaceless core of each moment.

Contemplation is learning how to sit still within our troubles so that we can understand how to overcome them. Contemplative prayer in most traditions is silent and still².

Petitionary prayer which is more common in organized religion should be seen as addressing an archetype of the self rather than to a being that is an other. Father Thomas Keating says,

"The idea that God is an object outside of one's self to which one relates through prayer is totally unscriptural. It is heresy."³

Contemplative prayer is a practice in which the conditional self seeks wholeness and salvation through union or communion with the unconditional self. In the true nature of reality, there is no separation of self and other. The divine cannot be other without also being self. The divine cannot be outside without also being inside.

Contemplation is about seeing reality as it really is, so our actions can be authentic and meaningful. When we see the world through our own limited perspective, we

2. This is the case in both Christianity and Buddhism.

3. Quoted in Susan Walker (ed)(1987), Speaking of Silence, Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ.

see a world of limitation and our actions lead to suffering for ourselves and others.

In contemplation, our awareness seeks the unlimited source of potentiality which allows for action beyond conditional limitations. Mother Tessa Bielecki says, "Any action without contemplation is blind."⁴

In contemplation, we come to see through the eyes of our full humanity. In doing so, we see reality as it really is and can act authentically without incurring suffering for ourselves and others.

Contemplation gathers together the limited fragments of reality to allow us to see the wholeness. It is a pooling of the many streams of our consciousness into one ocean of awareness.

In contemplative prayer, we are obedient⁵ to, listen thoroughly to, reality as it is and our full humanity. To listen thoroughly is to listen unconditionally beyond concepts and socially constructed ideas about God, Christ, Buddha, self, and other. Brother David Steindl-Rast writes,

"If we haven't learned to listen, nothing and no one will speak to us. If we have, God will speak to us through everything."⁶

The path of contemplative prayer seeks to see reality in proper perspective and right relationship through goodness, love, wisdom, and justice. One does not reject

4. Ibid.

5. The root meaning of "obedience" is "to listen thoroughly". I use it in this sense.

6. Walker p. 258.

the world of conditionality and suffering, one simply seeks its unconditional source. In centering one's life upon one's full humanity in contemplation, one can live in the world as a revelation of goodness, love, wisdom, and justice. In centering in limited modes of human expression, one will always be out of balance.

The seed of unconditionality exists within us as our full humanity. What we choose to nurture through prayerful awareness is what grows. Contemplation centers us in ourselves inseparably connected to the universe. When we find ourselves out of balance, contemplation allows us to return to our centers.

Without an active life of contemplation, we have a tendency to seek relaxation and ease outside of ourselves. Leisure time becomes a time to avoid ourselves and be entertained. We need this time to renew and get back in touch with ourselves. If we do not use it, we grow increasingly out of touch with who we really are. In contemplation, we are not spectators, we are active participants in the life of the world.

Contemplative Consciousness

In contemplation, we unify. The conscious becomes unconscious and the unconscious becomes conscious. The seer and the seen are one in the action of contemplative prayer. The mode of the unconscious is perception of holistic patterns. The mode of the conscious is focused

particulars. The conscious and the unconscious are the figure and the ground of our vision.

Contemplation is awakening to pure consciousness which is fully conscious and fully unconscious, both holistic and particular. The particular object of prayer is perceived within a holistic pattern and the holistic pattern is perceived within the particular object. In contemplative prayer, we seek to perceive inseparably in an holistic focus and a particular pattern.

With only the conscious mind, we could not hear a symphony. We would have to focus upon one instrument at a time. With only the unconscious mind, we could not hear the richness of particular instruments. To hear fully, our minds must be unified in contemplation.

The timeless unconscious allows the archetype of full humanity⁷ to live fully within us in the present moment. The focus of the conscious allows us to repeat the life of the timeless archetypal self in particular moments of time.

In contemplation, we return to our centers which is like an umbilical connection to our full humanity which is our spiritual placenta⁸ in the womb of reality. From the spiritual placenta which is our true self, we receive spiritual nourishment. Contemplation maintains this spiritual umbilical connection in the physical world.

7. For example: Christ, Buddha, Atman, or other.

8. Many cultures view the placenta as the child's spiritual alter ego. It is this symbolic notion to which I refer to here.

Contemplative Non-action

Contemplation is a witness. In contemplative prayer, we do not seek to change reality or seek for our limited, conditional will to be done. Contemplative prayer is not about our ideas on reality at all. It is about seeing reality as it really is. The will in contemplation seeks to harmonize conditional and unconditional, choice and choicelessness. The unconditional and choiceless will⁹ is similar to conscience in that it is not altered by conditions such as punishment and reward, or choices and options, because it is centered in a more universal, unconditional reality than the personal, conditional self.

Contemplation is a surrender of our conditional, self-centered will not a request for our limited will to be done. To wish for our will to be done is to wish to remain in limitation and suffering and to share this with others.

Ritual Non-action

Ritual is action without motive, expectation, or intent¹⁰. It is not a means to accomplishing something. Ritual is a means of harmonizing one's actions with what is really going on already. Spring rituals do not create fertility. They place us in harmony with the fertility of

9. In Christian tradition, this can be thought of as God's will.

10. A similar understanding is found in Taoism in the concept of wu wei, or non-action.

creation so that we may participate and become filled with the power of creation¹¹.

The life of the individual is a microrhythm of the life of the community, which is a microrhythm of the life of nature, which is a microrhythm of the life of ultimate reality. Contemplation listens to the rhythms and ritual harmonizes within a common symphonic rhythm. Each plays its part in the harmony. Multiplicity is not lost. We don't all play the same note, but all play the same song. To say that the life of every human exists within humanity does not diminish either multiplicity or unity.

Habitual Action

Contemplation liberates us from limited habitual actions¹² by making our actions rituals. A habit is an unconscious ritual. Habitual action is limiting because it impedes full awareness and presence in the world.

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11. This understanding is contradictory to magical interpretations of rituals offered by Eliade and others. Their interpretation is that rituals are believed to magically create the conditions found in nature rather than simply place one's self in a more encompassing reality. I don't deny that some may believe that natural conditions are influenced magically by rituals, but I feel the true power of ritual is not in the control of nature and the power of humans involved. The power of ritual is in connecting and harmonizing the conditional, limited self with a more unconditional, unlimited reality.
 12. Several studies which correlate meditation practice to overcoming addictions to drugs and alcohol are cited in Deepak Chopra (1991), Perfect Health, Harmony, New York, p. 162-3. He also provides methods of overcoming addictions through meditation.

Contemplation allows us to replace unconscious habits with conscious rituals so that we are present the true nature of reality. A habitual action means that our conscious and unconscious are out of balance. We are doing one thing while thinking of something else. Ritual seeks to harmonize unconscious and conscious action.

Many religious rituals have degenerated into habits. This is not because form or method is lacking. It is because the meaning is lacking. The outer forms and methods of ritual must arise out of inner meaning. Any form or method is useful if it is meaningful. Contemplation is ultimately a search for meaning.

A beginning discipline is simply to become conscious of the unconscious actions and awarenesses in which we are already engaged. What we contemplate, we internalize. In becoming conscious of awarenesses and actions, we can come to see them in a more unconditional reality and internalize a more unconditional vision of reality which becomes the basis for our actions.

Moral action is ritual action. Actions are not good or bad so much as they are in harmony or out of harmony with the true nature of reality. Ritual action is action that is in right relationship and with a proper perspective upon reality.

Contemplative Ritual

Ritual is the actualization of contemplative understanding. Ritual is where unconditional reality is manifest in conditional reality. It is the point of contact between conditional and unconditional, human and divine. A ritual happens in the present but is inseparable from all past and future time. Ritual represents, that is makes present again, past events. Events that are merely historical lose their meaning if they are not enacted spiritually in the present.

All ritual is sacrificial action in the sense that a ritual is the eternal and infinite accepting self-limitation in time and space¹³. The immanent becomes transcendent in contemplation. The transcendent becomes immanent in ritual. For the immanent and transcendent reality of our spiritual selves to be actualized, both contemplation and ritual are essential. "If one knows but does not act accordingly, one knows imperfectly."¹⁴

Contemplation without ritual is to be swallowed whole by the ocean of unconditional reality. Ritual without contemplation is to be swallowed whole by the waves of conditional reality. Contemplative prayer and ritual together allow us to live in the complete reality of our full humanity.

13. See Mircea Eliade (1960), Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, Harper, New York, p.183-190.

14. Attributed to Guyeau, quoted in Nyanaponika Thera (1988), The Heart of Buddhist Meditation, Weiser, York Beach, ME, p.44.

Contemplation precedes ritual. The contemplation of the infant leads to the rituals of the toddler. The prayerful attention to reality by every child leads to the need to repeat patterns in ritual. Every child develops rituals around food, clothes, and routine activities. Ritual is the repetition and context necessary for the child to learn about the world.

To become useful in creation, we must first become empty¹⁵. Contemplation is the emptying of the conditional self so that we may act unconditionally and authentically through ritual. We become a useful vehicle for our full humanity, when we are empty of limited and conditional forms of self. Contemplation is an unconditional and deconditioned state of mind.

Contemplation is the non-action from which authentic action can emerge. Ritual is active participation in conditions. The receptivity of contemplation necessitates the activity of ritual and vice versa. Contemplation gets us on the right track, ritual moves us down the line.

Contemplation and Spontaneity

Contemplation may begin as a disciplined technique, but ultimately it is a joyful presence in the fullness of

15. "Thirty spokes converge at one hub;
 What is not there makes the wheel useful.
 Clay is shaped to form a vessel;
 What is not there makes the vessel useful.
 Doors and windows are cut to form a room;
 What is not there makes the room useful."
Tao Te Ching, chapter 11, translated by R.L. Wing.

reality and all situations. In contemplation, we are present in the revelation of goodness, love, truth, and justice.

Contemplation and ritual are not meant to be dour, serious affairs. Contemplation is humor in that we are able to see from many perspectives rather than the narrow point of view that leads to humorless attachment to ourselves. By taking reality seriously, we can see the humor in all things.

Ritual is play in that it is spontaneous action without intent or expectation of a result. Centering our actions in our full humanity is to have the world as our playground¹⁶.

Contemplation is like becoming transparent. In being transparent, the radiance of unconditional reality can shine through us to bring light to ourselves and others. Being a window to this light brings us no glory. The glory is what is seen through the window, not the window itself which humbly serves. The process by which we come to understand ourselves and the process by which we come to understand others are the same contemplative process.

Contemplative prayer is the process of awakening to a reality that already exists. It is to see reality in proper perspective and right relationship, it is not the seeing of a different reality. Contemplative prayer is

16. A related concept would be the Hindu concept of lila.

ultimately a spontaneous and effortless path for living in the world not a mere discipline to be practiced.

Mystical Experience

In speaking of mystical experience, I prefer Father William McNamara's term of "heightened forms of loving awareness"¹⁷ to terms such as "altered states of consciousness" or "non-ordinary states". Mystical experience is not an altered or non-ordinary mode of being or perceiving. It is the natural experience of encountering reality as a whole person using all of one's faculties of perception.

Contemplation is being fully present in the experience of reality not about a different, non-ordinary experience. Contemplation allows us to have authentic, truly real experiences.

The birth of a child is a truly authentic experience of reality. We all seek such authentic experiences. Yet for many, this experience is diminished by drugs and pain killers and sterile unnatural environments to the point where many are not fully present in the experience.

Dying is another authentic experience that is diminished if we are not fully present. Authentic experiences obliterate the shell of conditional awareness. In so doing, they are often resisted. In resisting them, we are resisting the revelation of meaning and purpose in

17. In Charles Tart (1975), Transpersonal Psychologies, Harper and Row, New York, p. 413.

our lives. We live for authentic experience and without it our lives are meaningless. Contemplation is profound receptivity which opens us up to approaching births, deaths, and all experiences in such a way that our lives are filled with meaning.

Faith

Contemplation begins with faith. We must accept ourselves as is and have faith in our wholeness, which is our salvation. Every problem in conditional reality is like a window upon unconditional reality. We need to look through the window. If we spend all our time trying to change the window, we never take time to look through it. Contemplation's attentive gaze necessitates the faith that any problem is an adequate window.

Contemplation begins with the faith that every individual and condition shares a common core of goodness, love, truth, and justice. With the faith that these qualities exist in all people and all conditions, we are able to seek the revelation of these qualities in contemplation. What we may not see in the glance of our conditional awareness in time and space may be revealed in the glimpse of our unconditional awareness in a timeless and spaceless moment. Faith is needed if we are to look through the surface conditions to a deeper insight.

Repression

In contemplation, we neither repress nor express. What is felt, thought, or otherwise experienced is allowed to ripen. We don't pluck our problems off the tree and throw them away for them simply to grow up again from the same soil. Neither do we offer these unripe fruits to others for them to be sickened.

Contemplation allows experience to ripen until action can be truly fruitful as a ritual. To express is to deny a chance for ripening and to offer others unripe fruit when we truly want to offer a fruit that is nourishing and full of flavor.

To repress is to cast the fruit upon the ground for it to rot and decay within us. What is repressed becomes compost to fertilize the seed of that which was repressed. Repression simply sets us back. Repression says not now. Contemplation says there is only the now. What is repressed never remains repressed. When it grows up again we have another chance to allow the ripening of the same fruit.

Reason and Contemplation

Contemplative practice often begins with study of scripture¹⁸ and an acknowledgement of the role of reason. In contemplation, one naturally comes to a point where reason alone is too limiting and is let go of as one delves deeper into practice. Love and justice are the forces that lead us to union. True love, as we know from personal experience, blocks rational thought. In contemplation, love grows to the point where it overtakes rational thought spontaneously¹⁹. St. Richard of St. Victor says, "When contemplation is born, reason dies."²⁰

Contemplation seeks a direct experience with scripture rather than an interpretation of the words. Words come out of contemplative silence and return into it. The words of scripture must be read in the present tense of our own lives. Holding to any conditional form of the divine, any concept or image is ultimately an obstacle on the path to realization.

Historical, scientific, and doctrinal interpretations are not a main focus of contemplative practice. This is

18. Scripture here can be thought of as any description of reality that one holds to be true. For my purposes, it does not matter if one's scriptural base is religious or

scientific. If one holds to a scientific interpretation of truth, then that is one's scripture.

19. In Zen meditation, the overcoming of rational thought is done consciously and actively rather than waiting for it to happen naturally. Zen seeks to accelerate a natural process of self-realization.

20. Quoted in Walter Capps and Wendy Wright (1978), Silent Fire, Harper and Row, New York, p.31.

because through contemplation, the life of Christ or Buddha continues at this moment within us as our unconditional true self. The importance of Christ and Buddha is their revelation in the time and space of our lives. History guides us to the present. The scriptures are maps, but Christ and Buddha live more in our hearts than in a book. The life of Jesus and Gotama cannot be repeated in present conditions, but the reality of Christ and Buddha as archetypes of our full humanity can be repeated in the unconditional present.

It is our full humanity that is our central immediate concern in contemplative prayer. Authority rests in our own authentic, intimate experience of life in each moment.

The moment of union with unconditional reality is an eternal moment or a moment without time, and a moment of complete oneness with existence, an intimacy without the usual subject/object separation of spatial perception. The truth that is experienced cannot be conveyed in the separation of subject and object and the divisions of time and space found in the rational faculties.

Contemplation and Full Humanity

We are identified by that to which we are related. Contemplation seeks to relate human existence to an unconditional reality. When human existence draws its identity from a conditional reality, it is left in limitation and suffering. True freedom and liberation

exist only in the proper perception of our relationship to unconditional reality. Relationship to limited reality alone is to limit human existence which is bondage to suffering. Contemplation seeks to evoke and maintain a centeredness in an unlimited, unconditional existence. Our fullest, most human self is inseparable from all of humanity.

In contemplation, the archetype of our full humanity is awakened to as dwelling within us. This archetype is a seed within every individual that is nurtured by contemplative prayer.

The aim of such practice is to become fully alive and fully human in our own life. As an eternal and absolute ideal, the archetype reveals the model for liberation in human existence. The ultimate end of Christianity is awakening to the life of Christ as it is lived within us in the eternal now-moment. The same is true of Buddhism and awakening to the life of Buddha. We do not merely imitate this life in our own.

There is to be no subject/object division between self and Christ or Buddha. Christ or Buddha is to be experienced beyond the realm of concepts and images. Christ and Buddha ultimately represent unconditional forms of the self. It is only in union with our unconditional selves that we become fully human. Exclusive attachments to physical, emotional, intellectual, and symbolic forms of self block our awakening to who we really are.

In contemplation, we seek to transform ourselves into our unconditional self, and our unconditional self is transformed into us as we become unconditionally human and inclusive of all humanity within us. In this transformation, we become more truly ourselves. In our true selves, the core of conditional reality and the core of unconditional reality are the same inseparable core. If we are not centered in this core, we are not our true selves. Meister Eckhart writes,

"God is always ready but we are not ready. God is near to us but we are far from him. God is within; we are without. God is at home; we are abroad."²¹

Saint Augustine echoes,

"You (God) were within me, and I was in the world outside myself. You were with me but I was not with You."²²

Conditionality is the reality of time and space. Unconditionality is timeless and spaceless. The perception of space leads to the awareness of division between self and other. The perception of time leads to the perception of division between past, present, and future. Salvation as wholeness is the reconciliation of all divisions within our whole, true core of humanity. The perception of a separate self in space and time exists only in conditionality. Awakening to unconditional reality, liberates our true self.

Love and justice are the principles which unify self and other. Goodness and wisdom are the principles which

21. Ibid. p. 114

22. Ibid. p. 34

unify past, present, and future in the timeless now-moment. These principles guide our communion with the divine in conditional, differentiated reality and our union in unconditional, undifferentiated reality which are one inseparable core reality.

Love and justice place us in right relationship with core reality. Goodness and wisdom provide us with the proper perspective upon core reality. If there is an other who is separated from our love and our justice in any place, we are not in right relationship to our true selves. If there is an other who is separated from our goodness and our wisdom at any time, we do not have the proper perspective upon our true selves. If we allow conditions to block our goodness, love, wisdom, and justice; we are not in harmony with our unconditional selves.

Our conditional and unconditional selves are never separate. We are always our true selves. Our actions do not reflect our true nature because we are not aware of our true nature. Contemplation awakens our awareness of wholeness so that our actions may be authentic and meaningful.

Contemplation and The Experience of Death

Those who have had near death experiences have often spoken of how these experiences can effect a spiritual as

well as physical rebirth. Dr. Raymond Moody²³ writes of the following aspects of the near death experience: "ineffability", "feelings of peace and quiet", "the dark tunnel", "out of body" experiences, the cessation of pain and suffering, "meeting others" who are conditional beings from one's life seen in unconditionality, the "being of light" who is an unconditional being, and the "review" or involutionary look at one's life.

Moody and others²⁴ speak of the profound transformations that people may experience in discovering the meaning and purpose of their lives in near death experiences and experiences of dying. He speaks of this purpose as being love and understanding. These can be thought of as the two axes of the cross. The horizontal being love and justice and the vertical being goodness and truth (understanding).

A near death experience is an eternal and infinite experience that exists within an isolated moment of time and space. In contemplation the eternal and infinite can exist within each moment. The importance of contemplation is that we need not experience nor risk physical, bodily death to achieve the liberation from pain and suffering and the revelation of meaning and purpose in our lives.

23. See Raymond Moody (1975), Life After Life, Bantam, New York.

24. See the works of Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and Stephen Levine.

Contemplation can lead to a perfectly safe experience of death that awakens us to the core of our full humanity in this life. Salvation and wholeness can be achieved in this life through contemplation by those who prayerfully seek it.

SYMBOLISM OF THE CROSS AND THE SPIRAL

Symbols are the bridges between conditional and unconditional reality, between the material and the spiritual. Symbols relate to objects in conditional reality and point to meaning in unconditional reality. A sacred object is still simply an object in conditional reality. It becomes sacred and meaningful in that it points to or participates in a connection with spiritual or unconditional reality.

The symbolic understandings elaborated below are meant as windows upon unconditional reality. They are not simply to be seen, but also seen through. To look at the window is to miss seeing what is on the other side. We must look through the window and all its conditions if we are to see the unconditional radiance of reality.

The subjective experience of the symbol must be in communion with the objective experience of the symbol for its true meaning to be revealed. The symbol or archetype is an object of contemplation to be united with the subject who is contemplating it. The sacred objects of ritual are meant to be united with the subject who interacts with the object through ritual.

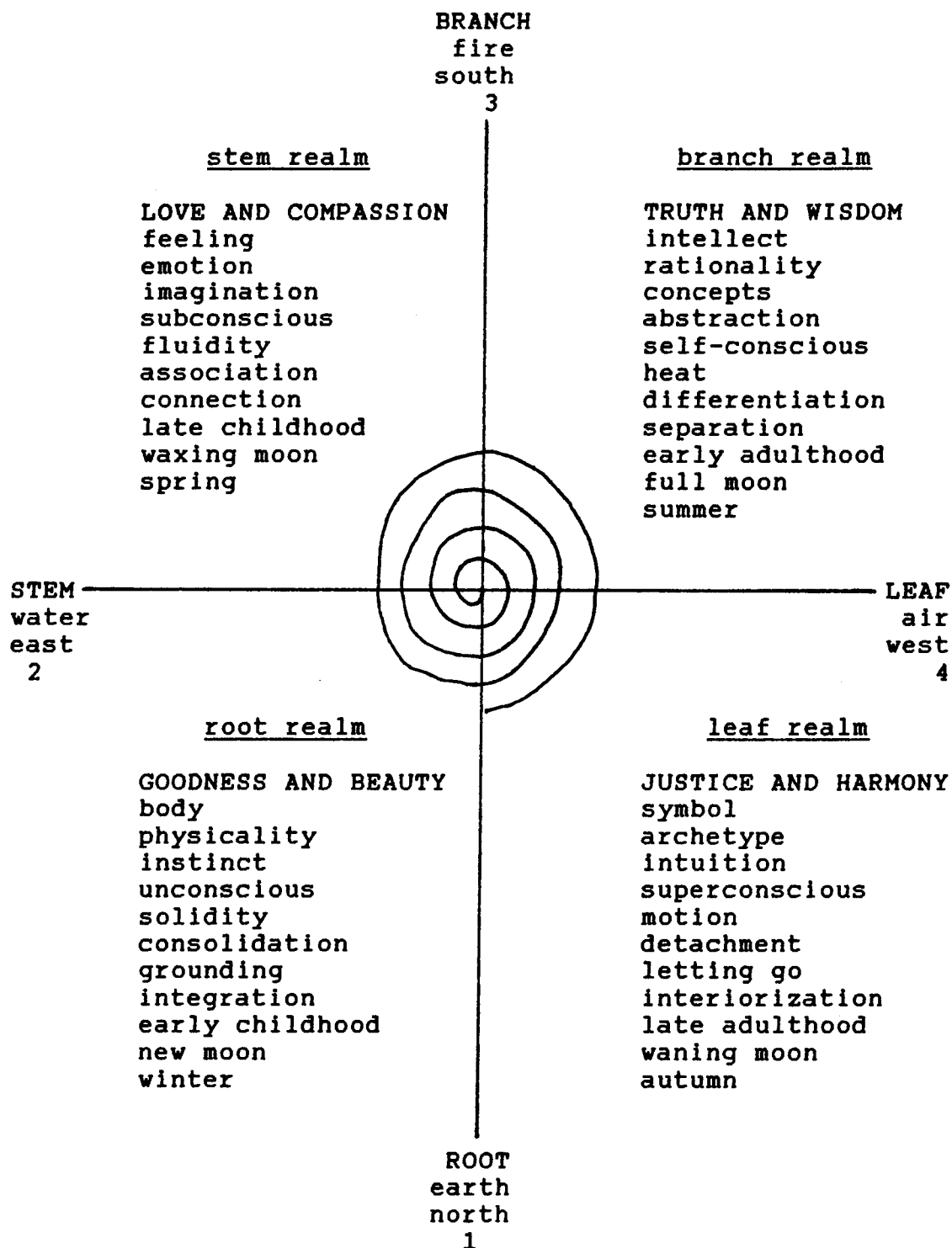


FIGURE 1: Attributes of the Cross and the Spiral

The Cross as Axis of Creation

The cross is a rich and universal symbol of unconditional being and it will be used as such for the purposes of this model. The cross represents the totality of being in that its two lines represent the totality of time in timelessness and the totality of space in spacelessness intersecting in a common point. The cross represents the harmony of all opposites in one.

The two lines for our purposes can be seen as the cutting or dismembering of core or primordial reality into the four images². The two axes are the two sacrifices; creation or birth through sacrifice of the unconditional for the conditional, and salvation or death through the sacrifice of the conditional for the unconditional.

The cross represents the changeless and indestructible. The four quadrants are the four realms of the tree of life as root, stem, branch, and leaf; the four seasons and the four directions. They also represent the four elements which are earth as our flesh, water as our

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1. See J.C. Cooper (1978), An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, Thames and Hudson, London, p. 176-9. See also J.E. Cirlot (1971), A Dictionary of Symbols, Dorset Press, New York, p. 346-50. Cross symbolism plays a central role in the religious traditions of Buddhism as the axis of the wheel of life, Hinduism as the rajās, Islam as the Supreme Identity, in addition to its predominance in Christianity.
 2. See Mircea Eliade (1960), Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, Harper, New York, p. 178-190. This is an excellent discussion of the meaning of sacrifice cross-culturally.

blood, fire as our body's heat or vital energy, and air as our breath.

The cross as a symbol for the tree of life³ represents, the whole of manifestation, the synthesis of the elemental principles, and the unity within diversity. Climbing its branches is ontological development into other realms. The four elemental principles are the root (earth, winter, north), the stem (water, spring, east), the branch (fire, summer, south), and the leaf (air, autumn, west).

The river that flows through the garden of Eden divides into four rivers when it leaves the garden. The four rivers represent these four elemental principles. If we follow any of the tributaries we will return to the source.

A numerological interpretation⁴ of the cross in figure 1, could look as follows. The root is the number one which symbolizes primordial unity, beginning, the seed of creation, essence, center, and possibility. It is the seed of potentiality from which all manifestation arises. The stem is the number two which symbolizes alternation, diversity, dependence, and manifestation of opposites. The branch is the number three which symbolizes multiplicity, creative power, overcoming duality, expression, synthesis, sum of duality (2) and unity (1).

3. Cooper, p. 176-9.

4. Ibid. p. 113-20. All numeric interpretations are drawn from this source.

The leaf is the number four which symbolizes wholeness, totality, completion, order, justice, and perfection. One is a point, two is a line, three is a plane, and four is a spatial object.

The sum of the four elements is ten, $1+2+3+4=10$, which represents the cosmos, the divine, the all-inclusive totality of potentiality. It is a return to unity and completeness as well as the infinite expansion of the whole of manifestation. Journeys are completed with a return to the wholeness of one's origins in the number ten. Odysseus returned in the tenth year of his journey. The city of Troy fell in the tenth year of siege. In Judaism, ten represents the Kingdom and return to unity. The Roman and Chinese numeral ten is denoted with an "X" or cross.

The Spiral as Manifestation and Becoming

In addition to unconditional, changeless, indestructible, and eternal; there is also the reality of conditionality, change in time and space, creation and destruction, birth and death, and becoming. As the cross represents the Godhead in its unchanging absoluteness, the spiral represents God that acts through the world of manifestation.

The spiral is the becoming that exists within being, the conditional within the unconditional, the personal within the universal. It is the tree of knowledge in the

same garden and growing from the same seed as the tree of life. It is activity in time and space connected to the timeless and spaceless. The spiral is the deciduous tree of knowledge which exists in conditional time and space, birth and death. The cross is the evergreen tree of life which exists in eternity and infinitude, unborn and undying.

The spiral can also be thought of as Christ, the "good serpent" offering us the fruit of the tree of life. As such, the spiral shares the symbolism of the serpent⁵ as birth and death, preservation and destruction, physical and spiritual, the mediator between dualistic appearing but ultimately unified aspects of reality, the cycles of manifestation and reabsorption, and the manifestation in time and space of that which is eternal and infinite. As the serpent is the guardian of the spiritual treasure in the center, it is through the spiral that we move towards the treasure of our true selves.

The spiral⁶ is the vortex of emanation. It is the creative force that harmonizes birth and death, sun and moon, expansion and contraction, winding and unwinding, involution and evolution. It represents continuity and the cyclic nature of the universe. It encompasses various realms of existence and modalities of being. As the whirlwind, it is the manifestation of energy in nature.

5. Ibid. p. 146-51 for the following interpretations of serpent symbolism.

6. Ibid. p. 156-7, and Cirlot p. 305-6 for the following interpretations of the spiral.

It denotes the return to the center or primordial perfection in the timeless moment.

The spiral is a universal symbol of creative force, emanation, the expansion and contraction of life, cyclic nature of time and space. It is the soul wandering in conditional creation. It is the breath of life in its inhalation and exhalation. The spiral aspect of our lives like the breath is both voluntary and involuntary. Living is an activity like breath which involves both choice and choicelessness.

Cross and Spiral

Both cross and spiral are archetypes of totality and wholeness. They always remain archetypes of totality even in this case where they are also being used to represent two aspects of reality. The whole of reality exists within each of its aspects. The cross here is used to represent the totality of the unconditional reality or Godhead, and the spiral is the totality of conditional reality or God. Human life is a microcosm of the macrocosmic convergence of cross and spiral, Godhead and God, God and Christ, Christ and human. Humans live as spirals upon the cross of Christ (true self) which exists as a spiral on the cross of God (conditional reality) which exists as a spiral on the cross of the Godhead (unconditional reality).

In describing the cross and the spiral as two aspects of reality or the two sticks from which the spark of life arises it is important to remember that sacrifice is not the end of original wholeness, the primal being or state of being, it is simply a change in conditions.

Unconditional unity does not cease to exist in the face of conditional duality, rather unconditional unity is the source and true nature of all conditional divisions.

In the ocean of unconditional unity, the waves upon the surface are conditional forms of that unity that emerge from and return to the ocean of unity and wholeness. The waves are never truly separate nor divided from the ocean. There is no distinct point where ocean becomes wave or wave becomes ocean. Waves are simply an active aspect of the ocean.

The two sticks needed to make a flame are like the ocean and the waves. One is active (the spiral) and one receptive (the cross). One stick moves and the other rests in stillness to give birth to the spark.

The cross is the receptive stick from the evergreen tree of life which is contemplation, being, unconditional reality, the universal, eternity of time and infinitude of space, the unborn and undying, changeless, goodness and wisdom, and the Godhead. We carry our cross through a life of prayer and contemplation. The spiral is the active stick from the deciduous tree of knowledge which is ritual, becoming, conditional reality, the personal, time

and space, birth and death, change, love and justice, and God. We turn this stick in spirals upon the receptive stick of the cross through a life of ritual.

In this model, the cross and the spiral exist together in all creation and therefore in human life. The points in which the spiral intersect with the cross can be thought of as four points of initiation or baptism, the four nails which hold Jesus to the cross, or four fruits from the tree of life. These four initiation points represent points of dying to the old and birth into new modes of existence. They are the four gateways or windows which lead us through each elemental principle to its source in the center. The part of the spiral that exists between these points are the four seasons of living, the four phases of the moon, where time and space intersect with the timeless and spaceless.

The sacrifice of the one to create two and thereby all of creation is conveyed by birth imagery. What emerges from the one through birth and sacrifice is the two which are inevitably opposites like night and day, male and female, active and passive⁷. The twins from whom humanity is created are opposite and in co-creation and union all humanity arises. In union, they symbolically return to wholeness which is the true source of all creation including their own. To create life, we must

7. Cooper p. 183 and Cirlot p. 355-6.

unify opposites and return to wholeness. The two in conflict is the root of suffering.

The cross represents undifferentiated unity and the spiral represents differentiated unity. The unity of cross and spiral is the true nature of reality.

The cross and the spiral can also be seen as the two eyes through which we see the world. We need both eyes to see in proper perspective, just as we need two sticks to create a spark. The two must meet and become one. This point of oneness is the spark of true humanity, our clear vision, our umbilical connection to the entire cosmos. The two are not truly two, they exist fully within each other.

Both the cross and the spiral are symbols of androgyny⁸ in that they are the union of opposites and paradoxical aspects of reality. Our true selves are beyond all dualistic conceptions and gendered modes of being. Christ, Buddha, and all symbols of our full humanity are ultimately androgynes. If masculine or feminine traits remain only in other and not in self, one is not fully human. Mircea Eliade writes,

"Androgyny extends to divinities who are pre-eminently masculine or feminine. This means that androgyny has become a general formula signifying autonomy, strength, wholeness; to say of a divinity it is androgyne is as much to say that it is the ultimate being, the ultimate reality."⁹

8. For an excellent discussion of androgyny and wholeness, see Mircea Eliade (1960), Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, Harper, New York, p. 174-6.

9. Ibid. p. 175.

This spaceless space and timeless time between cross and spiral is represented in religious story a narrow gate or a razor's edge¹⁰. Passage through is the religious journey of salvation, return to wholeness.

The two eyes that allow us to see reality are widely symbolized as the sun and the moon. The sun represents eternal time and the moon represents cyclic time. Mircea Eliade writes,

"Man's integration into the cosmos can only take place if he can bring himself into harmony with the two astral rhythms, 'unifying' the sun and moon in [her]his living body."¹¹

The relationship between sun and moon, unconditional and conditional, is reflected in the relationship between God and Christ Jesus. God is the unconditional parent from which the conditional form of Christ Jesus comes and to which Christ returns, as the conditional emerges from and returns to the unconditional. Christ, the moon, is the light in the darkness that reflects the eternal light of God, the sun. Christ Jesus, like the moon, dies and disappears for three nights and is resurrected. Christ, as the conditional Jesus, is God, unconditionality, accepting self-limitation in form to act in the world of conditions.

Together the cross and the spiral represent totality of creation. The cross is the qualitative, immutable warp and the spiral the quantitative, causal weft which weave

10. Cooper p.73.

11. Mircea Eliade (1958), Patterns in Comparative Religion, Meridian, New York, p. 179.

our lives. Weaving¹² is a universal symbol of uniting opposites. The spiral represents our lives as they exist within the matrix of the universe which is the cross.

The cross and spiral are being and becoming, divine and human, the receptive and the active, the ground and the figure, the unconditioned and the conditioned. Within these two symbols our full humanity and all of creation exist. The cross is the matrix of creation and the spiral is its manifestation. The energy of the cross is given form in the spiral.

The spiral and the cross represent where human meets divine, where creation touches its creator. The spiral as it moves along the axis represents the cyclic repetition or revelation of changeless unconditional reality. It is through this repetition and context that we come to understand reality. The cross is the context and the spiral is the repetition. Together they inform us about reality.

The cross and the spiral together form a mandala¹³. A mandala is qualitatively spirit represented by the cross and quantitatively existence as represented by the spiral. The cross represents the dualistic appearing but ultimately complementary principles of the universe. The spiral represents our spiritual pilgrimage through the universe. Temples are often representations of mandalas. Contemplation awakens us to this temple within. It is

12. Cooper p. 190, and Cirlot p. 369.

13. Cooper p. 103, and Cirlot p. 199-203.

through contemplation of our own cross and spiral that we come to see their harmony with the cross and spiral of the community and the cross and spiral of all creation.

The Common Center

In this model, the cross and the spiral share a common center. The axes of the cross meet in the center¹⁴ into the infiniteness of space and the eternity of time. The spiral emerges from and returns to the center in cyclic time and space. The center itself is beyond, before and after, divisions of time and space.

The eternity of time and the infinity of space intersect in the present moment of both unconditionality and conditionality. This sacred now-moment is connected to all time and space. The center of our beings exists fully in this moment.

The center is without qualities, distinctions, or attributes. The cross represents the unconditional principles of being whose center is the principle of uncreated being in itself. The spiral represents the conditional manifestation of becoming whose center is the principle of created becoming in itself. The center is where the unconditional reality of being/Godhead and the conditional reality of becoming/God are one inseparable

14. Cooper p. 32, and Cirlot p. 40-2 for symbolism of the mystic center. Cooper p. 122 and Cirlot p. 243-4 for symbolism of omphalos. Cooper p. 146 and Cirlot p. 282 for seed symbolism. Cooper p. 82 and Cirlot p. 141-2 for heart symbolism.

reality, the supreme ultimate source of all. From *The Secret of the Golden Flower*;

"The center is omnipresent; everything is contained in it; it is connected with the release of the whole process of creation."¹⁵

"Whoever seeks eternal life must search for the place whence human nature originally sprang."¹⁶

In the unconditionality of the divine, there are an infinity of centers for the manifestation of conditional human beings. The center of our being, our sacred navel, is our umbilical connection to our unconditional, divine self. Through this sacred navel we are nourished by the divine throughout life. It is in contemplating this sacred navel that we awaken to the divine as manifest in our lives.

The center of our being from which the cross we carry and the spiral we create emerge from is what Zen might call the face before we were born. The center is the source of all potentialities in our lives. Zen Roshi Phillip Kapleau says of this center,

"It is the true nature of all sentient beings, that which existed before our parents were born and hence before our own birth, and which presently exists, unchangeable and eternal."¹⁷

The center is the spiritual heart of existence. From the heart, the blood or essence of life emerges and to the heart it returns for replenishment and renewal. It is

15. Richard Wilhelm (trans.)(1931), The Secret of the Golden Flower, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, New York, p. 35-6.

16. Ibid. p.24.

17. Phillip Kapleau (1965), The Three Pillars of Zen, Beacon Press, Boston, p. 160.

this heart that renews us and replenishes us throughout life. It is in this center that our heart and the heart of the universe are one heart. Brother David Steindl-Rast says,

"The heart is where we are fully alive, fully aware, fully ourselves, and at the same time it is where we are fully united with all others and with God."¹⁸

Mountains¹⁹ are often seen as centers of the world, sacred navels. They are the meeting place of heaven (cross, being) and earth (spiral, becoming). Where heaven and earth, conscious and unconscious, the city and the wilderness, are one is the place where the garden of paradise exists. In the core of our beings we still live in primordial wholeness and perfection. It is to this center that we seek return through contemplation.

This center point is also portrayed as the smallest seed from which the tree of life grows, it is the leaven in the bread and the treasure in the field. The center is our God-seed.

As our lives are centers for the divine to act in the world, the center remains within us to guide and nourish us in fulfilling the purpose of the divine act. The aim of contemplation is the awakening to this deep center of our being so that we may be revelations of divine activity in our humanity.

18. Quoted in Susan Walker (ed.)(1987), Speaking of Silence, Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ, p. 22.

19. Cooper p. 109-10 and Cirlot p. 219-21.

Mystics call this center by many names; the soul, the eye of the soul, the ground of the soul, the ground of being, the stillpoint, the heart, the unmoved mover, and so on. It is the point of union where human touches divine and divine touches human. It is the kingdom of God from which, when sought, all other things come naturally and spontaneously. It is where we are fully human in each moment.

The center is our true and eternal self. Religious development seeks to center upon our true center which is our full humanity. To center our lives upon any conditional, created thing is to center in limitation. The spiral of our lives becomes unbalanced terribly if we are not centered upon the true center. This unbalanced, out of control, wheel²⁰ of life is what becomes dangerous for ourselves and others. Centering upon conditional things such as the separate ego-self, is what brings harm and suffering to ourselves and others who depend upon us. We can only exist fully as revelations of core reality, the divine, if we are centered in our true centers.

The center is the well²¹ of our beings. If we center upon conditionality such as our ego-selves, we are centering upon a limited source of sustenance which will soon be exhausted and leave us hungry and thirsty. If another comes to us seeking a drink, we have nothing to give and we may try to protect what little we have. If we

20. Cooper p. 191-2 and Cirlot p. 370-1.

21. Cooper p. 190 and Cirlot p. 369.

center upon the true center, our eternal selves, the well is an unlimited source of sustenance which easily satiates our thirst and can be shared bountifully with others.

The center is the state of grace throughout life. The center is where the sublime (subliminal unmanifest consciousness, or unconscious) is one with bliss (the ecstatic manifest consciousness, or superconscious). It is the integrative principle of the entire psyche, the eternal core of being and becoming, pure consciousness and unconsciousness, the point of oneness. It is where our consciousness is connected to the totality of consciousness. Centered here our lives are spontaneous, free, and eternal.

The center is the original paradise²², where all beings share a common experience of reality. Here all beings exist in a common being or state of being so all share a common language, indeed a common consciousness.

The center is our core. It has no substance, shape, or size. Yet all that has substance, shape, and size originates from the center and is a reflection of it in time and space. The center is the seed from which our full humanity is born in us.

22. Cooper p. 126.

THE MODEL OF THE TREE OF LIFE

The model of the cross and the spiral reflects experience on many levels. Each cross and spiral exists within larger crosses and spirals and consists of smaller ones. They are like cells that make up a body of experience. The cross is like our enduring bones¹ and the spiral like our temporal flesh². Together they create our personal tree of life which in turn exists within the universal or cosmic tree of life.

The tree of life represents unity within diversity and encompasses both masculine and feminine imagery³ and as such is an archetype of the completeness and wholeness of our full humanity.

The chapters which follow describe the various realms of the tree of life. These descriptions will come under the headings of parent-child relations, contemplative practice for parents, blockages, developmental theories, and symbols and correspondences.

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1. J.C. Cooper (1978), An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, Thames and Hudson, London, p. 23. Bones as "the indestructible life principle."
 2. The many references Paul makes to the flesh in the New Testament can be thought of as being a symbol for the temporal and conditional aspects of life in the spiral.
 3. The tree is traditionally masculine in the imagery of the axis mundi or pillar. The tree is traditionally feminine in the imagery of its sheltering leaves and branches. Instead of culture laden views of gender, I prefer to see the two aspects as the active and the receptive.

Parent-Child Relations

The spiral and the cross reflect not only the life of the child and the life of the parent, they reflect the parent-child relationship. All beings exist in relationship and relationships have a life of their own. In contemplation of the model, the core of all these lives are one in the common center.

Our lives exist in all the realms of the tree. The realms represent unconditional wholeness within conditional parts and conditional parts within unconditional wholeness. The realms exist inseparably in perpetual interpenetration. Each realm is an archetype of wholeness emerging from the center that is infinitely divisible into more detailed categories as it moves outwards into conditionality.

No hierarchy or differential valuation exists between the realms. They represent principles that are differentially emphasized at various times in the life cycle, but life consists of all of them in a constant state of interpenetration. None are pure or separate at any one time, nor do we progress in a linear fashion from one to the other. The realms are not stages in attainment, they are necessary principles for life itself.

The reflections upon parent-child relations in the chapters that follow are not meant to be comprehensive. They address certain areas relevant to the various realms

that seem to be issues that commonly arise as these realms present themselves in childhood.

Contemplative Practice for Parents

The main focus of the contemplative practice that will be outlined in the next several chapters is to provide active contemplation that is accessible in the heart of suffering. The contemplative practice that follows is not the prayerfulness of retreat, but a prayerful responsiveness to suffering and trial in daily life.

In moving through the various realms of contemplation, it is important that we move through them sequentially initially for a basic grounding and understanding. One need not master each before moving on but should gain a sense of proficiency. Once each has been tried for a period of time, one then should attempt to harmonize prayerfulness with the demands of the situation that is present.

The contemplative path that follows is designed for the parent. The child is naturally attentive and meditative. The parent is the object of contemplation throughout childhood. The developmental path of prayer outlined below is to assist parents in focusing upon the same realms upon which the child is focusing. In this way we are in harmony with our children and clearer revelations of our full humanity.

Contemplation is not simply a spiritual discipline. It is a state of mind. Contemplation is present in us from birth. The object of contemplation may vary throughout life, but the process of contemplation is inherent in our development.

In each contemplative prayer, we begin with ourselves and the ones we love and extend our prayerfulness to those with whom we come in contact. In prayer, we seek to address the fundamental needs of ourselves and our children. These needs are goodness, love, truth, and justice.

In our true selves, self and other, parent and child, this and that, are one. We both love and are loved, understand and are understood in the silent still core of our beings which is the silent still core of all beings.

Prayerfulness is not meant for ourselves and our children alone, but for all beings. We need not search the world seeking a place to serve. We need only to be revelations of our full humanity in the times and places in which we find ourselves. To search the world is to turn our backs on the suffering that is in front of us and within us. Contemplation is the noticing of the reality of goodness, love, truth, and justice in every time and place. Children help us notice what we might otherwise ignore.

Each realm of contemplation has as its focus both birth and death. The culmination of each prayer is the

experience of oneness of self and other, birth and death, in each of the given realms.

We will have times where our awareness is more contemplative than others, but we must always seek to be unconditionally contemplative. We must be as faithful in times of difficulty as we are in times of ease. Establishing disciplines and routines are helpful.

Where our challenges and difficulties lie are where our best opportunities for disciplined contemplation are. If there is a recurring difficulty in our lives it is an opportunity to develop an unconditionally prayerful approach to it. Each difficulty finds its source in one of the realms of the tree of life. In contemplation, we return the fragment of life that causes us difficulty to wholeness in the source of life and thereby overcome the difficulty.

In contemplation, we come to see the world as a child, as if for the first time without stereotypes, prejudices, conventions, judgments, or habitual preoccupations. Contemplation is the pure receptivity in which reality is left undisturbed. Contemplation is the unconditional attention which is the heart of parenting. If asked to give the rules of prayerful parenting, they would be unconditional attention to goodness, love, truth, and justice.

As we move through each realm of the tree, our contemplation focuses upon perceiving the principle of

each realm in ourselves, others, and inseparably in both ourselves and others. We come to see goodness, love, truth, and justice in ourselves and our children simultaneously.

The path of contemplative prayer outlined in the next several chapters is a way of putting unconditional reality into our conditional experience not a way of putting our conditional experience into unconditional reality. That is to say, this is not a method whereby parents learn to make their children do what they want. It is a method by which parents and children are harmoniously related in the reality of their true selves so the seeds which are already present may come to fruition.

Too often parents look for way of manifesting their individual will through their children. This is destructive for both parent and child. The purpose of what follows is to attempt to center both parent and child upon a universal will that is simultaneously conditional and unconditional, chosen and choiceless.

There are times in which the parent surrenders to the will of the child and there are times when the child surrenders to the will of the parent, but prayerful parenting is when both parent and child surrender to the will of their true, authentic selves, when both parent and child are in harmony with their awakened selves.

Our prayerful responses to our children must be genuine responses from our authentic selves, not

calculated methods to achieve a result. We need to build a deep loving relationship and cultivate our own growth and awareness so that our moment to moment interactions are grounded in goodness, love, truth, and justice. Contemplation is a process of deconditioning our conditional responses and grounding them in unconditional reality.

The lessons from relating with children are limitless. Sharing life with a child allows us insights into ourselves if we are open, and opportunities to interact from a place of wholeness if we have the discipline to enact our awareness.

Authentic living demands a fundamental transformation and reordering of conditional reality. The self that is conditioned in limited time and space must die to be reborn in our true, unconditional self. As long as we live in an awareness that is dominated by cultural, societal, and familial norms our minds are dead to our true selves.

We have internalized the norms of our parents, peers, and society. If we parent out of these norms alone, we are blind to a more unconditional reality. Contemplative prayer is the awakening to the unconditional self that is before conditions and after conditions. Ritual action allows this self to act within conditions.

Contemplation can have anything as its object. The model I will be outlining has as its object the parent-

child relationship. This model is not meant as an exhaustive or exclusive method, but rather as a guide for active contemplation that is accessible to parents.

Blockages(4)

The self is formless so there is nothing to conform to, nothing to which our children must be molded. Rather life is removing the molds that shackle our full humanity.

We need to discover who we really are. The problem with our lives are not inherent to life itself or who we are. The problem is that we do not really know who we are or the nature of the world within which we live.

Contemplative prayer transforms us by transforming our perspective and relationship upon the world in which we live. Our perspective becomes centered in goodness and wisdom and our relationship becomes centered in love and justice as we become centered in our full humanity. Salvation is simply seeing the world as it really is and ourselves as we really are.

Contemplation is the process of looking deeply into reality and seeing the oneness of self and other, subject and object, good and evil, this and that. In contemplation, we come to understand the object of our reflection as we understand ourselves. All of conditions are window upon unconditional reality.

4. For further elaboration see the chapter entitled Suffering and Blockages on p. 158.

Blockages are the many ways we close the windows upon our full humanity. These blockages of awareness cause suffering for ourselves and others. These blockages demand our attention and can help provide the focused, contemplative awareness needed to begin awakening to our full humanity.

Developmental Theories

The spiral represents the rings on the tree as it grows in time and space. The spiral reveals the cross in conditionality. Development is not simply a linear process. Development is the simultaneous growth of all realms of the tree. It is not a sequential process.

Most developmental theories are linear and sequential. This is represented in this model by the spiral repeatedly traversing the axes of the cross which forms a series of points of contact with each aspect. When attempting to look at a realm in isolation, such as emotional development in the stem or cognitive development in the branch, development appears linear and sequential. These linear, sequential models of development are helpful in understanding each realm. I seek to place them within a more holistic model.

Even in linear sequential models of development in a particular realm, other realms are illuminated. In a hypothetical linear model of the branch realm, the first point of contact or stage represents the principle of root

realm revealed in the branch. The second stage represents the principle of the stem realm within the branch. The third stage represents the principle of the branch within the branch. The fourth stage represents the principle of the leaf within the branch.

In the developmental theories section of the chapters which will follow, instead of grouping theorists by which realm of the tree with which they are predominantly concerned, I group the stage or stages of their theories that speak to each particular realm⁵.

The realms represent principles of development, not simply chronological stages. All realms are present throughout the life span in various emphases. Development through the realms proceeds in cycles which are of various durations interacting simultaneously. Just as the cycles of days, months, seasons, years, and lifetimes are proceeding within each other.

Certain realms seem to be the primary grounding for certain times in the life span and development is best facilitated by opening to the realms through contemplation as they present themselves. There is no time where the

5. Another way of grouping which I did not do would be to group theories by their area of focus. Examples would be psychodynamic theories as studying the root, transactional and emotive theories as studying the stem, cognitive and existential theories as studying the branch, and archetypal and transpersonal theories as studying the leaf. I will also discuss the seed and the fruit. Technically these aspects refer to development before birth and after death, which makes them quite difficult upon which to elaborate.

realms are purely separate and we are only open to one of them.

A tree does not grow branches and stop growing roots. We develop and deepen on all levels. In the rounds of existence, emphasis may shift, but the ultimate aim is harmonious being. We always exist as a whole. There is no final attainment only the contemplative awakening to full humanity in each moment of existence and ritual harmonization with universal rhythms. Our full humanity takes different forms at different times and places, but the unconditional reality of our lives is unchanging.

Symbols and Correspondences

The root, stem, branch, and leaf realms of the tree correspond respectively to the winter, spring, summer, and autumn of our lives. We move through them in a cyclic repetition. There is no fundamental separation or delineation between the seasons. In the same way there is no fundamental separation between the realms of the tree of our lives.

The cyclic movement of life is depicted in the daily rotation of the earth, the monthly phases of the moon, the seasons of the annual orbit around the sun, and the human lifespan. Harmonizing our lives with universal rhythms is to live in right relationship to and with proper perspective on our full humanity. Because of the cyclic nature of life, we contact the same principles throughout

life. There are many symbols that reveal various aspects of the elemental principles of the tree of life.

What we didn't resolve in the past returns to us in the present. An unresolved bad relationship will resurface as another bad relationship. The person may change but the resolution of an aspect of reality is the same.

The seasons and realms of the tree of life exist simultaneously in microcosm and macrocosm. Each winter, new moon and night is a return to the womb. Each spring, waxing moon, and morning is a childhood. Each summer, full moon, and afternoon is adulthood. Each autumn, waning moon, and evening is old age. Our lives are lived fully in every moment, day, month, year, and lifetime. To eat the fruit of the tree of life is for our lives to be in harmony with the seasons and realms of the tree of life.

The aim of Christian contemplation is to eat the fruit of the tree of life and live eternally in Christ; our true, eternal self⁶. To eat the fruit, we must first find the tree. The tree of life grows in garden of Eden. The first realization we need is that we have never left the garden and the garden has never left us.

In the spinning of the spiral, symbolized by the eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, we can

6. In the revelation to John, Jesus Christ says, "To everyone who conquers, I will give permission to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God." Revelations 2:7.

become lost and disoriented. The tree of life is closer than we might think. We are so close to it in fact that it is difficult to see the entire tree in one glance, we can not move without bumping into it. Usually we can begin to see only parts of it. The parts, conditionality, are connected to the whole, unconditionality, so in the contemplative gaze upon the parts we can gradually come to see the whole and find the fruit we seek.

THE ROOT

The root is the realm associated with the times of sunrise, the new moon, winter, and the life stage of birth and early childhood. It is the realm of the body, the senses, physicality, instinct, and the unconscious. Its dynamic is solidity, integration, consolidation, and fixation. The main focus is upon what can be contacted physically such as the body-self, the family, loved ones, and the sense world. It is a realm of faith and immanence in awakening to goodness, beauty, and blessing.

Parent-Child Relations

Infants are rich with innate and unconscious knowing. What is often called "instinct" is the manifestation of this knowledge. The child is full and does not initially consciously distinguish or give value to certain experiences over others. Most have difficulty remembering the first years of life, because the child does not hold to particular events.

The infant's awareness is non-spatial and non-temporal perceiving in holistic patterns. As such it is the eternal, infinite seed of the mind. This mind becomes differentiated through contact with conditionality in time and space, but all differentiation is a figure upon the ground of undifferentiated eternal, infinite consciousness.

The child needs safety and a sense of belonging with loved ones to develop faith and trust and open one's self to creation. The child needs to interact with the world without the concepts of right and wrong being imposed upon pure experience. Natural, physical limits and dangers are discovered with the parent as the guide and safe base to which one can return. The child is grounded in the physical world and the intimate family.

The child needs large amounts of physical touch and physical contact with the world such as being carried on the parents' bodies and being breastfed¹. Other needs are extensive eye contact, smiling, and soothing voice sounds². This provides the space to allow the deepening of the roots to provide a solid foundation for further growth. A main task is the internalization of the physical world.

Children in this realm are instinctually compassionate, unconditionally loving and forgiving toward the parents. They perceive and understand directly and concretely. Infant and parent are initially identified as one. Experience is undifferentiated and in the moment.

Infants spend large amounts of time in meditative and dream brain wave states³. The richness of the unconscious

1. See Joseph Chilton Pearce (1977), Magical Child, Bantam, New York.
2. R.W. Zaslow and L. Breger (1969), "A theory and treatment of autism." In Clinical-Cognitive Psychology: Models and Integration, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.
3. Mike and Nancy Samuels (1979), The Well Baby Book, Summit, New York.

is fully present and gradually gaining the focus and expression in revealed consciousness. The primary meditation⁴ in this realm involves both the body and the mind in rhythmic movement such as rocking, walking, or dancing.

The roots grow in the earth which spins rhythmically upon its own axis. This is the movement of the child. Meditation is within this rhythmic bodily movement. Concentration, mindfulness, and focusing are the main tasks of meditation. The "spacing in" and attention of the child to an object should not be interrupted or thought to be vacant. The primary object of meditation is the world of physical form.

Infants are baptized into the world of form and physicality. In many cultures there is an earth baptism⁵ where the infant is placed upon the ground to acknowledge the infant's spiritual parent in the earth.

Parenting is a return to our own roots. We draw upon our instinctual responses. If a child cries we respond instinctually. To parent with intellectual awarenesses blocks the realization of the roots. Breastfeeding, family co-sleeping, holding the infant on the body are all examples of disciplines for awakening to the roots.

4. For meditation practices for use with children, see Deborah Rozman (1976), Meditation for Children, Celestial Arts, Millbrae, CA.

5. Mircea Eliade (1958), Patterns in Comparative Religion, Meridian, New York, p. 250.

The root connection between parent and child is first developed in physical contact. This physical contact is essential for later development. It is also essential for the development of the parent. Sleeping with a child and the sharing of unconscious time helps to awaken us to our instinctual connection to our children. We also come to trust our instincts.

Not only is the infant learning trust, parents are learning to trust themselves. It is the lack of self-trust that leads us to non-instinctual and contrived parenting modes that have destructive goals and agendas.

We find ourselves at the roots in the dark of night. The infant who keeps us awake at night is guiding us to the roots of the tree of life. Through near constant physical contact and presence, we come to understand the infant. Bonding is on a physical, instinctual, and unconscious level.

The focus of parent contemplation should be to contemplate the physical form and presence of the infant or child and maintain an awareness of the unconditional blessedness and goodness of the child in every action.

It is our responsiveness to our children that builds faith. The child becomes doubtful and apathetic if there is no response. If we are not responsive to children's physical needs as physical parents, children are likely to lack faith in the responsiveness of their spiritual parent to their spiritual needs later in life.

As parents searching for the roots and seeking to share them with our children, we are present, reliable, trustworthy, and physically interacting with our children. We are both physically present with them, and interacting with them on a shared physical level.

Many parents say that it took them awhile to really bond with and love their infant fully because they did not know the infant. The infant is like a stranger but at the same time is one with us and is as familiar as we are to ourselves. There is an awareness, a knowing, that comes before love. This awareness is of goodness, blessing, and beauty. First we come to realize the goodness, beauty, and blessing of pregnancy and birth, then comes love of the infant. Love at first sight is the vision of blessedness and beauty.

Children need to feel safe. Without an underlying sense of safety, fear will inhibit an individual's growth. Love and communion can only exist without fear. If a child lacks love they are lost in fear. Children look to their parents to keep them safe. This safety is both physical and emotional. Most of us understand our response-ability to physical dangers. But children also rely on parents for emotional security. This includes most importantly unconditional acceptance, love, and belonging, but also an understanding of parental responses to understand the world, and a sense of continuity and predictability.

When people speak of a need for structure, they are really talking about a need for safety and understanding. It is not that the child needs an externally structured and ordered environment. Children are five senses in search of a world that makes sense. Children need to understand the world and see predictable responses to situations. They will provide structure for themselves. Capriciousness, inconsistency, and unpredictability make children feel unsafe.

To be a secure person is to be open and comfortable with the various situations in which we find ourselves. For children, or anyone to feel secure, they must interact with the world. To be insecure is to not feel comfortable in the world. In building defenses to protect us, we create insecurity. Any barrier placed between us and the world diminishes our security in ourselves. The most secure person is vulnerable, open, and defenseless.

In raising children, we must protect them from physical dangers without building barriers between them and the world they need to explore. A secure child needs to know how to navigate successfully in the world. This comes from understanding and connecting, not from separating.

Trust is the foundation of security. Children need to trust themselves, trust those they interact with, and trust the world in which they live. Trust is the antidote

to fear. If a child is filled with or surrounded by fear, growth is stunted. To be trusted we must also trust.

Contemplative Practice for Parents

Root prayer is coming to perceive the seed of conditions in unconditional goodness, beauty, and blessedness through primarily through the body and instincts.

In root prayer, the focus is the goodness and beauty of all life. In root prayer one not only is mindful of the blessings and beauty of birth but also the blessing and beauty of death. Pain, suffering, and loss are part of both birth and death. It is important to see the beauty and blessing of both birth and death beyond the suffering and loss.

In seeing the blessing of both birth and death, we must open ourselves to all births and deaths. Not only the physical births and deaths that begin and end life, but all changes in form. Every night is an excellent time to contemplate death and every morning an excellent time to contemplate birth. When the infant awakens the parent, the parent's first awareness should be of the infant and the blessedness and goodness.

As with all contemplation, it is useful to focus first upon one's self⁶. We prayerfully embrace our birth

6. This is perhaps a Buddhist assertion in that much Christian contemplation begins with the contemplation of an other.

and death in all its blessing and beauty. Then we come to prayerfully embrace the physical births and deaths of others, loved ones and strangers. It is often more difficult to see the beauty and blessing in the deaths of loved ones. The beauty is within the pain, suffering, and loss. The beauty does not blind us to the pain, suffering and loss, it allows us to see it more clearly. Finally, we see the beauty and blessing of birth and death in both ourselves and others with a common center.

Birth and death must be welcomed equally for life to be fully welcomed. Contemplation does not seek one or the other. Contemplation allows reality to exist fully within us. In prayerful awareness of the beauty of death, we do not seek death. We simply allow death to dwell within us without resistance or fear. The deaths and births we embrace in root prayer are physical, bodily births and deaths. In root prayer, we feel death in our bodies and we feel birth in our bodies. We focus first upon birth, then death so that every death is also a rebirth.

To realize the root, it is necessary to be mindful of our bodies and physical interactions with creation. In each moment we are mindful of body posture and tension within the body. Whenever there is tension, we become aware of it and let it go. We strive to hold no tension in the body. We should maintain a straight back, upright head, both feet in full contact with the ground when

sitting or standing, relaxed low shoulders, and breathe into the lowest and deepest regions of one's belly.

The best model is the child's posture when the child first learns to sit and stand and the infants breathing. In this contemplation, we are always aware of what the body is doing. If we are walking, we are mindful that we are walking⁷. All unconscious physical actions are made conscious.

To understand another, we may prayerfully assume their body posture and breathing. In harmonizing our physical presence with another's, we can come to understand another's experience from the inside to see their root in goodness.

In root prayer, we focus fully upon every moment of experience without reacting, commenting, reflecting, or judging. Each moment is seen in isolation. This is to harmonize with the mind of an infant. We do not hold to any experience or interpret it in any way. We simply consciously register each event upon the unconscious. Our mind is purely receptive. We do not put labels or judgments upon the world.

We respond to the infant's needs spontaneously and instinctually without interpretation or judgment. We do not think whether or not we should meet the need, we simply respond. If the infant cries, the parent responds

7. Toddlers will often run all the while saying "running". This harmony of mind and body in awareness is what I am talking about.

instinctually. The mind never wanders from what is seen or heard in the present moment. If the mind wanders into past or future or anything that is not physically present in the moment, we should return it to its single-minded focus upon the physical present.

There is no single object per se, but our minds should not wander away from that which is physically present and a purely receptive awareness. If the mind wanders, a simple technique is to return to focus upon our breathing and body posture.

Coming to realize beauty doesn't mean we see only the beautiful. To see the root, we see the unconditional beauty within all conditions. We come to see the beauty, goodness, and blessed within what we formerly thought to be ugly, bad, and cursed. Where we see ugliness our discipline is to look deeper to the root in beauty. The ugly is simply out of touch with the root of beauty, the cursed is out of touch with the blessed, and the bad is out of touch with the good. In contemplation, we must return the ugly and the cursed to its root to be renewed. If we can begin to do this in contemplation, we can begin to manifest this transformation in ritual action.

To discover the roots, we focus upon the physical sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and feel of conditions. The physical world is interacted with using all of the senses. The mindfulness of all sensations in the body is an important discipline, the beginning and root of

contemplative practice. Physical habits are overcome through attention to their source. We are attentive to body and physical needs of ourselves and our children.

In contemplating the death of the root, we come to understand the limits and potentials of the body and physicality. Through contemplation, we create space to see more fully. In contemplation upon the body and sensual experience, they are placed in a more unconditional perspective so that attachment to body and sensual objects diminishes. We come to see objects as objects.

Fasting is a discipline in this realm. For nursing mothers, fasting need not mean taking no food, it simply means a detachment to food and seeing food as simply a physical need instead of an emotional or other need. For nursing mothers, fasting may entail eating simple nourishing foods that are uninteresting and not eating for emotional or taste fulfillment.

In root prayer, we overcome conditioned instincts and physical expressions in our breath and posture. They are overcome through our unconditional faith in the goodness and blessedness of all creation. The unconditioned form returns to beauty. The reality of all form and physical reality beyond conditions is the reality of intrinsic goodness and blessing. The root prayer is largely about building a relationship with instincts and unconscious.

The roots are the beginning of contemplative practice because here the unshakable faith that is needed for the spiritual journey is established. It is here that one establishes one's spiritual roots and the instinctual connection to universal reality. The main focus of root prayer is developing receptivity and openness through faith and trust.

Blockages

Blockages of the birth of the root involve ungroundedness, lack of integration into body, uncomfortability in the body, lack of trust in instincts, fear of fusion with others, sleeplessness, lack of attention to physical details, lack of faith in others, negative body image, and fear of physical intimacy and sexuality.

Blockages of the death of the root involve imposing one's limited self upon others to reassure one's own solidity, putting one's limited self as the center of the world, being unable to let go of the sense of a solid enduring self, fixations, material attachments, and inflexibility.

Blockages are based in the body and the relationship between bodies and can stem from lack of touch and play. Parent/child physical bonding is essential to further growth and development. Many of the more severe

psychiatric disorders are rooted in this realm⁸. Autism, various psychoses, narcissistic borderline disorders, and some psychoneuroses are examples of a blockage of the root.

Blockages can be of varying intensity and result in an impaired ability to differentiate self from loved ones and the physical world. Blockages are largely psychodynamic. The self must interiorize physical reality. For people with a blockage of the root, reparenting and physiological and body-oriented therapies may be beneficial. The task of this element is building a basic foundation of trust. The healing of this blockage is in surrendering and letting go in an unavoidably physical/bodily way.

Developmental Theories

In developmental theory, the root is related to Wilber's⁹ sensoriphysical, phantasmic-emotional, and the beginning of the rep-mind; Piaget's¹⁰ sensorimotor and preoperational thinking levels; Maslow's¹¹ physiological and safety; Kohlberg's¹² premoral and preconventional;

8. See Ken Wilber (1984), "The developmental spectrum and psychopathology: part I, stages and types of pathology." *Journal for Transpersonal Psychology*, vol.16, #1.

9. Ibid.

10. H. Gruber and J. Voneche (eds.)(1977), The Essential Piaget, Basic Books, New York.

11 A. Maslow (1968), Towards a Psychology of Being, Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York.

12 L. Kohlberg (1964), "Development of moral character and moral ideology." In Hoffman and Hoffman (eds.), *Review of Child Development Research*, vol.1.

Loevinger's¹³ autistic, symbiotic, and impulsive; Green and Green's¹⁴ physical; Psychosynthesis's¹⁵ lower collective unconscious; Bubba Free John's¹⁶ physical body; Vedanta's¹⁷ annamayakosa and pranamayakosa; Battista's¹⁸ sensation and perception; Arieti's¹⁹ instincts and sensorimotor exoceptual; Kundalini's first and second chakras; Tiller's²⁰ physical and etheric astral; the Buddhist skandhas of corporeality and sensation or rupa and vedana, the element of solidity, and the contemplation of the body; Jung's²¹ sensation; Fowler's²² primal and intuitive-projective; and Eckhart's²³ natural bliss and no sin still at the mother's breast.

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13. J. Loevinger (1976), Ego Development, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
 14. E. Green and A. Green (1977), Beyond Biofeedback, Delacourte, New York.
 15. R. Assagioli (1965), Psychosynthesis, Viking, New York.
 16. Bubba Free John (1978), The Enlightenment of the Whole Body, Dawn Horse, Middletown.
 17. E. Deutsche (1969), Advaita Vedanta, East-West Center, Honolulu.
 18. J. Battista (1978), "The holistic model, holistic paradigm, information theory and consciousness." Revision, vol. 1, #3/4.
 19. S. Arieti (1967), The Intra-psychic Self, Basic Books, New York.
 20. J. White (ed.)(1976), Psychic Exploration, Capricorn, New York.
 21. F. Fordham (1966), An Introduction to Jung's Psychology, Pelican, New York.
 22. J. Fowler (1981), Stages of Faith, Harper, San Francisco.
 23. D.T. Suzuki (1957), Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist, Harper, New York.

Symbols and Correspondences

Symbolically, the root grows within the earth and the attributes of the earth²⁴ element are: the nourisher, inexhaustible creativity, fecundity, matter, the center, integration, the square, immutability, God manifest in creation and inseparable from it, earthly existence, the totality of the Godhead, honesty, straightforwardness, integrity, fixation, limitation, form, permanence, stability, primordial simplicity, order, and often the feminine power. It is associated with the tortoise²⁵ who supports the world. As the mountain²⁶, this element represents firmness, stillness, eternity, and full consciousness. In scientific mythology, the root represents gravitation which is the attraction that brings masses of objects together.

The roots share symbolism with the number one²⁷ as primordial unity, beginning, creation, essence, center, possibility, seed, potentiality, the point of increase.

As the river of life, it is the raindrops pooling in the womb of the mother and flowing out through the birth canal. The arms of the parents are the embankments and channel nurturing the beginning flow. The water must fill and pass over the earth element. Relationship begins the flow of the waters. Isolation or lack of bonding leaves

24. J.C. Cooper (1978), An Illustrated Dictionary of Traditional Symbols, Thames and Hudson, London, p. 59.

25. Ibid. p. 174-5.

26. Ibid. p. 109-10.

27. Ibid. p. 113.

one swallowed up by the ground. With no cradling channel, water cannot pool and form a coherent, cohesive stream of being. The universe is complete in every raindrop, and the river of life flows without any tributaries.

THE STEM

The stem is associated with the times of morning, the waxing moon, spring, and the life stage of later childhood. It is the realm of feeling, emotion, imagination, and the subconscious. Its dynamic is association, fluidity, cohesion, relationship, and identification. The focus is upon that which one contacts emotionally and imaginatively such as friends, peers, the community, and the emotional and imaginative world. It is a realm of faith and immanence in the awakening to love and compassion.

Parent-Child Relations

In the stem the child distinguishes the physical separation between self and other. The two are brought together in relationship through emotional and imaginative connection. Notions of divided time and space are developed in this realm with the child's awareness still centered in the present.

The emotional unity of parent-child is emphasized over the physical unity of the parent-child in the root. The physical instinctual attachment to the parent gives way to the emotional imaginative attachment to the parent.

With the awareness of self and other, likes and dislikes, pleasures and displeasures, attachments and resistances are established. There is the desire to belong to the group. The physical touch hunger of the

infant moves into the hunger for emotional and imaginative contact in childhood.

Communication and a sense of belonging are needed for the full development of the child. Process replaces form as the focus of attention and concentration. Culture and community become formative influences in coming to know the world. Interaction with the world is based upon feelings and emotional needs as they are informed by the sensation of pleasure and pain, joy and sadness, pleasant and unpleasant.

The child's mind is initiated into duality but it is not rigid. Imagination is an important connector between conditional and unconditional consciousness. The subconscious is differentiated as in dream. Day dreaming is important in childhood. The stem is the home of imagination. The reality of the imagination is the stem of faith in the reality of the unseen.

Thought in the stem is associative and connective. Children make connection between similar entities and experiences. Whereas the root was receptive, the stem represents the active within the receptive. The child continues to be receptive within activity. Imagination is the connection of the seen and the unseen. Imagination never completely separates from the seen but it puts the seen together in a creative way.

Compassion and understanding in this realm are willful and intentional. Love is expanded to include

outsiders. Emotional and imaginative bonds are formed between parent and child. The child's meditative mind is focused and concentrating on processes that occur between entities. The primary objects of meditation will be emotions and feelings.

Parenting in this realm involves emotionality, communication, and relationship. Emotion literally means "out movement". The parent begins to experience the child's movement out of exclusive attachment to parent.

In the root, parent and child were one. In the stem, parent and child are two and oneness is maintained through relationship. What was united in body and instinct, now becomes united in imagination and emotion. The child needs emotional presence as before physical presence was needed. The physical bond grows into an emotional bond.

The parent in the root responds to the child's need. In the stem, the parent responds more often to wish or desire. In the beginning there is only the necessary, the real needs of the child. Now there is perception and the threshing of the essential and the inessential. The perceived needs are of central importance.

Parent and child as two can lead to power struggles and clashes of wills. These are harmonized by emotional and imaginative connection. The parent says "yes" unconditionally to emotional care and imaginative expression.

Children are learning relationships in the world around them. Parents need to resist the temptation to create rules and instead share rituals. A ritual guides action in a given time and place. Rules seek to guide actions regardless of time and place. The understanding of ritual deepens over time. With rules, one comes to see that rules are not truly absolute and they are rejected often at a cost to one's relationship to time and place.

Rituals develop inner discipline, rules focus externals. Rituals give meaning to actions in time and place and provide a connection to the timeless. Rituals carry expectations, but their meaning is internal as well as communal. One acts internally out of a desire to act responsibly in the community. There is no fear of punishment with a ritual. Dinner at six o'clock is not a rule of the universe, it is a ritual of the family.

Children need emotional attention. By paying attention to the child's emotional expressions, we are opening up a dialogue and expressing a desire to help. The stem realm is one of emotional dialogue and attention.

Children need recognition and affection from those about whom they care. If children do things for attention, it is a clue that they need attention and that they care about us. If they can not get it in a positive way, a negative way is preferable to being ignored. If we do not want them to use the methods they are using, we

need to offer them an alternative ritual that meets the real needs they have. Children have a right to and a need for attention, but we should always realize the unconditional needs within their conditional forms.

Children behave to get attention to their needs and if milder approaches are ineffective, more drastic measures are employed. Generally the greater the outward display, the greater the inward lacking. If things are noticed when they are small, they do not need to get larger to attract notice. If we listen when our children whisper, they do not have to scream. When attention is no longer a birthright, and an affirmation of one's being, one will become unbalanced in an attempt to receive it.

Children need a lot of emotional attention. If we do not want to give attention to dramatic displays, we need to give it unconditionally at other times and the dramatic display will often become obsolete. We often say that our families are the most important thing, but our actions do not support our words. Children need to see in our actions that they are a priority.

Providing attention and accomplishing what we need to accomplish do not need to be in conflict. A child does not always need undivided attention. Often emotional accessibility and emotional presence is sufficient. In providing attention, we seek to provide the real needs of the child not the imposed needs of the parent.

Attention is part of how children feel like they belong and are valued. They need to know they have meaning in the world and can make it respond. Parents are the prime socializing force for children for the early years of life, so we are the main attention givers in the root and still significant in the stem. Children enjoy other children at a young age, but they still meditate upon their parents for guidance and approval about how to interact.

When we accept a child unconditionally, we are not resigning ourselves to their current behavior, but allowing them to grow beyond it by saying "even if you fall we are here for you". The current self is the seed for the future self and needs to be nurtured through all circumstances, especially hard times.

When the faith in our children is strong, our needs and feelings are intimately connected. This has consequences for how we relate to our children. Often our best clue to how our children are feeling in a given situation is how we react. If we respond to children's behavior out of anger, frustration, or impatience, it is a good clue that the child's behavior is motivated by anger, frustration, or impatience. How we cope with the situation is something we need to share with our children so they too can have effective ways of coping with their feelings.

Faith is bonding. Faith is the root connection that unites all things. It is spiritual gravity. Faith is established through contact. A child cannot develop faith without contact. The parent's first task is to provide the physical and emotional presence necessary for a strong bond to develop between parent and child. In this bond, the child's need becomes the parent's need. The child needs to eat and the parent needs to feed the child. Faith is the foundation of the spiritual path. Without connection, without roots, there is no growth.

Every member in a family is constantly affecting the others. We are not fundamentally separate. Who is observing affects what is being observed. What we expect, how we interpret, and how we feel determines our reaction to a situation. What we expect, we usually receive. Though we may receive it in a form different than we expected.

Tension is the force that exists in division and separation. It occurs when we try to separate what is inseparable or when we try to resist the union of that which is already unified. Seeing ourselves as separate and individual with separate roles and responsibilities can create tension and stress.

Prayerful understanding is essential to the unconditional love needed in parenting. Behavior is an outward expression of an inward state. Often children cannot express this inward state fully with just words.

Too often we react out of our own hurts and guilt so we cannot see what is going on inside the child.

When we seek to judge or interpret a situation instead of greeting it with unconditional receptivity, we limit our love and understanding and often our actions cause harm. As long as we look at a situation from the mindset of judgment and the divisions of good and bad, we can never understand the situation.

If a child does something hurtful to others, it is not because they are bad and want to hurt others. Usually when a child does something hurtful to others, it is a sign that they are hurting within themselves. In sharing our hurts, the fragments are reconnected and suffering is overcome. Support groups are an example of how adults share their hurts to heal them. Parents are the child's first support group. When a child hurts, the child will communicate this hurt however the child is able to. This may be hurting others physically or emotionally. In hurting us as parents, the child is communicating directly and clearly what the child is feeling. The child relies upon our compassionate response which is to bear the child's suffering and redeem it. Any hurtful action is a search for salvation and wholeness, if the action is judged good or bad it remains in limitation. It is the compassionate, prayerful attention of the parent who patiently bears the hurt of the child and heals it in one's self that opens the path for the child's salvation.

Compassion is to suffer with those who are suffering. We can have a pretty intellectualized understanding of compassion until our children's cries bring a clearer awareness to our hearts and adrenal glands.

When a child suffers it is suffering for the parent, when the child is happy, it is joy for the parent. This goes both ways. What the parent feels the child feels.

We often misunderstand this essential lesson, especially with challenging children. Children only make our lives miserable when their lives are miserable. When children do things that cause us hurt, disappointment, and anger; they are sharing with us the feelings they have inside and watching how we deal with them because they do not know how to. They are sharing their suffering with us hoping it will be alleviated by sharing it with someone who knows the path.

When a child bites her/his mother while s/he is nursing, s/he realizes that s/he hurts her and immediately starts crying. It is her/his instinctual compassionate response. S/he does not feel bad because s/he hurt her/his mother, s/he hurts because her/his mother hurts.

Compassion is really about connection on a deep level, not about feeling bad or guilty. Suffering with others is powerful and transcends suffering. It is also feeling joy in other's joy. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that much of the alarming violence in our society that seems to permeate younger and younger

children is a result of children feeling emotionally disconnected, and physically unbonded. Without faithful love which unifies separations, detachment becomes cruelty.

Contemplative Practice for Parents

Stem prayer is coming to perceive the seed of conditions with unconditional love and compassion primarily through feelings and emotions.

In stem prayer, the focus of the mind is feeling and emotion. We focus upon feelings and how we respond to them. In every situation, we are mindful of feelings and emotions and of our response such as pleasant, unpleasant, or neither. We do not act upon feelings and emotions, but give them space within the mind. We are aware of the birth of the feeling, how we respond to it, and how the feeling dies into the next feeling. We neither express nor repress the feeling or emotion, but allow it to exist fully within us and come to fruition. Often we respond with the feeling or emotion still in its ripening. In this way our actions are like unripe fruit that are not nourishing to those around us.

In stem prayer, we allow each feeling and emotion to ripen. First there is the stimulus, what is said or done by another or any relationship with the world. We are mindful of this birth. The reaction, feeling and emotion arises from this stimulus. We are mindful of the

reaction. We are aware and register, I am angry, happy, hurt, disappointed. This reaction begins to fade and we are aware and mindful of how the feeling or emotion dies or changes form. By creating space within in each reaction, we can understand the situation and respond appropriately instead of in an unconscious conditioned response.

We come to see how emotions and feelings arise and how they are conditioned. We begin to take time and space with the arising of each feeling and emotion. The inner reaction is allowed to resonate and ripen before we respond outwardly. The unconscious responses are made conscious as responses are deconditioned in contemplation.

A beginning discipline is to become immediately aware of the birth of a feeling or emotion and taking a moment of silence so that the feeling or emotion can enter fully and not be dissipated by an immediate reaction. In the moment of silence, we return to the root prayer of mindfulness of body posture and breathing.

Stem prayer usually begins with our own feelings and emotions as the focus. We must also focus upon the feelings and emotions of others and how they are born and die in others such as our children. In the spaciousness of awareness, we come to understand how our children respond emotionally to situations and the source of those reactions.

Finally in stem prayer, we focus upon the common experience in each situation. We are aware of both self and other in each situation. We are mindful of the birth, response, and death of the feelings and emotions of both self and other. In recognizing the common stem, we can experience true communion with others.

In understanding others, we prayerfully harmonize our emotional experience with theirs until we share the same feeling and can understand it from within. With an unconditional mind we seek to experience emotional reality as other does, not as we think they do or should.

In stem prayer, we allow the emotions and feelings to ripen within so any action is authentic. If we do not understand the birth and death of feelings and emotions in both self and other, we cannot respond authentically. In contemplation, one comes to see the common experience of feeling and emotion in self and other. We come to build a relationship with our feelings and emotions and those of others.

The fruition of stem prayer is to see love as the stem of all emotions and feelings. We contemplate upon how every situation, every interaction with others is an opportunity for love to be shared. The question in stem prayer is how can my every response and action be loving?

In stem prayer, we seek to love unconditionally every being with whom we interact. We see all people with the loving eyes of a parent. There is no hate or bitterness,

because we understand the source of all emotions and feelings and how they come into being. We come to see our reactions in every situation. Do we resist, embrace, fear, cling, deny, ignore this love?

Our prayer is to become our loving fully human self in every situation and respond with loving understanding. Our actions are no longer responses to pleasure and pain, reward or punishment, worthiness and unworthiness. They are responses to the love of full humanity. Out of the the love of our full humanity, we welcome both pleasure and pain, gain or loss.

In stem prayer, we contemplate our emotional births and deaths and those of others. We contemplate the beginnings and ends, the joys and hurts, of relationships. We seek the love in both the gain and loss of relationship. We contemplate the loss of loved ones and the loss of love relationships, to seek a more unconditional emotional connection that still remains throughout the loss of relationship.

In stem prayer, we awaken to the love and compassion in each birth and death. We develop faith in unconditional love and compassion. Feeling and emotion without conditions is unconditional love. Stem prayer allows us to overcome conditional emotions and feelings.

In stem prayer, we focus upon emotions and feelings until all are seen as manifestations of love. Every birth and death is an act of love. Every birth and death is an

offering of universal love to us. We see this love offering in our own births and deaths and in the births and deaths of others. Finally we see every birth and death of both ourselves and others as acts of universal love.

Feelings are unlimited by divisions of self and other, birth and death. The unconditionality of all feeling is love. In stem prayer, we come to have the feelings and imagination of our full humanity. Stem prayer establishes the spiritual stem of love in all emotion.

Blockages

Blockages of the stem are often interpersonal involving communication issues. Blockage of the birth of the stem may include drawing everything to one's self and the inability to see from other's points of view, fearing the loss of others, lack of physical autonomy, physical dependencies, selfishness, and the inability to share.

Blockages of the death of the stem may include being preoccupied with pleasure and pain, feeling incomplete in relationships, attempting to control or manipulate situations, being overly eager to please, extreme subjectivity, emotional attachments, and fearing rejection.

Mixed or contradictory messages and double binds can be especially troubling in this realm. Blockages are

usually cognitive. Psycho-pathology¹ can involve some neuroses but mostly script pathologies. They can be associated with problems involving rules and the understanding of and expectations of roles. Therapeutic techniques to heal blockages traditionally focus on communication, authenticity (uniting message, emotion, and intent), and improving interaction/transaction.

Blockages may be typified by instability, difficulties in relationships, inability to risk individuality in a group, anger and hostility, and blame and resentment.

Developmental Theories

In developmental theory, the stem is associated with Wilber's² later part of the rep-mind and the rule/role mind; Piaget's³ concrete operational thinking; Maslow's⁴ belongingness; Loevinger's⁵ conformist and conscientious conformist; Kohlberg's⁶ conventional including approval of others and law and order; Green and Green's⁷ emotional;

1. Ken Wilber (1984), "The developmental spectrum and psychopathology: part I, stages and types of pathology." *Journal for Transpersonal Psychology*, vol. 16, #1.
2. Ibid.
3. H. Gruber and J. Voneche (1977), The Essential Piaget, Basic Books, New York.
4. A. Maslow (1968), Toward a Psychology of Being, Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York.
5. J. Loevinger (1976), Ego Development, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
6. L. Kohlberg (1964), "Development of moral character and moral ideology." In *Review of Child Development Research*, vol. 1.
7. E. Green and A. Green (1977), Beyond Biofeedback, Delacourte, New York.

Psychosynthesis's⁸ lower unconscious; Bubba Free John's⁹ emotional body; Battista's¹⁰ emotion and beginning cognition; Arieti's¹¹ proto-emotions, phantasmic endoconceptual, and language paleologic; Kundalini's third and fourth chakra; Tiller's¹² lower mind; Vedanta's¹³ manomayakosa; The Buddhist skandha of perception or samjna, the element of fluidity, and contemplation upon feelings; Jung's¹⁴ emotion; Fowler's¹⁵ mythic-literal and synthetic conventional; and Eckhart's¹⁶ leaving the mother's lap to smile and face God.

Symbols and Correspondences

Symbolically, the stem transports water and shares the attributes of the water¹⁷ element as the beginning and end of all things, cohesiveness, undifferentiation, the unmanifest, the liquid counterpart of light, the fountain

8. R. Assagioli (1965), Psychosynthesis, Viking, New York.
9. Bubba Free John (1978), The Enlightenment of the Whole Body, Dawn Horse, Middletown.
10. J. Battista (1978), "The holographic model, holistic paradigm, information theory, and consciousness." In Re-Vision, vol. 1, #3/4.
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14. F. Fordham (1966), An Introduction to Jung's Psychology, Pelican, New York.
15. J. Fowler (1981), Stages of Faith, Harper, San Francisco.
16. D.T. Suzuki (1957), Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist, Harper, New York.
17. J.C. Cooper (1978), An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, Thames and Hudson, London, p. 188-9.

of life, youth, the continual flux and impermanence of the manifest world, the subconscious, washing away and regeneration, the blood and sap of life, emotion, purification and baptism, fertility, blessing, adaptation, persistence, nonresistance and flowing around obstacles. Waves upon the water represent illusion in the world of change. In scientific mythology, the stem represents the strong nuclear force that binds atoms.

Associated with the moon¹⁸, the stem is also: universal becoming, perpetual renewal, inner knowledge, time, change, variability, sexuality, impulse, duality, and youth.

Associated with the number two¹⁹, it is duality, alternation, diversity, conflict, dependence, manifestation, and opposites.

The image of the river of life is the flow of interaction, individual streams come together and form a larger river. Fullness comes from a receptivity to the flow of others. Lack of openness diminishes our fullness. The river nourishes all that contact it along its banks.

18. Ibid. p. 106-8.

19. Ibid. p. 114.

THE BRANCH

The branch is associated with the times of afternoon, the full moon, summer, and the life stage of early adulthood. It is the realm of the intellect, ego, rationality, reason, concepts, abstraction, and the self-conscious. It is the dynamic of heat, separation, and differentiation. The focus is upon that which is contacted conceptually and intellectually such as society, culture, and the world of ideas. It is a realm of surrender and transcendence in the awakening to truth and wisdom.

Parent-Child Relations

The self in the branch is a conceptual not just a physical and emotional reality. This makes way for other concepts to be applied to the self such as guilt, pride, and various concepts of worthiness and unworthiness. This dialogue of the self between the two of creation exists fully within one's self in the branch. This is the realm of ego, autonomy, and self-esteem. The dialogue between the two in the stem, now has an inner witness as a third.

The branch being farthest from the root and timeless time and spaceless space represents the height of our awareness of differentiated linear time and space and the differentiation of self and other.

The child needs to interiorize the intellectual and ideological as well as the emotional. The child focuses

upon fulfilling responsibilities, and loyalties to the society and the culture. Conscience, self-esteem, and self-sacrifice are needed to identify with an existential self within societal and cultural norms.

Love and compassion exist for strangers and those to whom one is conceptually or intellectually connected. Compassion and love exist as concepts and ideals independent of concrete expressions. Understanding of systems and abstraction is in existence.

The meeting of fire and water, stem and branch, emotion and intellect, create the heat and moisture necessary for the creation of life and as a life stage, the branch is the time when one comes into fertility.

There is necessary conflict before the two elements interpenetrate and unite. Stem overwhelming branch can leave one bound to the known and the inability to transcend the self dependent upon relationship with others. One sees only the needs of those one is close to and neglects others. Branch overwhelming stem can create unnecessary hurt and conflict in relationships through unbalanced anger and hostility. One sees only the needs of society and systems and neglects the needs of those close to him/her.

The branch is a time of activity and self-assertion in creation. It is the opposite pole from the receptivity of the root.

In the beginning, meditative practice is predominantly one where the mind is active and the body is still such as reading. The outer search for understanding leads to the search for inner meaning and identity through introspection. Whereas in the stem, relationships and processes were the focus, this focus has moved inward to thinking about thought and mindfulness of inner processes. The object of meditation is the mind itself.

Parents are needed as a rational, logical, and intellectual presence and the child's hunger is for conceptual and abstract understanding of creation.

Parents may experience difficulty letting go and allowing children to move freely in the world to encounter new embankments and obstacles. The values, assumptions, and ideals of the parent are scrutinized by the child and hypocrisies and inconsistencies are pointed out.

The root and the stem are realms characterized by attachment. The branch and the leaf are realms of detachment. The dynamic of the branch is one of separation and differentiation.

The child seeks to distance from the parent in concepts and ideals. This is necessary for the child to find their true selves and their spiritual parent. Without this differentiation, the child cannot fully understand the limitations of the parent. The parent should not attempt to be an absolute authority. This is

ultimately a failed attempt because the parent is not in reality the absolute authority and the child must understand reality. In the branch, the child's understanding of reality must not be limited by the parent's understanding.

The child seeks to know not only the answers but the one who is giving the answers and by what authority. The child seeks to know how we know what we know and how consistent our actions are with what we claim to believe. If we do not enact our beliefs how real are they? This can be a difficult time for parent if we are not willing to challenge ourselves with the same intensity that the child is. The child is not attempting to dismiss or hurt the parent as many parents of toddlers and teenagers believe. The child is seeking to understand reality. The child is not challenging the parent per se but rather the parent's self-understanding.

Children who are encountering the branch realm provide an important reality test for the parent. Are we indeed as loving and understanding as we claim to be? The child will help us answer that question by highlighting inconsistencies and places of departure. Our messages are not as clear as we think they are. Our actions and words may be saying different things. We may be asking things of our children that we are unwilling to do ourselves.

This is a time where parents feel they are losing control of their children. Children are given labels of

insubordinate, disobedient, and oppositional. It is these labels that are the number one reason parents seek help for their children. The children often are and should be all these things and more. Children need to be insubordinate and disobedient to limitation and partiality to realize wholeness and salvation. If we obey one we disobey another. What children are insubordinate, disobedient, and oppositional to are usually necessary. The form and condition may not always be appropriate however. The parent must allow the child to find something deeper to which they can be obedient.

We cannot bind children to limitation, they must grow into their fuller selves. We must lose control because there is nothing to control. Often the problem is not that the parent cannot control the child, often the problem is that the parent lacks control of his or her own life. Where there is an urge to master others, a need for self-mastery exists. If our children are out of control, we must seek the source in our own lives as well as theirs.

The branch contains the process of individuation. In becoming a unique revelation in time and space, the child must differentiate from the parent. In the branch, the reality that two objects cannot occupy the same time and space is clearly revealed. As children seek their individual times and places, parents too must seek

authentic individual expressions differentiated from the child.

Children need to be able to make authentic choices as they are able. These are not "do it or else" choices, but rather choices that show that children can be trusted to make responsible real decisions even if they are not what we as parents would choose. Choice is a way for children to express their individuality, feel respect and autonomy, and clarify wants and needs. Choice-making helps children develop faith in themselves and the world.

Often children's actions result in consequences that are determined by the parent. Consequences are either rewarding or punishing. When these consequences are chosen by the parent, they may communicate the parent's value system and but it also encourages dependence upon the parent and removes real responsibility from the child.

When consequences are natural and logical to the situation, the child learns to navigate in the world and understand the workings of the world so they can make logical and functional choices. The whole world does not respond the same way a parent does. The child needs options and choices when situations arise which allow for growth and change, instead of feeling trapped. This does not exist when someone else controls the consequences.

We must learn to give without attachment to results and consequences. We give to others because we love and accept who they are, not because we want to change them.

We shouldn't parent out of a desire to have children turn out a certain way. We need to parent so the individuality of the child may naturally unfold. We give out of who we want to be as individuals. We give lovingly because we want to be loving people, not just because it is good for our kids. If we change who we are or act inconsistently with our true selves to effect a result, we are destined for failure.

If we are motivated to change our children, the most effective way to do it is to change ourselves. We need to respect our children for being who they are not for being who we want them to be. Parents support children in being who they want to be and maintain a relationship. The wider the gap that is bridged in relationship, the closer we are to our full humanity.

Parents transition children into living independently in the world. Independence is a process of expanding the world of the child. Yes expands, no contracts. To say "yes" is to say the world is full of possibility, to say "no" is to say the world is full of limitation. There is a yes within every no, we need to help children to find it. Instead of saying "no", we need to offer options and possibilities beyond what the child now knows. This doesn't mean that they always get what they want, but they always see a positive response from the world.

Too often by saying "no" we deny someone a chance to make their own decision and gain an understanding of the

world. By always limiting our children by telling them "no", they do not learn to limit themselves. Instead they know we will set the limits so they push and push to discover where we will draw them. If we turn it back upon them they make the decision and they become independent and understanding of the world instead of resistive to our limit making.

Children encounter a lot of real dangers that they may not understand. If the parent explores with the child, the parent can help understanding and safe interaction. If we just say "no", the child will want to keep coming back until they find out why. If we are not there and no understanding has been gained, the danger is likely to be actualized.

We often think requests are unreasonable when if we listen to them they become reasonable. If a child asks for the moon, they may just want something round and shiny the size of a quarter. The world is to be experienced and explored, to do so requires a "yes".

By saying "no" we try to suppress what we do not like, but what is suppressed always finds release. By saying "yes", we are giving someone the permission to grow beyond what we do not like. Instead of limiting the self, they may grow into a fuller more expansive self. Saying "no" is an invitation to a power struggle in which we will both lose. Parents need to always say "yes" to love and understanding.

For children to be successful in the world, they must feel successful in the world. Success creates success and failure creates failure. There is a success in all things and our job is to find it. Often we tell children what they did wrong so they will not do it again. We need to tell them what they did right so they will do it again. For children it is much easier to do something than to not do something. Instead of pointing out what went wrong, point out what is right and how the last action is a beginning.

Children never try to fail and yet most have their failings pointed out more than their successes. Even if a child is failing at something, if they feel successful they are more likely to do it and the more they do it the more likely they are to succeed.

Children often receive unconditional criticism such as "you are a _____." and conditional acceptance such as "I like it when you do that." Children need unconditional acceptance and any limitations should be placed within the conditions of time and place.

There is often a contradictory pressure towards and resistance to independence in children. Many have put development backwards. They push independence upon young children in a developmental stage of dependence, and cling to dependence with older children in a developmental stage of independence. In pushing independence and creating isolation, children become clinging and dependent. In

allowing developmentally appropriate dependence, children become autonomous and independent.

The times at which parents most often seek help with their children are times connected with increasing independence. These times are walking where children learn to navigate independently in the physical world, six to eight years, where the child begins to navigate independently in the social world, and adolescence where children begin to navigate in the world of adult responsibilities. These are cyclic repetitions of the branch realm within the other realms.

Parents struggle with these times because they have trouble changing with their children from the attachment of root and stem to the detachment and letting go of branch and leaf. A child must grow up and experience the world, it is a process that must be embraced and cannot be prevented. Some parents struggle with the fact that their children are different from them in values, aspirations, and other areas. But in our full humanity all differences are reconciled.

Independence is somewhat of a mistaken notion given our social nature and the interconnectedness of reality. The process of independence ideally should be a transition from an intimate, secure connection with the parent and conditional reality to an intimate, secure connection to their full humanity and unconditional reality. Too often

it is a shift from an intimate to an non-intimate connection and remains stuck in conditionality.

Autonomy develops from trust. If faith is present in the bonded parent-child relationship, healthy autonomy develops. If the unconditional bond is lacking, there is fear. If a child is pushed away, the child clings and there is isolation rather than autonomy. A child pushed from the parent before s/he is ready will cling. If parents are not available, surrogates of drugs, status, sex, and others will replace them. True authentic autonomy in the branch arises from the bonded faith of the root and the stem which precede it.

Contemplative Practice for Parents

Branch prayer is coming to perceive the seed of creation in unconditional truth and wisdom through the reason and intellect.

The main focus of branch prayer is the mind itself and mental processes. The dynamic of differentiation and separation that predominates in the branch leads to the height of the development of the separate ego-self. The ego-self is seen as an entity separate from others. Self and other are held apart with discursive thought, abstraction, and conceptual understandings. Branch prayer seeks to unify the birth and death of reason and rationality in unconditional wisdom and truth.

In branch prayer, we come to recognize the source of mental processes in social, cultural, and family conditioning. Our thoughts and our ego exist only in relationship to our experiences and have no enduring existence in and of themselves. We are who we are, we think the way we think, and know what we know, based upon the experiences we have had and our relationships with the world. These experiences and relationships condition our sense of self. Branch prayer seeks to reconnect these conditional understandings with the unconditional self.

In the beginning, we seek the birth of all rational thought, all ideas, all intellectual activity. In seeking the birth of reason, we seek to strip it of all its conditioning in time and space and leave it empty. We come to understand how the mind functions and the constantly changing relationships that maintain it. The self we take to be ourselves is seen as being conditioned by our experiences in time and space.

We also seek the birth of the mind of others. We seek to understand how others come to think, and understand the world the way they do. To truly understand, we must seek to know the mind of the most respected and the most depraved. When we come to understand the common branch of all reason and rationality, it is understood within unconditioned truth and understanding. Even the most depraved is seen as a partial reflection of unconditioned truth. We must come

to understand the birth of all ideas, theories, and ideologies as branching from the common branch of truth.

To understand others, we harmonize our thoughts, concepts, and ideas with those of others and seek to understand them from the inside. We identify ourselves with the socio-cultural circumstances and modes of thought of others. To understand others, we think their thoughts.

In branch prayer, we come to understand that no ideology, theory, idea, or concept can express the unconditioned truth. All must be seen as limited, incomplete articulations. Here no thought of God, no idea of Christ, no concept of the spiritual path is held to as an absolute. All thoughts, ideas, and concepts are conditioned and are unable to express the core of truth which is beyond conditioning.

To understand the birth of reason in self and others is not enough, we must also understand its death. The death of one is always a birth to another. The dying process of reason and rationality is the overcoming of dualistic thought that maintains self and other as distinct. In branch prayer, we focus upon the death of the ego-self and all the ideals and concepts we hold dear. We come to see we are more than our thoughts, more than our world view, more than our socio-cultural conditioning.

We develop a relationship with our rationality and beliefs and seek their unconditioned core. We decondition our concept of self from all rational and intellectual

development in time and space. Who are we without our reason? What do we know in our cores beyond the reach of reason?

The limited understanding that leads to suffering dies into unconditioned truth beyond conceptualization and abstraction. We must awaken to the truth of both birth and death themselves. Concepts of heaven and hell as physical abodes of eternal life are seen through in an understanding of the truth of birth and death.

All contemplation necessitates the previous prayers. The branch needs the stem as the stem needs the root. The branch is the realm of the intellect and rationality. This rationality can be cruel and vicious without the grounding in love that is provided in stem prayer. Intelligence without love is destructive. Love is necessary to prevent the dominance of discursive intellection. The intellect differentiates and separates. Without love, the separation leads to conflict and protection of the separate self which must die as an act of love for others.

The separate self is not the true self. In our full humanity all are one. The spiritual reality of our full humanity cannot be realized by intellectual reason alone.

If the root is the realm of faith, then the branch being opposite the root is the realm of doubt. Doubt is the necessary opening to the unknown that leads us beyond the known, limited egoic rational self. Without openness

to the unknown which is doubt, we are stuck in the known. Faith is the inertia that propels us through the tree of life. Faith is not blind belief, holding to the known. Faith is the unconditional inertia that allows us to face death in all its forms. Here faith leads us to doubt.

The danger of the ego rational self that lives in the branch realm is the absolutizing of the conditional and limited. Doubt allows us to realize the absolute within the conditional and the conditional within the absolute because we do not hold to limitation. Doubt allows us to see reality as it is without attempting to impose upon reality our limited understandings.

Religious doubt is an opening not a closing. Agnosticism is a healthy religious doubt which neither confirms nor denies that which is unknowable. Doubt as a closing dismisses the reality of that which we do not yet understand. When we close the mind with doubt understanding cannot come. When we open the mind with doubt, we can come to understand the revelation of truth.

Doubt is the awareness of limitation. We must doubt the reality of the limited to open to the unlimited. In doubting the unlimited we remain with the limited. If we doubt that being out of the cage is any different than being in the cage we will not leave the cage. If we doubt that being in the cage is all there is to life, we can leave the cage. Faith has left the door open, our doubt leads us to explore the world outside. Faith in

unconditional truth and doubt of conditional truth lead us to the truth of our full humanity.

In seeking the birth and death of reason and concepts, we come to see there are no concepts or ideas that must be adhered to in and of themselves. Literal, historical interpretations of scripture no longer can be reconciled with reality by themselves. In branch prayer, scripture is seen as an unfailing pointer to the truth, not a vessel which contains the whole of it.

In branch prayer, the conditional understandings that form the egoic rational self and bind one to the norms and conventions of society and culture are seen through to more unconditional understandings. No dogma or ideology shackles the mind. The truth can be found in the mind of all religions and all people.

In branch prayer, we establish a spiritual branch in understanding and a self-conscious, intellectual union with truth.

Blockages

Blockages of the birth of the branch realm can be a resistance to transformation, differentiation, independence, and change.

Blockages of the death of the branch realm may involve self-righteousness or ego attachment, clinging to particular ideologies, filtering information that is uncomfortable, fearing of real experiences, being stuck in

abstractions, holding to rigid mental habits, arrogance, and attempting to control the thoughts and ideas of others.

These blockages may result from an impaired ability to be reflective and introspective and to individuate from group norms. Along with this is an inability to find intrinsic meaning in life.

Identity neuroses and existential pathologies¹ such as angst, depression, and inauthenticity can stem from blockage. A spiritual emptiness or inner deadness is common as a result of inadequate development of the branch realm. Blocks can often manifest in anger and the desire to change others.

Traditionally, cognitive, humanistic, and existential therapies are used for blockages in this realm.

Developmental Theories

In developmental theory, this realm is associated with Wilber's² formal-reflexive and vision-logic minds; Piaget's³ formal operational thinking; Maslow's⁴ self-esteem; Loevinger's⁵ conscientious, individualistic, and

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1. Ken Wilber (1984), "The developmental spectrum and psychopathology: part I, stages and types of pathology." *Journal for Transpersonal Psychology*, vol. 16, #1.
 2. Ibid.
 3. H. Gruber and J. Voneche (1977), The Essential Piaget, Basic Books, New York.
 4. A. Maslow (1968), Toward a Psychology of Being, Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York.
 5. J. Loevinger (1976), Ego Development, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

autonomous levels; Kohlberg's⁶ post-conventional which includes individual rights and individual conscience; Green and Green's⁷ mental; Psychosynthesis's⁸ conscious self; Bubba Free John's⁹ higher and lower mental body; Battista's¹⁰ cognition and self-aware; Arieti's¹¹ conceptual; Vedanta's¹² vijnanamayakosa; The Buddhist skandha of mental formations or samskara, the element of heat, and contemplation of the mind; Tiller's¹³ intellectual mind; Kundalini's fifth and sixth chakras; Jung's¹⁴ thought; Fowler's¹⁵ individuating-reflective and paradoxical-consolidative; and Eckhart's¹⁶ identification with God including the growing of roots in the love of God.

6. L. Kohlberg (1964), "Development of moral character and moral ideology." In *Review of Child Development Research*, vol. 1.
7. E. Green and A. Green (1977), Beyond Biofeedback, Delacourte, New York.
8. R. Assagioli (1965), Psychosynthesis, Viking, New York.
9. Bubba Free John (1977), The Enlightenment of the Whole Body, Dawn Horse, San Francisco.
10. J. Battista (1978), "The holographic model, holistic paradigm, information theory and consciousness." In *Re-Vision*, vol. 1, #3/4.
11. S. Arieti (1967), The Intra-psychic Self, Basic Books, New York.
12. E. Deutsche (1969), Advaita Vedanta, East-West Center, Honolulu.
13. J. White (ed.) (1976), Psychic Exploration, Capricorn, New York.
14. F. Fordham (1966), An Introduction to Jung's Psychology, Pelican, New York.
15. J. Fowler (1981), Stages of Faith, Harper, San Francisco.
16. D.T. Suzuki (1957), Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist, Harper, New York.

Symbols and Correspondences

Symbolically, the branch being closest to the sun is associated with fire¹⁷ as transformation, purification, the power of the sun to give life, energy, protection, visibility, creation or destruction, fusion, passion, passage from one state to another, transcendence, illumination, inspiration, the heart, the triangle, understanding, intellect and emotion, sexual creation, the active principle, and creation through sacrifice.

Fire is widely seen as the intermediary between God and humans. Fire has a dual aspect of both light and heat. As light, it is spiritual power, creation, and transcendence in the realm of heaven. As heat, it is the realm of hell in consumptive anger, greed, danger, and fascination with speed and destruction. The hearth fire is the center of the home and family. In the Hebrew Bible, "The Lord, thy God is a consuming fire."¹⁸

Fire represents the presence of divinity, inspiration, and the center of spiritual life. In Islam, fire is both light and heat, heaven and hell and as such represents choice and human freedom in development and life. In scientific mythology, fire is electromagnetism which is the force that creates light.

17. J.C. Cooper (1978), An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, Thames and Hudson, London, p. 66-8.

18. Deuteronomy 4:24.

The branch as the triangle¹⁹ and the number three²⁰ is multiplicity, creative power, growth, overcoming duality, expression, synthesis, duality(2) plus unity(1) equals differentiated unity, unity in diversity, the Godhead of mother-father-child, the trinity which is the three-fold nature of the universe of heaven, earth, and human; body, mind, and spirit; mother, father, child; or the father, the son, and the holy ghost.

Duality of good and evil and subject and object that is often prevalent in the water realm is evaporated in realization of a deeper fundamental unity. This union of opposites and universalizing of perception is symbolized by the double triangle found all over the world. The upward pointing triangle (cross) is the sun, fire, heat, and heaven. The downward pointing triangle (spiral) is the moon, water, coolness, and earth.

The image of the branch in the river of life is the heat of the sun reflecting in the river and the beginning of evaporation. The heat of the sun separates water from what it knows as itself. The new self at first feels dualistic as river and mist, but is truly the expansion of the one. The river continues the flow downward uninterrupted, but the rising upward of mist and steam begins and the air is nourished as well as the earthly banks.

19. Cooper p. 179-80.

20. Ibid. p. 114-5.

THE LEAF

The leaf is associated with the times of evening, the waning moon, autumn, and the life stage of later adulthood/the elder. It is the realm of intuition, symbol, archetype, benevolence, equanimity, insight, illumination, and the super-conscious. It is the dynamic of detachment, mobility, lightness, flexibility, and letting go. The focus is that which is contacted intuitively and symbolically. It is a realm of surrender and transcendence in awakening to justice, peace, and harmony.

Parent-Child Relations

The leaf is the realm of intuition, illumination, and insight. Our connection to creation is through symbol and archetypal image. The world's body becomes the self's body, the world's relationships become the self's relationships, the world's truth becomes the self's truth.

In the root, we identify with that which is contacted physically and what is physically or instinctually touched is real and meaningful. In the stem, we identify with that which is contacted emotionally and what is felt or imagined is real and meaningful. In the branch, we identify with that which is contacted conceptually and what is conceptualized or rational is real and meaningful. In the leaf, we identify with that which we contact symbolically or intuitively and what is intuited or

envisioned is real and meaningful. The reality of extrasensory visions and voices exists in the leaf realm.

In the leaf, the myth or symbolic story has more unconditional meaning than the rational abstract theory. Leaf consciousness is filled with illuminations, visions, voices, and revelations which guide our experience of reality and are an aspect of reality itself. Mental images based upon abstraction such as mathematics are held to be the most real in the branch. In the leaf, mental images based upon intuition and archetype are held to be the most real in the leaf.

In the leaf, our sensitivity extends beyond what is contacted physically, emotionally, or intellectually. We become aware of and sensitive to visions and intuitions of reality for which such contact is lacking. The self is universalized through experiences of illumination and insight. This radical openness is experienced as rapturous and blissful.

There is love, compassion, and understanding for both good and evil. The child is without judgment and distinctions. One shares with no attachment to the material or created and no regard for the worthiness or unworthiness of the receiver. One gives to all according to need. One's vision is panoramic. Detachment and humor come from understanding all sides and perspectives. There is detachment to conditional things.

One lives in the world with an superconscious mind. Meditative awareness pervades activities and actions. The leaf drifts spontaneously to the ground to give nourishment and life without judgment or distinction. The objects of meditation are the mental objects of consciousness¹.

The leaf as the opposite pole of the stem represents the receptive within the active. The imagination of the stem is seeing the physical as mental forms. The intuition of the leaf is seeing the mental as physical forms. Divided linear time is perceived within timeless time and one centers in the complete present.

The hunger in the leaf is a hunger for symbolic and intuitive understanding. The parent is needed as an archetypal, symbolic, equanimous, and benevolent presence. Children may have intense very real experiences with a reality that is not physically based. Children may have knowledge of things about which the source of knowing is not apparent. Spiritual experiences and visions can occur throughout childhood.

Children need peace and relaxation. Tension results when a situation is out of balance. When a situation is out of balance, often it is best balanced by doing the opposite. When someone is angry and yelling to become angry and yell only serves to create more anger and yelling. Tension increases because the pushing apart

1. N. Thera (1988), The Heart of Buddhist Meditation, Weiser, York Beach, ME.

increases. When someone is angry and yelling, to listen quietly and caringly may bring the situation into greater balance and reduce tension. In the leaf, we seek the receptive core in active interaction and center there.

Part of this lesson is that what is important is who we are in the present moment. To the child the whole world exists within the present moment. As we become adults filled with goals and expectations, we often live in a future that never arrives. But living in the future denies us genuine experience because our consciousness is not in the moment of our lives. Joy and happiness exist only in the now.

The leaf is the season for letting worries fall away by revealing one's true self in every situation. This is the time for transcending the ego and the separate self. The self seeks union with the symbolic forms of our full humanity such as Buddha and Christ.

The ego-self is like a hot-air balloon that fills and rises from the heat of the branch realm. The ego-self attempts to hold in the air for itself, for its own grandeur and rising self-esteem. What makes the ego feel full and meaningful is the air within it. But the air is everywhere present. To continue to heat the limited air that we take to be self leads us to expand beyond the holding capacity of the ego balloon. Either, the ego balloon pops from its own internal pressures of expanding rationality and intellect, or it gently empties itself as

we add no more fuel to the intellect so that the fire dies out through prayerful surrender and mental nakedness.

There is no difference between the air within and the air without. It is felt to be different because the ego-balloon has given form to the formless. In liberating the air through ego-deflation or ego-death, there is release. We let go of the ego-balloon and allow ourselves to harmonize with the unconditional self.

The leaf realm is this surrender or detachment to the limitation of the ego-balloon. We die to the balloon and return the conditional form of air to the unconditional. The air was never separate from itself. It was only perceived as separate by the ego-balloon. No matter how high the balloon flies, it will never be unified with the source of its life as long as any form of the ego-balloon remains.

The leaf is a time of solitude and retreat. This can be both inward and outward. Children as well as parents need times for retreat, quiet, and solitude to restore balance and harmony. As a cyclic principle that exists throughout childhood, the leaf is when the child faces and reconciles with aloneness and boredom. This is the finding of our home within ourselves.

The parent's equanimity is needed by the child. The parent needs to neither cling nor resist the situations the parent and child find themselves within. The parent is a benevolent and gentle presence like the leaves of a

shade tree to which the child may return but which does not project onto the life of the child. The bond between parent and child is deeply intuitive and is maintained beyond the physical, emotional, and intellectual connections between parent and child.

The leaf is a time of balance and peaceful surrender. The parent and child need to open to each other without the clinging and resistances of needs and desires being placed one upon the other. The equality of parent and child that has always been present yet not always realized is revealed in the leaf realm. The parent and child surrender the separations that maintain parent and child and realize a love that is one of siblings before our common spiritual parent², and one of co-parenting our common spiritual child³ in our full humanity.

In this realm, the ups and downs of the parent-child relationship are reconciled into an even harmony and peacefulness through forgiveness. Both parent and child are freed of the blockages of unrealized dreams and desires. The expectations that lead to hurts and disappointments need to be surrendered.

The autonomy of both parent and child need to be respected fully. We trust our children because we trust the fullness of the humanity within them. Parent and child have done their best by one another and though the

2. God, or totality of reality.

3. Christ, or the fullness of humanity.

relationship continues, it is time for both to seek their spiritual parent and child within.

Contemplative Practice for Parents

Leaf prayer is coming to perceive the seed of creation in unconditional justice, peace, and harmony through intuition and archetype.

The focus of leaf prayer is the intuitive realization of symbols and archetypes. Contemplation of the unconditional consciousness is the focus. This is like the dreams of an infant that has not yet opened its eyes to the world. The process of mind is perceived beyond the conditions of mind. The mind is brought into harmony and peaceful communion with the archetypal, symbolic mind.

In this realm, we begin contemplation in the prayerful search for the birth of the symbolic, intuitive self. Intuition is the direct apprehension of the mind of others. A symbol is the window upon unconditional reality through conditionality. Leaf prayer seeks the birth of consciousness in the formless direct experience of the self that is symbolically and intuitively inseparable from all of creation which is consciousness. We perceive all creations as mental images in a universal mind. We look at the conditional world in leaf prayer not for its physical, emotional, or rational meaning, but rather for its symbolic meaning.

We also seek the birth of the symbolic, intuitive self in others and its inseparability from the self. Self and other are one in the intuitive realization of the symbolic self. The child and parent are seen not just as beautiful physical presences, nor simply as a loving emotional presences nor understanding intellectual presences. The child and parent are seen as intuitive symbolic presences. We seek to harmonize our lives with a symbol of our full humanity as Buddha or Christ.

To see the child in a harmonious, inseparably physical, emotional, intellectual, and symbolic presence in our lives is to truly see the child. To see the harmonious inseparable seed of the child which is ourselves is to see our full humanity which is both parent and child to humanity.

In seeking to understand others, we seek to harmonize ourselves with their symbolic and archetypal expressions. We seek to understand the archetypes that the person is revealing in their existence from the inside, by sharing an experience of the same archetype.

In contemplating the death of the intuitive symbolic self, we die to symbolic reality. This symbolic self is the formless self which is known through many names and in all times but is ultimately the nameless, timeless reality of human existence. The self as symbol and image must die into the unconditional unity beyond any mental imaging.

All conditions and forms even symbolic ones must die into the unconditional.

In contemplating the death of the symbolic self, the symbol and the self die to exist in the spirit. All conditional forms of self must die to live in the fullness of the spirit. The meaning of death has no personal meaning after death, only a universal, unconditional, spiritual meaning.

Leaf prayer finds peace and harmony in the complete abolition of all forms of the self which ultimately have no core existence whatsoever. There is peace and harmony in the emptiness, eternity, infiniteness of reality.

In root prayer, we contemplate the physical death of ourselves, our children, loved ones, and all beings which leads to emotional birth. In stem prayer, we contemplate the emotional death which births the conceptual and abstract. In branch prayer, we contemplate the conceptual death which births the symbolic. In leaf prayer, we contemplate the symbolic and archetypal death which births the spiritual and unconditional.

In leaf prayer, symbols are deconditioned of their limited, conceptual, and abstract meanings given by the intellect and socio-cultural conditioning. We seek direct intuitive communion with symbolic reality. We do not limit our experience to limited conceptual and intellectual forms, but seek full intuitive communion with symbolic, archetypal reality.

Leaf prayer involves contemplation of the visions and illuminations that are offered to us. The visions are a form of the unconditional within conditional reality even though the conditions are symbolic and intuitive. We should not seek full communion with any vision or voice or any bliss or rapture. Communion is to be sought with the source of these revelations. Leaf prayer is looking through and opening up the windows of symbols and archetypes.

We do not leave conditionality. Everything in conditionality is to be seen in its intuitive symbolic revelation in leaf prayer as conditionality was seen as instinctual physical, imaginative emotional, and intellectual conceptual revelation in previous prayer practice. Contemplation is the search for unconditional reality which is not a different reality than conditional reality.

Contemplation is a mode of perception of reality. Perception changes in time and space as does conditional reality but the unconditional reality is unchanging. We look at the same reality in different ways to understand it.

In root prayer we look at our children, ourselves, chairs, trees, rivers and all created things to seek their unconditional goodness and beauty. In stem prayer we look at the same created things to seek their unconditional love. In branch prayer we look at the same created things

to seek their unconditional truth. In leaf prayer we look at the same created things to seek their unconditional harmony.

We need never leave conditionality to seek our full humanity. We need only to see it in the proper perspective and live in it in right relationship.

The change of focus through a life of prayer may not change the objective reality in which we live. In leaf prayer there is a natural detachment from conditional things. This can often be manifest in increased social withdrawal and introversion. We need not run off and join a monastery or live in the forest, though these may be helpful. We need only see reality as it is.

The desire to withdraw and detach is not a change in reality. It isn't that we suddenly need a new reality in which to live. What is happening is that we are beginning to truly see the reality in which we already live. We become more detached because in reality there is nothing ultimately to which to attach.

We begin to find social interactions lacking because ultimately they are lacking. Material possessions and status are found to be lacking because ultimately they are lacking. They have not suddenly become lacking, they have always been so only we did not realize it.

We may have sought consummation of our love for our full humanity in lovers, friends, and others. When we achieve a harmony with our full humanity, the surrogates

lose favor and interest. They have not changed and our full humanity has not changed, it is our awareness that has changed. We are found to be the one's who have neglected our true selves.

In the spiritual richness of full humanity, material riches become nuisances, encumbrances, and stumbling blocks. To be clothed in our full humanity, we must be naked. The finest created clothes of humans cannot compare and are eagerly discarded in exchange for the nakedness of our full humanity.

In leaf prayer, our intuition and insight of symbols and visions lead us to the realization of our superconscious in justice, peace, and harmony.

Blockages

Blockages of the birth of the leaf involve resistance to higher spiritual attainment and self-surrender in forms such as fear of being out of touch, continual change, inability to focus, ego attachment to heightened abilities and awareness, dulled intelligence, and lack of openness to the new and unknown.

Blockages of the death of the leaf involve disconnection, obliviousness to the world, neglect of personal tasks and relationships, mistaking illuminations and revelations for the ultimate, neglect of bodily care due to ungroundedness, the inability to integrate

spiritual life into daily work and existence, extreme introversion, and being unresponsive emotionally.

Vulnerability and defenselessness are essential. Holding to the self and the need for security may block the ability to let go of limited awarenesses of conditional reality.

Developmental Theories

In developmental theory, the leaf is associated with Wilber's⁴ psychic and subtle stages; Maslow's⁵ self-actualization; Loevinger's⁶ integrated; Kohlberg's⁷ universal-spiritual; Green and Green's⁸ intuitionist; Psychosynthesis's⁹ higher unconscious and higher collective unconscious; Bubba Free John's¹⁰ cosmic gnosis; Battista's¹¹ unition; Vedanta's¹² anandamayakosa; the Buddhist skandha of consciousness or vijnana, the element

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4. Ken Wilber (1984), "The developmental spectrum and psychopathology: part I, stages and types of pathology." *Journal for Transpersonal Psychology*, vol. 16, #1.
 5. A. Maslow (1968), Towards a Psychology of Being, Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York.
 6. J. Loevinger (1976), Ego Development, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
 7. L. Kohlberg (1964), "Development of moral character and moral ideology." In *Review of Child Development Research*, vol. 1.
 8. E. Green and A. Green (1977), Beyond Biofeedback, Delacourte, New York.
 9. R. Assagioli (1965), Psychosynthesis, Viking, New York.
 10. Bubba Free John (1978), The Enlightenment of the Whole Body, Dawn Horse, Middletown.
 11. J. Battista (1978), "The holographic model, holistic paradigm, information theory and consciousness." In *Re-Vision*, vol. 1, #3-4.
 12. E. Deutsche (1969), Advaita Vedanta, East-West Center, Honolulu.

of motion, and the contemplation of mental objects; Kundalini's sixth and seventh chakras; Tiller's¹³ spiritual mind; Jung's¹⁴ intuition; Fowler's¹⁵ universalizing faith; and Eckhart's¹⁶ enjoying the fullness and peaceful joy of supreme wisdom.

Symbols and Correspondences

Symbolically, the leaf blows in the wind and falls through the air and shares the attributes of the air¹⁷ element as dryness, lightness, motion and mobility, the spirit that sustains life, the breath of the universe. As the cloud¹⁸ it is: evanescence, celestial, divine, and omnipotent.

Air is also the unity of fire and water symbolized by the double triangle mentioned above. A rain cloud is symbolic of God's benevolence who rains upon all beings nourishing and refreshing without distinction. Whereas earth represents density with matter closely packed with little space between them, air represents spaciousness and emptiness with matter flowing freely to fill a space. Air is openness to God, emptying one's self to be filled.

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13. J. White (ed.)(1976), Psychic Exploration, Capricorn, New York.
 14. F. Fordham (1966), An Introduction to Jung's Psychology, Pelican, New York.
 15. J. Fowler (1981), Stages of Faith, Harper, San Francisco.
 16. D.T. Suzuki (1957), Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist, Harper, New York.
 17. J.C. Cooper (1978), An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, Thames and Hudson, London.
 18. Ibid. p. 38.

Resistance and tension remain in the air realm between earth and heaven represented by the force of the wind¹⁹. The winds are messengers of the divine. In scientific mythology, air is the weak nuclear force and radioactive decay.

As the number four²⁰, the leaf represents wholeness, completion, order, justice, perfection, and balance.

The image of the river of life is vapor rising through the air to form clouds who in their fullness rain upon the earth becoming part of all rivers and streams and the nurturance of all beings. In so doing the clouds empty themselves of all form and substance and melt away into the pure and infinite sky of heaven. The clouds are moved by the force of the wind through the empty sky and over the mountains of earth.

19. Ibid. p. 192.

20. Ibid. p. 115.

THE SEED AND THE FRUIT

The seed is associated with conception and embryonic existence. The fruit is associated with death and dying. The seed and the fruit represent the birth and death that is life. The seed is the beginning and end of the fruit and the fruit is the beginning and the end of the seed. Together, they are the full cycle of life.

In the fruit, the seed is the center and source of the conditionality. The seed is the unconditional, unmanifest core of life. In realizing the seed within, we come to realize the fruit of conditional reality, the fruit of life. The seed self evolves into the fruit self. The fruit self involves back to the seed self.

The fruit is the revelation and actualization of the seed. The seed is the unconditional, spiritual paradise. The fruit is its actualization in conditional reality.

It is the embrace and celebration of both birth and death of the self that makes us whole. The seed is union with the void, the source. The fruit is union with infinitude, the completion. The death of the seed in the void is the birth of the fruit in infinitude. The death of the fruit in infinitude is the birth of the seed in the emptiness of the void. We must embrace both the infinity and the emptiness, the all and the nothing, for life to be revealed in our full humanity.

The seed is unmanifest, unconditioned consciousness that is limitless and free in receptivity. The fruit is

manifest, conditioned consciousness centered fully upon the receptive seed so that active consciousness is limitless and free. There is no separate self per se to identify with anything. It simply is in a pure state of undifferentiated existence in the seed and pure unified existence in the fruit. Emptiness and infinity are one.

Goodness, love, wisdom, and justice are fully interpenetrated within each other in the fruit and in an undifferentiated unity in the seed. The seed and the fruit of goodness, love, wisdom, and justice is the fullness of life itself. Universal reality exists and the self is inseparable from it, because there is ultimately no separate self.

The seed and the fruit are where the parent dwells fully in the child and the child dwells fully in the parent because both dwell fully in their full humanity.

Contemplative Practice for Parents

The liberation of our full humanity exists only in becoming it, not in simply in conditional forms of loving, or understanding it. Life in full humanity is the beginning and the end of the cycle of life. We climb the root and become fully human in goodness. We climb the stem and become fully human in love. We climb the branch and become fully human in truth. We reach the leaf and become fully human in peace. We eat the fruit of the tree

of life and become fully and unconditionally human within conditionality.

The seed is our core in our full humanity that guides us to the fulfillment of the fruit of our full humanity. Contemplation is the communion with the formless unconditioned seed reality. The fruit is the full interpenetration and harmony of body, instinct, feeling, emotion, imagination, intellect, rationality, intuition, symbol, and archetype in the unified reality of goodness, love, truth, and justice that is inseparably conditional and unconditional.

To be fully human, our contemplative awareness must be actualized in each moment where every action is a spontaneous ritual that places us in full communion with ultimate reality.

Seed Prayer

Seed prayer is unification of ourselves with the silent, still, uncreated, unmanifest, core of our beings. Seed prayer is making a home in emptiness. It seeks the awareness before any instinct, feeling, thought, or intuition was born. Seed prayer is like seeking the ocean before the wave. In silent, stillness, we allow our minds to let go of all cravings and resistances to conditionality. The seed is the point before the birth of any of the realms of the tree of life. Contemplation in

the all realms seek the seed which is before and after each realm.

Seed prayer is what most would think of as contemplation. It is seeking the source of infinitude in emptiness. Seed prayer awakens us to our selfless self in nothingness. Our individual goodness, love, truth, and peace are here for a moment then pass away. Our individual lives return to their source. We are the waves upon the ocean. Each individual wave is born of the ocean and returns to it. No one will long remember us as waves, we are remembered with all others as each wave remembers the ocean from which it came. Realizing the complete emptiness and nothingness of the self is the culmination of seed prayer.

It is easiest to practice seed prayer in retreat and solitude. We all need to find special spots by the river or in the forest, a hut behind the house, or a sacred space in our own homes. It is useful to visit established hermitages and monasteries as well since they have emerged from lifetimes of experience.

Even the most faithful practitioners of the prayers described in the other realms of the tree, will almost certainly need times for retreat and solitude in seed prayer. Seed prayer is the core of all prayers. Retreat and solitude are important opportunities to return to our centers so that our contemplation in conditionality are centered in the seed. Living fully in conditionality with

all its demands on our bodies and minds makes it easy to get out of balance with our true spiritual center.

In solitude, we return to our centers by being receptive and doing nothing. To be at home with ourselves, we must be at home with nothing but ourselves in solitude. In seed prayer, we are at home with God because even ourselves are not there, only God.

Fruit Prayer

Fruit prayer is the culmination of the unconditional seed in conditional reality. In fruit prayer, every action is pure and centered in pure receptive awareness. In every situation, even the most crowded, we are at home in solitude. There is spiritual solitude and receptivity at the center of all conditions. Fruit prayer is the spontaneous, natural, awareness of our liberated full humanity in conditions. It is without an object because there are no unconditional objects.

In fruit prayer, conscious and unconscious, human and divine, conditional and unconditional, created and uncreated are in full interpenetration and unity. In fruit prayer, one is completely free of all bondages and self-limitations because the limited self has died into the unlimited self. Fruit prayer is the mind of pure light in the radiance of all creation.

In fruit prayer, birth and death are inseparably one in eternal life. Reality is experienced as an

inseparable, complete harmony of conditionality and unconditionality. Eating the fruit of the tree of life allows for the actualization of the paradise on earth. The unconditional, spiritual paradise of can be manifest in conditional creation. Every action can be without suffering.

Many taste the fruit at death when the peaceful harmony of the fruit cannot be digested to energize the body to actualize the divine in conditional creation. The spiritual quest is not simply to taste the fruit of the tree of life and experience its peace, but to digest the fruit to energize the actualization of paradise in conditional reality.

Many may never glimpse, touch, or taste the fruit in this life. Those that do may not be able to hold it or suck more than a drop of juice from it. The more we come to our full humanity, the closer we come to the fruit and its sweetness, the deeper the meaning and joy of our lives will be.

Blockages

Blockages of the fruit are anything that stand in the way to total liberation including the desire for liberation or any concept or symbol of liberation or of the divine.

Blockages of the seed are any conditional form of consciousness. This is the complete void and emptiness,

which is complete potentiality. The inability to accept the completeness of death or loss is characteristic of a blockage of the seed and fruit.

Developmental Theories

Developmental theorists seldom, if ever, mention the realms of the seed and the fruit. They are largely the before and after of developmental theory. Aspects of the fruit are referred to by Wilber's¹ causal and ultimate stages; Psychosynthesis' transpersonal self²; Maslow's³ self-transcendence; Bubba Free John's⁴ atmic and nirvanic; Vedanta's⁵ Brahman-Atman; Battista's⁶ absolute; and Tiller's⁷ Spirit. The seed is referred to in Buddhism as shunyata which is the void, emptiness. In the Christian tradition, perhaps the best articulation of the seed is found in Meister Eckhart's the nichts of the Godhead.

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1. Ken Wilber (1984), "The developmental spectrum and psychopathology: part I, stages and types of pathology". *Journal for Transpersonal Psychology*, vol. 16, #1.
 2. R. Assagioli (1965), Psychosynthesis, Viking, New York.
 3. A. Maslow (1971), The Farther Reaches of Human Nature, Viking, New York.
 4. Bubba Free John (1978), The Enlightenment of the Whole Body, Dawn Horse, Middletown.
 5. E. Deutsche (1969), Advaita Vedanta, East-West Center, Honolulu.
 6. J. Battista (1978), "The holographic model, holistic paradigm, information theory and consciousness." In *Re-Vision*, vol. 1, #3/4.
 7. J. White (ed.)(1976), Psychic Exploration, Capricorn, New York.

Symbols and Correspondences

Symbolically, the seed represents the center⁸ out of which the tree of life grows. It is potentiality, latent power, the divine spirit, the heart, the center of being, life, and consciousness.

The fruit⁹ represents immortality, the culmination of one realm of being and the seed of the next. Both seed and fruit share symbolism with the circle¹⁰ and as such are totality, wholeness, simultaneity, original perfection, the unmanifest, the infinite, the eternal, the unborn and undying, timelessness with no beginning and no end, spacelessness with no above and no below, the abolition of time and space, completion, and fulfillment. God is a circle whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere according to Hermes Trismegistus¹¹. This is seed fully in the fruit and the fruit fully in the seed.

The seed as the number zero¹² represents nothingness, the eternal, the unlimited, the void, the absence of quantity and quality, boundlessness, the originator and container of all, the cosmic egg, the primordial androgyne, divine essence, the ultimate, and the unmanifest.

8. J.C. Cooper (1978), An Illustrated Dictionary of Traditional Symbols, Thames and Hudson, London, p. 146.

9. Ibid. p. 72.

10. Ibid. p. 36-7.

11. Ibid. p.37.

12. Ibid. p. 113.

The fruit is the sum of the realms of the tree of life. As the sum of $0+1+2+3+4$, the fruit is represented symbolically by the number ten¹³. Ten represents the cosmos, totality of creation, all possibilities, all-inclusiveness, perfection, return to unity, return to the beginning, completeness, the completion of journeys and return to origins, and the paradise of God.

13. Ibid. p. 119.

EVOLUTION AND INVOLUTION

Development is the movement in time and space of the spiral of our lives upon the matrix of elemental principles represented by the cross. In order to elaborate the meanings of various encounters with these principles, it is first important to elaborate the nature of the movement of the spiral.

Each moment of life whether it last a second or a lifetime, is characterized by both evolution and involution¹. Evolution follows birth and involution follows death. As birth and death are co-occurring realities of life, so are the processes of evolution and involution. Birth and death, evolution and involution, exist as an inseparable unity in the center of the cross and the spiral. The contemplative awareness of the union of these two processes is the awakening to our full humanity.

Evolution is the revelation of the unconditional into conditionality, the universal into the personal. Involution is the return from conditionality to the unconditional, from the personal to universal. We grow inside out and outside in simultaneously.

Evolution is action in time and space from the center outwards, involution is return to the timeless and spaceless center. When we talk about development, mostly

1. See Ken Wilber (1980), The Atman Project, Quest, Wheaton IS, p. 160-76. He draws heavily upon the bardo idea elaborated in the Tibetan Book of the Dead.

we are talking about evolution, but to understand evolution and see living as a revelation of our full humanity, it is necessary to talk about involution as well.

The spiral, our conditional self, evolves through contact with the world. The seed in the center of our lives contains unconditional potentiality. This seed grows into our full humanity, through contact with the elemental principles of the cross in the movement of the spiral. For the seed to be actualized in conditions, it needs earth for the root, water for the stem, sun (fire) for the branch, and air for the leaf. We transform these principles into the self and the self is transformed into these principles.

The self and the universe are inseparable. Evolution and involution are both personal and universal. Understanding one's self is equivalent to understanding the universe. The universal becomes personal and the personal becomes universal simultaneously.

Our conditional self evolves towards our unconditional self and our unconditional self involves towards our conditional selves. Awakening to our truest, fullest self is awakening to the full union of our conditional and unconditional selves.

Birth and evolution are the processes of the unconditional becoming conditional, the universal becoming personal. Death and involution are the processes of the

conditional becoming unconditional, the personal becoming the universal. In death, the personal returns to the universal dissolved of conditional form. In birth, the universal takes conditional form in the personal. Contemplation is in essence an experience of death and ritual is an experience of birth.

Contemplation is the involutionary development of the awareness of the inseparability of our conditional consciousness with unconditional consciousness. Ritual is the evolutionary development of this unconditional consciousness being revealed within conditional consciousness.

Evolution is remembering and learning. It is the revelation of our universal, unconditional self in the world of conditions. Involution is forgetting and unlearning². It is the forgetting and unlearning of the personal, conditional self in our universal, unconditional center.

Our evolved selves contain all earlier rounds of evolution within us. The earlier rounds are internalized

2. Remembering is related to the immanence of the divine in creation. Forgetting is related to the transcendence of the divine of creation.

sheaths of existence upon which future rounds depend³. Life is like a cyclic feedback loop. We can't leave behind past experiences. We continually interact with the principles that gave rise to these experiences and build upon them in time and space.

Evolution is a process whereby we increasingly remember and make immanent the universal in the personal. Each round of existence is like a new layer of skin. Skin is the point of contact between inner and outer. Involution is a process where we increasingly forget and transcend the personal in the universal. Each round is the shedding of outmoded layer of skin so the next layer may grow.

Another word for skin is "hide". Without the contemplative process of involution, the evolutionary skins become ways of hiding the center of our full humanity. If we only evolved and did not involve, we would be increasingly distanced from our true centers, instead of increasingly revealing our true centers. Meister Eckhart writes,

"A man has many skins in himself, covering the depths of his heart. Man knows so many things; he does not know himself. Why thirty

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3. See Vedanta conceptions of the kosas as sheaths of existence and reality. These sheaths are:
1. Annamaya-kosa, the material sheath.
 2. Pranamaya-kosa, the vital sheath.
 3. Manomaya-kosa, the mental sheath.
 4. Vijnanamaya-kosa, the intelligence sheath.
 5. Anandamaya-kosa, the sheath of bliss.
- See the symbols and correspondences section of the chapters which follow to see their correspondences with the model I am outlining.

or forty skins or hides, just like an ox's or a bear's, so thick and hard, cover the soul. Go into your own ground and learn to know yourself there."4

The rounds of evolution can make it difficult to remain centered upon the deep center of our lives. Like a potter who spins a pot, the larger it becomes the harder it is to keep it centered.

For each new round of evolution, we involute back to the source. With every birth, we die. Ritual as evolution is our movement towards universal reality in activity. Contemplation as involution is the movement of universal reality towards us in receptivity. It is involution that enfolds eternity within time and infinity within space5.

Evolutionary ritual culminates in the union of conditional and unconditional, personal and universal in totality. Involutionary contemplation culminates in the union of conditional and unconditional, personal and universal, in the void. Full humanity is the union of conditional and unconditional, personal and universal, birth and death, evolution and involution, ritual and contemplation, and totality and void.

Involution is the functioning of the unconditional consciousness within conditional consciousness. Evolution is the functioning of conditional consciousness within unconditional consciousness.

4. Quoted in Nancy Ross (ed.)(1960), The World of Zen, Vintage, New York, p. 238.
5. See W. Evans-Wentz (1968), The Tibetan Book of the Dead, Oxford University, London.

Involution returns us to the source where we remember the next round of evolution. In this way, evolution exists primarily in the realm of conditional consciousness. Involution exists primarily in the realm of unconditional consciousness. The full movement of life is the unity of both.

If there were evolution without involution, life would be experienced as individual events with no continuity or meaning. If there were involution without evolution, life would be experienced without individual events at all. Ritual evolution connects eternity to each moment of time, and infinitude to each place in space. Contemplative involution connects each moment to eternity, and each place to infinitude.

The symbol for evolution is the tree of life⁶. The symbol for involution is the inverted tree of life⁷. Evolution is the path through the tree from seed to root to stem to branch to leaf to fruit. Involution is the path through the tree of life from fruit to leaf to branch to stem to root to seed⁸.

6. See J.C. Cooper (1978), An Illustrated Dictionary of Traditional Symbols, Thames and Hudson, London, p. 176.

7. Ibid. p. 177.

8. See chapter Rounds of Existence p. 172 for a more elaborate discussion of this movement.

Evolution and involution occur in every moment of existence⁹. They are simultaneous processes like birth and death. Every birth begins evolution and every death begins involution.

As an example, in a day of our lives, we are born into conditionality when we awake. Consciousness is conditional and in active contact with conditional reality. When we fall asleep, we die to conditional consciousness and contact with conditionality to begin involution. We begin moving backwards through our day. Our early dreams are connected to what happened that day and gradually drift into deeper realms of our psyche.

In these realms, time and space operate without all the limitations and conditions we are accustomed to in waking consciousness. In deep sleep, we return to the unconditional seed-center, symbolically the womb. Out of this return to the womb, we are born again and evolve into waking consciousness in the morning feeling renewed. This renewal is necessary if we are to function in the day of conditionality.

9. See the Tibetan concept of bardo literally "the in between state". Three bardos exist in this life as the bardos of birth, dream, and meditation. It is through dream and meditation that we come to understand involution. Three more bardos exist in a forty-nine day period that exists between death and rebirth. These are the bardos of the moment of death, supreme reality, and becoming. Wilber discusses these in the Atman Project p. 162-7.

Initiation

The points in which the spiral intersects with the cross are initiation points. They are transitions where we die to one mode of living and are born into another. These points of contact become important guide posts for development and times for initiation and transformation to maintain harmony between the self and the universe.

These points of contact are the solstices and equinoxes where one season of existence dies and another is born. It is important to note that we are all born naked. To be born into a new mode of living, we must take off the clothes of the previous. The clothes of our existence are anything that we hold to anything that hides our full humanity. Putting on clothes is evolution and returning to nakedness is involution. Contemplative prayer seeks mental nakedness.

The failure to make these necessary passages from one mode of living to another limits the revelation of our universal potential. We repress life in our reluctance to face death. Liberation is the surrendering to death so that we may experience rebirth in the next mode of existence. Death is the return to potentiality in unconditionality. Without death there is no birth. Mircea Eliade writes,

"Everywhere we have found the symbolism of death as the ground of all spiritual birth - that is, of

regeneration."¹⁰

"Death is not, in itself, a definitive end, not an absolute annihilation as it is sometimes thought to be in the modern world. Death is likened to the seed which is sown in the bosom of the earth-mother to give birth to a new plant... [Death] makes possible the passage from one mode of being to another and also ensures the uninterrupted circulation of life."¹¹

It is through embracing the countless deaths and births in the conditions of our lives that we begin to awaken to the unconditional reality of our full humanity. Birth is the sacrifice of unconditionality for life in conditional reality, the universal for the personal. Death is the sacrifice of conditionality for life in unconditional reality, the personal for the universal. Both are necessary for the fullness of life¹².

These points of transition are initiations that are often experienced as ordeals. They are times for purgation of conditional understandings and actions for a return to unconditionality. Birth is accompanied by labor pains. Embracing the pains is necessary for realizing the fullness of the birth's blessing. To avoid the pain is to avoid the fullness of what is being born.

10. Mircea Eliade (1960), Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, Harper, New York, p. 200.

11. Ibid. p. 189. Also "In truth, in very truth, I tell you, a grain of wheat remains a solitary grain unless it falls to the ground and dies, but if it dies, it bears a rich harvest." John 12:24.

12. In religion, birth can be thought of as an offering of the universal to the personal, the divine to the human. Death is an offering of the personal to the universal, the human to the divine. This might give a clue to the religious use of death sacrifices in many cultures.

Death and rebirth are central to all religious life¹³. Without returning to unconditionality and dissolution, there can be no truly authentic conditional actions. An initiation is the process of dying to the old to be reborn into the new¹⁴.

Initiations¹⁵ usually involve separation and return into darkness. This is the return to unconditionality in the embryonic stage. In the sacred womb, we are instructed in the mysteries of the cosmos so that we may reenact in our own life an eternal mode of being. We then endure an initiatory ordeal or torture, often in imitation of the dead. Upon successful completion, a new name is given to mark our rebirth. We learn everything again as if for the first time.

Initiation and Parenthood

Parenthood is an initiation where we die to an outmoded existence and are born into another. Parenting can be an ordeal of suffering if we resist the death of our previous mode of living. Becoming a parent is becoming a new person. Most initiations involve lack of food and sleep and other deprivations. Without these struggles we cannot be born fully into parenthood. A

13. Here I do not distinguish between western notions of an afterlife and eastern notions of reincarnation.

14. Baptism in the Christian tradition is essentially a ritual experience of death of the old self and the birth of a new self.

15. See Eliade (1960) p. 190-230 for a more encompassing discussion of initiations.

newborn is our guide. To resist the newborn is to resist our necessary transformation.

Nursing on demand, near constant physical contact, and responding to every cry are not only important for the development of the child but also for the development of the parent¹⁶. This transitional initiation with the newborn, like all great initiations, largely takes place in the dark of night, the symbolic return to unconditionality.

In the darkness, we are instructed in the mysteries of life by the newborn so that we may reenact a more unconditional mode of parenting in our lives. We are then reborn usually with a new name such as "mama" or "papa" and we see everything from a changed perspective and everything is done as if for the first time.

Unconditionality, also known as chaos, is the precondition for rebirth. It is the disordering and deconditioning of norms and conventions. If a child doesn't fundamentally change our norms and conventions,

16. Studies have shown that the amount of time spent bonding with an infant in the first few days after birth effected the long-term behavior of the parent. Parents who spent extended amounts of time in the first few days after birth were more responsive, showed more eye-to-eye contact, exhibited more fondling and soothing behavior, used more descriptive vocabularies, asked more questions, issued fewer commands, were more reluctant to leave their babies, and were more encouraging of exploratory behavior years later. Three and a half years later, follow-up studies showed that children who received extended contact averaged an IQ that was fifteen points higher than the control group that observed normal hospital protocols. See Joseph Chilton Pearce (1977), Magical Child, Bantam, New York.

patterns and routines, we are not being reborn as initiated parents. In this unconditionality, we listen to the newborn, learning to respond instinctually to her/his needs, learning to see the world as if for the first time in all its newness. Clinging to our previous, seemingly more comfortable existence, creates more profound spiritual suffering in the long run.

Parenting necessitates the welcoming of death as well as birth. The ordeal of parenting is the necessary process of effecting rebirth. The more stubbornly we resist transformation out of fear of death¹⁷, the more our newborn guide will increase the necessary ordeal.

Any initiatory ordeal is meaningless without rebirth. If we see suffering only as suffering and not as a means to rebirth, life is painful and without meaning. Rebirth exists only through death. Rebirth into our full humanity in this life comes through experiencing the death of the self in contemplation.

17. Studies of near death experiences have clearly shown that people who have experienced "death" have profound realizations that there is nothing to fear in dying. There are interesting similarities between mystical experiences and near death experiences. Both can be thought of as reconciliations with death. See Raymond Moody (1975), Life After Life, Bantam, New York.

SUFFERING AND BLOCKAGE(1)

No one moves through life without sometimes feeling blocked or separated from the reality of goodness, love, truth, and justice. Blockages, experienced as suffering, can be excellent opportunities to focus the warmth of love and understanding on a given situation which allows the shell of separation to crack and hatch a new awareness. They can be times to allow the turbulent waters of our minds to settle into the stillness of contemplation so that we may see our true selves reflected more clearly.

As we move along the spiral of life, there are inevitably sufferings and blockages that we encounter. For our lives to move harmoniously through the rounds of existence, we need to perceive the seeds of goodness, love, wisdom, and justice within our suffering. These perceptions do not keep us in suffering, rather they reveal the path to liberation from suffering. It is the blockage of the ability to move through suffering through lack of awareness and lack of transformative action that increases suffering.

Suffering is a window upon our true centers. Suffering is overcome in the harmony of birth and death, personal and universal, evolution and involution, ritual

1. I am indebted to Buddhist understandings of suffering. It is difficult to acknowledge all the sources of these understandings, but I would especially recommend any works by Thich Nhat Hanh and Chogyam Trungpa.

and contemplation. To separate death from birth and birth from death leads to suffering.

Repression

Suffering is the holding onto pain. Newborns experience pain but do not hold to it. They scream when the pain is there. They do not repress their pain and make it suffering. To repress pain is to hold it within. Development is impeded by repression. Through our vulnerability we welcome the world into ourselves. If we open fully to our pain instead of repressing it, and act authentically out of an understanding of it, we are given the means to alleviate suffering.

Suffering can only be fully overcome when it is fully understood through contemplation. It can only be fully understood when it is forgiven and not simply judged right or wrong which leads us to cling or resist to conditional parts and blocks a vision of the unconditional whole. Suffering must become the object of contemplation if it is to be understood and overcome.

We need not pray to others to end our suffering, we need to pray to understand our full humanity which is to understand others and to understand suffering. We can only understand others if we understand them as ourselves. Often we try to maintain as other those who cause us pain. We must understand them as ourselves if we are to overcome the pain.

Suffering and the Need for Transformation

Suffering arises as a sign that transformation is needed. This is true on all levels from personal life to whole societies. To defer the necessary transformation or avoid facing the necessary deaths, is to increase pain and suffering. The denial of goodness, love, understanding, and justice has resulted in increasing pain and suffering in society. To voluntarily embrace in unconditional contemplation the sufferings we are confronted with is to embrace our rebirth.

Any awareness that leads to suffering is also a guide to our deeper needs. Where there is envy, equanimity is needed. Where there is deceit, honesty is needed. Where there is anger, serenity is needed. Where there is pride, humility is needed. Where there is laziness, action is needed. Where there is opulence, simplicity is needed. Where there is fear, courage is needed. Where there is greed, generosity is needed. In recognizing the parts, we can provide the complement needed for wholeness, salvation. In correctly identifying the seeds, we can provide the right conditions for full flowering.

Each of us is like a flower. If the flower withers, suffers, and does not reveal its beauty, we do not blame or judge the flower. We seek to change the conditions in which it grows². Even the most beautiful flower can not

2. See Thich Nhat Hanh (1987), Being Peace, Parallax, Berkeley.

bloom where the conditions are unfavorable. Conditions are transformed in relationship to their unconditional core in goodness, love, truth, and justice.

Suffering as our guide to harmonious living tells us when we are out of balance. Suffering inevitably leads to personality change³. If it is resisted the change is towards a more closed and limited mode of living. If it is embraced the change is towards a more open and unlimited mode of living. Paradoxically, the most open to suffering become the most joyful. The saints and sages⁴ embrace their suffering voluntarily and bear suffering for others.

Self and Other

When there is self and other, subject and object, suffering can be subjective or objective. Subjective suffering is suffering that exists within us, within our minds and awareness. Objective suffering is suffering imposed from without. There is no fundamental division or separation between the two. What is objective becomes subjective and what is subjective becomes objective.

When we do not embrace our own suffering, we impose it upon others. Self and other are inseparable. What is

3. I have seen this predominantly with individuals who have experienced traumatic events such as child abuse.

4. The Gospels make a special point of the fact that Jesus chose voluntarily to be crucified. Mircea Eliade stresses that the victim of human sacrifices in many cultures is a volunteer. See Mircea Eliade (1960), Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, Harper, New York, p.187-9

not embraced as self becomes other. If our suffering is repressed and not seen as our own it is placed upon others. Those who create suffering for others are those who resist transformation through their own suffering. Personal hurts lead us to hurt others⁵. Suffering is overcome in awakening to our full humanity⁶.

We resist suffering when we seek substitutes for our true selves through work, sex, drugs, possessions, and status⁷. This resistance only increases our suffering. We resist the reality of life and try to make it something it isn't.

Fear

Resistance is manifest as fear. Fear increases our pain and suffering⁸. The antidote to fear is faith⁹. The faith that suffering has meaning and is a means for transformation diminishes fear.

Fear can only exist where there is an other. When other is perceived as self, fear becomes trust. Trust is essential for suffering to be overcome. Our full humanity

5. I have yet to work with a violent person whose behavior was not rooted in some internalized traumatic or painful experience.

6. This is essentially the position of Buddhism as I understand it.

7. These substitutes for full humanity would be equivalent to what Wilber would call atman projects, see Ken Wilber (1980), The Atman Project, Quest, Wheaton.

8. For example, fear reduces the production of endorphines which are the body's pain relievers.

9. Worry is an aspect of fear as trust is an aspect of faith. In the lilies of the field sermon, Jesus' teaching people not to worry about conditions can be seen as an invitation to faith.

is the union of self and other. If we fear other, we block the realization of our full humanity.

Wholeness

Suffering calls us to wholeness. One who suffers needs to experience the fullness of goodness, love, truth, and justice within themselves and the world. Suffering is overcome in relationship, communion, and union. We are what we are related to. To relate the conditional self to an unconditional self in contemplation creates a fundamentally new transformed self. This relationship can only exist where there is the trust known as faith. Faith is the inertial force that leads us through suffering.

The word tribulation means "threshing the grain". Tribulation is the process of separating the essential core from the inessential husk. It helps us awaken to the unconditional, universal core of our lives within our conditional, personal existence.

Most mental and physical blockages arise from or are compounded by stress¹⁰. Stress necessitates a dualistic awareness. Stress is the resistance to wholeness by clinging to partiality. Awakening to wholeness decreases

10. In a lecture by psychologist Kelly Gortham, he cited research that indicated that over 80% of aggressive behavior is stress related.

stress. This is why meditation and contemplation relieve stress and improve health¹¹.

The healthy wholeness of self and other in non-dualistic awareness should not be confused with fusion. Wholeness is the union of conditional and unconditional, personal and universal. The personal self seeks union with a universal other in the wholeness of the true self.

Fusion is the union of conditional with conditional, personal with personal. Fusion¹² is limitation within limitation which is experienced as suffocating. Wholeness is limitation within the unlimited which is experienced as liberating and spacious.

Suffering is the claustrophobic experience of limited space and time¹³. It is feeling stuck in mortality and limited form. Suffering is overcome in the communion of our lives with the timeless and spaceless center of our true selves. In this way we may act spontaneously and freely in an authentic manner.

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11. See Deepak Chopra (1991), Perfect Health, Harmony, New York. He cites several studies showing meditation practice correlating with improving the health of individuals with a variety of conditions including hypertension, high cholesterol, heart disease, and malignant tumors, in addition to dramatically fewer routine health problems. See also L.A. Hjelle (1974), "Transcendental meditation and psychological health." *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 39, p. 623-8.
 12. In many popular forms of religion, God is often conveyed as a conditional, personal being. In seeking union with this image of God, religious life can become suffocating.
 13. See Chogyam Trungpa (1976), The Myth of Freedom, Shambala, Berkeley.

This is not to say frivolously. Frivolous action is centered in conditionality. Spontaneity is centered in unconditionality.

Conditionality

Suffering is to be overcome. The negativity of life is neutralized by finding its complementary positive. Suffering and negativity are conditional realities that are born and die. They do not exist forever. Suffering is embraced so that we can move beyond it. To resist suffering leaves us in suffering. What we resist is within us and will continue to arise until we embrace it. In embracing suffering we are able to move beyond it by understanding it and the larger whole that seeks revelation through it in loving action.

Suffering exists only in conditions, where there is a conditional self and other. This self and other can take many conditional forms and be a physical, an emotional, a conceptual, or an intuitive self and other. Where time and space are divided in conditionality, there will be suffering. These divisions placed upon space and time are the blockages that one must overcome. By these divisions, self becomes separated from the reality of goodness, love, truth, and justice. This reality becomes seen as other than self. In creating divisions and building walls, we deny the reality of who we are and we suffer.

Conscious and Unconscious Experience of Pain

When we are fully unconscious, we do not experience pain or suffering. Lying on the operating table, we do not feel anything but neither can we do anything. To avoid pain by being unconscious, we do not reveal our full humanity¹⁴. When we are fully conscious, we have unified unconditional consciousness¹⁵ and conditional consciousness so that we are aware of pain and suffering but its sting and hurt is absorbed peacefully into the unconscious. This frees us to act consciously in conditions and to understand the nature of pain and suffering. By consciously bearing pain and suffering for others, we awaken to the path to liberation from pain and suffering.

Suffering as Resistance to Death

A blockage is often a resistance to death¹⁶. In resisting the necessary deaths and losses, we become blocked on our paths. If we fear death in its many forms, we will not act authentically and will remain in suffering. The conditions of suffering are overcome when we offer our lives to their redemption. The willingness

14. The use of drugs is a common example of the attempt to avoid pain by being unconscious.

15. Or unconscious.

16. The beautiful images of heaven and the life after death can be meaningful if they help remove the fear and resistance to death.

to die to conditionality is necessary for redemption and salvation¹⁷.

When the willingness to die is resisted, the willingness to kill replaces it as an attempt to preserve the conditional self as separate from others. Killing can never provide for reconciliation and salvation. Resisting death is resisting the rebirth necessary for salvation and wholeness.

Suffering and the Lack of Meaning

Pathology is experience without meaning. Pathology and suffering are overcome through the perception of meaning and purpose. Experiences of suffering lead many to cling to the last safe place and stay there. In this way, a blockage becomes a point of focus. To heal, we need to use this focus to reveal meaning and purpose in contemplative prayer.

If one's focus is prayerful, the blockage can become a window upon the reality of goodness, love, truth, and justice. Experiences of suffering become sources of strength and insight to allow us to serve others who are also suffering. What has been awakened to in the unconditional understanding of contemplation needs actualization in the unconditional love and justice of ritual.

17. In the Buddhist tradition, this death is a death of conditional consciousness. In the Christian tradition, this death is symbolized in the physical death of Jesus.

The suffering we bear allows us the chance to develop insight into the means for its alleviation. Suffering is not to be overcome for ourselves alone. Suffering is to be overcome for all who suffer. All humanity exists in our full humanity. All suffering becomes the suffering of each. We will always suffer as self as long as others suffer. Suffering can only be overcome in the communion of self and other.

Contemplative Practice

The contemplative practice in the previous chapters is to assist grounding in each realm of our experience. When a blockage occurs and we become stuck in a particular realm, prayer practice focuses upon the death of the stuck realm and the birth of the subsequent realm in evolution.

Blockages are usually a resistance to death. This resistance to death often needs the reassurance of rebirth so that death can be welcomed. Our exclusive attachment to our physical selves dies to birth our inclusive emotional selves. Our exclusive attachment to our emotional selves dies to birth our inclusive intellectual selves. Our exclusive attachment to our intellectual selves dies to birth our inclusive intuitive selves.

The death is to the conditional so that the unconditional may be born. If we are blocked in our actions because of the fear of physical harm or death coming to our children, our contemplation must not only

embrace this death, but also the birth of unconditional love. Even the physical death or harm to our children is not a death to the love we have for them. When a child dies, love remains unconditionally.

In contemplating the death of our children, unconditional love is free to be shared with them in life. If we love our children with the awareness of their closeness to death in each moment, our love will be truer and fuller than if we deny or resist this awareness and parent in a way that shares fear instead of faith.

If we are blocked in our actions because of the fear of emotional hurt or the death of emotions such as love coming to our children, our prayerfulness must not only embrace this death of emotion, but the birth of unconditional understanding and knowledge. In facing the conditional emotional hurts and rejections of parenting and childhood, we may welcome the unconditional understanding of ourselves and our children. Instead of resisting or denying the emotions of the child and ourselves, we come to understand our children more fully so that our actions are wiser than they were before.

This is true of all realms of the tree of life in parenting. The blockage of each realm is conditional. In dying to the conditionality of each realm, we allow a deeper more unconditional birth in the subsequent realm and ultimately in our deep center.

Contemplative Deconditioning

Prayerful parenting is the deconditioning of our awareness through contemplation. It is our conditioning from family, society, and culture that creates limits upon our awareness and leads to suffering.

The greatest challenge of parenting is to parent unconditionally. What many take for absolutes are conditional realities of the family, culture, or society. What we take for our highest values are really conditional human values. Through contemplation, we may awaken to unconditional divine values.

Actions always exist within conditions. In saying that parents need to cultivate an unconditional prayerful awareness beyond limits of conditioning by family, society, and culture, I am not advocating rejection of these influences. We need to live and act within the conditions of family, society, and culture, with the prayerful center of our full humanity.

The goodness, love, wisdom, and justice of our families, cultures, and societies are increased not decreased through contemplation. This is because instead of seeing only their limited conditional reality, we see deeper into their true meaning which is in their connection to unconditional reality.

We need to see the conditionality and limitation of the actions of our families, but we also must come to see

the true unconditional seed of these actions in goodness, love, truth, and justice.

As parents, we want to do the best we can but we are limited by our conditioning. The harm we do as parents to our children is in passing along our limitation and conditionality. Parents enforce their limited conditional understanding with limited conditional love. This is the root of suffering for both parent and child. It is in unconditional goodness, love, truth and justice that both parent and child awaken to their full humanity.

THE ROUNDS OF EXISTENCE

It is important to emphasize that the model of the spiral and the cross is an aid in contemplation and ritual and is not meant to represent reality apart from anyone's experience of it. The simple spiral of life is more often experienced as a confusing labyrinth¹. In attempting to elaborate the movement of the spiral through the cross, oversimplification is unavoidable. To avoid oversimplification, we need to contemplate upon the labyrinth of our own lives and our own inner experience of the cross.

With this in mind, I will begin to discuss the generalities of this movement through life. I will speak predominantly in terms of lifestages here, but the realms are not lifestages as such but rather ever present principles of development. Every moment is a lifetime. The time and space of life is each individual's unique revelation of these principles.

The following are some examples of how the rounds of development can be conceptualized. There is no particular order to the following examples. Remember: Each round is reversible. To understand the movement of involution

1. For an elaboration of labyrinth symbolism, see J.C. Cooper (1978), An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, Thames and Hudson, London. p. 92-4. This symbol is a highly complex, universal symbol for the movement of life that is more illustrative in many ways than the use of the spiral.

simply reverse the movement of evolution. The end of evolution is the beginning of involution and vice versa.

Rounds Examples

EXAMPLE #1: Evolutionary Rounds Within Each Realm

We evolve through all of the realms of the tree of life within each realm for example:

The Root Realm

The root of the root= the instinct of body and physicality

The stem of the root= the feeling or sensation of body

The branch of the root= the concept of body

The leaf of the root= the intuition of body

The Stem Realm

The root of the stem= the instinct of feeling and emotion

The stem of the stem= the feeling of feeling and emotion

The branch of the stem= the concept of feeling and emotion

The leaf of the stem= the intuition of feeling and emotion

The Branch Realm

The root of the branch= the instinct of intellect

The stem of the branch= the feeling of intellect

The branch of the branch= the concept of the intellect

The leaf of the branch= the intuition of intellect

The Leaf Realm

The root of the leaf= the instinct of archetypes

The stem of the leaf= the feeling of archetypes

The branch of the leaf= the concept of archetypes

The leaf of the leaf= the intuition of archetypes

EXAMPLE #2: The Four "I"'s

Through each of these rounds we develop different senses of self. I call these the four "I"'s:

The root "I" is the instinctual self

The stem "I" is the imaginative self

The branch "I" is the intellectual self

The leaf "I" is the intuitive self

The fruit "I" is the interpenetrative self which involves all of the four "I"'s in fullness and harmony.

The evolution of the "I" is the internalizing of the physical in the the emotional, internalizing the emotional in the rational, internalizing the rational in the intuitive, and internalizing the intuitive in the interpenetrated whole. Each round is like a layer of skin which allows the next layer to grow.

The involution of the "I" is the reverse process of shedding skin. It is the internalizing of the interpenetrated in the intuitive, the internalizing of the intuitive in the rational, the internalizing of the rational in the emotional, the internalizing of the

emotional in the physical, and the internalizing of the physical in the unconditional core.

EXAMPLE #3: A Developmental Outline

In the following example, the spiral dynamics interact with each of the cross characteristics. To see the movement through any of the characteristics place it after the colon of the dynamics in succession. This succession is root, stem, branch, leaf in evolution and leaf, branch, stem, root in involution.

ROOT ROUND

<u>Spiral Dynamics</u>	<u>Cross Characteristics</u>
Root- Introduction to grounding in:	Physicality Sensation
Stem- Identification and and association with:	Unconscious Body
Branch- Differentiation and and separation from:	Instincts Parents and family
Leaf- Detachment from and interiorization of:	Blessedness Goodness Beauty

STEM ROUND

Spiral Dynamics

Root- Introduction to and
grounding in:

Stem- Identification and
association with:

Branch- Differentiation and
separation from:

Leaf- Detachment from and
interiorization of:

Cross Characteristics

Emotion

Feeling

Subconscious

Imagination

Friends and Community

Love

Compassion

BRANCH ROUND

Spiral Dynamics

Root- Introduction to and
grounding in:

Stem- Identification and
association with:

Branch- Differentiation and
separation from:

Leaf- Detachment from and
interiorization of:

Cross Characteristics

Rationality

Abstraction

Self-conscious

Intellect

Conceptual

Society and culture

Truth

Knowledge

LEAF ROUND

Spiral Dynamics

Root- Introduction to and
grounding in:

Stem- Identification and
association with:

Branch- Differentiation and
separation from:

Leaf- Detachment to and
interiorization of:

Cross Characteristics

Intuition

Symbol

Super-conscious

Archetype

Humanity and nature

Justice

Harmony

Peace

Communion

FRUIT ROUND

Spiral Dynamics

Root- Introduction to and
grounding in:

Stem- Identification and
association with:

Branch- Differentiation and
separation from:

Leaf- Detachment to and
interiorization of:

Cross Characteristics

Purity

Universality

Interpenetration

Wholeness

Union

Spontaneity

Liberation

Freedom

Luminosity

EXAMPLE #4: An Involutionary Developmental Outline**FRUIT ROUND**

Leaf= Interiorization and union of self with
unconditional consciousness, luminosity.

Branch= Differentiation and separation of self from the
unconditional and formless.

Stem= Association and identification of self with an
intuitive symbolic form of the formless.

Root= Grounding of self in an intuitive symbolic form of
the formless.

LEAF ROUND

Leaf= Detachment and interiorization within self of an
intuitive symbolic form.

Branch= Differentiation and separation of self from
intuitive symbolic forms.

Stem= Identification and association of self with
conceptual intellectual forms.

Root= Grounding of self in conceptual intellectual forms.

BRANCH ROUND

Leaf= Detachment and interiorization within self of
conceptual intellectual forms.

Branch= Differentiation and separation of self from
conceptual intellectual forms.

Stem= Identification and association of self with
emotional forms.

Root= Grounding of self in emotional forms.

STEM ROUND

Leaf= Detachment and interiorization within self of
emotional forms.

Branch= Differentiation and separation of self from
emotional forms.

Stem= Identification and association of self with physical
sense forms.

Root= Grounding of self in physical sense forms.

ROOT ROUND

Leaf= Detachment and interiorization within self of
physical sense forms.

Branch= Differentiation and separation of self from
physical sense forms.

Stem= Identification and association of self with
unmanifest forms.

Root= Grounding of self in unmanifest forms, return to the seed-center.

EXAMPLE #5: An 80 Year Developmental
Chronology of the Life Span(2)

In this example, the numbers given correspond to one's age in years. This example shows the principles of development that tend to intersect at various times in one's life. It offers three cycles within cycles in each year of life. Life is more labyrinth than spiral. These ages are guides not absolutes. A cross-cultural look at rituals for various ages can also help illuminate the principles of development present at that stage of life.

ROOT LIFE STAGE

<u>Root Round</u>	<u>Stem Round</u>	<u>Branch Round</u>	<u>Leaf Round</u>
0-1 Root	4-5 Root	8-9 Root	12-13 Root
1-2 Stem	5-6 Stem	9-10 Stem	13-14 Stem
2-3 Branch	6-7 Branch	10-11 Branch	14-15 Branch
3-4 Leaf	7-8 Leaf	11-12 Leaf	15-16 Leaf

2. This example is not reversible in involution because it exists in limited time and space.

STEM LIFE STAGE

<u>Root Round</u>	<u>Stem Round</u>	<u>Branch Round</u>	<u>Leaf Round</u>
16-17 Root	20-21 Root	24-25 Root	28-29 Root
17-18 Stem	21-22 Stem	25-26 Stem	29-30 Stem
18-19 Branch	22-23 Branch	26-27 Branch	30-31 Branch
19-20 Leaf	23-24 Leaf	27-28 Leaf	31-32 Leaf

BRANCH LIFE STAGE

<u>Root Round</u>	<u>Stem Round</u>	<u>Branch Round</u>	<u>Leaf Round</u>
32-33 Root	36-37 Root	40-41 Root	44-45 Root
33-34 Stem	37-38 Stem	41-42 Stem	45-46 Stem
34-35 Branch	38-39 Branch	42-43 Branch	46-47 Branch
35-36 Leaf	39-40 Leaf	43-44 Leaf	47-48 Leaf

LEAF LIFE STAGE

<u>Root Round</u>	<u>Stem Round</u>	<u>Branch Round</u>	<u>Leaf Round</u>
48-49 Root	52-53 Root	56-57 Root	60-61 Root
49-50 Stem	53-54 Stem	57-58 Stem	61-62 Stem
50-51 Branch	54-55 Branch	58-59 Branch	62-63 Branch
51-52 Leaf	55-56 Leaf	59-60 Leaf	63-64 Leaf

FRUIT LIFE STAGE

<u>Root Round</u>	<u>Stem Round</u>	<u>Branch Round</u>	<u>Leaf Round</u>
64-65 Root	68-69 Root	72-73 Root	76-77 Root
65-66 Stem	69-70 Stem	73-74 Stem	77-78 Stem
66-67 Branch	70-71 Branch	74-75 Branch	78-79 Branch
67-68 Leaf	71-72 Leaf	75-76 Leaf	79-80 Leaf

EXAMPLE #6: Evolutionary Rounds
in the Development of Consciousness

Seed: Unborn and undying source of consciousness in
immanent and transcendent unity

Birth of Root: Immanence of unconsciousness

Death of Root: Transcendence of unconsciousness

Birth of Stem: Immanence of subconsciousness

Death of Stem: Transcendence of subconsciousness

Birth of Branch: Immanence of self-consciousness

Death of Branch: Transcendence of self-consciousness

Birth of Leaf: Immanence of super-consciousness

Death of Leaf: Transcendence of super-consciousness

Fruit: Unborn and dying, full interpenetration of
consciousness in immanent and transcendent unity

THE FLOWER OF LIFE

The open-endedness of the spiral is an accurate reflection of the human experience of the tree of life which is without a definitive end or completeness in time and space. The spiral is an image of the personal serpent who offers the universal fruit.

The flower of life is the union of conditional with unconditional, earth with heaven, time with eternity, space with infinity, birth with death, human with divine, personal with universal. The fruit of the tree of life is offered by the flower which the universal self.

Figure 2 of the flower on the cross represents the movement through the tree of life of one who has eaten the fruit and is centered in one's universal, unconditional humanity. It is the mystic rose or the lotus¹.

The movement of the flower is simultaneously the contemplative awareness of involution and the ritual action of evolution. In the spiral, the unconditional, universal person is the unrealized true center of one's conditional, personal self as one exists in conditions. The flower represents one's personal self in full communion with the universal through return to the center and one's awakened existence in conditions through contemplative prayer and ritual.

1. For rose and lotus symbolism, see J.C. Cooper (1978), An Illustrated Dictionary of Traditional Symbols, Thames and Hudson, London.

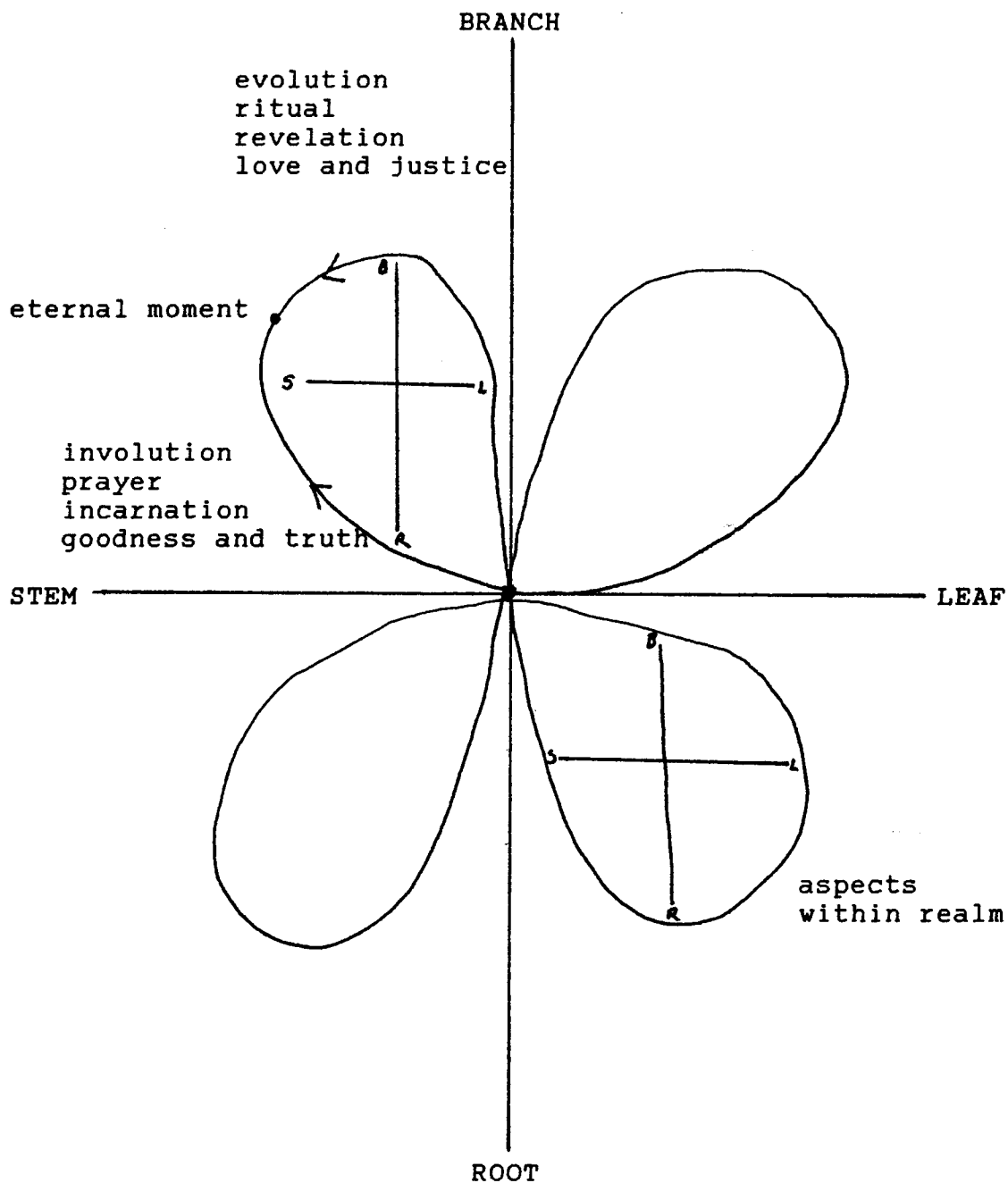


FIGURE 2: The Flower of Life

Path of Prayer and Incarnation

In contemplative prayer, one grows in understanding and love of death which is the awareness of involution. In prayer one contemplates the birth and death of all things. In this contemplation, one comes to see the birth and death of all in a common unborn, undying center. This is the process of dying which is the preparation for birth. This is the process of the incarnation of the unconditional to be revealed in conditions.

From this center, one dies into the leaf realm in the symbol or archetype of the unconditional as harmony and peace. This death has the purity of the unconditional incarnate within intuition which is justice and peace. One is grounded in the intuition of the peace of the unconditional in the body in the root, then one identifies and associates with the intuition of unconditional peace in the stem, then one differentiates and separates from the intuition of unconditional peace in the branch, then one detaches and interiorizes the intuition of unconditional peace in the leaf and returns to the center in contemplative awareness for renewal.

From the center, the interiorized intuition of unconditional peace dies into the branch realm in the concepts and reason of the unconditional. This death has the peace and harmony of the unconditional incarnate within reason which is truth. One is grounded in the reason of unconditional truth in the root, then one

identifies and associates with unconditional truth in the stem, then one differentiates and separates from the reason of unconditional truth in the branch, then one detaches and interiorizes the reason of unconditional truth in the leaf and returns to the center.

From the center, the interiorized reason of unconditional truth dies into the stem realm in the feelings and emotions of the unconditional. This death has the peace and truth of the unconditional incarnate within emotion which is love and compassion. One is grounded in the emotion of unconditional love in the root, then one identifies and associates with the emotion of unconditional love in the stem, then one differentiates and separates from the emotion of unconditional love in the branch, then one detaches and interiorizes the emotion of unconditional love in the leaf and returns to the center.

From the center, the interiorized unconditional love dies into the root in the body of the unconditional. This death has the peace, truth, and love of the unconditional incarnate within the body which is beauty and goodness. One is grounded in the embodiment of unconditional goodness in the root, then one identifies and associates with the embodiment of unconditional goodness in the stem, then one differentiates and separates from the embodiment of unconditional goodness in the branch, then one detaches

and interiorizes the embodiment of unconditional goodness in the leaf and returns to the center.

This the completion of the cycle which leaves the seed of the unconditional, universal self with peace, truth, love, and goodness fully incarnate within it ready to be revealed in conditions and personality. This seed of personality is whole and perfect in potentiality. This involution of death in contemplative prayer is the preparation for the birth and revelation of the unconditional within conditionality and the universal within the personal through ritual. This process is how one prayerfully perceives conditions in the proper perspective of divine transcendence.

Path of Ritual and Revelation

In contemplative ritual, one grows in understanding and love of birth which is evolution. One actualizes the unconditional in the birth and death of all things in conditions. One reveals in every action of birth and death the unborn and undying center. This is the process of birthing which is preparation for death. This process is the revelation in conditionality and personality of the incarnate unconditional and universal self. Mircea Eliade writes,

"The ideal of the religious man is, of course, that everything he does should be done ritually."²

2. Mircea Eliade (1958), Patterns in Comparative Religions, Meridian, New York, p. 460.

From the center in unconditionality incarnate, one is born into the body of the unconditional which is the archetypal symbol of beauty and goodness. From unconditionality incarnate, one detaches from and interiorizes the incarnate intuition of unconditional peace in the embodied goodness of the unconditional in the leaf, then one differentiates and separates from the intuition of unconditional peace into the embodied goodness of the unconditional in the branch, then one identifies and associates with the embodied goodness of the unconditional in the stem, then one is grounded in the embodied goodness of the unconditional in the root and returns to the center in ritual for renewal.

From the center, one is born into the stem grounded in the embodied goodness of the unconditional. From the grounded embodiment of unconditional goodness, one is born into the feeling of unconditional love in the stem. One detaches from and interiorizes the embodied goodness of the unconditional into the feeling of unconditional love in the leaf, then one differentiates and separates from the embodied goodness of the unconditional, then one associates and identifies with the feeling of unconditional love in the stem, then one is grounded in feeling of unconditional love in the root and returns to the center.

From the center, one is born into the branch grounded in the embodied goodness of the unconditional and the

feeling of unconditional love. From the grounded feeling of unconditional love, one is born into the reason of unconditional truth in the branch. One detaches and interiorizes the feeling of unconditional love into the reason of unconditional truth in leaf, then one differentiates and separates from feeling of unconditional love into the reason of unconditional truth in the branch, then one associates and identifies with the reason of unconditional truth in the stem, then one is grounded in the reason of unconditional truth in the root and returns to the center.

From the center, one is born into the leaf grounded in the goodness, love, and truth of the unconditional. From the grounded reason of unconditional truth, one is born into the intuition of unconditional peace in the leaf. One detaches from and interiorizes the reason of unconditional truth into the intuition of unconditional peace in the leaf, then one differentiates and separates from the reason of unconditional truth into the intuition of unconditional peace in the branch, then one associates and identifies with the intuition of unconditional peace in the stem, then one is grounded in the intuition of unconditional peace in the root and returns to the center.

This completes the cycle of ritual revelation with goodness, love, truth, and peace revealed in a life of ritual. The body, imagination, intellect, and intuition of one's life is a revelation of the unconditional,

universal self. This is being fully born into full humanity so that one is prepared for death and reincarnation. This process is the way one ritually acts in conditions in right relationship to divine immanence.

Life in Full Humanity

The flower represents the ideal of human revelation of the divine in conditions. Each point, each moment, in the path of the flower is a whole. Each point contains the unity of prayerfully incarnate awareness with ritual actualization and revelation.

For example, a moment of the flower path in the leaf aspect of the stem realm contains the incarnate prayerful awareness of the whole of the the leaf and the branch realms through involution and the whole of the root and stem realms through revealed ritual understanding. In this way, each moment is whole in goodness, love, wisdom, and justice and every action and awareness is a spontaneously centered revelation of the universal and unconditional.

In the flower path, one comes to each moment through both involution and evolution. Between these two movements, the whole of the flower is manifest in each moment in both awareness and action. Incarnate awareness of goodness and wisdom and revealed action of love and justice make each moment complete. The petals of the

flower represent involution within evolution and evolution within involution in full communion.

In contemplation, goodness and wisdom incarnate in love and justice and love and justice bring goodness and wisdom to fruition. In ritual, love and justice reveal goodness and wisdom and goodness and wisdom bring love and justice to fruition. In each moment where contemplative awareness is unified with ritual action, the fruit of goodness, love, wisdom, and justice are revealed and incarnate in creation through the life of full humanity.

In our full humanity, each action is a full revelation of the unconditional in that every action incarnates unconditional goodness and wisdom and reveals unconditional love and justice. Every action is spontaneous, natural, and free. Every action incarnates the seed of goodness, love, truth, and justice in conditions. Every action reveals the growth of the tree of life with the good earth, the loving waters, the true unwavering sunshine, and the peaceful wind.

In the universal, unconditional self, the parent abides within the child and the child abides within the parent. The parent and child abide fully within the true parent and the true child in the core center of life itself. The flower is the actualization of paradise in creation, the divine in human life.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

"Unless the contemplative dimension of the Christian life is being preached, the Gospel is not being fully proclaimed."¹

"God is just as present in your homes as he is in any monastery."²

-Father Thomas Keating

This paper has been an attempt to begin to address the spiritual needs of parents and children through a developmental path of contemplative prayer. Parenting and family life is seen by virtually all religions as a sanctified mode of being, but rarely is it a well developed, or well articulated path.

The inability to realize the core of religious life has alienated many from the church and left a spiritual hunger unsatisfied. We are left with no home in the temple and no temple in the home. The path whereby the temple is discovered in all of creation is contemplation. Without contemplation, there is no bridge between human and divine. We are left stranded on a distant shore.

Probably the most prevalent and universal image for the divine is that of the sacred parent, mother and father. To be a parent is to manifest a sacred mode of living. In parenting, we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, give drink to the thirsty, comfort the sorrowful, bear wrongs patiently, and perform other acts of mercy

1. Quoted in Susan Walker (ed.)(1987), Speaking of Silence, Paulist Press, Mahwah, p. 108.

2. Ibid p.220.

daily. It is an excellent discipline for following in the footsteps of the saints and sages.

If we see the world through the eyes of our separate, personal self only, we do not see reality. We must come to see with the eyes of our whole, universal self if we are to see clearly. To see unity is to see as divine. To see distinctions is to see as human. To see the unity in the distinctions is to see as a whole person, both human and divine. We will not overcome suffering without facing and embracing the reality of ourselves and others.

Parenting like religion has become an empty shell in need of renewal of its deep inner meaning. The meaning in our lives must be found within our everyday activities. Too often we seek some outer paradise which will bring us happiness. The meaning of parenthood is found within. Changing the outer forms of family life must arise from inner revelation of our true needs. Even the best structural changes will crumble if they are dead on the inside.

Parenting is a mode of living not just a job or an activity. As such we are parents in everything we do. Our perspective upon and relationship to all things is influenced by our experiences in parenting. The true spiritual parent is one who hears all the voices of all the children of the world with a compassionate and just ear.

Time spent in prayerful attention to children's realities from the humility of our knees can provide us with renewal and guidance. To renew means to be new again. Children show us a new world in all its wonder and freshness. We see the joy and the pain of our lives again as if for the first time. When challenges arise, the lessons of prayerfulness are within us, a beginning to which we can return for renewal. We must be open to the revelations our children can help us see and be open to goodness, love, truth, and justice at all hours, even at the most difficult ones.

I am not one who believes that if we just worked on having healthy families, that all the world's problems would be solved. I do believe that the prayerful awareness that is possible in parenting can direct us along the path of real solutions which come from a genuine understanding of and concern for the sufferings of the world.

Parenting is as much about healthy parents as it is about healthy children. Parenting puts us face to face on a daily basis with our contradictions and values. It is one of the best opportunities we have to discover who we really are by attentively looking at how we respond to the movement of life. The spirit of parenting lies in prayerful attention and contemplation.

Developmental Understanding

Parents need to understand directly the development of children. The rational and intellectual understanding provided by most developmental theorists provide helpful guidelines and norms for children in general, but parents need approaches that allow for understanding children in holistic particulars. Without approaches which guide an understanding of the inner experience of the child, parental actions may be out of sync with the individual needs of children. Contemplative prayer provides the direct inner experience necessary to truly understand.

Contemplative prayer is an important guide for parent-child relationships. It allows for greater responsiveness on the part of the parent and greater likelihood that those responses are genuine and appropriate to the need of the child.

Modes of Expression of Experience and Understanding

The language used to share our experiences and understandings and to assist parents and children must also be developmentally appropriate and inclusive. For the message to be fully received, it must exist harmoniously within various modes of expression. These modes are briefly:

1. The root: Concrete-literal (fundamental)
2. The stem: Associative-emotional (inspirational)

3. The branch: Conceptual-rational (intellectual)

4. The leaf: Symbolic-archetypal (visionary)

No one mode of expression should be relied upon as the best vehicle for conveying understanding. Each mode is important but in time they become too limiting to express the reality we experience. Instead of clinging to limitations, we must seek more inclusive modes of expression.

The four realms all reveal aspects of reality and are not inconsistent with each other. They are increasingly inclusive rounds of the spiral. If we cling to one mode of understanding the world, we become alienated and alienating. The literal is not lost in opening to the emotional, the emotional is not lost in opening to the rational, the rational is not lost in opening to the archetypal. They build upon each other in the understanding of reality. Each mode illuminates a part, but we must always seek the whole if we are to understand. A genuine experience of reality is not limited to nor inconsistent with any of the modes.

To rely upon one mode of understanding reality at the exclusion of others is to fall short of our purpose which is to reveal our unconditional, universal self within conditionality and personality. Renewal and healing of the outer forms must come by awakening to their inner meanings.

The Lost

Parenting and caregiving have lost meaning for many in society at a time when the need for these roles is immense. The inability to harmonize the development of parent and child leads to hurt and suffering for both parent and child. Parents end up expecting too much or too little of children because parents do not understand their children nor themselves. If we do not understand our children, we do not know how to share love with them. It is through contemplative attention to love that we come to understand.

In my short life, I have seen far too many lost children and adults. Many have strayed far from the goodness, love, truth, and peacefulness that is incarnate in them. In losing themselves, they become capable of ugliness, hatred, deception, and violence. The sufferings of these lost children are offered to us in evermore desperate acts to reach our compassion. Again and again a society that has lost touch with itself turns away and the suffering increases.

The acts of hate and violence cry out the hate and violence felt inside. We must embrace the sufferings within ourselves and bear them for others so that they, and we, can be healed and redeemed in our wholeness.

It is as parents that we must bear these crosses with radical forgiveness. These are sufferings only our fullest humanity can bear so as parents we must come to

experience our full humanity within us to find the strength to overcome. If we parent as whole people, every child is our child. Every lost child is looked after as if it were our own.

Contemplative prayer in parenting is not a call for a change in specific conditions so much as a change of heart towards unconditional love and justice. We cannot know what is best for ourselves and our children if we do not know ourselves and our children. Parenting is a genuine authentic opportunity to center our lives in our fullest selves. Too often it is a missed opportunity. The opportunity exists only in the present moment with our children not in the past or future.

Parents need ways of being fully present with children. We need ways of learning from the real experts who are the children themselves. As long as expertise is outside the parent, the parent will lack the faith and trust necessary to fully reveal love and understanding.

Developmental Blockages and Society

Developmental blockages in childrearing arise in all realms. I will not discuss this at great length but as an example; the root realm is blocked as American infants are increasingly held less, breastfed less and for shorter amounts of time, early bonding is impeded by hospital protocols and use of drugs (legal and illegal), there are fewer home births, children are physically and emotionally

isolated in homes, physical abuse and neglect have increased every year for two decades, many children live in poverty lacking basic necessities such as food, increasing numbers of children suffer from poor diet and lack of exercise, day care that cannot provide unconditional attention is the norm for younger and younger children, and nuclear families put more pressure on fewer care-givers, often a single parent even in two parent households, instead of extended families and community care of children. These and many other parenting practices in early childhood may impair children's abilities to relate to others and feel safe resulting in fixations and materialistic attachments. These practices can only come about when parents are not centered in their bodies and instincts.

The results of blockages of the root realm are that children do not interiorize their incarnate goodness. As children see themselves as "bad", they enact this awareness in "bad" actions. As the root-instinctual exists on the same axis as the branch-intellectual, blockages of the root have been shown to result in lower intellectual functioning later in life³.

3. See Joseph Chilton Pearce (1977), Magical Child, Bantam, New York. He cites studies showing correlations between increased physical touch in early life and increased intelligence, and increased intellectual abilities of breastfed children over non-breastfed children. Incidentally the international average for breastfeeding is 4.2 years per child. In contrast, the average in the United States is only a few months, and large numbers of women do not breastfeed at all.

Parenting practices that result in blockages of the stem result in children who are estranged from the incarnate love and compassion within them. These children are able to perform acts of cruelty and hate that are inconsistent with their true selves.

Blockages of the stem occur as children are increasingly isolated from the community. In schools and neighborhoods, children grow up segregated from people of different ages, cultures, and experiences. They are isolated from the world of work and the life of the community as workplaces and other institutions are not inclusive of children and family life. The place for children in churches, worksites, and other institutions is in daycare rather than as fully integrated members of the community.

Punishment also leads to blockages of the stem. Children are punished by emotionally inaccessible parents and institutions. Where there is punishment, there is separation and isolation. It becomes necessary for the individual to stress their rights in a world seen as a hierarchy of others⁴. Where there is forgiveness, there is connection and communion. It becomes necessary for the individual to stress their responsibilities to others in a

4. Studies have shown that hierarchy is internalized in childhood as an unquestioned absolute in social relations making more egalitarian modes of interaction difficult and destructive and exploitive relationships inevitable. See H. Wilcox (1968), "The culture trait of hierarchy in middle class children." In Public Administration Review, 28, p. 222-235.

world seen as an interconnected self⁵. The punitive nature of American society creates massive blockages of the stem leading to a lack of compassion and responsibility that can only be overcome through forgiveness.

As the stem-emotional is on the same axis as the leaf-intuitive, the emotional hurts and isolation experienced in the home, churches, and schools block realization of intuitive connections with others and spiritually rich lives⁶. Not only do we see people become estranged from the incarnate love and compassion within them and capable of hate, society as a whole becomes increasingly unjust and exploitive.

I do not seek to illustrate all the practices that lead to blockages since they are too numerous. What is needed is not an intellectual awareness of what to do in each specific case and what not to do. What is needed is to approach parenting with a prayerful loving understanding so we can address these issues at their root. I seek to outline a process whereby as parents we

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5. In my work with adults and children with aggressive behavior, I have had great success in removing all forms of punishment that they usually received for their behavior (even verbal reprimands) and replacing it with unconditional forgiveness along with responsibility towards others. This seems to awaken the neglected seed of compassion within these individuals.
 6. A study of characteristics of religious mystics found not only an extraordinary spiritual intuition but also an extraordinary emotional nature. See Marsha Sinetar (1986), Ordinary People as Monks and Mystics, Paulist, New York.

can come to understand our children by coming to understand ourselves in the present moment of our lives.

Mutuality

Parenting has often been seen as a one way transmission from parent to child. Reality is that the mutuality of parent and child also finds mutuality in the continued development of each. Developmentally appropriate child-rearing unavoidably involves parental development. If parents do not lead, children provide a sort of feedback loop or re-centering in the essentials of life to which we must learn to listen. An infant's cry is the voice of God calling us to return.

As parents, we must center in each realm of the tree of life for life to be full. We center in each realm through contemplative prayer. We know we are centered in the root when all physical forms seem to be expressing the same limitless beauty and goodness. We know we are centered in the stem when all feelings and emotions seem to be expressing the same limitless love and compassion. We know we are centered in the branch when all concepts and ideas seem to be expressing the same limitless truth and wisdom. We know we are centered in the leaf when all symbols seem to be expressing the same limitless justice and harmony.

The Parent-Child Moment

A parent who is wise can see the child's incarnate goodness in every moment. A parent who is just can see the child's incarnate compassion in every moment.

With a parent able to realize the truth of the branch and a child able to realize the goodness of the root, they will be on the same axis and in union. In this way, they can experience the wholeness of the parent-child moment in the shared center of their lives.

With a parent able to realize the justice of the leaf in every moment and a child able to realize the love of the stem, they will be on the same axis and in union. In this way, they can experience the wholeness of the parent-child moment in the shared center of their lives.

The shared experience of parent and child is a path of spiritual awakening in the open-eyed contemplative awareness of the movement of life. Parenting is not about giving and getting. Parenting is about centering in the principles of reality so we may awaken to our fullest humanity.

It is our peaceful justice as parents that allows the seed of compassion and love to grow up in our children. It is our truthful understanding as parents that allows the seed of goodness and beauty to grow up in our children.

This model is an attempt to illuminate the seeds of human potential and what we nurture is what will grow.

Once one is uprooted it is difficult to reintegrate and this is the situation faced all too often.

The Need for Parenting

This model derives largely from my work with the uprooted. The abused, neglected, institutionalized children and adults who cry out for parenting. There is pain in separation. Both parent and child are hurt and filled with guilt and anger. These children need real parents who are physically, emotionally, intellectually, and intuitively present. Children need parents who are whole and parents themselves need wholeness. The parent needs the child and the child needs the parent.

My hope is that parents and children can be united in the common center of our lives. My hope is that parents and children can share in goodness, love, truth, and justice as we frolic in the tree of life. My hope is that parents and children can face the sufferings and deaths of life to be reborn into greater fullness.

Through contemplative prayer, we can begin to see the nature of our true parent and our true child in the unity of the parent-child moment. We cannot give what we do not have. This paper offers nothing in itself. It is an invitation to walk a path of shared hopes. It is an invitation to begin removing the log from our own eyes so

that we may see more clearly the revelation of our own lives and those of our children⁷.

7. Jesus says, "How can you say to your neighbor, 'Friend, let me take out the speck in your eye', when you yourself do not notice the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye." Matthew 7:4-5 and Luke 6:42.

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