



Healing and the Extraordinary Mind: The Evolution of Consciousness Through the Body

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Acknowledgements

Very deep gratitude to Terri O’Fallon and Daniel P. Brown - both significant teachers in my life for your remarkable contribution to human consciousness and universal love. Thank you to Rene Dumetz for inviting me to write this article and for your ongoing encouragement and support.

PART I: FOUNDATIONS OF THIS APPROACH

INTRODUCTION

This article describes how deep relaxation and nuanced sensing into the body, mind, and subtle energy field release trauma and open a healthy, *embodied* pathway for human consciousness to unfold, expand, and evolve into advanced stages of human awakening. In Part I, I'll begin with a view of how physical, emotional, mental, and subtle energy trauma create deep patterning and arrested development in the body-mind. I'll discuss a similarity between Wilhelm Reich's body armoring and Hindu chakras or energy centers in the physical and subtle body as they pertain to somatic relaxation, whole body breathing, energy flow, and healing. I also will propose a relationship between a felt sense of embodied, energetic state stages of awakening as researched by Dan P. Brown¹ - and structure stages of development based on Terri O'Fallon's² STAGES framework. In Part 2, I'll compare descriptions of late stage individuals from O'Fallon's and Brown's research along with qualities of the embodied experience of late-stage individuals and groups that I have observed as facilitator over the past eighteen years, including common challenges or shadow material at each stage; and I'll provide some practical interventions to assist individuals to evolve into a healthy embodiment of these later stages of awareness of Awareness. Because Part 2 is based on an emerging field with fewer studies and subjects to support the observations, it is far from complete in describing qualities, shadow, and intervention of these late stages of Awareness. The reader is invited to approach this section from a spirit of curiosity, knowing that collectively, we have much more to learn about human development and evolution.

TRAUMA & THE HUMAN CONDITION

Trauma begins at birth and can even begin prenatally.³ If you are lucky you are carried by a mother who is happy, relaxed, safe, comfortable, healthy, loved and supported. Your father is emotionally and physically healthy and available, engaged with life, content, fulfilled, and in love with your mother and you - even before your arrival. No anxiety, no grief or depression, they are financially prepared, stable, and mature. Swaddled in soothing darkness, you are warm, held and nourished in your mother's body with a comforting heartbeat and familiar cooing voices. And then

¹ Brown, 1986

² Murray & O'Fallon, 2020

³ Chamberlain, 1998; Sharp & Aureshi, 2020.

you are born! You are squeezed, pushed, pulled, flushed – into shocking bright lights and vacuous open space. Your needs will never again be met immediately as they were during the previous nine months. Now you have no sense of who or where you are. You are at the mercy of the random elements of your environment that are all outside of your control. This description of the gestation and birthing process is the most idyllic scenario, that rarely happens, because most humans are not this happy and well-adjusted, especially by the time their children are born. Yet imagine the shock that such an intense and sudden environmental change can bring to you and to each one of us as we enter the world for the first time. And this is just the beginning. As we age and develop, we encounter difficult life experiences that are painful, confusing, and frightening, from falling down the stairs, to getting forgotten at school, or left home alone for too long, to being rejected by classmates, to parents fighting or absent, to the embarrassment of social awkwardness, and much worse. Trauma can occur during a one-time event such as our own birth, or from the early death of a parent. It can also occur as the result of events which are repeated over time, such as being criticized often, or during a time when parents are physically, emotionally, or energetically punishing, aggressive or unavailable. These traumatic experiences lead to distorted perceptions and unprocessed feelings which can inhibit our growth and happiness, and negatively impact our relationships, career, and life.⁴ By the time we are adults, all of us have developed a variety of coping skills and defense mechanisms that compromise and inhibit the natural expression of our body, mind, emotion, energy, and spirit. Some of us experience enough pain that we seek various remedies for our suffering. Others of us are simply inspired to heal, to grow and to awaken. This article is about awakening from, through and in spite of the trauma and conditioning that we experience as humans. In the remainder of Part I, I will describe some of the elements that contributed to a body-mind-emotion-spirit approach to healing and awakening that evolved through my training and through my work with my clients. These elements include traditional psychotherapy, embodied awareness, breathwork, non-dual spiritual practices, subtle energy sensing, state development and stage development. We'll start with some basics of psychotherapy.

Modern Approaches to Psychotherapy and Healing

Human suffering has been addressed in various ways for thousands of years, from ancient philosophies and shamanic healing techniques to modern psychology and medicine. Modern psychology began in the late nineteenth century and became known through the work of early

⁴ Van der Kolk, 2000

adopters such as Sigmund Freud, William James, Carl Jung, and Carl Rogers. These pioneers developed what became known as psychodynamic psychotherapy which addresses memories, patterns, feelings, and experiences from childhood which seemed to impact their clients' present dis-ease or well-being. For example, they saw how people tended to introject or absorb parental messages into self-assessments and beliefs; and, that adaptations to parental strengths and weaknesses established long-term, unconscious behavioral traits and defensive patterns in their clients. Some people seemed to feel better when they were invited to explore childhood pain and trauma in the presence of a qualified professional.

Another set of approaches termed Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) focused on the consequences of a client's current thoughts and behavior. CBT is a combination of behavior therapy, introduced in the early 20th century, and cognitive therapy which emerged in the 1960s. Practitioners of CBT provide techniques to change thinking and behavior often de-emphasizing childhood trauma. For example, reframing or taking a different perspective on a situation is a cognitive technique, while learning to set boundaries or changing a daily routine could be considered behavior-change techniques. Combining psychodynamic and cognitive behavior therapeutic techniques seems to be useful in helping clients gain insight and change outdated patterns in their life. Clients of effective traditional talk psychotherapy come away with a better understanding of how their childhood impacts them and they learn new behaviors to improve their relationships.

Another set of therapeutic modalities that has evolved over the last 80 years is somatic or body-centered psychotherapy. The synonyms *somatic* and *body-centered* refer to approaches and techniques that invite individuals to bring awareness to the felt experience of emotion, sensation, energy, and movement in and through the body, also known as *embodiment* or an *embodied* sense of self. Techniques include focusing attention on areas of tension or tightness in the body, various forms of breathing, and different types of movement. Through these modalities practitioners invite clients to bring presence into and through the entire physical body, thawing the frozen responses to trauma that were lodged in the body during the traumatic disturbances. These body-based modalities tend to access deeper unconscious material than traditional approaches and tend to accelerate the growth and awakening process. For example, according to Grof & Grof, "Deliberate increase of the pace of breathing typically loosens psychological defenses and leads to a release and emergence of unconscious (and superconscious) material."⁵ When body-centered approaches are interwoven with cognitive-behavioral and psychodynamic

⁵ 2010, pg. 8

approaches, depending on the needs of a particular client, results can be quite powerful. Since less is known in modern psychology about somatic processes, the following section will focus on the philosophy and some of the mechanisms in body-centered healing approaches to understand the body's relationship to healing and awakening.

How Trauma is Stored and Healed Through the Body

Trauma can be unconsciously stored in the body for decades until an individual is strong enough to allow it into conscious awareness. As children we do not yet have the emotional, physical, or intellectual resources to take care of ourselves or make sense of common life experiences; so we learn unconsciously to regulate our emotional, physical, and intellectual pain through various behaviors.⁶ For example, if we are told not to cry, or parents reject our reaching out for them, we may learn to stifle our emotions by holding our breath or by tightening our chest or belly. If we are unable to express our loneliness, we may distract ourselves by escaping into television, video games, fantasies, or a book to avoid feeling neglected. If we are not allowed to express anger, we may learn how to manipulate or retaliate through creating disruption. We become our parents' "good" child to avoid criticism or to manage a parents' emotions. We become ultra-sensitive and vigilant to avoid danger. If our parents favor intellectualism and do not reflect our emotions accurately, we may rationalize, intellectualize, or compartmentalize our feelings. If the trauma is very early or very severe, we may block the experience from memory and forget that it happened; or we may "split off" or dissociate from a part of our awareness, and "leave our body."⁷ All of these defense mechanisms require a person to hold or shorten their breath and tighten their muscles around the area of emotional or physical pain, reducing the intensity of both physical sensations and emotions in that area and diminishing awareness or presence. And when we suppress feelings and energy in the body in response to environmental and relational pain, conflict, and danger - we abandon our own authentic, healthy, natural way of being and evolving.

The discovery of the tendency in people to restrict their breathing and feeling in response to trauma is credited to twentieth century psychiatrist Wilhelm Reich. Through observing both peoples' bodies and their presenting attitudes and problems, Reich found that shallow breathing in particular areas of the body corresponded to muscular constrictions that he called body armor,

⁶ Afifi, Mota, MacMillan & Sareen, 2013; Bethell & Newacheck, 2014; 2004; Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005

⁷ Rosenberg, Rand & Asay, 1985

and that this armoring corresponded with specific physical, mental, and emotional issues.⁸ These areas of body armoring and their corresponding issues are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 - **Reich's Segments of Body Armor**⁹

Reich's Body Armor	Corresponding Issues
Pelvis	Hurt, anger, rage
Abdomen/Low Back	Repressed sexual responsiveness/boundaries
Diaphragm/Mid Back	Disempowerment, suppression of gut feelings
Chest/Upper Back	Love, grief, longing, desire, passion, vulnerability
Neck, Throat, Shoulders	Fear, burden, inhibited voice
Oral (Mouth/Jaw)	Inhibited verbal expression
(Ocular) Forehead, Eyes	Thinking, worry, confusion

Furthermore, Reich noticed how shallow breathing and tightened muscles restrict vital (subtle) energy from flowing through the body. To help his patients release energetic blockages to greater aliveness and wellbeing, Reich developed a full-bodied breathing method and other techniques. Since then, many practitioners and pioneers in healing have adapted Reich's theory and approach into their own methods of healing trauma through the body.¹⁰

Two of these practitioners were my teachers Bennet Wong and Jock McKeen, who both were trained in conventional medicine in the mid twentieth century. In his medical training, Wong specialized in psychiatry, later overseeing patients and clinicians as the clinical director of a psychiatric hospital, and then working primarily with adolescents in his private practice. McKeen had treated patients in hospital emergency rooms, and eventually received training in traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture. Their work with severely traumatized patients led them to their own understanding of how trauma is stored in the body and subsequently results in mental, emotional, and physical disease.¹¹ Early in their careers Wong and McKeen began experimenting with the use of Reich's breathing technique combined with a variety of other interventions, including acupuncture, psychodrama, gestalt, and bioenergetics to help individuals release

⁸ Boadella, 1994; Grof & Grof, 2010, Reich, 1949

⁹ Rosenberg, et al., 1985

¹⁰ Grof & Grof, 2010; Lowen, 1975; Payne, Levine & Crane-Godreau, 2015; Rosenberg, et al., 1985

¹¹ Scaer, 2014; Wong & McKeen, 1998

blocked energy in and through their bodies. As they experimented with these various modalities, they saw dramatic results that motivated them to leave their clinical practices and to offer long term residential retreats of up to several months in duration,¹² eventually teaching these techniques to thousands of people in North America and in Asia.

I first met Wong and McKeen in the mid 1980's when I sought support for my own emotional growth and healing and then continued as an intern, training directly with them, and learning their philosophy and methodology over the next ten years. During their retreats Wong and McKeen demonstrated the powerful healing effects of breathwork, body awareness, and energy release as paths to physical, emotional, and relational healing. Like Reich, they believed that holding the breath, tightening the body and/or stifling one's verbal communication interrupts authentic self-expression, deadens the natural feeling of aliveness in the body, and inhibits the capacity for healthy relationships. For example, when a loved one leaves or dies abruptly, the pain may be so great that the grieving person unconsciously squeezes the muscles around their chest to reduce that pain. Breath becomes shallow and the fullness in and around the chest becomes stunted. A deadening of feeling happens over time which can lead to depression and difficulty in feeling and receiving love. Likewise, tightening the muscles around feelings of anger or powerlessness freezes corresponding areas of the body and saps energy, resulting in potentially more manageable feelings of hopelessness, helplessness and eventually numbness. Severe tightening or deadening of the musculature can lead to the two most common human psychological disturbances - anxiety and depression - which are at epidemic proportions worldwide.¹³ These disturbances are usually treated with prescription medications. As trained allopathic physicians, Wong and McKeen believed that though pharmaceuticals can be useful for some people to stabilize their emotional and mental states, these medications also can prevent people from fully feeling their aliveness and emotion, and from truly healing the pain in a way that can open them to the realization of a natural experience of freedom and happiness. For many, breathing, body awareness, and deep psychotherapy can relieve the need for pharmaceuticals and allow natural states of happiness and spiritual awakening to occur more readily.¹⁴

In my psychotherapy practice between 1993 and 2003, I experimented with the techniques I had learned from Wong and McKeen. I invited my clients to lie on a foam mattress on their backs with knees bent, feet flat on the cushion, and to breathe through their whole body quickly

¹² Sulzbacher, Wong, McKeen, Glock & MacDonald, 1981

¹³ World Health Organization, 2017

¹⁴ Grof, Grob & Bravo, 2008.

and repeatedly until they could feel tingling through their bodies. Along with the traditional psychodynamic methods of psychotherapy, I incorporated acupressure and gestalt. As demonstrated by Wong and McKeen, I saw how deep, full breathing resulted in a build-up of energy that would erupt into emotional release revealing memories of forgotten trauma, repressed by muscular tension. During this period, I learned how tightened muscles look and feel in various parts of the body, and how the tightening of specific areas prevents the expression of corresponding thematic emotions and healthy ways of being human. When the muscles relax, the energy, memory, and emotion in and behind the tension or holding can flow freely, allowing greater insight, integration, clarity, and awareness throughout the body and mind.¹⁵

Blending Eastern & Western Approaches to Healing & Awakening

Many western healing modalities end with mental, emotional, and physical health, and as mentioned, many approaches do not integrate all three. However, there seems to be more to our human experience than the mental, emotional, and physical elements of our being. Most of us also experience a subtle energy field, and we have a spiritual or awareness component that are often addressed in meditation training and practice. Another foundational aspect of my overall approach comes from my study of eastern philosophical traditions which also began in the mid-1980's and intensified in 1988, when I began practicing meditation and studying Kashmir Shaivism. Kashmir Shaivism is a non-dual tantric tradition which reached its peak between the seventh and thirteen centuries A.D. in Kashmir. During this time, Buddhist scholars and practitioners from Tibet and China shared their knowledge and practices with Indians of various Hindu traditions. In the philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism, shakti or *kundalini* energy is said to be coiled and dormant at the base of the spine. Kundalini energy "is that vibrating, rotating power which by its upward rise within the subtle body dissolves the limited state – the contracted dualistic perception and cognition within time – and finally realizes its own nature, identical with the supreme reality."¹⁶ In broader terms, subtle energy can be felt in the body as a tingling sensation, rushes of sensation, or vibration. The term *subtle body* describes an invisible structure or shape of energetic holding in and around the physical body that seems to be held in place by a person's beliefs, emotions, and intentions, while the *subtle field* is a felt sense of a concentration of energy and/or awareness around and through the body.

¹⁵ Lalande, et al, 2012; Saraswati & Hiti, 1984; Yadav & Mutha, 2016.

¹⁶ Furlinger, pg. 10

In the subtle body model, subjectivity is understood to be comprised of matter-consciousness, usually termed energy, which is understood to be a constitutive element of mind and the physical body, as well as to exceed the corporeal self into the 'space' between self, other and world (Johnston & Barcan, 2006, pg. 29).

When kundalini energy is "awakened" by a powerful event and with the breath as support, the energy is said to rise through the central channel or *sushumna* of the body, activating specific energy centers or chakras that each correspond with various psycho-spiritual characteristics and increasing levels of realization. "The subtle body consists of focal points, often called chakras, connected by channels, often called nadis, that convey subtle breath, often called prana. Through breathing and other exercises, a practitioner may direct the subtle breath to achieve supernormal powers, immortality, or liberation."¹⁷ The practice of ecstatic chant also combines breathing and adds mantra or sacred sounds which result in energy release through the body, opening the heart and head, resulting in a state of bliss or ecstasy. To further aid the process of moving energy and awakening through the body, Hindu practitioners use various other breathing techniques including a form of alternate nostril breathing, and the breath of fire. These practices are known as *pranayama* which translates as life-force modulation. "Prana actually means energy – the vital energy which we draw into ourselves from the surrounding universe".¹⁸ Many types of breathing techniques also are utilized in Tibetan Buddhist teachings.¹⁹ In fact, the use of breathing to heal and awaken occurs in many cultures and religions around the world and has been used throughout history.²⁰ Grof and Grof (2010) stated:

Buddha's teaching of anāpāna [inhalation and exhalation] was based on his experience in using it as a means of achieving his own enlightenment. He emphasized the importance of not being mindful only of one's breath - but using the breath to become aware of one's entire body and of all of one's experience (pg. 6).

As my understanding and practice of these various modalities evolved, I began experimenting with a gentler form of conscious, full-bodied breathing specifically through the central channel while my clients were seated across from me (rather than lying on a cushion). This technique was less threatening for my clients and took less effort as a practitioner than the rapid full-bodied breathing and hands-on pressure points. As individuals brought their awareness

¹⁷ See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subtle_body

¹⁸ Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 1981, pg. 68

¹⁹ Bentor, 2000

²⁰ Grof & Grof, 2010; Edwards, Makunga, Thwala & Nzima, 2006; Kim, 2007

to the base of their spine and imagined inhaling consciously up through their bodies and out of the top of their heads, they became aware of information and insight about the patterns of tension in their bodies. Simultaneously, I could see how and where a person's breath moved and where it was blocked. Perceiving lack of flow in the breathing process allowed us to focus the breath into specific areas of numbness, contraction, or pain; intensify the sensations there, release the holding, and receive even more information. As they remained present with the physical tension and intensified it while relaxing the surrounding muscles and tissues - memories and feelings would surface just as with the more rapid breathing technique. Furthermore, it appeared that the sensations of energy would often move through pathways. For example, through breathing and awareness, a concentration of blocked energy might move from the heart or chest into the shoulders and down through the arms and hands, or up through the throat and out of the top of the head. This relaxation and movement resulted in a permanent release of the blockage in their body and a permanent healing of varying degrees of corresponding psychosocial issues as shown in *Table 2*. For example, a blockage in the throat corresponded to a difficulty in communicating one's boundaries, needs and desires. A band around the forehead prevented clear seeing or clear perception, and a sensation of a cap on the top of the head prevented a feeling of release into divine union or sense of expanded freedom. A person's awareness seemed to be able to move the breath, the breath moved the energy, the movement of energy relieved tension in the body, allowing the body to move gracefully, naturally, and organically without effort, releasing distortions through the mind and often bringing clear insight. "Through the visualization of breath, prana can be directed to any part of the body. Where we direct our focused attention, prana will go; in essence where attention goes, breath goes, and where breath goes energy moves".²¹ My original skepticism about chakras waned when I saw people who had no knowledge of eastern philosophy describe similar themes corresponding to the same areas of the body as described in Hindu and Tantric literature. Furthermore, as shown in the following table, it turned out that the energy centers described in eastern traditions generally seemed to correspond to the areas of character armoring described by Wilhelm Reich.

²¹ Schwarz, Corrigan, Hull & Raju, 2017, pg. 81

Table 2 - **Reich's Body Bands, Hindu Chakra System and Corresponding Themes**

Reich's Body Bands	Hindu Chakras	Corresponding Themes (Johari, 2000)
Pelvis	Root – Base of Spine	Survival, Grounding, Safety
Abdomen/Low Back	Hara – Abdomen	Creativity, Sexuality, Belonging
Diaphragm/Mid Back	Diaphragm	Power/Will
Chest/Upper Back	Heart	Love, Grief, Longing, Desire
Neck/Throat/Shoulders	Throat	Communication
Oral/Mouth/Jaw		
Ocular/Forehead/Eyes	Forehead	Intuition/Vision/Imagination
	Crown/Top of Head	Awakening/Divine Union

As mentioned, the chakras correspond to levels of development or increasing levels of realization within and through the human body.²² Since the body armoring of western psychology and the chakras of eastern philosophy generally correspond with each other and with particular ways of expressing, we can see how the release of trauma stored in the body from a western view and the opening and awakening of awareness from an eastern view seem to be important components of the same human system and consciousness. Taking this relationship of healing, awakening and development beyond the human mind and form, Kashmir Shaivism identifies 36 stages (*tattvas*) of involution and evolution in a system that moves from pure formless Awareness to the coarseness of matter and back again.²³ This idea of Awareness beyond the human mind and body will become important in descriptions of later stages of development. In the next section we will see how modern research is finding similar patterns and experiences in current human stages of development and awakening.

Structure Stages of Development & State Stages of Awakening

Since Piaget's²⁴ study of child development, psychologists, educators, and parents have come to a valuable understanding that children develop in their ability to perceive time, space, relationships and in their abilities to conceptualize and prioritize. Just as important, however, is a lesser-known concept that adults can continue to evolve in similar and even more complex ways.

²² Johari, 2000

²³ Chatterji, 1962

²⁴ Piaget, 1929

Some researchers who study adult development describe this evolution in terms of *stages of ego development*.²⁵ “Loevinger suggested that ego development represents an integration of diverse personality characteristics, including cognitive functioning, personal and interpersonal emotional awareness, and character development.”²⁶ Loevinger’s research showed how these characteristics evolve through stages that reveal an individual’s increasing capacity for complexity, greater degrees of nuanced emotional intelligence, and greater facility in the ability to self-reflect. Stages of ego development can also be regarded as structure stages of reasoning, perspective-taking, meaning-making, or one’s worldview. Regarding the term *ego*, psychologists agree on the importance of establishing a positive sense of self, personal identity, or ego. At later stages of development, however, individuals gradually relax their identification with an ego or personal sense of self. To avoid confusion, in this discussion, I will use the term *structure stages* rather than ego development to denote structure stages of development in contrast with *state* stages of development which I will discuss now.

While *structure* stages describe one’s worldview, *state* stages describe a person’s internal perception, experience, or felt sense of awareness. State stages most often evolve in the context of spiritual or contemplative traditions, reflecting the degree to which someone has progressed along the path of meditative or spiritual awakening. Awakening here is defined as the human capacity to experience a stabilized, felt-sense-perception of the boundlessness of form and formlessness as a unified field from a view beyond the *ordinary* mind. One of the most detailed descriptions of state stage development in humans was researched and documented by Dan P. Brown and published in the book, *Transformations of Consciousness* which he later expanded into his book *Pointing Out the Great Way*. Brown studied meditation lineages, meditation teachers, and students in three traditions and found evidence of state-stage development, cross-culturally. He organized his findings into six major stages, each with several substages. The main stages begin with *Stage I. Preliminary Ethical Practice*, and end with *Stage VI. The Extraordinary Mind and Enlightenment*.

“The major traditions we have studied in their original languages present an unfolding of meditation experience in terms of a stage model; for example, *Mahamudra* from the Tibetan Mahayana Buddhist tradition (Brown, 1977); the *Visuddhimagga* from the Pali Theravadin Buddhist tradition (Nyanamoli, 1976); and the *Yoga Sutras* from the Sanskrit Hindu tradition (Mishra, 1963). The models are sufficiently similar, to suggest an underlying common invariant sequence of

²⁵ Cook-Greuter, 2002; Kegan, 1994; Loevinger, 2014

²⁶ Manners, 2001, pg. 549

stages despite vast cultural and linguistic differences as well as different styles of practice.” (Brown, 1986, pg. 162).

My first encounter with detailed descriptions of later state stages of human development occurred around 1990 when I read Brown’s research on meditators. Then in the mid-90’s, through the work of Ken Wilber²⁷, I learned about Robert Kegan’s²⁸ and Susanne Cook-Greuter’s²⁹ research on late stages of adult development. Later, from 2006-2016, I joined Geoff Fitch and Terri O’Fallon as a facilitator, partner, and research associate at Pacific Integral, where we designed and offered a 9-month, conscious leadership program called *Generating Transformative Change (GTC)*. From 2006 to 2016, we observed the growth and development of hundreds of people over a period of nine months to several years. Initially we used Cook-Greuter’s framework to assess participants’ levels of development before the beginning of the program and again two years later. Under Terri O’Fallon’s direction, we observed the language, energy, emotion, and behavior of individuals at various levels of development, and we compared notes about similarities and differences as people grew in their perspective-taking. After O’Fallon learned to score sentence completion assessments using Cook-Greuter’s framework, O’Fallon began to see what appeared to be additional, deep patterns and structures in human consciousness. She then began her own research to identify more detailed differentiation, descriptions, and progression in the latest stages. Eventually O’Fallon created her own framework and scoring system,³⁰ inviting Geoff Fitch, John Kesler, and myself to learn and test it. The training lasted a full year, during which we each scored two, 36-stem assessments per week, shared and defended our scores in weekly meetings, and learned collectively how to assess people at various stages. O’Fallon hired two independent statisticians to determine the reliability and validity of this scoring method. Subsequently she had others evaluate her framework and its validity and the results are very positive.³¹

To summarize O’Fallon’s twelve *researched* stages of development, briefly: In the first four (Concrete) stages of development, children and adults are more literal and concrete in their ways of being, their themes being survival needs, belonging, and attaining a sense of agency and mastery over their physical reality. In the second four (Subtle) stages of development healthy adults evolve in their awareness of their more subtle ideas, nuanced feelings, and thoughts. They

²⁷ Wilber, 2001

²⁸ Kegan, 1994

²⁹ Cook-Greuter 2002

³⁰ Murray & O’Fallon, 2020

³¹ Murray & Solutions, 2017; O’Fallon, Polister, Neradiek & Murray, 2020

can imagine standing in the shoes of others; they can imagine more complex views of systems and take a wider view of time and space, generations into the past and future. At the next four (MetAware) stages of her researched developmental levels individuals can see the constructed nature of reality, observe their thoughts and feelings in the moment, create new paradigms in their awareness, and translate them into new structures with the intention of transforming human consciousness. As people mature into these late stages, they eventually experience a unified field of vast awareness that includes all of form without beginning or end, and they find simplicity on the other side of complexity through which to communicate nested meta views of existence and Awareness-itself. O'Fallon summarized the selves of each tier in this way: "In the developmental spectrum, we experience different levels of an ego: a concrete self, (our physical body), a subtle self (our identity beyond our physical body such as an authentic self), and a MetAware self (identity as 'conscious awareness')." ³² In O'Fallon's framework, each of the four broad categories or tiers of awareness is comprised of four subcategories that occur sequentially as a person evolves in their ability to take perspective. There are four substages in the concrete tier (stages 1, 1.5, 2, 2.5), four substages in the subtle tier (stages 3, 3.5, 4, 4.5) and four substages in the MetAware tier (stages 5, 5.5, 6, 6.5) as well as in the Non-Dual/Unified tier (stages 7, 7.5, 8, 8.5). The four stages in the MetAware tier are represented by a name and a number as follows: 1) Construct Aware/5.0; 2) Transpersonal/5.5; 3) Universal/6.0; and 4) Illumined/6.5.

Both advanced state stages and advanced structure stages can be *transpersonal* in nature. That is – at these later state and structure stages, a person may describe "experiences in which the sense of identity or self extends beyond (trans) the individual or personal to encompass wider aspects of humankind, life, psyche or cosmos."³³ There is an important distinction, however, between *temporary* states of consciousness and *permanent* state stages and structure stages of consciousness. For example, children can experience altered states of consciousness fairly easily because their sense of self and analytical mind are not fully developed; an adult can experience an exalted state through ingesting psychedelics or through extreme sports, or a meditation practice; however, these states tend to be temporary and are often viewed from earlier worldviews or structure stages.³⁴ A permanent or stabilized state or structure stage is one that remains and expresses throughout a person's waking state and everyday life. Part II of this article will provide greater detail about the experience of MetAware individuals and late-stage meditators.

³² O'Fallon, 2020, pg. 23

³³ Walsh & Vaughn, pg. 203

³⁴ Combs, 2013

Limitations of Developmental Frameworks and Conventional Psychology

The research on structure stages and state stages of consciousness offers substantial benefit to the evolution of individual and collective human awareness, however, until the last decade, little has been known about the relationship between these stages and psychological trauma. This relationship between structure stages of development and unconscious shadow is important. While people evolve in their worldview, perspective-taking, or their ability to perceive complexity - they may continue to suffer from mental, emotional, or relational issues that interfere with a sense of happiness and fulfillment. Similarly, regarding state stages of development in contemplative traditions, few meditation teachers adequately address the areas of psychological trauma and unconscious shadow in their teachings, leaving their students at best to find other avenues to address their emotional and relational health or at worst contributing to a dissociative state of *spiritual bypassing*. John Welwood described spiritual bypassing as “the tendency to use spiritual practice to rise above the difficulties of unresolved personal problems and emotions.”³⁵ Without the healing and resolution of physical and psychological trauma, spiritual bypassing or dissociation is common.

Conversely, because state stages and structure stages of adult development are still relatively unknown frameworks among the general population and even in the field of psychology, most psychologists, counselors, and psychotherapists do not address states and/or stages of development. Their clients may become better adjusted socially, and more self-aware but likely will continue to suffer from their assumptions about constructed reality, not knowing that researched paths of awakening can provide a greater sense of freedom, clarity, and happiness. Similarly, most spiritual teachers don't address structure stages of ego development even if they do train their students to evolve in state stages of meditation. A meditation student may have an experience of emptiness, beginner's mind, or a sense of oneness, for example, but cannot understand system's theory nor perceive the constructed nature of reality, which are both indicators of later structure stages of development. When structure stage development is brought to meditation training, individuals mature in their ability to take multiple perspectives on their experience, resulting in less attachment and less entanglement in their personal views, and leading to greater clarity, ease, and contentment in life. But the mind alone cannot heal trauma. As mentioned, healing and awakening are whole body-mind experiences. When state stage and structure stage development are combined with body-centered, cognitive-behavior and psychodynamic approaches to psychology, the results can be powerful.

³⁵ 1984, pg. 64

Through ten years with Pacific Integral and an additional eight years of coaching primarily late-stage individuals I've observed a relationship between O'Fallon's stages of development, Brown's state stages, Hindu chakra psychology, and Reich's body armoring. Remarkably, there seems to be a distinct progression in an individual's capacity to feel, sense and bring in-the-moment awareness first to 1) body sensations, then to 2) emotions, then to 3) constructs, then to 4) very subtle, non-conceptual energy impressions, then to 5) a merging and dissolution into and as Awareness itself, and ultimately to 6) a stabilized felt-sense of Self as an integration of the formless and all of form. As you can see, the progression moves from concrete to super subtle awareness of Awareness and ideally integrates these various layers of presence into a sense of unbounded wholeness. Table 3 shows the corresponding levels in these various frameworks.

In the following pages we will examine the apparent relationship between researched descriptions of Dan Brown's state stages, O'Fallon's structure stages and anecdotal descriptions of late-stage experience and embodiment. The anecdotal descriptions are based on my experience coaching or facilitating more than one-hundred late-stage individuals over many months to many years. The remainder of this article will focus on the healing and evolution of these later-stage individuals.

Table 3 – A Theory of the Relationship Between Various Schools of Healing and Awakening

Reich Body Bands	Hindu Chakras	O'Fallon Stage Development (Churchill & Murray, 2020, pgs. 298-304)	Brown's Stages of Meditation (Brown, 1986)	Themes
Pelvis	Root	1.0 Impulsive 1.5 Egocentric		Survival
Abdomen	Abdomen	2.0 Rule Oriented 2.5 Conformist	Stages I.A, I.B: Prelim Ethical Practices	Belonging/Sexuality
Diaphragm	Diaphragm	3.0 Expert 3.5 Achiever	Stages I.C., II.A & II.B Body & Mind Training	Personal Empowerment
Chest	Heart	4.0 Pluralist	Stage II.C & III.A.1 Concentration in front	Compassion/Longing Grief/Inclusivity
Neck/Shoulders	Throat	4.5 Strategist	Stage III.A.2 & III.B Pattern Recognition	Voicing Inter-Systemic Complexity
Mouth/Jaw	[Brain-Stem, Foramen Magnum]*	5.0 Construct Aware	Stage III.C and Stage IV.A Stopping the Mind	Construct Aware, Aware of Awareness
Forehead	Forehead	5.5 Transpersonal	Stage IV.B IV.C. Loss of i-acting, Psychic Powers	Hall of Mirrors; Clear Perceiving
	Crown of Head	6.0 Universal	V.A. V.B, V.C Cessation, Reverse Samadhi, Unity	Divine/Kosmic Union, Ocean and Waves
	Above Head	6.5 Illumined	VI.A Stop Karmic Chain; Equanimity; Basis Entry	Extraordinary Mind, Witness, Turiya
	Boundless, No Location	7.0 Intuitive, 7.5	VI.B The Yoga of Non-Meditation	Path Enlightenment, Non-dual Saturation
	Awareness/Self senses ItSelf thru every Form	8.0, 8.5	VI.C Path & Fruition Enlightenment	Enlightenment, Rainbow Body, Turiyatita

*Identified by author: Not a common chakra.



PART II ~ LATE STATES & STAGES OF AWARENESS: EMBODIED EXPERIENCE, SHADOW & INTERVENTIONS

Let's begin with a brief description of late-stage Strategist or 4.5 in O'Fallon's framework. At this stage many people have become emotionally intelligent and self-aware in addition to their ability to accomplish goals in life. Often Strategists are leaders in their field. They are admired for their capacity to stand in the shoes of others, to see into the past and future over multiple generations, and to understand how local and global systems of all kinds are related and impact one another in an evolutionary manner. As a result of these skills, they can originate ideas to solve complex problems in society. These individuals are operating inside the paradigm that is consensus reality – the way of perceiving the world that we are taught in school and learn from parents, science, and other human-made media - a reality that we assume to be true from the time we are born and which most people continue to assume is true for the rest of their lives. But some people break through even this advanced stage of development and continue to grow.

A Seismic Rupture in Ordinary Perception: Awareness of Awareness – 5.0 and III.C/IV.A

An accelerating number of people are beginning to access the broad tier of awareness that O'Fallon calls MetAware. Some of the drivers of this acceleration seem to be the accessibility of global information exchange via the internet along with greater accessibility and acceptance of psychedelics, breathwork and adult development. When someone transitions to O'Fallon's first MetAware stage (Construct Aware/5.0), they begin to become aware of the *Awareness* (beyond the thinking mind) that perceives all of experience. Of Brown's corresponding state stage III.C he stated: "Here in the third of the concentration exercises the practitioner gets a deeper glimpse into the mind's natural state, free from its course level content such as ordinary appearances and emotional states."³⁶ And he says, "A nonconceptual still state, in one sense, means to be-done-with all coarse-level cognitive, emotional, sensory, and perceptual events, especially thought content."³⁷

Experience of 5.0/Construct Aware, and III.C/IV.A

When someone begins to transition to Construct Aware or 5.0, the assumption that consensual reality is true begins to evaporate or rupture for moments at a time into an expanded state of deep stillness that opens beyond ordinary awareness. This beginning felt experience of Awareness brings with it a new capacity of unbiased observing. Also known as "beginner's mind," in Zen Buddhism, this quality of unbiased observing allows an individual to see objects and actions freshly with little to no elaborated thought, history, or interpretation, even if just for seconds at a time. In terms of a felt sense in and around the body, when these episodes occur, people often describe feeling a pleasant, expanded field of warmth or light behind their neck and behind their lower brain stem as indicated in Table 3. People also describe a sense of being suspended or lifted into a sense of weightlessness or groundless ground.

At first a person will experience flashes of this state for seconds or minutes. The state experience may seem like a surreal, slow-motion recognizing of one's awareness being aware of the elements of experience as they occur, in the present moment. Brown stated, "The practitioner becomes aware of an event exactly as it happens, at the moment that it arises. All such

³⁶ Brown, 2006, pg. 216

³⁷ Brown, 2006, pg. 217

immediately occurring events pass almost as quickly as they come forth.”³⁸ In fact, these moments of awareness of Awareness - while simultaneously perceiving concrete and subtle objects in awareness - bring a quality of direct perception rather than normal thinking. For example, a person may be standing near a picnic table in a park with several friends as everyone is casually talking. Suddenly she becomes aware of the Awareness or space in which everyone is interacting, as if in a dream or a movie. She can see the others as well as the surrounding environment, and she becomes aware of the awareness that is aware of this experience. The people and surroundings suddenly seem fresh and new – or perhaps time seems to slowdown - while the Awareness that is aware becomes the main event – accompanied by a sense of surprise, awe and sometimes amusement or disorientation as this extraordinary experience occurs.

In another example, a corporate trainer may have given hundreds of presentations to staff or clients and mastered technical and presentation skills. He may be adept at content knowledge and have a keen perception of the social dynamics in the room. One day, as he is giving a presentation, he finds himself seemingly outside of the whole situation while he is speaking, looking at it as if he is seeing it anew, and seeing that all aspects of it are constructed by the human mind. In this extraordinary moment he realizes that the entire scene is occurring only because the whole room full of people have collectively given it meaning and importance.

These moments shake the foundation of one’s understanding of reality. As these states become more frequent there is a dismantling of ones well integrated belief systems. Individuals at this stage begin to understand that all human-made beliefs, systems, and structures are constructed by the human mind, and inherently empty of meaning. The meaning and importance of all concrete and subtle objects including relationships come into question. The truth of consensus reality seems to disintegrate. Flashes of insight occur about which structures in their life are not in synch with the ease and flow they experience when perceiving clearly from these expanded states, and they may realize that it is time to make changes to their relationships, their work, and their residence.

At this stage all the knowledge, experience, and understanding of how to operate a human body and mind continue. What is different is the way reality is perceived. Instead of operating primarily from the intellect, for moments at a time the individual drops identification with and as the intellect and perceives from an expanded spacious emptiness in which thoughts and feelings seem to arise from and dissipate back into this spacious awareness. “Awareness pertains to the mind perspective. It is used wherever the events of the mind are calm enough to reveal the mind’s

³⁸ Brown, 2006, pg. 234

natural way of knowing, that is, knowing through non-conceptual, non-reactive awareness.”³⁹ As an individual’s awareness opens to this stage, their view of what is real, true, and necessary begins to relax. They see that the boundaries between ideas and objects are not as solid as they once thought. And from this new expanded level of awareness, they can begin to perceive and objectify very subtle energetic sensations in and around their body as well as relational connections and dynamics that operate in the “invisible” but now increasingly perceivable subtle energy field.

As they progress through this stage they abide for longer and longer periods of time in this presence and sense of suspension. On the positive side, these periods bring a sense of awe, wonder and the majesty of life and existence. There is a desire to “just be” and often a lack of knowing who one is, what one wants and what is true. Though this “not knowing” experience occurs at all developmental transitions, this one is particularly novel. Only a small percentage of people have made this transition into MetAware perspectives and therefore there are few reflections in life about what to expect and how to navigate the journey. Some of the challenges of this stage are also novel as we will discuss now.

Shadow at 5.0 & III.C/IV.A

These state experiences can bring a brief sense of spacious freedom and wonder and/or can also bring a disturbed confusion or futility, depending on one’s preparedness and social system. When individuals in this transition are supported by friends, communities and professionals who understand these states and stages they have a better chance of navigating this passage with grace and greater ease. Others find this passage quite dysregulating to the point of mental, emotional and/or physical breakdown. The shifting sense of reality can be quite disconcerting and confusing to both the one experiencing the shift and to those around them. This dismantling process includes the ***breaking down of old defensive postures and beliefs*** which held unconscious shadow material at bay and provided a sense of self. As these defensive postures come undone the unconscious painful memories, feelings and thoughts from their past will rise to conscious awareness more readily. Even if they have been in therapy in the past, they may not have metabolized what is now coming to the surface; and these memories may be overwhelming.

Further, as individuals progress through this stage/state they can become quite ***self-critical*** about their swings from their peaceful sense of spacious awareness back into their old

³⁹ Brown, 2006, pg. 218-219

painful behavioral patterns and relational dynamics. Since they have experienced a more peaceful state of awareness, they wonder why they are not able to maintain it. Since they know beliefs and interpretations are empty of meaning, they wonder why they still regularly find themselves emotionally or mentally participating in thought forms and situations that create suffering. Without support they may find themselves feeling **cynical and nihilistic** about people and about life. The cynicism will reveal itself through an attitude of “What’s the point? If everything is empty of meaning anyway, nothing matters.” Many people at this stage are **disturbed by their lack of motivation** to accomplish anything, and they may be afraid that they will **never function normally** again in life. Others during this stage may become **terrified of the spacious emptiness** and wonder if they are losing their mind. In a sense, they are. They are losing the mind that was constricted by a limiting system of beliefs. They are losing the mind that believed it knew so much. At 4.5/Strategist, they were at the top of their game. Now they begin to realize that what they thought was true and real, may not be. They realize that down deep **none of us really know anything.**

Interventions at 5.0 & III.C/IV.A

Initially, when I work with individuals at this stage of development, I want to help them develop a healthy, stable, embodied, foundation through which to awaken into later stages. We begin with breathing and embodied awareness to assess and dissolve any concentrations of blocked energy in the body, and we examine the mind for obsessive or mistaken thought patterns. Ultimately, we are working toward a clear central channel through which the kundalini, energy, chi, or spirit can rise and expand through the entire physical body and through the subtle energy field. Along with the expanded spaciousness, deeper layers of unresolved past trauma naturally tend to surface into awareness. In this way unconscious shadow work occurs through the body spontaneously as part of development and the awakening process.

Intervention: Dissolving Somatic and Mental Defenses

When needed, I help people at this stage heal any substantial, unresolved trauma by encouraging them to breathe through their body and to release contracted muscles, stuck energy, repressed memories, and to feel the resulting emotion just as I do at earlier stages. For example, I’ll have them locate either a painful area of tension or sense into a place where their breath or energy gets stuck in their body. I’ll invite them to relax around the area as much as possible, then breathe into the feeling of stuck-ness or numbness and follow the movement of the energy as it

releases. Often when they truly feel and surrender into the pain, tension or energy, the movement of energy will move the body in ways that tell a story. If the energy is stuck and won't move, I'll invite them to intensify the sensation of stuck-ness, wait for a moment while the energy builds, and then invite them to see how the energy wants to express through the body. And if it still won't move, I'll invite them to get inside the stuck-ness and tell me more about it. Each of these approaches work well 1) to begin moving the energy, and 2) to provide more information about what they've been holding down that is now ready to be expressed. It is important to allow a lot of space with no pressure for an outcome and to respect the timing and readiness of the body and unconscious. In this way we trust the larger Awareness to determine when a person is ready to feel and express what has been submerged for so long. These releases in the body-mind, clear more space for Awareness to reveal itself and for these states of awareness of Awareness to expand and gain in frequency. The relief and even pleasure that these more spacious states bring, allows them to *trust* that Awareness Itself resolves all tension, conflict, and disturbance. By relaxing the body of unnaturally held tension, releasing the preoccupations of the mind, and opening to awareness of Awareness, the client is ready and able to perceive increasingly subtle patterns of tension held in their unconscious.

Intervention: Trust, and Comfort with “Not-Knowing”

Because our identity has been developed and held together by our rational mind, familiar emotional and physical sensations, and concrete surroundings a deep existential vulnerability occurs as we contact and loosen layers of subtle tension. At one time the worries, plans, criticism, and regrets of the intellect seemed to keep everything in place and under control. Now these constructs are seen through as empty, problematic, and painful. People at this stage can see from an expanded awareness/Awareness or witnessing viewpoint that their suffering occurs because of their distorted (or partial) interpretations of appearances, and their need for people and things to be a certain way. As they realize that there is no right way for anyone or anything to be they are forced to let go of the constructs that once gave them a sense of control and safety. And they learn that we really do not know what will happen in the next moment let alone a week or a year or ten years into the future. They are learning that we cannot control life: Instead, life has its way with us. So, they must become comfortable with “not knowing” and with deep Trust in the intangible substance of Awareness Itself.

When they accept the willingness not to know and the willingness to trust something larger than their intellect, they can slowly empty the mind of obsessive thought, live from a suspended sense of spacious empty clear Awareness, and trust that they will be okay when they let go. Since

they have already experienced seconds or moments of suspension of thought, they understand what this means, and this is often a very useful ongoing daily practice for people at this stage. Since this is a brand-new way of being, and of processing information, they benefit by encouragement, reassurance that they will be okay, validation and being reminded to return to this state when they lose themselves back to the old patterns of thinking and responding.

Intervention – Non-Grasping and Non-Avoiding

As people at this stage see how their identification with their thoughts and emotions have created their suffering, they also become more aware of subtle grasping and how either grasping or rejecting anything leads to suffering. Since they can perceive thought, sensation, and emotion as it is occurring, they are equipped to begin to recognize when they get caught in desiring or grasping at an object, and when they are resisting or avoiding an object. At this 5.0 stage the skill is not well developed but can begin to aid one's understanding of what creates their suffering. For example, suffering occurs when we want another person to be different (grasping and resisting) or when we don't want to feel our hurt (avoidance) or when we become fixated on an object of desire (grasping). When we can empty our minds of obsessive thought and relax into our bodies and emotions, we can clear space for vital energy/spirit to flow and for Awareness to reveal what is true. In not avoiding and not grasping we let go into deeper peace. "The practitioner is clearing away the disorderly mental debris. He is preparing himself to observe the very functioning of the mind at its simpler levels."⁴⁰ The skill in identifying subtle grasping and subtle avoiding is a theme throughout the MetAware tier that becomes more and more refined as people develop. At first, we become aware of avoiding and attaching to physical aspects in our environment as well as our thinking, physical/muscular holding, and emotions. In later stages we will see that once we have let go of these coarser aspects, we find deeper and subtler energetic attachments and avoidances that we must purify or dissolve to enjoy deepening equanimity and bliss.

Intervention – Self-Compassion, and Release of Criticism of Self and Others

A more specific and common form of grasping and avoiding is a habit of judging and criticizing oneself and others. At 5.0 people begin to realize that these judgmental thought forms create internal contraction and pain, and interfere with clear, in-the-moment perception. Judging themselves for getting caught in old constructs and narratives is very common. Encouraging people to release the habit of self-criticism in favor of relaxed, empty, and peaceful Awareness is very important at this stage. When I see someone frustrated and angry at themselves about

⁴⁰ Brown, 2006, pg. 215

getting lost in the constructs of the mind or about having another fight with their spouse, I often feel an ache in my heart center for them. I reflect my heartache to them about their negative feelings towards their self. And I suggest that whatever they think they've done wrong is okay. They can let go and forgive their self, learn from their mistake, and feel some compassion for how far they've come and for who they are. Then they can come back to clear Awareness and start fresh. Similarly, they can practice being with others and noticing when their mind creates a judgement. They can practice releasing the judgement or criticism as soon as they become aware of it -- to perceive the person with a clear mind and an open heart. This shift relieves tension in the body-mind and brings the person back to the now – an experience which has never occurred before and never will occur again just like this.

Intervention – Finding New Meaning

As the awareness of Awareness grows and stabilizes, these individuals begin to trust the Awareness as always present, and to relax into the growing sense of freedom, peace, and clarity that they experience. These benefits motivate them to continue releasing attachment to thoughts, beliefs, and emotions along with anything in their concrete world that prevents freedom and flow. Meaning now shifts from attaching to social norms and getting approval from others – to a sense of awe in the emptiness of objects and a curiosity about what is true. When a person falls into cynicism, they may be expressing a deeper unresolved betrayal from their past in which case it would be useful to explore the historical root of the cynicism. They can also be assisted by helping them to identify or remember healthy activities and interests that brought or bring them sensual pleasure such as being in nature, dancing, painting, singing or by encouraging them to find ways to meaningfully interact with and serve other people. These activities can relax them and help them soften the heart, find new authentic meaning in connection with self and others.

As a person moves toward the end of this stage, they have a sense of greater spaciousness, and can sense a healthy vibration through the body. They are learning to let go of the habits of thinking and feeling that obscure larger and clearer Awareness. They are becoming comfortable in releasing their (ego) attachment to subtle self-structures including identification with attributes of the personal self and to the way in which one is perceived by others. And they are ready to allow the Awareness, energy/spirit to move them and inspire them in a more consistent, and natural flow with greater ease. This phase of letting go of old mental models and emotional habits and learning to remain present to the beginning awareness of Awareness Itself can take several years. The further one develops into later stages, the less need there is to work

through physical constrictions, mental constructs, and traumatic memories, and the more easily a person can work directly through the energy field and from/as Awareness itself.

Relaxing the Personal Will: Surrendering to Universal Will – 5.5 and IV.B/IV.C

Experience of 5.5/Transpersonal & IV.B/IV.C

As a person enters the next stage of development, 5.5/Transpersonal in O'Fallon's framework and IV.B/IV.C in Brown's research, they often suddenly move from a very empty and receptive place of "not knowing" to being motivated by an organic surge of energy, inspiration, and clear guidance. At this stage a person is beginning to sense that spaciousness is one vast oceanic consciousness through which form can be influenced. Since objects are empty and infinite the spaciousness that penetrates the objects also is infinite. Awareness is opening in such a way that the individual doesn't just perceive the constructed nature of reality, but now from an expanded Awareness, they can organize, transform, and prioritize those constructs in service to planetary consciousness.⁴¹ These new constructions tend to integrate various interests they've had in life. Generally, the new ideas that arise are comprised of those activities, skills, and talents that a person has already mastered, and which bring joy or continuing fascination. Even the most seemingly unrelated combination of interests can be integrated now that all constructs are found to be malleable and insubstantial. Examples include combining interests in linguistics, adult development, mathematics, and human motivation to create a new global language that will transform human consciousness; integrating dance, psychology, presentation skills, and energy-awareness for collective global healing; combining martial arts, physics, family constellation, and organizational development to transform large scale consciousness through business or finance. These inspired visions and impulses occur in people at this stage along with an experience of potent, free-flowing energy that moves through the physical body and subtle energy field, gathering in force and momentum until it inspires, motivates, and literally moves the individual, naturally, into unique acts of service for the benefit of all of sentience.

Similarly, people at 5.5/Transpersonal become fascinated by new ways to perceive and to think about complex topics. Since they understand that any object can be seen, interpreted, and described from infinite points of view, they enjoy finding deeper patterns in the way life works

⁴¹ Churchill & Murray, 2020; O'Fallon, 2011; Ramirez, Fitch & O'Fallon, 2013

or in the way humans have created meaning and structure. They can get lost in halls of mirrors which they find fascinating and amusing. For example, a person may realize that his “trying” to let go of grasping is another form of grasping but trying not to try is also another form of grasping. Wherever he looks he is either grasping or trying not to grasp which is more grasping. The conundrum is an interesting puzzle like pulling fingers from a Chinese finger trap. All he must do is to “let go” or “ease up” and his fingers release naturally. This hall of mirrors experience often accompanies a fascination with the idea of fractals. A fractal is a part that mirrors and contains the whole. Fractals become a delightful way of having their hall of mirrors reflected to them as a naturally occurring phenomenon.

At this stage a person’s consciousness often becomes more complex or full – and simultaneously more expanded and spacious. While their expanding awareness of Awareness is becoming more full and more complex with infinite and uncommon perspectives, their awareness is also becoming more spacious and more fluid. As a result, individuals throughout this stage of development increasingly and naturally begin to perceive beyond the five senses into a vast subtle, energetic network which pervades all physical form, globally and beyond. They experience what ancient scriptures have called psychic abilities or siddhis. These psychic abilities include clairsentience or clear feeling and sensing into the experience of others, life, and the world; clairaudience – the ability to hear clear sound, information, and truth through the field of Being/Awareness; clairvoyance – the ability to see in one’s mind images and information that bring insight to a situation. These gifts happen naturally as the physical, mental, emotional, and energetic contractions are relaxed and released by consciously breathing through the body and by dissolving subtle tension through their body and energy field. Brown said, “psychic powers are a result of perceptual experiences that are part of our human potential but become manifest only after our most habitual perceptual structures are removed.”⁴² In contemplative traditions, these extraordinary abilities are associated with the energy center located at the forehead which is also associated with the pineal gland as indicated in Table III.

Shadow at 5.5 & IV.B/IV.C

A shadow side of complexity at this stage is an **over fascination with thoughts** and thinking that draw the person into the mind and away from an embodied, felt sense of wellbeing. They aren’t so much caught “in” the mind and constructs as they were in 5.0 and earlier. They do see the emptiness of constructs, but now they find themselves either 1) fascinated by one

⁴² Brown, 1986, pgs. 268-269

construct after another, or 2) describing in detail the complexity of their infinite perspective taking. This can draw the person away from equally important aspects of their life such as developing healthy relationships, healing past trauma, dissolving the importance of the individual self, and stabilizing awareness of Awareness. Brown said: "Coarse flightiness is when coarse-level cognition arises and thereby distracts the practitioner from concentrating upon the intended object."⁴³ In this case the intended object is spacious Awareness Itself which for a person at this stage, still feels like an extension of their mind or individual awareness, rather than the boundlessness that penetrates the entire Kosmos. This continued sense of **individual self as agent of creation** becomes another obstacle to a person's evolution. At this stage people still assume they need an agenda, a plan, a strategy, especially when they become anxious about human needs such as income or relationships. Here, their personal willfulness comes forward as an unconscious dominant force in their psyche. When they follow these plans and strategies that are sourced from personal will or personal strategizing, they quickly encounter obstacles. For example, they exhaust themselves through efforting; their plans fail; they become confused; others do not respond well, etc. Through these "mistakes" they slowly learn the benefit of relaxing their personal will in favor of Universal will. But once again they find that they cannot "make" anything happen. Brown says: "Subtle flightiness is when subtle cognition occurs. It is a condition in which the practitioner either tries to prevent something from happening or to make something happen."⁴⁴ Though not an easy task this person must learn to let go of their own agenda and allow a sense of Universal Will to dominate.

Another concern and confusion that intensifies at this stage is a tendency for **spiritual bypassing**. Very often people at 5.5 have a fair amount of meditation training and experience. As mentioned, many meditation teachers do not integrate embodied awareness and emotional intelligence with meditation training. People at 5.5 often have become skilled at watching thoughts and feelings come and go to the point that they disregard their feelings, bodily sensations, and intuition. Instead of setting boundaries in relationships, learning to say no, and learning to take care of their humanness, they observe these elements as empty rather than understanding that these sensations are important information from Awareness about what needs attention in their life. Helping them move attention into their body and learning to listen and distinguish clear signals through a sense of boundless Awareness versus re-enacting distorted habits based on attachment and avoidance is an important intervention in this case.

⁴³ 2006, pg. 250

⁴⁴ 2006, pg. 250

Another challenge at this stage is the **difficulty in integrating emptiness and form** or fullness. Some people favor the truth, beauty, and goodness of sensuality, love, and the miraculous experience of being alive, while others tend to prefer the freedom of vast, clear, transcendent emptiness. Most people at this stage can experience both fullness and emptiness, but not at the same time. For example, they may be waxing philosophically about the fascinating connections and complexities they are perceiving in their consciousness and which they take to be important revelations. When invited to see the emptiness or awareness in which these forms are arising/passing or interpenetrated they dismiss the invitation as an interference or misunderstanding about what they are describing. Minutes later they find themselves empty again arguing for the emptiness of all constructs. These swings or biases can bring confusion and inner conflict about choosing between emptiness and fullness as a way of perceiving, and/or in their difficulty stabilizing and maintaining expanded awareness of Awareness consistently through their everyday lives.

Another common point of pain for individuals at this stage is a sense of **loneliness**. Only a very small percentage of people in the world perceive and operate with this level of both spaciousness and complexity; so, few people can understand them. Furthermore, they can see and perceive so much complexity that they sometimes have trouble communicating their unique planetary visions to others who could help them implement them. People at earlier stages perceive those at 5.5 as overly abstract or intellectual. People at later stages can feel frustrated or inundated by what they see as overcomplicating truth. Also, at 5.5 people believe the visions that arise are their personal visions that they must enact, drive, or manage. Brown says: "So long as there is any artificial activity, the mind is imbalanced. The goal of the present meditation is to clear away such obstructing artificial activity so that the natural samadhi mind can shine forth. When there is no artificial activity the mind itself settles in equanimity."⁴⁵ At 5.5 people haven't yet let go to allow consciousness to orchestrate. "While having eradicated the ordinary self-representation from meditation the meditator has not yet eradicated the ordinary sense of self agency called acting in the Mahamudra and I-acting in the yoga sutras."⁴⁶ This separate self-sense along with their willfulness and unusual complexity all contribute to them feeling unseen, misunderstood, and lonely.

⁴⁵ Brown, 2006, pg. 259

⁴⁶ Brown, 1986, pg. 242

Intervention: Dissolving Subtle Impressions (which obscure Awareness)

Because much of the more coarsely held mind, emotion, and energy blockages have been released at earlier stages, individuals at this 5.5 stage of development can easily resolve residual trauma or disturbance directly through their energy field and Awareness by dissolving and clearing what Hindu philosophy calls *samskaras* and what Tibetan Buddhism calls *subtle impressions*. Subtle impressions are often unconscious concentrations of subtle energy that potentially unfold into subtle non-conceptual wave-like patterns through the body and energy field. These non-conceptual energy patterns and sensations then give rise to unconscious thought constructs through which the individual creates conceptual stories about the subtle sensations. These stories lead to emotional reactivity which then creates and validates the imagined outcome in one's experience, leading to potential manifestation of these habitual outcomes in physical reality.

Subtle impressions are generally felt as a subtle disturbance in the clear spacious Awareness that occurs prior to thought or emotion. They can occur as a feeling of unease in one's energy field. As a person progresses through this 5.5 stage, breathing and focusing into specific muscular tension still can be useful, but becomes less necessary than breathing into and focusing on subtle sensations in and through their energy field. Especially if they have had experience with conscious breathing and somatic sensing, much of the physical tension has already been worked through so that conscious, full-bodied breath and body-awareness become more regular, natural, and spontaneous. This deep relaxation in body and mind is what allows subtle energy impressions to become more noticeable and prevalent. When a client at this stage experiences a disturbance of any kind even if it has already been elaborated by thought or emotion, I invite them to take a couple of full-bodied breaths and to relax. I invite them to become aware of the clear and empty field of expanded Awareness. Next, I instruct them to become aware of the felt sense of subtle energy of the disturbance whether attributed to a person, an event or even a disturbing felt sense devoid of content, and to bring that felt sense of it into the clear Awareness that permeates the body and subtle energy field. I ask them to allow the disturbing energy to take up as much space as it needs in the body, energy field, and Awareness without thought elaboration. Often, I'll encourage them to allow the sensation to intensify, similar to my work with people at earlier levels when I invite them to intensify the physical muscular contraction in their bodies. However, now I ask them to be fully present with the disturbing subtle felt sense or energy. I ask them to juxtapose this disturbing energy with their sense of clear, spacious Awareness and note the difference in the qualities of energy sensation. As they remain present with the energy as it moves, relaxes, and dissolves back into clear Awareness, they receive insight. The experience of these subtle

impressions often emerges and subsides as a bell curve, coming from seemingly nowhere, building charge and intensity, and finally subsiding back into emptiness. When done well, this technique is much quicker than the more traditional psychodynamic approaches as well as the somatic approach of breathing and focusing into muscular holding because it bypasses elaborated and constructed story, avoids reification of these stories, and gets to the essence of the energy contraction, simply through the clarified awareness of the felt sensation. The individual sees that the issue is non-substantial and that the sense of shame, anger, or fear (for example) are all constructed elements of perception that lead to a sense of separation. Healing occurs through ensuing flashes of insight. A deeper compassion for self and other, and a recognition that in a certain sense “there is no other” result as the disturbing felt sense dissolves and the inter-related, components of the larger picture reveal themselves. Now the breath is used to sense into the body more gently, to flush out any surfacing residue and as a method of integrating and sealing insight.⁴⁷ When repeated the process of releasing somatic tension and dissolving subtle impressions can help relieve the individual of deeper layers of shadow material from unconscious trauma which cloud the mind and Awareness.

Intervention: Embodiment and Grounding

Spiritual bypass can be viewed as a split between mind and body. Unresolved trauma in the body interferes with Awareness and presence through body, mind, emotion, and a clear subtle energy field. Instead of genuinely feeling the pain of the trauma in the body, a person avoids the pain and “believes” he is free of suffering or can’t understand why he is still suffering when he can observe all objects as empty. One of the ways to help a person integrate body, emotion and awareness with mental perception is to bring focus to contractions deeper in the body and to locate any submerged areas of unresolved pain. For these people, working with subtle impressions and the energy body is suspended in favor of a return to more concrete somatic focusing as used at earlier stages. Describing to them their tendency to overuse the intellect and inviting them to relax the mind and move awareness to the interior sensations of the body can be helpful. In these instances, it is important to assist them to bring awareness through their entire body into their pelvis, feet, and legs. This could take a bit of time depending on how unfamiliar this process is to them. It will be useful to them to learn to breathe into the hardened or vacated places in their body to increase their ability to feel more sensation. Many people who have this split between intellect and body are very resistant to breathing, but even small amounts of

⁴⁷ Yadav & Mutha 2016

conscious breathing can help them relax into their body more deeply and feel the trauma they have avoided. If they still need deeper embodiment, integration, and grounding, they can stand up, feel the ground, stomp their feet. They could find another person to connect with through touch and through emotionally vulnerable and intimate conversation. This other person might be a bodyworker who specializes in cranio-sacral therapy, the Rosen Method, Pilates or another form of somatic therapy that leads to emotional release. These methods will help people at this stage become aware of the challenging sensations in the body that need presence and integration.

Intervention: Releasing Personal Will

Learning to allow Awareness to take the lead in life seems to be one of the overall tasks of this stage of development. An important intervention here is to help the individual sense into the difference between personal willfulness and the surrender to Awareness Itself as driver of activity. Personal willfulness carries a tension in body and mind. As the unconscious subtle tensions of the will are released, space is freed up to allow the clear-seeing, clear-hearing, clear-sensing and clear-knowing to come through Awareness Itself without interference from one's personal agenda. "Moreover, the skilled practitioner predominantly sees potential events as immediately becoming calm upon arising as opposed to seeing their habitual momentum to become elaborated."⁴⁸ As people at this stage listen deeply and follow the guidance they receive from/as Awareness-Itself, they learn that life flows easily and with greater enjoyment. When they default to following their personal will, they hit roadblocks. Through this trial and error, they humbly learn to let go of their personal will into a more direct and conscious reciprocity with the Kosmos. They begin letting go of a sense of separation and to being attached to their inspired visions. They relax into Awareness-itself and feel a sense of oneness with all, which brings them into the next stage of Awareness along with an end to loneliness.

⁴⁸ Brown, 2006, pg. 251

Dissolving and Relaxing into a Felt Sense of Oneness – 6.0 & V.A., V.B., V.C

Experience at 6.0/Universal & V.A, V.B, V.C

As finer subtle impressions or subtle energetic holding patterns are dissolved, individual awareness relaxes into infinite space and eternal time as a permanent state stage. The over-complexity of the previous stage required a letting go into perceiving deeper patterns of consciousness and more fundamental laws of nature (for example, the way energy tends to move). This new direct experiencing of the deeper structures of reality brings simplicity on the other side of the complexity that allows them to communicate universal patterns in poetic ways that others intuitively appreciate. The new sensation in the body is a sense of opening or softening at the top of the head and a felt sense of warm, energetic expansion infinitely into space in all directions around and beyond the body. Simultaneously a sense of embodiment moves deeper into an earthy grounding that feels connected to all that is.

Now they are aware of the vastness of all concrete and subtle form simultaneously, which seems to be arising and passing through the infinite field of Awareness. Emptiness and form have united into a sense of oneness and wholeness. Brown states “The ordinary mental continuum is experienced in a radically new way-no longer as discrete coarse- or subtle-level successive mental events, but as a vast atemporal network of very subtle, interconnected propensities, seemingly produced en masse.”⁴⁹ At this stage, information from the whole Kosmos seems to come through this person’s felt-sense of expanded Awareness. Wilber describes the meaning of Kosmos this way: “So we might say the Kosmos includes the physio sphere, or cosmos; the biosphere, or life; the noosphere, or mind, all of which are radiant manifestations of pure Emptiness, and are not other to that Emptiness.”⁵⁰ People at this stage perceive the interconnectedness of all concrete and subtle form. Everything-all-at-once seems to extend out infinitely in all directions. They can see and feel how everything co-arises and co-relates. Of stage V.C. Arising/Passing Away Samadhi, Brown said:

The ordinary time/space matrix of ordinary perception is transcended, and awareness opens up to another order in which all the potential events of the universe and the fabric of potential connections between these events comes forth. Within this undivided

⁴⁹ Brown, 2006, pg. 361

⁵⁰ Kornman, 1996

interconnectedness of the universe, interactions occur not by causal laws but by relative relationships to everything else. Positionality in space and properties also depend on relative relationship to everything.⁵¹

This capacity also allows them to glimpse how actions will ripple out into the future and create karma or consequences through time and space. Through the clear, empty field of Awareness they can see how thought creates emotional reaction, becomes elaborated and reified into subtle energy images/senses, which unfold into manifest concrete reality. They can see how these subtle forms turn into decisions and then lead to actions that have consequences immediately and as far as the mind can see. Because their awareness is so present and in-the-moment – they experience the consequences of their actions very quickly - like “instant karma”. Thus, they begin to receive and process feedback more quickly to avoid creating more suffering in themselves and others. Through this near instantaneous feedback loop, they begin to experience the Kosmos perceiving them and teaching them in every moment through the eyes, words and behaviors of everything and everyone. Further, there are fewer obstacles in the persons physical, mental, emotional, and subtle energy fields and so there is greater clarity of received information. As a result, they gain confidence in the accuracy of their perception which reinforces itself in consistently positive results in their life.

People at this Universal stage experience themselves as increasingly translucent and insubstantial. Their felt sense of subtle energy becomes a more refined vibration that turns into a visible radiance through their presence. Their individual sense of self is no longer foregrounded.⁵² Since the personal will has relaxed, they stop pushing. They let go of their own agenda. The relaxation of the subtle biases and subtle energy boundaries dissolve the separate sense of self into the “oneness of all” where the personal, individual self becomes one small but precious element among all of phenomena, empty of anything substantial, floating in and as an ocean of love and bliss, an experience in which the polarities of fullness/emptiness, and inside/outside come together naturally. Some people in this phase experience a sense of “no self” because they sense the whole Kosmos as being their Awareness/Self. Now the whole Kosmos includes a speck of sand, the tiniest spider, warm sun on skin, a child crying. Ordinary objects are everywhere, and each is a miracle. Now there is an experience of deeply resting in the arms of beauty, love, and the magic of “what is”. “During post-samadhi, everything appears like a magic show because you have purified [the mistake of] holding all the phenomena along the path as being real. (PK,

⁵¹ Brown, 1986, pg. 255

⁵² Churchill & Murray, 2020

f.11b).⁵³ Though everyday living still brings challenges, people at this stage realize challenges to be temporary and insubstantial from an awareness perspective. Their primary affect consists of awe, wonder, humility, a sense of oneness, and great benevolence for existence. Their interior silence deepens, acceptance and allowing deepen, peace deepens. This process matures as this expansive sense of emptiness and fullness become stabilized in everyday life. The feeling of loneliness tends to diminish here, because there is a sense of being “one with” both all of form and with the Awareness that pervades all. Since there is no separation there is a sense of deep, un-ending intimacy and belongingness to everything.

Shadow at 6.0/V.A,B,C

At 6.0/Universal - hierarchy has dissolved once again, but now into the whole Kosmos. At this stage people can perceive and have empathy for every perspective, sometimes all-at-once. This all-at-once-ness of perspectives, empathy and emotion can bring **confusion and overwhelm**, which can slow everything down into an awed stillness or silence. Their emotions are emptier than in the past; they can witness their emotions as they feel them. However now that they have the capacity to feel and perceive all perspectives and emotions, confusion arises about whether they are feeling their own emotions or others' emotions. They can feel the suffering of the world all at once so who should they tend to first? Rather than emotions being deeply personal, they feel emotion now as transpersonal. For example, if they feel a sense of sadness about the death of a parent, they recognize that others around the world are also currently experiencing a similar loss and that this feeling of loss is universal throughout time and space. The emotion doesn't just belong to them; it is felt by everyone. While this all-at-once-ness brings great empathy, it also can interfere with the hierarchical prioritizing that brings clarity. Since everything is precious, it is not possible to prioritize anything over another.

This flooding of all objects and perspectives into awareness can also lead to a mistaken belief that all people who are MetAware are equal in their ability to perceive Awareness. From their view anyone at Construct Aware (5.0) and later can perceive the same clear light and awareness that is available at 6.0. Hierarchy of stages is immaterial. Surprise occurs when they realize that people at earlier stages are still quite obscured by subtle objects and constructs at 5.0, and by personal identification and complexity at 5.5. In addition, the relative coarseness of thought and expressions of people at 5.0 and 5.5 can irritate the sensitive and refined awareness

⁵³ Brown, 2006, pg. 359

field of people at 6.0. The stillness, awe and silence that permeates 6.0 brings an acute sensitivity to the point where people at this stage often feel **energetically irritated or over-stimulated** by complex verbalization and mental entanglements of others. As they begin to realize the dramatic distinction between the experience of earlier stages and their own experience of deep stillness mixed with the vastness of all, they realize they require more time alone to digest, explore and enjoy the Kosmos that is now their expanded Self.

This unfathomable fullness at 6.0 is a lot to metabolize continuously. Between the ongoing awe, and awareness of infinite perspectives, the persons whole physical, emotional, mental and energy system is constantly integrating new information. This constant absorption and integration leave little room for motivation to grow into later stages, to actively pursue and resolve shadow material, or to create new visions and structures as an individual in the world. They may settle into a sense of acceptance of “what is” - as enough. They also may feel quite content because they often feel a deep peacefulness along with love and appreciation for simple things. Towards the end of the stage, people can feel somewhat mired in this acceptance and **lack of movement or motivation**. They become aware that their lack of a clear hierarchy clouds vision. Some people in their frustration may revert to earlier action-oriented stage behaviors to try to push through the block. But that pushing drives them deeper into ineffective, willful action and dead ends, creating more pain and frustration.

At this stage, though Awareness seems to be infinite and eternal it still is perceived as a field of Awareness that extends from their own individual mind/awareness even as it pervades all. Their perception that the Kosmos is arising through them or their Awareness - which they still subtly sense is an extension of their own self or mind - indicates a very subtle split of self as Awareness and Kosmos as “other”. Since planetary (human and sentient) consciousness is an aspect of the Kosmos they also see factions of human consciousness as other. Most people at this stage are still cleaning up trauma residue; and some of their relational interactions along with various perspectives of the world may trigger unresolved trauma. In personal relationships their tendency is to own their own emotional pain rather than blame others for very long. However, their capacity to sense into collective suffering and global human dynamics and energy, may trigger in them a desire to relieve suffering along with an assessment of what is good and bad in the world. The good are those who are awake, loving, generous. The bad are those who are ignorant, unkind, and selfish, for example. Any entrenched view that makes **some groups or elements of consciousness bad and others good** is an indication of shadow at this stage.

Intervention: Refining Awareness

At Universal/6.0 people can continue to dissolve subtle remnants of their own personal patterns of suffering by comparing any subtle energetic tensions to the clear, infinite spaciousness of Awareness. As they become present to the discomfort of the difference between these contracted sensations and clear, formless, spacious Awareness-itself, they can intentionally relax and release the tension. As these even deeper layers of subtle tension release, they receive even greater clarity and refinement to their subtle energy field, providing even clearer feedback and more accurate perception from, through and as the field of Awareness Itself. Of his stage V.A. Brown commented:

The phenomena of the physical universe as observed in the activity of the mindstuff in meditation appear to be in constant change, while the “transcendent self” is changeless....S/he uses the category of “sameness” by which to compare the continuous changes in the energy field....Using the category of sameness during “constant practice” results in a transformation of the energy field called the transformation into cessation. For moments, transformation of specific wave patterns ceases and mindstuff attains an even more refined condition. Biasing impressions are eradicated.... The energy field is now a calm flow. Awareness turns away from the observable events toward the transcendent, hence it is called “reflecting awareness” (1986, pg. 249).

This practice reduces the feeling of overwhelm as the person relaxes into “the simple feeling of being.” As a person progresses through this stage, they enter a state of non-conceptual stillness that deepens into the deepest emptiness just before their transition to 6.5. Regarding what he called *Reverse Samadhi* at Stage V.B. Brown said, “While ordinary mental events recur, the same insight remains - emptiness, selflessness, and sameness-in-change, respectively. These insights become direct experiences built into the very structure of perception at both a gross and subtle level.”⁵⁴

Intervention: Different Laws Operating in Different Worlds or Bodies

One concept that can help people understand a need for hierarchy is to help them understand that different “universal laws” operate in the concrete world, in the subtle world and as Awareness Itself. “With a shift to a causeless, groundless experience of the entirety of all potential phenomena, the practitioner passes beyond the realm of discrete temporal mind-

⁵⁴ Brown, 1986, pg. 252.

moments to another locus of very subtle activity of mind, which works by a different set of rules.”⁵⁵ From the point of view of Awareness Itself alone, there is no separation; there is oneness. Boundaries are human constructs. Everything is always fine. In the *concrete world* boundaries are important. The concrete world brings many limitations and conundrums. We can't walk through walls. One person's gain may be another's apparent loss. People must take care of their body, their belongings, and secure necessities to live. In the *subtle field* energy can be shaped, images can be created, relationships can be non-local. Though the subtle field is infinite and full of possibility it also requires an understanding of boundaries. These different laws for different worlds also help them see what still needs purifying in their life and in their consciousness. Is their concrete life working well in terms of living situation, finances, health, and relationships? How are they feeling in terms of deciphering and navigating subtle energies, emotions, thought patterns and feelings of aliveness? And are they able to experience clear light of Awareness Itself most of the time, and at will? These three bodies must be differentiated before they can be integrated at later stages.

Intervention: Normalization, and Permission to Tend to Self

Between the vastness of Awareness, empathic acuity, and the all-at-once experience of sentience - people at this stage often background or even ignore their own personal needs. Since all ordinary objects are magical, people at this stage may diminish their own significance. In addition, very few people in the world can serve as mirrors for their consciousness, and they wonder if anyone else can relate to their increasing sense of translucency and experience of oneness. The individual self can get lost in a sense of oneness. An important intervention at this stage is to help them see that they are not alone in their experience; and that their personal needs are vitally important for their wellbeing and therefore for the wellbeing of both the planet and of Awareness Itself. They may need permission to take quiet time, to set boundaries in relationships, to fall into silence for long periods. They may need a reminder that their tiny drop of a personal self cannot prevent the suffering of all creatures that has occurred for as long as humans have existed. They may need a reminder to feel the pain and trauma that are projected onto the world and to claim at least some of this pain as their own. When they acknowledge their own projections onto the world, they can clean up the residue that mires them in a lack of differentiation and confusion. And they can release deeper and more subtle layers of unresolved trauma held within the body.

⁵⁵ Brown, 1986, pg. 359

Intervention: Breathing/Body Awareness

Awareness through the body can become quite refined for people at the 6.0/Universal stage. If a person has managed to get to this point with little awareness of their own body or energy, then an important intervention would be to encourage them to work with a skilled bodywork professional, especially someone who can help them relax into deep layers of repressed trauma. As mentioned, there are a variety of modalities that provide such healing; however, most important is the skill, maturity, and giftedness of the practitioner. On the other hand, if people at this stage have used body, breath and energy practices throughout their state and stage development, they likely are very aware of the sensations in their bodies most of the time. In this case, the intervention would be to guide the individual to even subtler sensations of holding that often reside very deeply in the body and in the mind. They locate these subtle sensations not from the intellect but from and as the clear field of Awareness Itself. As these deeply defended sensations are allowed into consciousness the practice is to allow this activity to occur without interfering with it at all.

“Recognition-itself is an intrinsic property of the natural mind. It is not a type of cognitive activity, because it doesn’t involve activity and it certainly doesn’t involve artificial activity, such as trying to prevent certain experiences from occurring or trying to make certain experiences happen.”⁵⁶

People at this stage are becoming aware of the deepest subtle propensities to avoid feeling in the body. Even tiny subtle energetic releases can have what feel like dramatic effects. Remarkably the release of these super subtle patterns of holding seem to bring permanent relief from a lifetime of unconscious repression. These very subtle practices purify awareness even further so that clear light comes forth unobstructed. Awareness-itself which includes all earthly and Kosmic form is becoming the primary mode of identification. Personal history is becoming now just “a story” empty of any substance.

⁵⁶ Brown, 2006, pg. 395

Awakened Awareness and The Extraordinary Mind – 6.5 and VI.A

Experience at 6.5/Illumined & VI.A

Ordinary awareness or consciousness is defined as “knowledge that something exists or an understanding of a situation at the present time based on information or experience.”⁵⁷ In contrast, the term *extraordinary mind* refers to the capacity to “[open] awareness to the level beyond the time/space matrix of ordinary perception.”⁵⁸ In relation to structure stages of awareness access to the extraordinary mind seems to occur at the last stage of the MetAware tier in O’Fallon’s framework. At O’Fallon’s 6.5/Illumined stage and Brown’s VI.A., a new level of relaxation occurs which dissolves the subtle boundary between self and Awareness-Itself. Churchill and Murray described non-ordinary Awareness this way: “awakened awareness, [is] the level of lucid, open, non-dual awareness, prior to the constructions of the information processing systems of perception, attention, temporal awareness, self-construct, emotion and cognition.”⁵⁹ Now the experience of Awareness is boundless and timeless, with no attributes. Awareness is the Witness of everything throughout time and space with no end. Awareness is empty. Awareness is free. “Awakening refers to the absence of localization of individual consciousness so as to operate from an experiential mode of “being” the unbounded wholeness (of objective reality).”⁶⁰

Since paradox is perceived from the view of an individual perceiver with a dualistic mind, now paradox collapses into an experience of *being Awareness Itself* perceiving existence, and acting spontaneously and appropriately without the need for thought (though thought can be used for concrete problem solving or planning). Of Brown’s Stage VI.A. *The Relationship Between Ordinary Perception and the Extraordinary Interconnectedness of the Mind*, he explained: “The paradoxes arise/pass away, one/many, successive/simultaneous, are all resolvable through an understanding of the subtle acausal interactions of the extraordinary mind.”⁶¹ During the previous MetAware stages, Awareness still has been perceived as an expanded sense of the individual human mind, body, and subtle energy field. At 5.0 the inquiry about Awareness is: “What is this felt sense of Awareness around my head? At 5.5 the relationship with Awareness is: “I can co-create *with* this big and spacious Awareness. At 6.0 the sensation is: “This Awareness infinitely extends from (my and everyone’s) being/awareness

⁵⁷ Cambridge Dictionary. (nd.)

⁵⁸ Brown, 1986, pg. 256

⁵⁹ 2020, pg. 329

⁶⁰ Schoenberg, Ruf, Churchill, Brown & Brewer, 2018, pg. 42

⁶¹ Brown, 1986, pg. 259

which includes everything. At 6.5 a person's experience is: "Awareness is other than form and perceives all of form; and I Am this Awareness". As we see at Brown's stage VI.B. - the person begins to wholly identify as that Awareness that exists prior to and outside of form – while including and expressing both the seeming substantiality and insubstantiality of all of form. He says of this state stage:

Once the practitioner gets a glimpse of the awakened wisdom as the ground of existence, it becomes possible to shift the locus of observation from seeming individual consciousness to the ground of existence by literally crossing over to it. Once having crossed over, the practitioner, in one sense, maintains an absolute perspective of awareness that both totally transcends ordinary reality and saturates it. Crossing over refers to the shift from individual consciousness to the vast perspective of awareness characterized by the enlightened mind (2006, pg. 438).

Enlightenment has not yet occurred; however, the basis from which enlightenment ripens is now being recognized. Here a person releases the primary identification with any personal, individual self and begins to realize that who they are does not depend upon a body, a human mind, or any form whatsoever. There is a sense of oneness with the movement of the Kosmos as Awareness, and with the deep non-conceptual stillness, clarity, radiance, and bliss that characterize this experience. Personal will seems to be subsumed into the natural spontaneity of Awareness-itself and the individual naturally manifests creative, spontaneous expressions as that Awareness through their being and through their actions. Surrender is so complete that 'doing' seems to occur with little forethought, effort, compulsivity, or reactivity but rather in and as an effortless flow in conjunction with and not separate from all of form, which also expresses from and as Awareness-itself.

In the Kashmiri Saiva tradition, Bhairava is understood as the divine form of the absolute realised as the exertive force (*udiyamd*) that drives the senses and mind at the microcosmic level along with the universe at the macrocosmic level. Much of Kashmiri Saiva practice...deals with how to lay hold of this inner power and identify with it (Dyczkowski, 1987, pg. 8).

With an understanding of the all-inclusive, undivided wholeness and the underlying patterns of the Kosmos becoming cleared of bias, the individual creates and offers elegant structures that describe, support, or integrate the evolution of human consciousness through the field of timeless, boundless Awareness-Itself. Because the individual can perceive Awareness

as vast emptiness while seeing the interrelatedness of all of form, they also are able to perceive the consequences of thought, word, and deed in sequence throughout time and space. As Brown expressed, “The meditator not only learns the stages by which every action becomes manifest over time according to The Doctrine of Cause and Effect, but also sees that it is possible to stop the karmic chain.”⁶² Thus, they spontaneously act on behalf of the benefit of all of sentience and consciousness, not from a place of sacrifice but without effort, like a flower blossoming in sunlight. “Practitioners at this level of development report experiencing the unfolding of cosmic evolution simultaneous to a liberating freedom and compassion whilst engaging in the everyday activities of daily living.”⁶³

Where at the previous stage, the boundaries between inside and outside collapsed, now individuals begin to sense their own and all concrete and subtle bodies *as transparent emanating subtle expressions of Awareness-Itself*. The continued refinement in one’s awareness and energy field constitute a sense of deepening peace, stillness, and quiet even amid awareness of form throughout time and space. The clarity brings a knowing of what is true and false. Inspired visions of universal structures appear naturally and guide this person’s journey.

Shadow at 6.5/VI.A

The MetAware ego at this stage is still at play. The elegant structures that have sprouted around a person at this stage have arisen both effortlessly and because of this person’s lifetime of skill-building and of letting go. So even amid true and deep humility, a **subtle pride** can arise about what this person seems to have had a hand in creating in service to the unfolding Kosmos and consciousness. This person’s very subtle ego may view the structures that have been inspired through them as their own creation, forgetting that the skills and knowledge they contribute have come not only from all human and sentient knowledge to this point but more importantly arise through and from the boundless field of Awareness Itself. Therefore, though their efforts deserve fruitful exchange with those who directly benefit, people at 6.5 and beyond are not entitled to possess or claim ownership to the fruits of their actions. The Bhagavad Gita states: “You have a right to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action. Never consider yourself the cause of the results of your activities, and never be attached to not doing your duty.”⁶⁴ The sense of attachment that comes with entitlement to an outcome is felt as

⁶² Brown, 1986, pg. 258

⁶³ Churchill & Murray, 2020, pg. 274

⁶⁴ See <https://www.bhagavad-gita.us/bhagavad-gita-2-47/>.

a very subtle energetic contraction through the body. This subtle contraction stemming from scarcity, prevents a more complete liberation into boundless Freedom and Love.

Another area of shadow for some people at this stage is a lack of integration of Awakened Awareness through the physical and subtle bodies. The state of witnessing (turiya) that occurs at this stage is possible while still avoiding the relaxation of ***muscular holding and tension in the body***. In this case, a person may overly rely on the intellect to describe transpersonal views without deeply relaxing through the entire physical body. To relax through the whole body would mean feeling the emotional pain of past trauma along with an unconscious fear of loss of control. For some people this pain and loss of control are too threatening or too overwhelming to allow into the somatic feeling sense of consciousness. Likely they are not consciously aware of this avoidance and so may deny this split in consciousness. However, their lack of embodiment is obvious to those who *have* integrated the somatic sensing and deep feeling that is available when the muscular tension is released, and insight is allowed to surface.

Related to the shadow of non-embodiment is a ***difficulty with intimate partners and relationships***. When there is a fair amount of repression of traumatic material in the body, people at this stage may act out unconscious and unhealthy ways of relating. For example, if they tend to repress their negative emotions, they may choose a partner who acts out emotions in extreme and unhealthy ways. They may neglect their own boundaries and may even allow themselves to be abused if they are not in touch with or willing to express their own anger. They may subtly dominate and control those around them if they are afraid of letting go of their own ego control and attachments to outcomes. They may remain in a dissatisfying relationship by denying their own joy and freedom. All of these versions of spiritual bypassing are caused by ignoring the subtle cues and sensations in the body in favor of transcendence or an idealistic spiritual persona. These same issues in relationships occur at earlier stages of development as well. However, at these late stages, relationship issues present a stark contrast to the otherwise advanced perspective-taking available to these individuals.

Another area of shadow at this stage is ***mistaking their Awakening/Witnessing as non-dual union***. Because they can perceive all of form from a non-local witnessing viewpoint and because all of form is seen as an emanation or expression of this Awakened Awareness, they project non-duality onto this view. They intellectualize non-duality and believe it to be something other than what it is. Though Awakened Awareness is an extraordinary state and stage, it is only the basis or foundation of what is yet to come.

Intervention: Purification and Equanimity through Nonmeditation

At the 6.5 Illumined stage their agency in the world provides more opportunity to refine their own energy field by working with the subtlest and deepest holding and tension in the physical body and by noticing the deepest remnants of subtle thoughts or impressions that obscure the clarity of Awareness Itself. Furthermore, they are now noticing these discrepancies between very subtle contractions in the body-mind-energy as they occur, in-the-moment, throughout their daily life. Meditation is ongoing whether eyes are open or closed. So, the refinement is constant. As they notice and dissolve these last remnants of attachment and reactivity they experience deep equanimity, without effort. This equanimity dissolves impatience, grasping and seeing objects as other than Awareness itself. Brown said:

“From the perspective of observable events, the activity observed during equanimity more and more approximates the perfect primordial state; ...The key to understanding this stage of practice is the mind's activity. An important distinction is made between artificial “activity” (M, byas ma) -- gross reactivity, and subtle activities which interfere with the realization of enlightenment – and the spontaneous activity of the primordial state. The meditator must learn to negate the more common forms of reactivity – expectations, doubts, evaluatory thought, and the incessant attempt to categorize the unfolding experience.”⁶⁵

Non-reactivity, in this sense, does not mean non-feeling, stoicism, or frozenness by any means. In fact, both non-feeling and lack of natural movement are indications that avoidant behavior is occurring - which is another form of reactivity. Non-reactivity means that the individual ego/self does not interfere with the spontaneous natural order and existence of Awareness-itself. By now the individual has surrendered deeply to Awareness Itself and identifies as and with that Awareness. Non-meditation occurs in stages and continues into Fruition. Beginning non-meditation entails continual awareness in one's daily life during which adjustments can be made to surrender to non-action and to dissolving subtle distinctions between appearances/objects and Awareness-Itself. “During lesser [beginning] nonmeditation, most dualistic appearances have been purified and there is no need to intentionally meditate or be mindful: everything arises as meditation.”⁶⁶ Non-action is a dissolving into the One that moves all and being moved by/moving

⁶⁵ Brown, 1986, pg. 260

⁶⁶ Namgyal, 2019, pg. 471

as That. “Willing to die you give up your will; keep still – until moved by what moves all else you move.”⁶⁷

Intervention: Personal Ownership & Mistaking Awakening for Non-Duality

At 6.5 people primarily are operating from an Awakened/Witnessing Awareness Field. They have dissolved most of their personal willfulness into the movement and wisdom of Awareness-Itself. Because the Witnessing capacity can comprehend the deeper, elegant structures of existence and construct temporary, subtle forms that support consciousness, they may mistake these inspired downloads as their own creations. When others attempt to enhance, transform, or utilize what this person believes is theirs, they may think they have a right to refuse the use of these inspired adaptations. A conversation with these individuals is useful, with the intention to help them see that when they claim ownership they are interfering with “everything as it is” and with evolution’s natural unfolding. Their attachment is a form of separation through which they are contracting away from non-dual wholeness in their own physical, mental, and subtle being, and insisting that others do the same. In reality – this is a deeper opportunity to learn that they have no control over anything anyway. It may be helpful to inquire into any fear of letting go. What are they afraid of if someone else adapts and transforms this structure that they believe is theirs? Once again, they can work through the very subtle impressions or karmic residue that keep them attached.

At the stage of stabilized awakening (state 4), any residue of self-reference and localization dissipates, wherein the self-referential and localization of individual consciousness fully shifts to the limitlessness of lucid awakened awareness. This is considered a shift from ‘ordinary mind’ to ‘awakened mind’, within which this unbounded wholeness, unification, interconnection, and its expression as compassion pervades consciousness.⁶⁸

The other primary confusion for the MetAware ego is interpreting the non-local, vast Awareness perspective that perceives the Kosmos - as non-duality. People at this stage can perceive infinite, transparent emanations of form throughout time and space, like fractals of rainbow-colored light, dancing through a prism of infinity, fanned out and shimmering as a non-substantial and impermanent display of all that is. This extraordinary perspective may seem non-

⁶⁷ Berry, 2013

⁶⁸ Schoenberg, et al., 2018, pg. 44

dual because it includes both formless awareness and boundless form. However, the embodiment of non-duality is altogether different. An intervention here would be to point them towards the few books and teachers that describe the difference, such as advanced Dzogchen teachings. Another intervention for some might be guided plant medicine journeys, such as psilocybin, ayahuasca, or MDMA. These substances can help dissolve the subtle mind and body tensions or contractions that hold the misconception in place.

Intervention: Embodiment and Relational Purification

Breathing practices can still be used here to relax residual and minor habitual contractions that occur in daily life. If a minor disturbance does arise it can be dissolved easily and quickly through the subtle energy field and through Awareness-itself. For those who have subtly split their awareness from the body through unresolved tension, energetic holding, and/or subtle by-passing they will need remedial work on conscious breathing, awareness of subtle body sensations and support around their fear of letting go so that they feel themselves through their body with as little avoidance of pain and past trauma as possible. As they feel the truth of their embodied sensations and emotions, they become clear about their boundaries. They integrate more of their vulnerable humanness into vast Awareness. They loosen any need to control their environment or others. Unhealthy relationships fall away, while healthy and conscious relating become natural byproducts of fluidly accepting the purified expression of Awareness-Itself.

Enlightenment and the Rainbow Body (7.0 + VI.B/VI.C)

As we surmise about human development and human consciousness beyond this point, it is important to note that few people have been assessed at O'Fallon's 6.5 stage or beyond, and I have not yet worked with anyone later than O'Fallon's 6.5 stage of development. Thus, this section theorizes the experience of awakened and enlightened beings based on reported temporary *state* experiences, along with O'Fallon's STAGES hypothesis, and the state stage descriptions from Brown and others. The previous section describes the initial stage of Awakening that naturally seems to occur at 6.5 and which seems to correspond to basis enlightenment in advanced Buddhist teachings. As a person moves into the next stages, purification of the mind-stream continues by filtering or comparing content and subtle movement that are clear and unobstructed from any residual contraction away from that clarity. From this repeated felt sense experience of the difference between the two states, arises an absolute knowing or clarity about the stainless mind. Brown stated:

“Crossing over is primarily the result of continuous, inconceivable mindfulness of the simultaneous mind, either with respect to the simultaneous mind’s vast awareness-itself or with respect to its seemingly unobstructed self-illuminating appearances and thoughts, so that every seeming moment manifests absolute certainty about its innate emptiness/clarity. Other than that, there is nothing else. (2006, pg. 439)

This purification also magnifies the deepest layers of unresolved trauma which are physically felt through the body and awareness. As the deepest layers of residual trauma are felt -- the physical, mental, and emotional pain effortlessly release into the primordial state of absolute freedom. There is no content to process because the content - in a sense - no longer exists. It has been subsumed into the Truth of Being through non-avoidance of feeling and through non-attachment to the story. From this new perspective it was never a problem, just another one of infinite perspectives and experiences. Not being a problem now does not negate the trauma that was experienced at an earlier time or by anyone else who currently suffers trauma. Trauma is perpetuated by sentient beings. However, both the identification with the trauma and avoidance of feeling the trauma, prevent its release. Now, from this new perspective and having released it from the body as well as the mind, it is as if it never occurred. Subtle impressions or samskaras are released and do not return. This purification allows basis enlightenment or awakening to stabilize.

With a stabilized awakened basis of operation there is no longer any ego defense active in the on-going experience and all the unprocessed, repressed, disavowed psychological content that has accumulated over a lifetime can now be released. This is the automatic experiential/psychosomatic extinction of early childhood object relations, early trauma, and the conditioning of perinatal experience (Grof, 1993).⁶⁹

This initial state of basis-enlightenment is the *beginning* of a ripening into full enlightenment that will mature and stabilize over time, likely through O’Fallon’s four stages of her Unified tier. Churchill & Murray suggested, “We can postulate the Buddhahood corresponds to the [Unified] tier of 7th [person perspective 7.0, 7.5] and 8th [person perspective 8.0, 8.5].”⁷⁰ And Shar rdza Rinpoche (2019) expressed:

⁶⁹ Chruchill & Murray, 2020, Pg. 276

⁷⁰ 2020, pg. 223

Enlightenment typically is progressive. The initial experience of the enlightened bodies is rarely stable. This is called basis enlightenment. Making a repeated connection to the enlightened bodies is called path enlightenment. At some point enlightenment becomes absolutely stable. This is called fruition enlightenment (pg. 484).

So, what are path and fruition enlightenment? What does “being the undivided wholeness” mean? How is it experienced? What does it mean to exist in and as non-dual realization? Since so few have reached these stages of awakening and development, we can imagine the experience through reported state experiences and through advanced descriptions from a few realized sages. For example, Dzogchen offers the following pointer. “Once a Dzogchen practitioner has recognized their true nature (and “do not remain in doubt” regarding this), the path consists of the integration (*sewa*) of all experiences in their life with the state of *rigpa*. All these experiences are self-liberated through this integration or mixing.”⁷¹

Another profound transformation seems to happen through 7.0 and beyond – from being the Witness or Awakened Awareness-itself, perceiving the Kosmos boundlessly and timelessly with no location (at 6.5) – to all of form collapsing into this Witness so that the witness and form are not two. Now through the direct experience as boundless Awareness-itself, this individual being *literally feels*, senses, and knows the felt experience of all being(s) timelessly and boundlessly. Through this embodied integration of infinite form and boundless formlessness, the individual knows and perceives that there literally is no other. “Dzogchen practice (*gompa*) relies on the Dzogchen view which is a “direct, non-dual, non-conceptual knowledge” of the pure nature.”⁷² [Note the term *non-conceptual*] Path Enlightenment entails continual refinement of any sense of separation at even the super subtle levels of sensation and awareness. Brown said: “The practitioner no longer clings to or becomes entangled in any particular mental content because there is no artificial activity or reactivity associated with it in any way...there is nothing particular to know because everything is known.”⁷³ As separation between perceiver and perceived collapses, all of form is experienced as the flavor of one taste.

Realized ones have neither an object of meditation nor a meditator.

Just as space cannot observe space,

emptiness does not meditate on emptiness.

The non-dual mind is like water [mixed] with milk:

⁷¹ See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dzogchen>

⁷² See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dzogchen>

⁷³ 2006, pg. 443

*continuous great bliss in which diversities are of one taste.*⁷⁴

Late path enlightenment is pointed out through several practices or capacities. According to Namkhai Norbu: "This process is often explained through three "liberations" or capacities of a Dzogchen practitioner." The first is "**Cherdrol** ("one observes and it liberates") - This is when an ordinary appearance occurs and one sees its true nature, which leads to its self-liberation. It is compared to how a drop of dew evaporates when the sunlight shines on it."⁷⁵ Another way of viewing and experiencing this capacity is to perceive the radiance of Being shining from, through and as all of form; so that form becomes empty upon it's seeming arising – allowing the truth of its original face to shine through. Once this capacity is stable and constant the next capacity is practiced. This capacity is: "**Shardrol** ("as soon as it arises it liberates itself") - This occurs when any sense contact or passion arises self-liberates automatically and effortlessly. This is compared to how snow melts immediately on falling into the sea."⁷⁶ Instead of objects being empty upon arising, they now are empty upon leaving. All appearances become traceless in the vast expanse of boundless, stainless Awareness. Through this process of path enlightenment, the sense of substantiality of anything is waning and the brilliance of non-dual enlightened awareness is intensifying and becoming more prevalent. The third capacity then in this process is: **Rangdrol** ("of itself it liberates itself"), according to Norbu, this is "completely non-dual and all-at-once, instantaneous self-liberation. Here the illusory separation of subject and object collapses of itself, and one's habitual vision, the limited cage, the trap of ego, opens out into the spacious vision of what is".⁷⁷

Completion of Path Enlightenment becomes Fruition Enlightenment. This "mixing" of Awareness Itself with all of form and its resulting non-dual Being is said to engender the deepest compassion and the flowering of positive qualities in a human being. Some say that it brings supernatural powers and capacities. For example, "His or her physical body self-liberates into a nonmaterial body of light with the ability to exist and abide wherever and whenever as pointed by one's compassion."⁷⁸

Whatever appearances arise, including one's own body, are seen to be partless particles. Because the particles of the four elements have become purified, one masters sublime insight and clairvoyance, and one is liberated in this very lifetime.

⁷⁴ Namgyal, 2019, pg. 468

⁷⁵ See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dzogchen>

⁷⁶ See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dzogchen>

⁷⁷ See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dzogchen>

⁷⁸ See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dzogchen>

... this is what we call in everyday language 'attainment of the rainbow body' and is referred to in the scriptures as 'the body vanishing into particles'.⁷⁹

This body of light includes the capacity through non-dual awareness to be and know oneself as Awakened Awareness feeling and expressing as everything – to be anywhere and everywhere as radiant consciousness, positively impacting, healing, and dissolving all separation. At these latest known stages of human potential -- radiance blossoms into Awareness beyond the human mind and all of physical form, inclusive of, and prior to light, sound, energy and with no point of location, no beginning, and no end. Though it is boundless, timeless, and spaceless, the sages say that this Absolute formless Awareness creates, sustains, and destroys form; that it turns itself into light, sound, and energy, and then throws form into being and withdraws form back into itself.

As the pulse of awareness moves from the expanded, undivided state to the contracted, limited condition and back again in each instant, novel perceptions are generated, and the world of experience is thus constantly renewed. Thus, this energy, like those of will and action is essentially Siva's creative power (svatantrya) which is the vibration (spanda) of consciousness through which He generates all things (Dyczkowski, 1987, pg. 97).

And if this mysterious pulsation or Spanda is the engine of the Kosmic Universe then we can know without a doubt that there is nothing to do, nothing to be afraid of, nothing to achieve.

Through the clear understanding that your own mind is a Buddha, you gain the deep conviction that there is no object of abandonment to reject, no remedy to apply, object to purify, no mind doing the perfect purification, no dying, and no not dying. Other than this no higher level of nonmeditation arises."⁸⁰

Shar rdza Rinpoche said: "Not doing anything whatsoever, this is being free. This is unmistakable Buddhahood."⁸¹

⁷⁹ Pema, D. 2020, Pg. 263

⁸⁰ Namgyal, 2019, pg. 472

⁸¹ 2019, pg. 244

Conclusion

Reich's framework, the Hindu energy philosophy, the body-centered psychology methods and the Tibetan Buddhist philosophy encourage the individual to relax tension and open to a natural flow of energy which seems to clear the channels in the human body of physical imbalances and disease⁸² while clearing the mind of obsessive thought and emotional disturbances leading to expanded consciousness.⁸³ In the language-based developmental models of O'Fallon and others, a relaxation, opening, and expansion of the mind occur to include more and more of reality - from only identifying with the concrete world, to including the subtle world of thoughts, feelings, plans, and ideas until all is "just this" where all of concrete, subtle, and super subtle form, are expressed inside or through timelessness, boundlessness, and formlessness. As the individual relaxes and opens through the body, mind, subtle energy field, into and as Awareness-itself - a deeper stillness, peace, and quiet become prevalent and through this stillness one can perceive past, present and future, stop the karmic chain, and allow spirit/energy/life force to energize, enliven, and move the body into spontaneous, fluid "right" action, synchronized with all, in each moment. Ultimately, the individual surrenders primary identification with the personal self altogether and perceives the transparency of all of form emanating like a dream from the boundless vastness of the Unborn. As we relax our identification with a physical body or any form, whatsoever, the truth of our Original Face reveals itself. We relax further and we feel ourselves as all of form literally experiencing life saturated in and as clear Formless Awareness.

The evolutionary impulse seems to be intensifying in many of us now, possibly even exponentially. Perhaps for those on the path, enlightenment and Buddhahood are more attainable than we have imagined. Tilopa said: "When all attempts to conceptualize cease, you will attain perfect awakening."⁸⁴ If you have read this far, you know what to do. Relax; feel and sense *everything*; let go of the subtlest attachment and avoidance in body, emotion, mind, and subtle energy; and let the magnificent radiance of (your) Being be free. Freedom, Love, and Clear Light are right now shimmering as your already Enlightened Self.

⁸² Esch, Fricchione & Stefano, 2003

⁸³ Saraswati & Hiti, 1984

⁸⁴ Tilopa's Ganges Mahamudra Oral Instructions, translated by Daniel Brown, Ph.D.

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