

**1. Wandering:** gathering one's tools.

We are born with a handful of basic reflexes and instincts, and from there we begin a long process of development, gathering tools and competencies as we go, along many different lines/multiple intelligences. Cognitive, emotional, physical, psycho/sexual, relational, moral/ethical, and spiritual are the major lines of development, with cognitive development being necessary but not sufficient for all the other lines. Each stage, in each line, requires the mastery of developmental tasks specific to that stage, and once mastered, that stage becomes a permanent, stable platform for development into the next stage. I don't know that we ever "arrive" at some ultimate end-stage, and so we are probably always gathering "inner" developmental tools. Along the way there are real, tangible tools and skills to be gathered as well, outward manifestations of the inward journey. We learn to walk, to talk, to read. We learn to make things with our hands, ask questions about the world, ride a bicycle. We learn to relate to other people, we learn to cooperate, we learn to help. We learn to resist, we learn to stand up for what is just, we learn to say "no" and make it stick. We learn to nurture, we learn to love, we learn to let our hearts break.

**2. Initiation:** Preparing oneself. Purifying, centering.

Robert Pirsig writes that the first thing to do when fixing a motorcycle (or doing anything else) is to cultivate inner peace, with no wandering desires, no impatience, no pre-conceived notions. Stuckness, he says, is something to be welcomed, because it means you are at the end of what you think you know, and now you have to see something new. Another name for stuckness is "beginner's mind." Broken attempts, failures, mistakes, all are purifying because they lead directly to stuckness, and therefore beginner's mind. Beginner's mind leads to awareness, and awareness can come suddenly. It is always sobering, and it has the effect of purifying (like the refiner's fire: the dross burns away).

But there's more. There are many times when what we set out to do does not match what we had imagined, sometimes not by a long shot, and maybe even most of the time. Part of the mismatch will have to do with inadequate or improper tools and materials, and part will have to do with something important getting lost in the translation from imagined to real. The gap between the imagined, even when it is not some perfectionist ideal, and the real manifestation, even when it is excellent work, will always be there, will always be sobering, and when minded, will always be purifying. And even when we manage, at the peak of a particular stage, to produce something enduring and wonderful, when we move into the next stage we are back at the beginning. The first thing to do when beginning a new stage of development, a new project, a new day, a new moment, is to settle into deep inner peace, without any wandering desires, without any impatience, without any pre-conceived notions whatsoever, and just be aware.

### 3. Honoring: Recognizing the "sacred" in one's life.

I believe it takes "eidetic awareness" to recognize the sacred in one's life. Eidetic *memory* is the ability to see something and then with eyes closed, recall a mental picture with near-perfect clarity and fidelity. Eidetic *awareness* is larger than that, it is the ability to be quiet enough internally that what is experienced is experienced in its deep essence as well as its appearance: really seeing (sight/insight), really experiencing, and then remembering with clarity and fidelity. James Joyce called these events "epiphanies." Thomas Hora invited us to ask "What is the meaning of what seems to be?" and then "What is what really is?" In some of my own work, an independent study of Meister Eckhart with Henry Young at Garrett Seminary, I came to understand spiritual path in three movements: letting go -> unitive glimpse -> remembrance. "Letting go" is another way of naming what is called kenosis, a kind of gentle emptying, but sometimes forced on us less gently by life circumstances. Letting go is "not-clinging," it is releasing everything, especially cherished notions, judgments, fears, hopes, regrets, shoulds, oughts. It is the goal of most meditative practice: dis-identification with as much as possible in order to see with an unclouded heart what is really real. That is unitive glimpse, and without it there is no sacred known and there is nothing to honor.

Sometimes, maybe even most of the time, we don't fully understand the unitive glimpse, the epiphany, when it is happening because we do not yet have a referent. We may know intuitively something remarkable is happening, but it only becomes clear from a later stage of development/larger context, and sometimes that happens only decades later. Ira Progoff calls these epiphanies that occur throughout our life "spiritual steppingstones" and the Intensive Journal is one way to recall them and integrate them into a larger and more understanding context.

### 4. Stating Intention: Realizing and acknowledging one's purpose.

What is intention? From Wikipedia:

*Folk psychology explains human behavior on the basis of mental states, including beliefs, desires, and intentions. Mental mechanisms, including intention, explain behavior in that individuals are seen as actors who have desires and who attempt to achieve goals that are directed by beliefs. Thus, an intentional action is a function to accomplish a desired goal and is based on the belief that the course of action will satisfy a desire.*

*There is also a theoretical distinction between intentionality (intentional actions), and a mental state of intention for the future. Searle (1983) labeled these as intention-in-action and prior intention respectively. Prior intentions reflect forethought about intentions-in-action; prior intentions do not need to be carried out to be considered intentions. An unfulfilled intention is a priori intention that has no action associated with it.*

*Astington (1993) outlined the connections between mental states (desires, beliefs, and intentions) and actions carried out by an individual in order to reach a goal; these connections are referred to as the Intentional Chain. The proposed connective chain is that desire causes intention, which causes action, which causes outcome. The Intentional Chain maps the linking of a desire to the satisfaction of a goal via the intermediary intention.*

Yikes. To quote Captain Jack Sparrow, maybe I can lend a machete to this intellectual thicket. Intention is simply "Why are you doing this? For what purpose? What is supposed to come of it?" And then the next question can be asked: "How's that working for you?"

Sometimes what we end up producing is not what we intended, sometimes it is but we realize it is not what we actually wanted, we were intending something that isn't working. Stating intention is important because, even if adjusted, modified or discarded, intention provides direction and self-correcting guidance. Many persons get to a mid-point in their lives, having passed muster on most of the expectations of being an adult, and realize "This is not what I meant, this is not what I intended." Something has gotten off, and a course-correction is necessary. And of course, there is always the question of whether one has the right tools gathered for what is intended, whether one is centered with inner peace, and whether one's intentions are proceeding from recognizing/honoring the sacred in life. It is, after all, quite possible to intend to be as lazy as possible and get by with as little as possible. To the extent intention is stated from ignorance it is in error and will ultimately produce discard because error simply does not work. Feedback from the Universe is always accurate, and most often immediate (though it can also take a long time). I can intend to fly like a bird, unaided, from the roof of a four-story building, and feedback from the Universe will be swift and accurate: I'm going to hit the ground. There are some who will say if you believe it through and through, without a trace of doubt, you *will* be able to fly like a bird. Don't believe it. You will hit the ground.

**5. Surrender:** Letting go of control, allowing vulnerability, leaving what is known.

Stating intention, setting one's heart, is near the beginning and not at the end of the journey. Once we have gathered our tools (as best we can with what we know), prepared ourselves with beginner's mind, learned to let go and recognize the sacred in our lives, and stated just exactly what we're about and what we're intending to do, it's time to take those steps down a path we've never walked before. Even if it's a worthwhile path, a path with heart, one we wanted, we will find ourselves in new territory, in unfamiliar places, vulnerable not only to possible dangers and wrong turns but also to our own fears and doubts and inadequate preparation. Maybe we have a poor map, maybe we brought the wrong tools and equipment, or maybe our maps are fine and our preparation good enough. It's still going to be new, not a tour, but an adventure. If we never leave what is known, if we stay only with what we can control, if we are never willing to be vulnerable,

then we will rarely, if ever, discover anything deeper and richer about life, the universe and everything, ourselves, or the people in our lives that we think we know. And even if we do manage to stay safely and boringly in our comfortable easy chair, sooner or later the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune will push us, willing or not, into vulnerability, loss of control, and even catastrophic failure of the false security of what we thought we knew. Would it not be better to leave what is known consciously, with intention, with understanding that we are never *not* vulnerable, with preparation, and with an eidetic awareness of the sacred all along the way? Did I mention that it is possible to find someone who has been there before you and might be able to help guide you to the best paths or at least help illuminate the way?

## 6. Embracing the Darkness: Walking into the unknown, being in the void.

It's one thing to acknowledge the unknown, like the old maps of the world that only went so far, and then there be dragons. It's another to embrace the unknown and actually walk into it. It feels like being lost, impossibly and permanently lost. That's what "void" means: there is nothing there. Not good, not bad, not even zero (a place holder and therefore "something"): void is nothing, no-thing. It's when the keepers of the void ensnare you, all, all is empty striving after wind, says Quothleth, the teacher in *Ecclesiastes*.

In many spiritual traditions, there are two "ways" of knowing, called the kataphatic and apophatic ways (ancient Koine Greek words). Kataphatic means "the way of knowing" and it is important. It is what happens when we master the tasks of a particular stage of development. That stage becomes "kataphatic" and it is important and useful for moving through the next stage. That next stage of development, one we have not yet moved into, is "apophatic," the way of unknowing. Spiritual tradition maintains that the holy, the divine, sometimes called god/ess, can be found only by following both the way of knowing and the way of unknowing, and since the way of knowing is always, only retrospective (the past), what is ahead (the future) is always a way of unknowing. St. John of the Cross called such embracing of the unknown the "dark night of the soul" and for him such dark nights were indispensable, not necessarily traumatic or painful (though they often are), without which there could be no encounter with god/ess. Ira Progoff, drawing on both depth psychology and the work of the anonymous monk who wrote *The Cloud of Unknowing*, encouraged persons to ask "What is my life wanting to become" or even the more egoic question "What am I going to be when I grow up?" The answer to apophatic questions is always "I don't know (yet)." And embracing that darkness, walking into the unknown, just sitting with "I don't know (yet)" is the beginning of wisdom. When it is clear that all, *all* is empty striving after wind, empty as in kenosis/letting go, we can stop striving. The vividly clear fact that everything living will eventually die forces the question of meaning. Death is the ultimate void, the ultimate unknown. In embracing the darkness and walking

mindfully into the unknown that waits, quietly and patiently, at the end of our lives, we are finally free to live.

**7. Lighting the Flame:** Conscious connection with spirit, finding meaningful ritual.

When those moments of epiphany occur, when we are gifted with a unitive glimpse, we may not fully understand what has happened, and it may take us many years to fully integrate what has happened, but we are nonetheless acutely aware that *something significant* happened and we would like it to happen again. In times past, Ira Progoff writes, when a significant spiritual event occurred, those who were there often created meaningful rituals in order to remember. In his book of meditations *The Well and the Cathedral*, he uses the image of a well (individual spiritual journey) leading to an underground stream (conscious connection with spirit):

*Those who have been there before us  
have much to teach us of what they learned there  
and what took place when they returned  
from the underground stream.*

*Where they came back,  
where they emerged from the well,  
many placed a stone for remembrance  
as Jacob had done.  
And many others, who did not themselves  
reach the depth of the stream,  
also placed a stone  
to commemorate the remarkable event  
of which they had heard.*

*Each placed a stone as a token  
and many placed their stones together,  
one building upon the other,  
until soon a magnificent cathedral covered the well,  
the well that led to the underground stream.*

*Since that time many have come to the cathedral  
to pay their respects,  
to praise the name of their God,  
to ask favors of many kinds.  
They all seem to know that something important is there,  
that something important is present  
at the site of the cathedral.*

*The well that leads to the underground stream  
is at the base of the cathedral.  
But now it is covered by stones  
and difficult to find.*

*How shall we get to the well*

*now that it is covered  
by the stones of the cathedral,  
now that it has been hidden  
by the passage of the centuries?*

*We have found a way.  
We can go there together.  
There is a shaft of a well beneath the cathedral.  
And where is the cathedral?  
We have nowhere to look and nowhere to go,  
for you are the cathedral,  
I am the cathedral.  
The way to the underground stream  
is the well that is hidden within us.*

*Wherever we are  
our cathedral is present;  
when we seek a quiet place  
in the midst of turmoil,  
a refuge from the pressures of the world,  
wherever we are,  
whatever is happening our cathedral  
is present and open for us.*

*Entering the cathedral is sanctuary  
from the hurricanes of life,  
a quiet center wherever we are,  
whatever is happening.*

**8. Transformation:** Climbing the mystic spiral to a vision of oneness; a vision that alters all perceptions.

I have no idea what this means. Intellectually I understand having a vision of oneness. Intellectually I understand that each of us is an individual wave or even droplet on an ocean of Consciousness, but experientially I have never had that kind of unitive glimpse I could call "climbing the mystic spiral to a vision of oneness." Even small doses, however, can be transformative, and I *have* experienced transformation in my life, and some of it has been stunning.

**9. Quietude:** Listening, observing, being still.

I do have an idea what this means. I have been in this place of absolute inner quiet, this place of eidetic awareness. It is a place of utter gratitude for what is, just simply what is. Once having experienced this kind of quiet listening, observing, being still, it is not difficult to remember and settle into the same place intentionally. It is sometimes helpful to sit quietly and simply breathe, feel, listen, be immersed in whatever is. And then observe. And then ask "Who is it that is doing the observing?" It is not the same one doing the breathing, feeling, listening. And the one asking

who it is that is observing? It is not the same one who is observing. There seems to be an infinite regression of observers. There is, behind it all, what Ken Wilber calls a persistent "I-am-ness" or "the simple feeling of being." How is it that you have developed from infant to adult through all the different shapes and sizes of your body, through all the stages of your development in all the major lines, and you recognize yourself in all of it? You feel yourself to be the same person? You can look at a photo of yourself when you were three years old and say "that's me" and even remember what you were doing and how you were feeling when that photo was taken. How is it possible that the self you feel yourself to be right now is the same feeling of self you have had all along, your whole life long?

10. **Becoming Human:** Empathy, being in truly responsible relationship.
11. **Walking the Path:** Integrating life experiences, teaching by being.
12. **Service:** Transcendence of the illusion of separateness.  
Humility. Joy.

These last three seem self-explanatory. There are levels and levels of all the themes but these last three, in particular, seem to be open-ended. Maybe all the others are pre-requisites for these last three. A more complete transcendence of self is required in these last three, and transcendence does not mean an infantile regression to some undifferentiated ego state: you cannot transcend something you don't have. Only a self can be human, only a self can be in relationship, and perhaps only a *Self* can be in truly responsible relationship, one that is empathy-response-able.

There is an old word that I like, it's the word *abide*. It means to totally live in, like a fish abides in water. "Teaching by being" is to abide in healing and wholeness, to integrate and live in peace, assurance, gratitude, wisdom and love. Walking the path. Integrating life experience, including the shadow (disowned) aspects of ourselves.

If life, my life in particular, is a spiritual journey, then the journey's culmination, like the music of *Migration*, will be "service," no matter how inadequate that service might be: "Transcendence of the illusion of separateness. Humility. Joy." In other words, one hand waving free. It is not possible to transcend something that is not there: the "illusion of separateness" is a requirement, a prerequisite, for its transcending. It is always there. In other words, one hand still bound.