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The Body and Embodiment in Human Development: Overview of the Body Map

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*You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves. (Mary Oliver, 1986, p. 14)*

Abstract. In contrast to current theories of human development, I propose that human development is centered in embodied experience, throughout the lifespan, in the initiation and integration of psycho-spiritual maturation in ways not fully recognized theoretically. Perhaps the disembodiment discourse of Western culture has been “captured” in our developmental theories as well. If we are to “embody” our developmental theories, we might reflect among ourselves about the role of the body in psycho-spiritual development in order to expand our own embodied sensibilities as spiritual practitioners, theorists, clinicians, and researchers. I will briefly present my own theory of the role of the body in human development known as The Body Map (Anderson, 2004) and compare its ten axes (stages) to the corresponding nine stages offered by Susanne Cook-Greuter (2005). At the conference itself, I offer examples of Embodied Writings (Anderson, 2001, 2002a, 2002b) from research participants and mystical writings to illustrate each axis. The Body Map represents my own attempt to put words to my own embodied intuitions about the role of the body and embodiment in psycho-spiritual development and is provisional in its current expression. Therefore, I encourage feedback and reflections from conference attendees on (a) the role of the body and embodiment in psycho-spiritual development, (b) how an understanding of embodiment contributes to developmental theory in general, and (c) how research procedures might invite embodied reflections from research participants, something often discouraged by Western culture and established research practice.

Through our bodies—“earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust”³—we are connected to origins and the cosmos. Our “home” is not far off and distant, but intimate and close. For whatever brief stretch of time we are blessed life within eons of time, change is sited in the human body. Sustaining life from conception to death, the body’s constant companionship is often misused and ignored until something goes terribly wrong. How might our relationship to our body change, if we were to cherish our human body as the site of transformation where spirit finds its home in the world?

Although the role of the body in the development of infants and children is more or less obvious (e.g., Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975), the role of the body in adult

development remains largely unexplored theoretically. Luminaries such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Francisco Varela in phenomenological philosophy; Maria Montessori and Rudolf Steiner in education; Janet Adler, Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, F. M. Alexander, Elsa Grinder, Moshe Feldenkrais, Thomas Hanna, Marion Rosen, Ida Rolf, Ilana Rubenfield, Charlotte Selver, and Mary Whitehouse as body and movement specialists; and Antonio Damasio (among others) in neurological research have advanced the role of the body and embodiment in human personality and development. Nonetheless, human developmental theorists have yet to integrate this compelling store of professional reflections and research findings, probably as a result of the disembodied language and discourse of Western culture and science.

In the last fifty years, developmental theories have charted the course of human development. When analyzed for patterns and commonalities, theories of human development describe similar sequences or continua of developmental stages, differing to various degrees in (a) the human dynamic emphasized in the theory, (b) the names of stages, (c) the demarcations made between stages on the continua, and (d) the range of development explored that may begin before birth and continue after death (Anderson, 2008; Grof, 1975, 1985; Wade, 1996). Of dynamics emphasized, developmental theories have emphasize cognitive skills (e.g., Kegan, 1994; Piaget & Inhelder, 1969), personality and identity (e.g., Erikson, 1963, 1968/1980; Loevinger, 1976), spirituality (e.g., Fowler, 1995, 2001; Vaughan, 1995; Walsh, 1999; Washburn, 1995, 2003; Welwood, 2000; Wilber, 1993, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2006), relational awareness (e.g., Gilligan, 1982; Gilligan, Lyons, & Hanmer, 1989; Gilligan, Rogers, & Tolman, 1991; Gilligan, Ward, & Taylor, 1988), morality (e.g., Kohlberg, 1981; Kohlberg & Ryncarz, 1990), and psycho-spiritual structures (e.g., Cook-Greuter, 2005; Fisher, Rooke, & Torbert, 2002; Hall, 1994, 2000; Ruumet, 1997, 2006; Vaughan, 2000; Wade, 1996).⁴

In contrast to current developmental theories, I propose that human development is centered in embodied experience, throughout the lifespan, in the initiation and integration of psycho-spiritual maturation in ways not fully recognized theoretically. This process of embodied development begins before birth—at least at conception—and ends at some indeterminate point after death. The Body Map (Anderson, 2004) reflects my ongoing understanding of the role of the body and embodiment largely founded on body-based intuitions, typically proprioceptive or kinesthetic in nature, and follows upon earlier research on the role of sacred weeping and of embodiment in psycho-spiritual growth (Anderson, 1996), the development of Embodied Writing (Anderson, 2001, 2002a, 2002b) and the Body Intelligence Scale (Anderson, 2006). I have also conducted research in transpersonal psychology and body awareness since 1992, using research findings and theory to challenge and refine my intuitions (Anderson, 1998, 2000, 2004b, 2008). Research findings play an essential, yet subsequent, role that help me sort and distinguish intuitions that are idiosyncratic to me from those of general value to others.⁵ In terms of Wilber's AQAL model, I have collected information from all four quadrants to refine the model. In the end, however, my intuitive sensibilities guide my interpretations as though I draw a larger

hermeneutical circle around all four quadrants, reflecting my personal view that everything is a matter of interpretation from this side of the Enlightenment Axis.

Manuscript drafts of *The Body Map* date back to 2004. I have found it challenging to articulate in words the body's inchoate expressions, even when I apprehend them clearly and can express them non-verbally. Over and again, subtle and sometimes radical shifts take place within my body that cannot be understood in terms of physiology or external events. Many of these bodily changes seem to signal developmental shifts, so I persevere in this project because I want to understand what I am living through. If *The Body Map* as a model of human development helps others understand what they are living through, I am happy for it.

Borrowing from a colloquialism, as you read, remember that a map is not the territory. No map of a country or a model of human development can embody the fullness of a landscape or life as lived. Maps can only express major features and commonly-traveled pathways. Note, too, that *The Body Map* described below is provisional in nature. The axes and cycles contained in the model are likely to change over time—at least to some extent. Since I believe that the sequence of stages is fairly well established despite differences among theorists, my current interests are not so much about the hierarchical stages themselves but in what Hillevi Ruumet (1997, 2006) calls the Return Cycles. Return Cycles require an integration and transformation of lower levels of development before higher levels of development can be stabilized in awareness. At the conference itself, for far as I am able, I will offer examples of Embodied Writings (Anderson, 2001, 2002a, 2002b) from research participants⁶ or quotes from spiritual writings to illustrate each of the ten Axes.

Ten Axes (Stages) of Human Development

As a theory of human development exploring the continuum of life from conception through death, *The Body Map* emphasizes the biological urgency of life, that physical life force that compels us forward until that life force ends. The model contains ten axes of human development portrayed as an organic process that constantly moves toward wholeness and integration. Each axis represents a forward development of expanded awareness and is presented from the perspective of the body. As illustrated in Table 1, each level of development revolves around a central axis, a primary mode of embodiment for that axis. For example, the infant's physical body is vigilant to avoid pain and survive so Axis 2 concerns Vigilance. At the other end of the continuum of development, Axis 10 describes the epitome of embodiment, the Enlightened Body.

Table 1

Primary Modes of Embodied Activity for Body-Map Developmental Axes

| Developmental Axes (Stages) | Modes of Activity |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Axis 10, Enlightenment Body | Accommodating to Emptiness |
| Axis 9, Awakening Body | Soulful Presence in the World |
| Axis 8, Awareness Body | Pleasuring With Life As It Is |
| Axis 7, Presence Body | Expressing Personal Uniqueness |
| Axis 6, Compassion Body | Serving and Caring for Others |
| Axis 5, Competence Body | Acquiring Mastery & Skill |
| Axis 4, Belongingness Body | Demanding “TLC” & Mirrored Self-Worth |
| Axis 3, Pleasure Body | Seeking Pleasure & Delight |
| Axis 2, Vigilance Body | Avoiding Pain, Distress, & Death |
| Axis 1, Archetypal Body | Generating Genetic, Neonatal, & Perinatal Imprints in Consciousness |

Generally speaking, early axes involve somatic and sensorial enmeshment; middle axes are characterized by increasing differentiation of body, mind, and spirit; and later axes reflect integration and ultimately unification of body, mind, and spirit in awakened consciousness. From a transpersonal perspective, despite our personal preferences, all dimensions of life and death are holy and no one axis is more sacrosanct than another. There is nothing more or less sacred about maintaining one’s safety and well-being than about full awakened consciousness. For ease in the comparison between developmental modes, Table 2 provides an approximate comparison of the ten axes of The Body Map with the nine stages of Susanne Cook-Greuter’s empirically-derived, Ego-development Theory.

Table 2

Approximate Comparison of the Body-Map Axes & Ego-Development Theory Stages

| Anderson (2005) Body Map Axes | Susanne Cook-Greuter (2005) Ego-Development Theory Stages |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Axis 10, Enlightenment Body | Stage 6, Unitive |
| Axis 9, Awakening Body | Stage 5/6, Construct-aware |
| Axis 8, Awareness Body | Stage 5, Autonomous |
| Axis 7, Presence Body | Stage 4/5, Individualistic |
| Axis 6, Compassion Body | Stage 4, Conscientious |
| Axis 5, Competence Body | Stage 3/4, Self-conscious |
| Axis 4, Belongingness Body | Stage 3, Conformist |
| Axis 3, Pleasure Body | Stage 2/3, Self-defensive |
| Axis 2, Vigilance Body | Stage 1/2, Infant & Impulsive |
| Axis 1, Archetypal Body | n/a |

Axis 1, Archetypal Body

Primary Activity: Generating genetic, neonatal, perinatal imprints in consciousness.

Depending on the reader's belief systems, imprints also include karmic imprints. Overestimating the force of these impressions on the formation of our physical constitution, personalities, and life is impossible. As most mothers will say, every baby is different from birth, even from conception.

Embodiment Stance: Absorbing imprints prior to physical birth and sometimes for some weeks or months thereafter.

Healthy Expression: The vast majority of our genetic, neonatal, and perinatal imprints are subliminal or unconscious to ordinary, day-to-day awareness. Subliminal means below perceptual threshold. Probably because I was trained in experimental social psychology in graduate school, I prefer the term subliminal to the term unconscious because it reflects my experience that awareness of archetypal imprints slip both below and above perceptual awareness in a seemingly unpredictable way. The vast amounts of psychoanalytic and Jungian literature and tantric spiritual practices originating in Asia have taught us a great deal about access to such subliminal or unconscious perceptual processes. Healthy adult expression requires, sometimes quite dramatically, a willingness to digest information arising from subliminal or unconscious processes with a

certain modicum of well-being and physical health. There is no doubt that sharply arising impressions from subliminal or unconscious processes can be disorienting to even to most healthy-minded people. A healthy response to these experiences may be to seek help from psychotherapists attuned to spiritual issues and spiritual guides who have experienced these states for themselves.

Unhealthy Adult Expression: Perhaps it will come as no surprise to those who read US newspapers that some of our political leaders are driven by archetypal processes about which they have little or no awareness. In transpersonal and spiritual circles, I have also known individuals who are so open to archetypal impressions that they are unable to conduct the day-to-day tasks of life.

Developmental Comparison: From a developmental perspective, only Stanislov Grof (1975, 1985) and Jenny Wade (1996) explore pre- and perinatal experiences in depth.

Forward Development: The transition from Axis 1 to Axis 2, *Vigilance Body*, occurs at birth or shortly thereafter. Some babies, especially those with challenging births, do not seem to fully embody their essence into their physical bodies for weeks or months, even up to a year, after birth.

Return Cycle: Reconfiguring and refining the archetypal patterns of this life occurs in the final stages of psycho-spiritual development in the Return Cycle of Axis 10, *Enlightenment Body*. Individuals experiencing this Return Cycle are among the “living dead,” sharing their illumination with others spontaneously and fearlessly, and are refining archetypal imprints now in preparation in some way for whatever comes after death. If we do not do this important work while we are alive, we will do it in what Tibetan Buddhists call *bardo* or Christian mystics call hell and purgatory. Completing this process now is highly recommended.⁷

Return Cycles are overviewed in the section entitled Return Cycles of Transformation below. Experiences of archetypes (templates of consciousness) can occur in any axis without necessarily indicating an Axis 1-Axis 10 Return Cycle.

Axis 2, Vigilance Body

Primary Activity: Avoiding pain, distress, and death.

Embodied Stance: Constantly on alert and vigilant.

Healthy Expression: Relaxed and aware physical bearing, capacity to focus attention when danger is present or likely, and active exploration of the world appropriate to age. Health is marked by an increased willingness to explore the external environment and a capacity to feel wonder and delight at any age. Being fearful and vigilant are appropriate to immediate circumstances.

Unhealthy Expression: Chronic hyper-vigilance and chronic arousal results in over-stimulated sympathetic nervous system. Symptoms of post-traumatic stress may

be evident at any age, even in babies. Somatic and psychic energies are consumed by self-preservation and restricted or distorted perceptual reality. Unhealthy expression is marked by fear in response to external change and a reticence to explore the world in a manner appropriate to age. As a consequence of traumatic births or infant abuse, some adults may be unrecognized trauma victims who remain chronically fearful, constantly watching for signs of danger, and easily reduced to feeling terrorized by minor provocations. Most adults have experienced frightful events in life, such as accidents or extreme illness. Recovery from emotional trauma may take longer than recovery from the physical injury itself. If we are traumatized often or severely, it may take years to tame our now hyper-vigilant sensorial alarm systems in order to trust the world as we once did.

Developmental Comparison: Axis 2 development characterizes most infants during the first few months of life. Between months 5 and 9, healthy babies begin a process of bodily differentiation from mother known to researcher Margaret Mahler (1975) as “hatching”. Hatching from fused identity with mother signifies the transition from Axis 2 to Axis 3, Pleasure Body. Axis 3 is fully realized in emotional and libidinal differentiation from the mother, occurring between months 15 and 24 in healthy development. Axis 4 is more or less parallel to Cook-Greuter’s Stage 2, Impulsive.⁸

Forward Development: Transition to Axis 3, Pleasure Body, is marked by a willingness to relax one’s guard and explore the world. The sympathetic nervous system is no longer over-stimulated by real or inchoate threats to one’s physical well-being. Hyper-vigilance and fear of the unknown relax over time, albeit gradually. Physical stance is alert but more relaxed. No longer needing to maintain high alert for threats to one’s physical safety, life energies begin to focus on exploring the world, attending to novel stimuli, broadening one’s perceptual reality, and reciprocating in response to touch, attention, and affection from others.

Return Cycle: Overcoming the impressions and urgency of vigilance and concern for self in Axis 2 is the transformational task of Axis 9, Awakening Body. Return Cycles are overviewed in the section entitled Return Cycles of Transformation below.

Axis 3, Pleasure Body

Primary Activity: Seeking pleasure and delight.

Embodied Stance: Readiness for pleasure, delight, and play.

Healthy Expression: Able to relax and move gracefully, feel secure and comfortable even under difficult circumstances, feel pleasure, use internal body sensations as a source of information and intuition, give and receive affection, comfort oneself physically and emotionally during times of stress and hardship, and explore the world with a sense of wonder and curiosity. In learning what is pleasurable and what is not, we learn the rudiments of somatic and psychological resilience. The differences between what is pleasurable and what is not generate physical and

emotional “boundaries” against which children learn to evaluate who and what to trust.

Unhealthy Expression: Unable to relax or move gracefully, feel secure and comfortable, feel pleasure, interpret internal body sensations appropriately, give and receive affection, comfort oneself physically and emotionally during times of stress and hardship, and explore the world with a sense of wonder and curiosity. Among the most radical threat to feeling secure and comfortable in the world is intimate physical contact inappropriate to age or sexual abuse at any age, because for some the world may never feel safe again.

Developmental Comparison: Emotional and libidinal differentiation from mother is a difficult transition from the “paradise” of being physically and emotionally at the center of one’s own world to being separate from mother (their “world”) and, therefore, vulnerable. In healthy development, the young child (2-3 years) learns to feel secure and comfortable without relying entirely on the actions of others. In so doing, the child acquires a rudimentary capacity to maintain emotional and libidinal self-boundaries. Axis 3 is more or less parallel to Cook-Greuter’s Stage 2/3, Self-defensive.

Forward Development: Stable mental picturing of the world as separate from oneself marks the end of Axis 3 development and beginning of Axis 4, Belongingness Body. The transition to Axis 4, reflects a shift from preoccupation with our own security, comfort, and pleasure by the ability to extend self-boundaries to include the needs and wants of others, especially family, neighbors, and friends. At Axis 3, the types of pleasures sought are now less based in physical pleasures and found in the pleasures of love, affection, and attention from others.

Return Cycle: Most of us are concerned for ourselves most of the time whether we wish to admit it or not. Overcoming the impressions of Axis 3’s demand for ongoing physical and emotional pleasure and nurturance is the transformation task of Axis 4, Awareness Body. Return Cycles are overviewed in the section entitled Return Cycles of Transformation below.

Axis 4, Belongingness Body

Primary Activity: Commanding “TLC” and mirrored self-worth.

Embodied Stance: Heightened sensitivity to the opinions, feelings, and impressions of others.

Healthy Expression: Satisfaction with one’s body and physical appearance, security and comfort in moving, pleasure and autonomy in physical activities, a well-established sense of being a good person and sense of self worth, at ease in social situations, aware of rules and social conventions, and caring of others appropriate to age. Gradually, a maturing child learns to control and coordinate his or her body movements and actions. In learning to use a spoon to eat, hold a cup, walk, and control one’s bladder and bowels, we gain a sense of self-value

and belonging to the world. In the ongoing give-and-take between the child and family members, we learn patterns of relating that will affect our way of relating to others all our lives. We learn to share and reciprocate. We want to please, belong, and express and manage our emotions. Over time we acquire a basic sense of physical self-worth and competence.

Unhealthy Expression: Dissatisfaction with one's body and physical appearance, insecurity and self-conscious in physical activities, preoccupation with body image and physical appearance, hypersensitivity to rules and social conventions, ill at ease in social situations, and tendency to please others indiscriminately. Most adults are deficient in at least some aspect of self-care and may not know who or what supports their emotional well-being. Often they neglect important aspects of physical, emotional, psychological, or spiritual well-being by not eating, sleeping, relaxing, or exercising in healthy ways.

Developmental Comparison: In Jean Piaget's terms, Axis 4 begins with preoperational thinking and continues through concrete operational thinking. The start of Piaget's formal operational thinking marks the transition to Axis 5, Competence Body. Axis 4 is more or less parallel to Cook-Greuter's Stage 3, Conformist.

Forward Development: The skills of autonomy, self-worth, and emotional control are essential to the transition from Axis 4 to Axis 5, Competence Body.

Return Cycle: Overcoming absorption in self-nurturance and belonging to anyone or anything in Axis 4 is the transformational task to Axis 7, Presence Body. Return Cycles are overviewed in the section entitled Return Cycles of Transformation below.

Axis 5, Competence Body

Primary Activity: Acquiring mastery, skill, and competence.

Embodied Stance: Appearing invulnerable and therefore susceptible to stress-related diseases.

Healthy Expression: Self-confidence, conscientiousness, getting the job done well, willing to take on difficult tasks, striving for excellence, experiencing pleasure in challenges and bodily sense of competence. In healthy development, we typically receive acknowledgment from the authority figures, such as parents, teachers, work supervisors, and colleagues for accomplishments. Past successes lead to renewed self-confidence. Self-confidence allows us to accept the challenges of new and more difficult tasks and to choose tasks that help us acquire new skills. Building on the emotional strengths (and limitations) of Axis 4, Belongingness Body, we learn to communicate, form, and maintain relationships with caretakers, sisters and brothers, extended family members, peers, colleagues, community members, and like-minded colleagues through shared tasks. Increasingly, we relate to others' shared goals and work conscientiously to accomplish common goals.

Unhealthy Expression: Extremes of feeling either incompetent or grandiose (and often fluctuations between the two extremes), extremes of either taking on over-ambitious goals or ambivalence toward challenging tasks, and extremes of either over-confidence or performance anxiety. Unhealthy expressions of Axis 5 lead to stress-related diseases, such as hypertension, diabetes, and heart disease. Addictions that reduce stress may also manifest, such as excessive drinking, eating, or misuse of drugs and medications. Friends and colleagues may think of us as workaholics. At Axis 5 we are likely to believe in mind over matter and, therefore, ignore stress symptoms and not take kindly to advice that we are pushing ourselves too hard.

Developmental Comparison: Axis 5 development more or less parallels Piaget's formal operational thinking that allows for mature reasoning and self-reflection. Axis 5 is more or less parallel to Cook-Greuter's Stage 3/4, Self-Conscious.

Forward Development: Once we have achieved a sufficient level of mastery and competence in the world, we can begin to explore integrating our competencies in ways that give our lives unique meaning and value, the development mode of Axis 6, Compassion Body. Transition to Axis 6, is signaled by the development of higher mental functions, such as integrative or synthetic thinking, and meta-values, such as beauty and meaningfulness. Only a small percentage of the adult population continues beyond Axis 5, though many individuals may have peak experiences that offer glimpses of these more advanced cycles of development.

Return Cycle: Overcoming absorption in the Axis 5 tasks of competence, mastery, and control is the principal task of Axis 6, Compassion Body. Return Cycles are overviewed in the section entitled Return Cycles of Transformation below.

Axis 6, Compassion Body

Primary Activity: Genuine concern and caring for others and the world. Heartfelt action in the world. In spiritual terms, the heart begins to open.

Embodied Stance: Emergence of mind-body awareness.

Healthy Expression: Altruistic activities, reaching out in service toward others, realization that life is short and that caring for others is more important than success, fame, and achievement.

Unhealthy Expression: Doing "good" for others even at their expense or at one's own expense through over-extension. Open-hearted service to others leads to the same stress-related diseases of Axis 5. Competence Body. Getting stressed out is all too likely because we are "fixing" the world's problems through good works.

Developmental Comparison: Parallel to Maslow's (1971) healthy self-actualizers and Wilber's (1993, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2006) vision-logic cycles of development. Transition to Axis 7, Presence Body, is signaled by the development of Being Values, such as seeing beauty in everything and everyone and an utter simplicity

that goes to the heart of things effortlessly. Axis 6 is more or less parallel to Cook-Greuter's Stage 4, Conscientious.

Forward Development: In time, we may learn that we cannot "fix" the world through our own activities. Despite our accomplishments and the accomplishments of others, nothing fundamentally changes. This realization attenuates our ego identification or attachment to fixing the world's problems and provides us enough humility to enter Axis 7, Presence Body. We begin to realize that the world is the mess it is and cannot be changed through our singular or group efforts. If we fall into despair or lethargy, we will fixate in Axis 6 or in time regress. If our religious or spiritual lives allow us to envision our place in the world as it is, we begin to explore the territory of Axis 7.

Return Cycle: Overcoming absorption in the Axis 5 tasks of competence, mastery, and control is the principal task of Axis 6, Compassion. Return Cycles are overviewed in the section entitled Return Cycles of Transformation below.

Axis 7, Presence Body

Primary Activity: Expressing personal uniqueness.

Embodied Stance: Being in the flow and present in the moment.

Healthy Expression: A full and creative life; sense of presence that other's notice and sometimes envy without knowing why, feelings of belong to a world beyond one's own needs and desires; unique expressions of one's talents and skills; willingness to express original and unconventional opinions when necessary to express the truth of one's own understanding; frequent opportunities for being "in the flow" in creative work; greater sense of ease with the troubles and sorrows of life; and expression of Being-Values such as simplicity, truth, beauty, playfulness, and synergy.

Unhealthy Expression: Forgetfulness of other aspects of life like health and finances, ennui or depression when not creatively engaged, episodes of boredom and impatience when not "in the flow", thwarted expressions of one's talents that leave one feeling depressed or not wanted in the world, unable to truly reconcile oneself with the troubles and sorrows of life, and episodes of despair or lethargy that life as it is cannot be "fixed."

Developmental Comparison: Aspects of Axes 7 and 8, Awareness Body, are parallel to Maslow's (1971) transcendent self-actualizers. Axis 7 is more or less parallel to Cook-Greuter's Stage 4/5, Individualistic.

Forward Development: Transition to Axis 8, Awareness Body, is signaled by the development of being present and content with whatever happens and less concern, or even interest, in expressing one's own voice or unique personality.

Return Cycle: Overcoming absorption in self-nurturance and belonging to anyone or anything in Axis 4, Belongingness Body, is the transformational task of Axis 7,

Presence Body. Return Cycles are overviewed in the section entitled Return Cycles of Transformation below.

Axis 8, Awareness Body

Primary Activity: Pleasuring in life as it is.

Embodied Stance: Fully present and spontaneous action, equanimity, and less and less effort to get things done.

Healthy Expression: In Axis 8, individuals begin to feel that there is no progress, no up, no down, no path. There is only expression in the moment. There is no forward movement in life, nor any backward movement; there is only change. There is no path to follow to wisdom and enlightenment. No experiences or people are especially preferred over others. There is nothing to seek in life, though there is plenty to do. The only path is where you are. The Zen Buddhist saying “to look at your feet to find your path” applies well to the experience of Axis 8. Pleasure and delight are found in whatever is happening at the moment, compassion for others, equanimity in demeanor, sense of trust and hope regardless of circumstances, tendency to elude public notice or acknowledgment, and readiness to give one’s time, energy, and skills to honorable pursuits. In Axis 8, we seek to meet the needs of others. In so doing, our own needs are also met without apparent effort. Own needs are gratified easily, not only because our own needs are low, but because we take such delight in the happiness of others.

Unhealthy Expression: Danger of being used and manipulated by others, withdrawal from the world and its problems, disengagement from ordinary life, bitterness about the world, and withholding of one’s time, energy, and skills in fear of being used.

Developmental Comparison: Axis 8 is more or less parallel to Cook-Greuter’s Stage 5, Autonomous.

Forward Development: Signaling the onset of Axis 8, Awakening Body, the love and compassion we feel toward those around us includes more and more of the world. Individual begin to experience deep, personal grief about the suffering and pain of the world. A sense of soulfulness arises as a palpable sensation that is felt by others. Compassion is felt apart from person needs or the desire to “fix” anyone or anything. In Tibetan Buddhism, true *bodhicitta* arises as a steady state and our psyche and body begin to align with the needs and requirements of the world far more than with our own.

Return Cycle: Overcoming the desire for ongoing pleasure, security, and nurturance in Axis 3, Pleasure Body, is the transformational task of Axis 8. Return Cycles are overviewed in the section entitled Return Cycles of Transformation below.

Axis 9, Awakening Body

Primary Activity: Masterful and soulful presence in the world.

Embodied Stance: Simultaneous flow of time and space, spontaneous action, lack of self presentation, and enveloping sense of gentleness and compassion.

Healthy Expression: Union with others as they are. Union with the world as it is. We create new forms and capacities in the world that are uniquely expressive, masterful, and beyond skillfulness or expertise themselves. As awakening human beings, we are at one with the world as it is. We suffer and pleasure with the sorrow and joys of the world. We suffer and rejoice for others spontaneously and effortlessly. We serve the world with genuine compassion and without restraint. We welcome everything and everyone. Our actions are fluid, resolute, and powerful in the moment. Our body is spacious and open. We feel aligned and compassionate toward the events and people around us, both locally and globally. Because our actions enact the greatest potential possible in the moment, we create possibilities and capacity for others. Because we are no longer separate from the world, our actions “redeem” the world. Moment to moment, we feel at ease and comfortable in the world precisely as it is.

Unhealthy Expression: Danger of being misunderstood, vilified, or killed, depending on the brutality of the culture and times.

Developmental Comparison: Axis 9 is more or less parallel to Cook-Greuter’s Stage 5/6, Construct-aware.

Forward Development: Probably more than any of the other hierarchical transitions, the transition from Axis 9 to 10, Enlightenment Body, is more a matter of grace or mystery than anything else. Who can predict who will “die” before they die?

Return Cycle: In order to awaken, we must transform the survival and safety needs inherent to human existence (Ruomet, 1997, 2006). Believing that death and suffering are illusory is not enough. Death and suffering must take the form of experiential knowing, that is, fully embodied in awareness as experience. Overcoming the impressions of constant vigilance and concern for the self imposed in Axis 2, Vigilance Body, is the transformational task of Axis 9.

Axis 10, Enlightenment Body

Primary Activity: Accommodating to Emptiness/Fullness/Suchness.

Embodied Stance: Union with death while alive.

Healthy Expression. Once we experience, through and through, that death and suffering are forms that change, we return to the origins and imprints of our lives to revisit, reclaim, and refine them. There is no longer any need to change the world. Yet, we change the world because actions spring from us spontaneously in the moment. We affect local and even world events without any intent to do so. We are no longer outside the world trying to change it. United with the world, we *are* the world that changes form to form, so the world follows us.

Perhaps the Buddha and Jesus were “awakened” long before their words were recorded in scripture, completely transforming the habits and patterns connected to their own archetypal imprints. This model does not expect that many of us are likely to become like Jesus or Buddha. If we are led by the future rather than pushed by the past, it helps to know where we are going. In this way, too, we can notice the small and sacred moments in life in which we are awakened to the capacities glimpsed in the lives of enlightened beings and their activities.

Unhealthy Expression. n/a

Developmental Comparison: Axis 10 is more or less parallel to Cook-Greuter’s Stage 6, Unitive.

Forward Development: n/a

Return Cycle: All of us will face death. We can only choose whether we will die consciously or not. Reconfiguring and refining the archetypal patterns of this life imprinted before birth in Axis 1, Archetypal Body, occurs in the final stages of psycho-spiritual development in the Return Cycle of Axis 10.

Return Cycles of Transformation

Consciousness in order to move forward, must also cycle downward to bring closure to and transform inquiries both of the past and of what did not happen that might have happened. All of us are injured—sometimes from real trauma and abuse but also from what did not happen in ways appropriate and genuinely needed in earlier portions of our lives. The good news of moving forward psycho-spiritually is that we eventually gather up the broken parts of our lives in order to reinterpret them at a higher level of consciousness. What no longer serves us also sloughs away. Reinterpretation of the past is not denial but rather a necessary and artful way of living.

This regressive and transformational process of The Body Map’s Return Cycles as illustrated in Figure 1. The role of Return Cycles in psycho-spiritual development was first articulated by Ruumet (1997, 2006) and I expanded upon her theorizing.⁹ Viewed from the point of forward development, Figure 1 illustrates the Return Cycles, integrating Axes 6 through 10 with Axes 5 through 1, respectively. The Return Cycle paired with Axis 6, Compassion Body, is Axis 5, Competence Body. The Return Cycle paired with Axis 7, Presence Body, is Axis 4, Belongingness Body. Axis 8, Awareness Body, is paired with Axis 3, Pleasure Body. Axis 9, Awakening Body, is paired with Axis 2, Vigilance Body. Axis 10, Enlightenment Body is paired with Axis 1, Archetypal Body. Each Return Cycle transforms a more rudimentary form of embodiment at progressively lower axes.

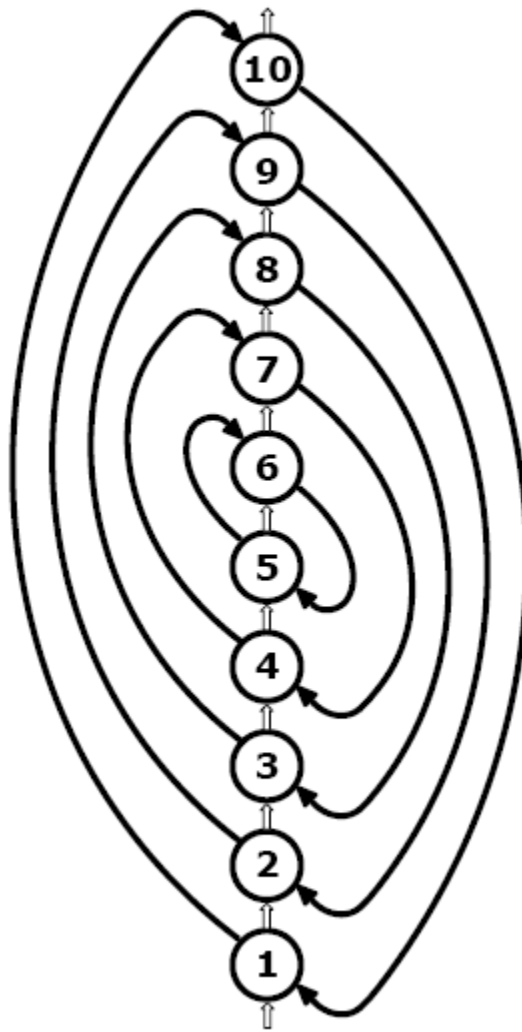


Figure 1. Body-Map of Human Development, Hierarchical Axes and Return Cycles

Probably it is obvious to psychologically-informed readers that an individual might be centered in more than one Axis or engaged in more than one Return Cycle at a time. In particular, dramatic life events can initiate forward hierarchical development and Return Cycles, requiring us to revisit “sites” of old injuries or worn out, useless patterns of behavior and inviting our body, mind, and spirit to accommodate. Encountering serious illness or death of oneself or loved ones is probably the best elixir for spiritual growth there ever was or will be. However momentary, in tiny encounters with death, we visit higher levels of development and the trivial aspects of our lives drop away. Of course, in the next moment, we usually gather our trivialities back up again. But never mind—literally never mind—the body remembers everything.

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³ This phrase is spoken aloud by a priest as earth is cast upon a coffin in the Christian ritual for the Burial of the Dead.

⁴ I wish to thank and acknowledge Cara Lynne Carlson (2008) for her review of human development theories, which contributed significantly to this list of citations.

⁵ For a fuller explanation of how I understand the role of intuition in research, see my writings on intuitive inquiry (Anderson, 1998, 2000, 2004, 2008), a transpersonal approach to research praxis.

⁶ Research participants responded to Experiential Exercises (meditations) for each stage (Anderson, 2005), writing their responses in the style of Embodied Writing (Anderson 2001, 2002a, 2002b).

⁷ See Sogyal Rinpoche's *Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* or Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*, if you wish to explore dramatic portrayals of what this process may be like.

⁸ At this point, I am not sure whether or not Axes 2 and 3 can be separated out as distinct axes. For example, I have known infants and young children who have little fear or concern about self-preservation. I have separated Axes 2 and 3 because the Return Cycles required for Axes 8 and 9 seem to signal these more rudimentary developmental structures. Also, as a pragmatic matter as I continue to develop The Body Map, it will be easier to integrate Axes 2 and 3 than to differentiate them later.

⁹ My understanding of the Return Cycles has been substantially informed in conversation with my friend and colleague Hillevi Ruumet (1997, 2006), whose model of psycho-spiritual development is informed by her many years of experience as a clinical psychologist.

¹⁰ First names are given in acknowledgment of feminist styles of notation.