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A Matter of Heart and Soul: The Value of Positing a Personal Ontological Center for Developmental Psychology

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A whole person understanding of postconventional development needs to offer a facilitative agent, what is here called a psychocentric dimension, with a unique and necessary role in the transformation of individual consciousness, that complements and completes the egocentric and cosmocentric domains. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's writings and praxis concerning what they called the psychic being may elucidate an alternative frame to current theoretical speculations, in a way that may offer a new synthesis and a more theoretically satisfying interpretation. More specifically, it is hoped that an integral yoga psychology framework for postconventional development can meaningfully account for the transformation of individual consciousness by rendering the psychic being as the definitive reference point, facilitative agent, basis, source, originating point of the self and-or cause for the process of self-individuation of postconventional consciousness.

Keywords: postconventional development, psychic being, integral yoga, Sri Aurobindo, evolution of consciousness, soul, theoretical hermeneutics

The study described herein proposes that an integral yoga psychology framework makes a positive contribution in articulating the possible nature and unfoldment of postformal, or postconventional, characterizations of individual development by framing it as consciousness evolution. In order to assess the metaphysical assumptions that underlie many of the dominant developmental theories, the researcher has drawn largely from the work of integral scholar and professor of psychology Bahman A. K. Shirazi. In articulating an integral psychology framework, she has employed Shirazi's (1994, 2015) three broad-spectrum paradigmatic categories of subjective self-experience that he termed: (1) the *egocentric*, or the composition of egoic (i.e., mental, vital, and physical) dimensions of the individual associated with the embodied surface personality (the *outer being* in integral yoga); (2) the *cosmocentric* (Ātman-Brahman in integral yoga) or pure awakening to the impersonal Self or Ultimate Reality; and (3) the *psychocentric*, which is the awareness of the entirely unique and personal

aspect of individual consciousness known as the soul (*psychic being* or the *inmost being* in integral yoga). To this end, an extensive critical evaluation and problematization of the disparate theoretical literatures indicated that while the egocentric and cosmocentric dimensions have been taken into account by various models, the psychocentric, or more specifically, the evolutionary soul dimension and its role in postconventional development has commonly been overlooked.

With this background, there appears to be hardly any substantial signs of agreement in the extensive and rapidly expanding literatures on postformal human development. Such division has resulted in increasingly heated disagreements and debates concerning controversies of shape, goals, and, particularly, direction (e.g., structural-hierarchical versus spiral-dynamic models; Washburn, 2003a). The shared shortcoming of egocentric and cosmocentric views of postconventional development is that they fail to identify a satisfactory facilitative agent that might account for this process.

Egocentric forces cannot explain a drive for development beyond an egocentric domain—a fact that seems to have gone largely unnoticed in the field of developmental psychology—and it is hard to understand how a cosmocentric view of a single, undifferentiated consciousness accounts for the diversities of life and development.

A whole person understanding of postconventional development needs to offer a facilitative agent, what is here called a psychocentric dimension, with a unique and necessary role in the transformation of individual consciousness, that complements and completes the egocentric and cosmocentric domains. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's writings and praxis concerning what they called *the psychic being* may elucidate an alternative frame to current theoretical speculations, in a way that may offer a new synthesis and a more theoretically satisfying interpretation. More specifically, it is hoped that an integral yoga psychology framework for postconventional development can meaningfully account for the transformation of individual consciousness by rendering the psychic being as the definitive reference point, facilitative agent, basis, source, originating point of the self and / or cause for the process of self-individuation of postconventional consciousness.

While psychology typically relies on empirical evidence, the question of situating postconventional development differently than egoic development is relatively novel, so that even preliminary speculative framing of the issue is largely lacking. Accordingly, this paper employs a multidisciplinary approach to *theoretical hermeneutics*, considering the construct of the psychic being in an exploratory and emergent manner that considers potential syntheses between qualitative accounts and various theoretical and metaphysical contexts along both logical and intuitive lines of reasoning. As such, it challenges much of the existing literature with an alternate assumptive ground in its integral aim for a deeper and richer dialogue. This preliminary effort attempts to apprehend possible outlines of what a satisfying solution might look like, as a potential guide to more specific work in the future. Following Gadamer (1960/1975), such a theoretical hermeneutic approach is concerned with “the experience of truth

that transcends the domain of scientific method wherever that experience is to be found” (p. xxii).

Such a broad sweep as this is undeniably imperfect, as any effort to interpret such a vast body of theoretical literature requires careful examination from a variety of perspectives, contexts, and ways of knowing. For instance, the very process of identifying assumptions underlying a particular set of theories calls for intuitive conjecture on the part of the researcher, as specific biases are not typically clearly stated. That is, authors of published theories are not always frank about the way their theoretical assumptions have shaped their research questions, designs, interpretations, and conclusions (Paterson et al., 2001). The process of interpretation, might, for instance, extend from that which has been studied to that which *has not*—thus permitting speculation about why this might be so (Paterson et al., 2001). In this way, the researcher could help others understand certain problematic areas in the theoretical literatures, which have typically been ignored, misconstrued, or mistreated (Kasper, 1994).

It should be conceded from the outset, interpretation as employed here does not seek to dwell on evidence for and / or against the soul—a more familiar term with some rough equivalence to the notion of the psychic being—nor attempt to establish the ontological reality of the psychocentric dimension. For that matter, this research, as creative conceptualization, does not attempt to prove anything at all. As Rachael (2012) put it, such a theoretical hermeneutic endeavor “does not interpret texts in an attempt to prove the existence of underlying phenomena arising out of a pre-given or objective static ground” (p. 69). While the present writing honors the evolutionary insights of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and furthermore attempts to remain as devoted as possible to their integral yogic psychological perspective, it should be emphasized that the researcher does not pretend to offer up a universally verifiable and predetermined path, nor a *grand map* (e.g., Wilber, 2000a; see Shirazi, 2001; cf. Ferrer, 2001), that should be applied to all psychological theories and all spiritual traditions at all times, for all people, now and in the future. In other words, she presents an interpretive model and a privileged (not absolutist) knowledge

claim in terms of the ensuing integral psychology framework she presents.

Historical Overview

The etymological origin of the word *psychology* literally means the study of the soul, one's essence or deepest self. By comparable definition, a psychotherapist becomes an attendant or a servant (i.e., *therapeia*) of the soul. Beginning in the seventeenth century, however, the concept of soul virtually disappeared from the Western philosophical vocabulary. With Newton's (1687/1999) most famous and influential work *Principia Mathematica*, the ghost was apparently taken out of the machine (Koestler, 1967; Ryle, 1949/2009) and the soul was removed from matter, as the evolution of the universe was incrementally reduced to reliable, self-sufficient clockwork. Hence, modern-day psychology chose to cut itself off from its roots and to graft itself onto the tree of the physical sciences (Elkins, 1998). Psychology "became a self-explanatory system with its own laws, methodology, and language, not requiring spirits, mysticism, or superstition to explain itself Matter—the uniform, invisible substance that underlies all appearances—[was to be] governed by a single set of rules" (Du Toit, 2007, p. 5). The ensuing mechanical worldview left neither purpose nor meaning for the soul. Increasingly, for over three hundred years, the conception of the soul has faced a series of further paradigmatic and philosophical setbacks (see the works of Thomas Hobbes, Rene Descartes, Anne Finch Conway, G. W. Leibniz, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant). Thus, the secularized soul—the *self*, the modern-day notion of the mind or ego—has become the dominant motif of psychology (Beck, 2002) and, moreover, the prevailing subject of treatment by psychotherapists and theorists. As a result, the self-concept has replaced the soul as the foundation for most schools of Western psychology (i.e., psychoanalytic, behaviorist, cognitive, humanistic, etc.).

At the same time, the term psychology, as a word of Greek origin applied in a context of Western culture, implies a certain type of study—one informed by rational philosophy. The challenge of defining something that is more than the secular self

in language compatible with the critical constraints of psychology is a difficult one. Reference to one's essence is arguably essentialist, and the notion of a deepest self introduces a notion of internal hierarchy for which there is no clear empirical evidence. At the same time, absence of any such notion is also problematic. By way of illustration, if one were to look up at a mountain and identify the highest visible point, then climb to that point and discover that there were higher summits behind it, the point first seen would no longer be considered the peak of the mountain.

In psychology, the self or secularized soul is that first visible peak, and postconventional development points to what appear to be higher levels of something like the same mountain. A challenge arises in how to describe postconventional features—the higher points—when the territory has already been extensively characterized from the perspective of the egoic self, the lower summit. For example, Linn and Siegel (1984) argued that a postformal stage of reasoning "seems impossible since there is no logic more logical than formal-operational logic" (p. 247). Such a position gives no consideration to the possibility that postconventional development might itself reflect a shifted context of evaluation. This problem may prove more soluble if the entire territory is prospectively reconsidered from the higher location, using something other than a Piagetian norm—for example, perhaps drawing on what Sri Aurobindo has called the psychic being.

There have been other efforts to define something like soul within psychology, for example by Carl Jung (1969), whose archetype of the Self evokes the notion of something beyond the ego or secular self. More recently, Michael Washburn (2003b) has formulated an embodied version of a deep psychic core, also within a psychodynamic frame. These both differ from the more typical stage-based models that propose levels of development beyond formal operations without addressing the fact that any movement away from the dynamics at the core of the egoic sphere of agency would simply erode that sphere, unless it was also movement toward a different sphere. Models such as those of Jung and Washburn contribute to the discussion of what might constitute such a recentered sphere, but

both are limited by the largely Western context of their approach. Here these efforts are complemented by a similar and highly developed concept from the Indian yoga tradition. Before outlining the concept of a psychocentric sphere, or psychic being, it is appropriate to look back at how the literature has addressed the notion of postconventional development.

Human Development

For a good part of the past century, there has evidently been growing interest in the study of the self and its growth processes and evolution, or what Piaget (1930/1999), Kohlberg (1969), Loevinger (1976), and other psychologists have termed *human development*. Especially in the past 40 years, developmental theorists have proposed scores of diverse maps of human development. With the advent of the twenty-first century, developmental theory has been undergoing a wave of popularity that according to some scholars is currently reaching critical mass (Cook-Greuter, 2004). McIntosh (2007) remarked: “Despite the objections of the materialist and postmodern schools of psychology, developmental psychology has continued to increase its sway within the larger field of psychology as a whole” (p. 30).

As a source of internal consistency among many theorists in recent decades, there has been demonstrated not only an explicit attempt to revive the Piagetian developmental framework but also the further endeavor to extend its conventional narrative to include a more complete account of advanced human development—one that extends beyond the traditional mode of formal operational reasoning to include postformal, postconventional, and/or transpersonal stages of human development—whereby that which Jung termed individuation and Maslow (1968) termed self-actualization are but the upper end of a developmental spectrum (Pfaffenberger, 2007b). Arguably, although the names and descriptions of their developmental stages differ to various degrees, there do appear to be a few points of agreement common to many of them. Especially over the last several decades, there have been numerous varied and rigorous efforts to situate and qualify a better understanding of these lesser-understood advanced human developmental

pathways. Above all, “the preceding panoramic survey of the developments in modern psychology shows that the young science has been . . . steadily growing towards an increasingly deeper and more comprehensive view of the human being and of human life” (Dalal, 2001, p. 8).

But in spite of all this, psychologists have become increasingly polarized and progressively inclined to engage in considerable debate concerning their disparate views in regards to how such psychospiritual stages might ultimately come about. The adult development literatures, indeed, tell a fascinating epic narrative regarding the nature and destiny of selfhood—albeit, oftentimes according to contradictory and highly divergent accounts (Cortright, 2007). Paradoxically, there appears to be significant division even among the most ostensibly similar theories. In Ferrer’s (2002) words, “And these divergences are not merely about minor theoretical issues, but often about the central philosophical and metaphysical foundations of the field, for example, the understanding of transpersonal phenomena, the meaning of spirituality, or the very nature of reality” (p. 7), which has led to something of a Gordian knot for the better part of three decades (Wilber, 2006). Understandably, this situation has resulted in a very confusing picture for spiritual practitioners and clinicians in the field.

Metaphysical Considerations

Related to the foregoing, Cortright (2007) observed, “All psychological systems arise within a particular spiritual and philosophical context and construct their view of the human being from basic assumptions embedded in this context” (p. 2). He continued, “Whether this philosophical context is materialistic or spiritual has profound implications for the psychology that emerges” (p. 2). It certainly appears true that over the past forty years, theorists have effectively associated personality development with spiritual notions of awakening. Nevertheless, there is good reason to suggest that advanced models of human development have apparently failed to overcome certain stubborn problems, biases, and limitations that continue to pervade the established bodies of theoretical literature. In terms of the wider community of psychologists, Miovic

(2001) reasoned that underlying such conceptual problems, there exist invisible metaphysical lenses, or worldviews, that lead to the ultimate questions that are not inconsequential in terms of their implications “because the answers we select for them determine the framework of metapsychology, and that in turn influences clinical practice. The answers to these questions depend largely upon what we believe to be the ultimate nature of reality” (para. 2).

Developmental theories, in particular, tend to presuppose a certain set of *a priori* suppositions that enable theorists to conceptualize human growth and development (Daniels, 2005). Beginning with Aristotle (384–322 B.C) for example, it has become increasingly evident that processes of growth and maturation seem best understood when inserted within an extra-logical framework of metaphysical concepts and principles (being, becoming, potential, and so on; Broughton, 1984). As has been noted, if logic is the highest emergent dynamic of the secular self, then any move away from this—whether or not it is seen as emergent, autopoietic, or somehow beyond the egoic—can at best be seen as a benevolent erosion rather than further development. As has been systematically pointed out by numerous scholars (e.g., Lerner 1985; Lerner & Tubman, 1989; Werner, 1957), the issue of framing assumptions or metaphysics is one that goes to the very core of developmental psychology, perhaps more so than any other field of inquiry, because developmental frameworks are concerned with highly subjective and invisible processes purely determined by theory (Jarvis, 1997).

The Egocentric Sphere

Through exploratory examination of the theoretical underpinnings of many of the foremost developmental literatures, it has been found that, despite a seeming overplay of the various points of contrast, the majority of developmental theorists turn out to have converging egocentric concerns (see Shirazi, 1994). Taken together, neo-Piagetianism and ego psychology (e.g., Kohlberg, 1969; Loevinger, 1976; see also Colby et al., 1983) appear to represent two dominant paradigms underlying many of the frameworks in the field. Generally owing a common intellectual debt, in one way or another, to the work of Freud or Piaget, there appear to be a broad range of

developmental theories proceeding from egocentric assumptions, which lend primacy to the charting of developmental stages in terms of predominantly materialistic, logical empiricist, positivistic, and-or pragmatic philosophies of science. Put somewhat differently, many developmental models tend to be based upon naturalistic philosophies that hold “biology to be ultimate, [and thus] lead to certain conclusions about consciousness, behavior, and possibilities for human growth” (Cortright, 2007, p. 2).

Underneath the egocentric bias, there appear much more stubborn issues in terms of explaining the very basis of human change and development itself. Simply stated, the egocentric approach to the problem of stage change brings to the fore a related set of problems that, in present-day formulation, can be summarized as the fundamental difficulty of *epiphenomenalism*—or, the materialistic conviction that mental events are caused by neural impulses generated by the brain. In this regard, Cornelissen (2001) wrote, “if the material viewpoint is carried to its extreme, consciousness is seen as not more than a causally ineffective epiphenomenon of material processes” (para. 5). Materialists, according to McIntosh (2007), for instance, reject the idea that *mind*—much less the *soul*—is distinct from matter, and their framework has dominated the institutional study of both consciousness and evolution. As McIntosh put it:

There is a general consensus among academics that mental awareness can be reduced to the physical activity occurring in brain cells, and that it is just a matter of time before science is able to clearly explain how brain states produce the sensations of awareness. (p. 9)

The dominant epiphenomenal biases informing much of the egocentric literatures seem to assume that core neurophysiological and autopoietic structures can generate in themselves the precise conditions needed to catalyze the transformation of individual consciousness. Consequently, according to this logic, physical structures (like the brain) must then necessarily serve as the ultimate basis for all human growth and development. Hence, within the broad-spectrum egocentric sphere, and especially among cognitive psychologists, there appears to

be reinforcement for an already existing inclination and propensity to equate a facilitative agent or mechanism of change with a neuronal structured substrate. In this context, Wade (1996) conceded that there appears to be no precise definition for a transition function specified within the literature other than a general nod towards the Gravesian concept of existential crises. In other words, the processes involved with transformation are not well described by many developmental theorists beyond generalities; and, thus, they are not particularly revealing.

The Cosmocentric Sphere

The egocentric sphere's claim that the ego is the center and driving force for the evolution of consciousness appears to fall apart, however, as personal awareness begins to individuate beyond formal structures of the mind and egoic personality. As Irwin (2002) put it: But the story of the ego is not all that occupies the landscape of consciousness and development. By historical analysis, Pederson (2011) observed that incrementally "the continuum of psychological development and consciousness evolution [has] expanded in recent years to include stages beyond the full integration of the personality to a realm of . . . identity colloquially referred to as *enlightenment*" (pp. 8–9; see also Cook-Greuter, 1990; Page, 2011; Pfaffenberger, 2003; Wade, 1996; Washburn, 1999).

Not to be confused here with Sri Aurobindo's *cosmic consciousness* (a term that he designated for a specific experience or state of spiritual identification), according to Shirazi (1994), the cosmocentric sphere represents a level of transcendent impersonal identity whereby the egocentric self is traditionally perceived as an illusion. At first glance, it seems the cosmocentric interface is where humanistic psychology, postmodernism, Buddhist spiritual systems, and "object relations views of the self as an image converge, and the conclusion that the self is an illusion can seem convincing" (Cortright, 2007, p. 43). Cortright succinctly elucidated this view:

Buddhist psychology has performed an even more microscopic examination of the self than object relations and has emerged with a more thorough deconstruction of the self. Buddhist

texts report that when the self becomes the object of meditative inquiry, in looking closely at the images of the self it is discovered that there are spaces between these images. There actually is nothing to hold these images together. In meditatively penetrating the spaces between the images, it is found that there is no self, and emptiness is seen to be fundamental. It is this deeply experienced insight that liberates the person and leads to enlightenment. The continuity of the self is explained as a kind of optical illusion similar to watching movement in a movie. Although in watching a movie we see continuous movement, in reality we are looking at a series of rapidly flickering still photos that we interpret as continuous motion. The illusion of the continuity of the self is based upon a similar mis-perception. (p. 42)

Above all, and consistent with postmodern theory, the self and its development are typically presented as socially constructed or illusory. Borrowing heavily from humanistic and transpersonal psychology as well as Eastern philosophy, for instance, a cosmocentric view of the self suggests that the formal operational self-construct introduced by Piaget naturally annuls itself to realize a broader form of transcendental contemplation, informed by an awareness and a creativity that override the dualism of subject and object (Broughton, 1984; see Gowan, 1974). Thus, a number of theories of advanced human development tend to share in common the basic premise that the self is an impermanent delusion or no-thingness—an ever-changing configuration of mental, physical energies, or processes that is only meaningful because of a particular set of psychological, social, and cultural contexts. Michael Leicht (2008) summarized the cosmocentric orientation towards the self in the following excerpt:

And one striking result of this movement of conviction of things here of unreality and the assertion of the sole reality beyond, was the doctrine of Buddhism, leading to self-extinction. As you know Buddha came to say that there is no creator, there is no beginning. Each

individual is a product of a movement, which starts with desire. One desire leads to another. And this continuity of desire leads to the illusion of permanence. Cut out the root of desire, the movement comes to a stop and one day you find things extinguished. . . . In this whole operation the individual loses his significance. (p. 10)

The locus of action in a cosmocentric view shifts from the ego to a nebulous ultimate that is both source and goal of all the universe. While some version of such a spiritual vision serves in traditions such as Buddhism, its value for the psychological study of postconventional development is plagued by difficulties, including the challenge of explaining how this same ego-dissolving ultimate permits the existence of any conventional process of development, which would seemingly need to resist its force to exist.

The Psychocentric Sphere

An exhaustive five year review and critical examination of the disparate developmental literatures has indicated that while egocentric and cosmocentric epistemic assumptions appear widespread underlying much of the contemporary theories of advanced human growth and development, the psychocentric perspective (or more specifically the individual soul dimension) and its role in psychospiritual development appears to have been largely ignored. Specifically, theories of transpersonal development—whether ascending, descending, or otherwise (e.g., Daniels, 1995; Wilber, 2007)—focus: one, almost exclusively on egocentric, or surface dimensions of personality evolution, or alternatively, two, accept only the impersonal, transcendent reality of the cosmocentric Self (B. Shirazi, personal communication, February 27, 2012).

In light of the present review, theories of transpersonal development have explored many surface dimensions associated with human awareness (e.g., ego development, motivation, moral reasoning, object relations, and socialization). But a self that is not the ego—what in European tradition was referred to as the soul—has yet to be formally situated into any larger model of human development. Further, most ascending and

descending postconventional accounts have failed to explicitly acknowledge something akin to the soul, or psychocentric sphere, as a possible facilitative agent of development beyond the egoic. It may be that since the last scientific revolution, Western psychology has lacked a sufficient developmental framework for the personal evolution of the soul because it has maintained there is not one.

In a concerted effort “to understand how the rejection and loss of the soul came about aside from modernity’s more recent secular movements in philosophy-skepticism, atheistic existentialism, metaphysical materialism (physicalism), science, and the secular mental health movements” (Riccardi, 2011, p. 189), problematization of the extant developmental literatures exposed significant anti-theistic and related anti-soul assumptions that can be summarized in terms of aforementioned egocentric and cosmocentric biases. It should not be surprising that the soul—banished by respectable society from public, outer space—has meanwhile reappeared in some psychological theories as the unconscious or as the Self. Hoffman, Stewart, Warren, and Meek (2009) once observed: “It is hard to imagine Western psychology without a conception of the self. The self is intertwined with diagnosis, personality, assessment, and treatment” (as cited in Hoffman & Ortiz, 2008, p. 2). To this point, Irwin (2002) observed, From Freud to Piaget, conceptions of development have proposed as their apex a conscious and self-possessed personhood. In fact, the formation of a separate and autonomous “self is the starting point for virtually all developmental theories, regardless of their nominal beginning” (Wade, 1996, p. 97). Veritably, throughout the developmental literatures, issues of the self versus Self, individuality, personality, consciousness, mind, spirit, and psyche and other modern substitutes for the soul (Duvall, 1998) have proven increasingly problematic. Quoting Duvall, Beck (2002) wrote:

Into the vacuum left 100 years ago by the departure of the soul has stepped the self. “We have come to use self to bear some of the meaning that soul used to carry” (Duvall, 1998, p. 8). Synonyms abound for self (person, individuality, identity), and the word has served the discipline well. The word is widely understood in both

secular and religious circles, and it has proven to be heuristic in contrast to the dead end status of soul studies in the 19th and 20th centuries even though some predict the end of the self to be replaced with a postmodern psychological construction of many selves that are socially embedded. (para. 42)

As professor of psychology Jerry Kroth (2010) pointed out, there remains a fundamental flaw undermining much of the field of academic psychology. That is, Kroth spotted a three hundred yearlong gap with hardly any compelling professional body of psychological literature on the soul to review. For many centuries, the soul has dropped out of mainstream academic discourse. To underscore the extent of the institutional bias, Kroth pointed out, "The hallowed, pristine—and sanitized—databases of academic psychology [contain] . . . beggarly numbers of articles published [on the soul]" (p. 32). Kroth further offered that if one were to investigate academic psychology's storied database, *Psych Lit*, and impute soul and existence versus soul and nonexistence, the researcher would likely find that "there are fourteen times more articles on the latter topic than the former" (p. 35). Echoing this observation, Duvall (1998) wrote:

In the current psychological literature, usage of soul is virtually non-existent, with the exception that more recently, in the last few years, there has been a burgeoning use of the term soul in the title of articles, books, and presentations, but virtually no definition nor discussion of the term's meaning. Reference to soul care has been particularly popular since the publication of Thomas Moore's (1992) book, *Care of the Soul*. In the recent history of psychological literature pertaining to the self, one is struck with the synonymous usage of self and soul. John Broughton's (1980) chapter on "Psychology and the History of the Self: From Substance to Function" illustrates this point. Several examples of sentences in context [has shown] this equivalency. (p. 8)

While many of these ideas of the soul have been influential, they have yet to reach respectable

academic discourse. To this day, in the Western philosophical world, one of the most inspiring, ennobling, and yet controversial concepts in the Western endeavor of psychological inquiry is approaching this idea of the human soul. Considering the intellectual climate, the soul is, of course, a difficult word. It seems important to note, scientists have fundamentally avoided the subject because of the way it tends to undermine their quasi-religious commitment to the metaphysical principle of scientific materialism (McIntosh, 2007). That is, the soul has been systematically ignored or rejected by mainstream academia who have apparently found it too dissonant with prevailing views of the self to take it seriously. Alluding to these and other anti-metaphysical biases against the soul exposed throughout the psychological discourse, Giegerich (1998/2008) indicated, "The psychology of the Self, the soul, the daimon [can be] a huge defense mechanism against the soul, against the self, against the daimon" (p. 20). Such incredulity against the soul appears symptomatic of the fact that the field of psychology remains beleaguered by a certain "hubris of absolutist metaphysics [further] constrained by the assumptions of the Cartesian-Kantian legacy" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 188).

An examination of both contemporary psychological theories and the history of scientific theorizing demonstrates that the concept of a soul has become taboo in intellectual and even to some degree in transpersonal circles (Daniels, 2005). To this point, Talbot (1992) elucidated, "It is currently not fashionable in science to consider seriously any phenomenon that seems to support the idea of a spiritual reality" (p. 244). This bias has no doubt contributed to the erasure of any notion that could take the place of the soul in Western thought, and thereby reflect a psychocentric sphere. It is here that Sri Aurobindo's work may provide a possible contribution.

Monistic Fundamentalism is a Flatlander's World

By advancing a highly original and rigorous approach to theory generation called *problematization*, organizational researchers Mats Alvesson, Dan Kärreman, and Jörgen Sandberg

(see Alvensson & Kärreman, 2000a, 2000b, 2007, 2011; Alvensson & Sandberg, 2011, 2013a, 2013b; Sandberg & Alvensson, 2011) have contributed to renewed debate concerning how researchers might better arrive at exciting and persuasive theoretical frameworks—less susceptible to the typical pitfalls characteristic of the contemporary quantitative and qualitative research traditions. As a dialogue partner, this study has adopted Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's integral yoga psychology as an alternative assumption ground to aid in the problematization of the extant literatures and to engage in a meaningful interchange with the paradigmatic assumptions found underlying many of the established theories.

Overall and very generally, this methodology has established at least two broad categories of widespread assumptions and beliefs that appear to still overwhelmingly permeate the contemporary fields of developmental theory—several of these egocentric and cosmocentric biases have been touched upon very briefly. Just as the egocentric sphere has clearly and without much controversy traced the developmental contours operative in the construction of the frontal self, so the cosmocentric sphere has sought to identify and transcend the cultural, biographical, historical, linguistic, and philosophical outlines of the socially constructed self. Paralleling this turn, as elucidated in the previous section, the downside of egocentric materialism appears to be its disregard for consciousness “as insubstantial chimera, or at best as epiphenomena of material processes” (Cornelissen, 2008, p. 411).

With perceptive consideration, for instance, Cornelissen (2001) summarized the fundamental assumptions and pitfalls of egocentrism. He wrote, “materialist reductionism is a puritan view; it clears out superstition, but in the end it sterilizes and leaves one in a bare, severely diminished remnant of reality” (p. 3). In almost a “perfect mirror image of this denial of spirit and consciousness by the materialists, the influential [cosmocentric] *Mayavadin* schools of Indian philosophy regard matter and sense-impressions as illusions imposed on the absolute silence of the spirit” (p. 411). With this, several problems have become increasingly apparent on the grounds that each account is significantly partial and one-sided. The defect apparently lies in the fact that

both spheres are monistic doctrines—granted one side emphasizes the monism of matter or of force and the other seems to subscribe entirely to the monism of Spirit. Or to put it somewhat differently, the monism of matter, like “constructionism is, till now, still a flatlanders’ world. It recognizes that there are different viewpoints, but they are all still within one single plane” (Cornelissen, 2012, para. 16).

To better understand this dichotomy, it seems an apt guiding metaphor is an image of a pole extending up from Earth to Heaven. One end represents the *materialist egocentric denial* (i.e., nothing but Matter) and the other represents the *ascetic cosmocentric denial* (i.e., nothing but Spirit). The bottom end of the pole, or the egocentric starting point for the first negation, is perilous in its belittling and degrading effects on both the individual and the collective. The top end of the pole, or the cessation of the individual by the attainment of transcendence is the logical and supreme conclusion of the second negation. This cosmocentric sense is felt as the ultimate unreality of the world combined with the perception of the pure Self or of the Non-Being—two different expressions of the same denial—which are some “of the most powerful and convincing experiences of which the human mind is capable” (Sri Aurobindo, 1940/2005, p. 26). To this misconception, Sri Aurobindo (1998) wrote:

But Vedanta is popularly supposed to be a denial of life, and this is no doubt a dominant trend it has taken. Though starting from the original truth that all is the Brahman, the Self, it has insisted in the end that the world is simply not-Brahman, not-Self; it has ended in a paradox. (p. 107)

If the egocentric is on one end of the polarity, the cosmocentric pole represents the other extreme. The pole itself can be said to epitomize *monism* (from the Greek *monas* “one”), which assumes that mind and matter are essentially reducible down to the same ultimate substrate or principle of being. *Perspectival monism* “is the view according to which the variety of experiences and visions of ultimate reality should be understood as

different perspectives, dimensions, or levels of the very same Ground of Being” (Ferrer, 2002, p. 81). At the descriptive level, “there is only one metaphysic but many traditional languages through which it is expressed” (p. 92). Kazlev (1999) further elucidated:

The term *monism* . . . like “materialism” and “dualism,” is rather ambiguous. In modern philosophy it is used to designate any metaphysical theory, which states that there is only one reality, from which everything else came. . . . Others use the term monism to designate a materialistic position—there is only one reality, and that is physical matter and energy. . . . But Monism can also be defined as the thesis that there is only one spiritual or Divine reality, and that physical and psychic reality are not separate from that. This could be termed “Spiritual Monism,” to distinguish it from “Neutral Monism” and “Materialistic Monism.” Monism (in the sense of Spiritual Monism) sees the Divine as an all-embracing impersonal or transpersonal Absolute Reality, which is identified with the innermost Self (the “God within”). So there is no separation between God and the Soul, or God and the world. (Kazlev, 1999, para. 1–2)

On one side of the continuum, the egocentric pole seems to favor the exploration of purely surface phenomena like logic, cognition, complexity, ego formulations, structures, and other mechanistic concerns at the expense of exploring deeper and more integrative realms and dimensions of being. Indeed, most fields of Western psychology, neuroscience, and philosophies of the self have decidedly taken along the lines formulated by the naturalistic philosophies of materialism and positivism in the West. *Caraka* in Indian philosophy can also be roughly described as representative of this egocentric ontological approach (Lal, 1973/2010).

Here, however, there is no room for the experiencer. The egocentric scheme, that is, entirely overlooks the fact that human material existence is extremely poor and inadequate in terms of explaining existence, and moreover, misses the fact that every individual is capable of certain nobility of being—of

going beyond the terrestrial (Lal, 1973/2010). It can be argued that the inherent flaw of the egocentric sphere, is not that it is so much wrong but that it tends to assume bottom up causality, as elucidated by E. F. Kelly (2007) here:

Everything we are and do is in principle causally explainable from the bottom up in terms of our biology, chemistry, and physics—ultimately, that is, in terms of local contact interactions among bits of matter moving in strict accordance with mechanical laws under the influence of fields of force. Some of what we know, and the substrate of our general capacities to learn additional things, are built-in genetically as complex resultants of biological evolution. Everything else comes to us directly or indirectly by way of our sensory systems, through energetic exchanges with the environment of types already largely understood. Mind and consciousness are entirely generated by—or perhaps in some mysterious way identical with—neurophysiological events and processes in the brain. Mental causation, volition, and the “self” do not really exist; they are mere illusions, by-products of the grinding of our neural machinery. And of course because one’s mind and personality are entirely products of the bodily machinery, they will necessarily be extinguished, totally and finally, by the demise and dissolution of that body. (pp. xx–xxi)

At first glance, the egocentric extreme (i.e., the Newtonian/Cartesian) paradigm of classical empiricism that considers material existence alone as real) appears to reflect the exact opposite reality as the cosmocentric pole, which accepts only an Absolute, transcendent, and-or impersonal reality. That is, the cosmocentric pole tends to assume the complete contradictory position with its insistence that the Absolute alone is real. Lal (1973/2010) explained: “We can also include the metaphysical theories of Bradley and even of Spinoza as falling under this group, because according to them also the . . . Absolute or the [transcendent] substance is the only reality” (pp. 177–178). This fundamental understanding of reality basically asserts, If there is an experiencer (i.e., a subject), it will eventually be transcended into some kind of object, hence the

experiencer is just a transitional object, an illusory wave. To this, Cortright (2007) offered the metaphor of a “river flowing into the sea or the drop of water dissolving into the ocean illustrate the loss of the lower individuality of the ego in order to gain a higher identity with Brahman” (p. 24).

Ironically, while appearing fundamentally opposed to the egocentric order, it should be emphasized that development towards the cosmocentric pole still follows a bottom up orientation. More generally, both the egocentric and cosmocentric theories of existence could arguably be defined in terms of their fixed and polarized natures. The cosmocentric sphere’s monistic character is so emphatic that in such a theory the reality of everything else, even of man tends to suffer (Lal, 1973/2010). In many important respects, according to this polarized viewpoint, embodied existence is considered to be the essential source of suffering, which has apparently led to recurrent devaluing of the physical body faced by certain meditation practices, as they have frequently been “limited to the higher emotional realm and hardly touch the central emotional or lower instinctual emotional levels of everyday life. The self, with its unconscious needs, grasps the heart’s aspiration and twists it to its own narcissistic ends” (Cortright, 2007, p. 67). Schism and overall tension between the phenomenal and noumenal poles of these monistic approaches is alienating because, as Tarnas (1991) convincingly reasoned, “these dualisms ineluctably place us out of touch from the reality that is the very source of our being” (as cited in Ferrer, 2002, p. 172). E. F. Kelly (2007) explained: “Scientific psychology has been struggling to reconcile these most basic dimensions of its subject matter ever since it emerged from philosophy near the end of the 19th century” (p. xvii). By situating the individual self “inexorably out of touch with the *real* world, the alienating Cartesian gap between subject and object is epistemologically affirmed and secured” (Ferrer, 2002, p. 142). In developmental psychology, it is apparent that theorists across both egocentric and cosmocentric domains have fallen prey to such tragedies.

Returning now to the main point, it seems a matter of critical importance to make clear the

assertion, when conceptualizing a cosmocentric map of psychospiritual development, that the journey of self-transcendence has not necessarily replaced the more familiar egocentric terrain. At least not conceptually, as these corresponding spheres have been frequently rendered throughout the literatures as intersecting by means of an unbroken and continuous *stacking* (i.e., tiers) from the pre-rational (pre-personal) to the rational (personal), and then taking the ontological leap from the rational to the trans-rational (transpersonal). This conversion is reflected in the literatures with a lowercase *s*, *self*, a term which is used to designate the ego’s understanding of itself as defined by the self-representation adapted into an uppercase *S*, or *Self*, a term used to designate the power of the Ground in its highest expression as transcendent Spirit (Washburn, 2003b; see also Daniels, 2005).

Apparently, still at issue, there has long been a need for a synthesizing bridge that might unite the cosmocentric and egocentric respective shores divided perhaps by a nearly four-centuries-old Cartesian gulf. As Wade (1996) articulated: “In fact, the very plethora of developmental schools suggests that some higher-order theory focusing on consciousness itself, rather than the content or expression of consciousness, might bring greater integration to the field of developmental psychology” (p. 1). Nevertheless, many of the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underlie many of the more recent developmental theories based on consciousness itself, for instance, have apparently been founded on lenses biased towards the impersonal. Employing terminology such as the *Numinous*, the *Noetic*, and the *Transcendent*, it seems many tend to carry forward the biases of moral philosophers such as Kant. As far as the Neo-Kantian lens and its capacity to synthesize to any significant degree, Mišra (1998) opined that such frameworks mostly disappoint in this regard.

Kant ultimately fails to give us a view of reason, which bridges the yawning gulf between the subject and object. Thought in Kant is still very much analytic. It has ultimately failed to attain concreteness and the true power of synthesis on account of its utter dependence upon sensibility.

It is confronted on all sides by irreconcilable contradictions. It finds itself unable to solve the contradiction between subject and object, reason and sensibility, phenomena and noumena. (pp. 42–43)

Weiss (2012) underscored how Kantian assumptions ultimately fail in terms of their explanatory power: “If we posit that all manifestation is the expression of one, featureless, undifferentiated consciousness . . . then it becomes difficult to account for the individualization of consciousness, which is so prominent in our experience” (p. 65). Echoing Kantian anthropocentrism, for instance, perennialist transpersonal theories seem to essentially negate the possibility of a multidimensional unfolding of human development and, moreover, the ontological status of a soul. The afore identified problem of the field’s continued exclusion of the psychocentric dimension “may be, as we can see in our own intellectual tradition, to quickly reduce the *res cogitans* to the status of an epiphenomenon, thus rendering it essentially irrelevant, and banishing it from respectable discourse” (Weiss, 2004, p. 9). Thus, the richness and intricacy of inner existence has been reduced purely to the “poverty of a holon” (p. 6). As Lal (1973/2010) contended, the Kantian solution ultimately eliminates any evolutionary purpose for the universe.

Therefore, in a sense this theory preaches acosmism and reduces man almost to the status of unreality. Another defect of this theory . . . is that it rules out completely the possibility of the opening up [and being transformed by] higher consciousness in this life and world, because it believes that is possible only in a different-higher word. (p. 179)

The Cartesian gap, then, exacerbates the unsatisfactory nature of the secularized self.

Secularized Self

Cannot Account for Individuation

When considering any integrating developmental framework, “the mechanisms of transition from one stage to the next must be accounted for” (Wade, 1996, p. 21). After all, “development

in its deepest meaning refers to transformations of consciousness” (Cook-Greuter, 2004, p. 3). In terms of transformation, Kant once posited that in order for any kind of experience to unfold such as the evolution of human consciousness “there must be an underlying subject, a transcendent ego which is a synthesizing self [that might drive] such phenomenological and contextual connections between parts of experience” (Crabtree, 2007, p. 340). As a concurrent development within the Kantian vision, Derrida (1967/1978) similarly established, “A pure representation, a machine, never functions on its own” (as cited in Miller & Armstrong, 2007, p. 137). Nevertheless, Kant (1787/1999) proclaimed that the transcendent ego or synthesizing self is

so completely empty of all content, that it cannot be called even a conception, but merely a consciousness which accompanies all conceptions. This *I* or he or it, this thing that thinks, is nothing but the idea of a transcendental subject of thought = *x*, which is known only through the thoughts that are its predicates, and which apart from them, cannot be conceived at all. (as cited in Mišra, 1998, p. 42)

In the Western psychological tradition, there have been many admirable theories of human development attempting to achieve a complementary relationship between Eastern and Western notions of the egoic self and the transcendent Self, particularly, in terms of individual consciousness as it advances towards ever greater maturity and enlightenment—all from markedly different perspectives and guided by divergent goals and concerns. Variations of this general theme can, of course, be found throughout the various literatures. As such, thinkers like Kohlberg (1969, 1981), Commons (1984), Fischer et al. (1984), Sternberg and Downing (1982), Commons and Richards (2002), and Pascual-Leone (1983, 1984) have devoted considerable attention to the difficulty of specifying a *facilitative agent*, a mechanism, or catalyst for human change, which reflects a critical issue in developmental theory remaining to this day (see Commons, Richards, & Kuhn, 1982; Commons, Trudeau, Stein, Richards, & Crause, 1998; Marko, 2006; Page, 2005). To clarify, a facilitative

agent has been described variably throughout the developmental literature as a theoretical construct, impetus, enabling factor, or intrinsic aspect of personal consciousness that can impel psychological change to happen “anywhere along the change continuum moving it incrementally forward or through a bolt of sudden awareness” (Marko, 2011, p. 88).

To alleviate confusion, however, a foremost distinction needs to be discriminated between egocentric and cosmocentric accounts concerning that which has been presumed to catalyze stage change and development. Granted, mainstream psychological theories have long-inferred the impetus for growth and change to be the aforementioned secularized self, mind, or ego. By contrast, according to the cosmocentric view the role of transition function does not belong essentially to the self (i.e., ego or mental system) but belongs, instead, to the hierarchy of basic structures themselves (Washburn, 2003b). That is, development is assumed to emerge teleologically from the interaction of our immediate present experience with the structures or levels of transcendent consciousness (Ferrer, 2011; see also Ferrer, 2008).

Combs and Krippner (2011) explained the evolution of consciousness as a “self-organizing, or autopoietic system, nested within a larger developmental autopoietic system” (p. 216). To mention a classic example, Graves (1970, 2005) theorized that rather than an underlying facilitative agent, each discrete stage of development is shaped and formed by its relationship to the other stages. More precisely, the earlier levels of development are presumed to become *the basis* for more advanced stages—each emerging as a new and more complex psychology (i.e., belief systems, feelings, behavior, attitude, ethics, values, cognition, motivations, learning systems, coping mechanisms, etc.), an emergent ontological perspective of reality, and/or an evolving epistemological approach to meaning making that is particular to that developmental stage. The process is typically assumed to be marked by a transcend and include progression understood to mean subordination of an older interpretive lens for a more advanced perspective.

Many psychospiritual models tend to assume that successful stage change depends on

shifts in underlying basic structures within an overall spectrum of one unitive consciousness. In a somewhat pantheistic fashion, then, a perennialist paradigm often acknowledges only one true Self, the All, an ultimate reality entirely devoid of individuality. In other words, “transpersonal theorists have typically regarded Spirit not only as the essence of human nature, but also as the ground, pull, and goal of cosmic evolution” (Ferrer, 2002, p. 7). Such models consequently describe a mediation process from one locus of Cosmic Self-identification to the next, which thus only creates an illusion of continuity of change. Rather than transformation, then, there is merely a switch-point (a fulcrum) in the self-system’s center of gravity around which the basic structures progressively identify.

Drawing, for instance, on various conceptualizations of adaptation, some postconventional theorists apparently do not speak so much of transformation in terms of the evolution of an underlying and continuous person. While numerous, that is to say, Western psychological theories do not offer much help or insight into explaining exactly who or what is doing the changing according to the transformations in which they describe. While there appear countless possible *triggering agents* (see Helson & Roberts, 1994; Helson & Srivastava, 2001; Kegan, 1982) and potential antecedent factors (e.g., Hoyer & Touron, 2003; Moshman, 2003) that might precipitate a new developmental stage of thinking or behavior (Marko, 2006, 2011), the change theories that were reviewed appear to assume that the structures of the mind can form the sufficient foundation to automatically generate stage change by themselves. Still at issue, then, the underlying source, origin, cause, and/or basis for psychological growth and development has apparently all but eluded developmental thinkers. Even if such a system is autopoietic, it must have at least the capacity to organize itself in ways that go beyond formal development, if such development is to be possible. In so far as the literatures that have been reviewed, developmental theories appear to function almost exclusively without a fundamental and underlying ontological reference point, which once clearly indicated might help explain the how and why of transformation.

While not immediately obvious, the foregoing calls to mind earlier discussion of Buddhist metaphors of still photos flickering inside a cinematograph. As has been seen, the Buddhist doctrine tends to fundamentally deny the existence of a central, permanent, and psychocentric dimension of self. In a similar way, structure stages are assumed to represent separate loci of exclusive identifications that unfold in an blank succession of images with no person within (Cortright, 2007). Hence, any conjecture of continuous evolution of a personal soul is typically deemed to be the most deceptive of delusions. Indeed, a central concept underlying the cosmocentric perspective is the concept of *anatman* or no-self found in traditional schools of Buddhism (notable exceptions include some of the more occult sects such as Tibetan Tantra). Charlie Singer (2011) explained in *Reflections in a Mirror: The Nature of Appearance in Buddhist Philosophy*:

Common to all schools, or forms, of Buddhism, is the idea of the anatman, or "no-self" nature of the individual or person (or actually of all beings endowed with consciousness). The Buddha was born into the Hindu religious has always been that all beings are endowed with the nature of (having an) atman, or "soul" or actually a "self," which is ultimately identical with, or actually partakes of, the nature of Brahman, or the creator aspect of God in Hindu tradition. ... the Buddha made it quite clear in one of his first teachings, that in regard to the notion that beings are endowed with an atman or permanent "self," that notion is ultimately erroneous, and that in fact, the condition of having a "no-self" is an underlying "fact-of-life," or principle of existence. (p. 37)

According to this view, Sri Aurobindo (1997a) explained, "a person is not a person but a continuity of change, a condition of things is not a condition and there are no things but there is only a continuity of change" (p. 202). Individual consciousness, then, represents "only a sum of apparent continuous movement of consciousness and energy in past, present, and future to which we give this name" (Sri Aurobindo, 1940/2005, pp. 604–605; see also Sri

Aurobindo, 2008, p. 299; Sri Aurobindo, 1940/2005, p. 308, p. 473; Sri Aurobindo, 1999, p. 288).

Rather than a continuous process of individual becoming, each emergent stage of consciousness evolution must logically then "be considered as separate from its predecessor and successor, each successive action of Energy as a new quantum or new creation" (Sri Aurobindo, 1940/2005, p. 84). Accordingly, an individual "can never be anything more than an Ignorance fleeting through Time and catching at knowledge in a most scanty and fragmentary fashion" (p. 523). Sri Aurobindo permitted that the cosmocentric lens is very appealing only so far as it proceeds with its eye fixed solely upon "that which we become, [as] we see ourselves as a continual progression of movement and change in consciousness in the eternal succession of Time" (p. 84). But the cosmocentric appeal immediately begins to fall apart as soon as it attempts to "abrogate continuity without which there would be no duration of Time or coherence of consciousness" (p. 84).

Very poignantly, Sri Aurobindo (1940/2005) gave the metaphor that the individual's steps as he or she "walks or runs or leaps are separate, but there is something that takes the steps and makes the movement continuous" (p. 84). He claimed with supreme intuition that through exceeding the rational intellect, people can begin to "go back behind our surface self and find that this becoming, change, succession are only a mode of our being and that there is that in us" (pp. 84–85)—that is, an origin, a foundation, an essential nature, the inmost secret, or the true self. Sri Aurobindo mused that such a continuous status of personal awareness must appear to the cosmocentrist as "a stupendous machinery without a use, a mighty meaningless movement, an aeonic spectacle without a witness, a cosmic edifice without an inhabitant" (p. 881). There should exist nothing but an empty vessel with "no sign of an indwelling Spirit, no being for whose delight it was made" (p. 881).

To recollect to this point, throughout the relevant theory and research, the developmental approaches examined here seem to favor the positivistic approach to psychological investigation that apparently disdains metaphysics and further opts

instead for anti-metaphysical philosophical sources such as Kant and post-Kantian thinkers. Today, at the brink of emergent new scientific paradigms, it seems many so-called integral theorists have failed to provide a more convincing response to the still-dominant secularist operational assumptions. Consequently, there appears to persist a frustratingly vague gap, or gulf, of missing personhood between the two anti-metaphysical extremes (i.e., the egocentric and cosmocentric spheres). Categorically, beyond vague teleological inferences of facilitation factors that suggest transcendence through the practice of meditation, cosmocentric models appear to have hardly anything of consequence to say concerning exactly how and why evolution arises in the first place. That is, rather than accounting for the processes of individual transformation, it seems as Underhill (1955/1974) rightly observed, many such cosmocentric theorists' "aim is wholly spiritual and self-transcendent, [and is] 'in no way concerned with adding to, exploring, rearranging, or improving anything in the visible universe'" (as cited in Wade, 1996, p. 291). Hence, even for stacked egocentric-cosmocentric theories of human development, an impersonal transcendent source of consciousness replaces the rational self-concept as both its evolutionary ultimate but also in terms of its presumed *source* of change as it carries "development along into the transpersonal realms where the socially constructed self appears to be transcended" (Combs & Krippner, 2011, p. 213). Indeed, if there is one common central assumption found throughout the transpersonal literatures, it seems to be this: transrational consciousness evolution is tantamount with transcendence of the personal being.

This discussion raises a most significant question for developmental theorists: Without a personal evolutionary dimension to human consciousness, what exactly is individuation? The problem for transpersonalists, even when reincarnation is accounted for in a developmental context, is that they, nevertheless, relegate the individualization of consciousness (along with all of the other specific and changing characteristics of differing personalities and of the worlds that they experience), to the status of an illusion. Cortright

(2007) posited that a model that specifies no way to intelligibly account for individuation would be unlikely to offer a conducive framework for discussing the true transformative dimensions of human consciousness. Without positing a personal ontological center, Cortright insightfully maintained, the secularized self is inadequate to the task of explaining the evolutionary nature of selfhood and particularly its individuation.

By obviating any intrinsic sense of a continuing referent of individual consciousness, especially in terms of a theory of human development, the standard view becomes increasingly problematic and furthermore begins to break down altogether. In other words, without a continuous evolutionary self, nothing can essentially bridge the gaps that separate the isolated grades of existence, as it is assumed that no connection can exist between them. To this Sri Aurobindo asked, "Then how the theory of evolution is to be supported at all?" (as cited in Mišra, 1998, p. 318). By removing the status of this innermost consistent and unbroken continuity of being that remains one's true identity over the course of one and many lifetimes "without this inwardness, this spiritual origination, in a too externalized consciousness or by only external means" (Sri Aurobindo, 1940/2005, p. 1056) no change of consciousness could ultimately be possible. Sri Aurobindo (1997a) further challenged:

So it would seem that change is not something isolated which is the sole original and eternal reality, but it is something dependent on status, and if status were non-existent, change also could not exist. For we have to ask, when you speak of change as alone real, change of what, from what, to what? Without this "what" change could not be. (p. 202)

Emergent Psychocentric Territory

As the foregoing discussion has tried to show, a critical stance regarding the assumptions that have guided the whole Newtonian/Cartesian/neo-Kantian project forward "leave us suspicious about the story these developmentalists have told, and leave open alternative possibilities for redescribing the story of development, and for imagining its

uses in psychological science and related research practices” (Day & Youngman, 2003, p. 527). Cortright (2007) offered, “The greatest thinkers of the religious traditions of the world are unanimous in their verdict that failing to see the spiritual dimension of human consciousness as fundamental leads to limited and ultimately incorrect psychologies” (p. 2). As should be obvious, Cortright noted, “here we come upon new, evolutionary, emergent territory that is just beginning to be manifested” (p. 77). Dalal (2007) similarly contended:

During the past several decades there has been occurring what has been called a “paradigm shift”—a fundamental change in the general conceptual framework—in several fields, particularly physics, medicine, psychology, and economics. In psychology, while the great majority are still wedded to the paradigms of one or another of the established schools, a growing number of researchers are shifting to a new psychological paradigm, giving rise to a new trend in psychology as yet not quite well defined. (p. 384)

The present writing submits that materialistic, positivistic, and cosmocentric prejudices have tended toward negation, devaluing, or preclusion of any meaningful role for the personal, evolutionary soul, or psychocentric dimension, from a larger comprehensive developmental framework or model. Indeed, widespread agreement appears throughout the literatures that contemporary psychology has lost its soul (W. Barrett, 1986). While the word psychology originally arose from the Greek prefix meaning soul (Lapointe, 1970, 1972), the term psyche has virtually disappeared from modern parlance. Thus, it could be argued it “remains only an empty prefix, an ever present reminder of a bygone era in thinking about human nature” (Johnson, 1998, p. 22). Turning to Duvall’s (1998) more substantive point, Chapman (2005) explained:

Whatever the semantic alternatives to “soul”—“spirit,” “self,” “ego,” “the I,” “mind,” “reason,” “consciousness,” “psyche,” “subject,” and “person” have all been tried—the concrete density of the self has been progressively lost to view; and

the flourishing of soul and its sensitivities and sufferings, longings for meaning, for beauty, and the divine has not been encouraged. (p. 26)

When psychology lost touch with its Greek prefix, it could be argued that its frameworks became empty and two-dimensional as a consequence. To wit, a baseless story with no reference point is essentially meaningless. Or put another way, it represents a reality that lacks form or substance and verily offers no real way forward to help people chart their course through life. Perhaps a more precise way to express the foregoing idea is to propose that an empty framework represents the ultimate consequence of a psychology without a soul.

Since the very birth of the transpersonal field, it appears that egocentric and / or cosmocentric spheres of self-realization have often served as prevalent interpretive lenses for the study of spiritual phenomena (see Ferrer, 2002). If developmental theory intends to meaningfully situate the psychocentric dimension in rapport with egocentric and cosmocentric notions of human change and transformation, it behooves psychologists to consider an alternative explanatory ground concerning the fundamental nature of individual consciousness and its evolution. Overall and very generally, it seems to this researcher that the egocentric and / or cosmocentric problems and limitations underlying many of the developmental literatures might strongly suggest that an alternative assumption ground that grants an ontological center could offer a deeper and more explanatory vision. More than a century ago, Myers (1886), for instance, discerned some important avenues for exploring the thesis of this study. As he put it very simply, “Our notions of mind and matter must pass through many a phase as yet unimagined” (as cited in E. F. Kelly, 2007, p. 610). Corbin (1964/1972) similarly spoke of an imaginal intermediate metaphysic he thought was necessary to restore meaning and creative connections between self and the world. Hillman (1976/1992) described this middle-way, or uniting realm, as the place of soul.

Much work is needed to arrive at a more psychocentric and integrated model of human

development. As Ferrer (2002) skillfully put it, after the deconstruction has finally been carried out, there emerges the more challenging task of reconstruction. The writing now turns to the work of establishing the groundwork for a more meaningful connection between the soul and matters of advanced psychospiritual growth and transpersonal development and works toward an integral psychology framework that can perhaps generate new research questions about transformations of consciousness while integrating egocentric, cosmocentric, and psychocentric dimensions into a whole person, psychospiritual account of consciousness development. It turns to the Aurobindonian notion of the psychic being.

Alternative Assumption Ground

The soul, the psychic being is in direct touch with the Divine Truth, but it is hidden in man by the mind, the vital being, and the physical nature. One may practice yoga and get illuminations in the mind and the reason; one may conquer power and luxuriate in all kinds of experiences in the vital; one may establish even surprising physical Siddhis; but if the true soul-power behind does not manifest, if the psychic nature does not come into the front, nothing genuine has been done [from the viewpoint of transformation, conceived as a goal versus liberation] . . . Mind can open by itself to its own higher reaches; it can still itself in some kind of static liberation or Nirvana; but the Supramental cannot find a sufficient base in spiritualized mind alone. (Sri Aurobindo, 2014a, pp. 337–338)

In this letter written by Indian mystic-philosopher Sri Aurobindo Ghose (1872–1950) nearly a century ago, is a prelude of his remarkable teachings on the *psychic being*, or evolving soul. Particularly, the prose intimates Sri Aurobindo and his French-born collaborator *the Mother* Mirra Alfassa's (1878–1973) uncommon vision of *psychicization*. That is evocation-invocation (bringing forward) of the true soul, or inmost portion of the Divine within, to take up the lead in the evolution of human consciousness, especially, as the person individuates beyond the limits imposed by the outer mind and

vital (i.e., mental and libidinal) sheaths. In sum, they taught that there is indeed an evolutionary soul—a personal and eternal aspect of Divine consciousness that is underlying and hidden to one's mental, vital, and physical instruments.

Perhaps more eloquently than any other writer in the English language, Sri Aurobindo has synthesized modern elements of Western thought with coherent outlines of an ancient but venerable branch of Vedantic psychology—one that also echoes several European esoteric traditions. By historical analysis, their *Purna* (Sanskrit for *whole* or *full*) yoga, or *integral yoga* psychology, calls into dispute two divergent paradigms (i.e., epistemologies, cosmologies, metaphysics) prevalent throughout the evolutionary literature—that is, *materialism* in the West (i.e., mainstream science's faith in the sole reality of matter) and ancient teachings such as *Illusionism* and *Nihilism* in the East (i.e., Shankara's sense of the universal cosmic illusion along with Buddhist philosophy's goal of personal annihilation as the sole means to escape from universal suffering).

Transformation, in an integral sense of the word begins with the fundamental assumption that development does not simply mean nullification of personal embodied existence nor transcendence away from creative participation in the miracle of this living universe (Cortright, 2007). Such an alteration of one's personal condition, can be viewed, rather, in terms of a gradual elimination or purification process of the lower ego-clouded defects that obscure the soul's inner intimations—thus not the complete destruction of one's instrumental (physical, emotional, and psychological) nature. According to Sri Aurobindo (1940/2005), such a profound transformation in the world “must proceed through a renunciation by the ego of its false standpoint, and false certainties, through its entry into a right relation, and harmony with the totalities of which it forms a part” (pp. 59–60). In his *Letters On Yoga II* (2013), in a section titled “The Meaning of Transformation,” Sri Aurobindo added:

By transformation I do not mean some change of the nature—I do not mean for instance

sainthood or ethical perfection or Yogic siddhis (like the Tantrik's) or a transcendental (cinmaya) body. I use transformation in a special sense, a change of consciousness radical and complete and of a certain specific kind which is so conceived as to bring about a strong and assured step forward in the spiritual evolution of the being, an advance of a greater and higher kind and of a larger sweep and completeness than that smaller though decisive achievement of the emerging Consciousness . . . One may have some light of realization at the spiritual summit of the consciousness but the parts below remain what they were. I have seen any number of instances of that. There must be a descent of the light not merely into the mind or part of it but into all the being down to the physical and below before a real and total transformation can take place. (p. 398)

By deeply integrating a soul dimension, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother sought for conscious reconciliation of the two poles of matter and Spirit; whereby, each dimension, on its own, represents an arguably one-sided and barren account. More expressly, rather than advocating pure transcendence, or complete and final liberation away from physical existence, the telling distinction of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's evolutionary account is their emphasis on a fully-embodied "liberation of the soul by overcoming the ignorant identification with its instruments. The process of disidentification is thus at once yogic and psychological" (Dalal, 2001, p. 51).

Against an evolutionary background, then, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother maintained the primacy of the psychic being as absolutely crucial for the transformation and ultimate divinization of human consciousness. In the words of psychiatrist and integral student Michael Miovic (2004): "the soul alone can lead towards a radical transformation of the outer ego" (p. 122). As such, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother contended that the human mind (i.e., formal operational thinking) is much too imperfect an instrument to accomplish such a difficult transmuting endeavor. Commenting on the necessity of the psychic transformation, Pandit

(2008) related, "But a psychic experience is not that easy. It is not enough that the psychic is awake. It has to be active, it has to surge forward; there are many stages" (p. 10). In terms of an integral psychological framework, Miovic (2004) elucidated that

transpersonal growth is possible precisely because the psychic being (soul) is entirely real and can, through its direct link with the Divine, bring to the outer being a deep source of psychological strength and sustenance. Practically, this means the psychic being (soul) has the power to transform ego functioning, even to heal psychological wounds that seem therapeutically unsolvable. (pp. 127-128)

Sri Aurobindo observed, for instance, that Western academic thinking cannot begin to explain the dynamic of evolutionary change for it lacks permanence and solidity. For him, change is not possible in a solely materialistic or pantheistic reality. Ideally, in fact, there must be a continuity of status of being. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's highly unique cosmology might be very helpful in this regard, as their "stages of the ascent enjoy their authority and can get their own united completeness only by a reference to a third level" (Sri Aurobindo, 1940/2005, p. 981). Particularly, their assumption of multidimensional reality, radically alters the concept of evolution. Sri Aurobindo maintained that this integrated third psychic dimension, can alone account for transformation, as there "dwells the intuitional being [from hence the higher descending stages] derive the knowledge which they turn into thought or sight and bring down to us for the mind's transmutation" (p. 981).

Change is possible only if there is a status from which to change; but status again exists only as a step that pauses, a step in the continuous passage of change or a step on which change pauses before it passes on to another step in its creative passage. And behind this relation is a duality of eternal status and eternal motion and behind this duality is something that is neither status nor change but contains both as its aspects—and that is likely to be the true Reality. (Sri Aurobindo, 1997a, p. 203)

Parts and Planes of Being

While granting the essential nature of *Sachchidananda* – meaning in Sanskrit: (1) Infinite Existence (*Sat*); Consciousness (*Chit*); and (3) Bliss or Delight (*Ananda*)—as the ultimate Truth of all existence, Sri Aurobindo described how consciousness manifests differently and according to variable statuses, functions, and laws depending on its particular graded emanation. In fact, an important feature of Sri Aurobindo’s formulation is the presumption that there exist inner dimensions as well as lower and higher planes of consciousness that exert a constant and pervasive influence on a person’s psychological wellbeing and, moreover, represent the secret and original determinants of consciousness evolution here on the physical plane.

In an effort to provide a brief overview of a large territory, the writer will now attempt to spell out some of the contours of Sri Aurobindo’s multidimensional model beginning with the vertical planes of being. Sri Aurobindo (1997a) postulated that the human being is made up of a “many layered plane of Life, a many layered plane of Mind” (p. 249). In terms of the vertical planes of being, he held that there is a far more vast complexity, which constitutes a human being but yet, for the most part, these remain imperceptible to normal awareness. Sri Aurobindo found, for example, that above the human mind, there arises still greater reaches of superconscient intelligence that descend as secret influences, hidden powers, and influential touches on the ordinary mind. The following list (see

Cornelissen, 2016), closely adheres to the ascending hierarchical system proposed by Sri Aurobindo (1940/2005):

Sevenfold Chord of Being

1. Sat (Existence)
2. Chit-Tapas (Consciousness-Energy)
3. Ananda (Bliss)
4. Supermind (Vijnanat)
5. Mental Plane
6. Vital Plane
7. Physical Plane

Five Sub-Planes of the Fifth Cord or Mental Plane

1. Overmind
2. Intuition
3. Illumined Mind
4. Higher Mind
5. Ordinary Mind

Three Layers of the Ordinary Mind

1. Thinking Mind
2. Dynamic Mind
3. Externalizing Mind

Following ancient Vedantic tradition, integral psychology accepts that the gross physical body is not the entirety of a person; but rather, it is just one of many interconnecting dimensions of being, or that which Sri Aurobindo termed the *parts of being*. More specifically, the horizontal concentric realms of being represent a corresponding body, or vehicle, that intersects with the aforementioned vertical planes. These concentric powers within a

Outer Being	Inner Being	Innermost Being	Inmost Center
Outer Mental (Cognitive)	Inner Mental (Mind)	True Mental (<i>Manomaya Purusha</i>)	
Outer Vital (Affective)	Inner Vital (Heart)	True Vital (<i>Pranamaya Purusha</i>)	Psychic Being (<i>Chaitya Purusha</i>)
Outer Physical (Behavioral)	Inner Physical (Subtle Body)	True Physical (<i>Annamaya Purusha</i>)	

Figure 1: The Concentric System

person's being are each in natural relation "with its own proper plane of existence and all have their roots there" (Sri Aurobindo, 1940/2005, p. 835). However, rather than depicting these parts in terms that are indicative of traditional Indian psychology's *koshas*, or vehicles of consciousness,—i.e., rings of an onion whereby each body is consecutively superimposed onto the next—according to Shirazi, Sri Aurobindo's system is much more complex, as the horizontal concentric parts interact with the vertical planes in ways that are much "more like holographic interplay than what a three dimensional imagination can reveal" (B. Shirazi, personal communication, February 17, 2016).

According to integral yoga psychology, the psychic being is the English equivalent to the Sanskrit word *caitya purusa* (Figure 1). Simply put, the *caitya purusa* represents the permanent innermost center of individual consciousness that does not stand in a linear line or horizontal scale like the other chakras or the mental, vital, and physical sheaths. For, the psychic being stands at their center and behind them from a different dimension of being and supports them in their growth and development towards full realization of the Life Divine. In his words, Sri Aurobindo (2012) pointed out that the nature of the psychic being is something quite different from the other parts and planes of being:

[The psychic being] is our inmost being and [it] supports all the others, mental, vital, physical, but it is also much veiled by them and has to act upon them as an influence rather than by its sovereign right of direct action; its direct action becomes normal and preponderant only at a high stage of development or by Yoga. (p. 59)

A Matter of Dimensionality

Realizing acutely the problematic nature of ontological reductionism, Sri Aurobindo (1997b) declared: "All the uneasiness, dissatisfaction, disillusionment, weariness, melancholy, pessimism of the human mind comes from man's practical failure to solve the riddle and the difficulty of his double nature" (p. 236). Simply stated, such problems come down to an issue of dimensionality. The problem with the scientific approach to psychological inquiry, the Mother (2002) added, is that it lacks

a general overall sense of the supraphysical. For, to be conscious, even, of the psychic being, she contended, one must "be capable of feeling the fourth dimension" (p. 429). With a closer examination of the philosophical underpinnings that inform much of developmental theory in the West today, it becomes increasingly clear that an enduring metaphysical commitment to physicalist scientific naturalism seems to fundamentally preclude any possibility for the ontological status of a continuous and personal center. This notion of the supraphysical, Sri Aurobindo (1940/2005) elucidated, "has been associated with mysticism and occultism, and occultism has been banned as a superstition and a fantastic error" (p. 678). Mistrusted, rejected, and abandoned, then, the occult has been long forbidden from serving as any semblance of a deeper psychological lens with which to explore and understand the nature of human consciousness and its evolution. In a particularly relevant letter, Sri Aurobindo (2014b) clarified:

The self-chosen field of these psychologists [speaking here towards the field of psychoanalysis] is besides poor and dark and limited; you must know the whole before you can know the part and the highest before you can truly understand the lowest. That is the province of a greater psychology awaiting its hour before which these poor gropings will disappear and come to nothing. (p. 616)

In the *Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo (1940/2005) countered, "Our physical mind is not the whole of us nor, even though it dominates almost the whole of our surface consciousness, the best or greatest part of us" (p. 803). He further added, "reality cannot be restricted to a sole field of this narrowness or to the dimensions known within its rigid circle" (p. 803). The term *metaphysics*, according to integral yoga psychology, means the "ultimate cause of things and all that is behind the world of phenomena" (Sri Aurobindo, 2014b, pp. 73–74). Accordingly, from this perspective, Sri Aurobindo contended that the occult is, in fact, a necessary aspect of human existence. He (1940/2005) reasoned: "True occultism means no more than a research into supraphysical realities and an unveiling of the hidden laws of being and

Nature, of all that is not obvious on the surface" (p. 678). For essentially, Sri Aurobindo (1999) rejected any form of exclusive dualism between manifest reality, "a lesser consciousness veiled in its own exceeding light" (p. 298) and its Ultimate Source—the "Mystery translucent in highest consciousness to its own spirit" (p. 298). While "these things are to the dimensional mind irreconcilable opposites, but to the constant vision and experience of the supramental Truth-consciousness, they are so simply and inevitably the intrinsic nature of each other that even to think of them as contraries is an unimaginable violence" (p. 298).

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's basic position was that their system of metaphysical psychology is not at all incompatible with a meaningful relationship with modern psychology, as both approaches to the mind and consciousness ask the ultimate questions about "what they are and how they come into existence [in terms of] their relation to Matter, Life, etc." (Sri Aurobindo, 2014b, p. 73). For them, integral yoga is but a "deeper practical psychology" (Sri Aurobindo, 1998, p. 146). Not obviating, then, the existence of other antecedent or coexisting subtle worlds, realms, or dimensions, Sri Aurobindo (1970) affirmed, "We must not apply to the soul a logic, which is based on the peculiarities of matter" (p. 59). In *Letters on Yoga I*, he (2012) again reiterated this sentiment writing that physical notions about the various material planes based on three-dimensional ideas of space and time unequivocally distort discernment of any greater reality. In fact, all the objections to an ontologically rich multidimensional account, the Mother (1993) opined, seem to be founded upon the limited human senses and rational predispositions. As a consequence of taking the fourth dimension seriously into account, the Mother declared, "there, everything holds together, in a very concrete, palpable way, the 'outside' and the 'inside'" (p. 31). While integral yoga, as a spiritual tradition, is at odds with the scientific discipline of psychology—however Sri Aurobindo and the Mother might have held the contrary—it deserves at least to be in dialogue with developmental psychology with regard to conceptualizations of postconventional development.

Final Discussion and Conclusion

As the twenty-first century gets underway, nearly 100 years after the establishment of the American Psychological Association (APA), there appears hardly any agreement in the extensive and rapidly expanding literatures concerning the precise nature and processes of postconventional development. Indeed, the current state of the advanced developmental debate appears far more heterogeneous, contradictory, and vehemently argumentative than it was just three decades ago, as it has come to be characterized as a theoretical Tower of Babel (Lewis, 2000) and consequently finds itself divided into bitterly quarreling factions (Leahey, 1992). Today, ostensible controversy and schism between rivaling explanatory paradigms are evidenced by a kind of civil war that has emerged, engulfing the entire field (Tarnas, 2002).

It seems Hillman (1976/1992) may have correctly identified the heart of the problem when he proclaimed that psychology had lost its integrating framework when it abandoned the soul. Hillman believed that without this ontological basis, the field of psychology could never define the boundaries of its profession, nor, more importantly, define its focus, its center. To this contention, Hillman declared, "Where there is connection to soul, there is psychology; where not, what is taking place is better called statistics, physical anthropology, cultural journalism, or animal breeding" (p. xvii). Elkins (1995) echoed this sentiment and added, "Make no mistake, soulless therapies produce soulless results" (p. 82). Hillman thereby challenged psychologists to stop forcing psychology to meet superficial standards set forth by the natural sciences and return most fundamentally to the field's roots: the study of the soul.

Within the narrow discourse of modern developmental theory, that which has not yet been attempted, to this researcher's knowledge, is an intelligible multidimensional framework of psychospiritual development that places emphasis on the integral path of something akin to a psychic being and thus grants the inmost soul as the unbroken developmental thread of being, the ontic substrate, and reference point for the evolution of

individual consciousness over the course of one and many lifetimes. More precisely, the concept of an evolving individuality like the psychic being distinguished from the ego, on the one hand, and from an unevolving transcendent Self, on the other, could only be found by this researcher in the integral yoga psychology of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Speaking toward the common assumption that the transcendent Self is purely impersonal, Sri Aurobindo (1940/2005) described the evolutionary importance of its personal aspect:

If we look at things from a larger point of view, we might say that what is impersonal is only a power of the Person: existence itself has no meaning without an Existent, consciousness has no standing-place if there is none who is conscious, delight is useless and invalid without an enjoyer, love can have no foundation or fulfillment if there is no lover, all-power must be otiose if there is not an Almighty. (pp. 367–368)

In the previous sections, it has been roughly shown that egocentric and cosmocentric biases presume sequences that involve either epiphenomenal stage-like mechanisms on one hand, or intimations of vague teleological notions of ego transcendence on the other, which tend to relate everything to some impersonal purpose or goal, which the evolutionary process seeks to realize. While some domains of psychology hold that actualization of the highest potential of the self represents the ultimate goals of mental health, delineations concerning the mechanisms of growth and change still represent central issues facing almost every area of developmental inquiry. That is, developmental theorists have apparently been at a relative loss in terms of offering much fundamental insight into that which might resolve ongoing controversies concerning shape, telos, direction, and particularly the how and why of transformation itself. At present, in the extant literatures, there appears to be no universally recognized facilitative agent.

This researcher indeed agrees with Cortright (2007), who stated, “Our deepest identity is our psychic center. Our frontal self and organism are an expression of this deeper source, and it must be placed at the very center of any comprehensive

vision of psychology” (p. 26). To this he noted, “Different schools of psychology have been tentatively groping toward this inmost core but have not yet come upon it” (p. 26). As viewed from the vantage point of integral yoga psychology, Cortright suggested, “neither the ego nor the authentic self can be adequately comprehended without reference to the psychic center” (p. 46). He further proposed, “The deep psychic center is the evolutionary principle within us. It’s upward evolutionary journey is reflected in the self it puts forth” (p. 49). That is to say, “both the sense of self and the sense of continuity emanate from our psychic center, our true soul. Without reference to this eternal soul the experience of selfhood cannot be understood” (p. 43). The psychic center, or the evolutionary soul element in a human, may perhaps lend meaningful and explanatory insight into this “deepest psychological core and most authentic self” (p. 25).

It is argued here that identification of a facilitative agent remains an unresolved issue for the simple reason that any claim of multidimensional (occult) reality might run the risk of one being judged as unscientific. Perhaps chief among critics of such residual positivism, Ferrer (2014) contended that even the outwardly broad-minded field of transpersonal psychology has long been held hostage by psychology’s commitment to neo-Kantian dualism and metaphysical agnosticism. As Ferrer (2001) put it, “retentions of these positivist prejudices sacrifices the integrity of [the whole enterprise] and leaves us with a self-defeating account of spiritual inquiry” (p. 60). It is interesting to recall that Western psychology originally based its study on the psyche or soul. Much of the academic field has been attempting to mimic the natural sciences since its early years thus has grown up hewed to a purely empirical, materialistic paradigm. Sri Aurobindo explained, “In the last rationalistic period of human thought from which we are emerging, [the soul] has been swept aside as an age-long superstition” (Sri Aurobindo, 1940/2005, p. 802). It remains challenging for a science of consciousness to explain the very consciousness that some scholars now deny.

In many ways, the proposed integral psychology framework presented here represents

a first emancipatory attempt to free the soul from the taboo constraints imposed on it by modern academic orthodoxy. An integral developmental theory, based on Shirazi's more psychological conceptualization of Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga, might be a contribution in proposing facilitative factors involved in stage change along with the evolutionary shape, goals, and purposes that guide the transformation of human consciousness beyond identification with the mind and ego. Sri Aurobindo's (1940/2005) writings propose that to go beyond mind one must first go behind mind and see the true hidden determinates of change, referring once again to the psychic dimension. "The real truth of things lies not in their process, but behind it, in whatever determines, effects or governs the process" (p. 520). He continued, "To do this we must dare . . . to penetrate the unfathomable depths of consciousness" (p. 520). In essence, to know all, one must turn one's gaze to that which is beyond all. An integral framework would assert positively that it is the psychic being that is the guide of consciousness evolution, the facilitative agent of transpersonal stage change and transformation.

The aim of such an integrated framework as proposed herein, then, is not to exclude any psychological egocentric perspective or spiritual cosmocentric hermeneutic, but to clarify and offer a psychocentric sphere as a potential participant in the developmental story (B. Shirazi, personal communication, March 28, 2014). It seems such a tri-spheric metaphysic might be beneficial not only to better account for a full range of possibilities in human development and change as a whole. Not to be repudiated, abandoned, or replaced, the adequacy and validity of the egocentric and cosmocentric spheres may be better qualified and situated within a much larger integrated understanding. In fact, by integrating a psychocentric sphere, it seems an integral model of development could help facilitate a broader valuing of the egocentric and cosmocentric spheres' significant contributions to the developmental literatures.

This work essentially attempts to bring greater clarity and awareness to the need to place some evolutionary aspect akin to soul, or psychic being, at the defining center of an emergent

interpretive model—one that stands in marked contrast to conventional (one-sided) accounts. More specifically, it is anticipated that by inclusion of the psychocentric dimension, specifically the psychic being, the research might offer a more useful, effective, comprehensive, and elegant theoretical account of the evolution of individual consciousness, its transformation, and particularly, its nature and unfoldment beyond formal constructs of the mind and ego. Indeed, at first glance, the egocentric, cosmocentric, and psychocentric spheres might appear to be mutually exclusive.

Particularly, such a multidimensional account of postconventional development proposed herein is hoped to address metaphysical problems in terms of mapping the unfoldment of postformal characterizations of individual consciousness beyond mere assumptions of adaptation. Hereby, the evolutionary aspect of the person begins to interact with the outer personality to influence and shape the course of one's individuation process. "Without the presence of the soul as a catalyst many adaptations can take place that do not result in transformation of consciousness, but are reconfigurations of surface personality" (B. Shirazi, personal communication, March 27, 2013).

In many respects, it seems Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's integral framework offers a more satisfying account of consciousness evolution. For instance, by emphasizing the overall multidimensional parts, realms, and planes of being, perhaps an integral developmental model would not be depicted as a two-dimensional map. Consequently, by adding the concentric dimensions of being to an overall integral charting of human development, the thesis proposed herein would maintain that such a conceptual map must necessarily be rendered as a three-dimensional sphere.

By integrating the third psychocentric dimension with a predominately two-dimensional (egocentric and cosmocentric) monopolar axis, such a framework might not only redeem the epistemic status of soul but Flatland could be ultimately overcome. Emblematically, perhaps this is why developmental theorist Clare Graves (1914–1986) explained, "While these are chaotic and turbulent times, they are hardly crazy ones. There is rhyme

to both the reason and the unreason. Order lurks in the disorder” (as cited in Cowan & Beck, 1996, p. 1). Graves continued, “Those who have eyes to see, ears to hear, and spirals in their minds to understand will rest easier. . . . These do not live in Edwin Abbot’s two-dimensional *Flatland*” (p. 1). In Abbott’s (1884/2007) words:

I am not a plane Figure, but a Solid. You call me a Circle; but in reality I am not a Circle, but an infinite number of Circles, of size varying from a Point to a Circle of thirteen inches in diameter, one placed on the top of the other. When I cut through your plane as I am now doing, I make in your plane a section, which you, very rightly, call a Circle. For even a Sphere—which is my proper name in my own country—if he manifest himself at all to an inhabitant of Flatland—must needs manifest himself as a Circle. (p. 54)

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