

LEVELS OF CONSCIOUSNESS 1

DEFINITIONS

The definitions that follow are based on the developmental and evolutionary models used by Fr. Keating in his explanations for and theories and models of the spiritual journey¹

Uroboric (Reptilian) Consciousness: the level of consciousness characterized by immersion in nature, prompt fulfillment of instinctual needs, and no consciousness of a (separate) self.² At this stage of development there is the formation of the security/survival center – arising out of the corresponding instinctive drives. This is also a stage of dependence on nature and mother.³

Typhonic Consciousness: the level of consciousness characterized by the development (and awareness) of a body-self distinct from the rest of nature (and in particular the mother). It is characterized by the inability to distinguish the part from the whole, and images in the imagination from external reality.⁴

At this stage of development, in addition to the formation (and awareness) of a body-self, there is also the formation of two centers: (1) the affection/esteem/pleasure/approval center – arising out of the corresponding instinctive drives and in particular the sexual impulse; and (ii) the power/control center – arising out of the instinctive aggressive drive.⁵

As Fr. Keating observes: “[In] this type of consciousness... [one is] aware of a body-self but dominated by [the] instincts for survival, nourishment and reproduction”.⁶ It is a stage dominated by body-consciousness and the satisfaction of the things that are associated with it.

Mythic Membership Consciousness: the level of consciousness in which group/tribal consciousness (the ‘super ego’ or ‘proto ego’) is dominant and shapes and influences the

¹ See Invitation to Love (ITL), pgs. 26 – 27 and Chap. 4 in general on ‘the human condition’.

² ITL, p. 147.

³ ITL, p. 141; See also ITL, pgs. 27 – 28.

⁴ ITL, p. 148.

⁵ ITL, p.141.

⁶ ITL, p. 28.

individual's values, ideas, behaviours, identity etc.⁷ Thus there is over-identification with group affiliation and conformity to group values.⁸

Mental Egoic Consciousness: the level of consciousness associated with full reflective self-consciousness. It begins with the capacity for logical reasoning (at about 8 years) and develops into abstract thinking (at about 12 – 13 years).⁹

Fr. Keating points out that one comes to this level of consciousness “without easy intimacy with God” and that one “lack(s) a sense of oneness with God, other people, and the cosmos”.¹⁰ This is a consciousness of separation. Yet, exactly because one has full reflective self-consciousness, the mental egoic stage is considered to be **“the door leading to the great adventure of recovering and developing union with God”**.¹¹

Fr. Keating thus points out that the mental egoic level “is the level of the full emergence of moral responsibility for our behaviour and relationships – the level of true conscience”.¹² It is the stage associated with the emergence of reason, reflection, personal responsibility, and true choice.

Intuitive Consciousness: the level of consciousness beyond rational thinking; experienced as a sense of oneness with others and of belonging to the universe (to be distinguished from ‘bodily intuition’ and from uroboric consciousness).¹³ As Fr. Keating explains, beyond the mental egoic further human growth **begins** with the intuitive level of consciousness: the sense of belonging to the universe and being one with others takes root, the activity of the intuitive brain increases, there are more frequent insights, spiritual consolations, and psychic gifts.¹⁴ The **Night of Sense** precedes this stage of consciousness.¹⁵

⁷ ITL, pgs. 33, 42 and 146.

⁸ ITL, p. 141.

⁹ ITL, p. 146.

¹⁰ ITL, p. 41.

¹¹ ITL, p. 43.

¹² ITL, p. 42; and see generally pgs 37, 42 – 43 for the attitudes and dispositions proper to the mental egoic stage of development.

¹³ ITL, p. 146.

¹⁴ ITL, p.43; See also ITL, p. 110.

¹⁵ ITL, p. 142.

Unitive Consciousness: (Transforming Union) the level of consciousness in which the Divine Reality (Divine Love) is perceived to be present in oneself and in all that is; and the process through which all of one's faculties and relationships are changed (transformed) accordingly.¹⁶ The experience of unitive consciousness (transforming union) is a way of being that enables one to live with the invincible conviction of continuous (abiding) union with God.¹⁷ The presence of God becomes a kind of fourth dimension. One experiences an “abiding sense of rootedness in the divine presence within”.¹⁸ Here one relates to God (and the other/cosmos) out of an ‘I-Thou’ relationship. As Fr. Keating explains, **this stage of consciousness “is the goal of the first part of the Christian spiritual journey. [I]t should be regarded as the normal Christian life”**¹⁹ The **Night of Spirit** precedes this stage of consciousness.²⁰

Unity Consciousness: the level of consciousness in which one moves beyond the I-Thou relationship with God (other/creation) to unity, experienced as being one with God (other/creation), distinct but not separate – referred to by Jesus in John 10:30 and 17:21. This movement is described by Fr. Keating as follows:²¹

Still, the spiritual journey continues even after the movement into Transforming Union. There remains **the movement from the divine union to unity, the letting go of one's self-identity as a fixed point of reference**, a passage that might be called the **Night of Self**. Perhaps a poem can suggest its extraordinary significance for understanding the purpose and meaning of our lives in particular and the whole process of human evolution.

The Night of Self

**When the self relativizes
And the “me” disappears,
There is not much left of time.
There is only the present moment.**

¹⁶ ITL, p. 148.

¹⁷ ITL, p. 101

¹⁸ ITL, pgs. 92 – 93.

¹⁹ ITL, p. 103 “The next part of the journey is to learn the meaning of Jesus’ words, ‘The Father and I are one’ (John 10:30), and the consequences of his prayer, “That they may be one in us” (John 17:21)”; See also ITL, p. 111.

²⁰ ITL, pgs. 142 and 111.

²¹ Fruits of the Spirit (FOS), p. 115.

Unity consciousness is experienced as a non-dual state,²² beyond self-consciousness (i.e. with the self as no fixed point of reference).²³ The **Night of Self** precedes this stage of consciousness.

Ultimate Consciousness: the level of consciousness which is apparently experienced in all the traditions as Nada! Fana! Moksha! Samadhi! The realm of God, of no-self, beyond self, beyond even non-duality – maybe of pure monism?

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY OF THE STAGES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

At the **uroboric** level consciousness is essentially undifferentiated: at one with (immersed and embodied in) the natural and biological realms – especially with mother (experienced during the first year of life). Awareness is of the most fundamental body sensations and emotions. The most basic (largely biological) instinctive impulses govern behaviour.

In the second year of life the **typhonic** level of consciousness emerges. Differentiation from the natural environment begins. First is the sense of separation/emergence of a distinctive body-self (this actually begins at about 6 – 8 months). This is followed by the sense of separation/emergence of a distinctive emotional-self; and at about the same time there occurs the emergence of a sense of will (both from about 2 years). Then finally in the typhonic stage a sense of separate mind-self emerges (initially of language and imagination) distinct from the body/emotions (from about 3 years). However the general consciousness is primarily body-bound (involved with the body). The typhonic stage is treated as continuing until about age 4, and by age 5 there is a distinct, but simple, sense of body, emotions, will and mind.

The period between ages 4 to 8 is considered to be the level of **mythic membership** consciousness. Here body, emotions, mind are all developing, but the distinctive trait is the emergence of a sense of self embedded in the group. The sphere of influencing consciousness expands beyond mother, through nuclear family, now to the proto-subjectivity of the group: which is the world view of the group in which the individual is

²² The first experience of this at the ‘trans’ level as opposed to ‘corresponding’ uroboric experiences at the ‘pre’ level.

²³ See also, Basil Pennington, Centered Living, p. 94.

embedded, and which the individual unconsciously accepts.²⁴ A greater degree of differentiation from the body-self occurs, but the general consciousness is primarily group-bound (involved with the group).

From about age 8 the **mental-egoic** level of consciousness begins to emerge. The governing trait is the emergence of full reflective self-consciousness, which is the fruit of the emergence of a rational and reflective mental capacity. The mind further separates as a distinctive faculty, separate from body and emotions, and from the ‘drives’ that characterize these. Here there is clear differentiation from the body-self. The consequence is that the mind is now capable of not being governed by body and emotions. With this separation real choice emerges (free will). Prior to this, in the uroboric and typhonic stages the will was serving the instinctive needs/drives and in the membership stage the will was serving the group needs (its proto-subjectivity). Now with the full emergence and separation (differentiation) of mind from body and emotions, the capacity to differentiate, to reason and to reflect emerges, and with these the capacity to truly choose – will as consent emerges. With this comes increasing degrees of differentiation from the group-self, but the general consciousness in turn becomes individualistic (self-bound - involved with the individual self).

It is at this stage of consciousness that the self can resist the pull and drives of the primitive (the uroboric, typhonic and membership levels of consciousness).²⁵ The individual can now choose “to do the will of God”.

With the emergence of the **intuitive** level of consciousness the significant shift that begins to occur is the movement from the general sense of separateness of the individual self, to a sensing of oneness with all that is and of God’s Presence (Life) in all and of God’s Lead through all – for the Good. Here there is the emergence of increased (psychic) intuition, (unitive/unity) awareness and insight, and (ultimate) identity: the transpersonal realms. With this comes increasing degrees of differentiation from the group and individual self(s) of the prepersonal levels of consciousness. In the intuitive level transcendent openness and clarity begins, together with the certain awareness that one is more than an individual body/mind self and part of a Greater Whole.

²⁴ See K. Wilber, *Up From Eden*, p. 115.

²⁵ See ITL, pgs. 41- 42.

Up to the mental-egoic there is a definite ‘pull’ back to the pre-personal natural ‘oneness’ – the oceanic bliss of the uroboric consciousness. Even at the mental-egoic this primitive pull remains and even intensifies with the existential experience (angst) of separation that accompanies the emergence of the full personal mental-egoic consciousness (because of the memory of the prepersonal uroboric). With the emergence of the intuitive level of consciousness a new ‘pull’ is experienced on the personal away from the prepersonal and to the transpersonal unitive, unity and ultimate levels of consciousness. Thus the mental-egoic is the door to freedom, and one can walk through because at the mental-egoic stage free will also emerges and with it the power to make real choice: to choose to respond to the pull ‘upwards’ to the transpersonal.

In the intuitive level will as choice remains but will as consent/surrender develops. Now there is greater openness, a willingness to let be, to be led by the pull of the Divine beyond the mental-egoic and the sense of separation of the individual personal self. Ahead lie the unitive, unity and ultimate stages of consciousness, and the freedoms, joys and transformations that accompany them.

For the purposes of this summary the **unitive and unity** stages of consciousness will be described using the insights of Basil Pennington.²⁶

The first insight is that the transformation of consciousness to the **unitive** stage (that precedes unity) is when: “We come to an experiential knowledge of God dwelling at the Center of our being and indeed in all things. **Yet for the moment there remains a distinction or division in this knowledge and experience. An “I-Thou” relation continues to exist. We have attained a God-consciousness, but not yet unity – consciousness.**”²⁷

For Pennington the stage of **unity** is when one has “so entered into the divine experience that **we come to know how much we are one with God** – a oneness brought to a new level of intimacy and participation”, his second insight.²⁸ As he explains further:²⁹

We have been made in the image of God. We know that the Father and the Son are absolutely one. And yet there is the distinction of persons.

²⁶ See Centered Living, pgs. 93 – 95.

²⁷ CL, p. 94.

²⁸ CL, p. 94

²⁹ CL, pgs. 94 – 95.

Through our likeness to God we have been brought into a unity with God that is beyond any union we can conceive, yet we are not absorbed. We remain distinct persons, able to delight in the love of the Other – yet that love is experienced now as our own; indeed, it is only Love and nothing else. **It is a unity of love and experience so intimate and so complete that we as the subject of the experience simply disappear.** There is no consciousness of. There is no subject left in the consciousness to be conscious of. There is just wholly, simply, and purely consciousness. And that consciousness is God.

“This perfect union is not a fusion of natures but a unity of love and experience. The distinction between the soul and God is no longer experienced as a separation into subject and object when the soul is united to God” – Thomas Merton.³⁰

The third insight is that as one moves from nature-centeredness to/through self-centeredness to God-centeredness one goes through “many little deaths and resurrections” until one “seem(s) to undergo the **great death** and come into an experience of **life in God** that never again leaves us”.³¹

The fourth insight is that this “life in God that never ... leaves us” is the stage of unity. Here, as Pennington explains further:

There is a constant, abiding joy and Presence, even in the midst of the toils, the pains [And] we perhaps suffer even more because of greater compassion and love and because of the contrast – knowing what can be if only we will all say a complete ‘yes’ to God.³²

Consistent with all spiritual traditions there is an even further stage of consciousness, described by Fr. Keating as the **ultimate** level of consciousness. This is the stage of pure Spirit, beyond self (consciousness). It is the realm of All-Pervading-Life, of God. To avoid unnecessary repetition the description of this stage will be left for the section that follows: Comparisons.

³⁰ CL, p. 95.

³¹ CL, p. 93

³² CL, p. 93.

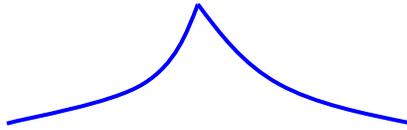
COMPARISONS

To round off this introductory description of the stages of consciousness a comparative explanation of the transpersonal or superconscious stages will be outlined, drawing almost exclusively on the work of Ken Wilber.³³

Ken Wilber deals with these ‘higher stages’ using essentially Buddhist concepts and relating these (in the passages to be quoted) to Christian understandings. What may be of interest is the similarity between what Wilber is describing and what both Keating and Pennington have described (as quoted and cited above). Thus, the first undertaking will be to present a comparative schema of Wilber’s and Keating’s stages of consciousness as follows:



³³ Taken from: Up From Eden, pgs. 253 – 266, 319. This comparison with Ken Wilber is presented because Fr. Keating has drawn heavily on Wilber in developing his own evolutionary model of the spiritual journey. See for example, ITL, p. 27.



0. Ground Unconsciousness

0. Ground of Being

WILBER

KEATING

With the above schema in mind the comparisons are set out below. Wilber explains the differences between his Subtle and Causal stages (which correspond to Keating's Unitive and Unity stages) as follows:

In the Sambhogakaya, or the subtle realm, a transcendent one-ness – one God, one Goddess – makes itself evident to the soul, and the soul communes, in sacrificial awareness, with that archetypal oneness. In the Dharmakaya, the causal realm, the path of transcendence goes even further, for the soul no longer communes with that oneness or worships that oneness – it becomes that oneness, in a state the Muslim mystics call the Supreme Identity. That is, in the subtle realm, there is a slight remnant of the subject-object dualism, a subtle distinction between the Creator and the creature, between God and the soul. But in the Dharmakaya, the subject and object become radically identical; the Creator and creature becomes profoundly united – so united, in fact, that both disappear as separate entities. They are both, God and soul, dissolved in and returned to the radiant ground of prior Emptiness, or unobstructed and all-pervading Consciousness as Such – what we earlier called superconsciousness and the ultimate Whole.

In short, if the subtle is the realm of one God, the causal is the realm “beyond God,” the realm of a prior Godhead, Ground, Source, or Void, out of which the personal God/dess emerges. If the Sambhogakaya one God was viewed (and rightly so) as the Creator of the worlds, the Dharmakaya Void could say, as Osiris/Ra would, I am the divine hidden Soul (Atman) who created the god (s).” **And if the Sambhogakaya was**

“our Father who art in Heaven,” the voice of the Dharmakaya Void could say, “I and the Father are One.”

Applying these insights to the Judeo Christian traditions Wilber suggests the following, first of Mosaic insight (revelation) and then of Jesus the Christ’s:

This monotheistic religion was, as far as it went, a correct reflection of the Sambhogakaya realm: a higher God exists, which is Fire and Light, which can be contacted in revelation and prophetic ecstasy, which confers meaning on personal destiny, which must be contacted through discipline and struggle, but **which remains ultimately an Other – ultimately a Creator separated from all creation, a God separated from the world and from the soul.** It is possible to deeply commune with this God, but not absolutely become one with it. But those are all more or less true insights into the subtle realm.

Similarly, Christ’s revelation was an evolutionary advance, a revelation of the Dharmakaya, a revelation that “I and the Father are One.” This was the same revelation that the Upanishads brought in India – Tat tvam asi, “Thou art That,” you and God are ultimately one, a message not clearly found in the earlier Vedas, which were Mosaic-like in revelation.. But Christ now faced the old Mosaic law of the external One God of the Sambhogakaya, which he criticized as being partial, so that he was ultimately crucified because “you, being a man, make yourself out to be God.” That is, he was crucified because he dared to evolve from **the Sambhogakaya – where the subject-object dualism remains in a subtle form, and where therefore the dualism between Creator and creature remains in a subtle form – to the Dharmakaya – where subject and object reduce to prior oneness,** and where therefore God and soul reduce to prior Godhead, or the Void of the Supreme Identity.

Then Wilber, quoting the Christian mystic Behmen,³⁴ explains his Spirit/Svabhavikakaya (and Causal overlap) stage (which corresponds to Keatings’s Ultimate Stage) as follows:

³⁴ Jacob (Bohme) Behmen - from “The Way to Christ”, 1623.

The Christian mystic Behmen was eloquent on these points, and in a fashion that shows perfectly how similar (esoteric) Christianity is to all Dharmakaya religions, including Buddhism: “Whoever finds it [the ultimate, level 7/8] finds Nothing and all Things. But how finds he Nothing? He that findeth it findeth a supersensual Abyss [Emptiness], which hath no ground to stand on; and he findeth also nothing is like unto it and therefore it may fitly be compared to Nothing, for it is deeper than any Thing. And because it is Nothing, it is therefore free from All Things, and is that only Good, which a man cannot express or utter what it is, there being Nothing to which it may be compared, to express it by.”

But this is not a transcendent vacuum. The Void means seamless, not featureless; it transcends but includes all manifestation. Therefore Behmen continues: “But in that I lastly say: Whosoever finds it finds All Things. **It hath been the Beginning of All Things; it is also the End of All Things. All Things are from it, and in it, and by it. If thou findest it thou comest into that ground from whence All Things are proceeded, and wherein they subsist.**”

Thus for Wilber the **Psychic** level (level 5, which corresponds to Keating’s **Intuitive** level) is where one has “the first insights into subtle Oneness” and where there is the emergence of “bodily ecstasy ... accompanied by psychosomatic changes ... and psychic intuitions”³⁵

And Wilber’s **Subtle** level (level 6, which corresponds to Keating’s **Unitive** level) is where one experiences the “One God/dess” – monotheism, and is the region of ‘subtle light and sound’.³⁶

And Wilber’s **Causal** level (level 7, which corresponds to Keating’s **Unity** level) is where there is “transcendence of subject-object duality, coalescence of human and divine”, the place of “identity of soul and God” where “I and the Father are One.” Here

³⁵ UFE, pgs 85 and 262 – 263.

³⁶ UFE, p. 262.

there is also the beginning ‘experience’/ ‘awareness’/ ‘consciousness’ of the “unmanifest Void, Empty Ground, the Godhead ... the Depth, the Abyss, the Ground of God”.³⁷

And Wilber’s **Spirit** level (level 8, which corresponds to Keating’s **Ultimate** level) is the place of “identity of manifest and unmanifest, or identity of the entire World Process and the Void, perfect and radical transcendence into and as **Ultimate Consciousness as Such**.”³⁸

Wilber’s thoughts on the differences between levels 7 and 8 (Causal/Spirit; Unity/Ulimate) are summarized by him as follows:

Suffice it to say that the Dharmakaya is the asymptotic limit of the spectrum of consciousness, and the Svabhavikakaya is the always prior and present ground of every level of the spectrum. The former is the Source of all levels, the latter is the Suchness (tathata) of all levels; the former is the highest of all levels, the latter is the Condition of all levels.

Finally, the following general observations of Wilber (a warning and an exhortation) are worth noting in this introduction.³⁹

Many New Age (advocates) understanding well that the higher realms are outside of reason, do not bother to differentiate prerational impulses from transrational awareness, and thus end up advocating not only transcendence but also regression. Some, in fact, simply leave out transcendence altogether and champion typhonic feeling simply because it is nonrational. It is, to me, a great personal disappointment that so many humanistic therapies, which began with the promising understanding that awareness ought eventually to move beyond the mind, have taken the regressive way to do so, and simply retreated to exclusive typhonic exercises: just body therapy, just feelings, just sensory awareness, just experiential sensation. They are, in and by themselves, perfect educations in subhumanity, and they have the nerve to call it “consciousness raising”. It is one thing to recontact the typhoon and integrate it with the mind so as

³⁷ UFE, pgs. 262 – 263.

³⁸ UFE, p. 263.

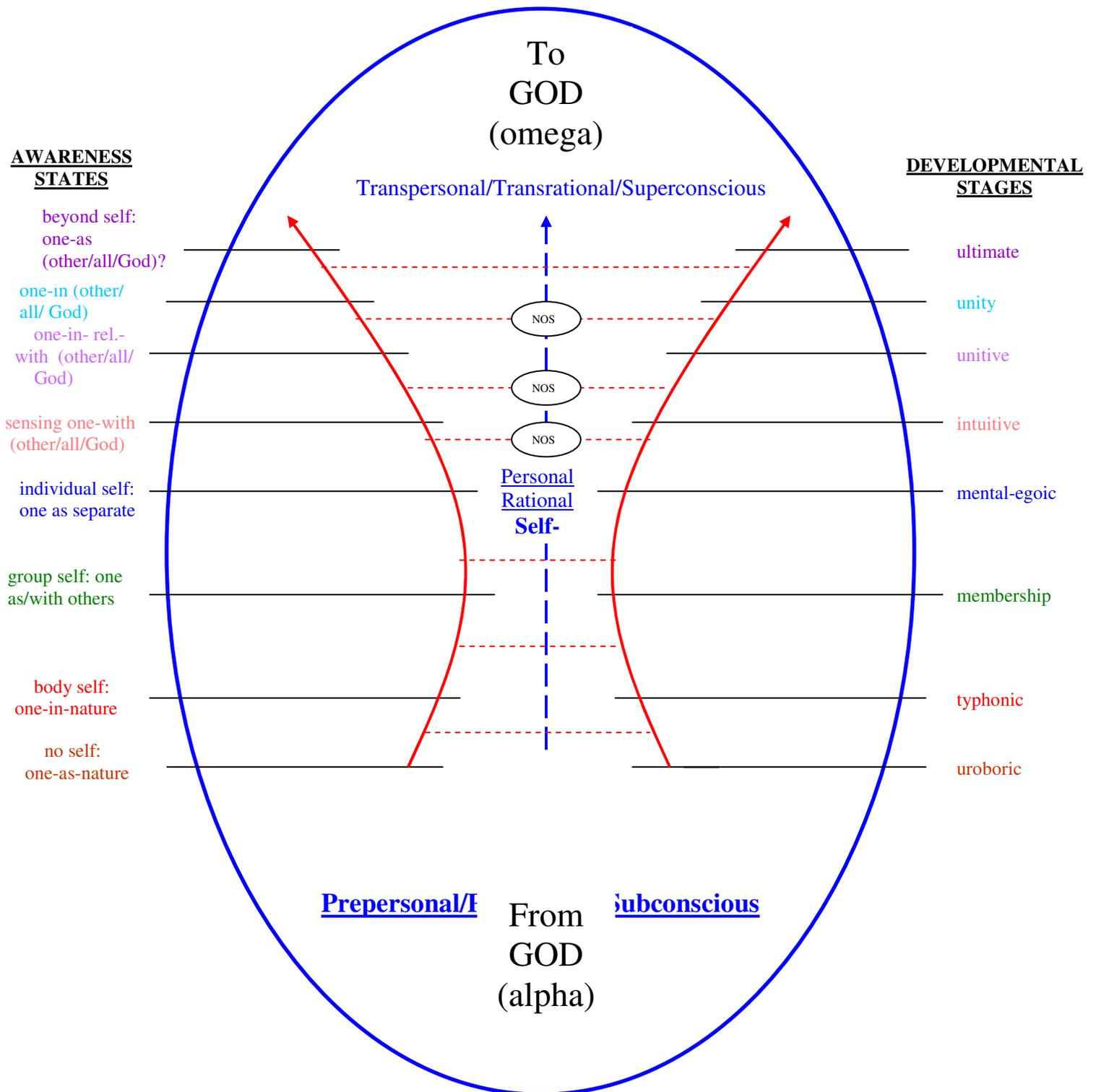
³⁹ UFE, pgs 348, 341.

to eventually transcend both; quite another to recontact the typhoon and stay there.

And, if we – you and I – are to further the evolution of mankind, and not just reap the benefit of past humanity's struggles, if we are to contribute to evolution and not merely siphon it off, if we are to help the overcoming of our self-alienation from Spirit and not merely perpetuate it, then **meditation – or a similar and truly contemplative practice – becomes an absolute ethical imperative**, a new categorical imperative. If we do less than that, our life then becomes, not so much a wicked affair, but rather a case of merely enjoying the level of consciousness which past heroes achieved for us. We contribute nothing; we pass on our mediocrity.

LEVELS OF CONSCIOUSNESS 2

CONSCIOUSNESS STAGES AND STATES DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL



(NOS) : night of sense; night of spirit; night of self (in ascending order): the three major transitions that occur as one moves into and through the transrational/ transpersonal stages of consciousness.

Stages, Levels, States

A **stage** is an established level of development in which one 'lives and moves and has one's existence' in a more or less generalized and established way.

A **level** is characterized by normative level specific structures in one's consciousness, which generally determine our way of being; how we see ourselves, others and the world; and how we behave as we come into relationship with ourselves, others and the world.

A **state** is descriptive generally of both the inner and outer personal awareness that one experiences at any given time. It is a transitory condition.

Multiple Stages, Levels

It is possible to co-exist in multiple levels at a given time, because one's existence at a level is a question of degree. Also, one will at times often be 'in between' stages and can experience the consciousness structures and the levels that are normative for these multiple stages at any one time. Finally, because all transcended stages are assimilated and carried forward in one's development, the levels that are related to each transcended stage are always present and available to be lived out of/from and experienced.

Broken Lines

Indicate that the boundaries between 'stages' are permeable. One may move upwards through stages, but also regress downwards. They also indicate that at any stage one may have an experience of a different state. And, that even if one is at a certain stage one may move to a different level (upwards or downwards), because through lower stages are transcended they are carried forward as assimilated levels (so also are higher levels available because they are always present – if only in potentiality).

An Example

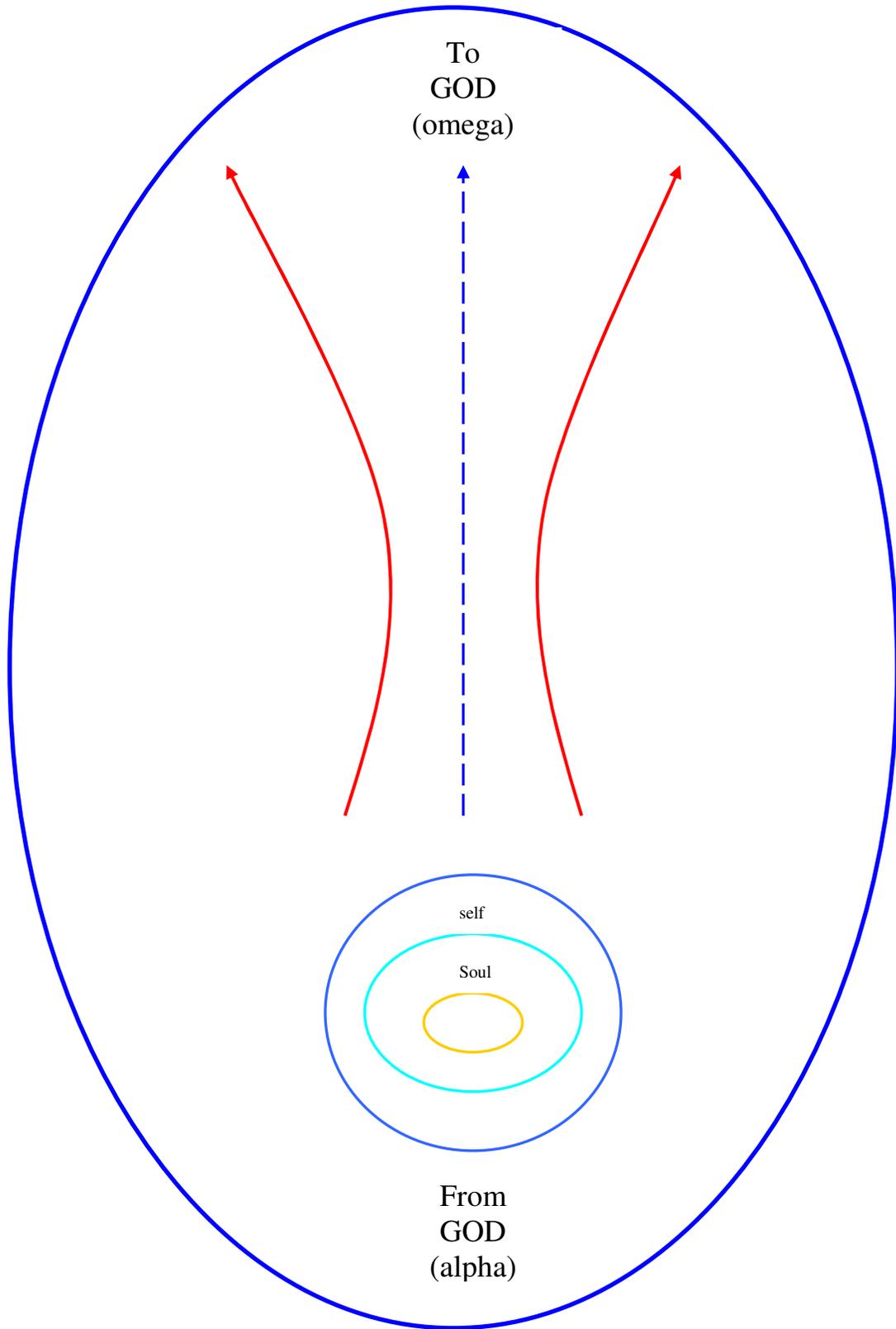
It is thus the case that one may be at say the mental-egoic stage of development, yet shift to the mythic membership (tribal) level when the issue of politics arises, and also shift to the typhonic (body-self) level when the issues of intimacy and sexual relations arise. Also, one may be in-between stages, say the mythic-membership and mental-egoic (differentiating from the lower but not yet established in the higher), and experience, perceive and live out of aspects of both corresponding levels (and others also).

Development: Jesus to Nicodemus: one must ‘die’ to be ‘born again’.

This is true for each ‘stage’ of growth. One ‘dies’ to an existing stage and is ‘born again’ into the next. However, earlier stages are assimilated/incorporated (carried forward) and transcended.

At each stage one identifies with the structures that are normative for that stage, which determine one’s way of being, seeing and acting (behaving). To move from one stage to the next involves a process of differentiation (not disassociation/denial) in which one recognizes this (stage) is who I am and I am more, and so disidentifies with the existing stage and identifies with the next stage (the process of transcending a stage), ... and so on. This disidentification and letting go of an existing stage is experienced as a ‘death’ and facilitates growth into a new stage of development – experienced as new birth/emergence.

THE SELF IN A CONSCIOUSNESS



Self as (bearer of):

- Impulse/Desires
- Body Sensations
- Emotions/Feelings
- Will
- Reason/Intellect
- Intuitions

Soul as dynamic center/ life of self and center of awareness [Soul nature: Impulse (will) to God; Truth; Love; Life]. The integrating center of the self.

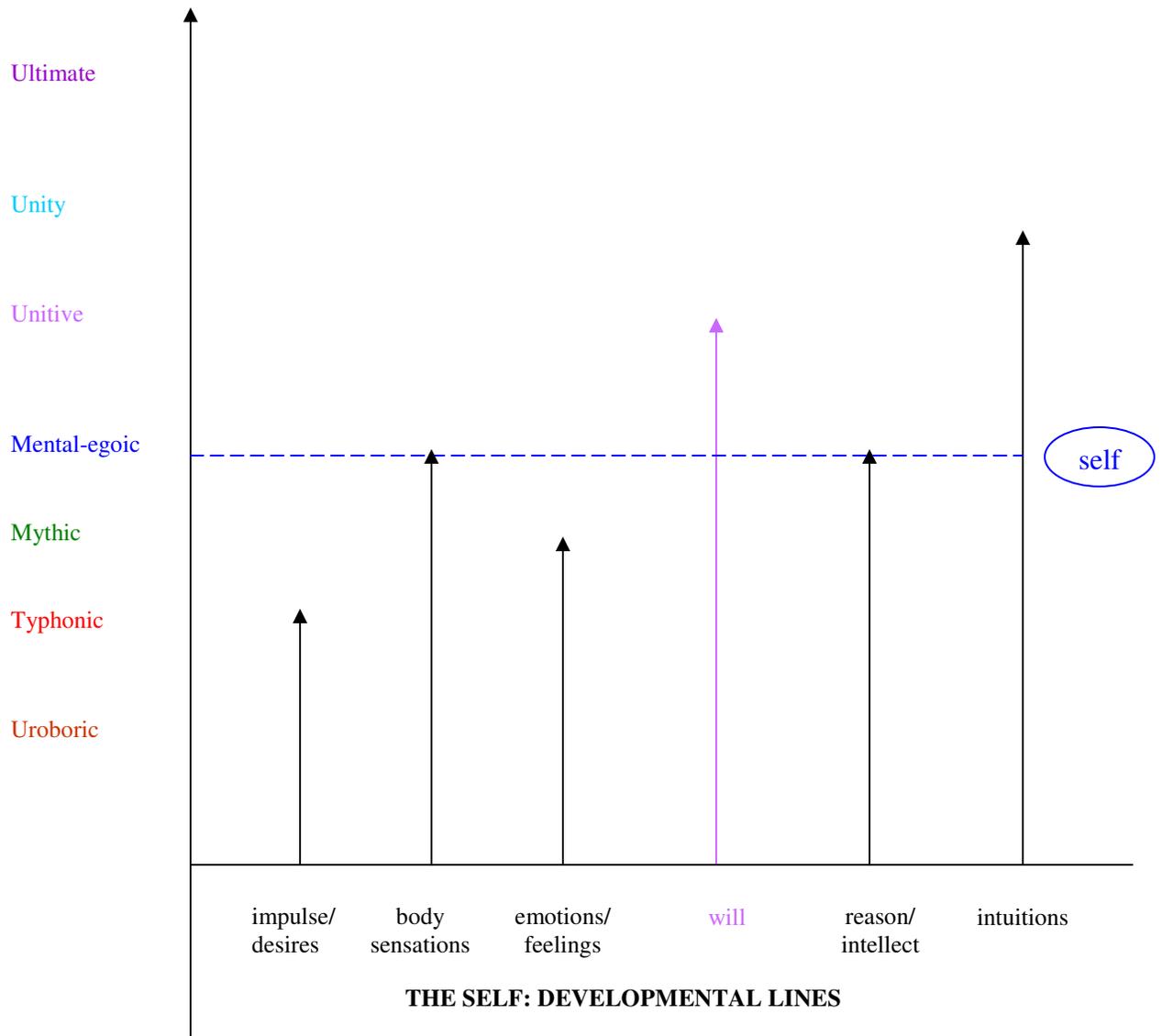
God (Divine Indwelling/Presence) as Dynamic Center/ Life of soul [God Nature: Impulse-ing (will-ing) to Union, Unity, Ultimacy; Truth-ing, Love-ing, Life-ing, Awareness-ing]

As the **self** emerges from Intention (out of God) and conception, through formation, to ultimate transcendence (one-as-God), it goes through changing and unfolding **levels/stages** of development and consciousness.

However, in addition to **level/stages** of development there are also **lines** of development, which can vary inter se. These lines of development include (as a minimum) the main constituent elements of the self: **impulse desires, body sensations, emotions/feelings, will, reason/intellect, intuitions**. These aspects of self can each be at different levels of development (which is generally the case) – some ‘higher’ and some ‘lower’, even as the self is generally established at a certain stage of development (i.e. at its level of general abode at a given time).

DEVELOPMENTAL LINES

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT



Using the **will** as an example of a developmental line, the following observations can be noted as one moves through the stages of development.

Initially the will is only ‘free will’ in potential (contained within the self).

Practically the will is experienced in the **uroboric** and **typhonic** stages as – will serving the instinctive needs (security/survival; pleasure/esteem/approval; power/control). It may be exercised as strong and/or skillful will.

In the **membership** stage the will is experienced as – will serving the group(s) needs. Here the will is identified with the group will. Again it may be exercised as strong and/or skillful will.

Significantly in these three developmental stages (uroboric, typhonic and membership) the experience of will is: “**I have no will**” (in so far as the will is under the influence of and/or co-opted by the instinctive drives that dominate these three stages of development).

In the **mental-egoic** stage true choice emerges (because until one can differentiate, reason and reflect one cannot really choose). Thus it is here that the “will as consent” emerges. Here the experience of will is: “**I have a will**”. Spirituality, consent to God is experienced as the “will to God” and/or the “will willing God”.

In the **intuitive** stage the experience of will is of the “will led by God”. In the **unitive** and **union** stages the experience of will is of the “will united to God” and/or of the “will in God”. Here the will is surrendered in alignment with the Divine Will. The core experience of will is: “**I am will**”.

One would assume that in the **ultimate** stage the experience of will is simply: “**I am**” – completely unbounded free will.

PJ/12th August, 2008