

What is spiritual bypassing?,

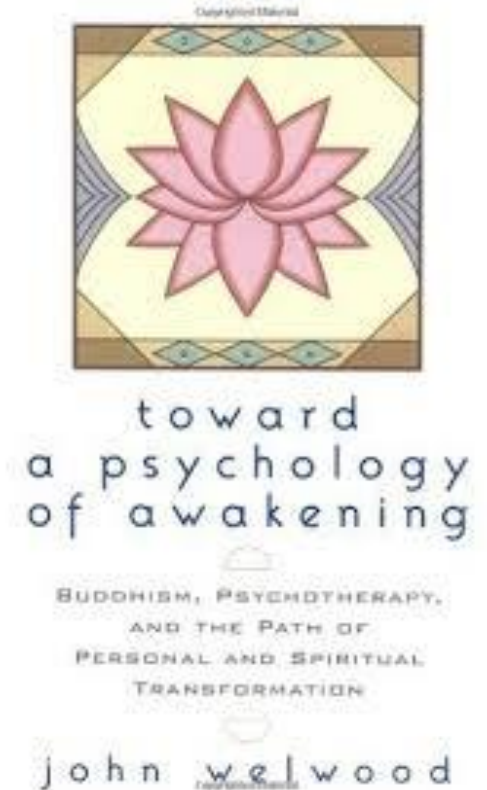
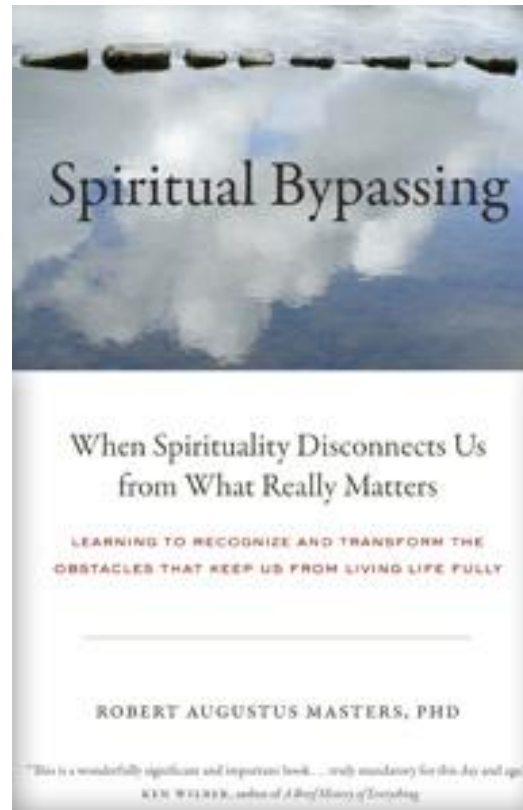
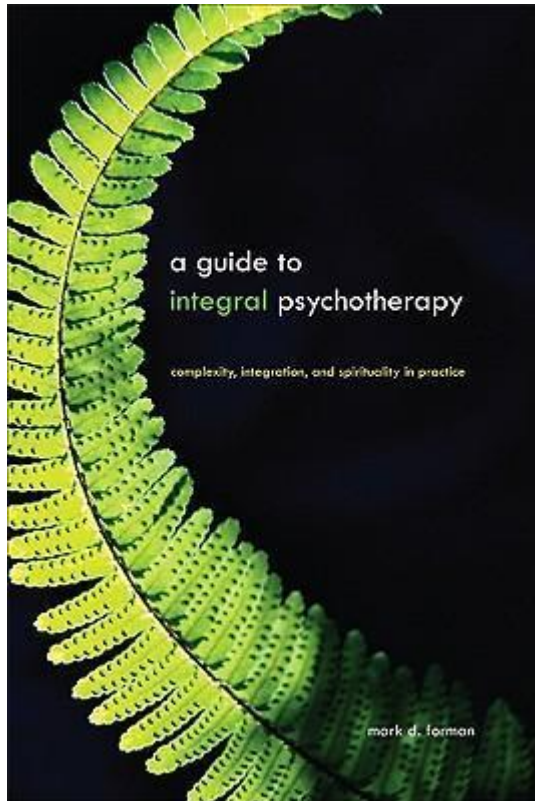
(when spirituality gets in the way of what really matters)

and how does it ethically affect psychological practice when attempting to differentiate between mysticism and madness?

Bali Retreat

October 2012

3 great books to get



Defining spiritual bypassing

- Using the spiritual (transpersonal) to bypass the personal e.g. Espousing ideals of unconditional love but not permitting love to show up in its more challenging personal dimension.
- The use of spiritual practices and beliefs to avoid dealing with painful feelings, unresolved wounds and developmental needs.
- Spirituality which accepts the light whilst avoiding its heat.
- Not only avoids pain but also legitimizes such avoidance.
- Is the shadow of spirituality. (Masters 2010)

Spiritual bypassing includes

- Exaggerated detachment
- Emotional numbing and repression
- overdone niceness V's emotional depth and authenticity
- Overemphasis on the positive
- Anger-phobia (confusing anger with aggression and ill will)
- Blind or overtly tolerant compassion
- Weak or too porous boundaries
- Lopsided development e.g. Cognitive intelligence too far ahead of emotional and moral intelligence
- Debilitating judgement about ones shadow side
- Devaluing of the personal relative to the spiritual
- Delusions of having arrived at a higher level of being (Masters 2010)

Spirituality

1st definition

Spirituality describes the deepest point of view within first person (intrapsychic) second person (relational) and third person (objective) perspectives.

(Forman, p208 2010)

Spirituality

2nd definition

Spirituality is a line of development that addresses a persons 'ultimate concern' or understanding of what the nature and purpose of life is at any given time during the life span. From this point of view there is childhood spirituality, adolescent spirituality, adult spirituality, and elder spirituality. This spiritual line can also be influenced by type – it can have more masculine, feminine, introverted or extroverted features for example.

(Forman, p208 2010)

Spirituality

3rd Definition

Spirituality refers to altered states (psychic, subtle, causal or nondual) that individuals may experience during the lifespan.

(Forman, p208 2010)

Spirituality

4th Definition

Spirituality is best understood as describing the insights gained during the higher stages of identity development.

(Forman, p208 2010)

Unravelling spiritual bypassing via 4 themes

1. Ascending and descending spirituality
2. Offensive and defensive spirituality
3. The Pre-Trans Fallacy: Psychosis and Spirituality
4. State / Structure Fallacy

(Forman, p213-223 2010)

Ascenders

- Represent an otherworldly point of view.
- It posits that the deepest truth is found in the transcendence of the physical, sensual and animal.
- The material world is distrusted due to its illusory or less than real ontological status.
- Goal is to **develop wisdom** and insight that allows one to understand higher spiritual realities.
- Encourages greater freedom and less fear – transcending this world and death.

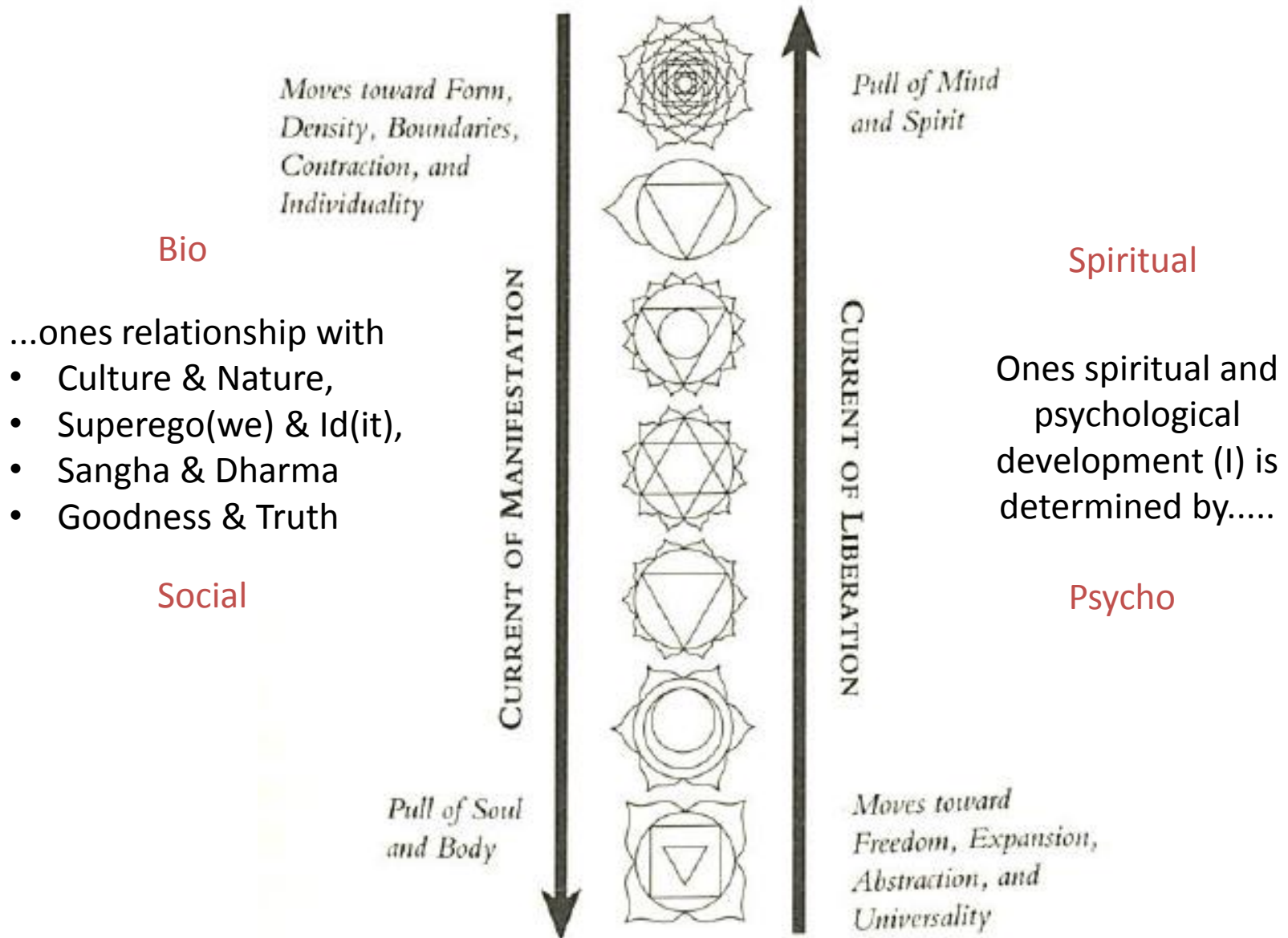
(Forman, p213-216, 2010)

Descenders

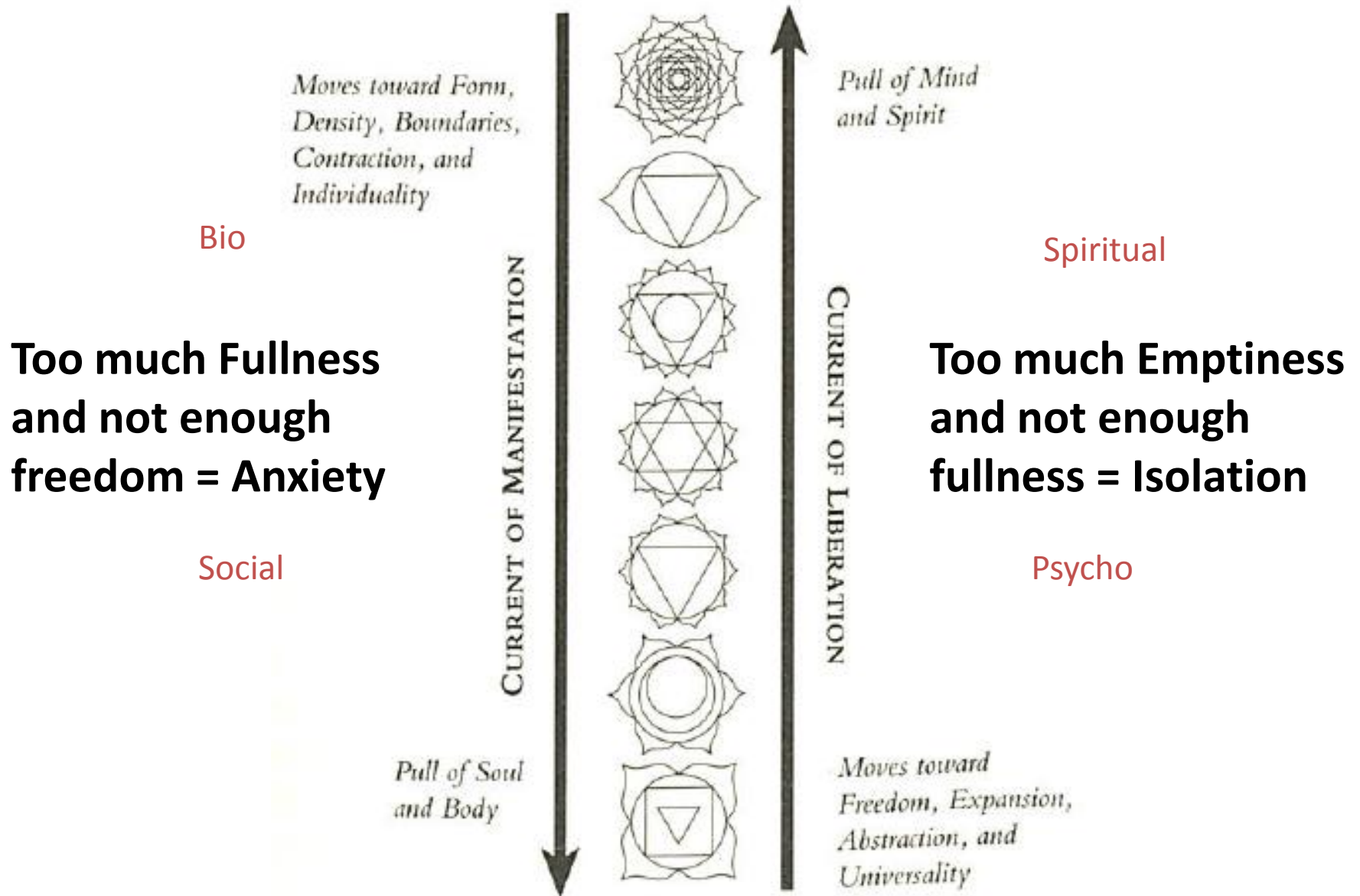
- This worldly in orientation
- The greater truth is immanent and is found in nature, in embodiment and in service to others, and **develops compassion.**
- Emphasis on sanctification of daily life and the embrace of creation.
- See's the sacred in the mundane allowing greater emotional connection and embodiment

(Forman, p213-216 2010)

The benefits of integrating Ascending V's Descending Spirituality



The tricky business of balancing emptiness and form



Pathological versions of Gender type

Ascending V's Descending Currents

In Communion – right brain

FEMININE

- Fusion with those around
- Can't speak for self
- Radically passive
- Part of the herd
- Nothing but relational
- "Process Queens"

Needs to learn to speak own mind,
build autonomy, stand up for self and views

ANIMUS-

the female unconsciously seeking
more agency – in left hemisphere



In Agency – left brain

MASCULINE

- Rigid association
- Alienation
- Radically assertive
- Repressed from body, nature
- Isolated
- "Power Over"

Needs to be "part of," to connect, to touch,
be impacted and influenced by others

ANIMA-

the male unconsciously seeking more
communion – in right hemisphere

Offensive V's Defensive Spirituality

- **Offensive -**

Using spirituality to feel good about oneself.. the *closeted-narcissist*. To enhance and inflate the self, protected under a guise of being special.

The belief that certain spiritual beliefs, experiences, insights or practices make one immune to the problems and foibles that plague other people.

- **Defensive –**

using spirituality to deny oneself e.g. Sexuality, anger, the wish for power, success, money are denied or suppressed in an unhealthy fashion.

Using spirituality to avoid confrontation, to defend against perceived neediness, emotional vulnerability or weakness.

(Forman, p216-220, 2010)

Psychosis or mystical state?

Identifying spiritual emergency (temporary psychosis) over genuine psychosis

1. If a person was functioning prior to the episode = SE
2. If psychosis lasts 3 months or less = SE
3. If there was a stressful antecedent to the episode = SE
4. If the person retains some positive or explanatory attitude toward the episode = SE

(Lukoff et al., 1996)

'The Pre-Trans Fallacy'

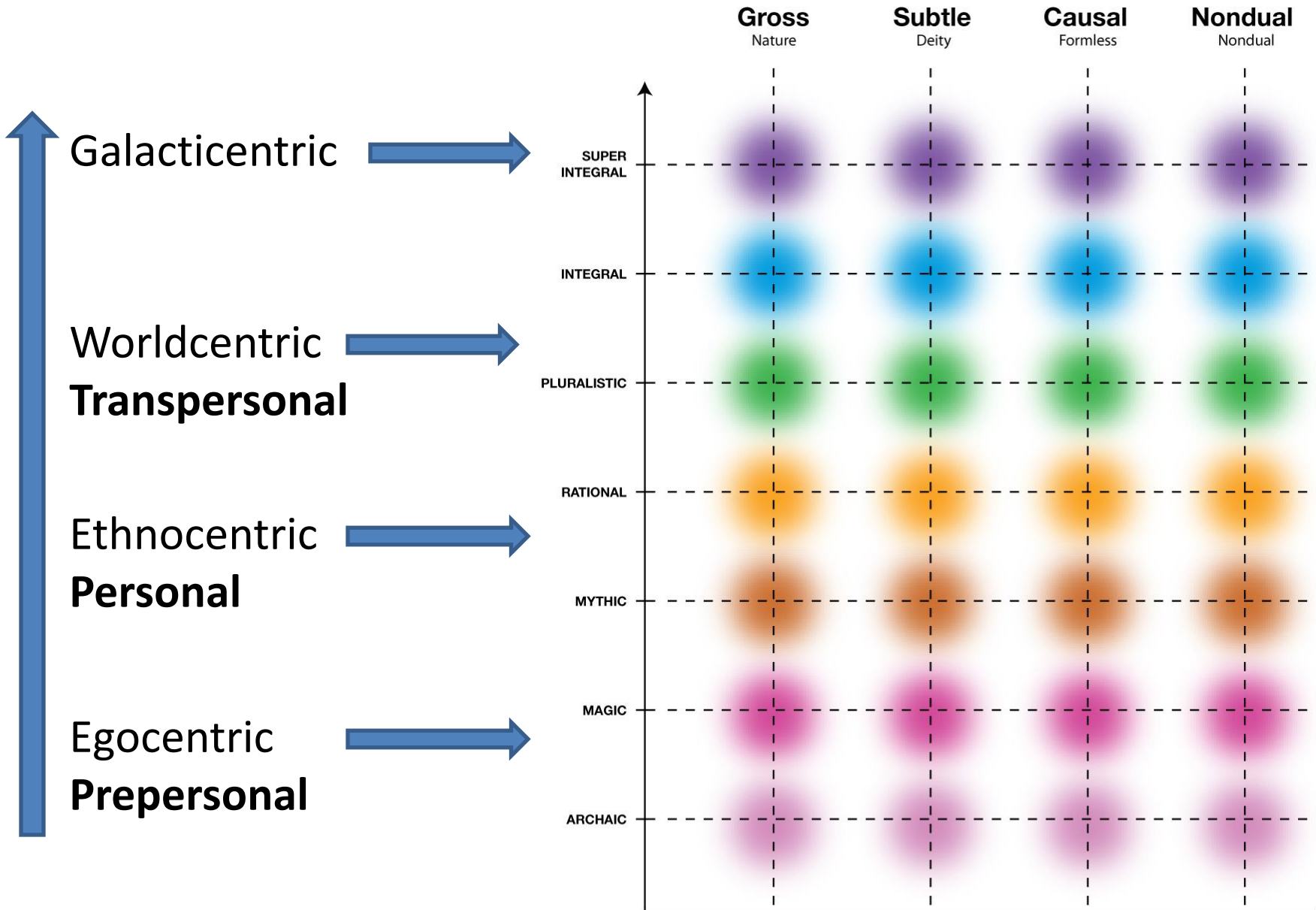
- **Fallacy 1: Reducing transpersonal to prepersonal**

When genuine mystical or contemplative experiences are seen as a regression or throwback to infantile states of narcissism, oceanic adualism, indissociation, and even primitive autism. E.g. the route taken by Freud in *The Future of an Illusion*.

- **Fallacy 2: Elevating prepersonal to transpersonal**

If one is sympathetic with higher or mystical states, then one will *elevate* all prerational states to some sort of transrational glory. E.g. the route taken by Jung and many of his followers.

State/Structure Fallacy



Stage Vs State of consciousness

Defining 2 aspects of spirituality

STAGES

Spirituality is Emergent and Developmental

- When more consciousness, light or awareness gradually emerges from one developmental stage to the next.
Inc childhood/adolescent/adult/elder spirituality.
- Which leads to increasingly greater insight into the spectrum of pathology and/or enlightenment.

STATES

Spirituality is accessible instantaneously

- Via an altered state of awareness (ordinary or non-ordinary state) over the life span.

The Wilber-Combs Matrix

2 types of Development

Waking up –
States of consciousness

Growing up -
Structural development

