

**An Integral Approach to Parenting
in the First Few Years of a Child's Life:
The Four Quadrants**



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An Integral Approach to Parenting in the First Three Years of a Child's Life:¹ The Four Quadrants

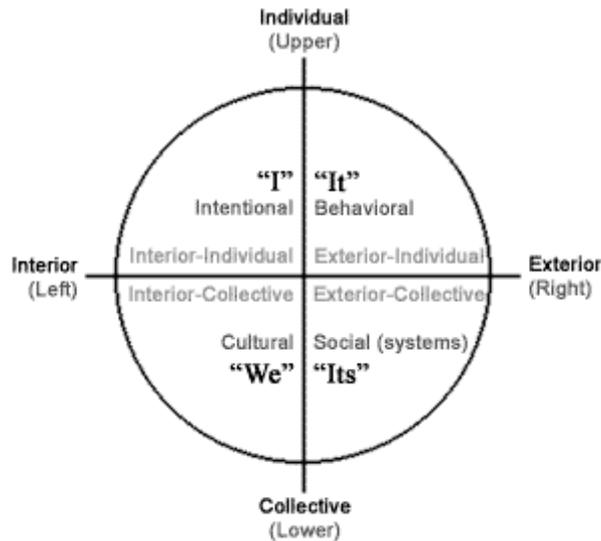


Integral Parenting involves considering the individual and collective aspects of the parent-child journey, as well as the interior and exterior modes of experience and reality. Combined, these are termed the *four quadrants*. Each quadrant is introduced. Insights and conclusions are presented as each of the four dimensions of the young child and the parent-child relationship is explored. In addition, what can be done to care for and nurture each dimension is discussed.

KEYWORDS: Consciousness, self, spirituality, developmental lines, levels, environment, neurological development, communication, culture, worldviews, social structures, technoeconomic base, educational systems, change.

Introduction

Understanding the human being is probably one of the most difficult undertakings. We have been trying to figure our selves and each other out for thousands of years. This has led us to look at who we are from various viewpoints and develop multiple bodies of knowledge and research: biology, psychology, anthropology, and sociology, to name just a few. Each of these sheds some light on our quest to understand. Bringing together the partial truths they uncover enables us to arrive at a fuller and deeper understanding. To do this, Wilber suggests that we use a four-quadrant model.² According to his model, there are four dimensions to everything. There is the *individual* perspective and the *collective* one. There is also the *interior* dimension and the *exterior* one. Combined we arrive at four quadrants: an individual interior quadrant (upper left, UL), a collective interior one (lower left, LL), an individual exterior one (upper right, UR), and a collective exterior one (lower right, LR).



In order to comprehend or get a complete picture of anything, Integral Theory insists that one of the steps is to look at everything through each of the four quadrants. By integrating the four perspectives and discovering how they inform each other, we avoid reducing “what is” to anything less than it actually is.

For our exploration of integral parenting this means that we consider the subjective experience of the child (UL), the child’s behavior (UR), the culture in which s/he is embedded (LL), and the environmental systems of which s/he is a part (LR). Because, by its very nature, parenting involves and touches both child and parent most intimately, the four dimensions of the parent holon also make up part of what integral parenting is all about. In many ways the two are inseparable when discussing parenting during early childhood along the four quadrants; the discussion will often be about how the parent and child interface, as we shall see in this paper. However, here the four quadrants in relation to the infant and young child are emphasized. A forthcoming paper on Integral Life Practice for parents will focus primarily on the parent’s experience, growth, and practice, and in doing so consider each quadrant specifically in relation to the parent.

As we proceed, keep in mind that the four quadrants represent simultaneous interdependent dimensions of life, rather than mutually exclusive ways of viewing knowledge and experience.

All four perspectives are equally there at the same time. We might focus on or be more familiar with one or the other quadrant, but really they all exist together, they all influence each other. They are all part of everything all the time.



To get a clearer idea of what the AQAL model means in application, we will take the four-quadrant aspect of the Integral map and plunge into the journey of parenting during early childhood with it. Taking all four quadrants into consideration gives us a fuller and more complete sense of what parenting an infant and young child can and should incorporate. We will therefore look at the first few years of a child's life by exploring each of the four dimensions. To do so I have divided this paper into four sections, one on each quadrant. Each dimension is distinct. At the same time they all complement each other and are part of the *one* experience. I have chosen to hold the paradox of differentiation and integration in each section, or in other words, to honor both the distinct content arising in each quadrant, as well as considering how they cross-pollinate and are intricately interwoven. Each section thus introduces and emphasizes one quadrant, and also touches on how that particular realm influences and is influenced by the others.

Questions we bring along are: What insights and conclusions can we draw from considering each quadrant? What aspects of the young child are emphasized and differentiated as we look at his or her four dimensions? How do the insights and information arising from our consideration of each quadrant inform each other?

This paper is structured as follows: each section begins with a brief overview of what is considered in that particular dimension. I have then chosen 3 or 4 topics for each section that are

relevant to the respective quadrant when looking at a young child's being and unfolding. Which particular topics I picked to explore and discuss in more depth were influenced by what struck me, both theoretically and practically, to be some of the most pertinent to parenting an infant and young child. No doubt, this is in part a subjective choice, informed by my own journey of becoming a mother—by what has proven most meaningful, revealing, and helpful in understanding how I can parent more integrally, and also by what has challenged me to grow in how I relate to my daughter, Adonia. In sifting through the many areas that I could have covered when looking at each quadrant, I also attempted to focus on ones that I felt represented themes very much alive for many parents today, such as raising a child in an increasingly fast-paced society with all the inherent opportunities and challenges (for example, television, early daycare, shifting family structures, positive and negative cultural influences). Also, in some cases, the subjects I chose are ones that in my view are often overlooked or not readily available, such as cutting-edge research in neurocardiology on heart-brain interactions and the effects of the heart's electromagnetic energy on its environment (with its astounding implications for the parent-child relationship), or reflections on a young child's spiritual development that are free of pre/trans fallacy and look further than conventional religious instruction. In short, the ensuing four sections represent both an introduction to the four quadrants specifically as these relate to parenting young children, as well as a collection of some of the gems I have discovered over the past decade and a half of pursuing my interest in and studying how we can best facilitate the flourishing and development of another person's potential during the foundational first few years of life. It is my hope that the following discussion, insights, and questions raised can serve you in your parenting efforts or, if you are not a parent, widen and deepen your understanding of what parenting a young child entails.

Depending on the subject and the quadrant under discussion, my use of first, second, or third-person language (I, we, or it) varies. This reflects in part the texture and tone of each quadrant's territory. It is also influenced by the specific topics themselves. For some, such as brain development in an infant and young child (in section 1), or attachment theory (in section 3) there is a lot of scientific research and study to be drawn upon, which naturally leads to a more traditional third-person academic style of writing. In discussing other subject areas, for example, how each child brings with them the possibility of cultural renewal (in section 3) or how to

nurture a young child's spiritual development (in section 2), I am more exploratory. This is partly due to the nature of the topics themselves, and partly because I have learnt more on subjects such as these from raising my daughter and watching other parents raise their kids than in any other way. Reflections and inquiry are still underway, as is the daily attempt to figure out and implement a more integral way of parenting. It is an ongoing experiment. In these exploratory sections I offer what I have discovered, tried and tested thus far.

I begin this four-quadrant exploration of early childhood with the *Upper-Right quadrant* (section 1), much like we generally first meet a child, viewing him or her from the outside. Section 2 then discusses the *Upper-Left quadrant*; we move from the outside view to considering what a young child's inner subjective experience of life is. Following this we shift our focus to the *Lower-Left quadrant* (section 3) and explore aspects of the child's interior cultural dimension, the shared We-space a young child is enfolded in. Section 4 looks at the *Lower-Right quadrant*, and discusses topics related to the collective exterior dimension of a young child. And finally, a conclusion offers a few closing remarks on how we can navigate parenthood more comprehensively when holding all four quadrants in our awareness and allowing the considerations present in each dimension to inform our actions and choices.

The topic is vast. In aiming for integral (greatest span and depth), we automatically set ourselves up for an ongoing task. Here then is a humble beginning, an initial exploration of integral parenting through the four quadrants. It is written with the hopes and intention of providing a more palpable sense of what these four dimensions encompass in relation to parenting an infant and young child.

Section One: The Upper-Right Quadrant

This section introduces the Upper-Right quadrant, and presents some of the insights and conclusions that arise when exploring this exterior, behavioral dimension of the young child. The UR dimension of a young child's development is examined by focusing on the following four topics: brain research, effects of television on neurological development, neurocardiology, and baby signing.

In the **Upper-Right quadrant (UR)** the self is looked at in an objective, scientific fashion: as a product of brain mechanisms and neurophysiological systems, and described in “it” language. Here we look at the individual child from the outside. It is the dimension of the body, from the gross to the subtle to the causal, and from the micro to the macro levels of existence.³ This quadrant includes organic body states, genetics, biochemistry, neurobiological and physiological factors, neurotransmitters, organic brain structures (brain stem, limbic system, neocortex), physical well-being and exercise, as well as subtle energy fields and the child’s behavior. Connected with this quadrant are: truth, correspondence, representation, and the propositional.



Care for the individual child’s physical and survival needs is usually at the very forefront of any new parents’ minds and concern. A young child’s extreme vulnerability calls upon us to do anything we can to ensure his⁴ well-being and comfort. How we “decide” (consciously, instinctually or habitually) to do this, is generally influenced by the two lower quadrants—the cultural assumptions and the societal framework within which we are operating—as well as the UL quadrant that encompasses our personal beliefs, values and preferences.

To give an idea of how considering the UR quadrant can enable greater understanding of what goes on in the first few years of life, and what can contribute to or disturb a young child’s healthy development, we will discuss the following four topics: brain research and its implications, effects of television on neurological development, neurocardiology, as well as the recent popular phenomenon of using sign language to enable children to communicate clearly before they can speak.

Brain Research

An area of research from the UR quadrant that can add significantly to our understanding of what unfolds in an infant and young child is the study of the brain. We now know so much more about

the structure and physiology of the brain, how and in which sequence it develops. According to Ronald Kotulak, author of *Inside the Brain: Revolutionary Discoveries of How the Mind Works*,⁵ scientists have learned more about the brain during the last two decades than during the entire century preceding it. For many years, science believed that each person was born with a certain number of brain cells and, therefore, a genetically predetermined intellectual capacity. More recent research, however, appears to refute this assumption, concluding a much more intricate interweaving between genetic disposition and environmental influences.⁶ Experiments by Eliot,⁷ Diamond⁸ and other scientists indicate that brains are not rigid at birth, but plastic, and thus able to change structure and chemistry in response to the environment. In other words, the brain is formed, at least in part, by the environment, and much of the “wiring” of the brain’s neurons comes after birth and depends on the experiences infants and children have. Eliot describes the delicate dance between genes and the environment as follows: “While genes program the *sequence* of neural development, at every turn, the *quality* of that development is shaped by environmental factors. (. . .) Every touch, movement, and emotion is translated into electrical and chemical activity that shifts the forward genetic momentum, subtly modifying the way a child’s brain is wired together.”⁹

This plasticity of the developing brain has given rise to all kinds of considerations: from what the effects of nutrition and early learning are, to how intelligence is at least partially determined by life experiences, and even by the beliefs and values held by the primary caregivers.

Although scientists still believe that, for the most part,¹⁰ humans cannot grow new neurons, they now understand that the brain can and does grow new dendrites¹¹—the communication points between neurons. The number and efficiency of dendrites, neuroscientists say, determine how much and how well the brain receives, processes, and retains information. Intelligence thus depends on the *connections* among the nerve cells, and those connections depend, at least in part, on the quality of the educational environment.

Overproduction and Pruning. According to Eliot,¹² during the “exuberant” period of brain development (1-8 years), children produce about twice as many synapses as they will eventually need. These initial synapses are highly unselective. Experience, or electrical activity, then determines which synapses will be preserved and which ones will be eliminated. At its peak, around 15,000 synapses are produced on every cortical neuron. This corresponds to a rate of 1.8

million new synapses per second in a child's brain between two months of gestation and two years after birth! The excessive number of synapses forces them to compete, which promotes selection of the fittest or most useful, and enables the best "fit" with the environment a child is born into and interacting with. In neural development, "usefulness" is defined in terms of electrical activity, in other words, those connections that have been used repeatedly, that are highly active and transmit more effectively are the ones, that will stay. The others that are rarely activated will wither and die. This sorting out, during which a child loses around 20 billion synapses per day between early childhood and adolescence, is a good thing. Otherwise we would be left with the initial diffuse system, which has a lot of overlap, and is inefficient and imprecise in the transmission of information. The pruning strengthens those neural connections in use and gets rid of the others, thereby making for a more streamlined and coherent system. Synapses that are frequently activated—for example, through languages a young child is exposed to, or music she hears or plays, or love and care that is felt—lead to the establishment of certain circuits of synapses. Thus the ability to speak several languages flawlessly, a musical ear, or a healthy self-sense develop.

Insulating the "Wiring". The other significant event in postnatal brain development is *myelination*. Myelin is a fatty protein that encases the long axons involved in neural communication. It forms as a *result of the use* of those connections, and enables faster and more economical transmission of signals. It also makes permanent the learning, imprints, and developments gained to that point.¹³ This "insulating of the wires" is largely genetically controlled, beginning with the axonal fibers in the older brain regions and moving to those areas that control more sophisticated mental abilities later, some areas continuing through childhood into adolescence and adulthood. The action of sucking, for example, will be practiced and become myelinated during the first few weeks of life, whereas the accomplishment of reaching and holding objects gets myelinated later during the first year. Repetition and variation contribute to this process. Think of the times your little one drops the spoon, and as soon as you pick it up he drops it again, over and over (for as long as you go along with the exercise!). As he repeats this action, the initially slow and clumsy movement becomes smooth until it becomes myelinated and goes on "automatic pilot."¹⁴ Sequence and timing of myelination are largely predictable in all healthy children. However, practice and stimulation affect which circuits get

activated, and nutrition has been found to affect its degree, i.e. the thickness of the wrapping around individual axons. Myelin, the protective sheath that covers communicating neurons, is composed of 30% protein and 70% fat. Because of this, a high level of healthy fats¹⁵ in a child's diet up to age two is recommended, breast milk being an excellent source.



Critical or Sensitive Periods. The sequence in brain development and the selection of the active neural circuits point to *critical periods* in the development of the brain. Critical periods are times when the brain is *especially sensitive to its environment* for the development of a certain skill. As such they are like windows of opportunity, some lasting longer and others shorter.

An infant's exposure to language, for example, profoundly and permanently shapes the range of speech sounds that she will later be able to perceive and speak. This explains why as adults we can still learn a new language, but to speak it without an accent is much more difficult. Also, certain skills in language development, such as grammar and phonology, are more dependent on input and usage than others, such as the size of vocabulary.¹⁶ Skills that emerge later on, e.g. the more complex skills of emotion and reasoning, remain plastic for a longer period than the critical period of basic sensory abilities such as vision and hearing.

Glenn Doman and The Institutes for the Achievement of the Human Potential have done extensive research in the field of child brain development, initially working with brain-injured children.¹⁷ Over forty years ago they began experimenting with non-surgical methods, paying close attention to the critical periods in brain development, as well as the sequence in which a brain develops. As they improved their techniques, they started seeing brain-injured children perform as well as average children,¹⁸ to the point of not being able to be distinguished from them.¹⁹ Understanding and making use of the fact that neurological growth is a dynamic and

ever-changing process, they have helped brain-injured children journey from neurological disorganization to neurological organization, e.g. taking them through the stages of growth by physically assisting them in moving their arms and legs, then helping them crawl, then creep, then walk. Over time, with the improvement and refinement of their methods, some brain-injured children even began performing at above or superior levels, compared to children with no brain injuries. This work led them to fascinating discoveries about the growth and development of well children. They began using the same techniques to increase the amount of neurological organization and accelerate the neurological growth demonstrated in well children. Underlying their techniques are the premises that 1) you can increase a child's learning markedly by removing any physical restrictions placed on it, and 2) you can multiply the knowledge a child absorbs, as well as his potential, by appreciating his supreme capacity for learning, giving him unlimited opportunity to do so, while simultaneously encouraging him.²⁰ An example of their work is teaching babies and young children how to read,²¹ making use of the incredible absorbency and plasticity of a young brain, and the eagerness for learning that young children display when this happens in joyful and loving ways. Instead of teaching a young child the alphabet, which is abstract and meaningless to a baby or toddler, they present them with whole words written in large print (to accommodate the still developing visual pathways). According to their experiences, the little ones literally absorb the written words and the parent's accompanying spoken word in a matter of seconds. Repeating this for short periods (five words at a time) over the day, they learn how to read without even noticing that they are doing so. Words are chosen that have meaning to the child, beginning with himself—body parts and functions—and moving on to people and objects he interacts with daily (papa, crayon, banana).

“Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.” William Butler Yeats

Integrating Viewpoints This brings us to the question of what we do with all this information on brain development, plasticity, and critical periods gathered in the UR quadrant? There can be no question that enabling an initially brain-injured child to become an independent, skilled and knowledgeable individual can only be a good thing. Could it then be a bad thing to teach well children how to, for example, read at an early age? It has been interesting to see how different parents and educators respond when I bring up this kind of UR information and related brain enriching suggestions.²² Some are wary of what sounds like “filling a child with as much

information as possible in the hopes that she will end up smarter.” They raise some valid questions, e.g. what other modes of exploring and knowing the world (such as imagination and creativity) might get buried or overrun if too much emphasis is placed on the acquisition of knowledge and intellectual stimulation? Are we allowing children to be children, or are we rushing them, thus depriving them of their natural unfolding? The critical or at least wary voices all seem to come from a concern of reducing a child’s learning and development to the UR quadrant only, at the expense of the others. Their unease is backed by observing the recent hype, especially in the United States, to produce “super babies,”²³ with parents becoming stressed and anxious that they have already “missed the boat” in giving their child a head start in her development. Indeed, when one reads sentences such as: “...once a given brain region has passed the refinement stage, its critical period has ended, and the opportunity to rewire it is significantly limited,”²⁴ combined with the fact that for certain abilities the critical periods lie in the very few first years, it is easy to begin feeling concerned whether one has missed stimulating a crucial area in one’s child’s brain and imagining what consequences this negligence might have on the child’s future! Elkind, author of *The Hurried Child*,²⁵ cautions that development in children under 4 years old can be seriously damaged by parents’ well-meaning efforts to give them a head-start in education or in sports through early formal academic and physical instructions. Toddlers and preschoolers ought to be encouraged in their spontaneous learning rather than given formal instruction that possibly teaches them the wrong things at the wrong time. He advises parents to let their children excel at their own speed. Steiner education²⁶ encourages parents and teachers to wait with teaching the more academic skills, like reading and writing, till later, while focusing on laying the foundations for these skills through lots of practice in manual dexterity and artistic expression in the earlier years.

And then there are those, such as Doman, Diamond, and Eliot²⁷ who are keenly interested in how neurological development in children might be facilitated and stimulated during the periods of greatest growth and plasticity. They see value, not in pushing a child beyond what she is naturally inclined to do, but in helping the neurological foundations be laid when this is most easily done, namely in conjunction with the way the brain develops. The extreme response to this information by some parents and educators to produce “superkids” does perhaps not provide an accurate reflection of what they are suggesting. Doman, for example, speaks of the overarching importance of learning being a joyous, relaxed endeavor that adds quality, intimacy and fun to

the parent-child interaction (LL). The aim is not to have one's child read or do math by a certain age, but rather to enable the child to do so if and when she wants to (UL) by removing obstacles, such as the print usually being too small, (LR) and providing the correct stimulation at the right time (UR). According to his research, this encourages and accelerates neurological organization. David Sousa,²⁸ an educational consultant, provides several recommendations for education based on brain research. These include:

- Providing an *enriched* and *challenging* educational environment, as a stimulating environment creates more connections in the brain.
- Facilitating learning that is *multisensory* and *interactive*, as the brain makes the most neural connections when it is actively involved in learning.
- Ensuring that learning is *meaningful* to each individual, as activities that involve emotion trigger the release of chemicals in the brain that strengthen memory.
- Building on prior knowledge, as the human brain strives to create connections or patterns.
- Ensuring that a child feel *physically safe and emotionally secure*, as the brain's hierarchy of tasks starts with physical survival, moves to emotional survival, and only then turns to thinking and learning;
- Providing a variety of learning opportunities, as *each brain is unique*.

Applying integral thinking and study to this topic can facilitate an integration of relevant brain research (UR quadrant) with the wisdom and insight on how to nourish a child's unfolding emotional, imaginal, and creative self (UL quadrant). An integral approach takes both the child's inner as well as his outer self into consideration. Thus, the information on brain development, critical periods, and the effects of environmental enrichment are taken seriously and made use of. At the same time the individual child, with his particular pace, preferences and interests, strengths and weaknesses is honored and accommodated. Age-appropriate stimulation and opportunities for learning are offered in fun and loving ways; the child is never forced, pressured, or overstimulated. The parent watches the child carefully and picks up on what he is interested in learning, where his attention is placed, what he sees and is drawn to, what he cares about and is consumed by. Picking up on the child's impulse and curiosity, the parent provides stimuli that encourage further learning and exploration. The parent may also offer stimuli that lie outside the child's own expression of interest, but are aligned with his developmental "windows

of opportunity”, thus inviting him to stretch into unknown areas of skill, and see how he responds. If he is interested, the learning experience can continue, otherwise it is put aside and offered at another time. Thus through careful observation, knowledge of developmental stages, flexibility, and creativity, both the inner and the outer self of the child can be accommodated and encouraged to thrive.

With her use of the term “sensitive period”—which is slightly different than how it is used in developmental psychology and neurobiological literatures today, where the environmental input is emphasized—Montessori²⁹ pointed toward such an integrated approach. She saw the *inner impulse* (UL quadrant) as an expression of the child’s biologically guided sensitive periods (UR quadrant), and suggested capitalizing on these when they arise by providing a lot of high interest input at that time.³⁰ The child’s interest is therefore indicator of what particular stimuli aid her psychological and biological development. An example of a sensitive period as observed by Montessori is the early sensitive period for language, demonstrated by the special interest infants around 4 months have in carefully observing and attempting to imitate the lip movements made by adults as they speak. Another one is the sensitive period for the perception of tiny objects during the second year of life, when children notice and are drawn to small details that we as adults often oversee. A sensitive period for precision and exactness during the early years led Montessori to begin teaching mathematics to 4 year-olds.

In this way a balance between directed early stimulation and allowing for the natural unfolding of the child becomes possible. We are attempting this balance with our daughter, e.g. using Doman’s method of teaching young children how to read, and only doing the 30-second reading exercises with her when she feels like it and has fun doing so. It would actually be quite a feat to do this when she is not interested. . . toddlers have minds of their own!

Television and Young Children

A further practically applicable area of knowledge that is generated by research in the UR quadrant is the effect of watching television on a young child’s neurological development. Much more attention has been paid to the emotional and social impacts of excessive television watching due to its questionable content, but the consequences for a young child’s neurological development are in some ways much more severe.³¹ These negative effects are compounded by

the sheer amount of time spent in front of the television. The average 2-5 year old in America watches some 4 hours of television per day.³²

Mulholland and Crown studied the changes in brain waves (i.e. alpha waves) in both adults and children as they were engaged in watching television. Their research found that watching television induces passivity (high frequency alpha waves), and this in contrast to similar tests carried out on children who were reading, who showed the reverse alpha pattern, indicating attentiveness.³³ Further studies have made the connection between television viewing and the disturbance of children's ability to concentrate and self-regulate.³⁴ One study found that the more hours per day one and three year-old children watched television, the more likely they were to be diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) at the age of seven.³⁵ Inversely a recent study in the *American Journal of Public Health* found that children as young as five showed a significant reduction in ADHD symptoms when they engaged with nature. Author and columnist Richard Louv gives the lowdown on stress and play in *Nature Deficit*.³⁶

A further criticism of television (and certain computer programs), especially for the young child, is that these technologies create concrete images that the developing brain is designed to create itself.³⁷ With television it is all already there: word, sound track, image and action—the brain/mind just needs to take it all in. Those centers of the brain necessary for critical and creative thinking are not engaged, and thus not developed. According to Pearce, this literally prevents neural growth in the developing brains of children. When young children watch too much television, it suppresses the capacity of their brains to create an internal image of something, or someone, or some event not presented to the sensory system by the environment. This is the essence of what we call “imagination.”³⁸ One aspect of stories being told is that they require the listener to come up with internal images not present to the sensory system. The listening child's vision thus turns within, where the action is. Pearce describes a girl who once told him she much preferred radio to television, as the pictures were so much more beautiful. Her creation of pictures far exceeded what was being spoon-fed through TV.³⁹

Other negative effects on the physical and psychological well-being of a young child and the development of certain skills, not due to the content, but to both primary and secondary effects of television watching include: increased obesity as children tend to eat while watching and are

obviously sitting still instead of being physically active; a 16% drop in the metabolic rate from a normal resting state; less effective coping skills such as figuring out what to do when bored or upset; time taken away from reading actual books, and weak independent play skills.⁴⁰ An additional factor to consider in exposing the very young to television is that their auditory pathways are still quite undeveloped and thus their ability to discriminate sounds in a noisy setting is reduced.⁴¹ This is particularly worth paying attention to while they are still learning the subtleties of speech.⁴²

There does not seem to be much good to be said about viewing television at an early age. In reviewing the above studies, however, a clear distinction is drawn between the effects on adults versus children, and especially young children. We must remember that a person's ability to absorb information is at its peak in the early years, but his cognitive discerning and judging capacities are at their lowest. This is gradually inversed, as we grow older.⁴³ Once a person has developed skills such as reading and thinking, the benefits of watching television in a discerning way can balance out some of the negative impacts. It then can be used as a tool to access sights, sounds, people and stories, and a wide array of interesting information.

The Heartbrain and other UR Quadrant Insights

An example of how UR quadrant research can offer insight and support to other dimensions of the self is the new discipline of neurocardiology, which indicates that a fifth center of our brain is located in the heart. Neurocardiology and study at the Institute of HeartMath have verified and validated John and Beatrice Lacey's decades of research for the National Institutes of Health on the neurological connections and ongoing dialogue between the brain and the heart.⁴⁴ Half or more of the heart's cells are neural cells, like those making up the brain. The intelligence of the heart is not verbal, linear, digital, analytical, or logical (as the intellect in our head). Rather the heart responds to the brain's emotional system—whether the reports come from the hindbrain and its ancient sensorimotor and survival systems or from the forebrain's creative imagination—and sends unmediated intuitive prompts for appropriate behavior. It is thus a highly complex, self-organized information-processing center, with its own functional “brain.” Research has shown that the heart communicates to the brain in four major ways: neurologically (through the transmission of nerve impulses), biochemically (via hormones and neurotransmitters),

biophysically (through pressure waves), and energetically (through electromagnetic field interactions).

Studies by The Institute of HeartMath on the heart and its electromagnetic energy communication have shown the heart to be the most powerful generator of electromagnetic energy in the human body. It produces the largest rhythmic electromagnetic field of any of the body's organs, with an electrical field about 60 times greater in amplitude than the electrical activity generated by the brain. In addition, the magnetic field produced by the heart is more than 5,000 times greater in strength than the field generated by the brain. Further studies by the Institute have explored the interactions that take place between one person's heart and another's brain when two people touch or are in proximity.⁴⁵ This research elucidates the intriguing finding that the electromagnetic signals generated by the heart have the capacity to affect others around us. Cardioelectromagnetic communication, although still a little-known source of information exchange between people, and one that is influenced by our emotions, holds much pertinence for the parent-child relationship.⁴⁶ What are we passing on to our little ones as we hold them close? We can consciously sooth and comfort them by being present, loving, and relaxed ourselves. When upset or stressed, we can remove ourselves from their energetic field, take care of our needs, and return when in a more peaceful state.



**Further interesting aspects of the UR quadrant in relationship to
accompanying our infants and young children include:**

- * The growing inquiry and research into the *effects of vaccines* and encouragement for parents to make informed decisions on this practice, which has been viewed as necessary for the last few decades, but is now also bringing up controversy;⁴⁷
- * The *benefits of breastfeeding*, not just for a child's physical nourishment,⁴⁸ emotional well-being and growing bond with her mother, but also for the overall stimuli an infant receives, her developing immune system, proper development of jaw and facial structure, normal weight gain, safeguard against later allergies, the development of an infant's brain and nervous system, as well as a number of health benefits to the mother;⁴⁹
- * The impacts of *pregnancy* and *birth* on brain development, learning ability and emotional well-being;
- * The value of integrating *alternative approaches to health*, thereby complementing and, when possible replacing, conventional methods of treating childhood sicknesses that often have negative side effects and are generally unquestioningly overused in treating childhood sicknesses.⁵⁰
- * And of course the enormous contributions made through acute observation by Montessori, Piaget, Kegan and others toward understanding the *developmental levels* a young child moves through. By getting a clear sense of where a child is at in his development, we are able to respond to his needs so much more appropriately, neither underestimating nor overestimating his capacities.

Baby Signing

An example of how the UR quadrant is integrated in aiding a child's expression of its UL quadrant is Baby Signing. This technique is based on the age-old phenomenon of humans using gestures to accompany their language, e.g. waving when saying good-bye. Baby Signing builds upon this natural gesturing and teaches the very young child signs that she can use to communicate long before she utters her first words. With the control infants have over their hands, an ability that develops a lot earlier than the fine motor skills necessary for speech, very

young children can express themselves, thereby enabling parents greater insight into what is going on inside them. This greatly lessens their frustration before they can speak and facilitates a growing confidence in being heard.⁵¹ Using Baby Signs, babies can tell you such things as “I am hungry”, “I would like more”, or “I have an earache,” many months before they can speak. After two decades of research conducted by Acredolo and Goodwyn it has been evidenced that young children introduced to baby signs learn to talk sooner, have fewer tantrums, get a jump start in their intellectual development, express emotions effectively, and develop stronger bonds with parents. They know that they can communicate and get used to being understood at an earlier age.⁵² They also seem to simply enjoy this use of communication that builds on how they instinctively communicate. Baby Signing has become an international movement. We have used this technique with our daughter, beginning with just a few signs when she was 4 months old. It has been one of the most useful and delightful parenting tools we have come across. It allows the child to let you know without a doubt what is going on, whether he is hot, tired, or has had enough food and would like to go outside, or is simply communicating what he is observing, e.g. the loud noise a truck makes as it drives by, or the butterfly he is watching. If we consider how essential communication is to human interaction, baby signing literally opens a door to reflecting back, recognizing and expressing understanding for our children.

Adonia (at 13 months) is clearly upset. What is bothering her? She is waving her index finger back and forth—her sign for “where”—hmmm, she must be looking for something. “What is it you are looking for, Adonia?” I ask. She places her arms as if cradling a baby. “Aah, your baby, you’re looking for your baby doll?” Her eyes light up, “yes!” she nods vigorously. We begin searching, lifting pillows and looking under the sofa, until finally we retrieve the little “friend” hidden behind the bookshelf. A shout of glee escapes her. Then as she spies the books in the book shelf, with her doll tucked under her arm she makes the gesture of “book”, and so we sit down to enjoy a book together, while she comments on the various things she sees... using her signs for “horse,” “chicken,” “cat whiskers,” and many others. Later on as we sit down for supper she lets us know that she would like “more” (an incredibly useful sign!), and then a few spoonfuls after that, that she is “all done” and would like to “go to sleep.” Just before falling asleep, in the dim light of the early evening, she stirs and signs “hurt” over her wrist that is swollen from a recent mosquito bite. After applying some soothing ointment she waves

goodnight and closes her eyes. 2AM she stirs, half-asleep she signs “nursing”—and after a short suckle turns over and sleeps on.

In learning together gestures to express those parts of her life that are important to her and to us as parents, she is empowered in her communications and we are greatly aided in responding to her. Now, at 22 months, her spoken language is exploding, and she uses her signing less and less. However, once in a while, in order to give extra emphasis to something, or simply as an accompanying gesture (with Italian flair!) she still utilizes some of her signs.

This UR component of consciously using body language draws on what is possible at a given developmental stage and allows for the child to flourish within that stage, at the same time encouraging him to stretch into continued growth and unfolding.

Some practical suggestions for integral practice along the UR dimension:

Clothing – Organic, breathable, and comfortable. Once your child is ready to wear shoes, getting ones that don’t have a hard sole, but rather a flexible leather bottom will allow her to feel the ground when taking first and all ensuing steps during the initial period of walking. The more direct feedback from the nerve endings on the soles of her feet will enhance the young child’s sense of balance and confidence.

Diet – Organic nutritious food that is minimally processed, with an emphasis on fruit, vegetables, and whole grains that are seasonally available. Avoidance of nuts and honey during the first year (the former because a young child does not yet have the enzymes to digest them; the latter because there is a risk of infant botulism, which can be fatal). Avoidance of caffeine and sugars (especially refined ones) throughout the first few years of life (and beyond!). Supplementing the intake of solids with breast milk, if possible, for the first two years of life.⁵³ Sufficient intake and balance of omega-3 fatty acids and omega-6 fatty acids, and avoidance of fried oils. Alternating between various grains—we tend to rely too heavily on wheat—including spelt, rye, rice, kamut, buckwheat, and quinoa to avoid a sensitivity to wheat from forming. Keeping the intake of dairy to a moderate amount—there is ongoing debate about the consequences of ingesting milk from another mammal—the human family is the only species that does this. Dairy allergies are amongst the most common. Sufficient drinking of purified water.

Body – Encouraging the development of a healthy self-sense and vitality by touching, massaging, holding, bathing, and cuddling these newly arrived human beings. Providing ample opportunities for the development of motor skills, from creeping and crawling to walking, running, climbing, balancing, skipping, and jumping—and this on a variety of terrains (sloping, uneven, flat...). Facilitating a rich and varied range of sensory experiences along all five modalities: tasting, seeing, touching, hearing, and smelling. Encouraging daily activities outside in the fresh air.



Section Two: The Upper-Left Quadrant

In the **Upper-Left quadrant** (UL) we consider the child’s consciousness and self as they are perceived and experienced from the inside (“I” language). This is the realm of the child’s



subjective experience: her thoughts, feelings, desires, fears, sensations, intentions, and perceptions. Mature expressions of this quadrant include truthfulness, sincerity, integrity, and trustworthiness.⁵⁴ Questions such as “How does a newborn and young child perceive and experience herself, her immediate surroundings and the world at large?” are addressed in this quadrant. Associated with the UL are a

child’s developing self-sense and self-image, her psychological and spiritual development, her motivation, creativity, and emotional sense of belonging, safety and mattering (or lack thereof). Because a young child cannot articulate verbally at the level of an adult, we are largely

dependent on acute observation and attentive listening to get an idea of what is going on inside the child. What is a child saying in “I” language, if not verbally, then through all the other ways she has of communicating (facial expression, breathing rhythm, body and muscle tone, sounds, moods, gestures, actions)? While this attention may not yield any hard scientific facts, the importance of refining our capacity for attentive, empathic listening and observation are not to be underestimated.

Placing oneself in the position of the child, imagining what the child experiences can provide greater insight, patience, and compassion in the parent.⁵⁵ To do this we need to suspend our own perspective from time to time. For example, as your 18-month old is getting increasingly frustrated by the fact that he cannot communicate something to you despite intense gesturing, sounds, facial expression, and the few words he can articulate, imagine how you might feel standing on a street corner in a foreign country, trying to ask the next passer-by how to get to the closest grocery store and getting nowhere with your communication—blank looks and an apologetic smile, but alas, no directions. The arising compassion will likely encourage you to respond with kindness and creativity instead of impatience. Or think of how startled a newborn might be by a sudden loud noise. Taking this into consideration, taking a moment to imagine how this world is still so full of new and potentially frightening and jolting experiences to a “new arrival,” you may choose to remove your infant from the scene where a loud sound is about to happen, or as your child gets a little older communicate by forewarning with a simple gesture accompanied by the word “noise” that it will learn to recognize and trust (see “Baby Signs” in section one, pp. 17-19).

Because each quadrant represents just one dimension of four simultaneous interdependent dimensions, anything arising in this particular quadrant will be influenced, informed, reflected, and complemented in the other ones (and vice versa). Here in the UL quadrant the child’s inner experience of life, be this sensory, emotional, cognitive, or spiritual, is thus also seen as enfolded and informed by the other realms of existence. As we saw in the above section on the UR quadrant, for example, brain research is providing insights into early neurological development, and thereby able to complement, underscore, or otherwise inform our observations and intuitions.

Huge changes take place in the UL quadrant during the first few years of a child's life. These beginning years are marked by the developmental shifts from an undifferentiated state to ever-greater differentiation and subsequent integration, first at a physical level, then emotionally and mentally. In part one of this section, I provide a brief overview of the inner journey an infant and young child experiences. The remainder of this section on the UL quadrant then focuses on the spiritual development in the initial years of life, specifically I discuss how we as parents can nurture and encourage this line of development in the very young.

The Inner Journey

As a human being enters life on earth through the process of involution, we step into the realm of duality, of seeming separation between matter and Spirit.⁵⁶ A newborn is not consciously aware of this separation, although it causes her discomfort and possibly distress.⁵⁷ Even when parents do their utmost to tend to their infant through a welcoming and responsive environment, the new arrival will experience moments of hunger, temperature variations, and other “gaps” between the sensation of a basic need and its remediation. Initially, the newborn's sense of self is still very diffused; she is only just beginning to orient herself in the world. Through the process of development (evolution), a child gradually becomes conscious of the separation, as she develops agency and a distinct sense of self.

As the infant begins to differentiate his body from his mother's body and the surrounding world, he gradually becomes aware of separation at a physical level. This happens beginning around 2-3 months and continues through to 12 months. He realizes through direct sensory experience that his hand and feet belong to himself, that mama's hand and feet belong to mama, and that manipulating the rattle by tasting and shaking it are a very different sensation than sucking on and shaking his own toes. Around 6 months the infant also begins to investigate how his actions affect objects, what happens when he drops, pushes, or pulls objects. His self-sense is at this point largely physically defined.⁵⁸ He experiences himself as a body with growing motor skills and a wide range of sensory exploration and discovery. He responds reflexively to sensations. When he is hungry, his entire being is hungry. When a young child is tired, tiredness *is* the child. When he is fed, freshly diapered, warm, rested and loved—everything feels just great! There is

no differentiation yet between himself and his physical sensations. The very young child is locked into the present, for better and for worse. The growing realization of a separate physical self, culminating in the incredible first steps away from one's primary caregivers provides the foundation for the next stage of differentiation.

Between 12-18 months, the child begins to be aware of the separation between her own emotions and her mother's and other peoples'. Before, when another little one would burst into tears, she too may follow suit, overtaken by the emotional expression. Now, she watches carefully, interested, and possibly offers a toy to comfort, or strokes the little friend's head. How she expresses her budding understanding that another is in physical or emotional discomfort will generally follow the model her parents have provided when comforting her.

Then between 18-24 months the child's mind begins to emerge as separate from his physical and emotional being. In addition to the present, a tentative notion of the past becomes part of his awareness. An understanding of time is a difficult concept to develop as it involves abstracting from the present. At this stage "yesterday" simply refers to what has happened, whether this was a week ago or actually yesterday. The toddler explores choice, will, independence, and contrast between self and parent in all kinds of ways and circumstances. "No", spoken with absolute conviction by a two year-old can provide all kinds of new challenges to the parenting adventure!⁵⁹ Complexity and delight go hand in hand. The child's rapidly evolving use of language allows the parents to understand more clearly what is going on in the interior of his consciousness. This is indeed a miracle to behold.

As the toddler explores his will, he comes up against limits and boundaries. Some because he is still developing skills necessary to navigate independently, and so can, for example, not yet tie his own shoes even if he would like to. Others because his parents set a boundary, for example, by holding a clear limitation around the use of certain objects, by providing firm guidance and correction in response to certain behavior, or by maintaining rhythms such as a regular bedtime that the child does not always jive with. As most parents will know, it is truly a dance, sometimes a truly challenging one, to accommodate and encourage a toddler's growing independence while ensuring the child's safety and well-being. A great amount of flexibility and flow is required to facilitate a healthy balance between autonomy and security. The emerging

will of a toddler can sometimes seem very erratic, even eccentric, compulsive, or obsessive in its manifestations. The decisions about when and how to hold a boundary, and when and how to follow the child's will, involve many factors that the parent must take into consideration. *Knowing* one's child, and thus being able to discern what is a true need versus what can and should be tempered or redirected in a healthy way, is key to orienting oneself as a parent in the many choices required as the child's will and insistence awaken. Sometimes we may discern that maintaining a boundary in a loving and firm manner is the most beneficial response to our child's demands. Other times we may sense that stretching ourselves beyond what we might think is the logical, comfortable, or even expected way to respond in order to accommodate our child's wishes and needs is exactly the right thing to do.

An example to illustrate: Our then 22-month old daughter is usually happily in bed between 7 and 8 PM. One evening, for some unknown reason, she was adamant about extending her awake time. I lay next to her in bed, while over the space of an hour she requested that I bring her one item after the other—her baby doll, then the other baby, and the other—two of which were dripping wet from her bath earlier on, so wrapped in a towel, then her soft stuffed cat, and two bottles of shampoo. Finally, bundled up tight with her “friends” and other fine objects all wrapped and layered on top of her, she made the transition to sleep. This was very different from the agenda I had had, namely that after a day of accompanying her I would have the evening to get some work done. I left the room, somewhere between laughing and crying, the tenderness and absurdity of such moments, combined with my own fatigue hitting me at the same time. It felt deeply right to accommodate her as much as possible while maintaining clarity that we were staying in bed and heading toward sleep. I just hadn't counted on that balancing act taking quite so long. . . .

Parenting during the first years of a child's life is not a very predictable endeavor, to say the least. It can help to remember that the emergence of will is a necessary and important stage in the child's development, one that can cause him great frustration at times, but also furnishes him with essential experiences in how to relate to and be in the world. These first years are a time for parents to consider carefully what are important boundaries to hold, and what can be accommodated to allow the child to discover his own needs and desires himself. Both holding boundaries and accommodating the child's wishes fulfill important functions: the former allows

the child to learn adaptation, self-control, and the release of a certain desired outcome; the latter encourages discovery of self through empowerment and will.

With the emerging mental differentiation and increased use of language around the age of two, the child's sense of "I" appears on the scene, and the journey of ego building has commenced.⁶⁰ The emerging self-image that is formed, further differentiated, and increasingly identified with as an act of self-preservation and self-adaptation may one day make way for the underlying essential self to emerge. But for now, this budding ego is the next step for the child to take. As we have briefly discussed here, the first few years of our lives see the journey from an undifferentiated state that is unconscious of its separation from others and God to a more differentiated state that begins to grow in awareness of and seeks to protect itself from the dual nature we are born into. Wilber speaks of this as the journey from pre-ego to ego, or prepersonal to personal.⁶¹ According to Gebser, this period spans archaic consciousness and the early stages of magical consciousness.⁶² Kegan refers to this early development as the transition from the incorporative self to the impulsive self.⁶³

Spiritual Development

How might we nurture the spiritual unfolding of our young children as they stand at the very beginning of the journey toward ever-increasing differentiation and integration?⁶⁴ There is a large and growing amount of insightful material available on what takes place in a child's physical, emotional, and cognitive experience, and what a parent can do to nurture these lines of development. However, besides conventional religious frameworks and their introductory, initiatory rituals (such as baptism in Catholicism), and the New Age treatment of childhood spirituality that tends to insufficiently consider the stages of development each human being passes through (confuses a young child's prepersonal consciousness with transpersonal consciousness), there is very little information out there regarding an integral nurturing of the young child's soul and spirit. In speaking of soul and spirit we step into realms that are much less measurable. Accurate cross-referencing of direct experiences is harder to come by, especially as pertains to the young child. Precisely because of the prevailing imbalance between how far we have come in, for example, studying and understanding the emotional and cognitive lines of development in young children compared to our appreciation and consideration of their spiritual

being and development, I have opted to “tip the scales” somewhat in this discussion of the UL quadrant by beginning an exploration and offering some suggestions in the remainder of this section on how we as parents might nurture the spiritual development of our little ones, as much as their physical, cognitive, linguistic, and emotional unfolding. So, let us proceed, keeping in mind that this is merely an introduction to a topic that deserves a discussion far beyond the scope of this section.

I propose two simultaneous approaches: 1) Nurturing the young child’s soul and spirit by focusing on the *layered development of the self*; and 2) Nurturing the child’s soul and spirit *directly*. The two approaches contain much overlap, but are also distinct in focus and framework. The first sees soul and spirit as later transpersonal stages in a human being’s development; the latter acknowledges this, but focuses on the subtle (soul) and causal (spirit) dimensions that are present from the beginning onwards.⁶⁵ Integral parenting combines the two, working with Spirit as both immanent and transcendent.

“In returning to God and to ourselves, we have to begin with what we actually are. We have to start from our alienated condition. We are prodigals in a distant country, ‘the region of unlikeness,’ and we travel far in that region before we seem to reach our own land (and yet secretly we are in our own land all the time!).” Thomas Merton

1) Nurturing the child’s soul and spirit by focusing on the layered development of the self

As one stage of development follows the other, and the human being evolves from matter to body to mind to soul to spirit,⁶⁶ a young child’s spiritual development is nurtured through *nurturing the foundations* upon which her soul and spirit will grow. This means beginning at the beginning: in the physical and sensorimotor realm. The archaic consciousness in infants is ruled by sensations and impulses, and connected with a growth spurt in evolution’s oldest system, the reptilian brain (which includes our spinal cord and the brain stem)—the UR correlate of consciousness development. This is the sensorimotor brain, and it is responsible for survival, defense, and emergency responses. During this phase in a young child’s development the swift and caring response to her physical and psychological survival needs lies at the center of a parent’s attention. These include food, warmth, hygiene, being held and loved, providing a sense of belonging through bonding, and an increasing amount of rich sensory and motor stimulation.⁶⁷ It is through this care provided by the young child’s parents that the infant learns about who she

is and begins to orient herself in the world. How a newborn child is picked up, how she is held, whether she is fed when hungry or according to a rigid schedule, whether she is left alone to cry or picked up and comforted, whether she is bored or offered opportunities to orient herself and absorb her surroundings. . . all this and more informs and forms the young child. The very direct, physical interaction between parents and their infant holds the opportunity to nurture these little one's spiritual development. If their basic survival needs are consistently and respectfully taken care of, they can then put their attention to their next steps. They are freed to move on, while integrating the sensorimotor and survival systems into the next level of their development with a new expanded role that is compatible with the next emerging system. The archaic level of consciousness thus retains its integrity, but functions in a more intelligent and flexible way through being incorporated into the next stage, that of magical consciousness.

Information from the UR quadrant tells us that beginning around a child's first birthday the great limbic structure (our emotional-cognitive brain which is superimposed on the reptilian brain) experiences a growth spurt, and the focus of development shifts from emphasizing survival to emotional and mental energies. The toddler develops more evolved and sophisticated capacities to relate to his world as an object. He begins to register the past in addition to the present. By about 18 months the young child's emotional-cognitive system will have developed patterns of response that will influence the nature of his relationships for life, the emotional and mental foundations for all learning.⁶⁸ Between 18 months and two years of age the child begins to acquire representational skills in the area of mental imagery, and symbolic play gradually emerges (next to the simple motor play). Around 2 years of age the development of language explodes. With the emerging ego the child also puts a lot of attention toward orienting himself amongst others, especially those close and present: "papa", "mama", and "mine" *together* mean "family". Helping a child develop the ability to relate intelligently is now the task of the parents (while of course still tending to his basic survival needs—the parents' care includes and transcends along with the child's development).⁶⁹ Given an encouraging and stimulating environment the child, as he continues to grow, continuously widens his scope of ability and expression along the multiple lines of development.

Throughout the first year of a child's life the parents act on their child's behalf in establishing appropriate relationships, nurturing, stimulation, structure, and protection. Once the survival and sensorimotor system functions with some independence, the parents then act as models for further stages, accompanying and guiding the child in the gradual journey from the concrete to the abstract. Ideally the parents hold the space for and model what the child is about to learn next.

Spirit in action. Through being fully present and responding to the unfolding moment, we as parents can partake intimately in encouraging our children's journey toward Spirit. As we nurture the physical, emotional, moral, and cognitive aspects of the young child in developmentally appropriate and loving ways, thereby enabling the child to grow and flourish, we engage in a form of *practical spirituality*. This is a twofold path: 1) The young child's spiritual unfolding is nurtured in that we facilitate a healthy foundation upon and from which her soul and spirit can grow. Thus it is a practical way of encouraging a child's spiritual development, based upon an understanding of the nested nature of development, whereby each stage builds upon what has come before through transcending and including prior stages. 2) To nurture our child in such a way, to bring presence to each interaction with our child, also requires of us as parents that we welcome parenthood as a spiritual practice, that we see the sacred in what can at times seem very mundane.

There is a Zen saying, "Before Enlightenment chop wood carry water, after Enlightenment, chop wood carry water."

What's the difference? The tasks are the same. The need is the same. What about the frame of mind? Who is chopping? Who is carrying water?⁷⁰

Being consistently attentive to another being, in this case caring for a young child's well-being, challenges us to let go of our self-centered relationship to life, to go beyond our own agenda,⁷¹ and to bring mindfulness and heartfulness to each gesture and action.

Responding in the most appropriate, present, and loving manner to what lies before us—an infant or young child's real needs—can become a direct way of recognizing, being available to, and acting upon Spirit as immanent. In other words, we can honor Spirit's immanent unfolding practically, through the day-to-day care of a young child by engaging in the myriad parenting

responsibilities from a place of greater awareness and presence. Changing a diaper or cradling a restless infant becomes the meditation for the parent. Engaging with a child in sincere relationship, helping her figure out how to navigate within the world and in relation to others, facilitating stimulating, challenging and joyful learning experiences, providing structure and direction when necessary: there is prayer. Or in other words, *the* sacred thing for parents to do is to tend to their child in ways that nurture a strong, healthy, and integral foundation for his or her human potential to grow upon. To do so we ourselves are challenged to grow so that we can think, feel, and act integrally in relation to the very young.

Thus, as we understand and honor the various stages of development, and see how one layer is nested within and necessary for the next, we may glimpse and support the humble magnificence of the human journey.

2) Nurturing the child's soul and spirit directly

Spirit lies at the end, but also in the midst of the most humble beginnings. Or as T. S. Eliot said:

“We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.”

The central difference between the beginning and the end lies in the “knowing”. The child has a soul and a spirit, as much as a body and a mind. However, the child is not awakened to these aspects of herself, not conscious of them, not yet realized as soul or spirit. For this to happen, she must travel the long road of evolution, gradually shifting her center of gravity through ever-deepening layers of the Self (from body to mind to soul to spirit). But because the subtle and causal dimensions of self are already present from the start (alongside the frontal self or ego that adapts to the gross realm),⁷² we as parents can recognize and strengthen them, not only later as they gradually appear consciously, but also within and alongside the pre-egoic and egoic phases of a child's development.

How so? Primarily *by awakening the deeper layers of our self*. Because doing flows from being.⁷³ Integral parenting ultimately hinges upon the parent being, thinking, feeling, and acting integrally. Nurturing an infant's and young child's soul and spirit is intimately connected with the parent's spirituality. Because of this, rather than using the following section to go into details

on specific parenting techniques or skills that can benefit a young child's spiritual development, I have chosen to focus on what I see as *foundational* to nurturing childhood spirituality, namely: where the parent is coming from in all his or her interactions with the child, who the parent is to the child, which in turn greatly affects what kind of relationship can grow between child and parent. Concluding this section I offer a list of specific suggestions on how we might put this awareness into practice as we strive to nurture and encourage young children's spiritual development.

The subtle (soul) and causal (spirit) dimensions, both in parent and in child do not need to be constructed or built, they are already there. The expression and realization of these deeper layers of self are, however, dependent on the developmental level of the individual. Thus, parenting with the aspiration to nurture the spiritual aspects of our child calls us as parents to stretch and grow toward engaging with our child from our Highest Self. In doing so we can become increasingly present and attentive to the soul and spirit in a child and can attune ourselves to their unfolding. As we evolve in consciousness, our identification with our self-constructed persona⁷⁴ or ego begins to loosen. We become increasingly alert to the reality that at the very core of our being lies another identity:

“To sense the beauty, wholeness, and mystery of our authentic nature
is to see our own true face before we were born,
and to find ourselves on the horizon of infinite Being,
the very lap of God.”
Thomas Merton

Initially we experience this deeper identity in glimpses (as a temporary state). As we continue to evolve, the recognition of and familiarity with these state-stages of self stabilizes. We begin to awaken to our self in the subtle and causal dimensions. Our soul and spirit come to the foreground more frequently. We learn to discern and differentiate between our habitual egoic modes of being and manifesting, and the emerging authentic expression and presence that become possible when we, as we have known ourselves, get out of the way.

In relating with a young child we begin to experience the difference between resting in our soul or being automatically controlled by our ego.⁷⁵ When we rest in our soul, our true self flows forth. It sees and touches the true self in the child. Simply in doing so it nurtures and strengthens the child's soul and spirit. Our false self, on the other hand, the expression of our made-up persona,⁷⁶ is generally oblivious to the child's spiritual being and becoming. Ultimately it is still concentrated on itself, still wrapped up in itself.

But, and this is a grace in the care of a child: wherever we as parents might stand in our own evolution, we can access the soul and spirit realms⁷⁷ as a temporary state, even if we have not yet become grounded in these state-stages of self. And being in the presence of a little one can often open us up way beyond what we are used to. Love pierces through. The love that is both tender and fierce, generous and discerning. When our hearts are open, love pours forth, through the cracks in our egos, spilling out in authentic expression. Our true self recognizes the child's essential self, and this provides the foundation for a relationship that, even as the child develops his ego, allows for genuine soul and spirit connection.

To recognize and relate to a child's true self allows for this deeper identity to be more accessible to the child, not in a conscious way, but experientially. In my experience, children are generally



very responsive to the centered realness that is extended when an adult resides in grounded, loving presence. They thrive on it. It is in that space that we are actually present to the child in front of us, rather than halfway there, and halfway absorbed in our own personal agendas, dilemmas, and preferences. If there is anything a child really loves it is non-distracted relationship. This does not mean that as parents we can do nothing else but be with our kids; but simply that when we do interact from our essential self we open up breathing space for the child's essential self.

Another way in which awakening to our soul affects a child's spiritual development is the *modeling* that occurs. When still fully immersed in ego we will automatically manifest and express Ego—through gesture, tone of voice, choice of words, facial expressions, way of moving

and interacting with the world, our specific set of fears, doubts, blocks we bring along etc. Our child will pick up on all this as *the way to be*. Especially at this young age, we are their orientation, their compass point. If exposed to adults who are growing in awareness of their ego patterns and increasingly able to contain them, instead giving expression to the deeper self, the child will still (and must!) develop her own ego, but one that emerges as a healthy stage along the way, rather than a thick armor that becomes increasingly difficult to penetrate through later on.⁷⁸

In considering the UL quadrant and early childhood spirituality there are a variety of ways in which we as parents can nurture our children at their specific developmental stage (working with Spirit as immanent), and *simultaneously* encourage that delicate sinking into our deeper self as we relate to our children, thereby nurturing their essential self and parenting within a more conscious field (working with Spirit as transcendent). Here some suggestions which touch on various definitions of spirituality:⁷⁹

- Honoring our child's sovereignty, that which is deepest in him. Treating children with dignity and respect, taking them seriously.⁸⁰
- Embracing parenting as a great way to do the work of love in the world.
- Growing in discernment of and alertness to the subtle levels of communication that are present in the parent-child relationship (e.g. moods, emotional qualities, energetic variations, which make up non-verbal and non-gestured communication).
- Bringing uplifting and inspired music into the parent-child space. Music that speaks to the soul, be this Bach, bluegrass, meditative chants, or whatever it may be that our child enjoys and that lifts our soul and brings us to a contemplative, festive or otherwise deeper and more alive place.
- Giving careful consideration to the use of physical strength over the child: when is it truly necessary? When could other means of persuasion be used? When should the parent let go? By distinguishing between punitive force and protective force, we can ensure that in the rare occasions when we do engage physical strength over a child it is used for the protection and health of the child and others, and never as a method of punishment.
- Providing both challenge and support: directing one's child to stretch beyond what comes easily *and* embracing what is already there.

- Being attentive and responsive: the mind engaged but not at the expense of the heart. Listening with all one's senses and beyond. . . Listening and being present to the child, listening and being present to the space between oneself and the child.
- Attentive listening requires that we as parents are also present to ourselves, paying attention to any knee-jerk reactions arising within ourselves that may not support the well-being of the child, as well as tending to an integral care for our own person so that we are able to nourish and accompany another one.
- Taking the time to listen, to witness, and be present, should one's child mention a profound experience of any sort.⁸¹
- Integrating and acknowledging parenting as part of our practice. Bringing creative thought to questions such as: How can I bring meditation and prayer right into the space between and amongst my child and myself? How can I be receptive to the sacred in the midst of daily life, and like an alchemist, with utmost attention and care, become a part of the transformative possibilities inherent in any life situation? Meditation and relationship. . . changing diapers and prayer. . . Respect and cheerfulness amidst chaos and lack of sleep. . . . compassionate, calm firmness in the face of our child needing guidance, direction, or reassurance.
- Creating and facilitating learning experiences where the center of growth and motive lies within the child. One natural form of self-directed learning in a young child is creative play.
- Sitting back and not disturbing or interrupting a child when she is absorbed in creative activity.⁸²
- Following the child during interactive play: watch, wait and wonder.⁸³ Adults often feel like they need to entertain and initiate all the time. In relaxing this habit, we make space for a child's initiative, imagination and creativity to flourish.⁸⁴
- Making use of any opportunity for children to grow in independence, confidence and responsibility, be this dressing themselves, making some simple choices or joining in daily activities. Children want to take part in adult life. From a young age on, a child will often want to help sweep or do the dishes, thrilled by the empowering experience of working side by side with his parent, and the sense of belonging this brings calls forth.
- Being attentive to which boundaries/limits are necessary for the physical safety and healthy psychological orientation of the child; and allowing ample space for children to explore and discover freely. This involves providing a balance between support and challenge to our children.
- Seeking out joyful excellence: a free flow between ennobling and voluntary exploration and the unfolding of human soul. Or as Steiner suggests, attempting as far as possible the "harmonizing of the spirit and the soul with the physical body."⁸⁵

- Making use of information and encouragement instead of blame/punishment or extravagant praise. A child cannot learn and defend herself at the same time. A child wants to learn. We can point out why things went wrong, got spilled or broken without making her feel like she gets disconnected from her parent when she makes a mistake or misunderstands a direction.⁸⁶
- Supporting the unfolding of the child's inherent potential, whatever that may be, rather than a specific projected or desired-for outcome by us as parents. Accompanying the child with the question: "Who are *you* and how can I help you to become that?"
- Regardless of whether we as parents decide to introduce our children to a particular religion or not, we can find ways in which a young child can discover and express feelings that have a spiritual quality to them, e.g. gratitude or care, and this in ways that are meaningful and fun for the child. When our daughter was 22 months old we began holding hands before every meal and simply saying "thank you" for the many things that had brought joy and goodness throughout the day. Adonia joined in enthusiastically and would often initiate or remind us of this simple ritual. A mother takes her 2 and a half year-old to church with her to light candles for those in need of blessings or as a gesture of thanks. Together they name who each candle is for or what each candle is expressing thanks for. Simple rituals and symbolism work well for young children whose consciousness resides in the magical realm.
- For a child's spiritual development it can be very helpful to encourage self-awareness in an age-appropriate manner, for example, by working with her on the discernment of where she is coming from in all her actions—is she, for example, grounded or spinning away from her center?
- Invoking light and love for our young ones through prayer.
- If as parent one is committed to and healthily enfolded in a particular religion or spiritual practice, one can facilitate a young child's entry into such spiritual experience in ways that are *attuned to his/her developmental stage*. This could be as simple as bringing the young child along when frequenting a church, temple, or mosque and allowing the sounds, smells and atmosphere to imbue the child. It is so important to ensure that these experiences are positive and child-friendly. It is quite an oxymoron, for example, to hope that a young child will grow to appreciate and enjoy a form of worship and spiritual practice if s/he is told to be quiet and sit still for long periods of time, something that does not come easily to most young children and goes against their natural expression and needs. Here again, knowing one's child (developmental level, momentary state, temperament etc.) greatly facilitates knowing what the right balance between challenge and support is in any given situation. Where is a child's growing edge? For one it might be 5 minutes of sitting quietly and whispering softly, followed by 10 minutes of quietly walking around the place of worship, and then off to other adventures; for another it might mean bringing along coloring pens and paper while listening to the songs, chants, and words being uttered. We grow spiritually in freedom. Coercion does not encourage

interest in spiritual matters. At the same time, by the age of 3-4 a child can understand the natural consequence that if s/he can't be quiet they need to leave the church or temple.

- As the child begins to take an increasing interest in listening to stories, one can tell stories of inspiring figures that embody qualities of the soul and the spirit.

These are just a few of the many ways in which we can encourage an integral foundation in the very young child. At the core of them all is love. That simple, overarching, underlying, and penetrating force that evades definition yet is felt and known without a doubt when present, reaching into and reminding us of our true identity. As we accompany our little ones, seeking to honor and nurture their inner life, this love will take on many forms—laughter, joyfulness, excited discovery, clear guidance and structure, curious exploration, playful interactions, sincere appreciation, firm compassion, action—weaving its way into a foundation that honors and nurtures body, mind, soul, and spirit of the child as he grows into this world and begins to discover and express himself.

Section Three: The Lower-Left Quadrant

This section introduces the Lower-Left quadrant, and presents some of the insights and conclusions that arise when exploring this interior, cultural dimension of early childhood and parenthood. The LL dimension of a child's first few years of life is examined beginning with the intimate connection between parent and young child, then looking at the interface between young children and culture in general, and also reflecting on how each child brings along the possibility of cultural renewal

The **Lower-Left quadrant (LL)** deals with the interior collective dimensions of the self. It is the inter-subjective realm of consciousness, expressed in “We” language. Here we look at how a child is enfolded in, interacting with and influenced by culture. Shared worldviews, ethics, customs, values, and inter-subjective structures held in common by family, peers, organizations, towns, nation, and globe are explored. Connected to this dimension of reality is what Wilber calls “justness”—involving a cultural fit, mutual understanding, and rightness amongst and between the subjects that make up a collective.⁸⁷

There are many layers to the LL quadrant: the shared space and culture between child and parent, the family system as a dynamic whole, the individual and family embedded in their particular sub-culture, which is enfolded in the predominant culture at large, and connected to the global collective, on and on to the kosmic level. Nested holarchic subjective collectives! Cultural assumptions, expectations, beliefs and understandings, as well as the possibility of discovering and co-creating new inter-subjective experience and redefining culture belong in this quadrant.

“How are WE doing?” is a question more commonly asked in ethnocentric, traditional, and nationalistic societies. As collectives move to a more pluralistic and individualistically oriented consciousness, awareness for the “We” can easily get forgotten. How might this question be integrated anew as we explore integral consciousness? Not in order to enhance and protect identification with a group ego, but rather to become attuned to the LL subtleties of the one and the many. Asking, “How are we doing as a family?” invites us to bring attention and consideration to the well-being and growth of each individual family member, the space between and amongst all, as well as the inner subjective collective experience of the whole.

To get a sense of what this LL quadrant encompasses in relation to the parent-child journey we will sample some of the themes and questions that arise in this dimension, beginning with the intimate connection between parent and young child, then looking at the interface between young children and culture in general, and also reflecting on how each child brings with him the possibility of cultural renewal.

The Intimate Intersubjective Space or “Local Culture”



As soon as there are two, we enter the dimension of the lower quadrants—the collective self; when focusing on what is subjectively experienced, we step into the LL quadrant—the inner dimensions of this collective. The shared space between parent and child is the child’s first experience of relationship and culture.

During the initial years of life it is in and through this dynamic that most children are introduced and exposed to what relationship is and can be. This vulnerable early period in a human being’s life thus holds within it the incredible opportunity and

responsibility for shared inner space and connection to develop in ways that foster a healthy experience of and relating to self and others.⁸⁸

Two days before birth: “Another bright sunny day. You are coming to us in one of the hottest summers of the last century. I love you my friend. It is a simple feeling at the center of my being. In so many ways we still know each other so little. Yet we are coming to the end of a 9-month journey together; we have traveled together and grown together. This journey has brought me to many places—some very challenging, others graceful and easy. . . .”

Five days after birth: “You are lying here with me, have just woken up and look so content. Your eyes are half open, myriad expressions move across your face. You are so beautiful. I look and look and wonder and love. It really is a falling in love, sinking into the most delicious melting and soft encounter. Being pregnant was wonderful, but not comparable to this. Now, in addition to a deep connection is also this distinct experience of you as an “other”, of watching and getting to know you. . . .⁸⁹”

A Sense of Belonging. At birth the inner subjective shared experience between mother and child undergoes a remarkable transition: two sets of eyes are suddenly looking at each other. The bonding between mother and child that in most cases begins long before the infant is actually born, during the months of pregnancy, takes on a new form and expression. This meeting: through eye contact, smell, touch, sound as both mother and child hear each other’s voices, and the force of love that enfolds mother and child initiates the psychological attachment,⁹⁰ which *lies at the heart* of relationship and of social functioning. “Physical attachment in the womb is necessary until our offspring are viable enough to be born. Likewise, our children need to be attached psychologically to us until they are capable of standing on their own two feet, able to think for themselves and to determine their own direction.”⁹¹ The bonding between parent and child forms the ground upon which orientation, a sense of significance and being recognized, trust, empathy and care towards others, as well as the movement from dependence to independence (and the ongoing dance between these two poles) grow.

According to infant and child psychology, bonding and the ensuing attachment and relationship are seen as the first and most significant developmental task of a human being.⁹²

Studies about the growing relationships between parents and infants show that the most powerful component of a secure attachment and a subsequent sense of belonging is early, sensitive care for children. This is characterized by:

- recognition that even the youngest infant can signal her needs and wishes;

- accurate reading and interpretation of infant cues and signals;
- letting the young child's signals, rather than the parents' needs or wishes, set the agenda;
- and consistency or predictability over time.⁹³

Intimacy and Independence. A further related phenomenon in considering the LL dimension of early childhood is the widespread preoccupation with independence in North American culture, often at the expense of connection. Understanding how attachment works, as well as taking the developmental stages of a young child into consideration, can guide us in navigating the child's journey on her way to becoming a separate being. As Neufeld points out, "there is no short cut to true independence. The only way to become independent is through being dependent."⁹⁴ This brings us to the important question of timing. A child that is prematurely pushed into independence tends to cling, and may become anxious or disengage from trusting intimacy.⁹⁵ We consider it normal that a newborn is dependent on its parents for her survival—on all levels. But how soon do we begin to worry whether a child is perhaps too dependent? And why so? Given western culture's emphasis on independence⁹⁶ it seems worthwhile checking in on what may be a cultural assumption, but not necessarily the best for the child's unfolding. The hunger and need for attachment can be compared to the physical hunger for food. If not satiated, the child will continue to seek for more (possibly all the way into adulthood). In our concern about encouraging sufficient independence in a young child, we might be inclined to hold back from providing closeness and availability in certain moments or over stretches of time. Because a child's development often has the pattern of "two steps forward, one step back," it can be quite disorienting for a parent when his/her toddler who has just taken off to new reaches of independence, suddenly curls back in, craving more closeness and support. Here we touch on the underlying paradox: it is dependence and attachment that foster independence and genuine separation. By filling the cup of closeness and security until it is full, satisfied and overflowing, the child is freed to venture forth emotionally. A child, whose parents are not using her dependence to fill their own possible lack of closeness and intimacy, *will* move onwards and forwards.⁹⁷



We grow best when exposed to a balance between known and unknown.⁹⁸ When a child lacks the “known” he continues to seek security and is inhibited from spreading its wings to fly. When a child lacks “unknown” he gets bored, frustrated, and impatient. It is in a flexible flow between known and unknown—in intimate freedom—that an infant moving on to toddlerhood can make his way toward independence at his own individual rate. Given the fundamental importance of the attachment connection between child and parent, this journey toward independence through dependence forms a cornerstone as we regard the LL quadrant in the early years of life.

According to Neufeld, this cornerstone—the context of the parent-child dynamic and shared culture—has far-reaching consequences. His observations lead him to the following conclusion: “Not a lack of love or parenting know-how but the erosion of the attachment context is what renders our parenting impotent.”⁹⁹ When children are properly attached to their parents and others responsible for them, the culture flows into them. Without the attachment context our children end up ignoring our cues and are not teachable, manageable, or maturing.

Tied into this theme of attachment is the LL challenge and dance in the parent-child dynamic of releasing the child from day one onward to become who she is, and not who we think she should be. As Kahlil Gibran expresses in his visionary poetry:

“Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of Life’s longing for itself.
They come through you but not from you,
And though they are with you they do not belong to you.”¹⁰⁰

The dance between security and independence weaves its way throughout the child-parent relationship. To hold up our end as dance partners we as parents need to *listen* into the shared collective space. This enables us to be available and to respond with intimacy when the young person before us is ready for and needing more closeness, as well as with supportive encouragement when freedom, curiosity, and expansion beckon. To dance with another, in this case a growing child, requires attentive observation and responsiveness, both to the dynamic of the moment, as well as to the overarching and developing qualities in the child, his/her type, and related traits and tendencies. The differences from one child to another can be huge in this area, some eagerly ready to stretch out and others taking more time before they venture forth.

Child meets Culture

A further aspect of the LL quadrant in relation to parenting the infant and young child is our *historically embedded background*—culture as it develops over time. As we become more aware of what our unconscious and conscious cultural assumptions, norms and expectations are, we can look afresh at our culture. Which aspects of the culture we live in are actually healthy and life-enhancing ones, which ones aren't? The role of culture—the imprint at this level—is huge and all pervasive. We are subject to cultural conditionings that mark us profoundly and form a center of reference for us. Each newborn child enters a culture. There is no vacuum; even an infant or young child who is, for whatever reasons, sheltered from the prevailing culture will still be subjected to his family culture. Are we, in and through our culture and ideology, allowing space for the shared and the individual self (body, mind, soul, and spirit) to thrive and evolve? Such a question does not remain theoretical in the child-parent relationship. As Paulo Freire says:

“Recognizing that precisely because we are constantly in the process of becoming and, therefore, are capable of observing, comparing, evaluating, choosing, deciding, intervening, breaking with, and making options, we are ethical beings, capable of transgressing our ethical grounding.”¹⁰¹

Our unconditioned responses need to become conscious before we can decide as parents whether they serve or stifle our child's unfolding potential.

A growing number of parents feel that they must protect their kids from the surrounding culture that, as one father bluntly put it, can seem increasingly suicidal. Consumer directed advertising is now reaching and invading early childhood. A few years ago I walked by a McDonald's billboard showing a fetus reaching for a hamburger through its mum's belly! Clothes, even for

very young kids, are becoming increasingly fashionable and sexualized (high heels, frills and impractical accessories). . . . What happened to good old sweaters, jeans and running shoes—made to be used, to run and play in, to be worn and torn? The television has become the main storyteller in the northwestern hemisphere, entering each household and taking up center stage in most living rooms—the content of which is largely geared to producing consumers for a consumer society and includes an increasing amount of invasive violence.¹⁰² It is ironic, tragic really, that what is created and issued forth from us human beings as a collective is now seen by many parents as something they need to protect their children from.

Parent as Mediator between Child and Culture. So what to do? Both “goodness, truth, and beauty” as well as their opposites make up our culture. The Integral approach seeks to glean what is good, true, and beautiful and appropriate according to age, gender, and type from the surrounding culture, while not being unconsciously sucked into or swept along with it. Thus the richness and depth that has been invoked and evoked through culture can continue to delight and nourish our self and our selves. Stories, myths, poetry, rhymes, ideologies, music, narratives, traditions, meaning-making and communication through language. . . all these and more can be discerned as to their value and message. If they are conducive to our child’s well-being and healthy growth, they are welcomed into our homes. If not, the no entry sign goes up. This holds especially true for the first few years of life, when a young child’s absorbency for information is at its absolute peak, but his capacity to judge and discern is at its lowest.¹⁰³ Each family will make their own decisions as to what is acceptable or not.

In our case we try to be as careful and aware about what enters Adonia’s mind, soul, and spirit as we are about what her body assimilates and comes in contact with. This involves, for example, the careful selection of books, toys, and music, taking into consideration content, message, material and aesthetic quality, age-appropriateness, width, depth and breadth, and what might appeal to our daughter’s tastes, interests, and growth. We spontaneously edit books as we read them to her, changing text that holds messages we do not find accurate or stimulating. We pay attention to the texts in music, as much as to the melody, rhythm, and energy. We watch to see what kind of music she likes. Santana, Van Morrison, Mozart, Bach, and her wide array of lullabies and selected kid’s music are among her favorites. We have chosen not to have television hook-up, meaning we do not watch TV but do, as adults, have access to videos/DVDs.

In this way we avoid opening the floodgates onto a whole subset of culture that we find sketchy to say the very least. As most parents notice, children will pick up habits and expressions from other kids within seconds of exposure. You then end up dealing with a “picked up” cultural trail in your home for quite a while. Because of this we try to discern where Adonia can interact joyfully and creatively with other little ones without being exposed to cultural input and modeling from other kids such as comic-like grimaces or aggressive behavior, e.g. pushing and pulling other kids or screaming at them. These are just a few examples. We are learning as we go. . . And encouraged by the understanding that a child is not an empty vessel into which information simply gets poured. Rather, it has been found that infants and young children are actually quite selective and, if enabled, will make choices—we just need to observe them carefully and respond accordingly.¹⁰⁴ We have, for example, noticed that Adonia, in this early phase of her life during which she is less cognitively oriented, has a sensitive antenna for people’s energy. In watching her around people we can get a clear sense whether she is comfortable or not, and heed her signals accordingly.

It is much more possible to shield a child from unwanted influences at an early age, before the world at large becomes their territory to explore and engage with. The parenting task is to a large extent about helping a foundation be laid. Once a child’s foundation is firm and strong, the possible interference or damage that could ensue through destructive elements in our culture is greatly decreased. When exactly any particular child is ready for a gradual introduction to the lesser qualities of our culture will differ according to the individual child. With our daughter we are observing a distinct nine-month rhythm: her first 9 months being in the shelter of the pregnant womb; then an extended womb space period from birth to 9 months, during which she was increasingly interested in discovering and interacting with her immediate surroundings and herself, but also still needing a lot of protection from the world at large. At 9 months we observed a marked shift, a broadening in her awareness and interest in the world. Then at 18 months, this again increased markedly and was supplemented by her use of language, and the referencing and orientation to the greater world that this brought along.

Co-creating Culture. In addition to integrating what works within a particular family matrix and discarding or avoiding what doesn’t, we as parents have the choice of co-creating with our

children new shared experiences. One example of this is storytelling. Next to reading age- and content-appropriate traditional and contemporary stories, myths and tales to our children, we can make up our own stories. This allows original narratives to emerge in the moment, in the immediate shared inner space between parent and child. Teacher and therapist Nancy Mellon describes in her book *Storytelling with Children* how the use of imagination in storytelling helps to: awaken listening; open the senses; focus attention; encourage language development; and lead our children towards a more developed sense of who they are and what they can become.¹⁰⁵ As parents become storytellers themselves, making them up especially for the child listening, the old art of narration is reawakened with conscious intention. Silence, rhythm, conscious use of tone and melody of voice, memory and integration of the past, imagination and vision, healing and transformation, learning in values, ethics and morals, inspiration, and humor are facilitated. “With the same commitment you bring to providing wholesome meals, you can serve stories rich in words, images and spiritual content.”¹⁰⁶ These stories can be attuned to the specific temperament, personality, and circumstance of the child before you. Some children are particularly responsive to and interested in highly imaginative tales, others gravitate to down-to-earth practical stories, and again others to ones that portray emotional truths.

John, father of Julien, began inventing stories for his son following a trip to Abiqui, New Mexico, during which they had visited a 15th century Native American ruins called Poshouinge. He began telling stories about a little boy named Hulien who lived at Poshouinge and had all kinds of adventures and encounters with animals in the Chama River Valley. “They were undoubtedly his favorite stories, and I loved inventing them. Is there any greater joy than watching the look of rapt anticipation on my child’s face as I make up fantastic tales about a boy like him running through red canyons and climbing cottonwood trees?”¹⁰⁷

Cosmologist Brian Swimme suggests telling the story of the universe to our children as an alternative to the materialism presented in the invasive advertising they are subjected to and become shaped by through television, billboards, logos stitched on to their clothing, magazines, back of cereal boxes, radio and video programs. According to Swimme, “advertisements” might sound like a superficial cultural phenomenon, but “an advertisement is a small, powerful, compact sermon for materialism and consumerism,” and “the average 3-year-old in America is taking in 10,000 advertisements a year.”¹⁰⁸ In contrast, the universe story offers meaning and human purpose: “Four billion years ago the planet Earth was molten rock; now it sings opera!”¹⁰⁹

Montessori schools include the universe story in their curriculum, beginning at the elementary level with the five great lessons: the creation of the universe, the beginning of life, the coming of human beings, and the development of language and numbers. As one Montessori trainer explains: “Cosmic Education is a way to show the child how everything in the universe is interrelated and interdependent, no matter whether it is the tiniest molecule or the largest organism ever created. Every single thing has a part to play, a contribution to make to the maintenance of harmony of the whole. In understanding this network of relationships, the child finds that he or she is also part of the whole, and has a part to play, a contribution to make.”¹¹⁰ How might we begin to tell the universe story to the very young? Perhaps simply by taking them outside, allowing them to touch and discover the earth, pointing out the moon and the stars, the sun and the clouds, as well as the snowflakes, tiny bugs and all that lies in between. At around 14 months our daughter began taking a keen delight in showing us the moon whenever it is visible. It has become one further orientation point for her.

Emergence

In discussing the interrelating between individual and culture, let us not forget the crucial and hopeful aspect in the LL quadrant of a child bringing in newness as it grows and begins to contribute to culture. One mother expressed it this way: “In order to make sure that I keep growing I need to listen, to be open and curious to what my children (now grown ups) are discovering and telling me about: I then grow with my children”. Gilbert Childs, a Steiner teacher and author, speaks of the unresolved, open-ended approach to education as one that will allow the next generation’s culture to emerge in a co-creative process. Education forms a platform or foundation, not a finished product. “If class teachers have done their job well, in that they have provided their pupils with concepts that are capable of further growth and development and not those which are fixed, rigid and closed, they will have at the same time left their charges free to develop as they will. . . free to “produce” themselves as individuals, able to exercise their birthright of as untrammelled a freedom as possible and to experience true autonomy.”¹¹¹ So what are the possibilities to discover anew together, to co-create culture in the space between parent and child, thus enabling the LL quadrant to become a dimension in the child’s existence that supports and encourages connection, growth and wisdom? How can we avoid falling into what Kimura calls the conspiracy of mediocrity—a pervasive force in culture? According to him,

mediocrity is “a revolt against the common destiny of the soul to co-evolve, to self-realize through self-transcendence. . . the complaisant acceptance of the status quo—of the world and of the self.”¹¹² What new forms of culture might we explore in order to encourage a human journey that is conducive to the evolution of the soul?

In the parent-child relationship different worldviews meet. The young child’s worldview is greatly colored by his developmental level and will generally reside in the archaic or magic realms. The adult world is likely centered in the rational or post-rational worldview, possibly moving towards an integral perspective. Both adult and child are embedded in the shared cultural Mind. How do these differing perspectives meet? What communication is required to understand each other?



As an example, let us look at this through the way we communicate with children. As adults we share certain linguistic semantics and worldviews.¹¹³ A common language is a central component in forming a shared culture. It is a vessel that holds the meanings, understandings, discoveries, and assumptions of a culture. A big part of raising a child then is to introduce him to our language, and through language to a certain worldview and culture. Integral parenting makes conscious and questions what is prevalent culture; it seeks to find out and choose where evolution must kick in. A healthy common heritage is one part, what is still to come is the other. How then might we integrate the above-discussed discernment between passing on what is conducive to a child’s well-being and growth, and evolving beyond what is not—and this in relation to language? There are two central components to answering this query: to become conscious of our usage of language, and to then become more precise and attentive in our usage of language. In becoming more conscious of the how, when, and what of our language use we

reveal hidden nuances, assumed realities, and underlying messages conveyed in our speech and choice of words.

Do I as parent hold certain pre-assumptions that might get conveyed in my use of certain words and descriptions? If yes, why so? Are these based on experience or passed-down cultural norm, on information, supposition, or preference? Does a pre-assumption do any good? Were my child to hold the same connotations and associations, would this in any way help her in her discovery of life? This questioning and bringing to consciousness what I might be conveying when, for example, opening a picture book with my child as we sit down to read and learn about the world allows me to rediscover the world anew at her side. What do I pass on through unconscious “natural” expression in voice, tone, and face? Can and do I leave her the space to discover for herself? When am I perhaps inaccurately enculturating her with a certain attitude towards something that bears no resemblance with actuality? To bring more precision to my choice of words (symbols of inner and outer objects) and all the associations passed along with them, I must through such reflection first become conscious of what assumed truths are inaccurately embedded in my use of language. This suggested “objective look” at our use of language is of course not meant in the sense of analyzing each and every word. . . we’d be stuttering and stumbling before we know it! Rather to grow in awareness of the loaded ones, those that carry unnecessary fear, prejudgment, shallowness, doubt, pain etc. and to renew, to make present and discover with the child what they actually mean and convey. This involves being attentive to what is present and emerging between oneself and the child: what is the growing edge in that space? What is the discovery there of language, its usage, and meaning? When I say to my child: “Careful, you’ll fall!” am I providing her with useful information or projecting my fear onto her, possibly making a fall more likely as she loses confidence? As we listen to a piece of music, do I fill the initial moment of listening with my preference or distaste, e.g. “This is beautiful!” or “This is boring,” or express displeasure simply through my facial expression, or do I allow space for her to discover and respond herself? Bringing to this exploration insights from fields such as neurolinguistic programming¹¹⁴ and communicology¹¹⁵ can make the acquisition of language and awareness of our usage more integral.

In addition, a more aware usage of language allows for an increase in *integrity*. As I focus on becoming more precise and refreshed in how I communicate and introduce language to my child, I am forced to consider whether I really mean what I say. When I tell my daughter “I can’t do this”, is this true or do I actually mean: “I don’t want to do this.” Do I follow through with what I promise? Does “I will be back right away” actually mean “right away” or might I get sidetracked and end up returning half an hour later? Do I speak to others about my child in front of her, and if yes, how?

Another central way in which we pass on culture to our young children is simply our lives, the *models* we provide through who we are, what we do, how we interact, what we wear and eat and care about, like or dislike, accept or disapprove of. According to Howard Gardner, more is spontaneously and unconsciously absorbed from the parents in the first four years of life than during the rest of a person’s formal education put together!¹¹⁶

As I watch my daughter make her way into this world, I sometimes attempt to imagine myself in her shoes, looking at the world through her eyes. . . every day cultural givens are presented to her, sometimes she is clearly directed to adapt to them. She absorbs these as “the way things are,” even if she resists some of them. I am humbled by the responsibility of introducing her to our culture, family and beyond. Seeing it through her eyes is a precious opportunity to look anew, to grow in consciousness and awareness in regards to what I have largely come to take for granted. It is also an invitation to discover anew, at her side, aspects of this existence I have closed myself to prior to her curious discovery of the world.

A hailstorm sweeps through the valley. Eager to show her a new aspect of life on earth I bring her to the window. Interested she wants to go outside. It is pouring hailstones. I enjoy watching them through the window, from the warmth of the house. She, on the other hand, is raring to go. We step outside, me somewhat gingerly, she with no hesitation, becoming tremendously energized and joyously excited as she hops through the hailstones, picks them up and tastes them. . . mmm, she squeals in delight and sets forth to pick up and eat each and every hailstone falling on the deck. By her side I find myself opening up to another dimension of existence that I would have missed, had my daughter not led me on with a wide grin. Leaving behind

presupposed assumptions of “cold” and “uncomfortable” I am introduced to a new experience through our shared exploration.

Section Four: The Lower-Right Quadrant

This section introduces the Lower-Right quadrant, and presents some of the insights and conclusions that arise when exploring this exterior, systems dimension of early childhood and parenthood. The LR dimension of a child’s first few years of life is discussed by means of the following four topics: early daycare; educational systems; the effect of the environment on the young child; and the importance of rhythm and flow.

The **Lower-Right quadrant (LR)** is the dimension of the collective from an exterior point of view, and is expressed in “Its” language. It is the inter-objective realm. What can we perceive about the collective self from the outside, objectively? What exterior structures make up the collective self? To be considered along this dimension are our social institutions, such as physical buildings and infrastructures, the techno-economic base (from foraging to informational), the quantitative aspects (statistics and data; birth and death rates; monetary exchanges, availability and distribution), the sociopolitical levels, the various ways of communication (from different languages and written words to telephones and the internet), organizing structures, decision-making systems, conflict resolution procedures, reward/penalty systems, accountability systems, and the ecosystems, bioregions and geopolitical locations the collective self is embedded in and surrounded by. Society is also looked at over time (historically) and space (geographically). This dimension looks at the functional fit of social systems (e.g. systems theory, the ecological web of life, and environmental networks).¹¹⁷ Again, as in all the other quadrants, the content of this quadrant goes from micro to macro levels of existence, from the smallest to the largest structures in place. Systems within systems within systems. . . ad infinitum.

What questions arise as we look at our society in relation to raising young children? Does 21st century society generally support and nurture the parenting journey, or does it challenge or ignore it? The needs of little ones as they enter the world have not changed much over the centuries. The landscape they step into, however, has changed dramatically—culturally,

physically, and socially. What are some of the recent changes in society and what is their impact on families? How are families doing in bridging the widening gap between an increasingly fast-paced and technology-oriented society and the much slower pace and organic needs during the initial period of a human being's life?

As with each quadrant the topic is huge, and a thorough investigation would greatly exceed the scope of this brief exploration. But let us at least dabble with some of the themes and questions that arise in looking at the LR quadrant with family life in mind by means of the following four topics: early daycare; educational systems; the effect of the environment on the young child; and the importance of rhythm and flow.

Then and Now



How have living conditions changed over the last century? And what might some of the newly emerging benefits and challenges of these changes in relation to the parent-child adventure be? Many more people now live in large urban centers and their surrounding suburbs. Growing up in a small town or on a farm in a rural area, which used to be commonplace, has become more seldom. Many

small family-owned businesses have been replaced by large corporations, spread out and reflected in strip malls and fast food restaurants. The large industries of the past, such as iron and steel, and resource extraction have yielded to high tech and service oriented ones. Getting information and news from one place to another, which once took days or hours, now happens in a matter of seconds. The various generations in any one family that used to live just down the street from one another are now often separated by long distances, even continents and oceans. The nuclear family thus stands alone and must find its extended “family” amongst new friends. In addition to the nuclear family we now also have an increasingly wide array of family structures—with single parent families and newly merged families bringing kids from two (or more) different marriages together. Monoculturism has given way to a rich cultural diversity, especially in metropolitan areas. The gap between rich and poor continues to grow. Our

ecosystems have been exposed to our consumptive ways of life for that much longer. The job market has changed, as well as the requirements and definitions of a successful career. We have a lot more stuff and a lot less time. And on and on. . . many changes, and with these come opportunities as well as losses.

Without going into all the possible consequences, let us take a closer look at present-day North American and Western European society,¹¹⁸ and its impact on the very young.

Newborns and young children have better access to greater hygiene and medical care, and are much less likely to contract diseases such as dysentery, typhoid fever, or cholera. In addition, access to wide variety of fresh food year round has become commonplace, and they are more likely to be fed organic and wholesome food as it is again becoming available, allowing for a healthier diet. Their physical safety, while always a primary concern, is now also embraced by society at large, for example, through laws regarding infant and children's car seats, or wearing helmets when on bikes, as well as through the availability of all kinds of safety gadgets (although nothing can replace the watchful eye and presence of a parent). However, the children of today also spend a lot more time in cars with all the attendant risks. Depending on where they live they experience greater exposure to polluted air, noise, harmful sunrays, and chlorinated water.

A further change that has come about through the application of systemic thinking is the increase in general awareness for the LR dimensions of young children's circumstances—how they are enfolded and dynamically interwoven with their family structure. An example of this is systemic family therapy, a relatively recent addition to the field of Psychotherapy.¹¹⁹ Systemic family therapy reveals the intricate and finely tuned roles each family member takes on and plays, as well as the dynamics of family structure, time management, power and authority, conflict resolution and decision-making procedures.

Given the many changes in the LR dimension, both positive and negative, it is interesting to note that the needs of a young child are not really different than they were 100 or 500 years ago: we all still begin at the beginning. So, even if a 10-year old can make good use of a computer, thus drawing on the more recent technology available in educational ways, it is likely that any two-



year old would still prefer picking huckleberries, chasing a cat, or watching a pig scuffle in the dirt than tap around on a keyboard. Young children can get involved in and learn about the tasks that are predominant in foraging, horticultural, and agrarian societies from a very early age

onward. Those tasks are age appropriate and align with the child's gradual development from the concrete to the abstract—the early years being located primarily in the concrete. If we think of the activities a mother would be engaged in, for example, in an agrarian society, such as baking bread, harvesting, sweeping the yard, or weeding the garden, these activities are easy for a young child to join in (starting as early as one year old). The learning implied in attempting such work is suitable for the development of fine motor skills, sensory development, and cognitive interest and growth in relation to concrete events. If we compare this to mama sitting at a computer, we may well ask: how can the young child participate in a meaningful way? In the child's effort to be involved, rather than furthering the work being done, she might press the delete button by accident or smear jam between the keys or poke her fingers into the screen?!

On the other hand, the information age we live in also brings with it a number of extremely valuable assets to the parenting journey. We have access to all kinds of information through the world wide web—from a wide variety of online educational material to what to do in case of teething pains or what the latest studies on the a wide array of health issues conclude. In addition, the networking and the possibility of home-based jobs provided through the Internet are extensive. Isolation, one of the more common challenges of having young children in our present-day society, can be surmounted through such virtual connection, and complemented with the more local outreach and access to family centers and other parents.

Integrating Change. An integral approach encourages making use of the best of the many LR quadrant layers and levels, thus including the healthy aspects of the evolving technoeconomic bases in correlation with a child’s development. Drawing on the discussion above, an example of this would include making ample use of the multitude of creative and supportive LR structures currently in place, while simultaneously providing young children with the possibility to connect with an age-old LR “structure”: the earth itself. . . bringing kids to farms, growing vegetables (even just a small patch of lettuce in a window box), letting them eat some dirt and walk in puddles, feel the rain and the snow, touch the grass and taste the rocks.



Finding this balance between old and new—including and transcending—is both a challenge and an opportunity as we raise kids in the 21st century. We will continue exploring what this means in relation to the early childhood years, looking at the relatively recent need for early childcare outside of the family structure.

Early Daycare

One of the biggest shifts in present-day society is that in many families both parents work, leading to a huge demand for early daycare and preschool facilities. What does this mean for very young children? On the one hand they experience a lot of cognitive stimulation and activity, as well as possible social learning and variety. They also get to connect and build friendships with the daycare workers—child-loving, caring individuals who are generally trained in early childhood education. On the other hand, it also puts them in situations they might not yet be ready to assimilate. This is a delicate topic, as the intrinsic needs of little ones and the realities of many parents who have no choice but to go back to work while their children are still very young do not always point in the same direction. For a growing number of parents, especially

single parents, early daycare has become unavoidable. While discussing this subject, let us keep the greater context of society at large in mind, for changes at that level would have great potential to transform the present dilemma between the differing needs of the very young and the realities facing parents due to financial and social constraints. Let us also hold awareness for what alternatives might present themselves.

There is increasing evidence that daycare for the very young, while useful and at times simply unavoidable for families, is not always beneficial for the children themselves. Both Pearce and Neufeld caution against the emphasis placed on children needing to spend a lot of time with their peers¹²⁰. Pearce argues that a young child cannot meet another young child's intent with sufficient content, and that the majority of the preschool years are better spent with a playful adult(s) and only some supervised time with peers. Similarly Neufeld makes the case that peers should not be raising peers; he describes the consequences of this trend (what he has dubbed "peer orientation") in great detail all the way to adolescence. The transmission of culture becomes horizontal (taking place within the younger generation) instead of vertical, and something systemic significantly shifts: peers replace children's parent and other adults in creating their core personalities.¹²¹ While current psychological literature emphasizes the role of peers in creating a child's sense of identity, Neufeld suggests that what is *missing* in peer relationships has a profound impact, namely "unconditional love and acceptance, the desire to nurture, the ability to extend oneself for the sake of the other, the willingness to sacrifice for the growth and development of the other."¹²² My experience with our young daughter shows clear support of this. While she has an undeniable and wonderful-to-behold attraction to other little ones, she and they are not developmentally mature enough to satisfy each other's immediate and still very self-centered needs when those needs really kick in. Without attentive supervision, the sweetest and most pleasant interaction between two toddlers can transform in a matter of seconds into an intense and desperate tug-of-war to hold a certain ball, doll, or other coveted object. Values and capabilities such as sharing and caring, differentiating oneself from others, and self-reflection take time to mature.

At the same time sending one's child to a daycare or preschool is often the best or only solution given the variety of factors impacting present-day families. Are there ways to integrate and

balance the need for child care outside of the home with careful attention given to the needs of the young child? To facilitate integral parenting requires changes in, and support from, the societal level of existence. Many daycare and preschool workers are underpaid and the institutions are often understaffed. Certain countries have made more headway in this area than others: Sweden, for example, is renowned worldwide for its social welfare benefits, comprehensive family policy, design aesthetic, and child care system. According to Dr. Peter Cook, author of *Early Childcare: Infants and Nations at Risk*,¹²³ however, “Most Swedes believe home care is better than the best child care. Sweden, reported to have the world’s highest quality child care. . . has now largely phased it out for infants in the first year. . . .” and “. . . more than 80% of Swedes regard it as ideal to care for children at home until they reach the age of three. Professional opinion supports this view.” Amongst the reasons for discouraging daycare for the first few years of life (up to 3 years old) are: cross-infection, under-staffing, possible negative impact on their socioemotional development and their behavior, the importance of attachment, and the effects on young children undergoing separation. Robertson¹²⁴ observed that unless young children were receiving responsive substitute mothering, they typically went through three successive stages, which he termed protest, despair, and finally detachment. While there is still much controversy on the subject and the long-term effects of early daycare, one thing stands out quite clearly: the quality of child care and the quality of the mother-child relationship play a much greater role than how much actual time is spent apart or together.¹²⁵

Child psychiatrist Dr. Peter Cook adds another question to the debate: "How—in our detribalized societies—can we best help and support those parents who wish to do a mutually satisfying job of mothering and fathering their infants and young children without jeopardizing their own futures?" He suggests that if some of the resources directed towards providing daycare were creatively redirected to supporting high quality parenting, e.g. through longer parental leave¹²⁶, social and financial support, and education, the real goal of enhancing the well-being of mothers, young children, and society would be more likely achieved. He also points out that the economies of scale which have been part of the economic justification for day care disappear as staff/child ratios are improved towards recommended levels; daycare then ceases to be cost-effective, because the “caregiver/child ratio is the key determinant of cost.”¹²⁷ Another option is cooperative child care, which means that parents take turns looking after each other’s children. Advantages to this system is that it is free and the participating parents can collectively discuss,

agree upon and uphold a certain standard and consciousness in their child care. They can also choose what adult/child ratio works best, as this system can involve just two families, or more.

As our technoeconomic base in the northern hemispheres has moved from the industrial to the information age, another aspect to consider with regard to early child care is the growing role fathers are taking on in the task of parenting. This change in societal norm holds incredible potential and importance for integral parenting. To parent integrally takes an extraordinary amount of presence, time, attention, and rhythm, as well as flexibility in time management. This



is not at all a given in many lives nowadays. With engaged and caring fathers more involved in the process, integral parenting becomes that much more possible. Remember the saying “it takes a village to raise a child”? In our western society we are often trying to create a “patchwork village”, made up of whoever and whatever seems conducive to our child’s well-being and

development. Having a loving and present father share in this fabric and network of support and nurturance is an undeniable asset.

One compelling practical plan on how to combine the needs of children with 21st-century reality is a proposal by Mendizza, founder of The Nurturing Project: to nurture the caregivers—the parents and those working at daycares so that they can better nurture the children.¹²⁸ This project seeks to facilitate support and parent education by creating an *effective distribution system that connects* “our nation’s early childhood network and elementary schools (moms, dads, teachers, and caregivers) with the best science, the best education, mentors, inspired information, and local resources.” To do this it provides locally based, continuing early childhood education and community support for children ages zero to five, their parents and caregivers.

The topic of early child care is just one example of the intricate and complex nature of attempting to bring into practice what is discussed and explored when considering any one quadrant in relation to all the others. Conclusive answers are often hard to come by, but at the same time the search to find out, to know more, to weigh the many pros and cons of many

approaches promises to reveal more mature and wholesome answers; most of all ones that in this case will benefit the child (which by default must include its extended environment).

Educational Systems

It is clear in looking at the four quadrants that in order to fully support integral parenting, the educational system itself must become more integral. This is indeed a complex and multi-layered endeavor, reaching all the way from educational policy to teacher/childcare training to underlying assumptions and beliefs about education to curriculum development and improvement. As we see, attempting to change any one facet of the whole is much more effective when the transformation is supported by as many surrounding and underlying facets as possible. Change can be instigated both from within (left-hand quadrants) and without (right-hand quadrants), as well as from an individual (upper quadrants), or from groups (lower quadrants). For any movement forward to become grounded and be sustained at a large-scale, however, requires that all quadrants “pick up the ball,” that the change is welcomed and integrated across all four quadrants.

An example of how the LR quadrant is taken into consideration in an existing alternative school system is found in Waldorf schools.¹²⁹ Rudolf Steiner, founder of Waldorf schools, placed great emphasis on the exterior surrounding having a profound effect on the interior. He maintained that the physical architecture of form and color should nurture the soul as much as house the bodies of the students. Entering a Waldorf preschool can indeed be likened to entering an extended womb space: harmonious soft colors, cushioned corners to nestle into, colorful silks and wooden toys and tools for learning line the shelves. . . a feast for the eyes and senses, for the imaginal and creative aspects of who is still newly stepping into the world.

Maria Montessori¹³⁰ also took great care to include the LR quadrant in her approach to schooling the very young, albeit with a slightly different emphasis. Her understanding that a child absorbs learning from the physical environment in which he lives led her to create the “prepared environment”. A Montessori classroom is thus carefully and functionally arranged for the child, allowing him to move, work and develop freely, and to choose which activities to engage in. She too placed importance on the beauty of a child’s environment, both for the development of a

child's aesthetic sense as well as functionality and ease of access: Montessori materials are well made and maintained, neatly placed and all within reach of the child.

Effect of the Environment on the Young Child

Babyproofing one's home is another example of how parents can make use of the LR to encourage their child's healthy development. By doing this early, and updating the "proofing" to keep up with a child's expanding range and ability, we can help our young ones find new and interesting objects to play with, facilitate the freedom for them to move around and explore without them hurting themselves or hearing "no" at every turn. When visiting friends' homes it is advisable to do a quick "baby- or toddlerproof" upon entering in order to prevent possible mishaps, as well as anxious looks on the face of the hosts. It is also much more relaxing for the parent to be in a space that is safe for the child as well as for adults' "precious" items!

Spanning the smaller to the larger LR structures, childproofing a young child's environment includes the question of how childproof our environment at large has become. The level of toxicity—present in all kinds of influences (air and water pollution, clothing, food, and other materials etc.)—has increased greatly over the last century. In addition, young children are often more vulnerable to these impacts, for example, with car fumes on city streets right at their level, both as they walk on sidewalks or sit in strollers, or the increased intensity of sunrays due to ozone depletion being more harmful to their sensitive skin.

Again, here we see the interconnectedness of everything. We can protect our children from the harmful effects of pollution and environmental degradation to a certain degree, but to really childproof at this much larger LR level requires change in how we as a human family interact with the earth and surrounding atmosphere. Childproofing at the larger and more long-term scale is more challenging, but vitally important to work towards.

Vice Versa. And then there is the inverse effect of what each additional person on this planet contributes to the environment, especially in the northern hemisphere where our consumptive lifestyles impact the earth to a much greater degree.¹³¹ We each have an Ecological Footprint—this is the amount of bioproductivity each of us uses in a given year.¹³² Thus, to become more conscious of and work towards lessening our impact on the earth and its resources, we as parents must take into consideration how all the things we buy for our little ones—from diapers to

clothes to toys—are all supplied and then eventually absorbed as waste by land, sea, and atmosphere. Many of these items are necessary, many are not. Whilst the societal pressure to buy things for them is great, their material needs are actually quite simple. To differentiate and to balance this aspect of the LR quadrant with the many other aspects in all four quadrants is part of the task of integral parenting.

Rhythmic Flow

As we aspire to transcend and include the evolving technoeconomic bases in ways that align with a young child's development, the topic of rhythm and routine amidst the generally more hectic pace of everyday postmodern life requires consideration. Young children need and thrive on regular rhythms throughout the day. A sense of natural order facilitates their growing orientation in the world. They cannot provide this for themselves; rather they need to be guided into such rhythms. During the first year this is most obvious around sleep/awake patterns. Establishing daily rhythms does not mean rigidly following the clock according to a pre-decided schedule. It is more a matter of being creative and attentive to what rhythms would work for child, parent, and family as a whole, and then consciously encouraging and implementing those rhythms. Simple rituals thus emerge quite naturally, be it just in the order of what happens first, second and third, for example, before going to bed. These rituals, instead of becoming fixed, can stay open to the changing needs of the child, giving way to others when they have done their time. In this way the family as a whole can become enfolded in a sense of breathing in and breathing out, similar to the tides: times of rest and times of activity, times of solitude and times together, times of focus and times of creative chaos.

Benefits of integrating and honoring such rhythms include: a sense of security and predictability for the child; which builds confidence and an understanding for structure and boundaries; which helps balance energies; familiarity with one's surrounding and the day's flow; sufficient rest and activity; a strengthening of self-regulation, and balancing between will and adaptation; a growing into the nature matrix with seasonal awareness, and appreciation of nature's cycles; as well as the ability to let go and move on, which is connected to a developing integration of the realities of birth and death.

In our increasingly busy lives, holding awareness for the importance of rhythm and routine in a child's unfolding can also provide a comforting and helpful basis for parents to thrive within. In

our case we have found that once we tap into a certain rhythm that works for Adonia, as well as for us as her parents, so much else is naturally taken care of—the routine itself holds and takes care of a lot of negotiating. She knows that after supper she has a short time for play, then we will brush our teeth, all grinning in the mirror together, followed by getting ready for bed and a certain “tuck in ritual”. We don’t have to figure this out anew every evening. What it requires from us as parents is consistency and reliability, with the right dose of flexibility to allow for those exceptional times when glorious life calls for something completely different!

Interwoven with this intrinsic longing in young children for rhythm is Montessori’s observation of a sensitive period during the first 4 years of a child’s life for order and an attentiveness to things being put in their proper places and done in their proper ways, as well as an awareness of the order sequence in time and space.¹³³

“The child makes himself out of the elements of his environment, and thus this self-making is not accomplished by some vague formula, but following a precise and definite guidance....For the tiny child order is like the plane on which terrestrial beings rest if they are to go forward.” – Maria Montessori¹³⁴

In reflecting on the two lower quadrants (LL and LR) and what they offer to the parenting journey I am repeatedly faced with this: *to parent integrally requires in its ideal version an integral surrounding community*. Raising a child is to bring them into a culture and society, and into themselves—body, mind, soul, and spirit. In a surrounding that falls short of being wholesome and comprehensive, the parent must provide the framework and also shield them from what is a lot less than ideal. For obvious reasons this is very demanding if not entirely impossible. With the Integral “village” missing, we are looking at making the best of an imperfect situation—or at least one that has a lot of space for further evolution and integration. Thus looking at parenting through an integral lens calls for a simultaneous juggling between reaching for the best, while taking into consideration all the contributing factors that challenge and compromise the task at hand.

Conclusion

In considering all four quadrants we have differentiated as well as looked at the integration of myriad insights on the subject of parenting an infant and young child, thereby increasing the spaciousness, the breadth of our attention, or in other words, we have opened up the horizontal axis by increasing the span of what parenting encompasses. However, the four perspectives are but one aspect of the Integral framework (AQAL = All Quadrants, All Levels, All Lines, All States, All Types).¹³⁵ As we combine our inclusion of the four quadrants with other aspects of the integral map—levels and lines—we also engage the vertical axis,¹³⁶ the evolutionary notion that within each perspective there are increasing levels of complexity and depth to be discovered and lived. In seeking out the greatest span and depth in our parenting efforts we thus do both: we broaden our consciousness to include, to be informed by, and to stretch into all four perspectives. We also exclude certain information and insight from former levels and seek out the growing edge within each perspective. In other words, certain understandings about early childhood and how we can best accompany infants and young children remain true even as we evolve. Others do not; they are transcended. This is the task of separating the “wheat from the chaff.”

As parents we often set out on the integral path by paying attention to how spacious our consciousness is in relation to the four fundamental perspectives on reality or the four quadrants, in this way increasing our horizontal awareness. We begin to expand our awareness to include all four dimensions when facing questions, analyzing situations that arise, or seeking out solutions. This soon leads us to consider more factors involved in any situation as well as additional directions for growth. Take, for example, the situation most mothers will face: the question as to whether she will breastfeed her infant, and if yes, for how long. Scanning all four quadrants in both the child holon and the mother holon brings up a multitude of factors to be weighed. To name just a few: emotional nurturing (UL), the child’s inclination toward eating solid foods (upper quadrants), effects on neurological development (UR), physical nutrition (UR), teething pains (UR)—for which breast feeding can provide emotional comfort (UL), food allergies (UR), effects on development of immune system (UR), bonding (LL), spiritual support and connection (left-hand quadrants), the entrainment of heart frequencies between mother and infant during breast feeding (right-hand quadrants), the mother’s physical health (UR), the mother’s availability (UR) and relationship with breast feeding (UL), LR structures and realities, and

cultural norms and expectations (LL). As we can see, in considering each of the quadrants we must weigh many different angles. Certain factors may be ideals that we hold; others may be givens that compromise our ideals, but are present nonetheless and must be considered, and other factors from a particular quadrant may stand in conflict with insights arising from another. In this example, taking all four quadrants into consideration does not necessarily give us a right answer, but it does widen and deepen our inquiry and awareness, and the subsequent actions we take, thereby helping us discover and practice more comprehensive and evolved forms of parenting.

Thus, as aspiring integral parents we simultaneously hold a bottom-up and a top-down approach. We seek to accurately assess where we are and ask: “What is the most integral next step?” We also view our parenting task within the greatest possible context that we can “see” from our developmental vantage point and are informed by state experiences we may have had in our life and with our child.

Ultimately I believe that the journey toward becoming integral human beings ourselves facilitates a *quality of being and presence* in our relationship to the parenting experience and to our children that has a profound impact on how our children are accompanied. As we continuously expand our awareness and lift the ceiling of the human potential to embrace the notion of ongoing evolution, we can help provide an integral foundation in our children upon which they may grow, flourish, and draw upon as they make their way toward navigating the 21st century landscape they are a part of.

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Notes for Introduction

¹ In Piaget's stages of cognitive development: the sensorimotor period to the preoperational phase of the preoperational period.

² Wilber, 2001, pp. 8-16; Wilber, 2000b, pp. 61-64

Notes for Section One

³ Wilber: "Each subtle energy holon is the exterior or the Right-Hand component of the corresponding interior or Left-Hand consciousness" (2001, p. 389)

⁴ When referring to children in singular, I have alternated gender throughout this paper, instead of using he/she, him/her, and so forth.

⁵ Kotulak, 1997

⁶ The debate that has long engaged philosophers—whether nature or nurture dominates development—no longer perplexes scientists. "It's not a competition," says Dr. Stanley Greenspan, a psychiatrist at George Washington University. "It's a dance." (Nash, Madeline. "Fertile Minds." *Time*, February 3, 1997, p.52)

⁷ Eliot, 2000

⁸ Diamond, 1999

⁹ Eliot, 2000, p. 9

¹⁰ Recent evidence suggests that new neurons are produced throughout life, though far less rapidly, and probably in numbers sufficient only to replace those that gradually die off. (From the BrainWonders Web site, a collaborative project of the Boston University School of Medicine; Erikson Institute, A Graduate School in Child Development; and ZERO to THREE: National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families: <http://www.zerotothree.org/brainwonders/index.html>)

¹¹ Dendrites serve as the receiving point for synaptic input from other neurons. Synapses are the connecting points between the axon of one neuron and the dendrite of another.

¹² 2000

¹³ Pearce, 2002

¹⁴ A newborn's brain works considerably slower than an adult's, transmitting information some sixteen times less efficiently. The speed of neural processing increases dramatically during infancy and childhood, and reaches its maximum at about age fifteen.

¹⁵ Besides breast milk, healthy fats are also found in foods such as avocados, flax seeds, sea vegetables, leafy green vegetables and expeller cold-pressed oils from olives, almonds, pecans, sunflowers seeds, sesame and macadamias.

¹⁶ Eliot, 2000, p. 361

¹⁷ Doman uses the term “brain-injured child” to refer to those children whose brains were healthy at conception, but incurred physical injury, either before, during or after birth, resulting in millions of dead cells in the brain.

¹⁸ The term “average” or “well” children is used to refer to children whose brains are not physically injured and, given the right environmental conditions, develop normally.

¹⁹ Doman, 1994, xxii

²⁰ Doman, 1994, p. 19

²¹ Scientists used to think that reading with children creates a context in which learning can occur. Today, however, they have evidence that reading is one of the experiences that actually influences the way young brains develop—that is, the way the brain's circuitry is “wired.” (Shore, 1977)

²² It also seems to vary depending on what skill or ability is being discussed. One area where most seem to agree that early stimulation makes a real difference is the learning of languages. Because language is fundamental to most of the rest of cognitive development, the simple action of talking and listening to one's child is one of the best and also most natural ways to make the most of its critical brain-building years.

²³ Term to describe pressuring babies and young children into performing beyond their natural pace, e.g. through all-day academic preschool programs, and programs and materials designed to teach young children how to read, compute, ski etc. Dr. Gail Gross speaks of this as the “Hurried Child Syndrome” (www.naturalfamilyonline.com/5-ap/46-hurried-child.htm).

²⁴ Eliot, 2000, p. 38

²⁵ Elkind, 2001

²⁶ Steiner schools, or Waldorf schools—as they are commonly called—are based on the educational theories of Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925). Waldorf teachers strive to transform education into an art that educates the whole child—the heart and the hands, as well as the head. Currently there are around 850 Waldorf schools in over 40 countries worldwide.

²⁷ 1994, 1999, 2000

²⁸ David A. Sousa, “Is the Fuss About Brain Research Justified?” *Education Week*, 16 December 1998, p. 35.

²⁹ Maria Montessori (1870-1952), founder of Montessori Education, an alternative teaching system based on her observations of how children learn and with a strong emphasis on the practical.

³⁰ Lillard, 2005, p. 123

³¹ Pearce, 1993; Salter, 1987

³² Eliot, 2000

³³ Paper published in *Newsweek* 1977, from *Who's bringing them up?* Martin Large, Hawthorn Press 1981

³⁴ Emery, F. & M., 1975; Levine & Waite, 2000

³⁵ Christakis, Zimmerman, DiGiuseppe, & McCarty, 2004

³⁶ <http://www.oriononline.org/pages/om/05-4om/Louv.html>

³⁷ Mendizza, 2003, p. 145

³⁸ What are the consequences of failing to develop imagery, in other words having no imagination? Not trained in “seeing” inner images could have far-reaching implications. Pearce and Mendizza suggest a few: feeling more victimized by the environment due to not being able to imagine inner alternatives to replace outer ones; not “seeing”/understanding what symbols and semantic words mean; not understanding the subtleties of abstractions; ending of expansive cycles into the unknown/still-to-be-discovered, as new forms and possibilities can simply not be imagined; less hope and vision. (Pearce, 1993, p. 168, Mendizza, 2003, p. 143)

³⁹ Pearce, 1993, p. 154

⁴⁰ Eisenberg, A., Murkoff, H., & Hathaway, S., 1996, p. 159

⁴¹ This obviously includes other sources of potential excessive background noise such as traffic, electronic toys and radio.

⁴² Eliot, 2000

⁴³ Or as Doman (1991, p. 62) remarks: “The older we are, the more wisdom we acquire, but the younger we are, the easier it is to take in raw facts and the easier they are to store.”

⁴⁴ See http://www.heartmath.org/research/science-of-the-heart/soh_20.php

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶ From <http://heartmath.org/research/research-overview.html>: “...research has shown that our heart's field changes distinctly as we experience different emotions, is registered by the brains of people around us, and also appears to be capable of affecting cells, water, and DNA studied in vitro. The implications of these findings are that people may be capable of affecting their environment in ways not previously understood, and that such “energetic” interactions may be prominently influenced by our emotions.”

⁴⁷ What does “transcend and include” mean in regards to the topic of vaccines? This question requires taking into consideration many angles, such as the individual child’s constitution, geographical location and possible exposure factors, study of the potential pros and cons of vaccination, values and beliefs of parents etc. It is quite difficult to find unbiased, balanced information about this topic. According to the Vaccine Risk Awareness Network (a non-profit organization that provides information on the potential risks and side-effects of vaccines: www.vran.org), useful vaccine risk links can be found at: <http://vran.org/links/general-links/> Dr. Sears provides helpful information on vaccinating at: <http://www.askdrsears.com/topics/vaccines> And here is a link to a book that claims to provide balanced information: <http://www.amazon.com/Vaccinations-Thoughtful-Sensible-Decisions-Alternatives/dp/0892819316>

⁴⁸ La Leche League International, 1997, p. 6

⁴⁹ Pearce, 1993, p. 235; La Leche League International, 1997; p.335-360; Sears, M. & Sears, W., 2000; Eliot, 2000, pp. 183-192

⁵⁰ An excellent resource on how to complement the various approaches is the book *Smart Medicine for a Healthier Child* (Zand, Walton, Rountree, 1994). It includes both conventional and natural treatments for infants and children in a refreshingly unbiased manner.

⁵¹ Garcia, 2002

⁵² Acredolo, L. & Goodwyn, S., 2002

⁵³ The American Academy of Pediatrics currently recommends, “breastfeeding continue for at least 12 months, and thereafter for as long as mutually desired.” The World Health Organization and UNICEF recommend that babies be

breastfed for at least two years (from <http://www.lalecheleague.org/FAQ/advantagetoddler.html>). For more information on the benefits of extended breastfeeding see: <http://www.lalecheleague.org/NB/NBextended.html> The mission of La Leche League International is “to help mothers worldwide to breastfeed through mother-to-mother support, education, information, and encouragement and to promote a better understanding of breastfeeding as an important element in the healthy development of the baby and mother.” (www.lalecheleague.org)

Notes for Section Two

⁵⁴ Wilber, 1996, p. 12

⁵⁵ Kabat-Zinn & Kabat-Zinn, 1997

⁵⁶ Once involution has occurred, whereby Spirit is embodied in an individual bodymind at conception and during the prenatal period (Wilber, 2001, pp. 341-342n. 1), the long journey of human evolution can proceed: from *unconscious separation* to *conscious separation*, and eventually, transcending the separate sense of self, to *conscious unity* (Wilber, 2001, pp. 49-50).

⁵⁷ How a fetus might experience this seeming separation is another very fascinating subject. Jenny Wade (1996) synthesizes research and theory on pre- and perinatal consciousness, providing a compelling case for the presence of a transcendent source of consciousness as distinct from the brain-based consciousness that is developing in utero (fetal consciousness).

⁵⁸ I say “largely” because what the child is experiencing and picking up emotionally, cognitively, and spiritually is of course also weaving its way into the fabric of who he is and will understand himself to be. Development when written up like this can sound far too linear and ordered. In reality, what will soon emerge is incubating and developing beneath the surface. As the foundation for the next level of differentiation and subsequent integration gets laid, that next level is being colored by the whole life experience, by the subtle energetic field as much as by concrete ways in which the child gets picked up and handled.

⁵⁹ I found it very helpful to introduce my daughter to the use of “Yes” before this phase. I had observed that it was easier for her to shake her head than to nod, and that she would therefore at times shake her head while actually meaning “yes”. We practiced, in that I modeled a cheerful “yes,” nodding my head while saying the word. She got it and by the time she was one she was thus able to make use of both body gestures: “yes” and “no”, and try out how both can express a form of independence, choice and control.

⁶⁰ Or in Frances Vaughan’s words, “the self becomes increasingly identified with the verbal ego-mind.” (2000, p. 27) Before this, in the prepersonal stages of development, the rudimentary ego is present and developing, but here we use the term *ego* in relation to the child’s growing capacity to form an egoic self-concept that transcends exclusive identification with the body and emotions. It is important to note that we are speaking here of the *beginning* of this process of ego building.

⁶¹ According to Wilber, the ego (or frontal self) includes all the self-stages that “orient consciousness to the gross realm (the material self, the bodyego, the persona, the ego, and the centaur (...))” (2000, p.126). During the first three years in a child’s life, we are speaking of the transition from the preegoic stage to the material self, then the bodyego, and finally, the very beginning phase of the persona (Wilber, 2000b, p. 126, p. 240 note 7, pp. 197-201).

⁶² Gebser, 1986

⁶³ Kegan, 1982

⁶⁴ Wilber, 2000b, p. 93

⁶⁵ The basic idea is that we as parents can work concurrently with a child’s ego, soul and spirit/Self. And that by attuning to, nurturing, and connecting with the subtle and causal dimensions of consciousness that are already

present from the start of a child's life, we can facilitate a child's experience of and access to these state-selves and state-stages during the pre-egoic and egoic phases of a child's development, even as they are not yet realized by the child.

⁶⁶ Wilber, 2000b

⁶⁷ Sensory and motor stimulation involves: seeing and recognition of symbols, hearing (musical and talking); sensation and tactility (hot/cold); location and mobility; communication and speech; manual dexterity; emotional and social input; lots of fun and love; and cognitive stimuli and encouragement based on the inquisitive curiosity of child.

⁶⁸ Pearce, 2002

⁶⁹ With this I mean that the care that parents give their child will continuously expand to integrate the child's growing spectrum of ability, thereby transcending the original basic needs of physical/survival care and emotional security to encompass an ever-growing variety of cognitive and interpersonal stimulation. Simultaneously the earlier needs the child are still tended to (they are included).

⁷⁰ From: <http://www.interluderetreat.com/meditate/chop.htm>

⁷¹ Agenda is understood here as a focus on a predetermined result set by our own expectations and desires, which usually takes us away from being present to what is actually unfolding in the moment and blinds us from responding fully and appropriately. As adults we can learn to be both present to the actual situation as well as holding the larger picture, the sense of where things could/should go. In this way we can include the value of an agenda (having direction and purpose) and transcend its limitations (e.g. being more concerned with our agenda that what may actually be going on in the moment; responding only to our needs and desires rather than taking the whole into consideration).

⁷² According to the Wilber-Combs lattice (Wilber, 2006), subtle and causal states can occur (temporarily) at almost any level of development (structure-stage), and this access can be trained (state-stages).

⁷³ Or in other words, our actions generally reflect where we reside in consciousness.

⁷⁴ The Latin word *persona* means "mask". It is formed reactively, a composite identity of amassed self-images (Kimura, 2000). It is the image, the role we generally present to the world, as distinguished from the inner self, or the True Self or Higher Self. According to Wilber, it is one of the self-stages of the frontal self, which is the self that orients consciousness to the gross realm (Wilber, 2000b, p.126).

⁷⁵ The term "ego" encompasses many aspects: it is the egoic self-concept (everything we think we are), as well as the functional self that enables self-regulation, that is the central agent of socialization and culture, and holds the capacity to integrate, orient, and organize. It is also the separate self-sense. As we evolve beyond the personal, we begin to disidentify, to loosen our exclusive identification with the ego, while maintaining and even strengthening certain of its capacities, such as the ability to objectively witness or integrate. (Wilber, 2000b, p.91) In other words, as we evolve in consciousness we transcend the limitations of conventional ego development, while including many of the ego's functions and capacities.

⁷⁶ Kimura (2000, p.45) makes an important distinction between persona and character. For a brief description of the word "persona" see endnote 21. The word "Character" comes from the Greek word, which means, "to inscribe". Kimura defines "character" as the "distinctive mark inscribed or imprinted on the soul"—that which distinguishes us from each other at the level of the soul, giving individuality to the universal and universalization to the individual.

⁷⁷ Or in other words, the subtle and causal states of consciousness. Also see Wilber, 2001, pp. 41-42 for a brief synopsis of the major realms of consciousness and how they are understood and defined in the three major wisdom traditions—Judeo-Christian-Muslim, Buddhism, and Hinduism.

⁷⁸ Parenting is a potent way of discovering self and shadow. We discover aspects of ourselves we had no idea were still lurking. We get triggered in ways we thought we were immune to. Children imitate us and they are still very self-centered. This can be quite a merciless combination! Humbling and also an opportunity to see ourselves honestly, to stretch and to evolve. Preferably with a good dose of humor!

⁷⁹ Wilber distinguishes at least five definitions of spirituality (Wilber, 2000b & 2001): 1) The highest levels of any of the developmental lines; 2) The sum total of the highest levels of the developmental lines; 3) A separate developmental line; 4) An attitude (such as openness, love, trust, compassion) that one can have at any stage of development; 5) Peak experiences (state experiences), which are temporary and can occur at almost any age or stage.

⁸⁰ This is symbolically reflected in India through the custom of greeting each other by placing the hands together and bowing slightly toward each other: “Namaste,” or translated “I bow to the divinity in you”.

⁸¹ Tobin Hart in *The Secret Spiritual World of Children* (2003) writes sensitively and thoughtfully about how to recognize and nurture the deep connection children may experience, and how to help them integrate such experiences.

⁸² Times when the child is self-regulated and self-directed are precious and important for its development! According to Neufeld (2004) the play that children need for healthy development is what he calls emergent play (rather than social play). Emergent play (or creative solitude), combined with a sense of security, allows the child to venture forth into a world of imagination or creativity. Montessori emphasizes the importance of not interrupting a concentrated child. She saw such moments as “the moment of self-development.” (Lillard, 2005, p.265)

⁸³ “Watch, Wait and Wonder” is a term borrowed from Wesner, Dowling and Johnson (1982), who used it to describe an infant-led approach that makes use of the deeper understanding of the critical elements of healthy infant socio-emotional development.

⁸⁴ George Downing, Professor of Clinical Psychology, enables parents to see for themselves where and how they might inhibit their child’s creative initiative through their habitual, often unconscious behavior with a method he has developed called Video-Microanalysis Therapy (VMT). This precise form of feedback opens up the door to discuss alternatives. (http://www.george-downing.com/Deutsch/VMT/V_index.htm)

⁸⁵ Childs, 1991, p.33

⁸⁶ According to Mendizza (2003) and evidenced by the research of the Institute of HeartMath (www.heartmath.org), defending one’s self splits attention and energy. In order to explore and learn about the living world, a child must feel secure, safe, accepted, and loved by that world. As the parent is the child’s first environment, or world, the acceptance and love provided by the parents encourages the child’s learning and development.

Notes for Section Three

⁸⁷ Wilber, 1996, p. 122

⁸⁸ What can we as parents do to encourage a healthy attachment? Dr. Sears and his wife Martha describe attachment parenting as a “highly intuitive, high-touch, style of parenting that encourages a strong early attachment, and advocates consistent parental responsiveness to baby’s dependency needs (Sears & Sears, 2001). The Sears, who coined the term “attachment parenting”, suggest 7 tools to facilitate a positive attachment between parent and young child: —Bonding, Breastfeeding, Babywearing, Bedding close to baby, Belief in the language value of baby’s cry, and Beware of baby trainers, and Balance (<https://www.askdrsears.com/html/10/T130300.asp>). On how to nurture and encourage a healthy attachment as the child grows older I highly recommend Part 3 “How to Hold On to Our Children” in *Hold On to Your Kids* (Neufeld & Mate, 2004).

⁸⁹ Journal entries by author, July 30th and Aug 8th 2002 respectively.

⁹⁰ As we discuss the fundamental role of attachment for the ensuing development of the child it is important to differentiate between positive and negative attachment. I suggest using different terms to make the distinction: “attachment” to describe a positive flex flow between closeness, availability on the side of the parent with ample breathing space and attuned encouragement for the child to expand and grow; “constrictive binding” to describe the sticky, suffocating dependence that can ensue when a parent projects and interweaves his/her fears, lacks, desires, and neuroses in general on to the relationship with the child. A parent’s insecurity can also lead to overindulgence, which in turn is likely to lead to boundary and discipline problems. Integral parenting requires that we as parents face ourselves, meet and integrate the shadows still lurking. . . It is a compelling invitation and challenge to grow!

⁹¹ Neufeld & Mate, 2004, p. 18

⁹² Bowlby, J. 1969; Elehar, M., Watern, E., & Wall, S., 1978; Neufeld & Mate, 2004; Sears & Sears, 2001; Smith, P.B., & Pederson, D.R., 1988.

⁹³ By Martha Farrell Erickson, Ph.D., Coordinator, Project STEEP, University of Minnesota. In Winter 1991 report, Volume 18, Number 2: <http://education.umn.edu/ceed/publications/earlyreport/winter91.htm>

⁹⁴ Neufeld & Mate, 2004, p. 228

⁹⁵ For more information on long-term effects of attachment: <https://www.askdrsears.com/html/10/T110246.asp>; <http://education.umn.edu/ceed/publications/earlyreport/winter91.htm>

⁹⁶ Reference to this tendency in western culture is not made to the exclusion of any other societies, but to reflect that an emphasis on early independence seems to be more predominant in western society.

⁹⁷ The “ghosts” or “replayed battles” and “reincarnated relatives” from parents’ earlier experiences form a further important dimension when considering the subject of attachment versus negative or constrictive binding. Baby doctor Brazelton and psychiatrist/psychoanalyst Cramer explore parent-child relationships when the parents’ fears, fantasies, and ideals collide with the infant’s temperament in their book *The Earliest Relationship: Parents, Infants, and the Drama of Early Attachment* (1990).

⁹⁸ Pearce, 1993, pp. 140-141

⁹⁹ Neufeld & Mate, 2004, p. 6

¹⁰⁰ Gibran, 1926

¹⁰¹ Freire, 1998

¹⁰² Grossman, 1999; Largo 1981 & 2000

¹⁰³ Doman, 1994; Montessori, 1998

¹⁰⁴ Largo, 2002

¹⁰⁵ Mellon, 2000

¹⁰⁶ Mellon, 2000, p. 14

¹⁰⁷ Gruber, John (2005). Personal email. JWGruber@msn.com

¹⁰⁸ Swimme, 1996

¹⁰⁹ Swimme, 1990

¹¹⁰ Description of Cosmic Education by Montessori trainer Phyllis Pottish-Lewis in Lillard, 2005, p. 130

¹¹¹ Childs, 1991, p. 7

¹¹² Kimura, 2000, p. 47

¹¹³ Wilber, 2000a, p. 50

¹¹⁴ The name Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) comes from the disciplines, which influenced the early development of the field. It began as an exploration of the relationship between neurology, linguistics, and observable patterns (“programs”) of behavior. NLP was developed in the mid-70s by John Grinder, a Professor at UC Santa Cruz, and Richard Bandler, a graduate student NLP, as most people use the term today, is a set of models of how communication impacts and is impacted by subjective experience. It's more a collection of tools than any overarching theory. Much of early NLP was based on the work of Virginia Satir, a family therapist; Fritz Pearls, founder of Gestalt therapy; Gregory Bateson, anthropologist; and Milton Erickson, hypnotist. It was Erickson's work that formed the foundation for a lot of NLP, thus the tight connection with hypnosis. NLP consists of a number of models, and then techniques based on those models. (From:

http://www.nlpschedule.com/w_neuro_linguistic_programming_definition.html)

¹¹⁵ Communicology is the study of human discourse in all of its semiotic and phenomenological manifestations of embodied consciousness and practice in the world of other people and their environment. . . . As a young discipline in Human Science research, Communicology is the critical study of discourse and practice, especially the expressive body as mediated by the perception of cultural signs and codes. Communicology uses the methodology of semiotic phenomenology in which the expressive body discloses cultural codes, and cultural codes shape the perceptive body—an ongoing, dialectical, complex helix of twists and turns constituting the reflectivity, reversibility, and reflexivity of consciousness and experience. (From www.communicology.org)

¹¹⁶ Gardner, 1978

Notes for Section Four

¹¹⁷ Wilber, 1996, p. 122; Wilber, 2000a, p. 50; Wilber, 2000b, p. 63

¹¹⁸ The focus on present-day North American and Western European society in this context is not to the exclusion of any other societies, but simply because the author is much more familiar with these. While there may be a number of similarities to other societies, to do them real justice would require greater knowledge and study.

¹¹⁹ This LR approach to family dynamics complements the more common UL quadrant approach to psychotherapy and counseling. The Association for Family Therapy and Systemic Practice in the UK defines family therapy as “. . . based on the idea that the behavior of individuals and families is influenced and maintained by the way other individuals and systems interact with them. This way of working involves engaging with the whole family system as a functioning unit. But family therapy is more than this. It embraces work with smaller systems (including individual work) and bigger systems than the family. It includes a much wider range of work than can fit under the heading of therapy. Understanding workers’ agency organization and inter-agency functioning allows a family systems approach to be adapted to other kinds of helping agencies. This is what is called *systemic practice*.” The official history of family therapy describes its beginnings as a daring technical and philosophical departure from traditional individual treatment in the 1960s, inspired especially by the “system thinking” of Gregory Bateson. The founders of family therapy were psychiatrists who developed theories of their own, derived from a new epistemology: Batesonian systems theory, Bowenian intergenerational theory (1966), structural theories of Minuchin (1974) and of Selvini-Palazzoli and her colleagues (1978).

¹²⁰ This is an argument often used in favor of sending a child to early daycare, where, given the common caregiver/child ratio, kids end up spending most of their time with peers.

¹²¹ Neufeld & Mate, 2004

¹²² Neufeld & Mate, 2004, p. 10

¹²³ 1996, p. 177

¹²⁴ Robertson J & J, 1989

¹²⁵ Eliot, 2000, pp. 308-311

¹²⁶ An example of above-average parental leave is Sweden, where all working parents are entitled to 16 months paid leave per child, the cost being shared between employer and State. To encourage greater paternal involvement in child-rearing, a minimum of 3 months out of the 16 is required to be used by the “minority” parent, in practice usually the father.

¹²⁷ The Medical Journal of Australia, 1999 (<http://www.mja.com.au>)

¹²⁸ www.nurturing.us Something precious has been lost with the post second world war increase in urban and suburban living: connection, belonging to a supportive community, and being mentored by close relatives and friends. According to Mendizza, real parent education takes place in these intimate relationships. *The Nurturing Project* makes use of present-day networks to provide a childhood educational and community support system for parents and caregivers, thus reviving supportive mentoring and relationship.

¹²⁹ Waldorf schools (or Steiner schools, as they are also called) are based on the educational theories of Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925). Waldorf teachers strive to transform education into an art that educates the whole child—the heart and the hands, as well as the head. Currently there are around 850 Waldorf schools in over 40 countries worldwide.

¹³⁰ Maria Montessori (1870-1952) is the founder of Montessori Education, an alternative teaching system based on her observations of how children learn and with a strong emphasis on the practical.

¹³¹ New Road Map Foundation, 1993

¹³² The Ecological Footprint is the amount of bioproductive land and sea area in continuous production to supply all we use and to absorb our wastes, using prevailing technology (Merkel, 2003). Another informative book on individuals’ as well as countries’ Ecological Footprints is *Our Ecological Footprint, Reducing Human Impact of the Earth* by Mathis Wackernagel and William Rees.

¹³³ Lillard p.125; Hainstock p. 7

¹³⁴ 1939, pp. 61-62

Notes for Conclusion

¹³⁵ In addition to these five aspects Wilber has added the eight perspectives, a description of which can be found in Excerpt C: <http://wilber.shambhala.com/html/books/kosmos/excerptC/part2-4.cfm>)

¹³⁶ I have not included States or Types when speaking of engaging the vertical axis for the following reasons: Whilst States can give an individual a peak experience of a higher level (in this way informing and providing them with a glimpse them of what lies beyond), these higher states can be accessed temporarily from *any developmental stage*, or in other words, are not dependent on vertical development (Wilber, 2000b, pp. 14-15). Types are not vertical

levels, rather they are different orientations that are possible at each level (Wilber, 200b, pp. 53-54). While a particular personality type may well express itself and act differently depending on a person's developmental stage, they are thus primarily horizontal.