

: [kskchris@](mailto:kskchris@) Back when I was on the AML List, I got this:  
From: Veda Hale  
Subject: Perry scheme [Note: She wrote an analysis of Levi Peterson's Canyons of Grace based on the scheme.]

I was cleaning up my email and wondered if I ever sent this to you.  
Whatever....here goes.  
Veda

PERRY SCHEME OF COGNITIVE AND ETHICAL GROWTH  
TABLE OF TRAITS BY POSITION AND TRANSITION

POSITION 1 - Basic Duality. (Garden of Eden Position: All will be well.)  
The person perceives meaning divided into two realms-Good/Bad, Right/wrong, We/They, Success/Failure, etc. They believe that knowledge and goodness are quantitative, that there are absolute answers for every problem and authorities know them and will teach them to those who will work hard and memorize them. Agency is "Out there". The person is so embedded here that there is no place from which to observe themselves, yet they have a dim sense of there being a boundary to Otherness somewhere that gives their Eden-like world view boundary.  
Transition 1-2 - Dualism modified. (Snake whispers.) The person starts to be aware of others and of differing opinions, even among authorities. This started the feeling of uncertainty. But they decide it is part of the authority's job to pose problems. It takes hard work to deny the legitimacy of diversity and to keep the belief in the simplicity of truth.

(It should be kept in mind that in any of the transition states it is easy for the person to become depressed. It takes time for the "guts to catch up with leaps of mind." When a sense of loss is accorded the honor of acknowledgement, movement is more rapid and the risk of getting stuck in apathy, alienation, or depression is reduced. When one steps into new perceptions he is unlikely to take another until he comes to terms with the losses attendant on the first.)

POSITION 2 - Multiplicity Prelegitimate. (Resisting snake)

Now the person moves to accept that there is diversity, but they still think there are TRUE authorities who are right, that the others are confused by complexities or are just frauds. They think they are with the true authorities and are right while all others are wrong. They accept that their good authorities present problems so they can learn to reach right answers independently.

TRANSITION: 2-3 - Dualism modified

Now the person admits that good authorities can admit to not knowing all the answers yet, but they will teach what they know now and teach the rest when they have it. They accept that disciplines are divided into the definite and the vague, but that in the end even science fails. Though they have given up dividing meaning into just two realms, they still feel knowledge and goodness are quantitative and that agency is "out there".

POSITION 3 - Multiplicity Legitimate but Subordinate. (Snake's logic considered)

The person still feels that the nature of things naturally produces differing opinions, but it's as it should be, because the Authorities will figure it all out and hand on their conclusions eventually.

ALL OF THE POSITIONS ABOVE FEEL ABANDONMENT IN UNSTRUCTURED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS. WHEN CHANGES IN THINKING START TO HAPPEN, IT CAN BE A DANGEROUS TIME. (The forbidden fruit has been partaken and one is out of the Garden of Eden.)

There are seven ways a person can go.

Transition 1. The person can make the transition by modifying dualism drastically to where one no longer trusts authority to have any answers, and they think it will be a long, long time before they will; therefore, there is really no way to be judged by them. Bitterness sets in, as it seems as if rewards don't come by hard work and rightness, but by good expression and arbitrary factors. With an inability to distinguish between abstract thought and "bull", disillusion settles and blinds the person to where they become dangerously cynical and take advantage of any opportunity to get gain.

Transition 2. The person could decide that, if there are so many different answers a depending on individual perspective, that it is impossible for any true judgment; therefore anything goes. All is of equal value. To have an opinion makes it right.

Transition 3. Same as above, except it dawns that there are some facts that, if known, can make for a better choice among the many.

Transition 4. Anger and frustration win out. Instead of becoming cynical and opportunistic, person acts out negatively.

Transition 5. The person is moving closer to accepting relativity. He trusts authorities to have valid grounds for evaluations. To get along, one needs to accept that authorities are using reasonable information in making their answers. So the person tries to discover what it is authorities think and want.

Transition 6. Person realizes that on some matters, reasonable people reasonably disagree, that knowledge is qualitative and is context-dependent. They begin weighing factors and approaches in ways that force comparison of patterns of thought, they think about thinking and this occupies the foreground. But they still tend to want to conform so much that they have trouble thinking independently.

Transition 7. This position between multiplicity and relativity is now closer to relativity. The person sees that thinking relatively isn't just what the authorities he has been dealing have reasoned out and want him to accept, it is the way the world works, in most cases.

NOW UNCERTAINTIES OR DIVERSITIES MULTIPLY UNTIL THEY TIP THE BALANCE AGAINST CERTAINTY AND HOMOGENEITY, PRECIPITATING A CRISIS THAT FORCES THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW VISION OF THE WORLD, BE IT ONE MARKED BY CYNICISM, ANXIETY, OR A NEW SENSE OF FREEDOM.

POSITION 5 Relativism discovered.

The person accepts that all thinking is relative for everyone and are much taken with this new perspective. It could be a time of profound anxiety as the person struggles to understand how to make right choices. They decide they can and must do something about this new world view, but they may spend a long time before sensing a need for commitment. They can take responsibility for a task at hand, but don't yet realize they have a responsibility to choose commitments.

THIS POSITION COULD MAKE FOR A PERSON WHOSE AGENCY FOR MAKING SENSE HAS VANISHED ENTIRELY. THEY COULD ALSO REACT BY POSTPONING DECISIONS, FALLING INTO APATHY OR GOING INTO A RAGE. IT COULD GET SO BAD IT COULD APPEAR THE PERSON NEEDS CLINICAL HELP. THE POTENTIAL FOR CYNICISM COULD BECOME EQUALLY ALARMING EDUCATIONALLY.

If the person RETREATS, rage takes over and he loses agency to make sense. He survives by avoiding complexity and ambivalence and regresses to Dualism, position 2, (multiplicity prelegitimate). He becomes moralistic righteous and has "righteous" hatred for otherness. He complains childlike and demands of authority figures to just tell him what they want.

If the person at this point doesn't retreat, he may go into a state of TEMPORIZING. His agency for making sense has vanished, but he postpones any movement. He may reconsign agency to some possible event. If so, Guilt and shame accompany the uneasiness about a failure of responsibility they feel hopeless to cope with.

Or if not either of the above then the person may try to ESCAPE. He becomes apathetic. His agency for making sense has also vanished, but in his feeling of being alienated, he abandons responsibility and uses his understanding of multiplicity and relativism as a way to avoid commitment. He is drifting and has some sense that later he will find himself to be living a hollow life. This drifting with insecurity about "goodness" of his position can make for such a detachment that precludes any meaningful involvement. He starts to rely on impulse. THIS CAN BECOME A SETTLED CONDITION. "For the students reporting their recovery of care, ...their period of alienation appears as a time of transition. In this time the self is lost through the very effort to hold onto it in the face of inexorable change in the world's appearance. It is a space of meaninglessness between received belief and creative faith. In their rebirth they experience in themselves the origin or meanings, which they had previously expected to come to them from outside." (page 92 of the Perry Scheme.)

POSITION 6. Commitment Foreseen.

FROM HERE ON THE PERSON WILL FEEL FRUSTRATION IN TOO-STRUCTURED OF AN ENVIRONMENT.

Now the person thinks he is alone in an uncertain world, making his own decisions, with no one to say he is right. He makes choices aware of relativism and accepts that the agency to do so is within the individual. He sees that to move forward he must make commitments coming from within. He foresees the challenge of responsibility and feels he needs to get on with it. He also senses that the first steps require arbitrary faith or willing suspension of disbelief. He knows he needs to narrow his focus, center himself and become aware of internal, what could be called, spiritual strength.

He starts to see how he must be embracing and transcending of: certainty/doubt, focus/breadth, idealism/realism, tolerance/contempt, stability/flexibility. He senses need for affirmation and incorporation of existential or logical polarities. He senses need to hold polarities in tension in the interest of Truth.

He begins to maintain meaning, coherence, and value while conscious of their partial, limited, and contradictable nature. He begins to understand symbol as symbols and acknowledges the time-place relativity of them. He begins to

affirm and hold absolutes in symbols while still acknowledging them to be relativistic. He begins to embrace viewpoints in conflict with his own. Now the person has a field-independent learning style, has learned to scan for information, accepts that hierarchical and analytic notes are evidence of sharpening of cognition. He is willing to take risks, is flexible, perceptive, broad, strategy-minded, and analytical.

The TRANSITION position between Position 6, "Commitment Foreseen", and position 7, "Commitments in Relativism developed" is as follows:

Besides the above, the person feels he is lost if he doesn't decide, that if he can once make one decision, everything else will be OK.

POSITION 7. Commitments in Relativism developed.

The person makes first commitment while being aware of Relativism, and has a vivid sense of CLAIMING AND POWER. He now more fully feels that agency is within him and foresees responsibility with excitement and anticipates more empowering as he makes more commitments and choices. The TRANSITION between Position 7 and Position 8, sees the person having made his first commitment but feeling that everything else is still in limbo and he is foreseeing problems coming from trying to juggling responsibility. He senses need to be: wholehearted--but tentative, to be able to fight for his own values--yet respect others. Now, besides the other ways of studying, the person begins to read not to conciliate Authority, but to learn on his own initiative.

POSITION 8. Commitments in Relativism developed continues.

The person makes several more Commitments while realizing he must find balance and establish painful priorities of energy, action and time. He starts to experience periodically serenity and well-being in the midst of complexity. He has a sense of living with trust in the midst of heightened awareness of risk. He accepts fact that order and disorder are fluctuations in experience. He searches for models of knowledgeability and courage to affirm commitment in full awareness of uncertainty. HE STILL NEEDS TO RECOGNIZE THAT EVEN

THE MODEL MUST BE TRANSCENDED, AND HE SENSES HE NEEDS TO DEVELOP IRONY. The TRANSITION between Position 8 and 9 brings trauma. The person feels everything is contradictory and he just can't make sense out of life's dilemmas. But he begins to develop sense of irony and sees he must embrace viewpoints in conflict with his own, not in the old multiplistic way of "separate but equal" or "live and let live" but truly embrace them with what might as well be called "love".

POSITION 9. Commitments in Relativism further developed.

The person now has a developed sense of irony and can more easily embrace other's viewpoints. He can accept life as just that "life", just the way IT is! Now he holds the commitments he makes in a condition of "PROVISIONAL ULTIMACY", meaning that for him what he chooses to be truth IS his truth, and he acts as if it is ultimate truth, but there is still a "provision" for change. He has no illusions about having "arrived" permanently on top of some heap, he is ready and knows he will have to retrace his journey over and over, but he has hope that he will do it each time more wisely. He is aware that he is developing his IDENTITY through Commitment. He can affirm the inseparable nature of the knower and the known--meaning he knows he as knower contributes to what he calls known. He helps weld a community by sharing realization of aloneness and gains strength and intimacy through this shared vulnerability. He has discarded obedience in favor of his own agency, and he continues to select, judge, and

build.

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