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THE ART OF

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SPIRITUAL  
GUIDANCE

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A CONTEMPORARY APPROACH  
TO GROWING IN THE SPIRIT

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## Chapter One

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# WAKING UP TO FREEDOM AND WHOLENESS

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**T**HERE are all kinds of ways of waking up from the sleep of the everyday to the awareness that we are alive, and embodied, and necessarily (whether we like it or not) involved in the flow of the universe. History and art record many such moments of awakening. Often, the record includes the individual's profound recognition that in spite of the weight of circumstances and in the midst of the cosmic drama of unceasing change, he or she is inwardly free.

Yet there are millions of human beings whose hearts continue to slumber, who remain for a lifetime dozing in a taken-for-granted existence. Helping persons to wake up to the range and power of their own human hearts is one of the perennial goals of spiritual guides.

In a somewhat different way, that goal is also a perennial one for artists and writers. Recent fiction and autobiography continue to describe the entry of individuals (or their refusal to enter) into a transformed consciousness. Three well-known examples might be helpful here.

Etty Hillesum's diary, *An Interrupted Life*, gives us an intimate record of that young Jewish woman's life in Holland — of her friendships, her family, her ideas, her love.<sup>1</sup> Hillesum's daily routine of intellectual and sensual pleasure was shattered by the dark years of Nazi occupation (1941–43). Her diary shows her being forced to confront some of life's most serious questions as she struggles with the moral issues and the cruel realities of that time. The events burning in her life became catalysts, evoking inner resources of faith, hope and love that were "already there" but not previously in her conscious awareness. We see her transformed into a compassionate and deeply spiritual woman by the events that challenged her humanity.

Judith Guest's novel *Ordinary People* tells the story — a refusal.<sup>2</sup> Beth Jarrett, the central character, is an organized and efficient wife

and the mother of a suicidal son. She is unable to face the death of one of her sons and the mental illness of another; nor can she face her own affectional inadequacies. Beth Jarrett has built a respectable, comfortable life. But as it crumbles, her inner deformations engulf her, and she flees. She “cops out” on a classic mid-life crisis, refusing to deal with the imperfect world and limited self that are hers.

Norman Cousins’s *The Healing Heart* is autobiographical.<sup>3</sup> The book tells us how his personal faith, hope, confidence, and will to live were the attitudes that helped him to meet the life-challenging event of the breakdown of his physical health. After his heart attack, Cousins begins gradually to see that health does not depend only on vital-physical conditioning. Emotional and spiritual questions — questions his doctors were mostly unprepared to deal with — are health issues as well.

These three crisis stories show us people in contemporary circumstances who have been forced by events in their lives to wake up from the taken-for-grantedness of their everyday routine. They must make decisions about the very meaning of their lives.

These three, and others like them, would make ideal candidates for the kind of spiritual guidance this book is all about.

Each of these three could agree, from personal experience, that the universe and life itself are in a constant process of formation and reformation, of taking a certain shape or structure and then losing that shape by being restructured. Human beings, too, receive a certain form from what happens to them in the course of their life. But as they marry, or start a new job, or get caught in a war, or have a child or a major new idea, the shape of life changes. Even their presence in a room changes when someone else enters or leaves that room.

With some formative insight, our three persons would also be able to see that although they are always part of the ongoing process of giving and receiving form, they are never totally determined by it.

Human beings are always free to respond to what happens. Not absolutely free, it is true; but really free, with a relative and limited freedom. Human persons can give form to life as it changes, even in chaotic situations like war, family crisis, or a heart attack.

### Freedom Is What We Seek

This inner freedom is essential to being human, to being spirit. It is true that we also see impersonal “laws” — chemical, biological, even social “laws” — constantly operating in the universe. Nonetheless, the human spirit is able freely to choose to give form, in a way that confounds the appearance of determinism.

This assumption — that human beings have limited but real freedom — is central to our understanding of spiritual guidance.

The Christian tradition, in centuries of reflecting on the Gospel of the Incarnation, affirms that the divine Mystery has entered the process of history, the ceaseless giving and receiving of form. God’s self-communicating grace is here in this process, meeting human freedom. Therefore, Christians can speak not only of formation and reformation, but also of divine transformation.<sup>4</sup> Those who seek guidance, as well as those who offer it are, like the fish swimming in the water of the Sufi legend, situated within this mystery. They are able to be receptive to the divine form-giving, and they are able to partake in it. In their need and in their freedom, human beings are situated in this vast open process, and there they can encounter God. An appreciation of human freedom and of its built-in directedness toward the divine Presence underlying all life events is the basis of the church’s traditional understanding of spiritual direction.

We are certainly not always aware of this aspect of our reality. Like the fish, we are busy swimming and seeking. We get distracted. We get lost in routines and crises, in daily striving for power and status and possessions or even just survival. We lose touch with our desire for the “more,” with our human capacity for freely partaking in the fullness of the Mystery. We lose touch with the transcendent aspirations of our searching human hearts.

We need to be reminded, often, of the hidden intentionality of those longing hearts. When they lose their way, for the moment, they need guidance. The spiritual guide is there to help seekers freely awaken to or “remember” the path along which God is leading their hearts.<sup>5</sup>

### Starting Points for Direction

There are times when our established routines and our accustomed frame of mind seem to be able to contain the ongoing flow of life. We cope well, or at least satisfactorily. Things make sense, or at least they stay within the reach of what we might expect. Those are the seasons when people are most likely to “fall asleep” to the deeper possibilities of their own lives.<sup>6</sup>

There are other times when unexpected events interrupt the flow of our lives and raise sharp new questions. We have already glanced at three books about life events that question someone’s whole frame of reference: a son’s suicide for Beth Jarrett, a heart attack for Norman Cousins, the Nazi invasion for Etty Hillesum. In Hillesum’s book, for example, we watch the author (diarist) grow and become transformed by the divine Other in whom she does not consciously believe. She is transformed not in spite of the questions presented to her by the

Holocaust, but because of them, and because there are no easy answers to the mystery of human suffering and compassion.

Life questions that arise from experience often overflow the frame of mind in which we try to receive them. Transitions force us to go deeper, to ask what this new event or loss or person means for me, in view of the larger purpose of my life.

What is this event saying? What is it asking of me as response? How shall I react when my spouse draws away from me without explanation or warning? What shall I do about my children whose ways I no longer understand? Why continue in this job or commitment in community when I can see no real result, when I'm feeling coerced and controlled, when I have lost my original enthusiasm?

Dilemmas like this push people toward ultimate questions.<sup>7</sup> Even very young people today are often pushed hard by such questions. They are not taking their future for granted; they are thinking deeply, often despairingly. The questions of "ordinary people" aren't so ordinary anymore. I have overheard ten-year-olds, on their way to the skating rink, talking about AIDS and death and nuclear war and environmental catastrophes. When people are being haunted by ultimate questions, functionalistic answers do not satisfy them. Neither are they interested in pious formulas or in dogmatic confrontations. At such moments, they are looking for the spiritual direction of their lives.

Where can contemporary people turn with such questions?

In traditional societies, there were usually village elders, or shamans, or other wise women and men who could be consulted during critical periods in the lives of individuals or of the tribe. Who fills that role for modern North Americans? Today the gurus for most people seem to be newspaper columnists or talk show hosts like Phil Donahue, Oprah Winfrey, or Dr. Ruth.<sup>8</sup> There is a certain homely wisdom there, and a fund of pop psychology. But as life guidance, the insights of today's media stars come nowhere near the calibre of the guidance given centuries ago by the desert Fathers and Mothers, or by later contemplatives in the Christian tradition.<sup>9</sup> Today's gurus tend to offer functionalistic solutions or ways to escape the problem of meaning altogether. Granted, some questions are merely functional, and deserve a functional answer. But many questions are not. "Who am I? Who is really in charge? Why me? Why did this happen to me?" The "who" and "why" questions often arise from the deepest part of our being.

These are questions that themselves give guidance as they lead us forward into freedom. These are questions that can free us to confront life's ambiguity instead of escaping into some authoritarian cult where all the answers are figured out ahead of time. As Rilke said to the young poet: Try to love the questions themselves; do not seek the answers now, but live the questions themselves.<sup>10</sup>

To seek guidance is not necessarily the same as looking for answers.

People seek guidance that can show them how to participate more deeply in the Mystery that is the underlying ground of all the questions. By being helped to listen to and to trust the events of their own lived experience, people can come to understand their problems and worries against a wider and deeper consciousness of the Mystery of All That Is.

In somewhat the same way, a Chinese painting lets us see small human figures against an obviously larger and more imposing background that reveals the cosmic reality of nature and the Tao.<sup>11</sup>

To get lost in Tao includes the willingness to live as part of a whole that is much larger than I am, a Whole that is mysterious, and that endows my life, too, with mystery and ultimate meaning. As Gabriel Marcel has put it, a person's life is not merely a series of problems to be solved. Someone's life is a mystery to be lived.<sup>12</sup> My life is a mystery to be lived in a style that integrates my gifts and resources and respects my intrinsic limits.

From this point of view, each person is a unique, limited, embodied presence to the Mystery that is the Everything. Or — since personal presence to the Mystery is a free act of being — there could be, at the core of someone's life, an absence from the Mystery. Usually, though, there is in each of us a kind of receptive consciousness that from time to time allows us to notice and reverence the interconnectedness of persons with the world around them and with its mysterious Source. From that interconnectedness flows abundance of life.

### Integration in an Age of Pluralism

By itself, psychology is inadequate to hold and handle that abundance of life. Even before I had finished my doctorate in psychology, I was aware that the methods of psychological observation cannot by themselves yield understanding of someone who is seeking spiritual guidance. Techniques learned from the study of behavior and of unconscious dynamisms can teach us much. But, when spiritual guidance is being sought, psychological methods need to be complemented by a much more intuitive perception of how a particular person is living in relation to the larger Whole. I needed to explore something of the dialogue of each person's autonomous self with her or his essential rootedness in God and in the rest of creation.<sup>13</sup>

Spiritual guides have been aware for centuries of the spiritual seeker's need for an integrative awareness of the Whole. It used to be the case that at the heart of every great culture lay an integrated,

more or less agreed upon worldview that dealt with the human person's relationship to the Whole, the Everything, and to its mysterious Source.

Western civilization, for example, used to have at its heart a more or less unified worldview based primarily on Christian revelation. That view of the meaning of life was dominant in the culture and alive in it and was in fact quite widely and deeply shared by Europeans. Then came the Renaissance, and with it a shift of consciousness that brought an explosion of sciences and philosophies. Science has not stopped exploding. Secularism has flourished, eroding the power of religion to ground people in a common spiritual frame of reference. New frameworks — including whole new sciences — multiply around us. Each new framework raises thousands of new questions. Each new science — think of bio-engineering, subatomic physics, social anthropology — offers its own set of answers. But only to its own set of questions. Those questions are not about the Whole.

It is as if each science has claimed a slice of reality. There are many brilliant slices. They complement one another in fascinating ways. But there is no longer one unified underlying vision on which people profoundly agree. This modern situation is sometimes called "pluralism."<sup>14</sup> It makes life more difficult for anyone attempting to offer coherent spiritual guidance. In the European Middle Ages, for example, a spiritual guide could take for granted a great deal of implicit spiritual formation that would be common to the people who sought him out — because a common horizon of deeper meaning was vividly symbolized and presented to people at every level of their inherited culture. Today, that is not the case.

People, however, still face the need to integrate their lives. North Americans often turn to psychology when they feel a need for integration. But psychology — itself offering only a "slice" of reality — exists now in many different "slivers." There is a Freudian sliver, an Adlerian sliver, a Jungian sliver, a Rogerian sliver, a behavioral or Skinnerian sliver, just to begin with. Some people boldly grasp one sliver and make it into an explanation of the whole, as Skinner has done in behavioral psychology. Others (and this is more common) are eclectic, taking a behavioral bit here and a Jungian piece there, working toward a synthesis that can hold more of their sense of the whole story.

All these currents of modern thought affect people who are trying to understand Christian spirituality and who wish to offer spiritual guidance to contemporaries. These days one can find books of spiritual guidance combining Jung and Teresa of Avila, Ignatius and the Sufi mystics, gestalt therapy and John of the Cross.<sup>15</sup>

Through the centuries, it has been common for people offering pastoral care to draw on current psychologies and to borrow techniques for

the "cure of souls" even from disciplines that espoused contending anthropologies. This point is made in Roger Hurding's *Roots and Shoots: A Guide to Counseling and Psychotherapy*.<sup>16</sup> Hurding's book deals with the rise of today's secular psychologies, and also with the Christian reaction and response to each new sliver of the psychological slice. He examines how Freud's exploration of the dynamics of the vital dimension led spiritual counselors to ask what is going on below the surface of the inner life, to question the unconscious, the sexual instinct, and the developmental stages, and to be critical of an individual's need for religion itself. Hurding goes on to look at the responses to Adler, Erikson, Horney, Fromm, and Sullivan, and at Jung's archetypes as guides for the whole of the inner journey.<sup>17</sup> Hurding also points to the new life-shifting and transpersonal methods of guidance that are proliferating as people sense the need for still deeper change that moves one beyond the isolated self.

Two discoveries stand out here for me. The first is that any spiritual guidance that people will trust will eventually have to be in harmony with the dynamics flowing from life as a whole, not from just one layer of life. Life needs to be received in its entirety as a mystery full of meaning, not split up into parts that can be dealt with like a problem. The second discovery is that the personality theory that underlies any trustable human guidance will have to include the human person's origins in Mystery as well as the person's other dimensions and capacities — the sociohistorical, the vital, the functional, the transcendent, and also the pneumatic,<sup>18</sup> that deepest capacity that makes us potential participants in the life of God.

In the light of all this, one distinction that research into the discipline of formative spirituality has taught me to make is between what we might call formative counseling and formative spiritual direction.

Formative *counseling* (or guidance) is concerned with the normal questions of growth and development that belong to the sociohistorical, vital, functional, and transcendent dimensions of human life; with how the person absorbs/resists the cultural pulsations of his or her environment, with embodiment and temperament, with the person's ambitions, attitudes and skills and with how she or he employs these in the daily dialogue with the "more than" in life. Formative spiritual *direction*, on the other hand, while it is concerned with all of the above, focuses on awakening the person's heart to the larger life of participation in Mystery, as illumined by the specific revealed tradition within which the person is committed.

It is possible to have spiritual guidance or counseling that is formative for life yet is not necessarily bound to any of the great faith traditions. Spiritual direction, on the other hand, usually involves mutual adherence to a faith tradition.

### How People Are Spiritual

Anyone who offers coherent spiritual guidance must be grounded in some central understanding of how human beings are “spiritual,” of what the human spirit truly is.<sup>19</sup> There are philosophical ways of approaching this understanding, and there are more imaginative or symbolic ways. For example, Teresa of Avila imagined the human soul as a castle made of a single crystal. The poet Gerard Manley Hopkins described the soul as “immortal diamond.” John of the Cross discerned within each human being a “living flame of love.” None of these images is a theological definition of the soul, but all three tell us something of the soul’s greatness and hiddenness.

The approach to spiritual direction that is developed in this book accepts a basic assumption about each human person: the human person is a unique, never-to-be-replicated image of the Mystery itself. This way of guidance assumes that each person’s life develops as an expression of his or her emerging foundational life form, or embodied soul.<sup>20</sup>

“Spiritual” in this sense refers to who we are, to our distinctively human ability to express this soul personally, through our powers of mind and will. It is as spirit that we are open to “more than” the vital-functional aspects of reality. It is as spirit that we freely aspire to what is beyond or below the surface of things, and that we are able to long for “more.” This longing of the human spirit constitutes the central dynamic force of human life.<sup>21</sup>

Spiritual life, then, refers not only to inner life, but is concerned with the entire created field in which that life unfolds. It is not confined merely to the rational-functional intelligence, but intuitively reaches out beyond the visible to the invisible.

Throughout history, people searching for transcendent meaning have developed worldviews based on this human capacity for encountering invisible Mystery. In the East as well as in the West these syntheses are called “spiritualities.”

For me the word “spirituality” points to a vocational or “called” aspect of the human person that the rational/scientific viewpoint often misses entirely. Perhaps soul and spirit are best understood in terms of a relation, a relatedness to all that is. On the one hand we have the “call,” given to each human person even before birth, to become a unique “diamond.” On the other hand we have the life process of gradually discovering and expressing that call concretely, in dialogue with the changing appeals discovered in the world as it evokes commitments of time and energy in each person throughout life. Spiritual call cannot be understood in terms of inner life alone. Each person’s call includes evocations from the life situation in which we find ourselves, with its concrete possibilities of justice, compassion,

and healing, encountered at the various ages and stages of the person’s development.<sup>22</sup>

Frederick Buechner expressed this relation of soul to its concrete expressions in real history when he wrote, “The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”<sup>23</sup> His phrase “your deep gladness” evokes the divine image that each of us interiorly is — that sparkling mysterious core of energy and life. His other phrase, “the world’s deep hunger,” points to the suffering in and around us that evokes our committed efforts to act. His conviction that the “gladness” and the “hunger” can “meet” points to the loving mysterious Source of our inner energy: the Source whose love embraces the whole cosmos and flows through us to heal it.

Human beings have a deep need to embody the desires of their heart by using their uniquely human power of giving and receiving form in the real world. We want to make a contribution to the world. We want our lives freely to fulfill a unique, intrinsic purpose; we have “vocational hunger.”<sup>24</sup> One of the profound hopes of spiritual direction is to make it more possible for persons to discover what they are called to do, how they most deeply want to use their time and energy. Limited finite people also need to find out what they are *not* called to do. Both types of guidance help seekers to recognize the connection between their unique potential and what they can contribute from within their particular life field toward the transformation of the world.

It is not easy to find the link between attentiveness to one’s deepest interior capacity of soul and the call to a spirit-inspired life of social commitment. Too many people try to settle for one or the other. Ignorance of the dynamics of one can seriously block the dynamism of the other. Alas, institutionalized religion often forgets this link. Church members are too often pushed into a busy doing of good works, or left in an isolated interiority and not even invited into the costly effort of living a truly spiritual life in the real world. Settling for less prevents a person from becoming a genuinely transforming presence in the world.

That is why it matters — matters for the life of the world — that we understand what it means that the human person is spirit. Both spiritual guides and those guided need to learn to dwell with gratitude on this human capacity to connect with the Mystery that embraces everything.

When we do that, we will be able to notice and to take action when the spiritual dimension of the human person is being refused or repressed — by personal fears, by institutional cramping, or by “slice and sliver” images of the human reality.

### How We Co-form Our Experience

If a theory of human personality is to prove useful to someone who offers spiritual guidance, that theory must be down-to-earth and basic. It has to be foundational enough to incorporate one's constantly growing experience of persons, and subtle enough to keep us open to the many schools of thought, worldviews, spiritualities, and cultures we will work with.

How can we integrate the insights of psychological theories, medicine, pastoral care, social analysis? What about particular "spiritualities" — Franciscan, Benedictine, Ignatian, charismatic, and so on? Is there a basic, more or less simple foundation on which an integrative approach to guidance can be built?

I think there is. It is the foundational intuition that all of human life is essentially a dialogue of person and world, of spirit and infrahuman forms and processes in the human person's own organism and in his or her surrounding world. The human spirit co-forms its world as a human formation field.

In other words, human beings are a personal and social presence or openness that actually co-forms and co-creates the world they inhabit, by giving a certain form to the things, events, and persons that present themselves.<sup>25</sup>

Everyone is aware of this on a commonsense level. Folk wisdom tells us that people "see things differently," notice different possibilities, and "handle" apparently similar challenges well or badly.

As guides, we will become more and more aware that every person tends to dialogue uniquely with what appears to be the same reality of people, events, and things. Every time I encounter something or someone in the world — in each act of perceiving, questioning, using, organizing, explaining, or cultivating what exists — I set up an experiential dialogue with that person or thing that is my own dialogue, characteristic of me, more or less unique to me. The dialogue can be altogether unconscious or "prefocal." Questions can emerge from it, questions that can become pressingly conscious: What does this event mean to me? What is really going on? How can I cope with this? What is happening in this situation, in this society? Who am I really? In the midst of all this pain and ambiguity, what is the best direction for me to follow?

We all sense that there is more going on than meets the eye, that the dynamics of life and death, of suffering and joy are not always transparent. Our life questions point to an invisible, prefocal dialogue between ourselves (especially ourselves as human spirit) and situations that befuddle us in the midst of the pluralistic, disordered culture and society in which we live in late-twentieth-century North America.

There is still another set of questions that arise for Christians — for people who are trying to live the dialogue of person and world in a Gospel context. What does it mean for a Christian to live and try to love in the midst of chaos and change? How should I work for a just society or pursue peace in a world like ours?

The task of spiritual guidance lies in the attempt to make this very basic prefocal dialogue *focal*, that is, conscious and attended to. Spiritual guidance helps persons become more conscious of how they are giving a certain shape or form to their lives, at the same time as they are in the process of being formed by those very lives. Or deformed, of course; our freedom, like our world, is full of ambiguities.

Here, as always, freedom is central. Guidance aims to increase the margin of freedom, of free responsible choice, in people's lives. Good guidance helps people to make good decisions by waking them up to what is happening in their ongoing lives. To be spirit means to be able (in however limited a way) to choose more and more freely the direction in which our lives will move.

For Christians, living spiritually includes raising to consciousness the ongoing dialogue between the Gospel and the values and imperatives flooding in from society and from the culture as we seek to shape our choices from day to day.

Once we understand that there is more to the human person than the merely vital level, we could still have utmost respect for Freud's genius in exploring libidinal dynamics, or the behaviorist's estimation of the undoubted stimulus-response dimension of human behaving. But we will not take those theories as a total explanation of a person's religious or even sexual behavior. We can appreciate the truth Adler saw about human striving for power and competent functioning, but we need not always see ourselves as simply dominated by ego-oriented ambitions.

What we need is a theory of personality that can appreciate all the insights from the human sciences and integrate them into a more whole vision that gives each layer of human expressiveness its rightful but partial place within the whole. The human spirit's capacity for "more" always has to be factored in; and that can make all the difference.

### Questions from Life Help Us Notice Reality

In his *Stages of Faith*, James Fowler presents a list of basic life questions that I find extremely helpful. They are as follows:

- What are you spending and being spent for? What commands and receives your best time and energy?
- What goals, dreams, or institutions are you pouring out your life for?

- As you live your life, what power or powers do you fear or dread? What power or powers do you rely on and trust?
- To what or to whom are you committed in life? In death?
- With whom or with what group do you share your most sacred or private hopes for your life and for the lives of those you love?
- What *are* those most sacred and compelling hopes and purposes in your life?<sup>26</sup>

As I read them, James Fowler's questions are about commitment. They are questions that speak of the underlying dialogue between the loving, thinking, acting, sensing, enculturated human heart and all that it finds lovable, thinkable, do-able, sensible, and historically "there" in the world. They are not simply problem-oriented questions that ask for advice on what one should do. They are mystery-oriented questions that flow from a heart that seeks a future for its love.

Of course, the questions of one's heart do not usually emerge as clearly as do questions in a book on stages of faith. But the guide who is paying attention will gradually learn to hear how each seeker is facing — or evading — the questions that are emerging from her or his life. Each of us lives a dialogue with various aspects of our life fields. But the dialogue is not always free, not always honest. Self-alienation, escape, denial of freedom and of responsibility are always possible. The surrounding culture can be illusion-generating. Events can be confusing. And other people can be deceiving. The dialogue with a particular aspect of one's life field can be discordant or distorted; it can need a little work.

Thus, the concealed ongoing dialogue with reality that each person lives is no shining exchange of infallibilities. Nevertheless, it is precious. Being aware of this dialogue with reality will prevent the spiritual guide (and the person guided) from getting lost in introspective attentiveness only to the inner movements of conscience, emotions, and contents of the mind. Self-knowledge is available also by looking at the self in relation to its entire life field. We find out who we are not only by looking at what happens in the time of prayer, but also by examining our commitments of time and energy through family responsibilities, friendships, work commitments, social and political efforts, and leisure activities. We also find out who we are by noticing the parts of reality to which our hearts choose to be more or less open.

An attentive guide recognizes when a person is totally absorbed in the outward impressions of sense and feeling available through the body. Often the conscious mind is preoccupied in dealing with what the world presents to the control of the empirical ego or surface self.

An attentive guide rejoices when the person begins to become aware of her or his own heart as it relates to the underlying ground of visible, daily reality. Each day, as one's heart beats on, it is either connecting with or missing the mysterious web of meaning and connectedness, of invisible Presence that holds everything together. The human heart will never be totally satisfied until it encounters the ultimate Other as the ground of All That Is, until it wakes up to the living, flowing presence of Mystery beneath the surface of everyday life. Spiritual guidance helps us to discover or recall, not so much the exact meaning of each separate part of our lives, but rather a picture of the whole that will help us to discern and trust the loving presence of a divine Someone Else flowing through everything that is.<sup>27</sup>

It is not only the art of spiritual direction that is recapturing the sense of the whole of life being lived, bodily in Mystery. Religious education — especially adult catechesis — is touched by a similar vision these days. A striking example is the RCIA, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.<sup>28</sup> Not so long ago, preparation for adult baptism was concentrated on one-to-one giving of information about the faith. Now the RCIA includes the entry into a formative community and a life-centered plan for individual growth and instruction that is primarily the sponsor's responsibility. The plan is linked to small house meetings and worship with other believers, and also to large group retreats and the Sunday celebrations of the local Christian community. Later, the "mystagogia"<sup>29</sup> shows the new Christian how the life of faith is responsibly linked to the lives of other people — locally and in the global church, which is the sign on earth of the all-encompassing Mystery of Christ. The paradigm has shifted — from the need to add new, truthful information to the individual mind, to communal sharing of life formation on the level of the other-centered heart.

Another related paradigm shift is under way in "official" Roman Catholic theology: the way in which that theology now describes the vocation and mission of lay Christians.<sup>30</sup> There is now a new definition of the particularly lay status and "charism." Lay Christians are those who, having been invited by the sacrament of baptism to enter totally into the heart of God and to accept the messianic vocation of Jesus the Redeemer, are then called by God to the world. This "call to the world" is presented as a deeply personal spiritual event, coming to each lay Christian individually from God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Accepting this call enables the baptized lay Christian to become a transforming presence in the world as loved and as being-saved by its Creator. Holiness — the holiness that flows from incorporation into the mystery of Jesus Christ — is fused in this description with a profound, generous, and courageous attentiveness to the world, and a readiness to act in the world. This approach will progressively in-



compatible with any spirituality that attends only to interior personal dispositions and not to a person's relatedness, in faith, to the whole created and human world as it enters that person's life field.

In the last thirty years, the major concern of new publications and of research in pastoral counseling and spiritual direction has been a many-sided effort to come to terms with various developments in the field of psychology. The scores of books that have been written range all the way from fervent denunciations of psychology to enthusiastic reinterpretations of concepts of classical mysticism in terms of psychological meaning. It is a scene of confusing richness and diversity.<sup>31</sup>

As more and more spiritual thinkers accept the fundamental orientation I have been describing in these last two sections — that a "spiritual" life is lived in relation to a human person's whole life field, very much including his/her society and its decisions and structures — it may be that psychology will have to "move over" a little from its present place in the center of attention for writers on spiritual guidance. More attention may in the future be paid to social analysis, social theology, biblical hermeneutics that include "political readings" of Scripture, and theories of social change. There also appears to be a renewal of interest in the more contemplative thrust of spiritual living,<sup>32</sup> in studying how spiritual persons co-constitute their world and transform their world. They are also many ways of studying how the Spirit of holiness leads believers into that hunger and thirst for peace and justice which is transformative in real history.

A style of guidance founded on the intuition that all of human life is essentially a dialogue of person and world will certainly be able to deal with the political, social, and professional dimensions of a person's vocation, as well as with the interpersonal, interior, and intrapsychic dimensions of his or her growth. A foundational approach to guidance tends to begin with whatever questions are emerging from the lived experience of the person who comes. Anchoring themselves in the truth of a universe-in-formation, guides aim to bring this person or these persons to an awareness of how they are co-forming whatever reality they experience. The guide aims also to move toward reflectively re-connecting all the detailed happenings of a person's life field with that person's deeper longing for God. A merely psychological approach or a mainly interiorized direction will probably not be as effective, over a lifetime, in helping a man or woman to discover and live out his or her unique call.<sup>33</sup>

Certainly the task of helping people to listen more carefully to the unique directions emerging from within their entire life field can be enhanced by a proper use of psychological and other scientific insights. It can be enhanced, too, by critical awareness of culture, by social awareness, and by historical knowledge.

The Christian guide, who in faith wishes to assist others from within the Christian tradition, will necessarily want to go beyond those human sciences. He or she will want and need to be immersed in the vision, the key ideas, and the classic texts of that tradition. Besides the need to become a person of prudence and of practical wisdom, the one who guides will also have to become a person of prayer.

James Fenhagen observes in *Invitation to Holiness* that the movement of the Spirit in prayer is always to lead us beyond our own limited horizon to a new dimension of encounter with the world.<sup>34</sup> Fenhagen remarks that prayer produces in us a new set of eyes through which to view the world, and then the motivation to respond in love to what we see.<sup>35</sup> It is this kind of holiness that is most often the aim of contemporary people who freely seek spiritual guidance for their hearts and lives.<sup>36</sup>