



BUILDING THE FACETS OF THE SOUL

Marilyn L. Buehler

May 2005

BUILDING THE FACETS OF THE SOUL

A soul quality clearly expressed is drawn into the personality and flows without distortion through one's consciousness into the physical world. This ability to bring a soul quality into the personality is called "building a virtue or facet of the soul."¹

As the personality becomes purified, the individual naturally begins to develop an inner sense of right action. During the process of purification, moral guidance in the form of ethical behavior can be a guiding light to develop discernment of right and wrong. Virtues are ethical behavior, which are the soul qualities, expressed through the personality. As humanity traverses the path returning to God, virtues are held as model behavior by the diverse religious systems through out the world. "Virtues are the silver thread running through all humanity's sacred literature as well as the oral traditions of the world's indigenous peoples. Virtues are described as the qualities of the soul and the attributes of God. They are the means by which we can reflect the image and likeness of the Creator."²

Wholistic wellness recognizes the relationship and connectedness of body, mind and spirit. Wellness includes developing the connection with the soul and living the soul's purpose in this world, and awareness of God in daily life. This paper will explore how to work with virtues in daily life to develop soul qualities, to be integrated into a wholistic approach to wellness. Learning to work with virtues can be a way in which to

¹Carol E. Parrish-Harra, Ph.D., *The New Dictionary of Spiritual Thought*, Expanded 2nd ed. (Tahlequah, Okla.: Sparrow Hawk Press, 2002), 314.

²Linda Kavelin Popov, Dan Popov, Ph.D., and John Kavelin, *The Family Virtues Guide, Simple Ways to Bring Out the Best in Our Children and in Ourselves* (New York: Penguin Books USA Inc., 1997), xii.

inspire another to turn their life in a more positive direction. Virtues can be used as the focus of meditation and one can work to develop virtues in daily activity.

Meher Baba stated, “Nothing is real but God, Nothing matters but love for God.”³ Virtues are considered love in action. Considering Meher Baba’s statement, virtues could also be considered an expression of that which is real. Vice, the opposite or distortion of virtue; therefore, is not real.

Living Virtues

A virtue, Aristotle said, is a pattern of behavior learned through practice, so that it becomes part of the way a person normally tends to act. Having the virtue of kindness does not mean knowing intellectually how a kind person would act. The teacher of ethics has to have that intellectual knowledge, so that he or she can identify kind people and kind actions and point them out to the pupils. But people who have the virtue of kindness are people who have actually done acts of kindness to the point that they regularly do the kind thing.⁴

Virtues are of the soul. When acting out of a distorted virtue, one acts out of attachment to the body. “. . . Greed is the natural outcome of attachment to the body . . . which breeds all vices, such as selfishness, hatred, pride, anger, jealousy, hypocrisy, and so forth.”⁵ As the aspirant awakens to the reality of his true nature as the soul, he may find it helpful to cultivate virtues as part of his spiritual practice. “He who follows the path of righteousness without the thought of the soul or God is a moral man; he who does the same with the idea of attaining unto God and soul is a spiritual man.”⁶

Rick Prater uses the term “living ethics” in his book *Bridge to Superconsciousness*. “The cornerstone of living ethics is spiritualized conscience, that inner

³ Irwin Luck, *The Silent Master Meher Baba* (North Myrtle Beach, S.C.: Meher Baba Archives, 1967), 5.

⁴ Robin W. Lovin, *Christian Ethics, An Essential Guide* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 2000), 64.

⁵ Swami Satpraksahananda, *Ethics and Religion* (St. Louis, Mo.: The Vedanta Society of St. Louis, 1968), 16.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

sense or right which has been qualified by our highest level of understanding. This spiritualized conscience enables us to act with love and intelligence from our highest understanding of truth.”⁷ Using the virtues expressed by ethical teachings of various religions, one can develop one’s own living ethics. When falling short of living the ideal virtue, one may find oneself struggling to move beyond its opposite, which is vice.

Looking to the Hermetic principle of polarity, “. . . we find that there is absolutely no such thing as Absolute Love or Absolute Hate, as distinguished from each other. The two are merely terms applied to the two poles of the same thing. Beginning at any point of the scale we find “more love,” or “less hate,” as we ascend the scale.” With this perspective, a vice is viewed as a lesser aspect of a virtue. The ideal would be to live the highest aspect of each virtue. In order to move beyond one’s vices, it is helpful to understand how the virtue can become distorted.

Virtues and Vices, Shadows and Compulsions

“Destiny is the divine law or will which guides us through our numerous existences. Every soul must experience happiness and unhappiness, virtue and vice, from the very commencement of its evolution up to that goal which is the Realization of God.”⁸ Humanity learns through the experience of opposites. As the individual develops an inner sense of right, focusing on developing virtues helps to live the highest understanding of one’s ideals. “The value of the practice of living ethics: Increases positive reactions and minimizes negative reactions.”⁹

⁷ Rick Prater, *Bridge to Superconsciousness* (Mariposa, Calif.: Source Publications, 1999), 25.

⁸ Bhau Kalchuri, *Lord Meher, The Biography of the Avatar of the Age Meher Baba* (Myrtle Beach, S.C. and Ashville, N.C.: MANifestation, Inc., 1986-2000), 6:2172.

⁹ Prater, *Bridge to Superconsciousness*, 20.

Vice is the opposite or absence of a virtue; these could be considered shadows or “places in our personality where our gifts are absent.”¹⁰ Dr. Richard P. Johnson in his book, *Loving for a Lifetime*, explores the idea that each virtue has a shadow and a compulsion. “Compulsions are aspects of our gifts exaggerated to such a degree that they become distorted and lose their healing, soothing, and fortifying power.”¹¹

As a professional counselor, Dr. Johnson observed that some patients were able to accept a sickness or terminal illness with a profound acceptance, which transformed their life. His work was in response to the question “What power sets these people apart from the norm? What special quality allows them to respond to tragedy in their lives with such peace of mind and calmness of action?”¹² He concluded what these individuals had in common was the expression of virtues in their life. His book, *Body Mind Spirit*, explains how each person has been given innate healing gifts, or has six primary virtues through which their life is expressed. As one falls out of alignment with their primary healing gifts or virtues, the shadows and compulsions are expressed in daily life and relationships. Understanding one’s healing gifts includes understanding the shadows and compulsion of these six gifts.

How to determine an individual’s healing gifts, or the six unique virtues, is not the focus of this paper. What is of interest is the value of seeing the shadows and compulsions or distortions of one’s healing gifts. When the individual is able to witness the

¹⁰ Richard P. Johnson, Ph.D., *Loving for a Lifetime* (Ligourri, MO: Liguorri Lifespan, 2002), 14.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹² Richard P. Johnson, Ph.D., *Body Mind Spirit, Tapping the Healing Power Within You* (Ligourri, Mo.: Liguorri Lifespan, 2002), 12.

shadow or compulsion and identify the distorted virtue, one can then, focus on the higher aspect or ideal of that virtue to serve as their path to wholeness.

Developing Virtues as a Path to Healing

Below is the list of the thirty virtues or “healing gifts” identified in *Body Mind Spirit*. Each person has six unique healing gifts intrinsic to their personality. Using this list as guide to identify the gifts working through the personality, one can identify a particular shadow or compulsion that may be expressed repeatedly. Once observing that distortion, focus on developing the highest aspect or virtue of that gift. For example, if one doubts their own abilities, they have the gift of God-reliance that has distorted. Through affirmation, prayer, and focus on moving from doubt to God-reliance, one can begin to express the highest qualities of the virtue of God-reliance.

<u>Compulsion</u>	<u>Gifts (Virtues)</u>	<u>Shadow</u>
1. Dependency	God-reliance	Doubt
2. Self-abasement	Humility	Self-centeredness
3. Aloofness	Acceptance	Dissension
4. Legalism	Mercy	Neglect
5. Presumption	Hope	Despair
6. Illusion	Vision	Blindness
7. Recklessness	Humor	Lamentation
8. Appeasement	Peace	Contentment
9. Self-forfeiture	Adaptability	Rigidity
10. Bluntness	Simplicity	Complexity
11. Overzealousness	Faith	Disloyalty
12. Perfectionism	Wisdom	Inadequacy
13. Sentimentality	Love	Fear
14. Parochialism	Wholeness	Fragmentation
15. Servitude	Charity	Judgment
16. Hyper-Euphoria	Joyfulness	Dejection
17. Reductionism	Trust	Insecurity
18. Pollyannaism	Love-finder	Fault-seeker
19. Ingratiation	Empathy	Obtuseness
20. Submissiveness	Gratitude	Blame
21. Indecision	Harmony	Chaos

22. Unresponsiveness	Patience	Impulsion
23. Brutishness	Strength	Impotence
24. Unreality	Transcendence	Worldliness
25. Self-Repression	Self-discipline	Self-indulgence
26. Skepticism	Honesty/Truth	Deceit
27. Excitability	Inspiration	Deadened
28. Co-dependency	Kindness	Indifference
29. Fixated	Steadfast	Unreliability
30. Imperiousness	Perseverance	Resignation

Allow a virtue to be a focus during the day. When the shadow or compulsion is observed, one can begin to move out of it by recognizing this as the unreal aspect of the virtue. The virtue as love in action can bring on into alignment with the soul. The virtue can become a focus of meditation and contemplating the qualities, meaning, and purpose of the virtue. It is also possible to work with affirmations to develop and cultivate the virtue.

Virtues and Agni Yoga

Agni Yoga associates a virtue with each astrological sign. “Agni Yoga suggests the influences under which person is born reveal what the soul has designated as virtues upon which one is to focus for this lifetime. Each person has three major qualities to develop, determined by assigned virtues of sun, moon, and ascendant.”¹³ The virtues associated with each astrological sign are as follows:

¹³ Parrish-Harra, Ph.D., *The New Dictionary of Spiritual Thought*, Expanded 2nd ed., 24.

<u>Astrological Sign</u>	<u>Virtue</u>
Aries	enthusiasm
Taurus	beauty
Gemini	universality
Cancer	leadership
Leo	love
Virgo	purity
Libra	reverence
Scorpio	transformation
Sagittarius	harmlessness
Capricorn	fearlessness
Aquarius	humility
Pisces	joy. ¹⁴

Based on one's astrological chart, it can be determined which three virtues are to be cultivated this lifetime. For example, with a sun in Capricorn, the virtue of fearlessness is to be developed. Again, the practice of meditation can be done using the virtue as the seed thought. One can create an affirmation to develop the virtue in need.

Virtues in Relationship

“Love is the source of every virtue.”¹⁵ Life and love are inseparable. Love brings us into relationship. The first relationship is with our self. We have relationships with others, with society, and with God. In the book, *The Many Faces of Virtues* by Donald DeMarco, the virtues are viewed from four perspectives: personal, interpersonal, social, and sacred. It is helpful to understand these four types of virtues in order to develop them.

Personal virtues include meekness, reverence, chastity, patience, determination, temperance, integrity, innocence, and uprightness. Interpersonal virtues include care,

¹⁴ Ibid., 24-25.

¹⁵ Donald Demarco, *The Many Faces of Virtue* (Steubenville, Ohio: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2000), 15.

courtesy, kindheartedness, lightheartedness, kindness, decency, modesty, compassion, and brotherly love. Social virtues include unselfishness, human sympathy, hospitality, conviviality, fairness, justice, social justice, leadership and honor.

The failure to effect reconciliation between the individual and the common interest is the one root cause of all antagonism between individualism and socialism. All conflict of democratic and totalitarian ideologies stem from this. And the only way to eradicate it is to transform the individualistic outlook by spiritual understanding. As the outlook will broaden, we shall consider it a privilege to do good to others. The egotistic attitude of kindness will give way to that of service. We shall no more clamor for our “rights” but concern our selves with our “duties”. We shall feel that we owe to the world much more than the world owes us . . . Hence the individual life is conceived as an organic part of the universal life.¹⁶

“He who lives a pure life is a great benefactor of society, even though he may not render any apparent active service. The potent influence of his noble thoughts, and deep feelings for all uplifts many knowingly or unknowingly.”¹⁷ By purifying our personality, and living a life closer to God, the influence may be unseen, but uplifts society.

The sacred virtues include obedience, gratitude, generosity, hope, forgiveness, endurance, prudence and thankfulness. “The highest expression of religious life is seeing and worshiping God in all beings. No ethical ideal can go beyond this.”¹⁸

Virtues as a Source of Healing

The Central Fire, the kernel of man, is a powerhouse of Light, Love, and Power. It is the source of life for the vehicles and even for the surrounding world. But, often, due to lack of integration and alignment, there is a very weak communication between the Central Fire and the three vehicles: the physical, emotional, and mental bodies. This lack of alignment and integration is the real cause of all psychosomatic illnesses, psychological disorders, and of

¹⁶ Ibid., 17.

¹⁷ Satpraksahananda, *Ethics and Religion*, 31-32.

¹⁸ Ibid., 43.

course all our personal and social problems. The basic method for healing these cleavages, disorders, and problems is to release the energy of the Divine Spark within us, to increase the vitality of our physical body, to increase the love energy in our emotional nature, and to increase the light in our mental world.¹⁹

Torkum Saraydarian explains, “If a person has a very strong vice, energy will work for the vice, though eventually it will destroy the mechanism. If the person has a great virtue, energy will radiate out as a pure service for humanity, and the mechanism of the person will be more healthy.”²⁰ The body, mind, spirit connection must be considered when approaching the whole person. A wholistic approach to healing should include a study of virtues, and their relationship to physical and mental health and spiritual wholeness.

Acknowledging Virtues Developing in Children

Speak the language of virtues with children. Children, as adults, are struggling with developing virtues. “The extraordinary responses one sees from both children and adults, when naming virtues, are linked to the fact that virtues are the attributes of the soul, and we believe it is the soul which responds.”²¹ Replace blaming and criticism with acknowledging the virtue that needs to be developed. Some virtues may not come easily to the child. If a child is reluctant to practice piano, mention that it requires self-discipline to maintain a regular practice. If a child wants something “right now”, talk about patience, and ask if they can call on patience to help them.

¹⁹ Saraydarian, *The Science of Becoming Oneself* (Sedona, Ariz.: Aquarian Educational Group, 1996), 23.

²⁰ Saraydarian, *The Challenge for Discipleship* (Sedona, Ariz.: Aquarian Educational Group, 1986), 63.

²¹ Linda Kavelin Popov, Dan Popov, Ph.D., and Jonn Kavelin, *The Family Virtues Guide, Simple Ways to Bring Out the Best in Our Children and in Ourselves*, 20.

Virtues as the Great Entities

Developing a virtue means to associate oneself with the cosmic Entity Who is the Source and embodiment of that virtue. As one increases in virtue, he becomes a part of that Entity, and the power, inspiration, and energy of the Entity passes through him. Thus we are told that major virtues, such as peace, beauty, love, harmony, striving, etc., are the names of great Entities. Ancient initiates knew this, and in their creative works they reveal this mystery to the public. We find virtues as titles of great works of art and virtues as names of heroes or Gods.²²

This is a concept to contemplate, that there may be great beings, or angels that are the embodiment or hold the archetype of each virtue. By focusing on a virtue, this being is invoked and may be a source of guidance for assisting one to develop the virtue. The Virtues are an order of angels; perhaps, this is why they have been named Virtues.

Conclusion

To penetrate into the essence of all being and significance, and to release the fragrance of that inner attainment for the guidance and benefit of others, by expressing, in the world of forms, truth, love, purity and beauty – this is the sole game which has any intrinsic and absolute worth. All other happenings, incidents and attainments can, in themselves, have no lasting importance.²³

In these times, the sense of deep values, appreciation for purity, development of virtues seems to be lost in the relentless pursuit of selfish desires. For those responding to a higher call, virtues can be the guiding light to develop moral character and purify the personality so that it can reflect the soul qualities.

Understanding the Human Condition

No one, however saintly he may be, has attained the heights of moral virtues except after a life of moral failings; and no one is so bad as to be unable to improve and become good. Everyone, no matter how depraved, can gradually become better and better until he becomes the best example for all mankind. There is always hope for everyone; no one is utterly lost, and none need despair. It remains

²² Saraydarian, *The Challenge for Discipleship*, 63-64.

²³ Kalchuri, *Lord Meher, The Biography of the Avatar of the Age Meher Baba*, 19:6398.

true, however, that the way to divinity lies through the renunciation of evil in favor of good. The gradual unfoldment of good brings in its train love, generosity, and peace.²⁴

When working with others, it is helpful to have an understanding that within each of us is the potential for moral failure and the ability to improve. No matter what state someone is in, if given guidance they can begin to turn towards the light and wholeness. It is sometime suffering that makes an individual ready to turn their focus and intent towards good. Understanding that the qualities of good are expressed through virtues is one method of changing focus.

Utilizing Virtues in Pastoral Ministry

“To enjoy good health, to bring true happiness to one’s family, to bring peace to all, one must first discipline and control one’s own mind. If a man can control his mind he can find the way to enlightenment, and all wisdom and virtue will naturally come to him.”²⁵ As a student chaplain, I have been developing a skill to listen to patients and assess them based on a virtues scale. I refer to the list virtues as healing gifts and the related shadows and compulsions. I observe a patient to identify what virtue is being expressed and experienced in the their life. I note if that virtue is expressed in its purity or through a distortion as a compulsion or shadow.

If appropriate, I will bring the virtue into the discussion and explore how its expression is part of their life. We may explore how to focus on the undistorted aspect of the virtue and let it serve as a healing gift in their life. Can I help them to understand that their doubt is their challenge to develop God-reliance? For those expressing insecurity, I

²⁴ Meher Baba, *Discourses*, 7th Revised Edition (Myrtle Beach, SC: Sheriar Foundation, 1995), 23.

can pray with them to develop trust. Fear is the shadow of love. Where there is fear, we can explore focusing on love, and identifying where love is acting in their life. Blame is the shadow of gratitude. Where there is blame, we can talk about gratitude, and work to express gratitude for the gifts in their life. Deceit is the shadow of honesty. If there is deceit, explore how can they seek honesty and truth in their life. Explore how can we find balance when a shadow or compulsion is predominant in their life?

Healing verses Curing

As a chaplain, one of my roles is to be with the patient to facilitate their healing. Healing is not curing. Healing is a return to wholeness, a gathering of the fragments of life, and restoring to wholeness through the relationship with God, the soul, or the inner self. When the patient moves toward identifying how God is moving through them, despite the illness, personal disaster, or shattered life, they are reconciled back to God in wholeness. Curing relates to fixing, and many times there is no way for a patient to be cured or to return to the state that existed prior to the accident or the onset of a major illness. Seeking a cure can lead to disappointment. Seeking healing and wholeness is a possibility for everyone at any stage or experience in life.

Through recognizing virtues as healing gifts, they can become the path to restore one to wholeness. Read St. Francis' Serenity Prayer, and note the shadows (in italics) and virtues (in bold). St. Francis' prayer for peace is a formula to transform shadows and express them as the healing gifts.

Lord, make me an instrument of Your **peace**.
Where there is *hatred*, let me sow **love**;

²⁵ [Society for the Promotion of Buddhism], *The Teaching of the Buddha* (Tokyo: Kosaido Printing Co., Ltd., 1966), 121.

where there is *injury*, **pardon**;
where there is *doubt*, **faith**;
where there is *despair*, **hope**;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is *sadness*, **joy**.
O, Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Demarco, Donald. *The Many Faces of Virtue*. Steubenville, Ohio: Emmaus Road Publishing. 2000.
- Johnson, Ph.D., Richard P. *Body Mind Spirit, Tapping the Healing Power Within You*. Ligourri, Mo.: Liguori Lifespan. 2002
- _____. *Loving for a Lifetime*. Ligourri, Mo.: Liguorri Lifespan, 2002.
- Kalchuri, Bhau. *Lord Meher, The Biography of the Avatar of the Age Meher Baba*, 20 vols. Myrtle Beach, S.C. and Ashville, N.C.: MANifestation, Inc. 1986-2000.
- Lovin, Robin W. *Christian Ethics, An Essential Guide*. Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 2000.
- Luck, Irwin. *The Silent Master Meher Baba..* North Myrtle Beach, S.C.: Meher Baba Archives, 1967.
- Meher Baba. *Discourses*. 7th ed. Revised. Myrtle Beach, S.C.: Sheriar Foundation, 1995.
- Parrish-Harra, Ph.D., Carol E. *The New Dictionary of Spiritual Thought*, Expanded 2nd ed. Tahlequah, Okla.: Sparrow Hawk Press, 2002.
- Popov, Linda Kavelin with Dan Popov, Ph.D., and John Kavelin. *The Family Virtues Guide, Simple Ways to Bring Out the Best in Our Children and in Ourselves*. New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books USA Inc., 1997.
- Prater, Rick. *Bridge to Superconsciousness*. Mariposa, Calif.: Source Publications, 1999.
- Saraydarian, Torkum. *The Challenge for Discipleship*. Sedona, Ariz.: Aquarian Educational Group, 1986.
- _____. *The Science of Becoming Oneself*. Sedona, Ariz.: Aquarian Educational Group. 1996.
- _____. *Talks on Agni*. Sedona, Ariz.: Aquarian Educational Group, 1987.
- [Society for the Promotion of Buddhism]. *The Teaching of the Buddha*. Tokyo: Kosaido Printing Co., Ltd. 1966.
- Swami Satpraksahananda. *Ethics and Religion*. St. Louis, Mo.: The Vedanta Society of St. Louis. 1968.