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A Vision for the Farther Reaches of Spirituality: A Phenomenologically Based Model of Spiritual Development and Growth

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We present a phenomenologically based model of spiritual development and growth. The model heuristically suggests three "spatial" facets—(a) deep within, (b) up and beyond, and (c) sideways and interconnected—assuming them to be related and yet distinct realms of spiritual development. The model further underscores the importance of alignment and harmony among the three facets of development, as well as the centrality of expressing spirituality in one's way of living and the importance of sustaining an intrinsic and intentional mindset. The model further notes that the developmental process is nonlinear and endless in nature, involves both conscious decisions and less conscious intentional actions, and might be better described as a process of "becoming." This developmental process is assumed to contribute to the development of inner personal wholeness, which is a quality not fully achievable. Such wholeness involves a sense of inner peace, integrity, and harmony; closeness to one's authentic self; a sense of "being held"; gratitude; a compassionate and caring stance; and a sense of meaning and purpose in life. We conclude by presenting a vision that inner and personal wholeness may lead to outer wholeness, among individuals and among social groups. Three facilitating aspects are suggested to create such a bridge between inner wholeness and outer wholeness: (a) values of respect, caring, and service; (b) a less exclusive circle of care; and (c) humility and pluralistic spirituality.

Keywords: caring, model of spiritual growth, spiritual development, wellbeing, wholeness

This paper introduces a phenomenologically based conceptual model of spiritual development and growth and discusses its culmination in benevolent outcomes and inner wholeness. In addition, the paper presents a vision that inner wholeness can also create wholeness among individuals and among groups of people and discusses facilitators of such process.

The paper opens with a brief discussion of spirituality and spiritual development and presents common definitions of these notions. It then presents the phenomenologically based model of spiritual development and growth by first discussing general characteristics of such developmental process ("how spirituality grows") and then discussing "what grows" by referring to three spatial facets of spiritual development and three general qualities of spiritual development and growth. We then discuss outcomes of spiritual development and growth by referring to inner personal wholeness as a comprehensive term and then present a vision for how inner personal wholeness can culminate in outer wholeness among individuals and among social groups, underscoring facilitating aspects in this process. We end with our hope that what starts as a personal search for the sacred may serve as a beacon to foster peace and wholeness in societies at large.

Spirituality and Spiritual Development

Definition of Spirituality

Spirituality is multifaceted and holistic. It refers to experiences, cognitions (beliefs, attitudes), feelings and emotions, worldviews, and

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individuals' ways of life. As a mysterious and elusive process, it is difficult to capture in words, and scholars have provided a host of different definitions (see summary in Pargament, Mahoney, Exline, Jones, & Shafranske, 2013). For example, Pargament (2011, p. 32) defines spirituality as "the search for the sacred," with sacred referring not only to God or a higher power but also to other facets of life that are conceived as manifestations of the sacred or the divine, such as nature, or as expressing sacred qualities, such as transcendence, boundlessness, and ultimacy. Lerner, Dowling, and Anderson (2003) view spirituality as involving transcending oneself and developing a commitment to contributing to others beyond the self. Most definitions include the following three aspects:

(a) The sacred, the divine, a higher power, or the transcendent. This aspect is the realization of the existence of something that is beyond the ordinary or the material, beyond body and mind, and infinite. It is often viewed as transcendent, but it may be immanent, or it may be both. It is larger than the self and can only be partly known or experienced and yet it is central to our existence. This realm may be described by different terms, such as God, the divine, a higher power, life energy, or the sacred.

(b) A connection. We have some form of affinity, tie, linkage, or relation with this transcendent/sacred sphere. We can perceive, experience. and contemplate it; be part of it; or hold part of it within us.

(c) Purpose and meaning. This connection often provides us with an ultimate (fundamental and vital) purpose and meaning to our lives.

Spiritual Development

Most spiritual traditions—whether old or new, part of a religion or reflecting individuals' endeavors outside religious traditions—conceive that all that exists is spiritual and, in particular, that all persons are spiritual beings (Benson, Scales, Syvertsen, & Roehlkepartain, 2012; Love & Talbot, 2000; Miller, 2015). In addition, humans have the capacity to contemplate the spiritual and to develop their spirituality. Spiritual development is conceived as a process that generally unfolds over time and by which individuals gradually increase their depth of awareness of and search for spiritual meaning, as well as their commitment to engaging in spiritual practices (Wink & Dillon, 2002). We can change and develop spiritually, and this development is often viewed as an endless, nonlinear process (Benson et al., 2012; Kiesling & Sorell, 2009). People differ in their awareness of this dimension in their existence and in their motivated investment in it (Moody & Carroll, 1997; Paloutzian, 2005). One way of thinking about this potential is to think of music. Everyone has the capacity and internal inclination to enjoy music and make music, yet individuals differ in how much, if at all, they invest in it.

According to Benson, Roehlkepartain, and Rude (2003, pp. 205–206), spiritual development can be defined as the "process of growing the intrinsic human capacity for self-transcendence, in which the self is embedded in something greater than the self, including the sacred. It is the developmental engine that propels the search for connectedness, meaning, purpose, and contribution." Spiritual development is often viewed as both a continual process (King & Boyatzis, 2004) and a movement between discrete stages (Fowler, 1981). Relying on Piagetian perspectives, Fowler (1981) articulated one of the most significant models relating to stages of spiritual development, where individuals progress from "undifferentiated" faith to faith that reflects critical reflection and introspection. Exploring the core processes of "what develops" in spiritual development, Benson and Roehlkepartain (2008) have suggested that spiritual development involves the processes of (a) awareness or awakening, (b) interconnecting and belonging, and (c) a way of living. They suggest that the central developmental process of spiritual development involves an integration of these core processes, reflecting a synergetic system capable of combining the strong human aspiration for a life of connection, interdependence, and purpose with a connection to deeper levels of the self.

The Phenomenologically Based Model of Spiritual Development and Growth

The model presented here is based on extant research, on conceptual models offered by researchers examining spiritual development and growth (see review in Friedman, Krippner, Riebel, & Johnson, 2012) and our own phenom-

enological research (Russo-Netzer & Mayseless, 2014; Russo-Netzer, 2017a, 2017b; Russo-Netzer & Mayseless, 2017). It is a descriptive model rooted in the phenomenology of personal spiritual change, growth, and development in a variety of spiritual traditions, both within and outside of institutional religions. Adopting a phenomenological perspective (Creswell, 2007; Van Manen, 1990) we aimed at uncovering the essence of the phenomena—spiritual development and growth—by focusing on the "lived experiences" of individuals and the exploration of the phenomenon as consciously experienced. To illustrate these processes, we use excerpts from interviews with individuals who have undergone spiritual change in their lives, using pseudonyms to protect their identities (Russo-Netzer & Mayseless, 2014; Russo-Netzer, 2017a, 2017b; Russo-Netzer & Mayseless, 2017). The interviews were conducted with the approval of an IRB ethics committee. It is a working model and hence it is open to changes, modifications, and reformations. Finally, the suggested model is a heuristic one, in that it presents a heuristic simplification of multifaceted processes that are mostly nonlinear and do not have an end point—it attempts to describe the mysterious and elusive personal processes of spiritual development and growth. The model includes a description of general characteristics of the spiritual developmental process that refer to how spirituality grows during such process and a three-dimensional, spatial metaphor as well as additional three general qualities that refers to what grows in the developmental process.

General Characteristics of the Spiritual Developmental Process: How Spirituality Grows

Nonlinear Process

We use the term *development* when discussing spiritual development, even though some of its connotations implicate the expectation of a linear process of positive change wherein later occurrences are viewed as better than earlier ones and these are often described as involving stages. However, this might not be the case with the development and growth of spirituality within individuals. Although individuals often discern changes and may relate to them in hindsight as involving stages that are more or less distinct, descriptions of spiritual development and growth often depict nonlinear changes where someone may go one step up (whatever up means) and then two steps down, in a more spiral form of development involving "regression in the service of transcendence" (Sharma, Charak, & Sharma, 2009). (Excerpts quoted here are followed by the individual's pseudonym, gender, and age.)

> It feels like I am working slowly, step after step after step after step, and also going back sometimes. If I compare this to a metaphor of going up a flight of stairs, it's sometimes important to go back two steps because things keep coming up all the time. It's circular; there are repeated things, because a certain point can make me want to look back at things. It's like going back to reexamine things. (Yasmin, female, 25)

> You keep learning, layer after layer after layer, with increasing depth. In this process, you cannot skip steps. . . . it's a process. You must go through a process, because if you skip from one end to the other you can fall to a deeper abyss. . . . It must come gradually. . . . in my experience, I can tell you that it is a way of life. . . . you have to live it. You go up a step and you go down, up one and down another. . . . It's constant, because it takes time until the next step is stable, when you know it is really yours, that you really earned it. (Tali, female, 53)

Even when going downward or backward appears at the time or in hindsight to be required for further growth, the description is not of a direct or linear path but a winding one or one with stops and sidestepping that includes getting lost, getting back on track, facing past challenges again with a new twist, and more.

No Final Set Point

Unlike canonical psychological models, often spiritual development or growth processes do not have a set point—a fully mature and healthy stance to aspire to. Unlike models of nonspiritual psychotherapy where a presenting symptom can be overcome and successfully dealt with, spiritual development and growth is in principle endless. Often growth-oriented therapies or interventions seek to heal the person and strive to help him or her attain wholeness (e.g., Vaughan, 1991), but such a situation is an "ideal type" rather than a tangible goal.

> There is no "final destination" here; it doesn't end anywhere. Taking this path is endless, with endless work. You move from one "room" to another and then

> another and so forth, and this is how you grow. (Boaz, male, 63)

> It never ends, never . . . at first it demands work, practice, attention, even effort and intention . . . and then comes a moment when it happens, when you know it is yours. Insights, comprehension, really assimilated within me even at times when I was not actively practicing. It doesn't go away, because it is already who I am, how I view the world, how I think, how I behave . . . So if we use a metaphor of stairs, then this is major progress, it's an important breakthrough and you can stay on that stair a long time until you get another insight like this one . . . It's not like you should reach a certain destination at the end. (Meirav, female, 45)

The model presented here mostly reflects spiritual growth and development throughout the various phases of adulthood, including emerging adulthood, midlife, and late adulthood. Although the past two decades have seen growing study and interest in the spirituality of children, its manifestation, and how to nourish such processes (Boyatzis, 2012; Hart, 2003; Miller, 2015), a conceptual model of such development is still needed to better understand these processes. It is yet to be explored whether the present model, based on studies with adolescents and adults, would apply to developmental processes of spirituality in younger ages.

Conscious Decisions and Less Consciously Intentional Actions

In adolescence and adulthood, spiritual development and growth often rests on a conscious decision to embark on that path or make it a life goal, sometimes a most central and significant one (Paloutzian, 2005). However, people also may grow and develop their spirituality without a conscious decision to do so (Pargament, 2011). Sometimes they may call it by different names, such as morality or character. It may emerge in them as they respond to life's demands, questions, challenges, and opportunities or following a trauma (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996) or a transcendent experience (James, 1902; McDonald, 2008). When people make a conscious decision to pursue a spiritual path and to invest in the development of the spiritual within them, their spiritual growth is strongly influenced by their intentional actions (e.g., to meditate daily, to go to a retreat, to ask themselves hard and deep questions, to forgive, to be thankful); however, it is also affected by many processes that are not intentionally geared to aid their spiritual development (e.g., volunteering, being in nature) and by a host of events, occurrences, and "coincidences" in their life that they respond to without a conscious decision informed by their general spiritual path.

> I began to see, to feel, that there is something beyond. Something that I do not exactly know how to explain in words, and I began to slowly search for its meaning . . . I began to really get into, to delve into some kind of spiritual search process. To read a lot of books, and engage in all sorts of channeling, and courses and workshops, and Reiki, past life regression, Vipassana, and rebirthing, a lot of searching, searching for questions, for answers, mediation . . . it's a lot but I can see truths in all kinds of ways . . . because each of us is a bit different and the variety of ways that exist today allow you to explore and understand things more deeply through different approaches. So you can really cover a wider spectrum. Because, eventually, all of this searching and exploration of different workshops, practices or methods are basically ways of "knowing thyself." All these allow me to know myself from the inside. (Yaron, male, 26)

Spiritual Development and Growth ("What Grows"): A Three-Dimensional, Spatial Metaphor

Spiritual development includes a great variety of experiences and developmental processes. Several metaphors, such as a journey, a quest (Roof, 1993, 1999), or inner work on the self (Russo-Netzer & Mayseless, 2017) have been suggested to describe it. The model presented here is, as stated above, a simplification of multifaceted and nuanced processes; yet we found that such processes can roughly be described using a three-dimensional, spatial metaphor that reflects three major directions or kinds of developmental processes and their interrelations. These three "spatial" dimensions, or facets, are suggested based on extant theory and research across cultures, religious traditions, and denominations (Benson et al., 2012; Hodge, 2000, 2013; James, 1902/1961; Miller, 2012; Pargament et al., 2013; Vieten et al., 2013), as well as research on individuals who pursue contemporary spiritualities outside the boundaries of traditional religions (Elbaz, 2012; Roof, 1999; Russo-Netzer & Mayseless, 2014; Sutcliffe, 2000; Wuthnow, 1998).

In this section, we describe each of these facets in terms of the developmental process and the kinds of feelings, emotions, and experiences associated with advancing in this pro-

cess, providing excerpts from interviews to bring the phenomenology alive. We then discuss similar conceptual and empirical models before we move to the next section which discusses "what grows" by referring to general qualities of spiritual development and growth: the interrelations among the facets, the importance of expressing spirituality in one's way of living, and sustaining the developmental process by a unique mindset.

First Facet—Deep Within

The first spatial direction is "deep within." This facet relates to our capacity to act in a harmonious and balanced way and often resembles what others have described as emotional maturity, integrity, and fidelity. It includes processes of reaching within to purify the self, to cleanse it from excess burdens, stains, cultural conditioning, fears, yearnings, anger, and other psychologically related impasses that impede our capacity to listen attentively to ourselves, identify who we truly are and what is really important and significant to us, and be at peace with our "authentic" self.

> Through this work you become aware of everything that happens to you, and you can peel out everything that is fake: fear, anger, worries, doubts, cravings, interpretations . . . you realize that it is not relevant, that it is poisonous. This continuously attentive awareness, again and again, to all of these processes has removed a lot of anxiety from my life, as well as existential fears and worries. (Rachel, female, 59)

> This process actually means shedding anything that disturbs and stands in my way, all that I have accumulated throughout the years whether in this life or in another . . . This is just the outer skin. It may represent something, may reflect something, but it's still just a mirror, and a mirror is not the truth. (Limor, female, 44)

This process is often experienced and described as involving acts of taking excess baggage away and cleansing, rather than incrementing and adding knowledge or skills, as if there is a clear, bright light that is within us and truly defines who we are and we want to expose it and stay connected to it.

> You work to get closer to yourself, leaving out external or temporal distractions . . . to get back to yourself, to your true authentic self, to come back home. (Yaron, male, 26)

> It's like working toward expanding your light and your precision, and it keeps growing and evolving. I am engaged in constant inner observation, getting to know myself, to expanding my vessel . . . your vessel becomes more accurate and you can rise above and see more. (Nofar, female, 47)

> When we do the work, when we shed our outer skins, when we cleanse ourselves from the unnecessary emotions that block us, we are reminded of the higher parts within us, we can reconnect . . . all these processes of connection and this expanded awareness allow more light to get in. (Efrat, female, 38)

> It is a very slow and gradual process which builds up . . . it's a repeated experience of awareness, presence, and self-connectedness, and also of self-acceptance, of the mistakes, of your weaknesses and low points, while accepting that this is all part of the process . . . it's a process, it's like bringing light to everything, to the past and to the present. It's a process of slow conquest, allowing me to slowly find my place. It's like discovering these strengths within me. (Ziva, female, 44)

The developmental process includes cleansing the self, making it more pure, refined, accurate, and valid, as well as more aligned, synchronized, and harmonized with what is perceived to be its true and innately good nature. The feelings, emotions, and experiences associated with advancing in this process include a feeling of peace within oneself, a sense of harmony and joy, and an experience of a full, authentic, and more stable sense of presence and equanimity. In terms of measures of well-being, these kinds of growth processes are often expressed as internal peace, harmony, and centeredness.

Second Facet—Up and Beyond

The "up and beyond" facet relates to our capacity to connect our physical and personal existence to the ideal, the ultimate, the sacred, the eternal, and the divine or transcendent in a sphere that lies outside the confines of space and time. This facet involves rising above, getting closer to the divine with its energy and presence, and developing the capacity to see things from above with perspective and compassion and consequently becoming more acquainted with the divine in oneself. As part of such development, people often experience bliss, get insights into the sacred and the infinite, and transcend their physical and psychological selves as well as expanding them, feeling part of an infinite whole.

The developmental process includes rising above and becoming closer, more a part of or more aligned with the sacred/divine. Addition-

ally, the sacred/divine becomes more present in one's life and experiences. The feelings, emotions, and experiences associated with advancing in this process include a sense of bliss and being "held" and secure, joy, elation, awe, and a sense of elevation. In terms of measures of well-being, these kinds of growth processes are often expressed as a sense of security, bliss, joy, awe, and gratitude.

> The work that needs to be done is expanding awareness, seeing things from above, and understanding that there is a kind of wholeness in all things, both bad and good . . . not to react automatically to everything you are used to, and mainly to really be present in every moment. This is the work that needs to be done. (Shelley, female, 32)

> This work is seeing everything from a different perspective, not as me, me, mine, but from a higher perspective . . . you discover that you exist in another dimension that is not an existence informed by your senses or intellect, but a kind of existential dimension that you can only experience. It is something entirely different. (Dorit, female, 52)

> It is not a belief nor a religion, it's knowing that you can be helped, that you have someone to talk to . . . that you are not alone, which is a huge thing. It changes everything completely . . . additional things happen along with it. You begin to be freed from very big fears you have, such as the fear of death. You know all the great fears . . . it's fantastic, this feeling of unconditional acceptance, it heals so many places inside . . . I cannot imagine my life without the connection to heaven, this higher wisdom, this guidance, it doesn't matter what you call it . . . call it God, the angels, the divine spirit, the Holy One Blessed Be He . . . it doesn't matter what you call it, the connection is just essential. It's impossible to live without it. (Mira, female, 57)

Third Facet—Sideways and Interconnected

The third facet, "sideways and interconnected," relates to our spiritual capacity to experience our interconnectedness to all that exists. This includes our interconnectedness with other people and the authentic and sacred bond that we can create with other people as discussed by Buber (1958) and using the relational spirituality concept (Davis, Hook, Van Tongeren, Gartner, & Worthington Jr, 2012). It also includes our capacity to feel embedded within a community in a way that transcends our differences and yet respects them and to feel connected and responsible to all humankind and to all living things— human and nonhuman. Such interconnectedness also extends to the inanimate world, to the environment, to our cosmos. and to the universe.

The developmental process involves promoting authentic connections with others and with all that exists, in a way that involves a flow of energy that creates and affirms this delicate interconnectedness with the compassion and responsibility that it entails. The feelings, emotions, and experiences associated with advancing in this process include a sense of connectedness; the effortless flow of energy that is vital and vibrating and connects us with other people, nature, and the world; and the concomitant love and compassion to all that exists along with a sense of "being held"' by this interconnection and being part of something bigger. Along with such love and compassion comes a sense of responsibility to take care of other people, close and strange, and to take care of the environment, as we are all interconnected and one. In terms of measures of well-being, these kinds of growth processes are often expressed as a sense of empathy, compassion, and responsibility; feeling an important part of a web of a larger whole; and having ultimate purpose and meaning to care and serve such wholeness of which we are part.

> Once you build yourself from the inside, you learn to develop love for others, you are able to develop some kind of sensitivity toward others and to see them from a position of true respect and sympathy rather than judgmentally . . . we are all human beings, and it doesn't matter who they are or what they do for a living. My heart is open to everyone . . . it makes you love people for what they are . . . it's a different experience. (Tali, female, 53)

> First and foremost it is about being a human being . . . to remember that the person in front of you is a human being, who has feelings and thoughts and dreams, who is scared and sad and happy, who loves and hates and is sometimes depressed like you . . . when I face another person then we can really be in a dialogue as equals, because what happens in many relationships is that we think we are better or not as good as the other person and that has a lot of impact on the dialogue. I am more open to others, I have more patience. (Shay, male, 34)

Similar Conceptual and Empirical Models

These three facets have been alluded to by many other scholars, albeit often using somewhat different terms and descriptions (see handbooks edited by Miller, 2012, and Pargament, Exline, & Jones, 2013). For example, coming from a philo-

sophical perspective and identifying very similar facets of spirituality in philosophical writings, Alexander (2001) has termed them subjective (referring to the *deep within* facet), objective (referring to the transcendent— *up and beyond* facet), and collective spirituality (referring mostly to the community and the cultural realm).

A known and similar categorization distinguishes between vertical spirituality, referring to the transcendent aspect and one's connectedness with God or a Supreme Being, and horizontal spirituality, referring to one's relationship with oneself, other people, or nature (e.g., Stoll, 1989). Similar distinctions have been proposed in suggesting three kinds of prayers (Ladd & Spilka, 2006) that are conceived as fostering connectivity with the self (inward prayer), with others (outer prayer), and with the divine (upward prayer). Finally, a promising scale termed SHALOM has distinguished four facets of spiritual wellbeing: personal, communal, environmental, and transcendental (Fisher, 2010). The personal scale deals mostly with issues related to *deep within* processes, the communal and environmental scales relate mostly to the *sideways and interconnected* facet, and the transcendental involves the *up and beyond* facet.

In sum, our model, which rests on phenomenological analyses of interviews with individuals from various orientations and traditions undergoing spiritual change, appears to resonate with several ongoing themes in the scholarship of spiritual development. Such similarity across a number of researchers and perspectives provides some cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary validity to the bottom-up approach that we have undertaken.

Spiritual Development and Growth ("What Grows"): General Qualities

Interrelations Among the Three Facets of Spiritual Development and Growth

The developmental processes in each of these facets are somewhat distinct, yet they are clearly interrelated and affect each other. For example, by advancing in the *up and beyond* process, individuals may find the courage and the insights to go deeper into their soul and mind to tackle issues they need to face to become more pure and authentic. Similarly, by engaging in inner work on the self, individuals become more truthful to themselves and less defensive and therefore become more open, compassionate, and caring with other people. As another example, investing in service to others and caring for the needy may render a person more thankful and humble and hence closer to the beyond.

Yet different spiritual traditions and different individuals may focus on one or two of the facets with less investment in the others. This preference may be temporary or may reflect a moderately stable quality of the individual or the spiritual tradition. Based on phenomenological accounts of individuals' experiences of spiritual change and relying on other models of spirituality (e.g., Benson et al., 2012; James, 1902/1961), we suggest that spiritual development as a whole also involves the increased alignment of the three facets, their interconnectedness, and balance among them. By this we do not mean equilibrium or homeostasis, because the human body, psyche, and soul are part of the ebb and flow of life and hence there is no static and stable balance or equilibrium. Furthermore, from the interviews it became clear that it is customary to invest in one facet and then perhaps in another, rather than in all three of them at the same time in tandem. Yet, as individuals narrate their progress in spiritual development, they often recount that they experience more balance, harmony, interconnectedness and alignment among the three facets.

> If you want to be able to rise above, you have to do emotional work, to reach places requiring the resolution of internal and deep conflicts . . . you have to clean [yourself]. The more you are emotionally and psychologically balanced, the more you can transcend . . . You cannot separate the two. (Mira, 57, female)

> When we do the work, when we shed our outer skins, when we cleanse ourselves from the unnecessary emotions that block us, we are reminded of the higher parts within us, we can reconnect . . . all these processes of connection and this expanded awareness allow more light to get in. (Efrat, female, 38)

The Importance of Expressing Spirituality in One's Way of Living

Individuals recount that spiritual change and growth is also observed in their and others' behavior and acts in the real world. Participants in our studies, as well in in other studies, stress that this expression of spirituality as a way of

living is central to spiritual development (Benson et al., 2012).

> I think that people who practice spiritual practices can sometimes become addicted to it in the sense of wanting to stay in this state of high, of spiritual experiences . . . it's very magical of course and sometimes can be ecstatic, but it's not real . . . because you cannot leave your psychological issues, your physical life behind and go to live in some kind of monastery in the East, practice meditation and be happy. It doesn't work that way. We cannot ignore what surrounds us and the other parts of us, such as needs and our mental and emotional structures . . . so only when spirituality is exposed to real life, can you say it is real. (Alon, male, 35)

> Let's see you be spiritual in the bank and in the central bus station; this is the challenge. . . . this is where real spirituality counts, and this is much harder . . . It's not like something that you achieve and it's like a pink cloud made out of feathers and you just float in the heavens. It is something that you work on all the time. All of the spiritual insights are really measured in how you implement them in real life. Because life in the real world, and especially here in Israel, is full of nonspiritual things, allegedly nonspiritual . . . and the question is how you deal with it. To be really spiritual is to connect, rather than separate, real life and spirituality. (Gideon, male, 51)

An Intrinsic, Intentional Mindset Aiming for Authenticity, Connectedness, and the Sacred

Because the whole process of spiritual development is infinite in essence and does not have an endpoint, and because it involves a nonlinear developmental process, it can best be described as a continuous developmental process of *becoming*. Furthermore, the developmental process of becoming includes not only nongradual ups and downs but also arduous and difficult experiences that require sacrifice.

> It's like a piece of tin that gets into a Ferrari factory and doesn't know that all the hits, abuse, and mistreatment it gets is meant to eventually make it into a Ferrari. At the end of the process it says "look how beautiful I am, maybe I should have received some more bumps so I would become even more perfect." You see, I can look back and realize that all these inner processes, all these struggles, are things that I have to go through in order to become better. I wouldn't change a thing, even though it is difficult. (Reuven, male, 47)

This developmental process is not easy to maintain. Indeed the interviewees in our studies have described that such investment in spiritual development is often, but not always, sustained by a unique mindset. This mindset involves an intrinsic intention toward authenticity, connectedness, and the sacred that is reflected in deliberate choice, openness, engagement in intentional and mindful attention, and courage.

> You do this [spiritual] work because you want to understand, to learn, to change, to crack, to agree to see who you really are and it is hard . . . it's really hard because it means getting inside your gut, going all the way . . . you have to be in a state where you understand that you can choose and that you are strong enough to choose and take responsibility for it. It's knowing that there is a hand somewhere that is reached out for you, if only you would agree to reach yours as well. It will come but you have to want it, to choose it. (Tali, female, 53)

> I think that choice is the essential thing here. I chose this [spiritual] path. I chose and I continue to choose every day to remain in the position of choosing . . . there is always a choice of whether to persist . . . and the universe, it tries you out, to check if you are really serious. (Nathan, male, 43)

> It demands a lot of courage . . . an inner courage to cope with things that are rising from the inside, and an external courage of not ascribing too much meaning or importance to things everyone else does . . . it requires that you know your direction and stick to it. (Dorit, female, 52)

> Awareness is critical. You cannot do this process without awareness. It's not something you do because someone 'brainwashed' you. It has to come from you. It has force and power because it comes from your awareness, from your observation, from your attentiveness. You have to be able to observe. If you do not, you cannot do it. (Yasmin, female, 25)

> You need to have a strong will to be open and attentive. In my experience, you need to maintain open eyes and an open heart. To be willing to be aware, to learn things about yourself, to acknowledge how much you do not actually know and to be open to it. [Yaron, male, 26]

Summary of the Phenomenologically Based Model of Spiritual Development and Growth

In sum, and as can be seen in Table 1, according to the model presented here, spiritual development involves advancing in the following:

1. Each of the three spatial facets (deep within, up and beyond, and sideways and interconnected), which complement and are interrelated with each other, but are somewhat distinct;

Table 1
Phenomenologically Based Model of Spiritual Development and Growth

How spirituality grows?	
General characteristics	Nonlinear
	Endless in nature – a process of "becoming"
	Conscious decisions and less consciously intentional actions
What grows?	
Development in: Spatial facets of spiritual development	Deep within
	Up and beyond
	Sideways and interconnected
Development in: General qualities of spiritual development	Alignment, interconnectedness, harmony, and balance among the three facets
	A way of living in daily life
	Adoption of an intrinsic, intentional mindset

2. Alignment, interconnectedness, harmony, and balance among the three spatial facets;
3. The expression of the three spatial facets as a way of living in daily life; and
4. The adoption of an intrinsic, intentional mindset aimed toward authenticity, connectedness, and the sacred.

Spiritual Development Leading to Inner Personal Wholeness

Generally speaking, such advancement is expected to lead to greater wholeness, resolution of internal conflicts, internal peace, joy, and meaning in life and to be expressed in qualities such as compassion and caring and service to others, the environment, and the world at large. And indeed the past two decades have seen a growing number of empirical studies that have demonstrated the contribution of spirituality to a host of positive outcomes and human optimal functioning (e.g., Dierendonck & Mohan, 2006). Substantial evidence shows that spirituality and religion are strongly associated with better mental health and psychological well-being (e.g., Hill & Pargament, 2003; Koenig, McCullough, & Larson, 2001; Wills, 2009) and physical health (Elmer, MacDonald, & Friedman, 2003; Miller & Thoresen, 2003) and that they act as moderators for better psychological adjustment to negative life experiences (e.g., Young, Cashwell, & Shcherbakova, 2000) and less substance abuse (Moreira-Almeida et al., 2006). Religion and spirituality play a significant role in providing a sense of identity and in satisfying universal human needs for coherence, mastery and control, belongingness, purpose, and attention to existential concerns (Pargament, 2002; Park, 2005, 2013; Park, Edmondson, & Hale-Smith, 2013). The growing number of theories and models that have discussed issues of spirituality in fields such as education, psychology, social work, nursing, sociology, and counseling reflect the current broad acknowledgment of the meaningful significance of spirituality in human development (e.g., Furman, Benson, Grimwood, & Canda, 2004; Mohan & Uys, 2006; Rose, Westefeld, & Ansely, 2001; Tanyi, 2002). Recently the World Health Organization (WHO) decided to include spirituality and religiousness as a significant aspect of quality of life (Javed, 2015).

Based on the previous findings discussed above, as well as phenomenological evidence (Russo-Netzer & Mayseless, 2014, 2017; Russo-Netzer, 2017a, 2017b), we suggest that spiritual development that involves the three spatial facets, their alignment, and their expression in a way of living that is sustained by an intrinsic, intentional mindset would contribute to the development of inner personal wholeness. Such inner wholeness is not an end state. Like the whole process of spiritual development that we describe as reflecting a quality of becoming it is a growing state rather than a stable one or a final destination. The term *wholeness* that we adopt here refers to a holistic sense of self that involves embracing and accepting "negative," "dark," or unsettling sides of the self.

> I have had so many parts within me that I refused to acknowledge . . . like my anger, my aggression, even my cruelty. These things were the most difficult to encounter, but once I did, so much space cleared up. All those

> weights that I had carried, I've learned to treat them as my growth space and not as my enemy . . . I let go of control and met these parts within me of hard feelings, of my weaknesses, of death wishes, and it is such a corrective experience because once you validate these parts within you, when you accept them rather than struggle, you finally feel whole. (Amit, Male, 51)

Such inner personal wholeness comprises the following qualities (Mayseless, 2015): a sense of inner peace, integrity, and harmony where different aspects of one's life are aligned and connected; a sense of closeness to one's authentic self that serves as a compass in life; a sense of trust and of "being held" throughout the process and interconnectedness up and sideways; an appreciation of the potential for growth and gratitude for what has been achieved; a compassionate and caring stance; and a sense of meaning and purpose in life.

In many respects, inner wholeness resembles the descriptions of eudemonic well-being that is based on notions of growth, self-actualization, and meaning rather than hedonia, which involves maximizing experiences of pleasure and positive emotions and minimizing negative ones (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Overall, pursuing hedonia is generally related to personal well-being (e.g., Huta & Ryan, 2010; Peterson, Park, & Seligman, 2005), whereas the pursuit of eudemonia is associated with both personal well-being and caring that goes beyond self-interest (Huta & Waterman, 2014).

> I am happier today . . . but a different kind of happy . . . I'm not "happy high (yoo-hoo)," but a more gentle, subtle and silent kind of happiness that lies deep within. It is much more stable, much more lasting. An inner happiness in my heart . . . it is something that stays, it's always there even if something happened and I'm angry or sad, it's there. (Meirav, female, 45)

> I feel I am much calmer and peaceful, and ultimately much happier . . . I feel that I have more joy in my life now, less falseness, less pretending, less "playing" . . . I am much truer to what I am feeling, closer to myself . . . it clearly gives me much more peace and serenity, but its greatness is that along with peacefulness it also leaves space to be human, to be angry. (Alon, male, 35)]

> There is no greater happiness than touching other people's lives and being living proof that there is hope and that there is something to strive for . . . that there is a meaning to life. My whole life has changed and I want to give back. I only want to do things that matter. I do not want any money for it [volunteer work with cancer patients; P.R.N.], I just want to help people recover, to hear them, to help them realize the gifts of life. That makes my life meaningful, knowing that I have a role to play here . . . We all have a limited time in this world and if I do not use it for doing things that can benefit other people, the world, then I am wasting it. (Rachel, female, 59)

From Inner Personal Wholeness to Outer Wholeness—An Advocated Vision

Inner and personal wholeness is most often not confined to the individual. It radiates to intimate circles, such as one's family and friends (Mahoney, Pargament, Murray-Swank, & Murray-Swank, 2003), but also to larger ones. We believe that it can affect large social groups as well as intergroup relations and perhaps even nations. We envision a possible bridge from inner to outer wholeness, such that the integrated inner and personal wholeness can also yield outer wholeness, that is, wholeness among individuals and among social groups. Such outer wholeness includes qualities similar to inner wholeness. For example, it involves the acceptance of positive and negative, or "dark," aspects in the relationships among group members and in the relations among social groups. It involves respect, compassion, caring, and a sense of interconnectedness that is stimulated by seeing the divine in others even beyond differences and discord. These qualities can grow a sense of shared responsibility to each other and the universe. It is a utopian vision but a possible one. Just like inner personal wholeness, which is a process of becoming, we can aspire to cultivate outer wholeness that can gradually grow and "become."

Several factors can facilitate this extension from the individual to broader circles of influence, such as groups. Three such facilitators that can help arouse shared humane values and harness the spiritual that we all share in creating wholeness in and among social groups are: (a) values of respect, caring, and service; (b) a less exclusive circle of care; and (c) humility and pluralistic spirituality.

Values of Respect, Caring, and Service

In most spiritual traditions, the qualities of compassion and caring, as well as giving and bestowing, are ascribed to the divine or the sacred. They are further conceived as central qualities that should be nurtured and pro-

moted in human life and are often viewed as a compass for our ultimate destiny (Mayseless, 2016a). In fact it has been suggested that by caring and having compassion for and responsibility to all that exists we actualize the divine in us, because through care we embody divine qualities—"we give and sustain life and help it heal, grow, and thrive" (Mayseless, 2016a, p. 348). We conceive of this general humanistic dimension as including basic humanistic respect for all that exists (Mayseless & Scharf, 2010). That includes a compassion and caring component, which often is associated with the emotional realm; responsibility and connection to all that exists, which is often associated with the attitudes and beliefs realm; and the service component, which accentuates the importance of actual responding and prosocial action. All three components are conceived as part of the sideways and interconnected facet described in the model of the development of spirituality presented here.

Research has demonstrated that religiosity and spirituality are indeed associated with benevolence and prosocial responding across cultures and traditions (Saroglou, Delpierre, & Dernelle, 2004). However, religious and spiritual traditions differ in the extent to which they emphasize these humanistic values and underline their centrality and importance. Furthermore, within self-led spiritual quests outside religious contexts and within the new-age, sociocultural milieu, there is often a predisposition to focus on the self and strongly cherish authentic self-development. In this context, where spiritual development is focused on the self ("self spirituality"; Heelas, 1996), the importance and centrality of caring, service, and prosocial responding might be attenuated.

We suggest that spiritual development that is based on shared humane values of respect, compassion, caring, responsibility, connection, and service would facilitate a bridge between inner personal wholeness and outer wholeness among individuals and among social groups.

A Less Exclusive Circle of Care

We further suggest that a commitment and obligation to the giving side of our nature is at its best when there are no formal or informal limits on what we term the *circle of care* (Oliner & Oliner, 1988). Some spiritual traditions that advocate compassion, caring, responsibility, and service limit the circle of entities (e.g., people, animals, objects) that is deemed worthy of care, or at least they sanction such prosocial responding only to an ingroup (whatever the criteria are for this ingroup). Even in cases where general benevolence is expected, informally the norms may focus mostly on ingroup members or on certain entities—human or nonhuman—and not on others (e.g., global warming is not a problem that needs to be addressed). The human tendency to prefer ingroups over outgroups or close family members over strangers is universal and understandable (Mayseless, 2016a; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). However, research has demonstrated that the boundaries that we create between ingroups and outgroups are quite flexible and malleable (Mayseless, 2016a; Van Vugt & Park, 2009). In fact, a fundamental part of our spiritual nature is our capacity to extend ourselves beyond our self and our close circle and transcend our divisions, an extension that is often conceived as reflecting the sacred or the divine within us (Hart, 2014; Mayseless, 2016b; Miller, 2015). This capacity for self-transcendence, self-expansiveness, and self-extension allows us to broaden our circle of empathy, care, and prosocial responding to all that exists.

We argue that a central aspect that can facilitate wholeness among individuals and among groups is related to how broad we draw our circle of care and how flexible we are in extending it beyond common divisions of race, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender, nationality, religious creed, and human versus nonhuman entities. We suggest that broad and flexible circles of care that are less exclusive can greatly help in facilitating wholeness in groups and among groups.

Humility and Pluralistic Spirituality

The third dimension that we believe is significant in facilitating outer wholeness relates to humility and the adoption of a pluralistic spirituality stance (Worthington, Davis, & Hook, 2017). Often spiritual traditions or spiritual development that is self-led adopt a stance of truism and certainty, namely a

strong belief that the specific way by which they understand and experience their spiritual way is correct and that it is THE only correct way. We do not contest the truthfulness of religious or spiritual beliefs but suggest that such a stance often leads to delegitimization of other beliefs and dogmas; to a sense of being on higher moral ground than others who do not subscribe to one's dogma; and to efforts, sometimes very coercive and even violent ones, to convince others to "convert." Sometimes this sense of ultimate certainty leads to delegitimization of even the mere existence of others who do not subscribe to one's dogma.

We view this issue as a very significant aspect that is thorny and delicate and try here to address it by referring to two qualities of both the individuals subscribing to a certain dogma and the dogma itself: humility and pluralism. Humility in general and spiritual humility have been discussed as central qualities in major world religions, although they sometimes refer to humility in the face of the divine rather than with regard to one's credo (Davis, Hook, McAnnally-Linz, Choe, & Placeres, 2017). It has been suggested that humility involves an accurate assessment of self, including one's limitations; an honest self-presentation; and an other-oriented stance (Worthington, Davis, & Hook, 2017). Here we focus on similar yet somewhat distinct qualities. By humility we mean a quality of being vulnerable and open to new insights and experiences that may contradict or may be dialectical to our current beliefs. By humility we further refer to the quality of deeply understanding our innate imperfection and fallibility as humans and the availability of unlimited ways and perspectives to grasp ourselves, the world, the sacred, and the divine.

By spiritual pluralism we mean a very delicate and nuanced dialectic in which, on the one hand, we are confident and firm regarding a certain truth because of faith and/or because of the ultimacy of our experiences and understanding, and at the same time, on the other hand, we are deeply aware that we are always limited and finite in our understanding and what we see now and our current insights may only reflect a certain perspective or a specific angle of an infinite and eternal realm, only part of which we can glimpse. In that sense, we both strongly believe in something or even "know" it to be true and also acknowledge our limitations and our incapacity i to know all. Similar aspects have been described using terms such as cultural humility (Hook, Davis, Owen, Worthington Jr, & Utsey, 2013). Acknowledgment of this allows us to be both certain and yet pluralistic in respecting other spiritual belief systems and other people who do not see the world the way we are certain that it is.

We suggest that the extent to which individuals and spiritual traditions are humble and subscribe to pluralistic spirituality is critical to the extent to which spirituality is associated with wholeness at the macro level—within groups and among groups.

In sum, we suggest three central facilitators of outer wholeness at the group level. The existence of (a) a clear humanistic call to adopt values of caring and service, (b) a less exclusive circle of care (broad and flexible), and (c) internalization of a quality of humility as well as a pluralistic spirituality stance would facilitate wholeness among individuals as part of groups as well as among groups. High levels of these facilitators appear to be associated with benevolent conduct with self and others and with the capacity to forgive (Oliner & Oliner, 1995; Worthington, Davis, & Hook, 2017). Furthermore, high levels of such qualities can be conceived as leading to wholeness—not only within the person but in his or her relations with the world (animate and inanimate alike) and to external peace. They can also contribute to resolutions of conflicts and help bridge gaps among groups across cultural and societal divides and rifts (see Figure 1 for a description of the process from inner and personal wholeness to outer wholeness).

Concluding Remarks

The main impetus to suggest the heuristic model of spiritual development and growth and the facilitators of the benevolent impact of inner wholeness on outer wholeness began as we were searching for a model to understand our own personal processes as well as spiritual change and growth processes in people around us and as we wanted to understand the diverse and sometimes confusing manifes-

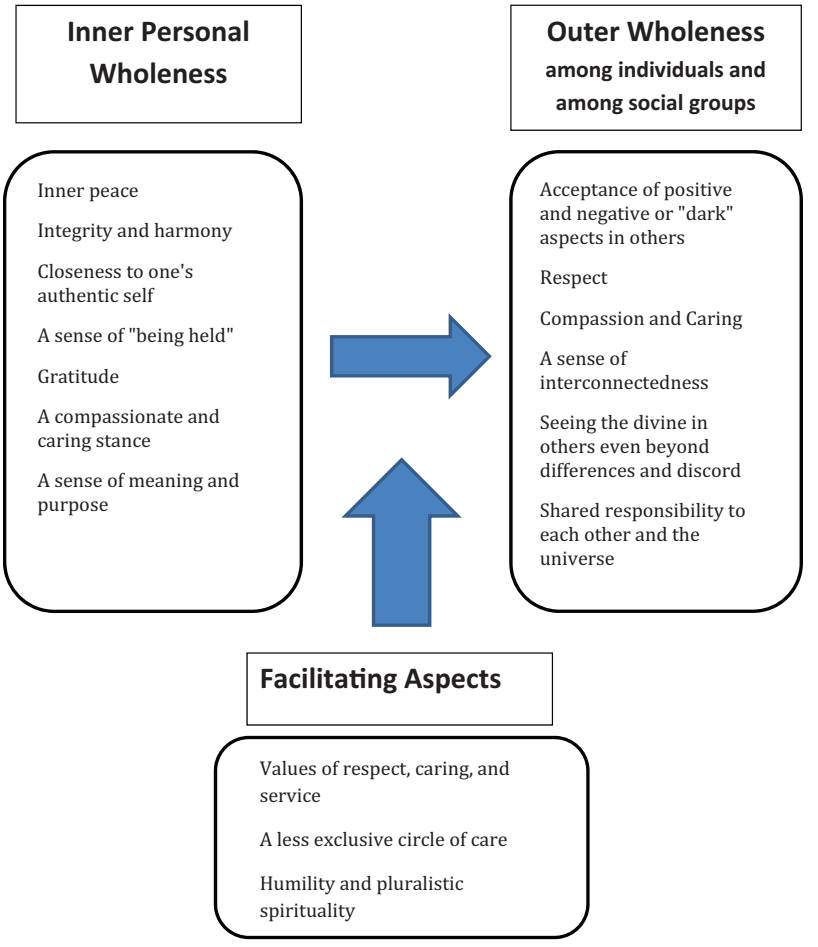

Figure 1. Outcomes of spiritual development and growth: From inner personal wholeness to outer wholeness. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

tations of such change processes. We believe that the model of spiritual development suggested here can be of help to psychotherapists and in particular those who engage in spiritually oriented or spiritually integrated psychotherapy as they try to understand their clients' concerns and developmental processes (Sperry & Shafranske, 2005). We further believe that the model suggested and the vision of outer wholeness and its facilitators that may enable an expansion from inner personal wholeness to outer wholeness can provide a tentative road map to observe such processes and make sense of them, both in research and in practice. Finally, we hope that the inner wholeness that gradually grows as individuals spiritually develop can serve as a bridge to foster wholeness and growth in societies at large.

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