



*Arrows Tipped with Flowers:
Threshold Theory for Transformative Learning*

Supplemental Resource

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The purpose of this supplemental resource is to empower your participation in threshold theorizing. The brief commentaries, graphics, selected quotations, and questions are intended to help you interrelate the wide-ranging concepts found in the book. Please keep in mind that only a portion of the terms and ideas presented in the book are included here. To develop your own vocabulary relevant to learning at the threshold, you will most likely want to integrate additional concepts from the book, as well as terminology that reflects your background and fields of interest. Pioneering new kinds of conversations challenges us to articulate what it is that we observe and experience in the world and in ourselves. That social movement of generating new thought and language can inspire, console, and constrain us. Most significantly, it can move us closer to the integral knowledge formation processes that womanist wisdom offers to us as possibility. Whether you utilize this resource by yourself or within a group, throughout your reading or only at certain junctures, I hope that the review it provides, and the responses it provokes in you, enriches your reading and comprehension journey.

QUESTION KEY



Inter- and Intrapersonal



Critical Question



Creative Question



Integrative Question

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Introduction



COMMENTARY ON THE INTRODUCTION

In conversations about transformative learning, key topics, like “becoming unstuck,” are reminding people that learning involves psychological transformations. “Threshold concepts” in higher education are defined as transformative, troublesome, and irreversible once comprehended, since they open the learner to a new worldview. *Arrows Tipped with Flowers* does not help instructors to identify threshold concepts within their field, nor does it assist them to mark out trajectories through which students attain mastery. Instead, it aims to develop in readers a broad yet deep understanding of thresholds themselves.

In the study of threshold theory as a means of addressing limitations in our current approaches to human development, the threshold itself functions as a gateway concept or door, through which we apprehend what makes learning transformative. The book’s Introduction offers that “the spirit of inquiry itself” requires us “to articulate and protect in institutional life, a psychology of integrity.” This view of engagement relates inquiry and transformative learning directly to human evolutionary processes. The ability to reason experimentally inheres within all behaviors, and that holds true for non-human life as well. Education involves the totality of our humanity and relationship to that which is beyond us. Consequently, eradicating systemic problems in education asks us to familiarize ourselves with perhaps unfamiliar topics, pertaining to the life drives and a kinship worldview, for example. Furthermore, we need to recognize upfront that this linking together of interiority, inquiry, and integrity points to the visionary project of forging what Sylvia Wynter called a “science of life beyond the master discourse.”

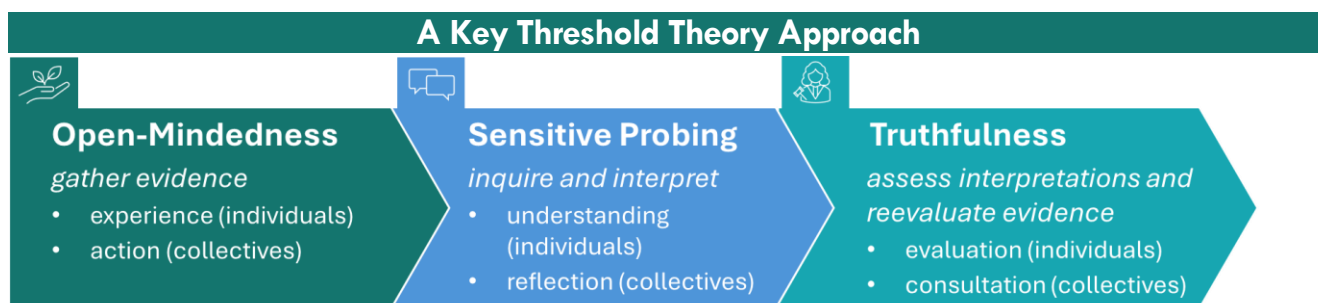
FOOD FOR THOUGHT

What are Threshold Concepts?

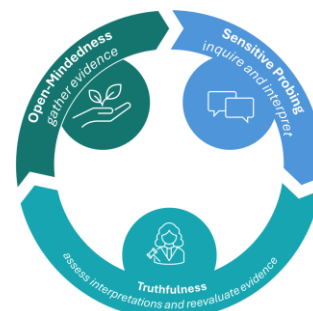
Below are examples of threshold concepts identified by researchers in higher education:

- ▶ **Deconstruction** in Cultural Studies
- ▶ **Signification** in Humanities
- ▶ **Inertia** in Physics
- ▶ **Natural selection** in Biology
- ▶ **Progressive Revelation** in Bahá’í Studies
- ▶ **Dependent co-arising** in Buddhism Studies
- ▶ **Resistance** in Social Justice
- ▶ **Post-oppositionality** in Womanist and Transformations Studies

Can you think of others? Keep in mind that a given field can have more than one worldview-shifting portal concept. Pursuing a pluralist approach to threshold concepts moves us beyond predetermined disciplinary enclosures. As it leads us into domains of creative overlap, it encourages interdisciplinary thinking.



To the right the transcendental methods and precepts described by Daniel Helminiak are positioned in their actual circular relation to each other. The poststructural component of post-oppositionality may abide in the relationship of truthfulness to open-mindedness. When practicing truthfulness at the threshold, all non-empirical certainties dissolve. Truthfulness and open-mindedness unite.



CHAPTER QUOTE

“Those exploring threshold concepts revive forms of veneration with long-standing recognized merit, but with the need for a dusting off. They awaken respect. . . for virtues like truthfulness, courage, and humility, which lose priority in Western secular education. –JG

QUESTIONS

IP-Q

What are your own experiences of challenges and breakthroughs in learning, whether in designated educational settings or everyday life? In addition to remembering actual emotional responses, consider their political, social, moral and spiritual dimensions.

IP-Q

What are your experiences of stuckness and those of your peers, relations, and-or students? If the experience of stuckness ended in quitting or believing a given path was “not for you” what do you think are the reasons for that? You may want to consider this response, too, in ecological, and relational terms, which pertain to the role of community and institutional authority in this situation, as well as how that experience of troublesomeness influenced those social conditions.

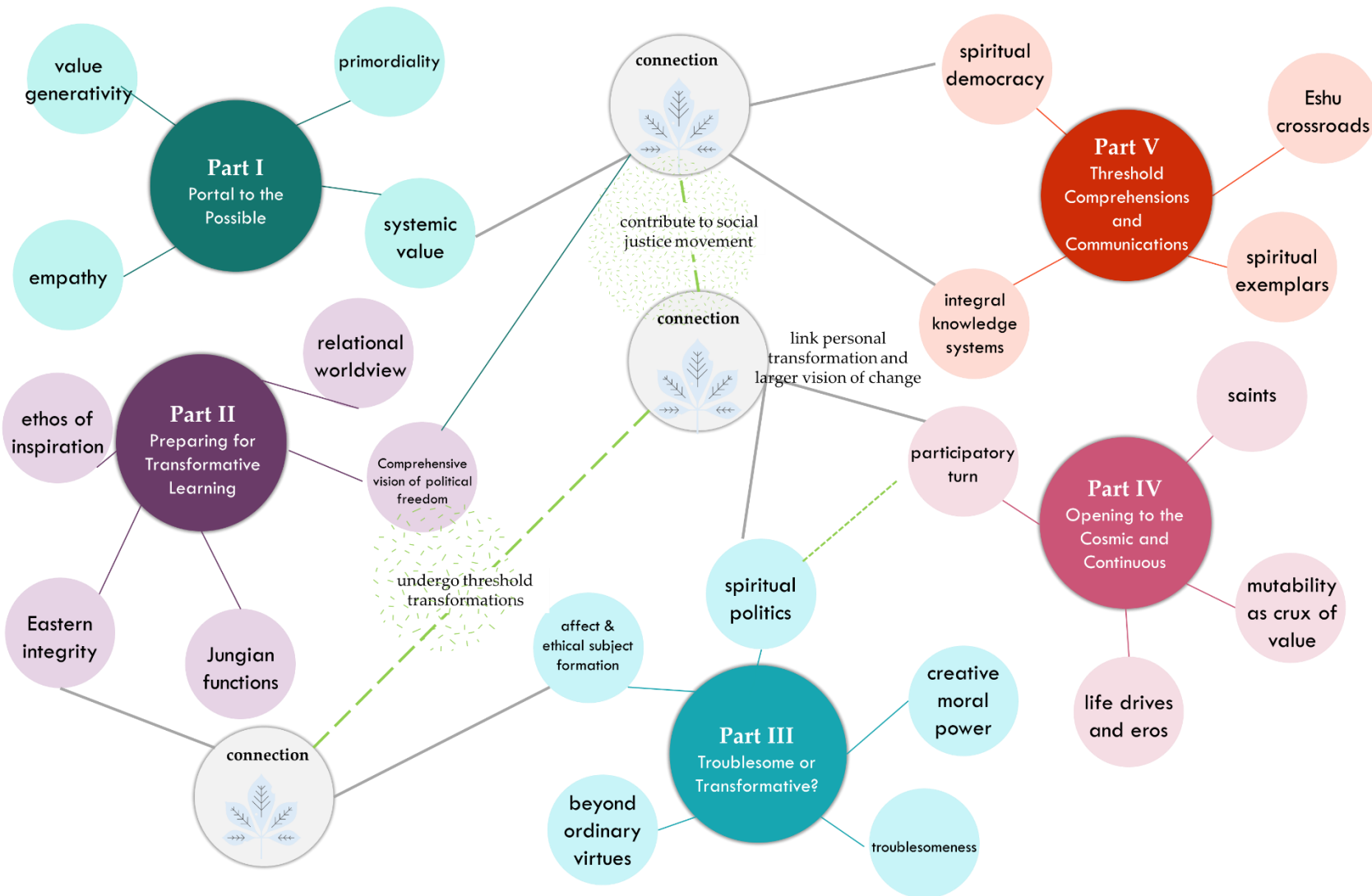
IP-Q

Do you have any myths or religious transformation stories that serve a guiding role in your development? When you think of a transformative journey, what kinds of characters, exemplars, personal role models, do you think of? What kinds of trials and challenges are associated with the journey?

NOTE-TAKING IDEA

Having read the Introduction’s summarized roadmap of the journey ahead, you may want to review the book’s contents visually. The graphic below includes terms mentioned in the Introduction. As you read and reflect on content in the upcoming chapters, it may help to add core concepts and insights to the visual representation of the book’s movement toward threshold confidence. You may also want to create linkages between certain concepts and in a rhizomatic (or underground plant-like, decentralized and horizontal) way, record interconnections you are making among ideas.

A Possible Way to Map Your Thinking



CHAPTER 1



Into the Threshold of Majesty: Befriending the Foe

COMMENTARY ON CHAPTER 1

Womanist post-oppositional concepts, like Sophianic wisdom and self-governance prepare us to investigate learning at the threshold from the inside out, and in terms of functioning and emergent theories of mind. Sophianic consciousness expresses common, often unconscious, desires for *knowledge*, *love*, and *unity*. It unifies opposites at the level of yearning and thus provides us with a bridge between conscious and unconscious, physical and spiritual, manifest and unmanifest realities. We need to remember the transformative psychological and Sophianic dimensions of threshold learning, which involve:

- ▶ Experiencing points of breakage
- ▶ Accepting liminality and humans' vulnerable existential position
- ▶ Making negations antidotal
- ▶ Connecting to cosmogenic realities that unite the mind with all matter's Mystical Source
- ▶ Participating in the reconfigurative life

In response to these kinds of challenges presented by thresholds, Anzaldúa questions her relationship to her inmost self's Wisdom, which she refers to as a "greater power than the conscious I." For her, living decoloniality as a spiritual force of "resurgence and insurgence" takes the form of a practical question: that is, "when to bow down to Her and when to allow the limited conscious mind to take over" (Mignolo and Walsh 2018; Anzaldúa 1987, 50).

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

What is Sophianic desire?

Sophianic desire encompasses both directions of human yearning.



**other-worldly
longing**
mystical
union



**this-worldly
longing**
relationship-
oriented quest

CHAPTER QUOTE

“

The concept of rule by Light asks people, as co-creators of social reality: What if we put spirituality at the center of human life? How would this reprioritizing impact politics, ecology, and daily well-being? —JG

QUESTIONS

CRIT-Q

What are your own associations with the interior world challenges of threshold learning listed in the Commentary, such as “experiencing breakage points”? In what ways are these challenges interrelated?

CRIT-Q

In memorable works of fiction, historical narratives, oral tradition and scriptural accounts of spirituality that you have encountered, how is Sophianic longing expressed? In what ways do these two directions of desire come together when people experience post-oppositionality’s world-embracing vision? In your response to this question, you may want to reference the womanist terms from Layli Maparyan’s work cited in this chapter.

IP-Q

Anzaldúa has numerous ancient names for the inner “godwoman.” What names might resonate for you? How do you relate to the “greater power than the conscious I” that abides within?

CRE-Q

Looking back at the chapter quotation, what are your own responses to these questions? In what ways do your thoughts reflect the emergence of a new imagination that resists and transforms oppositional ideologies?

NOTE-TAKING IDEA

Arrows Tipped with Flowers uniquely integrates the Sophianic functions throughout its entire discussion of integral comprehensions and threshold theory. To prepare for further inquiry related to wisdom and knowledge formation, you may want to:

1. Track new content that you are learning about the Sophianic.
2. Record *questions, connections, and reactions* that arise for you while reading this content.
3. Observe how Sophianic functions and consciousness are relevant to almost every other concept in threshold theory.



Primordial Will: Toward a Political and Theological Understanding of the Mothers

COMMENTARY ON CHAPTER 2

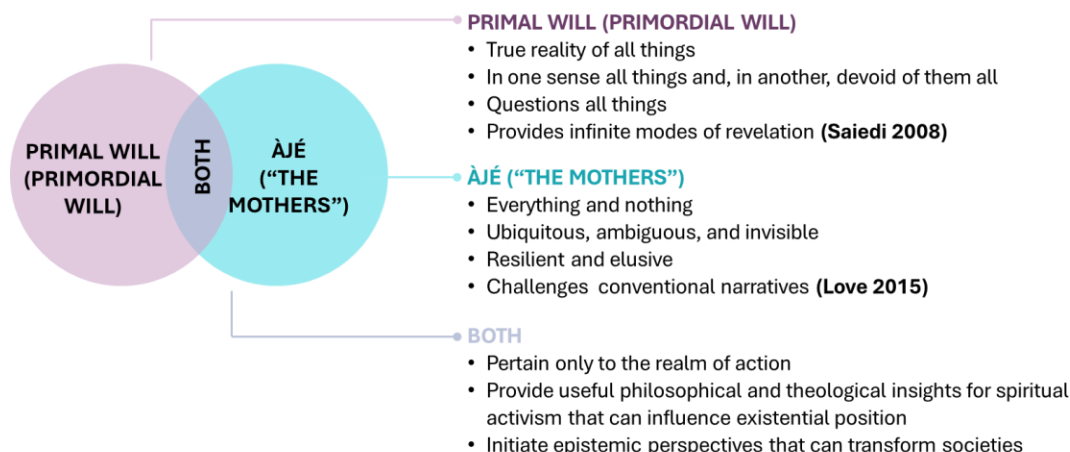
This chapter could also be called, “Getting to Know the Process Impulse and What It Means to Learn, Create, and Grow from Within It.” The process impulse connects us to what Yoruba tradition refers to as *àjé*, or the mothers, and what Bábí tradition calls the Primal Will. Both are intermediary powers through which performative acts of care endue a person with threshold consciousness. The view of “God” in the realm of action that is presented in this chapter resists the social tendency to exalt oneself over the other and refutes the existence of essential kinds. We can therefore engage with its matrixial potency to critique structural violence within the status quo political and economic order.

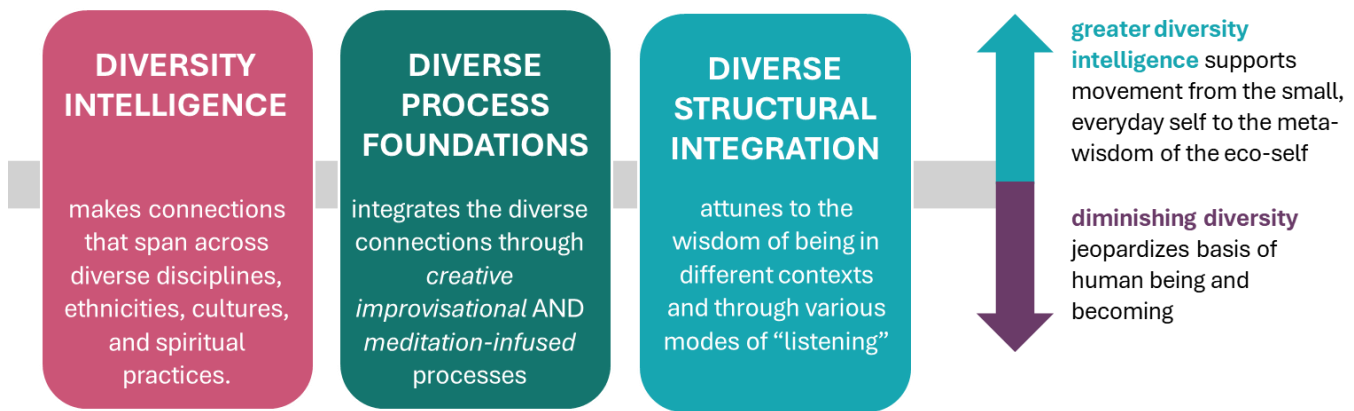
The primordial dimension of empathy associated with active knowing and described in this chapter reconnects us to primal wisdom. The *primal wisdom worldview* accessed through empathy and foregrounded in this book’s articulation of threshold theory aligns with Darcia Narvaez’s moral development research. As a worldview, primal wisdom:

- Promotes a more intimate appreciation of the natural world
- Nurtures an ecological imagination
- Respects the animal’s practical intelligence
- Honors the life-force energies that abide in all things
- Participates in a ‘common self’
- Emphasizes the responsibility to attune to what abides beyond or beneath the physical senses
- Confounds narrow anthropocentric notions of agency, time, and space

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Key Threshold Theory Concepts





CRITICAL REFLECTION:

- *Meditation-infused consciousness, whole-to-parts movement*
- Transcendent consciousness through which common Self intuitis

CRITICAL THINKING:

- *Improvisation-driven creativity, parts-to-whole movement*
- Discerning, evaluating consciousness through which personal self participates in volition or ‘choice’

Stronger critical faculties help to integrate whole-to-parts and parts-to-whole movement; reconnect the awakened consciousness to ‘everyday’ life.

Diminishing criticality separates the everyday self from awakened consciousness

Critical faculties help to integrate critical reflection and critical thinking. We need diverse process foundations to develop these faculties! (Sarath 2013)

Performative Care Acts

The Egyptian goddess Nut provides an archetypal template for appreciating care acts and the reconfigurative life.

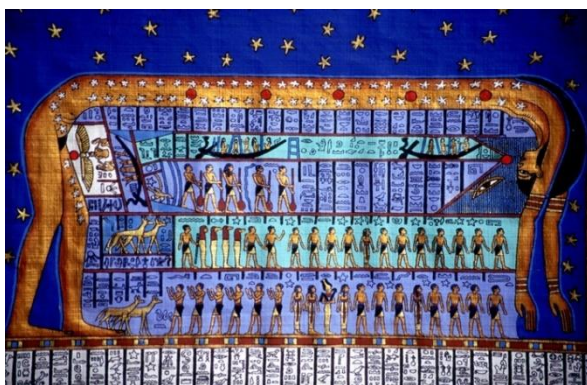


Figure 2.2: She Who Holds a Thousand Souls, Goddess Nut bending to form the sky. Papyrus copy based on late Egyptian temple at Denderah. Contributor: World History Archive / Alamy Stock Photo

Due to their willingness to live through the intermediary position of process impulse, threshold exemplars like the goddess Nut participate in ecological grace. Rather than overly asserting control, they surrender to, and thus, manifest, the wisdom of the “inner godwoman.”

Such care acts awaken consciousness of the complexio oppositorum associated with Sophia’s Divine Child, which spiritually particularizes and politicizes perceptual faculties.

CHAPTER QUOTE

“Empathy’s culmination in a significant act of comprehending meaning and value in relation to the other relates it crucially to law’s social purposes and to the nature of rights. –JG

QUESTIONS

IP-Q

How do the descriptions of Primal Will and àjé compare to your own theology and religious education, and-or to those of others you have interacted with? What is your response to Daly’s question: “Why indeed must ‘God’ be a noun? Why not a verb—the most active and dynamic of all?”

IN-Q

How does interaction with spiritual architecture shape our vision of the learner’s journey toward threshold confidence? In your response you may want to consider ideas like *parts-to-whole* and *whole-to-parts* integration, and concepts related to the Sophianic.

CRIT-Q

How do performative care acts awaken oracular vision, or the ability to read reality? How do they develop the reflective meta-wisdom of the relational or eco-self? What are examples of such acts, in literature, history, oral tradition or scripture?

IP-Q

How would you explain what is socially rational? If your definition centers on the concept of justice or includes notions of fairness, then what is your view of the relationship of legal and political power to social power?

CRIT-Q

After having completed the chapter, how does threshold theory’s distinctive view of the empathy process inform your view of social rationality? Does your present day experience of sociality promote or hinder the emergence of primal wisdom and relationship to Primordial Will or àjé?

NOTE-TAKING IDEA

In its concern for the process impulse, this chapter emphasized the importance of performative care acts. It also discussed the inner prohibiting and permission-granting instincts of craftspeople and homemakers, for example. You may want to begin your own list of how we could honor the process impulse in education practices today (for example, relating this impulse to relational worldview, to the participatory, to cultures of interiority, and the importance of a service-orientation that responds to the exigencies of the day.)



The Ecosystem 'Spins a Bigger Story'

COMMENTARY ON CHAPTER 3

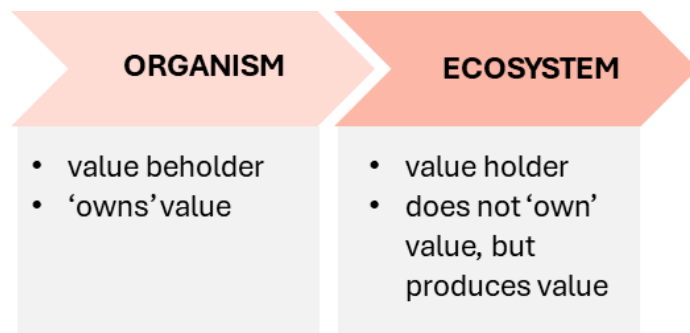
This chapter reminds us that ecosystems and the entities and organisms within them *do not share the same logic of interaction*. By respecting their differences, we can develop a social rationality informed by the ecosystem's ability to produce systemic value and to introduce new levels of value beholding to its members. Through the imagination we can participate in larger consciousness-making "self-referral dynamics" and thus birth "a global social rationality." However, we must remember that although beholding the signs of unity within the natural world is the greatest *productive* purpose of Nature, the ecosystem is not a caring entity or organism seeking to produce idyllic conditions for its inhabitants. Instead, experiences of "finding" the signs of unity within Nature are "both natural and preternatural 'happenings'": They reflect how Nature's primal iterative mechanisms generate value and moreover affirm the intelligence of play or lila.

The view of social rationality that emerges from this chapter supports the dynamic nominalist stance, which prioritizes inner process over outer product and rejects all forms of essentialism in knowledge formation. The references to Ganesha help us envision a functional relationship to creative chaos and to understand the dialogical approach to cultural evolution offered by dis/ability theorists who similarly challenge a static, reified relationship to names. Darcia Narvaez's view of ethical love and al-Hallaj's teachings on the doctrine of intoxication similarly disrupt conventional notions of rule-following and sociality while introducing us to the shamanic function in threshold transformations.

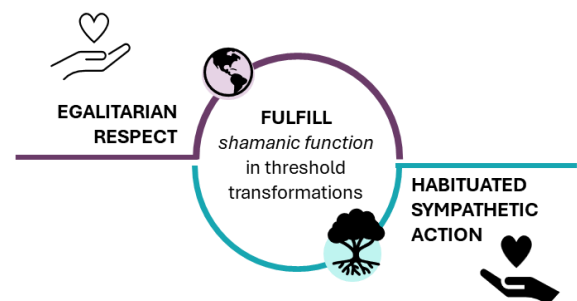
FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Key Threshold Theory Concepts

Organisms and Ecosystems Have Different Logics of Interaction (Rolston 1988)



Two Facets of Ethical Love (Narvaez 2018)



CHAPTER QUOTE



Threshold people “sustain a self-renewing relationship to their interiorities, so that instances of creative emergence do not reflect only the accidental but rather evidence a resourceful apprehension of kinship and ancestry. –JG

QUESTIONS

IP-Q

What role does Nature play in your view of social rationality? What is the nature of your current social bond with Nature? To what degree do you “behold value” in Nature?

IN-Q

Have you ever had the poetic experience of discovering signs of unity in the natural world? Do you agree that through this event you are consciously participating in Nature (or Physis) experiencing and aesthetically organizing Itself?

IP-Q

This chapter cites perspectives on human development from Mencius (Mengzi), early Islamic philosophy, and Kabbalistic Judaism. How do such approaches to developing human potential reflect an appreciation of systemic value? How do you relate your personal approach to human development to these visions? What does your response to this question say about your relationship to systemic value?

CRIT-Q

What is the difference between learning that *severs* reproduction’s boundedness to racial capitalism, and learning that *enforces* the current political economic paradigm’s enclosed ways of relating? What role does the shamanic play in the former—that is, in genuine threshold learning? Why is foregrounding the twofold nature of ethical love crucial?

NOTE-TAKING IDEA

Working with the first graphic on the difference between entity and ecosystem, you may want to consider further what it means to be a “value beholder,” and the different ways in which you experience value (for example, intellectually, morally, socially). After reviewing the significance of play and reflecting on the two facets of ethical love discussed in this chapter, you may want to further examine how these shape your ability to behold value and to access systemic value.



'Eunuchs Swirl Colored Skirts': Arriving at the Intersection of the Mundane and Numinous

COMMENTARY ON CHAPTER 4

Threshold learning can fulfill greater social purposes since it protects and expands political freedom defined as *non-domination* and the corresponding *absence of coercive and manipulative forces*. Shaman-poets, like Das, help us to understand the transformative processes through which we can participate in fulfilling those purposes. In this chapter, we see how in Das's poetry, the moral phenomena that arises out of interrelating spirituality and physicality positions the subject at a creative juncture point, or crossroads, with political implications and evolutionary significance. As Jung emphasized in his 1948 letter to the United Nations, physiologically integrating the unconscious transforms moral consciousness. The end of the chapter additionally introduces the concept of *incorporation* and returns to the concept of *complexio oppositorum* introduced in chapter 2, which pertains to Sophia's child, who functions as a symbol of unity, inclusive of divinity's shadow. These understandings of transformation and inner marriage further our thinking about human development within the relational worldview and contribute to the idea explored in chapter 3, about maturing from a 'small person' (*xio ren*) to a 'great person' (*da ren*).

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Key Threshold Theory Concepts

The Twofold Meaning of Political Freedom (Hayward 2011)



Background Knowledge

The Mahabharata is a major example of ancient Indian epic poetry. Hindu epic poetry provides narrative accounts of historical events alongside Subject-dependent reverence for moral law or dharma. The Mahabharata probably took shape in written Sanskrit by the 4th century CE and is believed to have been written by Vyasa. However, it may have been in process as early as the 8th or 9th century BCE. Astonishingly, its earliest origins could even be as early as 400 BCE.

CHAPTER QUOTE

“ *Das can subvert identity exactly because she has reclaimed a subjectivity that recognizes but does not oppose the Other’s alterity and plurality.* –JG

QUESTIONS

CRIT-Q

Can you identify examples of both inter-agentive and systemic domination? How are these forms of domination inter-related? How do collective and cultural unconscious forces infuse our personal life challenges? How do those forces hinder our ability to participate in comprehension’s active principle?

CRIT-Q

How does Das as a shaman-poet challenge the relations that govern social production and reproduction, as a means of growing beyond her woundedness and bettering the world? How does she infuse the poetic basis of mind into otherwise toxic elements of her inter-agentive relations? How does she access systemic value by attuning to the generative potentials within Nature and matter?

IN-Q

In light of the previous chapter’s discussion of Nature and systemic value, how does reconnecting to the Mahabharata’s ancient and primordial dimensions disrupt present day social assumptions and cultural complexes? Can you think of other poets and artists who have similarly drawn from this well or reservoir of humanity’s spiritual and cultural wealth?

IN-Q

How does Das’s ‘playfulness’ in the Malabar pond resonate with understandings of Indigenous sportiveness and lila (or leela) discussed in chapter 3?

NOTE-TAKING IDEA

If you are interested, follow up further by reading these poems in their entirety and others by Das (or poets of your choosing). Work with the additional images and ideas you find to elaborate your own thinking on threshold theory concepts introduced in this chapter.



Steady, Resilient and Smooth Mind: Transcultural Understandings of Emptiness and Mental Health

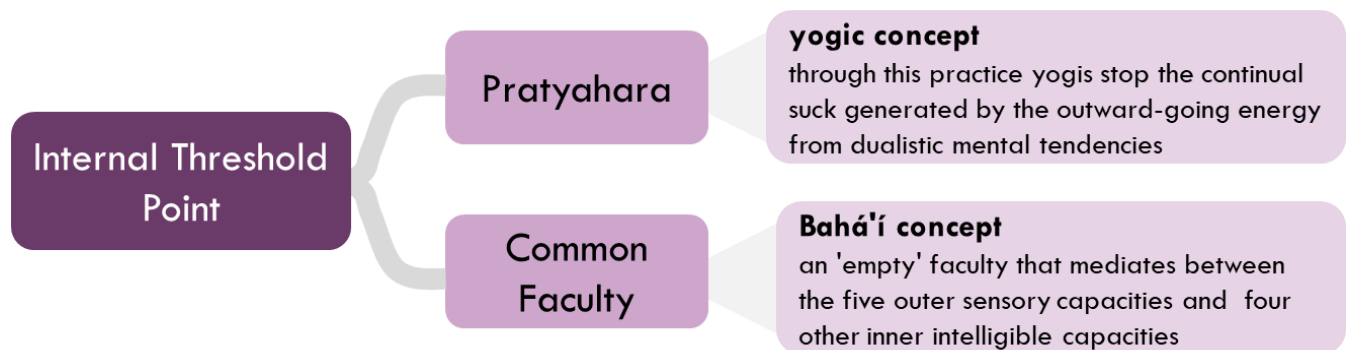
COMMENTARY ON CHAPTER 5

In the threefold, place-based Western Apache apprehension of mind elaborated upon in this chapter, we are reminded that learners must address distractions in the outer world and in the inner world. Applying the sensing and intuiting functions, a person's steady and resilient mind qualities organize in a chiasmic or mirrored symmetrical pattern (a-b-b-a). The juncture point created by the inverted parallelism generates the smooth mind quality. Associated with the open potential of a cleared agricultural field, through smooth mind a person can experience place-based, creative and noetic intersubjective wisdom. In addition to finding structural commonalities across ancient and Indigenous informal theories of mind and the Sophianic functions, this chapter emphasizes the role of nonduality within the relational worldview. Ed Sarath notes that even integral discourses tend to marginalize the intersubjective field's ultimate significances. The deep intersubjectivity implied by the universal mind premise that this chapter introduces has not been adequately foregrounded, so that it can "serve as a platform" for anti-racist, innovative practices. Significantly, threshold theory relates the task of developing a transcultural theory of mind to that of initiating theory-driven investigations that advance what Sylvia Wynter called a science of "life beyond the master discourse."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Key Threshold Theory Concepts

Thresholds and Mental Health



**An internal threshold point negotiates between inner and outer worlds,
introverted and extraverted orientations.**

CHAPTER QUOTES

“

Across time periods and cultures, people have celebrated how threshold consciousness births the eco-self's meta-wisdom (Narvaez 2014). For those learning at the threshold, ancient and Indigenous theories of mind teach how to understand political freedom from an eco-viewpoint: in terms of both inter-agentive and systemic non-domination. –JG

“

On the transformative shift honoring the creative and noetic Sophianic function:

The steadiness of Isis's hieroglyphic presence—the seat (sthit)—depends not upon the metaphysical realm's 'objective' realities, or goods of 'ought'-respect. . . but rather, upon ethical love's power, and the intersubjective field. This final shift of focus, from steady mind to smooth—or from sthira to sukha—expresses veneration for the creative and noetic Sophianic functions . . . [and] advances a normative science of ethics. –JG

QUESTIONS

CRIT-Q

Can a science of “life beyond the ‘master discourse’” be advanced without concern for a theory of mind that respects the potential depth of intersubjectivity? In what ways might the latter (science) be said to naturally arise out of the former (theory of mind)? In responding to this question, you may want to return to ideas laid out in the Introduction, about experimental reasoning inhering within behavior, and transcendental methods and precepts reflecting processes and motives within Nature.

IN-Q

In what ways do concepts introduced in chapter 4, like a heresthetic politics and dialogical body politics, pertain to ideas in this chapter like the need to interrelate a sense of vocation and a sense of beauty?

CRE-Q

In your experience, how do virtues function in integrative ways to ethically regulate experiences of inspiration? You may want to consider how your examples support or add complexity to this chapter's descriptions of how the virtues function.

IP-Q

What is your response to Sarath's stated viewpoint, that people disregard the significance of the universal mind premise? How does threshold theorizing influence your thinking about creativity, noesis, and intersubjectivity?

NOTE-TAKING IDEA

To clarify for yourself the meanings of steady, resilient, and smooth mind, you may want to create thinking maps to help you to comparatively analyze the function and structure of each mental quality. Another idea is to identify and record in a list, qualities from other cultures that resonate with the Western Apache insights into mind.



When Locusts Sing, the Corn Ripens

COMMENTARY ON CHAPTER 6

This chapter investigates relationality and the role of causality in threshold theorizing. For example, it considers how:

- ▶ the components of creative moral power also constitute the integrated principle of publicis
- ▶ learning that transforms passions facilitates coherence-making across disciplines, faith traditions, and cultures
- ▶ when causal power is apprehended, causality itself can function as a “transformational norm vector” in international politics and environmental science related to climate change
- ▶ “essential” qualities cannot abide in any one member of a community.

As it explores the above themes, the chapter introduces the reader to the ways different cultural and spiritual traditions have related to Source and to unitive consciousness. It also invites readers to reflect on the social, intellectual, and political implications of the “nonduality premise.”

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Key Threshold Theory Concepts

This chapter works with different concepts to investigate the causality associated with creative moral power.

law of restoration

the honor of one is the honor of all, the harm of one is the harm of all (*Buffalo Calf Woman wisdom*)

pattica samppada

dependent co-arising

vinnana-paccaya-namarupam

a greater consciousness conditions all relations

nidana

the act of binding or fettering

upadhi

impediment or obstruction

vincularidad

relationality

ondinoc

the potent quality of an activity, event, or occurrence

oki

known to Huronne-Wendat peoples as a kind of invisible Power spirit; also, animals that appear in dreams and that carry magical energy

CHAPTER QUOTES

“The immediate relevance of these Buddhist concepts to learning at the threshold is their implicit claim that constraint lies at the heart of causality. Because of its inhibiting and therefore specifying impact on action, people often associate constraint with punishment, harm, and toxicity, and with passions’ origins in deficiency-motivated drives. Notwithstanding this, constraints also can function on the subtle level as protective parameters that enable differentiations to manifest. –JG

“the Haudenosaunee view of Will pertains exclusively to the realm of action — the only realm relevant to human experience and to developmental tasks. As proof of this, consider that events ‘dictated’ by the oki, like feasts or dances that include songs, regularly accompany ondinocs. The locating of these dynamically within the realm of action rejects essentialized meanings and discourages blind obedience to established authority figures.” –JG

QUESTIONS

CRIT-Q

How can the structural and causal understanding of creative moral power presented in this chapter advance womanist aims in human development and governance?

CRIT-Q

How can creative philosophical engagement with the Penawáhpsek creation song help us to forge transcultural frameworks for understanding threshold learning, the mind, spiritual architecture and post-oppositional work?

IN-Q

This chapter relates the causal powers within biogenic mixing to threshold learning, and the Primordial Will’s infinite revelatory modes. What are your own responses to these ideas in the chapter about the need to create conditions for the learner’s active knowing?

CRIT-Q

How do you think Patricia Collins’s understanding of a “visionary pragmatism” and “passionate rationality” relate to our previous discussions about prophetic pragmatism and a view of social rationality informed by systemic value?

NOTE-TAKING IDEA

At this point, you may find it helpful to create a list of “threshold virtues” based on your reading thus far, wisdom from sources like the Penawáhpsek people’s creation story, as well as your own experiences of transformative learning.



Bringing Steel to Light: The Hidden Strength of 'Transcultural Particularized Universals'

COMMENTARY ON CHAPTER 7

Threshold theory focuses our attention on the biological intelligences that undergird experimental reasoning. According to Hume and others, experimental reasoning is learning's driving principle. It emphasizes the intuitive (non-intellectualized) foundations of custom (or prefigurative life designs.) In contrast, the intellectually rationalized notions of morality that colonizers conflated with custom override the natural processes, or biological activities, through which interactive questioning and problem-solving occurs. According to Dewey, the intuitive spirit of inquiry within survival wisdom produces biologically grounded networks of relationships, all of which ultimately support mindful actions. Learners who practice the methods and precepts (see the graphic from Introduction in this resource) become like physicians and shaman-poets, in that they make discoveries that challenge and transform presently enclosed knowledge systems. They are uniquely prepared to improve communication and address social imbalances.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Key Threshold Theory Concepts

In agreement with Wiredu (1996), the chapter affirms



how Indigenous teachings and traditional proverbs converge on the impartial sympathy principle



how the power of communication can shift us beyond immersion in cultural relativisms and narrow Eurocentrisms by cultivating our shared access to the mind's global intellectual capacities

CHAPTER QUOTES

“

When biological activities implicated in learning or valuing conjoin with forces shaping social life, then linguistic power and symbolic reasoning tend to improve by necessity. The evolution of creativity and consciousness results; and enriched communicative rationality generates new possibilities for relationships and actions. –JG



largely unconscious observations of how occurrences or actors conjoin, over a variety of instances warrants an expectation of similar conjunctions in similar future situations. Those experientially based expectations eventually constitute the induction principle. –JG

QUESTIONS

CRIT-Q

Why do you think threshold theory encourages a more encompassing view of human sociality, one that is inclusive of pre-modern and even pre-historic human life, and that focuses on the common biological substrates implicated in comprehension?

IN-Q

What is your response to the chapter's claim, that the worldview-opening power of a discipline's identified threshold concepts, in fact reflects a biological fruition of custom?

IN-Q

How does the biologically and culturally grounded approach to understanding epistemological norms (like induction and the Golden Rule or impartial sympathy principle) help us participate in Indigenous theorizing?

CRIT-Q

What do you think of the idea that there are “instinctual bases” for an ethical sensibility? How is this idea related to a prophetic pragmatism that advances a science of ethics through transformative learning processes? In addition to considering further the Teachings of the Ancient Wise Ones and Prophets cited in the chapter, you may find it meaningful to begin to articulate and discuss how post-oppositional frameworks and womanist approaches to human development both contribute to, and benefit from, such a pragmatism.

CRE-Q

In what ways does the psychology of integrity promoted by threshold theorizing affirm a feminine potency within life, one that aligns threshold learning with moral development, spiritual activism and peaceful ‘warriorship’? How does that psychology reflect “continuity with Nature’s intents”?

NOTE-TAKING IDEA

It may be helpful to make a consolidated list of terms that support the emergence of social ethical creativity. For instance, this list could include the transcendental methods and precepts, Dewey’s “distinctively moral traits,” insights into inductive reasoning and the application of ethical principles, and any other attributes or mindfulness-based practices that help us to think about human development in evolutionary terms.



The Emergence of the Ethical Subject: Navigating Troublesome and Transformative Aspects of Affect

COMMENTARY ON CHAPTER 8

Below is a list of terms introduced in this chapter that contribute to our understanding of how those learning at the threshold develop an *ethical basis for subjecthood*:

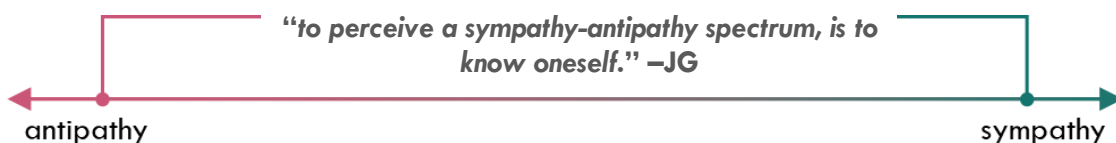
- ▶ Prehensions
- ▶ Active knowing
- ▶ Texture of freedom
- ▶ Natality
- ▶ Dynamics of care
- ▶ Vectorial field
- ▶ Apathetic racism theory
- ▶ Negative capability
- ▶ Ethical actions

Threshold learning compels us to attend to the conditions that impact ethical subjecthood. As members of publics develop resilient, smooth, and steady mind qualities, they participate both in process impulses related to the dynamics of care and texture of freedom, and in process imperatives reflective of the “ethos of inspiration” discussed in chapter 5. Process impulses and imperatives moreover involve a person in the practice of negative capability and in value transformations. The chapter encourages us to ask critical questions about how threshold learners:

- ▶ experience the diverse vectors or ‘arrows’ within the affective field
- ▶ cease the habitual preferencing of their own in-group or culture
- ▶ avoid over-identification with only one source of ethical obligation
- ▶ participate fully in systemic-level ethical actions
- ▶ abolish animosities

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Key Threshold Theory Concepts



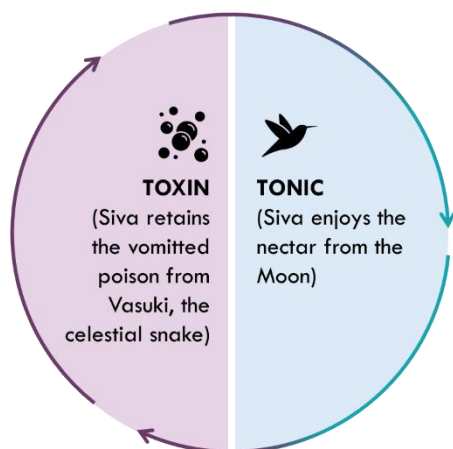
“The aloe’s antipathetic wisdom, for example, complements or ‘treats’ landscapes of its habitat and potentially of the human body, and thus invites us to probe its logic of interaction.” –JG

Apathetic Racism Theory (Firat 2013)

Appetitive and aversive motivational systems underlying emotions can perpetuate moral valuations that reproduce inequality and hinder social integration

MOTIVATION	BEHAVIOR
Appetitive Motivation	Approach Behavior
Aversive Motivation	Avoid Behavior

Pharmacopeic Perspective



Pharmacopeic perspective finds a balance between toxic and tonic potentialities. Because it informs our relationship both to toxins and to tonics, it empowers moral transformations. When humans lack pharmacopeic perspective they “enact adverse or harming behaviors” in part because their reasoning about both the social and the non-social dimensions of human nature do not integrate the texture of freedom and the dynamics of care.

CHAPTER QUOTE

“

Furthermore, increasing onto-sympathy with plant life reveals how the plant’s antipathies contribute to tonic-making mechanisms. The aloe’s antipathetic wisdom, for example, complements or “treats” landscapes of its habitat and potentially of the human body, and thus invites us to probe its logic of interaction. Discerning the aloe’s underlying cooperativity through antipathy stirs decolonial love: Learning’s troublesomeness may become transformative. –JG

QUESTIONS

CRIT-Q

When we do *not* tend to process impulses and imperatives, we reproduce the social-emotional ecologies that perpetuate stuckness. How could care for process alter those stymied outcomes? In your response, you may also want to reflect on the importance of attuning to the para-sympathetic nervous system, which is discussed at the chapter's end.

CRE-Q

Cultures of interiority prepare us for active knowing. How could we foreground their importance when learning, designing curriculum, fulfilling educational projects, engaging in discussions within learning communities?

IN-Q

What is your response to “A Father’s Prayer Upon the Murder of His Son” offered by Bishop Dehqani-Tafti of Iran? How would you describe the challenge of radical integration implied by the transformation of moral value absolutisms it offers?

IN-Q

How does the discussion of toxins and tonics pertain to the idea that the naturalized God-concept (*nous*) is an internally heterogeneous reality, one reflected in the Shambhala prophecy message and the mixed vitalist nature of ancient female figures, like Coatlicue’s descendants, Tonantzin, and Coatlopeuh?

CRIT-Q

How do the stories of Job and Siva help us to understand the pharmacopeic perspective? How does the discussion of the aloe plant pertain to this perspective and to the approach-avoid polarities observed in apathetic racism theory? How do these discussions help us to respect the inner growth processes through which learning’s troublesomeness may become transformative?

NOTE-TAKING IDEA

This chapter made the following assertions relevant to our understanding of emotional being:

- “[g]reat communicators open ‘a vein’ in the emotional body.”
- “[t]o become sensitive to unrectified potentials through the emotional body is to approach the problematic nature of *dinim*, or the ‘wrath’ of God as ‘intensifying agent.’”
- apartheid’s structural violence “crucified the unity of humanity as a single emotional body.”

Reviewing these references to the “emotional body,” you may want to generate responses to them and related examples of your own. For example, are there communicators who have opened a ‘vein’ in your emotional body? How did that experience impact your development? In what specific ways does structural violence harm the emotional life of the social body as a whole? Finally, applying concepts in this chapter related to active knowing and the vectorial field, you could reflect on how, in threshold learning, the emotional body is implicated in stuckness, yet it can also contribute to the *emergence of ethical subjecthood*.



Primordial Will: Toward a Political and Theological Understanding of the Mothers

COMMENTARY ON CHAPTER 9

Opening to the cosmic and continuous is not so much a strategy for overcoming stuckness, (discussed in the previous section), as it is *a means of directing threshold learners to the heart of transformation work*. Marimba Ani's Afrikan-consciousness focused critical theory of culture restores remembrance of the cosmogonic origins of culture's germ-seed. The vital force of eros reveals the nature of a culture's seed, whether it is constituted of unity consciousness or of a divisive consciousness. Anzaldúa's approach to transformations is similar to Ani's in that, for Anzaldúa, the mestiza must deconstruct dualisms and heal the subject-object divide, which involves reconnecting to culture's germ-seed or Logos (Asili) at a cosmogonic level. You may find it helpful to relate this chapter's discussions of eros, dynamism, and Nature—which involve narrative accounts of Abraxas, Phanes, La Llorona, Changing Woman, Kamadeva, Kurukullā, Hou Yi, Chang'e, and others—to concepts and terms introduced both in this chapter, and earlier.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Key Threshold Theory Concepts

Swahili Terms in Ani's
Afrikan-Consciousness
Theory of Culture (1994)



Asili

The culture's germ-seed or Logos

Utamaroho

The culture's vital force, eros

Utamawazo

Culturally-structured thinking, the cognitive order

CHAPTER QUOTES

“Because they sustain a conscious relationship to creative moral power's generic component, figures like Hou Yi reject the suppression of eros and help humanity to understand justice in overarching normative terms, as reflective of a culture's nondual germ-seed logos. Protecting justice, then, involves clarifying the cultural relationship of Utamaroho and Utamawazo to Asili. —JG

“

The Navajo establish a transformative relation to karma (the intent and skill organizing action and influencing causality) by dedicating to Changing Woman ceremonies at major life crossroads, like childbirth, coming of age for girls, weddings, and blessings for a new home. –JG

“

“Bloch understood that how life drives manifest reflects social realities like economic class and geopolitics (62). Discussing life drives in fields like psychology thus links the field to a larger domain of political and social responsibility as well as moral scrutiny, as psychologists like Carl Jung, and more recently Isaac and Ora Prilleltensky (2007) and Elena Mustakova-Possardt (2014), have emphasized in their writings and practices. –JG

QUESTIONS

CRE-Q

How has this chapter influenced your thinking about Anzaldúa’s question, regarding when to bow down to the Innate Divinity, and when to seek better control? How could care for the vagus nerve help people to participate in the initiations, transitional realities, and transformations implied by the protagonists in the cited myths?

CRIT-Q

What do you think the role of Physis in drive theory implies about the evolutionary dimensions of learning, which were discussed in the book’s Introduction and in chapter 7? In what ways could social justice movement focus our attention on the need to protect these physical and spiritual aspects of transformative learning?

CRIT-Q

In what ways do both Kurukullā and Changing Woman reflect the dynamic nominalist stance and “a liberating understanding of the Light of Nature?”

CRE-Q

Keeping in mind Bloch’s critical perspective on the need to relate drive theory to social realities and justice issues, what do you think fields like psychology should begin to do to develop political and social responsibility? Can you think of others who are addressing the need to integrate moral concerns into their approach to knowledge formation?

NOTE-TAKING IDEA

The stories and philosophies in this chapter foreground agent-structure interactivity. It may be helpful to list the stories that feature arrow-shooting and consider how, in each one, conditions for animating social ethical creativity emerge out of that agent-structure interactivity. You can develop the list possibly, with examples from your own background knowledge or research. Also, see if you can find contemporary or more historical examples of justice-makers who were similarly unafraid to challenge old knowledge systems and their accompanying oppressive social structures. In what ways is their work related to eros and a nonoppressive relation to the life drives?

CHAPTER 10



Threshold Transformations, Leaps, and Reversals: How the Participatory Turn Contributes to the Political Community

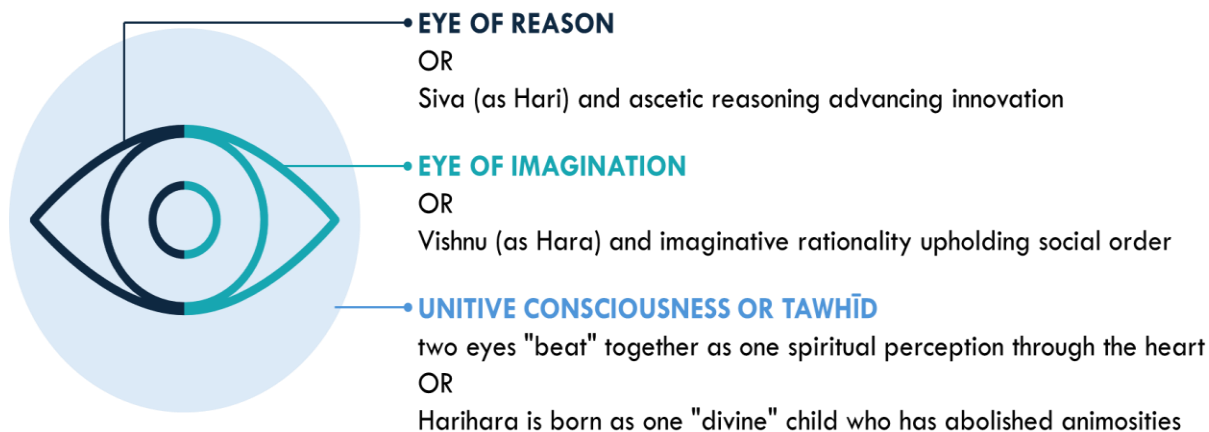
COMMENTARY ON CHAPTER 10

By affirming the “participatory turn” those learning at the threshold develop their capacities both for creativity making and consciousness making. Thus, they can nurture political community’s spiritual development. Through its examples of how musicians and poets make the “participatory turn,” and through its reflections on religious art, and Sacred Writings, this chapter discloses how inner alchemical processes and active intent make the threshold a place of transformation that supports comprehensive intersubjective knowledge formation processes. Like threshold learning, Great Learning (*Daxue*), as a collective movement that harmonizes myriad ways of knowing, expresses Physis as the archetypal active principle in life. Such learning fulfills the political community’s potential to transform culture over time and to author new social forms that sustain continuity with Nature’s intents. In addition to the *quaternal framework* provided in this chapter, many terms are introduced that help us to relate the expanded horizons of the threshold learner who has taken the “participatory turn,” to this larger project of developing inclusive and integrative knowledge systems.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Key Threshold Theory Concepts

Islamic and Hindu Philosophical Insights into Unitive Consciousness



As you review these concepts to the right, you may find it helpful to consider each in relation to examples in this chapter, and elsewhere in this book and beyond.

sacrality of time

the Messianic

participatory turn

as below so above

alchemical process

experiences of inter-being

CHAPTER QUOTES

“ Quaternal correspondences “uncover patterns of relationship across religions and cultures that enliven scientific inquiry and can inform ethical innovation.” –JG

“ Like *Changing Woman* who rejects essentialist or thematized perceptions of reality, the performer edifies (and secretly historicizes) the counterintuitive or concealed reality—that which is the opposite of what is seemingly expressed, thought, or done—thereby splitting the totalized, manifested affirmation. . . –JG

QUESTIONS

IN-Q

How do the concepts listed in the first graphic speak to threshold learning as an active process that links the learner’s transformations to the larger political community?

CRIT-Q

Why do you think this chapter emphasizes that performers’ threshold transformations call for holistic analyses? What concepts and critical approaches do you find most helpful when responding to this call and developing your own analyses?

CRIT-Q

In what ways do the examples in this chapter valorize the feminine, as discussed in chapter 9? How do they contribute to movement that inaugurates rule by Light?

CRIT-Q

How do the examples in this chapter inform our ability to disrupt prejudiced norms and to transform culturally structured thinking? What can they teach us about post-oppositional practices and ways of relating within institutional life?

NOTE-TAKING IDEA

Consider developing a quaternal framework organizer that helps you to meditate on the stations of Will or Heart, Mind or Spirit, Soul, and Body, especially in relationship to the elements and natural world entities like plants (flower or fruit, leaf, stem, root).



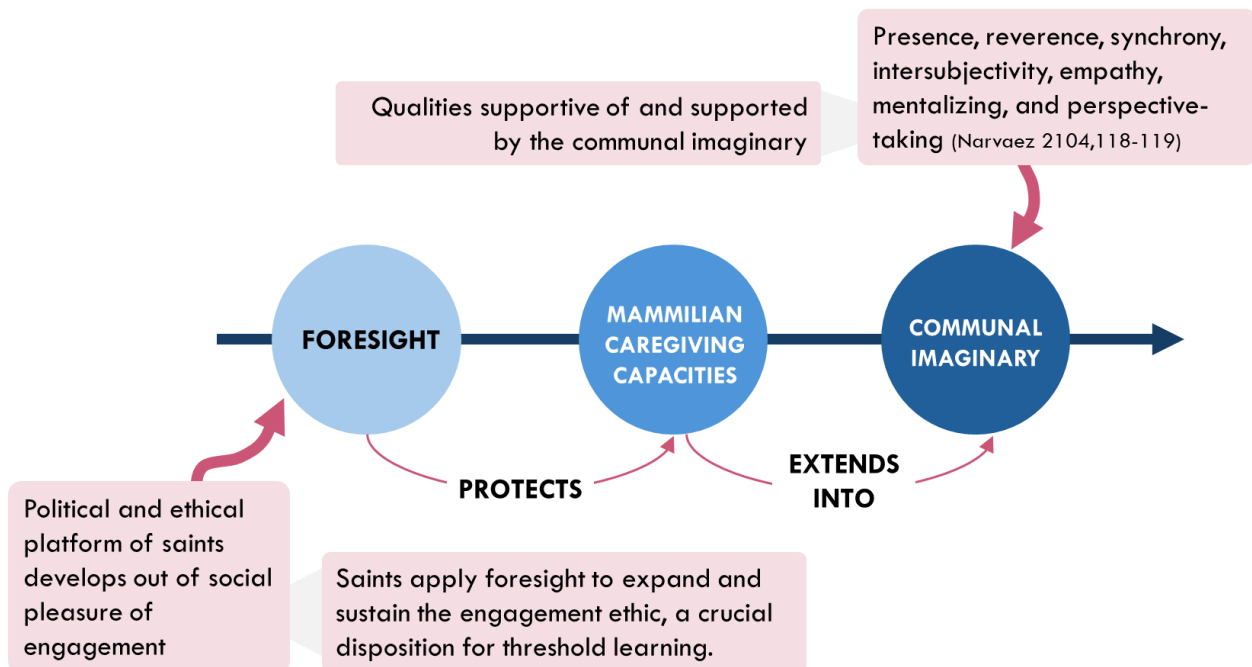
Value Transformations in the Threshold between Inner and Outer

COMMENTARY ON CHAPTER 11

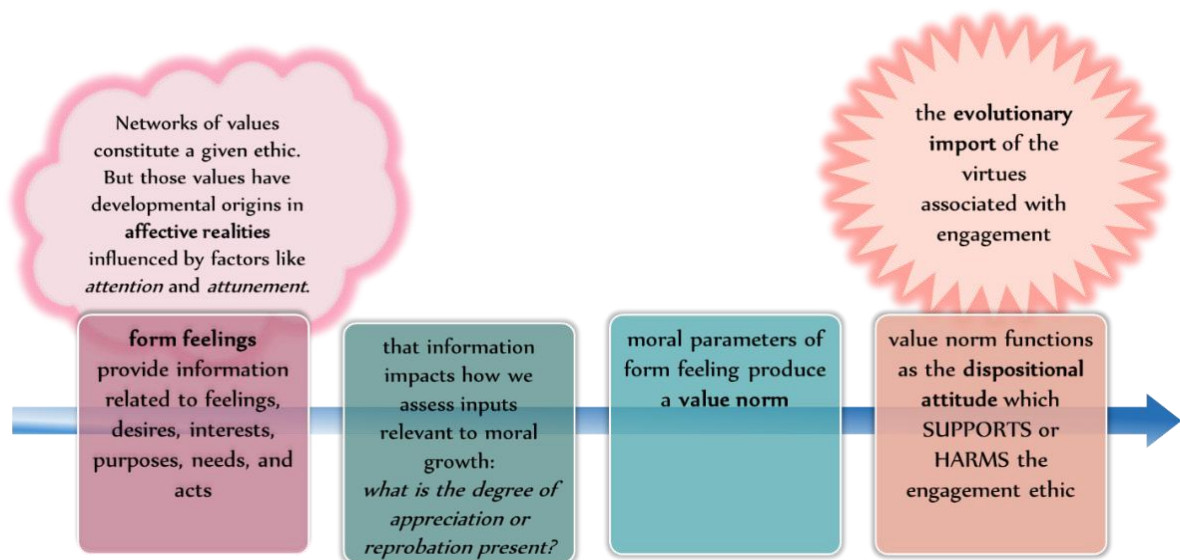
Projects that engage us involve interactions that produce social pleasure, which then underwrites the communal imaginary's creative ethical enterprises. This chapter emphasizes the importance of *engagement ethic* capacities. We must develop *an attitude* that affirms this ethic if we hope to create conditions supportive of threshold transformations and comprehensions. Value absolutisms and categorical thinking modes impede people from engaging in threshold learning's creative undertakings. Although such ego-based mental habits may spur on certain kinds of active behaviors, they resist the *creative ethical zones of freedom* that the engagement ethic generates. This chapter turns to Alain LeRoy Locke's philosophy of value and form feelings since it addresses fundamentalisms at the root level and encourages engagement ethic capacities. Locke's philosophy explains how mutability functions as the "crux of value"; it prepares learners to participate in social ethical creativity's reciprocities. His emphasis on *tolerance*, *relativism*, and *pluralism* debunks Western cultural assumptions about form, content, matter, and process.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Key Threshold Theory Concepts



Womanist foresight as a dispositional attitude both arises out of and supports the engagement ethic.



CHAPTER QUOTES

“

A dispositional attitude bent toward engagement will actively seek to integrate otherness and function, in part to prevent absolutist habits. It is this insight—about the evolutionary import of the virtues associated with engagement—that must organize womanism’s foresight as it pioneers post-oppositional, antiracist philosophies capable of supporting learning at the threshold, worldwide. –JG

“

“The specifics of value content do not matter when the goal is value integration that counters various forms of injustice. What does matter are the emotional mechanisms and psychological processes involved in valuing itself.”

QUESTIONS

CRE-Q

In what ways does Locke’s philosophy support post-oppositional work? In what ways can it embolden transdisciplinary learning?

CRE-Q

What kinds of engagement ethic practices protective of care-giving capacities can support the shift from “me to We” consciousness that Keating references in her experiences as a professor?

CRIT-Q

How does Locke’s philosophy align with principles of non-ownership and previously discussed understandings of the ecosystem as a holder and producer of value?

NOTE-TAKING IDEA

Based on examples in the chapter, consider making a map of different kinds of possible value transformations and reflect on why it is that differing introverted/extraverted orientations make agreement within a given domain harder. How can this information inform transformative learning?

CHAPTER 12



Existing as Finding: The Humorist Approach

COMMENTARY ON CHAPTER 12

Existence itself is search (or Sophianic quest both for mystical union and relationship). By remembering the vulnerabilities of the human existential condition, we make possible threshold confidence; and by resisting the tendency to deny the potentials of the bare self, we become receptive to existence as discovery and comprehension. Accepting existence as finding, we embrace active knowing, discern concealed antagonisms, and develop what Darcia Narvaez calls the “meta-wisdom” of the eco-self. Looking more closely at how threshold learning involves us in differentiated comprehensions that deconstruct the monolithic, this chapter investigates how readers of womanist self-recovery narratives become critical witnesses to the wound and to processes of transformation that relate needs for healing to desires within social justice movements. Taking up Pirandello’s “humorist approach,” as well as questions concerning the relationship of “galactic consciousness” to knowledge formation and to “Black survival,” the chapter affirms the this-world/other-worldly intersections through which threshold learners enter the “Egypt of love.” The humorist approach, and like-minded approaches that encourage us to probe the absurd and to engage with “mystic blackness,” defend the bareness of the small self from limiting beliefs, harsh social judgments, and anxieties. They therefore open the door to the experience of threshold confidence.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Key Threshold Theory Concepts

wujud

“existence”

wajada

“to find” (this is the root verb in the word wujud)

wahdat al-wujud

“oneness of being”, the “unity of finding” or the “unity of existence”

CHAPTER QUOTES

“

In expanding with integrity beyond former perceiving modes and egoic needs for control, the spiritual activist develops connective faculties and integral comprehensions associated with unitive consciousness. On el camino de la mestiza, Anzaldúa transforms “into a tree, a coyote, into another person” (83). Each realization mode enters an existential position of relative and functional rightness, through which the other’s alterity does not estrange, but provokes integral movement and becomes an alternative to oppositional politics. –JG

“

Because it is geared toward dignity-making, nonharming, and friendship, the humorist approach can reveal oppositions (like the tension between the impulse to differentiate and that to unite) within all feelings, thinking, and perceiving. Sensing incongruity, the humorist separates out and dismantles these oppositions. –JG

QUESTIONS

IP-Q

What are self-recovery narratives that have played an inspiring and transformative role in your own life?

IN-Q

How does Pirandello’s ability to raise awareness of the heterogeneities and transhuman realities within the “unity of finding,” challenge scientific naturalism and positivism? What does it say about the nature of comprehension?

CRIT-Q

In what ways has threshold theory emphasized the importance of introversion and cultures of interiority, even while it argues that threshold learning opens the learner to global perspective and social justice issues? How has this chapter further affirmed the movement to valorize the feminine?

NOTE-TAKING IDEA

You may want to consider why it is that rejecting “galactic consciousness” (and avoiding learning at the threshold) is associated with “anti-Blackness,” as Cervanek posits. We have already looked at apathetic racism theory and the role of the vectorial field in stuckness and problems like prejudice. You may find it helpful now to reflect on how “existing as finding” introduces into an expanded field of consciousness, greater awareness of the antipathy-sympathy spectrum within oneself. How does that combination support transformative learning?



The Spirit of Friendship

COMMENTARY ON CHAPTER 13

Examining what the spiritual exemplar teaches us about the relationship of radical vulnerability to threshold confidence, this chapter looks at the political and spiritual meanings of the exemplar's "double station." It asks how the spirit of friendship and the ethical platform created by saints make it possible for marginalized or oppressed people to assert their claims, and to share their knowledge(s) outside of the oppositional frameworks that reenact power relations like margin/center. It furthermore looks at how spiritual exemplars participate in the needs of the whole, despite threats against them by authoritarian social political forces; and, at how the exemplar rises above and contains structural and ideological conflicts imposed on them, rather than resisting or opposing these through violence. In developing its understanding of the spirit of friendship, the chapter articulates the components of the word "panentheism" and considers what the "en" segment of the word can tell us about the dynamic movements between self, Primordial Will, and world. For example, it observes how panentheist vision urges us to create a universal language that fulfills human potential for communicative rationality across borders. This larger goal for humanity can help us think about the journey to threshold confidence from more encompassing evolutionary perspectives.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Key Threshold Theory Concepts

Review and Reflection on Core Terms

VALUE PLURALISM

By clearing their perceptual field and cultivating the poetic basis of mind, threshold learners avoid preferencing their evaluative functions and can relate to multiple frameworks and possible interpretations.



Reflection: An emphasis on value pluralism links threshold confidence to the creative chaos (value generativity) discussed in chapters 1 through 3. You may want to consider too, how value pluralism relates to the ecosystem's knitting together of instrumental and intrinsic rationality that produces systemic value and experiences of existing as finding.

SPIRIT OF FRIENDSHIP OR WALĀYA

Outcomes associated with walāya include: identity ‘blurring,’ radical vulnerability and creative insecurity (leading to threshold confidence), and identification with friendship itself.



Reflection: Previously discussed topics—like drive theory, cosmogonic dimensions of eros, Asili as culture’s germ-seed, Physis as perfecting movement in Nature, and vagus nerve health—can all contribute to our appreciation of the spirit of friendship. Reflecting on how they contribute, you may want to consider too, how the Buddhist concepts explored in chapter 6, like dependent co-arising and inter-determinacy, which pertain to causal power and moral order or dharma, also help us to understand outcomes associated with walāya.

COMMITMENT TO THE CONCRETE

Threshold learners do not avoid or transcend any aspect of a situation’s concreteness. Yet, they sustain their poetic basis of mind and maintain a meta-aware position in relationship to the situation. In the radical empiricism that arises out of commitment to the concrete, recognition of objective deprivations calls for supererogatory actions, (those going above and beyond one’s moral duty on the ordinary social level, to maintain continuity with Nature’s intents).



Reflection: The ethical obligations associated with threshold virtues differ from those of ordinary virtues. You may want to contemplate how this theme of being bound to the concrete relates to the axiom reversal the Báb introduces, (*as below, so above*), and the idea of the first dharr manifesting in the fourth dharr (discussed in chapter 10).

INTROVERTED ORIENTATION

Both the discussion on humorism (chapter 9), and on the ecosystem’s ‘indifference’ (chapter 3) emphasize the need for an introverted orientation. Chapter 13 emphasizes that while the regime of fragmentation “generates hardship,” it also “produces signs in the visible world which direct people inwardly, to their deeper sympathies.”



Reflection: This chapter’s performative and psychological perspective on political relationships resonates with the idea presented in chapter 3, that the ecosystem directs us toward stoicism and a spiritualization of consciousness. We need the introverted orientation to participate in the valorizing of the feminine and gynesis (chapter 9). You may want to think more about the role that foresight, the mammalian care-giving traits, and the love your enemy logic of the majestic threshold play in transformations’ internality.

CHAPTER QUOTES

“

Improving our understanding of the spiritual exemplars’ structural integrity, we gain insight into Their ability to introduce the spirit of friendship to all people, and to empower spiritual activism that reflects political freedom’s full meaning. –JG

QUESTIONS

CRIT-Q

How do threshold learning standards of integrity pertain to the “utopian project” that Janice Radway advocates for (mentioned in chapter 1)? In your response, you may want to draw on your understanding of threshold theory concepts like spiritual architecture, Primordial Will and creative moral power, and the nonduality premise.

IN-Q

How does radical vulnerability contribute to a sociality that is grounded in the impartial sympathy principle (chapter 7) and that encourages integration of the vagus nerve?

CRE-Q

How does threshold theory affirm Bakhtin’s architectonics of responsibility referenced in chapter 4? What are your own thoughts on the quality of threshold consciousness needed for the peoples of the world to collaborate in the project of making a universal language? What steps can threshold learners take today to contribute to that project?

NOTE-TAKING IDEA

This chapter links the panentheist imaginary to the communal imaginary’s abstracting capabilities, like perspective-taking, which serve the public weal. You may find it helpful to compare the *dynamic nominalist stance* to panentheism’s ability to support the resilient mind. By emphasizing the interaction between margin and center, critical dis/ability studies avoids a static nominalism, in which certain attributes become essentialized and harmfully static (named, for example, ‘abled’ or not). Consider recording your thoughts on how both the panentheist imaginary and dynamic nominalism nurture conviviality.



Gates of Comprehension

COMMENTARY ON CHAPTER 14

Drawing upon Ibn Abī Jumhūr's gates of comprehension to better understand the meaning of threshold confidence, this chapter looks at how transformative learning engages us in a collective-level maturation process that involves:

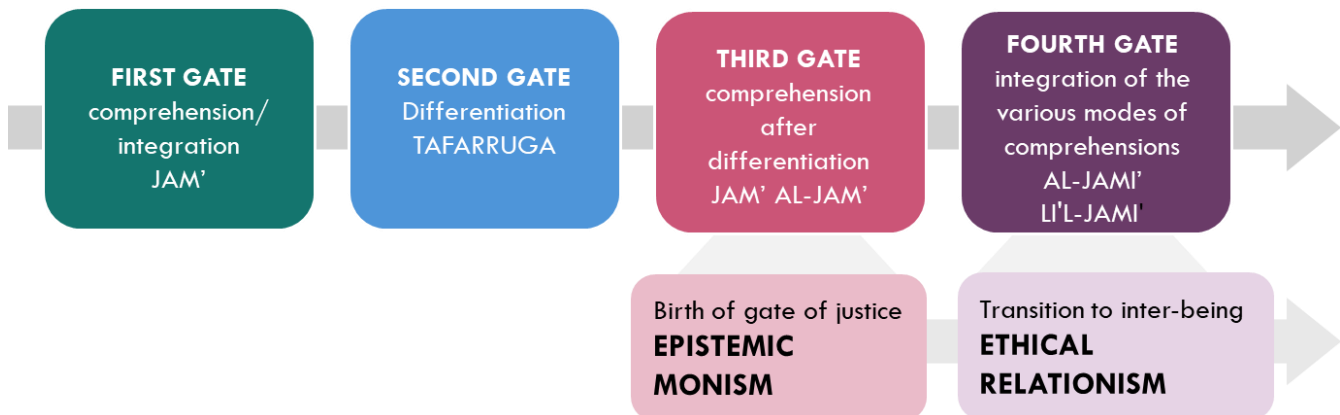
- ▶ shifting from a structuralist orientation to a poststructuralist
- ▶ developing a public action ethic
- ▶ integrating minority perspective and subjugated knowledges
- ▶ practicing 'imperfect procedures' for knowledge formation

The chapter focuses particularly on the ethical movement from the third to the fourth of Jumhūr's gates—a movement that involves transition from an immersive, first-person way of knowing (*epistemic monism*) to a pluralistic and integrative approach (*ethical relationalism*) that sustains transformative learning from within the majestic threshold. In that transitional shift, remembrance of Eshu (the trickster at the crossroads) helps, because he confounds the solely unitary aspects of structuralism. The movement from the third to the fourth gate of comprehension ushers in a more profound understanding of the nature of difference and of liminality's role confounding status quo power dynamics. It facilitates new levels of cooperation and agreement regarding planetary futures.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Key Threshold Theory Concepts

Ibn Abī Jumhūr's description of the four stations of progressively more differentiated and integrated comprehension (Lawson 1997):



New environmentalisms (Reid and Taylor 2010):

- ✓ stand up for new level of integrity expressive of fourth gate ethical relationalism
- ✓ affirm the conditions needed for ethical creativity and inclusion
- ✓ support the social, political, and epistemological virtues needed to achieve environmental justice vision
- ✓ expand, diversify and radicalize environmental politics
- ✓ demonstrate that public action embodies a dynamism of caring—moral, intellectual, and spiritual—that affords systemic value's breakthrough wisdom
- ✓ awaken truth-force
- ✓ connect the politics of Nature to democracy's moral and spiritual meanings

CHAPTER QUOTES

“

Eshu mandates our recognition of the epistemic utility of uncertainty, ambiguity, and liminality. That which has lower status position, or which appears malignant from the conventional viewpoint, gets its due, thanks to Eshu, the mediator (orisha), who knows all the Earth's possible languages. –JG

“

a pluritopical hermeneutics recognizes diverse revelation modes and the need in civilization building for more encompassing frameworks to support interpretive acts. The performing artist similarly recognizes the underlying lawfulness of practices that result in greater cooperation and a more robust value pluralism. –JG

“

Cultivating an intellectual foundation for tolerance and an ethical cultural attitude toward value pluralism, those learning at the threshold can avoid the described tendency toward self-enclosure, as they initiate a shift, like that from the structuralist orientation to the poststructuralist –JG

QUESTIONS

CRIT-Q

In what ways is Eshu’s role in this shift relevant to Julia Varley’s claims about theater, women, knowledge formation and liminality?

CRE-Q

How can comprehension of threshold theory help to mobilize new environmentalisms?
You may want to reflect here too on content in chapter 3 and 6.

CRE-Q

What can you and others do to engage with imperfect procedures for forming knowledge? For example, how can you help to cultivate the virtues and mind qualities associated with what Elgin calls a “wide reflective equilibrium”?

IN-Q

Based on your reading can you articulate how it is that integral knowledge systems delegitimize force relations?

IP-Q

What are your own thoughts on introducing Kamadeva’s flower-tipped arrows—that is, the cosmogonic dimensions of eros and transformed relation to the life drives—into the social sciences?

NOTE-TAKING IDEA

To offer a more multi-layered discussion of the shift from third to fourth gate comprehensions, from perfect to imperfect procedures for knowledge formation, and from an epistemic monism to an ethical relationalism, this chapter draws on ideas and approaches from: Walt Whitman, Audre Lorde, Bábí philosophy, Pirandello, Julia Varley, as well as Ibn Abī Jumhūr. You may find it helpful to review and reflect on the commonalities and differences in these people’s contributions to threshold theorizing in this chapter, and to consider ideas and approaches from others that may similarly help us to articulate aspects of this shift.

All citations in this Supplemental Resource are found in the References section of the text, *Arrows Tipped with Flowers: Threshold Theory for Transformative Learning*.