



Ecotherapy and Forest School

With Robert Black

Ecopsychology

- Eco- Home, including the house, family, land, people who work the land, etc.
- Psyche- Soul, deepest part of who we are as an individual, our uniqueness, our blueprint.
- Ology- study or exploration of something leading to a dynamic logic
- Dynamic exploration of the home of the soul or soul of the home



Ecotherapy

- Applied Ecopsychology
- Therapy- To attend
- (Psyche is sometimes implied)
- To attend to (the soul of) the home (or home of the soul)
- Used broadly to address any activity of people relating in a positive way with nature



Embodiment and Biophilia

- We cannot relate to anything if we are not in our body.
- Inhabit the body in order to be sensitive/sense
- Mindfulness is embodiment, body and mind together
- Our body is our nature, disconnecting from body disconnects us from nature
- Our inherent connection to nature emerges when we are sensitive, biophilia



Soul

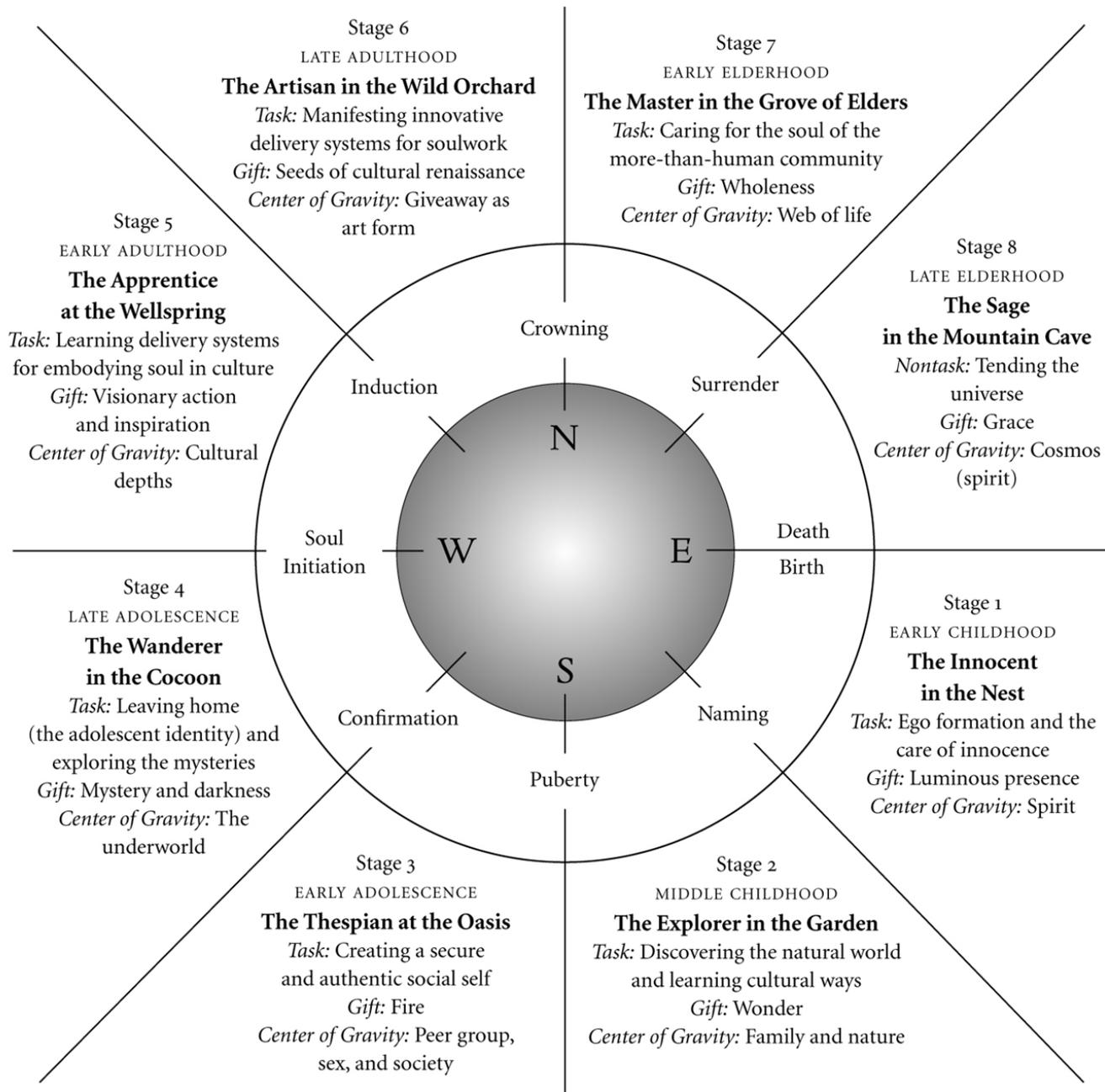
- .Just as our body is nature, so is our soul
- .Nature is ensouled, alive, animated, as well as humans
- .As we relax into connection with nature, a deeper level of being emerges
- .Our unfoldment is mirrored in nature
- .It is co-unfoldment, co-evolution, deeply interconnected processes and systems



Human Development

- We develop when we are
 - mindful, embodied, directly experiencing ourselves in nature, and
 - held by curious, caring, communicative, mature adults in a safe environment
- There is an identified pattern of this unfoldment
- Bill Plotkin puts it like this





The Eight Soulcentric/ Ecocentric Stages of Human Development
From Nature and the Human Soul © Bill Plotkin (New World Library, 2008)
soulcraft@animas.org



1) The Innocent in the Nest

- Early childhood, the stage of innocence.
- No human language. Our domain is the nest.
- We look, listen, feel, and smell everything for the first time. We're not able to label anything, **we can only directly experience**
- Only images, scents, sounds, feelings, and movements in and around us.
- No judgments, but lots of deep curiosity.
- We are Innocence personified. We are Spirit. We are unquestionably in relation with everything at this stage, and everything is waiting for us to question it.



2) The Explorer in the Garden

- Middle childhood, the stage of wonder.
- Developing ways to engage with nature and culture. Our domain is the garden, the immediate environment.
- We explore, mimic, and imagine new ways of connecting with humans, other-than-humans, and things.
- **Language and bio-mimicry** are amazing new tools that we play around with.
- Naming things in relation to our cultural paradigm.
- Play is paramount. Wonder is primary. Life is about discovering family through culture, and nature through the amazing biodiversity of the ecosystem.
- Build things like forts, climb trees. Talk to squirrels, etc.



3) The Thespian at the Oasis

- .Early adolescence, the stage of creative fire.
- .Concerned with securing an authentic social self.
- .Our domain is the oasis, the greater environment and the extent of our society.
- .The budding ego is paramount. Peer pressure is primary, sexuality is secondary.
- .We seek confirmation through the societal paradigm, and our curiosity shifts toward sexuality.
- .Gradually becoming more authentic in relation to others, and beginning to recognize the authenticity of others: people, animals, things.
- .The majority of people in Western societies have not gone beyond this stage. True adulthood, or psychological maturity, has become an uncommon achievement, and genuine elderhood nearly non-existent.



4) The Wanderer in the Cocoon

- .Late adolescence, the stage of mystery and darkness.
- .Concerned with understanding the Great Mystery.
- .Our domain is the cocoon: a mystical and mythical transformation place within the unconscious realm.
- .Exploring ways of letting go, while at the same time exploring new ways of being in the world. Trying new things.
- .Mystery is becoming an essential guide. We are learning how to open up to serendipity, becoming more sensitive to coincidence.
- .Exploration is paramount. Hearing “the call of the wild” is primary; heeding the call is secondary.
- .Stretching comfort zones, breaking mental paradigms, and pass through existential thresholds. Our ego becomes fully formed, ready to emerge from the cocoon.
- .Becoming a creature that has the capacity for



The Other 4 Stages

- .5) The Apprentice at the Wellspring
 - Early Adulthood
- .6) The Artisan in the Wild Orchard
 - Late Adulthood
- .7) The Master in the Grove of Elders
 - Early Elderhood
- .8) The Sage in the Mountain Cave
 - Late Elderhood



Practising Ecotherapy

- Mindfulness and Nature Practice

- In what ways do you relate to nature on a regular basis? What is your relationship with nature like?

- Not so much thinking about it, but more feeling about it, notice what colour or mark making implement you are drawn to.

- Notice how it feels in your hand, and make any shapes and lines you like in response to what you are feeling.



To Be Facilitators of Development?

- .Work on our own unfoldment
- .Cultivate mindfulness and embodiment
- .Keep learning and growing
- .And?



Resources

- Books by Bill Plotkin- <https://animas.org/>
 - Nature and the Human Soul
 - Soulcraft
 - Wild Mind
- Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind- Edited Rozak
- Ecotherapy- Edited Linda Buzzel
- Ecotherapy in Practice- Jordan and Hinds
- <https://markcoleman.org/>- books and free meditations
- <http://8shields.org/>
- <https://www.jonyoung.online/>

