

Unfolding Toward Being: Etty Hillesum and the Evolution of Consciousness

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Abstract: The 'unfolding' of Etty Hillesum's developing consciousness is considered from an integral and 'evolution of consciousness' perspective. In the introductory section some parallels and similarities between aspects of transformation of consciousness and personality in integral yoga psychology and the work of A.H. Almaas and Karen Johnson, the developers of the Diamond Approach, is drawn upon to set the stage. This path combines Eastern teachings and practices with the concepts of Western depth psychology and sees development as occurring in spiraling and overlapping stages. Etty's spiritual and psychological journey is examined in the context of these stages. Her evolutionary process is informed by the Diamond Approach's method of inquiry, which is similar to Etty's process of "hineinhorchen" or "hearkening" to herself. This exploration will offer a contemporary yet ancient perspective that tracks Etty Hillesum's own radical evolution of consciousness that we glimpse in a mere 'moment' in time, that is, indeed, timeless.

Keywords: A.H. Almaas, Diamond Approach, Etty Hillesum, Evolution of Consciousness, Haridas Chaudhuri, Integral Yoga, Karen Johnson, Psychospiritual Transformation, Sri Aurobindo.

Introduction

*I want to unfold
Let no place in me hold itself closed,
for where I am closed, I am false.
I want to stay clear in your sight.*

—Rainer Maria Rilke (1996, P. 67)

The intention of this study is to locate the 'unfolding' of Etty Hillesum's—a young Jewish woman who died at Auschwitz, leaving behind a journal—developing consciousness in the field

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of study called the evolution of consciousness. In the introductory section, I will draw on some parallels and similarities between aspects of transformation of consciousness and personality in integral yoga and psychology and the work of A.H. Almaas to set the stage. It should be noted here that these two bodies of psychospiritual knowledge and practice have different historical roots and there are specific differences in the details of the processes of transformation between them that would warrant a separate exploration altogether. What is of relevance to this study is the key emphasis put on the role of the soul in the overall context of transformation of consciousness and personality that is not explicit in other integral models of evolution of consciousness such as those of Jean Gebser (1949/1985) and Ken Wilber (1977, 2000). I will then engage Almaas' Diamond Approach to explore in detail Etty's processes of unfoldment and transformation.

According to Haridas Chaudhuri (1965), the founder of the California Institute of Integral Studies, and student of Sri Aurobindo, the integral perspective of being consists of three factors: (1) union with the nondual ground of existence, (2) development of the deepest human potentials, and (3) participation with the evolutionary force of Being. The integral perspective involves the different levels of body, heart, mind and spirit (Sri Aurobindo, 2007, 1990), and for this paper's exploration it will be important to add the cultural and historical context as well. Etty's spiritual and psychological journey is examined in the context of these stages. Her evolutionary process is informed by the Diamond Approach's method of inquiry, which is similar to Etty's process of '*hineinhorchen*' or hearkening to herself. This exploration will offer a contemporary yet ancient perspective that tracks Etty Hillesum's own radical evolution of consciousness that we glimpse in a mere 'moment' in time, that is, indeed, timeless.

In the Diamond Approach, *essence* is central to the process of the soul's inner journey to development and liberation. From the perspective of the relationship of the soul to essential presence, the inner journey of realization can be divided into two major parts: the '*journey of ascent*' and the '*journey of descent*'. The journey of ascent has three phases: the journey to presence; the journey with presence; and the journey in or as presence (Almaas, 2002, p. 44). Almaas likens the journeys to climbing a ladder. In the journey of descent, the soul climbs back down the same ladder that it climbed on its way up to reality or true nature, but this time the soul integrates the various dimensions she has passed through in her ascent. In the ascent the soul moves inward, while in the descent is moving outward where it retains its conscious awareness within manifestation (Almaas, 2004). In this regard, The Diamond Approach is similar to processes of Psychic and Spiritual Transformation in integral yoga which comprise two aspects of the Triple Transformation process in integral yoga.

In his metaphysical magnum opus, *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo (1971, pp. 889-918) discusses the Triple Transformation in the following way:

there must first be the psychic change, the conversion of our whole present nature into a soul-instrumentation; on that or along with that there must be the spiritual change, the descent of a higher Light, Knowledge, Power, Force, Bliss, Purity into the whole being, even into the lowest recesses of the life and body, even into the darkness of our subconsciousness; last, there must supervene the supramental transmutation,—there must take

place as the crowning movement the ascent into the supermind and the transforming descent of the supramental Consciousness into our entire being and nature. (p. 891)

The soul plays a central role in the transformation of consciousness in Integral yoga and psychology. Besides Atman, the transcendent aspect of the soul which is part of the eternal spirit, or Brahman, there are two more components that are key to understanding the soul in creation. One of these, *Jivatman*, is better known in the traditional Indian spiritual teachings and yoga psychology. It is the unique line of individual connection to Atman. In other words, Atman which is eternal beyond time and space, becomes individually manifested in existence as Jivatman. Another aspect of the soul is the Psychic Being which descends into the material plane and is the agency of evolution of consciousness in matter. Working behind the scenes, both Jivatman and the Psychic Being are responsible for maintaining the individual existence of the human being.

According to Neeltje Huppes (2005):

The soul is our individual self, each soul is unique yet eternal. The psychic being is the *evolving* soul, which grows around the soul. In other words, the psychic is evolutionary, it goes through a development, it grows. This development starts from a psychic presence or a small entity. This presence is granted to all human beings, it is there in each of us. This entity can develop into an individualized Psychic Being by its action on our surface nature; changing it from ordinary nature to divine nature. Through self-observation and an aspiration for a life, first influenced, later guided by divine consciousness, a human being can enhance this process. (Para. 23)

According to Sri Aurobindo (1971):

At the beginning the soul in Nature, the psychic entity, whose unfolding is the first step towards a spiritual change, is an entirely veiled part of us, although it is that by which we exist and persist as individual beings in Nature. The other parts of our natural composition are not only mutable but perishable; but the psychic entity in us persists and is fundamentally the same always: it contains all essential possibilities of our manifestation but is not constituted by them; it is not limited by what it manifests, not contained by the incomplete forms of the manifestation, not tarnished by the imperfections and impurities, the defects and depravations of the surface being. It is an ever-pure flame of the divinity in things and nothing that comes to it, nothing that enters into our experience can pollute its purity or extinguish the flame. (p.922)

According to the Mother:

The soul and the Psychic Being are not exactly the same thing, although in essence they are the same. The soul is the divine spark that dwells at the center of each being; it is identical with its Divine Origin; it is the divine in human beings. The Psychic Being is formed progressively around this divine center, the soul, in the course of innumerable lives in the terrestrial evolution, until the time comes when the psychic being fully formed and wholly awakened, becomes the conscious sheath of the soul around which it is formed.

And thus identified with the Divine, it becomes a refined instrument in the world. (Alfassa, 1972, p. 247)

The Psychic Being is also referred to as the psychic personality or evolving soul, which “passes through a slow development and formation” (Sri Aurobindo, 1971, p. 894). The soul contacts the surface personality through the mind as an intermediary, or through the heart which is in close contact with the emotional being in us.

[I]t is consequently through the emotions that it can act best at the beginning with its native power, with its living force of concrete experience. It is through a love and adoration of the All-beautiful and All blissful, the All-Good, the True, the spiritual Reality of love, that the approach is made; the aesthetic and emotional parts join together to offer the soul, the life, the whole nature to that which they worship. (Sri Aurobindo, 1971, p. 936)

This process which is known as *psychic transformation* is described by Sri Aurobindo as cracking of the outer nature and breaking down of the walls of inner separation. The

... inner light gets through, the inner fire burns in the heart, the substance of the nature and the stuff of consciousness refine to a greater subtlety and purity, and the deeper psychic experiences, those which are not solely of an inner mental or inner vital character, become possible in this subtler, purer, finer substance; the soul begins to unveil itself, the psychic personality reaches its full stature. (p. 907)

The process of psychic transformation is typically the first stage of the process. It is similar to Almas’ journey of ascent in the sense that our egoic consciousness reaches ‘up’ to soul consciousness. The three phases of ascent: the journey to presence; the journey with presence; and the journey in or as presence may be considered as phases of the process of Psychic Transformation in Integral Yoga. Here it is the soul that reaches to the surface consciousness (cracking the outer nature), in the journey to presence. The unveiling of the soul is analogous to journey with presence, and the psychic personality reaching its “full stature” constitutes journey in or as presence.

Almas’ “journey of descent” is parallel to Aurobindo’s second type of transformation—the *Spiritual Transformation*. Sri Aurobindo describes this process as

... a free inflow of all kinds of spiritual experience, experience of the Self, experience of the Ishwara and the Divine Shakti, experience of cosmic consciousness, a direct touch with cosmic forces and with the occult movements of universal Nature, a psychic sympathy and unity and inner communication and interchanges of all kinds with other beings and with Nature, illuminations of the mind by knowledge, illuminations of the heart by love and devotion and spiritual joy and ecstasy, illuminations of the sense and the body by higher experience, illuminations of dynamic action in the truth and largeness of a purified mind and heart and soul, the certitudes of the divine light and guidance, the joy and power of the divine force working in the will and the conduct. (Aurobindo, 1971, p. 908)

Integral yoga also involves another type of transformation, the Supramental Transformation, which aims at total transformation of embodied existence. Briefly, Sri Aurobindo describes this process as a highest spiritual transformation

... that must intervene on the psychic or psycho-spiritual change; the psychic movement inward to the inner being, the Self or Divinity within us, must be completed by an opening upward to a supreme spiritual status or a higher existence. This can be done by our opening into what is above us, by an ascent of consciousness into the ranges of overmind and supramental nature in which the sense of self and spirit is ever unveiled and permanent... (p. 910)

Almaas suggests that *The Personal Essence* allows us to see the meaning and the potential of a fulfilled human and personal life, a life of truth, love, dignity and harmony, which includes the usual human concerns of work, family, creativity, accomplishments and enjoyments of all kinds (Almaas, 1988). One of the few teachers who has seen this possibility and given it its due importance is Sri Aurobindo, who was not satisfied with the transcendent and impersonal states of enlightenment alone, and who worked towards the actualization of a liberated human life. Writing about Sri Aurobindo and his work, one of his students says:

It is not enough for us to find our individual centre without the totality of the world, or the totality of the world without the individual, and yet less to find the supreme Peace if it dissolves the world and the individual—"I do not want to be sugar," exclaimed the great Ramakrishna, "I want to eat sugar!" And without the individual what meaning would all the marvelous realizations have for us, for we are no longer them. (Satprem, 2008, p.177)

What we know from the lived experience of Etty Hillesum and other human lives born into times of significant trauma, hatred, and destruction, is that living one's truth and liberation of consciousness is possible for some. The Mother would concur that 'waking up' is the purpose of our evolving soul's journey. She says:

But generally, having come to this stage, it remembers all that has happened to it and understands the great necessity of coming to the help of those who are yet struggling in the midst of difficulties. These psychic beings give their whole existence to the Divine Work. (Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, 1989, p. 83)

As we will see in the pages ahead, Etty Hillesum would give her entire existence, and leave us her words for our development and evolution.

Etty Hillesum: A Brief History of Her Life

Etty Hillesum, a young Jewish Dutch woman, found an inner path to liberation and union with the 'nondual ground of existence' in the face of the annihilation of the Holocaust. Etty was born on September 15, 1914 in Middleburg, the Netherlands, with her family moving several times, finally ending up in Deventer. Her father, a Dutch Jew, taught classical languages and was a scholarly, quiet man with a sense of humor. Etty's mother was a Russian Jew who had escaped to the Netherlands following a pogrom and is described as passionate, chaotic and domineering.

This marriage of opposites created a tempestuous relationship and household, and Etty admired her father and was critical of her mother. Her two younger brothers were intellectually gifted, one a musician, the other a physician, and though did have severe psychological difficulties, and were hospitalized at different times for schizophrenia (Hillesum, 2002, p. xi).

Etty went to Amsterdam in 1932 to study law at the University of Amsterdam, and then went on to study Slavic languages, psychology, and Russian language and literature. She had a number of private pupils for Russian language lessons. During her university years she was involved in left-wing, antifascist student circles. In 1937 Etty moved into the household of Hans Wegerif, an accountant, as his housekeeper. After some time Etty developed an intimate relationship with Hans, and seemed to derive some sense of warmth and stability from that relationship. There were several members of the household that made up this 'family of five', including Maria Tuinzing, a nurse who became one of Etty's best friends (Hillesum, 1996, p. xvii).

Etty met Julius Spier, a chirologist and former student of Jung, in February 1941, and immediately became his student and soon after, his secretary. Spier was a psychologically gifted and charismatic figure that gathered around him a group of students, mostly women, whom he lectured to and had individual psychotherapy sessions with. His psychological approach would be considered unorthodox today, as it often included wrestling bouts, and multi-role relationships. Etty became part of this group, or 'Spier Club', and as she wrote about Spier, "I fell under the spell of the inner freedom that seemed to emanate from him" (Hillesum, 2002, p.5). Etty's psychological and spiritual journey began to take off with Spier. She started a diary and wrote about her inner life and the life around her. Her relationship with Spier is the catalyst for her own growth, he is whom she tests and challenges herself against, and this struggle dominates her early journals. Spier and Etty resist a physical relationship for a considerable time, as Spier has a fiancée waiting for him in England, and Etty has a relationship with 'Pa' Han Wegerif. The relationship of Etty and Spier evolves through erotic obsession to a deeply transformative one for both.

As the Nazi reign of terror increased for the Dutch Jews, Etty's journals reflect this developing horror and her experience of it. She becomes an 'unofficial' member of the Jewish Council in July 1942, and soon after applies for a position to help the Jews at the Westerbork transit camp. She turned down offers to go into hiding and continued to travel to and from Amsterdam and Westerbork, becoming the 'thinking heart of Westerbork'. On 7 September 1943, Etty and her parents and brother were transported to Auschwitz. Her parents died immediately upon arriving at Auschwitz, while Etty died 30 November 1943. Before her final departure, Etty gave her diaries and a bundle of letters to her friends, in case she didn't return.

The Diamond Approach

The Diamond Approach is an original spiritual path toward self-realization. It is unique in combining Eastern spiritual concepts and practices with Western knowledge of psychological development. The teaching is a comprehensive approach toward the soul's realization of true nature, and is based on an understanding of the evolving nature of the human being and reality. Hameed Ali (penname A.H. Almaas) developed the Diamond Approach 35 years ago, after

arriving from Kuwait to California to study physics at Berkeley. As his teaching reached more and more students, it developed into the Ridhwan School, with two main Centers in the United States, one in California and one in Colorado. Presently there are branches throughout the United States and Europe, including Ety's home of Amsterdam. Almaas credits his studies of Sufism, Buddhism, Aurobindo's Integral Yoga, Tantra, Kashmir Shaivism, and Gurdjieff as important influences.

Karen Johnson has participated in the development of the Diamond Approach with Hameed Ali since the 1970's. She has been teaching in the US and Europe for 35 years. She has an MA in Psychology, and trained as an artist and dancer. She has an interest in the true spirit of scientific investigation based on the love of the truth. The underlying truth that manifests through the beauty and order of the physical and spiritual universe has been a motivating force in her life.

At the core of the Diamond Approach lies the tenet that psychological growth is a necessary concomitant to spiritual evolution. In fact, one cannot evolve spiritually until one works through the psychological blocks that obscure the spiritual path. Spiritual bypassing, well known in our times, is the danger of many a path that neglects the psychological aspect of human development, including the boundless dimension. While the Diamond Approach has incorporated into its understanding the wisdom available from many branches of psychology (particularly Freudian, object relations theory and ego psychology) it is still considered a spiritual teaching and path. Where psychology typically stops, the Diamond Approach continues on to a boundless spiritual level. The primary approach to spiritual awakening and liberation is exploring and understanding immediate experience. Everyday life is the arena where this work is done; and in our relationships, work and reactions to the world around us we attempt to live a deeper, more spiritual life, but various blockages arise and we are filled with our fears, pain, and doubts instead of realizing our true nature. However, in directing our awareness and curiosity to our reactions we are led to what our defenses were covering. As one faces into the pain and emptiness in the moment one can develop deep understanding and move naturally into a greater sense of spaciousness, presence and freedom.

This is a process that we read about innumerable times in Ety's writings that she calls "*hineinhorchen*", or "hearkening to herself". She may start with a mood, or words of Rilke, or an interaction with Spier, and in her characteristic style she seeks the truth behind the experience and dives through all the emotions and thoughts to arrive at a deeper understanding of her true nature and an ever growing freedom.

In the Diamond Approach, Being is considered the true nature of existence. It is the ground and the expression of all manifestation and is both diversity and unity. True nature is "Being without any distortion by our personal history" (Davis, 1999, P. 146). It is not a construction of ours, and when we can penetrate the subjective distortions that obscure it we are truly aware and in touch with the mystery. Being and its qualities are a natural and central part of the potential of the human being. This potential naturally opens up and develops as part of an individual's maturation. When this unfolding does not occur, psychological and epistemological blocks are often the cause. According to Almaas, these barriers consist primarily of fixed beliefs about oneself and reality in general, deeply held attitudes, inner positions, and compulsive patterns of

reactivity and behavior (Almaas, 2002, pp. 10-11). With touching sensitivity, Davis concludes his description of true nature:

True nature gives a texture to our experiences. The more we are in touch with it the more we find our experiences to be flowing, beautiful, full, clear, and pure. There is a sense of mystery. We become aware of the world, and our awareness is luminous, radiant, and delicate. We feel that everything is majestic and real. When we move deeply enough into any experience, it reveals its deepest characteristic and its true nature. True nature is not a state of consciousness; it is the ground of all consciousness. (Davis, 1999, p. 147)

The Diamond Approach considers the soul as individual consciousness and the portal to experience. The soul is fluid and dynamic and is influenced by the ego and personality as well as its true nature. The soul is not only awareness but also the locus of our awareness and the experience of our self. It is the perceiver and the perceived, the observer, the doer and the site of all experiences. In short, when we say ‘inner experience’ we are talking about the soul. The evolution of individual consciousness is focused on the soul and its development, maturation, and refinement. As it develops, it reveals increasingly deeper levels, each disclosing true nature and the ultimate ground of all Being.

The true nature of the person or their soul is called their essence. Essence is our nature unconditioned by ego or personality. Being is the essence or true nature of the soul, as it is in all manifestation. Essence is the specific experience of Being in its various aspects when it arises as the true nature of the human soul (Almaas, 2002, p. 8). We experience ourselves as essence if we experience ourselves as free, unfabricated, and spontaneously arising—not conditioned by the past or by mental images or self-concepts. It is the truth of our very presence. Different spiritual traditions give it different names: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: Spirit; Buddhism: Buddha Nature; Taoism : the Tao, Hinduism: Atman/Brahman. In sum, realization of essence is often considered to be the most authentic, innate and fundamental nature of who we are. The work of the soul is to open up to presence and let go of the conditioning and obstructions and blocks that prevent the soul from experiencing Essence (Davis, 1999, p. 11).

In a certain way, the spiritual journey, or the realization of Being is a process of recognition. Etty’s evolving consciousness toward Being over such a brief two and a half year period exquisitely demonstrates this growing recognition. How did such a profound shift occur in her over a relatively brief period of time? Was it Etty’s experience with Spier and his teaching, or did the tragic circumstances of the Holocaust accelerate her spiritual process? Both seem important catalysts, yet these two factors needed the fertile ground of her ‘Love of the Truth’. In the Diamond Approach this love of the truth, or the recognition of the flame of the truth, no matter where it leads, or what pain one feels in the discovery, it is the fuel that propels one down the spiritual path, and throughout Etty’s writings we can see her relentless search for and love of the truth. She was not to be deterred. Almaas speaks of the potential pain of the journey:

When you really get into seeing things about yourself, it’s very painful. You don’t like it, but something in you says “I want to feel this and get to the bottom of it.” nobody’s making you do it.” So in that moment what is compelling you? It is somehow your desire to see the truth. Seeing the truth seems to be fulfilling in itself, it seems to bring some

subtle pleasure and joy. So you want to see it regardless of how difficult it is. It is no longer a question of what is a true statement or perception or not. There is something more, and something more subtle. It is, in a sense, that the truth wants itself. And that's what is called the love of the truth for its own sake. In that situation, it is such a deep compelling desire that when it is there, nothing can stand in its way—not fear, not pain. (Almaas, 2000, pp. 96-97)

The Sufi's often quote the hadith (Quran) in which God says "I was a hidden treasure: I loved to be known, so I created all." God wants to know his nature, his possibilities, his manifestations. This love to know himself, the desire to know himself, appears in us as the love to inquire; for inquiry is not only openness to what perception presents, but a love of finding out what's really there. If you say, "I'm open to what's there," you're not dynamic yet. It is the love that brings in the dynamism: "Yes, I'm not only open to seeing, I'm going to get engaged in this. I'm going to jump into the middle of the experience with my hands and feet and dig, because I love to find out." We do not need to take the Sufis literally; that is we do not need to believe in a god that loves and wants. When we clearly see true nature, we see its dynamic force as a love that manifests; everything arises out of love and celebration. (Almaas, 2002, p. 18)

The Method of Inquiry

The primary method of the Diamond Approach is inquiry. This work is an open ended inquiry into the various elements of our experience and its patterns. The understanding that what the Diamond work cultivates is not intellectual or mental comprehension but a direct awareness and experience of oneself that is present, insightful, and clear. As Almaas says, "it is the clear discrimination of the truth of experience as an inseparable aspect of that experience. This understanding is the direct response of Being to sincere inquiry." (Almaas, 2002, pp.13-14)

Generally, inquiry means a questioning or investigation, a wanting to find out, and is an element of a number of teachings, not just the Diamond Approach. India's Ramana Maharshi and the esoteric Armenian teacher George Gurdjieff are both examples of well-known teachers who employed such a method. Inquiry is also the starting point of the scientific method, and this introspection into one's experience begins the process of empirical inquiry. At its heart, inquiry is an unknowing, one that often ignites a passion to discover, to learn, to understand.

As Almaas says:

It is as if something is tickling you from inside, saying, 'Look here, there is something here.' The flavor of unknowing...is how the unfoldment is arising. Something is coming up. Being is heaving up, presenting one of its possibilities, and that possibility is approaching your knowing consciousness. (Almaas, 2002, p.15)

Open inquiry begins by looking at our present experiences but it is a looking that must embody openness. Instead of taking our perceived discrimination as final, inquiry says "I know what I see, but I acknowledge that I do not know whether what I see is all." According to Almaas, "you cannot begin to inquire into a perception if you think you know all there is to know about it. The

moment you think you know, the door to inquiry closes.” (Almaas, 2002, p.17). So inquiry begins with a not-knowing, from recognizing and observing something in yourself that you do not understand.

It is well known to the EHOC (Etty Hillesum Research Centre) community that Etty was continually asking questions of herself, others and ‘God’. Rainer Marie Rilke, one of her main influences, employed inquiry as a guiding philosophy. Etty responded to questions of her own and those of Spier and others with a kind of immediacy that exemplifies this “direct response of Being.” The immediacy and openness in Etty Hillesum’s writing is characteristic of the presence of essence. It is an openness that she had to see things as they were as well as an openness for them to change, and for the change to reveal more of what was present. Etty’s open attitude of inquiry was the means of engaging not only the dynamism of Being, but the spaciousness or vastness that was the infinite possibility of her true nature.

The Diamond Work’s Basic Structure: The Journey of Ascent and Descent

In the Diamond Approach, essence is central to the process of the soul’s inner journey to liberation and development. From the perspective of the relationship of the soul to essential presence, the inner journey of realization can be divided into two major parts: the journey of ascent and the journey of descent. The journey of ascent has three phases: the journey to presence; the journey with presence; and the journey in or as presence (Almaas, 2002, p. 44). Almaas likens the journeys to climbing a ladder. In the journey of descent, the soul climbs back down the same ladder that it climbed on its way up to reality or true nature, but this time the soul integrates the various dimensions she has passed through in her ascent. In the ascent the soul moves inward, while in the descent is moving outward where it retains its conscious awareness within manifestation (Almaas, 2004).

The First Journey of Ascent

The first journey takes us to the beginning of experiencing our Being, as we have glimpses of our true essential presence. The recognition of essence as presence is the fundamental insight of the first journey. In this place the soul is dissociated from her true nature and living as the animal soul with the possibility of actualizing to being a human soul, a soul with heart. In the first phase we are earthbound and caught in inertia, and this has often been described as being asleep to existence. In this phase we are held captive by our conditioning to repeat the same unchanging patterns, with the same experiences, perceptions and knowledge. The same suffering and pain are re-experienced and often reinforced with addictive behaviors used to help numb us to the feelings, and Freud’s repetition compulsion is often in play.

The first phase of the Diamond work is to focus its teachings and experiential exercises on the essential aspects of our humanness. Almaas suggests that “this wish to be ourselves is the true motivation for inquiry” (Almaas, 2002, p. 252). In accordance with the Sufi tradition, he calls these first five of the essential aspects the *lataif*, and each one is associated with a color. They are Joy, or the excitement of curiosity (yellow); Strength, or the capacity to engage in one’s spiritual work (red); Will, the perseverance in the face of suffering, (white); Peace, or the ability to

perceive what one is experiencing (black) and Compassion, or the sensitivity to hold oneself gently (green). These aspects emerge in relationship to various basic needs that are touched in the beginning stages of one's inquiry practice. The other six essential aspects, according to the Diamond Approach, are more implicit but are important in forming the ground for inquiry: Knowing, Truth, Clarity, Focus, Personalness, and Intelligence. A.H. Almaas points out that the similarities to the Sufi understanding are limited, as the Sufi tradition is ancient and has its own system and teachings, and the Diamond Approach has come to manifest in the current age (Almaas, 2002, p. 253).

In this early phase our personality, typical patterns and feelings, and the conventional conditions of existence dominate, whether neurotic or normal. Even though one is stuck in the repetition of these patterns and conditions, this phase holds the potential to break the grip of conventional experience, exposing its limitations and opening one to the experience of true presence. An example of this process would be the opening to the presence of self-compassion that allows one to tolerate pain, and to explore and understand its origins, thus eventually reducing the pain and touching a greater presence and awareness of one's essence. At this point in the journey is where many in Western culture (based on privilege, education, and awareness) enter psychotherapy.

The Second Journey

The second journey, with presence, begins when one begins to recognize the presence of essence, the dimension of essential manifestation. Upon experiencing presence, one discovers the medium of the soul and the essence of what humanness is. It is here that an individual may have his or her first glimpses of strength without identification, solidity without the usual self representations. A spiritual teacher (rabbi, priest, guru, clergy, imam, spiritual guide, depth therapist) is often sought at this juncture to help one pay attention and discriminate the subtle and previously unrecognized aspects of experience that open the door to essential perception. The openness of Being transforms time and space. The soul's journey here is in company with presence, both receptive to it and guided by it.

The 'Pearl Beyond Price': Individuation based on true Personal Essence

Through the development of the ego the sense of self is maintained by the ego's attachment, object relations, conditioning and history. As the second journey unfolds and these attachments and conditionings are transcended and recognized as limiting for the soul, the building of a new structure needs to occur that provides a sense of self based on essence. This phase of the second journey is toward individuation and the realization of personal essence. This is what Almaas calls 'the pearl beyond price'. The 'pearl' functions as the essential structure that the soul develops and uses to integrate all her experiences of everyday life. This structure draws upon essence to mature and develop the soul's virtues, capacities, and faculties (Almaas, 2004). This personal essence, or 'pearl' gives the soul a sense of individuality and ability to function as a person in a fluid and dynamic fashion that is responsive to the environment. Throughout Journey two, the soul learns to depend less and less on the rigid ego structures for a self sense and functioning. One can be in the world coming from an authentic place, as the pearl has the qualities of autonomy, beingness, independence, yet contact with the world and others. In

developing the pearl we realize that who we really are is our essence, and not our attachments. As Almaas writes, having the pearl and touching true personal essence is "the experience of being oneself and not a response or reaction to something. It is not being something for somebody. It is, in a sense, complete freedom, the freedom to be" (Davis, 1999, p. 123). Almaas describes the Pearl as an "ontological presence", as opposed to the structured process of the ego. But the Pearl is personal, and not impersonal and detached. It has the capacity to make intimate contact with another human being and still be totally free and unconditioned. In fact, because of its freedom and basis in personal essence and true nature, the pearl is capable of more intimacy and connectedness than the selfish ego. As the second journey and self-realization continues the pearl becomes more deeply integrated with other aspects of one's personal essence, and then finally with the boundless dimensions.

The Discovery of Essence

As the development of the pearl is the process of individuation in the second journey, there is a second phase occurring in the second journey that involves the soul's maturation and the realization of true nature and essential identity. During this phase of the journey the soul experiences essence mainly as an internal phenomena that inspires, guides and supports the soul. This is still a dual experience as she recognizes essence as her nature and is with it but not identical to it. This experience exposes the ego as the primary barrier to identity with essence, as the soul is only beginning to construct the 'pearl' and is still more or less dependent on the ego for self-identity. Through the process of uncovering and working through the ego structures, the soul learns about the inherent narcissism of the ego. The Diamond Approach has come to name this process 'the point work' (Almaas, 1996). The transcendence of this narcissism is self-realization, or the soul's realization.

The Point Work

In the natural course of human development the infant initially is present to his or her immediate experience and true nature. As the self develops, the infant acquires memories and starts to lose this immediacy and begins to experience oneself through past impressions and the developing ego structures. Consequently, the soul loses awareness of its wholeness or true nature. Narcissism is the consequence of this loss of immediacy and lack of presence to one's wholeness. Narcissism manifests itself with self-centeredness, sensitivity to others' critiques, easily wounded by others' lack of empathy, defensiveness about one's mistakes or weaknesses and a need to be seen, admired and appreciated. All these narcissistic defenses cover a pervasive sense of being deficient and worthless, and a deep narcissistic wound caused by the alienation from one's essential presence. The development of the narcissistic wound was fostered by the significant people surrounding the child that didn't see or support the child's true self. This lack of support and love was intolerable to the child and consequently a limited false self was developed that was more acceptable. A sense of betrayal remains due to this lack of support, and not only toward others but also toward oneself for giving up the wholeness of Being. In the journey to self-realization this construction of a limited self needs to be torn down and the wholeness of one's Being laid bare.

The point work involves using inquiry to uncover and work through these narcissistic defenses to open the narcissistic wound and find one's true nature. During this process various emotions arise. First, comes dread as one approaches the great emptiness, and then shame and embarrassment related to one's sense of deficiency. Due to the betrayal, narcissistic rage can erupt both at ourselves and at the critical and rejecting others. These emotions are difficult to experience and the tendency of the ego is to turn away and cover up. In the point work one counters the ego and continues to face the pain and sense of worthlessness, using inquiry as a tool of discovery. This process takes a great love for the truth to bear the pain.

The uncovering leads to a dissolving of the sense of self and the experience of great emptiness. Sometimes the ego fills this emptiness with a narcissistic depression and hopelessness as a defense against the perceived loss of self. The way out of being stuck in this emptiness and depression requires a basic trust in the goodness of the nature of the universe. Inquiry into one's distrust ultimately can lead to a discovering of trust. Accompanying this discovery is accepting and surrendering to not knowing what to do, "for being is not a matter of doing anything" (Almaas, 1996, p. 342). Finding this trust in the rightness of the cosmos, and beauty, leads to compassion and loving kindness toward the self, and to the experience of universal love. Being present to this universal love transforms the emptiness into a luminous vastness that is peaceful and free of the constrictions of the self. The experience of this love allows the ego to stop its incessant, self-preserving activity, and let Being just occur. Empathic guidance from a teacher can be very important during the point work to help support the student in facing this painful material, and to model universal love.

Summary

The realization of personal essence and essential identity are two interdependent processes that have separate stages and different elements. Perhaps the most significant difference is that the realization of the personal essence is more of a development and construction, while the realization of essential identity is a discovery. The development of 'the pearl beyond price' enables the soul to mature and individuate, while the realization of essential identity involves the penetration of the false self and the discovery of one's true nature. Both the individuation process and realization of true nature are focused on dissolving the ego and its limiting narcissism, and at the end of journey two the soul begins to know her essence as her identity. The duality of soul and essence begins to be bridged and the soul moves into the third journey. "The soul recognizes she is the simplicity and exquisiteness of timeless presence." (Almaas, 2004, p. 224)

The Third Journey

This journey is entitled the journey in or as presence. It involves the development of and living through non-duality. The soul's experience becomes one with essential presence, and all the maturation and structures of the soul that were developed in the second journey now become integrated into this non-dual presence. This journey, like the second journey, has two interdependent or complementary phases.

The first phase is the essential development of the soul, what the Diamond Work calls the “essentialization” of the soul. It is the complete merging of the soul with essence, where the transparency of the soul to essence becomes so complete that the two become one. This non-dual soul is a dynamic presence that all experience arises from. When the soul is realized, she is totally inseparable from and transparent to the presence of love. She is not only love, says Almaas, but “she is loving in a complete and full way. She is a presence that expresses itself dynamically as loving action. The dynamism and the presence of love are inseparable, co-emergent” (Almaas, 2004, p. 225). This essentialization of the soul can include all aspects, such as intelligence, compassion, clarity, steadfastness, etc. It can be in the physical, expressive or mental realm. In this transformation, the soul has progressed from the stage of the human soul, the attainment of the second journey, to the stage of realized or essential soul.

The second phase of the development of nonduality is the discovery in presence of the boundlessness of true nature. True nature begins to reveal it is the ground and nature of everything, and that it transcends the limited boundaries of individuality or personhood of the soul. The soul now begins to experience herself “as a boundless and nonlocal presence that transcends all spatial extensions, as eternal ‘nowness’ that transcends all time, and as a mystery that transcends all determinations. She is all and everything, she is Reality” (Almaas, 2004, p. 225). In the third journey, one experiences true nature free from the limitations of separateness, and from particular forms and manifestations. As presence or human consciousness has gone beyond the individual soul and personal essence to touch boundless Reality, nonduality is now complete.

Journey of Descent

Now that the soul has journeyed into the mystery and transcended all limitations, it flows back into the multitude of forms and objects of the phenomenal world. As the soul does so, it maintains its connection to the absolute and true nature that it has discovered, but integrates Being into the manifestations of the phenomenal world. The journey of ascent was a movement inward, while the journey of descent is a movement outward into the world of forms and objects, which leads to integration and union with the whole (Almaas, 2004). This journey involves understanding the absolute not only as a transcendent truth but also as the immanent ground of Reality. Like the previous two journeys, this journey involves the two phases of self-realization and individuation. There develops a deeper understanding of the functional relationship between true nature and the individual soul, and the relationship between soul, Being or God, and the cosmos. In the descent the soul finds its place in the cosmic reality.

The journeys of ascent and descent are not separate linear processes, but are present simultaneously, co-existing and co-emerging. The journeys complement each other and are equally important. “Immanence, fullness, and the myriad forms of the world are one side of a coin; transcendence, emptiness, and the mystery of union are the other. Thus, the richness and beauty of the world are no more true, valuable or privileged than its emptiness, spaciousness and vastness”(Davis, 1999, p. 153).

Journey 1: Ety Hillesum

Since we have only two and a half years of Ety's words and experiences describing these four phases of the journey to the realization of true nature, the stages are compressed and overlap greatly, and are often not as distinct and differentiated as I am pointing out here. Most authors of Hillesum, however, recognize the gradual, yet dramatic change in the tonality of Ety's personality and life as she moves toward the unfolding of her Being. I appreciate the interwovenness and gradual shift in Ety's unfolding, even as I unpack the journeys to illuminate her process of evolution.

As mentioned, in the first journey we get glimpses of Being itself, the first recognition of our essence as presence. However, the soul is cutoff from her true nature in this stage. Earthbound, caught in survival and self-absorption, asleep to existence, we repeat the same patterns of perception and behavior that we have developed through our conditioning. Even though one is stuck in the repetition, the potential exists in this journey to break through conventional experience and reveal its limitations, opening one to true presence.

This is a phase where dynamics of family relationships come into full awareness. While little is known of Ety's childhood years, it is clear in her teenage and younger adult years she struggled intensely in relationship to her mother, while idealizing her father. She deemed her mother to be chaotic and smothering, and her father as accomplished, stoic, and erudite. These parental relationships do much to set the stage for the negating of her own personality and the tendency to merge with older men for security, love and learning. She shares the Russian sense of drama, emotionality and somatic complaints of her mother, yet identifies with the intellectual curiosity and capacity of her father.

Ety captures moments of insight and vulnerability without, seemingly, a staged self representation. Her budding transparency suggests an inner strength with striking immediacy. What is illuminating at this first stage is that her expanded self has compassion for this egoic, scattered, and immature personality. For example:

Here in this strange family, there is such a remarkable mixture of barbarism and culture that you are stripped of all your strength...In the past, my picturesque family would cost me a bucket of tears every night. I can't explain those tears as of yet; they came from somewhere in the dark collective unconscious. Nowadays I am not so wasteful of this precious fluid, but it is not easy to live here. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 83)

And again:

Mother's first words to me were, "I really do feel awful." It's so strange. Father has only to utter the smallest sigh and my heart just about breaks, but when Mother says with great pathos, I really do feel awful, I couldn't sleep a wink again", and so on, I remain basically untouched...

Stop whining, for goodness sake, you shrew, you nag, carrying on like that. Such are my inner reactions when my mother sits down to have a chat with me. My mother is someone

who would try the patience of a saint. I do my best to look at her objectively, and I try to be fond of her, but then suddenly I'll find myself saying, emphatically, "What a ridiculous and silly person you are." It's so wrong of me....

And again: Had a respectable conversation in Russian with Mother, who suddenly seems a spirited, decent person again. Then I am all at once dreadfully sorry for having had such ugly feelings and am sure that I have misjudged her, but a few hours later an exasperated little devil inside me suddenly riles against her again: You horrible cry-baby, stop all that rubbish, you're honestly quite mad, what a mad person you are." I think these thoughts very soberly and with a wry sort of humor, and love is far removed from me then. Etty, Etty, don't let yourself down like that! And isn't it high time you were asleep? (Hillesum, 2002, pp. 81-83)

As the entries indicate there is a forming of a relationship with herself that is reminiscent of a 're-parenting' of herself, opening to self compassion right along with her overwhelm, anger, guilt and regret.

In the first phases of spiritual or therapeutic work the use of a journal is common, as is the seeking of a teacher. It seems Etty was ripe for both as she went to one of Julius Spier's lectures, and asked to become his student. In a short time she became his secretary and assistant. We realize how much Etty is a natural seeker, and has begun a journey with a teacher, both psychologically and spiritually. Spier, known as S. in Etty's journal, was a chirologist and psychologist associated with C.G. Jung. What she saw in Spier went beyond his obvious personality conflicts and limitations. She wanted what he had: his spiritual presence, his deep wisdom and love of the truth and of the students he worked with, and his ability to see through things as they really were. He helped Etty to face reality, to be with whatever came up in her and allow it, and to inquire into it, just as Diamond Approach students would do. Spier and his 'magical personality' could be seen today from an Integral, eastern perspective as a guru, or a teacher of an older philosophical tradition, such as the perennial philosophy, including the ancient spiritual traditions of the east such as Buddhism, Sufism, Hinduism, as well as indigenous traditions, and mystical branches of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Spier's group of students could be like any "mystery" school, *sangha*, or spiritual community of any kind such as the Diamond Approach, called the Ridhwan school, with its teachings, transmission, and practices of dyadic inquiry, chanting, meditation and study.

We get a glimpse of what Etty was experiencing at the time of her choosing a teacher from this entry:

...Intelligent, incredibly wise, age-old gray eyes, which drew one's attention from the full mouth, but not for long or all together. I was awed by his skill, his ability to read my deepest conflicts from my second face: my hands.... And then there was his lecture. The impression was good. First rate lecture. A charming man. Charming smile, despite the false teeth. I fell under the spell of the inner freedom that seemed to emanate from him... (Hillesum, 2002, pp. 4-5)

It is here, in Etty's first letter to Spier, where we understand what she is addressing in her work with him, the base of the first journey. This entry, the first one in Exercise Book 1 is prescient of what is to come:

You know, yesterday, when I could do nothing but look stupidly at you, I experienced such a clash of conflicting thoughts and feelings that I was quite shattered and would have yelled out loud had I had even less self-control. I experienced strong erotic feelings for you, which I thought I would have got over by now, and at the same time a strong aversion to you, and there was also a sudden feeling of utter loneliness, a suspicion that life is terribly difficult, that one has to face it all on one's own, that help from outside is out of the question and uncertainty, fear and all of that too. A small slice of chaos was suddenly staring at me from deep down inside my soul. And when I had left you and was going back home, I wanted a car to run me over and thought, ah, well, I must be out of my mind, like the rest of my family, something I always think when I feel the slightest bit desperate. But I know again that I am not mad, I simply need to do a lot of work on myself before I develop into an adult and a complete human being. And you will be helping me won't you?

Well, I have written you a few lines now; they have cost me a lot of trouble. I write with the greatest reluctance, and always feel inhibited and uncertain when I do. Yet, I want to become a writer one day, would you believe it? (Hillesum, 2002, p. 3)

As mentioned, right away, Etty, unabashedly shares her erotic attraction and aversion to Spier, leading us to two of the most powerful energies for transformation: desire and repulsion. Initially, Etty prides herself on her skill and passion as a lover. As she says, "I am accomplished in bed, just about seasoned enough I should think, to be counted among the better lovers," yet her deepest commitment is revealed in the continuance of the same sentence: "and love does indeed suit me to perfection, and yet it remains a mere trifle, set apart from what is truly essential, and deep inside me something is still locked away." (Hillesum, 2002, p. 4E)

This tension will become a dynamic part of the second phase of her Journey, but for this first phase of her exploring, her 'gender questions', much like the younger Anne Frank, are very much on her mind and heart:

He said that love of mankind (sic) is greater than the love of one man. For when you love one person you are merely loving oneself. He is a mature fifty-five year old man and has reached the stage where he can love all mankind, having loved many individuals in the past. I am an ordinary twenty-seven year old girl, and I too am filled with love for all mankind but for all I know I shall always continue to be in search of my one man. And I wonder to what extent that is a handicap, a woman's handicap. Whether it is an ancient tradition from which she must liberate herself, or whether it is so much part of her very essence that she would be doing violence to herself if she bestowed her love on all mankind instead of one single man. Feelings of friendship, respect, and love for us as human beings, these are all very well, but don't we ultimately want men to desire us as women? Perhaps the true, essential emancipation of women still has to come. We are not yet full human beings; we are "the weaker sex." We are still tied down and enmeshed

in centuries-old traditions. We still have to be born as human beings; that is the great task that lies before us. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 69)

Another area Etty speaks about in the early phase of her journey is loneliness, indicative of depression, mania or anxiety. I would call it existential despair in its tone as well as a kind of cyclothymia in its biological characteristics. She says:

I know two sorts of loneliness. One makes me feel dreadfully unhappy, lost and forlorn, the other makes me feel strong and happy. The first always appears when I feel out of touch with my fellow men (sic), with everything, when I am completely cut off from others and from myself and can see no purpose in life or any connection between things, nor have the slightest idea where I fit in. With the other kind of loneliness, by contrast, I feel very strong and certain and connected with everyone and everything and God. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 82)

In these states of disconnection, the theme of Etty's personality struggle is one of feeling lost. So, when she says "I need to expose myself unreservedly to someone. And perhaps and above all I also want that someone to appreciate my full worth." We can see why Spier and his psychological and spiritual mastery become so important to her, even if his carnal struggle was in "full cry." Etty is becoming aware of herself and what she needs and wants in relationship. She is committed to record everything that is going on with her and realizes she can't capture all of it in words at this stage. Her agitation gets translated into the somatic complaints of headaches, stomachaches, or digestion problems. She has used metaphors of a "tightly bound ball of twine" the "cork that bottles her up again" to explain this inability to write or, "to say things, to express them in such a way that the words become transparent and the spirit behind them can be seen." It is very telling when Etty is in one of these cut off and alienated places, and when she hears from S. she comes back to center: "I regained contact with myself, with the deepest and best in me which I call God, and so also with you. A moment came in which I grew one stage further, in which many new perspectives about myself and my bond with you and my fellow beings appeared" (Hillesum, 2002, p. 83).

There are many points in this first journey where Etty's maturation becomes palpable:

A strong straight pillar is growing in my heart, I can almost feel it growing, and around it all the rest resolves; I myself, the world, everything. And the pillar is an earnest (symbol) of my inner security. How terribly important this is for me, being in touch with my inner self! I don't go on losing my balance or tumbling from one world into the next...Something is being consolidated within me, I seem to be taking root instead of continuously drifting, but it is still no more than the fragile start of a new and more mature phase. You must keep watching your step, little one, but I am well pleased with you all the same, your pulling through, truly, you are pulling through..." (Hillesum, 2002, p. 85)

Etty often mentions she wants to be a chronicler; one who sees, writes, records, helping others to see, to understand, to expand. This is her mission. She elaborates and underscores her curiosity, so familiar to the logos of the Diamond Approach as the fuel of the spiritual journey:

I want to live to see the future, to become the chronicler of the things that are happening now (downstairs they are screaming blue murder with father yelling, "Go then!" and slamming the door; that too, must be absorbed, and now I am suddenly crying since I am not all that objective really and no one can breathe properly in this house; all right, make the best of it then); oh yes, a chronicler. I notice that over and above all my subjective suffering, I have an irrepressible objective curiosity, a passionate interest in everything that touches this world and its people and my own motives. Sometimes I believe that I have a task. Everything that opens around me is to be clarified in my mind and later in my writing. Poor head and poor heart, what a lot there is still in store for you. Rich head and rich heart, you still have a lovely life, though, both of you. I have stopped crying. But my head still throbs. It is sheer hell in this house. I would have to be quite a writer to describe it properly. Anyhow, I sprang from this chaos, and it is my business to pull myself out of it. S. calls it "building with noble material; he's a real treasure."

As discussed, the method of the Diamond Approach is inquiry. To merely ask questions does not include the complexity and depth of the process; it actually has a great deal to do with being present to what arises throughout the process of inquiring, very similar to Etty's process of "hineinhorchen" or "hearkening" to herself. Rilke was also a guide for her in this regard and she gave credit to Rilke and Spier for teaching her about the wisdom of suffering in the moment, not the idea of suffering. She describes the process of "hearkening" as:

Hearkening to myself, to others, to the world. I listen very intently, with my whole being, and try to fathom the meaning of things. I am always very tense and attentive. I keep looking for something but I don't know what. What I am looking for, of course, is my own truth, but I still have no idea of what it will look like. (Hillesum, 2002, pp. 90-91)

These are actually three important parts of the Diamond work; hearkening or inquiring into experience, the love of the truth, and holding the reality of 'not knowing'.

What becomes clear at the base of this split she feels within herself is a feeling of shame. Her struggle with her body and her view of the feminine instilled in her by nature and nurture and seems deficient to what she sees in the masculine. She reveals the difficulty she faces in realizing how all her physical symptoms, including strong fatigue and shifting moods, keep her off balance and stuck. She is embarrassed and tells us so:

I always think it is so humiliating that the mind should be impaired by a silly cold or by headaches or by whatever other physical complaints. I always feel ashamed about being unwell, I want to keep it to myself, struggle against it and, as a result, I feel twice as bad, a person without energy because the body has such a tremendous influence on one's work and, more generally, on one's whole psychological state. Do I still tend to despise the body? Does one have to stand by one's illnesses, even the most minor, or should one resist them? This is still something of a problem for the girl who broods too much. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 91)

The final thing I would like to discuss in the first phase of Etty's journey based upon these journals is the beginning of a conscious relationship with what she is calling God. She says early on that God is what is the 'deepest and best' in her. She says that:

There is a really deep well inside me. And in it dwells God. Sometimes I am there, too. But more often stones and grit block the well, and God is buried beneath. Then he must be dug out again. (Hillesum, 2002, 91)

What becomes apparent is that Etty's religiosity is radically unconventional. In Holland today, says J.G. Gaarlandt (Hillesum, 1996, p. xv) Christians and Jews are claiming Etty as typically Jewish or typically Christian – "an unprofitable discussion as Etty chooses her own way." It seems to me that Etty chooses a way, an integral way, all inclusive of the world's deepest mystical traditions or the perennial wisdom of transformation. It seems that Etty's first attempts at being present, or praying, or meditation have something to do with surrender, as kneeling becomes a way and symbol of that surrender. She describes one of her first times:

This afternoon I suddenly found myself kneeling on the brown coconut matting in the bathroom, my head hidden in my dressing gown, which was slung over the broken cane chair. Kneeling down doesn't come easily to me, I feel a sort of embarrassment. Why? Probably because of the critical, rational, atheistic bit that is part of me as well. And yet every so often I have a great urge to kneel down with my face in my hands and in this way find some peace and to listen to that hidden source within me. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 103)

Gaarlandt, one of the early publishers of Etty, poses the question: "Was she a mystic?" and answers the question with "Perhaps." What strikes us as different about Etty in this regard is her 'crystal-clear honesty,' something important to psychological and spiritual systems such as the "Spier Club" or in my experience, the Diamond Approach. She insisted that "mysticism must rest on crystal-clear honesty, and can only come after things have been stripped down to their naked reality." Much like any of the non-dual, integral theorists, teachers and practitioners such as Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, Jean Gebser or, the more contemporary ones such as Ken Wilber, or A. H. Almaas and Karen Johnson, the 'work' is done in the world and not (only) in solitary contemplation. We will see in the next phases of Etty's life, the deepening, the deconstruction, and the love of truth. I agree with Gaarlandt when he says "her vision had nothing to do with escape or self-deception, and everything to do with a hard-won, steady, and whole perception of reality. Her God, in a sense, resided in her own capacity to see the truth, to bear it and find consolation in it" (Hillesum, 1996, p. xv).

Journey 2: Etty Hillesum

It's a slow and painful process, this striving after true inner freedom (Hillesum, 2002, p. 134).

As mentioned earlier, as the Diamond Approach's definition of the second journey, the personal essence or 'pearl' gives the soul a sense of fullness, individuality, and ability to function as a person in a fluid and dynamic fashion responsive to the environment. The pearl has the qualities of autonomy, beingness, and independence, yet has contact with the world and others. It

is about evolving maturation, with a certain lustre and fullness that you might think of as you imagine an actual pearl.

As Etty enters this next iteration of the journey, the second one, she becomes more determined to examine and assimilate her sensual obsession with Spier. She struggles with romantic notions of the ideal relationship, her own jealousy and possessiveness, while attributing this to the “illogical” nature of women. It is as if she is unwinding, at such an early age, ‘the inner ball of twine’, inch by inch as she explores gender and romance through her own experience.

Yes, we foolish, idiotic, illogical women, we all seek Paradise and the Absolute. And yet my brain, my capable brain tells me there are no absolutes, that everything is relative, endlessly diverse, and in eternal motion, and that is precisely for that reason that life is so exciting and fascinating, but also very, very painful. We women want to perpetuate ourselves in a man. Yes, I want him to say “Darling, you are the only one, and I shall love you for evermore. I know, of course, that there is no such thing as eternal love, but unless he declares it for me, nothing has any meaning. And the stupid thing is I don’t really want him forever or as the only one in my life, and yet I demand it of him. Do I demand absolute love from others because I’m unable to give it to myself? And I always expect the same level of intensity.... After all, I wouldn’t know what to do if somebody really was on fire for me all day long. It would annoy me and bore me and make me feel tied down. Oh, Etty, Etty! (Hillesum, 2002, p. 105)

These are the kind of struggles that suggest identification at the object relations level of development, where everything gets viewed from the original and primal need for love, with needs such as security, and the animal body’s physical and sexual urges as central. This stage is also rife with the deficiencies that surface based on personality fixations as well as parental deficiencies and modeling. The prevailing historical and cultural beliefs about gender add and reinforce to the conditioning. Etty reveals her wisdom when she reflects on these things and says that her need for Spier to desire ‘me alone’ and for ‘eternal love’ “are some kind of compulsion.” She begins to recognize this when she is feeling ‘extremely’ sensual, she obsesses about Spier, “his mouth and hands while everything else pales into insignificance...” As the above quote illustrates she is quite aware this is a compulsive fantasy.

One day later she gives us a sense of this ability to see, to assimilate, to metabolize as she says:

This has to be put plainly now once and for all – be a bit more sparing with your “once and for alls”, my girl, there’s no such thing in life. It seems so simple now, but there will always be minor crises. What are the facts, then? This afternoon I bicycled over to see him, completely wrapped up in things to do with his work, with no womanly feeling at all. The thought suddenly struck me, and I felt more serious about it than I usually do: I really want to work with him for a few years. I am getting very attuned to him, can learn a tremendous lot from him and can also do a lot for him. I was so pleased with him and our relationship. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 107)

What is striking here is that Etty is aware of her ups and downs, her recognition that: “there will always be minor crises”, and Spier was aware of this as well, as he said to her “Right now I happen to be the right friend for you.” While this turned out to be true in a much larger sense, the sexual forces between them would complicate their spiritual and psychological work. Etty lets us know that she ‘saw’ the whole of Spier and herself when she says, “I would like him to love me like that” (as this is how she idealized what love of a man would be for a woman), and she continues, “he is a good, dear, fascinating human being, and also volatile, temperamental and full of unexpected nonsense.”

While Etty realized at one level the dangers of being exploited by a teacher and therapist “wrestling” with his women students as an intimate practice, she would only later realize her deep vulnerability in this regard. In spite of Spier's deficiencies it was because of his influence that Etty came to see her life and strivings in non-dualistic terms, as she says “You taught me to speak the name of God without embarrassment. You were the mediator between God and me” (Hillesum, 2002, p. 516). Carol Lee Flinders captures this phase of Etty's relationship with Spier when she says so crisply, “mediator he may have been, but in effect, Spier threw almost as many obstacles in Etty's path as he removed. We could resent him more for this if those obstacles hadn't also been the making of her” (Flinders, 2006, p. 44).

Etty's relationship with Spier is what spans her second journey. This is the time that Etty's ‘pearl’ becomes more and more evident as she actually experiences what it meant to “repose in herself.” It is, of course, paradoxical that the pearl gains its lustre during the deepest parts of one's struggle. For Etty, it seems like it is the first conscious drive to awaken, not masked by mood swings or illness, and in fact the beginning of the way in to her origins. It begins with a true grappling with her demon of jealousy and possessiveness and surely a part of what Almas (1996) calls the ‘point work’ referred to earlier in this paper. It is the work of facing into the deconstruction of the ego's hold on self representation; the crumbling of the edifice and touching of the ‘abyss.’ Another way to put it in the language of the Diamond Approach is the cracking of the egoic shell and revealing not only the terror of annihilation, but the deepest human vulnerability without the layers of defense.

While beginning this section with her grappling with ideals about eternal or undying romantic love, she moves to the next layer that reveals what she thinks is another obstacle to Spier's love, his fiancé Hertha Levi. Etty's fear was that Hertha would come to Amsterdam to join Spier on an on-going basis.

I suddenly had the feeling that Hertha was coming back. My heart broke...several times over. I waged a heroic struggle and then took off for faraway Russia. After first having written him a heartrending letter to tell him I was but a frail human being who could not cope with him and Hertha combined. Nor did I want to have anything more to do with his work, and I suddenly puzzled hard whether I had not chosen the work for the man's sake rather than to the man for his work's sake. And though I knew I would never want to marry him, I could not put up with him having another woman. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 117)

Each of these obsessive fantasies, and the subsequent inner struggles that would ensue, would bring Etty back to her goal, which was that of learning to love another person unconditionally,

wholly, as a way of preparing her (and them) to love all human beings in a similar fashion, so the love for one would lead to the love of all. Spier had the same goal and also had his own way of backsliding. But this mission that they shared, had the power to transform both of them over time.

It becomes clear that Etty is maturing over time and is becoming more and more convinced that she is “no longer cut off from that deep undercurrent” within her. It is indeed painstaking work, and Etty rose to this challenge based upon her own drive for the truth. It was not evolved or so radiant to begin with, which is important for most seekers to know. It was a grind, like the grains of sand rubbing over the pearl, over and over again, to face the reality of her relationship with Spier, as if grinding the toughest kernels of corn into a soft pulp. As she says:

He was probably tired as well, absorbed in something or other. In the past that would have been a shock, I should not have been able to take that neutral conversation. This time, too, I felt for a moment how tired and over-excited I was, because the horribly sober tone he used made me want to let myself go completely for a split second, to burst into tears or something like that. But in another split second I had scolded myself for being so hysterical. In the past I would have been quite unable to reconcile his sober tone with my feelings toward him, and there would have been a head-on-collision. I would have blown the whole thing up out of all proportion. But this morning it suddenly hit me: its ebb tide again. And now I know that the flood tide will be coming back... And now just this bit more: when it suddenly struck me, again in the bathroom, that it can't always be flood tide in a friendship, and that the ebb tide has to be accepted as something positive and fruitful as well, then, life, too suddenly surged through me again with a calmer beat. (Hillesum, 2002, pp. 200-201)

This is the period that Etty's desire for Spier reached its peak, as she continually mentions its deepening in the form of “intensity.” As she says, “I am afraid of the full physical relationship, lest it fail to reach the same pitch as our intellectual relationship, and something gets spoiled. One should never force things but leave them to develop naturally and wait for the ripe fruit to drop. My desire is developing very slowly and ripening into complete surrender of a kind I have never known before” (Hillesum, 2002, p. 257).

We will return to Etty's ever growing and changing relationship with Spier, as this is the ground of this second part of her journey, just as it is the beginning of her awareness of the oppressive society of the Third Reich that was gathering around her. This is one of the first times that Etty addresses her direct experience with the Nazi machine:

Very early on Wednesday morning a large group of us were crowded into the Gestapo hall, and at that moment the circumstances of all our lives were the same. All of us occupied the same space, the men behind the desk no less than those about to be questioned. What distinguished each one of us was only our inner attitudes... When it was my turn to stand in front of his desk, he bawled at me. “What the hell's so funny?” I wanted to say nothing's funny here except you, “ but refrained. “I didn't mean to its my usual expression.” And he, “don't give me that, get the hell out of here,” his face saying I'll deal with you later.” And that was presumably meant to scare me to death, but the device was

too transparent. I am not easily frightened. Not because I am brave, but because I know that I am dealing with human beings and I must try as hard as I can to understand everything that anyone ever does. And that was the real import of this morning; not that a disgruntled young Gestapo Officer yelled at me, but that I felt no indignation, rather a real compassion, and would have liked to ask, “Did you have a very unhappy childhood, has your girlfriend let you down?” Yes, he looked harassed and driven, sullen and weak. I should have liked to start treating him there and then, for I know that pitiful young men like that are dangerous as soon as they are let loose on human kind. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 259)

This marks the very beginning of Etty’s attention to the impending threat. At the moment it is held at bay, and within this second part of her journey will she come to realize how dangerous ‘pitiful men like this’ are ‘as soon as they are let loose on human kind.’

Yet her personal essence grows as manifested through her grappling with relationship. During the first half of this stage, Etty’s desire was actually to ‘see through’ her stuckness, her impasses, her blocks, as well as her fear, in order to become internally free. We see she has reached a turning point with Spier, just past a year into their relationship, she reveals:

I suddenly knew for sure that I would be visiting a great many countries, see a great many people, write books, and leave him, ...and how I felt freer of him at that moment than ever before, yet also closer to him. And then I said No matter what happens between us, that feeling of freedom, of being a world unto myself, of having no claims on you, will always be with me, and that is why I have the courage to tell you everything all the time, the courage even to express my desire, since that doesn’t call for any ties. It is sheer desire, nothing more, and it longs for one part of you, and yet I am free of you... and I am walking this path right now—that became clear to me yesterday. I have turned my desire into our joint venture, and we shall no doubt cope with it together. (Hillesum, 2002, pp. 268-269)

Etty and Spier’s joint venture became her catalyst for transformation. What started as tempering their desire for the sake of their other relationships, Pa Han Wegerif for Etty and Hertha Levi for Spier, became for both of them a path of deepening love. In many ways this would resemble Tantric philosophy of the east, which uses sexual energy to fuel spiritual evolution. Etty’s struggle with possession, sexual desire, and jealousy began to expand to another dimension of love entirely. She says “That I can feel such great love! My inner state is blossoming forth in all directions, my love grows ever stronger and greater, I am learning to bear it better and better and no longer feel crushed by it” (Hillesum, 2002, p. 352).

Some of the relationships well known in the spiritual world, often beginning as teacher and student, evolved into a mutuality where the relationship became more of a mystical union, larger than and including both individuals. Jelaluddin Rumi and Shams of Tebriz, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and A.H. Almaas and Karen Johnson of the Diamond work all refer to the phenomena of such relationships being one consciousness in two bodies. Etty and Spier could be counted among their members. Karen Johnson and A.H. Almaas write about this divine eros in their book entitled: “The Power of Divine Eros; The Illuminating Force of Love in Everyday

Life.” In it they speak about the ‘two loves’ of human beings; one as the love of life and personal relationships, the world and its beauty and turmoil, and the other as the love of mystery, and complete inner freedom (Almaas and Johnson, 2013, pp. 34-35). These spiritual partners mentioned above seem to embody the ‘whole’ in their relationships, yin and yang, receptive and dynamic, feminine and masculine, inner and outer, two as one, all as one. As Karen puts it:

When we follow love to its source, we may feel the actual presence of love itself. Then love is no longer just an idea, a thought, or even an emotional affect. We are in touch with the underlying process of love, which has a feeling of an actual presence of light and fullness or a liquid soft presence...When we know the nature of love, we can begin to see that, in fact, our spiritual nature is what can embrace our personal relationships. (Almaas and Johnson, 2013, pp.38-40)

In a recent chapter written on the Diamond Approach in a Handbook on Transpersonal Psychology, Davis, et al (2013) write: “As the soul opens to her boundless nature, the personal essence integrates more and more dimensions of being, bringing these riches into the world through personal and human expression” (p. 571). We begin to see at this stage in Etty’s unfolding that it is possible for the soul to touch the boundless dimension and simultaneously express it in her unique way, through her personal essence. Etty gives us a glimpse of the continual freshness arising at the same time in this relationship:

It is as if I had never seen him before, as if I were having to get to know him from scratch. And that, I believe, is the great miracle of our relationship, at least for me: that over and over again he seems an entirely new person to me, having to be scrutinized and fathomed over and over again, that I still have to go on absorbing him, that he is material I shall not have finished studying for years. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 353)

This particular exercise book of Etty’s is coming to a close in April of 1942. Before the close of this segment of her journal, the “yellow star” was issued. While she says at this moment “I wondered again if I was so “unworldly” simply because the German measures affect me so little personally. But I don’t fool myself for one single moment about the gravity of it all.” Although she surmises that these measures do not affect her strongly, they are clearly influencing the unfolding of her being. Such as the thought “there will always be suffering, and whether one suffers from this or that really doesn’t make much difference. It is the same with love. One should be less and less concerned with the love object and more and more concerned with love itself, if it is to be real love” (Hillesum, 2002, p. 358). Given this realization, Etty has come to a place at the end of April where she wants to marry Spier in order to “get through these times together.” In fact, the following passage reveals her own ‘pearl beyond price’, personal and boundless at the same time:

I am so glad that he is a Jew and I am a Jewess. And I shall do what I can to remain with him so we can get through these times together...I am not really frightened of anything, I feel so strong: it matters little whether you have to sleep on a hard floor, or whether you are allowed to walk only through certain specified streets, and so on – These are minor vexations, so insignificant compared with the infinite riches and possibilities we carry within us. We must guard these and remain true to them and keep faith with them. And I

shall help you and stay with you and leave you entirely free. And one day I shall surrender you to the girl you mean to marry. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 355)

Etty's journal has a gap at this very point. Exercise Book 7 was never found, so we meet her again in the middle of May 1943, in Exercise Book 8, where it is clear that the final part of this second journey is brewing. The Diamond Approach would call this the Point work; facing into the empty void. Etty has been confronting painful wounds about the fear of losing love, and now the shell of ego identity losing its power to cover up insecurity and deficiency. Etty's additional confrontation with impending destruction is a multifaceted process: the loss of Spier, of future aspirations of being a writer, a chronicler, as well as facing directly into her own death and the annihilation of her family and her people.

At the end of May, 1943, she was quite reflective as the ever present squeeze of the Nazi's was getting tighter and tighter. The persecution accelerated with constant restrictions and it became clear to Etty that the Nazi machine was intent upon their destruction. Even so, it seems Etty is touching some kind of deep feminine receptivity that sustained her:

I went to bed early last night, and from my bed I stared out from the large open window. And it was once more as if life with all of its mysteries was close to me, as if I could touch it. I had the feeling that I was resting against the naked breast of life, and could feel her gentle and regular heartbeat. I felt safe and protected. And I thought, how strange. It is wartime. There are concentration camps. Small barbarity mounts upon small barbarity. I can say of so many of the houses that I pass: here the son has been thrown into prison, there the father has been taken hostage, and an eighteen-year old boy in that house over there has been sentenced to death. And these streets and houses are all so close to my own. I know how very nervous people are, I know about the mounting human suffering. I know the persecution and oppression and despotism and the impotent fury and the terrible sadism. I know it all and continue to confront every shred of reality that thrusts itself upon me. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 386)

Around the same period of time, she was continuing to face the ego's inherent deficient emptiness that her relationship with Spier laid bare, and what was evolving in relationship to the emptiness:

I used to be genuinely hysterical and desperate then. And would have felt betrayed and let down by his failure to console me in my emptiness and sadness. But now I was sitting there perfectly calm and collected, telling myself, you shouldn't be so ambitious, thinking you have to inspire a man every minute. You must accept the fact that you can be empty and tired and just want to get away from him...In the past I would refuse to acknowledge that sort of emptiness in myself, and then make forced attempts on all fronts, from the intellectual, to the erotic and sexual, to restore contact at any price, and if that failed, I would later have orgies of loneliness all on my own...In the past, I would have expected him, and other friends as well, to work miracles of solace. And now, I was bearing my own emptiness, and tiredness, and malaise, and that too was part and parcel of life, and there was no need to feel so forlorn. (Hillesum, 2002, 405)

There is something happening with Etty as she stares into the inner starkness, the emptiness, immanent destruction, and the failings of her own body. She begins to accept, and even embrace the very moment of her unfolding and finds that her ‘love of life has not been diminished.’ This seems to be an emerging non-dual experience as well as the human will’s defiance to the Nazi’s persecution. While with Etty, the illumination of the boundless dimension gets brighter and more spacious.

Etty’s imagery illuminates the struggle with her body at this time:

All sorts of things are going out of joint south of my midriff. This mental frame of mine is certainly in need of drastic repair...I really don’t know what to do about it. If I stop eating salt, the kidney may float a little less. But the homeopathic drops and the endless aspirins are of course constantly at loggerheads with each other, waging battle in my ‘earthly home’. Oh, yes, that body of mine: all at once I have an image of a battered old ruin, with white doves flying in and out of the holes in the walls –They are my thoughts, and they are more than thoughts; they are the comings and goings, and the movements made by my spirit; between the cracks new young flowers are growing, so touchingly fresh and young among the weathered walls. – and those are my feelings. That’s how I feel suddenly: like a battered old ruin. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 387)

As Etty moves closer and more deeply to the “point of her existence” and wrestles with ultimate questions, she comes to an evolving awareness about what she feels God is to her. It becomes her ongoing inquiry:

It means gathering together all the strength one can, living one’s life with God and in God and having God dwell within. (I find the word “God” so primitive at times, it is only a metaphor after all, an approach to our greatest and most continuous inner adventure; I’m sure that I don’t even need the word “God” which sometimes strikes me as a primitive, primordial sound—A makeshift construction.) And at night, when I sometimes have the inclination to speak to God and say very childishly, “God, things cannot go on like this with me” – and sometimes my prayers can be very desperate and imploring – it is, nevertheless, it is as if I were addressing in myself, trying to plead with a part of myself. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 440)

When Etty heard the latest news at the end of June, 1942, that all Jews will be transported out of Holland through Drenthe Province (Camp Westerbork) and then on to Poland and Auschwitz, she comes to the realization that God cannot help the Jews. As Patrick Woodhouse discusses, she arrives at the same insight as Dietrich Bonhoeffer writing to his friend from prison just months before he was hanged by the Nazis for attempting a plot to kill Hitler. As Bonhoeffer wrote of the God “weak and powerless” in the world, Etty also comes to the awareness that “God is not accountable to us, but we are to Him,” that what mattered to her was “not whether we preserve our lives at any cost, but how we preserve them.” And so, as Woodhouse summarized, “God becomes to her a vulnerable Presence, to be looked after and cherished in the human heart.” (Woodhouse, 2009, pp. 50-51)

While Etty had tremendous strength of will, as we see in her first response to the news of the transports, “I know about everything, and I am no longer appalled by the latest reports, in one way or the other, I know it all.” She acknowledges that “though her mind has come to terms with it all, her body hasn’t. It has disintegrated into a thousand pieces” (Hillesum, 2002, p. 456).

Etty now is up against and present to the abyss, death, in any numbers of forms. Her inquiry is fueled by fear, curiosity and love. She says:

Suffering is not beneath human dignity. I mean: it is possible to suffer with dignity and without. I mean: most of us in the West don’t understand the art of suffering and experience a thousand fears instead. We cease to be alive, being full of fear, bitterness, hatred and despair...And I wonder if there is much of a difference between being consumed here by a thousand fears or in Poland by a thousand lice and hunger? We have to accept death as a part of life, even the most horrible of deaths. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 459)

As mentioned in the Diamond Approach section, its primary method is inquiry, which opens one to the raw, concomitant feelings and experiences of vulnerability. While the defensive structures of the personality are worked through, there is a deep touching of the affect, and an impact on the body/soma that carries such vulnerability in the face of trauma (depression, anxiety, somatic illness). And the more feeling that is integrated, the more fullness that results. Curiosity can lead this process, as a strength that emerges that loves the truth wherever it will lead. Etty’s authenticity is revealed in her immediate response of unflinching strength in the face of overwhelming power and her vulnerable sharing of each disintegration that comes afterward, where the somatic level of her being is seriously compromised until the shock to her sensitive system is metabolized. Her continuous work of deconstruction and integration is the core of her process and that of the Diamond Approach, a system where psychological and spiritual maturity become inseparable. We can see from her poetic response to human suffering, above, to a much more personal response, shortly afterward:

Yes, I am still at the same desk, but it seems to me that I am going to have to draw a line under everything and continue in a different tone. I must admit a new insight into my life and find a place for it: What is at stake is our impending destruction and annihilation. We can have no more illusions about that. They are out to destroy us completely. We must accept that and go on from there. Today I was filled with terrible despair, and I shall have to come to terms with that as well. And perhaps, or rather, certainly, that is the result of yesterday’s four aspirins. Even if we are consigned to hell, let us go there as gracefully as we can. Why this mood at this particular moment? Is it because I have a blister on my foot from walking through the hot town, because so many people have had sore feet ever since they were stopped from using the trains...Because Liesl stood in a queue and didn’t get any vegetables after all? It is for such an awful lot of reasons, all of them petty in themselves, but all of them part of the great campaign to destroy us. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 461)

Later still:

I shall not be bitter if others fail to understand what is happening to us Jews. I work and continue to live with the same conviction that life is meaningful- yes, meaningful-although I hardly dare say so in company these days. Living and dying, sorrow and joy, the blisters on my feet and the jasmine behind the house, the persecution, the unspeakable horrors- it is all one in me, and I accept it all as one mighty whole. And begin to grasp it better if only for myself, without being able to explain it to anyone else how it all hangs together. I wish I could live for a long time so that one day I may know how to explain it, and if I am not granted that wish, well, then, somebody else will perhaps do it, carry on from where my life has been cut short. And that is why I must live a faithful life to my last breath: so that those who come after me do not have to start all over again, need not face the same difficulties. Isn't that doing something for future generations? (Hillesum, 2002, p. 461)

So it was, during this time that Etty's confrontation with annihilation prompted the need for the external confirmation of her identity to fall away. Almaas has often called this aspect the 'point', since it is often experienced as a timeless, dimensionless point of light (Almaas, 1996, P. 346). It is during this phase that Etty speaks about her inferiority complex and her perceived deficiencies falling away. She was also beginning to face the inevitability of losing Spier:

He leaned against the wall in Dicky's room, and I leaned gently and lightly against him, as I had done on countless similar occasions in the past, but this time, it suddenly felt as if the sky had fallen as in a Greek tragedy. For a moment my senses were totally confused, and I felt as though I was standing in the center of infinite space- pervaded by space but also filled with eternity. In that moment a great change took place within us, forever. He remained leaning against the wall for a little and said in an almost plaintive voice, "I must write to my girlfriend tonight, it will be her birthday soon. But what am I to say to her? I haven't the heart for it or the inspiration." And I said to him, "You must start even now and try to reconcile her to the fact that she will never see you again; you must give her something to hold onto for the future. Tell her how the two of you, though physically apart for all these years, have nevertheless been as one, and that she has a duty to carry on if only to keep something of your spirit alive." Yes, that's how people speak to one another these days, and it doesn't even sound unreal anymore. We have embraced a new reality, and everything has taken on new colors and new emphases. And between our eyes and hands and mouths there now flows a constant stream of tenderness, a stream in which all petty desires seem to have been extinguished. All that matters now is to be kind to each other with all the goodness that is in us. And every encounter is also a farewell. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 475)

It is quite clear from this passage that any of Etty's longings that came as a result of deficiency or fear of rejection, have melted into a love larger than what she has known, and in fact she becomes Spier's spiritual 'teacher' as he begins his own process of disintegration. Etty wants to give Hertha hope, and give them both, Spier and Hertha, access to that 'constant stream of tenderness.' This was theirs, Etty and Spier's joint venture, ultimately hastened by facing into annihilation, or 'death before death' as it has been called. We begin to see Etty's preparation for her separation from Spier while she continues to display a deep union of grit and grace, and the following passage reveals it:

A hard day, a very hard day. We must learn to shoulder our “common fate”; everyone who seeks to save himself must surely realize that if he does not go, another will take his place. As if it really mattered which of us goes. Ours is now a common destiny that I must shoulder myself in prayer... and that part of our common destiny that I must shoulder myself; I strap it tightly and firmly to my back, it becomes part of me as I walk through the streets even now. And I shall wield this slender fountain pen as if it were a hammer, and my words will have to be so many hammer strokes with which to beat out the story of our fate and of a piece of history as it is and never was before. Not in this totalitarian, massively organized form, spanning the whole of Europe. Still, a few people must survive if only to be the chroniclers of this age. I would very much like to become one of their number – . (Hillesum, 2002, p. 484)

Within this great strife, Etty is touching her essence, this deep capacity to hold the whole of her experience. Both to find ‘meaning’ as her personality covets the rational, analytic meaning making process, yet, we bear witness to the arising fire of her true nature, Being itself. Given the ‘extremis’ of her moment in human history, we can feel her increased calling “to beat out the story of our fate.” An important decision for Etty during this time was the one she made about going into ‘hiding.’ This decision is one that thousands of Dutch Jews had to make and the one the Frank family made at this moment on July 6th 1942, just three miles away from Etty in South Amsterdam. Within the following week the fifteen year old Anne would begin her diary in the familiar red plaid notebook. Etty, twenty-eight, chose not to go into hiding, a controversial choice with many of her friends, and has engendered multiple critiques since that time. She was clear about this decision, and in fact, was adamant about it, as is described in the story about Klass Smelik, a friend and former lover, and his daughter, Johanna or “Jopie” trying to kidnap Etty into hiding. Klass reports:

At a certain point, Klass grabbed her and tried to convince her to go into hiding. She wormed herself free and stood at a distance at about five feet from me. She looked at me very strangely and said “You don’t understand me,” I replied, No, I don’t understand what on earth you’re up to. Why don’t you stay here, you fool!” Then she said: “I want to share the destiny of my people.” When she said that, I knew there was no hope. She would never come to us,” said Smelik. Others also offered Etty a hiding place, but she steadfastly refused this. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 761)

What is this decision about to share the destiny of her people? As an assimilated Jew without a commitment to formal religious Judaism, and in fact a Marxist earlier in her life, Etty’s own evolution of consciousness takes her to this place as her soul’s wisdom and clarity intersects this moment in European history. This event in European history has also evolved as Gebser (1949/1985) might say, moving from the magical, to mythical, to the mental. This changed the fabric of human consciousness by moving beyond crimes of passion and dominance (magical, mythical) to the mental, scientific, systematic dehumanization and ultimate genocide of those not considered a pure race, an Aryan race. As Etty faces into this kind of annihilation, she is never far from ‘God’ or her own soul, the very sparks of that divine essence that she communes with, and, more importantly, *is*. At one of the darkest hours she says:

Dear God, these are anxious times. Tonight for the first time, I lay in the dark with burning eyes, as scene after scene of human suffering passed before me. I shall promise You one thing, God, just one very small thing: I shall never burden my today with cares about my tomorrow, although that takes some practice... I shall try to help you, God, to stop my strength ebbing away, though I cannot vouch for it in advance. But one thing is becoming increasingly clear to me: that You cannot help us, and we must help You to help ourselves. And that is all we can manage these days and also all that really matters: that we safeguard that little piece of You, God, in ourselves. And perhaps in others as well. Alas, there doesn't seem to be too much You Yourself can do about our circumstances, about our lives. Neither do I hold you responsible. You cannot help us, but we must help You, and defend your dwelling place within us to the last. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 488)

This protecting or 'safeguarding' of this cherished soul or essence or 'piece of You' in herself and others was Etty's destiny, and moved from a flicker to a flame and back again throughout this short time of her human existence. At the end of this exercise book 10, she was coming near to the time of going to Westerbork, the transit camp to Auschwitz, located in Drenthe Province. It is now her time to say goodbye to life as she has known it, which is the very heart of radical spiritual transformation. It will not be easy as she confesses that she feels

... that I am still tied by a thousand threads to everything I treasure here. I will have to tear myself away bit by bit and store everything inside me, so that when I have to leave I shall not abandon anything but carry it all with me. There are times I feel like a little bird, tucked away in a great protective hand. (Hillesum, 2002, P. 509)

And, tear herself away, she did. Etty was on her way to Camp Westerbork, a decision she made, as more and more Jews were being rounded up. Spier had recently been ill and she watched him beginning to deteriorate. She did not know, consciously, that he would be dying of cancer during her first six-week period at Westerbork.

When it became known that appointments to the Jewish Council could offer temporary protection from deportation, many people applied for work (Hillesum, 2002, p. 740). It seems likely that Etty, having received the 'normal' summons for Westerbork, had been urged to apply for work at the Jewish Council by Jaap and a certain Loopuit. She probably felt guilty about this and reported to the recently established 'Westerbork department', a sub-department of the Jewish Council in Amsterdam. She was officially appointed as stenographer; her field was 'Social Welfare for people in Transit' at Westerbork. And on July 30th, she arrived at Westerbork with the first staff members of the Jewish Council (p. 740). As she says: "Nothing can ever atone for the fact that one section of the Jewish population is helping to transport the majority out of the country. History will pass judgment in due course"(Hillesum, 2002, p. 511).

As her time with Spier was coming to a close, she has a profound experience of the power of divine eros:

On Sunday morning I was curled up on his floor in my big striped dressing gown, darning socks. Water can be so clear that you can see right through it and distinguish everything on the bottom... What I really wanted to say is: it suddenly felt as if life in its thousand details,

twists, and turns had become perfectly clear and transparent. Just as if I were standing before an Ocean and could look straight through the crystal clear water to the bottom. I doubt very much if I will ever be able to write – or shall I yet? It may take a long time before I can describe this moment, a high point in my life. You huddle in the corner on the floor of the room of the man you love and darn his socks and at the same time you are sitting by the shore of a mighty Ocean so transparent that you can see the bottom. And that is an unforgettable experience... (Hillesum, 2002, p. 512)

Etty was also having second thoughts about marrying Spier. As much as they spoke about staying together through the war, both came to the realization that marriage was not the purpose, it was love. Spier also felt he did not want to bind Hertha to him in this way (marriage), given his age. Etty, while speaking of this with Spier, thought to herself, “You look so ill, so terribly tired, and loving you as much as I do, the worst thing that could happen to me would be to sit by and watch you suffer” (Hillesum, 2002, p. 509). She begins to realize:

To put it quite soberly and bluntly the differences in our ages is too great. I have already seen a man (Han) change before my eyes in a few years. I see him changing too. He is an old man whom I love, love infinitely, and to whom I shall always be united by an inner bond. But “marry” what the worthy citizen calls marry, I must, in all seriousness and honesty, say finally that I don’t want to. And the fact that I have to go my own way all by myself gives me a great feeling of strength. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 511)

Around this time she asserts, “There is a vast silence in me that continues to grow. And washing around in it are so many words that make one tired because one can express nothing with them. One must do more and more without meaningless words the better to find the few one needs. And in the silence new powers of expression must grow” (Hillesum, 2002, p. 512).

Etty was preparing, or being prepared for the next steps in her evolution. She found comfort in the words of Rainer Marie Rilke, her poetic partner in transformation, as she says, “I read a bit more of Rilke and discovered the following passage; the words greeted me as if they were my closest family”:

And suddenly as if through clear tears, you have a vague inkling that, even as a lover, you need solitude, that sorrow, not injustice, is meted out to you and envelops you when, in the midst of an overwhelming urge to reach out to the beloved person, it suddenly dawns on you: yes, you can only develop and make complete even this apparently most closely shared fellowship, which is love, by yourself, separately; if only because in the union of strong affections you set up a current of pleasure that carries you along and finally casts you out; whereas if you are enveloped in your own feelings, love becomes a daily task performed on your own self and a constant series of bold and magnanimous challenges to the other. Beings who love each other in this way call up infinite dangers around them, but they are safe from the petty risks that have frayed and crumbled so many great emotional beginnings. Because they always hope for, and expect, the utmost from each other, neither can wrong the other through limitation; on the contrary they incessantly create space and breadth and freedom for each other. (Hillesum, 2002, P. 81)

It is here on the eve of Etty's first journey to Westerbork that the line will be drawn, however arbitrarily, between Etty's Second and Third Journey. Both the individuation process and realization of true nature are focused on dissolving the ego and its limiting narcissism, and at the end of journey two the soul begins to know her essence as her identity. The duality of soul and essence begins to be bridged and the soul moves into the third journey. "The soul recognizes she is the simplicity and exquisiteness of timeless presence" (Almaas, 2004, p. 224). It is to the third journey or that of the boundless dimension that we will now turn.

Journey 3: Etty Hillesum

Truly, my life is one long hearkening unto myself and unto others, unto God. And if I say that I hearken, it is really God who hearkens inside of me (Hillesum, 2002, p. 519).

From the frame of the Diamond Approach, the first phase of Journey Three is the essential development of the soul, and this is illustrated in the above quote of Etty's. The soul merges with essence so completely that the two become one. This non-dual soul is a dynamic presence that all experience arises from, and Etty's reveals her non-dual soul in the experience of God inside her. Her soul is totally immersed with the presence of love.

When Etty returned from Westerbork on leave to Amsterdam six weeks later, the world had turned yet again. Not only did she become ill with what she later learned was kidney stones, but she had to face Spier's imminent death. She saw him for the last time with some awareness on his part on September 11th and according to her friend Tide's diary, "Etty had returned from her visit to him, broken. Which is not surprising: he is no longer himself. At first he didn't recognize her. Later he did. He also said something: that she was not only a woman but also 'very clever'" (Hillesum, 2002, p. 750).

It is through this transition and the one of being at Westerbork that we see this explosion toward the increasing boundless dimension of Etty's being. The day of Spier's death is when she put pen to paper again after a six week hiatus. She acknowledges that "everything coming together like that was a little hard."

She goes on to say that:

I am a little numb and bewildered and helpless, but at the same time I am trying to scrape together what patience I have from all the corners of my being, and I shall have to find a new kind of patience to meet this entirely new state of affairs. I shall follow the tried and tested old method, talking to myself now and again on these faint blue lines. And talking to You God, Is that all right? With the passing of people, I feel a growing need to speak to You alone. I love people so terribly, because in every human being I love something of you....But now I need so much patience and thought, and things will be very difficult. And now I have to do everything by myself. The best and noblest part of my friend, of the man whose light You kindled in me, is now with you. What was left behind was a childish, worn-out husk in the two small rooms in which I experienced the greatest and deepest happiness of my life. I stood beside his bed and found myself standing before one

of Your last mysteries, my God. Give me a whole life to contain it all. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 514)

And, to Spier:

There you lie now in your two small rooms, you dear great, good man. I once wrote to you, "My heart will always fly to you like a bird, from any place on earth, and it will surely find you....And even if they flung me into a dungeon, that piece of heaven would still spread out within me and my heart would fly up to it like a bird, and that is why everything is so simple, so terribly simple and beautiful and full of meaning." I had a thousand things to ask you and to learn from you; now I will have to do everything by myself. But I feel so strong that I'm sure I'll manage. What energies I possess have been set inside me. You taught me to speak the name of God without embarrassment. You were the mediator between God and me, and now you, the mediator, have gone, and my path leads straight to God. It is right that it should be so. And I shall be the mediator for any other soul I can reach. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 516)

It is here that Etty suggests what has been happening all along, that she has moved from a possessive kind of love, to an idealistic one, to an integration and expansion of Spier's and her consciousness. At this part of her journal, the transmission from the page is palpable, and the reader is struck by the presence of Being as she touches it directly:

My love of life is so great and so strong and calm and makes me so grateful that I shall refrain from putting it into words again. There is such perfect and complete happiness in me, oh God. What he called "reposing in oneself." And that probably best expresses my own love of life: I repose in myself. And that part of myself; that deepest and richest part in which I repose, is what I call "God." (Hillesum, 2002, p. 519)

It was at this point that Etty's body has "called a halt" to her activity, as she says that she "must rest awhile "if I am to do what I have to do." She continues: Even if one's body aches, the spirit can continue to do its work, can it not? It can love and *hineinhorchen* – "hearken unto"- itself and unto others and unto what binds us to life. *Hineinhorchen* – I so wish I could find a Dutch equivalent for that German word. Truly, my life is one long hearkening unto myself, and unto others and unto God. And if I say that I hearken, it is really God who hearkens inside me. The most essential and the deepest in me is hearkening unto the most essential and deepest in the other. God to God. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 519)

These lines of Etty's reveal how her soul has completed the process that the Diamond Approach calls 'essentialization'. Her soul has now realized a nondual state that is loving in a complete and full way. The divine presence of her soul is able to see, touch, and love the divine in others. Her soul has a dynamic presence that expresses itself as loving action. This is the "thinking heart of the barracks", as she called herself in her two months at Westerbork. She continues with wishing to put it all into words:

Those two months behind barbed wire have been the richest and most intense months of my life, in which my highest values were confirmed. I have learned to love Westerbork.

Yet when I fell asleep in my narrow plank bed there, what I dreamed of was the desk behind which I now sit and write. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 520)

Etty describes Westerbork as a "new focus of Jewish suffering" as it is a "camp for a people in transit, great waves of human beings constantly washed in from the cities and provinces, from rest homes, prisons, and other prison camps, from all the nooks and crannies of the Netherlands, only to be deported a few days later to meet their unknown destiny" (Hillesum, 2002, p. 583). She gives some physical characteristics of the place, with the words: "There is mud, so much mud that somewhere between your ribs you need to have a great deal of inner sunshine if you don't want to become the psychological victim of it all." She makes sure to add the effects of "broken shoes and wet feet." The barbed wire, of course was another feature. "If the barbed wire just encircled the camp, at least you would know where you were. But these twentieth century wires meander about inside the camp, too, around the barracks and in between, in a labyrinth and unfathomable network.... Anyway, it is terribly crowded in Westerbork, as when too many drowning people cling to the last bit of flotsam after a ship has sunk..." (Hillesum, 2002, pp. 583-584).

As a prelude to the second phase of the Third Journey, Etty gives us a glimpse of her unfolding nondual filter through which she glimpses Reality:

The sky is full of birds, the purple lupines stand up so regally and peacefully, two little old women have sat down on the box for a chat, the sun is shining on my face – and right before our eyes, mass murder. The whole thing is simply beyond comprehension. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 602)

The second phase of the third journey is the discovery of the boundlessness of true nature. This can be seen in the second part of Etty's third journey as a 'seeing through' the limited boundaries of individuality, and of time and place to experience her soul as this "eternal newness that transcends all time and as a mystery that transcends all determinations." Etty's soul now experiences itself as boundless and transcending her individual perspective. This is best described in Etty's riveting words:

I once wrote in my diaries, "I would like to run my fingertips along the contours of these times." I was sitting at my desk with no idea what to make of life. That was because I had not yet arrived at the life in myself; was still sitting at this desk. And then I was suddenly flung into one into one of many flashpoints of human suffering. And there, in the faces of people, in a thousand gestures, small changes of expression, life stories, I was suddenly able to read our age – and much more than our age alone. And then it suddenly happened: I was able to feel the contours of these times with my fingertips. How is it that this stretch of heathland surrounded by barbed wire, through which so much human misery has flooded, nevertheless remains inscribed in my memory as something almost lovely? How is it that my spirit, far from being oppressed, seemed to grow lighter and brighter there? It is because I read the signs of the times and they did not seem meaningless to me. Surrounded by my writers and poets and flowers on my desk, I loved life. And there among the barracks, full of hunted and persecuted people, I found confirmation of my love of life. Life in those drafty barracks was no other than life in this protected, peaceful room.

Not for one moment was I cut off from the life I was said to have left behind. There was simply one great meaningful whole. Will I be able to describe all of that one day? (Hillesum, 2002, p. 526)

In reading Etty's words from the Diamond Approach perspective we can see "that co-emergent with these boundless dimensions is the constant upwelling, flow, and completely fresh experience of being in each moment" (Davis, J., Usatynski, T., and Ish-Shalom, Z, 2013, p. 572). The soul's journey of Etty Hillesum has been moving toward this realization throughout this brief account of her life. We experience many moments of this 'upwelling,' 'flow' and 'freshness' or immediacy in Etty's inner and outer discoveries. The further differentiations of the boundless dimensions that Almaas lays out include Divine Love, the Supreme, the Nonconceptual, the Logos, and the Absolute (Almaas, 2004). For the purposes of this paper, the 'Absolute' will suffice to convey the whole of all the aspects of this term, providing the basis of spaciousness, presence, nonduality and unlimited potential in all experience.

Journey 4: The Journey of Descent

Now that the soul has journeyed into the mystery and transcended all limitations, it flows back into the multitude of forms and objects of the phenomenal world. As the soul does so, it maintains its connection to the Absolute and true nature that it has discovered, but integrates Being into the manifestations of the phenomenal world. The journey of ascent was a movement inward, while the journey of descent is a movement outward into the world of forms and objects, which leads to integration and union with the whole (Almaas, 2004). This journey involves understanding the Absolute not only as a transcendent truth but also as the immanent ground of reality. Like the previous two journeys, this one involves the two phases of self-realization and individuation. There develops a deeper understanding of the functional relationship between true nature and the individual soul, and the relationship between soul, Being or God in Etty's case, and the cosmos. In the descent, the soul finds its place in the cosmic reality.

The journeys of ascent and descent are not separate linear processes, but are present simultaneously, co-existing and co-emerging. The journeys complement each other and are equally important. "Immanence, fullness, and the myriad forms of the world are one side of a coin; transcendence, emptiness, and the mystery of union are the other. Thus, the richness and beauty of the world are no more true, valuable, or privileged than its emptiness, spaciousness and vastness" (Davis, 1999, p. 153).

As Etty comes to the end of her recuperation in Amsterdam, and prepares herself to return to Westerbork, we see her soul's movement toward the realization of the boundless dimensions of the Absolute and its expression in the world. Etty faces moving back into one of the forms of the 'world': the concentration camps and debacle of the Holocaust. She prepares to go back, knowing that Westerbork will now be overflowing with people. The transports to Auschwitz will be much more frequent, in fact, speeding to their destination to beat the allies in these last 18 months of the war. Her preparation includes reflections about suffering, and how to free herself from the ideas of it. She says:

I know how to free my creative powers more and more from the snares of material concerns, far from the *idea* of hunger and cold and danger. They are, after all, *imaginary* phantoms, not the reality. Reality is something one shoulders together with all the suffering that goes with it, and with all the difficulties. And as one shoulders them, so one's resilience grows stronger. But the idea of suffering (which is not the reality, for real suffering is always fruitful and can turn life into a precious thing) must be destroyed. And if you destroy the ideas behind which life lies imprisoned as behind bars, then you liberate your true life, its real, its real mainsprings, and then you will also have the strength to bear real suffering, your own and the world's -. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 537)

This period of waiting to go back to Westerbork was one of her times of digestion and integration of all that has gone before and she finds herself in a poetic, boundless state of consciousness, right along with worry for her parents. She muses about poetry and feels that "there is no hidden poet in me, just a little piece of God that might grow into poetry." She continues to say that "a camp needs a poet, one who experiences life there, even there, as a bard and is able to sing about it." She remembers her first time at Westerbork and the women and girls that surrounded her plank bed who would often tell her that they did not want to think or feel, as they were sure to 'to go out of their minds.' She recalls an exquisite moment in the barracks one night:

I was sometimes filled with an infinite tenderness, and lay awake for hours letting all the many, too many impressions of a much too-long day wash over me, and I prayed, "Let me be the thinking heart of these barracks." And that is what I want to be again. The thinking heart of a whole concentration camp. I lie here so patiently and now so calmly again that I feel quite a bit better... . (Hillesum, 2002, p. 543)

This realization of the boundless dimension and her own true nature fortifies her essential strength, or the red essence, as well as her true will to persevere in the face of suffering, as the Diamond Approach would describe it, for this fourth journey or the one of descent. While the word descent is used to convey movement into the world with the realization of one's essential or true nature, or Being itself, in this particular instance descent could also convey a metaphor of descending into a hell on earth. Either way, this last part of her journey on earth, was consciousness itself witnessing the direct effects of this heinous destructive power of the human condition cut off from its essential nature.

When Etty arrived at Westerbork during the first week of June, 1943, she was struck by the desperate chaos of the place that she initially experienced as one of community and bonding with the staff and its 1,000 'citizens.' It now held 10,000 people living in gravely subpar conditions. Overall, Etty's continual concerns and struggles for herself, her family and the inhabitants had to do with exceedingly poor hygiene. Exacerbating these poor conditions for Etty was the sandy terrain and wind, with sand getting into people's eyes, food and bodies causing ever-present Illness; the constant anxiety and terror of who would be chosen for the next transport to Auschwitz; and the role of working in the hospital as a person who both comforted and assisted people in touching something within themselves that would not/could not be crushed by this destructive force. She was also quite concerned about her parents' health and wellbeing and

managed the process of writing to friends asking them to send rations and occasionally small delicacies such as butter, cakes or chocolate.

On her first night back at Westerbork, she was greeted by an abundance of mice, crowding, and a new transport from Vaught, a concentration camp considered notoriously barbaric, which had come in that night and early morning. She relays the horror:

First of all, we underwent a lysol treatment, because so many lice always arrive from Vaught. From four to nine a.m. I dragged screaming children around and carried luggage for exhausted women. It was hard going, and heart-rending. Women with small children, 1,600 (tonight another 1,600 will arrive); the men had been deliberately kept back in Vaught....In Vaught, two or three children die every day. An old woman asked me helplessly, "Could you tell me, please could you tell me, why we Jews have to suffer so much." I couldn't answer. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 600)

One gets a further glimpse of this scene from one of the staff at Westerbork, Friedrich Weintraub, who wrote a book after the war, "Collaboration and Resistance, 1940-1945", and he describes the scene:

And Etty Hillesum arrived with her dispatch bag – couldn't speak a word, only cry. She sat on a chair between Weyl's bed and mine, with her face buried in a handkerchief. Loonstijn called out: "My good girl, for heaven's sake stop, we have troubles enough we don't need any wailing women around." This helped a bit and Etty started telling us what she had seen.... However Etty soon started crying again. We let her do so, and it did help – at least then you don't have to cry yourself. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 762)

Etty, over her short time at Westerbork, faced many people forced into desperation who did not have any inner reference point, whether very young, their parents, or the very old. She speaks about a young girl who was partly paralyzed, and has just been learning to walk again. The girl says to Etty "Have you heard? I have to go."

Etty describes the encounter:

We look at each other for a long moment. It is as if her face has disappeared; she is all eyes. Then she says in a level gray little voice, "Such a pity, isn't it? That everything you have learned in life goes for nothing. And, How hard it is to die." She looks at me for a long time in silence, searchingly, and then says "I would like, oh, I really would like to swim away in my tears." (Hillesum, 2002, pp. 646, 648)

And another:

She grabbed hold of me; she looked deranged. A flood of words poured over me: "That isn't right, how can that be right? I've got to go, and I won't even be able to get my washing dry by tomorrow. And my child is sick, he's feverish, can't you fix things so that I don't have to go?...Can't you take my child for me? Go on, please, won't you hide him; he's got a high fever, how can I possibly take him along?" She points to a little bundle of

misery with blonde curls and a burning, bright red little face. "...my child," and then she sobs, "They take the sick children away, and you never get them back."

God Almighty, what are You doing to us? The words just escape me. (Hillesum, 2002, pp. 646-647)

These excerpts let us know she was in full contact with her emotions and her strength was born of her vulnerability. In her letters to others we see her essential strength/will and get a glimpse of what she conveys to others, as if wanting to infuse them, then and there, with the spiritual will to refuse to succumb their soul's richness to the evil of this killing machine. As she stood at the tub one morning with a colleague, she says:

The realms of the soul and the spirit are so spacious and unending that this little bit of physical discomfort and suffering really doesn't matter all that much. I do not feel I have been robbed of my freedom; essentially, no one can do me any harm at all....Yes, children, I am in a strange state of mournful contentment. If I once wrote you a desperate letter, don't take it too much to heart; it expressed only a brief moment. It's true you can suffer, but that need not make you desperate. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 611)

The worst part of Etty's anguish was relegated to the care and responsibility she felt toward her parents as well as the continuous fear of them being placed on the 'next transport' to Auschwitz. She actually comes to "admire them tremendously" for the way they are coping with the misery of their situation. She particularly develops a connection with her father, someone she has always admired, and watches him give lessons to a few students in Greek and Latin, "reads a great deal, philosophizes with ancient rabbis and old student friends, and now and then strolls with his daughter through the dusty sand of the hospital grounds" (Hillesum, 2002, p. 625). "We chuckle together a lot", she says, "Father and I; you can't really call it laughing. He has a primitive sense of humor, which becomes more profound and sparkling as the grotesque process of his reduction to poverty assumes ever more wretched dimensions." Keeping her parents off the transport list became her focus in the last months at Westerbork. She writes to a friend:

Tense and stirring days behind us. Father was on the transport list. We were able to get him off once again. I must explain that the call-ups for the transports come in the middle of the night, a few hours before the train leaves. If people are still needed at the last minute to fill the quotas, then Jews are seized here and there at random from the barracks. And that's why the days before the transports are so nerve wracking. The day afterward I fainted twice, but I'm fine again now – until the next transport.... I have got used to the idea that I'll have to go myself one day. Above all else in the world I wish I could spare my parents and my brothers. But you can't play the ostrich here; a transport leaves every week, and the quota must be filled. Just a little while longer and all our turns will come. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 625)

Amidst all of this numbing chaos, Etty reflects on the totality of her experience in one of her letters:

All I wanted to say is this: The misery here is quite terrible; and yet; late at night when the day has slunk away into the depths behind me, I often walk with a spring in my step along the barbed wire. And then, time and again, it soars straight from my heart – I can't help it, that's just the way that it is, like some elementary force – the feeling that life is glorious and magnificent, and that one day we shall be building a whole new world. Against every new outrage, and every fresh horror, we shall put up one more piece of love and goodness, drawing strength from within ourselves. We may suffer, but we must not succumb. And if we should survive unhurt in body and soul, but above all in soul, without bitterness and without hatred, then we shall have a say after the war.... Life here hardly touches my deepest resources – physically, perhaps you do decline a little, and sometimes you are infinitely sad – but fundamentally, you keep growing stronger. (Hillesum, 2002, pp. 616-617)

And indeed her turn did come with a sudden order from The Hague. Her friend Jopie let her friends and family know that

... for Etty it was a complete surprise –she had decided that she was not going to travel with her parents, and would have much preferred to go through these experiences without the pressures of family ties. For her it was a slap in the face, which did in fact, literally, strike her down. Within the hour, however, she had recovered and adapted herself to the new situation with admirable speed. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 666)

Etty Hillesum's last words to her friend, Christine Nooten, and to the ages were written on a postcard thrown out of the train on September 7th, 1943, found by farmers outside Westerbork camp and posted by them. It says:

Christine,

Opening the Bible at random I find this: "The Lord is my high tower." I am sitting on my rucksack in the middle of a full freight car. Father, Mother and Mischa are a few cars away. In the end, the departure came without warning. On sudden special orders from The Hague. We left the camps singing. Father and Mother firmly and calmly, Mischa too. We shall be traveling for three days. Thank-you for you for all your kindness and care....

Good-bye for now from the four of us. Etty. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 658)

Etty Hillesum died on 30th of November at Auschwitz.

Journey Four ends with Etty's physical death. What became more and more clear is that Etty's life reflected the "unfolding and expression of the Absolute as it becomes manifest in the world" (Davis, J., Usatynski, T., & Ish-Shalom, Z, 2013, p. 573). The experience of the full realization of essence is rare, and when we experience it, as it seems with Etty, "we know what pure consciousness is, that it is beyond the sense of aliveness more fundamental than life" (Almaas, 2004, p. 128). We don't know the exact details of Etty's death, but we can well imagine that she died with the same courage with which she lived. Courage and strength born not only of her vulnerability, but the strength of her lived experience that she was free, that her

essence or soul was unfettered. According to a recent lecture on the 'Fear of Death' by Karen Johnson of the Diamond Approach, the continuous endings or cessations we experience in life offer us practice, the practice of befriending death, of walking with it, instead of opposing it. Each time we move into a ceasing of expression, in any number of ways, the ego experiences it as death. The practice is to keep working through the levels of cessation. "We die alone", says Johnson, "not separate" (Johnson, 2013). We can see in Etty's fourth journey, that she repeatedly experiences the wrenching of separation, loss and death testing her realization. She continuously had the experience of 'some elemental force' soaring from her heart, after each integration of suffering.

As we have seen from Etty's experiences in Journey Four, she not only has come back into the 'world' as an awakened being, but she has come back into an accelerated distorted, mechanized 'world' of transit and concentration camp destruction. In this world we are reminded of how much Etty has become realized, has indeed, unfolded toward Being itself. She became the light in the darkness or the "Thinking heart of the barracks" a presence who could hold the qualities of inquiry, change, cessation and love in one spacious whole.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to examine the unfolding or evolving of Etty Hillesum's consciousness through the Integral perspective lens. Etty has been placed in this field of study by the author as her journey of transformation is exemplary of the Integral systems that are inclusive of a non-dual ground of existence, development of the deepest human potentials, and participation in the evolutionary force of Being (Chaudhuri, 1965). Aurobindo and Gebser have served as the historical lineage of this perspective, while Almaas and Johnson have provided the current logos and practice of presence from which to delineate Etty's process.

Etty, as a self-realized chronicler, philosopher, therapist and teacher has become one of their numbers. As she said:

I shall become the chronicler of our adventures. I shall forge them into a new language and store them inside me should I have no chance to write things down. I shall grow dull and come to life again, fall down and rise up again, and one day I may perhaps discover a peaceful space round me that is mine alone, and then I shall sit there for as long as it takes, even if it should be a year, until life begins to bubble up in me and I find the words to be borne. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 540)

In terms of the Diamond Approach, Almaas has acknowledged that "no path can provide a full and final description of reality, and indeed, this view is expressed in the Diamond Approach's continuing evolution as a spiritual system" (Davis et al, 2013, p. 573). While no mystery can be encompassed by one spiritual path or tradition, as all paths or traditions are part of the largeness of Etty's consciousness, and why so many can relate to her vision. As A. H. Almaas concludes: "The Diamond Approach recognizes that all experiences, perspectives, and dimensions are co-emergent and always existing, at least in potential.... Because it is so radically open, this view includes all other views of individual realization, enlightenment, mystical union, and liberation" (Davis, J., Usatynski, T., & Ish-Shalom, Z., 2013, p. 574).

He has called this all inclusive perspective the “View of Totality.” While we might also call this view Integral, or Wholeness, the implications of its potential, “both in daily life and the spiritual journey are limitless” (Davis, J., Usatynski, T., & Ish-Shalom, Z, 2013, p. 574). We can see and often experience through her transmission, Etty’s consciousness as Love, driven by the flame of Truth as her essential aspects that continue to glow today. Her essence impacts us, as unconditioned Freedom independent of context. She became a chronicler not only of the distorted contours of her ‘time’ but far beyond it.

*I live my life in widening circles
that reach out across the world.
I may not complete this last one
but I give myself to it.
I circle around God, around the primordial tower.
I’ve been circling for thousands of years
and still don’t know: am I a falcon,
a storm, or a great song?*

Rainer Maria Rilke (1996, p. 45)

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