

Matrix Cognition and Spiritual Progress

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In his psychiatric analysis of the modern American character, Karl Menninger (1973) drew a contrast between sins and crimes, with sins being the subjective mental traits that precede the objective social actions of committed crimes. As illustrations of these subjective character traits, he utilized an analysis of the Seven Deadly Sins, first enumerated in 587 AD. These have been collectively defined as: "deadly sin: one of seven sins of pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth held to be fatal to spiritual progress" (Merriam-Webster, 1997), but this definition merely begs the question of the meaning of spiritual progress on our planet today. Continuing his analysis, Menninger suggested that these limiting character traits could be overcome, and even transcended, citing the final mature conclusion of world-historian Arnold J. Toynbee (1971): "I am convinced, myself, that man's fundamental problem is his human egocentricity."

Table 1: Character Traits for Spiritual Progress

Personal (selfish)	Familial (empathic)	Planetary (dedicated)
Pride	Praise	Offering
Covetousness	Sharing	Giving
Lust	Tenderness	Communion
Anger	Criticism	Analysis
Gluttony	Dining	Feasting
Envy	Respect	Sacrificing
Sloth	Helping	Volunteering

One of the techniques of matrix cognition (Frenster, 1989) is to array categories of related subjects within a two-dimensional matrix, each axis of the matrix representing an important dimension of the topic under discussion. If we apply this technique to the problem of egocentric character traits, we might decide, for example, that egocentric personal interests could be balanced by broader familial and planetary interests. Our old seven deadly sins certainly could fill the column under personal interests, but what would we find under the columns of familial interests and planetary interests? In the following **Table 1** is found a filled-in matrix of such character traits that would satisfy our need to enjoy our familial and planetary interests as well as our inherent personal interests. Obviously, our matrix needs to be explored, tested and modified. But the emphasis can be on joy and awareness as the hallmark of our progress and evolution, with our focus on freedom of choice as the method of our progress. The character traits in the Personal

column are largely egocentric states with selfish satisfactions. The character traits in the Familial column then show a broadening interest and empathy for those who are near and dear. Finally, the character traits in the Planetary column are dedicated to the supreme importance of our entire planet's safety and integrity for a continued existence of humankind. Such growth of focus from ourselves, to our family, and then to all the planet, could be the means of enlarging our spirit and our life, and can call forth our best in thoughts and deeds.

References

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