



THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life

14: The Human Condition, The Evolutionary Model, Part 1 - Continued

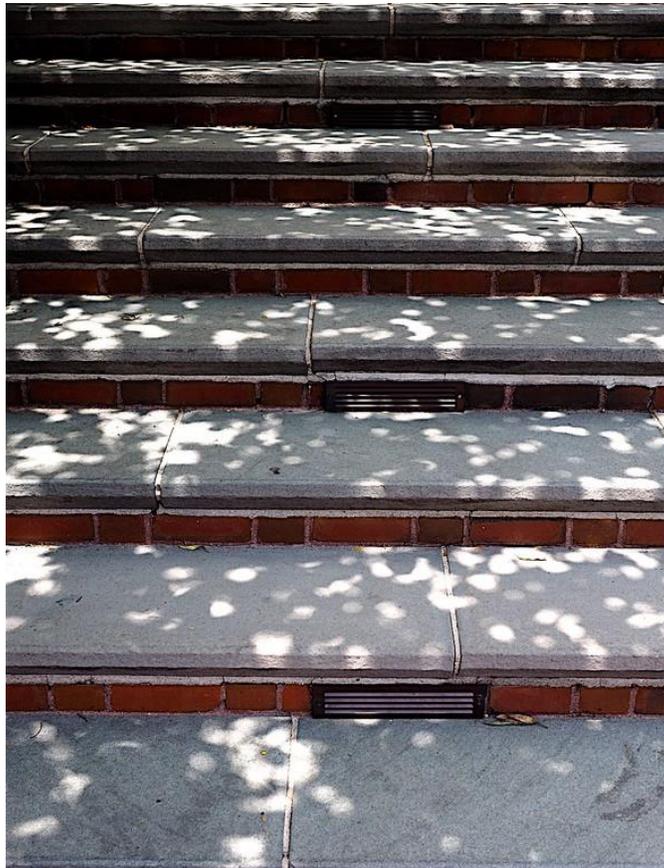


Image courtesy of Ron Barnett

*When I look at your heavens, the work of your hands,
the moon and stars that you have created;
what is man that you are mindful of him?
Woman that you should care for her?*

- Psalm 8:4-5

As we traverse the spiritual journey, a clearer understanding of the personal and social factors influencing the development of the self provides us with a revealing look into the human condition and the motivation to seek the remedies offered by the Gospel and the Christian contemplative tradition.

The focus of this first section presents the human condition as an evolutionary process from one level of consciousness to the next. Developmental psychology points to a similar process in the growth of each human being from infancy to the age of reason. Each level of consciousness is incorporated into the next level and, ideally all that is good in one level is integrated into the next. However, it is also possible to become arrested at one level. One purpose of the spiritual journey is to heal the wounds of a lifetime that occurred on all levels.

"And, in this perspective, the healing [that occurs in] the spiritual journey and ... the higher levels of consciousness that are now available to the human being ... enable us to have a conviction and, hence, a motivation to submit to the divine therapy ... to the divine compassion and mercy, and to share that healing with other people who are similarly afflicted, so that not only ourselves may be redeemed but that we might contribute something to the great individual and social ills of our time.

"As it moves, the healing is really a very down-to-earth kind of remedy. It enables us to belong to the human family as a whole without the barriers of race, ethnic group, religion, nation, or any barrier, social or whatever – not that there's not a certain value in each of these levels of human social development, but now they ... give way to a broader vision in which we see the human family as the supreme value of our social consciousness. ...

"It's important to realize that evolution is a perfectly normal way for God to function."

- Thomas Keating, excerpted from video segment 13, "The Human Condition: Evolutionary Model Part 1"

A Meditation

"The whole cosmos reaches for a certain point of evolution, at which it becomes self-awareness: that point is called 'I.' The 'I' is self-awareness of the world, of the cosmos, and of oneself. The cosmos is the context in which the relationship with God, with the Mystery, lives... The psalmist asks, 'Lord, what on earth is man that you keep him in mind...?' But the greatness of man, the honor and the glory... lies in the fact that man ... is in relationship with the infinite. To live what man is, to realize his person, man must grasp everything that God has done. Happiness is the final end of this process, the process of penetrating the eternal."

- Luigi Giussani, *The Psalms*

To Practice

- You may wish to review the chart in the previous narrative.

Evolutionary Model	
1. Uroboric	Immersed in nature, food, shelter, prompt fulfillment of needs, no self-consciousness
2. Typhonic	Magical, emotional, hunting culture (clan), formation of body-self
3. Mythic Membership	Verbal, socialization, farming culture, city-state, nation/race
4. Mental Egoic	Rational personhood, full reflective self-consciousness, cooperation, industrial technological society
5. Intuitive	Sense of oneness with the cosmos, of belonging to the human family, inclination to serve rather than compete

- Throughout the eons, through all creation that has ever been, from every possibility, all learnings and all experiences, to this very moment, you are the pinnacle of all creation that has ever existed. Can you sense profound wonder and reverence at your very being and its endless possibilities?

Resources for Further Study:

You may wish to read the Introduction and Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7 in *Invitation to Love* (20th Anniversary Edition) and the Introduction through Chapter 6, in older editions.

Notes and Reflections: