



THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life

"The Human Condition: Evolutionary Model, Part 2"

Excerpted from

The Spiritual Journey Part 2

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MOTIVATION IS EVERYTHING

To bring this home a little bit more to us, I'd like to specifically isolate the Mythic Membership level of consciousness. This is the level in which our body-self disengages, or rather the mind disengages from its identification with nature and identifies with our social group. And, hence, this is the period, let us say, in human development, from maybe four to eight, in which we unquestioningly absorb the values in which we are immersed as social beings whether these be family, religious, ethnic, national, or whatever. As long as we put a great value in belonging to a group, then we draw our identity, more or less, from the attitudes and the expectations of the group, and are not free to move into full personal responsibility which is characteristic of Mental Egoic level. I guess it can be said that few people have really accessed the Mental Egoic level and that this is really the work of life at this period of human evolution – in other words, to become fully human, to become a full personal self, a full reflective self-consciousness, a strong ego with its personal identity. That is the present stage of the evolutionary process, but all these previous stages are challenging it because we have in our conscious and our unconscious memories the values, satisfactions, and fears that were present at each one of these levels.

It's circumstances that tell you where you are: the unexpected, the crises, the trial – these are the great gifts of the Divine Therapist that let you know who you are and where you are, and under what motivation you are... so important in the Christian journey in which motivation is absolutely everything.

Jesus sets up in the parable [Parable of the Good Samaritan] an Israelite who's a poor victim of robbers, who's lying by the road, half dead. Along comes the respectable structure of society of his time, consisting of the priest, the Levite, and presumably the Israelite lay person. The priest and the Levite, as you'll remember, passed by because they didn't want to become ritually unclean or whatever their motivation was. So, the hearers are completely in sympathy with the victim who is Israelite, and the roads were dangerous in those days; as it was something that could have happened to them too.

Their expectation, from their Mythic Membership mindset of the conventional morality and the acceptable order of society in their religious milieu, are, of course, expecting a hero to come down the street next who is an Israelite and who will bind up the man's wounds and who will receive a reward from Yahweh. There are rabbinical parables with this in the theme. And so, as everyone, figuratively speaking, is looking for the hero to come down, who shows up but the most hated and the one who is considered an apostate from their religion, and who is the mortal enemy of Jews in general – a Samaritan, a "no-no!" It's written in rabbinical circles, who eats the food of Samaritans is eating the food of swine, which is an absolute "no-no," and a sign of apostasy in that particular Jewish milieu.

THE NAME OF THE GAME

The divine action working with these levels invites us by circumstances to recognize how tenuous is our access to some of these stages, or full human consciousness. And, in actual fact, we're dealing with the unconscious limitations and value systems that are sub-human and pre-rational and haven't been integrated; and, hence, are opposing the freedom to which the Gospel calls us, and which is characteristic of the Mental Egoic level. Freedom is the name of the game in the Gospel – inner freedom, not permissiveness or license, but the freedom that can take responsibility for our emotions, our actions, our decisions, and our response to Christ. That is what the Gospel is all about.

In searching through the Evolutionary Model, we now find ourselves with this tool that alerts us to the fact that through no fault of our own, simply the human condition, we have passed through these values without always integrating them into the new level of consciousness that emerges, and I might add, that emerges with a certain insistency. Brain research is still pretty infantile as a science, but it seems that every three or four years, the brain makes a kind of quantum leap into a new state of consciousness, or new powers, whether you're ready or not. So, there seems to be a blueprint.

At four, you begin to go on into socialization. At seven or eight, you begin logical thinking. At eleven or twelve, you begin abstract thinking. At fifteen or sixteen, the right side of the brain begins to be developed enough to have intuition, insight. And that's when the spiritual life biologically should begin; because you have all you need to start if you're not under one of these undue influences. Hence, the Developmental Model that [Ken] Wilbur has introduced into this [Evolutionary] model, makes this model extremely personal because this is really a model of our own experience short of the higher levels of consciousness. But once the Mental Egoic one is more or less attained, then the possibility of the higher levels of consciousness, of unity, and of union with God, and insight into the oneness of everything, and especially the goodness of other human beings, the awareness of the presence of Christ, as if the whole universe were his physical body, and that somehow the Spirit of Christ fills the whole world and is healing us of our deficiencies in growth. The name of the game in Christianity is growth.

FROM SURVIVAL TO SOLIDARITY

In the book *Bio-Spirituality* by Campbell and McMahon, they have a very striking analysis of two Greek words that Paul uses in his Epistles: sarx and soma. Sarx, which

means literally "flesh" is not so much flesh – although it doesn't exclude that – but flesh and emotions and body; in other words, the whole human condition as locked into survival, whether corporate or individual, as a goal; and, hence, this kind of consciousness will not grow or resists growth and, in that sense, since growth is the name of the game, it's a sin in the most personal sense of the word. It's the decision to remain safe where I am and to protect my turf no matter what this might cost other people.

The sarx is the body-self closed to growth and this is manifested so characteristically in the political and nationalistic policies of all the countries of the world with few exceptions. In other words, they have understood that happiness consists in being safe and in building up whatever armaments are required to feel secure, both corporately, no matter whether the majority of the human family go hungry or are deprived of the basic needs of life or opportunities for growth and healing. This is a kind of corporate or social sin and that's why, as the recent pope has said, that social justice is an essential part of the preaching of the Gospel. Unless all of us as Christians grasp the full impact of that, then our own spiritual growth is going to be truncated. It doesn't mean going to the United Nations or Moscow or someplace to change everything, or even to the Vatican, for that matter. It does mean being sensitive to those we can help here and now with the talents we have and with our limitations. It's solidarity with other people, especially those in their need, that is the beginning of the movement into the Intuitive level which perceives the deeper synthesis that is present in superficial structures; and can synthesize and draw insights beyond the usual level of rational thinking and doing.

Finally, there's one other aspect of this process that is engaging, as well as frightening. And that is, with each new level of self-differentiation as a stable kind of consciousness, one's fear of death increases, one's sense of responsibility increases, hence, one's anxiety and guilt feelings increase. And these have to be addressed. According to some psychologists like Becker, Norman Brown and others, the fear of death is one of the chief repressions, if not the biggest one, in the present stage of human development. Perhaps you can see why: at the Uroboric level there's an immersion in nature; hence, there's no thought of death – no thought of a self that can endure a death. At the Typhonic level, there's a body-self, but it's still so immersed in nature, that there's no or very little self-consciousness. At the Mythic Membership level, it begins to emerge with social consciousness. That's the period when ritual and human sacrifice begins to appear as a way of placating the gods or of winning their favor by presenting a representative of the whole (remember that the Typhonic consciousness can't distinguish the part from the whole). The idea of a representative dying for the whole is obviously an immortality symbol that allows everybody else to go on living. Notice please, that the Typhonic element in Mythic Membership consciousness, namely the mistake of the part for the whole, is a regressive or unintegrated element of Typhonic consciousness. And so, it prevents people at the Mythic Membership level from fully accessing the Mental Egoic level. The Mental Egoic is the level of negotiation, of co-operation, of the beginnings of bonding with other people. Hence, the great biblical injunction is to love your neighbor as yourself. You can't do that if you're under the excessive influence of these levels of consciousness.

THE INFLUENCE OF CONTEMPLATION

With this presentation of the Evolutionary Model, I think we're ready to look more deeply into the development of the individual self – with its fixations on the emotional levels of consciousness, and, hence, with an unconscious that is filled with the emotional pain of early life, with both values that are limited and also potentials that we don't know yet, such as the dynamic ground and the positive capacities of the psyche when these are fully opened by the freedom of the Mental Egoic and further stages of bonding, and intuition, and opening, and insight.

In looking at the Existential Model, we hope to show how the false self is the syndrome of those undigested emotional experiences of early childhood and the ways that we coped with this. We will begin to see what our personal diagnosis of our falsity as we have experienced it, and perhaps are experiencing it, actually is; and, thus, be open to the divine remedy.

I suggest that this is the contemplative dimension of the Gospel and which contemplative prayer accesses – Centering Prayer being a way into contemplation – but which is completed by action that emerges under the influence of the insight of contemplation, which actually belongs on the Intuitive, or as a beginning of the Intuitive level of consciousness. [This consciousness] grows beyond and offers us the possibility of perhaps inconceivable and unimaginable freedom and growth, union and unity with the Ultimate Reality or the Ultimate Mystery, whom in the Christian tradition we call God.