



# THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life

## "Formation of the Homemade Self: The Existential Model, Part 1"

Excerpted from

*The Spiritual Journey Part 2, The Human Condition*

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### DEVELOPMENT OF THE HUMAN FAMILY

We were speaking about the development of the human family through the process of evolution to this state of personhood which seems to be the goal of everything so far.

And then we saw that about three thousand BCE, the first glimmer of rational consciousness begins to dawn and this proceeds to develop until about one thousand BCE when the basis for higher states of consciousness as a possibility for each human individual for the first time in human history becomes possible. Just a few people succeeded, and these were the great founders of religions, all of whom appear significantly in that millennium before Christ and a few centuries later with Mohammed.

[Evolutionary Model Chart appears on last page of transcript.]

The Uroboric state has a biological basis according to Joseph Pierce in his most valuable book, *The Magical Child Matures*. I will follow a few of his thoughts at this point, and that is that the brain that is functioning at this period of human history [Uroboric] corresponds to that of the reptiles which is that brain which is capable of translating sensitive stimuli into images, but without differentiating one's perception from the reality itself. In other words, one is immersed in matter, in survival, in that particular form of animal life.

When this progresses to the Typhonic level, the mid-brain comes into functioning, which is a more powerful brain than the reptilian and it processes the information through the senses and transforms it into likes and dislikes and the development of emotional responses to the sensory stimuli. When the specifically human brain, sometimes called the "new brain," comes into function, this is much more powerful than the lower brains, but it depends on the information which they have processed in order to function. And the new brain, then, has a tremendous power and that power is designed to further developments in differentiation as well as use of these lower forms of brain function. Unfortunately, in human history, instead of the general public (that is, us) making use of the creative power of the brain, which is biologically available,

and which automatically evolves with time, this enormous energy, this new energy, is used to reinforce the fixations, the attitudes, and the physicality that is proper to these lower brains [Mythic, Typhonic, Uroboric]. Hence, you might say, that this energy, which is capable of almost unlimited growth and creativity, is put into the straitjacket of backing up and adding force to the energy that was already being used by these lower forms of brain power.

#### **INTEGRATION OF LOWER INTO HIGHER**

Thus we find here [Mental Egoic], instead of developing personhood and the capacity to relate to other people, to belong to a group, to serve others, to co-operate rather than just to compete, to build bridges, to harmonize, to try to join together in various units for the good of the whole; and, above all, to work for justice and peace, which are rational objects and the proper object of the socialization process of personhood and rational consciousness – that is, to negotiate rather than to rely on primitive ways of settling arguments (jousts, arms, and fighting), this immense energy of creativity is in the service of *destroying* the whole culture by using this brain power to develop bigger and better ways of having power over other people, controlling other people, having bigger and better pleasures for ourselves. In other words, it backs up the self-centered motivation that was necessary for survival in these earlier periods of more primitive consciousness [Uroboric, Typhonic, Mythic Membership]. It is totally inappropriate in a rational level of consciousness in which these lower values, which were proper and necessary at their particular time in human evolution, but which now have to be related to the higher human values that have now become possible through the development of human consciousness.

We can say that the new brain power – until these lower levels of consciousness are integrated into the on-going development of human nature, which is what union or unity is – (It is the integration of the lower into the higher value system and the higher powers, not just a forceful manipulation of parts into a whole, which is the work of the self-centered intelligence), the immense capacity of the human family to develop its true potential for union, for the good of the human family, and for its relationship to the cosmos, to the earth, and to the Ultimate Reality is severely limited, to say the least.

#### **DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL**

Now, let's look at the development of an individual human being. And significantly, the great researchers into human infancy and childhood, such as Piaget and his followers and others who have developed on his principles, tell us that each human being recapitulates, from its first year to its seventh year, this whole program of human evolution. We have a lot to learn about ourselves just by knowing what the appropriate attitudes, levels, and values of each level of human consciousness, as it can be discovered through anthropological research, is. Hence, it's important to understand the human condition, which is to understand one's own makeup, and problems, and the reasons for our problems, because now, when you have the facts, maybe you can do something about it.

The infant in its first year is at the Uroboric level of consciousness. It is totally immersed in matter, in the pleasurable experiences, in the reassurance of the human voice, and especially the human face of the mother; it needs the prompt attention to its needs. It is so fragile when it emerges from the womb, that it needs instantly the care that will reassure it that its new world is somewhat continuous with the one it enjoyed in the womb. Hence, the mother's breast is the proper place for this reassurance, because there, when it's being nursed, it hears the heartbeat of the mother, which it resonated with, or enjoyed in the womb of his mother. He hears her voice and her touch reminds him of the touch that was so reassuring in the world of the womb. If this bonding takes place right away, then the child's emotional life is immediately well-established, and it is on the road to accepting the human adventure with its little emotional life which is extremely fragile.

Suppose the child is not wanted – that it's not picked up regularly. That it's not cuddled, kissed, loved, fed, its needs promptly established. How is it going to interpret this? It sort of stays on the emotional level – which is not thinking, of course, because it doesn't have reason. But the child is capable at a very early age, it seems, of sensing at an intuitive level whether this business of living is a good idea or not. And, if its needs are not promptly met, then it experiences a kind of dull, pervasive anger or rage.

When I was novice master in the monastery for several years, we received a candidate who, by all appearances, was just an ideal candidate: very intelligent, good family, good education, very courteous, respectful, and talented. So, he came in. Well, all of a sudden, he got so nervous. He couldn't sing; his voice would block up when it was time to intone something; he couldn't relate to the other novices without constant anxiety. In those days we didn't speak, so that only made it worse (speak to each other, that is). Everything was done to try to assure him that he was appreciated and loved, but he couldn't believe it. He thought everyone disliked him and that he was making a bungle of everything. He wasn't. It was a totally subjective and mistaken judgment. Everybody was trying to reassure him and sort of spoon-feed him, almost holding his hand, and saying, "You're going to make it. It's just trials." We tried to think of all kinds of methods of reassuring him. But nothing worked. Finally, he left.

A few months later, his family happened to come by and his mother and I who I'd met when he was a novice at the family visits was saying – just casually she said – "You know, when my son was just a few months old, he developed this serious skin disease (a dermatology of some kind). We had to put him in the hospital for about a month or six weeks. We were separated from him and when he came home, the doctor said, 'You know this skin is still very tender. You must not pick this child up except very rarely, and feed him, of course, with a bottle.'"

Well, of course, my ears just went straight up! I said: "Now! Now I know what's wrong with this wonderful young man!" How did a child who had no reason or understanding interpret that tragic, human, pathetic experience? An infant translates it the only way he is capable of: it wants prompt attention; it needs affection. Without affection, it withers – whether that affection is withdrawn intentionally or unintentionally. This is one of the amazing things about the human condition: that the

damage done may be nobody's fault – just the vicissitudes of being a human being. But if it happens, then the emotional response of constant anger, rage because his affection and other needs are not being met, becomes habitual and gets sort of established in the images in the brain in some way that semi-permanently may disable that person for certain kinds of stress. Monastic life is a very sort of stressful situation and it requires a certain emotional balance in order to deal with it, especially in those days when the rule of silence was very strict. He was perfectly capable of leading an ordinary life in which other things occupied his mind, and so on, and he wasn't in such, you know, direct contact with the unconscious. And he just needed more time for the healing of that wound. And having known him afterwards, his life has gone along very well. But every now and then, he has a little flashback to that anxiety. It was just too much to lead certain kinds of life that were particularly demanding.

All of us have a tolerance point. All of us have been at the Uroboric level. What is characteristic, then, is the need for survival and security, and this is a biological need which is essential for the child at that age in order to continue its growth. But security is not the ultimate human value. It's the ideal value for a child at this age [Uroboric] because he's centered on survival. But once his security system is established, then he or she is ready to take on the next value.

The next instinctual drive is the development of the emotions [Typhonic], especially likes and dislikes. What is characteristic of Typhonic consciousness is this magical quality which the child also has at this period in which he can't distinguish his dream world, his images from reality. The child also suffers somewhat from the fears that were typical of our Typhonic ancestors: that is to say, it may be a little afraid of the dark; it may be afraid of the bogey man; it may be afraid of the characters it sees on the TV in our age. It is developing a symbolic interpretation of reality that is appropriate to that level of consciousness, while its emotional life is increasing; and it experiences a lot of likes and dislikes; and its moods change very rapidly.

The child is also learning to talk, and this accelerates its movement into the socialization period [Mythic Membership] of the child which is maybe, roughly, four to seven. And at that time, it is interiorizing the values of parents, peers or the culture, insofar as it filters down, without question. Normally, it unquestioningly accepts the information that it's given and the values and the parents acting as models. Meanwhile, its triune brain is developing, and as it comes out at four, the thinking capacity of the new brain begins to function [Mythic Membership], and it begins to be able to make some logical – what Piaget calls, I think, its functional or operational logic – which is that it is able to make judgments without really thinking in abstract terms yet. From seven to eleven, it begins to be able to use reason and develops the capacity for abstract thinking, for translating the images into abstractions like ethics, and good, and virtue, and truth, and such concepts as that.

#### **PROGRAMS FOR SELF DEFENSE**

This is biologically programmed apparently, because according to Pierce about every three and a half or four years, just as in human evolution there was a kind of spurt due to a development of the brain, so in the child about every three and a half or four years a new capacity of the triune brain comes into focus. From about one to puberty, the biological foundation or ground structure for life as a fully human being is completely

established. At least, that's the blueprint. Other people can interfere with that biological process. And this, along with negative experiences of life, is what produces defense mechanisms, coping with difficult situations or emotions in a way that's inadequate, or in a way that leaves behind stress or tension which makes it more difficult for the brain to unfold towards higher values and twists its energy around so that it uses its increasing brain power and energy – the new brain energy – to reinforce its programs for self-defense, or the programs for happiness that are beginning to develop in compensatory relationship to its grievances with life.

At fifteen the process seems to be complete, and that part of the brain, the left hemisphere, which is open to the spiritual world begins to function. In other words, the first eleven years of life are designed for the full development of the self as distinct identity from other objects outside [Mental Egoic]. This is the function of logical thinking: logical thinking requires a subject-object relationship.

After the biological process has been completed, then the reverse is meant to happen – that is, the movement from the particular to the general. The first part of life is to enter into through particular experiences, to develop that self-identity as thoroughly distinct from all the other identities. Then comes the opportunity to translate that experience back into the higher values of the spiritual potentiality of the human being with the new brain, the left hemisphere being the basis for it.

<b>EVOLUTIONARY MODEL</b> (Chain Of Being) <b>LEVELS OF CONSCIOUSNESS</b>	
<p>8 Ultimate</p> <p>7 Unity (Wisdom)</p> <p>6 Unitive (Holiness)</p> <p>5 <b>Intuitive</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begins to access spiritual levels of being</li> <li>• Possible psychic gifts</li> <li>• Sense of belonging and unity with God &amp; universe</li> <li>• Possibility of further development of consciousness</li> </ul> <p>4 <b>*Mental Egoic (3,000 - 2,000 BC)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mind separate from body</li> <li>• Transcendence of reason over emotion</li> <li>• Work at this point of evolution is to become fully human,</li> <li>• A full personal self</li> <li>• A fully reflective self-consciousness</li> </ul> <p>3 <b>*Mythic Membership (12,000 - 10,000 BC)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City state, socialization,</li> <li>• Farming</li> <li>• Stratification of society, kings, nobles;</li> <li>• Possessions; trade; military history;</li> <li>• More efficient ways of taking care of instinctual needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ritual, human sacrifice - part represents whole</li> <li>• First dawn of reason but not abstract thinking</li> <li>• One draws one's identity from group</li> <li>• Language invented c. 50,000 bc.— evolutionary process is accelerated</li> </ul> <p>2 <b>*Typhonic (Half animal - Half human) (200,000 BC)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergence of body self from nature</li> <li>• First sense of self identity</li> <li>• Inability to distinguish imagination from reality</li> <li>• Difficulty to distinguish part from whole</li> <li>• Beginning of tribal culture</li> <li>• The hunt</li> </ul> <p>1 <b>*Uroboric (Reptilian) (5 - 6 Million Years Ago)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most primitive consciousness</li> <li>• Immersed in cycle of nature</li> <li>• Primary concerns: food, shelter &amp; prompt fulfillment of needs</li> <li>• Survival a day at a time</li> <li>• No self-consciousness</li> </ul> <p><b>*FROM TIME OF CONCEPTION TILL THE AGE OF FIFTEEN OR SIXTEEN, THE HUMAN PERSON PASSES THROUGH ALL OF THESE STAGES TO SOME DEGREE</b></p>