



# THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life

## "Formation of the Homemade Self: The Existential Model, Part 2"

Excerpted from

*The Spiritual Journey Part 2, The Human Condition*

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### THE BLUEPRINT VS. THE ACTUAL HUMAN CONDITION

Let's look now at the energy centers which might be called an "Existential Model" of human nature. That is, here is the plan both for the human family and for the individual as it is biologically programmed in the biological structures of the brain and nervous system using the senses and the body and all the other receptive apparatus of the physical world. We need to know what happens to the blueprint in the actual human condition because of the ongoing weakness, fragility, illusion, ignorance of people. We might also speak about it as a state whose evolution has been distorted by the circumstances of early life.

[Evolutionary Model and Existential Model Chart appears on page 3 of transcript.]

### OVER-IDENTIFICATION WITH SURVIVAL AND SECURITY

What's going to happen to that child as its other powers of the brain come into function? It's going to use them in order to establish bigger and better programs to feel more secure – something to get away from that uneasiness and anxiety that is rolling around in there as the emotional judgment about life: "I'm rejected. I'm no good. Nobody loves me." All of those emotional responses to life are going to be painfully, and then successfully, repressed into the unconscious, perhaps. And then some compensatory ways of trying to reassure oneself will be found because the real security, which is the experience of intimacy with God, does not accompany this evolutionary process.

Our little fellow is getting on in life and his security needs have turned into an energy center, that is to say, a center of motivation, whether conscious or unconscious, around which thoughts, feelings and behaviors, circulate and in which it invests an enormous emotional investment in order to protect itself from that feeling.

So now feelings of security become happiness for this person. And as it emerges into the use of reason, the power of the new brain, instead of re-evaluating the system and

realizing that this feeling is coming from the neglect of parents [or many other factors, however innocent] at an early age, through no fault of one's own, turns that energy into justifying, rationalizing and glorifying the program of security. Whatever the symbols of security are in the culture – that's what appeals to our emotional life.

<b>2b. POWER CENTER</b> Power and Control
<b>2a. SENSATION CENTER</b> Affection and Esteem Sexual Energy / Pleasure
<b>1. SECURITY CENTER</b> Survival and Security

The energy centers are the beginning of the formation of what the Buddhists call – Zen Buddhists at least – the "individual self"; that is, it's the formation of the "false self:" the illusory world or self-image that we build up because we are basically insecure and cannot stand it, and have no choice but to find some childish or infantile ways of coping with that distress. You see people – I'm sure you know some people, maybe you're one of them yourself – for whom security is not only a "need," but becomes a "demand," and in some people, even becomes a "should." They now attach a certain moral right to having everybody else support their security systems. People don't usually do this, at least not too long. Reality significantly is always interfering with our programs for happiness that can't work because nobody is going to serve such fantastic demands for security. There's nothing wrong with security feelings itself – it's essential for biological life – but it becomes an absolute for the person who is desperate for security and they identify security with happiness, because when they have it, they feel so good, and when they don't have it, they have to reach for the tranquilizers, or take a vacation in Miami, to get over this terrible affront, or whatever it was, that challenged our demand that life give us the security, circumstances so that we can feel secure. This is what is so fantastical; what is the way to [satisfy] the energy centers? There's no means. Reason, you see, establishes...it moderates the instinctual needs of human nature...at least that's the blueprint. There's no moderation for an infantile, which has not the use of reason; the program for happiness that reaches out for a fantastic or unlimited amount of bolstering up by the environment and by other people.

Reality significantly frustrates, day after day, the energy centers. That means that the programs for happiness concocted in early childhood, through no fault of the child, probably through the circumstances of the parents [and other significant influencers] ... this is the tragedy ... that those programs can't possibly work, and, in actual fact, they are programs for human misery.

<b>EVOLUTIONARY MODEL</b> Chain of Being Evolution of the Human Family Soma	<b>EXISTENTIAL MODEL</b> Energy Centers And Individual Human Development Sarx
<b>4. Mental Egoic</b> Rational Person-hood, Full Self-Reflective Self-Consciousness, Industrial/Technological Culture, Nation-Co-operation	<b>4. Age of Reason</b> <i>Co-opted by the energy centers. Hence their programs are:-</i> a) justified, b) rationalized, c) glorified,
<b>3. Mythic Membership</b> Verbal, Socialization, Farming Culture, City-State/Nation/Race,	<b>3. Group Over-identification</b> Uncritical acceptance of :- a) parental, education, b) ethical, training influences, c) religious, cultural conditioning,
<b>2. Typhon</b> Magical, Emotional exchange, Hunting culture - clan, Formation of Body Self,	<i>Hence, preconceived ideas and pre-packaged values.</i> <b>2a. Power Center</b> Power and control, <b>2b. Sensation Center</b> Affection and esteem, Sexual energy/pleasure,
<b>1. Uroboric</b> Immersed in nature, food, shelter, matter Immediate fulfillment of needs.	<b>1. Security Center</b> Survival and security.

We come now to the damage that can come from the Typhonic level of consciousness (from ages one to three) in which the emotional life of the child is developing: Suppose this child lives in some of these areas where war is going on and where there's constant terror lurking over them. The child's emotional life can't handle it. It's unimaginable what damage is being done in those places to this future generation of children. Their only model is one of violence or fear.

**OVER-IDENTIFICATION WITH AFFECTION AND PLEASURE**

Their emotional life ... how is it going to react to that? It's going to have great doubt about human life – its value, its beauty, its goodness. Who is going to tell them that life is basically good when these things are laid out in front of them day after day after day, year after year? Their need, then, to compensate for that fear, or that withdrawal of the ordinary legitimate pleasures of life is going to become a compensatory enormity. Having felt this deep fear, and the privation of, perhaps, their homes, and they've lived in poverty, and so on, the chances [are great] for their developing the need for pleasure as the great human happiness. They may also experience an overwhelming need for human affection, that is because maybe one of their parents has been killed in this sort of thing, or there's been a divorce in the family.

I can't help remembering a sensitivity workshop that I attended in 1969: this one lady began to tell about her wounds. When she was five, she used to wake up in the night hearing her parents screaming at each other. She loved both of them intensely and she felt that she was being forced to choose between them, which she didn't want to do. Her emotional life couldn't handle that dilemma. She just felt literally torn apart. Out came these gallons of tears and this obvious incredible vulnerability that was just begging for affection, and parental affection, something to heal this wound which had never been thoroughly processed or healed, or something, even though she'd been in therapy. What impressed me, perhaps unrealizable on the part of us adults, what it does to a child of a certain age, when its models for life are at each other's throats or are split up?

If this wound is very deep, what can happen? It may be looking for a parental figure even when it's time to get married. That marriage is absolutely doomed to failure because nobody wants to get married to someone who wants to treat them as mommy or daddy. But some people marry because they want a father or a mother. And for some reason, unconsciously, unless they go through therapy, this person is a parental figure. Naturally the other person can't relate to that if they're relating in a mature level of individuality. It's ruined.

#### **OVER-IDENTIFICATION WITH POWER AND CONTROL**

Let's look at power, which is the other aspect of the need to have a certain independence, the need to be allowed to explore, which is a need of the child, the need to be allowed to play. From four to seven, the child is not geared to sitting down at a desk and receiving information, but its whole biology is designed for the adventure of play. And so, it may experience – some of them – school as a real oppressive situation until it finishes its exploratory operations, which are natural.

Let's say -- here's a child who has now become an adult, who had a certain talented or aggressive personality that he felt (now it can be imaginary treatment as well as real that a child responds to), but this person, boy or girl, feels that they were always put down, that some other sibling was preferred to them, that their wants and desires were never considered, that they had to come home at night at a certain hour and the other people were free, that they didn't succeed in school, the teachers were against them, and so on. They felt they hadn't had a reasonable or a fair deal in childhood. Well now, they arrive out of high school. They break with the family. And their talents begin to work. They absorb the values of the culture, which reinforces these childhood programs for happiness (if you look at any advertisement, it usually recommends pleasure or security or power, what else? Maybe sometimes some flag-raising for some group, but normally it's an appeal to the infantile emotions, likes and dislikes, which is really almost an insult to an adult; but anyway, that's the advertising world. And so here, this person is finally beginning to experience his ability to control other people and this is so delightful. His program for controlling as a response to being put down – it becomes a compensatory need, demand, or "should" and now the more I can control others, other worlds, other businesses, other people – oh, what happiness! My ego just gloats as it enjoys manipulating other people or at least circumstances, or at least, my own life.

This is manifestly stupid! Because if you want to control as your idea of happiness, then you're in competition with six billion people trying to do the same stupid thing! The statistics are against you! Every day when you try to control the office, when you try to control your husband or wife, or the children, your program will be frustrated. Hence, when the program is frustrated, the afflictive emotions immediately go off. Our emotions are designed to respond to what we perceive as a sensible – that is, an object of sense that's pleasant or pleasurable – and to run away as fast as we can from what is perceived as sensibly unpleasant. We also run away from what is emotionally, intellectually or spiritually perceived as unpleasant and we reach out automatically for what we really want.

The emotions are not enemies. They're the greatest friends we have because they faithfully record what your value system is. So that if you want power, whether consciously or unconsciously, the emotions faithfully record it. When you have it, you feel great. And when you don't have it, you feel anger, apathy, indignation, pride, hurt feelings, vanity, lust in the sense of an immediate need to compensate for this intolerable injustice that you feel. It's what you feel that is characteristic of the false self system. That feeling, need for compensation, for a vindictive triumph, to be loved by everybody, to be acceptable – whatever you didn't have in childhood that you really needed – tends to feed into this program which develops into programs for happiness based on the instinctual drive for survival, security, affection, esteem, power and control. As we go up the ladder of brainpower, the energy of the higher brain is used to reinforce those programs, to make them more successful, more effective, to affirm them in the face of opposition, to defend them and finally to be destroyed by them, because the energy centers are the heart's, so to speak, blood of the false-self system.

#### **THE FALSE SELF IS AN ILLUSION**

The false-self system is an illusion. And it has different names in different religious traditions – all of them recognize this syndrome clearly and religious discipline, ritual, devotion are all designed to start us on the road to health. None of them can guarantee it. If there was any foolproof method of transformation, everybody would be lined up at the door of whoever had this information. That's for sure. It is the very struggle to find it, perhaps, that is part of the process and the journey.

Once these are fully in place, and most of those energy centers are well-established by the age of four when socialization begins, they become more complex and they're related to parents and other relatives. And this is the period when we over-identify with the group and we derive our identity from the social unit of which we are a member. This is called the Mythic Membership level. That is to say, we surround the group with a certain mythology, with a certain unquestioned acceptance, glorification, or whatever, because it gives us security, affection, esteem or power. With socialization comes, of course, stratification of society, property, and control, and money, and the values of a structured society.

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| <p><b>3. GROUP OVER-IDENTIFICATION UNCRITICAL ACCEPTANCE OF:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. parental, education</li><li>b. ethical, training influences</li><li>c. religious, cultural conditioning</li></ul> |
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The child from four to seven is reacting with its emotional centers to these other factors, seeking to control, to get this or avoid that. These influences can involve and usually do involve the uncritical acceptance of parental, ethnic and religious education, training influences and cultural conditioning. How does this work in the child from four to seven? I think this Mythic Membership level is the key to a great many problems of our time – because on all kinds of groupings (nations, religions) which are now confronting each other because of mass communication on a level that was unthinkable until a few generations ago, the attitudes appropriate to the Mythical Membership level of consciousness, which is pre-rational, are deeply embedded in our psyche along with the emotional programs for happiness and the energy centers that gradually build those programs for happiness into a colossus, into a need, a demand or a should.

Whenever those power or sensation or security centers is frustrated, then the emotions faithfully record our frustration by feelings of turmoil that we just described, which we'll go into more a little bit later. This is the level that says: "My daddy is better than your daddy. My team is better than your team. Of course, American athletes are better than Russian athletes!" Are they really better? That's not the question. The question is "I need to feel that my Daddy is better. That my religion is better. That my country is better" – whatever it is. They may be better, but that's not why we're interested. It's feeding into our security needs. And I feel more secure if I know my daddy can beat up anybody on the block when I walk by.

In adolescence, when the self begins to assert itself over and against these unquestioned assumptions, then [one] sometimes overreacts and then you have the rebellion in some adolescents against parental values, which is really healthy insofar as it's an effort to affirm one's own individuality and conscience over and against the, perhaps oppressive, demands of the group. At the same time, there's a natural tendency as one develops one's own capacity for abstract thinking, to develop independence or a re-evaluation of the unquestioned acceptance of the cultural conditions out of which we emerge.

This is what it means to grow up. This is the poignant character of the human condition, and which, I suppose, is what is meant by "original sin." Sin is a very poor word; it's a very unsatisfactory term for the human condition; because there's no real sin involved in growing up, and most of the damage which becomes the sources of sin is due to other people's treatment. So, no theologian ever said original sin was personal sin or our fault. It's something that happens to us. This is simply the concrete expression of the consequences of what happened to us by other people's unredeemed humanity when they weren't able to respond to our growth patterns and to provide a model for the interior blueprint that was gradually developing that we could identify with. Hence, we sometimes get mixed-up on models that are not so satisfactory. The child has a kind of undifferentiated choice, a need to identify with models at the

different periods of his life. If it doesn't get that model, or the right one, then this adds to the distortion that may be involved in the emotional and mental life.

The Mythic Membership level, of course, is really, together with the Typhon, where racism comes from, prejudice, and those other disastrous human attitudes that cause divisions in society. Remember we said that it's typical of Typhonic consciousness to mistake the part for the whole. Okay? So, if one white man, at this level of consciousness in a child or a person, is hateful, *all* white people are hateful; or, if you're red, all red people are hateful. And so now, when you get to the group identification, everybody who agrees with me and my religion are perfect. Everybody who doesn't agree with me is a "no, no." Racism and prejudice is the fixation at a childhood level of consciousness. It is a tremendous obstacle to human growth and freedom.

The spiritual journey is absolutely impossible until you grow out of that. The spiritual journey is based on the growth of divine love, the capacity to relate, to belong, to support, to forgive. In the Buddhist religion, you have compassion as the expression of the Mental Egoic level and in the Christian religion: "Love your neighbor as yourself." It's only at this level that love begins to come, not just sentimental love, romantic love, but the love that cares, that is concerned – and this is what it means to be a human being. Any disposition less than the effort to love everyone in the world without exception and those closest to us unconditionally is subhuman! It's irrational. It's been brought to an end by Jesus on the cross. If it did anything, the crucifixion means that motivation prompted by this level of consciousness is completely out of date and absolutely to be rejected by a Christian conscience.

Unfortunately, our religion is woven into this stuff. And the ascetical journey, the ascetical life, or a spiritual discipline begins when we take ourselves in hand and hear the invitation of the Gospel to grow out of this straitjacket of childish emotional programs and try to replace that programming with the values of the Gospel, which are open to love, to human growth, to higher states of consciousness, to union, and to unity and which manifests that in a caring, loving, concerned and practical way of helping people in need. You can't hear the cry of the poor if you're under the influence of this stuff. It's the consequences of original sin that involve ignorance, concupiscence (that is, desire for the wrong things), and all of those motives circulate around a hard core of selfishness that is firmly in place when we come to the age of reason, and instead of being re-evaluated, uses the great energy of the higher mind of reason to get bigger and better means of surviving, bigger and better pleasures, and bigger and more power, if you can get it, over everybody else in the world. Such is the human condition. Thank you.