



THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life

"The Philosophical Model, Part 1"

Excerpted from

The Spiritual Journey Part 3, Paradigms of the Spiritual Journey

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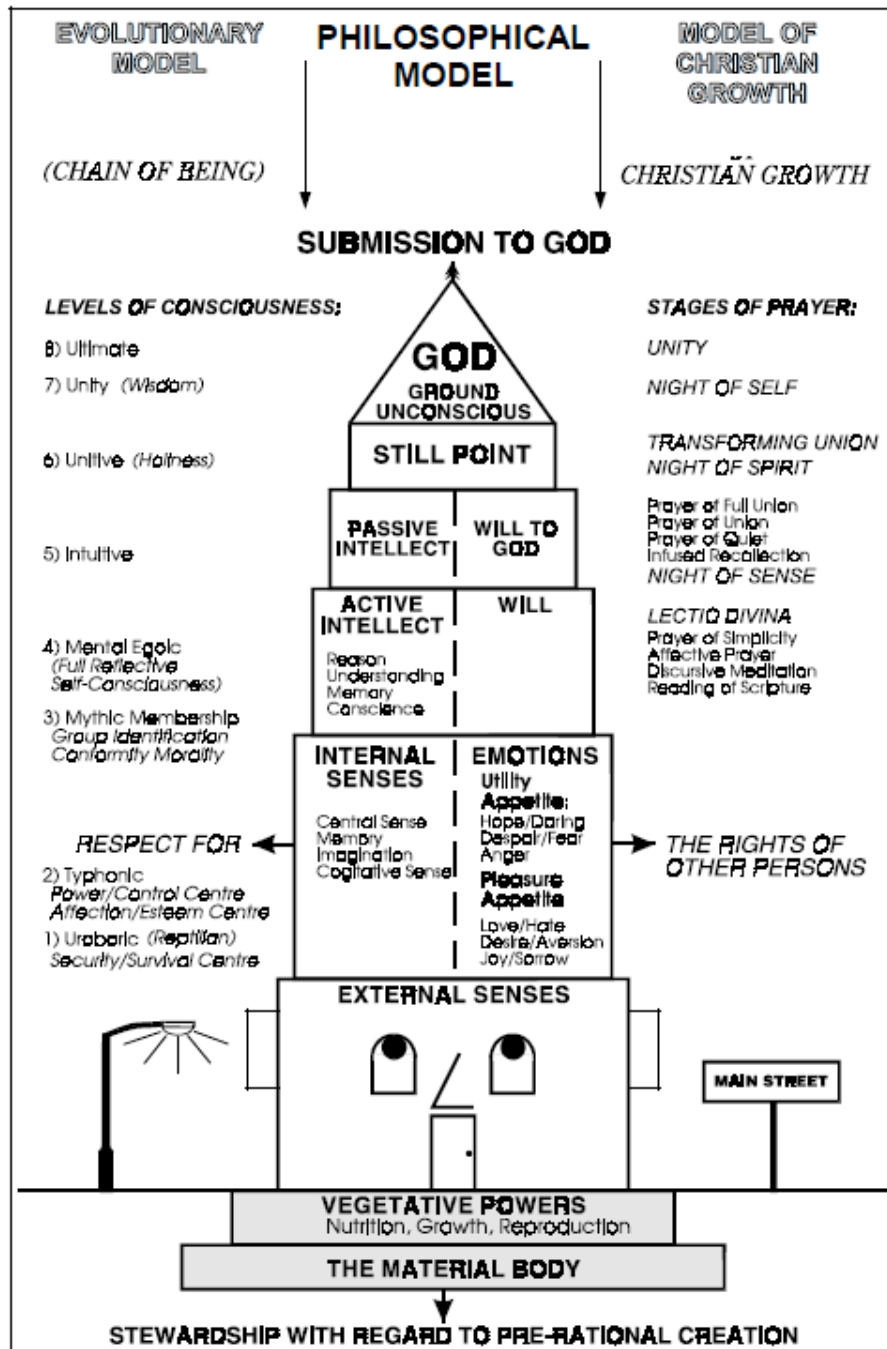
[Evolutionary, Existential and Philosophical Models Chart appears on page 2 of transcript.]

Let us then turn to one more model of the spiritual journey to complete the other two that we've presented so far. We presented over here the Evolutionary Model which is completed in this diagram on the left with its additional higher states of consciousness.

This chain of being is now open to each human person in view of the fact that the human family has finally arrived at this full self-reflective self-consciousness and personhood that involves the use of reason. This is the door into the higher states of consciousness. So, the great issue of the human family at this time is to become fully human, to develop what personhood really means, which is the capacity to relate to more and more of reality honestly, with compassion and love. The values of belonging, of co-operation and harmony rather than competition are now the values that will assist in this process of bringing the whole human family into its full Mental Egoic consciousness that was initiated in the low Mental Egoic period (maybe 3,000 BC) which came into its middle and full flowering about 1,000 BC, and which is now coming, perhaps, to its high peak of self-consciousness manifested by the intense psychological age in which we are living.

This central diagram is a view of the faculties and relationships of human nature as far as it can be discovered philosophically. And this diagram is a kind of expression, largely, of the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas which predates our evolutionary worldview and which expressed the static worldview and that was characteristic of the high Middle Ages. It represents a magnificent evaluation of human nature for its time; but, obviously, it has to be updated and brought into dialogue with the other developments in human knowledge, especially through the physical sciences and the psychological, sociological sciences that have developed in the last century or so. In addition to our chain of being, which is the ideal evolution of the human family and the ideal evolution of an individual human being who recapitulates, as we saw, in ourselves the development of the whole human family. It's an ideal program that, in actual fact, fairly rarely is verified in the individual plane and has yet to be verified in

the average human consciousness, across the board, of humanity. In actual fact, as we saw, most of us are still struggling to become human, and are hindered from doing so by our emotional programs and over-identification with our group.



In our diagram on the far right here [see chart on page 2], we saw a model of the existential way in which human life is actually experienced. This involves the study of all the difficulties that our emotional programming and our over-identification with our group or parents has caused. So that the Existential Model is the way it actually is, and these two models are simply ideal models of the way it's supposed to be depending on whether you look at human nature from a static point of view or an evolutionary one. The value of looking at this Philosophical Model is simply to identify the powers and faculties of human nature so that we might be able to recognize what they are normally supposed to do when they work properly; even if, in actual fact, we don't experience them that way.

Let me run through this quickly. A human being is a microcosm of the entire created world. In our bodies are, of course, the inorganic matter that we eat, and the constituency of our various cells are made up of material taken from the earth. And so, our material body might be called the sub-basement in which this whole superstructure is built. We also have the powers within us of the vegetable world or kingdom; namely, the capacity to grow, to nourish ourselves, and to reproduce ourselves. And we might consider that the basement.

Then we come to the street floor. Now the street floor is the three-dimensional world to which we relate with our senses. And so, the first story of this skyscraper, this interior skyscraper, you might say, is the five external senses that are indicated here on the diagram, by these ears, the door – the mouth, I suppose – the nose and the eyes. Now, I regret the man looks a little bit confused here; possibly because with all these marvelous faculties, he's wondering why they don't work so well. But, anyway, human beings also have the internal senses and emotions which we share with the higher mammals. Now you'll notice that on the left side of the skyscraper are faculties of knowing or perception. And on the right side are faculties of appetite. These appetitive faculties of knowing obviously co-relate on the various floors of this model.

This model, incidentally, is modeled on the interior castle of St. Teresa in some degree. Now, since we don't have castles anymore, it seemed more useful to use a paradigm from the technological age, a skyscraper.

The point to keep in mind is that we share in matter, we share in the vegetable life, we share in animal life. And this is precisely what we experienced in our Uroboric and Typhonic periods in the first few years of childhood when our senses were feeding the brain with material with which to develop our internal senses. And then the Typhonic level of consciousness brought our mid-brain into action and we were able to relate inwardly to the experiences outwardly and to develop the body-self distinction from the rest of nature and our previous immersion in it. So, all knowledge in St. Thomas' point of view comes through the external senses. Hence, this is called "Main Street" here because that's where the action is, so to speak, or where, rather, it begins.

Let's take a look at these internal senses just to identify them. The central sense is that faculty that unites multiple experiences or stimuli coming from the external senses; thus, I see this round object which tastes kind of bitter, and it has a yellow shell, and it's just so big, and it looks appetizing, and it's the central sense that says, without going through that process, it's a lemon. Similarly, it gives you a unit experience made up of a

number of stimuli. We also have a sense memory which recalls past units of experience, past experiences, and an imagination which creates out of past experience, stored in the memory bank, our vast computerized memory bank there in our brain, which, out of that store of images, it creates new images. And its creative abilities are fantastic.

The cogitative sense corresponds to instinct in animals. But the human mammal has the least amount of instincts, it would seem, and is the most helpless when it emerges into life and, hence, it's designed to find, when it arrives in this world, the kind of welcome and love which it desperately needs. I remember a family telling me about the birth of their youngest child. They had been in *Family Life* and had done a lot of studying into parenting, and so on. They decided to have a reception committee when the child was born. All the family were gathered together and assisting at this birth, and everybody was wide awake, including the mother, and when the baby finally was born, there was applause; there was a great shout of welcome. And the baby opened his eyes and looked around and smiled. He was so pleased to find this reception. And I'm told that this child is exceptionally intelligent and well-adjusted. So, if we could give children, on their entrance in the world, the kind of reception that ... Imagine yourself, if you came from a safe place into this mysterious world, how you would feel? We've forgotten how we felt, but it seems that we had feelings.

This capacity of evaluating sense experience is what we mean by the cogitative sense. In other words, it's like those – to use another image – children who felt deprived of the good things of life. They were surrounded by terror, or they were neglected. Well, they hesitate, then, with their emotions to accept the adventure of life. Even though their biological urge for survival keeps them going, there's not a love of life.

This is not a rational judgment about experience. It's the emotional judgment, and this is crucial for the whole development of the false-self system, which has to find ways of coping with negative experiences or experiences perceived by the child as threatening. Also, on the level of our internal senses are the emotions which correspond with the information that the central sense-memory, imagination and cogitative sense are registering. And so, there are two sets of emotions. One is the simple pleasure appetite which reacts spontaneously with an attraction for what is perceived as good, and with an aversion for what is perceived as harmful to the organism. And when either the perceived object, good or bad, is absent, it experiences desire or aversion; if it's present, it experiences joy or sorrow.

The utility appetite, or the emergency appetite, is a little more complex. It involves the pursuit of goods that are difficult to obtain, or the avoidance of perceived evils that are difficult to avoid, and so this involves a much deeper engagement of the personality and the emotional life. And, hence, if these emotions are constantly being activated, then the body reacts to this over-stimulation with various forms of dis-ease. That is to say, it doesn't feel so good because the brain is now adjusting itself, the brain cells, to an abnormal situation because the normal situation for a human being is to experience the simpler emotions. This is like, you know, being on 24-hour duty, or something, in a hospital. There's always a siren going off, or a phone ringing, and you have to respond. Well, too much of that is not a good balance of life, and in the technological culture,

there's research going on now to the effect that most of us, because of the noise, the stress, the anxieties, and the technological character of modern life, our failure to enjoy the relaxing experiences of nature, for a large part of the population, that there's almost a constant call on the utility emotions resulting, when we try to relax, in withdrawal symptoms of various levels of intensity.

In regard to these different perceptions, either good or evil, when the difficult good is still available, we experience hope; when it appears to be no longer available, one experiences despair or discouragement. And when these have developed, as we showed in our diagram about what happens when the energy centers are frustrated, apathy is what happens when despair becomes habitual or frequent. One simply kind of has the emotional withdrawal from life, friends, duties, commitments. It's a kind of paralyzing experience.

On the other hand, when an evil is perceived and not yet present, we can react in two ways, either by courage which takes on the difficulty, or by fear which experiences the difficulty as an impending evil, that is gradually descending upon one and which calls for some kind of speedy reaction. And finally, in anger, the evil descends upon you and becomes present and there's usually the inclination of rage, together with some tendency to revenge.

In repression, what seems to happen is that one of the emotions in the stronger utility appetite represses an emotion in the pleasure appetite, so that it never is able to get beyond the emotional level to a judgment of reason. For instance, if one is afraid of showing anger, and in the milieu, you're never allowed to show emotion, then you might repress it. Any emotion that is regarded as unacceptable because of cultural reasons or religious education may be repressed by fear or anger or one of the other stronger emotions. And this means that it's rumbling around somewhere in our emotional life and in our bodies and has simply been displaced and will eventually emerge in some form of ill health or bizarre activities.

Now reason begins to function between the ages of four and seven, although it's not abstract reasoning. It's a kind of logical reasoning and it's used in the service of our programs for happiness or to avoid unhappiness. And this is also the period when the Mythic Membership period begins, where we absorb unquestioningly the values and demands or commands of parents or other authority figures.

At seven, the age of reason begins to function and the possibility of operational logic and thinking logically begins. To think logically there has to be this subject-object relationship. That means that the child has developed a full self-identity; at this point not fully rational, but it now recognizes itself as a mind, as well as a body. It's beginning to differentiate its intellect from its body and the environment.

Now the acts of reason are these four: that are the various ways in which the same faculty deals with reality. About 11, abstract thinking seems to begin to come into function. And reason is the coming to conclusions from first principles. Understanding is the grasp of first principles. There's an intellectual memory bank as well as a sense memory bank. Finally, there is conscience, which is the judgment of reason about what

is right or wrong. And that judgment of reason is in constant conflict or dialogue with the cogitative sense, which in modern psychology is not quite the same as super-ego. But their consequences are somewhat related because the super-ego represents the obligation emerging from an emotional judgment, rather than a judgment of reason. Hence, it's not true conscience; it's not reliable. But this is where guilt feelings arise and where self-recriminations arise, which are really unreasonable or neurotic. So neurotic guilt is an unintegrated, cogitative sense into a true rational conscience. The will is the faculty, then, that goes towards whatever the good of reason presents to it. The will is not programmed to any particular good, and in this consists, somewhat, its freedom of choice. It always is geared to choose what seems to be good or what is represented as good. But its freedom consists in choosing between goods.

THE FOUR ACTS OF REASON	
At about 11 years of age abstract thinking seems to begin to come into function.	
REASON	Reason is the coming to conclusions from first principles.
UNDERSTANDING	Is the grasp of first principles
MEMORY	There's an intellectual memory bank as well as a sense memory bank.
CONSCIENCE	The judgment of reason about what is right or wrong.

You can see that we now have really three levels of functioning, of knowing, and of responding with desire. One is sensible objects presented through the external senses. Another are the intellectual goods such as truth, virtue, honesty, compassion. And a third level, which we'll see in just a moment, is the spiritual good that might be presented, either through our intellectual apparatus, our active intellect, or through intuition.

THREE LEVELS OF FUNCTIONING		
Sensible objects presented through the external senses.	The intellectual goods such as truth, virtue, honesty, compassion.	The spiritual good that might be presented, either through our intellectual apparatus, our active intellect, or through intuition.

Intellect has two aspects. One is active which reasons; the other is passive, or intuitive, which perceives truth directly without the mediation of reason. And to that level also corresponds this innate tendency to desire happiness. The will to God is this innate desire for happiness that is at the root of our search as seekers, and it speaks to the deepest part of human nature, the desire for God, and the memory, so to speak, intuitively infused, that something is missing in our life and that only God can fill it. Remember, in the Night of Sense, God infuses into us the knowledge that only he can satisfy, and this tends to relativize all the other objects that we had hoped would provide us with absolute or infinite happiness. And, hence, the psychological experience of not finding satisfaction in God or in anything else, such as we had previously enjoyed.

At the stillpoint we do not have an immediate, conscious experience of it. And, in fact, even this level is not immediately evident to us, except occasionally, without some discipline to cultivate it. Now, what are we doing in Centering Prayer? For the period of Centering Prayer, we're closing down everything in our perceptive and reactive, our knowledge and appetitive faculties, from here on down, in order to open ourselves to

the Intuitive level through our passive intellect and to God through this openness to happiness of an unbounded kind. As we wait, the divine action may bring us from time to time into the stillpoint, which mystics also call the apex or peak of the Spirit. And it's that place in which our person, having been developed now to the full Mythic Membership level, is reinserted, so to speak, or joined to the universal mind, or the cosmos, or what we would express in the Christian religion as our Christ nature, or, again, as our true Self. And this experience, as it reincorporates us into the unity with all reality, brings about the corresponding awareness or intuitive grasp of the oneness of the human family and indeed oneness with all reality.

Beyond that is that source from which we come, the Ground Unconscious, which can be thought of in different ways and is a term that one finds in the Buddhist tradition and which might be best translated – with care, however, -- in the Christian tradition, as God, the Ultimate Reality. Our Ground Unconscious is our participation in the Ultimate Reality, whatever that is.

As we've seen, in moving through these various levels, we experience the opposition, the downward movement as well as the upward movement which challenges us as we try to exercise the faculties according to their nature, and as we try to relate to other people. So, this diagram, then, of human nature is our faculties insofar as these can be identified by observation of philosophy which deals only with the exercise of reason. Hence, it's somewhat bound to be incomplete from the point of view of states of consciousness that perceive that same reality from higher levels of perception.