



# THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life

## 13: The Human Condition: The Evolutionary Model, Part 1



Hilma af Klint, *Altarpiece, No. 1, Group X*, Altarpieces, 1915

In this, the second part of our series on the spiritual journey, we will study various models of the human condition. The human condition teaching is Fr. Thomas' seminal work in that he uses contemporary science, particularly modern psychology, and applies it to the traditional Christian spiritual path. Those of us on this spiritual path are experiencing a healing and transforming process that has been experienced by all Christian contemplatives throughout the ages, most notably described in St. John of the Cross' teaching on the Dark Night of the Soul. Fr. Thomas discovered that the language of modern psychology, rather than the traditional language of spiritual theology, can aid us greatly in understanding the dynamics of grace in the process of transformation.

No matter how long we are on the spiritual journey, we always have a human condition. We are born into the evolutionary process wherever it is at the time of our birth, into a culture whose conditioning we can't escape, into a family that has likely suffered, into circumstances over which we have no control. Even those who say they had a happy childhood still struggle with what life brings and with living to their full divine-human potential. More often than not, when we are frustrated or upset, a person or event or even a thought is setting off something in our unconscious. What happens next will either be a conscious choice we make or an unconscious reaction we may end up regretting. Understanding the human condition is an important first step towards healing, transformation, and living life to our full divine-human potential.

*"What I do, I do not understand.  
For I do not do what I want, but I do what I hate."  
- Romans 7:15*

Even St. Paul, over 2,000 years ago, understood that he had a human condition, and that some of his behavior seemed to be out of his control. It's not really out of our control; it only seems that way because we are not aware of the unconscious motivations behind our behavior.

"The Gospel calls us forth to full responsibility for our emotional life. We tend to blame other people or situations for the turmoil we experience. In actual fact, upsetting emotions prove beyond any doubt that the problem is in us. If we do not assume responsibility for our emotional programs on the unconscious level and take measures to change them, we will be influenced by them to the end of our lives."  
- Thomas Keating, *The Mystery of Christ*

We begin our exploration of the human condition with the Evolutionary Model of human consciousness. In the weeks ahead, we will study other models. Fr. Thomas' intention is to help us understand why we need healing and what needs to be healed; in other words, what is being transformed. In *Invitation to Love* he says the primary goal of this teaching is "*practical*: to provide a solid conceptual background for the practice of contemplative prayer and the spiritual journey for our time. We are called to this journey not just for our own personal growth, but also for the sake of the whole human community."

## **A Meditation**

"Dear Lord, I believe and trust in your incredible love for me that heals the wounds of a lifetime – body, soul, and spirit – and which calls us into a share of your divine life, even in this world. May this course we're taking fulfill your will for us at this time as we begin or renew our commitment to Centering Prayer as a new life in Christ. That [it] will help us to face what needs to be healed and

also create the longings in us for deeper and deeper communion and union with yourself, dear Lord."

- Thomas Keating, from "A Blessing for this Journey" in the introductory session to this program

### To Practice

- View the video excerpt "The Human Condition: Evolutionary Model, Part 1." This excerpt is about 30 minutes in length. The key terms to learn as you watch today's video are the stages in the evolution of the human species but are particularly related to the evolution of consciousness and will be referred to throughout this course. Those terms are Uroboric, Typhonic, Mythic Membership, Mental Egoic and Intuitive. Referring to the following chart may assist you.

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

- Acknowledging that this teaching is a lot to take in and may not be familiar, notice how the material lands in you and perhaps what it stirs in you. Can you make connections between this material and your spiritual journey as it has unfolded?

### Resources for Further Study:

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

### Notes and Reflections: