

# Session 8: The Envy of Specialness

This deadly estrangement is characterized by the delusion of the mind that **there is such a thing as final self worth**. When trapped in this delusion we are overly concerned about being special by some knowable criteria of specialness. We may say to ourselves that everyone is special, but we still have some way of insisting that we are somehow more special than this all too common specialness. And we may think we have evidence for this. We may be very sensitive to our feelings and to other peoples feelings. We may be significantly intelligent, lucid, educated, artful, and thoughtful about our lives. We may find many people less so. And we may also envy those who are more so.

This deadly estrangement is characterized by the addiction of the heart that cries out **I want to to be the best**. This may sound crass to me when put this bluntly, but I may admit that I do want to be the best that I can be. I even believe that this should be true for everyone. It is harder for me to admit that I envy those who are clearly better than me in my chosen field of specialness. And I do not want to shame myself by sharing with others how much I envy someone. In a way this so-called “envy” is my own secrete, my motivation for being better in the ways I want to be better.

This deadly estrangement is characterized by this trap of the will: **I do bossy and exacting behaviors**. Without even thinking about it, my will takes charge of whatever I am doing and instructs other people how to help me to do what it is obvious to me needs to be done. In most situations it seems to me that I am the one who needs to give order to this occasion, to make it more artistic, to make it more organized, to make it succeed. Also, I have rather exacting standards for how things need to be and need to be done. When less qualified persons or leading the scene, I am frustrated. I have emotionally strong views about every movie, art form, program, book, speech, TV program, sex session, whatever. And my will moves in these patterns automatically. I need not even think about it. If I do, I think that this is quite normal, what everyone should do, and do better than they currently do.

## **This deadly estrangement is the typical mode of Escape from Reality by Enneagram Personality Type 4**

As a mode of escape, personality type 4 is an escape from the *Primal Merging* aspect of authenticity. Everyone can manifest this mode of escape to some extent, but certain people have a gift for it – even an obsession with it. Personality type 4 persons are deeply sensitive people almost to the extent of mixing up their own feelings with the feelings of others. They also tend to be creative people – as musicians or artists or anything that requires emotional sensitivity and expressiveness. Not all 4s are talented,

but those who are talented often make contributions to the overall culture that we count as treasures. They often lead us into deeper experiences. They tend to see themselves as special people with regard to personal gifts that most people lack. And if they do not have the personal gifts they want, they tend to be envious of those that do have them. "Self," in the sense of ego strengths, is a big deal for these persons.

Having a personality that overemphasizes personal creative potentials need not mean that such persons cannot access their profound life and use their sensibilities with effective compassion for others. Martha Graham and Paul Simons are well known examples of effective and compassionate type 4 personalities. The escape is identifying with one's strong ego strengths and thereby avoiding something very much deeper, namely the raw freedom that is beyond ego, beyond personality habits, beyond anything that pertains to promoting or defending self worth.

*Envy* is a quality that describes this estrangement, for the type 4 personality tends to so focus upon possessing special gifts that they may be envious of others who seem to possess the wanted gifts in more abundance. This can appear as a sort of over-competitiveness or uncharitableness toward also gifted companions. All this is a distraction from the real issue of accessing one's own deep freedom in order to shape one's own life in the directions desired or needed or called for.

## **Primal Merging**

When we view the "No Self" in its relation to the future, we discover our intentionality, our initiative, our freedom to act *beyond the boundaries of the ego or self image* that we have constructed to tell ourselves who we are and what we can and cannot do. If I am by habit a shy person, I may discover my freedom to risk intruding myself into contact with others. If I am by habit a boisterous person, I may discover my freedom to calm down into being sensitive to others. "*Primal Merging*" is the name I am giving to this intensely solitary aspect of what we often call "freedom." By "*Primal Merging*" I mean giving up the ego limitations and merging with the larger, more capable, more true-to-reality "I." The emptiness left by our departure from self-image or ego can naturally fill with a quality we can call "*persistent initiative*" or *Freedom*.

In some religious circles we call this initiative "prayer," but I am not yet talking about prayer as a religious practice. I am simply describing the appearance in our deep solitude of the *initiative aspect* of consciousness. By "initiative" I mean the capacity to influence the future. Though the "No Self" does not control the future (the future almost always comes to us as a surprise), our profound initiatives do make a difference in what the future turns out to be. It is as if our initiatives mingle with the massive forces beyond our control to form a future that is both a surprise to us and a result of our initiatives. These initiatives can be categorized as many types – four types have dominated the Christian devotions of prayer: (1) confessing our unrealism, (2) giving thanks for our life, our possibilities, and our forgiveness, (3) making requests of Reality for our own temporal being and for its further realization, (4) making requests of Reality for specific others and for the general social conditions that care for whole

groups of people. Such initiatives involve more than thoughts in the mind; they are acts of inner choice, and they are proposals for body movement and action in the world. The deep interior acts of *Primal Merging* are intentions to engage. They are internal initiatives that change the course of history.

Such initiatives access the power of being the “No Self” – a power that is not an achievement or a possession of the ego or of the personality. The power of initiative is a gift from the Power that posits us in being. Our access of this power is not an accomplishment but a merging, an allowing of our awareness and action to merge with the essential capacity of *Freedom* that characterizes our deep being. This deep initiative is a capacity to create “out of nothing” responses that have no cause except our own initiative. It remains true that many of our responses are automatic actions that derive from our genetics or our social conditioning or personality habits. And we can be frequently surprised about the extent to which some old childhood-developed habit imposes itself inappropriately into our present living. But along with all this past-determined behavior, something more exists in our living Now: an uncaused initiative that no psychological theory can explain.

Our experience of this profound initiative can break through our personality habits as a *state of being* that happens to us from time to time. And we can also come to recognize this “*Primal Merging*” with our inherent *Freedom* as a permanent *quality* of the “No Self” that we never need to leave.

### **Exercises:**

1. With what descriptions of estangment do you identify in these readings?
2. What descriptions of authenticity most caught your attention.
3. Do with a partner (or by yourself) the following repeating-question exercise: (One partner asks the question, listens to an answer, says thank you, and repeats the question. The exploring partner keeps answering this same question over and over. Do this for five minutes. Then switch questioner and answerer and repeat the process.)

### **How do you seek to be best?**

Repeat the process with this question:

### **When do you tend to get bossy and exacting?**

4. Share or write your reflections on this session.