

The Negative Chain of Emotions

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James: Dear Connie, I know you have been struggling with the emotions that have come up from a binding *samskara* that, like a bubble caught in the mud on the bottom of a lake, was jiggled loose from your subconscious and broke on the surface of your life, leaving uncomfortable ripples in your relationship with your family and others when you realized your true nature. People sometimes have the idea that realization is the end of *sadhana*, but it is only the end if you have completely purified your causal body before realization. Otherwise you have to deal with the residual stuff. Of course it is much easier to deal with it when you know who you are – you never really take it to be real. Nonetheless, it is still painful and it needs to be addressed and laid to rest. In a spirit of service I offer this inquiry into the nature of the *maya* mechanism, as it impacts on human psychology.

~ Much love, James

The Separation

If I am limitless, adequate and complete, yet think of myself as limited, inadequate and incomplete, I am living a lie. Christianity has labeled this separated state “original sin.” It is original because it is the source of erroneous views about oneself, the world and God – the self. It is called “sin” because it misses the mark about who we really are. To miss the mark is to suffer.

Stage One: Guilt

The error of non-apprehension of the self is the mother of ego and the cause of a chain of negative states of mind, the first of which is guilt – feeling bad for making a mistake. Guilt, which is largely unconscious and a synonym for The Separation, torments us until we realize what we’re missing by living out of the light of the self. We would like to erase the mistake, but have in the interim subconsciously accumulated a great store of negative feelings, beliefs, ideas and experiences which continually roil and cloud the mind with reaction, attachment and delusion. Attached, reactive, deluded minds are incapable of inquiry.

We infer guilt by observing our self-loathing, anger, depression, inadequacy, failure, impotence, emptiness, longing, desire, arrogance and the constant feeling that things should be more-better-different.

Stage Two: Fear

The psychology of ego is infantile and may account for the religious view of humans as children of God. When a child breaks the rules he or she immediately fears punishment. But God, the self, being unconditional love, will not punish us for separating, but – here’s the rub – we believe it will. Perhaps fear is a reasonable reaction to The Separation because we have unwittingly removed our true support and protection in life. The longer we remain separate, the deeper the hidden

reservoir of fear becomes. Unfortunately, the causal body is dynamic and fear oozes out, attaching itself in thousands of ways to various objects, both animate and inanimate, polluting our contact with the world.

Stage Three: Denial

The best way to live with fear – mutated guilt – is to repress it, push it down into the causal body, a phenomenon known in the psychological world as denial. However, what goes in must come out, so the repressed energy eventually erupts into the subtle body, creating intense extroverting waves which completely obscure the self, making inquiry quite impossible.

Stage Four: Projection

When guilt erupts, the subtle body is painfully conscious of it. To avoid taking responsibility, the ego quickly and automatically directs the pain to an object. It finds convenient scapegoats: the world, Mom and Pop, its childhood, the government, fate – and even God. The unconscious purpose of projection is to separate the ego from the sin of self-separation even though self-separation is not all bad from ego's point of view, because it opens up the fertile field of victimhood – which makes it feel marginally better about itself.

Stage Five: Anger

Having successfully laid the blame on someone or something outside, the next logical step is: get angry at the object, usually a person, and attack. The need to project guilt is perhaps the major root of hatred and anger. Anger, obviously, is inimical to inquiry, because inquiry, instead of flowing inward toward the self, is completely wrapped up in projected objects.

By following ego's idea we seem to have solved the problem – but attack makes us feel guilty. So instead of doing away with our uncomfortable emotions we are right back where we started. And as if to make matters worse, the ego, who is no fool, has a vested interest in seeing that we believe in the reality of The Separation. As long as we believe we are separate, ego is in business because it is the belief that we are separate.

So when we take up a spiritual way of life and begin to practice inquiry we not only have to contend with ego's self-serving thought system but its predictably negative view of our desire to inquire.

Knowledge, not ego, does the work. Perhaps the biggest danger is allowing the ego to co-opt the inquiry by donning the guise of a sincere, humble seeker. Inquiry should facilitate ego-transcendence, disengage ego-identification and purify the subtle body to the degree that it lifts the mind into the plane of the self where the ego is no longer the subject, the experiencer, but becomes an object of awareness. Inquiry that fails to expose the ego and ego-generated thoughts and emotions won't lead to self-knowledge even if it produces extraordinary experiences.

If we define inquiry on the level of practice as purification of the thought- and feeling-waves in the subtle body, we have our work cut out for us. If we understand inquiry as the flow of attention toward the self, one can easily see how the subtle-

body disturbance keeps us merely processing the effects of our spiritual ignorance instead of meditating on the self. Processing is an ego-driven activity, designed to keep ego firmly in control of thought processes, unlike inquiry, which should free thoughts and feelings from ego-manipulation and control. If inquiry is seen as the process of undoing the tight knots of the psyche, this convoluted psychological mess is what we have to work with.

Stage Six: Defense

As if dealing with the guilt/denial/projection/fear/attack cycle were not enough, a secondary complex develops: the attack/defense cycle. When you attack you need armor, a defensive posture, because of the fear of being attacked back. The more we defend ourselves the more we reinforce our guilt. Attack is projected fear, so defense is an attempt to protect against fear, but like all Separation-induced thoughts and feelings, it reinforces the precise *samskara* it is intended to relieve.

If the ultimate purpose of inquiry is to provide an environment conducive to self-knowledge, participation in ego's game is a waste of time because it teaches that the guilty, fearful ego is the self.