

CHAPTER 4

The Ego's Struggle to Preserve Itself

I. The Last Foolish Journey¹

The Bible says you should go with a brother twice as far as he asks.² It certainly does not suggest that you set him back on his journey. Devotion to a brother cannot set *you* back either. It can only lead to mutual progress. The result of genuine devotion is inspiration, a word which, properly understood, is the opposite of fatigue. To be fatigued is to be dispirited, but to be inspired is to be *in* the spirit. To be egocentric is to be dispirited, but to be self-centered in the *right* sense is to be inspired, or in the spirit. The truly inspired are enlightened and cannot abide in darkness.

- 2 Do not attempt to break God's copyright, because His authorship alone *can* "copy right."³ Your own right authorship does not lie in remaking His copies, but in creating like Him.
- 3 Embarrassment is always an expression of egocentricity, an association which has been made before.⁴ If you complete the sentence stem "When I was called on to speak" with "I became embarrassed and could not speak," this should be corrected to "I recognized my authorship."⁵ You cannot be embar-

1. See Cameo 16: "Helen's Extra Mile."

2. Matthew 5:41 (RSV): "And if any one forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles."

3. "God's copyright" is His exclusive right to create you. Breaking His copyright, then, means trying to "remake" His copy—trying to recreate yourself as you wish to be. Rather than this being an improvement of yourself, however, it is a distortion, for only God can "copy right."

4. After miracle principle 3, Helen got embarrassed when Jesus mentioned to her "the experiences of intense love you have felt." In response, he said, "Don't get embarrassed—things that are true are *not* embarrassing. Embarrassment is only a form of fear, and actually a particularly dangerous form because it reflects egocentricity" (see Cameo 2).

5. This originally referred to the SCT, the Sentence Completion Test. In this psychological test, patients are asked to finish incomplete sentences. The way they do so provides

rassed by your own words unless you believe that you are responsible for them. ⁴We have already corrected “word” to “thought,” and you *are* free to allocate the authorship of your thoughts as you elect. ⁶ ⁵You can thus speak from your spirit or from your ego, precisely as you choose. ⁶If you speak from your spirit, you have chosen to “Be still, and know that *I am God*.” ⁷These words are inspired, because they come from knowledge. ⁸If you speak from your ego, you are disclaiming knowledge instead of affirming it, and are thus dispiriting yourself.

4 The dispirited have no choice *but* to be narcissistic, and to be narcissistic is to place your faith in the unworthy. ²Your real worth is your divine authorship, and your spirit is its acknowledgment. ³I cannot guide your mind except as you associate it with your spirit.

5 Attacking misidentification errors is neither my function nor yours. ²Destroying the devil is a meaningless undertaking. ³Cervantes wrote an excellent symbolic account of this procedure, though he did not understand his own symbolism. ⁴The real point of his writing was that his hero was a man who perceived himself as unworthy because he identified with his ego and perceived its weakness. ⁵He then set about to alter this misperception, not by correcting his misidentification, but by behaving egotistically.⁸

6 Chesterton wrote an excellent description of Cervantes and his perception of his “unheroic hero,”⁹ a view of human beings which the ego tolerates all too frequently but which the spirit never countenances:

²And he sees across a weary land a straggling road in Spain,
Up which a lean and foolish knight forever rides in vain.¹⁰

insight into their preoccupations, fears, and defenses. The phrase “I recognized my authorship” refers to recognizing God as our Author.

6. T-3.VII.16:2, 5: “*The Word* is really a thought....The original name for ‘thought’ and ‘word’ was the same.”
7. Psalm 46:10 (KJV). In the above context, to “Be still, and know that *I am God*” is to acknowledge that *God* is our Author and we are not.
8. This paragraph refers, of course, to *Don Quixote* (1605 and 1615), by Miguel de Cervantes. Jesus says that the book’s real meaning is that Don Quixote feels unworthy because he identifies with his ego. He tries to solve this problem, however, not by dis-identifying with his ego, but by trying to *inflate* it, through “heroic” acts such as “tilting at windmills.” Don Quixote thus symbolizes the insanity of trying to overcome the ego’s unworthiness by puffing it up.
9. These two occurrences of “his” seem to refer to Cervantes.
10. From the poem “Lepanto,” by G. K. Chesterton. This 1911 poem is about the 1571 naval

- 7 Do not embark on foolish journeys, because they are indeed in vain. ²The ego may will them because the ego *is* both lean and foolish, but the spirit cannot embark on them because it is forever unwilling to depart from its foundation. ³The journey to the cross should be the last foolish journey for every mind.¹¹ ⁴Do not dwell upon it, but dismiss it as accomplished. ⁵If you can accept that as your own last foolish journey, you are free also to join my resurrection.
- 8 Human living has indeed been needlessly wasted in repetition compulsion.¹² ²It reenacts the separation, the loss of power, the foolish journey of the ego in its attempts at reparation, and finally the crucifixion of the body, or death. ³Repetition compulsions can be endless, unless they are given up by an act of will or, more properly, an active creation. ⁴Do not make the pathetic human error of “clinging to the old rugged cross.”¹³ ⁵The only message of the crucifixion is in respect to your ability to *overcome* the cross. ⁶Unless you do so, you are free to crucify yourself as often as you choose.

battle of Lepanto. Miguel de Cervantes fought in this battle and was always very proud of doing so, even though a gunshot wound rendered his left hand permanently useless. The poem ends on the implication that, in the aftermath of the battle, Cervantes conceived the character Don Quixote:

Cervantes on his galley sets the sword back in the sheath...
 And he sees across a weary land a straggling road in Spain,
 Up which a lean and foolish knight forever rides in vain,
 And he smiles, but not as Sultans smile, and settles back the blade...

11. The term “last foolish journey” suggests that the crucifixion on the outside was yet another repetition of the ego’s natural cycle, which ends in death (see next paragraph). Yet on the inside Jesus had left behind the ego, the very thing that generated those repetitions. So for him it was the *last* such repetition. And if we can view the crucifixion as he does, it can be the last one for us, too.
12. “Repetition compulsion” is a Freudian concept in which a person is drawn to repeat traumatic events, situations, relationships, or behaviors from earlier in life, especially childhood. This compulsion is believed to come from primordial, instinctual forces at the deepest levels of the self, which impel one to endlessly repeat certain damaging patterns. In the above passage, we feel the compulsion to repeat the trauma of the separation and its aftereffects, which culminate in death.
13. “The Old Rugged Cross” is a beloved Christian hymn, written in 1912 by George Bennard and performed by many of the biggest names in the twentieth-century recording industry. It begins with the words “On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross, the emblem of suffering and shame,” and its refrain ends with “I will cling to the old rugged cross, and exchange it some day for a crown.” Jesus implies this as an example of repetition compulsion.

¹But this was *not* the gospel I intended to offer you. ²We have another journey to undertake, and I hope that, if you will read these teachings carefully, they will help to prepare you to undertake it.¹⁴

II. The Devoted Teacher

We have spoken of many different human symptoms,¹⁵ and at this level there is almost endless variation. ²But there is only one cause for all of them. ³The authority problem, not money, is the real “root of all evil.”¹⁶ ⁴Money is but one of its many reflections, and is a reasonably representative example of the kind of thinking which stems from it. ⁵The idea of buying and selling implies precisely the kind of exchange that the spirit cannot understand at all, because its own supply is always abundant and all its demands are fully met.¹⁷

- 2 Every symptom which the ego has made involves a contradiction in terms. ²This is because the mind is split between the ego and the spirit, so that whatever the ego makes is incomplete and contradictory. ³Consider, for example, what a “speechless professor” means as a concept.¹⁸ ⁴It literally means a “nonprofessing professor” or a “nonspeaking speaker.” ⁵Untenable positions such as this are the result of the authority problem, which, because it accepts the one inconceivable thought as its premise, can only produce ideas which are inconceivable.

14. See Cameo 17: “Bill’s Class.”

15. These would include emotional symptoms, such as fear (see T-2.IX.4:1-8), and physical symptoms, such as sickness (see T-2.VII.4:3).

16. 1 Timothy 6:10 (KJV): “For the love of money is the root of all evil.”

17. This, of course, is a reference to the concept in economics of supply and demand, in which the price for selling something is a function of both how much demand there is (how much the product is desired by buyers) and how much supply there is (how much of the product the market can offer). Jesus’ point is that this entire system makes no sense to the spirit. Because the spirit has an ever-abundant supply and thus has no real demands (since they have all been “fully met”), it has no need to buy or sell.

18. This originally referred to Bill, who at the time was an Associate Professor of Medical Psychology. His fear of public speaking therefore made him a “speechless professor,” an oxymoron that results from combining ego (speechless) and spirit (professing). Needless to say, not everyone has Bill’s fear of speaking and teaching. For that reason, this section will not be entirely applicable to everyone.