

Session 4: The Faces of No-Self as Complete Freedom

The Doing aspect of Faces of Awe

Complete Freedom is the doing aspect of being Holy Spirit. The knowing aspect of *Complete Freedom* is **Primal Merging**. The being aspect of *Complete Freedom* is **Inherent Purity**. The Doing aspect of *Complete Freedom* is **Attuned Working**.

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. For example, 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 will 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 my actions and thereby 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.

Inherent Purity

Inherent Purity is the central aspect of the “No-Self” in its relations with action. *Inherent Purity* means the actions of the “No-Self” that originates in the clear space of *Freedom*. This aspect of the “No-Self” entails living *beyond good and evil*—beyond the stories of the superego that holds our oughts, duties, customs, and morals; beyond the approval of our parents, offspring, friends and other social peers; beyond all the libraries of ethical thought; beyond all the preferences of our own bodies, minds, and habits. *Inherent Purity* is the pure freedom to act out of the spacious emptiness of the “No-Self” with uncaused, unauthorized, unprecedented options of creative response.

This confident purity of action is an *audacious boldness*, a *Freedom* so primordially rooted in our deep being that it shocks our personality habits into a sideline share of our living. This *audacious boldness* uses our personality gifts when appropriate, but will also contradict all personality habits and values without qualms. All impulses to be righteous in terms of superego conditioning are bypassed; a new form of righteousness reigns: *Freedom* itself. That we spend most of our lives squeezing our inherent *Freedom* into some narrow box of morality or social acceptability does not contradict the fact that this deep *audacious boldness* is our true being. That we insist upon being guilty before our social norms rather than alive in an innocent liberty does not contradict the fact that living “*beyond good and evil*” characterizes the real “me.” In spite of the fact that our parents, our community, our friends, our enemies teach us good and evil, we are each an *audacious boldness* that uses these teachings or leaps beyond these teaching as we deem appropriate to the situation. Within this understanding of our true being, we can recognize that eating with Adam and Eve from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is a fall from authenticity, not a step upward.

Engaging our essential *Freedom* in temporal action is engaging our *Inherent Purity*. Engaging this *Freedom* is the liberation of the “True Me.” But because we cling so tightly to our moral certainties and ethical principles, *Freedom* may seem dreadful. Indeed, this dread of *Freedom* recurs whenever we wish to feel certain about a particular decision. In the real world all our choices are ambiguous. There are many ways to view each choice. There are many values to consider, and some of them will have to be negated in each specific choice. The boldness of such living is truly audacious. Nevertheless, fear of

this *Freedom* can turn to glory as we realize that *Freedom* is our *Inherent Purity*, our *Righteousness*, our *Authenticity*, our true “me,” our “No-Self” of profound humanness.

This awesome initiative of *Inherent Purity* 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 that *Inherent Purity* is a permanent *quality* of the “No-Self” that we never need to leave.

Attuned Working

When our enigmatic attentionality pays attention to the “No-Self” in its relation to the future, we also discover something about the Overall Reality in which the “No-Self” is embedded. Reality is not a fixed fate, automatically working itself out like a piece of recorded music. Rather, Reality is an “open-to-options” fluidity that can turn out in a large number of different ways, many of which can seem impossible or miraculous to our self-contained personality and ego establishment. It is in this sense that “*Attuned Working*” means living *beyond fate*. It means giving up all fatalism. This does not mean that we create our own reality, as so many false teachers claim. We do indeed create the worlds that our minds believe to be true, but these creations are all human made and therefore illusory in some or all of their components. The effects of these self-created mind-worlds on the actual course of history are unpredictable and typically tragic in some way or another. These self-created mind-worlds always involve some sort of neglect of Reality and thereby yield disappointments so extreme that despair eventually overwhelms the so-called “reality creator.” So I am calling this aspect of the “No-Self” not “creating reality” but “*Attuned Working*.” The Jesus in John

’s Gospel says, “My Father is working still, and I am working.”¹ That is *Attuned Working*—working in the context of “what-is-doing” in the overall course of things. *Attuned Working* pays attention to what is going on, and then is obedient to that “working,” not in some robotic fashion, but as a free being attuned to the real options. Such living can be very powerful; our tiny little actions can instigate an echo from the whole of Reality.

When out of his deep awareness and honesty, Martin Luther nailed some discussion topics on a cathedral door, he could not have imagined the echo Reality would give to his action. It was as if the whole of European history turned on the pivot of this man’s persistent working. Some of Luther’s responses may not have been well tuned, but he nevertheless rang a bell of *Freedom* that enabled nobles and peasants to break with the stodgy traditions and the oppressive familiarities of that time and place. Many of the consequences of Luther’s actions were unintended and some may be judged tragic. Nevertheless, his attunement to what was so in his time joined with the existing trends and potentials, creating an avalanche of historical change. Luther’s *Attuned Working*, combined with the *Attuned Working* of others, set in motion a new era of human living that was less estranged from the deep Truth of our human existing.

¹ John 5:17 Revised Standard Version

In the lives of most of us, *Attuned Working* may not be Luther-level dramatic, but each of us has in our essential being this same potential for *Attuned Working* within the times of our lives. We are manifesting *Attuned Working* when we act out of our sense of how the cultural, political, and economic liberation of women is relevant for all of us in today's world. We are manifesting *Attuned Working* when we act out of our sense of the relevance for all of us of the care of the Earth—its climate, its soils, its water ways, its diversity of species, and so forth. Our *Freedom* can manifest as *Attuned Working*, as creative living within the actual challenges of our times. Flight from these challenges is not *Freedom*; it is cowardly compulsion, or greedy obsession, or some other cop-out of estrangement from our real lives.

We may also call this aspect of our essential “No-Self” “*Obedient Implementation*,” for it involves the application of our intentional power to the historical circumstances within which our intentional power is to be manifest. By “*Implementation*,” I am talking about getting things done—a quiet adding of something useful or perhaps joining a march of protest on some sick Jerusalem that may result in a noticeable uproar. Such placements of our bodies may not result in torture or death, but scorn of some sort can be expected as part of the overall response to any persistent action that is attuned to the actual course of Reality. Illusions are so firmly established in the lives of the multitudes, and especially the lives of most current leaders, that we can expect scorn and surprisingly angry persecution from some members of the well-established “*Liars Kingdom*.”

Attuned Working 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 realize *Attuned Working* as a permanent *quality* of the “No-Self” that we never need to leave.

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