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Evolution from Primitive Ego to Enlightened Consciousness

A SUMMARY OF THE BELIEFS, BEHAVIORS & MANIFESTATIONS OF THE PRIMITIVE EGO

1) THE PRIMITIVE EGO USES BLACK AND WHITE THINKING.

- To keep the world safe and manageable, the primitive ego **splits the world into right and wrong and believes that it is right and it alone possesses “the truth” on all matters.**
- The only outcome possible from this primitive way of thinking is the creation of **categories of “otherness” and conflict.**
- **Generosity** is possible but only when it is in the interest of the primitive ego achieving more power and control.
- **Sustained intimacy and vulnerability** are not possible for the primitive ego.
- The primitive ego is comfortable only when others are in total agreement with its beliefs and opinions.
- Criticism is not allowed and **groupthink is mandatory.**
- Anyone who disagrees with a primitive ego is immediately labeled as **them, enemy, wrong, perverted, or evil.**
- The primitive ego often hides its aggression, violence, and judgment under a veneer of moral righteousness.
- Is unable to perceive complexities, accept diversity, deal with ambiguity, or embrace inclusiveness. The primitive sees the world in **either/or** terms.
- The primitive ego tends to think in black and white, **always / never** terms that leads to **extreme over generalizations or labeling** of both self and others.
- It's **primary goal** is to be **right.**
- Driven to be “right” rather than “wrong”, **the primitive ego tends to strive for perfection.** This belief leads to **exhaustion, depression, despair, self-criticism, and hopelessness.** Since **perfection and failure are mental illusions** and not real, the primitive ego tends to have **low self-esteem.**
- The Primitive Ego is always a victim.

2) THE GOAL OF THE PRIMITIVE EGO IS SURVIVAL: A SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST THINKING PROCESS

- The primary focus of the primitive ego is **safety and survival**, not seeking **truth**, not seeking **peace**, not seeking **cooperation**, not seeking **compassion.**
- The primary thinking process of the primitive thinking process is known as **vertical power or survival of the fittest** (an early evolutionary imperative for the human species).
- **The Power and control** that comes with vertical power thinking are the primitive ego's primary goal.
- When overwhelmed, the primitive ego will often run away and hide in a safe place, such as a bedroom or basement. The way to run away psychologically is by disassociation, avoidance, repression, and denial.



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3) THE PRIMITIVE EGO IS UNABLE TO OWN ITS OWN FEELINGS

- **The primitive ego is unable to own its own feelings.**
- The primitive ego believes that all **happiness and unhappiness comes from the world.**
- This belief leads to a) **projection** and **blaming others for whatever it's feeling, the desire for revenge, and the inability to forgive.**
- The primitive ego uses **thoughts to create feelings and emotions**
- The primitive ego has **very little ability to disconnect feelings from thoughts** and very little ability to perceive the relativity of one's feelings and beliefs.
- The primitive ego uses **frozen, stuck, distorted thoughts and beliefs from childhood** to create its feeling responses to the environment.
- **Assumptions, jumping to conclusions, and mind reading** are three primary generators of primitive ego feelings.
- **All feelings are assumed to be factual reality.** "I feel, therefore it's true."
- **All conflict is personalized.** Anyone who disagrees with the primitive ego is labeled as stupid, ignorant, etc. and all difference of opinion is considered a personal attack.

4) THE PRIMITIVE EGO IS THE NARCISSISTIC CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE.

- The primitive ego believes that it is the center of the universe and it **takes everything personally.**
- This belief leads to high levels of **defensive reactivity.**
- This belief results in very **low empathy and compassion for others.** In psychological language this is known as **narcissism.**
- The primitive ego is **defensively reactive to criticism** or any perceived threat to its many **narcissistic beliefs, opinions, or assumptions.**
- **The primitive ego wants what it wants.....now!**
- The primitive ego is very **impatient.** It gets **angry** when its narcissistic needs and wants are not immediately satisfied. It has virtually no ability to see the **long range picture, develop long range goals, or delay gratification.**
- **The primitive ego is narcissistically always right,** therefore it is emotionally impulsive and thinks concretely. Responses tend to be **simple, concrete, unconscious emotional knee jerk responses to outside stimuli.**
- The narcissism of the primitive ego has virtually **no ability to modulate a response** by employing an **observing ego** or manifesting Piaget's formal operational stage ability to think abstractly or reason contrary to fact e.g. "What would happen if snow were black."
- **Uses magical thinking and grandiosity.** Magical thinking often drives the narcissism of the primitive ego. "I should get what I want, because I want it." or "If others really loved me, they would know what I want and need without my having to ask".



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- The primitive ego is very **concerned with what others think about it.**
- The primitive ego is very concerned with the greedy **acquisition of money, prestige, and worldly possessions.** In Buddhist terms this is called **attachment.**
- The pathological narcissism of the primitive ego leads **to cut off and poor differentiation.** The is very **little ability to separate me from not me.**
- The primitive ego has very **little ability to tolerate or affirm the autonomy of another person and still remain a differentiated self.**
- The primitive ego does **not understand** or have the ability to for **reciprocity, empathy, or mutuality** (the ability to actively listen and appropriately respond to the cognitive and affective world of another and assume that others have the same rights to get their needs met as we do).
- The narcissism of the primitive ego leads to strong feelings of entitlement and the need to always be in the spot light getting the attention of others.
- The narcissism of the primitive ego does not allow for **sustained intimacy or mutuality** with others ie. the **differentiation of self-in-relationships.**
- The “reasonable coherent wholeness” assumed by other developmental theorists is not sustainable by the primitive ego when under stress.

5) THE PRIMITIVE EGO OF THE INNER-CHILD IS STUCK IN THE PAST AND UNABLE TO EMBRACE CHANGE.

- Since the primitive ego is about **eight years old** and is the **operating system of the unconscious** inner-child, it sees the world through the eyes of the child it once was and **passionately resists change** so as to keep things **safe and protect it’s own power, control, possessions, beliefs, and self-identity.**
- The primary tools to accomplish these goals are called **bent nickel beliefs** and **survival skills.**
- Change is experienced as a form of death to the primitive ego. Homeostasis is safety.

6) THE PRIMITIVE EGO BELIEVES ITS “SELF” TO BE A TOTALLY SEPARATE AND UNIQUE BEING.

- The primitive ego (“me”) insists that it is a separate being. One object out of a universe filled with object. This belief makes **cooperation and team work** virtually impossible for the primitive ego to either understand or achieve.
- The primitive ego does not experience itself as a **systemic part of a living, conscious universe.**
- This leads to **loneliness, and a deep sense of disconnection** from the world and others.



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- The primitive ego can only think alone; it is not capable of the creative process of collective thought.

7) THE PRIMITIVE EGO IS ONLY CAPABLE OF A CONDITIONAL LOVE THAT ALWAYS LOVES BASED ON A “BECAUSE”.

- The primitive ego is **unable to love unconditionally**. It always loves conditionally based on a “because” or internal belief.
- The primitive ego **can love only if it is not threatened by the loss of items 1-6 above**.
- When items 1-6 above are threatened or challenged, the primitive ego becomes defensive and aggressive; emotionally **angry, judgmental, critical, blaming, or shaming**.

8) THE PRIMITIVE EGO IS TAUGHT TO BE RESPECTFUL, SUBMISSIVE, AND OBEDIENT TO AUTHORITY.

- A child is trained to be obedient during the culturalization process which teaches children that they are the **property of their parents**. When they are “**bad**” and **disobey the rules** of the powerful parents, they **expect to be punished**. Most children do not understand the concept that all choices will result in an outcome or consequence that is only helpful or unhelpful. A common survival skill of the primitive ego is oppositional behavior.

SUMMARY:

The primitive ego can appear to have the same abilities and consciousness as the adult “observing ego”, but it is unable to sustain the matured ego responses and abilities of the observing ego when it is emotionally challenged. Because of this, very few people manifest the ability to sustain Piaget’s formal operational stage of cognitive development under emotional stress. The world has very few enlightened spiritual mystics and virtually no enlightened politicians.

The evolution of human consciousness from the primitive ego of early childhood to higher levels of an enlightened adult consciousness is the most imperative human challenge of the 21st century.

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The Primitive Ego Theory of Human Development© 2004



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APPENDIX A

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