

A bird's eye view of human development from birth to Enlightenment, this book addresses what can go wrong at each stage. Simply organized as a series of triangulated settings that we must transform (Rescuer-Victim-Abuser, for example), the author enables anyone on a recovery or spiritual growth path to identify where he is and what he needs to do next. With over 25 years experience, the author makes the Path easy and accessible.

**Homo Sapiens: an owner's manual**

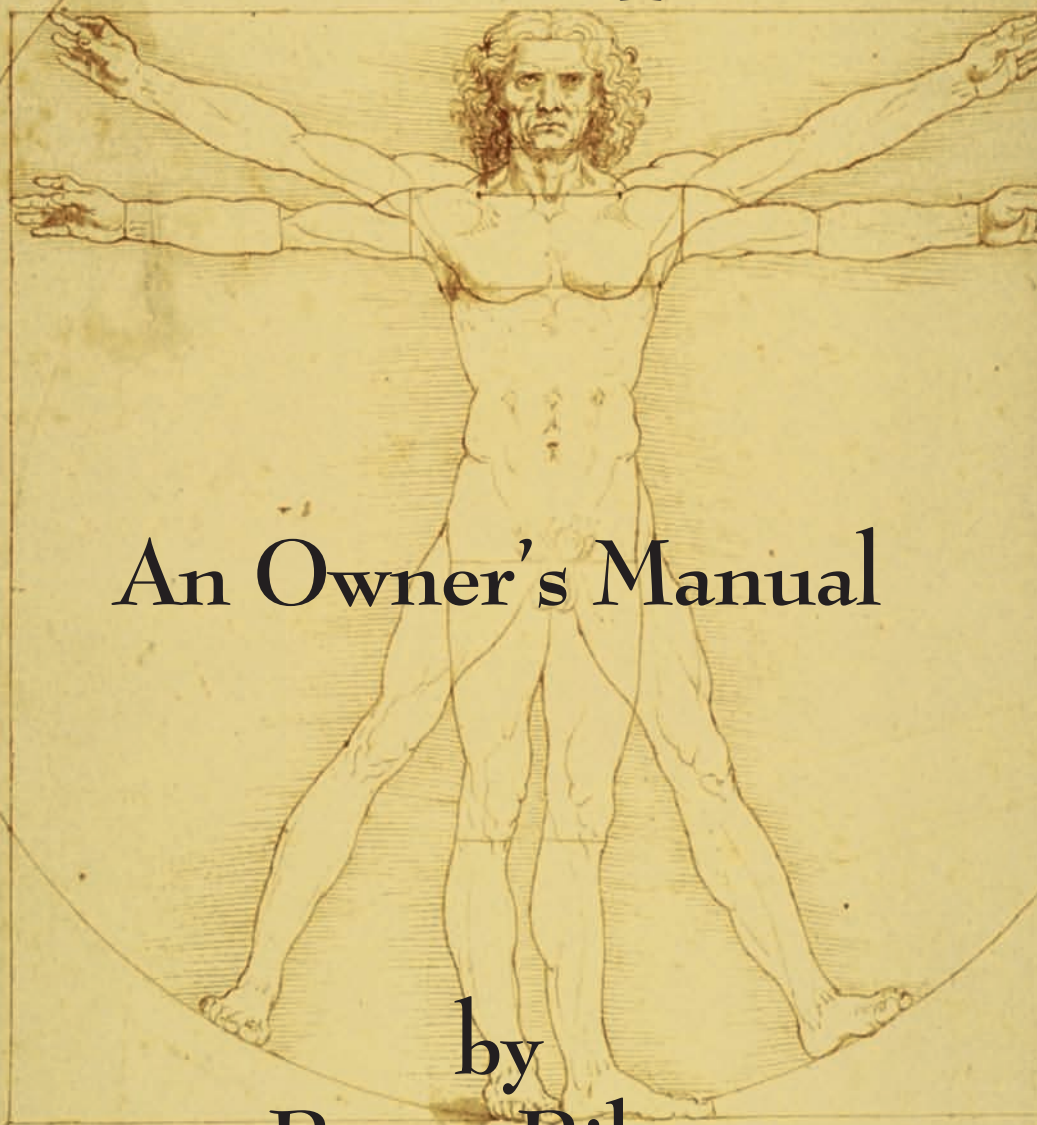
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# Homo Sapiens

## An Owner's Manual

by  
Bruce Bibee



Homo Sapiens: An Owner's Manual – Fourth Edition

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## Chapter 1: Our First Triangulated Setting

*We are born into the basic creative triangle of mother-father-child. Until this original triangulated setting is transformed, we tend to recreate this triangle in all our relationships.*

It is not rocket science to raise a child. In fact, we're a lot like potted plants in that regard. Put a plant in the proper soil, care for it, make sure it has adequate water and light, and it will grow into the fullness of whatever kind of plant it is. So will we. When parents make sure a child's external (food, water, clothing, shelter) needs are met, along with the internal (attention, affection, belongingness) needs are met, then the parents have role-modeled a successful life-plan the child will take into adulthood. Pretty simple stuff actually.

For the more intellectually curious, healthy development is the focus of Humanistic Psychology and various researchers have tracked different lines of development (needs hierarchy - Maslow; cognitive development - Piaget; moral development - Kohlberg; psycho-social - Erikson; etc.). These lines of development predict maturation much like our plants above. Give each its optimum environment and it grows.

And that's the catch. Most of us grew up in some kind of toxic environment - what we've come to call 'dysfunctional.' We don't know what a healthy growth environment looks like; yet without one we can't grow.

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Therefore, as a counselor, most of my time is spent guiding folks from where they are stuck in some toxic cul-de-sac back to the path of growth. Once on this path, they must also learn how to stay on the path. This book was the result of that project, and hence its title. You need an owner's manual to understand the system you're working with, or when things go wrong.

The structure of this book is to define human development in terms of a series of triangulated settings. We'll start with a look at triangles themselves. Triangles are one of the most stable geometric configurations there is. Once created, they are hard to break down. Once we have entered a triangulated setting (which is what birth did for us), it is virtually impossible to escape. It is, however, fairly simple to transform them.

Triangles, it should also be noted, do not appear in nature. Cones, crystals, and triangle look-alikes do, but triangles do not. They are wholly a human devise. As a human devise, they also have kinship with the magic number 3. In Eastern thought, the number 1 signifies or symbolizes the oneness and unity of all creation; the number 2 signifies the binary systems that enable us to identify the world – right/wrong, up/down, left/right, etc.; and the number 3 represents creation and conflict.

Staying with Eastern thought, we find that all creation is in a state of constant conflict, not only with itself (all things are always changing), but also with the concept of oneness. Things in the created universe are “other than” (in conflict with) the basic oneness of all that is.

These conflict/creation tensions underpin the Eastern belief that human life is a constant struggle wherein attachments bring suffering. The struggle of life, however, is the legitimate work of the ego: first, to identify itself in relation to its surroundings; second, to develop itself to its full potential; and thirdly, to

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discover its semi-autonomous nature and align itself with the Tao. (In Eastern thought, God is not a person, but a Principle.) The hard-won ability to let go of attachments mark the way to Enlightenment; that is, our evolution is directly related to our ability to let go of attachments.

Evolution, in this context, lies in opposition to involution. We must first involve ourselves in the process of living in a body before we evolve back to spirit. The Law of Involution requires that we form attachments and struggle to attain our goals. Whereas, the Law of Evolution requires that we redefine our goals and let go of attachments.

The triangles presented here offer a way of conceptualizing this somewhat complicated human journey. We will examine how we become involved in life, whether what our parents taught us prepared us to deal with life; then what awakened us to the return journey back to the Source replete with the rigors of the path of evolution. As always, however, the "map is not the territory."

Even more important, I think, is the need to keep conceptualizations in perspective. I have found that if my mind is put to rest by logic, then I can let go and let God. I have also found that if I keep a full backpack, rifle with ammunition, and about a week's worth of freeze-dried food in my closet, then I don't have survival fears. Little props that keep the monsters at bay, and I can do quality recovery.

Next, I've worked as a counselor for a long time and have had to use neutral language when I've spoken about spirituality. As a result, I bounce around from one spiritual tradition to the next. If it helps, the reader may substitute his or her preferred way of conceptualizing It.

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Finally, I think there is some kind of mirroring going on with triangles. The Holy Trinity is a triangle, and that's the image we're made in. I think that we must resolve the internal triangles in order to claim any kind of kinship to All That Is. And, All That Is manifests Itself as a Trinity to give us the clue about what we need to do.

### **The First Triangle:**

The first triangle we are confronted with is the triangle of mother, father, and child. It is fairly well known that until this original setting is transformed, all other triangulated interactions will tend to mimic this triangle. We will play out incomplete parent/child transactions with others. We will play out loyalty patterns by continuing to treat ourselves the way our parents treated us.

This gets started from the fact that we are all born dependent. Our dependency creates a ground state all humans share. We all need a basic environment in order to grow into adults. This environment or ground state includes: Physical support, validation, confirmation of identity, and permission.

### **The Ground State:**

1. Physical support is just that – food, water, shelter and clothing. It includes physical attention and affection, as these are also needs of the child.
2. Validation has to do with the thoughts and feelings the child must learn to work with to solve the human condition. Feelings tell a child how she is responding to the outer and inner environments. And it is the task of the parent to help a child identify what these feeling states are all about. To some degree it is like teaching a child colors – this is blue (what you're feeling is sad). With labels for feeling states, the child can begin



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to solve the problems associated with what is felt. In other words, the child can begin to learn what needs and wants are being identified by what feelings. (If I'm scared, then I need safety.)

The thought process, after it picks up the feeling and decodes it, can solve the problem. Again, the parent assists the child in solving problems, correcting thinking errors (e.g., "you can't kill your brother, but you can let him know that your feelings are hurt").

What ultimately gets validated through this process is both the intellectual self and the emotional self.

The intellectual self can be described as the problem-solving faculty. This includes sequential, verbal thought processes as well as visual, spontaneous, intuitive processes. The emotional self can be described as the connection between the totality of who we are (e.g., our history + our genetics) and the internal as well as external environments.

In more detail, then, the emotional self is comprised of different layers. The primal layer, or ground of being, for the emotional self is the feeling of being alive. When all emotional content releases, this feeling remains. It can be strong or weak, but it is *the* basic emotional state. In 12-Step programs, being in this state is known as serenity.

In levels of complexity, then, the next layer is sensation: hunger, cold, thirst, bodily pain, etc. This layer gives information about how things are going with the body.

The next level is that of the felt-sense. A felt-sense (described in some detail by Gendlin, *Focusing*) is an amorphous feeling that tends to defy description. It's a feeling that happens to the

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whole body, all at once, then begins to shift and change in a kaleidoscopic fashion when it is described.

The next level is primary feelings. These are feeling states that can be described: Sad, confused, happy, scared, lonely, embarrassed, guilty, etc. The information secured from these feelings is much more solid than the information secured from felt-senses.

The final level is emotion. In this hierarchy, emotions are defined as composite or secondary feelings. Anger, frustration, and jealousy would be examples.

In a healthy family system, the child is led to understand all of these states, to be comfortable with all these internal sources of information. The child learns there is no such thing as good or bad feelings; rather, all feelings are merely information about how the child is responding to certain stimuli, and, in this sense, all feelings are “good.”

In dysfunctional family systems, however, the child learns certain feelings are not OK. Anger at the alcoholic parent will not be tolerated. Sadness or disappointment for being constantly let down is cajoled out of existence (“let me see that happy face... there's a good girl”). The child learns to be ashamed of certain feelings (shame being the feeling that says ‘I’m not OK’). Shame sets into motion defensive patterns to deal with the not-OK feelings – repression, acting out, etc.

E-motion: the energy of motivation. Our feelings energize us to take some kind of action. Anger fills us with energy to deal with a threat. Loneliness fills us with the energy to seek companionship. When we have directed our energy effectively (e.g., satisfied the need identified by the feeling), the feeling changes. When we missed the mark, the feeling persists, usually

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in some mitigated form so that we can ascertain if we are on the right track or not.

This is where the thought process comes into the picture. It is charged with solving the problems raised by the emotional self. The two ways the thought process works are: 1) linear, logical, scientific thinking, and 2) holistic, intuitive, paradoxical thinking. The first is associated with the left side of the brain, and the other is associated with the right side of the brain. Ideally, these work in tandem, but often they do not. Typically, we are socialized to excel in one type of thinking to the detriment of the other. Men are usually socialized to be linear; women are usually socialized to be intuitive.

Thinking processes define what goals are being targeted. For the scientific thinker, the goal is to get enough information about the problem so that it can be: a) identified; b) brainstormed; c) a solution planned; d) a time-frame developed for experimenting with the plan; and e) a way to fine-tune the plan.

For the holistic thinker, the goal is to fully immerse oneself in the problem and explore the process involved in the creation of the problem. In doing so, the solution comes from an intuitive hit at a process level. Problems get solved as a function of cleaning up process, rather than scientific problem solving.

Linear thinking leads to the achieving of some goal; whereas, holistic thinking leads to achieving clean process. Both are needed to fully accomplish the task of living life. Our culture, however, doesn't prepare us to think ambidextrously. As a consequence, one form of thinking is preferred over the other. During this Patriarchal Age, the linear system is reigning supreme, much to the detriment of both men and women.

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What is somewhat humorous about this situation, though, is the experience of the leading edge hard sciences. Science has essentially proved mysticism. The universe of sub-atomic physics seems to be a hologram – interpenetrating vertical and horizontal levels of reality – a paradox that says: “All in one; one in all.”

We have pushed science to the edge of reality itself, and we have found nothing and everything. So, the physicists have shifted to right-brain thinking to further understand the nature of reality.

While the joining of right and left-brain thinking is a feature of the paradigm shift in physics, the clash between these two modes of thinking continues to mark the rest of society.

For example, one of the features of domestic violence is the conflict between these two modes of thinking. Rarely have I seen domestic violence in a family where both partners problem-solved in the same way. Usually, there are opposite problem-solving strategies. One of the partners likes to get in there, tear the problem apart, figure out what’s wrong, and fix it. The other person wants to skirt the edges of the problem, view it from all sides, sleep on it, and then tentatively begin to make incremental changes. Each person, then, experiences the other as “not caring about the problem.” This escalates the problem even further, perhaps to the point of physical abuse. In recovery, each must learn to respect the opposite problem-solving strategy, which eventually triggers into existence his or her own ability to do the opposite kind of thinking.

Parents, and school systems for that matter, need to balance problem-solving curricula between right and left-brain thinking. Both are necessary, and each is the optimum for different kinds of problems.

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So, with parents validating emotions and problem-solving strategies, the child comes to her full humanity. Empowered by knowing what her feelings are saying, and by knowing how to solve problems, the child reaches adulthood prepared to achieve her full potential and accomplish her Higher Purpose. For the many children not raised in homes where this validation was present, much transformational “recovery” work is needed to become fully functional adults.

3. Identity is the next facet of personality that parents impact. Initially the child’s identity comes from the roles the child ends up playing. The survival roles discussed below fit into this category. In the healthy family system, though, the parent is alert for the potentials and talents as they begin to bud in the child. When the parent discovers an interest in, say, music, then the parent encourages the child to pursue music lessons. When the child develops some mastery with a musical instrument, he can then identify himself as a “guitar player.”

When parents encourage their children to manifest their potential, children develop a positive self-image – an identity. And it is completely appropriate for the human to define who he is by what he does, by the roles that he plays, until the mid-30’s. At that time, defining himself by what he does falls apart, and he must go inward to discover his True Self.

Until then, though, and especially in childhood, the roles we play define who we are. The better those roles represent our true potential and talents, the more congruency there will be for the self-image that develops.

4. Permission is the final parental dynamic. By giving or not giving the child permission, the parent teaches self-responsibility. For example, the child comes to the parent and says, “Can I climb that tree?” The parent includes the child in

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the permission-giving process, “Well, I don’t know. It looks like that second limb up there is a bit of a reach for a little guy like you.” The child answers, “I’ll be careful with that one.” And the parent concedes, “O.K., but watch it up there.”

Permission, freedom, and responsibility all blend together in this aspect of parenting. For those who grow up in dysfunctional families, there is a lot of damage stemming from this parenting task. For the most part, Children of Alcoholics (CoA’s) end up hearing, “No!” Or they end up not hearing anything at all. They are not led step by step through broadening levels of self-responsibility by the parents. They are pretty much on their own.

The problem all parents face is the problem of correctly seeing within the child his or her potentials, then encouraging the child to fulfill his or her own destiny. If one parent is an alcoholic/addict, then the child is subverted into the denial system and not allowed to become himself. Even if the parents are “good” parents, they probably didn’t get the kind of unselfish, unconditional support that is actually required, so they were never trained in how to provide it for their children.

As a result, children generally have to give up more or less of their integrity, authenticity, and basic truth just to survive. And it is the parents who demand they do so (just as it was demanded of them when they were children).

### **Belongingness Needs**

Around age 4 or so, a child will feel the urge to find a way to fit into the family system. In other words, her belongingness needs emerge. By about age 6 or so, these needs have to be met.

Therefore, a child’s first task in the family is to establish some kind of role, some way to relate to others in the family. In a

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healthy family system, that role is multidimensional, but in a dysfunctional system, the child must develop a one-dimensional role that serves the interests of the family rather than the child. In this sense, these “roles” aren’t really statements of identity, but rather defensive patterns the child ends up identifying with. This is an important point that must be remembered in recovery – we are not our patterns.

The first child has some latitude, and ends up choosing a role that suits him. The second child finds she cannot compete with the older child for whatever role the older child has, so the second child settles for a different role, and so on down the line. The typical roles available are: Family Hero, Scapegoat, Lost Child, Mascot, Placator, and Chameleon. It should be noted these roles also show up in a healthy family, but they are available to each child. In other words, a child is allowed to be the Hero, to do wrong and be behind the eight ball, to go isolate in his room for a while, to make the family laugh, or to be the peacemaker with other family members.

In the dysfunctional system, the children are stuck with one role at a time. They are always the good guy, or the bad guy, or the socially isolated one, etc. If any of them tries to change roles, someone else has to accept the vacated role.

As a result of the children being forced into narrow slots, two things happen: 1) the family stays together; 2) the child loses his integrity. The children, in other words, are sacrificed for the family.

The obvious question at this point is: What makes up a healthy family? My answer is: The family that is child-centered is a healthy one. If there is any focus in the family more important than the well being of the children, then the family is unhealthy to that degree. Simply said, the competing focus (be it alcohol,

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drugs, work, religion, or whatever) is the reason the children need to be simplified into one-dimensional roles. The family is too busy with the primary focus to allow the complexity of a child in growth. A multidimensional child takes a lot of time; whereas, a one-dimensional child does not. (Of course, if the child is the only focus, that's out-of-whack, too, and slams the kid into Family Hero role.)

Another way of looking at this is to compare the internal landscapes of the healthy child with the ones from a dysfunctional family. The healthy child is raised to know what goes on inside. He can accurately identify emotions, monitor the internal dialogue that kicks in when emotions are triggered, and he can communicate what he has observed within himself. Additionally, he can actively listen to an adult mentor without his defenses going wild.

Children from dysfunctional systems are afraid to look inside, and that is what enables the one-dimensional role to exist. I might add that 'dysfunctional' is now a generic term that applies to all toxic family systems (even though we first discovered it in alcoholic families.) In these systems, the children's behavior soon looks like a broken record, because they are not monitoring their inner landscape and making changes and adjustments. Rather, they are quickly becoming a stimulus-response mechanism that merely reacts to surroundings. This occurs differently for each role.

### **Family Hero**

For the Family Hero, there is a program of constantly being the best at everything – school, sports, the right friends and contacts, etc. If something comes up, the Hero either knows how to deal with it, or knows who can deal with it. Which, of course, means the Hero can never allow himself to be one-



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upped; nor can he allow anyone to “make him wrong.” The twin fears of being one-upped or made wrong drive the Hero to over-achievement at each and everything attempted. The expectation of the Hero is that if he is just good enough, then the parents will be OK. If they are OK, then the Hero can go back to being a kid, and the parents will go back to doing their job.

The logic the child uses to arrive at this conclusion is usually ascribed to the self-centeredness of children. I’m sure that has something to do with it, but I think there is a deeper motivation going on. The child may also be making a faulty “if this...then that” conclusion. The child knows it is the job of parents to confirm identity, and it is the job of children to discover their identity through the agency of the parents.

When this is not occurring, the child may be making a reverse connection – “if I confirm my parents’ identity, then they’ll be able to do it for me.” The children, then, conform to every parental wish, make massive behavioral changes, act in accordance with what their parents expect of them (both good and bad), all in the hopes of healing the parents’ identity so that the parents can do their job.

The emotional cost for doing this is enormous. The Hero suffers, in addition to fear, from feelings of inadequacy (nothing is ever enough), confusion (if I ever stop running around, maybe I’ll figure out who I am), and anger (similar to that experienced by Sisyphus as he pushed his stone up the same mountain forever in Hades). Notwithstanding all this negative emotion (which is supposed to warn us something is wrong), the Hero continues to drive himself. The desperate need for support, validation and identity require that something be done; the most reasonable action is the invalid belief that if the parents can be fixed, then they will take care of the children.

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Since all the internal checks and balances are run over in pursuit of this goal, he begins to lose faith in himself, he stops trusting in his ability to grow and become, and he feels a deep sense of abandonment. To make sense of that, he assumes (again, incorrectly) there must be something wrong with him. Which serves to drive him even more strongly to over-achieve, but now for a dual purpose: 1) to fix the family; and 2) to prove he is worthwhile.

Neither of which can be allowed to occur. If the family gets fixed, then mom and dad are out of a job (codependency), and if he proves he's worthwhile, then he has to admit his parents are screwed up. Survival demands he doesn't reach that conclusion.

But what if he did? Can you imagine a ten-year-old boy coming home from his paper route and walking into the house and confronting his father: "Hey, you drunken slob, why don't you get your act together so you can parent me in the way that I deserve!" A kid like that wouldn't last long.

Back to the point, here, the Family Hero. This is the kid that has visible success; he does what is right (i.e., what is expected); and the family now has something to be proud of (which serves to hold it together). The Hero learns his self-worth is tied up with making others proud of him.

In a perverted sort of way, this mimics the normal. As a parent, I confirm the identity of my children, and I try to hook them up with elements in them that provide a sense of self-worth. I, ultimately, become proud of their ability to be proud of themselves. The dysfunctional system does not allow self-validation and punishes it when it occurs. The dysfunctional system claims the absolute right of validation, which sets all the children up for a lifetime of seeking validation outside themselves.

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Since that validation is never truly forthcoming, it also sets the children up to never be in completion about anything. Nothing is ever over. If any infraction, character defect, or mistake was ever resolved and let drop, then that would set the stage for the child actually completing his childhood – and leaving home, leaving the controlled environment, leaving (which means threatening) the denial system. “Why would you want to leave us? Is there something wrong with us?” are the typical questions that face someone about to leave a dysfunctional system. And they are questions that are entirely beside the point: “I want to leave because I have somewhere else to go. My choosing to leave is not an indictment of you; in fact, it has nothing at all to do with you.”

The Family Hero is reinforced by society. Schools put them in accelerated tracks; businesses promote them; female Heroes take on the role of Supermom; etc. The Family Hero's form of enforced prostitution is doubly hard because of society's affirmation of it. Luckily, when they get into recovery, they have the discipline and staying power to succeed at recovery.

I was doing an ACoA workshop a while back, and I thought it would be a good idea to have all the different roles get into their own group. So, I had the Heroes in one corner of the room; Scapegoats go to another corner; and so on. Of the twenty people in the room, all but two were Family Heroes. We had a good laugh over that.

The Family Hero resembles a paper mache statue of a Hero. On the inside there is nothing but the vicarious dreams of the family. On the outside is this over-achieving, driven kid. The family lives through him, and derives its sense of accomplishment from the Hero's accomplishments. As a result of this parasitic relationship, the Hero does not appreciate those accomplishments, since they were done for others. He sees no

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reason for rejoicing when a goal is achieved (although, not to rejoice would upset the family, so he pretends).

At some point, then, the Hero may rebel. When that occurs, there appear to be only three choices for the Hero to make: 1) become a Scapegoat; 2) do alcohol/drugs; 3) leave home. Eventually, they make some kind of choice. Some stay with over-achieving and become workaholics, or get involved with other addictions; some let go of over-achieving and hit the road (during the Sixties I found myself hitch-hiking with PhD's like this); some begin a new anti-establishment compulsion and assume the Scapegoat role. There are lot of permutations and combinations here.

The unique quality of the Family Hero, I feel, remains with society's treatment of them. Parents encourage their other children to be like the Hero; employers keep trying to find psychological tests to determine who are the Heroes; the government is exhorting education to produce more Heroes; and on and on. The problem is that this role is DYSFUNCTIONAL. People who are in this mode are cut off from their authenticity; they are not acting in accordance with their own higher purpose. And as a result, they will self-destruct sooner or later. Family Heroes are bad risks.

### **Scapegoat**

The Scapegoat role is a role born, primarily, from a rival child's failure to adequately compete with the Family Hero.

Competition (or sibling rivalry) hasn't been addressed in the manner I think it should. Since competition sets up a win/lose game, why would any sane parent allow a win/lose game to get set up within the family? Losing makes no one stronger, nor does it build character, nor does it encourage participation in the family process. Winning does make people stronger, it does

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build character, and it creates enthusiasm for the game. So why not set up win/win games? Why not set up cooperation rather than competition?

Not surprising, then, in the healthy family cooperation is fostered and competition is downplayed. In the dysfunctional system, the reverse is true.

Each child in the dysfunctional family must compete for a role, and once secured, it's gripped fervently. The Scapegoat, once he gives up trying to be a Hero, finds out he can get needs met by acting out. So he does. Parents help the apprentice Scapegoat as well. They will say things like: "Why can't you be like your older brother/sister?" And if the answer is: "Because I'm not my older brother/sister," then they get in trouble for sassing the parent.

As a result, the Scapegoat becomes hostile, is defiant rather than open to problem solving, and is angry all the time. Scapegoats seem to go out of their way to make problems from everyday events. They tend to see themselves as victims of any circumstance, of any infraction of common courtesy (even though, they don't adhere to those codes themselves, they do expect others to). In short, they are raw with loneliness, hurt, guilt, and rejection. And they turn all that emotion into anger and acting out behavior.

This serves to take the heat off the alcoholic, who can now sit in the corner and get drunk in peace as the family berates the Scapegoat. As such, this is the primary contribution the Scapegoat offers the family system. He takes the heat off the addict.

Some variations on the Scapegoat theme include the switch from Family Hero to Scapegoat. Oftentimes the Family Hero will tire of the pressure to always be the best, and will opt out of

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something – say, sports. The parents are disappointed by this and confront the Hero. He tells them his Heroing days are limited, which enrages the parents. And the Hero becomes a Scapegoat as a result.

Another variation occurs when the parents are contemplating a divorce or separation. The Scapegoat can actually keep the family together by becoming more of a problem than the marital problem. He can do this through acting out, getting a terminal illness, becoming schizophrenic, having an accident, getting raped, or a variety of other scenarios.

Scapegoats are usually the first to come into contact with the system – school, police, juvenile justice, etc. As a result, the Scapegoat is often the first to get help, and he is often in recovery long before any one else in the family system. (Recovered Scapegoats make good counselors.)

The Scapegoat role is useful to the family in that the Scapegoat takes the heat off the alcoholic, but this role also brings society's attention to the family system. The family will try to convince the authorities this is just a rotten kid; after all, look at the Hero, the Mascot, the Lost Child, the co-alcoholic, and the alcoholic – "We're all members of the community in good standing." Which is true, because those roles are reinforced by society.

Take the Scapegoat out of the system, and the system goes through some interesting adjustments – either a new Scapegoat has to be named, or some other way to bleed the frustration out of the system has to be developed (spouse abuse is one way, child abuse, incest, etc.).

### **Lost Child**

Another survival role is the Lost Child. This is the “invisible” kid. Oftentimes a third or later sibling claims the Lost Child position. This child finds he cannot compete with the Family Hero, and the Scapegoat has all the negative attention sewn up, so he just withdraws and becomes a loner. As a result of this, the Lost Child suffers from terminal loneliness and comes to believe he is abjectly unimportant.

This child is good at not drawing any attention to himself. He adapts and changes to suit the situation, even if the situation demands he act in a way that is against his integrity. He can be this dishonest because he is detached from his feelings, and can therefore survive any situation without emotional expression. Additionally, the Lost Child is usually very creative, and can bring himself to a place where he “lives” his lies (and can therefore believe them).

On the other hand, the Lost Child doesn't do well with conflict (that is the province of the Scapegoat). Conflict drives the Lost Child out the back door. Conflict terrifies the Lost Child.

As a result of this fear of conflict, the Lost Child will have trouble making decisions, and will usually be a follower – one who follows without question.

For the family, the Lost Child represents “relief.” This is one kid that no one has to worry about, who doesn't cause trouble, or take up any time. This is a “good kid.”

And since this good kid is so good at being a loner, he becomes very susceptible to any kind of dysfunction that includes denial or a secret. These kids get sexually exploited; they will often contract alcohol and drug addictions that end in overdoses; they suicide more often than the other roles; they seem to have more

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sexual identity problems than the other roles; they are easily manipulated, and, conversely, will get into relationships with people who allow them to continue to deal with life by avoiding it – people who are crisis oriented and problem-creators.

Of all the people I work with, I find this role the most difficult to crack through. The Lost Child has two disturbing abilities that confound most helpers: 1) they disappear in a group setting; and they can also become unavailable in an individual setting; 2) they have the most profound defenses of any of the roles; they are almost impossible to “engage” because of these defenses.

Once inside those defenses and face to face with the entity that is hiding, what is there is a person barely alive. Their connection to the earth is tenuous; their development is retarded; and they seem completely out of place on the physical plane. If they can be reached, however, they recover into creative, talented, independent men and women.

### **Mascot**

Another survival role is the Mascot. Like the Lost Child, this role seems to be more developmentally delayed. It seems, the trauma that flung them into a survival role happened at any earlier age than with the Hero or Scapegoat. This may be because these roles have to contend with the additional terrors of older brothers/sisters. Whatever the reason, the result is development is arrested at a real early age, and the dysfunctional role takes over.

For the Mascot, fear, insecurity and confusion run his emotions. He reacts by creating fun, good humor, and laughter. When this behavior intensifies into a survival role, then the child is stuck with a fragile personality, immature behavior, and a clowning attitude.



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This is, however, just what the family needs to get its mind off all the problems the alcoholic, the Scapegoat, and the codependent are creating – it needs comic relief.

The Mascot will use pranks to get attention, doesn't know what is appropriately humorous behavior, and is unaware when jokes are and are not funny. He will mask feelings with humor, and the predominant feeling that needs to be masked is fear.

To others the Mascot may appear hyperactive, and often has a short attention span, and may actually have learning disabilities. As the Mascot matures, he will be unable to handle stress, and may develop physical ailments such as ulcers. He will continue compulsive clowning around, and will remain immature. He may also marry a Hero for protection and care.

The payoff for the Mascot is he does not need to take responsibility for his life. This payoff is extremely important to the child who, being born into an already highly structured dysfunctional family, can't figure out how to cope. An older sibling, following the example of the codependent, will offer some serious caretaking, and that will be all the Mascot needs to see he can cope with the dysfunction by refusing to be responsible for anything. Safe with a caretaker now, the Mascot learns to deal with larger, stronger people by making them laugh. The role is set.

#### **Placator**

Another role is called the Placator (a.k.a., Caretaker). This is the one referred to above, the one that learns from the codependent how to rescue people, turn them into dependents, and then derive self-esteem from "having" to take care of them.

The Placator is the family comforter, people pleaser, fixer, rescuer, etc. In order for someone to fulfill this role, he or she

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has to be extremely sensitive, be able to feel what others are feeling. And it is by feeling others' feelings the Placator is able to keep from feeling his own feelings, which inexorably point to the belief that he is the cause of the parent's alcoholism. The attendant guilt that comes from this belief drives the Placator to help others, to try to take away others' pain, and never to disagree with anyone.

When a Placator leaves home, he will have a hard time adjusting to no one to caretaker. As a consequence, he will become a counselor, nurse, marry an alcoholic, or find some other way to continue "helping" people.

One of the payoffs for this role is society reinforces it. There are rewards (usually not monetary) for the Placator. They will get cards and letters that read: "We couldn't have done it without you."

Since a Placator is obsessed with others' needs, he will not have a clue as to his own needs; hence, he will not be getting his own needs met. This leads to frustration, despair, anger, and bitterness. The Placator counselor or nurse will suffer from "burn-out." The Placator married to an alcoholic may also become an alcoholic.

One of the beliefs the Placator maintains is feelings can be labeled "good or bad." Feelings can't just be feelings. Placators go into frenzy if someone feels bad. Maybe if he can fix this bad feeling, then the alcoholic parent won't drink. (Fat chance.) So Placators get caught in a never-ending cycle of trying to fix bad feelings so that good things can happen. They get trapped into trying to fix daddy's feelings so he can be a decent parent. And that scenario continues to play in all succeeding relationships until the Placator sees that a positive self-image is not dependent on what they do to help others.

### **Chameleon**

Another role is the Chameleon (a.k.a. Jack of All Trades). To be a Chameleon, the child has to be extremely sensitive. He has to know what role will fit any situation. He also has to be smart, in that he has to create the role that will slide into and be absorbed by any group or situation. The Chameleon differs from the Lost Child in one important way – the Lost Child blends in by disappearing, whereas the Chameleon blends in by becoming someone else.

Some of the characteristics of the Chameleon are: Sudden and dramatic changes in mood, behavior, or schoolwork; sick often with vague symptoms; seemingly flexible, appears to be undisturbed by changes; generally well liked by all; is uncomfortable with expressed emotion; rarely accepts a challenge or takes a risk; is often “spaced out;” can be shy around adults but not peers; needs a guarantee of success before attempting a task (and will cover up mistakes); can blend into new situations or groups.

As an adult, the Chameleon, like all other adult children of alcoholics (ACoA's), will be unable to trust or care for anyone else. He can become a hypochondriac; suffer from frequent and debilitating illnesses. When he achieves some success, he will discount it because of the belief he is an “impostor.” As a result of all that, he will be unable to form lasting relationships or a career.

This role is also the ‘normal’ role that an incest survivor will take on. As a place to hide oneself, the Chameleon is the role of choice, and it's usually girls who end up with this role. The corollary role for boys is Jack-of-all-Trades. The difference is with the Chameleon, one becomes someone else; the Jack-of-all-Trades can get anything done that needs to be done.

**Conclusion:**

The above survival patterns have a number of characteristics in common with each other, and some characteristics unique to the pattern itself. What is important to remember, though, is they are roles (survival roles, at that), and roles that do not accurately identify the children themselves.

Here's the rub, though. Children define themselves through their defenses and established behavioral patterns within their families. They develop a sense of identity through these "roles" they play. In a healthy family system, the parents look for the emerging talents their children exhibit, and then encourage the children to act on those talents. A child with musical talent may become a guitar-player, for example, and if asked about himself he might say, "I'm Joe, a guitar-player." Children begin to establish a sense of identity through what they do.

Conversely, in a dysfunctional family system, the children are told what they are: "No good;" "You're our pride and joy;" etc. From this essence, they develop a role to play. If they are the "bad boy," then they develop the Scapegoat role, and so on. This dynamic follows the Zen rule of: Be, Do, Have.

**Be-Do-Have**

There are two ways to get into the be-do-have game. Let's say your parents have decided you will be a ballerina. So, they go out and buy you all the stuff you need: tutu, shoes, lessons, etc. Now you have all the ballerina stuff. Next, you take lessons, so you start doing what ballerinas do. And finally you become a ballerina. In this scenario, you follow the sequence of have-do-be.

The other way of running this dynamic is if you discover within yourself a ballerina wanting to come out (being), so you start

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dancing (doing), and finally you end up with all the stuff that ballerinas have.

Neither of these sequences is preferable to the other; both work. The point I'm trying to make is if a parent confirms a child's sense of no-goodness, then the child will assume 'no-goodness' is his essence (beingness). It's confirmed by his role (doingness), and therefore he reaps those rewards (what he has).

The trick is to intuit what the child's true essence is, then encourage him to go for it. Which is easier said than done. However, we all enter life with a sense of mission; the problem is we don't know what it is we're supposed to do. It's as though we are unique tools God created for specific jobs, but we can't remember what kind of tool we are, nor what jobs we are supposed to do. Consequently, parents who have yet to figure out their own purpose cannot be expected to help their children figure out theirs.

### **Human Odyssey**

The truth is we are spiritual beings on some kind of human odyssey. The ego (body-emotions-mind) is the agency we use to complete this journey. Yet it has to go through a long and rigorous training program. For some of us, that training includes being raised in dysfunctional families, where we are incested, physically assaulted, and systematically denied access to our own basic goodness. We are shocked into survival roles, and then stay in these roles as adults because we know no other way of being in the world.

Additionally, we try to complete the work of childhood through our relations with other adults. The Family Hero, for example, will tend to get into relationships with a partner that is irresponsible or chemically dependent. Then the adult Hero will

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try to work out the childhood task of having his parent become responsible and free the Hero from the Hero role.

Naturally, this doesn't work. So the Hero tries harder (which, in effect, means he will get out of the current relationship and get into an even worse one). Since the task is a validation task, and a childhood task at that, the logic here is childlike: "If I can find someone like mommy and fix them enough, then this mommy substitute can release me from this prison."

It doesn't dawn on the adult Hero he can do it for himself (mainly because he has no concept of independence). It doesn't click he is looking for relief from people incapable of giving him relief. All the inner child knows is he must get validation from a parent before he can move onto adulthood. And if the birth parents are unavailable, then a surrogate is the answer.

### **Pre-Egoic State**

Another function of this first triangle we are born into is more intrapsychic. It goes like this: There are three stages of ego development – pre-egoic, egoic, trans-egoic. This first triangle finds us in a pre-egoic state. We have a personality; we have a response to life that is unique; we have a lot of things at birth. What we don't have is a clear sense of self. The ego (our sense of self) is, at first, a body-ego; we identify with bodily functions and tactile sensation. That is who we are.

Additionally, however, we also are identified with the primary caregiver, and to a lesser degree, the other parent. In other words, we are unaware that we are separate from mom. So, this triangle of me-mom-dad is, from our point of view, an imploded triangle. We see no separation. As a result, we act in ways that make everybody happy – or we try to, because in making them happy, we are happy (since there is no separation). If making them happy hurts us, we have no way to process the event. The

event will get blocked. (Pre-verbal sexual assault will be dealt with in this way, for example.)

Because we as infants didn't know we were different from, or separate than our parents, it is imperative we receive lots of positive interaction with those caregivers. We are absolutely dependent on them to complete Erik Erikson's first developmental stage – learning to trust rather than distrust the world. We are dependent on our parents in this task because we see no separation between them and us.

If we learn to distrust the world (which is what all ACoA's did), then we cannot progress completely with the succeeding developmental stages. We will progress with the succeeding developmental stages, but where that development clashes with our ability to trust, we will not proceed. We will compensate instead. That compensation will look like a block or vacuum, and we will become defensive when others expose that block or vacuum. Once we become defensive, the survival role of choice will kick in.

### **Dynamic Ground**

To make all this even more complicated, we are also at risk to be re-absorbed into the pre-birth nirvana state we emerged from. This state has been called the Dynamic Ground. What seems to be occurring for the infant is a battle to actually transfer allegiance from the dynamic ground to the human experience. The dynamic ground is, or represents, God, prana, All-That-Is, Higher Power, Great Spirit, or the movement of the Tao. In many other cultures of the world, children and elders are revered because of this unique connection to that which lies outside of human experience. Children are fresh from the bosom of God, and elders are close to going back to the bosom of God.

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In psychological terms, infants tend to be dominated by the dynamic ground, for it is the epitome of serenity. When in the embrace of this force, there is nothing outside the self that is meaningful. They derive complete peace and meaning by relaxing into this state and maintain an at-oneness with the power of the universe.

The parents, especially, coax the child into the world through tactile stimulation, and by meeting the child's body needs. If this does not occur, then failure to thrive syndrome develops and the child dies or becomes withdrawn and/or retarded.

If the parents are successful, and the child chooses the human experience, then she must somehow defy the allure of the dynamic ground. The process the child uses to do this is called: Original Repression.

#### **Original Repression**

The child represses (obliterates from consciousness) all memory of the dynamic ground. This act sets up a dichotomy within the child. It sets up two forms of reference: The conscious and the unconscious. The conscious maintains the human endeavor; the unconscious stores all that needs to be repressed for the conscious to function in this new way.

Stored in the unconscious is memory of the dynamic ground, but also the body-ego, trauma the child cannot incorporate into the newly developed mind-ego, and anything else that might threaten the fragile structure of the developing ego. So, both "good" and "bad" elements are located in the unconscious for future processing.

The child is now fully committed to the human experience, and begins to work her way through the basic training childhood represents. If the family system is healthy, then the child learns



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to accept the emotions that surge through her, to name those emotions, and to work with them. The child learns she has certain potentials that can be translated into roles, and these roles confirm her identity. She learns to take responsibility for herself by what her parents give her permission to do.

If the child's family system is dysfunctional, she learns a survival defensive pattern (role), and makes it through childhood as best she can.

This complex interplay of external and internal forces, in the end, serve to firmly connect the child to the apparent reality, and the child learns to adapt and survive.

In one sense, the child's sense of trying to please the parents forces the child into growth. For example, if the parents are convinced the child is doing something wrong, and the parents spend time trying to "catch" the child in the act, then the child will accept this as a game the parents want to play. The child will then do something wrong so that the parents can catch her.

Women who were sexually abused as children often can recall, during therapy, they agreed to the abuse, at least in the beginning, so that the parent would be happy.

This dynamic (the games that the parents teach the child to play) is the most powerful force in the child's life after original repression.

A bird's eye view of human development from birth to Enlightenment, this book addresses what can go wrong at each stage. Simply organized as a series of triangulated settings that we must transform (Rescuer-Victim-Abuser, for example), the author enables anyone on a recovery or spiritual growth path to identify where he is and what he needs to do next. With over 25 years experience, the author makes the Path easy and accessible.

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