

Primitive Ego Psychology
For
**Life Coaches & Mental Health
Counselors**

Taming the Primitive Ego

THE MANIFESTO OF A THERAPIST/LIFE COACH

The Journey toward Middlepath Thinking
and Growth in Self-Awareness

by Dick Rauscher



STONYHILL

A Stonyhill Publication

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ISBN:

ISBN-13:

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PREFACE

Changing A Client's Worldview Is A Process

I wrote this Manifesto to support the on-going continuing education of Professional Life Coaches, Life Coaching students, and Mental Health Counselors. Learning how to help our client is a process that requires developing the skills and insights needed to help our clients tame their childhood primitive ego. Changing the *way* our clients think requires knowing *what* they think (their childhood primitive ego's self-limiting beliefs) and *how* they think (their childhood primitive ego's assumptions and illusions about reality).

Continuing education is a never-ending process given the rapidly changing knowledge of human psychology and behavior.

A successful life coaching or mental health counseling practice requires a lifetime commitment to continuing education and advanced professional training so we can better understand what gets in the way of our clients achieving their goals and dreams.....the unconscious obstacles that keep the client from living the life they want to live.

This Manifesto is an introduction to **Primitive Ego Psychology** and the *taming of our childhood primitive ego*. When our clients get stuck on the journey toward their goals, the problem is almost always *an unconscious childhood primitive ego belief distorting the way they think*. The evolution of Primitive Ego Psychology has been the primary focus of my thirty-year professional career; thirty years of training, education, and experience working with clients as a life coach, writer, and mental health counselor.

To become a successful life coach or mental health counselor for our clients, it is essential that we understand ourselves through *growth in self-awareness*. The more I have been able to identify and incorporate

primitive ego theory into my professional and personal life, the more effective I have been in helping others. I am grateful every day for the ways primitive ego theory has helped shape who I am... and how it has helped my clients overcome the mental obstacles that threatened to overwhelm their goals and dreams. Taming the childhood primitive ego and *growth in self-awareness are essential for anyone whose goal in life is...*

- embracing happiness,
- creating a successful life,
- developing happy relationships,
- achieving their life goals, and
- creating the life they've dreamed of living.

Helping our client's *tame their primitive ego* and achieve their life goals requires that life coaches and mental health counselors...

- a) learn to embrace the *wisdom and meaning in life* that comes from our own journey into *deeper self-awareness*;
- b) gain a deeper understanding *how our mind works*, and
- c) learn the specific skills and insights required to *tame our own childhood primitive ego*.

Awakening our consciousness and achieving growth in self-awareness are best achieved when we know how our mind works; including how we think and what we think. Why?

Because, just like our clients, *we too use our minds to create our lives and our world.*

So it makes sense the more we know about the childhood conditioning of *our mind* and how *we think*, the more choice we will have in how we use it! And most importantly, *we can't teach our clients what we don't know ourselves... what we haven't experienced.*

Knowing how the human mind thinks is essential if we want to be a successful life coach or mental health counselor and help our clients achieve their goals.

This is also true for our clients! *They can't change what they don't understand and accept about themselves.*

Awakening our consciousness and achieving growth in self-awareness are best achieved when we know how our mind works; including how we think and what we think.

Learning to embrace reality and awaken our human consciousness are one-in-the-same subject. They both require *knowing* how our mind works and *what our minds believe to be true*. This knowledge happens only when we have *intentionally* embraced growth in self-awareness and learned to *tame our own childhood primitive ego*.

Awakening the human consciousness, and the growth in self-awareness required to tame our childhood primitive ego, happen when we have *the courage to take action...* when we learn to *change how we think...* when we learn to:

- become self-aware of our reality distorting *childhood beliefs and conditioning*,
- empty our primitive ego of its *need to be “right,”*
- drop our primitive ego’s *dualistic “us vs. them” thinking*,
- embrace a more evolved *non-dual, both/and consciousness*,
- transform our conscious and dropped the dangerous *illusion of separateness*,
- embrace “we” thinking and the concepts of “*mutual benefit*” and “*common good*” for all living beings.

When The Client Gets Stuck

When our clients get stuck on the journey toward their goals, we need to help them better understand *why* they’re stuck, and *what they need to do* to get unstuck. For over thirty years, primitive ego theory has reminded me almost daily that *we can’t teach others what we haven’t learned ourselves*. We can’t lead others into the wilderness of their unconscious primitive ego until we have made the journey ourselves.

A successful life coach requires deep insight on *how* the client

thinks when the client is stuck on the journey toward their goals. Successful life coaches and mental health counselors know how to support the client's journey into a deeper self-awareness... because they had the courage to make that journey themselves.

Welcome to Primitive Ego Psychology

This Manifesto was written to introduce you to Primitive Ego Psychology and help you deepen the *professional skills* and *personal self-awareness* required to become a successful life coach or mental health counselor. Like our clients, *we too struggle to awaken to the presence of our own unconscious primitive ego.* Our ability to help others improves dramatically when we have learned to tame our own primitive ego.

My purpose in writing this Manifesto is to support and encourage your growth in self-awareness as a life coach or mental health counselor. Your clients will thank you for your willingness to have already grown in the same way you are helping them to grow.

Dick Rauscher, Redmond, Oregon 2016

INTRODUCTION

Most people struggle.....

- to experience a lasting sense of happiness,
- to create healthy relationships,
- to achieve greater purpose in life, and
- to live lives of deeper meaning,

but they fail to grasp the reality that we can not achieve our life goals *by searching for them in the outer world.*

Life coaches and mental health counselors know those frantically sought goals of the client will only be realized when the client has embraced the courage to *look inward* and become more *self-aware*; when the client has learned to tame their primitive ego and the unconscious, “self-limiting” reality distorting beliefs they learned in childhood. Life coaches and mental health counselors know the answers and insights the client is searching for can only be found when they have embraced the courage to journey into the wilderness of their inner world and listen to the quiet whispers of their soul.

Life coaches and mental health counselors understand the reality that *every experience* we have in our lives is the *experience of a relationship in one form or another.* And they also know *that the most important relationship we will ever experience is the relationship we have with ourselves.*

Deepening the skills and insights needed to add value to the lives of others requires life coaches and mental health counselors to better understand and deepen their self-awareness; the ability to *see, accept, and then tame their own childhood primitive ego.* They understand that *you can't teach what you don't know.* You can't lead others into the wilderness until you've discovered the courage to take the *inward*

journey and deepened your own self-awareness; until you've tamed your own childhood primitive ego.

...every experience we have in our lives is the experience of a relationship in one form or another..... the most important relationship we will ever experience is the relationship we have with ourselves.

If this makes sense to you, if your goal is a desire to improve your life coaching skills and your mental health counseling skills so you can be more effective in adding value to the lives of others... this Manifesto was written for you.

This Manifesto is meant to shift the way you look at reality... and yourself.

We all carry reality distorting beliefs from childhood into our adult life. We all do it. It's part of being human. Being an effective and successful life coach requires taming our childhood primitive ego. It requires diving deeply into our own *self-awareness*... learning to pay attention to *how*, and *what* we think. How we look at life and reality. *Until we have learned to shift our attention on how and what we think, our ability to understand and help our clients achieve their goals will be seriously limited.* We will quickly become frustrated at our inability to successfully "hold" a client while they learn about themselves and the skills they need to reach their goal. Client turnover will be high. Success as a life coach will be low.

Successful life coaching is not a "technique" one uses. It is knowing how your client thinks. But that insight can't be intellection *learned*; it has to be *experienced personally* by our own journey into the subtleties and reality distorting beliefs of our own childhood primitive ego.

This Manifesto is an invitation to begin that journey inward. It will take you take you step by step through some of the basic insights and

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teachings of Primitive Ego Psychology and primitive ego theory. It's meant to be an introduction to primitive ego theory, not an in-depth training course. It will give you some of the skills and information you will need to help your clients tame *their* primitive ego through *their* growth in self-awareness, by helping you improve *your* ability to deepen *your* self-awareness.

Self-Awareness is learning to pay attention to how, and what we think. Until we have learned to shift our attention on how and what we think, our ability to understand and help our clients achieve their goals will be seriously limited.

Important Concepts

- Evolving our consciousness and becoming more self-aware is *hard work*. It requires courage because much of what we learn about ourselves will challenge our self-identity. We rarely like what we discover about ourselves when we become more self-aware. That's why we keep it hidden in our unconscious. Self-awareness is not a one-time learning. It requires learning about ourselves over and over.....until we finally get it and accept what we've discovered. You'll know when that happens; it's called humility.
- Our ego *does not like change*. It resists change even when we want to grow and evolve. Growth in self-awareness and awakening our human consciousness to the presence of our childhood primitive ego is a process that takes time. Learning to become an effective life coach is also a process. They both take time and effort.
- This Manifesto will offer the reader a map of some of the changes necessary to become a more successful self-aware life coach or mental health counselor... *but the map is never the*

journey itself. Reading a menu is not the same as eating the meal. Until we have the courage to *take our own journey* into deeper self-awareness, we will never develop the skills and insights that only come from the experience of actually taking the journey inward.

- Our primitive ego is filled with *reality distorting views, illusions, and beliefs from childhood.* At the end of this Manifesto, I have included a list of some additional childhood skills and insights that I believe are important for us to wrestle with on our journey into self-awareness. The further you journey into the wilderness of your own childhood primitive ego, the more helpful you will be to your clients... and the more successful you'll be as a life coach or mental health counselor.

MY JOURNEY

A 12th century Nasrudin story:

Nasrudin was frantically riding his donkey up and down the streets of his small village one morning. After watching Nasrudin for a while, one of the villagers yelled out “Nasrudin, Nasrudin, what are you doing so frantically riding your donkey up and down the village streets?”

Nasrudin looked back over his shoulder and shouted back “What am I doing? What am I doing? You fool... I’m looking for my donkey!”

The problem that keeps us from the happiness and meaning we long for, the problem that keeps us from taming our primitive ego and creating a more awakened human consciousness, is much like Nasrudin’s donkey. Our childhood primitive ego is so close to us... so much a part of us... we fail to see it.

How My Journey As A Life Coach/Therapist Began

I began my adult life as a dualistic, black and white, either/or thinker; it was me against the world. And of course, because my inner-child was convinced all good things come from the world, I *knew* happiness would come to me if I were famous, wealthy, and successful in my Electrical Engineering career. My goal was to be a millionaire by the time I was thirty. I was well on my way to achieving those career goals by the time I was thirty-two ... but I awoke one day to the sobering reality that I wasn’t happy. I wasn’t living the life I wanted to live. So I quit the corporate life.

So much for the dream of a successful career and wealth.

Fast Forward A Few Years ...

I woke up the morning of my 35th birthday, threw some wood in the wood stove, and headed to the barn to milk the goats, feed the chickens, and slop the pigs. I was homesteading on 27 acres in upstate New York raising a family of six on \$7000 a year.

Fast Forward a Few More Years ...

It was a warm summer evening in the late 1970's when the universe introduced me to the “*rest of my life.*” An innocent philosophic question was about to change my world. My days of milking goats, building stone walls, rough sawn wood barns, and racing a dirt bike in cross-country “endurance” races were about to become a fond memory.

Like most Saturday evenings in the summer, we were sitting around a campfire drinking beer and making music with five or six neighboring families. The kids were playing kick the can in the field down near the pond.

The musical instruments were back in their cases, and we had settled into quiet conversations about life and philosophy. *Talking about philosophy after a few beers around a campfire is a lot like getting into a taxi and impulsively telling the driver “just drive”... you have absolutely no idea where you're going to end up.*

The guitar player picked up his beer, looked slowly around the campfire, and asked an innocent philosophic question. “So what would you do with your life if you could do anything you wanted to do with it.”

When it came to my turn to answer the question, I impulsively responded: “I would be a Pastor.” Talk about a show stopper. The only sound for the next thirty seconds was the crackling of the burning campfire. To this day, I have no idea where those words came from, but over the next few months, I couldn't get them out of my head.

The following spring I signed up for some courses at Colgate-Rochester Seminary to explore the possibility that I might actually enter the Christian ministry. I tried hard to fit in theologically, but my degree in Electrical Engineering and Physics made it hard for me to accept much of what I was being taught.

It wasn't long before the more conservative students made it a point to avoid me in the cafeteria. Their fear, I think, was the possibility that

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my questions and theological doubts might be contagious.

I began to have serious doubts about my decision to enter the ministry.

The seminary felt like home to me. I loved learning and the sense of community, but my struggle with Christian theology was growing. The traditional conservative Christian beliefs that embraced scientifically illiterate, first-century worldviews lacked the spiritual wisdom and insights I hungered for. At the same time, the desire to grow spiritually was an inner calling I couldn't ignore.

I didn't want to live a life that simply happened to me. I didn't want to live a life that others had chosen for me. I wanted to discover the truth for myself. I wanted to discover for myself why I was here, what my soul had come here to do? What it was that I was meant to contribute to the world? I knew I wanted to add value to the world; not just take up space.

These were the inner conflicts, doubts, thoughts, and questions that I was wrestling with the morning I walked into my first class in Pastoral Counseling 101... and *knew* that I had finally discovered the path I was born to walk.

And, as they say, the rest is history.

I left corporate life and went “back to the land” in search of happiness and meaning; to figure out who I was. Homesteading the land for those five years was “*the*” rebirthing experience my soul had been searching for. It was the first step of an amazing journey that eventually took me toward a seminary M.Div. Degree; ordination as an Elder in the United Methodist Church; working as a Chaplain and Counselor at Keuka College in upstate New York; an AAPC Fellowship in analytic psychotherapy; and eventually over two decades working in private practice as a mental health therapist and life coach helping people find meaning in their lives, encouraging them to discover their life purpose, and walking with them as they struggled to discover and embrace the authentic life that called them.

THE THREE INSIGHTS THAT MOST SHAPED THE BIRTH OF PRIMITIVE EGO PSYCHOLOGY

I had a successful therapy practice underway, but I saw that the technical, psycho-therapeutic language I had been taught, was not

helping my clients move toward the healing and growth they longed for in their lives. It was too technical. Too removed from my client's experience of life to be helpful. I needed a therapeutic language that *made sense* to my client's.

Insight #1: Survival Skills

When I learned about the concept of "*childhood survival skills*," I realized my clients were not dealing with neurotic behaviors and character disorders. They were essentially attempting to use the survival skills learned in early childhood to navigate their adult lives.

For the first time, I could "see" the two primary *survival skills* creating conflict and unhappiness in my client's lives;

- *dualistic, black and white, either/or, good and bad thinking of childhood, and*
- *their primitive ego's need to be "right."*

I recognized that dualistic childhood primitive ego thinking and the need to be right were not only creating conflict and unhappiness in the lives of my clients, they were also responsible for the conflict and pain I experienced in my own life as well. They were the two childhood primitive ego beliefs responsible for most of the conflict and pain we experience in life and especially in our relationships with others.

Insight #2: Humility

The second insight that changed the way I see the world began the day I decided to retire from homesteading and return to the modern world. What I learned in the years following that decision was how hard it is to climb out of poverty and re-enter modern society ... even when that poverty has been self-imposed.

I had a bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering. I was living on 27 acres in upstate New York fifty-five miles from the nearest large city. My home was a small 12' x 20' foot cabin five hundred feet above the valley floor. A hand pump on the front porch supplied the "running water." We had a two-hole outhouse with a great view of the valley, and an indoor compost toilet. What I *didn't* have was a financial base to support a wife and four children without the income that had been provided by the farm.

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We had been living on less than seven thousand dollars a year for half a decade. This was a level of income that was adequate while we were self-sufficient and living off of the land, but woefully inadequate without the food and financial income provided by our homesteading efforts.

The struggle to get back on my feet taught me humility and created in me a deep compassion for the poor in our world. I was well educated and owned property, but I had no cash to get traction. Without cash, making the transition from self-sufficient homesteading to purchasing food in a grocery store became a financial nightmare. To this day, I emotionally hesitate to answer the phone in fear that it will be another creditor demanding payment or threatening legal action.

When I hear people tell the poor, just get a job, and life will be fine, I know that's not true. Digging out of poverty was an almost overwhelming challenge.

When you are starting from poverty, getting traction to make the journey toward prosperity and success is all but impossible. I shudder to think what it must feel like to begin that journey as a disadvantaged person with limited resources. It was a five-year struggle for me, and I had resources most of the poor, and disadvantaged can only dream about. Learning to accept the grace and compassion of friends who were willing to reach out and offer me a helping hand when the journey overwhelmed me was a major challenge. Without their help during those days as I struggled to get back on my feet, I'm not sure where I would be today. And I had a college engineering degree!

The humility born in that life experience changed forever the way I see the world and the plight of the poor. The struggle to eliminate “*us vs. them*” thinking created by the illusion of separateness in the world is a very personal issue for me.

Eliminating dualistic “*us vs. them*” thinking, the illusion of separateness, and increasing our human ability to offer compassion to those less fortunate, is a primary reason why I became a writer and life coach/mental health counselor. The “*why*” of my life purpose for the last thirty years has been a focus on adding value to the lives of others, awakening the human consciousness to the presence of our childhood primitive ego, and teaching others the skills and insights needed to successfully tame the childhood primitive ego. In other words, becoming

more self-aware, and helping others do the same. Without deep *self*-awareness, and the ability to tame our childhood primitive ego that comes from the journey into *self*-awareness, happiness and success in life are all but impossible to achieve.

Insight #3: Non-Duality

The third insight that changed my life was *non-duality* and *non-dual thinking*.

I had the head wisdom from the first two insights. I even had the beginning of the deeper heart wisdom I needed to better care for and support the emotional and spiritual growth of my clients. But coming from an engineering background, I still saw the world in fragmented, bits and pieces of reality. I was not yet “*seeing*” the *wholeness* of reality and creation.

Like Nasrudin’s donkey, and my own childhood primitive ego, that simple reality called “wholeness” was so close I couldn’t *see* it.

Awakening to the non-dual wholeness of reality happened when my study of Buddhist psychology changed my spiritual worldview from theological, religious beliefs, and technical human developmental theory, to the deeper wisdom that our “*true-self*” is not our “*ego-self*.”

- We are not a unique “self” separate from the rest of the universe as our unconscious childhood primitive ego would have us believe.
- We are not the unconscious primitive ego “self” born in the childhood crucible of black and white, right and wrong dualistic thinking.
- We are not just our body, and a mind filled with thoughts, emotions, beliefs, opinions, assumptions, expectations and hurts.
- We are not a “self” defined by our possessions and the various experiences we have had as a “separate” and unique being. That separate ego-“self” is an illusion called our false-self.
- Our “true self”... who we “are”... is a pure observing consciousness.

It was finally clear to me. Our inner child's dualistic primitive ego, an ego that turns the rest of creation into categories of “them” or “other,”

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lacks the insight and non-dual maturity needed to embrace the unity, oneness, and wholeness of reality.

The dualistic thinking of our childhood primitive ego; the dualistic thinking process created by the illusion of separateness, is and always has been, one of humanity's greatest dangers and threat. It creates unhappiness, destroys relationships, is the source of judgmental prejudice, and is responsible for most of the conflict and violence we experience in the world both currently and historically.

For the first time, I could see how dualistic “us vs. them” thinking, and the violence it creates, stops our ability to evolve an authentic, compassionate, awakened human consciousness dead in its tracks. It blinds our consciousness; our ability to see, embrace and accept the unity and oneness of reality.

If we don't learn to awaken our human consciousness to;

- a. the presence of our dualistic primitive ego,
- b. the illusion of separateness,
- c. learn to become more self-aware, and
- d. begin to embrace a true non-dual consciousness...

the *ability to achieve an awakened human* consciousness will not be difficult... *it will be impossible.*

**The dualistic thinking of our childhood
primitive ego; the dualistic thinking process
created by the illusion of separateness, is and
always has been, one of humanity's greatest
dangers and threat.**

Stated simply, the belief that we are a separate “self” or “i” is a powerful and dangerous illusion of our childhood primitive ego; an illusion that will continue to create most of the suffering we experience in life until we have;

- a. grown in self-awareness;

- b. awakened to the *reality distorting beliefs* of our childhood primitive ego consciousness,
- c. learned to embrace the *wholeness of reality*, and
- d. intentionally emptied our childhood primitive ego consciousness of the reality distorting illusion that our “*self*” is *an object separate from the rest of reality*.

It is the *illusion of separateness* that so often drives our obsessive human need to *embrace greed* and our never-ending focus on *what’s in it for “me”*. It is the illusion of separateness that drives a wedge into all of our relationships; a wedge that separates our “*self*” from the rest of the universe.

The primitive ego’s illusion of separateness is also directly responsible for the greed that drives our “*us vs. them*” global economic system.

The only antidote to *greed* is a consciousness that has learned to drop the illusion of separateness and learned how to embrace a “*we*”/“*us*” *focus*... a focus on the *common good*, and *mutual benefit* for the “*whole*.”

*Only a true, non-dual, awakened
consciousness that embraces deep self-
awareness, the wholeness of creation... an
awakened, non-dual consciousness that refuses
to fragment reality into judgmental categories of
“us” vs. “them”... has the power to create a non-
violent, compassionate, awakened world.*

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Where I Am Today

With this third insight, I finally *knew* the life purpose I was meant to embrace was exploring, teaching, and writing about;

- the humility, self-awareness, and emptiness of ego required to achieve an authentic, *awakened human conscious...* and create true happiness in life.
- the *self-awareness* required for us to empty our childhood primitive ego and let go of the dualistic “false self” of childhood that thinks it knows how the universe “*should*” function. In other words, awakening our consciousness to the presence of our inner child's primitive ego and its tendency to “*push the river*” by assuming we know what “*should be*” and ignoring the reality of “*what is.*”
- the intentional evolution of a true non-dual human consciousness that embraces “mutual benefit” through its *interconnection and interdependence* with the rest of creation. A consciousness that has learned to live in *right relationship with the laws of nature* and the natural world.

The journey to become a *non-dual thinker* has been the most exciting, meaningful but difficult journey I have ever undertaken.

The further I've journeyed toward an awakened consciousness and *non-duality*, the more I am discovering the lack of stress that comes when I have the courage to embrace change more openly. When I intentionally become more self-aware and let go of *the idea that my subjective ego beliefs represent absolute truth.*

I have more to learn on this journey toward an awakened consciousness. Fortunately, there are those in our community who have been on this path far longer than myself. Those enlightened souls willing to share their spiritual wisdom include folks like Bernadette Robert's, Alan Watts, Wendell Berry, Beatrice Bruteau, Andrew Cohen, Steve McIntosh, Anthony DeMello, Eckhart Tolle, the Dali Lama, Tich Nhat Hahn, Peter Russell, and of course, all of humanity's great spiritual teachers, mystics, and sages.

They are humanity's awakened trailblazers and guides teaching us about “*emptiness of ego*” and guiding us through the *wilderness of our childhood primitive ego psyches* as we journey toward *self-awareness*

and our *true-self*. They are the teachers that support and encourage us when we encounter the inevitable challenges that are part of the journey toward our *full humanity*.

I am increasingly thankful for the heart wisdom they offer.