

they have any existential knowledge of what they are talking about. You can perfectly assent to the Catholic belief in the Real Presence, for example, and be totally incapable of presence yourself—so there will be no inner experience and no transformation of the self. One will manipulate or use the very doctrine for ego enhancement purposes and control. This is likely what Jesus is referring to when he quotes Isaiah 29:13 in his Sermon on the Mount: “This people has all the right words, but no change of heart. It is all just a lesson memorized, a human commandment.”

My own attempt to correlate the various schemas of development that I have studied would have me put it this way. In my experience, we move from level 1 to level 9. (Note that this is merely a teaching tool; real life is much more subtle.)

1. **My body and self-image are who I am.** Leads to a dominance of security, safety, and defense needs. Dualistic/polarity thinking.
2. **My external behavior is who I am.** Needs to look good outside and to hide or disguise the contrary evidence from others; I become so practiced at this game that the evidence is eventually hidden from myself, too. This *emergence of the shadow* is very common among conservatives.
3. **My thoughts/feelings are who I am.** Development of intellect and will to have better thoughts and feelings and also control them so others do not know, and so, finally, that I do not see their self-serving and shadowy character myself. This *education as a substitute for transformation* is very common among liberals and the educated.

Normally a major defeat, shock, or humiliation must be suffered and passed through to go beyond this stage.

4. **My deeper intuitions and felt knowledge in my body are who I am.** This is such a breakthrough and so informative and helpful that many become stymied at this level. Leads to individualism, self-absorption, and inner work as a substitute for any real encounter with otherness.
5. **My shadow self is who I am.** *The dark night.* My weakness comes to overwhelm me, as I face myself in my raw, unvarnished, uncivilized state. Without guidance, grace, and prayer, most go running back to previous identities. Time is of the essence here.
6. **I am empty and powerless.** “God’s Waiting Room.” Almost any attempt to save the self by any superior behavior, technique, morality, positive role, or religious devotion will lead to regression. All you can do is wait and ask and trust. Here is where you learn faith and discover that darkness is the much better teacher. God is about to become real.
7. **I am much more than who I thought I was.** Death of the false self, and birth of the True Self. But because you are not at home here yet, it will first of all feel like a *void*, even if a wonderful void. “Luminous darkness,” as John of the Cross would call it.
8. **“I and the Father are one”** (John 10:30). Henceforth there is only God, or as Teresa says, “*One knows God in oneself, and knows oneself in God.*” All else is seen as a passing ego possession, and I do not need to protect it, promote it, or prove it—to anyone.

9. *“I am who I am”*