

Jinxed by grandiosity

Some of the truisms of life have kernels of truth in them. Phrases like, “The devil you know is better than the devil you don’t know” has its own truths. We often meet people who, after a lifetime of searching, finds someone who will not control or abuse them but instead love them. Then they find out that the devil they had abandoned became a devil incarnate.

Continuing the reflection by Robert Moore on the demon on grandiosity, we hear him say that our society reminds us that all we need is autonomy. If we have it, there will be no more conflicts between autonomy, shame and doubts. Modern thinking suggests that “we get rid of all those Catholic, all those priests, and especially all those nuns we went to parochial school with. ‘I had shame and doubt when I had them, but now I have autonomy. Where they wanted me to have poverty, chastity and obedience, now I am going to have prosperity, sex and autonomy. Get rid of spirituality and you get the goodies.’” Perhaps many of our angry and well-known Catholics find themselves free but still in their own jails.

We live in a culture of narcissism where our egos become so inflated that we act as if we were God. We continue to have larger fantasies than our experiences or lifestyles can support. So we either get depressed because we cannot keep up with the demands or are depressed because our desires are unachievable and it is useless to try anything.

Moore suggests there are four archetypes that can impact us: king/queen, warrior, magician and lover.

The King/Queen archetype person is usually narcissistic, sensitive to criticism, often in a position of leadership where they get a lot of adulation which helps them to project an aura of calmness.

The Warrior is on a mission, has their marching orders. They are usually workaholics. They are God’s gift to everyone. They work all the time because if they stopped the world would stop as well. They may not have a good sense of self-esteem but working gives them the energy and recognition they need.

The Magician has hidden knowledge and wisdom, often living in the world of academia, always pursuing knowledge. They always want to know how things work.

The Lover is the sensitive one. Everything seems beautiful and esoteric. A lover cannot get enough of whatever they are looking for whether it be: food, alcohol, drugs, sex. For the lover, if it moves, they adore it.

Moore suggests different approaches to tame the dragon within us. First of all, he recommends “active imagination,” or practicing the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. This approach helps us to realize that a king and queen dwells in the kingdom within us and we need to talk to them about what is happening and needs to happen. Secondly, he suggests an exercise program that will allow us to have some time and space for oneself. Thirdly, he suggests that we belong to some religious community which helps us curb our grandiose energies. Groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous provide a survival spirituality. Fourthly, he recommends regular participation in communal worship and liturgy. Even marking time through the liturgical year can be helpful. Fifthly, he recommends rituals, even a lot of the rituals of the Catholic Church including rosary and other devotions. Finally, he recommends prayer. People having a regular prayer life handle their compulsions better and enables the person to connect with the basic energies of life and humbles a person enough to make sure they don’t think of themselves as God.

He suggests that the sacred enters the profane through the cross of Christ. “The blood of Christ, the cup of salvation, the bread of life comes in and through the cross of Christ. We are healed, we are fed and we are made whole through the grace that comes in through the sacred body and blood of Christ. We cannot be made whole without it.”