

A Spirituality of Self-Discovery, Love of God, Love of Other

Knowing Self and Knowing God; Two Poles of Classic Christian Spirituality.

Bi-polar spirituality has a long history in Christian practice. Discovering self through transcendent union with God who is above, beyond, outside the self offers a pathway for exploring and experiencing the Other and results in a deeper knowledge of the self. Spirituality is the capacity to experience the holy—God immanent (within self and encounter with the world) and God transcendent (without self, beyond all self knowledge, above all human interchange.

“I want to know God and the soul,” is Augustine’s opening prayer. “Grant, Lord, that I may know myself that I may know Thee.” He prays elsewhere. *Soliloquies*, p23. “First see whether you have learned to love yourself. If you have not learned how to love yourself, I am afraid that you will cheat your neighbor as yourself. *City of God*, 10.3.2 “Love the neighbor *in* God. This is to love the neighbor as a mortal *means* toward loving God who is the only worthy *end*, eternal and immutable; it is not to love the neighbor for her own sake. As we flow in the great river of love toward God, we ‘*use*’ the neighbor, we ‘*enjoy*’ God. We should love only what we cannot lose, namely, God. *On the Trinity*. “True and sound wisdom consists of two parts” the knowledge of God and of ourselves. In knowing God each of us also knows himself.”

--John Calvin on the concept of ‘double knowledge.’ *Institutes*, 1.1.1,7.

The two searching questions of life are: “Who is God?” and “Who am I?” The two are welded together when we are led so deeply into God we verily and truly know our own soul. --Julian of Norwich, 14th cent. *Showings*, 289

“You are a fool if you find joy in any other than Jesus.”

-Thomas a Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*. p.93

In our striving to know God,
we progress in our self-knowledge.
The soul’s self awareness is organized around
the awareness of its true relation to God,
whereby we know ourselves.

-Teresa of Avila *Interior Castle*, p.48

“The more conception of God, the more self;
the more self, the more conception of God.”

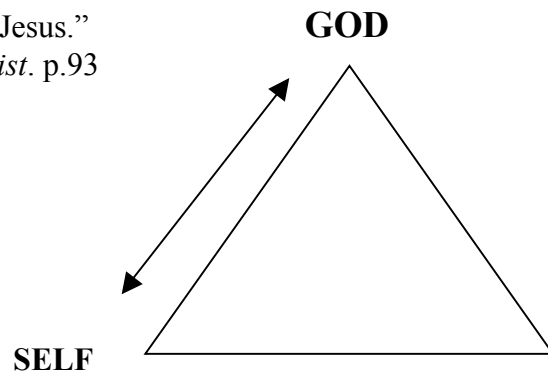
-Soren Kierkegaard,
Fear and Trembling, p. 211

“The spiritual life is a journey in which we discover ourselves in discovering God, and discover God in discovering our true self hidden in God. If I find Him I will find myself and if I find my true self I will find Him.”

-Thos. Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 36

“We become strangers to ourselves the more we act as strangers before God.”

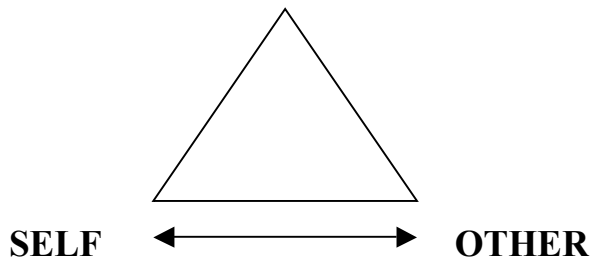
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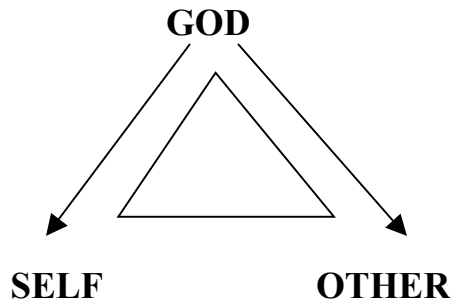
Loving God, loving self and other as one before God ---tri-polar spirituality.

Jesus did not teach bi-polar spirituality. Most of his conflict was with those who did.

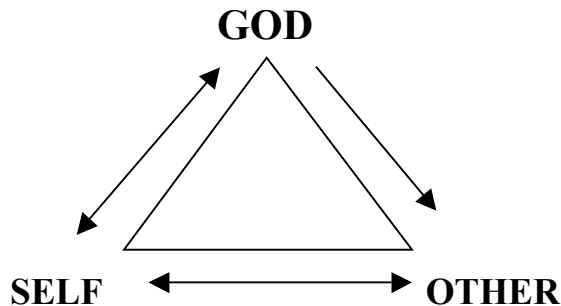
“The love of God and the love of neighbor are one thing and must not be divided. The love of God, indeed, God himself, has fallen away from whoever does not find the love of neighbor in the self. God does not wish to be loved by us aside from the love of our neighbor.” _Johann Arndt, German Lutheran Pietist, 1675 *True Christianity*. P.126



A non-theist, humanitarian may prize self and other equally, act in equal regard for neighbor, care with radical commitment to the welfare of fellow humans, serve humanity in non-violent compassionate service.



As a theist, one sees the ultimate situation of existence grounded in the grace of God, lives in the confidence that we, self and other, are equally prized by God. God loves all humanity. (I may or may not)



Love for God is love for other who is the face of God. Love for neighbor, when grounded in grace, is equally unlimited, irresponsible, steadfast, stubborn, the love of God made visible, vital in us.

In tripolar spirituality, love for God and love for neighbor become inseparable, indivisible, they are aspects of one and the same love. No splitting is possible, no exceptions permissible. Not one. The Other, created in the image of God, images God to us and so reflects the Creator. Love of the other who is seen becomes love of God who is not seen. I Jno. 4:19-21. “You shall be children of the Most High, He himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful as your Father is merciful (Luke 6:35)

“You say we are inexpert, unlearned, and know not the scriptures. I reply, the Word is plain and needs no interpretation, namely, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and your neighbor as yourself.’ Matt 22: 37-39. Again, ‘You shall give bread to the hungry and entertain the needy.’ Isa 58:7 All who do not understand such passages are more like clods than Christians.” Menno, *Complete Writings*, 214