

In *Roaming Free Inside the Cage*, clinical psychologist William M. Schafer, Ph.D., details the journey away from essence and presence into unconscious fixation and reactivity.

Three Elements of Infantile Experience can be observed during an infant's first two years of life.

Presence – pure awareness, in newborns of unmedicated mothers; devoid of judgments, fears, comparisons, desires, memories, and expectations. When the absence of Presence grows too intense, we call it disease, diagnosis it, and treat it.

Joy – a natural consequence of Presence; sense of wonder, curiosity and interest; by 3 months old. When Joy is absent, we strive to feel “happy,” which is often only a memory of some past pleasure or as a daydream of some future one.

Awareness of Others' Awareness – the realization that we all share the experience of being present, the intuition that I am not alone; at about 8-9 months, accompanied by purposeful, communicative signaling by the baby; the birthing the mind. When awareness is absent, we undergo a painful set of internalized preoccupations with what others think of us, want from us, might do to us, or what we think about them or need from them.

The three functions of the human soul – to be present, to be joyful, and to share the single point of awareness that grounds all experience.

The Three Shocks of Embodiment¹

Loss of Wholeness – it is a result of physicality itself. We leave the security of our mother's body and discover that existence as a physical organism is difficult. The realization of just how difficult it is to be in a physical body is the first step in the loss of full access to original life energy with its willingness to be fully open to every experience. The original feeling of being “one with” is lost. We are left with the feeling of *separate and alone*. Our ability to remain fully present is obscured and just too painful. We experience an unconscious sense of **anger** about being tied to a physical body.

Loss of Emotional Connection – the gradual realization that our emotional ties to our caregiver do not always bring pleasure and joy. Psychology calls this process “attachment.” The baby is born wide open, ready to make a deep and lasting commitment to their caregiver. This deep connection is in a way a buffer against the first shock of embodiment. It softens the blow of being in a physical body. But deep emotional pleasure cannot always be maintained in human relationships, which leaves the infant with a sense of being unseen, unimportant and unlovable. Loss of Wholeness produces anger. Loss of Connection closes down the infant's capacity for joy, resulting in feelings of **grief** and **sadness**.

Loss of Trust – the infant's original energy is *receptivity to others*. Infants instinctively trust. When deeply traumatized, they become chronically **fearful** and mistrustful of the very people on whom they depend. And, their mistrust of others starts to extend inward toward the infant's own self. The infant begins to mistrust their own capacity to influence others and produce desired results. The environment is dangerous, and the infant's ability to influence it seems too weak and inefficient. The child loses confidence in their own ability to reconnect to the original state of presence, joy, and shared awareness. What is left is the ego struggling to survive in a world that seems alternatively yet unpredictably comfortable and harsh, loving and lonely, trustworthy and downright dangerous.

The cumulative effect of the three shocks upon the child's ability to remain open to the full flow of life energy is a gradual loss of presence and the emergence of reactivity and loss of harmony. But a person's actual connection to original energy cannot ever be lost. If it were, one would simply cease to exist. But *awareness* of connection can be lost, and as it is lost, a blockage of energy occurs. As awareness of original essence is lost, life energy is constricted, forming a kind of psychic knothole, a wound. A pattern of reactions crystalizes like a protective shell around the wound – the protective shell being our ego.

The infant gradually becomes these Shocks of Embodiment that he or she *is this* body with *these* feelings and *these* thoughts and that he or she is *only* these. It is this identification – that I am “me” and *only* a “me” – that ultimately makes us feel separate, alone and lost. The ego's major illusion is that it can undo the effects of these losses – which it does by its own egoic striving. But because it is not capable of this, the ego can never succeed. As a result, the ego is forced to create a facsimile, a false copy of the lost quality. The full blown container of the facsimile is our Enneagram Type.

Our personality is fundamentally a mark of lost connection with the only energy – our essence – that can bring us true peace and happiness. The ego helped us survive the pain and traumas of childhood and get on with life's journey, but it can never bring us home.

The constriction of our individual egos serves to constrict all others' egos. Our collective maintenance of this constriction is called “the obscuring of Dao.” Hindus call it *maya*. Buddhists call it *samsara*. Christians name it *original sin*.

From *Roaming Free Inside the Cage – A Daoist Approach to the Enneagram and Spiritual Transformation*, by William M. Schafer, Ph.D.

¹ Note: these shocks are *not* the same as Gurdjieff's shock points.