

Ego in the Contemplative Christian tradition is a way of thinking and being in the world that is driven by a compulsion to control:

- It is a false self that sees everything through the lens of its own private hurts, needs, and memories, making it self-centered, defensive, judgmental, and easily wounded.
- When the ego is in charge, we take things personally, and when offended we must get even, retaliating tit-for-tat.
- It construes life as a zero-sum game in which there are only winners and losers, then strives to be superior, obsessing over earning, achieving, public perception, and the admiration of others.
- The ego is inherently dualistic, painting the world in black and white extremes. As such, it is arrogant, riddled with illusions, and blinded to deep truth.
- Ego causes us to constantly compare ourselves with others, is neurotically self-reliant and must always be in control. It makes us think, I must control my thinking, feeling, and interacting; I must control my appearance and how other people see me; I must control other people and how they relate to me; I must control my environment and all situations that might bear on me; I must get my way, meet my own needs, fix my own problems, and secure my own future.