

## LETTER TO RUNDBRIEF -

For years I have looked for points of agreement between spiritual systems, rather than how they differ, and on the matter of type there is universal agreement. Each tradition has something useful to say about the monk of fearful mind, or sleepy mind, or angry mind, (and all the other mind states named in the Enneagram,) because type presents a specific barrier to spiritual life.

Type performs a dual function. It is both a protective emotional strategy, and also a confining, automatic pattern of resistance. For me, the great advantage of the Enneagram, is that it names the specific patterns of resistance that different types of people encounter on the spiritual journey, thus uniting psychological insight, with the specific traditional practices that assist different type of people toward spiritual liberation.

My own understanding about the role of type in spiritual life is still unfolding, but even in the early '70s, I saw that most people were capable of having a spiritual experience. That was the easy part. Profound spiritual insight and experience were happening everywhere, regardless of the particular techniques that awakened them. In retrospect it's easy to see why. At the beginning of what was then called "the human potential movement" in America, students were relatively naive. They might enroll in regimens of fasting, solitude and unfamiliar meditations, all of which lower the defensive barriers of personality. Coupled with frequent body- and breathwork sessions, it seemed impossible not have an experience. Even those who felt they were made of stone would open.

But the tough part always came on Monday morning, when students went back to jobs and a family. Within weeks, that same powerful experience, by then reduced to a memory, was dissected and analyzed from the point of view of type. The event itself isn't forgotten, but over time, powerful peak experiences become time honored conversation pieces: "Do you remember the time when? Remember what happened back then? Let me tell you this amazing story!" Students are extremely grateful for a context where spiritual experiences can happen. They tell you how grateful they are, all of which makes teachers feel appreciated and productive. But to me, perhaps cynically, it looked like insight and experience were easy to come by, while the real work is about integrating those experiences, until they become part of your personality makeup.

The hardest phase of any shift in consciousness isn't about getting an experience. It's more about softening the resistance's that return once the experience is over. We can see this illustrated in the shock points of the Enneagram diagram. An initial impulse at 3, countered by reactivity at 6, leading either to forgetfulness, or to a new synthesis of consciousness at 9. Lasting change lies in softening the self-protective defenses of type that counter any radical experience. To me, the biggest deal in spiritual growth always lies in how to handle Monday morning, when resistance returns.

When I started out, serious meditators were commonly caught in a generational problem. A lot of us faced the age-old choice between monastic life or being a householder, and sadly, it was often a simple matter of survival. Unless you had an independent means of support, it was very difficult to undertake both at the same time. As it happened, just at that juncture-mid-seventies to the early eighties-traditional teachers from many spiritual lineages poured into America. High-level teachings became available to working people just as the Enneagram began to go public. There's no

precedent for the fact that lay people now learn practices traditionally kept secret, or that psychologists can draw on the healing technology of meditation. It's the first time in history that individuals like ourselves have both psychological and spiritual wisdom available to us. The bald truth, however, is that an active spiritual practice requires a big investment of time and energy. Stabilizing a higher state of consciousness isn't about just going to church, or visiting temple for prayers a couple of times a week. The investment is far more demanding, especially when your attention is split between earning a living, and other material priorities. Actually, part of my early excitement about the Enneagram was seeing how it cuts through the enormous time sink of discovering your own spiritual barriers.

To tell the truth, when most Enneagrammers speak about spirituality, they are probably focused at stage one on the continuum of inner development. They've looked within themselves and discovered that suffering is caused by destructive patterns such as pride, avarice, gluttony, lust, and the whole show of type-related preoccupations. They want to relieve that suffering by taking responsibility for the situation, respecting other people's points of view, and leading an informed, ethical life. But paradoxically, many of those changes can take place without ever leaving ordinary consciousness.

Most beginners have a mental concept of their higher potentials, and may have actually experienced them at peak moments. But potential students browsing an Enneagram web site are likely to confuse real spiritual training with just becoming a decent, ethical human being. They won't have a clue about what they'll have to undergo to climb the inner ladder of development.

When I was starting out, I had an experience that illustrates the split between spirituality and going to work on Monday. The psychology department my graduate school required us to be in therapy, and I remember my therapist as both brilliant and blatantly disparaging about meditation. Meditation was magical thinking, and my attraction to it looked suspiciously like regression. The word "God" was also some kind of wishful construct, so I quickly learned to report my spiritual experiences as if they were fantasies, omitting the fact that I continuously followed their guidance. I would then hurry away to my Zen teacher on the other side of town, who in turn saw the American preoccupation with mere matters of personality as the source of human error.

Fortunately, this split has softened considerably with time. I think it might not even exist for the next generation of meditators. For them, it will just seem natural to shift between different modes of consciousness, recognizing the benefits of each. My analyst skillfully guided me to life-saving insights into the workings of my own unconscious, yet it was all about patterns of thought, feelings and sensation. Then I'd ride two stations on the subway to our quiet zendo, and learn that thoughts, emotions and sensations could drop away.

In the zendo, we were discouraged from talking about our meditation, lest the energy dissipate, or, perish the thought, be shunted to ego gratification. Personality was not valued. Emotions were definitely not welcome, and interviews with the Roshi focused on technique, bypassing all discussion of the feelings evoked by technique. The solution to unwanted feelings was "more zazen!" So I took my 6-like feelings straight back to the therapist.

In retrospect, the spirituality of our Zen temple was extraordinary, mainly because my teacher embodied an unmistakable quality of peace - the fruit of the practice he teaches. He remained, however, blissfully disinterested in

the aggressively competitive society that his students faced on a daily basis. The topic of integrating altered-state experiences with day-to-day American lives just never came up, so students had to engineer a private solution. This is another reason, incidentally, why I like the Enneagram panel method, which encourages speaking from personal experience in plain layman's language. The panels give a forum for thrashing out the ways that different types of people deal with ethical quandaries, relationships, competition, spiritual practice—all the areas we've been talking about. I think it helps the integration process.

Had I been pressed to choose between therapy and meditation, I might not have discovered the intuitive faculty that later became the mainstay of my teaching. As it happened, over a two-year period of intensive day-by-day practice, my meditations revealed the placements of attention that allowed me to discriminate between my thoughts, and a state of mind where impressions appeared before I knew what I would see. To make a very long story short, thanks to both the analyst I was seeing at the time, and the Zen Roshi with whom I sat—I remembered something about how my mind works, and wound up teaching it to others.

There's a giant gap between cognitive knowledge and the non-thinking clarity of intuition. Just because someone has an occasional psychic moment doesn't mean that they're particularly intuitive. Neither does occasionally falling in love with someone make us an embodiment of love. Spiritual states like intuition and love come and go all the time, and although they originate in higher consciousness, they're highly unstable, and easily unseated when attention turns to outer events. Frankly, I think we all have trouble maintaining spiritual presence during a hectic Monday morning at work. It's not that we don't know that non-duality is at the root of every moment. We may even know how to shift states of consciousness at will, but we still forget like 9s, get angry like 1s, become as despairing as 4s, and so on. There's a body of practices that deals with maintaining continuous spiritual presence, regardless of changing outer conditions. It applies to all types of people who are trying to integrate the "two selves" of spiritual and material identity, and frankly, I find those practices difficult.

As a tool to integrate the "two selves," the Enneagram is smack in the middle between material and spiritual life; this may be its strength but also its vulnerability. It's just as easy to mold it into a spiritual tool as it is to find practical no-nonsense business applications. Typical of universal truths, it appears to hold validity on all levels, from the concrete to the sublime. On the down side we could say that because of its elasticity, the range of applications of the Enneagram are infinite.

My interests in the Enneagram are anchored in attention practices for different types of people. But attention is a notoriously fragile tool. Higher states of awareness are often confused with fantasy, and overlaid by projection. You have to discriminate between fantasy and accurate intuition. You have to tell the difference between authentic inner experience and personality projection. Going back to your point about taking responsibility and being accountable, I've relied heavily on attention practices from what's called the oral tradition. It's a teaching style rooted in a very simple requirement. You have to give evidence.

The oral tradition is focused squarely on the integration of higher consciousness with ordinary living. It relies on teachers who embody an

aspect of higher consciousness and can draw others into a similar state. An obvious example would be shamanic cultures, where a tribe's survival depends on intuitive rather than cognitive skills, during a long trek in the desert, or on the open seas without sextant or compass. Traditional societies survive by being in synch with a greater consciousness, and depend on the attainments of their guides. But the tribal aim of giving physical evidence also serves a higher purpose. Those who demonstrate accuracy in altered states of consciousness are entrusted with the spiritual welfare of others.

Oral tradition teachers show up in every culture. My Zen teacher, for instance, has a pronounced capacity for an inner quality called "calm abiding." The reason that his reputation is strong isn't that he's knowledgeable "by the book," it's that his calm doesn't unseat, even when he's placed under great emotional duress. Newcomers usually think that every spiritual practice yields the same result. But in fact, there are many different qualities of higher being. Humility is different than strength for instance, and hope is different than faith. It's my teacher's quality of being that draws me to him, and it's the reason why other monks send him students who need to cultivate calm abiding. It's just plain easier to relax into empty awareness when he conducts a sesshin (long sit), than it is with monks who do not embody that quality.

I could go on at length about the oral tradition, and the qualities that different teachers embody. But in line with healing the personality/spiritual split, the oral tradition simply looks for evidence. One obvious evidence that a practice is working, is a personality change in the direction of kindness, joy, perseverance-the spectrum of higher being. In the oral tradition, students typically move between teachers who "house" a specific quality of higher being, because it rubs off in conversation, through inquiry and the interactive instruction that typifies oral teaching.

An arcane phrase like "oral tradition" instantly triggers images of mysterious initiations and secret knowledge. Also maybe something to do with a well-worn piece of parchment, handed down from one generation to another. Scenarios like that are more than likely wishful thinking, because Oral teaching is often public. Just as a quick example: I spent a concentrated three-year period of practice with Swami Muktananda when his Siddha Yoga ashram first opened. The constant buzz of conversation centered on the different qualities of darshan (spiritual energy) transmitted by the "living saints" of that tradition. It was assumed that Muktananda's darshan conveyed specific spiritual qualities, and that the shakti (spiritual energy) housed in another ashram could produce a different benefit.

There were plenty of sannyasis (renunciate Yogis) who passed through Siddha Yoga Dam to give teachings, but most of them did it "by the book." They were typically charming, amusing people who could handle questions very well. But other speakers-who usually weren't as attractive-left a far more enduring impression. Those few created an impact because they embodied an unmistakable quality that permeated the meditation. Their sessions were packed, because they could alter their consciousness, and speak from the placement of awareness inside of themselves that matched the content of their teaching.

It's just a whole lot easier to feel your own spiritual centers when you enter meditation in a conducive atmosphere. If you want to develop compassion, one way is to find someone who's stationed in a state of compassion, whose compassion resides in an activated heart chakra (energy center.) Then any interaction immediately shifts from "tell me about it" to "show me how." When someone teaches from genuine experience-from what they

embody, instead of what they think they know-the impact is magnified. It's like giving an orange to be tasted instead of describing its flavor. I was fond of sending my students to Siddha Yoga Dam, because it sliced through doubts about whether energy is demonstrable. Most everybody felt the palpable presence of shakti, and on some evenings, the energy in the hall was thick enough to cut with a knife-I remember one beginner, who came back so blissed out that she thought someone might have slipped a drug into the incense burners-but the point I'm trying to make is that students got a demonstration. They might have hated the chanting, or the fact that men and women are segregated, or the intense idealization of celibacy, but nevertheless, they felt in the presence of something genuine-evidence that could never be conveyed by force of intellect or analysis.

Now here comes the big heresy - Even though students reported all kinds of impressive experiences-physical energy movements, internal lights, insights and guidance of all kinds-even with all that demonstration of energy at work, I never encouraged students to surrender to the guru, change their customary meditation practice, or go live at the ashram. Why not? Because to me, shakti is only one of many expressions of energy. In fact, my Zen teacher, a true embodiment of calm abiding, was distressed for the entire three-year period that I attended the ashram, believing that my spiritual welfare was at stake. I doubt that my old analyst back in New York would have been too thrilled either.

Enneagram type panels are another illustration of oral teaching. The speakers have only to tell the truth, and they become living representatives, "houses" for a particular quality of being. When a panel is focused, they internally generate all the power and conviction of lived experience, and a receptive audience will be triggered into sharing the same consciousness.

There's a phenomenon that sometimes happens on panels. It feels like the quality of the type suffuses the hall-the up and out, raucous energy of Eight sweeps the audience, and everyone feels bigger. Or the Eight panel pulls back from a line of questioning, and you feel the vibrancy of the whole room contract, as the energetic quality of Five takes over. The panelists are just being themselves, but when their inner state of being is so precisely demonstrated, an audience shifts to match their energetic quality. You can't help seeing it the way the panel sees it, when you're in the presence of such powerful, directed presence. Your own thoughts recede, your <own> emotions fall away, you allow their feelings to penetrate your being -and for a time, you just let it all wash through you.

An audience instinctively perceives the authenticity of the state. The state is in the room, and students learn to interact with it. Actually, it's an example of integrating spiritual and ordinary awareness, faced with an emotional atmosphere, we naturally match it, much in the way that some children learn to match the moods of adults in the family. In intuition training, you learn the inner placements of attention that facilitate matching the emotional state of others, even when it's masked. On spiritual type panels you hear it described as "tapping in" or "hooking up" or "joining" with someone else's inner state. In psychological jargon it's close to the clinical phenomenon of projective identification, but far more flexible and voluntary. In martial arts vocabulary it's called "blending"-becoming a single energy with partners, by joining with their inner quality.

By the way-the martial arts are another oral tradition arena. Students are commonly attracted to a teacher who embodies a quality they're trying to

cultivate, but the learning happens in silence on the mat. A teacher blends with the quality of a student's energy, and explains both by demonstration and by verbally coaching, while both are joined in the same altered state of consciousness.

Long before the Enneagram books went public. I was at work developing a body of intuitive practices for different types of people. We had an incredible faculty. My Zen teacher came on board, and we had Enneagram type groups focused on every conceivable topic, especially progress in meditation.

Everyone had to follow a practice, but there was a huge range of preference—all the way from Christian centering prayer to Tibetan Dzogchen to the focusing technique. For a couple of years I sponsored seminars with teachers who worked with the higher uses of imagination. Fortunately there's a mature aikido association in California, where I taught, which was steeped in the oral approach of embodying different aspects of consciousness.

I always looked for teachers who could demonstrate an aspect of intuition or higher being, and could articulate what they knew. We used local resources, like Green Gulch Zen center, the Siddha Yoga society, and local Vipassana retreats. For two years, I sponsored classes with a tracker, who was able to explain his craft. He led sweat lodge work, and took groups to desert wilderness areas, having made a reputation finding lost people, and sometimes tracking for the police.

I taught visualization and intuition practices, because it's the area I'm suited to, but I also invited other intuitives, some of whom had a religious vocation, and others, who were well known in the human potential movement. But now it's come full circle. With the Enneagram books in place, and professional level training programs in Europe and America, I can return to the original agenda. Describing the access points to higher consciousness for different types of people.