

THE JOURNEYS OF UNITY AND DEVOTION
(FOUR SPIRITUALITIES, PART 2)
by Rev. Kit Ketcham, Jan. 23, 2005

A couple of weeks ago, we began a journey of understanding together, using our own personalities and their characteristics as guideposts, learning to discern more about ourselves and what our own personal spiritual character might reveal.

We talked at that time about the Myers-Briggs personality typologies and how that information can reveal our preferences for our spiritual lives. We identified the four components of our personalities as extroverted or introverted, sensing or intuiting, thinking or feeling, and judging or perceiving. We came up with a four letter combination that suggests our personality typology.

Some of you have doubtless gone a little farther and taken the Myers-Briggs test and have determined what your personality type is. How many of you now know what your four letters, your personality type, say about who you are? How many of you agree with it? Because this is not a perfect indicator of your personality, just one approach to self-understanding.

Remember that we compared personality typology to handedness: though we may use both hands almost interchangeably, depending on the need, we tend to use one hand more than the other for certain tasks. Just so, we use all eight personality characteristics, but we use one combination more than the others.

We went on to discover that it is the two inner letters of our personality typology score that seem to indicate our spiritual preferences. We learned that persons with an NT combination, an intuitive-thinking combination, have certain characteristics, as do those with ST, or sensing-thinking, NF, or intuitive-feeling, or SF, sensing-feeling.

We heard a little bit about the spiritual mentors for each typology: the Buddha and Buckminster Fuller for NT spirits, those on the Journey of Unity; Mohammed and St. Francis for SF spirits, those on the Journey of Devotion; Moses and Confucius, for ST spirits, those on the Journey of Works; and Rabindranath Tagore and Jesus for NF spirits, those on the Journey of Harmony.

I saw a lot of you smiling and nodding about some of the things you were hearing on January 9. I saw some couples nudge each other----- they clearly understood that these things affect their lives together. And I'm glad that so many of you are back to hear the next part of the story! Remember that next time we will learn even more about spiritual journey and what it means in human life.

Today we will learn more about two of the spiritual journeys mentioned in Peter Richardson's work *FOUR SPIRITUALITIES*, the Journey of Unity and the Journey of Devotion.

Last time, I noted that the Journey of Unity and the Journey of Devotion tend to attract very different personalities, that they are opposites on the typology map. The Journey of Unity attracts those with an NT, or intuitive/thinking, approach to reason and faith. The Journey of Devotion attracts those with an SF, or sensing/feeling, approach to reason and faith.

Let's deal with the Journey of Unity first, thinking about what it means to use intuitive reasoning and thinking decision-making together in choosing a spiritual path. The NT spirit experiences reality in a global way, the big picture, the organizing principles that operate in the universe. This person easily sees the universality of certain truths, the injustice of certain behaviors, and seeks clarity for self and others.

A classic experience for an NT spirit is expressed in this story told by Albert Schweitzer when he was in Africa many years ago: "Lost in thought I sat on the deck of the barge, struggling to find the elementary and universal conception of the ethical which I had not discovered in any philosophy.

"Sheet after sheet I covered with disconnected sentences, merely to keep myself concentrated on the problem. Late on the third day, at the very moment when, at sunset, we were making our way through a herd of hippopotamuses, there flashed upon my mind, unforeseen and unsought, the phrase, "Reverence for Life".

"The iron door had yielded; the path in the thicket had become visible. Now I had found my way to the idea in which affirmation of the world and ethics are contained side by side. Now I knew that the ethical acceptance of the world and of life, together with the ideals of civilization contained in this concept, has a foundation in thought."

The Journey of Unity always tries to boil complexity down into simplicity, whether it be broad principles, honesty, or clarity.

In searching for truth, Intuitive Thinkers may be either philosophical realists or idealists. Nothing, however, is taken for granted; it must be thought through and affirmed for oneself. In the Journey of Unity, the search for truth itself is often as satisfying as its conclusions at any point.

Social justice is an important concern for an Intuitive Thinker, who feels an imperative to change the world's structures in a long-term, permanent way. This may be so compelling that the immediate human need in front of the NT person can be neglected.

For an NT person, spiritual practice must have ongoing meaning, must not become rote and trite in usage. Our Unitarian Universalist humanists, those who see the greatest meaning in human life experience and do not necessarily need a God or Goddess figure to honor, continue to remind us that our worship, our shaping worth together, must have real meaning to us, must not become a mere habit, and we are grateful for their guidance.

With principle, truth, and justice, the Journey of Unity strives to attain clarity of mind and clarity of spiritual enlightenment. Intuitive Thinking meditation is an intellectual mysticism which calls to persons who crave a sense of belonging to the larger whole, whether that is called Universe or God or Goddess or Truth or Love.

An Intuitive Thinking spirit craves the simplest of settings for spiritual practice: a garden, a quiet grove or meadow, a simple room or chapel. Worship is welcoming, thoughtful, principles of truth are the focus. There is a sense of symmetry, a theme linking the elements together, an educational component. This spirit wishes to leave feeling more centered,

engaged, and informed.

Mentors for this way of being spiritual are the Buddha, born in 544 bce as Siddhartha Gautama into the family of a wealthy king. Though protected by his family from knowing much about poverty and despair, the young Siddhartha, at adulthood, left his home in search of understanding about the real world and the meaning of life. After years of searching and ascetic living, Siddhartha, according to the legend, achieved the enlightenment he had been seeking and began to teach the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism

Buckminster Fuller, the American visionary, learned through failure and suffering (he was at one point on the brink of suicide) to trust his vision and his intuition as he began to think of himself as a “design scientist”.

The Intuitive Thinking person brings great power to interfaith work, particularly in the area of peacemaking and synthesis of religious theologies. These seekers ask the important question, “how can religions be in harmony, not conflict?”, which Hans Kung, developer of an ecumenical world ethic, answers by saying, “Those who carry on dialogue do not shoot.”

The Journey of Devotion attracts seekers who are quite different from those we have described on the Journey of Unity. Of all of the Four Spiritualities, this journey is the one most readily tangible and specific, often involving direct experiences or highly ritualized behavior. Spiritual reality is present, approachable, personal, interactive.

While this spirituality dovetails with other spiritualities and shares

spaces, programs, and practices with them, this seeker, the Sensing Feeling personality, needs hands-on, direct, devotional experience.

An SF, or Sensing Feeling, spirit craves a space that is rich in stimulation, perhaps invoking rituals of cleansing or kneeling or lighting candles or incense. Art enhancing the sacred space is important, as are music and movement which celebrate the timelessness of the religious experience. An SF spirit invests a good deal of self in the sacred space and experiences a sense of the holy from this important place.

A Sensing Feeling spirit engages life in several important ways: many feel a strong pull toward pilgrimage, toward visiting a site that feels sacred and holy. The world has numerous pilgrimage destinations: Mecca, Jerusalem, Stonehenge, Rome, Glastonbury, Calcutta, Lourdes. (Boston for Unitarian Universalists?) For this spirit, a visit to a place of spiritual significance is a milestone that looms large in the Journey of Devotion.

Heroic figures may play an important part for SF seekers. The stories of those who have persisted in obedience to a higher cause provide important guidance and inspiration for Sensing Feeling spirits.

Epic stories abound---of long and dangerous travels, difficulties encountered and overcome, temptations of good and evil, dragons, rainbows, rivers, oceans, beasts. In the end, the hero triumphs over all adversity and gives humanity a great boon by restoring good over evil.

For an SF seeker, the concept of Divinity is no theory. God or

Goddess is real, personal, accessible, human in form. God is love. Images are ways of focusing on the beloved ideal. God or Goddess is seen as friend, parent, lover. Joy and ecstasy are part of the religious experience, and miracle an everyday occurrence.

Simplicity in living is a goal, with richness of relationship, of visual experience, of emotion providing the environment for joyous living. And Sensing Feeling seekers take this simple abundance into their social justice work, preferring direct, hands-on encounters with those they serve.

Many on the Journey of Devotion are attracted to monastic orders that unite prayer life with teaching, nursing, and serving the poor. But for every Mother Teresa known to the world, there are many thousands of anonymous others who roll up their sleeves with mercy and helpfulness and reach out from their households to neighbor and community.

Ultimately, devotion to people becomes the highest form of devotion to the divine.

In modern times, NT or intuitive thinking, personalities have gotten the attention and resources of a society, and SF, or sensing feeling, personalities have been undervalued, as technology and research seem to attract more respect.

The SF spirit is often drawn into teaching, nursing, the ministry, youth work, counseling, fulltime parenthood, garden designers, and other work in which service is paramount.

Those of us who have been public educators are aware of this sense of devaluing, as salaries, work conditions, and workload become the source of community resentment and punitive action.

So too, SF spirituality is looked down on by some as common or even anachronistic and foolish. Those who feel assurance that lighting a candle to a beloved hero will grant them the strength to endure misfortune, have often felt the skepticism of those who follow another path.

It is important for those on the Journey of Devotion to find mutual support to become who they truly are, to feel comfortable in their native spirituality. There are many variations in the practice of SF spirituality, all along the theological spectrum, from non-theistic to theistic, and in practice from true simplicity to highly ornate and complex practices. To enter into the practice of devotion without apology and with assurance can be a great blessing to oneself and to all others.

To an SF spirit, the home, workplace, and worship space are all places where the soul can flourish. This seeker may display a statue of Kuan Yin in a home or business, with flowers or incense. We are familiar with the small shrines visible in the corners of the yards of many Catholic families.

Prayer wheels by Buddhists, rosaries by Catholic and Orthodox Christians, favorite hymns invoking a personal God, the protective care of the Koran, the yarmulkes and prayer shawls of observant Jews, the removal of footwear before prayer, solstice and equinox celebrations, candles of joy and concern, clerical robes and stoles, flowers on the altar, ornate Celtic crosses, feast days which end the fasts of Ramadan and Yom Kippur, a new Easter hat and the bright eggs and candies of Easter egg hunts, dragon-boat festivals: all these express the joy and ecstasy of religious experience, brought to us by Sensing Feeling spirits and our

world would be poorer without them.

Spiritual mentors for SF seekers are Mohammed-----whose founding of Islam gave the world a religion of deep devotion and highly ritualized practices---and St. Francis, often thought of as the patron saint of the environment because of his connection with animals and nature. St. Francis is also credited with bringing hymn singing to ordinary people, as he set sacred texts to the folk tunes of Italy.

So what does this all mean to us? How does this knowledge affect our time together, our relationships, our outreach into the community? As we learn more in February about the Journeys of Works and Harmony, I hope we will expand our understanding of two of the most important principles of Unitarian Universalism---that we affirm and promote acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations and that we have the goal of world community, with peace, liberty, and justice for all.

Understanding each other and accepting the needs of others for different kinds of religious experience is crucial to the Unitarian Universalist path. So I ask you to think about this: how can we become more accepting and encouraging of others on their spiritual journeys, so that we can contribute the wisdom and learnings of our community to that larger world community, with peace, liberty, and justice for all?

Let's pause for a moment of silent reflection and prayer.

Our closing hymn is #123, Spirit of Life.

BENEDICTION:

Our worship service, our time of shaping worth together, is ended,

but our service to the world begins again as we leave this place. Let us go in peace, remembering that we have our gifts to offer and our limitations to teach us. May we offer understanding, love and hope to each other through the unique ways in which we express our deepest yearnings. Amen, Shalom, Salaam, and Blessed Be.