

**Archetype of the Spirit
by Rev. Ann Schranz
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I begin in the middle, the middle of life. Often by midlife, our usual way of being in the world is so habitual that life becomes flat. “Out of the routine of boredom a certain restlessness sets in,” according to Peter Tufts Richardson. “Buddhists call it *dukhka*, or a pervasive unsatisfactoriness of life, a free floating suffering. At midlife we ask, ‘Is this it? Is there nothing more to life than perpetuating this?’”¹ In September, I preached a sermon based on a book by Peter Tufts Richardson entitled *Four Spiritualities*. He relates different *spirituality* types to different *personality* types as described by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). You may remember the 16 tongue-in-cheek prayers I read that day, one for each of the 16 personality types.

The diagram on the front of the Order of Service this morning is the Four Spiritualities Mandala.² A mandala is something to look at and meditate upon as a means of developing greater powers of concentration and discernment. Many mandalas have shapes and colors but not letters. The Four Spiritualities mandala has letters corresponding to personality type in a very particular arrangement. Each of the four spiritual “journeys” (or types of spirituality -- unity, harmony, devotion, and works) is a natural outgrowth of personality.

According to Richardson, “The Journey of Unity (NT), represented by teachers such as the Buddha, Socrates, Margaret Fuller, engages spiritual growth in searching for truth, universal principles, mystical experience as clarity, and systemic social justice. The Journey of Devotion (SF) represented by leaders such as Mohammed, Ramakrishna, Mother Theresa, focuses upon the immediacy of direct experience, piety, and hands-on service to others. The Journey of Works (ST) represented by such as Moses, Confucius, Julia Ward Howe, begins with identity, covenant, order, evolving through work as spiritual practice and stewardship as its ethical focus. The Journey of Harmony (NF), with Jesus, Rabindranath Tagore, Lao Tzu, embarks on a quest for self-actualization as its message, fostering mystic gratitude, healing, idealism, and a concern for humane processes in human relationships.”³

¹ *Archetype of the Spirit: Origins of Spirituality – Individual and Collective*, Peter Tufts Richardson, Red Barn Publishing, Rockville, Maine, 2007, p. 16. See www.redbarnrockland.com.

² *Ibid.*, p. 17.

³ “Four Spiritualities and Spiritual Freedom” paper from the Proceedings of the Association of Psychological Type (APT XIII), July 1999, p. 1.

In Richardson's new book, *Archetype of the Spirit*, the focus is more strongly upon understanding our particular personality type as part of the whole wild and crazy development of consciousness itself on this sweet and bedraggled planet. This circle, these lines, and these letters [gesture to cover of the Order of Service] are not intended to fixate us like dead bugs under glass, skewered by a stick pin. Rather, they are intended to emphasize flux and dynamism, opportunities seized and opportunities missed. They are intended to offer an antidote to the boredom, restlessness, pervasive unsatisfactoriness of life that may become particularly acute at midlife.

“The four journeys, Unity (NT), Devotion (SF), Works (ST), and Harmony (NF) are to be found in all of us, in differing strengths and one leading. A large part of spiritual development is bringing each and all into an integration and a dynamic balance in consciousness and in the self. Antagonism toward any or an absence of one or two immediately raises a red flag,” says Richardson.⁴ As it happens, we are most likely to feel antagonism or a lack of connection with those opposite us on the Four Spiritualities Mandala.

Later in this service, Frank Sontag (from the KLOS radio station) and I will ask each other some questions about spirituality. As someone whose personality comfort zone is NT (intuitive thinking) and whose spirituality comfort zone is the Journey of Unity (shared with such exemplars as the Buddha, Socrates, and Margaret Fuller), my perspective in answering Frank's questions will be neither strictly personal nor will it be a universal perspective. My perspective is aligned with other “Journey of Unity” folks. It may resonate less with those on other spiritual journeys.

How can this model of the differentiation of human consciousness into four basic patterns help us on a practical level? How can it help us to find a way through the plaintive midlife question, “Is this all there is?” Since we are most likely to feel antagonism or a lack of connection with those directly opposite us on the Four Spiritualities Mandala, I have the most to learn from those whose personality type is SF (sensing feeling) and whose spiritual comfort zone is the Journey of Devotion and whose religious exemplars are Mohammed, Ramakrishna, and Mother Teresa.

When I relate with SF (sensing feeling) folks, those who are on the Journey of Devotion, the interactions may feel rough, awkward, disjointed, and prone to miscommunication and misunderstanding. What to do? Rather than trying to learn how to manipulate those people (which is not very ethical) and rather than trying to change my core self (which is unlikely to work), I am trying to befriend and nurture the

⁴ Ibid., p. 27.

underdeveloped SF (sensing feeling) aspects of myself. One antidote to midlife ennui and boredom is to do this with whatever may be the underdeveloped parts of our personality.

Keeping in mind the hazards of generalizing, I think it is fair to say that NT (intuitive thinking) people, those on the journey of unity, gravitate toward a stripped down and spare “enlightenment” rather than a richly textured, sensory “fulfillment,” and the reverse is true for SF (sensing feeling) people. The grand opportunity of *emotional* midlife, regardless of one’s *chronological* age, is to explore the inclination of the opposite “type” within ourselves. For NT (intuitive thinking) people, those who tend to have a minimalist spirituality, this might mean adding things – not adding ideas or concepts but literally adding *things* into our lives – fabric, color, texture, taste. For SF (sensing feeling) people, those who tend to have a dense and textured spirituality, it might mean simplifying, shedding, literally subtracting *things* to make a spacious meadow with room for new spiritual insight.

Speaking personally, here is how all of this has been expressed in my life over the past five to ten years. You may already know that I am not a cook. A typical meal for me means throwing together an edible collage of “found objects” from my refrigerator or cupboard – preferably objects which do not need cooking. I have now started giving myself positive “strokes” whenever I cook, even if this cooking is only frying eggs. I give myself positive strokes if I buy a spice other than salt or pepper. Another change is that I have started paying more attention to beauty in my physical environment: color, shape, texture. Frankly, it took me a while to understand that things can be beautiful, as well as functional. Since a placemat is a placemat, why would anyone need more than one set of placemats? ;) You know, maybe it is OK to have more than one set of placemats.

Another change that I have made in this process of befriending and encouraging the SF (sensing feeling) part of myself relates to Muffin, the outdoor cat who lives in my neighborhood and who has taken to hanging out on my patio. During this recent cold snap, I (I, who am inclined to say, “Systemic social justice or nothing!”) have been creating a shelter for Muffin, different and better each night. It looks like an igloo, with sleeping bags and cardboard boxes.

I will never be someone who sets up elaborate altars, yet I can bring an “altar sensibility” into many spaces. Over time, as I become more devotional in my daily actions, I suspect that people, who, for example, resonate with St. Francis of Assisi, will tend to feel less like the “other” to me. I am consoled and encouraged by this: “There are two kinds of compassion, cool and hot,” says Peter Tufts Richardson. “Cool compassion is of sky, such as the Buddha illustrated, a contemplative compassion for all sentient

beings. Hot compassion is of the earth, such as St. Francis illustrated, a direct, hands-on assistance for the person before you, here and now.” He says, “I cannot and would not say which spirituality might be more profound or superior. The world is in desperate need of both. It is important then . . . to travel both ways on the spine of the Archetype of Spirit, toward sky and toward earth, integrating as you proceed, with the goal of human wholeness.”⁵

May we find, beneath any antagonism or disconnection, a wellspring of affection and connection. May we value and nurture both cool compassion and hot compassion, sky and earth. May it be so!

⁵ Ibid., p. 98.