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Going for the Gold—Alchemy in Coaching

“Our collective predicament depends much on individual human transformation and... we cannot afford not arousing the potential and motivation of individuals to work on themselves to the extent that they can.”

Claudio Naranjo,

“Suggestions for Further Work on Self,” *Character and Neurosis*.

In 2009 I viewed Xue Shen and Hongbo Zhao’s graceful and Olympic gold-winning pairs skating performance. “This is our fourth Olympics,” noted Shen. “We made a comeback to give it our last shot at gold. Words cannot describe how I feel right now. I just want to cry. It is a dream.” Then a friend linked me to a video of another Chinese pair in a “she without arm, he without leg” ballet, whose profoundly moving performance changed the meaning for me of “going for the gold.”

In coaching we have the privilege of witnessing both kinds of “gold.” During my first few years as an executive coach, I was more focused on Olympian goals with my clients, who achieved their promotions, managed their teams for higher morale and productivity, or—in the bronze medal category of coaching—reinstated themselves instead of being fired. With some, however, my simply being present and mirroring encouraged much more, so I began to look for ways to reframe

Mary Bast



“going for the gold” in coaching. This is not about winning, not about being right, more caring, confident, unique, smart, inventive, strong, or content, but about a greater illumination.

Do we have the right to challenge clients to transformational work when they’ve asked only for help with their leadership or communication skills, or similar behavioral goals? Deep change—as indicated by these alchemical metaphors—is disorienting, discomfiting, and even frightening. Nonetheless, I believe it is our Great Work to be courageous enough to “go for the gold.” Of course, not every client is ready or wants to make the leap great coaching demands, but those who do find far more rewards than they could have anticipated when they started out to resolve an immediate problem.

Alchemy may seem a bit grandiose as a metaphor for this awakening, but alchemists believe everything will become more advanced given time; the “Great Work” is simply to speed up that process. So why not imagine our Great Work is to help accelerate our clients’ transformation?

Now envision the Enneagram as a dynamic vessel within which alchemical processes take place. Below are nine elements of alchemy, arranged in **CONTINUED ON PAGE 20**

Integral Living and Enneagram

My newest book, *The Integral Enneagram*, is on the relationship between the enneagram and Ken Wilber’s integral approach. For months, I’ve been wrestling with the question, What is integration? It’s one of those scenarios where every new insight leads to a dozen new questions. As a result, I’ve been working on one chapter for almost six months!

What follows is the result of what I’ve figured out so far, and it’s still a work in progress. The one thing I’m sure of is that a truly integral approach has got to be as all-encompassing as possible while at the same time providing enough practical details to make is useful as a guide for living.

So in this article, we’ll take a look at the nature of integration and at a new integral model designed to extend the model already developed by Wilber. And of course, since our focus in the *EM* is on the enneagram, there’s a discussion of how we can use the proposed model to look at differences among the nine types.

Life as Holarchy

If we want to understand the nature of integration, we have to understand exactly what is being integrated. Intuitively, we understand why it’s important to

Susan Rhodes

integrate things on the same level of life, e.g., to develop healthy relationships, a thriving ecosystem, or a government with checks and balances. We may call this kind of meshing *horizontal integration*. But most of us are less aware of the importance of *vertical integration*, which is the harmonious meshing of different levels of life. Both kinds of integration are important (Fig. 1). Also, without vertical integration, horizontal integration is difficult if not impossible.

Holarchy is a term invented by Arthur Koestler to describe the nature of vertical integration. From a holarchic perspective, everything in life is said to play two roles: the role of a *whole* (an autonomous individual) and the role of *participant* (in relation to something larger than itself). So ...CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

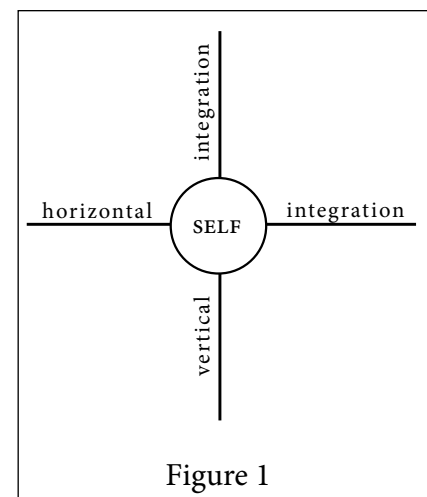


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Dear Jack,

Thank you for publishing my article, “Spirituality and the Enneagram in Business,” in the September issue of *EM*. I felt it necessary to write this letter, however, because I’m concerned that your summary of the article in the “From the Editor” section may give readers the wrong impression of what I am advocating, and, of course, I feel compelled to comment on your advocacy of Michael Behe.

I want to be clear that I do not believe that the business domain is one where activity occurs “irrespective of our secret motivations, feelings, and thoughts,” and I would strongly disagree that the domains of business and spirituality are diametrically opposed world views with separate value systems. On this latter point, I believe that comparative religion scholar Karen Armstrong would agree with me; in a recent column in “*The Washington Post*” she wrote “Two years ago we launched the Charter for Compassion and yet the people who have come forward to help us have not been religious leaders but business men and women.” I find that people in the business world are, on average, as concerned about ethics and values as people in the religious world (with a few notable exceptions in both camps, of course).

The issue for me is not one of separate or opposed ethics and values, it is the clear and precise demarcation between natural and supernatural explanations of phenomena. Once that line is crossed into the supernatural during a corporate training course there are significant ethical and legal issues at play, in the US at least. The vagueness of the term “spiritual” and (some of the things that fall within its domain) blurs that line. Thus, a “secular” Enneagram rather than a “spiritual” Enneagram is appropriate in the business

Letters

world for legal and ethical reasons (at a minimum).

Contrary to what many outside of it think, the business world is not an ethics-free zone; nor are ethics and values the exclusive domain of the spiritual/religious world. In fact, as Plato pointed out 2400 years ago in the Euthyphro dialogue, ethics and values are better left to the worldly domain. (In brief, the “Euthyphro dilemma” states that if the gods decide by fiat what is morally good, then morality is arbitrary and could change at their whim; if the gods refer to something beyond themselves when deciding what is morally good, then they are merely middle-men who serve little purpose and can be ignored.) Secular philosophers have wrestled with issues of ethics and morals from time immemorial. Thus, moral philosophy, while often incorporated into religion, is not a priori a religious activity—it is a secular activity and just as germane to the business world as any other.

I do not advocate the use of the Enneagram divorced from the consideration of ethics or personal values in the business world or any other domain. In 15 years of coaching leaders I have found that discussions of ethics, meaning, and personal values and the impact they have on my clients’ business and personal lives are often central to the conversation. Very, very rarely do we actually focus on direct profit and loss issues; they don’t need a coach or the Enneagram for that. They need a coach and the Enneagram to find out how to improve their personal well-being and their interpersonal efficacy in the business world; both of these things have the added advantage of gen-

erally contributing to the bottom line.

I do, however, advocate for divorcing the Enneagram as used in group training programs from anything related to the supernatural or metaphysical in the business world for the legal, logical, and philosophical reasons I stated in the original article.

While we’re on the topic of the supernatural, it is difficult for me not to comment on your most recent advocacy of Michael Behe and intelligent design (ID) “theory” and your claim that Darwin would have to reject his own theory if he were alive today. Rather than go into a lengthy critique of Behe and ID (which I did in these pages in 2007), I’d like to offer a few sources for alternative perspectives on Behe and his work in the name of fairness and balance (as the saying goes, “We report; you decide.”)

To learn what Behe’s colleagues at Lehigh University Department of Biological Sciences think of him, read their collective public statement on the website, which ends with: “While we respect Prof. Behe’s right to express his views, they are his alone and are in no way endorsed by the department. It is our collective position that intelligent design has no basis in science, has not been tested experimentally, and should not be regarded as scientific.” (<http://www.lehigh.edu/bio/news/evolution.htm>)

To learn what the US District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania had to say about Behe and his testimony in the *Kitzmiller v. Dover* case, read the judge’s scathing memorandum decision at http://www.talkorigins.org/faqs/dover/kitzmiller_v_dover_decision2.html#p121. Juicy tidbits include: “As expert testimony revealed, the qualification on what is meant by ‘irreducible complexity’ renders it meaningless as a criticism of evo- ...CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

From the Editor

Well, we have been about a month here in India and the Internet is finally fine-tuned

to the point where 70% of the time it’s working fairly well. Staying in the Himalayan foothills far away from large urban centers sure makes you realize how intertwined our lives are with electronic services...and how dependent we can get to be on our gadgets....Speaking of gadgets, progress is being made on our new website. We’re working to open it at an auspicious time on October 20th. (What’s the point of hanging out with the world’s finest group of Vedic astrologers in India unless you can figure out how to be in harmony with the natural cycles of life....). In addition to the subject and author index we currently provide, the new website will provide several hundred pages of material (about 6-7%) from *EM* archives that will be expanded over time. We’re also working on a way to allow readers and authors to dialog (in the online version) about articles. However, given that all beginnings are proverbially “hard” and fraught with unexpected little quirks, we’d appreciate input if you notice a function that is not working as expected. We’re also interested in feedback on other features you’d like to see in the future.

In this issue:

In “Going for the Gold: Alchemy in Coaching,” **Mary Bast** draws a parallel between the coaching process (where we’re trying to help people to fulfill

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748 Wayside Rd.
Portola Valley, CA 94028

Phone: 650-851-4806 Fax: 650-851-3113

Email: em@guna.us

Editor and Publisher Jack Labanauskas

Staff Writer Susan Rhodes

Assistant Editor Sue Ann McKean

Webmaster Gail Francisco

Consulting Editor Andrea Isaacs

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For subscription and advertising rates see back cover.

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their transformational potential) and nine phases of radical transformation as described by the alchemists by mapping each phase onto one of the nine points of the enneagram, beginning at Point 1 and ending at Point 9. In Mary's own words: *deep change — indicated by these alchemical metaphors—is disorienting, discomfiting, and even frightening. Nonetheless, I believe it is our Great Work to be courageous enough to “go for the gold.”*

So, we can expect significant change to happen after a little taste of “the dark night of the soul” and should not take discomfort to necessarily mean that we are on a wrong track.

Susan Rhodes' “Integral Living and Enneagram” presents a new way to look at the process of integral transformation based on Ken Wilber's integral operating system (IOS). While Wilber has stressed the importance of a more inclusive approach to spiritual growth (which he calls “transcend and include”), he has not looked at descent from the same integrative perspective. The model presented in this article is intended to show how growth can occur in two directions (up or down) and can be either integrative or non-integrative in nature. And since our focus here is on enneagrammatic differences, there's a breakdown of how this process works for each type.

“The Enneagram and the Buddhist Law of Interdependent Arising” by **Katharine Rawls** is a nicely personalized description of a lofty concept in Buddhism: the idea that nothing in existence is truly separate from that which gives rise to it. We may feel like individuals, but are we, really? Or is our individuality like that of a wave on the ocean: something that exists but which exists as a temporary manifestation of something more elemental?

“Plato's Phaedrus: The Enneagram Egg and the Erotic Ladder,” by **Dave Lorne**, covers a lot of territory for a short article. In it, Dave makes the claim that we each have an inner and outer enneagram type and gives celebrity examples of how this works. He links this idea to previous work he's done to look at similarities between opposite types. A challenging read for us ordinary mortals but interesting material (especially for those of you with a background in esoteric philosophy).

“Sex, Love and Your Personality — Type Six, the Loyalist in Love” is this month's treat for all of us who have may be a Six, love one (or not) or just try to understand what motivates them. **Mona Coates** and **Judith Searle** are a great help in shedding light on one of the most popular yet often misunderstood subjects in life: Love. We have six personal stories of a male and a female Six each, of the Self-Pres, Sexual and Social subtype in intimate relationships with other types. It has been often lamented that the enneagram literature has pretty much avoided the topic of sex and violence as subjects of discussion whereas we have covered pretty much everything else. Well, given a choice, I'm for sex over violence and thrilled that Mona and Judith finally came out with such a splendid opus and offered it to our readership. •

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- The Enneagram Intensive (Part 1) of our *Enneagram Professional Training Program* (EPTP) comes to lovely Vallombrosa Center in Menlo Park close to the SF Airport in February 2012 and to the Montreat Center close to Asheville, NC in October–November, 2011
- Deepening Spiritual Awareness and the Typing process (Part 2) come to California in February 2012.
- Check our website for David's radio shows and videos.

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