

Out of the Box Coaching Newsletter

Into the Light by Mary Bast

This month, I'll continue to explore how each Enneagram style addresses one of alchemy's crucial elements. In May we examined *Calcinatio* (Ones) and *Solutio* (Twos), how in transformational coaching we create a space for clients to burn away their illusion of reality and to release hidden needs and emotions.



This dissolution and letting go would be far too difficult if we didn't also help our clients envision new possibilities:

Solificatio, *making things real, represents moving from the lower to the higher mind. Our deep intention to change is not limited by rational thought and conscious goal attainment, but rather our thoughts are "enlightened," literally transformed into light, a vision of what is possible.*

For Tom, an Enneagram Three, *Solificatio* meant moving beyond his ego-image of *looking good*: "All my life, until I started doing some real work on myself, it was 'how things look' as opposed to how I really am. I wasn't conscious of it, but my image, how people saw me, was more important than anything. I was a football and baseball coach early in my career, and I got a really choice spot in a choice school. Being a sports coach might be altruistic in helping students achieve something, but my raw motivation was to be out there in front—to get noticed, to have people say, 'Oh, just look at him! He's a great guy!' I still might look good to others, but I'm getting away from the image of looking good, and just doing what I love to do. At 61 I'm also moving into community work, volunteer efforts, and this feels good and right. When I was focused on how I looked to others I was pretty much of a loner, but more and more I really enjoy sharing and working with others."

Once beginning to burn away the false self, uncovering the needs that have been driven by an Enneagram fixation, and envisioning the real self behind the mask, everyone encounters what mystics refer to as *the dark night of the soul*:

Nigredo, *separating the extraneous from the real. This aspect of alchemy means putrefaction or decomposition, all ingredients cleansed and cooked to a uniform black matter, representing the moment of maximum despair, the dying of inner chaos and doubt, discovering what really matters, what is authentic essence.*

Without a map or GPS when seeking a new destination, our tendency is to either succumb to panic or turn back to more familiar roads. Likewise, the journey of transformation is not rational or linear, there is certainly no GPS, and it can take heroic effort to stay present and open to the change. Carolyn Myss calls this *spiritual madness*. When we help our clients stay centered and endure the *madness*, they begin to hear their internal GPS.

Enneagram Four, Nora, describes her emerging voice of guidance: "There have been times when I had clear choices as to whether I was going to go on or not. I wasn't suicidal, but I thought I'd go crazy. I'd lie in bed and feel there was a battle between light and darkness inside, and consciously choose light. There have been a number of lessons for me. One is to trust that what and where I am right now, without exaggeration or drama, is enough. Another is that life without drama isn't mediocre or bland, it's living from the center."

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"It wasn't the events or people in my life," Nora continued, "it was the emotional energy I gave to them that was the problem. Drama pulled me away from my heart. Today is a good day to let go of the baggage getting in the way of my being in my heart. For this, I will gladly leave the drama behind."

In *Thoughts Without a Thinker* Mark Epstein shares an encounter between a Zen master and Kalu Rinpoche, a Tibetan monk. This was intended to be *dharma combat*, the clashing of great minds. The Zen master, obviously ready to parry any response, held up an orange and asked repeatedly "What is this?" "What is this?" After several moments of silence, the Tibetan whispered to the monk beside him, who then translated: "Rinpoche says, 'What is the matter with him? Don't they have oranges where he comes from?'" Rinpoche had ended the debate by shifting focus to the Zen master's own questioning.

Enneagram Fives rely on intellect to make sense of the world and their existence in it. As with the Tibetan Monk, it's important that we coaches meet them where they are, inviting them to question their own assumptions, but without being drawn into *dharma combat*.

Separatio, *separating wholes into components, separating the essence of dissolution from its wastes. This refers to "dismembering" the personality, retrieving the energy released by dissolution of negative beliefs and emotional blockages.*

My client John articulated very clearly his desire to "become aware of my assumptions, biases, and limitations and begin consciously choosing different assumptions and points of view." Notice in his self-description how John first had to access his beliefs through intellectual awareness, and only gradually became aware of his emotional blockages:

"A deep interest in the Enneagram came from realizing this was a fascinating way to understand myself and others. When my marriage ended it was a blow to my self-esteem. My wife accused me of not having feelings, of being too logical, and I didn't know what she was talking about. Finally, I sought help. I had to accept all this horrible unconscious stuff, and realize I really did have feelings, that I was just thinking too much. Now I reveal more when I'm comfortable with someone. And I'm more aware when I'm probably too much in my head. I see this whole process as a Hero's Journey. You receive a call, you engage in the search, then there's a struggle, you have a breakthrough, and you return -- somehow changed."

John concluded with some touching evidence of his new-found generosity of heart: "One way the call has been particularly clear is with a university course on personal development I'm now teaching. After I retired, I was just living my life when I got a phone call from an old friend who was leaving town and asked me to take over for her. It appealed to something inside of me at an intuitive level, and I cannot believe the response of people taking this course -- the warmth, and love. It's been great, wonderful!"



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