

Chapter 11

The Fall into Despair

Trust in the Wholeness of Reality is a quality of our essential being. When we fall from Trust we fall into despair. Despair is part of the experience of all persons, but three of the nine personality types of the enneagram model are primarily rooted in the fall from Trust into despair. In this chapter I will describe these three personality types: the five, the eight, and the two. Here is a brief overview that shows the relationship of these three personality types to the topic of despair:

Hiding Trust in a pattern of Despair

- 5. Hiding the gift of Transparent Attention in a despair over ignorance
- 8. Hiding the gift of Universal Forgiveness in a despair over powerlessness
- 2. Hiding the gift of Effortless Letting Be in a despair over abandonment

I have given these personality types names that join their characteristic behavior pattern with one of the “deadly sins.” Type 5 is the Greedy Investigator. Type 8 is the Lustful Challenger. And type 2 is the Vainglorious Helper.

The behavior pattern is not inherently bad. We need people who investigate, challenge, and help. These characteristics can be gifts of creative living. Yet the gifts of each of these personality types are typically used to form a cocoon in which a person hides from his or her essential being. In doing so, each personality type manifests a particular quality of estrangement from his or her true self. In this chapter we will explore the Greed or Avarice of type 5, the Pushiness or Lust of type 8, and the Vainglory or Pride of type 2.

People of a given type vary widely in their functionality, their mastery, their consciousness, their intellectual astuteness and emotional sensibilities, and in every other way that human beings differ. I will not be focusing on this wide variety. I will be focusing on the underlying dynamics of the fall from true Being that characterizes persons of each of these three personality types.

Type 5: The Greedy Investigator

Don Richard Riso calls the enneagram personality type five “The Investigator.” The Investigator is a pattern of falling away from that aspect of Spirit Trust I am calling “Transparent Attention.” The Investigator is a behavioral pattern that may appear in any life, but some lives are especially characterized by this pattern. The Investigator has a very strong relationship with the need to be informed, the need to know, to understand, to have a grasp on things, to be intellectually correct, to believe the right beliefs. He tends to be a withdrawn person who lives in his head. He tends to get lost in his thoughts. She tends to be paranoid about the challenge that others are to her thinking. She feels a deep need to put her inner view of things in order. He tends to talk in treatises. He wants to be a person who knows.

The *characteristic delusion* of the Investigator is that Reality is intelligible, or ought to be intelligible, or will some day be intelligible. Even if the Investigator is an accomplished scientist who knows that the more we know about nature the more we know we don’t know, he still makes knowing the key to living successfully, safely, and for realizing whatever other values come into play.

The Investigator commonly believes that she can stand apart from Reality as a separated witness and thus know Reality as something “other-than-I.” The thinking “I” stands apart and seeks to grasp Reality with the mind. The sensations of the body tend to become ideas about the sensations of the body. The emotions of the body tend to become ideas about the emotions. The soul, the core of consciousness, tends to become an idea about the soul. In other words, the Investigator obsesses on his own knowledge and is thereby estranged from living feelingly and actually in the here and now of ongoing experience.

The soul that falls away from Transparent Attention assumes that the “things” that the mind distinguishes are actually separate entities interacting in the mind’s picture of space and time. In other words, the Investigator assumes that the patterns of the mind are the patterns of actuality. This is an understandable mistake and easily made, for there is indeed some correspondence between the mind’s work and the actuality of human experience. If there were no such correspondence, the mind would be useless; and the human organism would not have survived. But the soul is mistaken when it views the constructs of the mind as the actual patterns of Reality. Most importantly, when the soul operates within this mistake, the soul sees itself as a separate thing, an entity of some sort, a separate substance that is not entirely part of the coming and going processes of nature. This mistake means that the soul has backed away from the fullness of being in Reality. The soul has withdrawn from its own real life experiences in the ongoing here and now. The soul is hiding in the woods of its own mental creations.

When this delusion is in operation, the soul can only feel secure within its own thoughts. The soul is paranoid about the wider Reality and about other people’s views of Reality. The soul feels fragile, feels her view of things to be fragile. So, the soul retreats to her own thoughts, lives in her own head, becomes greedy to possess knowledge that has lasting significance.

The *recurring despair* of the Investigator is a feeling of abject isolation, of being lost in thoughts, of being away from life in some ivory tower, some mental prison. Real challenges to act are frightening when they don’t fit neatly into the Investigator’s mental convictions. Conversations with other persons become difficult, because real people are not mere minds sharing ideas; they are whole people connecting intimately. As long as the Investigator can focus on ideas and his excitement about ideas, the isolation can seem tolerable or even nonexistent. But as it becomes more clear that all ideas are less than Reality, the life of isolation can seem dry. Ideas which have no real living juice to go with them become dry like a desert. So the Investigator can feel trapped between life in a lonely desert of ideas and his dread of full engagement in actual situations that continually challenge his ordered and controlled ivory tower of ideas. Caught between these two alternatives, the Investigator experiences another occasion for despair. Life can seem totally untrustworthy.

The Investigator may also despair over her ignorance. Temporary ignorance may be tolerated, for the Investigator hopes that knowledge will soon be forthcoming. But when it becomes clear that ignorance is a permanent condition of the human species, that even the most brilliant among us simply do not know, that we all face the unfathomable, the Mystery that never goes away – when these sorts of experiences come to pass, the Investigator may experience a profound uneasiness. If life does not make sense, what is the use of living?

Human beings don't like despair, so they tend to flee from it or suppress it. They typically do not realize that despair can be a doorway through which one might pass into a land of greater awareness and aliveness. So human beings defend themselves from their own despair. The Investigator's typical *defensive reaction* is to withdraw even further from other persons, from uncomfortable challenges, and from jarring situations. In so doing he avoids feeling the full tragedy of his experiences of isolation and his despair over his isolation. The Investigator can become quite skilled in avoiding situations in which this profound isolation becomes obvious. He hides in the inner workings of his own mind and becomes mildly or strongly paranoid about the actual surrounding world.

Nevertheless, the Investigator may be successful in investigating many things. She may be a storehouse of information on many subjects. We can say that she is greedy for information. She is obsessive for moments of security and for recognition in being someone who knows something. She may see her information or knowledge as her dearest possession. Her other possessions may also become an obsession, but her core motive for having things is her need to possess security in understanding, in knowing, in possessing certainty.

In these ways, the Investigator is in denial of Transparent Attention. He puts in its place his own self-constructed intellectual worlds. He becomes a *greedy* person, greedy most of all for security within his own ideas about living. He may become an argumentative person who feels threatened whenever even a single cherished idea is challenged or ignored. In the worst case scenario, he becomes a dysfunctional recluse who allows no one to meddle with his thoughts.

Economically, he will tend to be a miser. He will make security and correctness his most important economic consideration. Politically, he may have strongly held ideas, but he is slow to act upon them. He tends to be an outsider who thinks radical thoughts, yet he tends to be a passive person. He tends not to rock the boat. She tends to avoid conflict, especially conflict in which her ideas might be tested and challenged. When her ideas are challenged, she tends to overreact. Perhaps he argues unnecessarily or runs away to the safety of his own thoughts, his own books, his own ivory tower of mental familiarity. This is the core of his greediness.

Type 8: The Lustful Challenger

Don Richard Riso calls the enneagram personality type eight "The Challenger." The Challenger is a pattern of falling away from that aspect of Spirit Trust I am calling "Universal Forgiveness." The Challenger is a behavioral pattern that may appear in any life, but some lives are especially characterized by this pattern. The Challenger sees life as a battle that needs to be won. He feels a need to get what he wants, to act on his truth, to challenge all laziness and shoddiness in himself and others. She seeks to make things happen, and she usually does. He has little or no capacity for regret. If he fails or hurts someone, he denies it or he simply corrects the failing and moves on. He seldom acknowledges mistakes. Her talking style is "laying trips" on people, provoking people. She gives great emphasis to being competent.

The *characteristic delusion* of the Challenger is that there is a basic duality in life between "my truth" and "some enemy's untruth." At first this belief may seem completely true, for no matter what a person believes to be true, someone else can be

found who believes otherwise. There is indeed a war going on between systems of beliefs. Whatever we believe, we find others who resist our beliefs. The Challenger takes this war seriously. The Challenger believes that it is important for his beliefs to triumph in the war of beliefs. In this sense, the Challenger is committed to being in control. He wishes to shape the world in terms of his beliefs. She typically believes that she is in control of her own life, perhaps also in control of her own family or perhaps her own religious community. He may seek to expand his control to his company, town, city, or nation. In extreme cases the Challenger entertains fantasies of ruling the world. At least she may passionately believe that her beliefs should rule the world.

What is the delusion here? No human being or group of human beings ever rules the world. No human being is in control of his own family or even his own life. We are all out of control. We are controlled by the vast course of events over which we have only a little control. We are even controlled by our own mind's fixation with mental beliefs. Furthermore, those beliefs are never the whole truth, never that Absolute Truth that always wins. Our beliefs are partial truths at best, and they may even be passionately held fantasies.

If the Challenger were to realize that all his beliefs are partial truths and choose them intentionally, he would immediately be more humble and less over-controlling. If the Challenger were to realize that his "truth" need not conquer the entire world, he would experience a great relaxation of his fanatic need to control. And if the Challenger were to realize that human beings are perpetually ignorant, perpetually devoid of any possession of Absolute Truth, whether from so-called revealed religion or so-called objective science, he would be restored to the actual Truth, the true Absolute Truth that we are both ignorant of Final Truth and nevertheless Universally Forgiven for our perpetual stupidities.

But Universal Forgiveness is the key Truth about which the Challenger is in delusion. He may not believe that all atheists are forgiven. She may not believe that all religious fanatics are forgiven. He may not believe that all sentimentalists are forgiven. She may not believe that all moralists are forgiven. He may not believe that all criminals are forgiven. She may not believe that all tyrants are forgiven. The Challenger does not believe in forgiveness for everyone. The Challenger believes that her truth needs to win. There is a war going on and the opponents must be defeated. But within the Truth of Universal Forgiveness, there is no war. All are welcomed home to the same Reality. There are no enemies that must be defeated. Universal Forgiveness has already defeated us all. We are all members of one Reality that perpetually accepts us home from our far countries of delusory fanaticism.

The Challenger may not be conscious that he is at war with this Final Reality of Universal Forgiveness. He tends to see his war in terms of his own completely temporal beliefs. The Challenger is aware and active in challenging other human beings. Some of those challenges may be relatively correct. People who want a strong leader tend to follow this person. This personality type is comfortable with being a leader, he relishes it. She seeks it. She goes into situations where she can be a leader. But because of her alienation from Universal Forgiveness, she tends to be a needlessly bossy leader, as well as needlessly inflexible in her directions of leadership. The Challenger feels that his sense of truth needs to win, and that there are enemies that must be overcome in order for his truth to win. In other words, he believes that he must impose his truth on others.

The Challenger's "truth" may be so obviously illusory that this specific personality can be easily dismissed by others. Or the Challenger's "truth" may in large measure be in accord with Reality and thus relatively valid in its impacts on others. But even the most truthful Challenger is in illusion about the Absolute Truth of Universal Forgiveness. Universal Forgiveness needs no battle to be fought for it. That battle is already won. Universal Forgiveness simply is, and every human being can discover it within his or her own experience. But the Challenger, rather than humbly assisting others to find their own path to this releasing truth, imposes his truth, assumes that he knows how other persons need to live. Further, the Challenger feels he knows how others need to be challenged. The Challenger counts on her efforts to make happen whatever it is that she believes needs to happen.

The *recurring despair* of the Challenger is a feeling of guilt over having missed the mark, over having led falsely or challenged others toward some untruth. Such guilt may be very strongly felt, for the Challenger is an overconfident personality type, someone who commonly acts boldly and even brashly. Therefore, he tends to find any admission of acting wrongly deeply humiliating. He cannot be nonchalant about his actual guilt, because his life is obsessing over achieving victory for his specific beliefs. All actions in the service of his beliefs seem permitted and justified. Fully experiencing an accurate guilt over this entire pattern of living is felt to be intolerable.

So the Challenger is persistent in defending against her experiences of guilt. The Challenger's *defensive reaction* is to blame others for all the untoward outcomes. The Challenger does sometimes make reversals, but typically without admission that they were needed. The Challenger seems able to proceed in the same or in some new and better direction without even taking time to notice the full guilt of her past errors. This can sometimes appear to be a gift, for the Challenger is difficult to intimidate, stop, or slow down in her pursuit of her chosen projects. But on the negative side, the Challenger tends to learn slowly or not at all from her poorly admitted mistakes.

At the deepest level, the Challenger becomes a *lustful* bully for his own projects of living. This lust may manifest itself sexually, but lust is a broader category than sexual behavior. The deadly sin of lust is a *pushiness* that does not honor the solitary inward reality of other persons. Others become mere chess pieces in his game of conquest. The Challenger becomes an unforgiving person because she ignores the forgiving, welcoming quality of Final Reality. She becomes rigid and needlessly defensive. In the worst case scenario, he becomes a vicious tyrant violently imposing his own blatantly crazy truth. Consciously or unconsciously he lusts to rule the world.

Type 2: The Vainglorious Helper

Don Richard Riso calls the enneagram personality type two "The Helper." The Helper is a pattern of falling away from that aspect of Spirit Trust I am calling "Effortless Letting Be." The Helper is a behavioral pattern that may appear in any life, but some lives are especially characterized by this pattern. The Helper is focused on the needs of others and has a deeply felt need to be needed by others. The Helper is quite often actually helpful, truly generous with time and money and attention. Yet there is also a manipulative quality about this helpfulness. The Helper expects to be appreciated and even reciprocated for being so helpful. And when such appreciation is missing, the Helper can become vindictive, sarcastic, angrily withdrawn, or downright mean. Giving advice is a characteristic of the way this personality type talks with people. And the belief that her advice or actions are helpful is very important to her.

The *characteristic delusion* of the Helper is her need to be needed by others. The Helper views herself as an outgoing, active, giving person, and she is. But she is also deluded about her ability to help others live their lives in a deeply satisfying manner. The Helper has advice to offer and affection and acceptance, but she does not trust others to help themselves and, more importantly, she does not trust others to access the help they need from the depths of their own Being. The Helper is, therefore, arrogant in a subtle and often charming way. The Helper assumes that other people's happiness is something she can affect and needs to affect and that the juiciness of her own life is to be found in being helpful to others.

The Helper tends to bind people to himself rather than assist them to find their own autonomy. The Helper believes that he is needed and mistakes his own inner obsession with being helpful with the actual needs he confronts in others. The Helper tends to treat himself in a similar manner. He feels that his own self needs his own help in order to become fulfilled. So, for him, it seems to be a huge challenge to leave himself alone and access Effortless Letting Be. It is likewise a huge challenge for him to leave others alone or to support them in their Effortless Letting Be. He tends to advise and manipulate rather than patiently assist others to find their own way.

The *recurring despair* of the Helper appears in feelings of being humiliated by others disappointed by others, abandoned by others. Perhaps she finds that her help is not helping. Perhaps she finds that those whom she is trying to help are refusing her help. Perhaps it happens that even when her help seems to be helping, the help is not appreciated or reciprocated. Perhaps she feels humiliated by the very confusions that life brings over how to be helpful or over what is truly needed. These experiences occasion despair rather than self evaluation because being helpful and being needed is the core commitment of this particular type of personality.

The Helper attempts to overcome the pain of humiliation by the *defensive reaction* of manipulating the situation to conform to her role as helper. She can be a bold, imaginative, and skilled arranger and manipulator of other people's lives. Some of this work may even have positive outcomes, but underneath, this manipulation is driven by an obsession to be needed. The obsession leads her into serious mistakes. She tends to overlook providing the deeper help of assisting people to discover their own true nature. She tends to set up directives by which others are expected to live and to count herself a failure when they do not do so.

At the deepest level, the Helper is in denial of the Spirit quality of Effortless Letting Be. He becomes a *proud vainglorious* person masked in the charming garments of care for others. He also becomes an unforgiving person, because he is actually less interested in being helpful than in being a Helper – and perhaps also in being a Helper who is appreciated by those he helps. In the worst case scenario, he becomes a vindictive person toward those who resist and criticize his help. In all these obsessive processes he loses touch with his own interior journey and with accepting his own opportunities to Effortlessly Let Be his own true nature. Because of this lack of self realization, she is not prepared to truly assist others in accessing the glory and happiness of their lives. So it ends up that instead of drawing people to her, the Helper pushes them away. She occasions resentments rather than appreciation. This occasions more despair. To handle the despair he becomes ever more vainglorious in his confidence that he is only trying to help these ungrateful people.

Perhaps others allow the Helper to settle in to her patterns of being helpful and

simply use her to do things for them. We see alcoholic husbands make this kind of compact with a helpful wife. We see sons or daughters make this kind of compact with a helper mother. They let her run her helpfulness pattern on their terms while holding her in an unspoken contempt and seeing her almost as their ever-ready slave. Such entanglements may become conscious in the Helper and bring her to such a profound level of despair that she begins to see her despair as a doorway from her self-defeating pattern into the glorious quality of Effortless Letting Be – letting be her own true life and letting be the true life of others. But to do this, the type 2 personality must cease clinging to the vainglorious assumption that she is needed to make the lives of the people work out they way they “need” to work out.

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All persons fall from Trust, but these three personality types specialize in this aspect of falling away from their true nature. Type 5 specializes in falling away from attention to a deep knowing of the Unknown Unknown. Type 8 specializes in falling away from embracing the Great Dawning that self and others are always forgiven. Type 2 specializes in falling away from the choice of Effortless Letting Be the Being that all beings be. These three personality types illustrate for all of us what it looks like to fall from our essential Trust of Reality into despair, and how recognizing our despair can become a doorway back to the Trust from which we have fallen.

The descriptions of these three personality types have been brief. Moreover, my core aim has been to show the interface between the enneagram heritage and the Christian heritage of Holy Spirit, fall, and redemption. For further description of these three personality types, I recommend Chapters 7, 8, and 9 of *The Spiritual Dimension of the Enneagram: Nine Faces of the Soul* by Sandra Maitri. (Jeremy P Tarcher/Putnam: 2000).