

“You have formed my inward parts; You have covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, and that, my soul knows very well.” (Ps 139:13-14)

✧ Lecture IV: Self-Sumation ✧

✧ The Point of This Lecture:

People are different from each other, and no amount of getting after them is going to change them. Nor is there any reason to change them, because the differences are probably good, not bad. People are different in fundamental ways. They want different things; they have different motives, purposes, aims, values, needs, drives, impulses, urges. Nothing is more fundamental than that. They believe differently: they think, cognize, conceptualize, perceive, understand, comprehend, and cogitate differently. And of course, manners of acting and emoting, governed as they are by wants and beliefs, follow suit and differ radically among people. Differences abound and are not at all difficult to see, if one looks. And it is precisely these variations in behavior and attitude that trigger in each of us a common response. Seeing others around us differing from us, we conclude that these differences in individual behavior are but temporary manifestations of madness, badness, stupidity, or sickness. In other words, we rather naturally account for variations in the behavior of others in terms of flaw and affliction. Our job, at least for those near us, would seem to be to correct these flaws. Our Pygmalion project, then, is to make all those near us just like us. Fortunately, this project is impossible. Of course, some change is possible, but it is a twisting and distortion of underlying form. Our attempts to change spouse, offspring, or others can result in change, but the result is a scar and not a transformation. The belief that people are fundamentally alike appears to be a twentieth century notion. Probably the idea is related to the growth of democracy in the Western world. If we are equals then we must be alike!

✧ The Four Pairs of Preferences:

1. Extraversion (75% of population) vs. Introversion (25% of population)

The person who chooses people, as a source of energy probably prefers extraversion, while the person who prefers solitude to recover energy may tend toward introversion. Extraverts, with their need for sociability, appear to be energized or “tuned up” by people. Talking to people, playing with people, and working with people is what charges their batteries. Extraverts experience loneliness when they are not in contact with people. While the extravert is sociable, the introvert is territorial. That is, he desires space: private places in the mind and private environmental places. Introverts seem to draw their energies from a different source than do extraverts. Pursuing solitary activities, working quietly alone, reading, meditating, participating in activities which involve few or no other people – these seem to charge the batteries of the introvert. Introverts, too, are likely to experience a sense of loneliness – when they are in a crowd! They are most “alone” when surrounded by people, especially strangers. This is not to say that introverts do not like to be around people. Introverts enjoy interacting with others, but it drains their energy in a way not experienced by extraverts. Introverts need to find quiet places and solitary activities to recharge, while these activities exhaust the extravert. If the latter goes to a library to do research, for example, he may have to exercise strong will power to prevent himself, after fifteen minutes or so, from taking a “short brain break” and striking up a conversation with the librarian. It is quite the opposite with an introvert, who can remain only so long in interaction with people before he depletes his reserves. The question always arises, “Does not an extravert also have an introverted side and does not an introvert also have an extraverted side?” Yes, of course. But the preferred attitude, whether it be extraversion or introversion, will have the most potency and the other will be the “suppressed minority.”

Western culture seems to sanction the outgoing, sociable, and gregarious temperament. The notion of anyone wanting or needing much solitude is viewed rather often as reflecting an unfriendly attitude. Solitary activities frequently are seen as ways to structure time until something better comes along, and this something better by definition involves interacting with people. As a consequence, introverts are often the ugly duckling in a society where the majority enjoys sociability. There is a story about a mother who protested loudly and defensively, “My daughter is not an introvert. She is a lovely girl!”

2. Intuition (75% of population) vs. Sensation (25% of population)

Although extraversion and introversion are important differences in understanding ourselves and others, especially others we live with, these preferences are minor compared with sensation and intuitive ways of thinking about things. The two preferences of sensation and intuition are, of any preferences, the source of the most miscommunication, misunderstanding, vilification, defamation, and denigration. This difference places the widest gulf between people.

The sensation-preferring or “sensible” person wants facts, trusts facts, and remembers facts. He believes in experience and knows through experience (history), both personal and global. He might be described as earth-bound, as grounded firmly in reality, anchored to earth – a terrestrial. When a sensible talks to people, he is interested in their experience, their past. For example, if a sensation-preferring employer interviews someone for placement, he wants to know what experience the applicant has had. This is important to this employer, because, if an applicant has had experience, the employer feels he has had sound basis for decision. The intuitive-preferring employer, on the other hand, is likely to have confidence not in what the applicant has done in the past but in what an applicant verbalizes about the future of the organization – what he would do in a hypothesized situation, what he might see as possibilities for growth for the organization, or how he would propose to handle a given problem.

The intuitive finds appeal in the metaphor and enjoys vivid imagery. He often daydreams, reads poetry, enjoys fantasy and fiction, and can find the study of dreams fascinating. The intuitive acts as if he is an extraterrestrial, a space traveler engaged in explorations beyond the realities of the present and the past. The possible is always in front of him, pulling on his imagination like a magnet. The future holds an attraction for the intuitive, which the past and the actual do not. But, because his head is often in the clouds, the intuitive can be subject to greater error about facts than the sensible, who pays better attention to what is going on about him. The intuitive lives in anticipation. Whatever is can be better, or different, and is seen as only a way station. Consequently, intuitives often experience a vague sense of dissatisfaction and restlessness. They seem somewhat bothered by reality, constantly looking toward possibilities of changing or improving the actual. The intuitive can skip from one activity to the next, perhaps completing none. Thus, to the sensible, the intuitive frequently appears to be flighty, impractical, and unrealistic. The intuitive, on his part, at times views the sensible as plodding and exasperatingly slow to see possibilities in tomorrow.

The difference between intuitives and sensibles is most noticeable in their attitude about child rearing. The intuitive parent, especially if augmented by an intuitive spouse, is likely to worry if the child doesn't spend much time daydreaming and fantasizing and is not captured and intrigued by the more fanciful tales and myths. Nothing is more valued by an extreme intuitive than a vivid imagination. In contrast, the sensible parent becomes concerned should the child spend what seems an inordinate amount of time in fantasy. One must develop one's usefulness. The child should spend much of his time outdoors playing, practicing – and when older, working.

3. Thinking (50% of population) vs. Feeling (50% of population)

Persons who choose the impersonal basis of choice are called the thinking types. Persons who choose the personal basis are called the feeling types. Both of these ways of selecting what to do or not to do are necessary and useful. It is a matter of comfort. Some people are more comfortable with impersonal, objective judgments and uncomfortable with personal judgments. Others are more comfortable with value judgments and less with being objective and logical.

More women than men (6 out of 10) report that they prefer deciding on the basis of personal impact, and certainly there is a cultural sanction on this type of behavior on the part of females. More men than women (6 out of 10) report that they prefer to make decisions on the basis of principles, that is, logically and objectively. Thus more men prefer the thinking and more women feeling, although this sex difference is relatively minor and gives little edge in predicting behavior.

People who use the feeling preference as the basis for decisions claim, at times, that the thinking preference people are “heartless,” “stony-hearted,” “have ice in their veins,” are “cold,” “remote,” and “intellectualizers who are without the milk of human kindness,” On the other hand, the thinking preference people who use the impersonal principles as the basis for decisions may claim, at time, that the feeling preference people are “too soft hearted,” “unable to take a firm stand,” “incapable of standing up in the face of opposition,” “too emotional,” “illogical,” “fuzzy thinkers,” “intellectual dilettantes,” and people who “wear their hearts on their sleeves.”

The thinking versus feeling preference need not cause serious problems in interpersonal relations **if** the two different ways of going about making decision are understood and appreciated. To be sure, this dimension can be complimentary between two people in a way, which the other preferences are not. The feeling person needs a thinking person to present another point of view and vice versa. Once a feeling person understands that a thinking person does have deep, though not always visible, emotions, and once a thinking person realizes that a feeling person can think logically, although he may not always verbalize his logic, misunderstandings between them are apt to dissipate.

4. Judging (50% of population) vs. Perceiving (50% of population)

Question: Do I prefer closure and the settling of things or do I prefer to keep options open and fluid? Persons who choose closure over open options are likely to be the judging type. Persons preferring to keep things open and fluid are probably the perceiving types. The judging type is apt to report a sense of urgency until he has made a pending decision, and then be at rest once the decision has been made. The perceiving person, in contrast, is more apt to experience resistance to making a decision, wishing that more data could be accumulated as the basis for the decision. As a result, when a perceiving person makes a decision, he may have a feeling of uneasiness and restlessness, while the judging person, in the same situation, may have a feeling of ease and satisfaction.

The judging person tends to establish deadlines and to take them seriously, expecting others to do the same. The perceiving person may tend more to look upon deadlines as mere alarm clocks which buzz at a given time, easily turned off or ignored while one catches an extra forty winks, almost as if the deadline were used more as a signal to start than to complete a project. This preference can be a source of irritation in relationships, because judging persons push toward decisions, while perceiving persons hold out until there can be additional search for data and perhaps more options.

*This lecture is extracted from '*Please Understand Me*' by David Keirse & Marilyn Bates.