

Facets of Unity - The Enneagram of Holy Ideas

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Chapter 1: Brief History of the Enneagram

To understand what the Enneagram is, it is necessary to know something about its history. The nine-pointed symbol of the Enneagram first made a significant appearance in the modern West through the teachings of G.I. Gurdjieff, an Armenian mystic, around the turn of the century. Gurdjieff appears to have learned it from a secret school in the Middle East, a school steeped in a spiritual tradition that is at least two thousand years old. He did not, as far as we know, teach the Enneagram of personality fixation, which is currently the most widely known Enneagram. This Enneagram, which has become popular in recent years, came mostly from Claudio Naranjo, a Chilean psychiatrist and teacher, who learned it from Oscar Ichazo, a South American spiritual teacher. It is not clear which parts of this Enneagram teaching originated with Ichazo and which were added to or elaborated upon by Naranjo in the context of his extensive knowledge of depth psychology. Naranjo, from whom we learned the body of knowledge associated with the Enneagram, related it to the Middle Eastern school with which Gurdjieff was associated, but clearly stated that he received the basic knowledge of the Enneagram from Oscar Ichazo.

According to Naranjo, the idea that the figure of the Enneagram embodies an objective map of reality in its various manifestations and dimensions originated in this ancient school. Using the map of the Enneagram, one can acquire detailed understanding of any dimension of experience. Two categories of Enneagrams refer to inner experience: one pertaining to egoic experience (reflecting fundamental spiritual ignorance), such as the Enneagrams of Fixations and Passions, and the other pertaining to essential experience (reflecting spiritual enlightenment), such as the Enneagrams of the Virtues and the Holy Ideas. Not only are there inner connections within each Enneagram, but there are also very specific relationships between the various Enneagrams.

Several books on the Enneagram have appeared in recent years, addressing mainly the Enneagram of Fixations, or ego-types. The ideas in these books derive from Naranjo's teachings in the early seventies. Most of these publications present the Enneagram as basically psychological, and use it primarily as a method of typology. While the Enneagram is very useful as a method of identifying and clarifying psychological functioning, its possibilities are far more powerful than this limited application.

Our view on the higher uses of the Enneagram is in accordance with that of Ichazo and Naranjo. In his book, *Ennea-type Structures* (Naranjo, 1990), Naranjo presents the Enneagram as a means for self-observation and study as part of the larger work of spiritual realization. He elaborates upon how the personality characteristics of the nine ego-types (which Naranjo calls "ennea-types"*) are expressions of the loss of contact with Being, our essential nature, and in so doing, shows that the true value of this knowledge is to help us to reestablish this contact. For example, describing the Passions, the emotional underpinnings of each ennea-type, Naranjo states that they ". . . arise out of a background of ontic obscuriation; that the loss of a sense of I-am-ness sustains a craving-for-being that is manifested in the differentiated form of the ego's nine emotions." (Naranjo, 1990, p. 30) This view of the ennea-types' fixated passions, as related to the loss of contact with Being, reflects the perspective of the Enneagram-transmitted body of knowledge, as in Ichazo's understanding: "Every person develops a style of compensating for the lack, the ontological emptiness which is at the center of the ego. We say there are nine basic styles or points of ego fixation." (Bleibrey, 1982, p. 13) Although this is also Ichazo's view, Naranjo's study is the first published account of how each character type is related to the loss of contact with Being. Naranjo's work, as well as Helen Palmer's work connecting the types to modes of intuition, and Don Riso and Russ Hudson's discrimination of the psychological structuring of the types (Palmer, 1988; Riso and Hudson, 1996), makes it possible for us to present this study of the higher Enneagrams without providing a teaching on the Enneagram of personality type.

As our work, the Diamond Approach, developed, we observed that one's self-understanding can be simply and systematically organized with the help of the Enneagram. This enabled us to understand some of the Enneagrams in a new and sometimes deeper way, and also led to the formulation of new Enneagrams. Our understanding of the Enneagram, then, is the product of experiential integration of the commonly understood body of knowledge of the Enneagram, learned primarily from Naranjo, along with our own discoveries.

The transmitted view is that the Enneagram knowledge is an objective knowledge of reality. We find this to be true. We understand the objectivity of the Enneagram to mean, among other things, that it can be perceived directly by anyone with the necessary capacity, who inquires effectively into the nature of reality. And since it is a true model of reality, one cannot exhaust its knowledge. Knowledge of reality is both unlimited and inexhaustible: Each teaching has a specific way of describing reality and none of these ways exhausts all possible experience. The Enneagram is a structure which facilitates the revelation of truth about Being and about human beings as part of this Being. We view the present book as a new contribution to the knowledge of the Enneagram.