



# enneagram monthly

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## Psychological Bypassing & the Repression of the Sublime in Enneagram Theory and Practice

*Men build too many walls and not enough bridges.*  
--Dominique Pire, Nobel Peace Prize Winner (1958)

### Thesis

If the Enneagram is first and foremost a diagram and system for psychological healing, growth and integration, then the primary concern is to understand and avoid what has become known in Transpersonal Psychology circles as *spiritual bypassing*. However, if the Enneagram was originally designed by someone, somewhere, as a tool for advanced and profound spiritual development, then one of the things that blocks this conscious agenda is a pervasive and deleterious tendency to engage in what some are now calling *psychological bypassing*. If this latter process is in evidence we may eventually experience what Robert Desoille (1945) and Frank Haronian (1967) call “the repression of the sublime.” In the following essay, we will explore how the Enneagram community is pos-

### Carl Marsak



sibly imbalanced these days by focusing overly much on spiritual bypassing and not much, if at all, on psychological bypassing. When we engage in these forms of bypassing we will sooner or later foster and perpetuate a counterproductive split between the psychological and spiritual realms, and in the process will become hypersensitive and hypervigilant, judgmental and even alarmist, rather than calm, integrative and wise. We will also take a look at what the transpersonal theory and praxis of Psychosynthesis, as formulated by Italian visionary psychiatrist Roberto Assagioli and his students and co-workers, can add to our discussion.<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction: Three Main Traps

In 1983 psychotherapist John Welwood gave a talk at the Omega Institute in Rhinebeck, NY, one in which he coined the term spiritual bypassing. The following year this talk was published as an important article ...CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

## The Origin of the Enneagram

Lloyd Nygaard  
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### Introduction

There are many things we do not know and probably will never know about the origin of the enneagram, Figure 1. We do not know with certainty when it came into existence, where, why, by whose work, or by what process. The answers may be hidden in the remote past, and possibly were deliberately kept secret by those who knew from the very outset.

We do know that the enneagram was intentionally introduced into the current of modern Western thought by the enigmatic, spiritual teacher Gurdjieff, who taught the basics of enneagram symbolism to a small esoteric group of students, beginning in 1916 in Russia. Over a number of years they digested and developed the ideas associated with it, and later—having escaped from Russia during the Revolution and re-established themselves in Europe and the United States—released the enneagram to the public through books, lectures, and other means.

The enneagram symbolizes the synthesis of two universal laws, the law of 3 and the law of 7. The law of 3 has to do with relationships. The law of 7 has to do with

### Lloyd Nygaard



transformative processes. In the Enneagram, the triangle (3-6-9) represents the law of 3: It shows the points at which three forces come into relationship with each other. The six-sided figure (1-4-2-8-5-7) represents the law of 7: It shows the stages of development through which the three forces blend together. The interrelationship among the points of the triangle and the six-sided figure indicate how the three forces overcome the hazards that would prevent their blending together correctly, in a developing transformative process. The circle represents one completed cycle of a cyclically perpetual, self-sustaining process of transformation. In Gurdjieff's system, the enneagram's highest application is its describing the internal, cyclical “alchemical” process leading to eternal life.

As we shall see below, Gurdjieff knew nothing of Oscar Ichazo's Arica protoanalytic system, of which the enneagram of personality types is an integral part.

The personality typology is the best known application of the enneagram in the United States, due to the work of many talented ...CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

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Last month we announced the forming a research project with fellow enneagram aficionados in eastern Europe that have their own schools, trainings and unique mindsets as well as histories. We invite participation by people who can contribute expertise in history, scientific methodologies, statistics, medicine, psychology or any areas of research that look promising for finding ways to cross reference, verify or debunk the archetypal assumption of the 9 types we appreciate so much. The enneagram system seems to work wherever and whenever it's tried, and we want to bring it further, defining the distinctions more precisely and finding correlations with the physical, structural or other forms and patterns that may emerge.

Thoughts and suggestions are very welcome.

### In This Issue:

**Carl Marsak** puts out a cautionary warning to be mindful of "Psychological Bypassing and the Repression of the Sublime: *in Enneagram Theory and Practice.*" We are generally more familiar with the concept known in Transpersonal Psychology circles as *spiritual bypassing*. It means that instead of facing unresolved and difficult issues we choose to leapfrog over them to avoid the pain and effort of dealing with them. The assumption being that since the spiritual trumps the mundane psychological, we might get away with it. What we now are calling *psychological bypassing* is the "cousin" of the *spiritual bypassing* and refers more to imbalance created by hesitation, as in self-preoccupation. For example, it's like policing trivial flaws in our own thoughts and concepts so we need not deal with the gorillas in the room... This can perpetuate a counterproductive split between the psychological and spiritual realms, and in the process we will become hypersensitive and hyper-vigilant, judgmental and even alarmist, rather than calm, integrative and wise.

**Lloyd Nygaard** carefully researched the claims about "The Origin of the Enneagram" that have been circulating since it became diffused and popular in the early 70's. As far as we know, the nine-pointed enneagram symbol appeared very, very rarely in history and never in connection to a meaningful description, until a century ago it was introduced by G.I. Gurdjieff to his study groups in St. Petersburg and Moscow. It stayed with Gurdjieff's schools until it was re-introduced via Oscar Ichazo's training held in Arica (Chile) in the late 60's to a group of international students. Among them, was Claudio Naranjo who had attended most of that training along with some of his students. Upon returning to the USA Naranjo started a group of Seekers After Truth (SAT) in Berkeley. After about a decade of notes leaking out of the SAT group's meetings, we had two bestselling publications by Don Riso and Helen

## From the Editor

Palmer that really started the ball rolling.

By now we have probably a few hundred books world-wide on the *Enneagram of Personality* that are for the most part inspired by the early teachings by Ichazo as interpreted and expanded by Naranjo. This is what formed the basis of material for most authors and teachers. The linkage with Gurdjieff's Fourth Way school's interpretation of their *Process Enneagram* and our familiar *Enneagram of Personality* were never really seen or used in similar ways so that the systems stayed in their own separate tracks...

Lloyd summarizes what is known about the origins of the Enneagram from Gurdjieff's and Ichazo's scarce indications (with no traceable references) and attempts to find the root concepts under-girding the enneagram, the sources from whence it came. He looks at interesting archaeological clues discovered and recently dated as much older than Sumerian and Egyptian civilizations that show they had an equally developed competence and understanding of technology – imagine, 6000 years *before* the pyramids...

Lloyd takes us on a fascinating step by step journey putting the pieces together of this mosaic of recorded similarities that appeared in Greece, in Christianity and the Orthodox Eastern branch of it, in Sufism etc. he tabulates what we actually know, as opposed to what we merely suppose or assume without evidence. But as they say, wisdom is what's left when the sheaths of ignorance and false information have been removed. Although Lloyd does not claim to have found the final answer, his is a most coherent effort of summing up what we know today and where we still need to continue with research.

**Michael Damian** in "The Art of Freedom: *Outshining Ignorance*" explains step by step how "the search for fulfillment is built into the struggle and process of human life. Right from the beginning, we misidentify our being and our happiness with external things and circumstances. We cannot help this. Many substitutes for truth are accepted along the way, and substitutes always lead to disillusionment. This is the natural process of growing up.

The real meaning of growing up is to become conscious, an awake being. We become conscious through the dynamic of identifying ourselves with something only to later dis-identify and realize a new wholeness and independence from that thing, activity, or situation. To outgrow something means consciousness got tired of identifying with something less than its own fullness and potential." Michael has two advantages that are rarely seen together: the direct experience and a highly

articulate way with language to describe it.

**Jennifer P. Schneider M.D. & Ron Corn M.S.W.** take a look at how the "Achiever-Mediator (Three-Nine) Couple" get along. Mediators, who tend to procrastinate, have difficulty making decisions and easily lose their focus, find the high-energy Achievers very appealing and appreciate being helped getting motivated into action. They do tend to merge with their partner's goals and will support Achievers in their accomplishments. Together, they can form a team in which the Achiever provides the structure and goals and keeps things moving at a fast pace, while the Mediator can assist and provide damage control if necessary, resolving conflicts and soothing hurt feelings.

Nines admire Threes' energy and productivity, because it's something they usually struggle with. While the Three's inherent vanity takes great pride in the Nine's admiration. Nines are accepting, nonjudgmental, which is also very appealing to Threes who work very hard to project a successful, popular image.

In some ways, Threes and Nines lost their original personal agenda and life goals in a similar way. Nines merged with others at an early age, losing their wants, needs, and goals. Threes sacrificed their *being* for *doing* at an early age to gain the love of others. It can happen that a Three will push a Nine to awaken later in life or in the relationship, realizing that they were off course, a power struggle may ensue. As both are not exactly adroit in the feeling department, this possibility is to be watched and dealt with as early as noticed.

**Tom Condon** is well aware of "The Trouble With Typing." For example, it may start with letting the ego use the Enneagram as an excuse or justification in a defensive way. This can lead to situations where you are doing two contradictory things at once – thinking you are breaking free while using the material to strengthen your trance. Some distortions of the Enneagram are more "style specific," in that they come easily to people within the bias of their style and are expressions of its neurotic tendencies. Let's just look at a few key points.

Ones might distort the Enneagram by turning it into the ultimate criticism and using it as a basis for judging themselves and others, positing a new ideal self to strive for and become. Twos might distort the Enneagram by turning it into an instrument of seduction by using their refined understanding to better blend with other people's criteria to create synthetic personal connections. Threes may distort the Enneagram by missing its depth and seeing people as two-dimensional stereotypes, or, to get fascinated with the way the Enneagram "works," in an overly schematic, formulaic way.



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For subscription and advertising rates see back cover.

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Some people study the Enneagram but fail to identify their personality style. They may simply be unknown to themselves, having not observed their behavior, thinking or emotions. They've been busy raising children, or had a demanding career that left no time or motivation to question their premises. More often than not people don't recognize their style because of the amount or quality of their exposure to the Enneagram, or they type themselves too soon and then allow confirmation bias to solidify their assessment. Or else, they may have trusted an expert's wrong opinion with the same outcome.

Tom noticed how those who are *good at identifying Enneagram styles* often begin their assessment of someone by *seeking an underlying feeling*. Fives, Sixes and Sevens are fundamentally fearful, while Eights, Nines and Ones react from anger. Twos, Threes and Fours often display an absence of feeling or a quality of drama without depth. If you sense that someone is fundamentally angry, it might mean that they are an Eight, Nine or One. Choosing from three possibilities is then easier than choosing from nine." Sounds like a good plan to me.

**Antonio Barbato** has been refining his understanding and noting a lack of attention of the process "From Instinct to Identity *Part 2: Emotions, their Predominance and Dominant Themes in the Enneagram*" My own understanding of emotions (as a double head type, 7 to 5 line) is more along the lines that reason is based on logic while attraction and repulsion are based on val-

ues that manifest as emotions. I would therefore say that thoughts are perceived as rewarding and pleasant if we feel joy, or distressing if they evoke pain. Emotions act as an internal barometer that determines what value we give to the thought. If a thought is "juicy" and moving (joy or pain) it is imbued with emotion. But, Antonio (as a double type 4 to 2 line) is surely more in sink with the finer distinctions of emotional qualities and their effect on type formation. Just saying...

I assume that philosophers of the past were often head types and undervalued emotions vis-a-vis reason. That may be why a more positive take on passions, along with a more scientific approach started only in the more recent modern age in particular with Descartes.

As more and more discoveries pointed out that emotions are an important instrument of survival and of adaptation to the environment. In our evolution, emotions contributed to the formation of characteristics of the species. According to Darwin, some emotions are universal and in every culture expressed in the same way. Freud thought man was a creature driven by two predominantly instinctive emotional primary drives: Eros and Thanatos. Eros, the vital drive towards preserving existence, and Thanatos, the destructive force towards dissolution, or the return to an inorganic state. Freud's view re-proposes the old conflict between reason and passions that needs to "civilize" emotions as a necessity, with its unavoidable burden of personal discomfort and unhappiness.

Thanks to current studies of scientific psychol-

ogy (from behaviorism to cognitivism), the positive value of emotions is being recognized. They are important for survival, not only do they not oppose reason, but to the contrary, have their own "intelligence."

Cognitivists today are credited with the prevalent theory that each emotion arises from a complex inner process that has gone through multiple phases. A process, originally triggered by a momentous event of significant impact emotionally, leaves a visible mark on the cognitive, physiological and expressive levels. These emotions can be violent and short-lasting, and are to be distinguished from moods. As to how that applies to the enneagram, we can say that:

The emotional theme dominant in the upper triad is **rage or anger**. Types 8, 9 and 1, in the action or Belly center are essentially action oriented and prefer doing concrete things. Here the impulsive prevails as in recognizing a feeling of like/dislike or the sense of beauty.

The dominant emotional theme on the right side, the Heart center, is **shame** or its opposite, **satisfaction** and the pursuit of it. Types 2, 3 and 4, show the emotional aspect of love/hate in a more prevalent way, notably by more care about their image.

On the left of the enneagram we have the Head center dominated by **fear** to be understood as a deep sense of uncertainty related to actions and their possible consequences. With types 5, 6 and 7, thinking or the rational, the cognitive and right/wrong issues prevail.