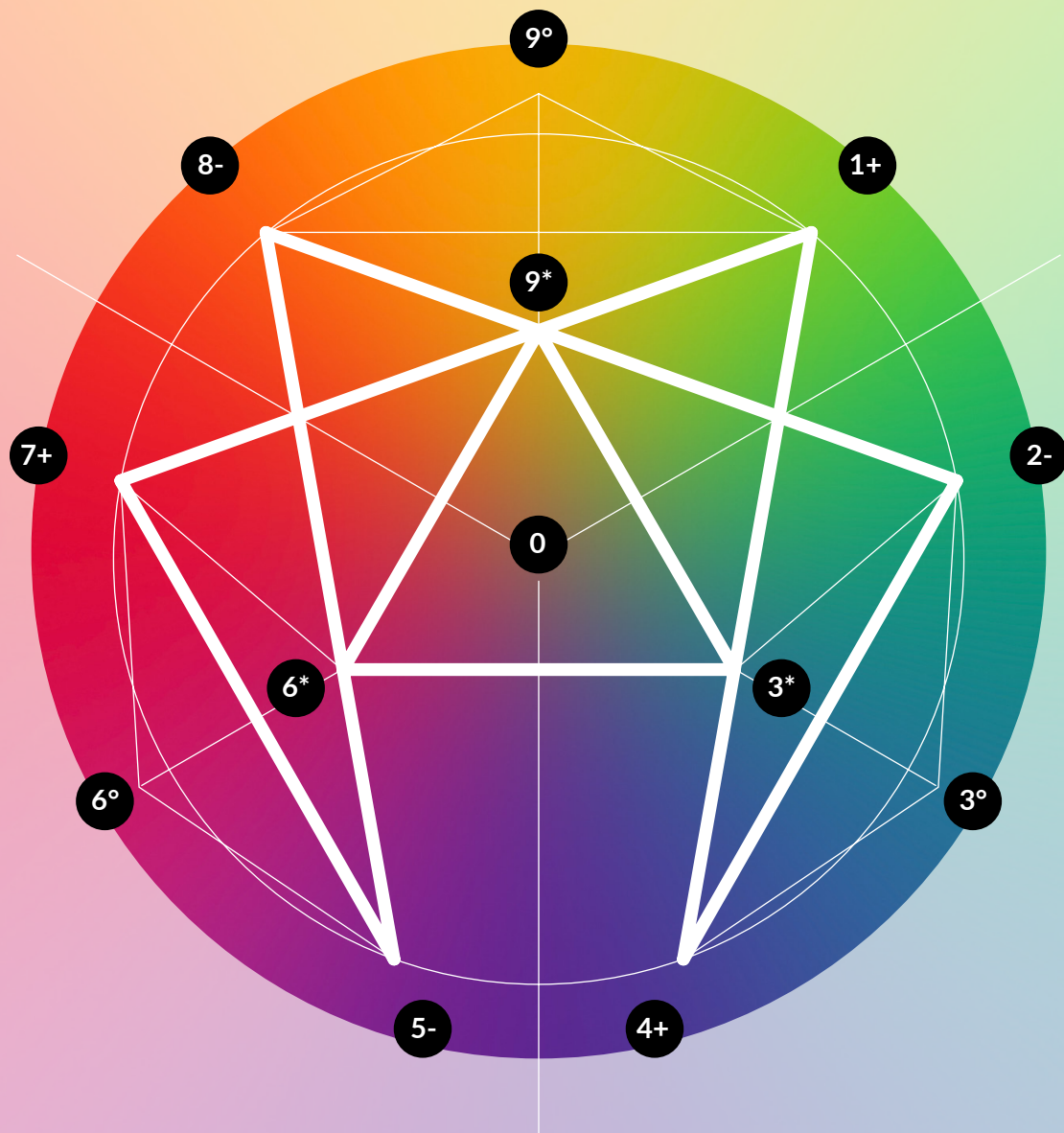


The Enneagram's Science of the Soul



Figure

The sacred psychology and its psycho-spiritual development according to the traditional Enneagram can be broadly envisioned by the following nine points (Bakhtiar 2013b):

1+	Hypocrisy	4+	Rashness	7+	Greed
2-	Cowardice	5-	Timidity	8-	Ignorance
3*	Fear	6*	Envy	9*	Disbelief

The emergence, in the modern West, of the nine-pointed Enneagram continues to confound and intrigue. Furthermore, the true source of this symbol (and its application) also remains enigmatic to a secular mentality. Due to the diminishment of religious consciousness in today's world, esoteric wisdom has been appropriated for mass consumption and relegated to the psychic dimension of life only. Given its powerful influence, the Enneagram has also been weaponized by profane forces to, paradoxically, undermine the sacred altogether. At the heart of all wisdom traditions around the globe, one finds a rich "science of the soul". Its far-reaching metaphysical outlook can help to demystify the inscrutable origins of the Enneagram, thus making its esoteric symbolism not only intelligible to modern seekers, but also spiritually operative. The quest to understand ourselves beyond our mere egoic personality is key to an authentic spiritual life, and to unveiling the true significance of the Enneagram. In exploring this phenomenon, a "transpersonal" framework has been adopted that aligns with the insights found in the world's great wisdom traditions and their sacred psychologies.



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1 Introduction

We shall show them Our signs upon the horizons and within themselves, until it be manifest unto them that it is the truth.

– Qur’ān 41:53

Each of the Nine Points is represented by one of nine saints who are at the highest level in the Divine Presence. They are the keys to unfold powers within the human being, but there is no permission to use these keys.

– Shaykh ‘Abd Allāh al-Fā’iz ad-Dāghestānī (quoted in Kab-bani 2004, 404)

If an idea is true, it belongs equally to all who are capable of understanding it; if it is false, there is no credit in having invented it. A true idea cannot be ‘new’, for truth is not a product of the human mind; it exists independently of us, and all we have to do is to take cognizance of it; outside this knowledge there can be nothing but error.

– René Guénon (2004a, 56–57)

The enigmatic origins of the nine-pointed symbol known as the Enneagram (*ennea* in Greek means “nine,” and *gram* means something “written” or “drawn”) – consisting of a circle, an inner triangle (connecting 3-6-9), and an irregular hexagon (connecting 1-4-2-8-5-7) – has captivated and perplexed people ever since its first appearance in the West around 1916 (Moore 1986/1987). At the same time, there are few more prominent examples of a blatant appropriation of esoteric knowledge by popular culture as we find with the Enneagram. That the nine-pointed figure of the Enneagram has entered into the mainstream illustrates its strange fate and perhaps the fate of all things of a spiritual nature. One of its key popularizers, Helen Palmer, writes: “[T]he enneagram was arguably the worst-kept secret in spiritual history” (quoted in *Special Forum* 1997, 14).

There has been a great deal of speculation about the origin and application of the Enneagram, but its true nature remains elusive. What part of it is fact and what part fiction or allegory? The Enneagram may go back as far as the Babylonian civilization, but even contemporary efforts to unveil this ancient symbol remain inconclusive. British scientist and mathematician John Bennett (1897–1974) recounts: “I concluded... that this symbol and the ideas for which it stands, originated with the Sarmān society about 2500 years ago and was revised when the power of the Arabic numerical system was developed in Samarkand in the fifteenth century” (1973, 293).

The Enneagram has migrated from the fringes of pop psychology or New Age fads to the mainstream. Its new status has been described as follows: “[T]he Enneagram is being popularized in America and used as a new psychological parlor game – ‘Want to find your Self? Take a number!’ – which is very unfortunate” (Wilber 1996, 210). Given its wide-ranging utility, we can see how the Enneagram is “a sleeping giant, awakened in our times” (Metz and Burchill 1987, 11).

This study has been undertaken to rectify some widespread misconceptions. Although the Enneagram remains largely enigmatic, this does not prevent us from making useful observations regarding its meaning and use. First, interpreting the Enneagram through a secular lens that ignores sacred tradition, cannot fully fathom its significance, because this approach fails to see how it can be used as an adjunct to spiritual growth. Furthermore, reductionist attempts to comprehend the nine-pointed symbol through modern psychology also fall short for the same reason. Laleh

Bakhtiar's (1938–2020) ground-breaking research – which adopted a spiritual hermeneutic (Ar. *ta'wil*) – has given a renewed focus on the traditional origins of the Enneagram within Islamic spirituality (Bakhtiar 1993; 1994a; 1994b; 2013a; 2013b). Thus, through a discernment that is properly metaphysical, the Enneagram may be viewed as a universal symbol that can support wayfarers on any path.

This study argues that only when the Enneagram is situated within humanity's spiritual traditions can we comprehend its meaning and utility as a sacred psychology. It is through a "science of the soul" grounded in metaphysics and cosmology that the nine-pointed symbol becomes operative for the purposes of healing and transformation. From the perspective of sacred symbolism, the Enneagram reveals a spiritually "operative" aspect. René Guénon (1886–1951) writes, "*the whole of nature amounts to no more than a symbol of the transcendent realities*" (2004b, 22), and additionally "*the entire natural order can in its turn be a symbol of the divine order*" (2004c, 10). Everything in the manifest world of the five senses pertains to symbolism. Frithjof Schuon (1907–1998) observes that "*to exist is to be a symbol*" and that we need sacred tradition to supply us with "*wisdom... to perceive the symbolism of things*" (2002 57). Our identity as human beings, and the meaning of our lives, are inseparable from symbolism and its metaphysical significance. In learning again to discern the "signs of God" (Lat. *vestigia Dei*; Ar. *āyāt Allāh*), we can reintegrate the science of the cosmos with a science of the soul, a unitive knowledge that had never been sundered prior to the modern age.

Awakening to our True Self is to recognize our fundamental identity in the Divine. In contrast, modern psychology is confused as to what comprises our fundamental personhood. The relative reality of the ego is perceived to be who we really are, whereas the personal dimension of our being is rooted in a transcendent origin. For this reason, Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–c. 215) could say: "*[I]f one knows himself, he will know God*" (1867, 273). Phenomenology, as contextualized in the epistemological pluralism of the sacred, will be the interpretive framework adopted in our analysis. This approach to the study of the Enneagram will be undertaken in a manner consistent with the method expounded by Henry Corbin (1903–1978); that is, "*tracing a thing back to its source, to its archetype*" (1980, 3). Corbin translated *phenomenology* as *kashf al-mahjūb* or "unveiling of the hidden" as informed by the spiritual hermeneutics (Ar. *al-ta'wil*) of Sūfism [1]. In the same way, a phenomenological approach is taken here as a method of studying the essence (or essential meaning) of phenomena in a way that is not limited to a given religious or spiritual form.

Without knowing its origins, one cannot account for the Enneagram, and its meaning will thus be left to the winds of conjecture and subjective whim. Ichazo explains: "*[T]hey have created an unending labyrinth over the descriptions and suppositions of each type with no other foundation, except for the wit of their own opinion. No wonder the contradictions amount, and there is no way they will ever get into any agreement*" (quoted in Isaacs and Labanauskas 1996, 18). What fundamentally distinguishes a sacred from a modern perspective – not only with respect to the Enneagram – is the attribution of a divine origin to all traditional symbols, rather than to a source based solely on human contrivance. It is a traditional understanding of symbols, alone, that provides the integrated knowledge necessary to situate them beyond a purely psychological point of view. The world's sapiential traditions unanimously recognize that "*symbolism is of 'non-human' origin*" (Guénon 2004c, 9).

We must therefore distinguish two ways of comprehending the Enneagram: a traditional interpretation rooted in divine revelation, and a modern approach that is divorced from the sacred. The Enneagram has profound implications for our understanding of the human psyche and its spiritual potential, yet this is not to suggest that its purpose is merely "psychological". Such an outlook can only lead to *psychologism* – the reduction of reality exclusively to the domain of the psyche, which is to fundamentally confuse ontological levels. In the same way that the human microcosm is a tripartite entity – consisting of Spirit, soul, and body – so too the cosmos at large, according to traditional cosmologies, has a three-fold structure, comprising realms that are spiritual, psychic, and corporeal. Titus Burckhardt (1908–1984) observes that "*man in his integral nature... is not only a physical datum but, at one and the same time, body, soul, and spirit*" (1987, 173).

An exclusive use of the Enneagram for the sole purpose of understanding the empirical personality, at the expense of what transcends it, is to radically curb its metaphysical scope and integrative potential. Such reductionism not only undermines a profound understanding of this nine-pointed symbol, but of everything pertaining to the transcendent order. What is needed is a deeper discernment that differentiates New Age parodies from authentic expressions of the sacred. This degeneration is what Guénon refers to as "*a parody of spirituality, imitating it so to speak in an inverse sense, so as to appear to be its very opposite*" (2001b, 267).

2 Gurdjieff and the Introduction of the Enneagram to the Modern West

The Enneagram became largely known in Western circles through contacts made with the Naqshbandī Sufi order, founded by Bahā ad-Dīn Naqshband Bukharī (1318–1389). George Ivanovich Gurdjieff (1877–1949) learned about the Enneagram through his association with the Naqshbandī Shaykh ‘Abd Allāh al-Fā’iz ad-Dāghestani (1891–1973) [2]. As noted by James Moore (1929–2017), a highly regarded biographer of Gurdjieff: “[T]he enneagram is sui generis and G. I. Gurdjieff, if not its author, is at least its first modern proponent” (1986/1987, 1). He initially presented the nine-pointed figure to his Russian pupils in Moscow and Petrograd (Saint Petersburg) in 1916. The first book to discuss the Enneagram did not appear until 1949, when Russian mathematician and esotericist Pyotr Demianovich Ouspensky (1878–1947), a distinguished disciple of Gurdjieff, released his work *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching*. Ouspensky, who first met Gurdjieff in Moscow in 1915, recounts Gurdjieff’s words on the significance of the nine-pointed figure (quoted in Ouspensky 1949, 294):

Speaking in general it must be understood that the enneagram is a universal symbol. All knowledge can be included in the enneagram and with the help of the enneagram it can be interpreted. And in this connection only what a man is able to put into the enneagram does he actually know, that is, understand. What he cannot put into the enneagram makes books and libraries entirely unnecessary. Everything can be included and read in the enneagram.

The following underscores the centrality of the Enneagram to Gurdjieff’s *Fourth Way* (Webb 1987, 505):

The most important use which Gurdjieff made of number symbolism is the figure of the enneagram, which he said contained and symbolized his whole System. His enneagram consists of a circle with the circumference divided into nine points which are joined to give a triangle and an irregular six-sided figure. Gurdjieff said that the triangle represented the presence of higher forces and that the six-sided figure stood for man. He also claimed that the enneagram was exclusive to his teaching. ‘This symbol cannot be met with anywhere in the study of occultism, either in books or in oral transmission,’ Ouspensky reports

him as saying. ‘It was given such significance by those who knew, that they considered it necessary to keep the knowledge of it secret.’ Because of the emphasis which Gurdjieff placed on this diagram, his followers have sought high and low for the symbol in occult literature. Bennett claims that it cannot be found anywhere; and if disciples of Gurdjieff have in fact discovered the figure, they have kept it very quiet.

3 Oscar Ichazo, Claudio Naranjo, and the Enneagram of Personality Types

Although Gurdjieff made the Enneagram known in the contemporary West, it was Oscar Ichazo, the Bolivian-born founder of the Arica Institute (*arica* is a Quechua word meaning “open door”) – established in New York in 1971 – who is recognized as having developed the system of the psychological typology of the Enneagram [3]. Because of his codification of personality types, some refer to Ichazo as the “Father of the Enneagram”. Prior to establishing the Arica Institute, Ichazo founded the Instituto de Gnoseología in 1968, where he gave instruction in the *enneagon* (Ichazo’s term for the Enneagram), and taught protoanalysis (his word for the knowledge obtained from analysis of human personality through the Enneagram) in 1969 at the Instituto de Psicología Aplicada in Santiago, under the sponsorship of the Chilean Psychological Association (Ichazo 1991).

Ichazo discusses the process of how he became a spiritual teacher, and what lay behind his instruction of others, as follows: “I went into a divine coma for seven days. When I came out of it I knew that I should teach; it was impossible that all my good luck should be only for myself. But it took me two years to act on this decision. Then I went to Santiago and started lecturing in the Institute for Applied Psychology” (quoted in Keen 1973, 64, 67).

Due to the many unknown details of Ichazo’s life, one could draw interesting parallels between Ichazo and the Peruvian-born Carlos Castañeda (1925–1998), who was himself a New Age icon, even dubbed the “Godfather of the New Age” (Wallace 2003, 16) [4]. Ichazo’s notoriety spread throughout the counter-culture movement following his involvement in the 1973 cult-classic film *The Holy Mountain*, directed by Alejandro Jodorowsky (b. 1929), a Chilean-French filmmaker. All the actors, including Jodorowsky

himself, are reported to have participated in Arica training before shooting the movie.

Jodorowsky invited Ichazo, whom he recognized as a spiritual master, to come to Mexico where the film was going to be made so as to receive his instruction. Ichazo accepted this invitation by initiating Jodorowsky into his first psychedelic experience through LSD, which was instrumental in the development of his perspective. Jodorowsky was also introduced to the sensory deprivation tank by a pupil of Ichazo's in November 1973, along with a host of other representatives of the counter-culture and Human Potential movements (Lilly 1977, 220–21). It has been suggested that the use of psychedelic drugs was a common feature of the Arica training, and Ichazo himself was exposed to these early on in his life, when he had contact with indigenous peoples in South America who used mind-altering substances for ceremonial purposes. He said: *"I had contact with Indians and they introduced me to psychedelic drugs and shamanism while I was in my early teens"* (quoted in Keen 1973, 64).

Claudio Naranjo (1932–2019), a Chilean psychiatrist regarded as a pioneer of the Human Potential movement, was another innovator of the Enneagram of personality types. Naranjo sought to further his understanding of both psychology and spirituality, having visited the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California, a leading center for the Human Potential movement. While at the institute, he encountered Fritz Perls (1893–1970), the German-born psychiatrist and psychotherapist known as the "Father of Gestalt Therapy," which influenced his theoretical outlook. Perls's impact upon the Human Potential movement and modern psychology itself may be summarized best in his own words: *"Freud took the first step... I accomplished the next step after Freud in the history of psychiatry"* (Perls 1979, 35). Naranjo became apprenticed under Perls and was considered one of his three successors at the Esalen Institute.

Naranjo initially learned about Ichazo in 1969, through various Chilean students who shared their experiences with him about Ichazo. Initially, Naranjo corresponded with Ichazo but then decided to visit Chile to meet him in person. Following his return to California, Naranjo spread the word to others about Ichazo and the Arica training. Soon thereafter, Naranjo, along with John Lilly (1915–2001) – a physician and psychoanalyst – were part of the first group of fifty-four Americans (many of whom were from the Esalen Institute and Big Sur) who traveled to Arica in Chile, during July 1970, to study with Ichazo.

What precisely took place between Ichazo and Naranjo is unknown and will likely remain a mystery. However, we do know that Naranjo decided to leave Ichazo after several months of training with him and returned to the United States. We might add that, by Ichazo's own account, he had no dispute with Naranjo. Upon returning to the San Francisco Bay Area, Naranjo began to teach the Enneagram of personality types (or ego fixations) that he had learned from Ichazo. Consequently, Ichazo's influence on the Esalen Institute was legendary, and many of the early disciples who studied under him in Chile returned to propagate the Arica training at Esalen, which was reflected in *The Esalen Catalog* (Winter 1972) [5].

In September 1971, Naranjo established the SAT ("Seekers After Truth," a phrase borrowed from Gurdjieff) Institute in Berkeley in order to amalgamate his knowledge of modern psychological theories, from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), and to correlate them with the Enneagram and an assortment of other spiritual methods (for example, Buddhist meditation, Gurdjieffian attention exercises, and Sufi stories). It is important to note the SAT Institute predated, by a decade, the flurry of interest in the Enneagram as it relates to personality types within the New Age movement and mainstream psychology.

4 Claudio Naranjo, the 'Breach of Secrecy', and the Enneagram for Mass Consumption

Several figures who had trained directly with Naranjo (or received instruction from those who studied under him) are responsible for the mass dissemination of the Enneagram as most people understand it today. Some of those exposed to Naranjo's early teaching on the Enneagram have gone on to become teachers themselves, such as Robert Ochs (1930–2018), Helen Palmer, Kathy Riordan Speeth, A. H. Almaas (also known as A. Hameed Ali), Sandra Maitri, Peter O'Hanrahan, and Reza Leah Landman. Naranjo's commitment to complete secrecy regarding the teachings of the Enneagram of personality types was something that he felt very strongly about, as we can see from his admission (Naranjo 1996, 16):

Let me just say that the teaching I did in 1971/73 was restricted to two groups. One met during one and a half years, and the other for only six months, I believe. Both were subject to a considerable reserve. This reserve was made explicit through a signed commitment that nobody

was to teach this, which I felt necessary because I was under a commitment of reserve with Ichazo at the time.

Robert Ochs, a Jesuit priest who attended the SAT Institute, took extensive notes during Naranjo's teaching on the Enneagram and taught it to other Jesuits at Loyola University in Chicago, making these teachings available to the Jesuit community at large. Those who had access to these teachings were Patrick H. O'Leary, Paul Robb, and Jerome Wagner. Before long, these notes on the Enneagram teaching had spread throughout North America.

Considering the popularity of the Enneagram within Catholic circles, it is significant to consider this interest in light of the events following the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), which have fundamentally compromised Western Christianity, as these desacralizing forces also inevitably spread to Protestant denominations leading to the pervasive secularism that is found throughout the West today (see Coomaraswamy 2006). The faithful have been cautioned: *"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables"* (2 Timothy 4:3–4). While efforts have been made to claim Christian origins for the Enneagram (see Rohr and Ebert 2001), some have become very critical of its application to personality types, and lament its ties to the New Age movement within Christian circles (see Pacwa 1992).

September 1984 saw the first book published on the nine-pointed symbol (*The Enneagram: A Journey of Self Discovery* by Maria Beesing, Robert J. Nogosek, and Patrick H. O'Leary). Don Richard Riso (1946–2012) encountered the early Enneagram material made available by Ochs in 1974, through one of Ochs's initial students by the name of Tad Dunne (while Riso was in a Jesuit seminary in Toronto). In 1987, Riso published his first book on the Enneagram, *Personality Types*. Helen Palmer, psychic and self-proclaimed "Queen of the Enneagram" (Ichazo 1991, 112), published her first book on the subject in 1988.

According to Palmer, she did not breach Naranjo's pact to secrecy, as this was not a requirement within the SAT group in which she participated: *"I did attend nine sessions of a public enneagram class with no 'secrecy' requirement"* (quoted in *Special Forum* 1997, 13). Palmer has no qualms over having aided the popularization of the Enneagram, as long as it has been in the service of consciousness expansion: *"I'm happy to be a popularizer, as long as what I've accomplished stands for popularization of the fact that type plays a part in accessing*

higher consciousness" (quoted in Smoley 1994, 19). Shortly after Palmer's book hit the marketplace, Naranjo published his *Ennea-Type Structures: Self-Analysis for the Seeker* in 1990. From this juncture on, interest in the Enneagram has spread like wildfire. Naranjo (1996, 16) laments the fact that his early teachings on the Enneagram were released and that his students did not honor his request for secrecy:

I want to only say parenthetically that I was not happy with the fact that the commitment to secrecy was not kept, that the enneagram came to the streets a little prematurely. I felt critical of people taking initiative in writing about information that had not been originated by them, and who were acquainted with only a fragment of a traditional body of knowledge that is considerably more complex.

Ichazo makes a thought-provoking and no less sobering assessment of the explosion surrounding the Enneagram of personality types on the global marketplace: *"The types that have become popular are 'mind games,' with rather no foundation whatsoever"* (quoted in Isaacs and Labanauskas 1996, 18). Gurdjieff makes a cautionary remark concerning the popularization of the Enneagram, and of its limitations when devoid of the esoteric knowledge that is necessary to access its inner dimensions: *"The knowledge of the enneagram has for a very long time been preserved in secret and if it now is, so to speak, made available to all, it is only in an incomplete and theoretical form of which nobody could make any practical use without instruction from a man who knows"* (quoted in Ouspensky 1949, 294).

5 Oscar Ichazo, Claudio Naranjo, and the Fourth Way teaching

It is important to note the connection between Ichazo and Naranjo, in relation to the teachings of Gurdjieff, as both were very familiar with the latter's Fourth Way system. Ichazo confirmed that he came in contact with the ideas of Gurdjieff in the early 1950s through Ouspensky's book, *In Search of the Miraculous*. An early exponent of both Gurdjieff's teaching and the Enneagram to the Spanish-speaking world was Rodney Collin (1909–1956), a British disciple of Ouspensky's. Rodney and his wife immigrated to Tlalpan (on the outskirts of Mexico City) in 1948, accompanied by a number of Ouspensky's followers and, in 1952, he published *The Theory of Celestial Influence* (Es. *El Desarrollo de la Luz*).

Although it is suggested that Ichazo appropriated the teachings of the Enneagram from Gurdjieff without giving him due credit, Ichazo denies such claims. The Gurdjieff Foundation of California has stated the following about Ichazo and his institute: *"The Bolivian founder of Arica expounds his system, a popular psychological training which draws – usually without acknowledgment – on several of the Gurdjieff ideas, especially the symbol of the enneagram (called here the 'enneagon')"* (Driscoll 1985, 89). Palmer links Ichazo's "new tradition" with New Age thought because of his theoretical departure: *"He [note: Ichazo] has moved the Enneagram from a Sufi context, from a Christian esoteric context, from the Gurdjieff context, and couched his 'new discovery' in an eclectic, new age spiritual growth context"* (quoted in Ichazo 1991, 111). Others suggest that *"the enneagram is a teaching device used by the Sufi school and developed by Ichazo"* (Lilly and Hart 1975, 333).

While Ichazo admitted to having read all Gurdjieff's books (and those of his disciples), he responded to the accusation of having borrowed from his work, and not giving him due credit, as follows: *"In synthesis, though I have gone through all of Gurdjieff's material, as well as all the important literature about him, I have never come to an 'idea' that I can call the unique apport [note: a term indicating the paranormal transference or appearance of an object] of Mr. Gurdjieff"* (Ichazo 1991, 93). Here Ichazo appears to adopt Gurdjieff's concepts without giving him credit for them.

Ichazo alludes to the syncretic underpinnings of the Arica Institute: *"Arica is not as much my invention as it is a product of our times. The knowledge I have contributed to the school came to me from many sources I encountered in my peculiar quest"* (quoted in Keen 1973, 64). Although Ichazo has studied the numerous religious and mystical systems of the world and warns against syncretism (the indiscriminate mixing of heterogeneous ideas in an attempt to fashion a synthesis), it is not clear if Ichazo (quoted in Bleibtreu 1982, 176) had a traditional spiritual affiliation or whether he offered a more nuanced version of the piecemeal approaches found in the New Age movement:

You cannot make a cocktail of traditions. That is totally false. I was not doing that at all. At any time I would teach one distinct path, just that path without including any elements of a different path. Or more clearly, suppose: If we were doing some Sufi exercise we would be working that Sufi exercise exclusively, not mixing Sufism with yoga, or yoga with Zen, etc. We worked them as separate units and never really mixed them. We were studying these traditions, just as you can study geography,

mathematics, or history, and yet you don't confuse them: each is a different science with a different method.

Ichazo (1991, 104) went as far as to say: *"Since I am proposing a completely new method, I am certainly correct when I say 'I am the root of a new tradition'"* [6]. According to Naranjo, *"he [note: Ichazo] asserts that he received the enneagram of character-fixations by direct inspiration"* (quoted in Parkin and Fittkau 1996, 22). What was the source of this "inspiration"? Ichazo claims to have received his instruction from the Metatron of the Kabbalah, the prince of the archangels, and from the mysterious "Green Qu'Tub" (likely referring to Khadir meaning "the Green One" in the Islamic tradition), and claims that both entities are in theory available to all Aricans. Indeed, a person *"may receive instructions from the higher entities such as Metatron, the prince of the archangels, who has given instructions to Ichazo"* (Lilly and Hart 1975, 341). Furthermore, *"The interior master of all Aricans is called the Green Qu'Tub. He may or may not make himself known to individual Aricans, depending on the stage of development of the student"* (341). Ichazo (1991, 106) emphasizes that the Enneagram came to him as in a vision, and its development into a system is his alone:

They came to me, 108 in all, as in a vision, showing their internal relations with complete clarity, in 1954 in Santiago, Chile. Not only am I the holder of the beginning of this tradition, but also, as can be absolutely and concretely proven, the 108 enneagons and the entire system in all its terms have been developed by me, only and exclusively, and I am more than ready to contest it publicly.

Naranjo informs us that he first learned about the Enneagram through the Fourth Way teaching in his early youth: *"I was first acquainted with the enneagram by reading Ouspensky's 'In Search of the Miraculous' when I was in my late teens"* (quoted in Parkin and Fittkau 1996, 22). It was this early exposure to the Fourth Way teaching of Gurdjieff that led Naranjo to study with Ichazo. *"[M]y main interest in learning from Oscar Ichazo was a conviction that he was a link to the Sarmouni – the school behind Gurdjieff"* (quoted in Parkin and Fittkau 1996, 22). Naranjo has stated that Ichazo had, on several occasions, alluded to his affiliation with the Sarmouni or the "School of the Bees" – the same ancient source from which Gurdjieff obtained certain Sufi teachings, which is what drew Naranjo to Ichazo: *"As we worked with Oscar [note: Ichazo], I had no doubt about regarding him as a link with that tradition which had been the main element in Gurdjieff's own background"* (1996, 16).

Yet Ichazo later appears to have denounced Gurdjieff's influence on the formation of the Arica system, as Naranjo explains: "Originally, Oscar Ichazo claimed that the enneagram was passed on to him orally by the Sarmouni, a Sufi brotherhood. In a recent interview, he said that he had never met a single Sufi who knew about the enneagram" (quoted in Parkin and Fittkau 1996, 22). We need to take heed of Moore's intimation regarding Gurdjieff's encounter with the Sarmouni: "Gurdjieff's provocative claim to have found and entered 'the chief Sarmoung Monastery' is in effect a litmus test, differentiating literal minds from those preferring allegory" (1991, 31).

Naranjo (1990, viii) initially gave credit to his teacher for the psychological typology of the Enneagram, admitting that it was "Oscar Ichazo, through whom I first became acquainted with the 'enneagrams of personality' during a series of lectures dictated [note: by Ichazo] at the Instituto de Psicología Aplicada (Santiago) in 1969, under the sponsorship of the Chilean Psychological Association". In 2010, however, he recanted this in two separate interviews, claiming that he did not in fact learn ennea-types from Ichazo (see Gold 2010; McNay 2010). Naranjo stated that he intentionally gave authorship to Ichazo, who was more famous than he, in order to draw people to the Enneagram and thus establish a correlation between the ancient Sufi origins of the Enneagram – purportedly brought to the modern West through Gurdjieff – and Ichazo leading up to him. Palmer (1991, 46) gives credit to Ichazo by way of the Fourth Way teachings: "The correct placement of the emotional passions was produced by Oscar Ichazo, and with that deceptively simple arrangement of what Gurdjieff called Chief Feature, the Enneagram code became available to us".

Naranjo stated that, under his tutelage, Ichazo spoke minimally about the Enneagram and said nothing about the specific ennea-types he later developed: "He [note: Ichazo] didn't talk about the enneagrams of personality more than two hours during our year with him" (1996, 16). Incidentally, Naranjo credits E. J. Gold, who was also influenced by Gurdjieff, for coining the term "ennea-type". Naranjo then tells us that he obtained his theories about the psychological types of the Enneagram through "automatic writing" or "psychography", before verifying them through observation (quoted in Gold 2010). We must not neglect the fact that Naranjo himself never completed his tutelage with Ichazo before taking on students himself: "Claudio [note: Naranjo] broke with Oscar [note: Ichazo] very early on, before completing Oscar's training. Claudio took the enneagram with him, thus starting a tradition within the enneagram community" (Eli Jaxon-Bear quoted in *Special Forum* 1997, 15).

Naranjo affirms the significance of his instruction under Ichazo in understanding personality types and the structure of the personality: "To this awakening of a 'clinical eye' I owe everything that I was able to learn about personality types and personality in general from then on, and for the intellectual experience of an increasing coalescence of what information on the subject I acquired" (2003, xxx). Palmer emphasizes what she considers Ichazo's chief contribution to the Enneagram of personality types: "Most important, Ichazo had placed the types correctly on the nine-pointed star" (1991, 47). Naranjo dually credits the impact of Gurdjieff's introduction of the Enneagram: "I could say that the enneagram of the Sarmouni acted as a magnet in my mind to bring together the pieces of psychological lore that, until then, were separate, an organizing catalytic factor causing the relative chaos of the information to come into a more precise pattern" (2003, xxx). Naranjo was initially going to call his first book on the Enneagram *Character Structure and Psychodynamics in the Light of the Enneagram of the Sarmouni*, in order to illustrate his indebtedness to the Sarmouni in its title; but he later renamed it (Naranjo 1990).

An additionally important influence upon Naranjo's outlook is the influence of the pseudo-Sufi teacher Idries Shah (1924–1996): "I should interpolate here for the sake of context that, as many who were deeply affected by the Gurdjieff heritage, I had been disappointed in the extent to which Gurdjieff's school entailed a living lineage. I had turned in my search towards *Ṣūfism* and had become part of a group under the guidance of Idries Shah" (2003, xxviii). Although (to our knowledge) Shah only references the Enneagram in one book under the heading "Symbols, especially the Enneagon" (Shah 1997, 286–87), he was a key source for the popularization of *Ṣūfism* in the West that has filtered into modern psychology [7]. However, it has been well demonstrated that Shah's brand of *Ṣūfism* is highly distorted and does not reflect the authenticity of traditional Islamic spirituality [8].

Riso insists that the Enneagram of personality types is a contemporary innovation, and the credit needs to go to Ichazo and Naranjo, not to any ancient origins. He has called those within the "enneagram community" to stop *romancing* the Enneagram; however, this appears to be a change from his initial position as reflected in an earlier publication: "I not only have much to learn but also much for which to give thanks, especially to those ancient masters who have handed down to us the profound wisdom of the Enneagram" (Riso 1992, 117).

Kathleen Riordan Speeth, who was raised in the milieu of Fourth Way teachings (seeing as her parents were disciples

of Gurdjieff), firmly asserted that the nine-pointed figure derived from Islamic esoterism: “The central symbol of the Gurdjieff work, the enneagram, is almost certainly of Sufi origin – an indication of the importance of these teachings in the system Gurdjieff developed” (Speeth 1989, 9). Palmer, who also avows that the origins of the Enneagram are to be found in the mystical dimension of Islam, dedicated her first book on the Enneagram to Lord Pentland (Henry John Sinclair, 1907–1984), a prominent disciple of Ouspensky and Gurdjieff who became the president of the Gurdjieff Foundation in both New York and California: “The Enneagram is an ancient Sufi teaching” (Palmer 1991, 3). Ichazo nevertheless questions the Sufi origins of the Enneagram: “I know Sūfism extensively – I’ve practiced traditional ‘zhikr’, prayer, meditation – and I know realized Sufi sheiks. It [note: the Enneagram] is not part of their theoretical framework. They couldn’t care less about the Enneagon” (quoted in Goldberg 1993, 24). A. H. Almaas, who took part in the early SAT group under Naranjo, presents the connection between Gurdjieff, Ichazo, and Naranjo (1998, 3) in a summary fashion that sheds light on contemporary understandings of the Enneagram:

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.

We will defer to Naranjo’s assessment of the current state of the “enneagram community” that he was instrumental in launching: “I see the movement as pervaded by a combination of greed and arrogance, and by a great disrespect toward the sources of the knowledge” (quoted in Parkin and Fittkau 1996, 23). We again cite Naranjo: “I will finish by saying

that I have been ambivalent about the enneagram movement that I have unwittingly fathered... looking in retrospect, we may say what Oscar [note: Ichazo] used to say concerning the excitement of the enneagram movement (and this was one of his most favorite slogans): ‘the devil doesn’t know for whom he works’” (Parkin and Fittkau 1996, 17).

6 Origins of the Enneagram and Islamic Spirituality

Although the Enneagram is known to have several different origins, a primary source can be found within the esoteric tradition of Islam. Yet this does not detract from the universal dimension of this symbol as it applies to all revealed religions and their “science of the soul.” As previously indicated, a significant encounter – that reveals the traditional genesis of the Enneagram – took place between Gurdjieff and Shaykh ‘Abd Allāh al-Fā’iz ad-Dāghestānī, who was raised and trained by his maternal uncle, Shaykh Sharafud-dīn ad-Dāghestānī (1875–1936) of the Naqshbandī Sufi order. It was this meeting, along with a number of key Sufi works, that not only provide a richer context for the Enneagram – or the “face of God” (Ar. *wajh Allāh*) as it is known in Sūfism – but unveils its esoteric depth as well. Bennett also made the acquaintance of Shaykh ‘Abd Allāh (Kabbani 2004, 449–51). We cite the following account of this encounter at length in order to show that the *wajh Allāh* is clearly a spiritual symbol connected to a major divine revelation (quoted in Kabbani 2004, 404).

As soon as they met, Shaykh Abd Allah said, ‘You are interested in the knowledge of the Nine Points. We can speak on it in the morning after the dawn prayer [note: fajr]. Now you eat something and rest.’ At the time of the dawn prayer, Shaykh Abd Allah called Gurdjieff to come and pray with him. As soon as the prayer finished, the shaykh began to recite Surah YaSin from the Holy Quran. As he finished reading, Gurdjieff approached him and asked if he could speak of what he had just experienced. Gurdjieff said:

‘As soon as you finished the prayer and began to recite, I saw you come to me and take my hand.’ We were transported to a beautiful rose garden. You told me that this garden is your garden and these roses are your disciples, each with his own color and perfume. You directed me to one particular red rose and said, ‘That one is yours. Go smell it.’ As I did, I saw the rose open and I disappeared within it and became the rose. I entered its roots, and

they led me to your presence. I found myself entering into your heart and becoming a part of you.

Through your spiritual power I was able to ascend to the knowledge of the power of the Nine Points. Then a voice, addressing me as Abd an-Nur, said, 'This light and knowledge have been granted to you from the Divine Presence of God to bring peace to your heart. However, you must not use the power of this knowledge.' The voice bid me farewell with the salutation of peace and the vision ended as you were finishing the recitation from the Quran.

Shaykh 'Abd Allāh replied:

Surah YaSin was called 'the Heart of the Quran' by the Holy Prophet and the knowledge of these Nine Points was opened to you through it. The vision was by the blessings of the verse, 'Peace! A World (of salutation) from a Lord Most Merciful' (36:58).

Each of the Nine Points is represented by one of nine saints who are at the highest level in the Divine Presence. They are the keys to untold powers within the human being, but there is no permission to use these keys. This is a secret that, in general, will not be opened until the Last Days when the Mahdi appears and Jesus returns.

Others have traced the Enneagram to the influence of the Kabbalistic Sefirot, through Medieval Christian philosopher Ramón Lull (1232–1315), and the German Jesuit scholar Athanasius Kircher (1601–1680) who published *Arithmologia* in 1665 – containing the Enneagram on the frontispiece of the volume – was reported to have influenced Gurdjieff's ideas on the nine-pointed symbol (Webb 1987) [9]. Gurdjieff is also recorded as having said that another one of its origins is in "esoteric Christianity" (quoted in Ouspensky 1949, 102). Ichazo (1991, 101) alludes to the ancient sources of the Enneagram as follows:

The enneagon figure, which the Gurdjieffians affirm that I took from their Master, is in fact one of the forms known as 'seals', which were produced by the Pythagorean school (500 BC), and the Platonic mathematicians (300 BC) who studied the internal relation of numbers with geometrical forms, giving to each number, not only their characteristics, but their internal interrelations.

Although the Enneagram contains a sacred psychology, it is essentially a method of spiritual transformation. However, contemporary Enneagram proponents typically overlook or misunderstand this aspect because they invariably con-

fuse the domain of the psyche with that of the spiritual. To reduce the Enneagram solely to a system of psychology, or a codification of personality types, serves to distort our understanding of this sacred symbol by undermining its ontological and cosmological foundations (Nasr 1994, vii–viii).

The human psyche is subordinate to what is higher than itself (i.e., the Spirit). This principle has been, for the most part, rejected by modernity, which has cut itself off from transcendence thanks to the secularizing tenets of the Enlightenment project. The main danger to which personality type theory all too easily lends itself is *psychologism* – the reduction of the Spirit to merely psychological states. This aberration largely defines the contemporary "spiritual" scene, especially New Age thought, yet this malady also afflicts modern psychology as a whole.

7 Psychologizing the Enneagram

The prevalence of this reductionism reflects a profane mentality that continues to dominate the present day. In particular, it shows how traditional symbols, such as the Enneagram, can be usurped by a materialist psychology. The question now arises as to why it is important to unearth one's particular ennea-type. Palmer (1991, 9) presents two reasons for this which, in themselves, are helpful in conducting our everyday life: (i) "*The reason for discovering your own type is so you can build a working relationship with yourself*"; and (ii) "*The second reason to study your type is so you can understand other people as they are to themselves, rather than as you see them from your own point of view*". This exclusive focus on "typology" or "fixation" is a recent phenomenon, and bears no resemblance to the Enneagram's traditional use.

The problem with a desacralized interpretation of Enneagram personality types is that it lends itself to a 'static' view of people, by falsely identifying the empirical ego with a person's true identity. This error is testimony to a psychologism that obscures the existence of a higher order (Oscar Ichazo quoted in Isaacs and Labanaukas 1997, 21):

The Enneagram authors have made the grave mistake of making this theory into a typology of nine 'personality types' as tools for ego aggrandizement, instead of a method of ego-reduction and final transcendence of the lower ego that, in fact, is like a sickness that has to be cured and transformed, in order to become completely developed human beings in a state of self-liberation.

The key to understanding this erosion of humanity's spiritual traditions can be found in the following statement by American psychologist Robert E. Ornstein (1942–2018), disciple and main representative of Idries Shah: “As the esoteric disciplines of other cultures become accessible to the [note: modern] West, they emerge as psychologies” (Ornstein 1972, 11). Ichazo also frames the Arica system in an analogous fashion so as to appeal to a modern mindset: “*Protoanalysis follows the same path as the real ancient spirituality, and it is a modern presentation... of all human potentialities in order to become actualized*” (quoted in Isaacs and Labanauskas 1997, 21). Palmer (1991, 52) also echoes this process: “The [note: Enneagram of personality types] system was being developed as an esoteric psychological tool.” It is apt to recall that an early teacher of Tibetan Buddhism in the West, Chögyam Trungpa (1939–1987), predicted this tendency in religion, stating in 1975: “*Buddhism will come to the West as a psychology*” (quoted in Goleman 2005, vii) [10].

While Sufi psychology, just like its Buddhist equivalent, has increased in popularity, both have suffered attempts to extract them from their traditional contexts. With Sūfism, this has led to a distortion of its central message, which cannot be cut off from Islam as a whole, since all Sufi orders are linked through an unbroken “chain” (Ar. *silsilah*), stretching back to the Prophet himself. In Buddhism, some of the most advanced teachings and practices are often offered to Western aspirants with little or no commitment, or without any assessment of their qualifications.

This development has been rather nuanced, so the utmost vigilance is required to thwart a burgeoning reductionism at the heart of mainstream psychology. Ornstein writes (1971, 139): “My intention is not to ‘reduce’ totally the phenomena of the esoteric disciplines to psychological terms, but simply to begin the process of considering these aspects of the traditions which fall within the realm of a modern psychological analysis.” And what do we say about that which does not lend itself to verification through the five senses? The Spirit lies outside the empirical order. Does this mean that spiritual traditions, that do not readily conform to the prejudices of modern psychology, are likely to be ignored? There are many unfortunate implications to this trend which affect how we understand the intermediary realm of the human psyche and what lies beyond it.

While psychology today – as an autonomous science separate from religion and philosophy – began with the emergence of modernism (and which continues into the post-Enlightenment era), it is erroneous to suppose that traditional religions did not possess their own integral psy-

chologies, even if they did not explicitly use that term. Ouspensky (1981, 4) indicated that “*it is necessary to realize that psychology except in modern times has never existed under its own name*”. In the premodern world, the human psyche was always viewed through the lens of metaphysics, in stark contrast to the materialist tenor of modern science, which no longer recognizes the human “soul”, having replaced it with the more scientifically acceptable term “mind”.

“Psychology is sometimes called a new science. This is quite wrong. Psychology is, perhaps, the oldest science, and, unfortunately, in its most essential features a forgotten science” (Ouspensky 1981, 3). The notion that modern psychology offers something “new” or “superior” to the sacred psychology of traditional peoples is related to a deficient grasp of what it means to be fully human, which is a direct consequence of authentic spirituality having become, in large measure, eclipsed in the contemporary world. Ouspensky (1981, 3) continues:

[P]ractically never in history has psychology stood at so low a level as at the present time. It has lost all touch with its origin and its meaning so that now it is even difficult to define the term ‘psychology’: that is, to say what psychology is and what it studies. And this is so in spite of the fact that never in history have there been so many psychological theories and so many psychological writings.

This personifies the thought process that mirrors what has been termed the “psychological impostor” (Schuon 1966, 98–101), a seduction that misunderstands the plenitude of authentic spirituality with its corresponding “science of the soul” – something that is quite evident in the “enneagram community.”

All spiritual traditions teach their own version of the famous inscription found at Delphi – “Know thyself” (Gr. *Gnóthi seautón*) – which did not emerge with Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), or modern psychology for that matter, but can be seen as a timeless truth that has been taught since time immemorial in all cultures. Rather than approaching the human psyche through the sole lens of modern science, we would be better off paying close attention to what Richard of St. Victor (d. 1173) had to say: “*If the mind would fain ascend to the height of science, let its first and principal study be to know itself*” (quoted in Gardner 1925, xv). Although each religion possesses a corresponding psychology, its insights can only be fully efficacious when realized within the nurturing and protective environs of an authentic spiritual tradition.

The following passage provides a good example of how a profound spiritual symbol can be flattened to a more restricted psychological level: *"The [note: Enneagram of personality types] teaching can help us to recognize our own type and how to cope with our issues, understand our work associates, lovers, friends, and to appreciate the predisposition that each type has for higher human capacities such as empathy, omniscience, and love"* (Palmer 1991, 3).

Just as the human microcosm is tripartite in nature – consisting of Spirit, soul, and body – so too is the universe – as macrocosm – mirrored by way of the formless, subtle, and gross planes of existence. We must therefore be cautious when statements are made that emphasize the importance of psychological inquiry over spiritual practice, for it is the latter alone that effects a metaphysical integration of the human psyche, and not vice versa as we read here: *"The way we get to our essential nature is not primarily through spiritual exercises but through psychological work to penetrate parts of the personality that are connected to underlying essential aspects of ourselves. Psychological inquiry leads to spiritual realization. Meditation supports this inquiry and sharpens it, but the psychological work is inseparable from the spiritual practice"* (Hameed Ali quoted in Schwartz 1996, 406).

While many contemporary approaches appear to embrace the psychology found at the heart of all spiritualities, they operate on several false assumptions which, when viewed more rigorously, are found to be antagonistic to the very mystical dimensions with which they seek to align themselves. The inner (or esoteric) aspect cannot exist without the outer (or exoteric); to only acknowledge the former is erroneous, and that is precisely what New Age pseudo-spirituality seeks to do – to strip religions of religion itself – so that it can then declare as true whatever conforms to its biases. Hujwīrī (d. 1071) explains the complementary facets of the "inner" (Ar. *bāṭin*) and "outer" (Ar. *ẓāhir*) dimensions of the Islamic tradition (in a manner applicable to all religions) as follows: *"The exoteric aspect of Truth without the esoteric is hypocrisy, and the esoteric without the exoteric is heresy. So, with regard to the Law, mere formality is defective, while mere spirituality is vain"* (1911, 14).

Furthermore, to say that the esoteric presents itself as a spectrum of "psychologies" is very misleading, because the spiritual domain surpasses that of psychology. This is to commit the same error made by Carl Jung (1875–1961), when he reduced spirituality in this way – which is the very hallmark of psychologism. So-called *"traditional esoteric psychologies"* (Ornstein 1972, 95–179) are none other than New Age aberrations. They are neither "traditional" nor "es-

oteric" but, rather, attempts to "spiritualize" a profane psychology in a way that undermines bona fide spiritual paths.

The fact that many in the humanistic and transpersonal psychology movement attribute a valid form of Sūfism to a deeply problematic figure such as Idries Shah speaks volumes in itself. While Shah popularized Sūfism in the West, he is not considered a valid source of traditional Sūfism by respected authorities (see Wilson 1997, 179–209). We can see here how Shah cannibalizes authentic Sufi insights to cater to a secular mindset. No matter how subtle his approach may appear at first, the end result is always the same: undermining the integrity of a genuine tradition, in order to satisfy New Age inclinations.

8 The Horizontal and Vertical Dimensions of Personality

Modern psychology is also confused as to what comprises our real personality. Because of the difficulty it has in discerning levels of reality – and its corresponding modes of knowing – it tends to view the conditioned personality or empirical ego as a fixed form of ultimate identity, rather than acknowledging the true source of our personality in the Divine. This disorientation can be summarized as follows: confusion of the Absolute with the relative, the vertical with the horizontal, the Spirit with the psychic, the Intellect with reason, the Self with ego, and personality with individuality. The sacred psychology informed by the spiritual traditions of humanity recognizes two forms of human identity: one relative and one Absolute – without ever blurring this distinction.

Most, if not all approaches, to contemporary understandings of the Enneagram fail to delineate the distinction between personality and "Essence" (Ar. *dhāt*). In singling out only the relative dimension of personality, its transcendent archetype is ignored. In addressing solely the Absolute dimension of Essence, the relative aspect of an individual essence is neglected. Although this might appear as unnecessary semantic nitpicking, the precise meaning of these terms as understood in their traditional context is of the utmost importance. Modern psychology is largely confined to the relative order of reality, as its understanding of identity is entirely confined to the psychic realm: *"[I]dentity comes about through the projection of an unconscious association by analogy with the object"* (Jung 1976, 131). By contrast, we recall the following, which speaks to the fullness of human identity: *"Inwardly' every religion is the doctrine of the one Self and its earthly manifestation, as also the way leading*

to the abolition of the false self, or the way of the mysterious reintegration of our 'personality' in the celestial Prototype" (Schuon 1990, 67).

There cannot be an effective *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) without taking the relative and absolute criteria of human identity into consideration. That is why the DSM – now in its fifth edition (published by the American Psychiatric Association) – remains a caricature of itself. The same could be said for the *International Classification of Diseases* (ICD) published by the World Health Organization. The psychological interpretation of the Enneagram, like the DSM, is a categorical classification that divides personality characteristics into types consisting of defining features. As what is higher than the human psyche can alone ensure integral individuality, it may not be surprising that the DSM concerns itself with human pathology alone, which is apparent in the following definition: "Personality traits are enduring patterns of perceiving, relating to, and thinking about the environment and oneself that are exhibited in a wide range of social and personal contexts. Only when personality traits are inflexible and maladaptive and cause significant functional impairment or subjective distress do they constitute personality disorders" (American Psychiatric Association 2022, 735).

Analogously, the Enneagram has come to occupy a function similar to the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) created by Katharine Cook Briggs (1875–1968) and her daughter Isabel Briggs Myers (1897–1980). Carl Jung was the key catalyst in the promotion of MBTI, as Katharine Cook Briggs came across Jung's book *Psychological Types* in 1923, when it was first published in English. She subsequently commenced a correspondence with Jung and met him personally during his visit to the United States. Those who use the MBTI forget that Jung's contribution to psychology, while appearing to be more inclusive than his onetime master Sigmund Freud, with whom he parted ways, took the reductionistic trajectory of Freud to new heights by psychologizing religion itself.

9 Zero as the Supreme Identity

Throughout diverse cultures and epochs, traditional peoples have held to two presiding ideas: that of Center and Origin. The first connects everything to a sacred presence at the heart of reality – where Spirit touches the earth – and the second brings all things back to their divine origin; the timeless moment when the numinous was perceived as being nearer and all-pervasive. According to the *Tao Te*

Ching: "All things come into being, and... thereby... return" (1963, 128). By truly apprehending this Center and Origin, a "science of the soul" can be found whereby "[e]verything in the behavior of ancient and traditional peoples can be explained, directly or indirectly, by reference to these two ideas" (Schuon 1984, 7).

When situated in the Absolute, personality in its full plenitude is a theophany. Attributing a particular "ennea-type" to someone is to focus on their conditioned personality which is not the same as our true identity. Regardless of how we are characterized on the nine-pointed Enneagram, none of the points on its circumference represent who we are in essence. This is the center point of the Enneagram – or "the Zero" – that is both transcendent and immanent. What is most important is that it radiates out to the periphery, making each of the nine points what they are. The purpose of the Enneagram is to become – from a strictly human point of view – a metaphysical cipher, which occurs when the empirical ego dissolves into the Supreme Identity, known as our True Self.

The Zero point of the Enneagram circle is an abode of light, unity, and oneness. The circumference is the realm of darkness, multiplicity, and nescience. The wayfarer on the path must make their way from the periphery to the sacred center. Again, we must not forget that "*the ego is error: it is a principle of illusion*" (Schuon 2007, 196). It is only through a spiritual practice, grounded in a divinely revealed tradition, that the Enneagram can be liberated from the throes of psychological reductionism. The higher includes the lower, and this is why only that which transcends the human psyche can situate the latter in its rightful place.

This Zero can therefore be seen as encompassing both Being and Non-Being. Rūmī (1207–1273) affirms: "*Return from existence to nonexistence! You are seeking the Lord and you belong to Him!*" (1983, 177). As anyone can move through any of the points of the Enneagram numerous times in any given moment, to fixate on one's "ennea-type" is problematic for it reduces a sacred psychology to a one-dimensional level devoid of transcendence. Indeed, Gurdjieff himself cautioned against becoming fixed in a single personality type: "*A motionless enneagram is a dead symbol; the living symbol is in motion*" (quoted in Ouspensky 1949, 294).

To return to the heart of the Enneagram is to reclaim our innermost identity, our sacred center. Plotinus (c. 205–270) explains a centre "*is an independent unity; everything within the circle has its term at the centre; and to the centre the radii bring each their own. Within our nature is such a centre*

by which we grasp and are linked and held; and those of us are firmly in the Supreme whose being is concentrated There" (1991, 360).

The following is taken from a conversation between Bakhtiar and a revered representative of the Naqshbandī Sufi order: "One day Shaykh Hisham said that he would tell me a secret about the Sufi Enneagram: The zero point in the center symbolizes the egoless person" (Laleh Bakhtiar, private correspondence with author, July 22, 2013). This insight reveals that the traditional Enneagram works on a transpersonal level, and is not confined to the *cul-du-sac* of the empirical ego.

For this reason, we require a traditional vision of ultimate reality that is fully integrated, not the pseudo-metaphysics of modernity that we find in Jung (1976, 143): "*Metaphysical* has for us the psychological connotation 'unconscious'." This is not a perspective informed by *gnosis* considered as a transcendent knowledge of the deeper implications of Zero: "[P]rimordial unity is nothing other than Zero affirmed" (Guénon 2001a, 32) or "Non-Being is metaphysical Zero" (Guénon 2001a, 90). In other words, a properly human quest seeks to restore our "primordial nature" (Ar. *fiṭrah*), the "image of God" (Lat. *imago Dei*), "Buddha-nature" (Sa. *Buddha-dhātu*) or the "Self" (Sa. *Ātmā*); that is, our true identity in *divinis*. This ontological correspondence is also to be found in Taoism: "Reveal thy simple self, / Embrace thy original nature" (Lao Tzu 1948, 119–20).

The Zero at the center of the Enneagram reconciles all polarities: "At the central point, all oppositions inherent in more external points of view are transcended; all oppositions have disappeared and are resolved in a perfect equilibrium" (Guénon 2004b, 45). This is why none of the personality types located on the nine-pointed symbol possess any enduring reality; neither can they awaken us to our true identity. It is only through abiding in the sacred Center – the Zero of the Enneagram – that we can find true rest, in which our spiritual travails finally come to an end.

10 The Enneagram and Spiritual Practice

A way of overcoming our lower impulses has been known to traditional peoples since time immemorial: namely, spiritual combat against the ego and a life sanctified by prayer and remembrance of the Divine. Ultimately, we are faced with a real conflict that is waged in the human heart and symbolized in the battlefield of terrestrial existence. For

example, the Buddha himself confirms the following in the *Dhammapada* (8:103–106): "If a man should conquer in battle a thousand and a thousand more, and another man should conquer himself, his would be the greater victory, because the greatest of victories is the victory over oneself." In Christianity, this notion is conveyed by St. Paul in his famous verse (Ephesians 6:12): "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Furthermore, the Prophet Muhammad refers to both a "lesser holy war" (Ar. *al-jihād al-asghar*) – which seeks to protect the lovers of God through social or military efforts – and a second "greater holy war" (Ar. *al-jihād al-akbar*), considered as the highest form of spiritual warfare – one that takes place in ourselves. To adopt the Enneagram in a traditional context requires "moral goodness" (Ar. *muruwwa*), which naturally leads to a "spiritual chivalry" (Ar. *futuwwa*; Per. *jawānmardī*) that battles our pernicious identification with the false self. The following illustrates the mystical dimension of this combat in successfully traversing a spiritual path (Lings 1983, 327–28):

During the return march to Medina after the victories of Mecca and Hunayn the Prophet said to some of his Companions: 'We have returned from the Lesser Holy War to the Greater Holy War.' And when one of them asked: 'What is the Greater Holy War, O Messenger of God?' he answered: 'The war against the soul.' The soul of fallen man is divided against itself. Of its lowest aspect the Koran says: Verily the soul commandeth unto evil. The better part of it, that is the conscience, is named the ever-upbraiding soul; and it is this which wages the Greater Holy War, with the help of the Spirit, against the lower soul.

The notion of spiritual warfare has also been used in the Shamanic or primordial religion of the First Peoples. Medicine man and Sun Dance chief Thomas Yellowtail (1903–1993) explained that (quoted in Fitzgerald 1994, 139–40):

The sun dancer and the Sun Dance itself will bless all of the tribe and all creation through the inner, spiritual warfare... The warrior fights an enemy who is on the outside; the sun dancer wages a war on an enemy within himself. Each of us must fight a continuing battle to keep to the spiritual values that represent our traditional heritage. If we fail to be continually alert in our prayers and our attitudes and to use good sense in all that we do, then we will fail in our interior war. In olden days, this interior warfare had the support of the whole tribe, and our life itself helped to guide us in our personal struggle. Nowadays,

we must follow the Sun Dance way all the more carefully, because it contains the key to our sacred warfare.

The conflict between human beings and the world is, in reality, a spiritual battle between the higher and lower nature of a person; our animality is drawn to the seductive world of sensory forms, whereas our theomorphic nature gravitates towards the Divine. The chief weapon in this combat is to, “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Accordingly, to understand the Enneagram or any other sacred psychology is to engage in spiritual practice. In particular, the universal method of invoking a Divine Name – which is capable of being practiced by all – is an especially effective antidote to the malaise of modernity. The Sufi master Shaykh ad-Darqāwī (d. 1823; 1998, 76–77) writes:

Listen to what I am about to say to you and do not forget it, do not take it lightly or let it go unheeded. In the course of the past fifty-five years or so, I have said to many a brother: every single man has any number of needs, but in reality all men need only one thing, which is truly to practice the remembrance of God; if they have acquired that, they will not want for anything, whether they possess it or do not possess it... Without fail, without fail, be constant in your remembrance of your Lord, as He ordained, and cling to your religion with all your strength; God will open the eyes of your intelligence and enlighten your inmost conscience.

A peculiar fate has befallen all things sacred, in that they are often victims of Western consumption, and this is no less the case with the Enneagram. The nine-pointed symbol has been usurped to the point where it has become disfigured, and its contemporary uses no longer resemble its original purpose. As elusive as the Enneagram is, its proponents for the most part have stopped asking the fundamental question as to its origins; yet without knowing this, the Enneagram will forever remain veiled in mystery.

At the heart of the modern psyche lies a pervasive hunger that has been exacerbated by the spiritual vacuum created by a desacralized world. Richard Leviton (1991, 36) laments the fate of all things of a higher order in the present-day: “What was formerly hard-won esoteric knowledge is now available in mass-market paperbacks. The metaphysical world has been turned inside out and dumped into the fertile American marketplace. Mystical truths now have a price tag as if they were consumer products.”

11 Conclusion

With the loss of a sense of the sacred, our spiritual vision has become fragmented and disfigured. Having lost our ability to see the theophany of nature, we can no longer discern the “signs of God” (Lat. *vestigia Dei*; Ar. *āyāt Allāh*) within the cosmos and in ourselves. We are interested here in the connection between a science of the cosmos (as informed by divine manifestation) and a science of the soul. Thus, the distinction between a science that is empirical from one that is sacred is that the former “seeks to derive principles from phenomena, the other seeks to see phenomena in the light of their metaphysical principles” (Northbourne 2001, 46). These signs are of a supra-individual or archetypal order; they transcend the human psyche but, at the same time, completely encompass it. As St. Paul says: “For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead” (Romans 1:20).

By returning to the spiritual roots of the Enneagram or the “face of God” (Ar. *wajh Allāh*) – which lie beyond the codification of personality types and the confines of what is merely psychological – we will have access to a sacred psychology that can heal our many existential maladies. The root of this crisis can be attributed to a confusion of levels, along with their corresponding modes of knowing, which simply cannot be grasped by a profane apprehension of the nine-pointed symbol. The modern Enneagram of personality types utterly fails to discern the transcendent nature of our personality as rooted in the Divine. When properly understood, the Enneagram presents itself as a universal symbol for contemporary seekers and mental health professionals, as they now have another tool with which to discover a rich “science of the soul” – available in every authentic spiritual tradition—that can lead to enduring inner wellbeing and transformation. Thus, the nine-pointed symbol is invaluable to those who seek answers to the most compelling of all human questions “Who am I?”. In the words of Rūmī (1983, 173): “Make a journey from self to Self... Purify yourself from the attributes of self, so that you may see your own pure essence!”

Notes

- [1] "Corbin... used to translate phenomenology... to the Persian-speaking students as 'kashf al-mahjūb', literally 'rending asunder of the veil to reveal the hidden essence,' and considered his method... to be spiritual hermeneutics (al-ta'wil) as understood in classical Sufi and Shi'ite thought" (Nasr 1996, 26).
- [2] Kabbani 2004, 403–05.
- [3] See Keen 1973, 64–72; Matson 1977, 52–55; Rawlinson 1997, 331–33.
- [4] See de Mille 1976; 1980.
- [5] See Kripal 2007, 177–80.
- [6] See De Christopher 1982, 129–50. Paradoxically, Ichazo appears to be affirming the same position as Gurdjieff, yet now divorced from the Fourth Way system: "The teaching whose theory is here being set out is completely self-supporting and independent of other lines and it has been completely unknown up to the present time" (quoted in Ouspensky 1949, 286).
- [7] Here are some works influenced by or containing Idries Shah's ideas within modern psychology: Shah 1976, 92; Naranjo and Ornstein 1971; Ornstein 1972; 1974, 271–309; 1975; Frager and Fadiman 1984, 478–513; Tart 1986; 1989; Deikman 1996, 241–60.
- [8] Annemarie Schimmel (1922–2003) provides her appraisal of Idries Shah: "He has no scholarly background, and his ramblings combine things which can really not be brought together; historical interest is nil, and accuracy very limited... I am willing to accept a genuine Sufi, who is not a scholar but has a deep experience, if his words radiate truth and honesty, even though he may be unable to express himself in an 'academic' style; that is not the problem; but I cannot accept Idries Shah's claims which are mere pretensions" (quoted in Wilson 1997, 193–94); "Idries Shah, *The Sufis* [note: 1964], as well as his other books, should be avoided by serious students" (Schimmel 1975, 9). See also Elwell-Sutton 1975, 9–17; Lings 1965, 56–57; R.N.J.A. 1970, 188–90; Moore 1986, 4–8.
- [9] We might make note of Kircher's warning about unqualified individuals pursuing the esoteric knowledge of the nine-pointed symbol of the Enneagram: "And I have exposed to the curious reader things which are told to few. Farewell, and guard your tongue" (quoted in Webb 1987, 508).
- [10] "Many modern psychologists have found that the discoveries and explanations of the abhidharma coincide with their own recent discoveries and new ideas; as though the abhidharma, which was taught 2,500 years ago, had been redeveloped in the modern idiom" (Trungpa 2001, 2).

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