

Enneagram  
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*It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are: e.e. cummings*

Thank you very much for providing me with the opportunity to share with you the enneagram, a system of personal growth that has become so important to me.

The first time I saw this quotation, many years ago, I had a very negative reaction. This is incredibly presumptuous I thought. How can someone suggest to me that I do not know who I am? Is he suggesting that he knows who I am even though I do not? And how is it that we come to know ourselves by growing up? Does he mean that some or even many of us do not grow up? From where can he possibly get this information?

But now I feel differently. What I think Cummings is referring to is a kind of Hero's Journey of classical mythology, one that each one of us who decides to follow a path of personal growth and development travels. The hero begins in the ordinary world, and receives a call to enter an unknown interior world of strange powers and events. The hero who accepts the call to enter this strange world must face tasks and trials, which he meets with help from special tools and allies. If the hero survives, he achieves a great gift. Then the hero returns successfully to the world and the gift is used to improve the world.

The great gift we find in our journey of personal growth is growing up to become who we really are. In every case, when we show up in the world as who we really are, the world is receiving a gift. Today I would like to talk to you about one special tool and ally for the Hero's Journey, the tool that I have found the most helpful for me. Its called the Enneagram. The system is based on the integration of ancient wisdom traditions and modern psychology that came to fruition at Esalen California in the 1970's. Today, millions know the enneagram and many UU communities are aware of it. It has also been presented at a UU general assembly.

Now some of you that may have heard of the Enneagram may be puzzled by my statement. You may be thinking that the Enneagram is a system for typing personalities and not a personal growth path. Because the Enneagram is so adept at personality typing and because personality typing can be so much fun, a sort of amusing parlor game where you can try to figure out your favorite characters from your favorite movies, or

better yet, your not so favorite acquaintances, it can be taught and used in that dimension alone. But in fact the genius of the Enneagram for me is how it integrates spiritual growth, psychological and somatic work. One of my favourite insights thanks to the Enneagram is that spiritual work and psychological work and body work, all necessary, are different dimensions of the same process. Let's see how this works.

According to the Enneagram, we are born into this world with a true nature – i.e. who we really are -- that includes aspects of Essence or Pure Being such as wisdom, compassion and worth. Some identify this Essence as a divine presence or a soul. Some do not. Regardless, it is who we really are. As we face a world that does not allow for the full expression of these Essential aspects, we become vulnerable and develop strategies to protect ourselves. These strategies are our personality. Since these strategies are developed well before our cognitive capacities develop, they are subconscious. Over time, we come to identify with our personality as who we are and lose contact with our Essence. In that sense, we do not know ourselves. Some say we are asleep. By doing the work of relaxing and loosening our personality as we hold it in our minds, hearts and bodies, we begin the process of allowing our true nature to reemerge, i.e. we awaken.

So the Enneagram of Personality is a psycho-spiritual typology that helps us begin our journey to Essence by first helping us recognize and understand who we are, right now in our minds, hearts and bodies. According to the Enneagram there are nine clusters of these thinking, feeling and acting patterns called types. This can be a problem if it defines people in a limited way, puts them in a box so to speak. But the Enneagram helps us define the box that we have subconsciously put ourselves in so that we can begin the work of stepping out of it. According to the Enneagram, we are not a type, we just have one. Each of us is much more than our type and by awakening to that we can grow into becoming who we really are. And each one of us is irreducibly a unique individual even though we do share qualities with others of our type.

By bringing our type patterns into our conscious awareness we begin the process of freeing ourselves from it, or as Cummings suggests, growing into becoming who we really are. The work we do does take courage. As we relax the subconscious type pattern to grow beyond it, we experience resistance in various forms such as anger, fear and sorrow. Part of the journey is reliving painful emotions we would rather avoid. Courage is required to move through these experiences. If we allow ourselves our

natural tendency to avoid them, our Hero becomes stuck in that place and the journey cannot go to its next phase.

Ultimately the type prevents us from experiencing the deeper spiritual truths that reside in our true selves. According to Helen Palmer, a participant in the original group at Esalen and founder of the Narrative Tradition of the Enneagram, the Enneagram was first developed as a system of detecting the barriers to spiritual freedom, the obstacles that different people experience on the path to liberation. Liberation not from ordinary life, but from the constantly recreated life that we do not have a choice about, that is running on its own on automatic. We gain the freedom to choose our state of mind. That is the real freedom to show up in the world the way we consciously choose to do so.

I have been close of the UU community for over 20 years; starting with Ottawa First Unitarian. I am very aware of the delicate balance felt in this community, historically dedicated to works, between spirituality and social activism and service. For me, the Enneagram has helped me reconcile the two seamlessly. Because when I access my Essence, I show up according to those beautiful words which many of you know, "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet" That's it right there. That is the point. That is where the Enneagram helps you go.

So perhaps you are now saying to yourselves are you ever going to tell us what this Enneagram thing actually is? Well I am going to start. The Enneagram is a deep and thick forest of knowledge. Today I will paint a picture from the treetops.

I like to start the description from what the Enneagram calls the three centers of intelligence, the head center, the heart center and the body center or if you prefer, the mental, emotional and gut centers. The qualities of our true nature, our essential qualities, are accessible to us through these centers. For example through the head center we can access quiet mind, inner guidance and clarity. Through the heart center we can access authenticity, compassion and forgiveness. Through the body center we can access inner strength, groundedness and acceptance.

According to the Enneagram all people have all three centers of intelligence and all three are operating all the time although in different modes. As a result of the particular qualities of Essence that our personal history made most vulnerable in our precognitive childhood state, each

one of us relies most heavily on the center of intelligence where the greatest vulnerability occurred. The reason we do that is once we lose contact with a quality associated with a particular center, we struggle with that center in a subconscious attempt to reconnect to it. So the Enneagram talks about head, heart and body types, depending on the predominant center that we use to filter information from our environment, which is also paradoxically, the same center where we suffer the greatest loss of contact with our Essence.

There are also three fundamental energetic strategies that a child can use to cope with a problematic environment. One is to move against (like crying), one is to move towards (like being cute) and one is to withdraw (like shutting down). Children experiment with all these strategies to figure out what works for them. Any of the three strategies can be used in any of the 3 center types, so 3X3 is 9 different types. That is the source of the nine Enneagram types. Enneagram is simply a Greek term for 9 points. Let's quickly review the center types.

As I review these three centers, what you will probably find is that you will personally relate to all of them in some degree. You may be able to identify immediately which one tends to be more dominant but perhaps not.

The body center is our seat of kinesthetic intelligence, of physical sensations and gut instincts. Body types are particularly attuned to personal position and power which they use to make life the way it should be. The focus of the body types is to devise strategies to assure a place in the world and to minimize discomfort. The main life themes of these types are worth, congruence, comfort, harmony and belonging.

The heart center is our seat of emotional intelligence. It is attuned to moods and feeling states. If you are a heart type you become particularly good at reading the moods and feelings of others and work with them to meet your own needs for contact and approval. You depend more than other types upon the recognition of others to support your self-esteem and fulfill your desire for love and connection. To assure that you receive that approval and recognition you create an image of yourself that will get others to accept you and see you as special. The main life themes of these types are love, connection, affection, bonding, image and approval.

The head center is our seat of mental intelligence. It is attuned to wisdom and clarity. If you are a head type you focus on this center to minimize

anxiety, manage potentially painful situations and gain a sense of certainty through analyzing, envisioning, imagining and planning. The main life themes of this type are security, safety, certainty, assurance, predictability and opportunity.

So now its time to talk about the 9 types. We give them numbers from 1 to 9 as the simplest way of describing them. None are higher or lower, better or worse and the numerical sequence is not important at the introductory level. We also give them titles as you shall see. The titles are really nothing more than a very general and vague description of the type, particularly helpful for being introduced to the system. But it is important not to assign too much importance to any particular understanding of the title.

I once attended a painting class here in San Miguel where the idea was to explore the differences in the style of creative expression of each enneagram type. That's one way to look at types and their differences. It worked beautifully and the workshop was recreated at a Enneagram International Conference. Alternatively I could describe each type by differences in leadership qualities, their relationship focus, their emotional drivers, their focus of attention, etc.. the list is long. For the purposes of todays presentation I will provide a very short description of the types with a focus on Values, based on the work of Jerry Wagner.

However, we also have vulnerabilities and these are the tender underbelly of our values. We are most sensitive around those areas where we are naturally gifted and which we most prize. Where our strengths are, there lie our weaknesses. When our values are assailed, discounted, derided, or in any way violated, we feel threatened and frightened. When our strengths are challenged, distrusted, or dismissed, we feel anxious, guilty, ashamed, and angry. By looking at the vulnerabilities or the sore spots alongside the values, we get a sense of the developmental challenge facing each type.

You will very likely see yourself to some degree in all of the types. Regardless, the theory of the enneagram says each person has only one type in the sense that there is one dominant set of reactive strategies that drive people to automatic unconscious thinking, feeling and acting.

### Body Center Types

Type Eight: The Leader/Protector. What do they really want? They want to live life fully and freely. They are attracted to, appreciate, and effectively

use power. They envision using their strength to influence others and bring about a more just world where power and resources are equitably distributed.

Eight Sore Spots — Valuing justice and autonomy and taking pride in being strong, EIGHTS are particularly irked by being neglected, being unjustly treated, and feeling powerless. Their powerful style is their way of being in charge and guaranteeing they will be heard, won't feel weak, and won't be taken advantage of.

Type Nine: The Peacemaker/Mediator. What do they really want? They want to feel at one and at home. They value peace, harmony, and unity. They envision making the world a more harmonious, ecumenical, and comfortable place to live in.

Nine Sore Spots — Valuing unity and harmony and taking pride in being settled, NINES are especially wary of and torn apart by conflict. They are easily hurt by neglect. Their relaxed, resigned style is an attempt to defend against feeling uncared for and having to assert themselves — which might disrupt the flow of the universe.

Type One: The Perfectionist/Reformer. What do they really want? They want to be good persons. They value and are attracted to goodness. They want to realize all their potentials and help others actualize theirs. They envision making the world a better place to live in.

One Sore Spots — Valuing being good and taking pride in being right, ONES are especially sensitive to criticism and being told they are wrong. Their perfectionist style is a way of assuring they won't be criticized. You can't criticize them if they're perfect or blame them as long as they're trying really hard.

### Heart Center Types

Type Two: The Helper/Giver. What do they really want? They want to be loving. They want to nurture others and foster relationships. They value and are attracted to love. They envision making the world a more loving place to live in.

Two Sore Spots — Valuing relationships and taking pride in being loving and generous, TWOS are easily hurt by rejection and by a lack of attention and appreciation shown them. They are sensitive to feeling useless and unneeded. Their rescuing style is an attempt to gain

recognition, gratitude, and acceptance and to make themselves necessary and important in the lives of others.

Type Three: The Achiever/Performer. What do they really want? They are attracted to and value productivity, industry, competence. They envision making the world more productive, organized, efficient and smooth running. They want to really make it a harmonious and orderly system. And most of all, they want others to recognize them and love them for their accomplishments.

Three Sore Spots — Valuing success and taking pride in their accomplishments, THREES are hurt by rejection and failure. Their achieving style is an attempt to be successful and to maintain relationships through performing and doing for others. Their concern about image and looking good has to do with getting people to like them.

Type Four: The Individualist/Romantic. What these people really want? They want to be unique individuals who value originality. They envision putting their personal touch on everything they are involved in. They also value beauty and want to make the world a more beautiful place to live in.

Four Sore Spots — Valuing relationships and belonging and taking pride in being special, FOURS are easily hurt by feeling abandoned or left out, or by going unnoticed. They are sensitive to feeling flawed, undesirable, unwanted. Their style of being special is an attempt to get others to notice them and keep others connected to them.

#### Head Center Types

Type Five: The Observer/Investigator. What do they really want? They value and are attracted to wisdom, understanding, knowledge, truth. They want to make the world a more enlightened place by discovering what is real and true and making it more intelligible.

Five Sore Spots — Valuing privacy and their own personal space, and taking pride in their knowledge, FIVES are easily spooked by being invaded, having demands and expectations put on them, and being deprived, belittled or ridiculed. Their knowing and loner style is an attempt to ward off intrusions, be self sufficient, and avoid looking foolish.

Type Six: The Loyal Skeptic/Doubter. What do they really want? They want to make the world a safer, more secure, more reliable, more

trustworthy place to live in. They are attracted to and value loyalty and stand by their commitments.

Six Sore Spots — Valuing fidelity, consistency, and security and taking pride in being loyal, SIXES are scared by perceived threats and challenges. They are vulnerable to being caught off guard and to the misuse of authority. Their phobic style (loyal and dependent) or counter-phobic style (rebellious and independent) are two sides of the same coin which seeks to purchase safety and security

Type Seven: The Epicure/Enthusiast. What do they really want? They want to enjoy life and experience all its possibilities. They value joy and variety. They envision making the world a more delightful place to live in.

Seven Sore Spots — Valuing enjoyment, freedom, and variety and taking pride in being upbeat and resourceful, SEVENS are brought down when their options are limited. They are deflated by having their balloons burst, parades rained on, and parties pooped. Their sunny-side-up style is an attempt to stay on the high side of life, experience as much as life has to offer and avoid pain and limitation.

This gives you a taste of what the Enneagram offers. With this map of personality type we can begin the important work of retracing our path back to our Essential self. We can indeed grow up and become who we really are.

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In the room today they are several other members of the San Miguel enneagram community. Some have written enneagram on their name tags indicating that they would be happy to speak to you about their experience after the service.

I am eternally grateful to Dr. Beverley Nelson of the Lifepath Center to her for introducing me into this world. I am trained in the Narrative Tradition and I facilitate several classes on the enneagram at Lifepath. You can find information about them by subscribing to the Lifepath newsletter. The work I do is voluntary, my gift to you, and if there is sufficient interest, I would be happy to create a workshop for the congregation.

Thank you for inviting me to share part of my path with you today. I hope you found the presentation thought provoking. But that is probably because I am a type five. If I was a two, I would probably be hoping that you found it helpful. If I was a seven I would be hoping that you found it pleasurable. Of course had I been one of those other types, the

presentation would have been very different. You get the idea. Welcome to the world of the Enneagram.