



The Enneagram and Spiritual Direction

Nine Paths
to Spiritual
Guidance

James Empereur

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JAMES EMPEREUR

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*With Gratitude to
Mario De Paoli, M.D.*

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Introduction

The subject of this book is the use of the enneagram in the ministry of Christian spiritual direction. Its primary audience is those engaged in spiritual direction as directors and as directees. Its wider audience is those Christians who pursue the spiritual life with some distinct intentionality and who, knowing the system of the enneagram, wish to enhance their spiritual lives through that system. An even wider audience includes those, Christian or not, who wish to deepen their spiritual lives and their knowledge of the enneagram.

This is not an introduction to the enneagram. In my view, there is no need for such a book, given the published material that is now available. Books that could be used for introductory purposes are noted in chapter 1. There is also a bibliography of selected books for those with particular interests in the enneagram system. Those searching the market for new books on the enneagram are seeking publications that will deepen their use of the enneagram in some way. This is certainly true regarding the area of spirituality, but it is equally true of business, psychology, and research. Indeed, it seems that authors now are vying to give their own distinct approach to the enneagram.

This is not an introduction to spiritual direction. Again, there is now a wealth of material available for that purpose. Chapter 2 discusses some of this material. For those who are in need of understanding what spiritual direction is, what its history is, how it has functioned in the past, and what its general contours are, there is much that can be recommended. But as in the case of the enneagram, what is needed in the area of spiritual direction are studies that are noted for their specificity and depth. This desire is understandable since in the past there was considerable repetition among the authors. Like the enneagram, spiritual direction is an old and living tradition. Both in the past were primarily oral. Now we use the printed word and other forms of modern communication to pass along a tradition. This makes the knowledge of the enneagram and

spiritual direction more universally available, but it also challenges the communicators to move to various levels of profundity in their work. The foundational studies have already been done.

However, those who do spiritual work with others, whether in the Christian tradition or not, will find in this volume, hopefully, much that will be of interest to them. It should serve as a way of expanding their horizons in an area where they are already functioning.

Finally, it will become evident to the reader early in the book that the subject matter is not confined to the narrow limits of a specific form of spiritual direction, but that there is much about spirituality here. I deal with the issue of the meaning of spirituality in chapter 2 and point to some areas that need reflection at this time. Even those who have relatively little acquaintance with the enneagram can find help from examining the variety of spiritualities that are at least implied in the application of the nine spaces of the enneagram to spiritual direction.

Chapter 1 presents the state of enneagram studies today. It reviews some of the pertinent literature and is thus a synthetic view of what has been achieved up to this time. It also contains some particular qualifications I wish to make that may be departures from some of the better known studies. Chapter 2 does basically the same thing for spiritual direction. It reviews some of the published material in the hope of communicating a bird's eye view of the phenomenon. It also contains some of my presuppositions regarding the practice of spiritual direction and spirituality in general. The nine remaining chapters deal with the nine enneagram points, detailing some of the issues that can arise in spiritual direction and how they might be addressed, this being done in terms of some of the stages of human growth.

One problem today's writer on the enneagram must confront has to do with proper attribution. When I began my enneagram work with Bob Ochs, S.J., in the early 1970s, there was no published material. There were some class notes reproduced in many forms, collated by others, added to by many, which made for a true hodgepodge of materials. I suspect that one of the reasons some of the students of the enneagram moved to publication was to clean up the mess of notes of divergent reliability. When copyrighted material began to appear, attribution became an issue.

Recently, this matter has been raised in the public forum and in fact has even reached the courts. Hopefully, the matter is now resolved, but this has made authors careful about attribution. As

should be obvious from the previous remarks, proper attribution is not easy. First, we are dealing with an oral tradition. Then we have claims made by some of the early enneagram people about origins of the material that are probably impossible to substantiate. The early articulations of the system were not copyrighted. What belongs to whom is not easy to determine. And, perhaps, most of the central insights and thrusts of the system belong to no one, at least, no one living.

This is not to deny that there are those who have made distinctive contributions to the enneagram. I will be acknowledging my own debt to Helen Palmer in the course of the pages that follow. I try to indicate where I think other authors have made an original contribution. Like so many others in enneagram work, I have profited from the work of Don Riso, Patrick O'Leary, Maria Beesing, Richard Rohr, Suzanne Zuercher, and others. I acknowledge my own dependence on their writings, although it is not always easy to say what in their writings is distinctly their own. I have attempted to find a balance in giving proper attribution. Where I have failed, I will surely rectify the situation when it is called to my attention.

In some instances full attribution would not be appropriate, as in the case of Mario De Paoli, to whom this book is dedicated. It will become clear that, like Helen Palmer, Elizabeth Liebert has played an important part in the shaping of this book. A special note of thanks to Mike Moyhanan, S.J., for his usual creative suggestions for a title for this book. I want to thank Shane Martin, S.J., Maurice Monette, and Arturo Pérez for the reflections they gave me during the course of writing this book. And I wish to thank in a special way all the enneagram students I have had for many years.

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Chapter 1

The Value of the Enneagram in Spiritual Growth

The Importance of the Enneagram Today

The enneagram, a system of human development that is based on nine personality types, has achieved such public recognition and acceptance in some of the helping professions that its value in several different areas is now established. This is true although as of yet there is no complete scientific grounding for the system. The nine spaces of the enneagram correlate well with the personality categories used by the psychological professions,¹ but there is still much regarding the enneagram that seems to be a matter more of art than of science. Even the origin of the system is obscure. When I first learned the system from one of its earliest promoters, Robert Ochs, S.J., it was taken for granted that the enneagram was of Sufi origin.² There was a later qualification that it arose more from an occultist setting. In recent years conflicts over the ownership of the enneagram, and especially claims made by Oscar Ichazo, have muddied the waters concerning the true origin of the system.³

But the value of the system does not depend on its origin. The source of the enneagram is people's experience, and it has proven itself through self-verification. We have the testimony of those who have now worked with the system for several years; we have the witness of those who have found that the enneagram helped them to clarify their lives, their relationships with others, and their religious faith. This verification has been strengthened by the various ways in which the enneagram has been appropriated by the different, but recognized, fields of learning. This journey of gradual acceptance reached a high point at the First International Enneagram Conference at Stanford University in California in August 1994.

The Stanford Conference brought together the leading contributors to and writers about the system. It was a kind of "ecumenical"

gathering since there were enneagram teachers of differing points of view, some of them not easily reconcilable. Present were most of the names with which students of the enneagram are quite familiar, such as Helen Palmer, Claudio Naranjo (via video), Ted Dobson, Kathy Hurley, Andreas Ebert, Patrick O'Leary, Don Riso, Richard Rohr, and many others. Then there were the larger number of presenters who were less well known but who often made substantial and quite creative contributions. A listing of the tracks will give a sense of the comprehensiveness of this conference: Assessment/Research/History; Business; Education; Experiential Practices; Spirituality; and Therapy/Medicine. Daily meditations kept a very important aspect of the system in focus, that is, its spiritual dimension. Surely, the enneagram has come of age, and now it is a matter of finding ways to give a larger audience access to it as well as deepening our understanding of it so that we can go beyond the mechanics of the system itself.

Such deepening is the great challenge that lies ahead of the system. Can it be removed from the superficial treatment it has received from so many who have turned it into a parlor game or who feel qualified to give workshops on it after having done only a workshop or two themselves? My own belief is that if the enneagram remains primarily a tool used by business and the secular helping professions, which will treat it only as one of many personality typing approaches, it will level off at some kind of general acceptance that will not plumb the depths of the system and will thus not give it a central place in human development. For this reason I believe that the enneagram must stay in contact with the best of the religious traditions today, especially those traditions that honor the practice of spiritual guidance.

Enneagram Literature

It would be impossible to do an evaluation of all that has now been published on the enneagram. Nor is that the intention of this section. Here it is important to note those authors whose work is helpful for an application of the system to the practice of spiritual direction. When I began my journey with the enneagram, there were, as noted earlier, no published books available. There were handwritten and typed notes of various kinds, many of which had their origin with Robert Ochs, S.J. But once Ochs passed the system among many Je-

suit communities, books began to appear such as *The Enneagram: A Journey of Self Discovery*.⁴

As will become increasingly clear, I have found the work of Helen Palmer the most helpful in relating the enneagram to spiritual direction. Her first book, *The Enneagram*, and her more recent one, *The Enneagram in Love and Work*,⁵ are recognized as among the very best of the published materials. Palmer has found the system a useful device for developing her theory of attentional styles and the practice of intuition. My own work with Palmer in regard to the enneagram has been helpful, but my work with her in the areas of intuitive training has been invaluable for integrating the enneagram in the practice of spiritual direction. Her workshops on intuitive training have been very significant for my own work in spiritual direction.

I am indebted to all the authors on the enneagram in some way. The work of Richard Rohr and Andreas Ebert⁶ is especially clear and seems to have much of the strong experiential basis characteristic of Palmer's oral tradition. Don Richard Riso is one of the most published authors in this field. He has published a number of books and has developed a definite following among enneagram advocates. His publications are noted for their psychological sensitivity and attempts to schematize the application of the system by the use of the categories of healthy, average, and unhealthy.⁷ Kathy Hurley and Ted Dobson are two very familiar people on the enneagram scene and workshop circuit. They have done much to explore the three centers, which they call Intellectual, Relational, and Creative. One center is preferred; another is relied upon; and a third is repressed. Their work is meant to show how to recover what is hidden in the repressed center.⁸ We are all indebted in some way to the work of Claudio Naranjo, who brought the enneagram to the United States and has done much to perceive its possibilities for moving beyond mere personality typing. While he approaches his work as a psychiatrist and as one who works with therapists, he opens up psychology to the spiritual.⁹ The work of Margaret Frings Keyes on synthesizing the enneagram with the Jungian concept of the shadow and modern psychology is a significant contribution in deepening this dimension of enneagram studies. Her imaginative writing style makes her work available to a wider audience.¹⁰ We are now in the era when the students of the main enneagram teachers are publishing. One example is Karen Webb, who follows the Palmer oral tradition. She has written an accessible introduction to the system.¹¹ One can only write on

typology so long, and then it becomes repetitious. And so authors are trying to give their own special twist to the enneagram. One of these twists is the emphasis on spirituality.

The American, almost infallible, sign of the enneagram's popularity is the presence of newsletters of differing types. The *Enneagram Educator* and the *Enneagram Monthly*¹² both pass along timely information, whether through probing articles on present enneagram research or announcements and teaching schedules of the various enneagram experts. *NinePoints* is the name of the official newsletter of the International Enneagram Association.¹³ It encourages dialogue between differing schools of thought.

The Enneagram and Christian Spirituality

The word "spirituality" has become so all-meaningful today that it means nothing. The word "spiritual" is applied to everything from interpreting one's dreams to a quiet walk in the garden. It now refers to anything that cannot be reduced to a muscle spasm. A glance at the books in the self-help section of most bookstores will confirm this. We see this in the cross-disciplinary fields. One example would be that of spirituality and the arts. This is a wonderful field of study and a natural one. However, the fine arts are spoken about in terms of their spiritual dimension in such a vague way that one can only conclude that all good art is spiritual. Perhaps that is true, but then there is little need to study any connection if art and the spiritual simply equal good art. Since we usually do not consider bad art as really artistic, we are caught in a redundancy: all art is spiritual.

At the Stanford Conference those workshops listed under "Spiritual" seemed to have only one common denominator: working with the inner life. Some were explicitly Christian in their content. Christian spirituality obviously deals with the inner world of the person committed to Christ. However, psychology, at least many of its different varieties, claims to work with the inner life also. So what is the meaning of "spiritual" here? I am not claiming that the Judeo-Christian tradition has a monopoly on spirituality. My point is that when a distinct field such as the fine arts or the system of the enneagram is put in conversation with spirituality, the latter needs to be sufficiently distinct in order that the conversation be conducted from the same levels.¹⁴ There is, fortunately, a growing body of literature that treats the enneagram in specifically Christian terms. I

refer to *An Enneagram Guide: A Spirituality of Love and Brokenness*,¹⁵ by Eilis Bergin and Eddie Fitzgerald; *Nine Faces of God*,¹⁶ by Peter Hannan, S.J.; *Conversion and the Enneagram*,¹⁷ by Bernard Tickerhoof, T.O.R.; and *Soul Stuff*,¹⁸ by Carol Ann Gotch and David Walsh.

Three authors who have been especially helpful in the specific area of Christian spirituality are Barbara Metz, S.N.D. de N., and John Burchill, O.P., in their volume, *The Enneagram and Prayer*,¹⁹ and Suzanne Zuercher, O.S.B., in her two volumes *Enneagram Spirituality* and *Enneagram Companions*.²⁰ Metz and Burchill deal explicitly with prayer in terms of the three centers. They have devoted chapters to head-centered prayer: focused meditation; heart-centered prayer: expressive prayer; and gut-centered prayer: quiet prayer. They have a number of appendices that deal with individual's particular avoidance, the emotion least controlled, and praying with scripture. This last section is an invaluable resource when working with people who wish to use the enneagram explicitly in their spiritual journeys. Zuercher in her works articulates what she calls a contemplative approach to the enneagram. Unlike those who follow the more psychological approach or what I shall call the more generalized spiritual approach, Zuercher does not recommend the method of moving away from one's compulsions in the direction of integration (according to the usual arrow theory). For her this does not facilitate the development of the individual in a transformative process. Her intention is to develop "a description of Christian maturity that depends on an attitude of contemplation rather than one that emphasizes character-building. This latter approach perpetuates the work of the ego, which I call the first task of life."²¹ For her the spiritual life of contemplation is on a level deeper than ego-development. It is obvious that this approach to the enneagram contains important components for integrating the system with Christian spiritual direction. I know of no other author who has applied the enneagram to spiritual direction as explicitly as Zuercher. Most recently she has published a book on Thomas Merton as a Four, *Merton: An Enneagram Profile*.²² Apart from the merits of this book itself, this is a fruitful approach in connecting the enneagram and Christian spirituality. So much of the literature of Christian spirituality has been in terms of the biographical. This moves spirituality away from the generalized into the concreteness of actual spiritual people, the only place where spirituality can be found.

The Importance of the Styles of Attention

Helen Palmer²³ has stated on a number of occasions that her original interest in the enneagram had a great deal to do with the fact that it provided her with a grid on which to place her work on styles of attention that are part of her intuitive work. Likewise, I have found the importance of styles of attention in the work of spiritual direction. Most importantly, for people using the enneagram in spiritual direction, or in fact, for those who simply wish to find their correct space,²⁴ knowledge of how one pays attention is indispensable. I have found no test or inventory guide that works conclusively in helping people type themselves. For me the two most effective ways to do so are listening to healthy types, such as when they speak about themselves on panels (Palmer's oral tradition), and through meditation. In both cases, especially the latter, one's style of paying attention will be salient.²⁵

This emphasis on attention leads Palmer to see the enneagram as a tool of compassion, a map of experience. Because the system of the enneagram is filled with people's experience, it is a phenomenological tool. It is a tool to be used, but it does not give us the total reality. It does provide food for further work, whether in therapy or spiritual direction.

Those acquainted with the system will recognize immediately that it is a slanted style of attention developed early in life that creates mental preoccupations, described as the fixations (e.g., One = resentment, Eight = vengeance, Five = stinginess), and emotional preoccupations, described as the passions (e.g., Two = pride; Four = envy; Six = fear). All enneagram practitioners advise dealing with these preoccupations in some way in order to bring about personal and emotional health, to become redeemed, to become more spiritual, to be a self-appropriated individual, and the like. Because this is seen as such a central task, the enneagram often appears to the outsider as a kind of personality typing based on negative aspects of the individual. This, in fact, is the way that many have presented the system, and it is easy to understand since one's preoccupations are more obvious in an unhealthy state. The problem arises when this is considered the main contribution of the enneagram or the main part of the spiritual task.²⁶

Spiritual direction will remain on a superficial level if it does not move beyond the arena of ego-clarification or if it is content to

deal with moving away from one fixation by compensating with the strong aspects of one of the other spaces. It may well be that for many, even those in direction, it will be necessary to begin there, but that can only be a point of insertion. More is needed than behavioral modification. Discovering our own style of attention as different from others and learning how to intervene so as not to be manipulated by it will soon open us up to the inner world where the life of meditation and prayer takes place. But it may be necessary to assist people first of all in recognizing how they pay attention. It is difficult to know our true selves. We may think we are paying attention to our interior lives, but in fact often we are not.

Palmer says there are six channels of perceptions according to which our preoccupations are organized. There are four of the head, one of the heart, and one of the body. Head channels are thought, memory (the past), planning (the future), and guided images. The heart channel is our feelings. The body channel is sensation. Guided imagery makes use of all six channels, combining those of the head with input from the heart and body. Our conscious life is controlled by these internal objects of attention. This state is what we usually call being awake. But for Palmer it is really being asleep because these internal thoughts, feelings, fantasies, and memories stand in the way of true perception. This state is an obstacle to the spiritual. It is slanted attention; it constitutes being controlled by one's habitual preoccupations. To become preoccupied with one or more of these ordinary forms of attention is to fall asleep.²⁷ The enneagram is about being awakened from this slumber. It is about becoming aware, having a wider and deeper range of perception. It involves breaking out of the mental and emotional prison in which we find ourselves so that a more expansive world of information appears. It involves becoming emotionally and mentally "ecumenical," that is, less biased, less slanted, less preoccupied by these channels of attention.²⁸

For Palmer, then, the point is to shift attention so that we can recognize the real situation so that the world of reality coming to us is free of projections and is not filtered through our defensive preoccupations.²⁹ It should come as no surprise that often spiritual direction may have to begin here before moving deeper. Shifting attention helps us to discriminate between true impressions coming to us and a projection and helps to get a sense of how styles of attention differ from each other. This approach is so significant for spiritual direc-

tion because the process of self-discovery is not one of identification of external personality traits but one of knowing when perception is correct rather than being lead by habitual inner preoccupations.

Let me give a simple example of how I see the styles of attention operating in spiritual direction. One of the things I find in beginning direction with people is their difficulty, even inability, to distinguish their thoughts from their feelings. They will speak of thoughts in feeling terms and of feelings in abstract language. Helping them discover how they pay attention makes it possible for them to avoid projection, to be more sensitive to their thoughts and feelings, to not be narrowed by their biases, and to allow their imaginations to entertain possibilities. They become more able to distinguish thought from feeling. Often directees are able to make a long list of thoughts in abstract vocabulary, but their list of feeling words is quite short. It would be difficult to imagine that the process of becoming more fully human or of spiritual growth could move very far if this simple distinction is not possible for a directee. Here we have a good example of the simple therapeutic principle that growth takes place through clarification.³⁰ What is said about the directee also applies to the director. We help each other to become more awake.

Spiritual direction is very much about helping people to wake up in a certain context. Preliminary to much spiritual growth is the ability to know how and when the attention shifts among thought, memory, and planning and among fantasy, feeling, and sensation; also necessary is the knowledge of how to visit the other spaces on the enneagram besides one's own to experience other styles of attention.³¹ This involves getting into another's world. For instance, I am a Six, with my own way of thinking, remembering, and planning, with my own ways of fantasizing, feeling, and sensing. I am not an Eight. How do I get into the world of the Eight? Not by reading books about it or even listening to Eights talk about it. I need to visit that space and live there for a while in order to discover how they think, remember, and plan, how they fantasize, feel, and sense. I cannot live in Eight, nor should I. But once I am acquainted with that world, I can then proceed to ask questions more pertinent to spiritual direction, such as: What is the nature of contact with God in that space? Or how do Fives fantasize about the historical Jesus? What does a Four remember about death?

We must enter the directee's world in order to deal with spiritual issues at any depth. Otherwise we will speak with trite language that

applies to no one in particular. For instance, in the case of someone having difficulties in prayer, what good is it simply to suggest that they hand themselves over to God or abandon themselves to God's will or to suggest that good will come out of this experience? One approach is to deal with such an issue by asking the directee: Have you asked God about this? What does God tell you about this? Have you taken this to God? No doubt the directee has, but what does this mean? They may not be able to create an image of God that talks to them as does another person. Such an approach gets one involved in requiring the directee to respond to certain images of God, usually the director's. Imaging God is itself a serious issue in contemporary spirituality.

Working with others in spiritual direction involves learning how they pay attention and that often this will not be like the way that we pay attention. During the direction sessions the director needs to be able to visit the space of the directee by not only becoming an observer of the directee's style of attention but also becoming a participant-observer. We experience others as they experience themselves intellectually, emotionally, and bodily. Perhaps this is the most difficult part of spiritual direction. A helpful exercise in the training of spiritual directors is to have them visit all the spaces on the enneagram and sense which ones are comfortable for them and which ones are not. This means sensing what it is like being in another world. It is a form of inculturation where one enters a different culture and lives that life as fully as possible.

A skeletal description of the way each space pays attention would go something like this. Twos³² have the natural ability to pick up other people's feelings. Their attention shifts from themselves and goes into the emotional world of others. It is outer-directed and focuses selectively. They leave their own inner world and go inside the other. They alter themselves to get a hold of the other's experience. They adjust themselves to other people. All this is a way of controlling the outside world.

The Threes' attention is focused on the feelings and expectations of the group and is prepared to act and change behavior accordingly. Their style is also outward-directed. It goes to what is to be accomplished. They pick up the sense of a group or of an action and so take on the feelings that are appropriate for what they discover outside. While Twos go for the feelings as a way of control, Threes go for the feelings of the task or group.

A Four's attention is directed to what is absent, what is not available, what is not in the pedestrian present. Fours attend to what is missing, what is unavailable. They move back and forth between the present and the absent, employing an external control directed not into the future but toward the absent. Twos augment feelings to make people more in need of their help while Fours augment feelings in terms of distance.

The Fives' retracted style is found not only in their observing others but in their watching themselves observing others. Fives are inner directed. Their real world is the mental one where there is a reduction in feeling and a going back and forth between specific concerns and more abstract ones. They watch themselves watching.

The Sixes' attention is focused on the possibly fearful, and so they scan the environment looking for the hidden sources of danger. The Sixes' attention is outward. Like Twos and Fours, Sixes augment their object of attention, but they do it by projection. Thus, they often take on a paranoid way of acting.

Sevens pay attention by not paying attention to anything very long and by creating a world of possibilities. This is what Palmer calls alternate thinking. One thing reminds them of something else, and that reminds them of something else again. They pay attention to multiple options by moving between present and future, between extremes, between relative values, and between the global and specific. Because their attention jumps, they can make unusual connections.

The Eights' attention is best described as a laser beam concentrating on one point or aspect of a thing or person. Theirs is a black-and-white world of narrow focus such that much of reality is denied. This style is also outward-directed. Eights put all their attention on the object and let the other parts fade away. There is an immediacy about this attentional style. That is because an internal control generates energy inside and then sends it out like a laser. This is not a diffused energy.

Nines are unable to focus their attention on anything without causing conflict with something else that commends itself to their attention. The image that is sometimes used is that of a wavering radio frequency. Conflict creates the need to diffuse the attention. The attention is outward and diffused toward the inessential things. Sevens settle for a moment; Nines never settle. It is like looking around in an open field in which there is no place to fix our gaze.

Finally, the Ones' attention is dominated by the inner judge. They automatically compare and contrast. Their back-and-forth movement is not between the absent and present (Fours), nor is it complicated by feelings (Fours), but it is between themselves and the outer world. Their view of the world is through the lens of their inner standard of evaluation.³³

Certain Qualifications regarding the Enneagram

Anyone who is familiar with the literature on the enneagram today immediately recognizes that there is some difference of opinion regarding certain aspects of the system. The most obvious one is the nomenclature. It seems that each author is trying to come up with something more original if not more descriptive. Perhaps some day standardization will take place, if that is desirable. Three other areas about which there is some disagreement are the arrows, wings, and subtypes.

Arrows

The theory of the arrows is found in most of the books. If a person moves in the direction of the arrows, this is considered to be moving in the direction of compulsion and is unhealthy. Thus, if one is a Six, it would be unhealthy to move one's energy in the direction of Three, for that movement is with the arrows. To act against compulsion is to move against the arrows and so to move toward health. Thus if a person is a Seven he or she should move toward Five and not One.³⁴ Rohr (with Ebert) gives a clear statement of this theory:

The direction of the arrows marks the path of regression and disintegration. In situations of stress, people searching for relief and consolation move with the arrow to another type on the Enneagram that is the stress point. At this point, however, they find only false consolation, which eventually is destructive. The paths opposite to the direction of the arrow show integration.³⁵

In times of positive life-feelings, after satisfying peak experiences, and on the way to spiritual maturity, we find true consolation with the positive qualities of the energy that we reach if we move against the direction of the arrows to our "consolation point."³⁶

I find this theory of the arrows to smack of predetermination. First, the proponents of this theory choose the positive aspects of the point of “security,” “consolation,” “heart,” or whatever name is current and encourage movement in that direction. They emphasize the negative aspects of the stress point and recommend moving away from it. Some authors seem to give the impression that these movements take place automatically. But what of free will? Why can I not move in the direction of the space of security and choose its negativity, and why can I not move in the direction of the stress point to utilize some of the positive qualities available to me? Palmer refers to this in her first book on the enneagram: “I have interviewed people who slide straight into the negative aspects of the security point when faced with a promising life situation; and I have also recorded many stories of those whose character has been formed by developing the best aspects of the action/stress point of their type.”³⁷

I prefer to understand the arrow theory as having to do with the way we choose to grow. That is, in times of stress, one can move toward one’s stress point in order to gain certain energies to move forward while in times of relative calm, there are qualities in the security point that one can utilize to further one’s journey. For instance, as a Six, if I have only two hours before my next class, which I have not yet prepared, it would make more sense to me to move to Three to pick up some of the efficiency in order to make some kind of adequate preparation. I doubt that my students over the past years would have appreciated it if I came in unprepared but announced to them that I had moved to my health space of Nine and was taking the matter in a nonchalant manner. Small consolation for those who are paying tuition!

My suspicion is that the usual arrow theory developed out of a basic principle found in a large part of Christian spirituality, a principle referred to by two Latin words, *agere contra*, which mean “to act against.” The spiritual principle here is to act against one’s passions, to move away from them. It is the opposite of the principle that leads us to move into our passions, move through them, and come out on the other side, using their energy to achieve health. I was taught the principle of *agere contra* in my days of Jesuit training, and I suspect that the Christians (especially the Jesuits) who were involved in enneagram work in the 1970s were influenced by that principle. In fairness it must be pointed out that Ignatius does not use *agere contra* in this sense. His rules for discernment urge acting

not against one's passions but against desolation. This would be consistent with the importance that Ignatius placed on the passions and on the importance of the imagination in the *Spiritual Exercises*.³⁸

Wings

The theory of the wings is found in most of the literature. A quote from Rohr's *Discovering the Enneagram* may be helpful:

The entire circle that the Enneagram describes is a kind of gradual overlapping; each energy melds into the next. The Enneagram does not make jumps between the individual types. As a consequence, each number contains something of each of its neighboring numbers, which help to determine it and balance it. . . . While FIVES are primarily determined by their own energies, blockages, and gifts, there are still two neighboring "theatres of war." The energies in the wings balance out the primary energy. There are, however, those who even say that the primary energy is formed by the tension from the wings! I have found this to be very true in several cases.³⁹

Rohr goes on to say that the wing theory is important because if one remains in one's space only, one will find it more difficult to move toward integration. He believes that in the first half of life we stress and develop one of our wings while in the second half of life the task is to develop the other one. Quite possibly. Again, here I find Palmer helpful. In her discussion of the influence of the wings and how that differs between the core points of Three-Six-Nine and the other spaces, she says:

The wings of any point are influential, however, because they give a flavor to that personality type. For example, in the anger group at the top of the Enneagram, a Nine, who will prefer to express anger indirectly and passively, will lean either to the Eight side (the Boss), making for a blunt and stubborn "don't push me" kind of passive anger, or to the One side (the Perfectionist), making for a nitpicking criticality, which will still be acted out in indirect ways. . . . For example, a fiveish Four would be a more withdrawn and private kind of Four, whereas a threeist Four would be a more flamboyant, dramatic Four, who maintains an active schedule, but still relates to the Four stance of melancholy, sadness, and loss. Each type is affected by