

Awakening Through the Instincts™

Original Ideas behind the Enneagram

Cynthia Bourgeault

Russ: Hi, everyone, and welcome to our latest bonus session and I'm really looking forward to this one. We're going to be enjoying today a conversation and I am here with my dear friend and colleague, Cynthia Bourgeault. We're going to be looking at some of the ways that Enneagram or at least the roots of the Enneagram are woven into a lot of the fabric of the roots of the Western spiritual tradition. Cynthia, as you probably know, is a very accomplished teacher who is part of the wisdom school. She has her own teaching and wisdom school, also is working in conjunction with Richard Rohr. She has written a number of amazing books, a book on centering prayer, which I love, one that we'll probably be touching on today called *The Holy Trinity and the Law of Three*, a topic dear to both of us, and really a book that I found amazing, *The Meaning of Mary Magdalene*, and some of you may have read any or all of those books. What else can I say about my friend, Cynthia? She is an Episcopal priest and like me, she has apprenticed in the Gurdjieff work for many, many years. So that has given us a really wonderful common language to talk about the kind of stuff that we care about in terms of the inner work that is behind the Enneagram. So welcome, Cynthia! I'm so delighted you're here.

Cynthia: Well, thanks, Russ. You know, we've got to stop meeting like this just through phone calls.

Russ: I know. We've got to get in person. We'll just have to make do.

Cynthia: Yeah. Welcome to the students and hello listeners in this conversation. Let's see what we can do.

Russ: Indeed. Well, I was just trying to think of how to lead off the kind of things that we might talk about that people would want to listen to. I've heard a lot of students say they would love to eavesdrop when you and I are having our marathon conversations and explorations, but I'd say just to kick it off, one of the big things that I have been beating the drum for, certainly with a little more fervor in the last few years is that the Enneagram is not just a typology. It isn't just nine boxes to put people in, and certainly anyone who's been taking the course understands that and has hopefully been working with some of the presence practices we do. But I'm also wanting people to understand how the perspective that the Enneagram is trying to illuminate is part and parcel of the whole core of what we might call the Western spiritual tradition. I take people to Egypt every year and we go to some of the monasteries there where the desert

fathers lived. In the course, we talked about the desert fathers and the desert mothers and some of the people whose contemplative practices generated the system of understanding, so there's a chunk of what the Enneagram typology is based on. But really, I think what you and I talk about a lot is that you could, if you only knew the Enneagram as a typology, you could just make a nice little tic-tac-toe board with nine boxes to put people in and there you'd go, which one of these boxes do we file you in. But we know that the whole symbol of the Enneagram, the circle, the triangle, and the hexad represent underlying principles. That they're indicators of an appropriate orientation to the system that becomes in my view super important for really understanding how to work with this material. Maybe you could say a little bit about how you got interested in the Enneagram and what led you to be interested in it as such and some of your journey about how your views about working with this material have changed over the years.

Cynthia: Sure. That's a good, broad lead. Well, like you, I first encountered the Enneagram via the Gurdjieff work. I encountered it really before it had developed really high public currency out there in the culture as a psychometric device.

The movements were getting underway, but I was discovering it just about the time that Helen Palmer was writing her book, and you and Don were putting your books out. So up to that time, my first introduction to it had been via the reverence of all the mystagogy that had surrounded the Gurdjieff work. The core of the thing was the whole idea that what you have was not a psychometric type at all. It was never in the work used about anything to do with personality type. That got handled under a whole different kind of set of protocols. But it was rather the interaction of what were regarded as two universal cosmic laws, the Law of Three that governed world creation or how things get in the form and the Law of Seven that governed the unfolding of form, the law of process. I remember in the classic, the Bible that we read as we entered the work, the *In Search of the Miraculous* by Ouspensky, he said that if you could read the Enneagram, you would hold in your hand all the secrets of the universe and know how the basic cosmic underpinnings lie. We worked on it in the work in various ways and one of them was I think the classic kind of nerd Asperger route that just drove me crazy where we followed down these numerous algebraic diagrams of food chains resulting, it looked like a chemistry homework thing for an 8th Grader. You must have loved that in your five-ishness.

Russ: I did.

Cynthia: The nerds of the biological chains and it made my mind go er. But the other way we encountered it that was always the heart of the Gurdjieff work was the sacred movements and many of them had to do with the Enneagram and many of them actually got people out on what you would call the dance floor for lack of a better term. It allowed them to put their bodies where their minds were and

move in such a way that they were actually imprinting in themselves kinesthetically how these laws moved and worked. Those movements were incredibly beautiful. I would say they were without doubt the liturgy of the Gurdjieff work and they had a way of imparting into your heart just cascades and cascades of meaning that went way deeper than anything you could keep in your mind. So I never claimed to understand the Enneagram, but then I remembered that I knew I was very, very well catechized in the basic principles that it was very high order cosmic laws, very, very much akin to what you would call the first, second, and third laws of thermodynamics nowadays, but in scientific language, every bit as much clout. So that was my attitude for it. I will never forget the first day when I walked into my work group proudly holding under my shoulder a copy of Helen Palmer's Enneagram book and saying, "Look, look! They've discovered something new about it. It's all about types so we can find out who we really are in each of these types." The look of absolute stone frozen acidity that fell from the lips of my spiritual teachers was enough to get me to quietly put the book away right then and there. They considered this unilaterally a desecration, a profanization of the cosmic laws, putting them down into a cheap psychic trip.

For a long time, I walked backtracking as I'm sure you did too finding that kind of universal scorn and the horror of the Enneagram of Personality within the Gurdjieff community. Yet on the other side when you look outside, the Gurdjieff community was frankly a bunch of aging folks in positions who had failed in 50 years to make any kind of visible impact on the moral or cosmological framework of the world. They gathered in their secret societies and studied higher truth. But what the Enneagram of Personality had going for it was that it captured the public imagination right where people were and in terms of classic work terminology, it was classic third force.

It connected things that had been stalled at impasse and it's just absolutely brilliant because the state for everybody who's beginning to wake up in psychological work is, "Tell me something about me. Tell me something about me that I can find out in a test and let me take the test and come back and tell you what type it is." It's absolutely addictive stuff, and so people started doing that. You found people wildly interested. I remembered when it swept Aspen and everybody was running off to see this Trappist monk teaching people what Enneagram type they were and everybody was happy. I even saw an ad in the Aspen Daily News for "Six support group forming." Well, I thought that was really cool because of all the types, the Six probably most needs a support group. But the hook in the whole thing is that if you really get with the teaching and if you live from the entry level, which is where it's all about me and this is who I am, and you follow it along the paths particularly the paths that you have been carving so beautifully in your work of where does this lead when you actually get into inner work. People very, very quickly get introduced to foundational witnessing presence, which is the hardest thing for anyone to learn. I think the

other religious traditions have also gone belly-up trying to teach people how to teach witnessing presence. You get it within five weeks fundamentally in the Enneagram of Personality. If you begin to realize the move from, "Oh, this is my type, I'm a Six" to "Oh my God, this is not my type," this is just a series of impersonal, mechanical behaviors that grow up in me and prevent me from real freedom and spontaneity in my movement. When you begin to make that realization, you discover you're already back into a different relationship with yourself and you already know the difference intuitively between you as you present yourself externally and that deeper. I've never seen anything that can hold a candle to the Enneagram of Personality teachings in the speed and the sureness, the accuracy with which it begins to imprint that fundamental witnessing capacity. I think it was a really good thing. I think that I agree with you 100% that you have to get beyond the typology as fast as possible or you're just wandering around in the same psychic stew. I think that what you're doing is really giving people the bridges that connect it to the ancient cosmic truth that actually lie in the symbol, imbedded in that interaction of the Law of Three and the Law of Seven. I think as people grow up enough to really understand how this could be useful for them in their next step of psychological growth and healing that we're into a whole new era.

Russ: Yeah. I agree with just everything you're saying. I was amazed that what was the genius of the Enneagram of Personality from my point of view was that you can sit down and teach people some kind of mindfulness, but it doesn't necessarily work on the implicit notion of who or what is being mindful. Whereas once you are keying people into paying attention to the fundamental, programmatic patterns, the part of the self that is most likely saying "I" at least in a significant chunk of my life. As soon as you're aware of that then what is being aware of that is not that so to speak. It catapults you more quickly toward the ground in the self that actually can expand this inner observer capacity, this witness capacity. I'm forever telling the students too. That's not the end point. It's a developmental phase, but it's a very necessary one. When I was working with Don Riso years ago, and I've never talked about this so explicitly. As I encountered the field coming from my Gurdjieff background and having very much the same response from most of my teachers that you described like, "Oh God, get that heresy out of here." There was a sense that they were wrong first off because I was sitting in rooms with people who'd been doing exercises and practices and so forth and I've been side by side with them for over a decade in some cases and they kept coming back to the same issues.

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As I started to think about them, their issues were as described in a deeper understanding of these types. What I then took on as what I thought the work I could bring to the field and what Don supported me in was based in my understanding of the Law of Seven. I understood that if a person could correctly recognize the fundamental patterns that were determining so much of their consciousness, so much of how they operated in life, that would function as

striking a kind of do for the person. When I say striking a do, I'm having this conversation with Cynthia, but I have to let a lot of you in, that means beginning a process. The Law of Seven is about processes and how things unfold and that no process is 100% linear. There are places where there are turns in the road and other forces have to come into play or the process doesn't complete itself.

I thought that for a lot of people, just discovering their Enneagram point was a shock. It was striking a do. If they got interested in that, it would lead them toward another experience of understanding what a human being is and what they were, but I saw the necessity of what we call in the Gurdjieff work a Mi-Fa shock. The Mi-Fa shock is based in the idea of the musical octave, Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La, Ti, Do. There's a point at which you have to bring something else into the system for the process to go to the next phase. What I was seeing and what I still see is that shock is teaching people the practice of presence and to observe from this deeper presence. We do that by teaching people as I have in the course what it means to be present in the body, what it means to be present in the heart, what it means to be present in the true mind. With that coming into play then the material that you discovered about your personality pattern starts to operate in this other whole way and takes you a lot further. My experience is when people don't get that shock, what happens is the Enneagram becomes an endless search for more narcissistic surprise. This is a psychological term. We're trying to get the system to more and more precisely mirror every detail about who we take ourselves to be, not necessarily who or what we are. We're looking for more and more backup for our self-concept rather than letting the system function as it was originally intended. Which is to help us see the self-concept we're stuck in and some glimpse of what we might be beyond that, which is when of course you and I know it really gets interesting.

Cynthia: Exactly. I keep remembering that one of the great one-liners of Gurdjieff was when he said, "Behind personality stands essence, and behind essence stands real I, and behind real I stands God." So the whole journey as the outline said is the whole journey precisely of getting beyond the personality, the types, the structures, the artificial, the mannered, the conventional into something that comes first of all closer to what's really you as it feels from the inside. But then you catapult it out of that into a whole new dimension, which is really not related to the narrative self and the small self and its goals and its needs anymore. But it's more directly beamed towards the infinite capaciousness of divine consciousness itself as it resides individually in a human being. The journey for me gets really, really exciting after you've escaped the critical, the critical escape, the velocity from the world of personality and even the world of the essence or full work as people typically call it nowadays, into that really question of how does a human being stand with one foot in the infinite and one foot in the finite and mediate between the two of them in this hobbledehoy called life.

Russ: Yes. That's what I'm wishing for the students when we work with the Enneagram. It's like if you find out a little bit more about your personality or that of your life partner or your kids or your parents or something or your boss, that's good. But your capacity to actually be in a ground that would be able to offer something different into those relationships really depends on this other kind of journey that you and I are describing.

The other part I want to get into for sure while we have this time together is that you've named the two big laws that we work with in the original presentation in the Enneagram, the Law of Seven, which I just explained a little bit about, and the Law of Three. I always think of the Law of Seven as having to do with how law is operating in time. In a certain way, the Law of Three almost is the, I think of it as how the timeless is connected with things that are in time. But there are many, many ways of looking at the Law of Three. One way I always work with it, and by the way, I love what you had to write about that in your book about this. I think of it as being conscious of how we're oriented to any particular phenomena. Where the I is, where the other is, what the relational field is, and to keep being awake to that in different dimensions. But I think the other thing that we talked about in the literature describing this chat that you and I are having, which I want to make sure to touch on, is that obviously when we think of the Law of Three, we're talking about a trinary view of reality. I've shown people how in the earliest civilizations of the West, certainly in ancient Egypt, people just would've thought of things in threes like we think of up and down or left and right. It just would've been a given assumption. Nobody would've thought differently about it. So it was very imbedded in the consciousness of people in the ancient and classical worlds, but I think one of the things that you wrote so beautifully about is the connection between this ancient sensibility of the trinary and how this blossoms as an integral and crucial part of the mystical journey of Christianity. Of course, we're talking about the Holy Trinity and heaven knows there were all these councils and battles and fierce debates about what the Trinity should be and what it was about. But I just would like you to say anything you'd like to of your journey of understanding that, which I'm sure is ever evolving. But there's something very special about that Law of Three as it pertains to the Christian journey. By the way, I'll just say briefly that it's in the mystical Judaism too. You would have no kabbalistic tree without this trinary process. All levels of the tree are trinary, so it's deeply imbedded in Judaism too. It's in Islam. It's the 99 names. There are three groups of 33 as a matter of fact, but your particular work with Christianity was so moving and I'd just like you to say whatever you'd like to say about that.

Cynthia: Yeah. Well, I have a couple of parts to what I want to say and I don't know whether you can put them both together nicely, but for me, the most powerful insight I got into the Trinity and the Law of Three came from Raimon Panikkar who's a great, great interspiritual scholar who died about six or seven years ago now, a magnificent man. He wrote a wonderful book on the Trinity. His whole

life work was actually on talking about the Trinity from a mystical kind of interspiritual way and he put light on the thing that a lot of people think that the Trinity is an add-on in Christianity. They didn't have it in the first four centuries of the church. You won't find any Foursquare Gospel Churches of the Trinity because it wasn't in the Bible. It got invented by Church councils, people said, in the 4th Century. What Panikkar said, and this absolutely riveted me, was that it is the original because its origin is in the mind of Christ. It's clear when you look at how this person thought, how he saw a process, how he saw relationality, how he saw creation that he was thinking in Trinitarian terms and that essentially the Trinity had to be downloaded into time eventually because as people find more and more towards moving, towards accessing what is this body of Christ? They couldn't do it apart from entering it through this dynamic Trinitarian mandala if you want.

That really riveted me not only because it made sense, but also because it laid down a basic kind of principle. If you wanted to use big, fancy words, you'd call it a hermeneutical principle. It's a protocol from how you actually do research and how you figure out what influences what. I know that in a lot of scholarship particularly esoteric scholarship, there's a tendency to run around and do it by the historical root of, "Oh well, is this an Enneagram here? Was Evagrius talking about the Enneagram? Is this an Enneagram that is an ancient Egyptian symbol?" In other words, you go back in time and try to look for specific things that look like early antecedence of it. I think that that approach is always kind of fraught. I've had many people come to me and say, "Well, where did Jesus go in those three years? Nobody knew what he was doing. Did he go to India and learned Buddhism?" This is just all speculation. The real essence is that when you have a very high level of mind, a universal level of mind and the highest possible people, it's universally and objectively accessible to everybody. Of course the Trinity is in the mind of Christ and of course it's in mystical Judaism because the kabbalah comes from extremely high places. Of course it percolates through because if Gurdjieff is correct that it is a fundamental law that talks about the creation of new arisings out of infinite possibility then of course it's going to be universally rediscovered over and over and over again and that some people who are like the five blind men trying to describe an elephant are all going to get bits and pieces of the one universal thing their heart is already intuiting. I would say that the Enneagram understood as the intersection of the Law of Three or the Law of Seven is absolutely primordial and foundational to Christian self-understanding because it's asymmetrical, so both three and seven, they zigzag. They don't come to the same place. They incorporate process and change and motion and dynamism and they represent a whole alternative metaphysic from the great stable spirit versus matter, any materialistic change, eternal, constant, unchanging metaphysic that percolates through a lot of the branches of the perennial philosophy and through some of the Hindu and Vedic tradition, that what you've got in the Trinitarian, what you've got in the Law of Seven, what you've got in the Enneagram world is messy and dynamic and oriented towards

bringing blood-curdling mow and flesh reality out of infinite form. It's about how you get into form, how you move in process, how things become, how they shift and how they move. It's like what part of dynamic do you not understand. Jesus niched with Judaism, which is already implicitly Trinitarian in its gravitation towards incarnation.

Russ: The seal of Solomon notwithstanding, the two triangles.

Cynthia: Yeah. It's all right there. I think that what we're saying is that Christianity perhaps more singularly than any of the other religions more directly grew up on the foundation of this Trinitarian, asymmetrical, creative, process-oriented dynamism that Jesus was accurately intuiting by reading the Law of Three. By reading the Law of Seven, not in some symbol that he happen to secretly know called the Enneagram, but because they're an open book. They're written into the fabric of the cosmos, so they saw it.

Russ: Go ahead.

Cynthia: I was going to say he didn't teach the Enneagram, but his whole way of framing life and theology of what we are to do and what are our moral accountability is, is framed in the dynamism that stands attention with the kind of neoplatonic strain. A lot of Christianity that loves to put it all back into eternal changelessness and immateriality, and you can't do that with Jesus. It just won't work. He jumps out of the box and gets moving again.

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Russ: That's what I loved about it and that is how I understood. What intrigued me about Gurdjieff, what intrigued me about Christianity, what intrigued me about the Enneagram is just exactly what you were saying. I remember Gurdjieff talking about the idea of all hermetic systems. Hermetic is just a buzzword which essentially means some core teaching of the Western orientation toward reality. That he said all real hermetic systems had what he called lawful inexactitudes, meaning there was an intentional mistake. There was an asymmetry. There was something that didn't fit and that it was because of that, the system was alive. It keeps moving forward. It keeps unfolding. This is behind the Greek idea of logos, the unfolding of reality. Of course, every time Christians say The Lord's Prayer, they're iterating this idea of the timeless consciousness participating intimately in the ever changing, evolving, developing world, "Thy Kingdom come", right?

Cynthia: Yeah, exactly, exactly. Then when you add to it that beautiful, beautiful phrase from the hadith qudsi of the Quran, the extra Quranic sayings, God speaks and says, "I was a hidden treasure and I long to be known, so I created the world both visible and invisible." The whole creation is this enormous spectral production of the divine hearts slowly being lived and loved and yearned and formed. It's not a kind of way station or proving ground for heaven or some sort of veil that we fall into before we get to an eternal, permanent, gated

community in heaven. It's part of the heart of God as it writhes and groans and becomes and shows what love is and you take away the dynamism and you take away the heart. I think that the whole Western mystical tradition in particular from which the Enneagram clearly emerges is really steeped in this loyalty to the fact that right here is where the quintessence of the unfolding is happening. It's not removed from God; it is God. But it can only be discovered as one actually moves into it and dances with it. There's no symphony concert that isn't playing. It's just lighting on a page otherwise. You've got to get in there and make the music.

Russ: Yes, exactly. I'm just remembering something. Our friend, Richard Rohr, said one time when I was working with him, he said, "If there's anything I've learned in my journey, it's that you're going to find God in the messy reality of human existence." I thought yeah, it's in the nooks and crannies. Again, that's why I found over the years a lot of the people working very sincerely, I might add, with venerable teachings, doing their best to try to open out into some kind of sense of the expansive divine consciousness would just be stuck and stuck and stuck and stuck. It gradually dawned on me that this was because they were trying to transcend the imminent part of that reality, meaning what I'm experiencing right now. I think when we understand the Enneagram rightly, we're remembering that we're going to find the gateway into these deeper truths of our human existence in the warp and weave and the specifics of the experiences that we're having now. That's why we get into some of the specifics in the Enneagram, because they're like a little training in coming into a more profound, awake, compassionate acceptance of right where we are and to slowly let it dawn on us that God is right here in the midst of all this.

Cynthia: Yeah, exactly.

Russ: That intimate sensibility that what I discover in that is one way I experience what Christ is.

Cynthia: Exactly. And you know, Russ, it's kind of, I don't know whether this has already struck you, but it struck me as a kind of a pity. Another of these clashes between the Enneagram of Personality as we typically experience and what's in the Gurdjieff work is that as the Enneagram is now drawn in 2D, in a lot of the Enneagram of Personality pictures, it becomes a closed pathway so that one goes back to Seven and you're all starting on the same plane, so it looks like a kind of perpetual motion machine. But what was always in it in the Gurdjieff work and implicit in those shocks that you've talked about earlier, the Mi-Fa, was that it was always kind of escaping off the two-dimensional into another active, into another dimension. That it never quite closed directly, and it wasn't tidy symmetry, but it had this asymmetrical, madly recklessly creative dynamism built right into it. I wish we could do it so that we could actually depict the Enneagram in 3D rather than 2D. Some of the Enneagram of Personality material as we move into another generation of this because it's not like we just juggle around

the circle and one goes back to Seven and something goes on. It has this whole list of dimensions, that I don't think is understood enough. But as we really move to take the people who have developed a core capacity of what you might call elementary witnessing, and then bring them back and widen their understanding to see how the Enneagram has been classically understood will continue to feed and nourish them in their growth towards fullness through a more and more direct engagement with these principles of the Law of Three and the Law of Seven. I think the work you're doing in really teaching people to look around the whole circle and see what perspective looks like from each of the types and to own a little bit about how each of the types is imbedded in you I think are all really important ways of helping the whole spaceship Enneagram lift off the ground a little bit and begin to move into the cosmos where it deserves to be.

Russ: Yeah. I didn't teach this in the early years because I figured I was rocking the boat enough and I find overwhelming people is not necessarily helpful in terms of a pedagogic technique. I was aware when I was in the Gurdjieff work, we were talking about how the Enneagram is actually a spiral. It's not a circle. A couple of us took on a work project where we constructed a three-dimensional model of the Enneagram. Of course, it's a lot easier to do nowadays with some sort of computer modeling, I suppose, but we just did it with paper and wood and some sticks to do the inner lines.

Cynthia: Do you have any pictures of that?

Russ: I don't. I don't know if anybody does. One of my friends might have a picture of that. I should see, but we hung it up on a mobile from the ceiling for a while. It was pretty interesting, but it actually looked a little bit like a DNA molecule, to tell you the truth, the way the connecting lines were.

Cynthia: Talk about fundamental cosmic laws.

Russ: There are little basic ideas that, I know that the fashion in the United States is to think that you don't really need your head and I think you need your right head. I think you need to think clearly and to be open to the way new experience can shift how you experience everything including yourself, but these little shifts of perception like for example flat, circle Enneagram has one sensibility that has a certain validity, has its own logic to it. But spiral Enneagram, suddenly you're on a different kind of experience of what the whole thing is, what you are, what this life is, and so that's what I'm always wanting to bring. I did a talk at the International Enneagram Association Conference a few years ago where I went full out, and I just showed them my understanding at least of how the Law of Three and Law of Seven operate together as a system of processes and shocks on the Enneagram diagram and why the Six is in a weird spot and because it's actually on another plane.

Cynthia: Another plane, right.

Russ: Yeah, so people, you could've heard of the proverbial pin drop in that talk. I think I'd like to leave, and it's my aim anyway, to support the people who are interested in moving beyond the two-dimensional Enneagram, which has its uses, but there's so much more to it than that. I used to quip that the way people use the Enneagram reminded me of people leaving aircrafts next to a village and farmers finding the aircrafts and then just hitching them to the back of their donkey and using them to store manure in or farm equipment. You can use it for that and it's a perfectly valid use, I suppose. But you've never actually got to find out what that thing is that you found in the road.

Cynthia: Exactly. I think it's a gateway tool. I'll just come back to what we both said at the beginning of this conversation. That it's a profoundly, strikingly effective gateway tool. When introspection begins, when the question of "Who am I?" hits, there's almost no more effective tool I know for getting that survey, that inquiry on really good ground and leading you firmly into it. I think partly because it is. I use the image in my book that I think the Enneagram of Personality is a hitchhiker nested beautifully on the back of the great cosmic laws. My hat is off to doctors Naranjo and company and for the, I'm blocking the one who started the whole thing, senior moments.

Russ: Oh, Oscar Ichazo.

Cynthia: Yeah, Ichazo, of course, but for these men to discover that and to discover that the Enneagram, the cosmic Enneagram, as you might call the Gurdjieff Enneagram, can actually accommodate this typology so well. I think it's amazing. It doesn't surprise me in a way. It's another manifestation of the power of this natural law. I think that it then becomes a really an important bridge to get over this kind of sensing while there's the Gurdjieff camp and there's the Enneagram of Personality camp. And say that the whole thing is a way of moving from circle to spiral and into the dimension that really, as you can more and more securely see how the universal laws percolate through the specifics of my own personality and healing and growth and awakening. The more you see that, the further you can travel in the full journey of divine awakening.

Russ: Yeah. Of course, it has implications. It has implications that are relevant to the aims of all three of the Western prophetic religions in a sense in that, well, to pedal back just a bit, these ideas, Gurdjieff called them the fourth way. The whole approach, the whole orientation, which was the way of working in life in that we're not full-time monastic. We have not retired from the world into a full-time monastic community. We are participating in the world and we're doing this in a work while participating in the world. But I also come back to over and over again, and this seems to always strike a note with my students because I do believe that something in our deepest heart knows about this, understands. Because we're indeed formed by the very laws that we're talking about, the very

ways that this consciousness is moving through us and as us, we know something about it on that heart level. I do believe that there is an aim to help us evolve as a species, as a culture, as a civilization, and that indeed our civilization must also obey the Law of Seven and go through these shock points where new things have to come into play. I think you and I have both had a number of thoughts about the idea that we might be at such a shock point in the world now.

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Cynthia:

Exactly. So particularly in the line of work I do in the wisdom school, it becomes really, really important for people to work with both the Enneagram of Personality in the way that they could be clear enough and responsible enough about their own being and their own personal deflections and craziness and bag of tricks. But they can step forward cosmically and begin to ask the question and see what's needed and what do we bring and what are we required to bring at the shot points because nothing in the culture, nothing that exists in the kind of traditional, intellectual, cognitive history of Western civilization has got the breadth and depth that I can see that prepares people to understand what scale we're actually working at and what's really being asked of us right now. The closest person I know in the canon who actually got the scale right was Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, and people are still able to read him. But with these great tools, now more than anything, they're needed front and center in Western intellectual history. The fact that both the church and the academia has had nothing to do with them I think has been a major shortcoming that we're really called to step up to the plate and address it at this point.

Russ:

Yeah, I think so. I love the conversations that you and Richard and others have been having about the emergent church. I think that's very inspiring idea, this new inner wave of the Christian current, I might say. I'm thinking what's also a way I really like to hold Enneagram of Personality from this point of view. Gurdjieff tells us pretty straight up in his probable point Eight orientation that we are mad machines, that we're just biological programs running amuck and until we get that, there's not any possibility for us. I think that is true, but a bit overwhelming and seems like poppycock to people when they're identified with their personalities in various ways. But I think the Enneagram of Personality offers a more compassionate and sure way of people understanding what he meant by that. When you really see that your fixated pattern not only cannot awaken as such, not only cannot step up to the plate for the major changes that will undoubtedly unfold in our world in the next few generations. I can't even shift how I behave with my life partner when I'm running from these. It raises a very intimate and immediate question, what in me can show up that isn't these habituated patterns that I now am discovering perhaps ad nauseam? What can actually step into this life that is free and able to respond to the deeper biddings of the heart? That's all I've ever wanted to have for myself, to help others in that, and it's another way that I understand when we more actively become part of what in Christian tradition we call the Body of Christ.

Cynthia: Yeah, I think that's beautifully said. I think the other thing that I've been discovering or reflecting on is that when that has happened and when our Enneagram type is no longer our identity. In other words, when we're not identified with it, when we're not identified with this kind of frozen and mechanical pattern, it can become our vehicle. So it's not like you transcend your type and you're never a Six again or you're never an Eight again, but it's rather that that thing in you that can show up shows up and manifests through that form, through that filter in ways that are particular and lovely and expressive and much more free than when you're trying to get your, when you're trying to nail down and assert your identity with every motion you make.

Russ: Yeah. I used to always say when we think we are the pattern, it's a trap. When we see that we're not it, it's a gift that we're able to express.

Cynthia: It's good and we flow through it and others are charmed by it because if there are only nine types that we're all, it's part of our universal body of humanity. We're the colors in the rainbow, the rainbow of God's craziness, so there's something beautiful and whimsical in watching people quintessentially manifest in their type without being stuck in it.

Russ: Yes, that's the aim. When Don Riso was writing about the levels of development, he was intuiting that there was some sort of journey toward that kind of inner freedom where we were not identified with the defensive routines of the type anymore. But the orientation that they were based in was then liberated to be of service for our life and for the things we care about.

Cynthia: Yeah.

Russ: I like that.

Cynthia: Whether it's a matter of transcending type or transcending and including or wherever it's going, who knows. I love that statement attributed by Meister Eckhart who says that "no being without a mode of being" which is sort of like no water without a glass to contain it. Our various modes of being allow this ineffability to manifest, so as long as we can wear them lightly and gently and humorously, they're part of the whimsy and charm of being incarnate.

Russ: Yes, and not anything to be disdained. Certainly, God is not interested in me getting rid of my personality. Personality is interested in that, but I also think that it touches on the traditional, one of the other central theme of the Christian journey is faith. Because we've so depended on these structures our whole life. They are what we believe in and in my view, we tend to create God in the image of ourselves. We tend to cast God that fits into the way that that particular control structure looks at reality, but I think that as we see through those patterns, we see that some of the things that we believed or clung to or so forth were just training wheels. Just like if you're really learning to ride a bike, at some

point if you still have the training wheels on, it's going to slow it down quite a bit, but there's this point where you think there's nothing there, nothing is going to catch you. You're going to let go of this structure and there's just not going to be anything there to hold you up and instead you step into this much bigger dance of forces. You're moving toward the heart of the Divine, to use that traditional language. but the journey, I think being able to see our personality for what it is, to not reject it, which just keeps it in business anyway, to see it with compassion and honesty gives us the courage in a sense to step into this bigger field of possibilities.

Cynthia: Yeah, exactly.

Russ: Well, is there anything else you want to chat about before we close out our time here?

Cynthia: Well, I think that's been a pretty good go at it, hasn't it? For me, it's a great, great takeaway from the conversation. It has been just really the affirmation that the whole, the Enneagram, whether you've encountered it in the Gurdjieff work or whether you've encountered it in the Enneagram of Personality. What it comes out of and what it bears witness to is the fundamental dynamism and process and messiness and faith in becoming that really is the godsend and the genius of the Western tradition. To that extent, it becomes a profoundly appropriate window through which much of Christianity, through which anything in any of these traditions could actually be framed for fullness. While I don't think myself that Evagrius had been introduced to the Enneagram secretly and was talking about it in the passion. I think he's coming implicitly from an understanding of process and development and thoughts that lends itself in a beautiful intertextual way to dialogue and to being drawn out in this master frame of the Enneagram. Once you flip the things that way and you just see how beautifully the Enneagram is in conversation with Western tradition and accentuates and draws out facets of it that have been squashed in the platonic and traditional categories, which theology has usually hammered them. I think we have a wonderful interpretive tool that could be turned lovingly toward our tradition and open up whole new insights.

Russ: Yeah. I love that. That feels like probably a good place for us to close for now.

Cynthia: I am the master of the exit line.

Russ: You are. See, everybody wants to know. We just sit around and giggle like this. That's the truth. We just get lots of giggles and have so much fun always, but anyway, all of you listening in, thank you so much. I hope you've got some new ideas about what this is we're up to here or some confirmation of some things you may have intuited. Of course, thank you to you, Cynthia, for taking some time out of your busy life to come and chat with me here. Thank you to The Shift

Network for giving us this vehicle to communicate our little passionate interests here with you all. Thank you so much and on to our next adventures.

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