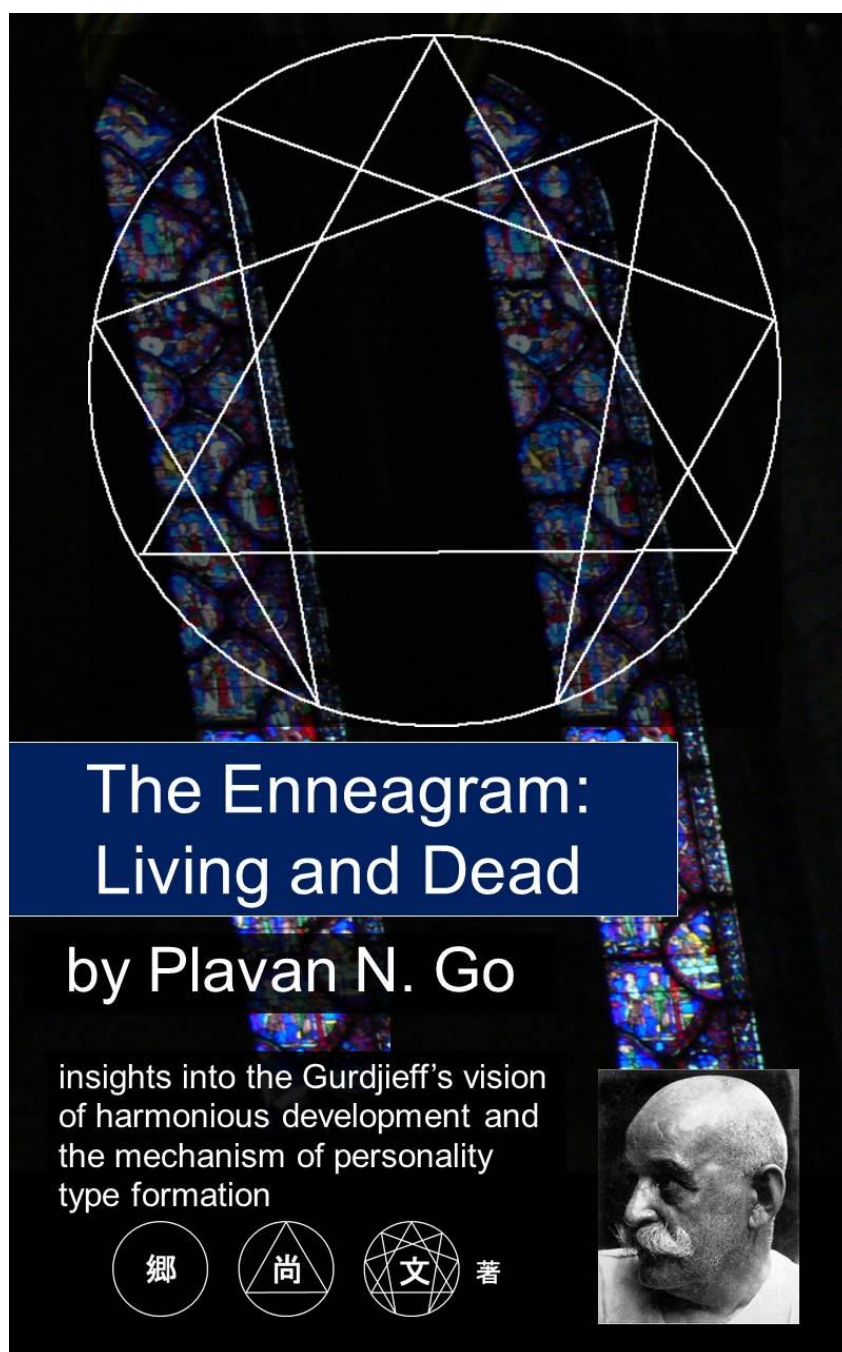


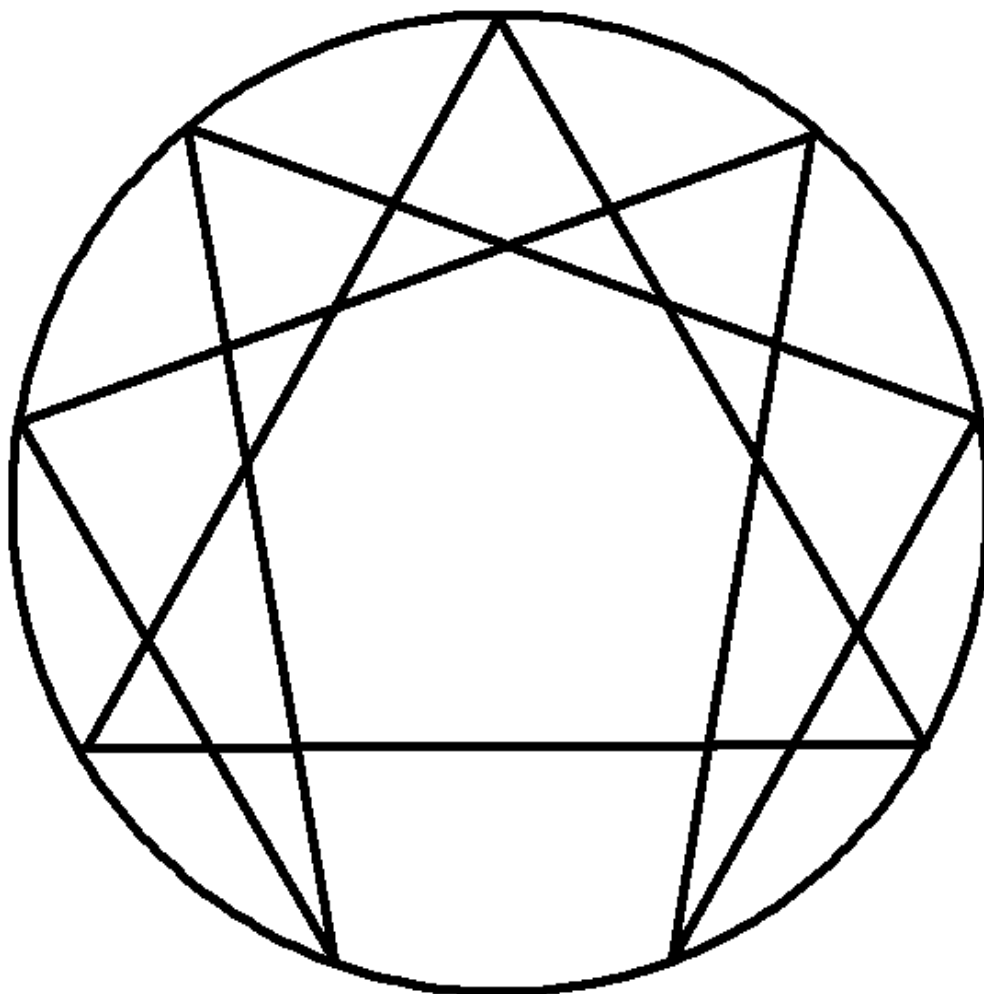
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*insights into the Gurdjieff's vision of harmonious development  
and the mechanism of personality type formation*

by Plavan N. Gon



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**Figure 1 *The enneagram***

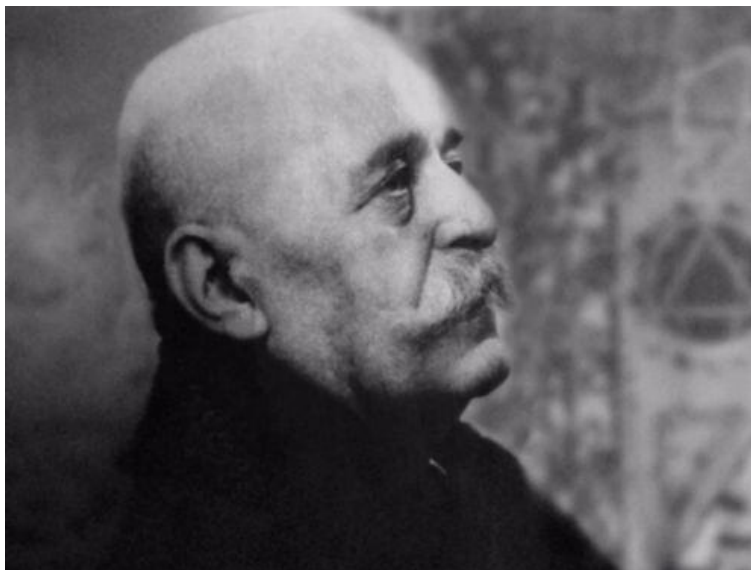
All knowledge can be included in the enneagram. With the help of the enneagram, all knowledge can be interpreted. And in this connection it can be said: only what a man can put into the enneagram, he actually knows, that is to say, he understands.

Gurdjieff<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Source: P. D. Ouspensky "In Search of the miraculous" Chapter 14

## Acknowledgement



The whole world owes George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (1866? - 1949) for all the knowledge it presently has about the enneagram. This book contains excerpts from his writings and recorded lectures. Some of them are abridged. For deeper and more exact understanding, the readers are advised to read the source documents mentioned in the footnotes.

+ + +



Oscar Ichazo, born in 1931, is the founder of the Arica School. What is known today as the enneagram of personality is based on a model of "ego fixations" that he developed in the 1970's. He is the originator of the enneagram of personality even though the way it is used today by the borrowers of his theory does not represent his approach.



Plavan N. Go, the author of this book, was born in 1961. He is the translator and electronic publisher in Japan of a full series of Gurdjieff's written works and recorded lectures. He developed understanding about Gurdjieff and his ideas through involvement in book translation and contacts with relevant groups and individuals since the late 1980s and also through acquaintance with the Movements since 1990. Since then, he has involved himself in group work initiatives of different kinds inside and outside Japan, and taught the Movements in Japan, India, Russia and France. More recently, since 2015, he has spent a considerable amount of time in Turkey leading the Movements practice and supporting local group initiatives.

His interest in universal laws that may counter the action of time, a major theme in Gurdjieff's masterpiece in writing, the Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson, began in 1982 as he studied under Prof. Masao Shimura who introduced the works of Thomas Pynchon<sup>2</sup> to Japan. This interest later developed into his studies in the area of complex system sciences. After having worked in the automobile industry for several years, he was professionally engaged in researches in cognitive linguistics from 1988 to 1989. His first book, published in 2001 in Japan, discusses the Gurdjieff's Movements in relation to Gurdjieff's views on man and universe with new perspectives from the area of complex system sciences.

[Homepage](#)

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<sup>2</sup> An American novelist who took a great interest in questions around the second law of thermodynamics. [\[WIKI\]](#)

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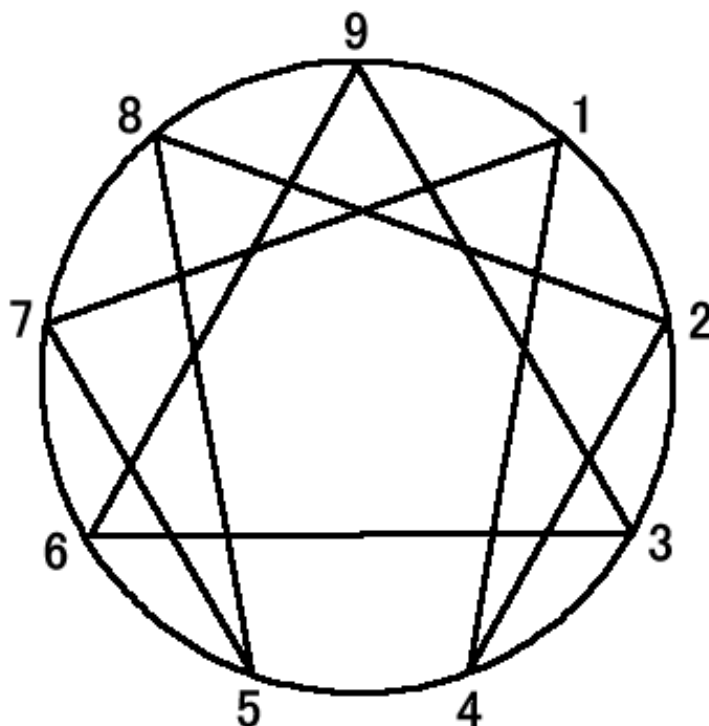
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## 1. Background and Purpose

### 1-1 History of the Enneagram



**Figure 2** *The enneagram*

Around 1915, Gurdjieff presented the above figure, later named the enneagram, in a lecture he gave in Russia. The lecture was translated into English<sup>3</sup> when Gurdjieff began his activities in Europe. This is the oldest reliable account concerning the history of the enneagram.

There is no historical evidence regarding the earlier existence of the enneagram. The enneagram is not found inscribed in any ancient manuscript or monument. In fact, the whole world owes Gurdjieff for all the knowledge it presently has about the enneagram.

Considering the visual impact of the enneagram, it would be nearly impossible to keep it secret once it is known to more than a handful of individuals. Either the secret had been very strictly guarded or the enneagram did not exist before Gurdjieff.

Many believe that Gurdjieff came to know about the enneagram through his contact with a secret school of wisdom, possibly the one mentioned as the Sarmoung Brotherhood. Supposing it was so, what happened to that secret school and its teaching of the enneagram? They don't seem to be doing anything parallel to Gurdjieff. What we see instead is certain proponents of Sufism in the West presenting their replicas of the enneagram of personality, which does not come from Sufism. It comes from Oscar Ichazo.

<sup>3</sup> The manuscript is originally titled "A Lecture on Symbolism" but is often presented as "The Enneagram" or "A Talk on the Enneagram" when it is reproduced on the internet. The word "enneagram" is not used in the lecture. Note that the original manuscript includes several obvious errors. Also note that there is inconsistency in the use of the terms "the first octave" and "the third octave." [\[LINK\]](#)

Claims made by Idris Shah and some others on this subject, spread further by certain proponents of the enneagram of personality, seem to discredit the story rather than to confirm it. If the enneagram really belonged to a long lineage of oral transmission, it is possible that the lineage was about to die when it passed the knowledge to Gurdjieff. They might have lost the living understanding of what they preserved. Gurdjieff himself mentioned that the transmission of something real through living individuals has little chance of surviving for a long time.<sup>4</sup>

In that case, the enneagram, like sacred dances and other pieces of objective art, may be regarded as what Gurdjieff called Legominism, that is to say, keys to objective knowledge that had been prepared in a special format to survive the end of oral transmission.

On the other hand, the real story could have been the reverse of what people believe. The finding of the enneagram in itself could have been the reaching of the hidden monastery of the Sarmoung Brotherhood.

Gurdjieff left no clear statement about the origin of the enneagram. However, his book known as the *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* contains stories about how some people came to learn about the Laws of World Creation and World Maintenance that the enneagram represents. According to those stories, the knowledge in this area was restored after the loss of the Atlantis in ancient China. In addition, from certain survivors from the Atlantis, the knowledge continued to be transmitted from generation to generation in the circles of initiates. It was known to a small number of learned beings who gathered in Babylon, including Pythagoras. In modern times, the story goes, the knowledge came into the hands of certain dervishes in Bokhara.<sup>5</sup>

## 1-2 Ichazo's Use of the Enneagram

The enneagram of personality has its origin in Oscar Ichazo's mapping of nine ego fixations on the enneagram. He is said to have developed this model in the 1970s. Later on, the model he developed began to be used and spread by his former colleagues and their students. Some of them had Catholic or Jesuit background.

Ichazo used the term "ego fixations" to describe what he had mapped on the enneagram. In time, the borrowers of his model showed a general tendency to de-emphasize the fact that they represented different ways of imprisonment. Nowadays, they are commonly referred to as personality types, which are believed to have both good and bad sides.

Some personality enneagram proponents claim that these nine types represent equally unique manifestations of one's "individuality." This idea of "individuality." is criminally deceptive. Considering that the nine personality types are formed mostly under pressure from the logic of survival, they should really be regarded as constraints to the manifestation of real individuality in man. Only something in man that may resist the automatic tendency toward adaptation and slavery to life is worthy of being praised as the individuality of man.

With this so-called "acceptance" of all personalities, the enneagram loses its significance as a symbol of evolution. If all points on the enneagram are equalized and accepted under such philosophy, which is in fact the acceptance of slavery, where is the path for evolution? Ichazo's approach was nothing like that.

With such modified approach, the enneagram of personality spread widely since the 1980s. It found its use in personal development seminars, management skill training, coaching, counseling, and so on.

---

<sup>4</sup> See G. Gurdjieff "Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson" Chapters 30, etc.

<sup>5</sup> G. Gurdjieff "Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson" Chapters 40 and 41

In the early 1990s, I became acquainted with the relatively unmodified approach based on Ichazo's original model as I participated in group work programs led by former Arica leaders. In the same period, I became acquainted also with the Arica's body-oriented techniques like gymnastics and Chi Kung style exercises.

Comparing Arica's body-oriented approach to Gurdjieff's methods like the Movements, it seems that Arica did not come to the point of making the practical use of the Gurdjieff's insights into energy transformation that he represented using the enneagram.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, the Ichazo's model of nine ego fixations could be quite authentic in itself. One may justify it on the basis of Gurdjieff's ideas. This might be the reason behind the mystical relevance of this model that the personality enneagram proponents assert but cannot explain.

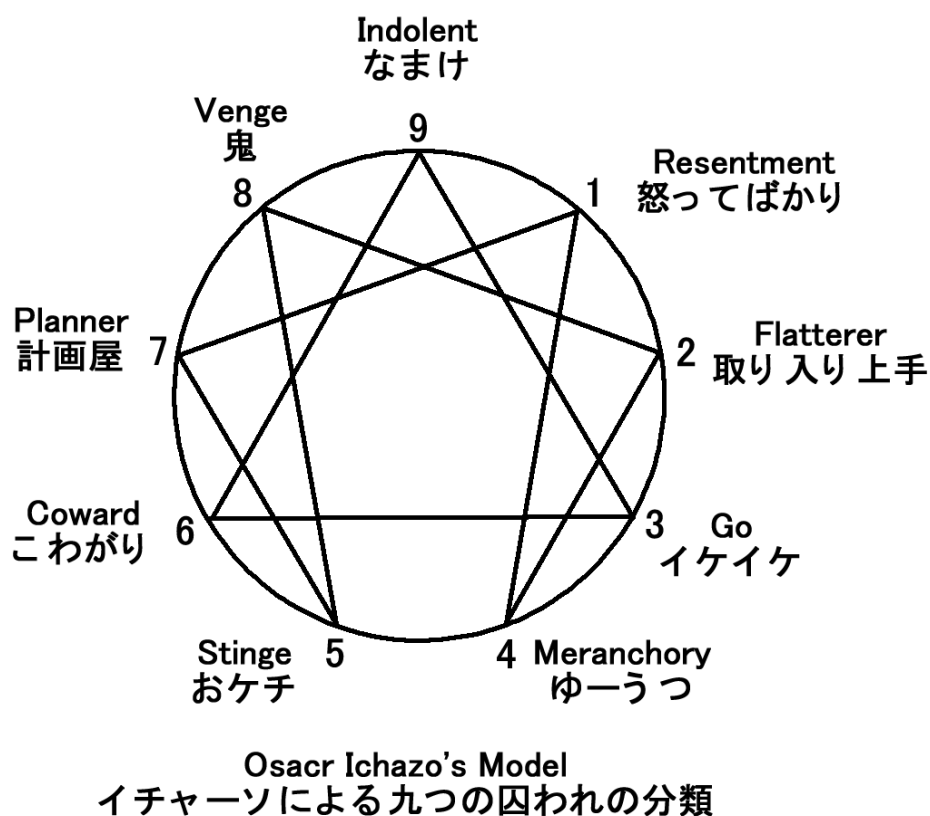


Figure 3 Oscar Ichazo's model

### 1-3 Questions around the Theoretical Basis of the Enneagram of Personality

The Ichazo's enneagram of nine personality types does not come from Gurdjieff. This does not mean that it is unauthentic. Saying so would be a gross misinterpretation of the concept of authenticity. The Ichazo's enneagram is made all the more authentic because of the fact that it does not come from Gurdjieff.

Since the laws represented by the enneagram are all pervading, one may quite independently arrive at some insights into the symbol to a certain extent that corresponds to the nature of his experience. A full dynamic understanding of something is crystallized in man in the shape of the enneagram. In this sense,

<sup>6</sup> This subject is discussed later in Section 2-3.

the enneagram is as ancient as man or the universe even though Gurdjieff may be the first man who has put it down on paper.

Ichazo might have arrived at this way of using the enneagram based on his unique insights into the works of the Law of Three and the Law of Seven that the enneagram represents. His insights might have been more intuitive than theoretical because he has not published the theoretical basis of his model.

As to those who simply borrowed and "refined" the Ichazo's model, the following words from a Persian dervish seems to apply:

"heard a bell without knowing where the sound came from"<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, there is something alarmingly strange about books written on the enneagram of personality. They contain extensive discussions on what these nine types are and how one can distinguish them, how each type may have a "wing" or inclination toward one of the two neighboring types, and how people may improve themselves by going against the movement in the direction of 9-3-6 or 1-4-2-8-5-7. However, the books do not offer any logic to justify such elaborate definitions and theories. The authors seem to ascribe everything to some mystical knowledge, which they don't feel obliged to explain.

Is there any logic behind the definitions of the nine personality types and their mapping on the enneagram?

One of the purposes of this book is to answer this question.

#### 1-4 Relating the Dead Enneagram of Personality with the Living Enneagram of Harmonious Development

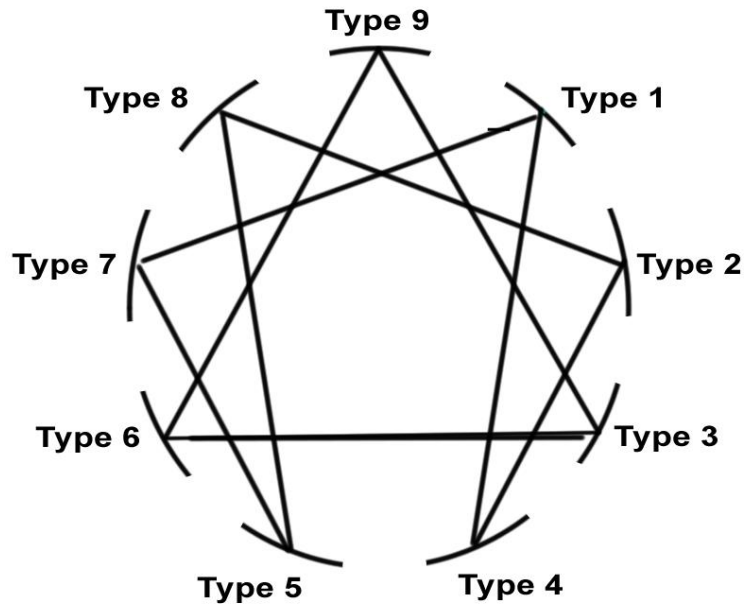
The enneagram of personality has another problem. It is a map showing the positions at which people stopped their movement. In Everest, the dead bodies of climbers remain frozen on the spots at which they collapsed during their ascent or descent. The enneagram of personality is just like that. It does not really show the dynamism of human growth.

The main path of human growth goes clockwise along the circumference of the enneagram. Books written on the enneagram of personality reveal the ignorance of their authors about this path. In the enneagram of personality, the circular path around the enneagram is ignored except for short distances around each point of fixation. Presenting such an incomplete picture of human growth could be equivalent of confining someone inside an Yezidi magic circle mentioned by Gurdjieff:<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Source: G. Gurdjieff "Meetings with Remarkable Men" Chapter 8

<sup>8</sup> See "Meetings with Remarkable Men" Chapter 4.



**Figure 4** *The dead enneagram of personality*

The counseling offered by the proponents of such theory cannot help being a deceit. They can do a good business by telling people how comfortably they may "accept" and adapt to the patterns of imprisonment not only of themselves but also of others. One should know, by the way, that this idea of "acceptance" is based on a top-down logic which people rarely doubt. Who is accepting who? The fallacy of such logic will become clearer when the true significance of the Law of Three is discussed later in this book.

From a memoir by Tchechovitch:<sup>9</sup>

"I knew some sorry prisoners," Mr. Gurdjieff continued, "who brought up three generations of spiders, which they succeeded in taming and even in teaching tricks. Another became friends with mice and rats, and still another shared his bread with sparrows. Each of these prisoners looked for a way of adapting to his condition and of finding a means to escape, not from the prison, but from himself. But only the one who sees that he is imprisoned in himself has a chance of freedom; that is, if he really desires it and is intelligently prepared. One needs to think very carefully and see who is in prison and what the prison consists of."

One gets imprisoned in one's personality as the logic of survival overpowers the logic of growth:

Gurdjieff:<sup>10</sup>

Personality in man is what is not his own. [. . .] From the point of view of ordinary psychology the division of man into personality and essence is hardly comprehensible. [. . .] A man's real I, his individuality, can grow only from his essence.

It happens fairly often that essence dies in a man while his personality and his body are still alive. A

<sup>9</sup> Source: Tcheslav Tchechovitch "Tu l'aimeras: Souvenirs sur Giorgii Ivanovitch Gurdjieff

<sup>10</sup> The text is abridged. See P. D. Ouspensky "In Search of the miraculous" Chapter 8.

considerable percentage of the people we meet in the streets of a great town are people who are empty inside, that is, they are actually already dead.

The dead enneagram of personality has to be made alive by complementing it with information from the living enneagram, which we may construct based on Gurdjieff's vision of harmonious development of man. This is another purpose of this book.

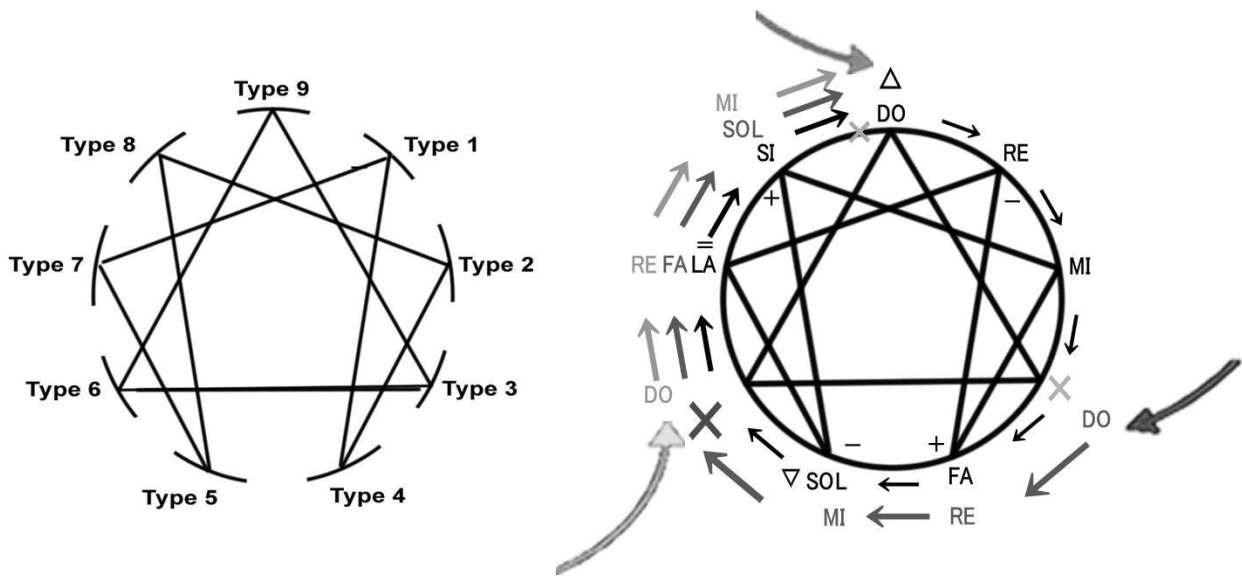


Figure 5 *The dead enneagram and the living enneagram*

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