

Conscious and Unconscious Behavior on the Path of Transformation

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This is an excerpt from a study guide for a class that I taught at a local collage back in 1986.

The class was secular so I framed the concepts that I used in Fourth Way language. The subject matter and processes are derived purely from Sufism.

Conscious and Unconscious Behavior.

Throughout history people have sought and invented "explanations" for the behavior of human beings. Freud invented such a system with his id, ego, and superego concepts that proved so popular that we can scarcely conceive of our present society without these ideas. It is important to have insight into our natures so that we can become conscious. It is through conscious evolution that the shaman steps into other realms. As you have seen from the sacred hoop of the processes and qualities of a human being, there is the possibility of being a complete, conscious person. This is analogous to Freud's idea that a person could, through conscious work, develop the superego to such an extent that the ego and the id could be kept in check.

As it happens, not many people are conscious--they have stopped somewhere in the process at one of the points of the process. What is often developed instead are habits--unconscious behaviors or responses--and from this, a habitual nature is created. What this implies is that our choices are limited; our pool of responses available for any particular stimulus are smaller than is intended for a human being. The result is that people tend to be at the effect of their world rather than being the cause and creation of it.

The statement that many people are not conscious means something different than what most people believe is consciousness. Consciousness is a state of presence, in the moment, that does not have internal reflections towards the past or future; consciousness does have an awareness of both the internal and external environments; being conscious is also the quality of lacking unintentional internal dialogue. Internal dialogue is that constant voice you may hear that judges and expects, fantasizes, and is generally trivial in nature. While people may often be

aware of their habits, or habitual natures, they often are unable to do anything about it. For the spiritual warrior, it is the awareness and mastery over this habitual, often mechanical, self that is the key to being on the path of power and freedom. First comes the experience that you are dissatisfied with your present way of being; second is the

insight into the nature of that being; and finally, the work that will enable you to overcome the more mechanical self and allow your essence self to emerge. What is needed, therefore, is another useful way in which we can scrutinize ourselves, and make sense of our behavior.

The Five Centers.

The five centers system is extracted from one of the ancient sacred oral teachings of Central Asia. The five centers describe the ways in which human beings manifest or express energy. Different kinds of energy are available for someone to express. In this system, the first three centers are referred to as the "lower" centers because they are most commonly available for people to experience in everyday life. The last two centers are called the "higher" centers, and are experienced as a person does some kind of work to "open" these centers. The higher centers are the ones that the traveler seeks to access for creating a permanent doorway to God.

1. The moving center is the instinctive part of us, the automatic response system, the reflex system, the "fight or flight" mechanism. This is represented physiologically by the autonomic nervous system (comprised of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, and regulating involuntary action such as of the intestines, heart and glands). The pure function of the moving center is appropriate physical response to stimulus. Stimulus-and-response in this system is faster than our thoughts. Imagine having to think: "remove hand from hot stove." Animals represent this center operating in its purest functioning. The moving center is also further divided into three centers--action, instinctual, and sexual--which are part of the oral teachings.

The impure functioning of the moving center is also referred to as an injury. An injury to the moving center is often reflected by one's body-image. This may be a body that does not carry itself well, looks and "feels" sunken or closed down, weak or ponderous. The ability to respond to stimulus is often missing or inappropriate, too much or too little. This is the sense of someone being self-conscious about their bodies and their movements. This is something you don't find with animals.

2. The heart or emotional center is what directs our "feelings." The pure function of this center provides feeling in the moment as a response to the given, immediate stimulus. Again, you find the pure functioning of this center in animals, although their range of feeling is limited compared with human beings. The limbic system part of the forebrain, including the hippocampus, and concerned with various aspects of emotion and behavior) represents the emotional center in the body.

The injury to the heart center creates a series of "feeling impressions" that are attracted to images that come from the head center. These can be pleasant or unpleasant impressions. For example, we associate an immediate stimulus or experience with a picture of one from the past (contributed by the head center), and in this way, find a feeling for the present. This is instead of having an immediate and pure feeling-response. You can think

of feelings generated from an injured heart center as "mind feelings." When this happens, we become locked to the particular form of reality associated with those images. Our actions are often colored by our internal kinesthetic reaction to stimulus. Notice that as you do this, you are not being present or conscious! The aim of the shaman is to be fully present and conscious in every moment.

3. The head center's pure function is to create a symbol system by which the universe can be represented. Some examples of symbol Systems are: language, music, pictures, This is obviously a center that most animals lack. It is the cerebral cortex of our brains, responsible for higher nervous functions. Some examples of this pure function at work might be found in the music of Mozart, or in the play of grand chess master.

In it's injured state, the head center runs incessantly rather than calling up symbols at the appropriate time. Imagine if you were to calculate the value of pi forever; this is kind of what the injured head center is like. It is that internal dialogue, or chitchat, that runs through our minds--often in tandem with an injured heart center providing the feelings. Thus, the head center becomes trivialized. This constant stream of dialogue is often mistaken for conscious thought. Language is most heavily represented here, In both healthy and injured states. This is where the past and the future is constructed. It is also where we are clever--when we think we know!

Working on an injured head center is a major aspect of the Teacher's work. Culture, and ways of seeing reality, are imprinted in this center. So it becomes a major task for being on this path to deal with, and master this center--to bring it back to its pure state.

Pure Functioning.

When these centers function in their pure state, harmoniously and in balance, then we might seem to be on top of the world! This may be the state that peak experience arises from--the sense of total involvement, alertness and presence. You have probably had this experience where every action, feeling, and decision you made was exactly right and appropriate for the situation. This is the lower centers operating as they were intended to: purely, and uninhibited by influences outside of the self's innate knowledge.

Injured Functioning.

These three centers often function completely independently of each other, and even in opposition to one another! Most people are functioning (or not, as the case may be) in this world almost exclusively from one of these three centers, in an injured condition. In this situation, one of these centers tends to dominate the others, and the person operates from the injured state of this dominant center. This is often accepted in society as normal or natural. The result, however, is a sense of being out of balance, not feeling "whole," or of being incomplete. It is when you at some level can no longer accept this "natural state of being" that you sense life to be out of balance. You begin to recognize how much of

your energy and attention goes to this dominant center, keeping you divided.

For example, suppose someone has a head injury which might manifest itself as over-intellectualizing, analyzing everything in their life, regardless of its appropriateness. The other centers will lose vitality to this dominant center and weaken. Such a person may simply not be able to respond in an emergency from their moving center--Whose quite legitimate function is to respond during emergencies. They may not have a "heart" and be unable to participate in intimate relations with others.

A good example of these three centers in an injured state is from the Wizard of Oz by Frank Baum. The straw man appears to be lacking a brain (the head center), the tin man lacks a heart (the heart center), and the lion is without courage (the moving center). In these characters, their preoccupation is with what they think they lack. In truth, of course, they never lacked for these qualities at all, as pointed out by the kindly wizard.

There is a balance between the pure, legitimate functions of these lower centers for each person. This balance is unique to that individual. When this balance exists, people can live balanced lives and work to open up the higher centers or energies. For most people, living from the imbalance of a dominant center, their responses in life are limited and tend to be habitual. These habitual responses arise from the particular quality of the most injured center. In this way, the centers control people's lives--they are at the effect of their own lives, rather than the master. When this happens, the centers are like a pack of feral dogs. And one center is top dog! The shaman seeks mastery over the lower centers so that precious energy is not wasted, and so that the centers can work for rather than against the spiritual warrior.

Practice: Observation.

Purpose: To observe the three centers in action.

Before moving on to the discussion of the higher centers, take some time to observe how the lower centers function in others and in yourself. Using the point-of-view of these three centers, observe others' behavior and see if you can identify the three centers and how they function. Can you identify top dog? Please don't burden anyone with your observations Now, look at yourself!

The Higher Centers.

Whereas the lower centers can "leak" and sap your energy, the higher centers are where extra energy can be generated. This is important because it takes extra energy to encounter the Mystery. The lower centers are where our unconscious attention is usually directed; it takes Conscious attention to activate and enter into the higher centers. These

two higher centers exist in you, however dormant. These centers are like the seed of essence of your original perfection, requiring conscious nurturing to grow into a fruit-bearing tree. This fruit is our access to knowledge and the experience of the Mystery.

4. The higher heart center is similar to the heart center in that it accesses a kind of knowing and Intuition that is beyond language. This center is the place of unconditional love, of ecstasy, and the sense of connectedness with the All. This is the plate from which true healing occurs. To activate this fourth center, we must balance and unify the three lower centers, if only momentarily.

In order to access this center, and to complete ourselves, people require more energy than they inherently have. You can obtain and store this energy from:

group work

sacred ceremonies (Dhikr)

sacred sites ("power spots, tombs, etc.")

***some special people who can tap into the Source
and transfer energy (this of transfer of energy is called "baraka").***

You also create this energy when you work to master and balance your lower centers.

The ecstatic energy of the higher heart center is always in the moment, in present-time, and in the body. The problem of ecstasy-producing drugs, like marijuana for example, is the tendency to go out of the body and presence, to leak energy. The spiritual warrior seeks to obtain and save this energy, never to "blow it off" In the way that drugs almost invariably do.

Activating the ecstatic state of this center is done through sacred ceremony and breath practices, and are part of the oral teachings. However, you can prepare yourself to enter this gateway by reviewing and continuing with practices 1-5. After you have worked with these practices, then go to:

(Practice deleted for safety's sake)

5. The higher head center is the universal mind center. It is through here that we touch the fabric of the universe, travel beyond the veil of our accepted reality, and have direct access to universal laws, communication and memory. Since this is not a recognized ability in our culture, our language reflects this lack with an inability to describe what goes on here. So we will offer examples and analogies that might help give you an idea of this center's possibilities.

Certain geniuses were probably connected to this center: Mozart for example, who seemed to be simply transcribing music that he heard "complete" in his mind, or

Buckminster Fuller with his tremendous amount of original and creative ideas. It is here perhaps where we touch Jung's Archetypes, or the Akashic Records (the library of the All that ever was, is or will be). This center is where the visions are dreamed, and brought back. In the higher head center lies the shaman's access to abilities screened out in the mundane veil of reality--abilities that are rightfully ours, like telepathy. Ultimately, it is through this center where the Mystery can be viewed.

We can access this center through self-remembering and sacred ceremony

Practice: The Three Attentions.

Purpose: To begin to develop self-remembering.

First attention is the awareness of your breath: the inhaling and the exhaling. Try to be aware of your breath in a variety of situations, especially tense or confrontational ones. You might notice how often you are unaware of your breathing; this unawareness often corresponds to the extent that the lower centers dominate your responses in the world. Try being aware of the first breath in the morning upon waking; the last breath at night before falling asleep. Mealtimes are also good opportunities to check in with your breath.

Second attention is becoming aware of the person who is aware of their breath. Maintain the first attention, and then step back and observe yourself being aware of this awareness of breath. This may sound odd, but you will surely recognize the experience when it happens. You will realize that you can have these two awarenesses simultaneously. It will be like stepping back from yourself, and then watching yourself observing the breath. This second awareness can extend into other areas of watchfulness too!

Third attention is awareness of everything, and the connections that make up this everything. This happens while maintaining the first and second attentions. This third attention will happen to you-- you cannot invoke it except to practice the first two attentions.

Pacing for this Practice: practice first attention constantly. Appreciate your breath! As this becomes a pattern of attention, then begin second attention. Spend a lot of time doing these two attentions. A doorway will often open up that will enable you to step through to the third attention without effort.

Self-Remembering.

It must be emphasized that proper groundwork in self-remembering is necessary before participating in sacred ceremonies, and before you can safely enter into the universal mind center, and have on-going access to this center. Essential to this participation is

developing and using the skills that balance the lower three centers so that they function appropriately and no longer distract you, or leak your energy. Until you can save and add to your energy, you cannot access the Mystery. Fortunately there is a very powerful tool for observing our habits and the mechanical nature of the lower centers, and ultimately, to bring them into balance. This is through The Law of Three and The Law of Seven (the Octave).

The Law of Three.

The Law of Three states that there are three forces in the universe, contained within the One. The affirming (active) moves toward, the denying (receptive) moves away from, and the reconciling (neutral) moves against. We take for granted the notions of cause and effect, action and reaction. We could call these pairs affirm and deny, or adhesion-repulsion and still mean the same thing. What is often overlooked is the third force which always binds these opposites together: the reconciling force, or cohesion. This force links the other two together. We typically don't recognize it as such because we usually have our attention on the cause or the effect, rarely on the link that binds them. These three forces have correspondences to the three lower centers: head\reconciling, heart\affirming, and moving\denying.

The Law of Seven or The Octave.

The Law of Seven or the Octave describes the movement and pattern of all processes in the universe. Processes work in cycles, and the octave is a repeating cycle that describes how and why actions are completed or not completed. This can be most easily represented by the musical octave. In every major octave, there are five whole-steps and two half-steps (**DO-RE-MI-FA-SO-LA-SI-DO**), seven notes plus the first note repeated at the end to mathematically complete the octave. If you play a major scale on a piano or guitar, you will hear the suspension of the scale when you reach the half-steps; it sounds incomplete, asks to be resolved which can only be done by continuing with the scale. Those half-steps are shock points that call for resolution yet require an extra push of momentum to continue. (For example, in the key of C, the shock points occur between B and F, and B and C, on the scale). The Law of Seven says that there is a process cycle to all action in the universe, and that in every process there are two shock points or obstacles, or places where extra energy is needed, in order to complete the process. Furthermore, it is easier to start over in the process than to continue, Completing an octave is an act of power, not only for yourself, but for the entire web of the universe.

The Octave and the Law of Three can be put together on a map called an enneagram. Oral teachings of the enneagram, the octave, and the Law of Three, are said to date to 2,500 B.C. with the Sarmoun Order, a Sufi mystery school still in existence today. The teachings of this order define the original nine distinctions of human habit and conscious action in the spirit of waking up to the Work. These nine distinctions can be thought of as the pure and impure functioning of the lower centers. An enneagram is a powerful tool

for observing and balancing the three lower centers, and can be used effectively in every situation in your life. >From the beginning, the use of this living knowledge has been for healing, transformation, and compassion.

You can mathematically derive the structure of the enneagram from the numbers 1, 3, and 7. Mathematically, 3 and 7 are the only two numbers that divided into 1 give you repeating decimals.

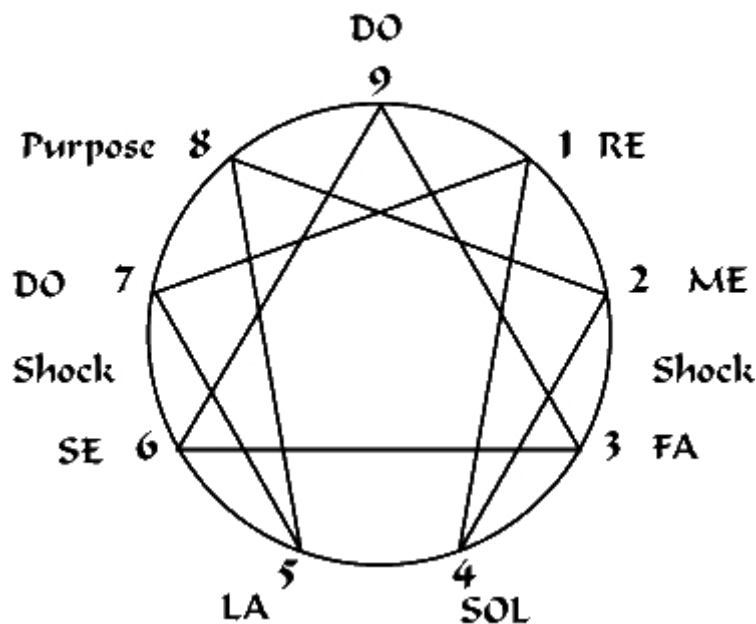
Expression of the Law of Three. 1 divided by 3 = .33333

added to Itself .66666

and again .99999

Expression of the Law of Seven: 1 divided by 7= .142857142857.....

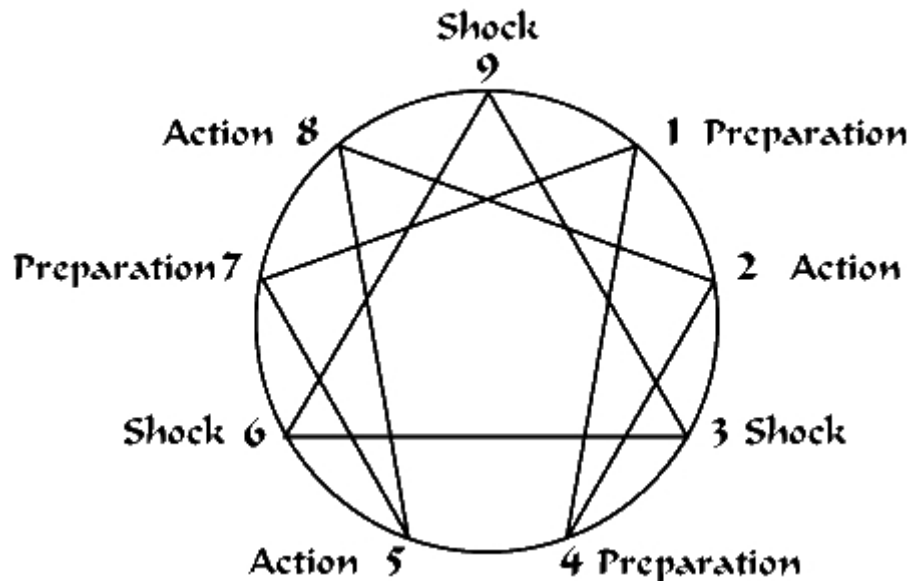
On the enneagram map, the triangle represents the Law of Three and the interior lines represent the Law of Seven. The circle contains the whole nine-pointed figure. There are several ways to map the Octave on an enneagram. Here is one way:



One of the most useful aspects of the enneagram as a map is that it can show how virtually any process works. A process has preparation, action, and shock points within its movement. The points of preparation are where the information and tools are gathered that are necessary for the process to continue, The action points are where the information and tools are put to work and used. The shock points occur at those places in the process where the energy winds down, and threatens to end the forward movement of the process. The shock points need to be prepared for, and acted upon, in order to go

through them~ You will notice on the enneagram figure that there are two ways of moving on the diagram: one way is around the circumference of the circle (like a sacred hoop), and the other way is to follow the interior lines marked by the arrows.

The following enneagram maps the movement of processes:



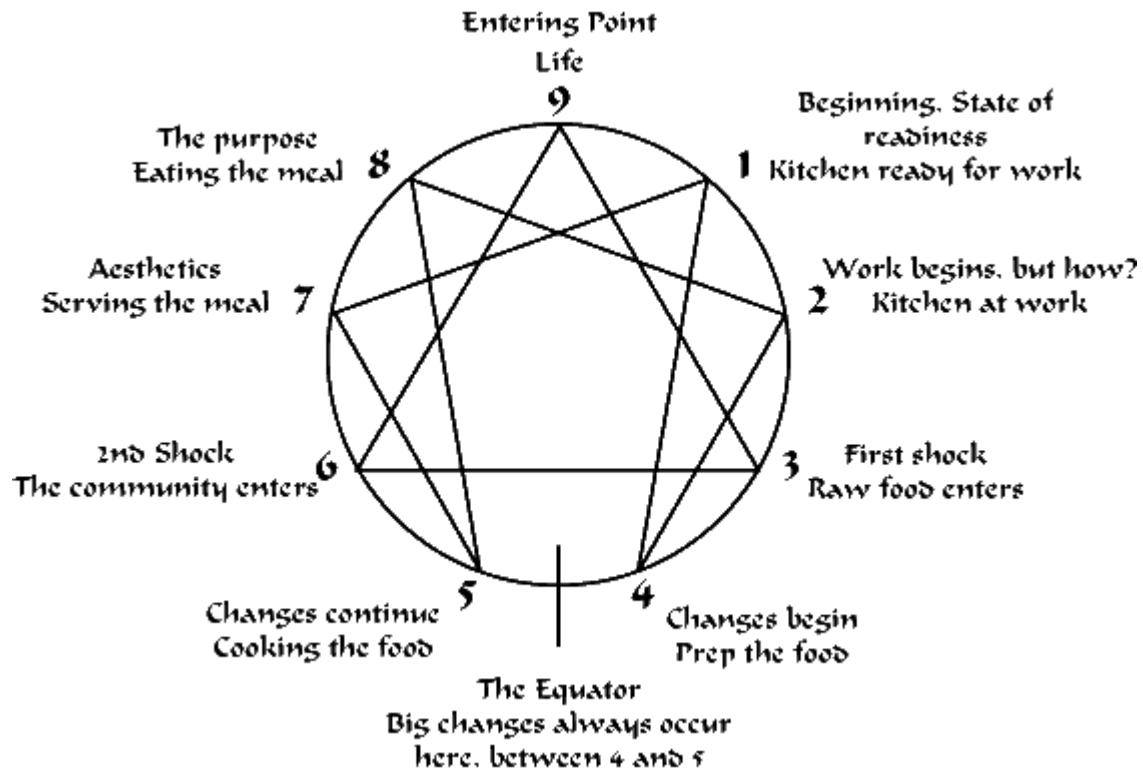
Any process will contain 3 shock points, or places where the process begins to slow down and requires extra energy to keep it going. The entering shock is, of course, getting the process going in the first place. This occurs at #9, the place where we enter into the process.

Going around the enneagram, we have our first preparation point--the place where we gather information and tools for the process to go into action. Action, therefore, is next at #2. The first shock is at #3, where the energy or momentum for keeping the process going, whatever it may be, begins to slow down. Extra energy (more preparation and action) is necessary to go to the next level of preparation, at #4. The information and responses obtained from action at #2, now begins to be evaluated.

The process now moves to a higher level of energy and commitment. This gets reflected in the second action point at #5. The second shock then arrives at #6, which demands some kind of surrender in order for the action from #5 to be successful. The next preparation (#7) and action (#8) points then complete the process and you are ready to begin again!

Here's an example of a process enneagram that comes from a long oral teaching tradition*: The Enneagram of the Kitchen, or "how to get the food on the table and eat".

**Derived from J.G. Bennett a book, Enneagram Studies.*



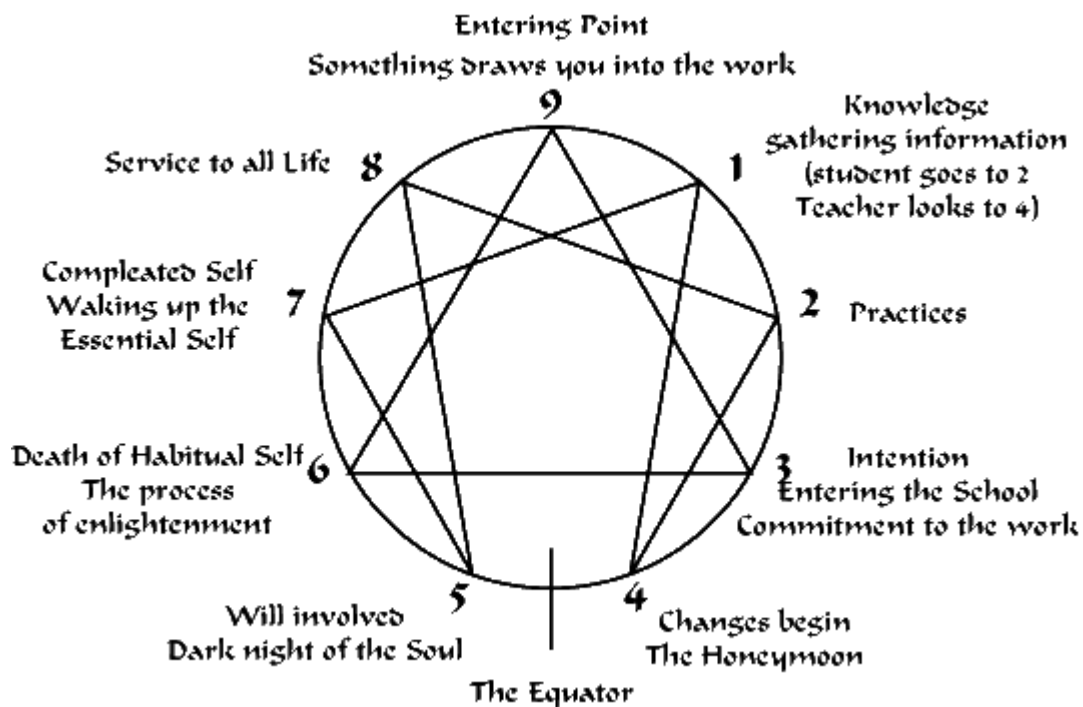
Starting at 9, we have the "name" of this enneagram--its essence, which in this example is Life. That is because food supports life. Other enneagrams could map other processes which also support life. We have the potential for working on the food at 1: kitchen Is ready to work, although nothing is happening yet. At 2 the kitchen begins to work, but the question arises: what are they supposed to do? There will be raw food entering in (#3), so how can we prepare for it? One way to find out is to follow the interior movement line from 1 to 4 which says prep all the food. This is how the chef looks at the process, looking ahead to see what needs to be done (and in what order) for the kitchen to operate efficiently. The kitchen help is on the circle's circumference waiting to get directions. If they proceed without the chef, the raw food could end up as anything but what the chef wants! The chef knows which tools to select to correctly prep the food, and the raw food enters in.

As the raw food is worked on, it changes form and these changes become irreversible. The food is cooked at 5. The timing of the cooking now becomes important, and this is one of the chef's greatest skills: the timing of various dishes so that they are all ready simultaneously. After all, the people will be arriving soon (the community) and they are hungry! Part of preparing this meal requires that the aesthetics are right, and this is taken into account while cooking the food (follow the interior movement line from 5 to 7), and the reason this preparation is being done to eat the food (follow the interior movement line from 5 to 8). Also at 7, cleanup in the kitchen can begin (follow 7 to 1) so that the

kitchen can be in readiness for the next meal. Finally, the meal is ready to be served and the chef must surrender authority of it and give it over to be eaten. It is well received by our hungry hordes, who take time to notice all the care and preparation that has gone into this meal, and who commence to eat: fulfilling the purpose of this enneagram!

The next enneagram is a map of this manual: it is the map of transformational processes. This enneagram maps the path of transformation that we are on as we seek to encounter the Mystery. It is also a map of any learning process. Insofar as life is a series of learning lessons or processes, you will see that most people rarely go beyond the first shock. Instead, they bounce back and forth between 1 and 2 on the enneagram. This is because we mostly respond to situations through habit, through stimulus-response type of behavior which is the nature of 1 and 2 on the enneagram. It takes extra energy, intention, desire, to break habitual patterns and begin change.

The Transformation of Human Beings. Or, "how to attend and graduate from the school of Life."



Even at the first change, at 4, you can go backwards! This is often the place where you "know it all" and decide that further study is silly because of your new, enlightened state. Warning! You must cross the chasm between 4 and 5 and this involves your Will, not just your intention. Great challenges are offered here for your continued learning and transformation, and it requires the right use of your Will to continue. This is because at 6 you will encounter a symbolic death of some kind--hopefully the end of part of your

habitual self. You will be required to "give up," to surrender something that has been a part of you in order for something new to come in! This can be frightening unless you remember (self-remember) your purpose (8) and the view of the new (7). Students go around the circumference of the enneagram: they are introduced to new information (knowledge), encounter practices that test and develop that knowledge, deal with their reasons for being there (intention), and begin to notice changes; if the student continues, major changes begin as they wrestle for mastery of themselves, undergo the process of death and rebirth (6 & 7), and then help heal life (8) and go on to another enneagram process. Also, one of the teachings of #7 on the enneagram is the giving back to the process of knowledge and experience (7 to 1), so that others may benefit from your completion.

Teachers use the interior movement lines to prepare their students for the challenges of the new learning and practices. Teachers know what the students will need for success at any point on the enneagram; by following the interior movement lines, the students' needs can be anticipated--although the students may not appreciate the help. Knowing, for example, what kinds of changes are needed at 4, the teacher can follow the interior lines up to 1 and provide the appropriate information, and to 2, giving the practices which will help the student with their intention and commitment (3). Even at 2, where the student is going through the drudgery of the practices, wondering when the fun will begin, and wavering in intention, the teacher will go to 8 and remind the student of the purpose of this work--the need and significance (;f "service to all life." These are some of the ways that teachers assist students in transformation.