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Enneagram of Holy Ideas

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As you journey through the Enneagram, you may encounter the concept of the 'Holy Ideas', a challenging term that reminds us of the powerful spiritual roots of this framework.

It was Oscar Ichazo who originally coined the term 'Holy Ideas' when he created a number of different layers of the Enneagram symbol or 'enneagons' as he called them, including the Enneagram of Fixations, Traps, Holy Ideas, Passions, and Virtues. The Enneagram fixations describe the delusional or ego-filtered perspective each Type takes on the world around them and reality; the Holy Ideas balance this distortion with a universal truth.

A.H. Almaas (1998), a student of Naranjo, described this view and the Holy Ideas in the book "Facets of Unity: The Enneagram of Holy Ideas" as follows:

"Each Ennea-type fixation is the expression of a limited mental perspective on reality, and that each of the nine egoic perspectives is the direct result of the loss or absence of the enlightened perception of one of the Holy Ideas. The Holy Ideas, then, are objective views of reality, reality seen through the eyes of our natural condition. We call them Ideas because they are the perspective of the awakened center in the head, the higher intellectual center. They are nine different perspectives of reality seen without the subjective filter of the ego."

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The Holy Ideas can be thus thought of as the truly enlightened view of reality for each Type, not obscured or influenced by the fears or drivers of our personality and ego. Jerome Wagner refers to these abstract ideas as the 'objective paradigm' of each type, emphasizing the way that the Holy Ideas invite us to take a more universalist, holistic view of our world and our place in it.

The Holy Idea is the universal, profound truth that we lost touch with at the time that our ego created a separation between the self and the world, forming our Type. For example, the Enneagram Seven Holy Idea of 'Holy Work' or 'Holy Plan' represents the idea that the universe will provide for us and that there is a master plan that we do not need to drive. If a Seven can engage with this idea and truly internalise it, it can help relieve much of the anxiety and fear of pain and lack that drive their gluttony, obsessive thinking, and anticipation.

This makes these Holy Ideas both very challenging and very powerful, as they form the purest possible antidote or antithesis of the Type's fixation - the remedy for the pattern of inter-linked beliefs, fears, and focus that keeps us stuck. However, this also makes the Holy Ideas understandably very difficult for the Types to engage with and fully understand. Often the initial reaction to hearing or reading your Type's Holy Idea is either a sense of confusion or "huh?", or an immediate feeling of aversion or a lack of understanding. These ideas may take time and exploration to land.

In a way, you will see that the Holy Ideas are all gentle but challenging reminders of what is already here - the universal truths that we lost contact with at a young age.



Enneagram 1: Holy Perfection

Rather than fixating on seeking and constantly chasing ideals, the idea of Holy Perfection invites us to see that we began perfect, and we are all still perfect in our essence. When we resist what is, and focus on what should be, we suffer. We miss the perfection in the imperfection and the beauty in the broken pieces. But when we are able to show up and be fully present, we see that it is always the perfect moment. We begin to trust the process and that even if it is not clear to us, the universe is unfolding precisely as it should. When we see that everything is just as it should be and that it could not be otherwise in this moment, we begin to learn and take in more from the world. Holy Perfection invites acceptance of what is, non-judgement, and surrender to the unfolding of life.

"Today you are You, that is truer than true. There is no one alive who is Youer than You."

- Dr Seuss

"If you look for perfection, you'll never be content."

- Leo Tolstoy



Enneagram 2: Holy Freedom /Holy Will

When we submit to Holy Will, we stop trying to control the universe, able to rather acknowledge that other forces are at play and that everyone is on their own journey. This brings the humility to give up our pride and the illusion that we personally have to make things happen or rescue others, and allows us to surrender to what will be. Holy Freedom refers to the freedom that arises from this surrender, being free to give or not to give, depending on our own needs, in a more open and authentic way. Freedom comes when we each take our rightful place as equals and co-journeyers in our relationships, allowing others to live their own truths. When we release our burden to the Holy Will, we give ourselves permission and freedom to not know and not do, to receive and take in as much as we give and thus to replenish ourselves.

"God does not play dice with the universe."

- Albert Einstein

"To love is, first of all, to accept ourselves as we actually are."

- Thich Nhat Hanh

Enneagram 3: Holy Hope /Holy Law

Holy Law invites us to see that the universe and all things within it operate according to their own laws, and that they can be allowed to do so without our assistance. We begin to see that, rather than us being the 'doer' or the driver that makes reality unfold, we are part of something bigger than us that works through us. The world has its own momentum and mind and so we can move in harmony with it rather than imposing our will all the time. Holy Hope reminds us that this means that we can hope for the best without taking full responsibility for making it happen ourselves. The future is hopeful and you are worthy, whatever you do or do not do. Even when we step back and wait to see what will unfold, life will continue and we will be okay.

"I am a human being, not a human doing."

- Kurt Vonnegut

"I'm not in this world to live up to your expectations and you're not in this world to live up to mine."

- Bruce Lee



Enneagram 4: Holy Origin

The idea of Holy Origin is that we are all connected to the source, to a true sense of 'being' that goes beyond how we see ourselves as people. We are not isolated individuals, and no man is an island. We are spiritual beings having a human experience; we all come from the same place and are part of a bigger creative flow. This Holy Origin means that, by definition, you are original, perfect, and connected to everything. You do not need to make yourself special or seek connections with others. You belong and you are whole and perfect, missing nothing in your connection to the source on all levels of being and meaning - it is only your fear that separates you. This opens up the possibility of inviting more equanimity and acceptance into our relationship with the universe, trusting that we are included and loved. We can stop searching for acceptance and truth, knowing that we hold it inside us as our birth right.

"Do not spoil what you have by desiring what you have not; remember that what you now have was once among the things you only hoped for."

- Epicurus

"You are not a drop in the ocean. You are the entire ocean in a drop."

- Rumi

Enneagram 5: Holy Omniscience

'Omniscience' means "the capacity to know everything", an attribute that we usually associate with godliness. Holy Omniscience is a reminder of a deeper, more universal level of knowing. True wisdom comes from life, experimentation, and failure, experienced through our bodies, not from the detached observation of the mind. We already know all that we need to know, but we can only access this knowing when we are fully engaged in life. Being known and seen for your true self is as important as knowing and seeing others.

Omniscience invites us to know ourselves in our essence, seeing ourselves in our rightful place within the universe. It invites more holistic ways of knowing ourselves, without attachment to our role or being the smartest person in the room. When we can see that we have all we need, nothing is stuck and our knowing is pure, we are able to be more generous and generative in how we engage.

"I have been impressed with the urgency of doing. Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Being willing is not enough; we must do."

- Leonardo da Vinci

"Life is always walking up to us and saying, 'Come on in, the living's fine,' and

what do we do? Back off and take its picture."

- Russell Baker

Enneagram 6: Holy Faith

The idea of Holy Faith invites us to experience the ways in which the universe is taking care of us and supporting us, unconditionally. Some might say "whether or not you believe in the universe, the universe believes in you". When we are not in touch with our true nature, we lose touch with the guidance of our inner voice and Holy Faith aims to re-establish this connection. Faith asks us to have courage and trust our real, essential self and to respond to whatever challenges might come up, spontaneously and authentically. Sixes who connect to Faith begin to believe that nothing from the outside can truly harm their essence, freeing them to live more courageously and to engage their curiosity in understanding the world rather than attempting to control it. They become able to receive life's gifts in a beautiful, open exchange.

"At the moment of commitment, the entire universe conspires to assist you."

- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

"I'm not afraid of storms, for I'm learning how to sail my ship."

- Louisa May Alcott

Enneagram 7: Holy Work /Holy Plan

The obsessive anticipation of the Seven can focus so significantly on the future life they are planning that they miss out on the life they are living right here and now, in the present. The idea that we are all part of a Holy Plan suggests that we might stop trying to shape and control the future, and instead surrender to what is happening now. This opens up the possibility of non-attachment and taking our rightful place in the ongoing flow of things, fully experiencing our own journey and reality as it unfolds. Holy Work reminds us that the true work of becoming, living and being, exists in the present moment and that while the work may not always be exciting or comfortable, it is holy and noble to fully engage in it. For example, there is something profound in acts of service for others that can ground the Seven's spirit.

"Life is a journey, not a destination."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

"You must give up the life you planned in order to have the life that is waiting for you."

- Joseph Campbell

Enneagram 8: Holy Truth

The idea of Holy Truth invites us to step beyond our own interpretations, judgements, and desires to see a bigger, more universal truth that is at play. The universe is just and fair and in time, its laws will reward or punish us accordingly, without any person having to take on the role of judge, jury, and executioner. This idea suggests that all is one, that all of our actions are connected to each other and that a bigger master plan is playing out. We do not need to determine our own individual master plan and try to enforce it as if we were separate from everything. In fact, the truth is that we are not separate from anything, and we need not fear being controlled or having our vulnerability revealed. If we are our true selves and come to reality with the innocence of just being, we will be looked after.

"Whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should."

- Max Ehrmann, *Desiderata*

"Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving deeply gives you courage."

- Lao Tzu

Enneagram 9: Holy Love

Love is held by many to be the most universal and driving force in the universe. We are all capable of love and it is love and compassion that makes us human. Holy Love invites us to feel and experience that we are loved and accepted by forces greater than ourselves, that every being in existence has a right to be loved, and is loved. We are connected through an unbreakable link, and cared for even when we forget who we are. Each of us is valuable in our own right, both as part of the whole and as an individual; and without you, the universe would not be as perfect as it is. When we are able to see that we are love itself, we are able to believe that we are worthy of being loved. It is a reminder that the world is fundamentally a loving place and that you are noticed and valued for your essence, for who you are. Love links us all, dissolving the artificial barriers that we create to truly knowing each other.

"Remember always that you not only have the right to be an individual, you have an obligation to be one."

- Eleanor Roosevelt

"Trust in what you love, continue to do it, and it will take you where you need to go."

- Natalie Goldberg



Finally... the path to integration

The Holy Ideas represent a stretch for many people working with the Enneagram, offering a powerful long-term aspiration and a guide to the greater development path for each Type. These are sophisticated ideas and typically we focus clients on their Core type and more basic work around their bind spots, defences, and vices first. Deeper work might move through Virtues and only then begin to really engage with the Holy Ideas. When working with the Enneagram in coaching, you may notice how clients feel about the Holy Idea for their Type, and also how their fixation plays out in direct opposition to this idea. The Holy Ideas can be powerful reflections for the Types, either in their original form or via inspirational quotes like those offered in this article. One powerful approach is to ask clients how it would be if they believed the Holy Idea for their Type, and invite them to step into that feeling for a moment, then to reflect on how they could invite a little of that quality into their life and practice today.