

The Nine-O-Gram of Inhumanity

nine ways to keep from being human

Ten solitary readings to be read more than once

This do-it-at-home program in Christian contemplation is a follow-up to the course entitled "Theologizing the Journey," in which many symbols including "sin" were defined. This simple program is about confessing our sins. There are several big misunderstandings currently held about the very old Christian ritual of confession: (1) that sin is moral failures, (2) that sin is about particular failings that we can remember. (The truth is that sin is about something deeper than behaviors. Sin manifests in behaviors for those who have eyes to see it, but sin is commonly that part of our lives about which we are most unconscious.) And (3) that confessing our sin requires a confessor. (A confessor may help if that person knows anything about sin and is as perceptive or more perceptive about you than you are yourself.) Anyhow, in this course you will learn how to discover and confess your own sin. And this is a lovely matter, because the confession of sin is at the same time a discovery of authenticity, the glory of being human.

All the great religions of the world came into being to help human beings be human in the profound sense of what human really IS. "Authenticity" we call it these days. Other names have also been used: Enlightenment, Salvation, Redemption, Liberation, Justification, Sanctification, and more. I do not want to discuss the subtle meanings of any of these "hot" terms, or do dialogue with their thousands of contending interpretations. I want to invite you to push intuitively into those deep territories that I am convinced every long-standing religion has explored: Hinduism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Taoism, Confucianism, Jainism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, many versions of all these, as well as less known practices from ancient Africa and Native America, and more.

In the late Middle Ages of the European and North African geography a dialogue was going on among Islamic, Jewish, and Christian practitioners that coughed into being an illumination of authenticity/inauthenticity now known by the name "enneagram," nine patterns of human personality – nine general types, each of which includes a flight from and/or a fight with some of the deeper structures of being human. Each of these personality patterns reveals some of the positive potentialities of being human; these patterns also show us how we use those same potentials to escape from the whole of being human. So we can view the enneagram tradition as reflection upon the many greatnesses of our species as well as on the many ways that our species becomes a destructive, mean, deluded, and desperately tragic aspect of life on this planet.

We cannot see clearly the full tragedy of our species except from the perspective of its glory. And we cannot see its glory except by passing through an awareness of its tragedy. Glory and tragedy and two sides of the same wisdom. The Nine-O-Gram, fully understood, is about nine aspects of our glory and the corresponding nine ways of veering off into tragedy. Each of these nine tragedies can be named as a Deadly

Estrangement from realism and described as (1) a major delusion of the mind, (2) a major addiction of the heart, and (3) a major bondage of the will. These three categories of description are about the primal ways that humans: (1) do deluded thinking, (2) are rebelliously impassioned, and (3) are stuck is mostly unconscious and unbeneficial behaviors that we are powerless to stop.

In the light of this brief introduction, consider the following chart:

Nine Blocks to Human Authenticity

The Trio of Fallenness	The Nine Deadly Estrangements	The Delusions of the Mind	The Addictions of the Heart	The Traps of the Will
The Pits of Despair	The Greed for Knowledge	there is such a thing as final Certainty	I want the Answers	I fight being Corrected
	The Lust for Power	there is such a thing as final Control	I want to Win	I Bully people & situations
	The Arrogance of Helpfulness	there is such a thing as final Help for Others	I want to be Appreciated	I do what others Want of me
The Shame of Malice	The Terror of Challenges	there is such a thing as final Safety	I want to be Cared For	I Retreat from bold actions & statements
	The Sloth of Inaction	there is such a thing as final Escape	I want Peace of mind & body	I avoid Conflict
	The Shells of Status	there is such a thing as final Success & Beauty	I want to make a Good Appearance	I do Exaggerated & overreaching behaviors
The Horror of Bondage	The Envy of Specialness	there is such a thing as final Self-Worth	I want to be Best	I do Bossy & exacting behaviors
	The Rage of Righteousness	there is such a thing as final Righteousness	I want to be Right	I Criticize people & situations unduly
	The Gluttony for Enthusiasm	there is such a thing as final Satisfaction	I don't want to Miss Out	I Scatter my energies in many half-baked ways

If you choose to do this do-it-at-home program, you will need to run off this chart and keep it handy while doing the following ten exercises in contemplative inquiry. Here is an overview of the contemplative exercises for each session of this ten-session program.

Session 1 is about reflection on the above chart – meditating carefully on each box of poetic description, and noting where you most resonate or identify with the patterns described. Also, session one includes an introduction to the enneagram tradition and a listing on paper of your reflections on the enneagram model.

Sessions 2 through 10 are about one of the nine deadly estrangements. Each session is composed of these three brief readings:

- (1) a spin on one line of the above chart,
- (2) a description of one of the nine estrangements, and
- (3) a description of the human glory or authenticity from which that estrangement is estranged.

Reflective exercises follow the three readings.

Here are the download codes for each of the ten sessions:

Session 1: Introduction to the Enneagram

<http://www.realisticliving.org/PDF/NineOGRAM/1NineOGRAM.pdf>

Session 2: The Greed for Knowledge

<http://www.realisticliving.org/PDF/NineOGRAM/2NineOGRAM.pdf>

Session 3: The Lust for Power

<http://www.realisticliving.org/PDF/NineOGRAM/3NineOGRAM.pdf>

Session 4: The Arrogance of Helpfulness

<http://www.realisticliving.org/PDF/NineOGRAM/4NineOGRAM.pdf>

Session 5: The Terror of Challenges

<http://www.realisticliving.org/PDF/NineOGRAM/5NineOGRAM.pdf>

Session 6: The Sloth of Inaction

<http://www.realisticliving.org/PDF/NineOGRAM/6NineOGRAM.pdf>

Session 7: The Shells of Status

<http://www.realisticliving.org/PDF/NineOGRAM/7NineOGRAM.pdf>

Session 8: The Envy of Specialness

<http://www.realisticliving.org/PDF/NineOGRAM/8NineOGRAM.pdf>

Session 9: The Rage of Righteousness

<http://www.realisticliving.org/PDF/NineOGRAM/9NineOGRAM.pdf>

Session 10: The Gluttony for Enthusiasm

<http://www.realisticliving.org/PDF/NineOGRAM/10NineOGRAM.pdf>