

The Emotional Enneagram and the Passion of Christ

Recently, a reader asked about trying to do practical work with the enneagram; and I wasn't quite sure how to respond to them, because trying to use a machine — which, the enneagram basically is — to describe one's inner processes is perhaps not such a good idea. As Ravi Ravindra once said to us, “matters of the spirit do not always fare so well under the cold light of analysis.” (Nova Scotia, summer 2000.) The only person that can really do this is a kind of spiritual clockmaker — and spiritual clockmakers are few and far between. For the most part we have to rely on our intuition, that is, our instinct, to understand the direction in which we need to go spiritually — a point which Mr. Gurdjieff made himself on more than one occasion.

There are some instances, however, where understanding the enneagram may contribute to an understanding of where we are inside ourselves, and in contemplating this question, it may at the same time illustrate some overarching spiritual principles, which have been followed by the ancient traditions for thousands of years.

If we ascribe to Gurdjieff's understandings, we can conclude that every Name of God, or *force*—that is, impelling character of God— has an octave that belongs to it. Love, like all other names of God, has its own octave; and that octave is, on our level (and, I suspect, on every level) related to the development of emotional center. How else could it be, indeed? So let's examine the evolution of that octave and understand what each note represents.

Love starts within the Absolute as the most absolute and overarching character of God, ruling over and exceeding both the Good, and Mercy, which have both been cited by various other authorities ([Dionysius the Areopagite](#), [Ibn al 'Arabi](#)) as the principle characteristics of God. Love, however, creates and embodies everything that follows it; that embodiment begins with creation itself— that is, the material world.

The lowest level of Love, as it manifests in the material world, is *urge*. All matter begins with what one calls, from the mechanical level, urge, though physics mistakenly conceives of and refers to it as the expression of inanimate forces dependent on the nature of the materials themselves—even though materiality is, as physics itself (paradoxically) proves, not actually material, but energetic. At this low, foundational level of creation, materiality functions according to automatic laws, that is, forces that act in the absence of volitional consciousness, or agency.

Urge is an energetic mechanical impulse, but it is an impulse. At the most basic level, the level of material interaction, urge is what keeps everything moving. Animals have urges. When we have the lowest level of instinctive emotional direction, it's an urge. This represents the note *re* on the octave, the first note.

The second note, *mi*, which represents the “emotional” note on the emotional octave, is *lust*. Lust is more powerful than urge; it is still animal, but now it has far more (twice the amount of) force. Much of the impetus in human life comes from lusts. Lust, only one step up from automatic animal emotion, still retains an unformed crudity which directly colors

our perception of the word. Lust is one of the seven deadly sins because of the very low level it operates on. In mankind, urge moves atoms; lust moves mountains.

The third note, which completes the natural side of the enneagram, is *desire*. This is the note *fa*, which can't be reached in a completed triad without the addition of what Gurdjieff called *conscious labor*. Humans don't usually apply this, and one thus ends up "stuck" on one node or another within the emotional octave on the earthly or material side.

Man and woman are thus victims of either their urges, their lusts, or their desires. This is a well-known dilemma which is addressed in almost every major spiritual teaching; and giving up desire (along, it should be noted, with lust and urge) , that is, suppressing, squelching, or attempting to eliminate it in one way or another, is a standard formulation in most spiritual practices. Asceticism relies on it as a hub on which the spokes of the wheel of practice are mounted; and there are few people who haven't, at one time or another, succumbed to the belief that asceticism, denial, or repression of desires of one kind or another will get them to the next serious step in their spiritual journey.

The odd thing about this situation is that if conscious labor, the shock Gurdjieff said was needed, is applied — that is, if a human being makes a sincere and unflagging spiritual effort — it doesn't result in the elimination of urge, lust, and desire. They are instead welded into a new energy by the effort of spirit work, and that new and very vital energy is called *wish*.

Wish preserves the useful mechanical abilities of urge, the tremendous forces of lust, and the aspirations of desire; and these three blended notes create a new chord of what we call *Being*. Being represents the first conscious manifestation of *spiritual* (as opposed to earthly) love on its lowest level—at the “foundation” of the left side of the enneagram.

Only when a human being acquires emotive Being through the welding of urge, lust, and desire into this single unified entity can they become a new inner *sol*. Until then, love is always subordinate to one of the motive forces (again, urge, lust, or desire) that push it forward. Wish, on the other hand, has acquired a being of its own, and it *understands*. When we say it understands, we mean that it grasps, that it has a tactile emotional experience of the fact that it stands under a much higher power. It can sense itself at the bottom of the pyramid which has, at its apex, the Love that originally created the enneagram of emotion on this level in the first place.

So what I've been puzzling over for a number of years now is the nature of the next notes, that is, the one that represents purification (the note *la* in the musical scale (at the one that represents wisdom (note *si*)).

As is so often the case, the answer to this has been under my nose, so to speak, for many years now; but it was only this morning, lying half awake in my bed, that the insight came to me and I understood what these two notes are represented by.

After one acquires the initial Being, the note *sol*, two additional forces are necessary in order to keep working. Now, before we go any further, let me remind readers that between *sol* and *la* on the enneagram, we have the misplaced shock of intentional suffering. The misplacement of this shock always tempts us, unconsciously, to presume that that shock actually needs to come in this place; images convey a powerful compulsion, no matter what the mind thinks to contradict them. Yet it doesn't come here *at all*. It's placement is just a language help us *anticipate* what will be necessary between *si* and *do*, because it is such a big thing we need to prepare for it for much longer.

So let's be clear that one once one reaches the note *sol*, the work of the notes *la* and *si* is also available to us, *without* the mediation of intentional suffering, because all three of these efforts need to be combined before we reach we reach *si* and the final interval, and shock, that leads to *do*.

Basically, put in simpler English, it means that everything is up to us, and we must all the resources necessary in order to bring ourselves to the moment of Truth – which, in this case, is literally a moment of Truth with a capital T, since there is no essential distinction between Truth and Divinity..

So. We have Love; at the next step, after we acquire real being and understand what Love is, we come to purification, represented by the note *la*.

Purification, in the case of desires, always represents a surrender. This should come as no surprise to anyone; religious works very typically ask us to surrender our desires. It's one of the essential principles of Buddhism; and much of esoteric as well as exoteric Christianity emphasizes our willingness to surrender our own desires. As such, seeing this particular impulse and requirement here is unremarkable—but for the fact that we always think it can be undertaken long before we have acquired real Being; right away, in fact. Few pause to consider that this results in an inadvertent denial of what we are; and we can't come to know what we are if we deny it.

Folks find themselves locked in a struggle urges, lusts, and desires, and without acquiring Being, think to themselves, "well, if I surrender my desires, I'll become more pure and that will do it, right there." Nothing could be further from the truth. Surrendering your desires without understanding what you're Being is can't lead anywhere. Purification has to take place *after* one has acquired an understanding of Being, not beforehand.

This is because one can't expect to begin purifying something, for example, in a chemist's retort before one *knows what the pollutants are in the first place*. If one just makes assumptions, it won't be good enough. This is one of the reasons that Mr. Gurdjieff was insistent people not tamper directly with their inner machinery until they understood what they were tampering with.

After purification, we come to the final note for reunion with the absolute, the note *si*. This note represents *wisdom* on the cyclical progression in the diagram; yet how does wisdom relate to our emotional being?

Spiritual Influences
(influenced by Being)

Earthly Influences
(influenced by materiality)

The Absolute

Love

9

Do

Trust
(Wisdom,
humility) 8

Si

1 **Urge**
(Materiality)

Re

Surrender
(Purification,
remorse) 7

La

The Emotional
Octave

2 **Lust**
(Desire)

Mi

6

Intentional Suffering

3

Conscious Labor

Sol

5

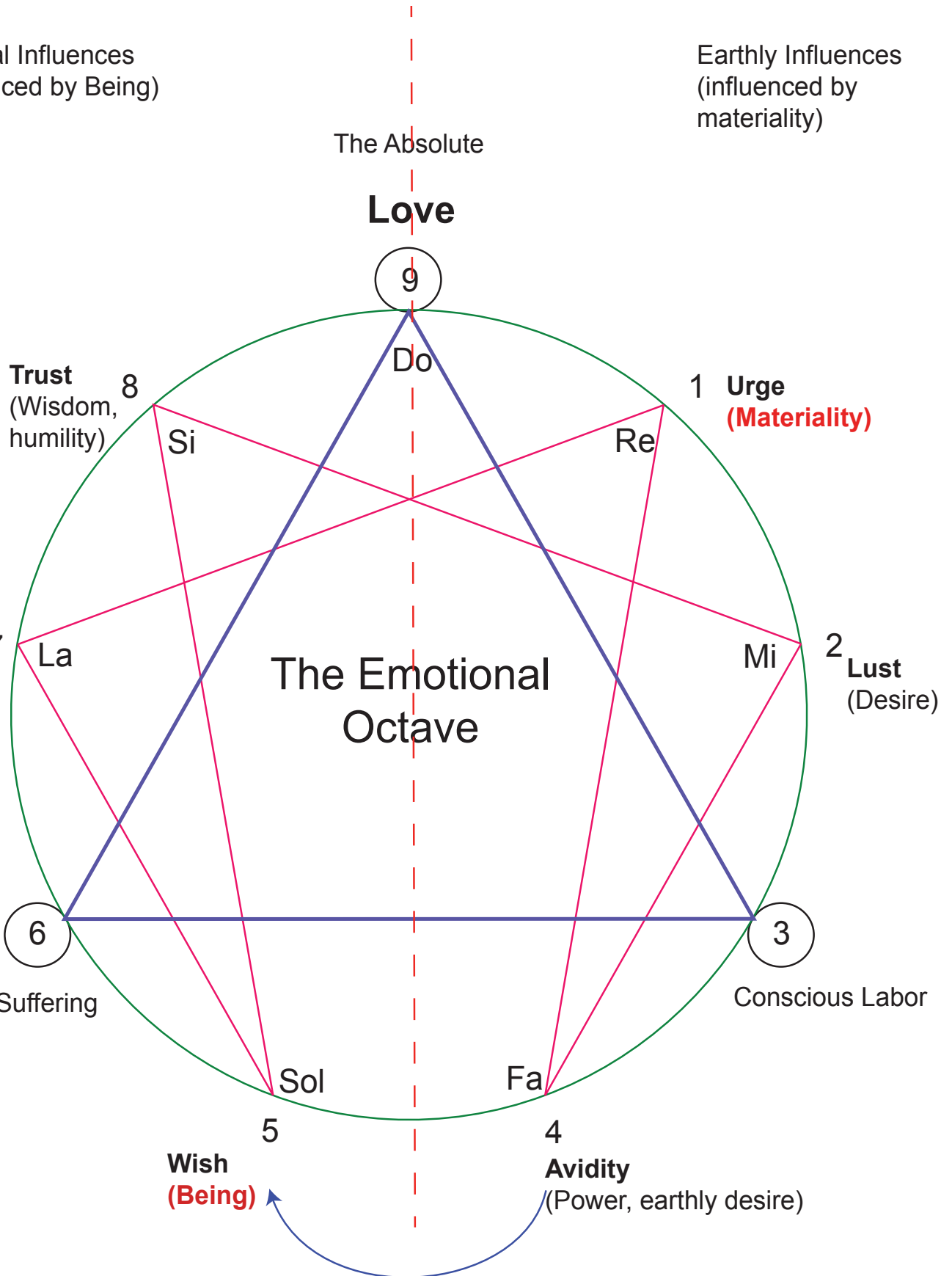
Wish
(Being)

Fa

4

Avidity
(Power, earthly desire)

Transition from earthly to spiritual influences



I was given a somewhat concise insight into this in 2009, but as is so often the case, it took me many years to recognize that and more clearly understand how it functions:

Wisdom, in the case of the emotional enneagram, consists of *trust*.

Trust is the highest level of Love that we can achieve before reunion with the Absolute. The way to understand this better is the following:

Trust is always loving, but Love is not always trusting.

Only Divine Love, which is complete unto itself and cannot tolerate or express the divisions we see on all lower levels, is perpetually trusting. We can distinguish between real Love, Love that has acquired an appropriate portion of Divine Wisdom, and any lower or more ordinary love by the presence or absence of trust.

I had two specific insights in earlier years, in fact, where the subject was brought up. One of them was a comment that Margaret Flinsch made many years ago, in which she placed trust at the center of the question of a group's work together; and the other was an angelic visitation which gave me third great prayer: *Lord, I call to thee from the depths of my iniquity: I have not delivered myself sufficiently unto thee; I know not how.*

The emotional impact of not knowing, having to digest that so thoroughly, has weighed on me heavily over the last six years; it is not a meal that one takes in easily. But above all, it has repeatedly occurred to me, during this process, that what I do not know how to do is to trust.

Now, I'll recount a few other personal tidbits that take that sketch and fill in the outlines a bit more. I remember, back in 2003 or 2004, going to the Episcopal church in Metuchen, New Jersey to sit in meditation during my lunch hour, which was a regular practice for me back in those days. As I walked out of the church one afternoon, I quite literally *felt* the hands of God holding me.

I knew, irrevocably, in that instant that we all sit in the hands of God at all times and that his loving hands are forever holding us. For me, this was not a theory, a hypothesis, or a conjecture: it became at that moment an absolute and irrevocable fact. In my own experience we are, as creatures, very rarely given to have a direct and practical experience of such things. We frequently *hear* about the hands of God—it's an old song—but we almost never *feel* them.

A second experience involves a meditation session while I was in Shanghai, about five years ago. I had gone through the usual stations of my meditation practice: relaxing myself,

letting go of the mind, coming into a deep sense of relationship with my organic sensation, and so on; and the “turning thought” portion of my being was—as it so often is—sitting there gnawing the bone of whether or not I was good enough, trying hard enough, would ever find favor in the eyes of God, and so on.

Of an instant, the silent Presence came to me from behind — the infinitely loving Presence – and told me that I was selfishly worrying about who I was and what I was doing, even though God (the Presence) already had my back *completely* covered.

It was further given to me to understand, in that moment, that my most important work was *not for myself*, and should *never* be, but that it should and must always be *for other people first*.

In that single incident, which was so brief it isn't possible for that much information to be conveyed (but it was) I saw that despite *and in spite of* my egocentric efforts, none of my spiritual search was actually about me anymore, and that I was actually expected to work for others on behalf of much larger forces.

Of course, even with direct contact from higher and angelic beings, we don't get these messages. We are thick and stubbornly independent; they bounce off the shells we have built for ourselves. We carry them around in our minds, but they don't go down into the marrow of the bone, where they need to reside.

This is because I don't Trust. Even the actual, concrete, and inevitable experience of God himself and His instruction is not enough to inspire Trust; I'm a selfish man, and I don't come to God with the humility that's necessary. It all turns on this Trust, which is both wisdom *and* love.

Astonishingly, God *does* trust us, even though we don't trust God; and that trust is as irrevocable as God's Love. God trusts us every day, even though he knows we are unreliable and flawed vessels. It's as though I was willing to trust people I knew were grotesquely incompetent and execute tasks I urgently needed done; of course, I would never do that, and yet God is so loving and trusting that He does this every day.

God trusts us, we don't trust Him. There isn't any reciprocity here; and if you want to have the glimmering of an insight as to what the whole point of intentional suffering is, it is for us to *see* this.

In any event, this morning, I once again encountered my inner struggle based on this question of trust, and I had an experience that, while it was similar, was also quite different from the experience of being held in God's hands. That was a personal and physical experience related to the sensation of gravity.

The experience this morning was one of *totality*, of an entire life that is formed by God and given by God, which I am living, and in which I *can trust everything*. My trust in this life and

in God's arrangement of it ought to be absolute; because there is safety everywhere in it, a fact I just don't appreciate.

In order to go into this in more depth, one has to reach into the toolbox of the Christian practice—the Passion—because everything one needs to know about this question is amply illustrated in biblical scripture, if one understands what the writer was trying to say.

In order to convey that, we need grasp the realization that the entire enneagram of emotion—Love—is actually a recapitulation, in stages, of the Passion of Christ, and there are some critical stories to be located in specific places on this enneagram that illustrate that.

Christ underwent purification of his desires immediately after he symbolically acquired Being through baptism (St. John the Baptist's practice represents the acquisition of Being for all those who undergo it.):

And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightaway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened up unto him, and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

And lo a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

—King James Bible, Matthew 3:16-17

This represents the note *sol*; yet it isn't enough to just acquire Being, even if it is sent directly from God.

Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered.

And when the tempter came to him, he said, if thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

But he answered and said, It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Take note of the very *material* nature of the temptation here, which is on the order of an urge (hunger); and Christ's refusal to live by this one name of God alone (the material) but by *all* the names of God (*every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*) What he means here is that he intends to live through a completed octave, not the fractions of it.

The process follows the enneagramatic multiplication that begins with 5:

5 = *sol* = Being (Christ's baptism)

7 = *la* = Purification (purging) of the three temptations:

1 = *re* = Temptation of Materiality (urge) to turn stone into bread and assuage his hunger

4 = *fa* = Temptation of exercising compulsion over angels (power)

2 = *mi* = Temptation of lust (desire) for the rule over all kingdoms

8 = *si* = Wisdom (trust) in God's Love

Spiritual Influences

Earthly Influences

The Absolute

Love

9

Christ's crucifixion
(correct location of the shock)

6

Trust (Wisdom)-
Christ allows his arrest
and execution

8

Si

The temptation of bread
1 Urge
(Materiality)

1

Re

Christ's
Temptation
Surrender 7
(Purification)

La

The Emotional
Octave

The temptation of Kingdoms
2 Lust
(Desire)

2

Mi

6

3

Intentional Suffering
(wrong location of the shock)

Conscious Labor

Sol

Fa

5

Wish
Christ's baptism
(the acquisition of real Being)

(Being)

4 Avidity
(Power)
The temptation of
the angels

4

Transition from earthly to spiritual influences

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Christ rejects all three temptations of earthly desire; this corresponds to the action of the

note *la*, purification, on the rotation of the enneagram. He has become free of temptation; free of desire—but there is one last step: the passage through temptation to Trust in the Lord.

It's Christ's Trust in the Lord that is most extraordinary, most touching, and most fully illustrates the question of trust and wisdom as it relates to our subject.

He *knew* he was to be crucified; and when he was arrested, as his disciples attempted to oppose the Roman soldiers, he told them not to.:

*Then they came, and laid hands on Jesus and took him.
And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the higher priest's, and smote off his ear.*

Then said Jesus unto him, put up thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?

But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

—*King James Bible, Matthew 26:50-54*

Christ trusts his destiny; and he trusts God, even though he knows God has laid out a terribly difficult path for him. It's his trust, above all, that demonstrates he's acquired the wisdom that's necessary to take the final step into the shock of intentional suffering, which is represented by the crucifixion itself. Christ intentionally surrendered his life God, trusting that this was what was necessary.

The scene is reminiscent of Abraham's sacrifice of his son; in both cases, God asks for the ultimate sacrifice in the course of life: the absolute surrender of life. Each of these cases requires an unflagging, perfect trust in the wisdom of the Lord. It's far from resignation to one's fate; it is an *active acceptance of one's fate*: as the Episcopal service calls it, a full, holy, and living sacrifice.

That is what is actually necessary in the final interval between *si* and *do*.