

## An Introduction to the Enneagram through further exploration of the Mini-ladder

Our initial study of Mr Ouspensky's teaching would be incomplete without an introduction to the Enneagram. However, unlike other parts of the System, this is not explained in detail beyond what is covered here, but is left for individuals to discover for themselves and come back with ideas and questions if they wish. (But nothing is mandatory!) If you wish to understand more about it, it is important to note that any understanding of the Enneagram comes from Higher Emotional Centre – a sudden intuition or inspiration – not from logical thought or the normal workings of the mind, although a little of this may be needed at the start to grasp the basic ideas. So having heard the basic description, it doesn't help to struggle with it. All that is needed is to occasionally remember the diagram, and each time we remember it, to stay with it for a moment and then just relax back into passive attention. (Our experiments with passive attention in the last meeting should help with this.) Sometime later – weeks, months or even years – a flash of insight may arise.

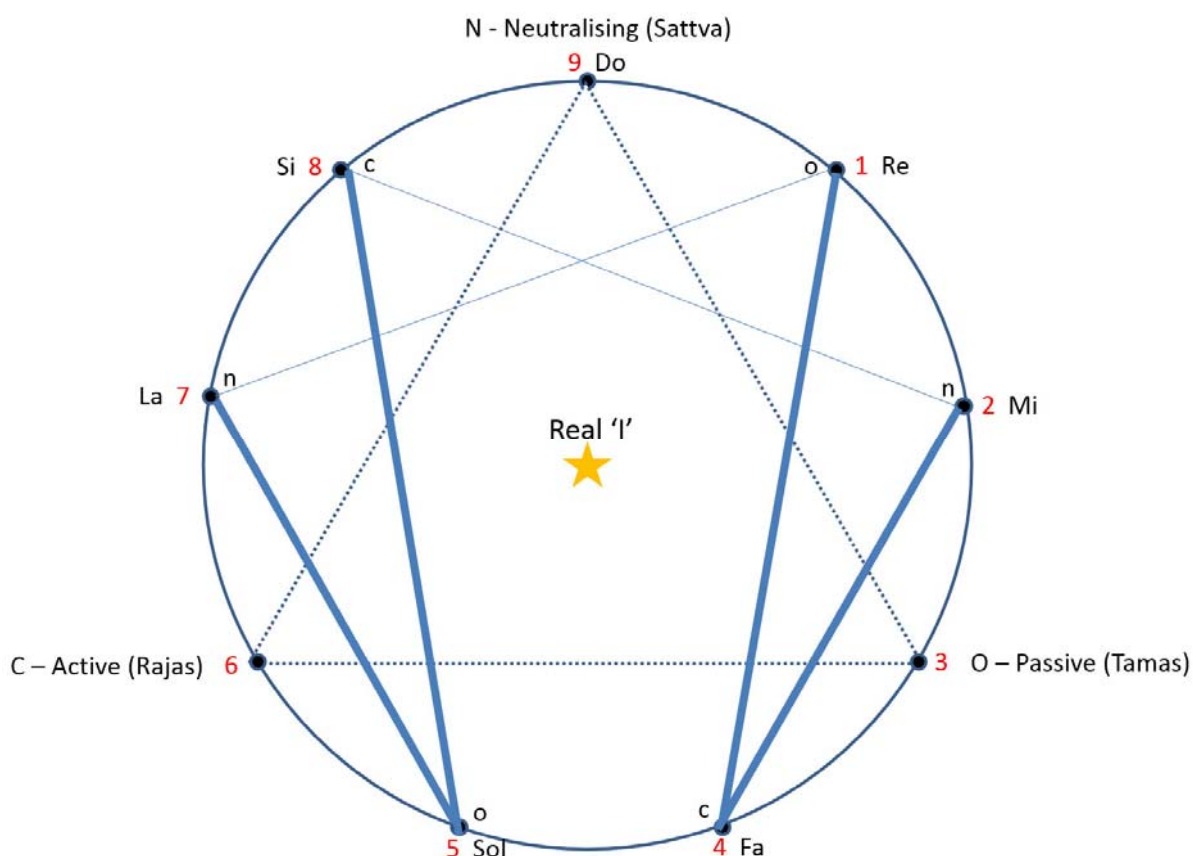
The new Ouspensky website (not yet launched) describes the Enneagram as follows:

The Enneagram is a universal symbol or a 'cosmic blueprint' — a diagrammatic representation of the fundamental laws that create and sustain everything from the whole of Creation to individual organisms. ...

The Enneagram was central to Francis Roles's reconstruction of the System. He said:

'What we should be interested in is True Knowledge, whether in Western form or in the form of the wisdom of the East. Both are united for us in this symbol – the universal symbol of the Enneagram – from which everything that we have taught here in this house since Mr Ouspensky died has been derived.'

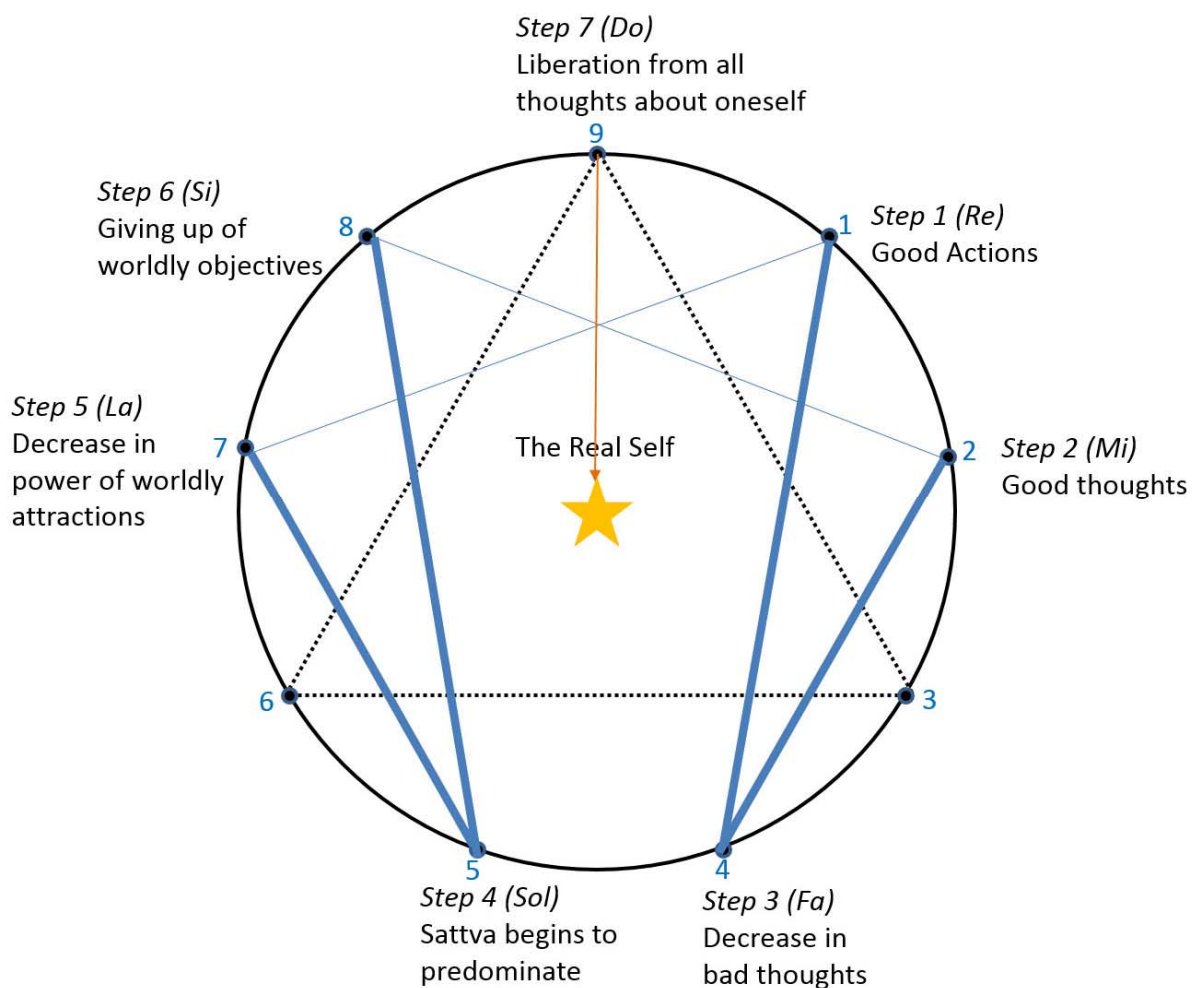
### Technical Description



The Enneagram represents the interaction of the Law of Octaves and the Law of Three forces. The steps of the octave are represented round the circumference of the circle, starting at point 9 (Do). Points 3 and 6 represent the higher energies needed to fill the intervals in the octave. The inner circulation of the Enneagram – illustrated in this case by the lines joining points 142857 – represents the continuous flow of energies that fuel the progression from one step of the octave to the next. This inner circulation consists of two triads – in this case OCN (passive-active-neutralising) and CON (active-passive-neutralising) – the triad of refinement and the triad of growth. These are the two ‘preparatory triads’ needed for our progression up the ladder of Self-realization. The progression around the circumference describes the unfolding of events in time, but the inner circulation is said to take place ‘out of time’ – in Eternity.

**Example: The Mini-ladder**

The best way of getting an initial idea of how the Enneagram operates is by taking an example. We will use the mini-ladder that we looked at briefly last year. Whereas the Nyaya ladder of Self-realization and Mr Ouspensky’s Seven levels of Man operate on the scale of many years – a large part if not the whole of a lifetime, the mini-ladder operates on a much smaller scale of a month, week, day or just a brief moment. It takes us from our ordinary every-day state of identification to resting knowingly as the Real Self (or ‘unity with Param-Atman’), a gentle dissolving of everything that we imagine ourselves to be, available to all of us at every moment of the day.



A reminder of Dr Roles’s and the Shankaracharya’s descriptions of the mini-ladder that we discussed last year is given in the Annex to this paper. Below are some thoughts on it in the context of the

Enneagram – but as with all of the teaching, it's up to each one of us to discover for ourselves how to interpret it and apply it in our own lives.

Rather than seeing the mini-ladder as a process with a beginning and end, by putting it on the Enneagram we are presenting it as a cyclic process. In other words, it is the repetition of all the steps – the whole cycle – over and over again that eventually leads to full Self-realisation. We might see the first part of the circle – the first three steps – as being outward-facing, concerning our actions and relationships in the world. ('World' being everything we perceive as 'not me'.) Then the next three steps are inward-facing – the positive energy we accumulate gradually diminishing the pull we experience from the world which is really the pull of an illusory separate self (ego). These three steps seem to be more of an automatic process, powered by the energy of sattva that is accumulated from practice of Steps 1-3. All we need to do is make sure we don't allow any blocks to get in the way. So the whole cycle is an entirely natural process – like breathing out (Steps 1-3) and breathing in (Steps 4-6) with a natural pause at Step 7.

#### *Step 1: Good actions*

If we start from resting in the empty, open, awareness which is what we really are, good actions arise naturally – not in response to the desires of an illusory self, but as an appropriate response to the situation around us. We play our role in the drama without identification – always remembering that it *is* a drama, and not reality. There is feeling of calmness, relaxation and 'not-doing'. This is represented by the inner circulation of the Enneagram: the triad of refinement, OCN (142) – starting with passive force and ending with neutralising force (sattva), followed by CON (857) – action with attention, followed by OCN in a continuous circulation. The Shankaracharya described it as follows:

Whatever they do will emerge from stillness, be held in stillness, and again submerge in the same stillness which they experience in this great total immobility.

So there is a natural cycle of passive attention and active attention that continues throughout the day. We keep coming back to rest in that passive, open awareness.

It seems that practice of this step at the deeper level requires a kind of non-resistance to all the difficult circumstances of life which, when we look more closely, are only a threat to the false, separate self – not to what we really are. We need to examine more closely all those things we strive towards – possessions, relationships, positions of authority or importance. Do we want them to bolster up this illusory self (ego) whose constant demands enslave us? Or is what we really want found in the expansive happiness of being what we really are – not striving to be something different.

#### *Step 2: Good thoughts*

As Dr Roles says, these seem to increase automatically as a result of practice of Step 1. At the deeper level there is really only one kind of 'good thought', and that is Self-remembering (or if you prefer, remembering Param-Atman). When we look carefully, we realise that almost all thought is about past or future. So in a way, perhaps this step is about staying in the present and going beyond thought? We can't get rid of thought, but by withdrawing attention from it, it can be left in the background to allow us to go through the doorway of 'I Am' into the stillness where all mental activity ceases and we rest in the light of pure being.

#### *Step 3: Decrease of bad thoughts*

Self-observation shows us that bad thoughts – and the associated negative emotions – arise from believing ourselves to be a separate self (ego). For example, ego says 'you can't do this to me – I must retaliate', or 'I want this and will do everything I can to get it; I can't afford to consider other people's needs – they must look after themselves'.

While we are remembering what we really are, bad thoughts can't so easily arise. If they *do* arise, trying to fight them is counter-productive – they just get stronger. One approach is to simply ask: 'On whose behalf is this thought arising? Who is it serving?' We always find it is the separate self. Seen clearly it dissolves just as a mirage disappears when you come closer.

*Step 4: Sattva begins to predominate*

Perhaps this step is really just about *allowing* sattva to accumulate which will inevitably happen if we practise the first three steps properly? We just need to enjoy the quiet, gentle feeling of warmth, openness and acceptance that it brings. If we go running after sattva, try to create it, or even try to hang on to it, it evaporates. Thoughts and concerns about past and future can be a key cause of the disappearance of sattva. And of course as Dr Roles once said, if we allow a single very strong negative emotion to take hold, it can use up several months' supply of sattva!

*Step 5: Decrease in the power of worldly attractions*

The Shankaracharya said that 'everyone in the world is looking for happiness', but in order to find it we need to look in the right place. Direct Path teachers say exactly the same. Those of us who have been following a spiritual path for some time all know that we won't find it in worldly attractions such as a new car, a lovely house, a good job, a new husband/wife/girlfriend etc. But there is much more to this step than that. Advaita (or non-duality) says 'all this I am', and that is something that most of us have experienced at some time in our lives, if only briefly. It is only through duality – the rising up of ego and feeling of being separate – that 'the world' seems to exist and we seem to exist as separate from it. When we look at or think about a person, animal or object from that perspective of separation, then desire (or 'worldly attraction') can arise: 'I want this person to like and respect me', 'I want my cat to sit on my lap', 'I want this new book on Self-realisation'. There is nothing inherently wrong with those desires. But if they temporarily become so strong that they have power over us, we can lose sight of our real aim and act inappropriately: we tell our friend what we think he wants to hear in order to make him happy and like us rather than telling him the truth, but in the end all that happens is that he no longer completely trusts us; we fail to notice that the cat doesn't want to sit on our lap and we restrain her there, with the result that she gets angry and scratches; we buy the book on Self-realisation but having satisfied the desire to own it, we fail to read it or practise what it says.

With the increase of sattva in Step 4, the power of these desires is reduced and we are no longer pulled relentlessly and uncontrollably towards actions, thoughts or feelings that attempt to control 'the world' in order to get what we temporarily want, while forgetting our real, life-long aim. We remember what we previously understood from our own experience (see Step 7) – that we are not separate entities, trying to get what we want from a largely uncooperative world. We see everything and everyone *as ourselves* and therefore respond to all people, animals and objects that we encounter with love and respect. (As the Shankaracharya said 'this Absolute is ready to meet you as a table, as a chair, as food and everything'.)

All this happens naturally – little effort is required other than perhaps impartial self-observation to see the ebb and flow of desires. Then when the tiny feeling of agitation occurs that indicates a desire is beginning to take hold, just asking ourselves the questions: 'On whose behalf is this desire arising? Is it on behalf of a separate self or from a feeling of being one with everything and everyone?' Just asking those questions can dissolve the feeling of separateness.

It is in the simple, everyday situations in life that this step is manifest. Rupert Spira describes it as 'living life in accordance with our understanding'.

*Step 6: Giving up of worldly objectives*

Perhaps we can see Step 6 as being simply the peaceful acceptance of whatever is happening in this present moment, with no desire for anything different? But as Dr Roles says, that does not mean that one fails to play one's part in the world and respond appropriately to the circumstances that arise. It is simply that there is no personal desire for a particular result. We take the action that seems appropriate at the time (if action is needed) and if events turn out differently from what we planned and expected, we are not troubled or agitated. Whatever happens is what is meant to happen – it is part of the drama and can't happen any other way.

Again, this step seems to occur automatically as a result of the previous step. The most we can do is dissolve any blocks that might occur by asking ourselves questions whenever we start to feel dislike for what is happening, such as 'what is it in me that dislikes this?'. The answer has to be the separate self which we imagine ourselves to be and which is the source of all unhappiness and suffering.

*Step 7: Liberation from all thoughts about oneself*

On first sight this doesn't sound very attractive. Our initial response might well be 'I *enjoy* thinking about myself and do rather a lot of it. How can giving it up be liberation?' But perhaps the real answer to that question is that we don't actually give up anything? Perhaps this step is actually nothing more than resting in desireless consciousness, *as* desireless consciousness, which is what we really are? The liberation is from all thoughts arising from what we are not. If there is no feeling of separation, why should there be any thoughts about oneself as a (non-existent) separate entity? It is not that one is supposed to go around thinking about other people – our husband/wife, friends, neighbours etc. all the time (as separate entities), and exclude oneself (as a separate entity) from the picture. It is simply seeing the *whole* situation that is within the scope of our current experience as 'I', and that includes all the people, animals, objects etc. 'There is nothing else but me'. I am not my body, mind, thoughts, feelings, or actions – they are in me, but I am not identified with them: I am 'the light of pure knowing that flows through *all* experience'.

Can we see Step 7 as corresponding to those naturally-occurring moments of awakening or higher consciousness that arise as a result of practice? Sometimes they last only a minute or so, sometimes hours, days or several weeks. Dr Roles says that we can judge our progress by the frequency and duration of their occurrence. The more often we go round the cycle of the mini-ladder the more frequently they occur, and the more *sattva* we accumulate the longer they last. So when this step becomes permanent would that be full Self-realisation?

As the Enneagram shows, it is our experience of Step 7, and our love for 'being what we really are' – free from any feeling of separation – that drives our efforts round Steps 1, 2 and 3 of the circle. By putting the mini-ladder on an Enneagram, it is a reminder that the Real Self is always there shining at the centre, outside the illusory wheel of time (the circumference of the circle) and immediately accessible simply by letting go of *everything* that we think we are at the moment. The remaining steps then become (temporarily) irrelevant as they are filled automatically. So reaching the top of the mini-ladder doesn't have to be something to strive towards in the future – it's available to all of us right now.

## Annex: The mini-ladder

There are seven successive stages like the steps of a ladder, each leading to the next, till the final stage is reached:

*Step 1* is 'Good Actions'. This means that we do what we have to do in the best possible way – do our jobs efficiently and cheerfully. Perhaps we go out of our way to be kind; and if we get a 'good impulse' we try to put it into effect at the appropriate moment.

'Good actions' lead to *Step 2*, 'Good will' ('benevolence'), good thoughts.

Increase of 'Good will' leads to *Step 3*, which is '*decrease in bad thoughts*';

and this decrease of negative, useless thinking and malevolence, is what puts us on *Step 4*, on which '*Sattva predominates*'. [Note: In System terms, *Sattva* refers to finer energy – higher frequency of vibration, neutralising force]

This 'energy of *Sattva*' makes possible *Steps 5 and 6*, which have to do with the 'struggle for *freedom from identification* or self-involvement'. [Step 5 – *decrease in worldly attractions*; Step 6 – *Giving up worldly objectives*]

The final or *7th Step* he describes as '*freedom from all thoughts about one's small personal self* and of the selfish benefits we might derive from our actions.

[from FCR 73/12, and HH Record – Mela talk 29<sup>th</sup> January 1973]

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Here [in the mini-ladder] lies for us our immediate way of escape [from the 'self-made prison'], for it means giving up the illusion of 'I' in all our own ideas – step by step – and replacing it with the thought and love for the Universal Param-Atman [the Universal Self]. ... all of us must realize that it is not much good 'hearing more about it'. Ascent of this little ladder is entirely a practical matter for each person to discover for himself, and in doing it we shall make other, unexpected discoveries.

[from FCR 80/20]

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... but the end point of this Ladder is to have no thoughts about yourself at all, but put the Atman [Real I] in their place. Then negative emotions won't exist, won't drain away all one's energy.

[from FCR 80/7]