

A Commentary on "Going for the Gold—Alchemy in Coaching"

I read with interest Mary Bast's article, "Going for the Gold—Alchemy in Coaching" in last month's EM, both because of its theory and thoughtful examples of how different types embody different steps in the alchemical process. I also had some thoughts in response to the alchemical stages she describes and what they imply about their corresponding types that I'd like to share. The original passages are in regular type; my comments are *italicized*.

Alchemists believe everything will become more

Susan Rhodes

advanced given time; the "Great Work" is simply to speed up that process. So why not imagine our Great Work is to help accelerate our clients' transformation?...[We can] envision the Enneagram as a dynamic vessel within which alchemical processes take place. Below are nine elements of alchemy, arranged in numerical sequence so you can see the Enneagram

parallels. Also keep in mind that each element, rather than being unique to an Enneagram style, is vital to the transformation process in all nine:

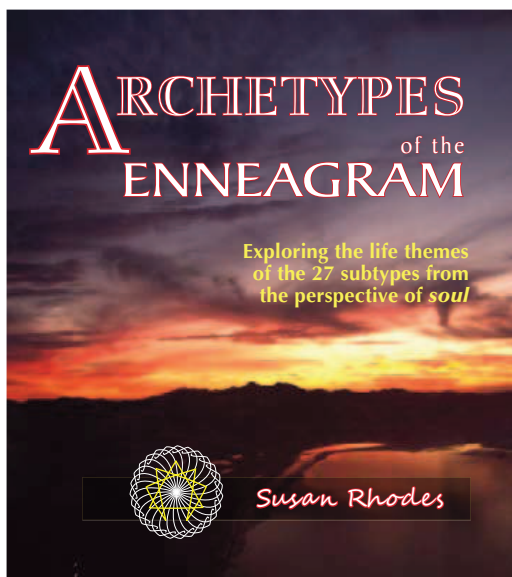
Calciniatio—purifying by fire subjects the basic material to intense heat, driving away alien substances and leaving a pure, whitened ash. Psychologically speaking, this works on the mind and ego, burning away the false self. The whitened ash represents release from our personality's fixated illusion of reality.

Type 1 is the individual most preoccupied with the highest, purest, and most refined ideals. Ones are probably the type most attracted to an ascetic lifestyle, the ones most attuned to the benefits of the purifying fire. In any process of transformation, the first step always seems to require us to drum up enough fire to penetrate through whatever illusions or habits (Point 9?) which have lulled us into a state of "sleep." The piercing, fiery quality of this point is necessary to definitively move out of habitual patterns and towards something new.

Solutio—melting hard hearts and entrenched positions uses the purifying and dissolving properties of water to return the ash to its most basic state so it can be worked with successfully. This dissolution works on the heart to release buried emotions.

The associating of Type 2 with flowing water seems to fit very well. The coolness of flowing water soothes the burn of the fire at Point 1 while also allowing us to proceed in our path via the pull of inner emotion. If Point 1 is associated with great and concentrated effort (like the blast off of a rocket), Point 2 is more like the pull of love or desire, which moves us onwards in a steady and compelling fashion.

Solificatio—making things real, represents moving from the lower to the higher mind. Our deep intention to change is not limited by rational thought and conscious goal attainment,



Archetypes of the Enneagram:

Exploring the Life Themes of the 27 subtypes from the Perspective of soul

"What is my path in life?"

This is the question we all seek to answer. The 27 enneagram subtypes can help us find that answer, especially when seen through the playful lens of archetypal psychology. Explore the worlds of spirit, ego, and soul—and discover the path that fulfill's the soul's purpose in life.



Read Chapter 1 at www.enneagramdimensions.net/archetypes_of_the_enneagram.htm

Buy it at [Amazon.com](#)

The Positive Enneagram

The first book to portray the nine types as vibrant resources that enrich our lives

"The enneagram of personality has fascinated me as a way of understanding problematic aspects of one's personality. But I suspected there were a lot of positive uses for it that have been overlooked. Susan Rhodes has pointed these out—fascinating reading!"

— Charles T. Tart, Ph.D., author of *Transpersonal Psychologies & The End of Materialism*

"Susan Rhodes defines the core of a much-needed unified field theory of the Enneagram through integrating Gurdjieff's Enneagram of Process with Ichazo's Enneagram of Personality."

— Judith Searle, author of *The Literary Enneagram*

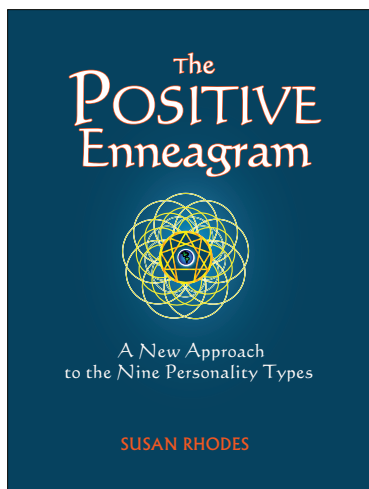
"Clear, cogent, and concise. Susan Rhodes looks at the enneagram through a positive psychology lens and opens up new territory."

— Jerome Wagner, Ph.D., author of *Nine Lenses on the World*



Read Chapter 1 at www.enneagramdimensions.net/positive_enneagram.htm

Buy it at [Amazon.com](#)



but rather our thoughts are “enlightened,” literally transformed into light, a vision of what is possible.

Type 3 is nothing if not practical and concrete. I like the idea of moving from the lower to the higher mind because it implies the broadening of vision that occurs when we begin to move beyond immediate goals, plans, and rewards to something more eternal and symbolic.

Nigredo—separating the extraneous from the real. This aspect of alchemy means putrefaction or decomposition, all ingredients cleansed and cooked to a uniform black matter, representing the moment of maximum despair, the dark night of the soul, the dying of inner chaos and doubt, discovering what really matters, what is authentic essence.

Ah, who could be associated with putrefaction but Type 4—that dark and mysterious place on the enneagram circle. If the first three steps in the process are about some sort of doing, this point is about something else entirely: about allowing. It’s through allowing that we can experience the slow falling apart of all contrived aspects of our being in preparation for rebirth.

Separatio—separating wholes into components, separating the essence of dissolution from its wastes. This refers to “dismembering” the personality, retrieving the energy released by dissolution of negative beliefs and emotional blockages.

If Type 4 embodies the essence of absolute allowing, Type 5 embodies the essence of absolute dissolution. There is an absoluteness about both bottom-of-the-enneagram types that represents the need to going to extremes in the transformation process. The bottom of the enneagram is as far away as we can get from the starting point in transformation—the place where everything is falling apart (Point 4) and in pieces (Point 5).

Mortificatio—killing or dead-making, consciously working on reduction of ego attachments; in Jungian terms going inside ourselves to embrace the shadow so our self reflects the whole instead of a dissociated part.

If we divide the transformational process into three phases, then Points 1–3 represent the preparatory phases in the process, Points 4–6 represent the “dark night of the Soul,” and Points 7–9 comprise the resolution phase. Therefore, it makes sense that Type 6 is where we confront the shadow self that we’ve managed to avoid until this point. We have already tackled the easy problems and even taken on more difficult but do-able challenges along the way; all that is left are the things we fear the most in ourselves.

Sublimatio—infusing with spirit, transmuting to a higher form. In chemistry a solid, when heated, passes directly into gas and ascends to the top of the vessel, where it re-solidifies. Metaphorically we are made spiritual, we move “above” and see objectively.

Point 7 is that place when we (finally) break through to something higher—where we literally become more spiritual. In the popular sense of the word, being “spiritual” is always positive; however, in real life, it’s a different story—as any Seven can attest. For there are challenges associated with this new state, especially challenges involving the need to integrate spirit into a world of limitation (which may be why the Nine and Tens of wands, which represent the near-end of a spiritual task in Tarot, portray a sense of deep burden rather than freedom).

If there is truly a meaningful one-to-one relationship between the process and personality enneagrams, it becomes impossible to view the nine personality types as inherently fragmented, incomplete, or pathological in nature.

Coagulatio—mastering the forces of nature, accessing our own soul power to change our reality on all levels. This refers to earth and to being solid, to a chemical reaction that produces a new compound. In *coagulatio* we seek stability with our newfound peace and become accustomed to our spirit-based self.

I love the image of “mastering the forces of nature... to change our reality on all levels.” I’m sure most Eights would like it, as well! It’s always seemed to me that Point 8 is about mastery...but not mastery just for its own sake but mastery in the service of something greater than the self. And that’s sort of the point of the whole transformational journey: that while we start on the journey for our own sake, we gradually realize that we are not really the star of our own individual show but a part of a much larger drama. Our mastery is ultimately not ours alone: it’s a function of forces larger than ourselves.

Coniunctio—uniting apparent opposites to make a larger whole. Here we unite conscious/ unconscious, balance masculine/ feminine principles, increase intuitive insights/ synchronicities, and enter psychological wholeness.

Could this point in the alchemical process apply to any type other than Type 9—the most universal of all types? It’s interesting that, although Point 9 seems to represent everything toward which we strive—wholeness, balance, and integration—on a personal level, it’s not so easy to embody that universality. (Ask any Nine who has to take sides, make decisions, or stick to a set schedule.) In some ways, it seems as though—the more “spiritual” the type, the greater the challenge to remain mentally focused and emotionally involved in life.

The preceding breakdown of the process of alchemical change is quite fascinating, since each step so nicely corresponds to each enneagram type. It so struck a chord because of my ongoing interest in looking at the relationship between the process and personality enneagrams—and especially at the one-to-one relationship between each of the nine steps in a transformational process and each of the nine enneagram personality types. If there is truly a meaningful one-to-one relationship, then (from my perspective) it becomes impossible to view the nine personality types as inherently fragmented, incomplete, or pathological in nature.

Moreover, if each type is associated with a stage in alchemical transformation, then knowing our type means knowing something about what sorts of activities tend to produce transformative change in each of us (and conversely, what sorts of activities are less productive of transformation). For example, a One may benefit more from the kind of highly-disciplined program that would only deflate a Seven, depress a Four, or confuse a Nine. The devotional approach favored by Twos, Sixes, or Nines might be incomprehensible to an Eight or Three. And the paths associated with “bottom” types Four or Five (which so often bring an individual into a place of aloneness or isolation) would not make sense for many other types.

I suppose that my point is that we transform not by “rising above” our type but by “working through” it: by understanding its deeper alchemical nature and inherent possibilities. Again, I thank Mary Bast for linking the (seemingly disparate) worlds of alchemy, coaching, and the personality enneagram.

THE ONLY COMBINED
SCIENTIFICALLY DETER-
MINED ENNEAGRAM
PERSONALITY TEST AND
IN-DEPTH GUIDE

the
essential
enneagram

DAVID DANIELS, M.D., & VIRGINIA PRICE, PH.D.
*JUST UPDATED AND REVISED 2010 WITH MUCH
NEW MATERIAL*

- The Enneagram Intensive (Part 1) of our Enneagram Professional Training Program (EPTP) comes to lovely Vallombrosa Center in Menlo Park close to the SF Airport in February 2012 and to the Montreat Center close to Asheville, NC in October–November, 2011
- Deepening Spiritual Awareness and the Typing process (Part 2) come to California in February 2012.
- Check our website for David’s radio shows and videos.

Call Tracy at 866-366-8973 for detailed information and registration or go to

www.enneagramworldwide.com

Visit our website and explore the more than 200 pages of vital information, and for all the detailed information about our Intensive, training programs, and workshops.

Visit our newly redesigned
Enneagram Monthly Website
enneagrammonthly.com